

THOUGHTAUDIO



THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

Written by
H. G. WELLS – 1895

Adaptations by
GARCIA MANN

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

Narrated by
MICHAEL ANTHONY SCOTT

Produced by
THOUGHTAUDIO.COM

Copyright © 2022
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
TA 0119

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The Time Traveler, the name I have given him, was expounding a recondite¹ matter to us. His pale grey eyes shone and twinkled, his pale face flushed and animated. The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights of the lilies caught the silver in the bubbles that flashed in our glasses. Our chairs, made by his own hands, embraced and caressed us, and there was that luxurious after-

¹ RECONDITE: A subject or knowledge not understood; abstruse, obscure.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

dinner atmosphere, when thought runs gracefully free of the trammels of modern life. He put it to us in this way — marking his talking points with a lean forefinger as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness and fecundity² at the new paradox he presented to us.

“You must follow me carefully,” said the Time Traveler. “I will have to repudiate one or two universally accepted ideas. The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception.”

“Isn’t that rather a complex subject to expect us to understand?” asked Filby, an argumentative person with red hair.

“I do not expect you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it,” responded the Time Traveler. “You will soon admit as much as I need from you. You already know that a mathematical line, a line of *nil* thickness, has no real existence. They taught you that in school. Neither does a mathematical plane have no real existence. These things are mere abstractions.”

“That is correct,” affirmed the Psychologist.

²FECUNDITY: The ability to produce an abundance of new thoughts, new growth; fertility, in this case fertility of mind.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube have a real existence either,” continued the Time Traveler.

“There I object,” said Filby. “Of course, a solid body may exist. All real things exist!”

“Most people think that but wait a moment,” said the Time Traveler. “Can an *instantaneous* cube exist?”

“I don’t follow you,” said Filby.

“Can a cube that does not last for any time at all have a real existence?” asked the Time Traveler.

Filby became pensive.

“Clearly,” the Time Traveler proceeded, “any real body must have extension in *four* directions, it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and — Duration. Through a natural infirmity of the flesh, which I will explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact. There are essentially four dimensions, three that we call the planes of Space, and a fourth dimension — Time. There is, however, a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the three dimensions of Space and that of Time, because it happens that our consciousness moves inter-mit-tent-ly in one direction along the timeline from the beginning to the end of our lives.”

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“That,” said the Young Man, making spasmodic efforts to relight his cigar over the lamp, “that is clear indeed.”

“It is remarkable that this is extensively overlooked,” continued the Time Traveler, with a slight hint of cheerfulness. “This is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know what this means. It is only another way of looking at Time. There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along the Time continuum. Some foolish people have gotten hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have already heard what they say about this Fourth Dimension.”

“I have not,” said the Provincial Mayor.

“It is simply this. That Space, as our mathematicians have interpreted the concept, has three dimensions as I mentioned before, and is always definable by reference to three planes, each at right angles to the others. Some philosophical people have been asking why *three* dimensions particularly — why not another direction at right angles to the other three? They have even tried to construct a Four-Dimensional geometry. Professor Simon Newcomb was expounding this to the New York Mathematical Society only a month 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

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

one of four dimensions — if only they could master the perspective of the problem. Do you understand what I'm getting at?"

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

"I do not mind telling you, I have been at work upon this geometry of Four Dimensions for some time. Some of my results are curious. For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at seventeen, and another at twenty-three. All these are visible fragments of Three-Dimensional representations of his Four-Dimensional being, and when viewed separately remain fixed and unalterable.

"Scientific people," proceeded the Time Traveler, after the pause required for our proper assimilation of what he had just said, "know that Time is only a kind of Space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather chart. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of the barometer. Yesterday it was high, last night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and gently upward to this point. Surely, the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of Space recognized! Yet certainly, it traced such a line, and therefore, we must conclude that the line moves along the Time Dimension."

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“However,” said the Medical Man, staring hard at a coal in the fire, “if Time is only a fourth dimension of Space, why is it, and why has it always been regarded as something different? Why can’t we move in Time as we move around in the other dimensions of Space?”

The Time Traveler smiled. “Are you sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go, backward and forward freely enough, as people have always done. I admit, we move freely in two dimensions. What about up and down? Gravitation limits us there.”

“Not exactly,” said the Medical Man. “There are balloons.”

“Go back to the time before the balloons. Except for spasmodic jumping and the inequalities of the earth’s surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement.”

“Still, they could move slightly up and down,” said the Medical Man.

“It is easier, far easier to move down than up,” responded the Time Traveler.

“You cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the present moment,” declared the Medical Man.

“My dear sir, on that point is where you are wrong,” responded the Time Traveler. “That is where the world has it wrong. We are always getting away from the present moment. Our mental existences, which are immaterial

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

and have no dimensions, are passing along the Time Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the grave, just as we would travel *down* if we began our existence fifty miles above the earth's surface."

"The difficulty I have is this," interrupted the Psychologist. "You *can* move around in all directions of Space, but you cannot move around in Time."

"That is the germ of my great discovery," responded the Time Traveler. "However, you are wrong to say that we cannot move around in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident vividly, I go back to the instant of its occurrence. I jump back in time for a moment. Of course, we have no means of staying back for any length of time, any more than our ancestors had of hovering six feet above the ground. A civilized man is better off than our ancient ancestors 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 around and travel the other way?"

