

The time machine

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THE WHEELS OF CHANCE

THE TIME MACHINE



H. G. WELLS

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FICTION

THE WHEELS OF CHANCE  
& THE TIME MACHINE  
BY H. G. WELLS

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J. M. DENT & SONS LIMITED  
10-13 BEDFORD STREET LONDON W.C.2

E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.  
286-302 FOURTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK

· Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,  
In thy most need to go by thy side.

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS, born on 21st September 1866 at Bromley, Kent, the son of a professional cricketer. From a draper's and chemist's assistant he became a teacher and was a London B.Sc. at twenty-four. Three years later he adopted a literary career.

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

H. G. WELLS has been writing books now for some forty years, and the two stories in this volume, *The Time Machine* and *The Wheels of Chance*, belong to his two first years as novelist. Yet, from the mass of his writings, enshrined in a hundred books and pamphlets, it would be hard to select two works more fitted than these to represent, within the compass of an *Everyman* volume, this many-sided author. In his *Autobiography* Mr. Wells says that during his early years he 'was welcomed as a second Dickens, a second Bulwer Lytton, and a second Jules Verne,' and adds that he was saved from the fate of Pett Ridge as the second Dickens by the perplexing variety of his books.

*The Wheels of Chance* is Dickensian in its humanity, its humour, and the caricature-portraits of some of the characters, particularly Hoopdriver, the central figure, whose name has the Dickens touch. Hoopdriver, Mr. Polly, and Kipps are Wells's three major creations in this kind, and the least of them is certainly not Hoopdriver. *The Wheels of Chance* is also Wells's first piece of 'escapist' fiction, a delightful example of that delightful theme of leaving the humdrum daily round behind and setting out for new scenes, new experiences and adventures. Hoopdriver is a creation, and the book is a cycling idyll. Set in the early days of cycling, one might expect the story to date. It does not. Change Jessica's 'rationals,' the daring female nether garments of those days, and Hoopdriver's knickers, to shorts, and it is a story of to-day.

*The Time Machine* belongs to those imaginative, scientific romances which led to its author being called a second Jules Verne and a second Bulwer Lytton. Here it is surely not Wells who is flattered. The creator of *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The War in the Air*, and *The Time Machine* is not a second anybody; he stands alone. The purpose of *The Time Machine* is a view of man's descendants in the year 802,701. First Wells has to satisfy the reader

that a normal twentieth-century person can take a peep thus far into the future, and this he does with every device of realism, literary and scientific. In an easy-going naturalistic setting he introduces us to the Time Traveller, who has invented a machine which travels through time instead of space. Once in that distant era the reader is under the spell. Utterly rational as the whole prognostication is, it is also a dramatic story and rises at its heights to poetic romance. Discussing his journey on his return to the present age the Time Traveller says: 'Treat my assertion of its truth as a mere stroke of art to enhance its interest. And taking it as a story, what do you think of it?' Our answer to that can readily be that it is as good as anything H. G. Wells has written.

A. J. H.

The following is a list of the chief works of H. G. Wells, with the dates of their appearance in book form:

