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Abstract/Excerpt

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The final chapter of H. G. Wells's novel, *Tono-Bungay* (1909) has given rise to surprisingly wide differences of opinion among commentators. Geoffrey West, an early admirer of the novel, thought that 'in the last chapter, one of the most splendid passages Wells has ever written, is focused the whole spirit of the book'; more recently J. R. Hammond referred to the chapter's 'series of brilliant images' and considered it 'one of the most carefully written . . . in the whole corpus of [Wells's] fiction'. At the opposite extreme from these views is Mark Schorer's familiar dismissal of *Tono-Bungay* in his essay 'Technique as Discovery' (1948) and his condemnation of the final chapter as a 'significant failure' because it is merely 'a kind of meditative rhapsody which denies every value that the book has been aiming towards'.

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Kennedy then quotes two short passages from the final chapter of *Tono-Bungay*, and these have since appeared in record sleeve and programme notes, and in other places, such as *Symphonies*.¹ Quoted in Kennedy, Michael: *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London, 1964). Kennedy also appears on pp. 139–140. ² Wells, H.G.: *Experiment in Autobiography* (London, 1966) pp.503 and 639. Also see Williams, Ursula Vaughan: *RVW. A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London, 1964), p.95. To EMBED. The final chapter of H. G. Wells's novel, *Tono-Bungay* (1909) has given rise to surprisingly wide differences of opinion among commentators. Geoffrey West, an early admirer of the novel, thought that 'in the last chapter, one of the most splendid passages Wells has ever written, is focused the whole spirit of the book'; more recently J. R. Hammond referred to the chapter's 'series of [Show full abstract] brilliant images' and considered it 'one of the most carefully written . . . in the whole corpus of [Wells's] fiction'. At the opposite extreme from these views is Mark Schorer's familiar dismissal of *Tono-Bungay* in his essay 'Technique as Discovery' (1948) and his condemnation of the final chapter as a 'significant failure' because it is merely 'a kind of meditative rhapsody which denies every value that the book has been aiming towards'. I have told of childless Marion, of my childless aunt, of Beatrice wasted and wasteful and futile. What I have done is to tell of all the energy I have given to vain things. I think of my industrious scheming with my uncle, of Crest Hill, of the men have envied him and wished to live as he lived. Through that central essential London reach I did not reach, the black hound going through reeds – on what trail even I who made her cannot tell. And in this reach, the