

插图·中文导读英文版



The Time Machine

时间机器

[英] 威尔斯 著

王勋 纪飞 等 编译



清华大学出版社

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内 容 简 介

《时间机器》是世界上最伟大的科幻小说之一，主要讲述“时间旅行”的故事。时间旅行家发明了一种能穿越时空的时间机器，乘坐时间机器，他穿越时空抵达公元 802701 年，然而展现在他眼前的是一个恐怖的人吃人的世界：地球上生活着两支人，一支是生活在地面，他们的智力已经严重退化，另一支生活在地下，他们的智力却异常发达；“地面人”被“地下人”作为食物饲养，每到夜晚，“地下人”就会借着夜色的掩护来到地面上猎捕“地面人”一副惊心动魄的景象。最后，他终于回到现在。不久，他又踏上了第二次时间之旅。这一次他却再也没有回来。留给我们的是一个永恒的不解之谜。

该书一经出版，很快就成为当时最畅销的小说，并被改编成电影、电视和动画片等。书中所展现的科幻故事伴随了一代又一代人的美丽童年、少年直至成年。无论作为语言学习的课本，还是作为通俗科幻小说读本，本书对当代中国的青少年都将产生积极的影响。为了使读者能够了解英文故事概况，进而提高阅读速度和阅读水平，在每章的开始部分增加了中文导读。同时，为了读者更好地理解故事内容，书中加入了大量插图。

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赫伯特·乔治·威尔斯（Herbert George Wells, 1866—1946），英国著名作家，被誉为“科幻小说界的莎士比亚”、“英国的儒勒·凡尔纳”。

1866年9月21日，威尔斯出生在英格兰肯特郡的一个贫穷人家。因为家庭破产，他十四岁就开始分担家庭负担，先后当过药房学徒、邮递员、售货员和教师等。通过自学，他于1884年进入伦敦自然科学师范学院学习，并于1890年获理科学士学位；之后，在雷克萨姆·霍尔特学院任教。

1891年，威尔斯开始为一些报刊撰写文章。1893年，他出版了第一部作品《生物学读本》。1895年，出版了科幻小说《时间机器》，该书一经出版便成为当时最畅销图书，并引发了人们对科学幻想的热烈讨论，威尔斯从此一举成名。之后，陆续出版了《莫洛博士岛》、《隐形人》、《星球大战》、《神的食物》等科幻小说。除了科幻小说，威尔斯还出版了喜剧小说《爱情和路易先姆先生》、《玻利先生的历史》、《基普斯》等，反映社会现实的小说《像神一样的人们》、《梦》、《巴海姆先生的独裁统治》和《怎么小心都不会过分》等以及长篇历史著作《世界史纲》。

威尔斯一生共创作、出版了一百多部作品，但影响最大、最成



功的是科幻小说，其中《时间机器》、《隐形人》、《星球大战》等已成为现代科幻小说的经典之作。一百多年来，他的科幻小说被译成世界上的多种文字，并不断被改编成电影、电视、动画片等，在全世界范围内广泛传播。时至今日，他的科幻小说仍是世界上最受欢迎的作品。

《时间机器》是威尔斯的代表作之一，它在世界科幻小说史上占有非常重要的位置，是公认的世界文学名著之一。在中国《时间机器》是最受广大读者欢迎的经典小说之一，是中国一代又一代读者最熟悉的世界文学名著之一。基于以上原因，我们决定编译《时间机器》，并采用中文导读英文版的形式出版。在中文导读中，我们尽力使其贴近原作的精髓，也尽可能保留原作故事主线。我们希望能够编出为当代中国读者所喜爱的经典读本。读者在阅读英文故事之前，可以先阅读中文导读，这样有利于了解故事背景，从而加快阅读速度。同时，为了读者更好地理解故事内容，书中加入了大量插图。我们相信，该经典著作的引进对加强当代中国读者，特别是青少年读者的人文修养是非常有帮助的。

