

BRIÈFER NOTICES

No book is provoking a more animated discussion among students of the social sciences at the present time than H. G. Wells' *Outline of History* (2 vols., Macmillans, pp. 648, 676). The author's task, as he himself sets it, is to tell, "truly and clearly, in one continuous narrative, the whole story of life and mankind so far as it is known today." But while these two volumes are plainly for the general reader rather than for the special student of history, it does not follow that they contain nothing beyond an endless parade of names and dates. Their chief value, indeed, is in the author's interpretation of what he writes about. Events are appraised and men are weighed in the balance as he goes along. Historians in general will not agree with some of these appraisals, nor will they credit Mr. Wells with an approach to infallibility in his judgment of the men who flit across his pages; but his estimates of the relative value of facts and forces can scarcely be brushed aside because they do not command general indorsement. On some matters, unhappily, Mr. Wells has allowed his iconoclastic proclivities to run away with him. Napoleon I, for example, cannot be disposed of as a second-grade "pestilence" because "he killed fewer people than the influenza epidemic of 1918" (II, p. 384); nor will the world believe, so long as it retains its senses, that Napoleon III was "a much more intelligent man" than his uncle (II, p. 438). Even the pinchbeck himself would have rebuked this insinuation. But when all is said, these two stout volumes embody a remarkable achievement. They contain astonishingly few historical inaccuracies of the customary type. The author's advisers, and a competent galaxy of scholars they are, have kept him clear of the pitfalls. The style is terse and forceful. Mr. Wells certainly has the gift of cogent exposition. Where, for example, can anyone find all pre-human history so vividly and clearly summarized as in the first seventy-five pages of this *Outline*? Nor is the author balked by the growing complexity of things after man appeared on this earth. His *coup d'oeil* over the whole range of human history from Adam and Eve to Harding and Coolidge is an astonishing success in point of clear delineation. It might better have borne the title "A Socialist's Interpretation of World History," however, for that is what it really is. The events are merely so many pegs on which to hang the eternal moral.

General Ludendorff continues his contributions to the history of the World War, from the German standpoint, by the publication of *The*

General Staff and its Problems (2 vols. E. P. Dutton & Co., pp. 721). The present work is not a narrative, like the author's *War Memories*, but a documentary history of the great conflict in its later stages. A preliminary chapter deals with the development of the German army and German war plans prior to 1914, and there are some rare admissions of German "preparedness" in these pages. The violation of Belgium's neutrality was completely planned, as the documents show, nearly two years before the war began. England's intervention was counted upon. A memorandum of December, 1912, signed by Von Moltke, then Chief of Staff, contains the following significant passage: "If we are to take the offensive against France, it would be necessary to violate the neutrality of Belgium. It is only by an advance across Belgian territory that we can hope to attack and defeat the French army in the open field. On this route we shall meet the English Expeditionary Force and—unless we succeed in coming to some arrangement with Belgium—the Belgian army as well. At the same time this operation is more promising than a frontal attack on the French fortified eastern frontier" (I, pp. 61-62).

The confidential letters, memoranda, and telegrams which passed between Main Headquarters, the Chancellor, and the Emperor are reprinted in all their nakedness, with explanatory footnotes and some running comment. For American students the documents relating to the unrestricted submarine campaign and the negotiations which preceded the armistice afford intensely live reading. They show that all was never serene below the surface. The military and political branches of the governments did not pull very well together. It is often said that the German general staff underestimated the part which an American army could play in the war, but broadly speaking this is not true. The documents prove that Ludendorff was well aware of America's resources, but he relied upon the admiralty's assurance that the transport of troops could be hindered and also upon the assurance of shipping experts that tonnage for the transportation of a large army was not available. Germany seems to have been well supplied with inaccurate statisticians and false prophets during these fateful years. The documents show that they went as far wide of the mark on foodstuffs as on submarines. Wilson's first notes in reply to the German requests for an armistice were thought by many in this country to be unduly lenient in their tone, but they came like quick thunderclaps to the masses of the German people. The intimation that no armistice could be considered unless it contained absolute guarantees for main-