"What you propose is gibberish," muttered Filby.

"Why not?" asked the Time Traveler.

"It goes against reason," answered Filby.

"What reason?" asked the Time Traveler.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“Anyone can prove that black is white by using clever logical arguments,” said Filby, “but you will never convince me.”

“Possibly not,” said the Time Traveler. “But now you begin to see the objective of my investigations into the geometry of Four Dimensions. Long ago I had a vague inkling of just such a machine.”

“To travel through Time?” queried the Young Man, somewhat puzzled by the Time Traveler’s assertion.

“Yes, a machine that will travel indifferently in any direction of Space and Time, as the driver determines,” responded the Time Traveler.

Filby contented himself with laughter.

“However, I have experimental verification,” said the Time Traveler, unaffected at Filby’s reaction.

“It would be remarkably convenient for the historian,” the Psychologist suggested. “One might travel back in time 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 learn Greek from the lips of Homer and Plato,” the Young Man stated aloud.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“In which case, they would certainly plough you for the Little-Go, since the German scholars have greatly improved Greek compared to those ancient times³,” quipped the Psychologist.

“Then there is the future,” said the Young Man. “Just think! One might go back in time, invest all one’s money, leave it to accumulate at interest, and hurry on ahead!”

“Or, to possibly create a society erected on a strictly communistic basis,” I interjected.

“Of all the wild extravagant theories!” responded the Psychologist.

“Yes, I agree with you. That is the reason I never talked of it until now,” I sputtered. I attempted to distract the subject from my frivolous interruption by turning attention back to the Time Traveler. “Experimental verification! You were going to verify your theory!”

“The experiment!” cried Filby, who was getting brain weary.

³ IN WHICH CASE THEY WOULD CERTAINLY PLOUGH YOU FOR THE LITTLE-GO. THE GERMAN SCHOLARS HAVE IMPROVED GREEK SO MUCH: It is a humorous statement. Little-Go: The examination held in the Cambridge University in the second year of residence. Called also “the previous examination,” because it precedes by a year the examination for a degree. In Oxford, calls the corresponding examination The Smalls. “They would certainly plough you for” describes how the examiners will ask questions that the student was unable to answer. In modern times we might say “They will bury you.” The last statement means that if one traveled back in time and learned Greek from Homer himself, they would not do well on a university. examination in 1895, because the 19th Century scholars had “improved Greek so much” with their modern studies of the language.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“Let us see your experiment,” said the Psychologist, “even though it’s all humbug.”

The Time Traveler smiled at us. Then, still smiling faintly, and with his hands deep in his trouser pockets, he walked slowly out of the room, and we heard his slippers shuffling down the long passage to his laboratory.

The Psychologist looked at us and muttered, “I wonder what he’s getting?”

“Some sleight-of-hand trick or other,” said the Medical Man as Filby tried to tell us about a conjuror he had seen at Bur-slem. Before he finished his story, the Time Traveler came back, and Filby’s anecdote collapsed.

CHAPTER II. THE MACHINE

The mechanism the Time Traveler held in his hand was a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and delicately made. There was ivory in it, and some transparent crystalline substance. I must now be explicit, for what follows — unless we unequivocally accept his explanation — is a preposterous phenomenon. He took one of the small octagonal tables scattered around the room and set it in front of the fire with two legs on the hearth rug. 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

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

were also a dozen candles around the room, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces, making the room brilliantly illuminated. I sat in a low armchair nearest the fire between the Time Traveler 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, and the Young Man stood behind the Psychologist. We were all on the alert. Looking back, it appeared inconceivable that the Time Traveler could have played any kind of trick on us under these conditions, however subtly contrived or adroitly performed.

The Time Traveler looked at us and then at the mechanism.

“Well, what are you going to show us?” queried the Psychologist.

“This small machine,” said the Time Traveler, resting his elbows upon the table and pressing his hands together above the apparatus, “is only a model. It is my plan for a machine to travel through time. You will notice that it looks singularly askew, and that there is an odd twinkling appearance around this bar, as though it is in some way unreal.” He pointed to the part with his finger. “Also, here is a white lever, and here is another.”

The Medical Man rose from his chair and peered into the machine. “It’s beautifully made,” he said.

“It took two years to make,” responded the Time Traveler.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

When we finished examining the machine, he continued his explanation.

“Now I want you to clearly understand that this lever, after I press it in this direction, sends the machine gliding into the future, and this other one reverses the motion. This saddle represents the seat for the time traveler. 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 machine, and also at the table, to satisfy yourselves there is no trickery. I don’t want to waste this model and then be told I’m a quack.”

There was a minute’s pause. The Psychologist was about to speak to me but changed his mind. Then the Time Traveler moved his finger towards the lever and then abruptly stepped back away from the machine. “No,” he said. “Lend me *your* hand.” Turning to the Psychologist, he took his hand and told him to put out his forefinger. It was the Psychologist himself who sent forth the model Time Machine on its interminable voyage. We all saw the lever turn. I am certain there was no trickery. Then there was a breath of wind, and the lamp flame jumped. One of the candles on the mantel blew out, and the little machine suddenly swung around, became indistinct, appearing ghost-like for a second, and then turned into a swirling vortex of faintly glittering brass and ivory, and then it was gone — vanished! Except for the lamp the table was bare.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

Everyone was silent for a minute. Then Filby said he was damned. The Psychologist recovered from his stupor, and then looked under the table.

