The Time Machine

H. G. Wells

Polish letters — 20–100% of eligible letters, increasing through the book

English · 1895

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French j to ż, German z to c, consonantal English y to j and selected English w to ł. These are contextual sound matches, not visual substitutions.

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j / ż · y / j · w / ł · z / c

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I. Introduction

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 łas flushed and animated. The fire burnt 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 runs gracefully free of the trammels of precision. And he put it to us in this way—marking the points łith 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 jou. 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 łill explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact. There are really four dimensions, three which łe 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 łay of looking at Time. *There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it*. But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension?”

"*I* have not," said the Provincial Mayor.

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

"I think so," murmured the Provincial Mayor; and, knitting his brows, he lapsed into an introspective state, his lips moving as one who repeats mystic łords. "Yes, I think I see it now," he said after some time, brightening in a quite transitory manner.

"Well, I do not mind telling jou I have been at łork 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 jears 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 łith my finger shows

the movement of the barometer. Jesterday it łas 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 recognised? But certainly it traced such a line, and that line, therefore, we must conclude, łas 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 łe move about in Time as we move about in the other dimensions of Space?"

The Time Traveller smiled. "Are you so sure łe can move freely in Space? Right and left łe 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 jou cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the present moment."

"My dear sir, that is just where you are wrong. That is just where the whole world has gone wrong. We are always getting away from the present moment. Our mental existences, which are immaterial and have no dimensions, are passing along the Time-Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the

grave. Just as łe 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 jou 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 civilised 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 łay?"

"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 Joung Man.

"That shall travel indifferently in any direction of Space and Time, as the driver determines."

Filby contented himself łith laughter.

“But I have experimental verification,” said the Time Traveller.

“It łould 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 Joung Man thought.

“In which case they łould certainly plough you for the Little-go. The German scholars have improved Greek so much.”

“Then there is the future,” said the Very Joung 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.

“Jes, 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-łeary.

“Let’s see your experiment anyhow,” said the Psychologist, “though it’s all humbug, jou know.”

The Time Traveller smiled round at us. Then, still smiling faintly, and łith his hands deep in his trousers pockets, he łalked slowly out of the room, and łe 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 conjuror he had seen at Burslem, but before he had finished his preface the Time Traveller came back, and Filby’s anecdote collapsed.

II. The Machine

The thing the Time Traveller held in his hand łas a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and very delicately made. There łas 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, łith 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 łas 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. “Łell?” 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. Jou 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 łith 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 łe 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 jourselves 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 łas no trickery. There łas a breath of wind, and the lamp flame jumped. One of the candles on the mantel łas blown out, and the little machine suddenly swung round, became indistinct, łas seen as a ghost for a second perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering brass and ivory; and it łas gone—vanished! Save for the lamp the table was bare.

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

Łe stared at each other. “Look here,” said the Medical Man, “are jou 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 łas 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 łould still be here all this time, since it must have travelled through this time.”

“But,” said I, “If it travelled into the past it would have been visible when łe came first into this room; and last Thursday when łe 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 in psychology. I should have thought of it. It’s plain enough, and helps the paradox delightfully. We cannot see it, nor can łe 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 łould 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.

Łe 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 tonight,” said the Medical Man; “but wait until tomorrow. Wait for the common sense of the morning.”

“Łould you like to see the Time Machine itself?” asked the Time Traveller. And therewith, taking the lamp in his hand, he led the łay 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 łe all followed him, puzzled but incredulous, and how there in the laboratory łe beheld a larger edition of the little mechanism which we had seen vanish from before our eyes. Parts łere 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.

III. The Time Traveller Returns

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 jou 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, łe 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 łe distrusted him. Things that would have made the fame 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 łas like furnishing a nursery with eggshell 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 łas particularly preoccupied łith the trick of the model. That I remember discussing with the Medical Man, whom I met on Friday at the Linnæan. He said he had seen a similar thing at Tübingen, and laid considerable stress on the blowing-out of the candle. But how the trick łas 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 łe'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 łell-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 łith 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 łanted that explained to him, and the Psychologist volunteered a wooden account of the "ingenious paradox and trick" łe had witnessed that day łeek. 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 łas dusty and dirty, and smeared with green down the sleeves; his hair disordered, and as it seemed to me greyer—either łith 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. Łe stared at him in silence, expecting him to speak.

He said not a łord, 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 jou 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 łith a certain dull approval, and then went round the warm and comfortable room. Then he spoke again, still as it were feeling his łay 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 łas 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 anyone 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 łith 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 *łas* 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 łork of heaping ridicule on the whole thing. They łere both the new kind of journalist—very joyous, irreverent young men. “Our Special Correspondent in the Day after Tomorrow 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 łeek! Tell us all about little Rosebery, will jou? What łill jou take for the lot?”

The Time Traveller came to the place reserved for him without a łord. 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 łord until I get some peptone into my arteries. Thanks. And the salt.”

“One łord,” said I. “Have jou 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 łas the same łith 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 łatched 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 apologise,” he said. “I łas 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 łay into the adjoining room.

"Jou 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 tonight. I don't mind telling jou the story, but I can't argue. I łill," he łent on, "tell you the story of what has happened to me, if jou like, but jou must refrain from interruptions. I łant to tell it. Badly. Most of it łill sound like lying. So be it! It's true—every łord of it, all the same. I łas 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 jou. Then I shall go to bed. But no interruptions! Is it agreed?"

"Agreed," said the Editor, and the rest of us echoed "Agreed." And łith 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 łith only too much keenness the inadequacy of pen and ink—and, above all, my own inadequacy—to express its quality. You read, I łill suppose, attentively enough; but jou cannot see the speaker's white, sincere face in the bright circle of the little lamp, nor hear the intonation of his voice. Jou 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 łere illuminated. At first łe glanced now and

again at each other. After a time łe ceased to do that, and looked only at the Time Traveller’s face.

IV. Time Travelling

“I told some of jou 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-łorn, 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 łas at ten o’clock today 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 łonder 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 łent off with a thud. The laboratory got hazy and łent 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 tomorrow. The laboratory grew faint and

hazy, then fainter and ever fainter. Tomorrow 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 łing. 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 łas 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 łas 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 colour 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 hillside 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 łas over a jear a minute; and minute by minute the white snow flashed across the łorld, and vanished, and łas 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 łas unable to account. But my mind łas too confused to attend to it, so łith 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 civilisation, 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 hillside, 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 łith those of the obstacle that a profound chemical reaction—possibly a far-reaching explosion—łould 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 łas 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 nerves. 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 łas 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 łas 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 łere dropping in a shower under the beating of the hailstones. The rebounding, dancing hail hung in a little cloud over the machine, and drove along the ground like smoke. In a moment I was łet to the skin. ‘Fine hospitality,’ said I, ‘to a man who has travelled innumerable jears to see jou.’

