H. G. Wells

The Time Machine

The Invisible Man

The War of the Worlds

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The Time Machine

by H. G. Wells [Herbert George]

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The Time Machine, by H(erbert) G(eorge) Wells [1898]

I

The Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of

him) was expounding a recondite matter to us. His grey 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 Traveller 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 Traveller, 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

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 thee 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 Traveller, 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 Traveller 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 movement. 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 Traveller.

`It's against reason,' said Filby.

`What reason?' said the Time Traveller.

`You can show black is white by argument,' said Filby, `but you

will never convince me.'

`Possibly not,' said the Time Traveller. `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

Traveller.

`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 Traveller 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

Traveller came back, and Filby's anecdote collapsed.

The thing the Time Traveller 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 arm-chair nearest the

fire, and I drew this forward so as to be almost between the Time

Traveller 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 Traveller looked at us, and then at the mechanism.

`Well?' said the Psychologist.

`This little affair,' said the Time Traveller, 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 Traveller.

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 traveller. Presently I am going to press the

lever, and off the machine will go. It will vanish, pass into

future Time, and disappear. Have a good look at the thing. Look

at the table too, and satisfy yourselves there is no trickery. I

don't want to waste this model, and then be told I'm a quack.'

There was a minute's pause perhaps. The Psychologist seemed

about to speak to me, but changed his mind. Then the Time

Traveller put forth his finger towards the lever. `No,' he said

suddenly. `Lend me your hand.' And turning to the Psychologist,

he took that individual's hand in his own and told him to put out

his forefinger. So that it was the Psychologist himself who sent

forth the model Time Machine on its interminable voyage. We all

saw the lever turn. I am absolutely certain there was no

trickery. There was a breath of wind, and the lamp flame jumped.

One of the candles on the mantel was blown out, and the little

machine suddenly swung round, became indistinct, was seen as a

ghost for a second perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering

brass and ivory; and it was gone--vanished! Save for the lamp

the table was bare.

Everyone was silent for a minute. Then Filby said he was

damned.

The Psychologist recovered from his stupor, and suddenly looked

under the table. At that the Time Traveller laughed cheerfully.

`Well?' he said, with a reminiscence of the Psychologist. Then,

getting up, he went to the tobacco jar on the mantel, and with

his back to us began to fill his pipe.

We stared at each other. `Look here,' said the Medical Man,

`are you in earnest about this? Do you seriously believe that

that machine has travelled into time?'

`Certainly,' said the Time Traveller, stooping to light a spill

at the fire. Then he turned, lighting his pipe, to look at the

Psychologist's face. (The Psychologist, to show that he was not

unhinged, helped himself to a cigar and tried to light it

uncut.)

`What is more, I have a big machine nearly finished in there'--he

indicated the laboratory--`and when that is put together I mean

to have a journey on my own account.'

`You mean to say that that machine has travelled into the

future?' said Filby.

`Into the future or the past--I don't, for certain, know

which.'

After an interval the Psychologist had an inspiration. `It

must have gone into the past if it has gone anywhere,' he said.

`Why?' said the Time Traveller.

`Because I presume that it has not moved in space, and if it

travelled into the future it would still be here all this time,

since it must have travelled through this time.'

`But,' I said, `If it travelled into the past it would have

been visible when we came first into this room; and last Thursday

when we were here; and the Thursday before that; and so forth!'

`Serious objections,' remarked the Provincial Mayor, with an

air of impartiality, turning towards the Time Traveller.

`Not a bit,' said the Time Traveller, and, to the Psychologist:

`You think. You can explain that. It's presentation below the

threshold, you know, diluted presentation.'

`Of course,' said the Psychologist, and reassured us. `That's

a simple point of psychology. I should have thought of it. It's

plain enough, and helps the paradox delightfully. We cannot see

it, nor can we appreciate this machine, any more than we can the

spoke of a wheel spinning, or a bullet flying through the air.

If it is travelling through time fifty times or a hundred times

faster than we are, if it gets through a minute while we get

through a second, the impression it creates will of course be

only one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of what it would make if it

were not travelling in time. That's plain enough.' He passed

his hand through the space in which the machine had been. `You

see?' he said, laughing.

We sat and stared at the vacant table for a minute or so. Then

the Time Traveller asked us what we thought of it all.

`It sounds plausible enough to-night,' said the Medical Man;

'but wait until to-morrow. Wait for the common sense of the

morning.'

`Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?' asked the Time

Traveller. And therewith, taking the lamp in his hand, he led the way down the long, draughty corridor to his laboratory. I remember vividly the flickering light, his queer, broad head in

silhouette, the dance of the shadows, how we all followed him,

puzzled but incredulous, and how there in the laboratory we beheld a larger edition of the little mechanism which we had seen

vanish from before our eyes. Parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal. The thing was generally complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets

of drawings, and I took one up for a better look at it. Quartz it seemed to be.

`Look here,' said the Medical Man, `are you perfectly

serious?

Or is this a trick--like that ghost you showed us last

Christmas?'

`Upon that machine,' said the Time Traveller, holding the lamp

aloft, `I intend to explore time. Is that plain? I was never

more serious in my life.'

None of us quite knew how to take it.

I caught Filby's eye over the shoulder of the Medical Man, and

he winked at me solemnly.

II

I think that at that time none of us quite believed in the

Time Machine. The fact is, the Time Traveller was one of

those

men who are too clever to be believed: you never felt that you

saw all round him; you always suspected some subtle reserve, some

ingenuity in ambush, behind his lucid frankness. Had Filby shown

the model and explained the matter in the Time Traveller's words,

we should have shown HIM far less scepticism. For we should

have perceived his motives; a pork butcher could understand

Filby. But the Time Traveller had more than a touch of whim

among his elements, and we distrusted him. Things that would

have made the frame of a less clever man seemed tricks in his

hands. It is a mistake to do things too easily. The serious

people who took him seriously never felt quite sure of his

deportment; they were somehow aware that trusting their

reputations for judgment with him was like furnishing a nursery

with egg-shell china. So I don't think any of us said very much

about time travelling in the interval between that Thursday and

the next, though its odd potentialities ran, no doubt, in most of

our minds: its plausibility, that is, its practical

incredibleness, the curious possibilities of anachronism and of

utter confusion it suggested. For my own part, I was

particularly preoccupied with the trick of the model. That I

remember discussing with the Medical Man, whom I met on Friday at

the Linnaean. He said he had seen a similar thing at

Tubingen, and laid considerable stress on the blowing out

of the candle. But how the trick was done he could not explain.

The next Thursday I went again to Richmond--I suppose I was

one of the Time Traveller's most constant guests--and, arriving

late, found four or five men already assembled in his

drawing-room. The Medical Man was standing before the fire with

a sheet of paper in one hand and his watch in the other. I

looked round for the Time Traveller, and--`It's half-past seven

now,' said the Medical Man. `I suppose we'd better have dinner?'

`Where's----?' said I, naming our host.

`You've just come? It's rather odd. He's unavoidably

detained. He asks me in this note to lead off with dinner at

seven if he's not back. Says he'll explain when he comes.'

`It seems a pity to let the dinner spoil,' said the Editor of

a well-known daily paper; and thereupon the Doctor rang the bell.

The Psychologist was the only person besides the Doctor

and

myself who had attended the previous dinner. The other men were

Blank, the Editor aforementioned, a certain journalist, and

another--a quiet, shy man with a beard--whom I didn't know,

and who, as far as my observation went, never opened his mouth

all the evening. There was some speculation at the dinner-table

about the Time Traveller's absence, and I suggested time

travelling, in a half-jocular spirit. The Editor wanted that

explained to him, and the Psychologist volunteered a wooden

account of the `ingenious paradox and trick' we had witnessed

that day week. He was in the midst of his exposition when the

door from the corridor opened slowly and without noise. I was

facing the door, and saw it first. `Hallo!' I said. `At last!'

And the door opened wider, and the Time Traveller stood before

us. I gave a cry of surprise. `Good heavens! man, what's the

matter?' cried the Medical Man, who saw him next. And the whole

tableful turned towards the door.

He was in an amazing plight. His coat was dusty and dirty,

and smeared with green down the sleeves; his hair disordered, and

as it seemed to me greyer--either with dust and dirt or because

its colour had actually faded. His face was ghastly pale; his

chin had a brown cut on it--a cut half healed; his expression

was haggard and drawn, as by intense suffering. For a moment he

hesitated in the doorway, as if he had been dazzled by the light.

Then he came into the room. He walked with just such a limp as

I have seen in footsore tramps. We stared at him in silence,

expecting him to speak.

He said not a word, but came painfully to the table, and made

a motion towards the wine. The Editor filled a glass of

champagne, and pushed it towards him. He drained it, and it

seemed to do him good: for he looked round the table, and the

ghost of his old smile flickered across his face. `What on earth

have you been up to, man?' said the Doctor. The Time Traveller

did not seem to hear. `Don't let me disturb you,' he said, with

a certain faltering articulation. `I'm all right.' He stopped,

held out his glass for more, and took it off at a draught.

`That's good,' he said. His eyes grew brighter, and a faint

colour came into his cheeks. His glance flickered over our faces

with a certain dull approval, and then went round the warm and

comfortable room. Then he spoke again, still as it were feeling

his way among his words. `I'm going to wash and dress, and then

I'll come down and explain things. . . Save me some of that

mutton. I'm starving for a bit of meat.'

He looked across at the Editor, who was a rare visitor, and

hoped he was all right. The Editor began a question. `Tell you

presently,' said the Time Traveller. `I'm--funny! Be all

right in a minute.'

He put down his glass, and walked towards the staircase door.

Again I remarked his lameness and the soft padding sound of his

footfall, and standing up in my place, I saw his feet as he went

out. He had nothing on them but a pair of tattered blood-stained

socks. Then the door closed upon him. I had half a mind to follow, till I remembered how he detested any fuss about himself.

For a minute, perhaps, my mind was wool-gathering. Then, 'Remarkable Behaviour of an Eminent Scientist,' I heard the Editor say, thinking (after his wont) in headlines. And this brought my attention back to the bright dinner-table.

`What's the game?' said the Journalist. `Has he been doing

the Amateur Cadger? I don't follow.' I met the eye of the Psychologist, and read my own interpretation in his face. I thought of the Time Traveller limping painfully upstairs. I don't think any one else had noticed his lameness.

The first to recover completely from this surprise was the Medical Man, who rang the bell--the Time Traveller hated to have servants waiting at dinner--for a hot plate. At that the Editor turned to his knife and fork with a grunt, and the Silent

Man followed suit. The dinner was resumed. Conversation

was

exclamatory for a little while, with gaps of wonderment; and then

the Editor got fervent in his curiosity. `Does our friend eke

out his modest income with a crossing? or has he his

Nebuchadnezzar phases?' he inquired. `I feel assured it's this

business of the Time Machine,' I said, and took up the

Psychologist's account of our previous meeting. The new guests

were frankly incredulous. The Editor raised objections. `What

WAS this time travelling? A man couldn't cover himself with

dust by rolling in a paradox, could he?' And then, as the idea

came home to him, he resorted to caricature. Hadn't they any

clothes-brushes in the Future? The Journalist too, would not

believe at any price, and joined the Editor in the easy work of

heaping ridicule on the whole thing. They were both the

new kind

of journalist--very joyous, irreverent young men. `Our Special

Correspondent in the Day after To-morrow reports,' the Journalist

was saying--or rather shouting--when the Time Traveller came

back. He was dressed in ordinary evening clothes, and nothing

save his haggard look remained of the change that had startled

me.

`I say,' said the Editor hilariously, `these chaps here say

you have been travelling into the middle of next week! Tell us

all about little Rosebery, will you? What will you take for the

lot?'

The Time Traveller came to the place reserved for him without

a word. He smiled quietly, in his old way. `Where's my

mutton?'

he said. `What a treat it is to stick a fork into meat again!'

`Story!' cried the Editor.

`Story be damned!' said the Time Traveller. `I want something

to eat. I won't say a word until I get some peptone into my

arteries. Thanks. And the salt.'

`One word,' said I. `Have you been time travelling?'

`Yes,' said the Time Traveller, with his mouth full, nodding

his head.

`I'd give a shilling a line for a verbatim note,' said the

Editor. The Time Traveller pushed his glass towards the Silent

Man and rang it with his fingernail; at which the Silent Man, who

had been staring at his face, started convulsively, and poured

him wine. The rest of the dinner was uncomfortable. For my own

part, sudden questions kept on rising to my lips, and I dare say

it was the same with the others. The Journalist tried to relieve

the tension by telling anecdotes of Hettie Potter. The Time

Traveller devoted his attention to his dinner, and displayed the

appetite of a tramp. The Medical Man smoked a cigarette, and

watched the Time Traveller through his eyelashes. The Silent Man

seemed even more clumsy than usual, and drank champagne with

regularity and determination out of sheer nervousness. At last

the Time Traveller pushed his plate away, and looked round us.

`I suppose I must apologize,' he said. `I was simply starving.

I've had a most amazing time.' He reached out his hand for a

cigar, and cut the end. `But come into the smoking-room. It's

too long a story to tell over greasy plates.' And ringing the

bell in passing, he led the way into the adjoining room.

`You have told Blank, and Dash, and Chose about the machine?'

he said to me, leaning back in his easy-chair and naming the

three new guests.

`But the thing's a mere paradox,' said the Editor.

`I can't argue to-night. I don't mind telling you the story,

but I can't argue. I will,' he went on, `tell you the story of

what has happened to me, if you like, but you must refrain from

interruptions. I want to tell it. Badly. Most of it will sound

like lying. So be it! It's true--every word of it, all the

same. I was in my laboratory at four o'clock, and since then . .

. I've lived eight days . . . such days as no human being ever

lived before! I'm nearly worn out, but I shan't sleep till I've told this thing over to you. Then I shall go to bed. But no interruptions! Is it agreed?'

`Agreed,' said the Editor, and the rest of us echoed `Agreed.'

And with that the Time Traveller began his story as I have set it forth. He sat back in his chair at first, and spoke like a weary man. Afterwards he got more animated. In writing it down I feel with only too much keenness the inadequacy of pen and ink --and, above all, my own inadequacy--to express its quality. You read, I will suppose, attentively enough; but you cannot see the speaker's white, sincere face in the bright circle of the little lamp, nor hear the intonation of his voice. You cannot know how his expression followed the turns of his story! Most of us hearers were in shadow, for the candles in the smoking-

room

had not been lighted, and only the face of the Journalist and the

legs of the Silent Man from the knees downward were illuminated.

At first we glanced now and again at each other. After a time we

ceased to do that, and looked only at the Time Traveller's face.

III

`I told some of you last Thursday of the principles of the

Time Machine, and showed you the actual thing itself, incomplete

in the workshop. There it is now, a little travel-worn, truly;

and one of the ivory bars is cracked, and a brass rail bent; but

the rest of it's sound enough. I expected to finish it on

Friday, but on Friday, when the putting together was nearly done,

I found that one of the nickel bars was exactly one inch too

short, and this I had to get remade; so that the thing was not

complete until this morning. It was at ten o'clock to-day that

the first of all Time Machines began its career. I gave it a

last tap, tried all the screws again, put one more drop of oil on

the quartz rod, and sat myself in the saddle. I suppose a

suicide who holds a pistol to his skull feels much the same

wonder at what will come next as I felt then. I took the

starting lever in one hand and the stopping one in the other,

pressed the first, and almost immediately the second. I seemed

to reel; I felt a nightmare sensation of falling; and, looking

round, I saw the laboratory exactly as before. Had anything

happened? For a moment I suspected that my intellect had tricked

me. Then I noted the clock. A moment before, as it seemed, it

had stood at a minute or so past ten; now it was nearly half-past

three!

`I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever

with both hands, and went off with a thud. The laboratory got

hazy and went dark. Mrs. Watchett came in and walked, apparently

without seeing me, towards the garden door. I suppose it took

her a minute or so to traverse the place, but to me she seemed to

shoot across the room like a rocket. I pressed the lever over to

its extreme position. The night came like the turning out of a

lamp, and in another moment came to-morrow. The laboratory grew

faint and hazy, then fainter and ever fainter. To-morrow night

came black, then day again, night again, day again, faster

and

faster still. An eddying murmur filled my ears, and a strange,

dumb confusedness descended on my mind.

