Exploring the character of the young Arthur Kipps, the protagonist

At the beginning of his story he is barely 23 years of age and engaged to Stella. He is employed in Mr. Bentley’s legal practice.

He is a confident young man with steady nerves: ‘But I was, in those days of my youth, a sturdy, commonsensical fellow, and I felt no unease or apprehension whatsoever.’ (p. 26)

There is an unquestionable arrogance about him: ‘For I must confess I had the Londoner’s sense of superiority in those days...’ (p. 42).

He is also dismissive and self-important. On his first meeting with Daily, the older Kipps describes how his younger self: ‘Having, in my youthful and priggish way, summed up and all but dismissed him...’ (p. 36). As a result of his youthful arrogance, he totally underestimates the capable, entrepreneurial Daily.

He has a boyish enthusiasm for life: ‘I was barely twenty-three years old, and retained a schoolboy’s passion for everything to do with railway stations and journeys on steam locomotives.’ (p. 26)

He is brave and risks his own life to save Spider from the quicksand after she has been lured to her death by a ghostly whistle: ‘I strained as hard as ever I could to drag my body backwards onto firmer ground. As I did so, the dog’s body suddenly gave and the tug of war was over as I fell back, holding her tight...’ (p. 131).

He is a religious man: ‘I bent my head and prayed with a sudden upsurge of concern for the soul of that lonely old woman...’ (p. 50). And despite his arrogance, he has a compassionate nature: ‘I intended to wait for the sick-looking woman and offer my arm to escort her.’ (p. 50)

He is determined, stubborn and has great strength of character: ‘I discovered for myself...that a man cannot remain indefinitely in a state of active terror...he runs away or goes mad; or he will become by slow degrees less agitated and more in possession of himself.’ (p. 126). Kipps recovers his composure and continues to explore the haunted Eel Marsh House in the middle of the night in which, against all advice, he has insisted on staying alone.

Arthur Kipps: a young lawyer aged barely 23 and the novel’s protagonist

He is concerned with social status and is somewhat of a snob: ‘I had come on the bicycle but, confronted with the grandeur of the Daily home, had hidden it in a ditch beyond the outer gates, feeling that it did not look quite right to bicycle up that carriage drive.’ (pp. 99–100).

He is a down to earth man who only believes in the evidence of his five senses: ‘I did not believe in ghosts...and whatever stories I had heard of them I had, like most rational, sensible young men, dismissed as nothing more than stories indeed.’ (p. 67)