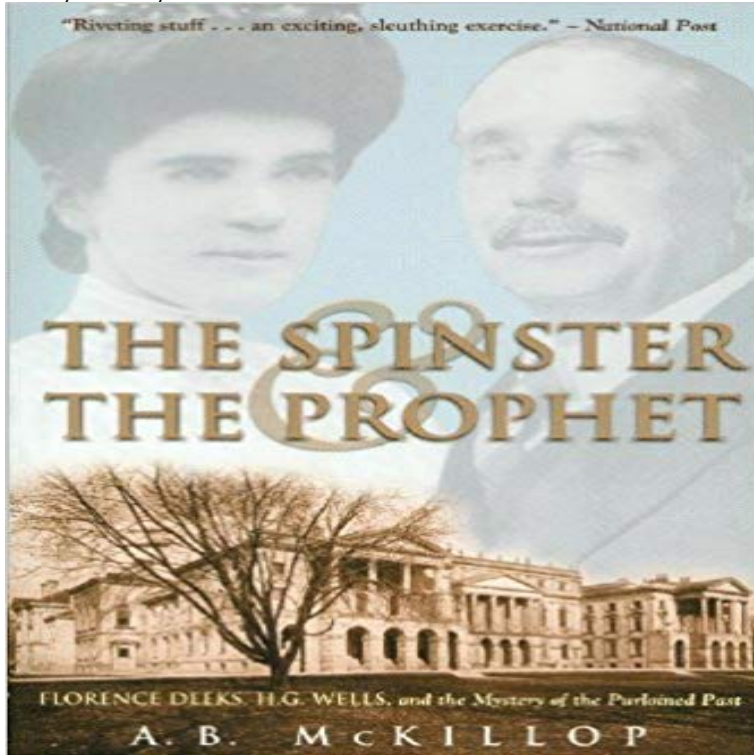


The Spinster and the Prophet: Florence Deeks, H.G. Wells, and the Mystery of the Purloined Past



Winner of the UBC Medal for Biography and shortlisted for the Drainie-Taylor Biography Prize. The prolific novelist and social prophet H.G. Wells had a way with words, and usually he had his way with women. That is, until he encountered the feisty Toronto spinster Florence Deeks. In 1925 Miss Deeks launched a \$500,000 lawsuit against Wells, claiming that in an act of literary piracy, Wells had somehow come to use her manuscript history of the world in the writing of his international bestseller *The Outline of History*, a work still in print today. Thus began one of the most sensational and extraordinary cases in Anglo-Canadian publishing and legal history. In this riveting literary whodunit, A.B. McKillop unfolds the parallel stories of two Edwardian figures and the ambition to capture the sweep of history that possessed them both: H.G. Wells was the celebrated writer of autobiographical fiction and futuristic fantasy who, at the end of the Great War, preached the need for a global world order. Florence Deeks was a modest teacher and amateur student of history who intended to correct traditional scholarships neglect by writing an account of civilization that stressed the contributions of women. Her manuscript was submitted to the venerable Macmillan Company in Canada but was rejected and never published. Wells's opus, completed in an astonishingly short period, was released by the same firm in North America the year following. As the mystery deepens and new evidence is revealed, it seems that the verdict of the courts in Deeks vs Wells may not be that of history. The cast of characters is as intriguing as it is wide in Canada, the United States, and England: renowned publishers and editors, eminent lawyers and judges, leading journalists and all-seeing office secretaries. Not all, it turns out, merited their reputations. Above all, the tale embraces the lives of the philandering Mr. Wells, his wife, and his

mistresses, and the scarcely noted Miss Florence Deeks, her family, her life's work, and her search for justice. From the Hardcover edition.

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