`I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time

travelling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling

exactly like that one has upon a switchback--of a helpless

headlong motion! I felt the same horrible anticipation, too, of

an imminent smash. As I put on pace, night followed day like the

flapping of a black wing. The dim suggestion of the laboratory

seemed presently to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping

swiftly across the sky, leaping it every minute, and every minute

marking a day. I supposed the laboratory had been destroyed and

I had come into the open air. I had a dim impression of

scaffolding, but I was already going too fast to be conscious of

any moving things. The slowest snail that ever crawled dashed by

too fast for me. The twinkling succession of darkness and light

was excessively painful to the eye. Then, in the intermittent

darknesses, I saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters

from new to full, and had a faint glimpse of the circling stars.

Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation

of night and day merged into one continuous greyness; the sky

took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color

like that of early twilight; the jerking sun became a streak of

fire, a brilliant arch, in space; the moon a fainter fluctuating

band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a

brighter circle flickering in the blue.

`The landscape was misty and vague. I was still on the hill-side upon which this house now stands, and the shoulder rose above me grey and dim. I saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour, now brown, now green; they grew, spread, shivered, and passed away. I saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams. The whole surface of the earth seemed changed--melting and flowing under my eyes. The little hands upon the dials that registered my speed raced round faster and faster. Presently I noted that the sun belt swayed up and down, from solstice to solstice, in a minute or less, and that consequently my pace was over a year a minute; and minute by minute the white snow flashed across the world, and vanished, and was followed by the bright, brief green of spring.

`The unpleasant sensations of the start were less poignant

now. They merged at last into a kind of hysterical exhilaration.

I remarked indeed a clumsy swaying of the machine, for which I

was unable to account. But my mind was too confused to attend to

it, so with a kind of madness growing upon me, I flung myself

into futurity. At first I scarce thought of stopping, scarce

thought of anything but these new sensations. But presently a

fresh series of impressions grew up in my mind--a certain

curiosity and therewith a certain dread--until at last they

took complete possession of me. What strange developments of

humanity, what wonderful advances upon our rudimentary

civilization, I thought, might not appear when I came to look

nearly into the dim elusive world that raced and fluctuated

before my eyes! I saw great and splendid architecture rising

about me, more massive than any buildings of our own time, and

yet, as it seemed, built of glimmer and mist. I saw a richer

green flow up the hill-side, and remain there, without any wintry

intermission. Even through the veil of my confusion the earth

seemed very fair. And so my mind came round to the business of

stopping,

`The peculiar risk lay in the possibility of my finding some

substance in the space which I, or the machine, occupied. So

long as I travelled at a high velocity through time, this

scarcely mattered; I was, so to speak, attenuated--was slipping

like a vapour through the interstices of intervening substances!

But to come to a stop involved the jamming of myself,

molecule by

molecule, into whatever lay in my way; meant bringing my atoms

into such intimate contact with those of the obstacle that a

profound chemical reaction--possibly a far-reaching explosion

--would result, and blow myself and my apparatus out of all

possible dimensions--into the Unknown. This possibility had

occurred to me again and again while I was making the machine;

but then I had cheerfully accepted it as an unavoidable risk--

one of the risks a man has got to take! Now the risk was

inevitable, I no longer saw it in the same cheerful light. The

fact is that insensibly, the absolute strangeness of everything,

the sickly jarring and swaying of the machine, above all, the

feeling of prolonged falling, had absolutely upset my nerve. I

told myself that I could never stop, and with a gust of petulance

I resolved to stop forthwith. Like an impatient fool, I lugged over the lever, and incontinently the thing went reeling over, and I was flung headlong through the air.

`There was the sound of a clap of thunder in my ears. I may have been stunned for a moment. A pitiless hail was hissing round me, and I was sitting on soft turf in front of the overset machine. Everything still seemed grey, but presently I remarked that the confusion in my ears was gone. I looked round me. I was on what seemed to be a little lawn in a garden, surrounded by rhododendron bushes, and I noticed that their mauve and purple blossoms were dropping in a shower under the beating of the hail-stones. The rebounding, dancing hail hung in a cloud over the machine, and drove along the ground like smoke. In a

moment

I was wet to the skin. "Fine hospitality," said I, "to a man who

has travelled innumerable years to see you."

`Presently I thought what a fool I was to get wet. I stood up

and looked round me. A colossal figure, carved apparently in

some white stone, loomed indistinctly beyond the rhododendrons

through the hazy downpour. But all else of the world was

invisible.

`My sensations would be hard to describe. As the columns of

hail grew thinner, I saw the white figure more distinctly. It

was very large, for a silver birch-tree touched its shoulder. It

was of white marble, in shape something like a winged sphinx, but

the wings, instead of being carried vertically at the sides,

were

spread so that it seemed to hover. The pedestal, it appeared to

me, was of bronze, and was thick with verdigris. It chanced that

the face was towards me; the sightless eyes seemed to watch me;

there was the faint shadow of a smile on the lips. It was

greatly weather-worn, and that imparted an unpleasant suggestion

of disease. I stood looking at it for a little space--half a

minute, perhaps, or half an hour. It seemed to advance and to

recede as the hail drove before it denser or thinner. At last I

tore my eyes from it for a moment and saw that the hail curtain

had worn threadbare, and that the sky was lightening with the

promise of the Sun.

`I looked up again at the crouching white shape, and the

full

temerity of my voyage came suddenly upon me. What might appear

when that hazy curtain was altogether withdrawn? What might not

have happened to men? What if cruelty had grown into a common

passion? What if in this interval the race had lost its

manliness and had developed into something inhuman,

unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? I might seem some

old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting

for our common likeness--a foul creature to be incontinently

slain.

`Already I saw other vast shapes--huge buildings with

intricate parapets and tall columns, with a wooded hill-side

dimly creeping in upon me through the lessening storm. I was

seized with a panic fear. I turned frantically to the Time

Machine, and strove hard to readjust it. As I did so the shafts

of the sun smote through the thunderstorm. The grey downpour was

swept aside and vanished like the trailing garments of a ghost.

Above me, in the intense blue of the summer sky, some faint brown

shreds of cloud whirled into nothingness. The great buildings

about me stood out clear and distinct, shining with the wet of

the thunderstorm, and picked out in white by the unmelted

hailstones piled along their courses. I felt naked in a strange

world. I felt as perhaps a bird may feel in the clear air,

knowing the hawk wings above and will swoop. My fear grew to

frenzy. I took a breathing space, set my teeth, and again

grappled fiercely, wrist and knee, with the machine. It gave

under my desperate onset and turned over. It struck my chin

violently. One hand on the saddle, the other on the lever, I stood panting heavily in attitude to mount again.

`But with this recovery of a prompt retreat my courage recovered. I looked more curiously and less fearfully at this world of the remote future. In a circular opening, high up in the wall of the nearer house, I saw a group of figures clad in rich soft robes. They had seen me, and their faces were directed towards me.

`Then I heard voices approaching me. Coming through the bushes by the White Sphinx were the heads and shoulders of men running. One of these emerged in a pathway leading straight to the little lawn upon which I stood with my machine. He was a slight creature--perhaps four feet high--clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt. Sandals or

buskins--I could not clearly distinguish which--were on his

feet; his legs were bare to the knees, and his head was bare.

Noticing that, I noticed for the first time how warm the air was.

`He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature,

but indescribably frail. His flushed face reminded me of the

more beautiful kind of consumptive--that hectic beauty of which

we used to hear so much. At the sight of him I suddenly regained

confidence. I took my hands from the machine.

IV

`In another moment we were standing face to face, I and this

fragile thing out of futurity. He came straight up to me and

laughed into my eyes. The absence from his bearing of any sign

of fear struck me at once. Then he turned to the two others who

were following him and spoke to them in a strange and very sweet

and liquid tongue.

`There were others coming, and presently a little group of

perhaps eight or ten of these exquisite creatures were about me.

One of them addressed me. It came into my head, oddly enough,

that my voice was too harsh and deep for them. So I shook my

head, and, pointing to my ears, shook it again. He came a step

forward, hesitated, and then touched my hand. Then I felt other

soft little tentacles upon my back and shoulders. They wanted to

make sure I was real. There was nothing in this at all alarming.

Indeed, there was something in these pretty little people that

inspired confidence--a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike

ease. And besides, they looked so frail that I could fancy

myself flinging the whole dozen of them about like nine-pins.

But I made a sudden motion to warn them when I saw their little

pink hands feeling at the Time Machine. Happily then, when it

was not too late, I thought of a danger I had hitherto forgotten,

and reaching over the bars of the machine I unscrewed the little

levers that would set it in motion, and put these in my pocket.

Then I turned again to see what I could do in the way of

communication.

`And then, looking more nearly into their features, I saw some

further peculiarities in their Dresden-china type of prettiness.

Their hair, which was uniformly curly, came to a sharp end at the

neck and cheek; there was not the faintest suggestion of it on

the face, and their ears were singularly minute. The mouths were

small, with bright red, rather thin lips, and the little chins

ran to a point. The eyes were large and mild; and--this may

seem egotism on my part--I fancied even that there was a

certain lack of the interest I might have expected in them.

`As they made no effort to communicate with me, but simply

stood round me smiling and speaking in soft cooing notes to each

other, I began the conversation. I pointed to the Time Machine

and to myself. Then hesitating for a moment how to

express time,

I pointed to the sun. At once a quaintly pretty little figure in chequered purple and white followed my gesture, and then astonished me by imitating the sound of thunder.

`For a moment I was staggered, though the import of his gesture was plain enough. The question had come into my mind abruptly: were these creatures fools? You may hardly understand how it took me. You see I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, everything. Then one of them suddenly asked me a question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five-year-old children--asked me, in fact, if I had come from the sun in a thunderstorm!

It let loose the judgment I had suspended upon their clothes, their frail light limbs, and fragile features. A flow of

disappointment rushed across my mind. For a moment I felt that I

had built the Time Machine in vain.

`I nodded, pointed to the sun, and gave them such a vivid

rendering of a thunderclap as startled them. They all withdrew a

pace or so and bowed. Then came one laughing towards me,

carrying a chain of beautiful flowers altogether new to me, and

put it about my neck. The idea was received with melodious

applause; and presently they were all running to and fro for

flowers, and laughingly flinging them upon me until I was almost

smothered with blossom. You who have never seen the like can

scarcely imagine what delicate and wonderful flowers countless

years of culture had created. Then someone suggested that their

plaything should be exhibited in the nearest building, and so I

was led past the sphinx of white marble, which had seemed to

watch me all the while with a smile at my astonishment, towards a

vast grey edifice of fretted stone. As I went with them the

memory of my confident anticipations of a profoundly grave and

intellectual posterity came, with irresistible merriment, to my

mind.

`The building had a huge entry, and was altogether of colossal

dimensions. I was naturally most occupied with the growing crowd

of little people, and with the big open portals that yawned

before me shadowy and mysterious. My general impression of the

world I saw over their heads was a tangled waste of beautiful

bushes and flowers, a long neglected and yet weedless

garden. I

saw a number of tall spikes of strange white flowers, measuring a

foot perhaps across the spread of the waxen petals. They grew

scattered, as if wild, among the variegated shrubs, but, as I

say, I did not examine them closely at this time. The Time

Machine was left deserted on the turf among the rhododendrons.

`The arch of the doorway was richly carved, but naturally I

did not observe the carving very narrowly, though I fancied I saw

suggestions of old Phoenician decorations as I passed through,

and it struck me that they were very badly broken and weather-

worn. Several more brightly clad people met me in the doorway,

and so we entered, I, dressed in dingy nineteenth-century

garments, looking grotesque enough, garlanded with flowers, and

surrounded by an eddying mass of bright, soft-colored robes and

shining white limbs, in a melodious whirl of laughter and

laughing speech.

`The big doorway opened into a proportionately great hall hung

with brown. The roof was in shadow, and the windows, partially

glazed with coloured glass and partially unglazed, admitted a

tempered light. The floor was made up of huge blocks of some

very hard white metal, not plates nor slabs--blocks, and it was

so much worn, as I judged by the going to and fro of past

generations, as to be deeply channelled along the more frequented

ways. Transverse to the length were innumerable tables made of

slabs of polished stone, raised perhaps a foot from the floor,

and upon these were heaps of fruits. Some I recognized as a kind

of hypertrophied raspberry and orange, but for the most part they

were strange.

`Between the tables was scattered a great number of cushions.

Upon these my conductors seated themselves, signing for me to do

likewise. With a pretty absence of ceremony they began to eat

the fruit with their hands, flinging peel and stalks, and so

forth, into the round openings in the sides of the tables. I was

not loath to follow their example, for I felt thirsty and hungry.

As I did so I surveyed the hall at my leisure.

`And perhaps the thing that struck me most was its dilapidated

look. The stained-glass windows, which displayed only a

geometrical pattern, were broken in many places, and the

curtains

that hung across the lower end were thick with dust. And it

caught my eye that the corner of the marble table near me was

fractured. Nevertheless, the general effect was extremely rich

and picturesque. There were, perhaps, a couple of hundred people

dining in the hall, and most of them, seated as near to me as

they could come, were watching me with interest, their little

eyes shining over the fruit they were eating. All were clad in

the same soft and yet strong, silky material.

`Fruit, by the by, was all their diet. These people of the

remote future were strict vegetarians, and while I was with them,

in spite of some carnal cravings, I had to be frugivorous also.

Indeed, I found afterwards that horses, cattle, sheep, dogs, had

followed the Ichthyosaurus into extinction. But the fruits

were

very delightful; one, in particular, that seemed to be in season

all the time I was there--a floury thing in a three-sided husk

--was especially good, and I made it my staple. At first I was

puzzled by all these strange fruits, and by the strange flowers I

saw, but later I began to perceive their import.

`However, I am telling you of my fruit dinner in the distant

future now. So soon as my appetite was a little checked, I

determined to make a resolute attempt to learn the speech of

these new men of mine. Clearly that was the next thing to do.

The fruits seemed a convenient thing to begin upon, and holding

one of these up I began a series of interrogative sounds and

gestures. I had some considerable difficulty in conveying my

meaning. At first my efforts met with a stare of surprise or inextinguishable laughter, but presently a fair-haired little creature seemed to grasp my intention and repeated a name. They had to chatter and explain the business at great length to each other, and my first attempts to make the exquisite little sounds of their language caused an immense amount of amusement.

However, I felt like a schoolmaster amidst children, and persisted, and presently I had a score of noun substantives at least at my command; and then I got to demonstrative pronouns, and even the verb "to eat." But it was slow work, and the little people soon tired and wanted to get away from my interrogations, so I determined, rather of necessity, to let them give their lessons in little doses when they felt inclined. And very little doses I found they were before long, for I never met people

more

indolent or more easily fatigued.

`A queer thing I soon discovered about my little hosts, and

that was their lack of interest. They would come to me with

eager cries of astonishment, like children, but like children

they would soon stop examining me and wander away after some

other toy. The dinner and my conversational beginnings ended, I

noted for the first time that almost all those who had surrounded

me at first were gone. It is odd, too, how speedily I came to

disregard these little people. I went out through the portal

into the sunlit world again as soon as my hunger was satisfied.

I was continually meeting more of these men of the future, who

would follow me a little distance, chatter and laugh about me,

and, having smiled and gesticulated in a friendly way, leave me

again to my own devices.

`The calm of evening was upon the world as I emerged from the

great hall, and the scene was lit by the warm glow of the setting

sun. At first things were very confusing. Everything was so

entirely different from the world I had known--even the

flowers. The big building I had left was situated on the slope

of a broad river valley, but the Thames had shifted perhaps a

mile from its present position. I resolved to mount to the

summit of a crest perhaps a mile and a half away, from which I

could get a wider view of this our planet in the year Eight

Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One A.D. For that, I

should explain, was the date the little dials of my machine

recorded.

`As I walked I was watching for every impression that could

possibly help to explain the condition of ruinous splendour in

which I found the world--for ruinous it was. A little way up

the hill, for instance, was a great heap of granite, bound

together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous

walls and crumpled heaps, amidst which were thick heaps of very

beautiful pagoda-like plants--nettles possibly--but wonderfully

tinted with brown about the leaves, and incapable of stinging.

It was evidently the derelict remains of some vast structure, to

what end built I could not determine. It was here that I was

destined, at a later date, to have a very strange experience--the

first intimation of a still stranger discovery--but of that I

will speak in its proper place.

`Looking round with a sudden thought, from a terrace on which

I rested for a while, I realized that there were no small houses

to be seen. Apparently the single house, and possibly even the

household, had vanished. Here and there among the greenery were

palace-like buildings, but the house and the cottage, which form

such characteristic features of our own English landscape, had

disappeared.

