

The future of the great numbers of workers in the cities, and of society in general, was on many people's minds. It was not really surprising that Karl Marx had lived in London. He had seen the situation of the workers there and put the results of his thinking into his books. Wells was not a follower of Marx, but he believed that everybody should have the chance to go to school, that science could improve people's lives and that a better, fairer kind of society was possible.

At the beginning of the book, Wells shows us that the Time Traveller lives in a large house and has servants. His friends include a doctor, a psychologist and the editor of a newspaper – people who have good jobs. The Time Traveller seems to do no regular work himself, so either he has a lot of money or he makes money from his inventions. Wells then sends him forwards in time to a possible future. In this time the workers and the managers have become more and more separate, until they have almost lost contact with each other completely. Their different lives have changed them into physically quite different species. The workers are ugly creatures who live almost like animals, although they still remember how to make things, while the managers have changed into people who are small, quite beautiful – and completely useless.

It is possible to see this as the old fight between good and bad, but Wells was not a very religious man. Also, to help the beautiful people, the Time Traveller is ready to fight against the others. On a number of occasions he attacks those in the other group, and can only with difficulty stop himself killing them. This is perhaps not the normal behaviour of a 'good' man, but the end of the nineteenth century was a time when war, often fought in colourful uniforms, was still seen as an activity in which men showed that they were men. Nobody could imagine the great killing of the next fifty years. In the book, Wells says that difficulties and dangers make people strong, clever and

intelligent, and it is clear that strength includes the ability and willingness to fight. Wells argued for world peace but understood the nature of man. So when he uses weapons, the Time Traveller only does what was expected of a man of his time. But he can dance too, and when he fights or when he dances he shows types of behaviour that belong to each of the two human groups of the future.

One of the dinner guests in Chapter 1 is a psychologist. Like many people of his time, Wells was interested in this new science and it is also possible to see the two social groups of the future as different parts of the human mind. Sigmund Freud's first book appeared in the same year as *The Time Machine*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (also a Penguin Reader) had come out less than ten years before. In that book, Stevenson used science to separate the good and bad sides of the same person. In a different way, Wells was doing something similar.

Wells was, perhaps, also examining his own behaviour. He was a very hard worker. In his life he wrote more than Dickens and Shakespeare together. But he also enjoyed his free time – sometimes in a way that shocked many people. Although Wells married his cousin in 1891, just over a year later he ran away with – and later married – one of his students. Later, he had a great number of relationships with other women, which his wife appeared to accept.

When the Time Traveller goes into the future, he meets a woman called Weena and they become close friends. We are told that Weena, like the others of her group, is small and almost childlike. To us, there may be something slightly worrying about this description, but confident women with ideas of equality were unusual in Wells's time. Some existed: they were known as New Women, and in his book *Ann Veronica* (1909) Wells wrote about one of them. But in general, middle-class women were