

## THE WELLSIAN

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EDITOR

Michael Draper

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The H.G. Wells Centre,  
Department of Language and Literature,  
The Polytechnic of North London,  
Prince of Wales Road,  
London NW5 3LB, England

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### Editorial

In the *Times Literary Supplement* last year, Philip Larkin concluded an appreciative review of *H.G. Wells in Love* and Anthony West's *H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life*, by wondering whether their biographical emphasis might not have the side-effect of distracting attention from Wells's real achievements as a writer and thinker. The 1985 *Wellsian*, I'm happy to say, testifies to a continuing interest in the full range of Wells's work. Brian Aldiss notes the undiminished topicality of Wells's fiction, and the same might be said of Wells's interest in warfare and in human rights, topics ably discussed here by Roger Stearn and Lord Stewart.

It's pleasing to see that our Contributors' List shows a wide variety of backgrounds and that our Checklist of Recent Books and Articles reveals an international interest in Wells Studies. With the symposium planned for next year, the recent Hogarth Press reprints of Wells's fiction and a number of books on Wells (my own included) at present in the pipeline, interest in Wells is clearly flourishing. One of the people most responsible for this state of affairs, it almost goes without saying, is Dr. Patrick Parrinder who, among his many activities, has edited this journal for the past four years. I'm sure I speak for many Wellsians in taking the opportunity of my first editorial to thank him publically for his efforts. I shall do my best to maintain his high standards and, as always, comments and suggestions from readers will be much appreciated.

M.D.

### *In the Days of the Comet: An Introduction*

Brian Aldiss

Of recent years, we have had to adjust our views of Herbert George Wells. It was becoming easy simply to dismiss him as a failed prophet, or to classify him with such writers of a fading epoch as Arnold Bennett, Gissing, or Hilaire Belloc. But Wells is amazing; Wells had a time-bomb waiting. In 1984 was published — thirty-eight years after his death — his secret story of his love-lives, under the title *H.G. Wells in Love*.

Wells wanted to be happy, that most immodest of ambitions. He took great pains to be happy, and devoted much of his remarkable energy to that end; what was rare in his striving was that he tried to make the women with whom he so regularly got himself involved happy too. He set them up in houses, paid their hotel bills, and for many years put up with the most difficult of them (there the palm goes to Odette Keun) in a vague placatory way which must have aggravated as much as much as it mollified. The most famous of these involvements, apart from that with his breath-takingly tolerant second wife, Jane, was with Rebecca West. There was, of course, Rebecca West's side of the question; but our later age can see sympathetically that many of the vexing stratagems these lovers were put to, as for instance the occasional pretence that Wells was merely his son Anthony's uncle, were forced upon them by the social conventions of the time.