`"Communism," said I to myself.

`And on the heels of that came another thought. I looked at

the half-dozen little figures that were following me. Then, in a

flash, I perceived that all had the same form of costume, the

same soft hairless visage, and the same girlish rotundity of

limb. It may seem strange, perhaps, that I had not noticed this

before. But everything was so strange. Now, I saw the fact

plainly enough. In costume, and in all the differences of

texture and bearing that now mark off the sexes from each other,

these people of the future were alike. And the children seemed

to my eyes to be but the miniatures of their parents. I judged,

then, that the children of that time were extremely precocious,

physically at least, and I found afterwards abundant verification

of my opinion.

`Seeing the ease and security in which these people were

living, I felt that this close resemblance of the sexes was after

all what one would expect; for the strength of a man and the

softness of a woman, the institution of the family, and the

differentiation of occupations are mere militant necessities of

an age of physical force; where population is balanced and

abundant, much childbearing becomes an evil rather than a

blessing to the State; where violence comes but rarely and

off-spring are secure, there is less necessity--indeed there is

no necessity--for an efficient family, and the specialization

of the sexes with reference to their children's needs disappears.

We see some beginnings of this even in our own time, and in this

future age it was complete. This, I must remind you, was my

speculation at the time. Later, I was to appreciate how far it

fell short of the reality.

`While I was musing upon these things, my attention was

attracted by a pretty little structure, like a well under a

cupola. I thought in a transitory way of the oddness of wells

still existing, and then resumed the thread of my

speculations.

There were no large buildings towards the top of the hill, and as

my walking powers were evidently miraculous, I was presently left

alone for the first time. With a strange sense of freedom and

adventure I pushed on up to the crest.

`There I found a seat of some yellow metal that I did not

recognize, corroded in places with a kind of pinkish rust and

half smothered in soft moss, the arm-rests cast and filed into

the resemblance of griffins' heads. I sat down on it, and I

surveyed the broad view of our old world under the sunset of that

long day. It was as sweet and fair a view as I have ever seen.

The sun had already gone below the horizon and the west was

flaming gold, touched with some horizontal bars of purple

and

crimson. Below was the valley of the Thames, in which the river

lay like a band of burnished steel. I have already spoken of the

great palaces dotted about among the variegated greenery, some in

ruins and some still occupied. Here and there rose a white or

silvery figure in the waste garden of the earth, here and there

came the sharp vertical line of some cupola or obelisk. There

were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights, no evidences of

agriculture; the whole earth had become a garden.

`So watching, I began to put my interpretation upon the things

I had seen, and as it shaped itself to me that evening, my

interpretation was something in this way. (Afterwards I found I

had got only a half-truth--or only a glimpse of one facet of the truth.)

`It seemed to me that I had happened upon humanity upon the wane. The ruddy sunset set me thinking of the sunset of mankind.

For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged. And yet, come to think, it is a logical consequence enough. Strength is the outcome of need; security sets a premium on feebleness. The work of ameliorating the conditions of life--the true civilizing process that makes life more and more secure--had gone steadily on to a climax. One triumph of a united humanity over Nature had followed another. Things that are now mere dreams had become projects deliberately put in hand and carried forward. And

the

harvest was what I saw!

`After all, the sanitation and the agriculture of to-day are

still in the rudimentary stage. The science of our time has

attacked but a little department of the field of human disease,

but even so, it spreads its operations very steadily and

persistently. Our agriculture and horticulture destroy a weed

just here and there and cultivate perhaps a score or so of

wholesome plants, leaving the greater number to fight out a

balance as they can. We improve our favourite plants and animals

--and how few they are--gradually by selective breeding; now a

new and better peach, now a seedless grape, now a sweeter and

larger flower, now a more convenient breed of cattle. We improve

them gradually, because our ideals are vague and tentative, and

our knowledge is very limited; because Nature, too, is shy and

slow in our clumsy hands. Some day all this will be better

organized, and still better. That is the drift of the current in

spite of the eddies. The whole world will be intelligent,

educated, and co-operating; things will move faster and faster

towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and

carefully we shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable

me to suit our human needs.

`This adjustment, I say, must have been done, and done well;

done indeed for all Time, in the space of Time across which my

machine had leaped. The air was free from gnats, the earth from

weeds or fungi; everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful

flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither. The

ideal of preventive medicine was attained. Diseases had been

stamped out. I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during

all my stay. And I shall have to tell you later that even the

processes of putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected

by these changes.

`Social triumphs, too, had been effected. I saw mankind

housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed, and as yet I had

found them engaged in no toil. There were no signs of struggle,

neither social nor economical struggle. The shop, the

advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the

body of our world, was gone. It was natural on that golden

evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The

difficulty of increasing population had been met, I guessed, and

population had ceased to increase.

`But with this change in condition comes inevitably

adaptations to the change. What, unless biological science is a

mass of errors, is the cause of human intelligence and vigour?

Hardship and freedom: conditions under which the active, strong,

and subtle survive and the weaker go to the wall; conditions that

put a premium upon the loyal alliance of capable men, upon

self-restraint, patience, and decision. And the institution of

the family, and the emotions that arise therein, the fierce

jealousy, the tenderness for offspring, parental self-devotion,

all found their justification and support in the imminent dangers

of the young. NOW, where are these imminent dangers? There is

a sentiment arising, and it will grow, against connubial

jealousy, against fierce maternity, against passion of all

sorts;

unnecessary things now, and things that make us uncomfortable,

savage survivals, discords in a refined and pleasant life.

`I thought of the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins, and it strengthened my belief in a perfect conquest of Nature. For after the battle comes Quiet. Humanity had been strong, energetic, and intelligent, and had used all its abundant vitality to alter the conditions under which it lived. And now came the reaction of the altered conditions.

`Under the new conditions of perfect comfort and security, that restless energy, that with us is strength, would become weakness. Even in our own time certain tendencies and desires,

once necessary to survival, are a constant source of failure. Physical courage and the love of battle, for instance, are no great help--may even be hindrances--to a civilized man. And

in a state of physical balance and security, power, intellectual

as well as physical, would be out of place. For countless years

I judged there had been no danger of war or solitary violence, no

danger from wild beasts, no wasting disease to require strength

of constitution, no need of toil. For such a life, what we

should call the weak are as well equipped as the strong, are

indeed no longer weak. Better equipped indeed they are, for the

strong would be fretted by an energy for which there was no

outlet. No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw was

the outcome of the last surgings of the now purposeless energy of

mankind before it settled down into perfect harmony with the

conditions under which it lived--the flourish of that triumph

which began the last great peace. This has ever been the

fate of

energy in security; it takes to art and to eroticism, and then

come languor and decay.

`Even this artistic impetus would at last die away--had

almost died in the Time I saw. To adorn themselves with flowers,

to dance, to sing in the sunlight: so much was left of the

artistic spirit, and no more. Even that would fade in the end

into a contented inactivity. We are kept keen on the grindstone

of pain and necessity, and, it seemed to me, that here was that

hateful grindstone broken at last!

`As I stood there in the gathering dark I thought that in this

simple explanation I had mastered the problem of the world--

mastered the whole secret of these delicious people. Possibly

the checks they had devised for the increase of population had

succeeded too well, and their numbers had rather diminished than

kept stationary. That would account for the abandoned ruins.

Very simple was my explanation, and plausible enough--as most

wrong theories are!

V

`As I stood there musing over this too perfect triumph of man,

the full moon, yellow and gibbous, came up out of an overflow of

silver light in the north-east. The bright little figures ceased

to move about below, a noiseless owl flitted by, and I shivered

with the chill of the night. I determined to descend and find

where I could sleep.

`I looked for the building I knew. Then my eye travelled along to the figure of the White Sphinx upon the pedestal of bronze, growing distinct as the light of the rising moon grew brighter. I could see the silver birch against it. There was the tangle of rhododendron bushes, black in the pale light, and there was the little lawn. I looked at the lawn again. A queer doubt chilled my complacency. "No," said I stoutly to myself, "that was not the lawn."

`But it WAS the lawn. For the white leprous face of the sphinx was towards it. Can you imagine what I felt as this conviction came home to me? But you cannot. The Time Machine was gone!

`At once, like a lash across the face, came the possibility of

losing my own age, of being left helpless in this strange new

world. The bare thought of it was an actual physical sensation.

I could feel it grip me at the throat and stop my breathing. In

another moment I was in a passion of fear and running with great

leaping strides down the slope. Once I fell headlong and cut my

face; I lost no time in stanching the blood, but jumped up and

ran on, with a warm trickle down my cheek and chin. All the time

I ran I was saying to myself: "They have moved it a little,

pushed it under the bushes out of the way." Nevertheless, I ran

with all my might. All the time, with the certainty that

sometimes comes with excessive dread, I knew that such assurance

was folly, knew instinctively that the machine was removed out of

my reach. My breath came with pain. I suppose I covered

the

whole distance from the hill crest to the little lawn, two miles

perhaps, in ten minutes. And I am not a young man. I cursed

aloud, as I ran, at my confident folly in leaving the machine,

wasting good breath thereby. I cried aloud, and none answered.

Not a creature seemed to be stirring in that moonlit world.

`When I reached the lawn my worst fears were realized. Not a

trace of the thing was to be seen. I felt faint and cold when I

faced the empty space among the black tangle of bushes. I ran

round it furiously, as if the thing might be hidden in a corner,

and then stopped abruptly, with my hands clutching my hair.

Above me towered the sphinx, upon the bronze pedestal, white,

shining, leprous, in the light of the rising moon. It seemed to

smile in mockery of my dismay.

`I might have consoled myself by imagining the little people

had put the mechanism in some shelter for me, had I not felt

assured of their physical and intellectual inadequacy. That is

what dismayed me: the sense of some hitherto unsuspected power,

through whose intervention my invention had vanished. Yet, for

one thing I felt assured: unless some other age had produced its

exact duplicate, the machine could not have moved in time. The

attachment of the levers--I will show you the method later--

prevented any one from tampering with it in that way when they

were removed. It had moved, and was hid, only in space. But

then, where could it be?

`I think I must have had a kind of frenzy. I remember running

violently in and out among the moonlit bushes all round the

sphinx, and startling some white animal that, in the dim light, I

took for a small deer. I remember, too, late that night, beating

the bushes with my clenched fist until my knuckles were gashed

and bleeding from the broken twigs. Then, sobbing and raving in

my anguish of mind, I went down to the great building of stone.

The big hall was dark, silent, and deserted. I slipped on the

uneven floor, and fell over one of the malachite tables, almost

breaking my shin. I lit a match and went on past the dusty

curtains, of which I have told you.

`There I found a second great hall covered with cushions, upon

which, perhaps, a score or so of the little people were sleeping.

I have no doubt they found my second appearance strange

enough,

coming suddenly out of the quiet darkness with inarticulate

noises and the splutter and flare of a match. For they had

forgotten about matches. "Where is my Time Machine?" I began,

bawling like an angry child, laying hands upon them and shaking

them up together. It must have been very queer to them. Some

laughed, most of them looked sorely frightened. When I saw them

standing round me, it came into my head that I was doing as

foolish a thing as it was possible for me to do under the

circumstances, in trying to revive the sensation of fear. For,

reasoning from their daylight behaviour, I thought that fear must

be forgotten.

`Abruptly, I dashed down the match, and, knocking one of the

people over in my course, went blundering across the big

dining-hall again, out under the moonlight. I heard cries of terror and their little feet running and stumbling this way and that. I do not remember all I did as the moon crept up the sky.

I suppose it was the unexpected nature of my loss that maddened me. I felt hopelessly cut off from my own kind--a strange animal in an unknown world. I must have raved to and fro, screaming and crying upon God and Fate. I have a memory of horrible fatigue, as the long night of despair wore away; of looking in this impossible place and that; of groping among moon-lit ruins and touching strange creatures in the black shadows; at last, of lying on the ground near the sphinx and weeping with absolute wretchedness. I had nothing left but misery. Then I slept, and when I woke again it was full day, and a couple of sparrows were hopping round me on the turf within reach of my arm.

`I sat up in the freshness of the morning, trying to remember

how I had got there, and why I had such a profound sense of

desertion and despair. Then things came clear in my mind. With

the plain, reasonable daylight, I could look my circumstances

fairly in the face. I saw the wild folly of my frenzy overnight,

and I could reason with myself. "Suppose the worst?" I said.

"Suppose the machine altogether lost--perhaps destroyed? It

behooves me to be calm and patient, to learn the way of the

people, to get a clear idea of the method of my loss, and the

means of getting materials and tools; so that in the end,

perhaps, I may make another." That would be my only hope,

perhaps, but better than despair. And, after all, it was a

beautiful and curious world.

`But probably, the machine had only been taken away.

Still, I

must be calm and patient, find its hiding-place, and recover it

by force or cunning. And with that I scrambled to my feet and

looked about me, wondering where I could bathe. I felt weary,

stiff, and travel-soiled. The freshness of the morning made me

desire an equal freshness. I had exhausted my emotion. Indeed,

as I went about my business, I found myself wondering at my

intense excitement overnight. I made a careful examination of

the ground about the little lawn. I wasted some time in futile

questionings, conveyed, as well as I was able, to such of the

little people as came by. They all failed to understand my

gestures; some were simply stolid, some thought it was a jest and

laughed at me. I had the hardest task in the world to keep

my

hands off their pretty laughing faces. It was a foolish impulse,

but the devil begotten of fear and blind anger was ill curbed and

still eager to take advantage of my perplexity. The turf gave

better counsel. I found a groove ripped in it, about midway

between the pedestal of the sphinx and the marks of my feet

where, on arrival, I had struggled with the overturned machine.

There were other signs of removal about, with queer narrow

footprints like those I could imagine made by a sloth. This

directed my closer attention to the pedestal. It was, as I think

I have said, of bronze. It was not a mere block, but highly

decorated with deep framed panels on either side. I went and

rapped at these. The pedestal was hollow. Examining the panels

with care I found them discontinuous with the frames. There were

no handles or keyholes, but possibly the panels, if they were

doors, as I supposed, opened from within. One thing was clear

enough to my mind. It took no very great mental effort to infer

that my Time Machine was inside that pedestal. But how it got

there was a different problem.

`I saw the heads of two orange-clad people coming through the

bushes and under some blossom-covered apple-trees towards me. I

turned smiling to them and beckoned them to me. They came, and

then, pointing to the bronze pedestal, I tried to intimate my

wish to open it. But at my first gesture towards this they

behaved very oddly. I don't know how to convey their expression

to you. Suppose you were to use a grossly improper gesture to a

delicate-minded woman--it is how she would look. They went off

as if they had received the last possible insult. I tried a

sweet-looking little chap in white next, with exactly the same

result. Somehow, his manner made me feel ashamed of myself.

But, as you know, I wanted the Time Machine, and I tried him once

more. As he turned off, like the others, my temper got the

better of me. In three strides I was after him, had him by the

loose part of his robe round the neck, and began dragging him

towards the sphinx. Then I saw the horror and repugnance of his

face, and all of a sudden I let him go.

`But I was not beaten yet. I banged with my fist at the

bronze panels. I thought I heard something stir inside--to be

explicit, I thought I heard a sound like a chuckle--but I must

have been mistaken. Then I got a big pebble from the river, and

came and hammered till I had flattened a coil in the decorations,

and the verdigris came off in powdery flakes. The delicate

little people must have heard me hammering in gusty outbreaks a

mile away on either hand, but nothing came of it. I saw a crowd

of them upon the slopes, looking furtively at me. At last, hot

and tired, I sat down to watch the place. But I was too restless

to watch long; I am too Occidental for a long vigil. I could

work at a problem for years, but to wait inactive for twenty-four

hours--that is another matter.

`I got up after a time, and began walking aimlessly through

the bushes towards the hill again. "Patience," said I to myself.

"If you want your machine again you must leave that sphinx

alone. If they mean to take your machine away, it's little good

your wrecking their bronze panels, and if they don't, you will

get it back as soon as you can ask for it. To sit among all

those unknown things before a puzzle like that is hopeless. That

way lies monomania. Face this world. Learn its ways, watch it,

be careful of too hasty guesses at its meaning. In the end you

will find clues to it all." Then suddenly the humour of the

situation came into my mind: the thought of the years I had spent

in study and toil to get into the future age, and now my passion

of anxiety to get out of it. I had made myself the most

complicated and the most hopeless trap that ever a man devised.

Although it was at my own expense, I could not help myself. I

laughed aloud.