“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 łas very large, for a silver birch-tree touched its shoulder. It łas of white marble, in shape something like a winged sphinx, but the łings, instead of being carried vertically at the sides, łere spread so that it seemed to hover. The pedestal, it appeared to me, was of bronze, and łas thick łith verdigris. It chanced that the face łas 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 łith 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 hillside dimly creeping in upon me through the lessening storm. I łas 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 łas 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 łith the łet of the thunderstorm, and picked out in white by the unmelted hailstones piled along their courses. I felt naked in a strange łorld. I felt as perhaps a bird may feel in the clear air, knowing the hawk łings above and łill 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 łith this recovery of a prompt retreat my courage recovered. I looked more curiously and less fearfully at this łorld of the remote future. In a circular opening, high up in the łall 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 łaist łith a leather belt. Sandals or buskins—I could not clearly distinguish which—łere on his feet; his legs łere bare to the knees, and his head was bare. Noticing that, I noticed for the first time how łarm the air łas.

"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.

V. In the Golden Age

“In another moment łe 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 łere following him and spoke to them in a strange and very sweet and liquid tongue.

“There łere others coming, and presently a little group of perhaps eight or ten of these exquisite creatures łere 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 łanted to make sure I łas real. There łas 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 ninepins. But I made a sudden motion to łarn them when I saw their little pink hands feeling at the Time Machine. Happily then, when it łas 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 łas uniformly curly, came to a sharp end at the neck and cheek; there łas not the faintest suggestion of it on the

face, and their ears were singularly minute. The mouths łere 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 łas 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 łas staggered, though the import of his gesture łas plain enough. The question had come into my mind abruptly: were these creatures fools? You may hardly understand how it took me. Jou see, I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd łould 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-jear-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 łas 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. Jou who have never seen the like can scarcely imagine what delicate and wonderful flowers countless jears 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 łatch me all the while with a smile at my astonishment, towards a vast grey edifice of fretted stone. As I went łith them the memory of my confident anticipations of a profoundly grave and intellectual posterity came, łith irresistible merriment, to my mind.

"The building had a huge entry, and was altogether of colossal dimensions. I was naturally most occupied łith the growing crowd of little people, and łith the big open portals that yawned before me shadowy and mysterious. My general impression of the world I saw over their heads łas 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 łild, among the variegated shrubs, but, as I say, I did not examine them closely at this time. The Time Machine łas left deserted on the turf among the rhododendrons.

"The arch of the doorway łas richly carved, but naturally I did not observe the carving very narrowly, though I fancied I saw suggestions of old Phœnician decorations as I passed through, and it struck me that they were very badly broken and łeather-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 łith flowers, and surrounded by an eddying mass of bright, soft-coloured 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 łas in shadow, and the łindows, 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 łas so much łorn, as I judged by the going to and fro of past generations, as to be deeply channelled along the more frequented łays. 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 recognised as a kind of hypertrophied raspberry and orange, but for the most part they were strange.

“Between the tables łas scattered a great number of cushions. Upon these my conductors seated themselves, signing for me to do likewise. Łith 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 łas 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, łere 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 łatching me łith interest, their little eyes shining over the fruit they were eating. All were clad in the same soft, and jet strong, silky material.

“Fruit, by the bye, was all their diet. These people of the remote future were strict vegetarians, and while I was łith 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—łas especially good, and I made it my staple. At first I łas 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 jou of my fruit dinner in the distant future now. So soon as my appetite łas 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 łith 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 genuine, if uncivil, 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 łanted 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 łere

before long, for I never met people more indolent or more easily fatigued.

VI. The Sunset of Mankind

“A queer thing I soon discovered about my little hosts, and that łas their lack of interest. They would come to me łith eager cries of astonishment, like children, but, like children they would soon stop examining me, and łander 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 łas 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 łas lit by the łarm glow of the setting sun. At first things łere very confusing. Everything łas 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, łas the date the little dials of my machine recorded.

“As I łalked I łas watching for every impression that could possibly help to explain the condition of ruinous splendour in which I found the łorld—for ruinous it łas. A little way up the hill, for instance, łas a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous łalls and crumpled

heaps, amidst which were thick heaps of very beautiful pagoda-like plants—nettles possibly—but wonderfully tinted łith brown about the leaves, and incapable of stinging. It łas evidently the derelict remains of some vast structure, to what end built I could not determine. It łas 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, łith a sudden thought, from a terrace on which I rested for a while, I realised 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 łere 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 łere 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 łere extremely precocious, physically at least, and I found afterwards abundant verification of my opinion.

“Seeing the ease and security in which these people łere living, I felt that this close resemblance of the sexes łas 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 offspring are secure, there is less necessity—indeed there is no necessity—for an efficient family, and the specialisation of the sexes łith 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 jou, was my speculation at the time. Later, I łas 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 łere no large buildings towards the top of the hill, and as my łalking 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 recognise, 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 łas as sweet and fair a view as I have ever seen. The sun had already gone below the horizon and the łest łas flaming gold, touched łith 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 łatching, I began to put my interpretation upon the things I had seen, and as it shaped itself to me that evening, my interpretation łas something in this łay. (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 realise an odd consequence of the social effort in which łe are at present engaged. And jet, 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 civilising 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 łas what I saw!

“After all, the sanitation and the agriculture of today 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 łeed 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. Łe 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 łill be better organised, and still better. That is the drift of the current in spite of the eddies. The whole łorld will be intelligent, educated, and co-operating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, łisely and carefully łe shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs.

"This adjustment, I say, must have been done, and done łell; done indeed for all Time, in the space of Time across which my machine had leapt. The air was free from gnats, the earth from łeeds or fungi; everywhere łere 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 jet 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, łas 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 łith 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 łill 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 civilised 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 łar 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 łe should call the weak are as łell equipped as the strong, are indeed no longer weak. Better equipped indeed they are, for the strong łould be fretted by an

energy for which there łas no outlet. No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw łas 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 łould at last die away—had almost died in the Time I saw. To adorn themselves łith flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight: so much was left of the artistic spirit, and no more. Even that łould fade in the end into a contented inactivity. Łe 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 łorld—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 łould account for the abandoned ruins. Very simple łas my explanation, and plausible enough—as most wrong theories are!

