

THE LIFE AND NOVELS OF

H. G. WELLS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

This study consists of a brief sketch of Wells' life and a discussion of his novels. It contains no discussion of the works aside from the novels, though something of their contribution to the understanding of Wells' point of view is indicated in the biographical sketch. Discussion of these works is omitted, not because they are not themselves of interest and value, but because a discussion of them is not essential to my present purpose in treating the novels.

In the biographical sketch I have given the main facts of Wells' life, together with such a brief account of the development of his point of view as belongs properly to the story of his life and as helps to render intelligible the general trend of his novels.

My plan for the discussion of the novels has been shaped largely by my conviction that in all of the novels the main interest, both to Wells and to the Reader,

lies in the matter of theme. I have discussed the novels, therefore, in such a way as to make clear the nature of the themes, and to show how Wells has presented them. In doing the latter, I have considered some matters of construction and also, for certain of the novels, a much-used fantastic element. I have found that a number of the novels deal with general social interests, and that a number deal with specific problems; I have, therefore, discussed these two classes of novels in separate chapters.

There is the widest difference in the plans of discussion of the matter of theme in the two chapters on novels, necessitated by the great difference between the two classes of novels. In the first class, the interest in society is general; in the second, it is gathered up into the consideration of specific problems. The novels of the second class are, therefore, superior to those of the first in unity of impression; because of that superior unity, they admit of more satisfactory thesis treatment than do the novels of the first class.

and, indeed, they merit more thorough treatment.

The appendices are added, the first because its illustration of Wells' passionate interest and belief in humanity gives the reader an appreciation of the inevitableness of the social interest displayed throughout Wells' novels; the second, because Wells' statement of his own ideas concerning the novel is naturally of peculiar interest in connection with the study of his novels.

CHAPTER I

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS<sup>1</sup>

Herbert George Wells was born in Bromley, Kent, September 21, 1866. His father, Joseph Wells, was the son of the head-gardener of Lord de Lisle at Penshurst Castle, Kent, and was himself a professional cricketer and the keeper of a small shop.<sup>2</sup> Wells' mother, the daughter of an innkeeper, had been before her marriage to Joseph Wells a lady's maid. T. Seccombe refers to the father as a "man of ingenious and passionate turn",<sup>3</sup> and to the mother, whom he knew

1. The general facts of the life of H. G. Wells are taken from the following sources:
  - a. Who's Who, 1918, Wells, Herbert George.
  - b. Living Age, vol. CCLXXXII, 1914, Thomas Seccombe, Life and Work of Wells, pp. 392-405.
  - c. Van Wyck Brooks, World of H. G. Wells, quotations from Wells' introduction to a Russian translation of his works, pp. 130-3.
  - d. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Wells, Herbert George.
2. Kipps, in the novel of that name, spends his boyhood in a small shop.
3. Living Age, vol. CCCLXXXII, T. Seccombe, Life and Work of Wells, p. 393.

personally in her later years, as a "gentle little old lady."<sup>4</sup> Concerning other ancestors Wells says that he himself knows almost nothing.<sup>5</sup>

The small capital of the Wells family was lost in the failure of their shop.<sup>6</sup> When Wells was twelve years old, the home was broken up, and his mother went to be housekeeper to her former mistress, Miss Fetherstonhaugh, at Up Park, near Petersfield. Wells was with his mother at Up Park for a time, and there, while as housekeeper's son he was having impressed upon him the strict rules of class in British society, he was at the same time breaking these rules by the unauthorized use of the library.<sup>7</sup>

4. Living Age, vol. CCCLXXXII, T. Seccombe, Life and Work of Wells, p. 394.
5. Brooks, Life and Work of H. G. Wells, p. 130-1.
6. In New Worlds for Old, Wells speaks at length about the common failure of small shops and calls it "the cruellest aspect of our economic struggle". See pp. 154-6.
7. Living Age, vol. CCLXXXII, T. Seccombe, Life and Work of Wells, p. 395.

George Ponderevo in Tono-Bungay, is the son of a housekeeper, and makes "unauthorized use" of the Bladersover library: Seccombe is positive that the picture of the rather hard housekeeper there presented is not a picture of Wells' own mother.

At the age of thirteen,<sup>8</sup> Wells, who had previously attended a private school in Bromley, was taken from his studies to be made a shopkeeper.<sup>9</sup> In his early shop life, however, he did not set himself to learn the business as was expected of him, but cherished and indulged as far as possible his passion for reading. He was first sent to be a learner at a draper's establishment in Windsor, and from there was soon transferred to a chemist's shop in Midhurst.<sup>10</sup> At the chemist's shop, he seems to have made a good start in his scientific studies. After two years in Midhurst, Wells went to Wookey Hale, Somerset, as pupil teacher at the primary school; but being unsuccessful there, he was sent back to shop life, this time as apprentice to a draper at Southsea. The two years spent at Southsea, filled with friction between Wells' love of study and his duties as draper's apprentice, ended in Wells' breaking his indentures and setting

8. A portrait of Wells at the age of thirteen appears in the Cosmopolitan, V. XXXIII, p. 469.
9. cf. Chapter II, p. 38. In New Worlds for Old, p. 110, Wells says that two of his brothers have also been shop assistants.
10. "I was a difficult son to place", New Worlds for Old, p. 110.



out definitely to obtain an education. He secured an assistantship at Midhurst Grammar School and from there he obtained a scholarship in the University of London. While a student of biology, he came under the influence of Professor Huxley. In 1888 Wells took the degree of B. Sc. with honors.

For several years after taking his degree, Wells devoted himself to teaching. He was assistant-master at Henley House School, St. John's Wood, where he taught science and English, and also edited Henley House Magazine. He left that position to combine the activities of tutor, lecturer, and crammer at the Old University Correspondence classes held in Red Lion Square. He was successful as a teacher, being naturally a clear demonstrator and being able to maintain a strong personal hold on his students. He overworked, however, and a physical breakdown marked the close of his career as teacher.

With almost no savings, and with an enforced vacation on his hands, the young scientist now came upon discouraging times. However, he had already made a few trials in the field of journalism, and the writing of humorous magazine articles presented itself as a possible means of making necessary

money. In 1893 Wells began writing for the Pall Mall Gazette, of which he was dramatic critic in 1895.<sup>11</sup> In these years he was writing also for the Saturday Review and Nature. His work readily became popular, and brought him a satisfactory income. After a second physical breakdown (about 1895), Wells turned from journalism to his final task, that of authorship.

During the years of his authorship, Wells has lived at Woking, at Sandgate, and at DUMMOW, Essex. He is married to Amy Catherine Robbins, and is the father of two sons.<sup>12</sup> Seccombe mentions the strenuous games that are played at the Wells home, and if one may judge from the description of home games in Mr. Britling Sees It Through, and from the enthusiasm of Wells in his books on Floor Games and Little Wars, it seems certain that, busy author though he is, Wells has built up a very cheery

11. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Wells, Herbert George,  
 12. The wife is mentioned incidentally in New Worlds for Old, p. 155.

According to mention of the sons in New Worlds for Old, p. 139, they were born about 1903 and 1905. The sons are spoken of throughout Floor Games as F. R. W. and G. P. W., and are mentioned in What Is Coming, p. 148, as students in middle school.

recreational feature in his home life.<sup>13</sup>

Definite details of his home life have no place in any of Wells' books, but sometimes there is a pleasing suggestion of the atmosphere of his home. As he concludes his study of social conditions in America, he writes this paragraph:

"The air is very warm and pleasant in my garden tonight, the sunset has left a rim of greenish-gold about the northward sky, shading up a blue that is, as yet, scarce pierced by any star. . . I write down these last words here, and then I shall step through the window and sit out there in the kindly twilight, now quiet, now gossiping idly of what so-and so had done while I have been away, of personal motives and of little incidents and entertaining intimate things." <sup>14</sup>

The major portion of Wells books are novels, but he has published also several volumes of short stories, two books about games, and a number of books in which he gives direct expression to his views on sociological, political, and religious questions.

Wells started his career as an author with the keenly inquiring mind of the student of science, and with that inquiring mind centered upon society. He was studying not one aspect, merely, but all aspects of society; and in early

13. Pictures of Mr. Wells' home, hockey field, and garden appear in the Bookman, Vol. XLV, pp. 586-93.

14. The Future in America, p. 259.

works, both novels and books of personal utterance, the variety of interests treated seems all-inclusive. 15

From his attitude of interested inquiry about society in general, Wells moved, in the course of ten or twelve years, to an attitude of conviction concerning certain definite problems. He reached the conviction that the only basis of true advancement for society was not outward change, but first of all a change of mind.<sup>16</sup> This conviction he applied both in novels and in avowedly socialistic treatises to the great social problems of ownership.

His arrival at a definite conviction concerning the basis of social advancement affected Wells deeply. With the need of society defined, he found in the possibility of his helping to meet that need a purpose great enough not

15. Anticipations more than any other one book shows how early in his career, Wells' mind was seething with social interests. It would be hard to find an aspect of social life dealt with in all Wells' books that is not at least mentioned in Anticipations.
16. For a clear statement of Wells' position in this matter, see New Worlds for Old, p. 265. All the books of this period are permeated by this idea.

only to keep his intellectual interest, but also to arouse within him all the fervor of his being. He gave himself to the writing of his books with a conscious consecration and a religious devotion. "In a sense Socialism is a religion, to me it is a religion", he wrote.<sup>17</sup>

Wells took his next step naturally. He endeavored to become still more fundamental, and so moved from the work of showing change of mind necessary to the solution of the great problems of ownership, to a study of the seat of that change, the inner life of the individual. With this turning of thought to the inner man came the crystallization of Wells' own religious fervor about the personality of a finite God who leads men in their social advancement, and in the following of whom comes that change of the individual mind which is the ultimate salvation of society.<sup>18</sup> The high tide of his attempts to be absolutely fundamental came for Wells in those years of general turning to fundamentals, the years of the world-war.

To judge from his latest book, Wells

17. New Worlds for Old, p. 134.

18. Aside from the novels, God the Invisible King is the most definite embodiment of Wells' religious attitude.

seems now to be about to give up his attempt to centralize other men's fervor about his God. He has found the idea of God, so potent for himself, failing to prove a rallying force for other men.<sup>19</sup> Just now he is centering his activity upon the plan for a League of Free Nations.

Wells is a significant author. In this day of social unrest he has centered his very considerable intellectual powers upon the study of social questions; he has written books both of widely ranged observations of social problems, and of suggested solutions which go much deeper than outward and immediate change. Such books, because of their revelation of present conditions, are significant for our own day and for the future student of our day; and because of the psychological character of their suggested solutions, they are significant for those of any age who are interested in men and their problems.

Wells has been characterized as intellectual, but cold. Phelps says of him, "We all admire the enormous industry and the mental vigor of H. G. Wells...."

19. See In The Fourth Year, pp. 151-2.

But we feel no more love for him than for a load of bricks." 20

It is true that Wells does not in any one book inspire a personal affection for himself. He does not give himself nor his readers the pleasure of the intimate personal revelations that endear an author to his readers. But characteristics revealed by his works as a whole, - an intensity of passion for the welfare of humanity; a faith, held almost fiercely against all that would defeat it, in the glorious, God-like destiny of mankind; a willingness to deny himself personal glorification, and utterly to sink his identity in the task of hastening the day of man's great destiny - make H. G. Wells a magnificent, even a personally lovely character.

CHAPTER II

NOVELS DEALING WITH GENERAL SOCIAL INTERESTS



CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF NOVELS DEALING WITH GENERAL  
SOCIAL INTERESTS

- 1895 Select Conversations with an Uncle  
The Time Machine  
The Wonderful Visit
- 1896 The Island of Dr. Moreau  
The Wheels of Chance
- 1897 The Invisible Man
- 1898 The War of the Worlds
- 1899 When the Sleeper Wakes
- 1900 Love and Mr. Lewisham
- 1901 The First Men in the Moon
- 1902 The Sea Lady
- 1904 The Food of the Gods
- 1905 Kipps
- 1906 In the Days of the Comet
- 1908 The War in the Air
- 1910 The History of Mr. Polly
- 1914 The World Set Free
- 1915 Bealby

### A. Concerning Theme

I shall deal with the theme of the novels under discussion in two ways: (1) I shall suggest the range of social interests treated, by means of a representative list of those interests together with the names of two or three novels in which each interest named is discussed; any interest named will not necessarily be the main interest and never the only interest of the book given as treating it, and therefore the same book may be referred to more than once in the list. (2) I shall then illustrate the discussion of social interests as treated in these novels both by means of the stories as a whole, and by means of touches aside from the main drift of the stories.

1. REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF SOCIAL INTERESTS DISCUSSED  
IN THESE NOVELS

a. Concerning the poor

(a)<sup>1</sup> Enslavement of the poor

The Time Machine

When the Sleeper Wakes

(b)<sup>1</sup> Difficulties in way of marriage for the  
poor

Love and Mr. Lewisham

In the Days of the Comet

(c)<sup>1</sup> The household servant

The Wonderful Visit

Bealby

(d)<sup>1</sup> The shop clerk

The Wheels of Chance

Kipps

b. Education

When the Sleeper Wakes

Kipps

The History of Mr. Polly

c. Politics

When the Sleeper Wakes

In the Days of the Comet

The World Set Free

## d. Militarism

The War of the WorldsThe War in the AirThe World Set Free

## e. Religion

(a)<sup>1</sup> Weakness of religious leadersThe Wheels of ChanceThe War of the WorldsLove and Mr. Lewisham(b)<sup>1</sup> Repudiation of old dogmasLove and Mr. LewishamIn the Days of the CometKipps

## f. The home

(a)<sup>1</sup> Matrimonial difficultiesLove and Mr. LewishamThe History of Mr. Polly(b)<sup>1</sup> ParenthoodLove and Mr. LewishamKipps(c)<sup>1</sup> Care of childrenWhen the Sleeper WakesThe History of Mr. Polly

## g. Possible social significance of scientific

discoveries

The Island of Dr. Moreau

The Food of the Gods

The World Set Free

h. Dreams vs. realities in life

The Wheels of Chance

Love and Mr. Lewisham

The Sea Lady

(2) ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DISCUSSION OF GENERAL  
SOCIAL INTERESTS IN THESE NOVELS

a. The novels under discussion deal with social interests by means of the story as a whole.

In The Wonderful Visit, for example, the whole story of the visit of the angel of art to this earth is told to show by the angel's reaction to our life, how our life squares with artistic principles. The angel feels mystified and depressed because of the conventions, insincerities, and petty cruelties of society; but he finds the element of self-sacrificing love entirely beautiful, more beautiful even than anything he has known in his own perfect world. It is in the little servant girl at the vicarage that he sees revealed this redeeming element. The vicarage is burning;

"There's a girl in the house, and she can't get out!"

"Went in after a fiddle", said another.

"Twas hopeless", he heard someone else say.

"I was standing near her. I heard her. Says she: 'I can get his fiddle!' I heard her just like that: 'I can get his fiddle'."

"For a moment the angel stood standing. Then in a flash he saw it all, saw this grim little world of battle and cruelty, transfigured in a splendour that outshone the angelic land, suffused suddenly and insupportably glorious with the wonderful light of love and self-sacrifice."<sup>1</sup>

The whole story of Hoopdriver in The Wheels of Chance deals with the life of the lower middle-class men; Hoopdriver embodies their pitiful handicaps, their ridiculous tendencies to pretension, their deep buried longings to be something nobler, and the saving power of imagination for them, by which they may forget their despair and move, if slowly, at least with something of zest, forward. Hoopdriver imagining himself a "bloomin' dook" or a South African diamond owner, Hoopdriver repeating his "Father chartin heaven", Hoopdriver riding up to the draper's shop with its endless folding of cretonnes and crying of "Hoopdriver Forward!" - coming back to that after his days of heroic imaginings, and coming back with a glorifying difference - that is a picture of struggling lower middle-class life. Wells has himself attempted to give us a bit of his purpose with regard to the story:

1. The Wonderful Visit, p. 238.

"If you see how a mere counter-jumper, a cad on castors, and a fool to boot, may come to feel the little insufficiencies of life, and if he has to any extent won your sympathies, my end is attained." 2

The whole story of The Sea Lady presents the allurements of "other dreams" as opposed to society's demand for common sense. The mermaid comes with her ethereal beauty and her strangely fascinating suggestions. Melville, not without a struggle, holds firmly to this world; but Chatteris finally goes with the mermaid. Miss Glendower, in contrast, capable and efficient in the ways of this world, has not need, even, to make a decision; the whisper of "better dreams" never reaches her ear. She fits here. She will remain a part of the social and political life of her day; society will have the benefit of her clear sense; but in the meantime, society is losing from its possible leaders Chatteris, the man of poetic mind, who has followed the dreams entirely.

(b) These novels deal with many social interests by means of touches aside from the main drift of the story. In general, these are qualifying touches, showing how far from possible it is

2. The Wheels of Chance, p. 317.



in a study of society to classify elements simply as good or bad, how hard it is to analyze at all certainly a society made up of human beings.

For example, Prendick, in The Island of Dr. Moreau, suffers deeply at the evidences of animal pain in the vivisectionist's laboratory; but Prendick has a confession to make, which qualifies his fine spirit of compassion:

"It was as if all the pain in the world had found a voice. Yet had I known such pain was in the next room, and had it been dumb, I believe - I have thought since - I could have stood it well enough." 3

In Love and Mr. Lewisham, Lewisham's wife,<sup>4</sup> who he has just concluded represents the greatest thing in life for him, buys him a new waste basket to use at his study. The "Schema" of his old days of dreaming and of high effort, which his wife's coming ended, chances to be the first bit of rubbish which Lewisham tosses into the basket.

Just as we are liking Buggins and feeling that shopmen in general should not be lumped off as an inferior class, we are abruptly saved by his own unfairness, from becoming too sentimental

3. The Island of Dr. Moreau, p. 68.

4. Love and Mr. Lewisham.

about the attitude of society toward men of his class:

"It won't do to give these here Blacks votes.... They're different altogether", said Buggins. "They 'aven't the sound sense of Englishmen, and they 'aven't the character. There's a sort of dishonesty about 'em - false witness and all that - of which an Englishman has no idea.... They're too timid to be honest. Too slavish. They aren't used to being free like we are, and if you gave 'em freedom they wouldn't make a proper use of it." 5

The artilleryman in The War of the Worlds seems to be vigor incarnate in his program for the world:

"We can't have any weak or silly. Life is real again, and the cumbersome and mischievous have to die....But saving the race is nothing in itself. As I say, that's only being rats. It's saving our knowledge and adding to it is the thing. ..."6

But hear this same artilleryman a little later:

"Let us knock off a bit....Oh one can't always work."7

The hero of The War of the Worlds reaches the heights in spiritual things, but the sequel is not in keeping:

"Now I prayed indeed, pleading steadfastly and sanely, face to face with the darkness of God. Strange night!

5. Kipps, p. 138.

6. The War of the Worlds, pp. 259-60.

7. Op. Cit. p. 263.

Strangest in this, that so soon as dawn had come, I, who had talked with God, crept out of the house like a rat leaving its hiding place."8

In The History of Mr. Polly, Mr.

Polly's general depression, and at the same time a good deal of the trouble of society is commented upon as follows:

"There had been a time when two people had thought Mr. Polly the most wonderful and adorable thing in the world.... And also they had fed him rather unwisely, for no one had ever troubled to teach his mother anything about the mysteries of a child's upbringing,...and by his fifth birthday the perfect rhythms of his nice new interior were already dimmed with perplexity."9

"Mr. Polly went into the National School at six and he left the private school at fourteen, and by that time his mind was in much the same state that you would be in, dear reader, if you were operated upon for appendicitis by a well meaning, boldly enterprising, but rather over-worked and under-paid butcher boy, who was superseded towards the climax of the operation by a left-handed clerk of high principle but intemperate habits, - that is to say, it was in a thorough mess." 10

8. The War of the Worlds, pp. 245-6.
9. The History of Mr. Polly, pp. 9-10.
10. Op. Cit., p. 12.

## NOVELS DEALING WITH GENERAL SOCIAL INTERESTS

## B. Concerning the Fantastic Elements.

In eleven of the books of this division the plot is based mainly upon fantastic elements.

A. CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF NOVELS EMPLOYING FANTASTIC  
ELEMENTS TOGETHER WITH AN INDICATION OF THE FANTASTIC  
ELEMENT EMPLOYED IN EACH.

- 1895 The Time Machine - Travel in Time  
The Wonderful Visit - An angelic  
visitant on this earth
- 1896 The Island of Dr. Moreau - The making  
of beasts into men.
- 1897 The Invisible Man - Use of a substance  
rendering solid matter invisible.
- 1898 The War of the Worlds - An invasion  
of this world from Mars.
- 1899 When the Sleeper Wakes - A man waking from  
a state of coma two centuries after  
his own time.
- 1901 The First Men in the Moon - A visit to  
the moon, made possible by a substance  
impervious to the action of gravity.
- 1902 The Sea Lady - A mermaid's visit on land.
- 1904 The Food of the Gods - Production, by  
means of a scientific food, of a race  
of giants.

- 1906 In the Days of the Comet - Complete change  
of the mind of the race by a comet's  
action on the atmosphere surrounding  
this earth.
- 1908 The War in the Air - Total destruction  
of civilization by a war of air ships.
- 1914 The World Set Free - Utilization of  
atomic energy.

I shall discuss the fantastic element in the novels listed above, under three heads: (1) Wells' reasons for the use of the fantastic element; (2) Wells' avoidance of artificiality in the use of the fantastic element; and (3) Wells' use of the fantastic element in relation to his treatment of social interests.

(1) There are two reasons shown by these novels for Wells' use of the fantastic element in them:

(a) Wells enjoys the contemplation of imaginary environments; he likes to play with the fantastic ideas that come to him, setting them in one perspective, then in another. Reactions of people totally unknown to each other he pictures in the coming together of the inhabitants of different worlds, (the Martians<sup>11</sup> and the angel<sup>12</sup> on earth, Cavor and Bedford in the moon<sup>13</sup>), and in the coming together of people out of different ages (the Time Traveler with the Eloi and the Morlocks<sup>14</sup>, and Graham with the men of two centuries beyond his time<sup>15</sup>). The possibility

11. The War of the Worlds
12. The Wonderful Visit
13. The First Men in the Moon
14. The Time Machine
15. When the Sleeper Wakes

of life within instead of on a planet he pictures in the tale of the Morlocks<sup>16</sup> and then more elaborately in that of the Selenites<sup>17</sup>. The possibility of new things for the world through strange chemical reactions he imagines in different ways in The Food of the Gods and In the Days of the Comet. The possibility of a great world war with succeeding disaster to society he pictures in The War of the Worlds, and of such a war with succeeding benefit he pictures in The World Set Free.

(b) Wells needs an unusual element in these stories of general social interest to cover the lack of incident. In later books where specific problems absorb the interest and where, too, a development of the author's skill in incident is manifest, such an artificial means of arousing interest is unnecessary; but in these books it is needed. The series of fights and escapes of the Time Traveler<sup>18</sup>, of Bedford and Cavor<sup>19</sup>, of Prendick<sup>20</sup>, or of the Sleeper,<sup>21</sup> for instance, would be dull outside their novel environment. The series of conversations which make up The Sea Lady would have little value as a story if one of the participators were not a mermaid. One long tale of destruction would be

16. The Time Machine
17. The First Men in the Moon
18. The Time Machine
19. The First Men in the Moon
20. The Island of Dr. Moreau
21. When the Sleeper Wakes



wearisome except for the novel machinery and the novel fighters in The War of the Worlds, and the wonderful hosts of airplanes and the astounding return to barbarism in The War in the Air.

(2) Wells avoids the effect of artificiality in his use of fantasy in two ways.