The Time Traveler laughed cheerfully. “Well, there it is. What do you think of my invention?” he asked. Then, getting up, he went to the tobacco jar on the mantel, and with his back to us began to fill his pipe. Everyone stared at each other with blank looks.

“Look here,” said the Medical Man, “are you in earnest about this? Do you seriously believe that the machine has traveled into the future?”

“Certainly,” said the Time Traveler, stooping to gather a spill in the fire. Then he turned, lit his pipe, and looked directly at the Psychologist. The Psychologist, to show everyone that he remained unhinged, helped himself to a cigar and laughingly tried to light it uncut. “What is more, I have a big machine nearly finished in my laboratory and when that is put together, I intend to take a journey of my own.”

“You mean to say that your machine has traveled into the future?” asked Filby, still fixated on the small machine’s disappearance.

“Into the future or the past — I don’t know for certain which one.”

After an interval, the Psychologist had an inspiration. “It must have gone into the past if it has gone anywhere,” he said.

“Why?” asked the Time Traveler.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“Because I presume it has not moved in geographical space, and if it traveled into the future it would still be here, since it must have traveled through this time.”

“However,” I said, “if it traveled into the past it would have been visible when we first came into this room, and last Thursday when we were here, and the Thursday before that!”

“Serious objections,” remarked the Provincial Mayor, with an air of impartiality, turning towards the Time Traveler.

“Those are not serious objections,” responded the Time Traveler, and then turning to the Psychologist, he said, “Think! *You* can explain this phenomenon. This demonstration illustrates common psychological knowledge, you already know the proper explanation, it’s elementary.”

“Of course,” said the Psychologist, and reassured us. “It is a simple point of how psychological perception works. I should have thought of it. The explanation is plain enough and delightfully helps the paradox. We cannot see it, nor can we appreciate this machine’s disappearance, any more than we can appreciate the spokes of a wheel spinning, or a bullet whizzing through the air. If it is traveling through time fifty times or a hundred times faster than we are, it travels a full minute while we only get through a second. The impression it creates is only one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of what it would make if it were not traveling in time. That’s plain enough.” He

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

passed his hand through the space in which the machine had been. “Do you see what I am talking about?” he asked, laughing.

We sat and stared at the vacant table for a minute or so. Then the Time Traveler asked us what we thought of what we just experienced.

“It sounds plausible enough tonight,” said the Medical Man, “but wait until tomorrow. Wait for the common sense of the morning to kick in. Then it becomes a different matter altogether.”

“Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?” asked the Time Traveler. With that, taking the lamp in his hand, he led the way down the long, draughty corridor to his laboratory. I remember vividly the flickering light, his curious, broad head in silhouette, the dance of the shadows, how we followed him, puzzled but incredulous, and how there in the laboratory we witnessed a larger edition of the diminutive mechanism, which we had seen vanish just moments before. We saw before our eye’s parts made of nickel, parts made of ivory, and parts filed out of rock crystal. The machine was complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets of drawings. I picked up one of the bars for a better look at it, and immediately recognized the material as Quartz.

“Look here,” said the Medical Man, “are you serious? Or is this a trick — like that ghost you showed us last Christmas?”

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

The Time Traveler, ignoring the Medical Man, held the lamp aloft and continued, “Upon that machine, I intend to explore Time. Haven’t I made my intentions clear enough? 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. We all stood aghast at what we saw in front of us.

CHAPTER III. THE TIME TRAVELER RETURNS

At the time, none of us quite believed in the Time Machine. The fact is, the Time Traveler was one of those men who was too clever for anyone to believe. You always felt he was hiding something, and suspect of an underlying deception, a duplicitous chicanery waiting to ambush you behind his lucid frankness. If instead, Filby demonstrated the model and explained its intricacies in the Time Traveler’s exact words, we would display far less skepticism because we trusted Filby’s character and his motives — a butcher would trust Filby’s explanation. The Time Traveler’s personality radiated a touch of whim in his showmanship that made you distrust him. The level of knowledge the Time Traveler communicated would make a less clever man a model of genius, but the Time Traveler’s words appeared like slight-of-hand tricks designed to deceive the observer with an unwelcome deviousness. It is a mistake to do things too seamlessly.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

I do not think any of us said much about Time Traveling in the interval between that Thursday and the next. Though, I must admit, its odd potentialities ran in most of our minds, among other things its plausibility, its practical incredibleness, the curious possibilities of anachronism, and the utter confusion it brought. For my own part, I was particularly preoccupied with the trick of the model and discussed the matter with the Medical Man when we met on Friday at the Linnean. He said he saw a similar thing at Tubingen and placed considerable stress on the candle blowing out. However, the Medical Man could not explain how the Time Traveler performed the trick.

The next Thursday I went to our weekly gathering at the Time Traveler's home — I suppose I was one of the Time Traveler's most constant guests — and arriving late saw four men already sitting in his drawing-room. The Medical Man was standing in front of the fire with a sheet of paper in one hand and his watch in the other. I looked around for the Time Traveler.