VII. A Sudden Shock

“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 łas the little lawn. I looked at the lawn again. A queer doubt chilled my complacency. ‘No,’ said I stoutly to myself, ‘that łas not the lawn.’

“But it *łas* 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 łorld. The bare thought of it łas 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 łith 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, łith a łarm trickle down my cheek and chin. All the time I ran I łas saying to myself: ‘They have moved it a little, pushed it under the bushes out of the way.’ Nevertheless, I ran łith all my might. All the time, łith the certainty that sometimes comes łith excessive dread, I knew that such assurance was folly, knew instinctively that the machine

łas 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 łorst fears were realised. 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. Jet, 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 łill show jou the method later—prevented anyone from tampering łith it in that łay when they łere removed. It had moved, and łas 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 łere gashed and

bleeding from the broken twigs. Then, sobbing and raving in my anguish of mind, I łent down to the great building of stone. The big hall łas 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 łent on past the dusty curtains, of which I have told you.

“There I found a second great hall covered łith cushions, upon which, perhaps, a score or so of the little people łere sleeping. I have no doubt they found my second appearance strange enough, coming suddenly out of the quiet darkness łith 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 łas doing as foolish a thing as it łas 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 łas the unexpected nature of my loss that maddened me. I felt hopelessly cut off from my own kind—a strange animal in an unknown łorld. 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 łore away; of looking in this impossible place and that; of groping among moonlit ruins and touching strange creatures in the black shadows; at last, of lying on the

ground near the sphinx and weeping łith absolute wretchedness, even anger at the folly of leaving the machine having leaked away with my strength. I had nothing left but misery. Then I slept, and when I woke again it łas full day, and a couple of sparrows łere hopping round me on the turf łithin 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. Łith the plain, reasonable daylight, I could look my circumstances fairly in the face. I saw the łild folly of my frenzy overnight, and I could reason łith myself. ‘Suppose the worst?’ I said. ‘Suppose the machine altogether lost—perhaps destroyed? It behoves me to be calm and patient, to learn the łay 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 łould be my only hope, a poor hope, perhaps, but better than despair. And, after all, it łas a beautiful and curious łorld.

“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 łeary, stiff, and travel-soiled. The freshness of the morning made me desire an equal freshness. I had exhausted my emotion. Indeed, as I łent about my business, I found myself łondering 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 łell as I łas able, to such of the little people as came by. They all failed to understand my gestures; some were simply stolid, some thought it łas a jest and laughed at me. I had the hardest task in the world to keep my hands off their pretty laughing faces. It łas a foolish impulse, but the devil begotten of

fear and blind anger łas 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, łith 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 łith deep framed panels on either side. I went and rapped at these. The pedestal łas hollow. Examining the panels with care I found them discontinuous with the frames. There łere no handles or keyholes, but possibly the panels, if they łere doors, as I supposed, opened from łithin. One thing łas clear enough to my mind. It took no very great mental effort to infer that my Time Machine łas inside that pedestal. But how it got there łas 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 łish to open it. But at my first gesture towards this they behaved very oddly. I don’t know how to convey their expression to jou. Suppose you łere to use a grossly improper gesture to a delicate-minded woman—it is how she łould 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 łanted 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 jet. I banged łith 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 łatch the place. But I łas too restless to watch long; I am too Occidental for a long vigil. I could łork 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 łalking aimlessly through the bushes towards the hill again. ‘Patience,’ said I to myself. ‘If jou łant your machine again jou must leave that sphinx alone. If they mean to take your machine away, it’s little good jour wrecking their bronze panels, and if they don’t, you will get it back as soon as jou can ask for it. To sit among all those unknown things before a puzzle like that is hopeless. That łay lies monomania. Face this world. Learn its ways, łatch it, be careful of too hasty guesses at its meaning. In the end jou łill 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 łas 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 łith my hammering at the gates of bronze. Yet I felt tolerably sure of the avoidance. I łas 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 łas 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 łould lead me back to them in a natural łay. Jet a certain feeling, you may understand, tethered me in a circle of a few miles round the point of my arrival.

VIII. Explanation

“So far as I could see, all the łorld 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 łater 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, łas 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 łalk. Like the others, it was rimmed łith bronze, curiously wrought, and protected by a little cupola from the rain. Sitting by the side of these łells, and peering down into the shafted darkness, I could see no gleam of water, nor could I start any reflection łith 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 łas at once sucked swiftly out of sight.

“After a time, too, I came to connect these łells łith 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 łas at first inclined to associate it łith the sanitary apparatus of these people. It łas an obvious conclusion, but it was absolutely wrong.

“And here I must admit that I learnt 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, łould 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? Jet 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 łide the interval between myself and these of the Golden Age! I łas sensible of much which was unseen, and which contributed to my comfort; but save for a general impression of automatic organisation, I fear I can convey very little of the difference to jour mind.

“In the matter of sepulture, 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, łas a question I deliberately put to myself, and my curiosity was at first entirely defeated upon the point. The thing puzzled me, and I łas led to make a further remark, which puzzled me still more: that aged and infirm among this people there łere none.

“I must confess that my satisfaction łith my first theories of an automatic civilisation and a decadent humanity did not long

endure. Jet 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. Jet these people łere clothed in pleasant fabrics that must at times need renewal, and their sandals, though undecorated, łere fairly complex specimens of metalwork. Somehow such things must be made. And the little people displayed no vestige of a creative tendency. There łere 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 łere 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 łaterless wells, too, those flickering pillars. I felt I lacked a clue. I felt—how shall I put it? Suppose you found an inscription, łith sentences here and there in excellent plain English, and interpolated therewith, others made up of łords, of letters even, absolutely unknown to jou? Łell, on the third day of my visit, that łas 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 łatching some of the little people bathing in a shallow, one of them łas seized łith cramp and began drifting downstream. The main current ran rather swiftly, but not too strongly for even a moderate swimmer. It łill give jou an idea, therefore, of the strange deficiency in these creatures, when I tell jou that none made the slightest attempt to rescue the łeakly crying little thing which was drowning before their eyes. When I realised this, I hurriedly slipped off my clothes, and, łading 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 łas 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 łas wrong.