(a) By virtue of his keen interest in the wonders of the scientific laboratory, Wells enters enthusiastically into the wonders his own mind has conceived. He fully sympathizes with the Time Traveler's eagerness for a second trip in time; the shiny steel levers, full of potentiality, could not long remain unused in his hands.<sup>22</sup> He shares Redwood's mental elation at his conception of a beautiful growth curve having no pauses, and he understands Bensington's high moment when it comes to the scientist that the thing he shall make shall be the Food of the Gods.<sup>23</sup> The clear exception to Wells' enjoyment of the scientific wonders he has conceived, i.e. in the case of Moreau's

22. The Time Machine

23. The Food of the Gods

triumph in vivisection<sup>24</sup>, is a significant exception: in that case the scientific advancement brings suffering to no end, - the beast-men produced have no future of growth but only a path of retrogression before them.

(b) By virtue of his feeling of the lack of fixity in the universe Wells easily conceives of novel situations as possible and makes them appear so to his readers. He makes himself immediately at home in whatever environment he has created. There are no long sketches of wonderment; the people of 802,701 are quickly the Eloi and the Morlocks<sup>25</sup>, just as if our author had known always that they existed and had the names waiting for them. The dwellers in the moon are the Selenites and of course are ruled over by the Grand Lunar<sup>26</sup>. The giants are the Children of the Food<sup>27</sup>, and Wells accepts them at once as the hope of the race and exactly the development he has been expecting. By taking things for granted, by giving only as much explanation as cannot be refuted, and by refraining from going into provoking discussions, Wells has succeeded in making his imaginings savor sufficiently of reality to be satisfying to the average reader. There is none of the stories which

- 24. The Island of Dr. Morean
- 25. The Time Machine
- 26. The First Men in the Moon
- 27. The Food of the Gods

asks too much of the reader's imagination for pleasure, none which violates the artistic necessity of the reader's being able to enter into the tale without feeling that he has made a fool of himself.

3. Wells uses the fantastic element in these novels to render more effective his discussion of social problems. This he does in three ways.

(a) He uses fantastic situations to bring cause and effect into evident connection. For example, there is a jump of two hundred years in When the Sleeper Wakes, and the wakened Sleeper is keenly and bitterly aware that in his own age he and his fellows were unconsciously making the age in which he has wakened. This is his cry as he views the results:

"But how is it with the little lives that make up this greater life? How is it with the common lives? As it has ever been - sorrow and labour, lives cramped and unfulfilled, lives tempted by power, tempted by wealth, and gone to waste and folly." 28.

There is a jump of millions of years in The Time Machine and the Time Traveler.

28. pp. 299-300.

in the midst of the Eloi with all their impotent loveliness, and quivering with loathing at the returned beast in the Morlocks, says with a conviction impossible to speculation aside from these surroundings:

"Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and sunlight of life. And now that brother was coming back changed." 29

(b) Wells uses fantastic situations in making effective contrasts. For example, the contrast between our blundering, half-thinking life, and one of clear unbiased thought, is impressively made in the story of the great change in In the Days of the Comet. The extent of our departure from frankness in dealing with all the affairs of life is effectively expressed in the contrast between the vicar and his angelic visitant.<sup>30</sup>

(c) Wells uses fantastic situations for the purpose of giving us a detached view of some of our social weaknesses.

(a)<sup>1</sup> He shows the weaknesses to us in a truer perspective through a story of an imaginary race than would be possible through a story of our own race. For example, he presents the dangerous tendency of our practical

29. The Time Machine, pp. 136-7.

30. The Wonderful Visit.

philosophy that some men are natural slaves,  
in the picture of the results of that philosophy  
among the Selenites:

"...quite recently I came upon a number of young Selenites confined in jars from which only the forelimbs protruded, who were being compressed to become machine-minders of a special sort. The extended 'hand' is stimulated by irritants, and nourished by injection, while the rest of the body is starved. Phi-oo, unless I misunderstood him, explained that in the earlier stages these queer little creatures are apt to display signs of suffering in their various cramped situations, but they easily become indurated to their lot. That wretched looking hand sticking out of its jar seemed to have a sort of limp appeal for lost possibilities; it haunts me still, although of course it is really in the end a far more human proceeding than our earthly method of leaving children to grow into human beings and then making machines of them." 31

The Selenites' seemingly inhumane system of dealing with the unemployed brings into perspective our own cruelty in that regard:

"All that huge extent of mushroom ground was, I found, peppered with those prostrate figures sleeping under an opiate until the moon had need of them....I felt a distinctly unpleasant sensation....It simply illustrates the unthinking way in which one acquires habits of thought and feeling. To drug the worker one does not want and toss him aside, is surely far better than to expel him from his factory to wander starving in the streets."32

31. The First Men in the Moon, Cosmopolitan, Vol. XXXI, p:96  
32. Op. Cit., 98.

(b)<sup>1</sup> The use of characters who hear of our life for the first time also gives us a detached view of ourselves. War viewed through the scientific eyes of the Grand Lunar, or human enmity through the artist-eyes of the angel visitant are equally unintelligible:

"You mean to say", inquired the astonished Grand Lunar, "that you run about over the surface of your world, this world whose riches you have scarcely begun to scrape, killing one another for beasts to eat?" 33

And the saddened angel of art comes to the Vicar from his first day of viewing the little village, with the puzzling situation:

"A dog today behaved most disagreeably. And these boys, and the way in which people speak - Everyone seems anxious - willing at any rate - to give this Pain." 34

Our whole social system is unintelligible to the Angel of Art:

"And that lean, bent old man trudges after that heavy blade of iron pulled by a couple of horses while we go down to eat?" 35

The Vicar answers, for society:

"Yes. You will find it is perfectly just. Ah! Mushrooms and poached eggs! It's the social system. Pray be seated. Possibly it strikes you as unfair?" 36

33. The First Men in the Moon, Cosmopolitan, Vol. XXXI, p. 204.

34. The Wonderful Visit, p. 153.

35. Op. Cit., p. 96.

36. Op. Cit., p. 96.

d. Wells uses fantastic situations by means of the reactions they produce in individuals of our own world, to further his discussion of social interests. For instance, the inability of the ordinary man to grasp the significance for the future of change in our own time is expressed in Caterham's reaction to the situation produced by the great discovery in The Food of the Gods. The use of the food brings inconvenient changes, and therefore Caterham sees in the advocacy of its suppression a good platform on which to appeal for re-election. "Grasp the nettle firmly", makes a good politician's slogan; and that is the total amount of understanding of the possibilities of the wonderful food, expressed in Caterham's endless talking.

The effect of a misapplied science is expressed in Prendick's reaction to the work of the vivisectionist. His view of Dr. Moreau's skillful but purposeless work makes him feel no glad wonder, but only a sense of the beast in man:

"Then I look about me at my fellow men; and I go in fear, I see faces, keen and bright; others dull or dangerous; others,

unsteady, insincere, - none that have the calm authority of a reasonable soul, I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale.... I would go out into the streets to fight with my delusion, and prowling women would mew after me; furtive, craving men glance jealously at me; weary, pale workers go coughing by me with tired eyes like wounded deer dripping blood."37.

37. The Island of Dr. Morean, pp. 245-6.



## NOVELS DEALING WITH GENERAL SOCIAL INTERESTS

## C. Concerning matters of construction.

I shall consider matters of construction in the novels dealing with general social interests under three heads: (1) Incident; (2) Characters; and (3) Style.

## (1) Incident

The novels of this division are not rich in incident. The predominance of an interest in society over an interest in the story itself makes incident relatively unimportant to Wells, and lessens the effect of its absence on the reader.

As stated above, the fantastic element in certain of these novels covers the lack of incident.<sup>38</sup> The novels which do not have the fantastic element show a distinct chronological development in Wells' skill in incident.

The first of these novels, Select Conversations with an Uncle, is hardly more than a series of clever monologues on social foibles. The Wheels of Chance, in spite of its social interests, drags a little; one town after another makes the stopping place for the cyclists, and the story so far as incident is concerned might be put into a sentence. Love and Mr. Lewisham marks a considerable advancement in respect to incident. Incidents arising out of Mr. Lewisham's

38. See page 26.

life as an ambitious young assistant in a boys' school, or as a student in London and as a young husband struggling for a bare living, and the incidents arising out of his relations with Miss Heydinger and with Chaffery, the medium, all make for variety and interest. Kipps is still more satisfactory in respect to incident. There are the days in the draper's shop, the incidents of the period of cramming on social arts, the complication arising from friendships in different strata of society, and the little details of the life of the Kippses - a husband who wants to climb the social ladder, with a wife who is happy enamelling her own floors.

(2) Characters.

(a) The novels dealing with general social interests are not remarkable for clear characterization. At first, indeed, there is very little individuality about the characters; later they emerge more distinctly. Details of personal appearance are always suppressed. Features and dress receive no attention except as they occasionally suggest something more

subtle in the character. Unmeaning personal idiosyncrasies are omitted. The heroes are never conventional types of perfection nor of villainy; they are mixed characters, human and true to life. One does not carry away a distinct impression of individuals so much as a distinct impression of the social problems they suggest; consistent with this, the characterization in the books which have the fantastic element is slighter, on the whole, than in those books in which the problems must take shape entirely through individuals.

(b) The chief characters are always men. Among them, shop-men and scientists form a large company. The shopmen are sympathetically treated, and the environment of shop life is pictured as uncongenial to the normal youth. In The Wheels of Chance, Hoopdriver describes the life of draper's assistant thus:

"To be just another man's hand, as I am. To have to wear what clothes you are told, and go to church to please customers, and work - There's no other kind of men stand such hours. A drunken bricklayer's a king to it." 39.

39. The Wheels of Chance, p. 268.

Scientists are always, with the exception of Dr. Morean,<sup>40</sup> somewhat idealized. Any follower of legitimate science - the scientist who, like Cavor,<sup>41</sup> merely wants to know, or the scientist who, like Cossar,<sup>42</sup> is full of plans for the benefit of society - seem to be peculiarly interesting to Wells. His preference goes clearly to the Cossar type.

Though never occupying places of chief importance, many women figure in these novels. The sweethearts of heroes, Ethel,<sup>43</sup> Nettie,<sup>44</sup> or little Ann,<sup>45</sup> exist mainly for the reaction of their lovers to love's influence. Wells has either not cared to make his women characters particularly attractive or else he has not, in general, succeeded. The most beautiful impression of a woman in all these books is one given with fewest details - that of the wife in The War with the Worlds, whose memory brought to her husband thoughts of "the old life of hope and tender helpfulness." 46

- 40. The Island of Dr. Morean
- 41. The First Men in the Moon
- 42. The Food of the Gods
- 43. Love and Mr. Lewisham
- 44. In the Days of the Comet
- 45. Kipps
- 46. p. 282.

(C) Characters are never ridiculous or ignorant merely for Wells' enjoyment of the comic effect. Slovenly, lisping old Skinner,<sup>47</sup> brings tragedy by his character. The apparently harmless little vicar<sup>48</sup> with his philosophy of "Ut in principio, nunc est et semper," must bear largely the responsibility for the waste of all Caddles' potentialities, - Caddles, who had eaten of the Food of the Gods. Wells laughs whole heartedly, but he never laughs only; he tells the truth about the results of apparently only comic mistakes and wrongs. He has laughed with us at the Kippses, but the revelation of tragedy is only the more intense:

"What is the good of keeping up the idyllic sham and pretending that ill-educated, misdirected people 'get along very well', and that all this is harmlessly funny, nothing more? You think I'm going to write fat, silly, grinning novels about half-educated, under-trained people and keep it up all the time, that the whole thing's nothing but funny!