“It's half-past seven,” said the Medical Man. “I suppose we should go on without him and have dinner as he suggested.”

“Where's our host?” I asked.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“You’ve arrived late, but as odd as it sounds, his sent a message telling us he was unavoidably detained. He asks that we start dinner at seven if he is not back, and will explain everything when he joins us.”

“It seems a pity to let the dinner spoil,” said the Editor of a well-known daily paper, and consequently the Doctor rang the dinner bell.

The Psychologist was the only person besides the Doctor and me who had attended the previous dinner. The new guests were Blank, the Editor mentioned, a certain journalist, and another — a quiet, shy man with a beard — whom I did not know, and who, as far as my observation went, never opened his mouth all the evening. There was speculation at the dinner table about the Time Traveler’s absence. In a joking spirit, I suggested he might be time traveling. The Editor wanted me to explain that to him, and the Psychologist volunteered a wooden account of the “ingenious paradox and astonishing trick” we witnessed the prior week. In the middle of his explanation, the door from the corridor opened slowly and without noise. I was facing the door and was the first to witness the Time Traveler’s entrance.

“At last!” I sighed.

The door opened wider, and the Time Traveler stood before us. I gasped in surprise.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“Good heavens man, what’s happened to you?” cried the Medical Man who saw him next, as all the guests turned towards the door.

He was in an amazing plight. His coat was dusty and dirty, his sleeves smeared with green grass, and his hair disheveled and greyer, either with dust and dirt, or its color faded. His face was ghastly pale, and his chin had a cut on it — a cut half-healed. His expression was haggard and drawn as if caused by intense suffering. For a moment, he hesitated in the doorway, as if the light dazzled him. Then he slowly walked into the room. He had a limp as seen in footsore beggars. We stared at him in silence, expecting him to speak.

He did not say a word, but walked painfully to the table, and made a motion towards the wine. The Editor filled his glass and pushed it towards him. He drained it in one solemn gulp, and by the expression on his face one could see it did him good. Then he looked around the table, and the ghost of his old smile flickered once again across his face.

“What on earth have you been up to?” asked the Doctor.

The Time Traveler did not seem to hear him. “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 wine, and once again drank it down in one swig. “That’s good wine, very good wine.” His face shone in complete satisfaction. His eyes grew brighter, and a faint color came into his cheeks.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

His glimpse flickered over our faces with a certain dull approval, and then he slowly looked around the warm and comfortable room. Then he spoke, in a manner as if he were feeling his way among his words. “I’m going to wash and dress now, and then I’ll come down and tell you about my astonishing journey Time Traveling. If you do not mind, save me some dinner. I’m starving.”

He looked straight at the Editor, who was a rare visitor, and welcomed him. The Editor responded by attempting to ask a question. The Time Traveler raised his hand to stop the Editor’s query.

“I will tell you everything as soon as I return,” said the Time Traveler. “I’m — let me say — slightly disoriented! I need to freshen up first. It won’t take long.”

He put down his glass and walked towards the staircase door. I saw his lame leg and heard the soft padding sound of his footsteps as he left the room. He wore nothing on his feet but a pair of tattered, blood-stained socks. Then the door closed behind him. I had half a mind to follow him, until I remembered how he detested any fuss about himself. For a minute, my mind whirled as I tried to make sense of it all.

Then the Editor, spreading his arms wide above his head and speaking in a voice as if creating the top headline for tomorrow’s news shouted,

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“Remarkable Behavior of an Eminent Scientist,” looking at each one of us in turn.

This brought my attention back to the dinner table.

“What game is he playing?” asked the Journalist. “He’s acting like a typical panhandler one finds in the lower quarters. I don’t follow.”

I met the eye of the Psychologist and we both realized there was more to the story than what we were witnessing. I noticed the Time Traveler limping painfully upstairs. I do not think anyone else noticed his lameness.

The first to recover completely from this surprising set of events was the Medical Man, who rang the bell for the Time Traveler’s dinner. When the meal arrived, the Editor turned to his knife and fork with a grunt, and the Silent Man followed suit. The dinner resumed. Conversation centered directly around the Time Traveler with gasps of wonderment.

Then the Editor got fervent in his curiosity. “Does our friend have tales of his time travels he wishes to share with us?” he inquired.

“I feel assured he will soon tell us about his business of the Time Machine,” I answered, and accepted the Psychologist’s account of our previous meeting.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

The new guests were frankly incredulous. The Editor raised objections. “What *was* this time traveling? I say, can a man cover himself with dust by rolling in a paradox?” The Editor laughed at his own wit.

Then, as the idea came home to him, he resorted to caricature, and rhetorically asked, “I wonder if they have any clothes-brushes in the Future? The Journalist too, would not believe the time traveling explanation at any price, and joined the Editor in the easy work of heaping ridicule on the whole scene. They were both the new kind of journalist — antagonistic, irreverent young men.

When the Time Traveler returned, the Journalist bellowed, “Our Special Correspondent in the Day after Tomorrow has arrived.”

The Time Traveler came into the dining room dressed in ordinary evening clothes, although with a ghastly haggard look that startled me.