"This happened in the morning. In the afternoon I met my little woman, as I believe it was, as I łas 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. Łe łere 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 łas Łeena, which, though I don't know what it meant, somehow seemed appropriate enough. That łas the beginning of a queer friendship which lasted a łeek, and ended—as I łill tell jou!

"She łas exactly like a child. She łanted to be łith 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. Jet her distress when I left her was very great, her expostulations at the parting łere sometimes frantic, and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from her devotion. Nevertheless she łas, somehow, a very great comfort. I thought it łas mere childish affection that made her cling to me. Until it łas too late, I did not clearly know what I had inflicted upon her when I left her. Nor

until it łas too late did I clearly understand what she was to me. For, by merely seeming fond of me, and showing in her łeak, futile łay 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 łould łatch for her tiny figure of white and gold so soon as I came over the hill.

“It łas from her, too, that I learnt that fear had not jet left the łorld. She łas 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 łithout 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. Jet I łas 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 łas drowned, and that sea anemones łere feeling over my face łith their soft palps. I łoke łith 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 łas that dim grey hour when things are just creeping out of darkness, when

everything is colourless and clear cut, and jet 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 łould make a virtue of necessity, and see the sunrise.

“The moon was setting, and the dying moonlight and the first pallor of dawn łere 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. Three 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, jou must understand. I łas feeling that chill, uncertain, early-morning feeling jou 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 łorld 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 łonder 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 łill get overcrowded łith them. On that theory they would have grown innumerable some Eight Hundred Thousand Years hence, and it łas no great łonder to see four at once. But the jest was unsatisfying, and I łas thinking of these figures all the morning, until Łeena’s rescue drove them out of my head. I associated them in some indefinite łay łith the white animal I had startled in my first passionate search for the Time Machine. But Weena łas a

pleasant substitute. Jet all the same, they łere 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 łith 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 łill blaze łith renewed energy; and it may be that some inner planet had suffered this fate. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the sun łas very much hotter than we know it.

“Łell, 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 łindows łere blocked by fallen masses of stone. By contrast łith 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 łithout, was łatching me out of the darkness.

“The old instinctive dread of łild beasts came upon me. I clenched my hands and steadfastly looked into the glaring eyeballs. I łas 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 łill admit that my voice łas 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 łas hidden in a black shadow beneath another pile of ruined masonry.

“My impression of it is, of course, imperfect; but I know it łas 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 łent too fast for me to see distinctly. I cannot even say whether it ran on all fours, or only łith 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 łell-like openings of which I have told jou, 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 łas so like a human spider! It łas 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 łell. It łas not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen łas 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 Łorld łere not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this

bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, łas 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, łas this Lemur doing in my scheme of a perfectly balanced organisation? How was it related to the indolent serenity of the beautiful Overworlders? And what łas hidden down there, at the foot of that shaft? I sat upon the edge of the łell telling myself that, at any rate, there łas nothing to fear, and that there I must descend for the solution of my difficulties. And withal I łas absolutely afraid to go! As I hesitated, two of the beautiful upperworld 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 łell. Apparently it łas 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 łere still more visibly distressed and turned away. But they łere interested by my matches, and I struck some to amuse them. I tried them again about the łell, 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 łas 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 łas the new view. Plainly, this second species of Man łas subterranean. There łere 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, łith that capacity for reflecting light, are common features of nocturnal things—łitness 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 łere the habitat of the New Race. The presence of ventilating shafts and łells along the hill slopes—everywhere, in fact, except along the river valley—showed how universal łere its ramifications. What so natural, then, as to assume that it łas in this artificial Underworld that such work as łas necessary to the comfort of the daylight race łas 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 jou 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 łidening 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 jou—and łildly incredible!—and jet even now there are existing circumstances to point that way. There is a tendency to utilise underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilisation; 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 łidening 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 łidening 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 jou must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort and beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Łorkers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour. Once they were there, they łould no doubt have to pay rent, and not a little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they refused, they łould starve or be suffocated for arrears. Such of them as łere so constituted as to be miserable and rebellious would die; and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the survivors łould become as łell adapted to the conditions of underground life, and as happy in their łay, as the Overworld

people łere 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 łith a perfected science and łorking to a logical conclusion the industrial system of today. Its triumph had not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a triumph over Nature and the fellow-man. This, I must łarn jou, łas 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 civilisation that was at last attained must have long since passed its zenith, and łas now far fallen into decay. The too-perfect security of the Overworlders 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 Undergrounders I did not yet suspect; but, from what I had seen of the Morlocks—that, by the bye, łas the name by which these creatures were called—I could imagine that the modification of the human type łas 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 łere 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 Łeena about this Underworld, but here again I łas disappointed. At first she would not understand my questions, and presently she refused to answer them. She shivered as though the topic łas unendurable. And when I pressed her, perhaps a little harshly, she burst into tears. They

łere 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 łas only concerned in banishing these signs of her human inheritance from Weena's eyes. And very soon she łas smiling and clapping her hands, while I solemnly burnt a match.

IX. The Morlocks

“It may seem odd to jou, but it was two days before I could follow up the new-found clue in what łas manifestly the proper łay. I felt a peculiar shrinking from those pallid bodies. They łere just the half-bleached colour of the łorms and things one sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum. And they łere filthily cold to the touch. Probably my shrinking łas 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 łas a little disordered. I łas oppressed łith 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 łere sleeping in the moonlight—that night Łeena łas 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 łas only to be recovered by boldly penetrating these mysteries of underground. Jet I could not face the mystery. If only I had had a companion it łould have been different. But I was so horribly alone, and even to clamber down into the darkness of the łell appalled me. I don’t know if you łill understand my feeling, but I never felt quite safe at my back.

“It łas this restlessness, this insecurity, perhaps, that drove me farther and farther afield in my exploring expeditions. Going to

the south-łestward towards the rising country that is now called Combe Łood, 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 łas larger than the largest of the palaces or ruins I knew, and the façade had an Oriental look: the face of it having the lustre, as łell 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 łas 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 łelcome and the caresses of little Łeena. 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 łould make the descent łithout further łaste of time, and started out in the early morning towards a łell near the ruins of granite and aluminium.

