

# Garrett P. Serviss

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*For the athlete, see Garrett Serviss*

**Garrett Putnam Serviss** (1851-1929) was an astronomer, popularizer of astronomy, and early science fiction writer. Serviss was born in upstate New York, and majored in science at Cornell. He took a law degree at Columbia, but never worked as an attorney. Instead, in 1876 he joined the staff of the New York Sun newspaper, working as a journalist until 1892 under editor Charles Dana. Serviss showed a talent for explaining scientific details in a way that made them clear to the ordinary reader, leading Andrew Carnegie to invite him to deliver *The Urania Lectures* on cosmology, astronomy, geology, and related matters. With Carnegie's financial backing, these lectures were illustrated with magic lantern slides and other effects to show eclipses, presumed lunar landscapes, and much else. Serviss toured the United States for over two years delivering these lectures, then settling down to become a popular speaker in the New York area. He gained

a syndicated newspaper column devoted to astronomy and other sciences and wrote frequently for the leading magazines of the day.

Serviss's favorite topic was astronomy, as shown by the fact that of the fifteen books he wrote, eight are devoted to that science. He unquestionably was more widely read by the public on that topic than anyone prior to his time. In his private life Serviss was an enthusiastic mountain climber, describing his reaching the summit of the Matterhorn at the age of 43 as part of an effort "to get as far away from terrestrial gravity as possible."<sup>[1]</sup>

Five of Serviss's books are science fiction (a term not invented when he wrote).

## **Bibliography**

### *Scientific Popularizations*

- *Astronomy Through an Opera Glass*, 1888
- *Pleasures of the Telescope*, 1901
- *Other Worlds*, 1901
- *The Moon*, 1907
- *Astronomy With The Naked Eye*, 1908

- *Curiosities of the Sky*, 1909
- *Round the Year with the Stars*, 1910
- *Astronomy in a Nutshell*, 1912

### *Science Fiction*

- *A Columbus of Space*, 1894 by G. W. Dilligham, 1974 by Hyperion Press
- *Edison's Conquest of Mars*, 1898 (written on commission as a sequel to H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*)
- *The Moon Metal*, 1900 (short story)
- *The Sky Pirate*, 1909
- *The Second Deluge*, 1911
- *The Moon Maiden*, 1915

## **External links**

- Works by Garrett P. Serviss at Project Gutenberg

## **References**

1. ^ Quoted by A. Langley Searles, in the preface to the 1974 edition of *A Columbus of Space*.

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