



An Englishman looks at the World

H.G. Wells

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An Englishman Looks at the World is a 1914 essay collection by H. G. Wells containing journalistic pieces written between 1909 and 1914. The book consists of twenty-six pieces ranging from five[1] to sixty-two pages[2] in length. An American edition was published the same year by Harper and Brothers under the title Social Forces in England and America. Wells organized the essays thematically, inserting a fanciful "synopsis" after the table of contents conveying his view that the book constituted an argument: "Blériot arrives and sets him thinking. He flies, and deduces certain consequences of cheap travel. He considers the King, and speculates on the New Epoch; he thinks Imperially, and then, coming to details, about Labour, Socialism, and Modern Warfare. He discourses on the Modern Novel, and the Public Library; criticises Chesterton, Belloc, and Sir Thomas More, and deals with the London Traffic Problem as a Socialist should. He doubts the existence of Sociology, discusses Divorce Schoolmasters, Motherhood, Doctors, and Specialisation; questions if there is a People, and diagnoses the Political Disease of Our Times. He then speculates upon the future of the American Population, considers a possible set-back to civilisation, the Ideal Citizen, the still undeveloped possibilities of Science, and—in the broadest spirit—the Human Adventure. This collection of newspaper articles is a heterogeneous compendium of Mr. Wells's impressions of modern life, which it is easier to read than to criticize. The author's well-known intolerance of our social and political methods sometimes leads him into exaggeration—as when he describes Members of Parliament as "intellectual riff-raff," or condemns the Army Council as "half-way back to bows and arrows" on the strength of an inspection of the Legion of Frontiersmen. "The expert 'quack' and the bureaucratic intriguer increase and multiply in a dull-minded, uncritical, strenuous period as disease germs multiply in darkness and beat." Mr. Wells goes too far on this line; but his criticism is always suggestive and frequently just.

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