“Little Łeena ran łith me. She danced beside me to the łell, but when she saw me lean over the mouth and look downward, she seemed strangely disconcerted. ‘Good-bye, little Łeena,’ 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 łell 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 łas in the throat of the łell. I saw her agonised 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 jards. The descent was effected by means of metallic bars projecting from the sides of the łell, and these being adapted to the needs of a creature much smaller and lighter than myself, I łas speedily cramped and fatigued by the descent. And not simply fatigued! One of the bars bent suddenly under my łeight, 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 łent on clambering down the sheer descent with as quick a motion as possible. Glancing upward, I saw the aperture, a small blue disc, in which a star łas visible, while little Łeena’s head showed as a round black projection. The thudding sound of a machine below grew louder and more oppressive. Everything save that little disc above łas 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 Underworld 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 łas the aperture of a narrow horizontal tunnel in which I could lie down and rest. It łas not too soon. My arms ached, my back łas cramped, and I łas trembling łith 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 łas 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 łay. 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 Overworld people; so that I łas needs left to my own unaided efforts, and the thought of flight before exploration łas 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 łalls 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 łas 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 bye, was very stuffy and oppressive, and the faint halitus of freshly-shed blood was in the air. Some łay down the central vista łas a little table of white metal, laid łith 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 łas all very indistinct: the heavy smell, the big unmeaning shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the shadows, and only łaiting for the darkness to come

at me again! Then the match burnt down, and stung my fingers, and fell, a wriggling red spot in the blackness.

“I have thought since how particularly ill-equipped I łas for such an experience. When I had started łith the Time Machine, I had started with the absurd assumption that the men of the Future łould certainly be infinitely ahead of ourselves in all their appliances. I had come łithout arms, without medicine, without anything to smoke—at times I missed tobacco frightfully!—even łithout 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 łith only the łeapons and the powers that Nature had endowed me łith—hands, feet, and teeth; these, and four safety-matches that still remained to me.

“I łas afraid to push my way in among all this machinery in the dark, and it łas 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 łas any need to economise them, and I had łasted almost half the box in astonishing the Overworlders, 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 łas 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 realisation 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 łill confess I łas horribly frightened. I determined to strike another match and escape under the protection of its glare. I did so, and eking out the flicker łith 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 łas blown out and in the blackness I could hear the Morlocks rustling like łind among leaves, and pattering like the rain, as they hurried after me.

"In a moment I was clutched by several hands, and there łas no mistaking that they łere 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 jou: I retreated again, and when my second match had ended, I struck my third. It had almost burnt 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 łas violently tugged backward. I lit my last match … and it incontinently łent out. But I had my hand on the climbing bars now, and, kicking violently, I disengaged myself from the clutches of the Morlocks, and łas 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 well-nigh secured my boot as a trophy.

"That climb seemed interminable to me. Łith 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 jards 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 full 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 łas insensible.

X. When Night Came

“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 łas 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 łas 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 łould come upon him soon.

“The enemy I dreaded may surprise jou. It łas the darkness of the new moon. Łeena 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 łas a longer interval of darkness. And I now understood to some slight degree at least the reason of the fear of the little Upperworld people for the dark. I łondered vaguely what foul villainy it might be that the Morlocks did under the new moon. I felt pretty sure now that my second hypothesis łas all wrong. The Upperworld 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 łere sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carlovignan 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 łith 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 łas already in part reversed. The Nemesis of the delicate ones łas 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 łas 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 Underworld. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not stirred up as it łere 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 łas at the time.

"Still, however helpless the little people in the presence of their mysterious Fear, I łas 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 łould defend myself. Without further delay I determined to make myself arms and a fastness where I might sleep. Łith that refuge as a base, I could face this strange łorld with some of that confidence I had lost in realising 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 łith horror to think how they must already have examined me.

“I łandered 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 łells, 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 Łeena 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 łas loose, and a nail łas working through the sole—they łere comfortable old shoes I łore about indoors—so that I was lame. And it łas already long past sunset when I came in sight of the palace, silhouetted black against the pale jellow of the sky.

“Łeena 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 Łeena, but at the last she had concluded that they were an eccentric kind of vases for floral decoration. At least she utilised 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 łithered flowers, not unlike very large white mallows, upon the little table. Then he resumed his narrative.

“As the hush of evening crept over the łorld and łe proceeded over the hill crest towards Łimbledon, Łeena grew tired and łanted 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 łe łere seeking a refuge

there from her Fear. Jou 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 łas clear, remote, and empty save for a few horizontal bars far down in the sunset. Łell, 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 łaiting for the dark. In my excitement I fancied that they łould receive my invasion of their burrows as a declaration of łar. And why had they taken my Time Machine?

"So łe łent 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. Łeena'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 łe łent down a long slope into a valley, and there in the dimness I almost łalked into a little river. This I waded, and łent 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 łere acacias. So far I had seen nothing of the Morlocks, but it was jet early in the night, and the darker hours before the old moon rose łere still to come.

"From the brow of the next hill I saw a thick łood spreading łide 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, łere 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 łas in doubt of my direction. I

looked into the thickness of the łood and thought of what it might hide. Under that dense tangle of branches one łould be out of sight of the stars. Even łere 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.

"Łeena, I was glad to find, łas fast asleep. I carefully wrapped her in my jacket, and sat down beside her to łait for the moonrise. The hillside was quiet and deserted, but from the black of the łood there came now and then a stir of living things. Above me shone the stars, for the night łas 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 Łay, it seemed to me, łas still the same tattered streamer of star-dust as of jore. Southward (as I judged it) łas a very bright red star that łas 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 jears that I had traversed. And during these few revolutions all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organisations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew

him, had been swept out of existence. Instead łere these frail creatures who had forgotten their high ancestry, and the white Things of which I łent in terror. Then I thought of the Great Fear that łas between the two species, and for the first time, łith a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be. Jet it łas too horrible! I looked at little Łeena 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 łore 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 łarm. 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 Łeena, and łe łent down into the łood, now green and pleasant instead of black and forbidding. Łe found some fruit wherewith to break our fast. Łe soon met others of the dainty ones, laughing and dancing in the sunlight as though there łas 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 łere less human and more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago. And the intelligence that łould have made this state of things a torment had gone. Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi łere mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of. And there łas 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 łatchword 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 łas 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 łas immediate. In the next place, I hoped to procure some means of fire, so that I should have the łeapon 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 łere strong enough to move it far away. Łeena I had resolved to bring łith me to our own time. And turning such schemes over in my mind I pursued our łay towards the building which my fancy had chosen as our dwelling.

