

but it should not make the reader ignore the literary technique which helped build up a perfect balance between the ideas and the plot within the novels. Wells, the writer, knew what a novel should be. In 1932, for instance, he wrote a superb novel *The Bulpington of Blup* (we find its title, along with its French translation, in the very useful bibliography at the end of the book). In *The Bulpington of Blup*, Wells builds up a striking plot, showing how imagination combined with a lack of serious training and of real education into adulthood, could lead to lies, indeed to a life of lies; here we have a perfect illustration of the “race between education and catastrophe” within a very good story. May I add that *Joan and Peter*, which to Mr Altairac may seem a rather long-winded book, was an inspiration to me as a teacher and that I never found it boring.

In the chapter entitled “Wells and France” the author deals with the attitude of French critics, their mistakes and their achievements. In my view, Mr Altairac’s book will be numbered among the achievements and, as a result, many French readers will find their way into Wells’s novels and his innumerable essays. It is unfortunate that so many of these are out of print.

Book Review: *The H.G. Wells Society: The First Forty Years 1960-2000: A Short History*, by John Hammond, ([N.P.]: H.G. Wells Society, 2000). 31 pp. [By David C. Smith]

In the H.G. Wells collection at the University of Illinois Rare Books Room, there are a half dozen programmes which were distributed at various social functions which H.G. Wells attended. They usually give a menu, list the speakers and describe the place and the time when the event took place. They are useful insofar as they locate him in time and suggest something of the reception with which he was received.

At least two of these are very valuable. One lists the table seating for an event in the early days of aviation (c. 1910) and among the guests at Wells’s table was the famous aeronaut, Moore Brabazon. They remained friends and Brabazon commented on a paper by Wells in *Nature* in 1941 as to the real purpose of science. Another souvenir programme of considerable interest was handed out on 6 November 1938 at Empire Stadium at Earl’s Court. This marked a large rally commemorating the 21st

anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. The group sponsoring the meeting was the Russia Today Society. Wells continued to be a member and the group was useful in bridging relationships between Britain and the USSR in the first half of the war. It may be of some interest to note that this meeting occurred quite soon after Munich and contains a message of good will from Wells to the Soviet people (pp. 7-11).

One wonders who will read the programme of the meeting of the H.G. Wells Society at the Cafe Royal in September 2000. And who among those attending will still be remembered. If the message of H.G. Wells continues to be strong and powerful, many of those at the fortieth anniversary commemorative dinner will be well known and those attending the centenary banquet can wish them well with a toast to “Wells and His Followers”.

This useful little pamphlet will help keep these matters alive. Compiled and written by John Hammond, the *non pareil* and founder of the H.G. Wells Society, I found myself reading and remembering – events, places, people. Among those which are especially poignant for me are the afternoons in Peter Hunot’s living room in 1976 when I gave my first paper on Wells (on his visit to Australia). Other meetings were the great symposium of 1986; an earlier visit to Uppark when I first realized the significance of those underground passages from Eric Korn’s lovely exogesis of physical events in Wells’s life; visits to Horsell Common and Red Lion Square, and above all one deep dark night in Blackheath as Bob Watkins read out the chapter on the giant rats from *The Food of the Gods*.

The history provides continuous coverage of various events through the present, with a brief (probably too brief) account of the first H.G. Wells Society, in which Peter Hunot’s father was an officer. Future historians will thank Hammond for the list of officers and their terms, an account of the various AGMs, useful summaries of the annual Weekend Conferences, and a listing of the various publications of the Society. Four excellent photographs of what must be hundreds appear in the booklet. Those persons who have photographs, and can identify times, places and people should consider donating their images to the Society’s archive.

This is a perfect little history of its type. Large enough to tell the story, or at least its outline, and small enough so that it will not bore the casual reader. As it happened, although I had planned to be at the Cafe Royal, events prevented this from happening. Instead, I was about to go under the knife when my friends and colleagues

sat down for the festivities. I thought of them, however, and of H.G. Wells which made the procedure easier to go through. And this history helps me recall the earlier days of the Society even more.

