

Ben Kuleshov

Professor Sarah Cole

H.G. Wells ENGLGU4500.001

12 December 2025

H.G. Wells on Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty

“One gets a measure of the quality of this force of mechanical, of inhuman, growth as one marks the great statue of Liberty on our larboard, which is meant to dominate and fails absolutely to dominate the scene. It gets to three hundred feet, about, by standing on a pedestal of a hundred and fifty; and the uplifted torch, seen against the sky, suggests an arm straining upward, straining in hopeless competition with the fierce commercial altitudes ahead. Poor liberating Lady of the American ideal! One passes her and forgets” (Wells 36).

“I visited Ellis Island yesterday. It chanced to be a good day for my purpose. For the first time in its history, this filter of immigrant humanity has this week proved inadequate to the demand upon it. It was choked, and half a score of gravid liners were lying uncomfortably up the harbor, replete with twenty thousand or so of crude Americans from Ireland and Poland and Italy and Syria and Finland and Albania; men, women, children, dirt, and bags together... Yes, Ellis Island is quietly immense. It gives one a visible image of one aspect at least of this world-large process of filling and growing and synthesis, which is America... In one record day this month 21,000 immigrants came into the port of New York alone; in one week, over 50,000. This year, the total will be 1,200,000 souls, pouring in, finding work at once, producing no fall in wages. They start digging and building and making. Just think of the dimensions of it” (Wells 43-47)!

Works Cited

Wells, H. G. "Chapter III - New York." *The Future in America, American Literature*, AmericanLiterature.com,
<https://americanliterature.com/author/hg-wells/book/the-future-in-america/chapter-iii-new-york>.