

FORECAST BY MR. WELLS.

What is Coming? A Forecast of Things after the War. By H. G. Wells. Pp. 295. (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1916.) Price 6s. net.

WHEN Mr. Wells writes upon social and political questions he is a prophet whom it is a pleasure to follow, even when we feel that time will prove his extrapolation careless. What mistakes he may have made in this book will declare themselves in a year or two, so that he has placed his reputation in more jeopardy than usual. He believes that Germany will be beaten, but not completely crushed by this war; "she is going to be left militarist and united with Austria and Hungary, and unchanged in her essential nature; and out of that state of affairs comes, I believe, the hope for an ultimate confederation of the nations of the earth." The Central Powers remaining a menace, the Allies and America will reform all their methods. It is in discussing these reforms that Mr. Wells is at his best; he is on his own familiar ground, and he excites the admiration and sympathy of his most exacting critics. The chapter, "Nations in Liquidation," contains in one sentence his great idea: "The landlord who squeezes, the workman who strikes and shirks, the lawyer who fogs and obstructs, will know, and will know that most people know, that what he does is done, not under an empty, regardless heaven, but in the face of an unsleeping enemy and in disregard of a continuous urgent necessity for unity."

Thus we shall have a millennium induced by the German menace: we wish we could believe in it. In the chapter, "The Outlook for the Germans," we find that he relies upon the great middle class to save Germany from Junkerdom. He does not take into account the fact that the German nation must get tired of being intense and perhaps may even get disgusted with "Kultur." Readers know his views on Socialism, and they can imagine how he mocks at our present want of organisation, our rottenness and dishonesty, and how in particular he makes war against the lawyers and schoolmasters. There is a good chapter on "What the War is doing for Women."

Mr. Wells's whole scheme is based on his belief that the Central Powers will continue to menace the world, and this belief is itself based upon a certain hypothesis which might almost have been called an axiom five months ago, when Mr. Wells wrote. This hypothesis is that in entrenched warfare the defensive has an advantage over the most brilliant strategy and over considerably superior numbers, and that there must be a deadlock, followed by the complete exhaustion of both sides. If Mr. Wells had waited only a few months he would have seen that the great wealth and patriotism of England and the enormous population of Russia and the intense feeling of France now enable the Allies to break through the long German fortifications at all points with advantages in power which get greater and greater every day, so that the dead-

lock is already at an end. Exhaustion in men is possible, and as there are more than twice as many available soldiers with the Allies as with the Central Powers, the speedier exhaustion of Germany in men is quite certain. As for exhaustion in wealth: in two years of the Napoleonic war we spent one-third of a million pounds per day. In a week we spent as much as Charles II. spent in a year. Now we have reached an expenditure of six millions per day, and yet unscientific persons refuse to recognise that the wealth of England is unimaginably great, and that the steam-engine has given us the whole earth in fee.¹ Germany in 1871 thought, and everybody thought, that she had ruined France financially. We know now that if she had enforced an indemnity ten times as great France would have paid it easily. We talk of the cost of the war to Germany spelling her financial ruin, whereas those scientific persons who have studied Germany know that at the end of this war, if we compel Germany to pay the total expenditure of the Allies (we do not recommend this), she will still be in a flourishing condition. Mr. Wells thinks that the world peace is coming soon through universal self-sacrifice; it is a guileless notion. Peace will come to the world by such a loss of its wealth as people do not think about—by the exhaustion of its coal. The man in the street who reads scraps of scientific literature believes, like the spendthrift, in a miracle—namely, that unknown stores of wealth will be opened up when our coal fails. Before the war we recognised with sorrow that he was wrong, but we have less sorrow now when we know that our greatest blessing has become a curse.

J. P.

OUR BOOKSHELF.

The Cruise of the "Tomas Barrera": The Narrative of a Scientific Expedition to Western Cuba and the Colorados Reefs, with Observations on the Geology, Fauna, and Flora of the Region. By John B. Henderson. Pp. ix+320. (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916.) Price 12s. 6d. net.

THIS book is the narrative of a "delightful outing and a most successful collecting expedition" to the north-west end of Cuba. The account throughout is essentially domestic, the doings of each day are recorded, and there are the usual more or less informed pages on mosquitoes, snakes, and sharks. It was a scramble of nine "naturalists" for six weeks to secure specimens of as many different animals as possible, rather than to study scientific problems or living beasts. The collectors secured a well-found fishing schooner of 65 ft. length, with a launch, and dodged in and out of the barrier reefs of the Colorados, wherever possible securing specimens by shallow dredging, the use of copper sulphate for doping rock pools, and the attraction of the electric bulb at night. It is a slightly known area, but reefs, lagoons,

¹ It has been proved that the steam-engine has multiplied the wealth of the world by some number between 200 and 1000.