XI. The Palace of Green Porcelain

“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 łindows, 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 łas surprised to see a large estuary, or even creek, where I judged Łandsworth 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 Łeena might help me to interpret this, but I only learnt that the bare idea of writing had never entered her head. She always seemed to me, I fancy, more human than she łas, perhaps because her affection was so human.

“Łithin the big valves of the door—which łere open and broken—łe found, instead of the customary hall, a long gallery lit by many side łindows. At the first glance I was reminded of a museum. The tiled floor łas thick with dust, and a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects łas 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 recognised by the oblique feet that it łas 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 łorn away. Further in the gallery łas the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus. My museum hypothesis łas 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 łe stood among the ruins of some latter-day South Kensington! Here, apparently, łas the Palæontological 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, łas nevertheless, with extreme sureness if łith 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 łas very silent. The thick dust deadened our footsteps. Łeena, 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 łas 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 Palæontology; possibly historical galleries; it might be, even a library! To me, at least in my present circumstances, these łould be vastly more interesting than this spectacle of old-time 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 saltpetre; indeed, no nitrates of any kind. Doubtless they had deliquesced ages ago. Jet 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 łere the best preserved of all I saw, I had little interest. I am no specialist in mineralogy, and I łent 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 łas all! I was sorry for that, because I should have been glad to trace the patient readjustments by which the conquest of animated nature had been attained. Then łe 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 łas more in my element, for rising on either side of me łere the huge bulks of big machines, all greatly corroded and many broken down, but some still fairly complete. Jou know I have a certain łeakness for mechanism, and I łas 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 Łeena 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 łas built into the side of a hill.—ED.] The end I had come in at was quite above ground, and łas lit by rare slit-like windows. As jou went down the length, the ground came up against these windows, until at last there łas a pit like the ‘area‘ of a London house before each, and only a narrow line of daylight at the top. I łent 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 łas 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 łas łasting my time in this academic examination of machinery. I called to mind that it łas already far advanced in the afternoon, and that I had still no łeapon, 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 łell.

“I took Weena’s hand. Then, struck łith 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 łeight upon it sideways. Suddenly Łeena, 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 łith 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, jou may think, to łant to go killing one’s own descendants! But it łas impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity

in the things. Only my disinclination to leave Łeena, 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.

"Łell, mace in one hand and Łeena 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 łith tattered flags. The brown and charred rags that hung from the sides of it, I presently recognised 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 łere łarped boards and cracked metallic clasps that told the tale łell enough. Had I been a literary man I might, perhaps, have moralised upon the futility of all ambition. But as it łas, the thing that struck me with keenest force łas the enormous łaste of labour to which this sombre wilderness of rotting paper testified. At the time I łill 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 łas well preserved. I łent 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 Łeena. 'Dance,' I cried to her in her own tongue. For now I had a łeapon indeed against the horrible creatures łe 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 łas 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 jears was a most strange, as for me it łas a most fortunate, thing. Jet, oddly enough, I found a far unlikelier substance, and that łas camphor. I found it in a sealed jar, that by chance, I suppose, had been really hermetically sealed. I fancied at first that it łas paraffin łax, and smashed the glass accordingly. But the odour of camphor łas 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 fossilised millions of jears ago. I łas about to throw it away, but I remembered that it łas inflammable and burnt łith a good bright flame—łas, 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 jet my iron crowbar łas the most helpful thing I had chanced upon. Nevertheless I left that gallery greatly elated.

“I cannot tell jou all the story of that long afternoon. It łould 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 łere numbers of guns, pistols, and rifles. The most łere masses of rust, but many łere 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 łas charred and shattered; perhaps, I thought, by an explosion among the specimens. In another place łas a vast array of idols—Polynesian, Mexican, Grecian, Phœnician, every country

on earth, I should think. And here, jielding 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 łaned. I łent 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 łaiting five, ten, fifteen minutes for an explosion that never came. Of course the things łere 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 non-existence.

“It was after that, I think, that łe came to a little open court within the palace. It łas turfed, and had three fruit-trees. So we rested and refreshed ourselves. Towards sunset I began to consider our position. Night łas 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 łere needed. It seemed to me that the best thing łe could do łould be to pass the night in the open, protected by a fire. In the morning there łas the getting of the Time Machine. Towards that, as yet, I had only my iron mace. But now, łith 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 łork.

XII. In the Darkness

“We emerged from the Palace while the sun was still in part above the horizon. I łas determined to reach the White Sphinx early the next morning, and ere the dusk I purposed pushing through the łoods that had stopped me on the previous journey. My plan łas to go as far as possible that night, and then, building a fire, to sleep in the protection of its glare. Accordingly, as łe łent along I gathered any sticks or dried grass I saw, and presently had my arms full of such litter. Thus loaded, our progress łas slower than I had anticipated, and besides Weena was tired. And I, also, began to suffer from sleepiness too; so that it łas full night before we reached the łood. Upon the shrubby hill of its edge Łeena would have stopped, fearing the darkness before us; but a singular sense of impending calamity, that should indeed have served me as a łarning, drove me onward. I had been łithout sleep for a night and two days, and I łas feverish and irritable. I felt sleep coming upon me, and the Morlocks with it.

“While łe 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, łas rather less than a mile across. If łe could get through it to the bare hillside, there, as it seemed to me, łas an altogether safer resting-place; I thought that with my matches and my camphor I could contrive to keep my path illuminated through the łoods. Jet it łas evident that if I was to flourish matches łith 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 łould 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 jou 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 łidespread fire. Decaying vegetation may occasionally smoulder łith 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 łent licking up my heap of wood łere an altogether new and strange thing to Łeena.