"As I think of them lying unhappily there in the darkness, my vision pierces the night. See what I can see! Above them, brooding over them, I tell you there is a monster.... It is matter and darkness, it is anti-soul, Stupidity. My Kippses live in its shadow.... But for that monster they might not be groping among false ideas and hurt one another so sorely

47. The Food of the Gods

48. Op. Cit.

and so stupidly; but for that, the glowing promise of childhood and youth might have had a happier fruition, thought might have awakened in them to meet the thought of the world, the quickening sunshine of literature pierced to the substance of their souls, their lives might not have been divorced, as now they are divorced forever, from the apprehension of beauty that we favoured ones are given - the vision of the Grail that makes life fine forever." 49

### 3. Style<sup>50</sup>

(a). The diction in these novels is simple and forceful. Most words used are of Anglo-Saxon origin, and such words of foreign derivation as appear are almost always words so much used that only rarely would a high school student need to refer to a dictionary. Even in the books which deal with scientific wonders the diction remains simple and untechnical - natural enough when one remembers that Wells takes his novel situations for granted instead of trying to give a scientifically convincing explanation.<sup>51</sup> The words are forceful both because of their simplicity and because of their concreteness. Abstract words are infrequent, and when used are generally followed up by concrete imagery. Adjectives

49. Kipps, pp. 440-1.

50. Some details of style mentioned here, are illustrated in the section on style in Chap. III.

51. See p. 28.

and verbs show the author's constant projection of himself into all he speaks of. This use of concrete terms and self-projection is so consistent through even the earlier novels that it is almost certainly not the result of an effort for a certain effect, but rather the result of Wells' way of seeing things.

Sentence forms are varied, but a fairly short sentence is most frequent. Even when a longer sentence is used, there is never any difficulty about the syntax. Parallelism is the most noticeable of the devices in Wells' sentence structure, though it is evident from the variety of sentences used that Wells does not work with any particular device in mind. Sentences are often joined by conjunctions, giving the effect of the author's thinking as he writes, instead of his having thought out exactly what he wants to say before. This effect is intensified by the occasional use of brief phrases punctuated as sentences, and following complete sentences as if they were a bit of thought to be added on. Were there no deliberate intention to be meditative in style and to put the reader in the position of a meditator rather than that of a mere recipient



of the author's finished thought, it would be simple enough for Wells to gather up all these loose phrases and incorporate them in the complete sentence which they follow as after-thoughts.

A certain disinclination to make what he says appear to be all there is to say on a subject is evident from the first in Wells' novels. In the earlier novels it is formally indicated by the frequent use of dashes. Later, beginning about the time of the author's more definite interest in analysis of thought,<sup>52</sup> asterisks come into use, and their use increases as the author's interest in thought increases.

(b) These novels show Wells' skill in giving strongly whatever impression he desires. Sometimes he does this by a massing of details; it is by this method, for instance, that he expresses all the disorder, selfishness, and fear of the multitudes in the flight from London, in The War of the Worlds.<sup>53</sup> In other instances Wells gives in a few suggestive words an impression quite as vivid:

"The green hawks of change spread their darkling wings above their last stumbling

52. See p. 45.

53. pp. 158-161.

paces. So they fell. And awoke - lovers together in a morning of Paradise. Who can tell how bright the sunshine was to them, how fair the flowers, how sweet the singing of the birds."<sup>54</sup>

Pictures swiftly but impressively drawn sometimes embody the essentials of a whole tale, as, for instance, the following picture embodies the change which comes over the world as the comet passes:

"It is the memory of woman's very beautiful face and tear-bright eyes who went by me without speaking, rapt in some sweet purpose....Whither this woman went I do not know, nor whence she came; I never saw her again, and only her face, glowing with that new and luminous resolve, stands out for me."<sup>55</sup>

(c) Dramatic effects are frequent in these novels. There is Ogilvy,<sup>56</sup> all excitement in his efforts to secure a safe egress from their cylinder for the Martians, stricken down with the first flash of their remorseless heat ray. The moment when the tall fighting machines of the Martians are seen, while the mind is yet filled with all the tumult and horror they have wrought, towering at last inactive in the dusk,<sup>57</sup> or when the angel of art<sup>58</sup> is heard drawing in this world tones

54. In the Days of the Comet, Cosmopolitan, Vol. XLI, p. 433.  
 55. Op. Cit., p. 326.  
 56. The War of the Worlds  
 57. Op. Cit.  
 58. The Wonderful Visit

of sorrow where before he had known only the music of raptured delight, are moments one feels again and again after the book is closed.

(d) Satire is also frequent - extremely frequent. One illustration will serve.

"Graham learnt that University Extension still existed in a modified form. 'There is a certain type of girl, for example,' said the Surveyor-General, dilating with a sense of his usefulness, 'with a perfect passion for severe studies - when they are not too difficult, you know. We cater to them by the thousand. At this moment,' he said with a Napoleonic touch, - 'nearly five hundred phonographs are lecturing in different parts of London on the influence exercised by Plato and Swift on the love affairs of Shelley, Hazlitt, and Burns.'"<sup>59</sup>

(e) To be told that these books contain passages of imagination and beauty is not necessary after having read only the few quotations here given, with no thought of that point in their selection.

(f) Within these works there is a growing tendency to analysis, in Wells' style. More and more he is searching the minds of his characters. This searching of thought fits in better with the more problematical novels of the second class, but even in these novels which do not deal with specific problems, Wells' inquiring state of mind is such that he cannot please the reader who "likes everything in hard, heavy lines,

59. When the Sleeper Wakes, p. 183.

black and white, yes and no, because he does not understand how much there is that cannot be presented at all in that way... .Mentally he seems to be built upon an invincible assumption that the Spirit of Creation cannot count beyond two, he deals only in alternatives.... I do not see why I should always pander to the vulgar appetite for stark stories."60

60. A Modern Utopia, A Note to the Reader, pp. VII-VIII.

CHAPTER III

NOVELS DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF NOVELS DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

- 1909 Tono-Bungay  
Ann Veronica
- 1911 The New Machiavelli
- 1912 Marriage
- 1913 The Passionate Friends
- 1914 The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman
- 1915 The Research Magnificent
- 1916 Mr. Britling Sees It Through
- 1917 The Soul of a Bishop
- 1918 Joan and Peter

## NOVELS DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

## A. Concerning Theme

Within the group of novels which deal with specific problems there are two classes according to theme, one class comprised of novels which deal with problems of ownership, and the other class comprised of novels which deal with the problems of the inner life of individuals. It so happens that the division is chronological, but it is not so sharp as the outline must make it appear. In books of the first class, Marriage and The Research Magnificent, for instance, the theme of the individual inner life is important; and in all the books of the second class, problems of ownership are suggested and treated more or less fully.

## NOVELS DEALING WITH PROBLEMS OF OWNERSHIP

The chronological list of novels dealing with problems of ownership follows:

- 1909 Tono-Bungay  
Ann Veronica
- 1911 The New Machiavelli
- 1912 Marriage
- 1913 The Passionate Friends
- 1914 The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman
- 1915 The Research Magnificent



The novels dealing with problems of ownership center on two specific themes: viz. ownership of property, and ownership of women.<sup>1</sup>

#### Ownership of Property

The novels under discussion deal with the ownership of property through two main theses.

(1) A proper adjustment of social difficulties arising from property is not to be attained by a fight of poor against rich. This the stories make clear in three ways:

(a) The rich are presented as human, and unconscious of wrong. Men who make vast sums of money figure as characters no more despicable than any other man who exercises his native powers in his work. Ponderevo with his huge farce, in Tono-Bungay, is only a child playing Napoleon. He is even a wholly likeable and, in the end, a pathetic figure, for he is very full of boyish enthusiasm over his enterprise, and he loses very much of the finest in his life in the course of his pursuit of wealth. And after all he does not really cheat the world.

1. For explanation of the use of this term see p.56.

He helps "make trade", and he gives medicine seekers a harmless enough production, with a bracing name, - two services the social order in which he lives strongly encourages. Sir Isaac Harman, unattractive character that he is, has worked untiringly and with "something of an artist's passion"<sup>2</sup> in making his business.

Trafford, in Marriage, pressed by the needs of his family and invited by economic conditions to make a fortune in business, is before his business venture the most enthusiastic of scientists, and after it, a high type of socialist. This does not mean that the rich bear no blame for social conditions;<sup>3</sup> they share the blame, but they are not, as a class, peculiarly evil.

(b) Militant socialists are presented as lacking a definite and reasoned program. Ann Veronica is most detailed on this point. The Goopes, with their carved wood inscription

"Do It Now"<sup>4</sup>

apparently cannot say just what they want done, though it is clear that they do want it done without delay. Ann Veronica feels and is inspired by the impulse for change and the desire for reconstruction manifest in

2. The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman, p. 108.

3. For example, Sir Isaac and Chasterson are declared to be in relation to their employees, "willfully and offensively stupid". The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman, p.225.

4. Ann Veronica, p. 144.

the meetings of the Goopes circle; she is unaffected in her interest by the fact that the circle is composed of "plain people", or faded people, or tired-looking people";<sup>5</sup> But she cannot ignore the fact that they argue without clearness and consistency, and that they are screaming and striking at undefined wrongs instead of working with effective dignity toward a comprehensive end.

(c) The most effective socialists are not among the clamorous poor, and their activity does not include a campaign against the rich as a class. Remington in The New Machiavelli, Trafford in Marriage, Stratton in The Passionate Friends, and Benham in The Research Magnificent are all men of education and of social standing. The Research Magnificent undertakes to show why this is so: Benham comes to the belief that the repudiation of kings can be feasible only as there are kingly individuals in society to take their place. Prothero, the lower class man, repudiates existing conventions and law, and plunges into excesses of freedom that work his own ruin; Benham, the aristocrat, repudiates existing convention and law, and restrains himself the more, that he may be true to his task of making a higher order

5. Ann Veronica, p. 153.

for humanity.

(2) A proper adjustment of social difficulties arising from property is to be attained only gradually, through the elevation of the general intelligence. This the stories make clear in two ways.

(a) Socialists who expect to make immediate sweeping changes are invariably disappointed. They are disappointed by their own inability to do more than barely touch the great mass of wrongs. Remington<sup>6</sup> imagines that his seat in Parliament will prove a place of power through which to reform amazingly; he finds it instead a place of limitations from which to learn the utter hopelessness of a program of sweeping change. Lady Harman<sup>7</sup> fancies that her hostels for the tea-room girls will prove the solution of the working-girl problem; instead they furnish her a point of contact with the working girls through which she begins to see the unlimited ramifications of that problem. Benham<sup>8</sup>, when he runs in front of the soldiers' guns at Johannesburg in an impulsive attempt to stop a wrong, the seat of which is not at all in the present

6. The New Machiavelli.
7. The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman.
8. The Research Magnificent.

"Foolery", loses his own life and deprives the world of the service he has carefully fitted himself to render.

Trafford feels that impulse for immediate reform is not only futile but even vicious.

"...We want to understand how people react upon one another to produce social consequences, and you ask us to put it at once into a draft bill for the reform of something or other. All our world over there is full of the confusion and wreckage of premature realizations. There's no real faith in thought and knowledge yet. Old necessity has driven men so hard that they still rush with a wild urgency though she goads no more. Greed and hate, and if, indeed we seem to have a moment's breathing space, then the Gawdsaker tramples us under..... He's the person who gets excited by any deliberate discussion and gets up wringing his hands and screaming, 'For Gawd's sake, let's do something now!'.... Oh! 'Gawdsaking' is the curse of all progress, the hectic consumption that kills a thousand good beginnings."<sup>9</sup>

(b) Socialists expecting sweeping changes are disappointed by the unreadiness of the masses for great reforms. The true socialist in each of the books under discussion wants to bring a high order into society, to redeem it from its muddle of "separated, undisciplined little people, all obstinately and ignorantly doing things jarringly, each one in his own way."<sup>10</sup> But it is just such a muddle of little people that Ann Veronica<sup>11</sup>,

9. Marriage, p. 507.

10. The New Machiavelli, Forum, Vol. XLIV, p. 375.

11. Ann Veronica.

Remington,<sup>12</sup> and Lady Harman<sup>13</sup> meet in the crowds whom they had supposed ready to help. Remington finds that he cannot follow the will of the people who gave him his seat in Parliament if he is truly to serve the people themselves:

"We Liberals know as a matter of fact - nowadays everyone knows - that the monster that brought us into power has, among other deficiencies, no head."<sup>14</sup>

(b) The effective socialists resort to campaigns of education. Trafford<sup>15</sup> and Remington<sup>16</sup> turn to writing, and Benham<sup>17</sup> would have done that had he lived. Stratton<sup>18</sup> gives himself to the work of publishing, endeavoring to put the best books within the reach of everyone. Remington formulates the idea back of this educational campaign as follows:

"You see, I began in my teens by wanting to plan and build cities and harbors for mankind; I ended in the middle thirties by desiring only to serve and increase a general process of thought, a process fearless, critical, real-spirited, that would in its own time give cities, harbors, air, happiness, everything at a scale and quality and in a light altogether beyond the match-striking

12. The New Machiavelli.
13. The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman.
14. The New Machiavelli. Forum, Vol. XLV, p. 109.
15. Marriage.
16. The New Machiavelli.
17. The Research Magnificent.
18. The Passionate Friends.

imaginations of a contemporary mind."19

#### Ownership of Women

The problem of ownership of women is the dominant problem in all of the books dealing with problems of ownership, with the exception of Tono-Bungay and The Research Magnificent. In both of these it is of almost equal importance with the problem of ownership of property. I use the term "ownership of women", taken from Wells' New Worlds for Old, to express all that these novels represent as wrong in the relation of women to their world. The woman problems are problems of ownership in two ways, - either women may be treated by men as possessions, or women may look upon themselves as possessions. Either a man may feel that a woman is filling her place in the world by merely giving herself to him, or a woman may feel that she is filling her place and receiving her sustenance fairly by carrying out the formal requirements of wifehood.

