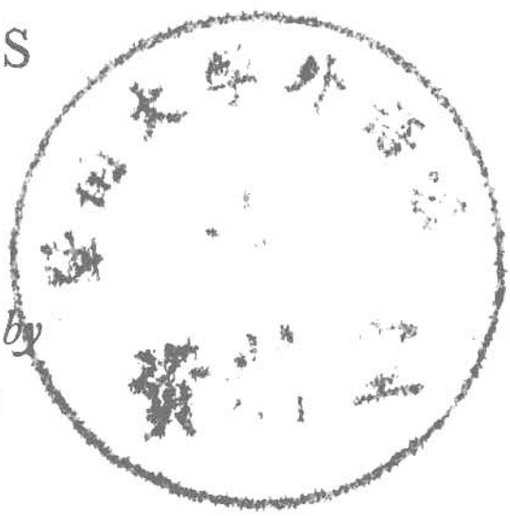
LOVE AND MR. LEWISHAM

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS
1866-1946

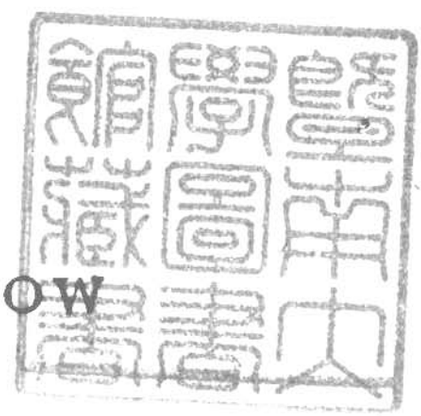
LOVE AND MR. LEWISHAM

H. G. WELLS

With an Introduction by
FRANK WELLS



COLLINS
LONDON AND GLASGOW



GENERAL EDITOR: G. F. MAINE

First published, 1900
This edition, 1954

Printed in Great Britain by
COLLINS CLEAR-TYPE PRESS

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS was born on 21 September 1866 at Bromley, Kent. Destined for the profession of a draper, he became instead one of the great intellectual lights of his age.

His father, Joseph Wells, kept a small hardware shop and was an enthusiastic professional cricketer. His mother, whose maiden name was Neal, had been in domestic service before her marriage. The shop in Bromley High Street never prospered; its income was barely sufficient to keep the family above the poverty line.

From his father, young Herbert George ("Bertie" as he was called) had inherited a taste for reading which he was able to indulge freely at the local Literary Institute and lending library. He was sent to school locally, first to some cottage school and later to an establishment called Morley's Academy. In 1880, when the family found itself in great financial difficulties, Mrs. Wells was offered and accepted a post as housekeeper to her former employers at Uppark, Sussex, and Herbert George was apprenticed to a firm of drapers in Windsor. However, he did not satisfy his employers and had to leave after one month. For a very brief spell he acted as pupil teacher at a school in Somerset, and after that he was a chemist's assistant at Midhurst for one month (January 1881). In April of the same year he found himself once more a draper's apprentice, this time at Southsea. After two years in this soul-destroying occupation he could bear it no longer and left.

He next obtained a post as assistant master at Mid-

hurst Grammar School, and in 1884 was awarded a scholarship (of one guinea a week) at the Normal School of Science (now the Imperial College of Science) South Kensington, London. For three years he studied physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy and biology—the latter under Professor Thomas H. Huxley. On termination of his studies he became assistant master in a school at Holt, North Wales. There he had a severe football accident from the effects of which he suffered for many years. He returned to London in July 1888, and early in 1889 joined the staff of Henley House School at Kilburn. In October 1890 he took a B.Sc. degree with first-class honours in zoology at London University. His next appointment(from 1891-93) was that of a biology tutor for the University Correspondence College.