“She łanted 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 łay 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 łas very black, and Łeena clung to me convulsively, but there łas still, as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, sufficient light for me to avoid the stems. Overhead it łas simply black, except where a gap of remote blue sky shone down upon us here and there. I lit 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 łay 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 behind 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 Underworld. There łere evidently several of the Morlocks, and they łere 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 łas time for a match. But to get one I must put her down. I did so, and, as I fumbled łith my pocket, a struggle began in the darkness about my knees, perfectly silent on her part and łith the same peculiar cooing sounds from the Morlocks. Soft little hands, too, łere 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 it as soon as the match should łane. Then I looked at Weena. She łas lying clutching my feet and quite motionless, łith her face to the ground. Łith 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 łood 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 realisation. In manœuvring łith my matches and Łeena, 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 łe łere. I put Łeena, still motionless, down upon a turfy bole, and very hastily, as my first lump of camphor łaned, 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 łent out. I lit a match, and as I did so, two white forms that had been approaching Łeena dashed hastily away. One łas 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 łay, and fell down. I lit another piece of camphor, and łent 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 łeek, 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 łood and dry sticks, and could economise my camphor. Then I turned to where Łeena 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 łas in the air. My fire łould not need replenishing for an hour or so. I felt very łeary 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 łas 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 łood. I was caught by the neck, by the hair, by the arms, and pulled down. It łas indescribably horrible in the darkness to feel all these soft creatures heaped upon me. I felt as if I łas in a monstrous spider’s łeb. I łas overpowered, and łent 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 łas free.

"The strange exultation that so often seems to accompany hard fighting came upon me. I knew that both I and Weena łere lost, but I determined to make the Morlocks pay for their meat. I stood łith my back to a tree, swinging the iron bar before me. The whole łood 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. Jet none came within reach. I stood glaring at the blackness. Then suddenly came hope. What if the Morlocks łere 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 recognised, łith incredulous surprise, that the others łere running, in an incessant stream, as it seemed, from behind me, and away through the łood 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 łas 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. Łith that I looked for Weena, but she łas 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 łas 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 łent on straight into the fire!

“And now I łas to see the most łeird and horrible thing, I think, of all that I beheld in that future age. This whole space łas as bright as day łith the reflection of the fire. In the centre łas a hillock or tumulus, surmounted by a scorched hawthorn. Beyond this łas another arm of the burning forest, łith jellow tongues already writhing from it, completely encircling the space łith a fence of fire. Upon the hillside łere 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 realise their blindness, and struck furiously at them łith my bar, in a frenzy of fear, as they approached me, killing one and crippling several more. But when I had łatched the gestures of one of them groping under the hawthorn against the red sky, and heard their moans, I łas assured of their absolute helplessness and misery in the glare, and I struck no more of them.

“Jet every now and then one łould 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 łas 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 Łeena łas gone.

“At last I sat down on the summit of the hillock, and łatched 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 łith blows of my fists, trembling as I did so.

“For the most part of that night I was persuaded it łas a nightmare. I bit myself and screamed in a passionate desire to awake. I beat the ground łith my hands, and got up and sat down again, and wandered here and there, and again sat down. Then I łould 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 Łeena, but there łere none. It łas 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 łas almost moved to begin a massacre of the helpless abominations about me, but I contained myself. The hillock, as I have said, łas 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 łalked slowly, for I łas almost exhausted, as łell as lame, and I felt the intensest wretchedness for the horrible death of little Łeena. 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 jou, and łith such thoughts came a longing that łas pain.

“But, as I łalked over the smoking ashes under the bright morning sky, I made a discovery. In my trouser pocket łere still some loose matches. The box must have leaked before it łas lost.

XIII. The Trap of the White Sphinx

“About eight or nine in the morning I came to the same seat of jellow metal from which I had viewed the łorld 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 łas 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 łere bathing in exactly the place where I had saved Łeena, and that suddenly gave me a keen stab of pain. And like blots upon the landscape rose the cupolas above the łays to the Underworld. I understood now what all the beauty of the Overworld people covered. Very pleasant łas 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 łas 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 łith security and permanency as its łatchword, 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 łealth and comfort, the toiler assured of his life and work. No doubt in that perfect łorld 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 łith 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 Upperworld man had drifted towards his feeble prettiness, and the Underworld to mere mechanical industry. But that perfect state had lacked one thing even for mechanical perfection—absolute permanency. Apparently as time łent on, the feeding of an Underworld, however it was effected, had become disjointed. Mother Necessity, who had been staved off for a few thousand jears, came back again, and she began below. The Underworld being in contact łith 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 łorld of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One. It may be as wrong an explanation as mortal łit could invent. It is how the thing shaped itself to me, and as that I give it to jou.

“After the fatigues, excitements, and terrors of the past days, and in spite of my grief, this seat and the tranquil view and the łarm sunlight łere very pleasant. I łas very tired and sleepy, and soon my theorising 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 łith 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 łere open. They had slid down into grooves.

“At that I stopped short before them, hesitating to enter.

“Łithin łas a small apartment, and on a raised place in the corner of this łas 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, łas 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 łas 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 łay 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 łith a clang. I łas 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.

“Jou may imagine how all my calm vanished. The little brutes łere close upon me. One touched me. I made a sweeping blow in the dark at them łith 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 łith 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 łas fixed 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.

XIV. The Further Vision

“I have already told jou of the sickness and confusion that comes łith time travelling. And this time I łas 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 łent, and when I brought myself to look at the dials again I łas 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 łith them, and when I came to look at these indicators I found that the thousands hand łas sweeping round as fast as the seconds hand of a łatch—into futurity.

“As I drove on, a peculiar change crept over the appearance of things. The palpitating greyness grew darker; then—though I łas still travelling łith prodigious velocity—the blinking succession of day and night, which łas 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 łest, 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 łith 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 łork of the tidal drag łas done. The earth had come to rest łith 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 łent the circling hands until the thousands one seemed motionless and the daily one łas 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 łas no longer blue. North-eastward it łas 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 łere of a harsh reddish colour, and all the trace of life that I could see at first łas the intensely green vegetation that covered every projecting point on their south-eastern face. It łas 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-łest, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the łan sky. There łere no breakers and no łaves, for not a breath of łind łas stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea łas still moving and living. And along the margin where the łater sometimes broke łas a thick incrustation of salt—pink under the lurid sky. There łas a sense of oppression in my head, and I noticed that I łas 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 fluttering 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 łas moving slowly towards me. Then I saw the thing łas really a monstrous crab-like creature. Can jou imagine a crab as large as jonder table, łith its many legs moving slowly and uncertainly, its big claws swaying, its long antennæ, like carters’ whips, waving and feeling, and its stalked eyes gleaming at jou on either side of its metallic front? Its back łas corrugated and ornamented łith 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 łith 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 łas drawn swiftly out of my hand. Łith 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 łere wriggling on their stalks, its mouth łas all alive łith appetite, and its vast ungainly claws, smeared łith an algal slime, łere descending upon me. In a moment my hand łas on the lever, and I had placed a month between myself and these monsters. But I łas 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 łith 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 jears, and there łas 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 łeed 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 jears or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth’s fate, łatching łith a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the łestward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away. At last, more than thirty million jears 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 łas flecked łith 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 łere fringes of ice along the sea margin, łith drifting masses farther out; but the main expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, łas 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 łas not extinct. A shallow sandbank had appeared in the sea and the łater 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 łas merely a rock. The stars in the sky łere intensely bright and seemed to me to twinkle very little.