These novels deal with the problem of the ownership of women in four ways: (1) by presenting ownership of women as an evil; (2) by

19. The New Machiavelli. Forum, V. XLV. pp. 234-235.

showing that ownership of women is not to be corrected by an antagonistic attitude of women toward men; (3) by showing that ownership of women is to be corrected by men's recognition of women as citizens and by women's recognition of themselves as citizens; and (4) by picturing ideal relations, devoid of the element of ownership, as possible between men and women.

(1) These novels present ownership of women as an evil (a) for men. This comes out in the life of characters who themselves wish to find fellowship and understanding in their wives, and who find, instead, a formal fulfillment of a wife's obligations, with an expectation of numerous attentions in return. The experiences of Trafford in Marriage and of Benham in The Research Magnificent are typical. Trafford, an enthusiastic young scientist, loves and marries Marjorie Pope. He regards her as in every way his equal and has no thought of any other life than that of fellowship and of mutual responsibility. Marjorie, on the contrary, is true to the old tradition of ownership. She has made herself Trafford's possession; she expects in return a position in society and his supreme attention. Her expectation of the former leads



her to disregard the fact that scientific research must suffer if means for social display are to be had; her expectation of the latter causes her to resent an interest that crowds out her image from Trafford's mind, and it makes tears and querulousness and a sense of personal tragedy seem to her justifiable when Trafford can stay beyond hours in his laboratory, forgetting that she waits at home. This attitude, on Marjorie's part comes near to proving the ruin of Trafford's life, and is, indeed, the ruin of his scientific career.

Sir Isaac Harman exemplifies the evil to men of the tradition of ownership of women, in another way. In his case it is he who is at fault. Sir Isaac conceives that Lady Harman's duty consists altogether in being a wife to him. So long as she centers herself upon the performance of that one duty, he is ready to give her rich gifts, an elegant home, beautiful clothes, and abundant leisure, and is ready - all too ready - to take from her every responsibility and worry incident to life beyond their home. In making his wife merely his possession and the recipient of his attentions, he

loses all the fine enlargements of spirit that a real fellowship with her could give. He dies, a pinched, hard, pitifully grasping little man, while Mr. Brumley, with no right of possession whatever in Lady Harman, reaps the rich returns of a broadened interest in society that her fellowship must bring to anyone who enjoys it.

These novels present ownership of women as an evil (b) for women. Ann Veronica, in the book of that name, and Marion, in Tono-Bungay, suffer evil effects, the former from her father's conception of her as a possession and the latter from her own conception of herself as a possession.

Ann Veronica is a young woman eager for knowledge and full of interested questionings concerning the world, from which her father and her lover, Mr. Manning wish to shield her. Her father so limits her chance for contact with the world and so persistently refuses to regard her except as a girl who must be restrained from all that would unfit her for conventional wifehood, and her lover so insists upon regarding her as a thing for worship and not for thought, that she breaks utterly away from them and comes near to the destruction of her

possibilities through anarchism, in her reaction against conventionality.

Marion is the cause of her own suffering. George Ponderevo would have made her his companion, but she can understand no relation with him save that of conventional wife. She lets him sacrifice his aspirations and degrade himself by a mere money-making swindle to obtain the price she has put on herself. Then she marries him and enjoys the place she has won in society thereby. Her one responsibility is met when she makes herself Ponderevo's wife. She loses, by her attitude, the love of her husband and all the broadening experience and all the opportunity for responsible service that would have been hers if marriage had meant to her an equal joining of her life to another, instead of a purchase of position by allowing a husband's ownership.

The ownership of women is declared in these stories to be an evil (c) with regard to children. Where the husband insists upon a relation of ownership, the highest motherhood is presented as impossible. Lady Mary Justin in The Passionate Friends and Lady Harman in The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman both lack the deep love for their children

that is possible to a woman like Ann Veronica, whose child is the result of a mutual devotion on the part of Capes and herself to the purpose of shaping together a new life.

When it is the woman who regards herself as a possession, she is represented as likely to evade the responsibility of children altogether. Marion, in Tono-Bungay, has given what she must for her position; she has no sense of personal responsibility nor any purpose to make her want to give more.

(2) The novels under discussion hold out no hope for the correction of the tradition of ownership of women by an antagonistic attitude of women toward men. This comes out mainly in a negative way, though Miss Miniver and the suffragettes in Ann Veronica illustrate positively the futility of antagonism. The raid on the House of Commons, by participation in which Ann Veronica succeeds in getting herself into prison for a month, is characterized and actually presented as "wild burlesque".<sup>20</sup> Miss Miniver who says; "We do not want the men,...we do not want them with their sneers and loud laughter,

20. Ann Veronica, p. 243.

Empty, silly, coarse brutes.";<sup>21</sup> can only flounder in recriminations and impulsive activities to no end; While Ann Veronica, who says, "Don't you want the love of men?.... I haven't a scrap of this sort of aversion,"<sup>22</sup> eventually constructs an entirely ideal relationship with the man she loves.

(3) These novels present a two-fold solution of the evil of ownership of women: (a) men need to recognize women as citizens, and (b) women need to recognize themselves as such. This recognition of women as citizens is not so small a thing as giving them suffrage or economic independence. It may include those things, but it is more comprehensive. It is a recognition of the individual responsibility of women to plan and think and act for themselves and for the good of society, just as binding as the responsibility of men to do those things.

(a) Ann Veronica<sup>23</sup> represents the woman who feels strongly her own responsibility and is able to bring the man she loves to her view point.

21. Ann Veronica, p. 186.

22. Op. Cit., p. 185-6.

23. Op. Cit.

Capes at first determines not to marry her because his past life would make the marriage unconventional. He feels it would be unfair to her. She convinces him of her own right to override conventions, to refuse the socially approved, loveless alliance that Mr. Manning offers her, and to put her life where it will count most, whatever her father and aunt, with their ideas of ownership of women, may think. She convinces Capes that he wrongs her, only when he denies her the right to decide for herself.

(b) Trafford<sup>24</sup> represents the husband who recognizes woman's true sphere and is able to make a conventional wife into a mate. Years of endeavor and disappointment and all but despair precede the happy culmination. At length, by a sojourn amidst the loneliness and dangers of a primitive country, where both work and suffer together for their daily subsistence, Trafford succeeds in making Marjorie know that she is not his dependent and possession, but his companion. He teaches her that her existence is not the simple one of being faithful to her marriage vows and reaping the rewards, but the complex one of an individual who must think and order

life for herself, and together with him for them both, and for whomever they influence. Marjorie is at last able to understand, when Trafford says:

"And you with me Marjorie - you with me! Everything I write I want you to read and think about. I want you to read as I read.... Old Madge, ... you and I have got to march together.... Into this Labrador and into all the wild and desolate places of thought and desire, if men come you women have to come too - and bring the race with you." 25

(4) These novels picture ideal relations between men and women as rare but possible..

(a) The existence of altogether ideal relationships between men and women is rare, because, besides the prevalent tradition of ownership of women, there are other hindrances to such ideality. For example, (a)<sup>1</sup>if the relationship lacks openness, no amount of love and understanding can make it ideal. Lady Mary Christian, in The Passionate Friends, is the true mate to Stratton, and she attempts to make her relationship with him ideal even after her marriage to Justin. The relationship breaks down entirely. The furtiveness of the indulgence of love destroys the best elements in their fellowship. The same thing

is true in the case of Beatrice Normandy and Ponderevo in Tono-Bungay. And in both cases the fine possibilities of the lives of the woman seem wasted. Neither can do her work well, Lady Mary hampered by her alliance to Justin, and Beatrice by hers to Carnaby; and neither can become the mother of her true lover's children. The only thing that could have redeemed the relationship was marriage, in spite of difficulties. Capes understood the hopelessness of any attempt to establish satisfactory relations between himself and Ann Veronica on any but an open basis. "You can't imagine...what a beastly thing a furtive love affair can be"<sup>26</sup>, he says; and until he is ready to brave the difficulties and take Ann Veronica openly to be his wife, he stays by his resolution that there shall be nothing to hide.

(b)<sup>1</sup> If the relationship lacks passionate love it is not ideal. Remington and Margaret in The New Machiavelli marry because of a common social interest. There is satisfaction in working together for a time; but the lack of keen delight in each other keeps them a little apart, and as Remington

26. Ann Veronica, p. 324.



departs from those views upon which he and Margaret first united, he cannot take her with him. She cannot understand and enter into his changes, and sees in them deflections from the man she married him for. In the end their relation is utterly broken down, and a love which combines the fervor and the intellectual sympathy necessary for truest understanding, crowds Margaret out of Remington's life.

(c)<sup>1</sup> If the relationship lacks seriousness for either the man or the woman, it fails. Benham and Amanda, in The Research Magnificent, marry with an apparently satisfactory relationship. They love with all the fervor possible to youth, and they share interests and desires. But Amanda does not keep the high seriousness of Benham in their interests. She travels with him to study the world, but to her the trip is more of a sight-seeing, honey-moon expedition than a study. When he becomes absorbed in contemplation, she likes to play with her power to attract him from his thought to herself. She does understand him when she will; she even sees the necessity of his making his second tour of study unaccompanied by her; and she sends

him away in a fine glow of devotion to the cause for which he is giving himself, while she stays at home to become the mother of his child. But the seriousness of the thing irks her; she is soon ready to wish for his return even with his purpose unaccomplished, and eventually, denied that, she turns for companionship to a man who has nothing better to do than to give her the attention she craves.

(b) With these novels picturing as they do so many fatal possibilities, it is natural that they should afford few examples of entirely ideal relationship. The possibility of such ideal relationship is implied, however, in the story of every failure; and in two cases it is represented as, in all essentials, realized. The cases are those of Ann Veronica and Capes,<sup>27</sup> and of Marjorie and Trafford.<sup>28</sup> Ann Veronica and Capes start life together right; and with our final view of them, after four years of married life, they are on the same terms of ideal understanding and love, and the work to which they have committed themselves is prospering. The fact that they have had to marry

27. Ann Veronica

28. Marriage

outside of social sanction is unfortunate, but that has not proved an essential factor in their relationship.

Trafford and Marjorie come into an entirely ideal relationship only after years together - years, however, in which there has always been love and a struggle toward complete understanding. Even when the ideal relationship is attained, there is one slight circumstance that shows they will have to struggle to keep it. Marjorie has just bade adieu to all her old interest in things. She has turned herself from the "flesh-pots" to a life of thought and social effort with her husband; she is ready to put all her powers with his into the making of his socialistic books. But in that moment she "saw minutely and distantly, and yet as clearly and brightly as if she looked into a concave mirror, that tall and dignified study, a very high room indeed, with a man writing before a fine, long-curtained window and a great lump of rich-glowing Labradorite upon his desk before him holding together an accumulation of written sheets... She knew exactly the shop in Oxford Street where the stuff for the curtains might be obtained." <sup>29</sup>

29. Marriage, p. 509.

NOVELS DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMS OF THE INNER  
LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The chronological list of novels  
dealing with the problems of the inner life  
of the individual follows:

1916 Mr. Britling Sees It Through

1917 The Soul of a Bishop

1918 Joan and Peter

The novels dealing with the problems of the inner life of the individual treat those problems in two ways: (1) by stressing the importance of the inner life; and (2) by studying the element of religion in it.