本书主要内容由王勋、纪飞编译。参加本书故事素材搜集整理及编译工作的还有郑佳、刘乃亚、赵雪、熊金玉、李丽秀、李智能、李鑫、熊红华、傅颖、乐贵明、王婷婷、熊志勇、聂利生、傅建平、蔡红昌、孟宪行、胡国平、李晓红、胡武荣、贡东兴、张镇、熊建国、张文绮、王多多、陈楠、彭勇、邵舒丽、黄福成、冯洁、王晓旭、王业伟、龚桂平、徐鑫、周丽萍、曹隼、徐平国、肖洁、王小红等。限于我们的科学、人文素养和英语水平，书中难免会有不当之处，衷心希望读者朋友批评指正。



第一章/Chapter1	1
第二章/Chapter2	16
第三章/Chapter3	27
第四章/Chapter4	37
第五章/Chapter5	55
第六章/Chapter6	82
第七章/Chapter7	92
第八章/Chapter8	104
第九章/Chapter9	116
第十章/Chapter10	128
第十一章/Chapter11	134
第十二章/Chapter12	144
尾声/Epilogue	154

时间旅行家很自豪地把他的时间机器呈现在我们面前，并借助心理学家的手指按下时间机器的白色按钮，眼看着它慢慢变得模糊直到消失。我们面面相觑。

时间旅行家对大家反应感到很满足，但他还不能断定这台小小的时间机器是走向了未来，还是回到了过去。他还带我们参观了他的实验室，并认真地告诉我们，他要完成一台真正可以载人的时

第一章

Chapter 1



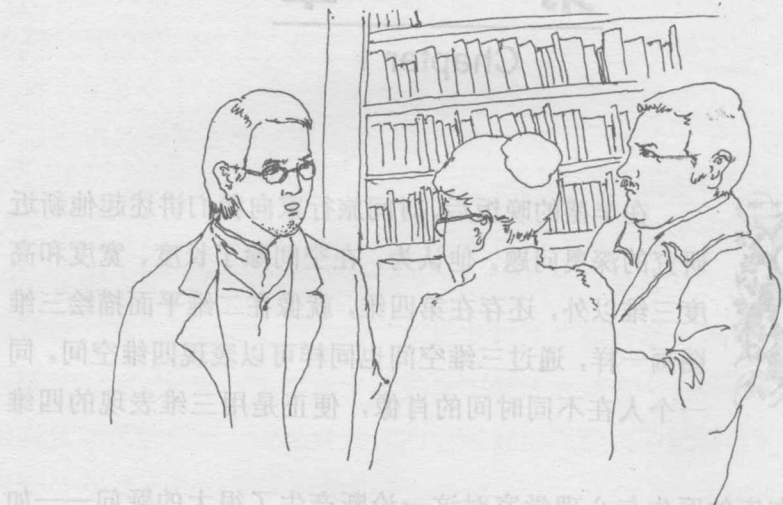
在丰盛的晚饭后，时间旅行家向我们讲述起他新近研究的深奥问题。他认为，在空间除了长度、宽度和高度三维以外，还存在第四维，就像在二维平面描绘三维图画一样，通过三维空间也同样可以表现四维空间。同

一个人在不同时间的肖像，便正是用三维表现的四维生命。

在座的医生与心理学家对这一论断产生了很大的疑问——如果确实存在第四维时间，那么我们自然能够在时间里自由来回，可事实并非如此。这个问题正好问到了点上。如果文明人可以通过飞机或气球抵制地心引力，那么就可以通过一种机器来穿越时间，这正是时间旅行家的伟大发明。

时间旅行家很自豪地把他的时间机器呈现在我们面前，并借助心理学家的手指按下时间机器的白色杠杆，眼看着它慢慢变得模糊直到消失。我们面面相觑。

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间机器，带着他穿越时空，揭开时间的奥秘。

The Time Traveler was expounding a recondite matter to us. His gray eyes shone and twinkled, and his usually pale face was flushed and animated.

The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights in the lilies of silver caught the bubbles that flashed and passed in our glasses.

Our chairs, being his patents, embraced and caressed us rather than submitted to be sat upon, and there was that luxurious after-dinner atmosphere when thought roams gracefully free of the trammels of precision. And he put it to us in this way—marking the points with a lean forefinger—as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness over this new paradox (as we thought it) and his fecundity.

