

at the table too, and satisfy yourself that there can be no tricks. I don't want to waste this model and then be told I'm dishonest.'

There was a minute's pause perhaps. The Psychologist opened his mouth to speak to me but closed it again. Then the Time Traveller put out his finger towards the lever.

'No,' he said suddenly, pulling his finger away again. 'Lend me your hand.' And turning to the Psychologist, he took that person's hand in his own and told him to put out his first finger and touch the lever.

So the Psychologist himself sent the model time machine on its endless journey. We all saw the lever turn. I am completely certain there was no trick. There was a breath of wind and the lamp flame jumped. The machine suddenly turned round, looked unclear, was seen like a ghost for a second and was gone – disappeared! Except for the lamp, the table was empty.

Everyone was silent for a minute. Then the Psychologist recovered from his surprise and looked under the table.

The Time Traveller laughed cheerfully. 'Well?' he said.

We all stared.

'My friend,' said the Medical Man quietly, 'are you serious about this? Do you really believe that machine has travelled in time?'

'Certainly,' said the Time Traveller. 'And I have a big machine nearly finished in there' – he pointed to the laboratory – 'and when that is put together I intend to go on a journey myself.'

'You mean to say that that machine has travelled into the future?' said Filby.

'Into the future or the past – I'm not completely sure which.'

After some time the Psychologist said, 'It has gone into the past if it has gone anywhere.'

'Why?' said the Time Traveller.

'Because I'm quite sure that it hasn't moved in space, and if it travelled into the future it would still be here all this time. It

would have to travel through the time that is passing as we stand here.'

'But,' I said, 'if it travelled into the past, why wasn't it here when we first came into this room, and last Thursday when we were here – and the Thursday before that?'

'Let's be fair – these are serious questions,' said Filby, turning towards the Time Traveller.

'That can be explained,' the Time Traveller said to the Psychologist. 'It's there but can't be seen.'

'Of course,' said the Psychologist. 'That's simple enough. Why didn't I think of it? We can't see it, in the same way that we can't see a bullet flying through the air. If it is travelling through time fifty times or a hundred times faster than we are, we can see only one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of it.'

We sat and stared at the empty table for a minute or two. Then the Time Traveller asked us what we thought of it all.

'It sounds believable enough tonight,' said the Medical Man, 'but it will seem different in the morning.'

'Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?' asked the Time Traveller. And then, taking the lamp in his hand, he led the way to the laboratory.

I remember clearly how we all followed him, and how in the laboratory we saw a larger copy of the little machine. It was almost complete, but two bars lay unfinished on the table and I picked one up for a better look.

'Now listen,' said the Medical Man, 'are you really serious?'

'In that machine,' said the Time Traveller, holding the lamp high, 'I intend to travel in time. Is that clear? I was never more serious in my life.'

None of us knew what to say. I looked at Filby over the shoulder of the Medical Man and he smiled at me.