`Going through the big palace, it seemed to me that the little

people avoided me. It may have been my fancy, or it may have had

something to do with my hammering at the gates of bronze. Yet I

felt tolerably sure of the avoidance. I was careful, however, to

show no concern and to abstain from any pursuit of them, and in

the course of a day or two things got back to the old footing. I

made what progress I could in the language, and in addition I

pushed my explorations here and there. Either I missed some

subtle point or their language was excessively simple--almost

exclusively composed of concrete substantives and verbs. There

seemed to be few, if any, abstract terms, or little use of

figurative language. Their sentences were usually simple and of

two words, and I failed to convey or understand any but the

simplest propositions. I determined to put the thought of my

Time Machine and the mystery of the bronze doors under the sphinx

as much as possible in a corner of memory, until my growing

knowledge would lead me back to them in a natural way. Yet a

certain feeling, you may understand, tethered me in a circle of a

few miles round the point of my arrival.

`So far as I could see, all the world displayed the same

exuberant richness as the Thames valley. From every hill I

climbed I saw the same abundance of splendid buildings, endlessly

varied in material and style, the same clustering thickets of

evergreens, the same blossom-laden trees and tree-ferns. Here

and there water shone like silver, and beyond, the land rose into

blue undulating hills, and so faded into the serenity of the sky.

A peculiar feature, which presently attracted my attention, was

the presence of certain circular wells, several, as it seemed to

me, of a very great depth. One lay by the path up the hill,

which I had followed during my first walk. Like the others, it

was rimmed with bronze, curiously wrought, and protected by a

little cupola from the rain. Sitting by the side of these wells,

and peering down into the shafted darkness, I could see no gleam

of water, nor could I start any reflection with a lighted match.

But in all of them I heard a certain sound: a thud-thud-thud,

like the beating of some big engine; and I discovered, from the

flaring of my matches, that a steady current of air set down the

shafts. Further, I threw a scrap of paper into the throat of

one, and, instead of fluttering slowly down, it was at once

sucked swiftly out of sight.

`After a time, too, I came to connect these wells with tall towers standing here and there upon the slopes; for above them there was often just such a flicker in the air as one sees on a hot day above a sun-scorched beach. Putting things together, I reached a strong suggestion of an extensive system of subterranean ventilation, whose true import it was difficult to imagine. I was at first inclined to associate it with the sanitary apparatus of these people. It was an obvious conclusion, but it was absolutely wrong.

`And here I must admit that I learned very little of drains and bells and modes of conveyance, and the like conveniences, during my time in this real future. In some of these visions of Utopias and coming times which I have read, there is a vast amount of detail about building, and social arrangements, and so

forth. But while such details are easy enough to obtain when the

whole world is contained in one's imagination, they are

altogether inaccessible to a real traveller amid such realities

as I found here. Conceive the tale of London which a negro,

fresh from Central Africa, would take back to his tribe! What

would he know of railway companies, of social movements, of

telephone and telegraph wires, of the Parcels Delivery Company,

and postal orders and the like? Yet we, at least, should be

willing enough to explain these things to him! And even of what

he knew, how much could he make his untravelled friend either

apprehend or believe? Then, think how narrow the gap between a

negro and a white man of our own times, and how wide the interval

between myself and these of the Golden Age! I was sensible of

much which was unseen, and which contributed to my comfort; but

save for a general impression of automatic organization, I fear I

can convey very little of the difference to your mind.

`In the matter of sepulchre, for instance, I could see no

signs of crematoria nor anything suggestive of tombs. But it

occurred to me that, possibly, there might be cemeteries (or

crematoria) somewhere beyond the range of my explorings. This,

again, was a question I deliberately put to myself, and my

curiosity was at first entirely defeated upon the point. The

thing puzzled me, and I was led to make a further remark, which

puzzled me still more: that aged and infirm among this people

there were none.

`I must confess that my satisfaction with my first theories of

an automatic civilization and a decadent humanity did not long

endure. Yet I could think of no other. Let me put my

difficulties. The several big palaces I had explored were mere

living places, great dining-halls and sleeping apartments. I

could find no machinery, no appliances of any kind. Yet these

people were clothed in pleasant fabrics that must at times need

renewal, and their sandals, though undecorated, were fairly

complex specimens of metalwork. Somehow such things must be

made. And the little people displayed no vestige of a creative

tendency. There were no shops, no workshops, no sign of

importations among them. They spent all their time in playing

gently, in bathing in the river, in making love in a half-playful

fashion, in eating fruit and sleeping. I could not see how

things were kept going.

`Then, again, about the Time Machine: something, I knew not

what, had taken it into the hollow pedestal of the White Sphinx.

Why? For the life of me I could not imagine. Those waterless

wells, too, those flickering pillars. I felt I lacked a clue. I

felt--how shall I put it? Suppose you found an inscription,

with sentences here and there in excellent plain English, and

interpolated therewith, others made up of words, of letters even,

absolutely unknown to you? Well, on the third day of my visit,

that was how the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven

Hundred and One presented itself to me!

`That day, too, I made a friend--of a sort. It happened

that, as I was watching some of the little people bathing in a

shallow, one of them was seized with cramp and began drifting

downstream. The main current ran rather swiftly, but not too

strongly for even a moderate swimmer. It will give you an idea,

therefore, of the strange deficiency in these creatures, when I

tell you that none made the slightest attempt to rescue the

weakly crying little thing which was drowning before their eyes.

When I realized this, I hurriedly slipped off my clothes, and,

wading in at a point lower down, I caught the poor mite and drew

her safe to land. A little rubbing of the limbs soon brought her

round, and I had the satisfaction of seeing she was all right

before I left her. I had got to such a low estimate of her kind

that I did not expect any gratitude from her. In that, however,

I was wrong.

`This happened in the morning. In the afternoon I met my little woman, as I believe it was, as I was returning towards my centre from an exploration, and she received me with cries of delight and presented me with a big garland of flowers--evidently made for me and me alone. The thing took my imagination. Very possibly I had been feeling desolate. At any rate I did my best to display my appreciation of the gift. We were soon seated together in a little stone arbour, engaged in conversation, chiefly of smiles. The creature's friendliness affected me exactly as a child's might have done. We passed each other flowers, and she kissed my hands. I did the same to hers.

Then I tried talk, and found that her name was Weena, which, though I don't know what it meant, somehow seemed appropriate

enough. That was the beginning of a queer friendship which

lasted a week, and ended--as I will tell you!

`She was exactly like a child. She wanted to be with me

always. She tried to follow me everywhere, and on my next

journey out and about it went to my heart to tire her down, and

leave her at last, exhausted and calling after me rather

plaintively. But the problems of the world had to be mastered.

I had not, I said to myself, come into the future to carry on a

miniature flirtation. Yet her distress when I left her was very

great, her expostulations at the parting were sometimes frantic,

and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from

her devotion. Nevertheless she was, somehow, a very great

comfort. I thought it was mere childish affection that made her

cling to me. Until it was too late, I did not clearly know what

I had inflicted upon her when I left her. Nor until it was too

late did I clearly understand what she was to me. For, by merely

seeming fond of me, and showing in her weak, futile way that she

cared for me, the little doll of a creature presently gave my

return to the neighbourhood of the White Sphinx almost the

feeling of coming home; and I would watch for her tiny figure of

white and gold so soon as I came over the hill.

`It was from her, too, that I learned that fear had not yet

left the world. She was fearless enough in the daylight, and she

had the oddest confidence in me; for once, in a foolish moment, I

made threatening grimaces at her, and she simply laughed at them.

But she dreaded the dark, dreaded shadows, dreaded black things.

Darkness to her was the one thing dreadful. It was a singularly

passionate emotion, and it set me thinking and observing. I discovered then, among other things, that these little people gathered into the great houses after dark, and slept in droves.

To enter upon them without a light was to put them into a tumult of apprehension. I never found one out of doors, or one sleeping alone within doors, after dark. Yet I was still such a blockhead that I missed the lesson of that fear, and in spite of Weena's distress I insisted upon sleeping away from these slumbering multitudes.

`It troubled her greatly, but in the end her odd affection for me triumphed, and for five of the nights of our acquaintance, including the last night of all, she slept with her head pillowed on my arm. But my story slips away from me as I speak of her.

It must have been the night before her rescue that I was awakened

about dawn. I had been restless, dreaming most disagreeably that

I was drowned, and that sea anemones were feeling over my face

with their soft palps. I woke with a start, and with an odd

fancy that some greyish animal had just rushed out of the

chamber. I tried to get to sleep again, but I felt restless and

uncomfortable. It was that dim grey hour when things are just

creeping out of darkness, when everything is colourless and clear

cut, and yet unreal. I got up, and went down into the great

hall, and so out upon the flagstones in front of the palace. I

thought I would make a virtue of necessity, and see the sunrise.

`The moon was setting, and the dying moonlight and the first

pallor of dawn were mingled in a ghastly half-light. The bushes

were inky black, the ground a sombre grey, the sky colourless and

cheerless. And up the hill I thought I could see ghosts. There

several times, as I scanned the slope, I saw white figures.

Twice I fancied I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running

rather quickly up the hill, and once near the ruins I saw a leash

of them carrying some dark body. They moved hastily. I did not

see what became of them. It seemed that they vanished among the

bushes. The dawn was still indistinct, you must understand. I

was feeling that chill, uncertain, early-morning feeling you may

have known. I doubted my eyes.

`As the eastern sky grew brighter, and the light of the day

came on and its vivid colouring returned upon the world once

more, I scanned the view keenly. But I saw no vestige of my

white figures. They were mere creatures of the half light.

"They must have been ghosts," I said; "I wonder whence they

dated." For a queer notion of Grant Allen's came into my head,

and amused me. If each generation die and leave ghosts, he

argued, the world at last will get overcrowded with them. On

that theory they would have grown innumerable some Eight Hundred

Thousand Years hence, and it was no great wonder to see four at

once. But the jest was unsatisfying, and I was thinking of these

figures all the morning, until Weena's rescue drove them out of

my head. I associated them in some indefinite way with the white

animal I had startled in my first passionate search for the Time

Machine. But Weena was a pleasant substitute. Yet all the same,

they were soon destined to take far deadlier possession of my

mind.

`I think I have said how much hotter than our own was the

weather of this Golden Age. I cannot account for it. It may be

that the sun was hotter, or the earth nearer the sun. It is

usual to assume that the sun will go on cooling steadily in the

future. But people, unfamiliar with such speculations as those

of the younger Darwin, forget that the planets must ultimately

fall back one by one into the parent body. As these catastrophes

occur, the sun will blaze with renewed energy; and it may be that

some inner planet had suffered this fate. Whatever the reason,

the fact remains that the sun was very much hotter than we know

it.

`Well, one very hot morning--my fourth, I think--as I was

seeking shelter from the heat and glare in a colossal ruin near

the great house where I slept and fed, there happened this

strange thing: Clambering among these heaps of masonry, I found a

narrow gallery, whose end and side windows were blocked by fallen

masses of stone. By contrast with the brilliancy outside, it

seemed at first impenetrably dark to me. I entered it groping,

for the change from light to blackness made spots of colour swim

before me. Suddenly I halted spellbound. A pair of eyes,

luminous by reflection against the daylight without, was watching

me out of the darkness.

`The old instinctive dread of wild beasts came upon me. I clenched my hands and steadfastly looked into the glaring eyeballs. I was afraid to turn. Then the thought of the absolute security in which humanity appeared to be living came to my mind. And then I remembered that strange terror of the dark.

Overcoming my fear to some extent, I advanced a step and spoke.

I will admit that my voice was harsh and ill-controlled. I put out my hand and touched something soft. At once the eyes darted sideways, and something white ran past me. I turned with my heart in my mouth, and saw a queer little ape-like figure, its head held down in a peculiar manner, running across the sunlit space behind me. It blundered against a block of granite, staggered aside, and in a moment was hidden in a black shadow beneath another pile of ruined masonry.

`My impression of it is, of course, imperfect; but I know it was a dull white, and had strange large greyish-red eyes; also that there was flaxen hair on its head and down its back. But, as I say, it went too fast for me to see distinctly. I cannot even say whether it ran on all-fours, or only with its forearms held very low. After an instant's pause I followed it into the second heap of ruins. I could not find it at first; but, after a time in the profound obscurity, I came upon one of those round well-like openings of which I have told you, half closed by a fallen pillar. A sudden thought came to me. Could this Thing have vanished down the shaft? I lit a match, and, looking down, I saw a small, white, moving creature, with large bright eyes which regarded me steadfastly as it retreated. It made me shudder. It was so like a human spider! It was clambering down the wall, and now I saw for the first time a number of metal

foot

and hand rests forming a kind of ladder down the shaft. Then the

light burned my fingers and fell out of my hand, going out as it

dropped, and when I had lit another the little monster had

disappeared.

`I do not know how long I sat peering down that well. It was

not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that

the thing I had seen was human. But, gradually, the truth dawned

on me: that Man had not remained one species, but had

differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful

children of the Upper-world were not the sole descendants of our

generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing,

which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages.

`I thought of the flickering pillars and of my theory of an underground ventilation. I began to suspect their true import.

And what, I wondered, was this Lemur doing in my scheme of a perfectly balanced organization? How was it related to the indolent serenity of the beautiful Upper-worlders? And what was hidden down there, at the foot of that shaft? I sat upon the edge of the well telling myself that, at any rate, there was nothing to fear, and that there I must descend for the solution of my difficulties. And withal I was absolutely afraid to go!

As I hesitated, two of the beautiful Upper-world people came running in their amorous sport across the daylight in the shadow.

The male pursued the female, flinging flowers at her as he ran.

`They seemed distressed to find me, my arm against the overturned pillar, peering down the well. Apparently it was

considered bad form to remark these apertures; for when I pointed

to this one, and tried to frame a question about it in their

tongue, they were still more visibly distressed and turned away.

But they were interested by my matches, and I struck some to

amuse them. I tried them again about the well, and again I

failed. So presently I left them, meaning to go back to Weena,

and see what I could get from her. But my mind was already in

revolution; my guesses and impressions were slipping and sliding

to a new adjustment. I had now a clue to the import of these

wells, to the ventilating towers, to the mystery of the ghosts;

to say nothing of a hint at the meaning of the bronze gates and

the fate of the Time Machine! And very vaguely there came a

suggestion towards the solution of the economic problem that had

puzzled me.

`Here was the new view. Plainly, this second species of Man

was subterranean. There were three circumstances in particular

which made me think that its rare emergence above ground was the

outcome of a long-continued underground habit. In the first

place, there was the bleached look common in most animals that

live largely in the dark--the white fish of the Kentucky caves,

for instance. Then, those large eyes, with that capacity for

reflecting light, are common features of nocturnal things--

witness the owl and the cat. And last of all, that evident

confusion in the sunshine, that hasty yet fumbling awkward flight

towards dark shadow, and that peculiar carriage of the head while

in the light--all reinforced the theory of an extreme

sensitiveness of the retina.

`Beneath my feet, then, the earth must be tunnelled enormously, and these tunnellings were the habitat of the new race. The presence of ventilating shafts and wells along the hill slopes--everywhere, in fact except along the river valley --showed how universal were its ramifications. What so natural, then, as to assume that it was in this artificial Underworld that such work as was necessary to the comfort of the daylight race was done? The notion was so plausible that I at once accepted it, and went on to assume the how of this splitting of the human species. I dare say you will anticipate the shape of my theory; though, for myself, I very soon felt that it fell far short of the truth.

`At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it

seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the

present merely temporary and social difference between the

Capitalist and the Labourer, was the key to the whole position.

No doubt it will seem grotesque enough to you--and wildly

incredible!--and yet even now there are existing circumstances

to point that way. There is a tendency to utilize underground

space for the less ornamental purposes of civilization; there is

the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new

electric railways, there are subways, there are underground

workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply.

Evidently, I thought, this tendency had increased till Industry

had gradually lost its birthright in the sky. I mean that it had

gone deeper and deeper into larger and ever larger underground

factories, spending a still-increasing amount of its time

therein, till, in the end--! Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?

`Again, the exclusive tendency of richer people--due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor-- is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land. About London, for instance, perhaps half the prettier country is shut in against intrusion. And this same widening gulf--which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich--will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at

present

retards the splitting of our species along lines of social

stratification, less and less frequent. So, in the end, above

ground you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort and

beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Workers getting

continually adapted to the conditions of their labour. Once they

were there, they would no doubt have to pay rent, and not a

little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they

refused, they would starve or be suffocated for arrears. Such of

them as were so constituted as to be miserable and rebellious

would die; and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the

survivors would become as well adapted to the conditions of

underground life, and as happy in their way, as the Upper-world

people were to theirs. As it seemed to me, the refined

beauty

and the etiolated pallor followed naturally enough.