‘You must follow me carefully. I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted. The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception.’

‘Is not that rather a large thing to expect us to begin upon?’ said Filby, an argumentative person with red hair.

‘I do not mean to ask you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it. You will soon admit as much as I need from you. You know of course that a mathematical line, a line of

thickness NIL, has no real existence. They taught you that? Neither has a mathematical plane. These things are mere abstractions.'

'That is all right,' said the Psychologist. 'Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube have a real existence.'

'There I object,' said Filby. 'Of course a solid body may exist. All real things—'

'So most people think. But wait a moment. Can an instantaneous cube exist?'

'Don't follow you,' said Filby.

'Can a cube that does not last for any time at all, have a real existence?' Filby became pensive.

'Clearly,' the Time Traveler proceeded, 'any real body must have extension in FOUR directions: it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and —Duration. But through a natural infirmity of the flesh, which I will explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact. There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and a fourth, Time. There is, however, a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the former three dimensions and the latter, because it happens that our consciousness moves intermittently in one direction along the latter from the beginning to the end of our lives.'

'That,' said a very young man, making spasmodic efforts to relight his cigar over the lamp. 'that...very clear indeed.'

'Now, it is very remarkable that this is so extensively

overlooked,' continued the Time Traveler, with a slight accession of cheerfulness. 'Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know they mean it. It is only another way of looking at Time. There is no difference between time and any of the three dimensions of space except that our consciousness moves along it. But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension?'

'I have not,' said the Provincial Mayor.

'It is simply this. That Space, as our mathematicians have it, is spoken of as having three dimensions, which one may call Length, Breadth, and Thickness, and is always definable by reference to three planes, each at right angles to the others. But some philosophical people have been asking why three dimensions particularly—why not another direction at right angles to the other three? —and have even tried to construct a Four-Dimension geometry. Professor Simon Newcomb was expounding this to the New York Mathematical Society only a month or so ago. You know how on a flat surface, which has only two dimensions, we can represent a figure of a three-dimensional solid, and similarly they think that by models of three dimensions they could represent one of four—if they could master the perspective of the thing. See?'

'I think so,' murmured the Provincial Mayor. and, knitting his brows, he lapsed into an introspective state, his lips moving as one



who repeats mystic words.

‘Yes, I think I see it now,’ he said after some time, brightening in a quite transitory manner.

‘Well, I do not mind telling you I have been at work upon this geometry of Four Dimensions for some time. Some of my results are curious. For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at seventeen, another at twenty-three, and so on. All these are evidently sections, as it were, Three-Dimensional representations of his Four-Dimensioned being, which is a fixed and unalterable thing.

‘Scientific people,’ proceeded the Time Traveler, after the pause required for the proper assimilation of this, ‘know very well that Time is only a kind of Space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather record. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of the barometer. Yesterday it was so high, yesterday night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and so gently upward to here. Surely the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of Space generally recognized. But certainly it traced such a line, and that line, therefore, we must conclude was along the Time-Dimension.’

‘But,’ said the Medical Man, staring hard at a coal in the fire, ‘if Time is really only a fourth dimension of Space, why is it, and why has it always been, regarded as something different? And why cannot we move in Time as we move about in the other dimensions

of Space?’

The Time Traveler smiled. ‘Are you sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go, backward and forward freely enough, and men always have done so. I admit we move freely in two dimensions. But how about up and down? Gravitation limits us there.’

‘Not exactly,’ said the Medical Man. ‘There are balloons.’

‘But before the balloons, save for spasmodic jumping and the inequalities of the surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement.’

‘Still they could move a little up and down,’ said the Medical Man.

‘Easier, far easier down than up.’

‘And you cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the, present moment.’

‘My dear sir, that is just where you are wrong. That is just where the whole world has gone wrong. We are always getting away from the present moment. Our mental existences, which are immaterial and have no dimensions, are passing along the Time-Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the grave. Just as we should travel down if we began our existence fifty miles above the earth’s surface.’

‘But the great difficulty is this,’ interrupted the Psychologist. ‘You can move about in all directions of Space, but you cannot

move about in Time.'