“I must say,” said the Editor hilariously, “these gentlemen say you have been traveling into the middle of next week! Tell us all about what happens to the Prime Minister. Can I pay you for an exclusive?”

The Time Traveler sat down at the place reserved for him at the table. Ignoring the Editor, he smiled quietly in typical fashion. “Where’s my steak?” he asked. Then pulling his plate in front of him he said, “What a treat it is to stick a fork into meat again!”

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“We want your story!” cried the Editor.

“The story can wait!” said the Time Traveler. “I want something to eat. I will not say a word until I get a satisfying meal into my belly.” Then turning to look at everyone at the table he said, “Thank you for your understanding. If you do not mind, please pass me the salt. Thank you.”

“One word,” I said. “Have you been time traveling?”

“Yes,” said the Time Traveler, with his mouth full, nodding his head.

“I’ll give you a shilling a line for an exclusive interview,” said the Editor.

The Time Traveler pushed his glass towards the Silent Man and rang it with his fingernail. The Silent Man, while unflinchingly staring at his face, convulsively started pouring wine in his glass. The remainder of the dinner was uncomfortable. For my own part, sudden questions kept coming to mind, and I am certain it was the same with the others. The Journalist tried to relieve the tension by telling anecdotes of a famous actress he met in London. The Time Traveler devoted his attention to his dinner and displayed the appetite of a starving drifter. The Medical Man smoked a cigarette and watched the Time Traveler through his eyelashes. The Silent Man became even more clumsy than usual and drank champagne with regularity and determination driven by sheer nervousness. At last, the Time Traveler pushed his plate away and looked around at us.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“I suppose I must apologize,” he said. “I was simply starving. I’ve experienced an amazing series of events.” He reached out his hand for a cigar and cut the end. “Come into the smoking room. It’s too long of a story to tell over greasy plates,” and ringing the bell in passing, he led the way into the adjoining room.

“Have you told Blank, Dash, and Chose about the machine?” he asked me, leaning back in his easy chair, and naming the three new guests.

“The thing’s a mere paradox,” said the Editor.

“I can’t argue tonight. I don’t mind telling you the story, but I can’t argue,” he said in a brisk voice. “I will tell you what happened to me, but you must refrain from interruptions. I want to tell it, badly! Most of my story will sound dubious. So be it! It is true — every word of it. I was in my laboratory at four o’clock, and since then I have lived eight days, such days as no human being ever lived! I am exhausted, but I will not sleep until I have told my story to you. Then I will go to bed and get some much needed sleep. However, again I must insist there be no interruptions! Is it agreed?”

“Agreed,” said the Editor aloud, and the rest of us nodded in agreement.

With that the Time Traveler began his story. He sat back in his chair and spoke like a weary man, although afterwards he got more animated. In writing it down, I must explain how inadequate I felt, especially in my

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

inability to capture in words the true mystique and quality of his story. You, dear reader, are certainly attentive enough, but you cannot see the speaker's gaunt face in the brightness of the lamp, nor hear the intonation of his voice. You cannot see how his expression followed the turns of his story! Most of us were in shadow, and since the candles in the smoking room had not been lit, they illuminated only the face of the Journalist and the legs of the Silent Man from the knees downward. At first, we frequently glanced at each other in the dark. After a time, we ceased to do even that, and looked only at the Time Traveler's face.

CHAPTER IV. TIME TRAVELING

“I told some of you last Thursday of the principles of the Time Machine, and showed you the actual machine as it stood incomplete in the workshop. There it is now, a little travel worn, with one of the ivory bars cracked, a brass rail bent, but the rest of it intact. I expected to finish it on Friday, but on Friday, when putting it together and nearly done, I noticed that one of the nickel bars was exactly one inch too short. I had to get it remade, so, the nickel bar was not complete until this morning. It was at ten o'clock today that the Time Machine began its career. I wrote a note to you to start dinner without me if I did not make it back by seven o'clock. Then I gave the Time Machine a last tap, tightened all the screws, put one more drop of oil on the quartz rod, and sat firmly in the saddle. I suppose a suicidal person who holds a pistol to his skull feels the same consternation as

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

I felt then at what might come next. I took the starting lever in one hand, the stopping lever in the other, and then began to slowly push the starting lever forward. I seemed to reel. I felt a nightmarish sensation of falling, and looking around in a dizzying manner I noticed the laboratory did not change. I asked myself if anything had happened? For a moment I suspected that my intellect tricked me. Then I noted the clock. A moment before it had stood at a minute past ten, now it was half-past three!

I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever with both hands, and went off with a breathtaking pulse. The laboratory got hazy and then went dark. Mrs. Watchett came in and, without seeing me, walked towards the garden door. I suppose it took her a minute or so to traverse the place, but to me she shot across the room like a bullet. Then I pressed the forward lever to its extreme position. The night came as rapidly as turning off a lamp, and in another moment came the sunrise of the next day. The laboratory grew faint and hazy, then fainter and ever fainter. The next night arrived with a dreary blackness, then day arrived again, night again, day again, faster, and faster still. An eddying murmur filled my ears, and a strange, inexpressible confusion descended on my mind.

