

| SPECIAL *Ratna Sagar* EDITION |

H G WELLS



THE
INVISIBLE
MAN

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED | WITH EXTENSIVE NOTES

The Invisible Man

The Invisible Man

H G WELLS

Notes by

NATALIDITA NINGTHOUKHONGJAM

PERVIN SAKET



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VIRAT BHAVAN, COMMERCIAL COMPLEX, MUKHERJEE NAGAR, DELHI 110009
PHONE: (011) 47038000 ♦ FAX: (011) 47038099 ♦ CIN: U74899DL 1986PTC023532
rsagar@ratnasagar.com ♦ ratnasagar.com ♦ ratnasagar.co.in

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H G WELLS (1866–1946)

About the Author

Herbert George Wells, born on 21 September 1866, is considered one of the pioneers of science fiction. A prolific writer, he worked within several other genres as well. Wells had a difficult childhood, marred mainly by economic struggles, poor health, and a staggered education. Wells belonged to a working class family; his father ran a small store and played professional cricket for the Kent County team. However, the store failed and his father fractured his thigh, forcing him to give up cricket.

As a young boy, Herbert Wells was bedridden for a few months and this led to his discovery of the joy of books. Later, his mother took up employment as a housekeeper in a place that had a large library. Here again Wells' connection with reading, writing and books grew deeper. Eventually, the boy was enrolled as an 'usher' (a student who also teaches younger children) at the Midhurst Grammar School. Following this, Wells studied science at the University of London and continued teaching. He married his cousin Isabel and tried to add to his income by writing short stories and articles for various publications.

Although H G Wells is best known for his immense contribution to science fiction, he also wrote on subjects like politics, war and history, and famously predicted many of the social and scientific changes of the 20th century. For instance, in his novel *The World Set Free*, Wells describes cities being

destroyed by atomic bombs. In *The Sleeper Awakes* he includes automatic doors, and his novel *The Island of Dr Moreau* revolves around genetic engineering. Wells is also known for his detailed and evocative rendering of the working classes, such as in *Kipps* and *The History of Mr Polly*.

Within a few years of marrying Isabel, they separated and Wells married Amy-Catherine with whom he had two children. He also had a daughter with the writer Amber Reeves and a son with the novelist and feminist Rebecca West. He died on 13th August 1946 at the age of 79.

H G Wells wrote a hundred books and influenced several writers, thinkers, and world leaders. Several of his stories and novels have been adapted on screen and continue to fascinate modern audiences.

Introduction

The Invisible Man was initially published in a serialized format in *Pearson's Weekly* in 1897. The same year, all the pieces were compiled and published as a novel. The publication reflects a fascination with the possibilities of science. Indeed, the novel is based within an internal and external framework of scientific advancements; this was the time when Marie Curie coined the word 'radioactivity' to describe the behaviour of uranium and thorium, the year J J Thompson discovered the electron, and the year Guglielmo Marconi sent the first wireless message across the open sea.

Simultaneously, the novel works as a commentary on the dark side of science, and seems to urge society to bring about a balancing effect. The invisible man of the book, Griffin, finds that after painstakingly discovering a way to change the body's refractive index to match the refractive index of air, and thereby becoming invisible, he is unable to undo the process. Stuck in a body that will not show, Wells explores the possibilities of a person who is not bound within the view of society.

This pushing of scientific boundaries, which Wells first began with *The Time Machine*, continues with *The Invisible Man*. These scientific romances (the term 'science fiction' was coined much later) all explore the limits of science, and are also admired for the accuracy of their predictions. Although we have a long way

to go before humans can be invisible, already there are significant leaps being made in optic research and related fields.

Further, Wells' representation of scientific phenomenon is as sincere as it is interesting. For instance, the Russian writer Yakov Perelman stated that if one were to be made invisible by Griffin's method, one would not be able to see at all because the eye must absorb light rays in order to see. This detail is accounted for when we learn that the invisible cat does have visible retinas.

Since its first publication, *The Invisible Man* has captured the imagination of readers and audiences around the world. Several adaptations have been created, through film, TV series, drama, radio and cartoons. In fact, the story has led to new sequels and derivatives such as *The Invisible Man Returns*, *The Invisible Woman*, *The Invisible Agent*, *The Invisible Man's Revenge*, *Memoirs of an Invisible Man*, and many others.