`The great triumph of Humanity I had dreamed of took a

different shape in my mind. It had been no such triumph of moral

education and general co-operation as I had imagined. Instead, I

saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and

working to a logical conclusion the industrial system of to-day.

Its triumph had not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a

triumph over Nature and the fellow-man. This, I must warn you,

was my theory at the time. I had no convenient cicerone in the

pattern of the Utopian books. My explanation may be absolutely

wrong. I still think it is the most plausible one. But even on

this supposition the balanced civilization that was at last

attained must have long since passed its zenith, and was now far

fallen into decay. The too-perfect security of the

Upper-worlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration,

to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence. That

I could see clearly enough already. What had happened to the

Under-grounders I did not yet suspect; but from what I had seen

of the Morlocks--that, by the by, was the name by which these

creatures were called--I could imagine that the modification of

the human type was even far more profound than among the "Eloi,"

the beautiful race that I already knew.

`Then came troublesome doubts. Why had the Morlocks taken my

Time Machine? For I felt sure it was they who had taken it.

Why, too, if the Eloi were masters, could they not restore the

machine to me? And why were they so terribly afraid of the dark?

I proceeded, as I have said, to question Weena about this

Under-world, but here again I was disappointed. At first she

would not understand my questions, and presently she refused to

answer them. She shivered as though the topic was unendurable.

And when I pressed her, perhaps a little harshly, she burst into

tears. They were the only tears, except my own, I ever saw in

that Golden Age. When I saw them I ceased abruptly to trouble

about the Morlocks, and was only concerned in banishing these

signs of the human inheritance from Weena's eyes. And very soon

she was smiling and clapping her hands, while I solemnly burned a

match.

VI

`It may seem odd to you, but it was two days before I could

follow up the new-found clue in what was manifestly the proper

way. I felt a peculiar shrinking from those pallid bodies. They

were just the half-bleached colour of the worms and things one

sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum. And they were

filthily cold to the touch. Probably my shrinking was largely

due to the sympathetic influence of the Eloi, whose disgust of

the Morlocks I now began to appreciate.

`The next night I did not sleep well. Probably my health was

a little disordered. I was oppressed with perplexity and

doubt.

Once or twice I had a feeling of intense fear for which I could

perceive no definite reason. I remember creeping noiselessly

into the great hall where the little people were sleeping in the

moonlight--that night Weena was among them--and feeling

reassured by their presence. It occurred to me even then, that

in the course of a few days the moon must pass through its last

quarter, and the nights grow dark, when the appearances of these

unpleasant creatures from below, these whitened Lemurs, this new

vermin that had replaced the old, might be more abundant. And on

both these days I had the restless feeling of one who shirks an

inevitable duty. I felt assured that the Time Machine was only

to be recovered by boldly penetrating these underground

mysteries. Yet I could not face the mystery. If only I had had

a companion it would have been different. But I was so horribly

alone, and even to clamber down into the darkness of the well

appalled me. I don't know if you will understand my feeling, but

I never felt quite safe at my back.

`It was this restlessness, this insecurity, perhaps, that

drove me further and further afield in my exploring expeditions.

Going to the south-westward towards the rising country that is

now called Combe Wood, I observed far off, in the direction of

nineteenth-century Banstead, a vast green structure, different in

character from any I had hitherto seen. It was larger than the

largest of the palaces or ruins I knew, and the facade had

an

Oriental look: the face of it having the lustre, as well as the

pale-green tint, a kind of bluish-green, of a certain type of

Chinese porcelain. This difference in aspect suggested a

difference in use, and I was minded to push on and explore. But

the day was growing late, and I had come upon the sight of the

place after a long and tiring circuit; so I resolved to hold over

the adventure for the following day, and I returned to the

welcome and the caresses of little Weena. But next morning I

perceived clearly enough that my curiosity regarding the Palace

of Green Porcelain was a piece of self-deception, to enable me to

shirk, by another day, an experience I dreaded. I resolved I

would make the descent without further waste of time, and started

out in the early morning towards a well near the ruins of granite

and aluminium.

`Little Weena ran with me. She danced beside me to the well,

but when she saw me lean over the mouth and look downward, she

seemed strangely disconcerted. "Good-bye, Little Weena," I said,

kissing her; and then putting her down, I began to feel over the

parapet for the climbing hooks. Rather hastily, I may as well

confess, for I feared my courage might leak away! At first she

watched me in amazement. Then she gave a most piteous cry, and

running to me, she began to pull at me with her little hands. I

think her opposition nerved me rather to proceed. I shook her

off, perhaps a little roughly, and in another moment I was in the

throat of the well. I saw her agonized face over the parapet,

and smiled to reassure her. Then I had to look down at the unstable hooks to which I clung.

`I had to clamber down a shaft of perhaps two hundred yards. The descent was effected by means of metallic bars projecting from the sides of the well, and these being adapted to the needs of a creature much smaller and lighter than myself, I was speedily cramped and fatigued by the descent. And not simply fatigued! One of the bars bent suddenly under my weight, and almost swung me off into the blackness beneath. For a moment I hung by one hand, and after that experience I did not dare to rest again. Though my arms and back were presently acutely painful, I went on clambering down the sheer descent with as

quick a motion as possible. Glancing upward, I saw the aperture,

a small blue disk, in which a star was visible, while little

Weena's head showed as a round black projection. The thudding

sound of a machine below grew louder and more oppressive.

Everything save that little disk above was profoundly dark, and

when I looked up again Weena had disappeared.

`I was in an agony of discomfort. I had some thought of

trying to go up the shaft again, and leave the Under-world alone.

But even while I turned this over in my mind I continued to

descend. At last, with intense relief, I saw dimly coming up, a

foot to the right of me, a slender loophole in the wall.

Swinging myself in, I found it was the aperture of a narrow

horizontal tunnel in which I could lie down and rest. It was not

too soon. My arms ached, my back was cramped, and I

was

trembling with the prolonged terror of a fall. Besides this, the

unbroken darkness had had a distressing effect upon my eyes. The

air was full of the throb and hum of machinery pumping air down

the shaft.

`I do not know how long I lay. I was roused by a soft hand

touching my face. Starting up in the darkness I snatched at my

matches and, hastily striking one, I saw three stooping white

creatures similar to the one I had seen above ground in the ruin,

hastily retreating before the light. Living, as they did, in

what appeared to me impenetrable darkness, their eyes were

abnormally large and sensitive, just as are the pupils of the

abysmal fishes, and they reflected the light in the same way. I

have no doubt they could see me in that rayless obscurity, and

they did not seem to have any fear of me apart from the light.

But, so soon as I struck a match in order to see them, they fled

incontinently, vanishing into dark gutters and tunnels, from

which their eyes glared at me in the strangest fashion.

`I tried to call to them, but the language they had was

apparently different from that of the Over-world people; so that

I was needs left to my own unaided efforts, and the thought of

flight before exploration was even then in my mind. But I said

to myself, "You are in for it now," and, feeling my way along the

tunnel, I found the noise of machinery grow louder. Presently

the walls fell away from me, and I came to a large open space,

and striking another match, saw that I had entered a vast arched

cavern, which stretched into utter darkness beyond the range of

my light. The view I had of it was as much as one could see in

the burning of a match.

`Necessarily my memory is vague. Great shapes like big

machines rose out of the dimness, and cast grotesque black

shadows, in which dim spectral Morlocks sheltered from the glare.

The place, by the by, was very stuffy and oppressive, and the

faint halitus of freshly shed blood was in the air. Some way

down the central vista was a little table of white metal, laid

with what seemed a meal. The Morlocks at any rate were

carnivorous! Even at the time, I remember wondering what large

animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw. It

was all very indistinct: the heavy smell, the big unmeaning

shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the shadows, and only

waiting for the darkness to come at me again! Then the match

burned down, and stung my fingers, and fell, a wriggling red spot

in the blackness.

`I have thought since how particularly ill-equipped I was for

such an experience. When I had started with the Time Machine, I

had started with the absurd assumption that the men of the Future

would certainly be infinitely ahead of ourselves in all their

appliances. I had come without arms, without medicine, without

anything to smoke--at times I missed tobacco frightfully--even

without enough matches. If only I had thought of a Kodak! I

could have flashed that glimpse of the Underworld in a second,

and examined it at leisure. But, as it was, I stood there with

only the weapons and the powers that Nature had endowed me

with--hands, feet, and teeth; these, and four safety-matches that

still remained to me.

`I was afraid to push my way in among all this machinery in

the dark, and it was only with my last glimpse of light I

discovered that my store of matches had run low. It had never

occurred to me until that moment that there was any need to

economize them, and I had wasted almost half the box in

astonishing the Upper-worlders, to whom fire was a novelty. Now,

as I say, I had four left, and while I stood in the dark, a hand

touched mine, lank fingers came feeling over my face, and I was

sensible of a peculiar unpleasant odour. I fancied I heard the

breathing of a crowd of those dreadful little beings about me. I

felt the box of matches in my hand being gently disengaged, and

other hands behind me plucking at my clothing. The sense of

these unseen creatures examining me was indescribably unpleasant.

The sudden realization of my ignorance of their ways of thinking

and doing came home to me very vividly in the darkness. I shouted

at them as loudly as I could. They started away, and then I

could feel them approaching me again. They clutched at me more

boldly, whispering odd sounds to each other. I shivered

violently, and shouted again rather discordantly. This time they

were not so seriously alarmed, and they made a queer laughing

noise as they came back at me. I will confess I was horribly

frightened. I determined to strike another match and escape

under the protection of its glare. I did so, and eking out the

flicker with a scrap of paper from my pocket, I made good my

retreat to the narrow tunnel. But I had scarce entered this when

my light was blown out and in the blackness I could hear the

Morlocks rustling like wind among leaves, and pattering like the

rain, as they hurried after me.

`In a moment I was clutched by several hands, and there was no

mistaking that they were trying to haul me back. I struck

another light, and waved it in their dazzled faces. You can

scarce imagine how nauseatingly inhuman they looked--those pale,

chinless faces and great, lidless, pinkish-grey eyes!--as they

stared in their blindness and bewilderment. But I did not stay to

look, I promise you: I retreated again, and when my second match

had ended, I struck my third. It had almost burned through

when

I reached the opening into the shaft. I lay down on the edge,

for the throb of the great pump below made me giddy. Then I felt

sideways for the projecting hooks, and, as I did so, my feet were

grasped from behind, and I was violently tugged backward. I lit

my last match . . . and it incontinently went out. But I had my

hand on the climbing bars now, and, kicking violently, I

disengaged myself from the clutches of the Morlocks and was

speedily clambering up the shaft, while they stayed peering and

blinking up at me: all but one little wretch who followed me for

some way, and wellnigh secured my boot as a trophy.

`That climb seemed interminable to me. With the last twenty

or thirty feet of it a deadly nausea came upon me. I had the

greatest difficulty in keeping my hold. The last few yards was a

frightful struggle against this faintness. Several times my head

swam, and I felt all the sensations of falling. At last,

however, I got over the well-mouth somehow, and staggered out of

the ruin into the blinding sunlight. I fell upon my face. Even

the soil smelt sweet and clean. Then I remember Weena kissing my

hands and ears, and the voices of others among the Eloi. Then,

for a time, I was insensible.

VII

`Now, indeed, I seemed in a worse case than before. Hitherto,

except during my night's anguish at the loss of the Time Machine,

I had felt a sustaining hope of ultimate escape, but that hope

was staggered by these new discoveries. Hitherto I had merely

thought myself impeded by the childish simplicity of the little

people, and by some unknown forces which I had only to understand

to overcome; but there was an altogether new element in the

sickening quality of the Morlocks--a something inhuman and

malign. Instinctively I loathed them. Before, I had felt as a

man might feel who had fallen into a pit: my concern was with

the pit and how to get out of it. Now I felt like a beast in a

trap, whose enemy would come upon him soon.

`The enemy I dreaded may surprise you. It was the darkness of

the new moon. Weena had put this into my head by some at first

incomprehensible remarks about the Dark Nights. It was

not now

such a very difficult problem to guess what the coming Dark

Nights might mean. The moon was on the wane: each night there

was a longer interval of darkness. And I now understood to some

slight degree at least the reason of the fear of the little

Upper-world people for the dark. I wondered vaguely what foul

villainy it might be that the Morlocks did under the new moon. I

felt pretty sure now that my second hypothesis was all wrong.

The Upper-world people might once have been the favoured

aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants: but

that had long since passed away. The two species that had

resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or

had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The

Eloi,

like the Carolingian kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful

futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since

the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come

at last to find the daylit surface intolerable. And the Morlocks

made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their

habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of

service. They did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or

as a man enjoys killing animals in sport: because ancient and

departed necessities had impressed it on the organism. But,

clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. The Nemesis

of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. Ages ago, thousands

of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of

the

ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back

changed! Already the Eloi had begun to learn one old lesson

anew. They were becoming reacquainted with Fear. And suddenly

there came into my head the memory of the meat I had seen in the

Under-world. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not

stirred up as it were by the current of my meditations, but

coming in almost like a question from outside. I tried to recall

the form of it. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I

could not tell what it was at the time.

`Still, however helpless the little people in the presence of

their mysterious Fear, I was differently constituted. I came out

of this age of ours, this ripe prime of the human race, when

Fear

does not paralyse and mystery has lost its terrors. I at least

would defend myself. Without further delay I determined to make

myself arms and a fastness where I might sleep. With that refuge

as a base, I could face this strange world with some of that

confidence I had lost in realizing to what creatures night by

night I lay exposed. I felt I could never sleep again until my

bed was secure from them. I shuddered with horror to think how

they must already have examined me.

`I wandered during the afternoon along the valley of the

Thames, but found nothing that commended itself to my mind as

inaccessible. All the buildings and trees seemed easily

practicable to such dexterous climbers as the Morlocks, to judge

by their wells, must be. Then the tall pinnacles of the Palace

of Green Porcelain and the polished gleam of its walls came back

to my memory; and in the evening, taking Weena like a child upon

my shoulder, I went up the hills towards the south-west. The

distance, I had reckoned, was seven or eight miles, but it must

have been nearer eighteen. I had first seen the place on a moist

afternoon when distances are deceptively diminished. In

addition, the heel of one of my shoes was loose, and a nail was

working through the sole--they were comfortable old shoes I wore

about indoors--so that I was lame. And it was already long past

sunset when I came in sight of the palace, silhouetted black

against the pale yellow of the sky.

`Weena had been hugely delighted when I began to carry her,

but after a while she desired me to let her down, and ran

along

by the side of me, occasionally darting off on either hand to

pick flowers to stick in my pockets. My pockets had always

puzzled Weena, but at the last she had concluded that they were

an eccentric kind of vase for floral decoration. At least she

utilized them for that purpose. And that reminds me! In

changing my jacket I found . . .'

The Time Traveller paused, put his hand into his pocket, and

silently placed two withered flowers, not unlike very large white

mallows, upon the little table. Then he resumed his narrative.

`As the hush of evening crept over the world and we proceeded

over the hill crest towards Wimbledon, Weena grew tired and

wanted to return to the house of grey stone. But I pointed out

the distant pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain to her,

and contrived to make her understand that we were seeking a

refuge there from her Fear. You know that great pause that comes

upon things before the dusk? Even the breeze stops in the trees.

To me there is always an air of expectation about that evening

stillness. The sky was clear, remote, and empty save for a few

horizontal bars far down in the sunset. Well, that night the

expectation took the colour of my fears. In that darkling calm

my senses seemed preternaturally sharpened. I fancied I could

even feel the hollowness of the ground beneath my feet: could,

indeed, almost see through it the Morlocks on their ant-hill

going hither and thither and waiting for the dark. In my

excitement I fancied that they would receive my invasion of

their

burrows as a declaration of war. And why had they taken my Time

Machine?

`So we went on in the quiet, and the twilight deepened into

night. The clear blue of the distance faded, and one star after

another came out. The ground grew dim and the trees black.

Weena's fears and her fatigue grew upon her. I took her in my

arms and talked to her and caressed her. Then, as the darkness

grew deeper, she put her arms round my neck, and, closing her

eyes, tightly pressed her face against my shoulder. So we went

down a long slope into a valley, and there in the dimness I

almost walked into a little river. This I waded, and went up the

opposite side of the valley, past a number of sleeping houses,

and by a statue--a Faun, or some such figure, MINUS the head.