I am afraid I cannot convey the endemic sensations of time traveling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling exactly like one has riding a roller coaster as it bends around corners seemingly out of control. It was a helpless headlong motion! I also felt the horrible anticipation of an

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

imminent crash. As I pushed the machine at a faster pace, night followed day like the flapping of a hummingbird's wings. The dim image of the laboratory seemed to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping from the distant horizon every minute, and every minute marking a day. As I accelerated through time, my laboratory disappeared, and I came into the open air. I had a dim impression of scaffolding, but I was already going too fast to be conscious of any objects on the ground. Imagine the slowest snail that ever crawled, now dashing by as rapidly as a galloping horse. The twinkling succession of darkness and light was excessively painful to my eyes. Then in the intermittent multi-fold darkness, I saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters from new to full, and then as I looked directly upward a faint glimpse of the circling stars appeared. As my journey progressed, I continued gaining velocity. The palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous greyness. The sky took on an exquisite deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color like that of early twilight. The jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch in space. The moon became a fainter fluctuating band, the stars a bright constellation flickering in the deep blue night.

The landscape was misty and vague. I remained on the hillside where this house now stands, and the familiar hill behind my home rose above me grey and dim. I saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapor, rapidly turning green as they grew and then brown as they aged — growing tall, spreading wide, then shriveling and passing away like dreams. I saw great

THE TIME MACHINE AN INVENTION

and splendid architecture rising around me, more massive than any buildings of our own time, bundled tightly together around city blocks, and yet, as I passed by them their construction seemed to consist only of glimmer and mist. The whole surface of the earth changed, melting and flowing under my eyes. The hands of the dials registering my speed raced around faster and faster. The sun belt swayed up and down from solstice to solstice in a minute or less, and consequently, I realized my pace was over a year a minute. Minute by minute the white snow flashed across the surface, vanished, and then the bright, brief green of spring appeared.

The unpleasant sensations that occurred during the initial stages of the starting process were less poignant now. My sensations merged completely into exhilaration when I noted a clumsy unaccountable swaying of the machine. My mind was too confused to pay attention to it because I felt a surreal madness expanding within me. I flung myself headlong into futurity. At first, I scarcely thought of stopping, scarcely thought of anything but these new sensations. My mind perceived unknown illusions, one after the other in rapid succession, as a swirling dread engulfed me and took complete possession of me. I asked myself what strange developments of humanity I might find, what wonderful advances our civilization made in time's passage, as I scanned the dim elusive world that raced and fluctuated before my eyes! I saw rich green trees and grasses cascading up the hillside and remain there without any wintry intermission. Even through the veil of my

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

confusion the earth seemed pleasing. That thought provided me the incentive to stop traveling forward in time.

The substantive risk lay in the possibility of finding some foreign substance in the space I occupied or somewhere on the machine. If I continued traveling at a high velocity through time, this scarcely mattered. The velocity attenuated⁴ me causing me to slip like a vapor through the interstice⁵ of intervening substances! To come to a complete stop involved jamming myself, molecule by molecule, into whatever lay in my way. Stopping the machine moving forward in time meant bringing my atoms into such intimate contact with the obstacles stopping the machine that a profound chemical reaction — a far-reaching explosion — could result in blowing my apparatus and me out of the dimensionality of life and into the Unknown. This possibility occurred to me repeatedly while I was making the machine, but at the time I cheerfully accepted it as an unavoidable risk — the risk a time traveler must take! However, now that the risk lay immediately in front of me, I no longer saw it in the same cheerful light. The fact is, insensibly, the absolute strangeness of everything, the sickening jarring and swaying of the machine, and the feeling of prolonged falling, absolutely upset my nerves. I told myself that I could never stop, but

⁴ ATTENUATED: Some object reduced in force, effect, or value.

⁵ INTERSTICES: An intervening space, especially a small one.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

ironically, with a gust of petulance, I resolved to stop immediately. Like an impatient fool, I lugged over the lever, and the machine went reeling over uncontrollably, and flung me headlong through the air.

The sound of thunder clapped in my ears. The reverberation of the sound stunned me for a moment. A pitiless hail was hissing around me, and I was sitting on soft turf in front of the overturned machine. Everything still seemed grey, but I noticed the confusion in my ears vanished. I looked around me. I stood on a small lawn in a garden, surrounded by rhododendron bushes, and I noticed that their mauve and purple blossoms were dropping in a shower of beating hailstones. The rebounding dancing hail hung together in a white cloud over the machine and moved along the ground like smoke. In a moment, I was wet to the skin. I said to myself, 'Fine hospitality to a man who has traveled innumerable years to be here.'

I thought what a fool I was to get wet. I stood up and looked around me. A colossal statue of a figure, carved in white stone, loomed indistinctly beyond the rhododendrons through the hazy downpour. Everything else in this newfound world was invisible.

