

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.