In the summer of 1893 a serious hæmorrhage of the lungs forced him to take a long rest and to adopt a completely sedentary occupation. Around 1891-92 he had contributed essays to various educational and other journals and in 1893 while he was recuperating from his illness he began to write short stories, essays and reviews for periodicals and magazines, among them *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *St. James's Gazette*, *Black and White*, the *New Review* and *The Saturday Review*. In 1893 his first major work *A Textbook of Biology* was published. The year 1895 saw the publication of a volume of short stories (*The Stolen Bacillus*), a volume of collected essays, and of two novels, *The Time Machine* and *The Wonderful Visit*. The former established his reputation as a writer of extraordinary power and imagination.

In 1895 also he married Miss Amy Catherine Robbins, a former pupil of his—his first marriage (1891) to a cousin having meanwhile been dissolved. Two sons were subsequently born of his second marriage

(George Philip, 1901, and Frank, 1903). The next few years brought his series of great scientific romances: *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) as well as many short stories, articles and novels, among them *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1901).

In 1900 Wells built himself a house at Sandgate near Folkstone, which remained his home for nearly a decade, in the course of which he rose to a position of world-wide literary fame. There, at Sandgate, he wrote some of his most celebrated works, e.g. *Anticipations*, a volume of essays on sociological problems (1901), *The Sea Lady* (1902), *The Food of the Gods* (1904), *Kipps*, *A Modern Utopia* (both in 1905), *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), *The War in the Air* (1908), *Tono Bungay*, *Anne Veronica* (both in 1909), and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910).

At the turn of the century, his health having greatly improved, Wells began to make frequent trips to the European Continent and in 1906 he went on his first tour to the United States. In 1903 he joined the Fabian Society, with which he remained actively (though not always harmoniously) connected for a number of years. In 1909 he moved to London, and in 1912 bought a house at Easton Park near Dunmow, Essex, which remained his home until his wife's death in 1927.

The New Machiavelli (1911) marks a new departure in Wells' creative work; the novel of ideas and of problems in which the (fictional) story becomes subbordinate to the sociological and ideological message. The works *Marriage* (1912), *The Passionate Friends* (1913), *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* (1914), *The Research Magnificent* (1915) belong to this category.

Wells supported the first World War as the "War to end War" and in 1918 became for a short time

director of Propaganda Policy against Germany on Lord Northcliffe's Enemy Propaganda Committee. His most important work, written and published during the war, was *Mr. Britling sees it Through* (1916) which achieved tremendous popularity.

Shortly after the war (1920) he visited Soviet Russia and in 1921 he attended the Washington Conference. In the years to follow he travelled much, and spent many winters away from the rigours of the English climate. Though he continued writing novels—his most important novel of the inter-war years was *The World of William Clissold* (1926)—he concentrated more and more on the propagating of ideas. The main thesis which he expounded during the last two decades of his life was that the human race must adapt itself to the material forces it has created, or perish. The three great works *Outline of History* (1920), *Science of Life* (1929), and *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1932), were all designed to popularise the ideology appropriate to the task of creating a World State—in his view the only alternative to a return to barbarism and to final annihilation. In 1934 he published two volumes of autobiography, *Experiment in Living*.

The second World War was to him the confirmation that mankind had indeed lost the mastery over the forces of its own making and was heading enexorably towards doom. His last work *Mind at the End of its Tether* (1945) gave expression to his final mood of despair.

Having been ailing for some considerable time, he died in his London home on 13 August 1946.

H. d. R.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Love and Mr. Lewisham was written in 1898, printed serially in the *Weekly Times* in 1899 and published as a book in 1900. In 1898 H. G. Wells was also writing *When the Sleeper Awakes* and in October he started work on *Kipps*.

Love and Mr. Lewisham has a great deal of autobiographical background to it, both on the surface and, perhaps unconsciously, beneath it. The setting of the story is real. The Author was himself a student-teacher at the Grammar School in Midhurst; the lodgings described were his lodgings; later he took a scholarship to the Normal School of Science in South Kensington. The description of the social life of the students there, and in their homes, in the period around 1885, may be taken as accurate and true. The conflict in the story, Mr. Lewisham's fear of Domestic Claustrophobia, was also undoubtedly a real phobia felt by the Author himself.