Here too were acacias. So far I had seen nothing of the

Morlocks, but it was yet early in the night, and the darker hours

before the old moon rose were still to come.

`From the brow of the next hill I saw a thick wood spreading

wide and black before me. I hesitated at this. I could see no

end to it, either to the right or the left. Feeling tired--my

feet, in particular, were very sore--I carefully lowered Weena

from my shoulder as I halted, and sat down upon the turf. I

could no longer see the Palace of Green Porcelain, and I was in

doubt of my direction. I looked into the thickness of the wood

and thought of what it might hide. Under that dense tangle

of

branches one would be out of sight of the stars. Even were there

no other lurking danger--a danger I did not care to let my

imagination loose upon--there would still be all the roots to

stumble over and the tree-boles to strike against.

`I was very tired, too, after the excitements of the day; so I

decided that I would not face it, but would pass the night upon

the open hill.

`Weena, I was glad to find, was fast asleep. I carefully

wrapped her in my jacket, and sat down beside her to wait for the

moonrise. The hill-side was quiet and deserted, but from the

black of the wood there came now and then a stir of living

things. Above me shone the stars, for the night was very clear.

I felt a certain sense of friendly comfort in their twinkling.

All the old constellations had gone from the sky, however: that

slow movement which is imperceptible in a hundred human

lifetimes, had long since rearranged them in unfamiliar

groupings. But the Milky Way, it seemed to me, was still the

same tattered streamer of star-dust as of yore. Southward (as I

judged it) was a very bright red star that was new to me; it was

even more splendid than our own green Sirius. And amid all these

scintillating points of light one bright planet shone kindly and

steadily like the face of an old friend.

`Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and

all the gravities of terrestrial life. I thought of their

unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their

movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future. I

thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes. Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed. And during these few revolutions all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organizations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence. Instead were these frail creatures who had forgotten their high ancestry, and the white Things of which I went in terror. Then I thought of the Great Fear that was between the two species, and for the first time, with a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be. Yet it was too horrible! I looked at little Weena sleeping beside me, her face white and starlike under the stars, and forthwith dismissed the thought.

`Through that long night I held my mind off the Morlocks as well as I could, and whiled away the time by trying to fancy I could find signs of the old constellations in the new confusion.

The sky kept very clear, except for a hazy cloud or so. No doubt I dozed at times. Then, as my vigil wore on, came a faintness in the eastward sky, like the reflection of some colourless fire, and the old moon rose, thin and peaked and white. And close behind, and overtaking it, and overflowing it, the dawn came, pale at first, and then growing pink and warm. No Morlocks had approached us. Indeed, I had seen none upon the hill that night.

And in the confidence of renewed day it almost seemed to me that my fear had been unreasonable. I stood up and found my foot with the loose heel swollen at the ankle and painful under the

heel;

so I sat down again, took off my shoes, and flung them away.

`I awakened Weena, and we went down into the wood, now green

and pleasant instead of black and forbidding. We found some

fruit wherewith to break our fast. We soon met others of the

dainty ones, laughing and dancing in the sunlight as though there

was no such thing in nature as the night. And then I thought

once more of the meat that I had seen. I felt assured now of

what it was, and from the bottom of my heart I pitied this last

feeble rill from the great flood of humanity. Clearly, at some

time in the Long-Ago of human decay the Morlocks' food had run

short. Possibly they had lived on rats and such-like vermin.

Even now man is far less discriminating and exclusive in his food

than he was--far less than any monkey. His prejudice against

human flesh is no deep-seated instinct. And so these inhuman

sons of men----! I tried to look at the thing in a scientific

spirit. After all, they were less human and more remote than our

cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago. And the

intelligence that would have made this state of things a torment

had gone. Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi were mere

fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed

upon--probably saw to the breeding of. And there was Weena

dancing at my side!

`Then I tried to preserve myself from the horror that was

coming upon me, by regarding it as a rigorous punishment of human

selfishness. Man had been content to live in ease and delight

upon the labours of his fellow-man, had taken Necessity as his

watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had

come home to him. I even tried a Carlyle-like scorn of this

wretched aristocracy in decay. But this attitude of mind was

impossible. However great their intellectual degradation, the

Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my

sympathy, and to make me perforce a sharer in their degradation

and their Fear.

`I had at that time very vague ideas as to the course I should

pursue. My first was to secure some safe place of refuge, and to

make myself such arms of metal or stone as I could contrive.

That necessity was immediate. In the next place, I hoped to

procure some means of fire, so that I should have the

weapon of a

torch at hand, for nothing, I knew, would be more efficient

against these Morlocks. Then I wanted to arrange some

contrivance to break open the doors of bronze under the White

Sphinx. I had in mind a battering ram. I had a persuasion that

if I could enter those doors and carry a blaze of light before me

I should discover the Time Machine and escape. I could not

imagine the Morlocks were strong enough to move it far away.

Weena I had resolved to bring with me to our own time. And

turning such schemes over in my mind I pursued our way towards

the building which my fancy had chosen as our dwelling.

`I found the Palace of Green Porcelain, when we approached it

about noon, deserted and falling into ruin. Only ragged vestiges

of glass remained in its windows, and great sheets of the green

facing had fallen away from the corroded metallic framework. It

lay very high upon a turfy down, and looking north-eastward

before I entered it, I was surprised to see a large estuary, or

even creek, where I judged Wandsworth and Battersea must once

have been. I thought then--though I never followed up the

thought--of what might have happened, or might be happening, to

the living things in the sea.

`The material of the Palace proved on examination to be indeed

porcelain, and along the face of it I saw an inscription in some

unknown character. I thought, rather foolishly, that Weena might

help me to interpret this, but I only learned that the bare idea

of writing had never entered her head. She always seemed to me,

I fancy, more human than she was, perhaps because her affection

was so human.

`Within the big valves of the door--which were open and

broken--we found, instead of the customary hall, a long gallery

lit by many side windows. At the first glance I was reminded of

a museum. The tiled floor was thick with dust, and a remarkable

array of miscellaneous objects was shrouded in the same grey

covering. Then I perceived, standing strange and gaunt in the

centre of the hall, what was clearly the lower part of a huge

skeleton. I recognized by the oblique feet that it was some

extinct creature after the fashion of the Megatherium. The skull

and the upper bones lay beside it in the thick dust, and in one

place, where rain-water had dropped through a leak in the roof,

the thing itself had been worn away. Further in the gallery was

the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus. My museum hypothesis

was confirmed. Going towards the side I found what appeared to be

sloping shelves, and clearing away the thick dust, I found the

old familiar glass cases of our own time. But they must have

been air-tight to judge from the fair preservation of some of

their contents.

`Clearly we stood among the ruins of some latter-day South

Kensington! Here, apparently, was the Palaeontological Section,

and a very splendid array of fossils it must have been, though

the inevitable process of decay that had been staved off for a

time, and had, through the extinction of bacteria and fungi, lost

ninety-nine hundredths of its force, was nevertheless, with

extreme sureness if with extreme slowness at work again upon all

its treasures. Here and there I found traces of the little

people in the shape of rare fossils broken to pieces or threaded

in strings upon reeds. And the cases had in some instances been

bodily removed--by the Morlocks as I judged. The place was very

silent. The thick dust deadened our footsteps. Weena, who had

been rolling a sea urchin down the sloping glass of a case,

presently came, as I stared about me, and very quietly took

my

hand and stood beside me.

`And at first I was so much surprised by this ancient monument

of an intellectual age, that I gave no thought to the

possibilities it presented. Even my preoccupation about the Time

Machine receded a little from my mind.

`To judge from the size of the place, this Palace of Green

Porcelain had a great deal more in it than a Gallery of

Palaeontology; possibly historical galleries; it might be, even a

library! To me, at least in my present circumstances, these

would be vastly more interesting than this spectacle of oldtime

geology in decay. Exploring, I found another short gallery

running transversely to the first. This appeared to be devoted

to minerals, and the sight of a block of sulphur set my mind

running on gunpowder. But I could find no saltpeter; indeed, no

nitrates of any kind. Doubtless they had deliquesced ages ago.

Yet the sulphur hung in my mind, and set up a train of thinking.

As for the rest of the contents of that gallery, though on the

whole they were the best preserved of all I saw, I had little

interest. I am no specialist in mineralogy, and I went on down a

very ruinous aisle running parallel to the first hall I had

entered. Apparently this section had been devoted to natural

history, but everything had long since passed out of recognition.

A few shrivelled and blackened vestiges of what had once been

stuffed animals, desiccated mummies in jars that had once held

spirit, a brown dust of departed plants: that was all! I was

sorry for that, because I should have been glad to trace the

patent readjustments by which the conquest of animated

nature had

been attained. Then we came to a gallery of simply colossal

proportions, but singularly ill-lit, the floor of it running

downward at a slight angle from the end at which I entered. At

intervals white globes hung from the ceiling--many of them

cracked and smashed--which suggested that originally the place

had been artificially lit. Here I was more in my element, for

rising on either side of me were the huge bulks of big machines,

all greatly corroded and many broken down, but some still fairly

complete. You know I have a certain weakness for mechanism, and I

was inclined to linger among these; the more so as for the most

part they had the interest of puzzles, and I could make only the

vaguest guesses at what they were for. I fancied that if I could

solve their puzzles I should find myself in possession of powers

that might be of use against the Morlocks.

`Suddenly Weena came very close to my side. So suddenly that

she startled me. Had it not been for her I do not think I should

have noticed that the floor of the gallery sloped at all.

[Footnote: It may be, of course, that the floor did not slope,

but that the museum was built into the side of a hill.-ED.] The

end I had come in at was quite above ground, and was lit by rare

slit-like windows. As you went down the length, the ground came

up against these windows, until at last there was a pit like the

"area" of a London house before each, and only a narrow line of

daylight at the top. I went slowly along, puzzling about the

machines, and had been too intent upon them to notice the

gradual

diminution of the light, until Weena's increasing apprehensions

drew my attention. Then I saw that the gallery ran down at last

into a thick darkness. I hesitated, and then, as I looked round

me, I saw that the dust was less abundant and its surface less

even. Further away towards the dimness, it appeared to be broken

by a number of small narrow footprints. My sense of the

immediate presence of the Morlocks revived at that. I felt that

I was wasting my time in the academic examination of machinery.

I called to mind that it was already far advanced in the

afternoon, and that I had still no weapon, no refuge, and no

means of making a fire. And then down in the remote blackness of

the gallery I heard a peculiar pattering, and the same odd noises

I had heard down the well.

`I took Weena's hand. Then, struck with a sudden idea, I left

her and turned to a machine from which projected a lever not

unlike those in a signal-box. Clambering upon the stand, and

grasping this lever in my hands, I put all my weight upon it

sideways. Suddenly Weena, deserted in the central aisle, began

to whimper. I had judged the strength of the lever pretty

correctly, for it snapped after a minute's strain, and I rejoined

her with a mace in my hand more than sufficient, I judged, for

any Morlock skull I might encounter. And I longed very much to

kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go

killing one's own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow,

to feel any humanity in the things. Only my disinclination to

leave Weena, and a persuasion that if I began to slake my thirst

for murder my Time Machine might suffer, restrained me from going

straight down the gallery and killing the brutes I heard.

`Well, mace in one hand and Weena in the other, I went out of

that gallery and into another and still larger one, which at the

first glance reminded me of a military chapel hung with tattered

flags. The brown and charred rags that hung from the sides of

it, I presently recognized as the decaying vestiges of books.

They had long since dropped to pieces, and every semblance of

print had left them. But here and there were warped boards and

cracked metallic clasps that told the tale well enough. Had I

been a literary man I might, perhaps, have moralized upon

the

futility of all ambition. But as it was, the thing that struck

me with keenest force was the enormous waste of labour to which

this sombre wilderness of rotting paper testified. At the time I

will confess that I thought chiefly of the PHILOSOPHICAL

TRANSACTIONS and my own seventeen papers upon physical optics.

`Then, going up a broad staircase, we came to what may once

have been a gallery of technical chemistry. And here I had not a

little hope of useful discoveries. Except at one end where the

roof had collapsed, this gallery was well preserved. I went

eagerly to every unbroken case. And at last, in one of the

really air-tight cases, I found a box of matches. Very eagerly I

tried them. They were perfectly good. They were not even damp.

I turned to Weena. "Dance," I cried to her in her own tongue.

For now I had a weapon indeed against the horrible creatures we

feared. And so, in that derelict museum, upon the thick soft

carpeting of dust, to Weena's huge delight, I solemnly performed

a kind of composite dance, whistling THE LAND OF THE LEAL as

cheerfully as I could. In part it was a modest CANCAN, in part

a step dance, in part a skirt-dance (so far as my tail-coat

permitted), and in part original. For I am naturally inventive,

as you know.

`Now, I still think that for this box of matches to have

escaped the wear of time for immemorial years was a most strange,

as for me it was a most fortunate thing. Yet, oddly enough, I

found a far unlikelier substance, and that was camphor. I found

it in a sealed jar, that by chance, I suppose, had been really

hermetically sealed. I fancied at first that it was paraffin

wax, and smashed the glass accordingly. But the odour of camphor

was unmistakable. In the universal decay this volatile substance

had chanced to survive, perhaps through many thousands of

centuries. It reminded me of a sepia painting I had once seen

done from the ink of a fossil Belemnite that must have perished

and become fossilized millions of years ago. I was about to

throw it away, but I remembered that it was inflammable and

burned with a good bright flame--was, in fact, an excellent

candle--and I put it in my pocket. I found no explosives,

however, nor any means of breaking down the bronze doors. As yet

my iron crowbar was the most helpful thing I had chanced upon.

Nevertheless I left that gallery greatly elated.

`I cannot tell you all the story of that long afternoon. It would require a great effort of memory to recall my explorations in at all the proper order. I remember a long gallery of rusting stands of arms, and how I hesitated between my crowbar and a hatchet or a sword. I could not carry both, however, and my bar of iron promised best against the bronze gates. There were numbers of guns, pistols, and rifles. The most were masses of rust, but many were of some new metal, and still fairly sound.

But any cartridges or powder there may once have been had rotted into dust. One corner I saw was charred and shattered; perhaps, I thought, by an explosion among the specimens. In another place

was a vast array of idols--Polynesian, Mexican, Grecian, Phoenician, every country on earth I should think. And here, yielding to an irresistible impulse, I wrote my name upon the nose of a steatite monster from South America that particularly took my fancy.

`As the evening drew on, my interest waned. I went through gallery after gallery, dusty, silent, often ruinous, the exhibits sometimes mere heaps of rust and lignite, sometimes fresher. In one place I suddenly found myself near the model of a tin-mine, and then by the merest accident I discovered, in an air-tight case, two dynamite cartridges! I shouted "Eureka!" and smashed the case with joy. Then came a doubt. I hesitated. Then, selecting a little side gallery, I made my essay. I never felt such a disappointment as I did in waiting five, ten, fifteen minutes for an explosion that never came. Of course the

things

were dummies, as I might have guessed from their presence. I

really believe that had they not been so, I should have rushed

off incontinently and blown Sphinx, bronze doors, and (as it

proved) my chances of finding the Time Machine, all together into

nonexistence.

`It was after that, I think, that we came to a little open

court within the palace. It was turfed, and had three fruit-

trees. So we rested and refreshed ourselves. Towards sunset I

began to consider our position. Night was creeping upon us, and

my inaccessible hiding-place had still to be found. But that

troubled me very little now. I had in my possession a thing that

was, perhaps, the best of all defences against the Morlocks--I

had matches! I had the camphor in my pocket, too, if a

blaze

were needed. It seemed to me that the best thing we could do

would be to pass the night in the open, protected by a fire. In

the morning there was the getting of the Time Machine. Towards

that, as yet, I had only my iron mace. But now, with my growing

knowledge, I felt very differently towards those bronze doors.

Up to this, I had refrained from forcing them, largely because of

the mystery on the other side. They had never impressed me as

being very strong, and I hoped to find my bar of iron not

altogether inadequate for the work.

IX

`We emerged from the palace while the sun was still in part

above the horizon. I was determined to reach the White Sphinx

early the next morning, and ere the dusk I purposed pushing

through the woods that had stopped me on the previous journey.

My plan was to go as far as possible that night, and then,

building a fire, to sleep in the protection of its glare.