(1) These novels stress the importance of the inner life of the individual (a) by making it the chief interest in the story. There are other important interests, it is true. In all these books, particularly in Mr. Britling Sees It Through and in Joan and Peter, the world war has large place. The state of society at the outset of the war, England's blunders and delays, her offering of fine young life, her tragedy of bereavement, are topics of great interest; but these topics are used in subordination to the ruling theme. Cultured, wholesome English life, as at Matching's Easy,<sup>30</sup> and gay, frivolous English life, as in London,<sup>31</sup> at the outset of the war, are vividly pictured; but the chief importance of both pictures so far as the books are concerned

30. Mr. Britling Sees It Through.

31. Joan and Peter.

lies in their forming a background for the revelation of the hearts of the characters. Through the stress of grief at the death of Hugh Britling, the author hastens on to the effect in Mr. Britling's life;<sup>32</sup> he makes the strained ecclesiastical and domestic relations in "The Soul of a Bishop secondary to the problem of Scrope's religious life; and he studies education in Joan and Peter from the standpoint, not of facts to be learned, but of inner life to be developed in the student.

(b) These novels stress the importance of the inner life by representing the chief crises in the lives of characters as crises of the inner life. The great moment in the life of Letty, in Mr. Britling Sees It Through, comes through her change of heart, not through the return of her lost husband:

"She was possessed by a sense of ending and beginning, as though a page had turned over in her life and everything was new....

"And so in the reaction of her emotions, Letty, who had gone out with her head full of murder and revenge, came back through the sunset thinking of pity, of the thousand kindnesses and tenderesses of Teddy that were, after all, perhaps only an intimation of the limitless kindnesses and tenderesses of God." 33

32. Mr. Britling Sees It Through.

33. pp. 409;410.

The chief crisis in Mr. Brittling's life is a crisis of the inner life:

"It was as if he had been groping all this time in the darkness, thinking himself alone amidst rocks and pitfalls and pitiless things, and suddenly a hand, a firm strong hand, had touched his own. And a voice within him bade him be of good courage. There was no magic trickery in that moment, he was still weak and weary, a discouraged rhetorician, a good intention ill-equipped; but he was no longer lonely and wretched, no longer in the same world with despair. God was beside him and within him and about him.... It was the crucial moment of Mr. Brittling's life. It was a thing as light as the passing of a cloud on an April morning; it was a thing as great as the first day of creation." 34

The crisis in the life of Scrope in The Soul of a Bishop is similar:

"He sat very still in the sunset peace, with his eyes upon the still mirror of the waters. The question seemed to fill the whole scene, to wait, even as the water and sky and the windless trees were waiting...

"And then by imperceptible degrees there grew in Scrope's mind the persuasion that he was in the presence of the living God. This time there was no vision of angels nor stars, no snapping of bow-strings, no throbbing of the heart nor change of scene, no magic and melodramatic drawing back of the curtain from the mysteries; the water and the bridge, the ragged black trees, and a distant boat that broke the silvery calm with an arrow of black ripples, all these things were still before him, But God was there too. God was everywhere about him. This persuasion was over him and about him; a dome of protection, a power in his nerves,

34. Mr. Brittling Sees It Through, pp. 438-9.

a peace in his heart. It was an exalting beauty; it was a perfected conviction....This indeed was the coming of God, the real coming of God. For the first time Scrope was absolutely sure that for the rest of life he would possess God. Everything that had so perplexed him seemed to be clear now, and his troubles lay at the foot of this last complete realization like a litter of dust and leaves in the foreground of a sunlit, snowy mountain range." 35

(c) These novels stress the importance of the inner life of the individual by making the solution of its problems lead toward a solution of all society's problems. It is in the solution of the problems of his inner life that the individual finds his inspiration for making the world a better place. From Mr. Britling's emotional experience comes this promise of good to society: "... Never had he felt so invincible a conviction that the Spirit of God was in him, and that it fell to him to take some part in the establishment of a new order of living upon the earth." 36

There is, likewise, this promise from Scrope:

"Always now it shall be the truth as near as I can put it. Always now it shall be

35. The Soul of a Bishop, pp. 297-8.

36. Mr. Britling Sees It Through, p. 437.



the service of the common weal as well as I can do it. I will live for the ending of all false kingship and priestcraft, for the eternal growth of the spirit of man." 37

(d) These novels stress the importance of the inner life by the formulation of the idea of that importance in the thought of characters who have come to feel it. For example, Oswald thinks to himself as follows:

"The essential self of him was not this thing that spun about in life, that felt and reflected the world, that missed so acutely the two dear other bubbles that had circled about him so long and that had now left him to eddy in his backwater while they hurried off into the midstream of life. His essential self, the self that mused now, that had struggled up through the egotisms of youth to this present predominance, was something deeper and tougher and more real than desire, than excitement, than pleasure or pain." 38

Mr. Britling says:

"Religion is the first thing and the last thing, and until a man has found God and been found by God, he begins at no beginnings, he works to no end. He may have his friendships, his partial loyalties, his scraps of honour. But all these things fall into place and life falls into place only with God." 39

2. These novels make an emotional or religious experience the basis of the solution of the problems of the inner life. This experience

37. The Soul of a Bishop, p. 336.

38. Joan and Peter, p. 592.

39. Mr. Britling Sees It Through, p. 442.

is nothing more nor less than the coming of the individual into harmony with an undefined purpose working through society. According to these novels religion, for so it is most convenient and most in accord with Well's own terms to speak of all that makes up this emotional experience, is (a) individualistic, (b) non-theological, and (c) purpose-informing.

(a) These novels represent religion as a matter of the individual life and hence something to be attained for each man by himself. Any knowledge of God that counts is a personal, intimate knowledge, never an accepted theory. When Mr. Britling comes at last to the solution of his problems in the knowledge of God, it is in just such a personal, intimate knowledge:

"But hitherto God had been for him a thing of the intelligence, a theory, a report, something told about but not realized.... Mr. Britling's thinking about God hitherto had been like some one who has found an empty house, very beautiful and pleasant, full of the promise of a fine personality. And then as the discoverer makes his lonely, curious explorations, he hears downstairs, dear and friendly, the voice of the Master coming in." 40

The Bishop realizes, after his own

great experience, the necessity of an individual religion. He, who has been priest to the multitudes before, is disappointed now at his family's readiness to accept his religion as theirs, and disconcerted at the temptation to a renewal of priesthood such readiness puts in his way:

"He was dissatisfied with this unconditional agreement. Why could not his wife meet God as he had met God? Why must Miriam put the fantastic question - as though it was not for her to decide: 'Are we still Christians?' And pursuing this thought, why couldn't Lady Sunderbund set up in religion for herself without going about the world seeking for a priest and prophet. Were women Undines who must get their souls from mortal men? And who was it tempted men to set themselves up as priests? It was the wife, the disciple, the lover, who was the last, the most fatal pitfall on the way to God." 41

The Bishop gives up his place in the church and finally even the plan to start a chapel of his own, because of his realization of the need of individualistic rather than specialized religion:

"Any chapel was impossible. It is just this specialization that has been the trouble with religion. It is just this tendency to make it the business of a special sort of man, in a special sort of building, on a special day - Every man, every building, every day belongs equally to God." 42

In Joan and Peter, it is easier for

41. The Soul of a Bishop, p. 339.

42. Op. Cit., p. 329.

Peter, who has never had a specialized religion thrust upon him, to come to a personal conviction of God's nearness than for Oswald, to whom the name of God is a name "battered out of all value and meaning." 43

(b) Because religion is intimate and individual, theology has nothing to do with the essence of it. This the novels bring out in two ways, (a)<sup>1</sup> by the disavowal of the importance of theology by the characters of truest religious experience, and (b)<sup>1</sup> by the disagreement of the results when these characters try to formulate their beliefs.

(a)<sup>1</sup> When Mr. Britling discourses to Letty of what God means for the world, she brings up the problem of the existence of evil:

"But he must let these things happen. Or why do they happen?"

"No", said Mr. Britling, "It is the theologians who must answer that. They have been extravagant about God. They have had silly absolute ideas.....But it's your teachers and catechisms have set you against God."<sup>44</sup>

Bishop Scrope finds concern about theological perplexities falling from him when God becomes real to him:

43. Joan and Peter, p. 593.

44. Mr. Britling Sees It Through, p. 406.

"'God is God', he whispered to himself, and the phrase seemed to him the discovery of a sufficient creed." 45

He finds himself not aided but hampered by theology when he considers giving his message to others.

"...one cannot run through the world crying, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand'. Men's minds were still so filled with old theological ideas that for the most part they would understand by that only a fantasy of some great coming of angels and fiery chariots and judgments, and hardly a soul but would doubt one's sanity and turn sorrowfully away." 46

In Joan and Peter, when Joan wants Peter to explain his new faith to her, to tell her whether his God in the Heart and God in the Universe are one, he answers:

"We don't know. All the waste and muddle in religion is due to people arguing and asserting that they are the same, that they are different but related, or that they are different but opposed. And so on and so on. How can we know? What need is there to know? In view of the little jobs we are doing. Let us leave it at that." 47

(b)<sup>1</sup> It is a significant implication of the non-essential nature of theology that no two characters in these books make the same formulation of their apparently equally valid religious experiences. Mr. Britling talks of his

45. The Soul of a Bishop, p. 301.

46. Op. Cit., p. 305.

47. Joan and Peter, p. 580.

finite God who is not the ruler of the universe; Scrope's God is only God, our Invisible King, but otherwise unknown to us so long as we are men; Peter visualizes his God and thinks of him as the "Old Experimenter"; and Oswald cannot find a name, not even a metaphor to express his belief; he can only think to himself of the Nameless, the Incomprehensible.

(c) These novels present the religious experience as consistently purpose-informing. The moment a man gets into close touch and harmony with that which gives purpose to the world, that moment he is eager to find his own task in the working out of the purpose, and to put his soul and body into its performance. Boredom and drifting are over; living begins in splendid earnest.

Mr. Britling, shaken by grief for the loss of Hugh and by the sense of his own futility, grasps gladly at the new purpose:

"Of course I must write about Him. I must tell all my world of Him. And before the coming of the true King, the inevitable King, the King who is present whenever just men foregather, this blood-stained rubbish of the ancient world, these puny kings and tawdry emperors, these wily politicians and artful lawgivers, these men who claim and grab and trick and compel, these war makers and oppressors, will presently shrivel and pass - like paper thrust into a flame." 48.

48. Mr. Britling Sees It Through, p. 442.

Scrope's thoughts turn to purpose as soon as God's reality becomes entirely clear to him. He is thinking of some service to render:

"To live and serve God's kingdom on earth, to help to bring it about, to propagate the idea of it, to establish the method of it, to incorporate all that one made and all that one did into its growing reality, was the only possible life that could be lived, once that God was known.

"He sat with hands gripping his knees, as if he were holding on to his idea. 'And now for my part', he whispered, brows knit, 'Now for my part.'" 49.

Peter, who has tasted of the gayest of Cambridge life and who has felt his early years wasting, talks in a new strain after his religious experience:

"I have been in the world now, Nobby, for five-and-twenty years, and I am only beginning to suspect the wonder and beauty of the things we men might know and do. If only we could get our eyes and hands free of the old inheritance. What has mankind done yet to boast about? I despise human history - because I believe in God. Not the God you don't approve of, Nobby, but in my Old Experimenter, whom I confess I don't begin to understand, and in the far-off eternal scheme he hides from us and which he means us to develop age by age. Oh! I don't understand him, I don't begin to explain him; he's just a figure for what I feel is reality. But he is right, he is wonderful. And instead of just muddling about over the surface of his universe, we have to get into the understanding of it to the very limits of our ability, to live our utmost and do the intensest best we can." 50.