Book Review: The H.G. Wells Collector's Monograph Series, Number One. *The Atlantic Edition: A 28 Volume Set of the Works of H.G. Wells*, by Gordon D. Feir (Southern Maple Publishers, 2000). 28 pp. [By Sylvia Hardy]

In the General Introduction to the Atlantic Edition of his works, H.G. Wells questions whether the word 'works' is applicable to his publications. He prefers the word 'writings', partly because he rejects the notion of permanence for any work of art and also because he sees his own products as 'miscellaneous and uneven'. But, he concludes, 'There is only one graceful response to this compliment, and that is to take himself as seriously as he has been taken, and to set out his writings with as brave a face as possible'. How, I wonder, would he have reacted to this monograph, which is wholly devoted to the Atlantic Edition? In the event, of course, the Atlantic Edition was, as Gordon Feir points out, 'a milestone in Wells's publishing history' because the 28-volume project obliged him to reread and revise his texts, and to some extent rethink them – the introductions to the various volumes provide fascinating insights into his thinking at this period. It has also become an important source of reference for scholars and is still the nearest thing we have to a collected edition.

Feir writes that the aim of this bibliographic monograph is to make information about the Edition available to other readers and collectors. To this end he gives details of its publication and of Wells's role as supervisor. There is a complete list of the contents of the 28 volumes, together with comprehensive notes on design and characteristics. The booklet includes full-page colour plates illustrating the binding of the UK and US editions, sample pages from volume VIII, and a reproduction of the photograph of Wells which formed the frontispiece of volume I. The section on Current Distribution is fascinating, and an indicator of the time and trouble the author has taken over this compilation. I had no idea so many sets had been broken up and sold separately – although I do remember that twenty or so years ago a bookseller offered me a signed copy of volume I for £60 which I declined – I

probably did not have the money at the time, though I have often wished since that I had bought it. From this account of current availability and sales prices it looks as though it is highly unlikely that I will achieve my life-time dream of one day discovering a complete (and cheap) set of the Atlantic Edition. I highly recommend this monograph to all readers interested in H.G. Wells, and it is a must for collectors.

Book Review: *The Spinster and the Prophet: A tale of H.G. Wells, plagiarism and the history of the world*, by A.B. McKillop (London: Aurum, 2001). 452 pp. [By Sylvia Hardy]

Like all Wellsians I had heard of the Florence Deeks case. I knew that in 1928 an obscure Canadian woman had charged H.G. Wells with plagiarising her unpublished manuscript in *The Outline of History*, and there seemed no reason to doubt that the accusation was absurd. *The Spinster and the Prophet* takes a very different approach. It was published in Toronto last year with a very different subtitle – *Florence Deeks, H.G. Wells, and the Mystery of the Purloined Past* (Toronto: Macfarlane, 2001) – a title which, in fact, provides a more accurate description of a book that attempts to redress the balance by giving as much attention to Wells's hitherto unknown accuser as it does to the great writer himself.

The case rested on the fact that in the autumn of 1918, when Wells was planning his history of the world, Deeks left her manuscript, 'The Web', a history of the world which covered the same period, with the Canadian branch of Macmillans. Significantly, this was the publishing house which had brought out a number of Wells's novels, and with which he still had a number of contacts. During this period (six or eight months, the plaintiff and the publishers disagreed about the dates) it was possible that the manuscript could have been sent to London and Wells could have had access to it. The prosecution alleged that this must have occurred, not only because Wells (a non-historian) could not possibly have written 250,000 words of *The Outline* between November and July without such an aid, but also because internal (textual) evidence showed that it was Deeks's manuscript that he had drawn on. The structure and overall plan of 'The Web' and *The Outline of History* were, it was claimed, very similar, and there were sentences and whole passages which were almost identical. What is more, the same omissions and errors appeared in both texts.