Accordingly, as we went along I gathered any sticks or dried

grass I saw, and presently had my arms full of such litter. Thus

loaded, our progress was slower than I had anticipated, and

besides Weena was tired. And I began to suffer from sleepiness

too; so that it was full night before we reached the wood. Upon

the shrubby hill of its edge Weena would have stopped, fearing

the darkness before us; but a singular sense of impending

calamity, that should indeed have served me as a warning, drove

me onward. I had been without sleep for a night and two days,

and I was feverish and irritable. I felt sleep coming upon me,

and the Morlocks with it.

`While we hesitated, among the black bushes behind us, and dim

against their blackness, I saw three crouching figures. There

was scrub and long grass all about us, and I did not feel safe

from their insidious approach. The forest, I calculated, was

rather less than a mile across. If we could get through it to

the bare hill-side, there, as it seemed to me, was an altogether

safer resting-place; I thought that with my matches and my

camphor I could contrive to keep my path illuminated through the

woods. Yet it was evident that if I was to flourish matches

with

my hands I should have to abandon my firewood; so, rather

reluctantly, I put it down. And then it came into my head that I

would amaze our friends behind by lighting it. I was to discover

the atrocious folly of this proceeding, but it came to my mind as

an ingenious move for covering our retreat.

`I don't know if you have ever thought what a rare thing flame

must be in the absence of man and in a temperate climate. The

sun's heat is rarely strong enough to burn, even when it is

focused by dewdrops, as is sometimes the case in more tropical

districts. Lightning may blast and blacken, but it rarely gives

rise to widespread fire. Decaying vegetation may occasionally

smoulder with the heat of its fermentation, but this rarely

results in flame. In this decadence, too, the art of fire-making

had been forgotten on the earth. The red tongues that went

licking up my heap of wood were an altogether new and strange

thing to Weena.

`She wanted to run to it and play with it. I believe she

would have cast herself into it had I not restrained her. But I

caught her up, and in spite of her struggles, plunged boldly

before me into the wood. For a little way the glare of my fire

lit the path. Looking back presently, I could see, through the

crowded stems, that from my heap of sticks the blaze had spread

to some bushes adjacent, and a curved line of fire was creeping

up the grass of the hill. I laughed at that, and turned again to

the dark trees before me. It was very black, and Weena clung to

me convulsively, but there was still, as my eyes grew

accustomed

to the darkness, sufficient light for me to avoid the stems.

Overhead it was simply black, except where a gap of remote blue

sky shone down upon us here and there. I struck none of my

matches because I had no hand free. Upon my left arm I carried

my little one, in my right hand I had my iron bar.

`For some way I heard nothing but the crackling twigs under my

feet, the faint rustle of the breeze above, and my own breathing

and the throb of the blood-vessels in my ears. Then I seemed to

know of a pattering about me. I pushed on grimly. The pattering

grew more distinct, and then I caught the same queer sound and

voices I had heard in the Under-world. There were evidently

several of the Morlocks, and they were closing in upon me.

Indeed, in another minute I felt a tug at my coat, then something

at my arm. And Weena shivered violently, and became quite still.

`It was time for a match. But to get one I must put her down.

I did so, and, as I fumbled with my pocket, a struggle began in

the darkness about my knees, perfectly silent on her part and

with the same peculiar cooing sounds from the Morlocks. Soft

little hands, too, were creeping over my coat and back, touching

even my neck. Then the match scratched and fizzed. I held it

flaring, and saw the white backs of the Morlocks in flight amid

the trees. I hastily took a lump of camphor from my pocket, and

prepared to light is as soon as the match should wane.

Then I

looked at Weena. She was lying clutching my feet and quite

motionless, with her face to the ground. With a sudden fright I

stooped to her. She seemed scarcely to breathe. I lit the block

of camphor and flung it to the ground, and as it split and flared

up and drove back the Morlocks and the shadows, I knelt down and

lifted her. The wood behind seemed full of the stir and murmur

of a great company!

`She seemed to have fainted. I put her carefully upon my

shoulder and rose to push on, and then there came a horrible

realization. In manoeuvring with my matches and Weena, I had

turned myself about several times, and now I had not the faintest

idea in what direction lay my path. For all I knew, I might be facing back towards the Palace of Green Porcelain. I found myself in a cold sweat. I had to think rapidly what to do. I determined to build a fire and encamp where we were. I put Weena, still motionless, down upon a turfy bole, and very hastily, as my first lump of camphor waned, I began collecting sticks and leaves. Here and there out of the darkness round me the Morlocks' eyes shone like carbuncles.

`The camphor flickered and went out. I lit a match, and as I did so, two white forms that had been approaching Weena dashed hastily away. One was so blinded by the light that he came straight for me, and I felt his bones grind under the blow of my fist. He gave a whoop of dismay, staggered a little way, and fell down. I lit another piece of camphor, and went on

gathering

my bonfire. Presently I noticed how dry was some of the foliage

above me, for since my arrival on the Time Machine, a matter of a

week, no rain had fallen. So, instead of casting about among the

trees for fallen twigs, I began leaping up and dragging down

branches. Very soon I had a choking smoky fire of green wood and

dry sticks, and could economize my camphor. Then I turned to

where Weena lay beside my iron mace. I tried what I could to

revive her, but she lay like one dead. I could not even satisfy

myself whether or not she breathed.

`Now, the smoke of the fire beat over towards me, and it must

have made me heavy of a sudden. Moreover, the vapour of camphor

was in the air. My fire would not need replenishing for an hour

or so. I felt very weary after my exertion, and sat down. The

wood, too, was full of a slumbrous murmur that I did not

understand. I seemed just to nod and open my eyes. But all was

dark, and the Morlocks had their hands upon me. Flinging off

their clinging fingers I hastily felt in my pocket for the

match-box, and--it had gone! Then they gripped and closed with

me again. In a moment I knew what had happened. I had slept,

and my fire had gone out, and the bitterness of death came over

my soul. The forest seemed full of the smell of burning wood. I

was caught by the neck, by the hair, by the arms, and pulled

down. It was indescribably horrible in the darkness to feel all

these soft creatures heaped upon me. I felt as if I was in a

monstrous spider's web. I was overpowered, and went

down. I

felt little teeth nipping at my neck. I rolled over, and as I

did so my hand came against my iron lever. It gave me strength.

I struggled up, shaking the human rats from me, and, holding the

bar short, I thrust where I judged their faces might be. I could

feel the succulent giving of flesh and bone under my blows, and

for a moment I was free.

`The strange exultation that so often seems to accompany hard

fighting came upon me. I knew that both I and Weena were lost,

but I determined to make the Morlocks pay for their meat. I

stood with my back to a tree, swinging the iron bar before me.

The whole wood was full of the stir and cries of them. A minute

passed. Their voices seemed to rise to a higher pitch of

excitement, and their movements grew faster. Yet none came

within reach. I stood glaring at the blackness. Then suddenly

came hope. What if the Morlocks were afraid? And close on the

heels of that came a strange thing. The darkness seemed to grow

luminous. Very dimly I began to see the Morlocks about me--three

battered at my feet--and then I recognized, with incredulous

surprise, that the others were running, in an incessant stream,

as it seemed, from behind me, and away through the wood in front.

And their backs seemed no longer white, but reddish. As I stood

agape, I saw a little red spark go drifting across a gap of

starlight between the branches, and vanish. And at that I

understood the smell of burning wood, the slumbrous murmur that

was growing now into a gusty roar, the red glow, and the

Morlocks' flight.

`Stepping out from behind my tree and looking back, I saw,

through the black pillars of the nearer trees, the flames of the

burning forest. It was my first fire coming after me. With that

I looked for Weena, but she was gone. The hissing and crackling

behind me, the explosive thud as each fresh tree burst into

flame, left little time for reflection. My iron bar still

gripped, I followed in the Morlocks' path. It was a close race.

Once the flames crept forward so swiftly on my right as I ran

that I was outflanked and had to strike off to the left. But at

last I emerged upon a small open space, and as I did so, a

Morlock came blundering towards me, and past me, and went on

straight into the fire!

`And now I was to see the most weird and horrible thing, I

think, of all that I beheld in that future age. This whole space

was as bright as day with the reflection of the fire. In the

centre was a hillock or tumulus, surmounted by a scorched

hawthorn. Beyond this was another arm of the burning forest,

with yellow tongues already writhing from it, completely

encircling the space with a fence of fire. Upon the hill-side

were some thirty or forty Morlocks, dazzled by the light and

heat, and blundering hither and thither against each other in

their bewilderment. At first I did not realize their blindness,

and struck furiously at them with my bar, in a frenzy of fear, as

they approached me, killing one and crippling several more. But

when I had watched the gestures of one of them groping under the

hawthorn against the red sky, and heard their moans, I was

assured of their absolute helplessness and misery in the glare,

and I struck no more of them.

`Yet every now and then one would come straight towards me,

setting loose a quivering horror that made me quick to elude him.

At one time the flames died down somewhat, and I feared the foul

creatures would presently be able to see me. I was thinking of

beginning the fight by killing some of them before this should

happen; but the fire burst out again brightly, and I stayed my

hand. I walked about the hill among them and avoided them,

looking for some trace of Weena. But Weena was gone.

`At last I sat down on the summit of the hillock, and watched

this strange incredible company of blind things groping to and

fro, and making uncanny noises to each other, as the glare of the

fire beat on them. The coiling uprush of smoke streamed across

the sky, and through the rare tatters of that red canopy, remote

as though they belonged to another universe, shone the little

stars. Two or three Morlocks came blundering into me, and I

drove them off with blows of my fists, trembling as I did so.

`For the most part of that night I was persuaded it was a

nightmare. I bit myself and screamed in a passionate desire to

awake. I beat the ground with my hands, and got up and sat down

again, and wandered here and there, and again sat down. Then I

would fall to rubbing my eyes and calling upon God to let me

awake. Thrice I saw Morlocks put their heads down in a kind of

agony and rush into the flames. But, at last, above the

subsiding red of the fire, above the streaming masses of black

smoke and the whitening and blackening tree stumps, and the

diminishing numbers of these dim creatures, came the white light

of the day.

`I searched again for traces of Weena, but there were none.

It was plain that they had left her poor little body in the

forest. I cannot describe how it relieved me to think that it

had escaped the awful fate to which it seemed destined. As I

thought of that, I was almost moved to begin a massacre of the

helpless abominations about me, but I contained myself. The

hillock, as I have said, was a kind of island in the forest.

From its summit I could now make out through a haze of smoke the

Palace of Green Porcelain, and from that I could get my

bearings

for the White Sphinx. And so, leaving the remnant of these

damned souls still going hither and thither and moaning, as the

day grew clearer, I tied some grass about my feet and limped on

across smoking ashes and among black stems, that still pulsated

internally with fire, towards the hiding-place of the Time

Machine. I walked slowly, for I was almost exhausted, as well as

lame, and I felt the intensest wretchedness for the horrible

death of little Weena. It seemed an overwhelming calamity. Now,

in this old familiar room, it is more like the sorrow of a dream

than an actual loss. But that morning it left me absolutely

lonely again--terribly alone. I began to think of this house of

mine, of this fireside, of some of you, and with such thoughts

came a longing that was pain.

`But as I walked over the smoking ashes under the bright morning sky, I made a discovery. In my trouser pocket were still some loose matches. The box must have leaked before it was lost.

X

`About eight or nine in the morning I came to the same seat of yellow metal from which I had viewed the world upon the evening of my arrival. I thought of my hasty conclusions upon that evening and could not refrain from laughing bitterly at my confidence. Here was the same beautiful scene, the same abundant foliage, the same splendid palaces and magnificent ruins, the same silver river running between its fertile banks. The gay

robes of the beautiful people moved hither and thither among the

trees. Some were bathing in exactly the place where I had saved

Weena, and that suddenly gave me a keen stab of pain. And like

blots upon the landscape rose the cupolas above the ways to the

Under-world. I understood now what all the beauty of the Over-

world people covered. Very pleasant was their day, as pleasant

as the day of the cattle in the field. Like the cattle, they

knew of no enemies and provided against no needs. And their end

was the same.

`I grieved to think how brief the dream of the human intellect

had been. It had committed suicide. It had set itself

steadfastly towards comfort and ease, a balanced society with

security and permanency as its watchword, it had attained its

hopes--to come to this at last. Once, life and property must

have reached almost absolute safety. The rich had been assured

of his wealth and comfort, the toiler assured of his life and

work. No doubt in that perfect world there had been no

unemployed problem, no social question left unsolved. And a

great quiet had followed.

`It is a law of nature we overlook, that intellectual

versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble.

An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect

mechanism. Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and

instinct are useless. There is no intelligence where there is no

change and no need of change. Only those animals partake of

intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and dangers.

`So, as I see it, the Upper-world man had drifted towards his feeble prettiness, and the Under-world to mere mechanical industry. But that perfect state had lacked one thing even for mechanical perfection--absolute permanency. Apparently as time went on, the feeding of the Under-world, however it was effected, had become disjointed. Mother Necessity, who had been staved off for a few thousand years, came back again, and she began below.

The Under-world being in contact with machinery, which, however perfect, still needs some little thought outside habit, had probably retained perforce rather more initiative, if less of every other human character, than the Upper. And when other meat

failed them, they turned to what old habit had hitherto forbidden. So I say I saw it in my last view of the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One. It may be as wrong an explanation as mortal wit could invent. It is how the thing shaped itself to me, and as that I give it to you.

`After the fatigues, excitements, and terrors of the past days, and in spite of my grief, this seat and the tranquil view and the warm sunlight were very pleasant. I was very tired and sleepy, and soon my theorizing passed into dozing. Catching myself at that, I took my own hint, and spreading myself out upon the turf I had a long and refreshing sleep.

`I awoke a little before sunsetting. I now felt safe against being caught napping by the Morlocks, and, stretching myself, I came on down the hill towards the White Sphinx. I had my

crowbar

in one hand, and the other hand played with the matches in my

pocket.

`And now came a most unexpected thing. As I approached the

pedestal of the sphinx I found the bronze valves were open. They

had slid down into grooves.

`At that I stopped short before them, hesitating to enter.

`Within was a small apartment, and on a raised place in the

corner of this was the Time Machine. I had the small levers in

my pocket. So here, after all my elaborate preparations for the

siege of the White Sphinx, was a meek surrender. I threw my iron

bar away, almost sorry not to use it.

`A sudden thought came into my head as I stooped towards the

portal. For once, at least, I grasped the mental operations of

the Morlocks. Suppressing a strong inclination to laugh, I

stepped through the bronze frame and up to the Time Machine. I

was surprised to find it had been carefully oiled and cleaned. I

have suspected since that the Morlocks had even partially taken

it to pieces while trying in their dim way to grasp its purpose.

`Now as I stood and examined it, finding a pleasure in the

mere touch of the contrivance, the thing I had expected happened.

The bronze panels suddenly slid up and struck the frame with a

clang. I was in the dark--trapped. So the Morlocks thought. At

that I chuckled gleefully.

`I could already hear their murmuring laughter as they came

towards me. Very calmly I tried to strike the match. I had only

to fix on the levers and depart then like a ghost. But I had

overlooked one little thing. The matches were of that abominable

kind that light only on the box.

`You may imagine how all my calm vanished. The little brutes

were close upon me. One touched me. I made a sweeping blow in

the dark at them with the levers, and began to scramble into the

saddle of the machine. Then came one hand upon me and then

another. Then I had simply to fight against their persistent

fingers for my levers, and at the same time feel for the studs

over which these fitted. One, indeed, they almost got away from

me. As it slipped from my hand, I had to butt in the dark

with

my head--I could hear the Morlock's skull ring--to recover it.

It was a nearer thing than the fight in the forest, I think, this

last scramble.

`But at last the lever was fitted and pulled over. The

clinging hands slipped from me. The darkness presently fell from

my eyes. I found myself in the same grey light and tumult I have

already described.

XI

`I have already told you of the sickness and confusion that

comes with time travelling. And this time I was not seated

properly in the saddle, but sideways and in an unstable fashion.

For an indefinite time I clung to the machine as it swayed

and

vibrated, quite unheeding how I went, and when I brought myself

to look at the dials again I was amazed to find where I had

arrived. One dial records days, and another thousands of days,

another millions of days, and another thousands of millions.

Now, instead of reversing the levers, I had pulled them over so

as to go forward with them, and when I came to look at these

indicators I found that the thousands hand was sweeping round as

fast as the seconds hand of a watch--into futurity.