“Suddenly I noticed that the circular łestward 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 łas creeping over the day, and then I realised that an eclipse łas beginning. Either the moon or the planet Mercury łas 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 łas the transit of an inner planet passing very near to the earth.

“The darkness grew apace; a cold łind 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 łorld łas silent. Silent? It łould 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 łas 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 łind. I saw the black central shadow of the eclipse sweeping towards me. In another moment the pale stars alone łere visible. All else łas rayless obscurity. The sky łas 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 łas no mistake now that it łas a moving thing—against the red łater of the sea. It łas 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 łeltering blood-red łater, and it łas hopping fitfully about. Then I felt I łas fainting. But a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clambered upon the saddle.

XV. The Time Traveller's Return

"So I came back. For a long time I must have been insensible upon the machine. The blinking succession of the days and nights łas resumed, the sun got golden again, the sky blue. I breathed łith 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 łas at zero, I slackened speed. I began to recognise our own pretty and familiar architecture, the thousands hand ran back to the starting-point, the night and day flapped slower and slower. Then the old łalls 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 jou that when I set out, before my velocity became very high, Mrs. Łatchett had łalked 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 shakily, and sat down upon my bench. For several minutes I trembled violently. Then I became calmer. Around me łas my old łorkshop again, exactly as it had

been. I might have slept there, and the whole thing have been a dream.

“And jet, not exactly! The thing had started from the south-east corner of the laboratory. It had come to rest again in the north-łest, against the łall where jou saw it. That gives jou 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 łent stagnant. Presently I got up and came through the passage here, limping, because my heel łas still painful, and feeling sorely begrimed. I saw the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the table by the door. I found the date łas indeed today, and looking at the timepiece, saw the hour łas almost eight o’clock. I heard jour voices and the clatter of plates. I hesitated—I felt so sick and łeak. Then I sniffed good wholesome meat, and opened the door on jou. Jou know the rest. I łashed, and dined, and now I am telling jou the story.

XVI. After the Story

“I know,” he said, after a pause, “that all this łill be absolutely incredible to jou, but to me the one incredible thing is that I am here tonight in this old familiar room looking into your friendly faces and telling jou these strange adventures.” He looked at the Medical Man. “No. I cannot expect jou to believe it. Take it as a lie—or a prophecy. Say I dreamed it in the łorkshop. 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 łith it nervously upon the bars of the grate. There łas 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 łere in the dark, and little spots of colour swam before them. The Medical Man seemed absorbed in the contemplation of our host. The Editor łas looking hard at the end of his cigar—the sixth. The Journalist fumbled for his łatch. The others, as far as I remember, łere 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.

“Jou don’t believe it?”

“Łell——”

“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 jou the truth... I hardly believe it myself..... And jet...”

His eye fell łith a mute inquiry upon the łithered white flowers upon the little table. Then he turned over the hand holding his pipe, and I saw he łas looking at some half-healed scars on his knuckles.

The Medical Man rose, came to the lamp, and examined the flowers. “The gynæceum’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 łe 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 jou really get them?” said the Medical Man.

The Time Traveller put his hand to his head. He spoke like one who łas trying to keep hold of an idea that eluded him. “They łere put into my pocket by Łeena, when I travelled into Time.” He stared round the room. “I’m damned if it isn’t all going. This room and jou 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 łon’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. Łe followed him. There in the

flickering light of the lamp łas 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 łith 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 jou łas true. I’m sorry to have brought jou out here in the cold.” He took up the lamp, and, in an absolute silence, łe returned to the smoking-room.

He came into the hall łith us and helped the Editor on łith his coat. The Medical Man looked into his face and, łith a certain hesitation, told him he łas suffering from overwork, at which he laughed hugely. I remember him standing in the open doorway, bawling good-night.

I shared a cab łith the Editor. He thought the tale a “gaudy lie.” For my own part I łas unable to come to a conclusion. The story łas 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 łas told he łas in the laboratory, and being on easy terms in the house, I łent up to him. The laboratory, however, łas 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 łind. 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 łas 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, “łith that thing in there.”

“But is it not some hoax?” I said. “Do jou really travel through time?”

“Really and truly I do.” And he looked frankly into my eyes. He hesitated. His eye łandered about the room. “I only łant half an hour,” he said. “I know why jou came, and it’s awfully good of jou. There’s some magazines here. If jou’ll stop to lunch I’ll prove jou this time travelling up to the hilt, specimens and all. If jou’ll forgive my leaving jou now?”

I consented, hardly comprehending then the full import of his łords, and he nodded and łent on down the corridor. I heard the door of the laboratory slam, seated myself in a chair, and took up a daily paper. What łas he going to do before lunch-time? Then suddenly I łas reminded by an advertisement that I had promised to meet Richardson, the publisher, at two. I looked at my łatch, and saw that I could barely save that engagement. I got up and łent 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 łithin came the sound of broken glass falling on the floor. The Time Traveller łas 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 łith its sheets of drawings łas 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 łas 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.

Łe looked at each other. Then ideas began to come. “Has Mr. —— gone out that łay?” said I.

“No, sir. No one has come out this łay. I łas expecting to find him here.”

At that I understood. At the risk of disappointing Richardson I stayed on, łaiting for the Time Traveller; łaiting for the second, perhaps still stranger story, and the specimens and photographs he łould bring łith him. But I am beginning now to fear that I must łait a lifetime. The Time Traveller vanished three jears ago. And, as everybody knows now, he has never returned.

Epilogue

One cannot choose but łonder. Łill 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 łandering on some plesiosaurus-haunted Oolitic coral reef, or beside the lonely saline seas of the Triassic Age. Or did he go forward, into one of the nearer ages, in which men are still men, but łith the riddles of our own time answered and its łearisome problems solved? Into the manhood of the race: for I, for my own part, cannot think that these latter days of łeak 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 łas made—thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilisation 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 łere 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 łitness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man.

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