

**LOOKING
BACKWARD,
2000-1887**

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Looking Backward, 2000-1887 by Edward Bellamy

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HEYWOOD BROUN

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EDWARD BELLAMY

(1850-1898)

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR OF *LOOKING BACKWARD*

About half the time allowed by Edward Bellamy for society to find a solution to most of its ills has already passed. A casual glance at the headlines of our newspapers should be enough to persuade anyone that his vision of a transformed world is far less than half achieved. Yet his book, like all its noble antecedents among utopian novels from Plato's *Republic* and Thomas More's *Utopia* to William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, should be measured more by its influence than by its prophetic accuracy, and that influence in awakening American hopes for a better social order has been incalculable.

From his home in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, where he was born, the descendant of a long line of clerical ancestors, Edward Bellamy went to Union College in Schenectady. He did not stay there long enough to be graduated, but departed for a year in Germany. Upon his return he studied law and was admitted to the bar, but abandoned his legal career, without having tried a case, in favor of the hazards of literature. After ac-

quiring some newspaper experience on the *New York Post* and *Springfield Union*, he tried his hand at the writing of short stories, some of which were collected in a volume entitled *The Blind Man's World and Other Stories*. The two novels which came from his pen, *Dr. Heidenhof's Process* (1880) and *Mrs. Ludington's Sister* (1884), certainly did not foreshadow the sensation he was to create by the publication, in 1888, of *Looking Backward*, undoubtedly the most influential book on social reform ever to be written in America. In what turned out to be an anti-climax, he published a last work, *Equality*, shortly before he contracted tuberculosis and was sent to Denver, where he stayed until 1898. Two months after his return to New England his life came to an end.



AUTHOR'S
PREFACE



HISTORICAL SECTION SHAWMUT COLLEGE, BOSTON,
DECEMBER 26, 2000

LIVING as we do in the closing year of the twentieth century, enjoying the blessings of a social order at once so simple and logical that it seems but the triumph of common sense, it is no doubt difficult for those whose studies have not been largely historical to realize that the present organization of society is, in its completeness, less than a century old. No historical fact is, however, better established than that till nearly the end of the nineteenth century it was the general belief that the ancient industrial system, with all its shocking social consequences, was destined to last, with possibly a little patching, to the end of time. How strange and wellnigh incredible does it seem that so prodigious a moral and material transformation as has taken place since then could have been accomplished in so brief an interval! The readiness with which men accustom themselves, as matters of course, to improvements in their condition, which, when anticipated, seemed to leave nothing more to be desired, could not be more strikingly illustrated. What reflection could be better calculated to moderate the enthusiasm of reformers who count for their reward on the lively gratitude of future ages!

The object of this volume is to assist persons who, while

desiring to gain a more definite idea of the social contrasts between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are daunted by the formal aspect of the histories which treat the subject. Warned by a teacher's experience that learning is accounted a weariness to the flesh, the author has sought to alleviate the instructive quality of the book by casting it in the form of a romantic narrative, which he would be glad to fancy not wholly devoid of interest on its own account.

The reader, to whom modern social institutions and their underlying principles are matters of course, may at times find Dr. Leete's explanations of them rather trite — but it must be remembered that to Dr. Leete's guest they were not matters of course, and that this book is written for the express purpose of inducing the reader to forget for the nonce that they are so to him. One word more. The almost universal theme of the writers and orators who have celebrated this bimillennial epoch has been the future rather than the past, not the advance that has been made, but the progress that shall be made, ever onward and upward, till the race shall achieve its ineffable destiny. This is well, wholly well, but it seems to me that nowhere can we find more solid ground for daring anticipations of human development during the next one thousand years, than by 'Looking Backward' upon the progress of the last one hundred.

That this volume may be so fortunate as to find readers whose interest in the subject shall incline them to overlook the deficiencies of the treatment is the hope in which the author steps aside and leaves Mr. Julian West to speak for himself.

INTRODUCTION

BY HEYWOOD BROUN

A good many of my radical friends express a certain kindly condescension when they speak of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*.

"Of course you know," they say, "that it really isn't first-rate economics."

And yet in further conversation I have known a very large number of these same somewhat scornful Socialists to admit, "You know, the first thing that got me started to thinking about Socialism was Bellamy's *Looking Backward*."

From the beginning it has been a highly provocative book. It is now. Many of the questions both of mood and technique are even more pertinent in the year 1931 than they were in 1887. A critic of the *Boston Transcript* said, when the novel first appeared, that the new State imagined by Bellamy was all very well, but that the author lost much of his effectiveness by putting his Utopia a scant fifty years ahead, and that he might much better have made it seventy-five centuries.

It is true that the fifty years assigned for changing the world utterly are almost gone by now. Not everything which was predicted in *Looking Backward* has come to pass. But the laugh is not against Bellamy, but