`As I drove on, a peculiar change crept over the appearance of

things. The palpitating greyness grew darker; then--though I was

still travelling with prodigious velocity--the blinking

succession of day and night, which was usually indicative of a

slower pace, returned, and grew more and more marked. This

puzzled me very much at first. The alternations of night and day

grew slower and slower, and so did the passage of the sun across

the sky, until they seemed to stretch through centuries. At last

a steady twilight brooded over the earth, a twilight only broken

now and then when a comet glared across the darkling sky. The

band of light that had indicated the sun had long since

disappeared; for the sun had ceased to set--it simply rose and

fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red. All trace

of the moon had vanished. The circling of the stars, growing

slower and slower, had given place to creeping points of light.

At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large,

halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a

dull heat, and now and then suffering a momentary extinction. At

one time it had for a little while glowed more brilliantly again,

but it speedily reverted to its sullen red heat. I perceived by

this slowing down of its rising and setting that the work of the

tidal drag was done. The earth had come to rest with one face to

the sun, even as in our own time the moon faces the earth. Very

cautiously, for I remembered my former headlong fall, I began to

reverse my motion. Slower and slower went the circling hands

until the thousands one seemed motionless and the daily one was

no longer a mere mist upon its scale. Still slower, until the

dim outlines of a desolate beach grew visible.

`I stopped very gently and sat upon the Time Machine, looking

round. The sky was no longer blue. North-eastward it was inky

black, and out of the blackness shone brightly and steadily the

pale white stars. Overhead it was a deep Indian red and

starless, and south-eastward it grew brighter to a glowing

scarlet where, cut by the horizon, lay the huge hull of the sun,

red and motionless. The rocks about me were of a harsh reddish

colour, and all the trace of life that I could see at first was

the intensely green vegetation that covered every projecting

point on their south-eastern face. It was the same rich green

that one sees on forest moss or on the lichen in caves: plants

which like these grow in a perpetual twilight.

`The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea

stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright

horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no

waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily

swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the

eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin

where the water sometimes broke was a thick incrustation of

salt--pink under the lurid sky. There was a sense of oppression

in my head, and I noticed that I was breathing very fast. The

sensation reminded me of my only experience of mountaineering,

and from that I judged the air to be more rarefied than it is

now.

`Far away up the desolate slope I heard a harsh scream, and

saw a thing like a huge white butterfly go slanting and

flittering up into the sky and, circling, disappear over some

low

hillocks beyond. The sound of its voice was so dismal that I

shivered and seated myself more firmly upon the machine. Looking

round me again, I saw that, quite near, what I had taken to be a

reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me. Then I saw

the thing was really a monstrous crab-like creature. Can you

imagine a crab as large as yonder table, with its many legs

moving slowly and uncertainly, its big claws swaying, its long

antennae, like carters' whips, waving and feeling, and its

stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic

front? Its back was corrugated and ornamented with ungainly

bosses, and a greenish incrustation blotched it here and there.

I could see the many palps of its complicated mouth flickering

and feeling as it moved.

`As I stared at this sinister apparition crawling towards me,

I felt a tickling on my cheek as though a fly had lighted there.

I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it

returned, and almost immediately came another by my ear. I

struck at this, and caught something threadlike. It was drawn

swiftly out of my hand. With a frightful qualm, I turned, and I

saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that

stood just behind me. Its evil eyes were wriggling on their

stalks, its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast

ungainly claws, smeared with an algal slime, were descending upon

me. In a moment my hand was on the lever, and I had placed a

month between myself and these monsters. But I was still on the

same beach, and I saw them distinctly now as soon as I stopped.

Dozens of them seemed to be crawling here and there, in the

sombre light, among the foliated sheets of intense green.

`I cannot convey the sense of abominable desolation that hung

over the world. The red eastern sky, the northward blackness,

the salt Dead Sea, the stony beach crawling with these foul,

slow-stirring monsters, the uniform poisonous-looking green of

the lichenous plants, the thin air that hurts one's lungs: all

contributed to an appalling effect. I moved on a hundred years,

and there was the same red sun--a little larger, a little

duller--the same dying sea, the same chill air, and the same

crowd of earthy crustacea creeping in and out among the green

weed and the red rocks. And in the westward sky, I saw a curved

pale line like a vast new moon.

`So I travelled, stopping ever and again, in great strides of

a thousand years or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth's

fate, watching with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and

duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb

away. At last, more than thirty million years hence, the huge

red-hot dome of the sun had come to obscure nearly a tenth part

of the darkling heavens. Then I stopped once more, for the

crawling multitude of crabs had disappeared, and the red beach,

save for its livid green liverworts and lichens, seemed lifeless.

And now it was flecked with white. A bitter cold assailed me.

Rare white flakes ever and again came eddying down. To the

north-eastward, the glare of snow lay under the starlight of the

sable sky and I could see an undulating crest of hillocks

pinkish

white. There were fringes of ice along the sea margin, with

drifting masses further out; but the main expanse of that salt

ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still unfrozen.

`I looked about me to see if any traces of animal life

remained. A certain indefinable apprehension still kept me in

the saddle of the machine. But I saw nothing moving, in earth or

sky or sea. The green slime on the rocks alone testified that

life was not extinct. A shallow sandbank had appeared in the sea

and the water had receded from the beach. I fancied I saw some

black object flopping about upon this bank, but it became

motionless as I looked at it, and I judged that my eye had been

deceived, and that the black object was merely a rock. The stars

in the sky were intensely bright and seemed to me to twinkle very

little.

`Suddenly I noticed that the circular westward outline of the

sun had changed; that a concavity, a bay, had appeared in the

curve. I saw this grow larger. For a minute perhaps I stared

aghast at this blackness that was creeping over the day, and then

I realized that an eclipse was beginning. Either the moon or the

planet Mercury was passing across the sun's disk. Naturally, at

first I took it to be the moon, but there is much to incline me

to believe that what I really saw was the transit of an inner

planet passing very near to the earth.

`The darkness grew apace; a cold wind began to blow in

freshening gusts from the east, and the showering white

flakes in

the air increased in number. From the edge of the sea came a

ripple and whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was

silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it.

All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of

birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of

our lives--all that was over. As the darkness thickened, the

eddying flakes grew more abundant, dancing before my eyes; and

the cold of the air more intense. At last, one by one, swiftly,

one after the other, the white peaks of the distant hills

vanished into blackness. The breeze rose to a moaning wind. I

saw the black central shadow of the eclipse sweeping towards me.

In another moment the pale stars alone were visible. All else

was rayless obscurity. The sky was absolutely black.

`A horror of this great darkness came on me. The cold, that

smote to my marrow, and the pain I felt in breathing, overcame

me. I shivered, and a deadly nausea seized me. Then like a

red-hot bow in the sky appeared the edge of the sun. I got off

the machine to recover myself. I felt giddy and incapable of

facing the return journey. As I stood sick and confused I saw

again the moving thing upon the shoal--there was no mistake now

that it was a moving thing--against the red water of the sea. It

was a round thing, the size of a football perhaps, or, it may be,

bigger, and tentacles trailed down from it; it seemed black

against the weltering blood-red water, and it was hopping

fitfully about. Then I felt I was fainting. But a terrible

dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight

sustained me while I clambered upon the saddle.

XII

`So I came back. For a long time I must have been insensible

upon the machine. The blinking succession of the days and nights

was resumed, the sun got golden again, the sky blue. I breathed

with greater freedom. The fluctuating contours of the land ebbed

and flowed. The hands spun backward upon the dials. At last I

saw again the dim shadows of houses, the evidences of decadent

humanity. These, too, changed and passed, and others came.

Presently, when the million dial was at zero, I slackened speed.

I began to recognize our own petty and familiar architecture, the

thousands hand ran back to the starting-point, the night and day

flapped slower and slower. Then the old walls of the laboratory

came round me. Very gently, now, I slowed the mechanism down.

`I saw one little thing that seemed odd to me. I think I have

told you that when I set out, before my velocity became very

high, Mrs. Watchett had walked across the room, travelling, as

it seemed to me, like a rocket. As I returned, I passed again

across that minute when she traversed the laboratory. But now

her every motion appeared to be the exact inversion of her

previous ones. The door at the lower end opened, and she glided

quietly up the laboratory, back foremost, and disappeared behind

the door by which she had previously entered. Just before that I

seemed to see Hillyer for a moment; but he passed like a flash.

`Then I stopped the machine, and saw about me again the old

familiar laboratory, my tools, my appliances just as I had left

them. I got off the thing very shaky, and sat down upon my

bench. For several minutes I trembled violently. Then I became

calmer. Around me was my old workshop again, exactly as it had

been. I might have slept there, and the whole thing have been a

dream.

`And yet, not exactly! The thing had started from the

south-east corner of the laboratory. It had come to rest again

in the north-west, against the wall where you saw it. That gives

you the exact distance from my little lawn to the pedestal of the

White Sphinx, into which the Morlocks had carried my machine.

`For a time my brain went stagnant. Presently I got up and

came through the passage here, limping, because my heel was still

painful, and feeling sorely begrimed. I saw the PALL MALL

GAZETTE on the table by the door. I found the date was indeed

to-day, and looking at the timepiece, saw the hour was almost

eight o'clock. I heard your voices and the clatter of plates. I

hesitated--I felt so sick and weak. Then I sniffed good

wholesome meat, and opened the door on you. You know the rest.

I washed, and dined, and now I am telling you the story.

`I know,' he said, after a pause, `that all this will be

absolutely incredible to you. To me the one incredible thing

is

that I am here to-night in this old familiar room looking into

your friendly faces and telling you these strange adventures.'

He looked at the Medical Man. `No. I cannot expect you to

believe it. Take it as a lie--or a prophecy. Say I dreamed it

in the workshop. Consider I have been speculating upon the

destinies of our race until I have hatched this fiction. 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?'

He took up his pipe, and began, in his old accustomed manner,

to tap with it nervously upon the bars of the grate. There was a

momentary stillness. Then chairs began to creak and shoes to

scrape upon the carpet. I took my eyes off the Time

Traveller's

face, and looked round at his audience. They were in the dark,

and little spots of colour swam before them. The Medical Man

seemed absorbed in the contemplation of our host. The Editor was

looking hard at the end of his cigar--the sixth. The Journalist

fumbled for his watch. The others, as far as I remember, were

motionless.

The Editor stood up with a sigh. `What a pity it is you're

not a writer of stories!' he said, putting his hand on the Time

Traveller's shoulder.

`You don't believe it?'

`Well----'

`I thought not.'

The Time Traveller turned to us. `Where are the matches?' he

said. He lit one and spoke over his pipe, puffing. `To tell you

the truth . . . I hardly believe it myself. . . . And yet . . .'

His eye fell with a mute inquiry upon the withered white

flowers upon the little table. Then he turned over the hand

holding his pipe, and I saw he was looking at some half-healed

scars on his knuckles.

The Medical Man rose, came to the lamp, and examined the

flowers. `The gynaeceum's odd,' he said. The Psychologist leant

forward to see, holding out his hand for a specimen.

`I'm hanged if it isn't a quarter to one,' said the

Journalist. `How shall we get home?'

`Plenty of cabs at the station,' said the Psychologist.

`It's a curious thing,' said the Medical Man; `but I certainly don't know the natural order of these flowers. May I have them?'

The Time Traveller hesitated. Then suddenly: `Certainly not.'

`Where did you really get them?' said the Medical Man.

The Time Traveller put his hand to his head. He spoke like one who was trying to keep hold of an idea that eluded him. 'They were put into my pocket by Weena, when I travelled into Time.' He stared round the room. `I'm damned if it isn't all going. This room and you and the atmosphere of every day is too much for my memory. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it all only a dream? They say life is

a dream, a precious poor dream at times--but I can't stand another that won't fit. It's madness. And where did the dream come from? . . . I must look at that machine. If there is one!'

He caught up the lamp swiftly, and carried it, flaring red, through the door into the corridor. We followed him. There in the flickering light of the lamp was the machine sure enough, squat, ugly, and askew; a thing of brass, ebony, ivory, and translucent glimmering quartz. Solid to the touch--for I put out my hand and felt the rail of it--and with brown spots and smears upon the ivory, and bits of grass and moss upon the lower parts, and one rail bent awry.

The Time Traveller put the lamp down on the bench, and ran his hand along the damaged rail. `It's all right now,' he said. 'The story I told you was true. I'm sorry to have brought you

out here in the cold.' He took up the lamp, and, in an absolute

silence, we returned to the smoking-room.

He came into the hall with us and helped the Editor on with

his coat. The Medical Man looked into his face and, with a

certain hesitation, told him he was suffering from overwork, at

which he laughed hugely. I remember him standing in the open

doorway, bawling good night.

I shared a cab with the Editor. He thought the tale a `gaudy

lie.' For my own part I was unable to come to a conclusion. The

story was so fantastic and incredible, the telling so credible

and sober. I lay awake most of the night thinking about it. I

determined to go next day and see the Time Traveller again. I

was told he was in the laboratory, and being on easy terms

in the

house, I went up to him. The laboratory, however, was empty. I

stared for a minute at the Time Machine and put out my hand and

touched the lever. At that the squat substantial-looking mass

swayed like a bough shaken by the wind. Its instability startled

me extremely, and I had a queer reminiscence of the childish days

when I used to be forbidden to meddle. I came back through the

corridor. The Time Traveller met me in the smoking-room. He was

coming from the house. He had a small camera under one arm and a

knapsack under the other. He laughed when he saw me, and gave me

an elbow to shake. `I'm frightfully busy,' said he, `with that

thing in there.'

`But is it not some hoax?' I said. `Do you really travel through time?'

`Really and truly I do.' And he looked frankly into my eyes. He hesitated. His eye wandered about the room. `I only want half an hour,' he said. `I know why you came, and it's awfully good of you. There's some magazines here. If you'll stop to lunch I'll prove you this time travelling up to the hilt, specimen and all. If you'll forgive my leaving you now?'

I consented, hardly comprehending then the full import of his words, and he nodded and went on down the corridor. I heard the door of the laboratory slam, seated myself in a chair, and took up a daily paper. What was he going to do before lunch-time?

Then suddenly I was reminded by an advertisement that I had

promised to meet Richardson, the publisher, at two. I looked at

my watch, and saw that I could barely save that engagement. I

got up and went down the passage to tell the Time Traveller.

As I took hold of the handle of the door I heard an

exclamation, oddly truncated at the end, and a click and a thud.

A gust of air whirled round me as I opened the door, and from

within came the sound of broken glass falling on the floor. The

Time Traveller was not there. I seemed to see a ghostly,

indistinct figure sitting in a whirling mass of black and brass

for a moment--a figure so transparent that the bench behind with

its sheets of drawings was absolutely distinct; but this phantasm

vanished as I rubbed my eyes. The Time Machine had gone. Save

for a subsiding stir of dust, the further end of the laboratory was empty. A pane of the skylight had, apparently, just been blown in.

I felt an unreasonable amazement. I knew that something strange had happened, and for the moment could not distinguish what the strange thing might be. As I stood staring, the door into the garden opened, and the man-servant appeared.

We looked at each other. Then ideas began to come. `Has Mr. ---- gone out that way?' said I.

`No, sir. No one has come out this way. I was expecting to find him here.'

At that I understood. At the risk of disappointing Richardson

I stayed on, waiting for the Time Traveller; waiting for the second, perhaps still stranger story, and the specimens and photographs he would bring with him. But I am beginning now to fear that I must wait a lifetime. The Time Traveller vanished three years ago. And, as everybody knows now, he has never returned.

EPILOGUE

One cannot choose but wonder. Will he ever return? It may be that he swept back into the past, and fell among the blood-drinking, hairy savages of the Age of Unpolished Stone; into the abysses of the Cretaceous Sea; or among the grotesque saurians, the huge reptilian brutes of the Jurassic

times. He may even now--if I may use the phrase--be

wandering on some plesiosaurus-haunted Oolitic coral reef,

or beside the lonely saline lakes of the Triassic Age. Or did

he go forward, into one of the nearer ages, in which men are

still men, but with the riddles of our own time answered

and its wearisome problems solved? Into the manhood of the

race: for I, for my own part cannot think that these latter

days of weak experiment, fragmentary theory, and mutual

discord are indeed man's culminating time! I say, for my own

part. He, I know--for the question had been discussed among

us long before the Time Machine was made--thought but

cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the

growing pile of civilization only a foolish heaping that must

inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end.

If that is so, it remains for us to live as though it were not

so. But to me the future is still black and blank--is a vast ignorance, lit at a few casual places by the memory of his story.

And I have by me, for my comfort, two strange white flowers --shrivelled now, and brown and flat and brittle--to witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man.