*Text-book of Biology*, 1893; *Honours Physiography* (with R. A. Gregory), 1893; *Select Conversations with an Uncle*, 1895; *The Time Machine*, 1895; *The Wonderful Visit*, 1895; *The Stolen Bacillus, etc.*, 1895; *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, 1896; *The Wheels of Chance*, 1896; *The Plattner Story, etc.*, 1897; *The Invisible Man*, 1897; *Certain Personal Matters*, 1897; *The War of the Worlds*, 1898; *When the Sleeper Wakes*, 1899 (revised ed. pub. as *The Sleeper Awakes*, 1910); *Tales of Space and Time*, 1899; *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, 1900; *The First Men in the Moon*, 1901; *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*, 1901; *The Discovery of the Future*, 1902; *The Sea Lady*, 1902; *Mankind in the Making*, 1903; *Twelve Stories and a Dream*, 1903; *The Food of the Gods*, 1904; *A Modern Utopia*, 1905; *Kipps*, 1905; *In the Days of the Comet*, 1906; *The Future in America*, 1906; *Socialism and the Family*, 1906; *The Misery of Boots*, 1907; *New Worlds for Old*, 1908; *The War in the Air*, 1908; *First and Last Things*, 1908 (revised and enlarged, 1917); *Tono-Bungay*, 1909; *Ann Veronica*, 1909; *The History of Mr. Polly*, 1910; *The New Machiavelli*, 1911; *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories*, 1911 (this collection contained five new stories); *Floor Games*, 1911; *Marriage*, 1912; *Little Wars*, 1913; *The Passionate Friends*, 1913; *An Englishman looks at the World*, 1914; *The World Set Free*, 1914; *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, 1914; *The War that will end War*, 1914; *The Peace of the World*, 1915; *Boon*, 1915 (first published under the pseudonym of Reginald Bliss); *Bealby*, 1915; *The Research Magnificent*, 1915; *What is Coming*, 1916; *Mr. Brilling sees it Through*, 1916; *The Elements of Reconstruction*, 1916 (originally published under the pseudonym of 'D.P.');

*War and the Future*, 1917; *God the Invisible King*, 1917; *A Reasonable Man's Peace*, 1917; *The Soul of a Bishop*, 1917; *In the Fourth Year*, 1918; *Joan and Peter*, 1918; *The Undying Fire*, 1919; *The Outline of History*, 1920 (definitive ed. 1926); *Russia in the Shadows*, 1920; *The Salvaging of Civilization*, 1921; *The New Teaching of History*, 1921; *Washington and the Hope of Peace*, 1922; *The*



*Secret Places of the Heart*, 1922; *A Short History of the World*, 1922; *Men like Gods*, 1923; *The Story of a Great Schoolmaster*, 1924; *The Dream*, 1924; *A Year of Prophesying*, 1924; *Christina Alberta's Father*, 1925; *Mr. Belloc Objects to 'The Outline of History'*, 1926; *The World of William Clissold*, 1926; *Democracy under Revision*, 1927; *Meanwhile*, 1927; *The Book of Catherine Wells*, 1928; *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island*, 1928; *The Way the World is Going*, 1928; *The Open Conspiracy*, 1928 (2nd version, 1930; rewritten as *What are We to do with Our Lives*, 1930); *The Adventures of Tommy*, 1929; *The Common Sense of World Peace*, 1929; *The King who was a King* (a film synopsis), 1929; *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham*, 1930; *The Way to World Peace*, 1930; *The Science of Life* (with Julian Huxley and G. P. Wells), 1931; *After Democracy*, 1932; *The Work, Wealth, and Happiness of Mankind*, 1932; *The Bulpington of Bulp*, 1933; *The Shape of Things to Come*, 1933; *An Experiment in Autobiography*, 1934.

The Atlantic edition (1925) of Wells's works contains some hitherto uncollected matter.

Although *An Experiment in Autobiography* was written several years later and is naturally more authoritative, the biography of Wells by G. A. West (1930) is supplementary and contains an Introduction by Wells. The same writer, using his real name of G. H. Wells, compiled a bibliography of the works of H. G. in 1925, which was amplified in 1926.

SPECIAL BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE TO 'THE TIME MACHINE': The first version of this tale appeared in 1888, when Wells contributed 'The Chronic Argonauts' to his college magazine, *The Science Schools Journal*. Later it was entirely rewritten and parts appeared in *The National Observer* in 1894 and in *The New Review* (1894-5).