The sensations I felt in that moment are hard to describe. As the columns of hail grew thinner, I saw the colossal white figure more distinctly. It was extremely large in scale, compared to the silver birch tree that touched its shoulder. The statue consisted of white marble in the shape of a winged sphinx, but the wings, instead of falling vertically at its sides, spread out

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

horizontally so that it appeared to hover. The bronze pedestal was thick with verdigris⁶. The statue's sightless eyes stared directly at me with a faint shadow of a smile on its lips. It was intensely weather worn, imparting an unpleasant suggestion of decrepit old age. I stood looking at it for a time, possibly a minute or maybe half an hour, I could not tell. I could not sense the passage of time in this new place. It seemed to advance and recede as the hail fell in waves, becoming more dense and then thinner. At last, the falling hailstorm began to fade. The sky started to show its blue hue as the sun began to shine, casting its light over the hill I stood upon.

I looked up again at the crouching white shape, and the full audacity of my voyage suddenly came upon me. What would appear when the hazy curtain of my voyage withdrew altogether? What might have happened to humanity? What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if in this interval of time the human race had lost its humanness, and developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? I might see some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness — a foul creature destined for slaughter.

As I began to look around, I saw other vast shapes appear — huge buildings with intricate parapets and tall columns standing on a wooded

⁶ VERDIGRIS: a bright bluish-green encrustation or patina formed on copper or brass by atmospheric oxidation, consisting of basic copper carbonate.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

hillside dimly creeping in upon me through the lessening storm. Panic and fear seized me. I turned frantically to the Time Machine, and strove hard to upright it to its proper position. As I did this the shafts of the sun smote through the thunderstorm and swept aside the grey downpour that vanished like the trailing garments of a ghost. Above me, in the intense indigo color of the summer sky, faint white shreds of cloud whirled into nothingness. The great buildings around me stood out clear and distinct, shining with wet drops of the thunderstorm, and brimming with white un-melted hailstones piled high along their fallen path. I felt naked in this strange world. I felt as a bird may feel in the clear air, knowing that hawk wings were soaring high above it and knowing it could swoop down to its destruction at any time. My fear grew into frenzy. I took a long breath, regained my balance, and again grappled fiercely with the machine. The machine gave under my desperate struggle and tumbled over. It struck my chin violently. With one hand on the saddle and the other on the lever, I once more attempted to stand the Time Machine upright.

In a distant circular opening, I saw a group of figures clad in rich soft robes looking directly at me. I heard their voices as they approached. Coming through the bushes by the White Sphinx were the heads and shoulders of people running. One of these emerged in a pathway leading straight to the small lawn upon which I stood with my machine. He was a slight creature — approximately four feet high — clad in a purple tunic and girdled at the waist with a leather belt. He wore soft laced boots, his legs

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

bare to the knees, and his head was bald. He struck me as a beautiful, graceful creature with flushed rose colored cheeks, but indescribably frail. At the sight of him I suddenly regained confidence and released my hands from the machine.

CHAPTER V. IN THE GOLDEN AGE

In another moment, I was standing face to face with a man, fragile in stature but unmenacing in every way. He came straight up to me and laughed as he looked directly into my eyes. The absence of any sign of fear struck me as bizarre. At the time, I felt that if an related but vastly different human species suddenly appeared it would have created, at least, a sense of astonishment, not laughing. My thought immediately vanished when the man turned to the two others who were following him and began speaking to them in a strange, but sweet, liquid tongue.

Others began to join them, until a small group of eight or ten of these delicate creatures surrounded me. Then one of them addressed me. When I responded, it occurred to me that my voice was too harsh and deep for them. I shook my head, and pointing to my ears, shook it again. He stepped forward, hesitated, and then touched my hand. Then I felt the soft fingers of the others on my back and shoulders. They wanted to make sure I was real. Nothing in this alarmed me. In fact, there was something in these people that inspired confidence — a gracefulness, a kind gentleness, a childlike ease

THE TIME MACHINE

AN INVENTION

coupled with a small and diminutive stature. I made a sudden motion to warn them when I saw their pink hands touching the Time Machine. Fortunately, when it was not too late, I thought of a potential danger with the machine I had forgotten. As fast as I could react, I reached over the bars of the machine and immediately unscrewed the levers that set the machine in motion and put them in my pocket. Then I turned to face the assembled crowd to see what I could do in the way of communicating with them.

Then, looking more closely at their features, I saw further peculiarities in their scant Dresden-like appearance. Their hair, which was uniformly curly, came to a sharp end at the neck and cheek. There was not the faintest suggestion of hair on their face, and their ears were singularly minute. Their mouths were small with bright red thin lips, and their chins came to a sharp point. Their eyes were large, some turquoise blue and others emerald green, casting an overall aesthetic appearance.

They made no effort to communicate with me, but simply stood around me smiling and speaking in soft cooing notes to each other. I attempted to start a conversation with them. I pointed to the Time Machine and then to me, hesitating for a moment on how to express Time. I pointed to the sun. At once, a quaint figure in a checkered purple and white robe followed my gesture, and then astonished me by imitating the sound of thunder.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

For a moment, I staggered at his response, though the significance of his gesture was plain enough. I questioned their ability to ever understand me. Then I realized what confused me. I always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One AD⁷ would be incredibly advanced in knowledge, art, science, medicine, and in fact, in everything compared to our time. Then one of them asked me a question that showed their collective intellectual level of five-year-old children. In a series of hand gestures, I surmised that they asked me if I came from the sun in a thunderstorm! I realized they were not the advanced civilization I imagined I would find in the future. A flow of disappointment rushed across my mind. For a moment, I could not help but feeling that I built the Time Machine in vain.