49. The Soul of a Bishop, p. 304.

50. Joan and Peter, p. 576.

Oswald does not find a definite purpose in his religion, but he does find the motivating power for whatever achievement may be before him:

".... it was by this, by this Nameless, this Incomprehensible, that he lived and was upheld. It ~~did~~ so uphold him that he could go on, he knew, though happiness were denied him, though defeat and death stared him in the face." 51



## NOVELS DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

## B. Concerning Matters of Construction

I shall consider matters of construction in the novels dealing with specific problems under three heads: (1) Incident, (2) Characters, (3) Style.

(1) Incident in the novels dealing with specific problems is abundant. There is none of the lack<sup>of</sup> of the device for covering lack of incident that is characteristic of the novels previously discussed. However, incident is still of secondary importance. It is determined by its significance for the main theme and is subordinated to it. This does not detract from the interest of the incidents themselves; it only makes them the more interesting because of the close relation to the absorbing theme.

## (2) Characters

(a) In the novels dealing with specific problems, individual characters are of more importance than in the novels dealing with general social interests. This is

necessary because in the novels now under discussion the chief characters are grappling with problems, while in the novels of the first division the characters were primarily objects through which the author observed society.

(b) The main characters in the novels dealing with specific problems are men or women who think. This fact, as well as the importance of the characters for the theme of the book, insures a close characterization at the hands of Wells, who loves people who think instead of "muddling", and who seeks eagerly to understand the processes of men's thoughts. Because they think for themselves, the characters are unconventional.

(c) The main characters in these novels, though strong and thoughtful, are struggling characters. In all this group, much higher in general tone than the characters of the novels of general social interest, there is still no hero, no paragon. Every man - Trafford, Mr. Britling, the Bishop - blunders and, for all his dignity, shows somewhere his intimately human side. There is no character,

when Wells is through with him, but has revealed a want within himself that puts him, whatever his position, within the bounds of our intimacy and sympathy. But best of all, none is content; all are struggling, putting nerve and sinew into an effort, which, though at times undefined, is always far above a mere seeking for present and selfish gratification. Even the God that the latest characters come to know is a struggling God.

(d) The characters in these novels are developing characters. In some cases, for example, in Tono-Bungay, The Research Magnificent, and Joan and Peter, the chief characters are dealt with from childhood; in other cases where the characters are adult when the story opens, they pass through phases of development in the course of the story. For example, Trafford and Marjorie, Ann Veronica, Lady Harman, Mr. Britling, and Scrope are all significantly changed men and women when Wells turns from them.

(e) Important characters in these novels are sometimes women; the places of chief importance, however, are given to women only in two novels: Ann Veronica and The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman. In most cases in these novels,

just as in the novels dealing with general social interests, the chief characters are men, and, as before, many of them have scientific training. The men of these books have a tendency, however, in their attempt to solve problems, to turn from science or whatever else their work may be, to authorship or educational work. Remington,<sup>51</sup> Capes,<sup>52</sup> Trafford,<sup>53</sup> Benham,<sup>54</sup> Mr. Britling,<sup>55</sup> and Scrope,<sup>56</sup> all want to write their solutions of problems, and Stratton<sup>57</sup> and Oswald<sup>58</sup> are concerned with educational projects.

Another feature of the personnel of these books, particularly interesting to the student of Wells' religious ideas, is the use of a Bishop in The Soul of a Bishop as a chief character. Though practically every novel has its clergyman, it is only in this book and in The Wonderful Visit out of all Wells' long list of novels, that a clergyman is presented as sincerely thoughtful; it is further interesting

- 51. The New Machiavelli
- 52. Ann Veronica
- 53. Marriage
- 54. The Research Magnificent
- 55. Mr. Britling Sees It Through
- 56. The Soul of a Bishop
- 57. The Passionate Friends
- 58. Joan and Peter.

to note that in both these cases considerable conversion was necessary to make the clergyman into a serious character.

(f) These books present characters altogether worth knowing, and they present them in such a way that the reader does know them. The characters are worth while because they are interesting personalities, because they are faithful reflections of the strength and weakness of human nature, because in their character as thinkers they inspire thought in the man who learns to know them, and because their fineness and their humanity are so blended as to make the reader love them and delight to call them about him in memory.

Wells evidently remembers his own characters, for, while he never gives a character a place of importance in a second book, he does occasionally mention a character as an old acquaintance, in a later book. For instance, Miss Summersly Satchel and Lady Mary Justice of The Passionate Friends are mentioned in The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman; Capes and Ann Veronica of Ann Veronica are mentioned in Marriage; Carnaby and Beatrice Normandy of Tono-Bungay are mentioned

in The New Machiavelli.

(g) These books present many characters humorously conceived, though at the same time occupying a serious place in reference to the theme. For example, in Marriage, Aunt Plessington and Mr. Pope are characterized with a delightful humor, yet in reference to the main theme Aunt Plessington represents a class of would-be reformers who are positive hindrances to any constructive solution of socialistic problems, and Mr. Pope represents a type of husband and father who sends out from his home children whose existence in his capricious monarchy has ill-fitted them for clear-thinking citizenship in a democracy.

The humorous touches in characterization are so true to life as to be irresistible. The reader who is offended at Wells' themes, at his vigorous style, or at his evident purpose must still enjoy these books for the humanity of the characters. No book is an exception in this matter; but by way of illustration I shall refer again briefly to Aunt Plessington, and give a more extended reference concerning Mr. Pope.

An illuminating commentary on the character of Aunt Plessington is furnished by the effect of her visit upon the easy-going family at the vicarage:

"Next morning an atmosphere of getting on and strenuosity generally prevailed throughout the vicarage. The Plessingtons were preparing a memorandum on their movement for the "Reformer's Year Book", every word was of importance and might win or lose adherents and subscribers, and they secured the undisturbed possession of the drawing-room, from which the higher notes of Aunt Plessington's voice explaining the whole thing to Hubert, who had to write it out, reached, a spur to effort, into every part of the house....

"Later in the day the widening circle of aggressive urgency reached the kitchen, and at two the cook gave notice in order, she said, to better herself." 59

A reverie of Mr. Pope's serves, as do many reveries in these books, to make possible an intimate characterization:

"Mr. Pope had fallen into a pleasant musing; several other ripe old yarns, dear delicious old things, had come into his mind that he felt he might presently recall when this unavoidable display of accomplishments was overpast, and it was with one of them almost on his lips that he glanced across at his guest. He was surprised to see Mr. Magnet's face transfigured. He was sitting forward, looking up at Marjorie, and he had caught something of the expression of those blessed boys who froth at the feet of an Assumption. For an instant Mr. Pope did not understand.

"Then he understood. It was Marjorie! He had a twinge of surprise, and glanced at his own daughter as though he had never seen her before. He perceived in a flash the first time that this troublesome, clever, disrespectful child was tall and shapely and sweet, and indeed quite a beautiful young woman. He forgot his anecdotes. His being was suffused with pride and responsibility and the sense of virtue rewarded. He did not reflect for a moment that Marjorie embodied in almost equal proportions the very best points in his mother, and his mother-in-law, and avoided his own more salient characteristics with so neat a dexterity that from top to toe, except for the one matter of colour, not only did she not resemble him but she scarcely even alluded to him. He thought simply that she was his daughter, that she derived from him, that her beauty was his. She was the outcome of his meritorious preparations. He recalled all the moments when he had been kind and indulgent to her; all the bills he had paid for her; all the stresses and trials of the coachbuilding collapse, all the fluctuations of his speculative adventures, became things he had faced patiently and valiantly for her sake. He forgot the endless times when he had been viciously cross with her, all the times when he had pished and tushed and sworn in her hearing. He had on provocation and in spite of her mother's protests slapped her pretty vigorously, but such things are better forgotten; nor did he recall how bitterly he had opposed the college education which had made her now so clear in eye and thought, nor the frightful shindy, only these months since, about the identical green dress in which she now stood delightful. He forgot these petty details, as an idealist should. There she was, his daughter. An immense benevolence irradiated his soul - for Marjorie - for Magnet. His eyes were suffused with a not ignoble tenderness. The man, he knew, was worth at least thirty-five thousand pounds, a discussion of investments had made that clear, and he must be making at least



five thousand a year! A beautiful girl, a worthy man! A good fellow, a sound good fellow, a careful fellow too - as these fellows went!

"Old Daddy would lose his treasure of course.

"Well, a father must learn resignation, and he for one would not stand in the way of his girl's happiness. A day would come when, very beautifully and tenderly, he would hand her over to Magnet, his favorite daughter to his trusted friend. 'Well, my boy, there's no one in all the world - ' he would begin.

"It would be a touching parting. 'Don't forget your old father, Maggots,' he would say. At such a moment that quaint nickname would surely not be resented....

"He reflected how much he had always preferred Marjorie to Daffy. She was brighter - more like him. Daffy was unresponsive, with a touch of bitterness under her tongue....

"He was already dreaming he was a widower, rather infirm, the object of Magnet's and Marjorie's devoted care, when the song ceased, and the wife he had for the purpose of reveries just consigned so carelessly to the cemetery proposed that they should have a little game that everyone could play at." 60

### 3. Style

(a) As to form

(a)<sup>1</sup> In the matter of diction, the novels dealing with specific problems differ in no essential from those dealing with general social interests.<sup>61</sup> For all his vast amount of intervening reading, and for all his variations in subject matter, Wells has

60. Marriage, pp. 40-2.

61. See p. 41.

advanced all the way from the writing of his first simply-planned books, to the writing of books that involve closest psychological studies, with a simple and concrete diction. The words are still mainly Anglo-Saxon, or, when of foreign derivation, words in common usage. The old habit of conceiving and expressing ideas in such a way as to call up images, of following abstract terms with illuminating concrete expressions, still prevails. To emphasize this latter point, I have selected at random brief passages from Marriage and from Mr. Britling Sees It Through, - passages in which the characters are undergoing some of Wells' psychological dissection, and in which, if anywhere, we should expect to find abstractions.

"Beneath that realization and carrying it, as a river may carry scum, was a sense of herself as something deeper, greater, more enduring than mountain or wilderness or sky, or any of those monstrous forms of nature that had dwarfed her physical self to nothingness. ...

"What was that reality? What was she herself? She became interested in framing an answer to that, and slipped down from the peace of soul she had attained. Her serenity gave way to a reiteration of this question, reiteration increasing and at last oppressing like the snowflakes of a storm, perpetual whirling repetitions that at last confused her and hid the sky." 62.

62. Marriage, pp. 473-4.

"She had never expected to find herself tied by her affections to a man with whom she disagreed, and who went contrary to her standards, very much as if she was lashed on the back of a very nice elephant that would wince but not obey the goad."<sup>63</sup>

(b)<sup>1</sup> In the matters of sentence structure, too, the novels of the second division are essentially like those of the first.<sup>64</sup> In the novels of the second division the use of dashes and asterisks is, in general, more frequent. Wells finds the asterisks particularly convenient in his long passages of thought-analysis; and he uses them with extremely good effect in passages suggestive of emotion. Often by means of asterisks Wells saves a situation from passing into sentimentality, without the effect of an abrupt ending. The asterisks skillfully used, particularly in the latest books, point out all sorts of by-paths to the reader's imagination, thus adding in no small measure to the pleasure of the reading.

(c)<sup>1</sup> Wells' paragraphs are usually of moderate length, though frequently short. Emphasis, or a feeling of the high point in the thought, is often conveyed by the use of the single sentence - paragraph, or, infrequently,

63. Mr. Britling Sees It Through, p. 393.

64. See Chap. II, p. 42.

by the use of only a phrase punctuated as a paragraph.

(b) As to effect.

(a)<sup>1</sup> The novels dealing with specific problems are written in a vigorous, masculine style. Every book moves along as if it were manipulated by a clear-thinking, extremely energetic, and sometimes rather impatient man. There is no evading of problems, no straying off into unimportant situations, no gratifying of idle curiosity concerning insignificant details. Emotional situations - and these books present plenty of them - are handled without sentimentality. Sometimes when the emotion has been prepared for and suggested, the scene closes at once. For instance, the only words given from Mr. Britling's night of mourning for Hugh are these:

"I will work tomorrow again," whispered Mr. Britling, "but tonight - tonight... Tonight is yours.... Can you hear me, can you hear? Your father... who had counted on you. ..."65

Sometimes the characters experiencing the emotion save the scene from too much sentiment by saying quite matter-of-fact things to cover the stress of their own emotions. For example, Joan sitting by Peter, dreaming of days to come

65. Mr. Britling Sees It Through, p. 380.

and feeling new purposes stirring within herself, is deeply moved:

"'Dear Petah', her lips said silently. Her heart swelled; her hands tightened. She wanted to kiss him....

