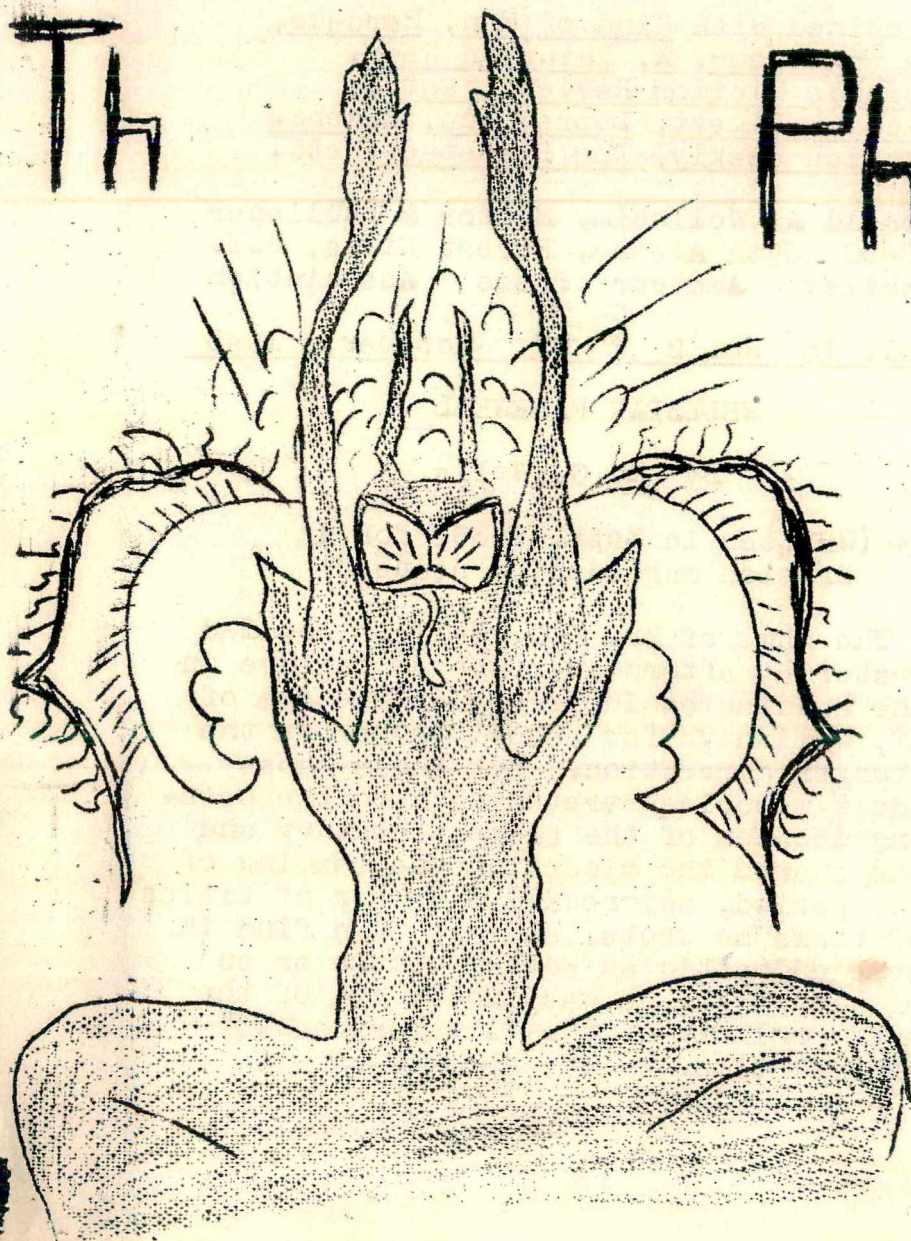


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
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Donald A. Wollheim, Editor & Publisher
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WELLSIAN FAREWELL

By H. G. Wells

(Written in Sept. 1936, for a
British magazine by request)

The name of Mr. H.G. Wells, who died yesterday afternoon of heart failure in the Paddington Infirmary at the age of 97, will have few associations for the younger generation. But those whose adult memories stretch back to the opening decades of the present century and who shared the miscellaneous reading of the period, may recall a number of titles of books he wrote, and may even find in some odd attic an actual volume or so of his works. He was indeed one of the most prolific of the "literary hacks" of that time.

Wells was a copious and repetitive essayist upon public affairs and still more copious writer of fiction. He wrote ~~xxxxxxxx~~ scientific romances, whose original freshness has long since been destroyed by the general advance of knowledge, and novels which have neither the circumstantial correctitude which gives his contemporaries, Galsworthy and Bennett, their documentary value, nor that ruthless frankness which endows so much of the younger American school of that time with a sort of bleeding immortality.

The question whether he was to be considered a "humorist" was discussed but never settled and it need not trouble us now. He played a not very successful part in the early attempts to make the films mean something. The organization, he says, was too much for him. It expelled whatever of his ideas had survived the director, automatically in the cutting room. Perhaps the organization knew its own appeal better than he did.

Wells was seriously injured in a brawl with some Fascist toughs brought about by a rare fit of indignation on his part in 1938, and his health was further impaired by a spell in a concentration camp under the brief Communist dictatorship in 1942.

Thereafter his once considerable vitality seems to have deserted him. He had no recorded share in the vigorous mental and social renaissance we have witnessed in the past decade, in spite of the fact that it followed so closely upon lines

4-----the phantagraph-----

he had foreshadowed. From being a premature, he became a forgotten man.

His immediate needs were relieved by a small Civil List pension in 1955. He occupied an old tumbledown house upon the border of Regent's Park and his bent shabby, slovenly and latterly somewhat obese figure was frequently to be seen in the adjacent gardens, sitting and looking idly at the boats on the lake or the flowers in the beds, or hobbling painfully about with the aid of a stick, coughing or talking to himself. "Some day," he would be heard to say, "I will write a book, a real book."

Scarcely anything remains of him now and yet, without him and his like, the roof of common ideas on which our civilization stands today could never have arisen.

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PHANTAGRAPHY

Publication of Wells' own obituary is motivated by the recent news of his serious illness and of the publication of what HGW terms the last book he shall ever write, "Mind at the End of its Tether." According to reports, in this HGW surrenders his long fight for social betterment and consigns humanity to saurian oblivion. Fortunately humanity has a way of surviving its doom-sayers, its errors and its deadly turns, and showing up bigger and better. We have not the slightest doubt that atomic energy and rocketry will do more to better humanity in the long run than they can do to hurt mankind (which seems to be the immediate prospect).

--D.A.Wollheim