This theme, that H. G. called his "Compound Fugue," occurred first in *Love and Mr. Lewisham* and was returned to many times in his later works; for example in *The Sea Lady*, *The New Machiavelli*, *Marriage* and *The World of William Clissold*. But he did not propound it as the only conflict between the sexes; in *The Days of the Comet* there is jealousy, and in *The Babes in the Darkling Wood* no conflict between the lovers at all.

Mr. Lewisham's adolescent love aroused no storm; the book is as innocent as was the love itself. But the book was the beginning of a series of Novels that brought down wrath on the Author's head and that

lead to his being much misquoted and misinterpreted. The row really started on the publication of *Anne Veronica*, although it is a little difficult to-day to realise why; in these days there is no fault found with a young lady that goes out to get her man; fifty years ago such action could not be admitted. The book created a scandal, was preached against, was banned by libraries and damned in the Press. Which was, of course, all very good for the sales and a delight to the publisher. H. G. Wells was ostracised by a great many people that he did not know and never met, so that this was no real hardship.

The suggestion, that two people could possibly not be entirely mutually satisfying in everything for the whole of their lives, was apparently an outrageous one. Realism and truth are often shocking. H. G. was attacked for having suggested in his writings possible solutions to the problems of marital incompatibility. He was accused of being himself promiscuous, and inaccurate re-assemblies of old stories and tinged memories are palatable, even in these enlightened days, to the readers of Sunday newspapers. One fact does, however, stand out, namely that the continuity and existence of a stable family life and home is possible only if there is practical understanding and real acceptance of the basic human qualities.

Catherine Wells herself wrote (but did not publish):

"As I have said, such love is considered by them really permissable only to the unmarried and marriageable. They profess to regard it as a phenomenon upon which marriage must follow with seemly dispatch. There must be marriage, according to their rules, before the love is what they would call 'consummated.' That having happened—the ritual of marriage performed and the lovers allowed to 'consummate' their love—they are assumed to continue to love one another,

or at least to maintain a relationship of paramount affection, for the rest of their lives. A departure from these rules and suppositions, the consummation of love without marriage, the manifestation of love for any other than the married partner, is visited by the gravest censure that they can apply. And as you know well, there being scarcely any human heart born so poor in its capacity for loving as these rules demand, the pretence that they are the only wise and possible and good and right rules lies over society like a thin and brittle skin, beneath which tosses and writhes the uneasy nature of man. Constantly the rigid impossible rules are broken; universally they are covertly broken. And that is the evil. It is not that human hearts should go hungry, for while that matters it does not matter so greatly as this other thing. It is that the starvation imposed on them is too dire to be borne. Everywhere the rules are secretly broken. But as much as they can they pretend the rules are excellent and work well, and that only the dissolute break them. By laying upon itself a rule so hard that it does not keep it, humanity has done its soul that injury which you may do a child by threatening punishments so severe that it is driven to lie to you. How deeply must humanity have stained its conscience with guilt by maintaining this pretence for even two thousand years; is it any matter for wonder that human beings now are things of little pride, of stunted honour and of crippled power? Under the surface of their ostensible lives lurk the spoilt things and the base things and the dark things, and the price of its sustenance is paid in intrigues, lies, hypocrisy, shams, deceptions, treacheries, cunning, trickery, betrayals, brothels, prostitutes, procurers, souteneurs, panders—into that monstrous heap of dirt they have stamped Love's rosy wings!"

From looking at the realites squarely, to the horror

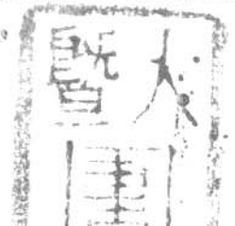
of the blind unthinking conventional society, came this cry of indignation at convention's hypocrisy.