"Then in a whim of reaction she was moved to mockery.

"'Do you feel so very stern and strong, dear Petah?' she whispered close to his shoulder." 66

(b)<sup>1</sup> These novels, though written in vigorous style, contain passages of truest tenderness. The understanding attitude of the author mingles with his clear sense. For example, the mixture of matter of fact and of tenderness in Mr. Britling's recollections of Herr Heinrich is characteristic. Mr. Britling recalls the curious, spectacled little figure, the homely details of Heinrich's simple life, his vast enthusiasms for Ido or Esperanto and for indexing, and his aversion to picnics, which perplexed his Magen; then Mr. Britling goes on with a tenderness the more impressive for these simple, half-humorous recollections:

"That story was over - just as Hugh's story was over. That first volume would never now have a second and a third. It ended in some hasty grave in Russia. The great scheme for marginal indices would never

be patented, the duets with the pianola would never be played again.

"Imagination glimpsed a little figure toiling manfully through the slush and snow of the Carpathians; saw it staggering under its first experience of shell fire; set it amidst attacks and flights and fatigue and hunger and a rush perhaps in the darkness; guessed at the wounding blow. Then came the pitiful pilgrimage of the prisoners into captivity, captivity in a land desolated, impoverished, and embittered. Came wounds wrapped in filthy rags, pain and want of occupation, and a poor little bent and broken Heinrich sitting aloof in a crowded compound nursing a mortifying wound....

"He used to sit in a peculiar attitude with his arms crossed on his crossed legs, looking slantingly through his glasses....

"So he must have sat, and presently he lay on some rough bedding and suffered, unattended, in infinite discomfort; lay motionless and thought at times, it may be, of Matching's Easy and wondered what Hugh and Teddy were doing. Then he became fevered, and the world grew bright - coloured and fantastic and ugly for him. Until one day an infinite weakness laid hold of him, and his pain grew faint and all his thoughts and memories grew faint - and still fainter...."67

(c)<sup>1</sup> Vigorous rather than beautiful is the best general term of characterization for the style of these books; but beauty is abundantly present, quite as abundantly present as possible, indeed, without making itself so prominent as to call attention to itself at the expense of the novel as a whole. Long descriptions of natural surroundings or of personal appearances

67. Mr. Britling Sees It Through, pp. 423-4.

and any other such passages, like pictures inserted only for their own sake, are conspicuously absent; but an imaginative word, a delicate, meaning touch, or a comparison opening out great vistas occurs again and again, always naturally, as an inseparable part of the whole. Because the beauty is so inwoven with the whole, I shall trust to the quotations here given for other purposes to have convinced the reader that these novels prove Wells' possession of "the gift of the creative and illuminating phrase which alone justifies writing." 68

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APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

"All this world is heavy with the promise of greater things, and a day will come, one day in the unending succession of days, when beings, beings who are now latent in our thoughts and hidden in our loins, shall stand upon this earth as one stands upon a footstool, and shall laugh and reach out their hands amid the stars." The Discovery of the Future, p. 60 (1902)

"For surely the greatness of life is still to come, it is not in such accidents as mountains or the sea. I have seen the splendour of the mountains, sunrise and sunset among them, and the waste immensity of sky and sea. I am not blind because I can see beyond these glories. To me no other thing is credible than that all the natural beauty in the world is only so much material for the imagination and the mind, so many hints and suggestions for art and creation. Whatever is, is but the lure and symbol toward what can be willed and done. Man lives to make - in the end he must make, for there will be nothing else left for him to do. And the world he will make - after a thousand years or so!

"I, at least, can forgive the loss of all the accidental, unmeaning beauty that is going for the sake of the beauty of fine order and intention that will come. I believe - passionately as a doubting lover believes in his mistress - in the future of mankind. And so to me it seems altogether well that all the froth and hurry of Niagara at last, all of it, dying into hungry canals of intake, should rise again in light and power, in ordered and equipped and proud and beautiful humanity, in cities and palaces and the emancipated souls and hearts of men." The Future in America, pp. 55-6. (1906)

"Man still goes to war against himself, prepares fleets and armies and fortresses, like a sleep-walker who wounds himself, like some infatuated barbarian who hacks his own limbs with a knife.

"But he awakens. ...



"And this man, this wonderful child of old earth, who is ourselves in the measure of our hearts and minds, does but begin his adventure now. Through all time henceforth he does but begin his adventure. This planet and its subjugation is but the dawn of his existence. In a little while he will reach out to the other planets, and take that greater fire, the sun, into his service. He will bring his solvent intelligence to bear upon the riddles of his individual interaction, transmute jealousy and every passion, control his own universe, select and breed for his embodiment a continually fairer and stronger and wiser race. What none of us can think or will, save in a disconnected partiality, he will think and will collectively. Already some of us feel our merger with that greater life. There come moments when the thing shines out upon our thoughts. Sometimes in the dark sleepless solitudes of night, one ceases to be so-and-so, one ceases to bear a proper name, forgets one's quarrels and vanities, forgives and understands one's enemies and oneself, as one forgives and understands the quarrels of little children, knowing oneself indeed to be a being greater than one's personal accidents, knowing oneself for Man on his planet, flying swiftly to unmeasured destinies through the starry stillnesses of space." Social Forces in England and America, pp. 414-15. (1914).

"I am a man who looks now towards the end of life; fifty-one years have I scratched off from my calendar, another slips by, and I cannot tell how many more of the sparse remainder of possible years are really mine. I live in days of hardship and privation, when it seems more natural to feel ill than well; without holidays or rest or peace; friends and the sons of my friends have been killed; the newspapers that come into my house tell mostly of blood and disaster, of drownings and slaughterings or of cruelties and base intrigues. Yet never have I been so sure that there is a divinity in man and that a great order of human life, a reign of justice and world-wide happiness, of plenty, power, hope, and gigantic creative effort, lies close at hand. Even now we have the science and the ability available for a universal welfare, though it is scattered about the world like a handful of money dropped by a child, even now there exists all the knowledge that is needed to make mankind universally free and

human life sweet and noble. We need but the faith for it, and it is at hand; we need but the courage to lay our hands upon it, and in a little space of years it can be ours." In the Fourth Year, pp. 153-4. (1918)

## APPENDIX B

"I consider the novel an important and necessary thing indeed in that complicated system of uneasy adjustments and readjustments which is modern civilization. I make very high and wide claims for it. In many directions I do not think we can yet get along without it.

"Now this I know, is not the usually received opinion. There is, I am aware, the theory that the novel is wholly and solely a means of relaxation. ... One may call it the Weary Giant theory....

"Both fiction and criticism today are in revolt against that tired giant, the prosperous Englishman. I cannot think of a single writer of any distinction today unless it is Mr. W. W. Jacobs, who is content merely to serve the purpose of those slippered hours. So far from the weary reader being a decently tired giant, we realize that he is only an inexpressibly lax, slovenly and undertrained giant, and we are all out with one accord resolved to exercise his higher gangalia in every possible way.

"We perceive more and more clearly that the study of social organization is an empty and unprofitable study until we approach it as a study of the association and inter-reaction of individualized human beings - inspired by diversified motives, ruled by traditions, and swayed by the suggestions of a complex intellectual atmosphere. And all our conceptions of the relationships between man and man, and of justice and rightfulness and social desirableness, remain something misfitting and inappropriate, something uncomfortable and potentially injurious, as if we were trying to wear sharp-edged clothes made for a giant out of tin, until we bring them to the test and measure of realized individuals.

"And this is where the value and opportunity of the modern novel comes in. So far as I can see, it is the only medium through which we can discuss the great majority of the problems which are being raised in such bristling multitude by our contemporary social development. Nearly everyone of those problems has

at its core a psychological problem, and not merely a psychological problem, but one in which the idea of individuality is an essential factor. Dealing with most of these questions by a rule or a generalization is like putting a cordon around a jungle full of the most diversified sort of game. The hunting only begins when you leave the cordon behind you and push into the thickets.

. . .

"The success of civilization amounts ultimately to a success of sympathy and understanding. If people cannot be brought to an interest in one another greater than they feel today, to curiosities and criticism far keener, and co-operations far subtler, than we have now; if class cannot be brought to measure itself against, and interchange experience and sympathy with class, and temperament with temperament, then we shall never struggle very far beyond the confessed discomforts and uneasiness of today, and the changes and complications of human life will remain as they are now, very like the crumplings and separations and complications of an immense avalanche that is sliding down a hill. And in this tremendous work of human reconciliation and elucidation, it seems to me it is the novel that must attempt most and achieve most.

. . .

"You see now the scope of the claim I am making for the novel; it is to be the social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination, the parade of morals and the exchange of manners, the factory of customs, the criticism of laws and institutions and of social dogmas and ideas. It is to be the home confessional, the initiator of knowledge, the seed of fruitful self-questioning....The novel is not a new sort of pulpit; humanity is passing out of the place when men sit under preachers and dogmatic influences. But the novelist is going to be the most potent of artists, because he is going to present conduct, devise beautiful conduct, discuss conduct, analyze conduct, suggest

conduct, illuminate it through and through, He will not teach, but discuss, point out, plead, and display. And this being my view you will be prepared for the demand I am now about to make for an absolutely free hand for the novelist in his choice of topic and incident and in his method of treatment; or, rather, if I may presume to speak for other novelists, I would say it is not so much a demand we make as an intention we proclaim. We are going to write, subject only to our limitations, about the whole of human life. We are going to deal with political questions and religious questions and social questions....We are going to write about business and finance and politics and precedence and pretentiousness and decorum and indecorum, until a thousand pretences and ten thousand impostures shrivel in the cold, clear air of our elucidations. We are going to write of wasted opportunities and latent beauties until a thousand new ways of living open to men and women. We are going to appeal to the young and hopeful and the curious, against the established, the dignified, and defensive. Before we have done, we will have all life within the scope of the novel."

From the essay on The Contemporary Novel in Social Forces in England and America, pp. 173-198.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES

Columbia. April 8, 1919.

Dean Walter Miller.

Dear Sir:

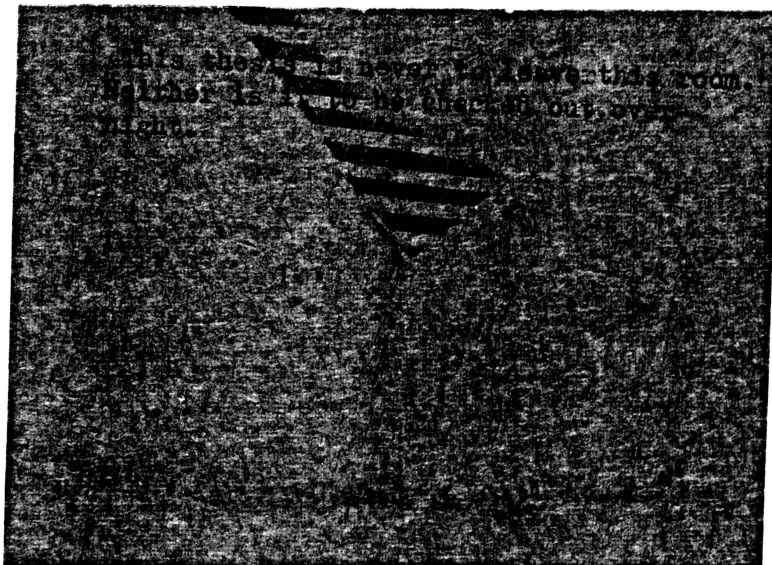
I have examined the enclosed manuscript of <sup>Mrs.</sup> Miss Jay Rusk Sullens. In my opinion the dissertation meets the standard that has been established in this University for the Master's dissertation.

Yours very truly,  
Caroline Stewart

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