'That is the germ of my great discovery. But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilized man is better off than the savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?'

'Oh, this,' began Filby. 'is all—'

'Why not?' said the Time Traveler.

'It's against reason,' said Filby.

'What reason?' said the Time Traveler.

'You can show black is white by argument,' said Filby. 'but you will never convince me.'

'Possibly not,' said the Time Traveler. 'But now you begin to see the object of my investigations into the geometry of Four Dimensions. Long ago I had a vague inkling of a machine—'

'To travel through Time!' exclaimed the Very Young Man.

'That shall travel indifferently in any direction of Space and Time, as the driver determines.' Filby contented himself with

laughter.

‘But I have experimental verification,’ said the Time Traveler.

‘It would be remarkably convenient for the historian,’ the Psychologist suggested. ‘One might travel back and verify the accepted account of the Battle of Hastings, for instance!’

‘Don’t you think you would attract attention?’ said the Medical Man. ‘Our ancestors had no great tolerance for anachronisms.’

‘One might get one’s Greek from the very lips of Homer and Plato,’ the Very Young Man thought.

‘In which case they would certainly plough you for the Little-go. The German scholars have improved Greek so much.’

‘Then there is the future,’ said the Very Young Man. ‘Just think! One might invest all one’s money, leave it to accumulate at interest, and hurry on ahead!’

‘To discover a society,’ said I, ‘erected on a strictly communistic basis.’

‘Of all the wild extravagant theories!’ began the Psychologist.

‘Yes, so it seemed to me, and so I never talked of it until—’

‘Experimental verification!’ cried I. ‘You are going to verify that?’

‘The experiment!’ cried Filby, who was getting brain-weary.

‘Let’s see your experiment anyhow,’ said the Psychologist. ‘though it’s all humbug, you know.’

The Time Traveler smiled round at us. Then, still smiling



faintly, and with his hands deep in his trousers pockets, he walked slowly out of the room, and we heard his slippers shuffling down the long passage to his laboratory.

The Psychologist looked at us. 'I wonder what he's got?' 'Some sleight-of-hand trick or other,' said the Medical Man, and Filby tried to tell us about a conjurer he had seen at Burslem; but before he had finished his preface the Time Traveler came back, and Filby's anecdote collapsed.

The thing the Time Traveler held in his hand was a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and very delicately made. There was ivory in it, and some transparent crystalline substance.

And now I must be explicit, for this that follows—unless his explanation is to be accepted—is an absolutely unaccountable thing.

He took one of the small octagonal tables that were scattered about the room, and set it in front of the fire, with two legs on the hearthrug.

On this table he placed the mechanism. Then he drew up a chair, and sat down.

The only other object on the table was a small shaded lamp, the bright light of which fell upon the model. There were also perhaps a dozen candles about, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces, so that the room was brilliantly illuminated.

I sat in a low armchair nearest the fire, and I drew this forward

so as to be almost between the Time Traveler and the fireplace. Filby sat behind him, looking over his shoulder. The Medical Man and the Provincial Mayor watched him in profile from the right, the Psychologist from the left. The Very Young Man stood behind the Psychologist. We were all on the alert. It appears incredible to me that any kind of trick, however subtly conceived and however adroitly done, could have been played upon us under these conditions.

The Time Traveler looked at us, and then at the mechanism.

‘Well?’ said the Psychologist.

‘This little affair,’ said the Time Traveler, resting his elbows upon the table and pressing his hands together above the apparatus, ‘is only a model. It is my plan for a machine to travel through time. You will notice that it looks singularly askew, and that there is an odd twinkling appearance about this bar, as though it was in some way unreal.’ He pointed to the part with his finger. ‘Also, here is one little white lever, and here is another.’

The Medical Man got up out of his chair and peered into the thing. ‘It’s beautifully made,’ he said.

‘It took two years to make,’ retorted the Time Traveler. Then, when we had all imitated the action of the Medical Man, he said: ‘Now I want you clearly to understand that this lever, being pressed over, sends the machine gliding into the future, and this other reverses the motion. This saddle represents the seat of a time