*The stranger came early in February . . . wrapped
up from head to foot . . .*

The Strange Man's Arrival

The stranger came early in February, one wintry day, through a biting wind and a driving snow, the last snowfall of the year, over the down, walking from Bramblehurst railway station, and carrying a little black portmanteau¹ in his thickly gloved hand. He was wrapped up from head to foot, and the brim of his soft felt hat hid every inch of his face but the shiny tip of his nose; the snow had piled itself against his shoulders and chest, and added a white crest to the burden he carried. He staggered into the 'Coach and Horses' more dead than alive, and flung his portmanteau down. 'A fire,' he cried, 'in the name of human charity! A room and a fire!' He stamped and shook the snow from off himself in the bar, and followed Mrs Hall into her guest parlour to strike his bargain. And with that much introduction, that and a couple of sovereigns² flung upon the table, he took up his quarters in the inn.

Mrs Hall lit the fire and left him there while she went to prepare him a meal with her own hands. A guest to stop at Iping in the wintertime was an unheard-of piece of luck, let alone a guest who was no 'haggler,' and she was resolved to show herself worthy of her good fortune. As soon as the bacon was well under way, and Millie, her lymphatic³ maid, had been brisked up a bit by a few deftly chosen expressions of contempt, she carried the cloth, plates, and glasses into the parlour and began to lay them with the utmost

The Invisible Man

*éclat*⁴. Although the fire was burning up briskly, she was surprised to see that her visitor still wore his hat and coat, standing with his back to her and staring out of the window at the falling snow in the yard. His gloved hands were clasped behind him, and he seemed to be lost in thought. She noticed that the melting snow that still sprinkled his shoulders dripped upon her carpet. ‘Can I take your hat and coat, sir?’ she said, ‘and give them a good dry in the kitchen?’

‘No,’ he said without turning.

She was not sure she had heard him, and was about to repeat her question.

He turned his head and looked at her over his shoulder. ‘I prefer to keep them on,’ he said with emphasis, and she noticed that he wore big blue spectacles with sidelights, and had a bush side-whisker over his coatcollar that completely hid his cheeks and face.

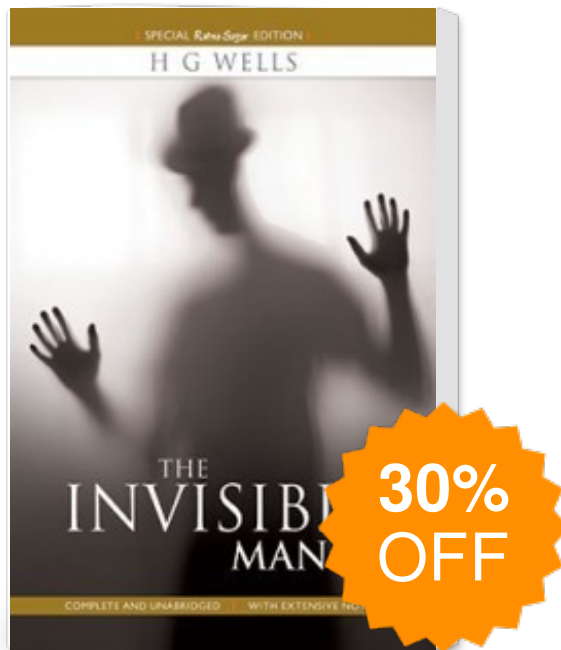
‘Very well, sir,’ she said. ‘As you like. In a bit the room will be warmer.’

He made no answer, and had turned his face away from her again, and Mrs Hall, feeling that her conversational advances were ill-timed, laid the rest of the table things in a quick staccato⁵ and whisked out of the room. When she returned he was still standing there, like a man of stone, his back hunched, his collar turned up, his dripping hat-brim turned down, hiding his face and ears completely. She put down the eggs and bacon with considerable emphasis, and called rather than said to him, ‘Your lunch is served, sir.’

‘Thank you,’ he said at the same time, and did not stir until she was closing the door. Then he swung round and approached the table with a certain eager quickness.

As she went behind the bar to the kitchen she heard a sound repeated at regular intervals. Chirk, chirk, chirk, it went, the sound of a spoon being rapidly whisked round a basin. ‘That girl!’ she

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