

# THE WELLSIAN

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Editor Michael Draper

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## Editorial

If one day a selection of material from the *Wellsian* were to be published in book form - and why, after all, should it not be? - there would be plenty of scope for heated editorial discussion over which material to include, such is the real wealth of articles this series has carried. Consider Christopher Priest on the early science fiction, Roslynn Haynes on *Dr Moreau*, John Huntington on 'The Hammerpond Park Burglary,' Bernard Loing on Wells's manuscripts, W.M.S. Russell and R.G. Hampson on Wells and the folktale, Chris Rolfe on *Mr Polly*, Jean-Pierre Vernier on *The New Machiavelli*, Patrick Parrinder on Wells and the Webbs, Rose Tilly on Wells's "telpherage system", Stephen Ingle on the Fabians' utopia, Lyman Tower Sargent on Wells's political theory, Roger Stearn on the war writings and John Hammond on Wells as an educationalist. And that's just a tentative list to get you thinking! (Predictable plug: back issues of the *Wellsian* are available by post from the Wells Centre, enquiries welcome.)

The point I really want to make, though, is that any such compilation of seminal essays would also have to take account of our latest issue, including as it does Part Two of David Lake's ground-breaking study of the texts of the scientific romances and Leon Stover's incisive critique of Wells's underlying "nihilism." It also contains a thoughtful piece on *Tono-Bungay* by John Hammond, two lively polemical articles, two book reviews and a valuable round-up of contemporary notices put together by Patrick Parrinder to supplement that in Ingvald Raknem's *H.G. Wells and his Critics*.

What we don't have on this occasion is a list of recent books and articles on Wells. Our apologies for the omission. Next year we'll include an extended list by way of compensation. Other features to which you may look forward in *Wellsian* 13 (a special 'unlucky' issue - unlucky, that is, for those who miss it because they failed to renew their subscription) are an essay on Wells's "filmic" imagination by Kenneth Bailey (one of the highlights of last year's residential conference) and an examination of mysticism and the fantasy tradition in *The First Men in the Moon* by David Lake.

The *Wellsian* and the Wells Society have been able to make an important contribution to the appreciation of Wells's work over the years because a

large number of people have worked very hard for their success. Among the most distinguished pioneers of the Wells revival have been two members of the Society whose deaths greatly saddened us during the last year - one the founder of the H.G. Wells Collection at Bromley Library and a former Chairman of the Society, the other a member of the original Wells Society in the 1930s who continued to give many progressive organisations the benefit of his creativity and wisdom for fifty years more. With respect and affection this issue is dedicated to Bob Watkins and Peter Hunot.

M.D.

*Leon Stover*

### **H.G. Wells and *The Sea Lady* - A Platonic Affair in the "Great Outside"?**

*An address to the H.G. Wells Society at a special meeting, Conway Hall, London,  
16 July 1988.*

*The Sea Lady*<sup>1</sup> is not as lightweight a fantasy as announced in the subtitle: *A Tissue of Moonshine*. Wells himself later explained that "it stressed the harsh incompatibility of wide public interests with the high, swift rush of imaginative passion." But then he adds, "- with considerable sympathy for the passion."<sup>2</sup>

The passion belongs to one Harry Chatteris, the nephew of an earl and a candidate for Parliament. But he is led astray from his proper calling by the magic beauty of the novel's title mermaid, symbolic of the imaginative passion versus public service; thence to be embraced by her and to be drowned in the uncaring sea waters from which she came, going down, as Wells relates, in "moonshine and death." The cause of this he puts with genuine candour: "She drives Chatteris into a madness of desire for 'other dreams,' for a life beyond reason and possibility."<sup>3</sup>

This matches what the novel's key character observes, a fellow politician and cousin to Chatteris named Melville. It is he who provides the narrator, the unspecified viewpoint character, with the substance of this tale.

During the story, it is Melville's reluctant duty to tell the earnest young Miss Adeline Glendower what went wrong with her engagement to Chatteris. A Marcella type, she is not only his fiancée but his devoted