Perhaps the problem is not just one of Domestic Claustrophobia, the fear of being tied to one house, with its furniture and fittings and fixtures and responsibilities, and to one person, but the problem of feeling comfortable in a close hard cage of habit and convention. H. G.'s suggestions for the nearest approach possible to a cure for this phobia is in *The Modern Utopia*. The human animal has lived for so very many generations in its "civilised" pattern that it might find a logical freedom incompatible. The tendency to acquire fixations and feelings of jealousy may be deeply inbred. But the realisation that a greater freedom in human relationships is sensible and required by most of us, and the discussion around, and airing of, that realisation, is *not* advocating "free love and breaking up the home"; it is just looking facts in the face however much they may be at variance with the rigid customs and acceptances of the past.

H. G. wrote elsewhere; "For everyone and every couple there is a distinctive discord and perhaps in most cases a solution." If the solution can be arrived at outside the boundaries of convention ("Convention" is a much prettier word than "Hypocrisy," said Frederick Lonsdale,) then surely it is better to find it there, rather than to strain a relationship possibly to a final breaking by disallowing the intrusion of common sense. W. B. Steele, in his notes for *The Anatomy of Frustration*, has tried to analyse and define these problems in great detail. "Love," he said, "urges us to abandon ourselves and at the same time it arouses an internal resistance to its own urgency. It expects and it distrusts." The biological reasons for marrying, he argued, cannot reasonably prolong marriage beyond fifteen years from the birth of the

last child. George Meredith, it will be remembered, considered that marriage could reasonably endure for ten years. The Biological urge having got us together does not concern itself with afterwards; this suffices well enough for animals. Each one of us has, like the animals, a brain; but has also a Mind and we have tangled ourselves about with it, tabooed ourselves and hammered our poor brains that know only "how" but never "why." "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, whether of virtue or mischief." In that, Francis Bacon expressed what was the common view for centuries. Will it always be so? H. G. Wells himself thought not. He saw us in a changing world undergoing one of the greatest of human changes—the release of woman from physical necessities. In his later novel, *Marriage*, it is repeated: "I believe every couple of lovers who've ever married have felt that strain," but with this addition: "it is not a difference in kind . . . but degree." For as long as there have been human beings in the world the men have gone out and hunted and wandered "in search of adventures and fresh ideas and the wells of mystery beyond the edge of the world." But now, within this present century, women have been released from the ties of the home and their children. When man goes out the woman comes with them too. That is still fresh enough to be a complication in our problem—the problem of the system that demands more than it is natural to give.

When *Love and Mr. Lewisham* was written the discussion of such matters, even the acknowledgement of their existence, was strongly abhorred by "decent-minded people." Mr. Lewisham fell in love; he did not know what he was in for, but his Brain and his Mind fidgeted restlessly against something unknown



and yet to come. How the Lewishams resolved their problem we do not know, for the novel ends with his capitulation and the real beginning of their married life.

By many this is held to be one of the best half-dozen of H. G.'s novels. There is writing in it of such reality that it could only be true. There is a description of a walk in London which has all the beauty of truth in it. But, however supported by truth, to write a story of Love(though many have thought nothing of it) is a brave thing to do; it is a pathway for the angels and they tread there fearfully. After we have eaten and drunk it is the next thing that engages our minds and our natures. This is not cynicism, it is a natural truth; it can be drawn into perspective by reminding ourselves that we only eat and drink so that we can love. If we do not eat and drink then we shall die and if we have no love then we might as well die also, although it is having too much of it that more usually puts us off our food.

It is this all absorbing quality of Love that Mr. Lewisham, and others, fought against. One's plans, one's ambitions for oneself, one's awareness of a Debt to the World, one's career—and there are many different ways of saying the same thing—one's Intentions, all can be sacrificed by gaining a craved-for personal passion. The natural, and let this not be misunderstood, the beautiful and natural is in conflict with the Mind. One part of you struggling for freedom from all bonds and obligations except from those of the Mind; one part of you struggling to find deep and lasting satisfaction in the slavery of individual Love.

FRANK WELLS