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# THE WHEELS OF CHANCE

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*Made in Great Britain  
at The Temple Press Letchworth  
and decorated by Eric Ravilious  
for*

*J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.  
Aldine House Bedford London*

*Toronto . Vancouver*

*Melbourne . Wellington*

*First Published in this Edition 1935*

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TO  
MY DEAR MOTHER



# I

## THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTER IN THE STORY

IF you (presuming you are of the sex that does such things)—if you had gone into the Drapery Emporium—which is really only magnificent for shop—of Messrs. Antrobud & Co.—a perfectly fictitious ‘Co.,’ by the by—of Putney, on the 14th of August 1895, had turned to the right-hand side, where the blocks of white linen and piles of blankets rise up to the rail from which the pink and blue prints depend, you might have been served by the central figure of this story that is now beginning. He would have come forward, bowing and swaying; he would have extended two hands with largish knuckles and enormous cuffs over the counter; and he would have asked you, protruding a pointed chin and without the slightest anticipation of pleasure in his manner, what he might have the pleasure of showing you. Under certain circumstances—as, for instance, hats, baby-linen, gloves, silks, lace, or curtains—he would simply have bowed politely, and with a drooping expression, and making a kind of circular sweep, invited you to ‘step this way,’ and so led you beyond his ken; but under other and happier conditions—huckaback, blankets, dimity, cretonne, linen, calico, are cases in point—he would have requested you to take a seat, emphasizing the hospitality by leaning over the counter and gripping a chair back in a spasmodic manner, and so proceeded to obtain, unfold, and exhibit his goods for

your consideration. Under which happier circumstances you might—if of an observing turn of mind, and not too much of a housewife to be inhuman—have given the central figure of this story less cursory attention.

Now if you had noticed anything about him, it would have been chiefly to notice how little he was noticeable. He wore the black morning coat, the black tie, and the speckled grey nether parts (descending into shadow and mystery below the counter) of his craft. He was of a pallid complexion, hair of a kind of dirty fairness, greyish eyes, and a skimpy, immature moustache under his peaked, indeterminate nose. His features were all small, but none ill-shaped. A rosette of pins decorated the lapel of his coat. His remarks, you would observe, were entirely what people used to call cliché, formulae not organic to the occasion, but stereotyped ages ago, and learnt years since by heart. 'This, madam,' he would say, 'is selling very well.' 'We are doing a very good article at four three a yard.' 'We could show you something better, of course.' 'No trouble, madam, I assure you.' Such were the simple counters of his intercourse. So, I say, he would have presented himself to your superficial observation. He would have danced about behind the counter, have neatly refolded the goods he had shown you, have put on one side those you selected, extracted a little book with a carbon leaf and a tinfoil sheet from a fixture, made you out a little bill in that weak flourishing hand peculiar to drapers, and have bawled 'Sayn!' Then a puffy little shop-walker would have come into view, looked at the bill for a second, very hard (showing you a parting down the middle of his head meanwhile), have scribbled a still more flourishing J. M. all over the document, have asked you if there was nothing more, have stood by you—



supposing that you were paying cash—until the central figure of this story reappeared with the change. One glance more at him, and the puffy little shop-walker would have been bowing you out, with fountains of civilities at work all about you. And so the interview would have terminated.

But real literature, as distinguished from anecdote, does not concern itself with superficial appearances alone. Literature is revelation. Modern literature is indecorous revelation. It is the duty of the earnest author to tell you what you would not have seen—even at the cost of some blushes. And the thing that you would not have seen about this young man, and the thing of the greatest moment to this story, the thing that must be told if the book is to be written, was—let us face it bravely—the Remarkable Condition of this Young Man's Legs.

Let us approach the business with dispassionate explicitness. Let us assume something of the scientific spirit, the hard, almost professorial tone of the conscientious realist. Let us treat this young man's legs as a mere diagram, and indicate the points of interest with the unemotional precision of a lecturer's pointer. And so to our revelation. On the internal aspect of the right ankle of this young man, you would have observed, ladies and gentlemen, a contusion and an abrasion; on the internal aspect of the left ankle a contusion also; on its external aspect a large yellowish bruise. On his left shin there were two bruises, one a leaden yellow graduating here and there into purple, and another, obviously of more recent date, of a blotchy red—tumid and threatening. Proceeding up the left leg in a spiral manner, an unnatural hardness and redness would have been discovered on the upper aspect of the calf; and above the knee and on the inner side, an extraordinary expanse of bruised surface a