I nodded, pointed to the sun, and gave them such a vivid rendering of a thunderclap that it startled them. They all withdrew a pace and bowed. Then one came towards me laughing, carrying a chain of beautiful unrecognizable flowers, and put it around my neck. The rest melodiously applauded, and then all of them began picking flowers and laughed while they flung them upon me, smothering me with an assortment of blossoms. You can scarcely imagine what delicate and wonderful flowers that countless years of floriculture created. Then someone gestured to bring me

⁷ 802,701 A.D.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

to the nearest building and then led me past the Sphinx of white marble. The carven eyes of the Sphinx followed me as we walked towards a vast grey edifice of fretted stone. As I went with them, I anticipated seeing profoundly advanced technologies and vast intellectual superiority.

The building had a huge entry, and its entirety was of colossal dimensions. The growing crowd of people occupied my attention, along with the big open portals that yawned before me, shadowy and mysterious. As I scanned the exterior of the building, my general impression was of a long neglected tangled wasteland of stunning, resplendent bushes and flowers, and yet contained in weedless, quasi-structured gardens. I saw several tall spikes of elegant white flowers, measuring a foot across the spread of waxen petals. They grew scattered, as if wild, among the variegated shrubs, but I did not have enough time to examine them closely as we marched toward the tall building. Reluctantly, I left the Time Machine deserted on the turf among the rhododendrons.

The arch of the doorway was richly carved, but with our brisk pace I was unable to observe the intricate carvings in detail, but sensed the vague images were old Phoenician decorations. It struck me that they were badly broken and weather worn. Several more brightly clad people met us in the doorway as we entered. A large group of people clamored around me as soon as I made my entrance. They were all wearing bright, soft-colored

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

robes, all roaring in a melodious whirl of laughter, and chattering with each other in their chattering language.

The huge doorway opened into a great hall hung with brown tapestry. The roof was in shadow, and the windows, partially glazed with colored glass, emitted a tempered light. The well-worn floor consisted of immense slabs of hard white metal. I conjectured it existed through countless past generations, creating a deeply channeled path along the well-worn ways. Traversing the length of the great hall were innumerable tables made of slabs of polished stone, and raised a foot from the floor, with numerous large bowls heaped full of fruits. Some I recognized as genetic derivatives of the fruits of our age, but all of them appeared inexpressively enigmatic.

Between the tables, several cushions lay scattered about. My hosts seated themselves on the cushions, signaling with their hands for me to do likewise. With an absence of ceremony, they began to eat the fruit with their hands, stuffing their peels and stalks into the openings in the sides of the tables. I followed their example without hesitation. I was extremely hungry. As I ate, I leisurely surveyed the hall.

The thing that struck me most was its dilapidated look. I noticed that the stained-glass windows displayed a geometric pattern with broken panes in many places. The curtains hung across the lower end of the windows and were abnormally thick with dust. Nevertheless, the general effect was extremely rich and picturesque. There were a couple of hundred people

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

dining in the hall, and most of them, seated as close to me as they could come, were watching me with interest, their eyes peeking over the fruit in the center of the table.

“Fruit was their total diet. These people of the remote future were strict vegetarians, and while I was with them, despite some carnal cravings, I had to be frugivorous also. I found afterwards that all land animals had become extinct and no longer a part of the human diet. The fruits were delightful. A flour-based dish in a three-sided husk was especially good, and I made it my staple. At first, all these strange fruits and flowers puzzled me, but later I began to understand their importance.

As soon as I checked my appetite, I grew determined to learn their language. Clearly that was the next thing to do. The fruits seemed a convenient thing to begin with and holding a piece of fruit in my hand I began a series of interrogative sounds and gestures. Surprisingly, I experienced considerable difficulty in conveying my meaning. At first, my efforts were met with a stare of surprise or inextinguishable laughter, but then a fair-haired creature grasped my intention and repeated a name. They chattered at great length to each other. My first attempts to make the sounds of their language caused an immense amount of genuine amusement. However, I persisted, and soon learned a score of nouns at my command. Then I learned pronouns, and even the verb ‘to eat.’ It was slow work, and the people soon tired and wanted to get away from my interrogations. I

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

determined, by necessity, to ask for language lessons in smaller micro doses and only when they felt inclined. Before long, I found that *smaller micro doses* of everything was their forte. I thought to myself that I had never met people more apathetic or so easily fatigued.

CHAPTER VI. THE SUNSET OF HUMANITY

“I soon discovered a curious thing about my hosts, and that was their lack of sustained interest. They would come to me with eager cries of astonishment, like children, but then again, like children, they would soon stop and wander away after some other distraction. As the dinner and my conversational lessons ended, I noted for the first time that all those who first surrounded me were gone. It is odd how speedily I came to disregard these people after interacting with them over time.

As soon as my hunger was satisfied, I went out through the portal into the sunlit world. I was continually meeting more of these people of the future, who would follow me for a short distance, chattering and laughing, and then after briefly dancing around me, they would suddenly stop and leave me without notice.

The calm of evening was upon the world as I emerged from the great hall, the scenery lit by the warm glow of the setting sun. At first, everything was confusing and entirely different from the world I knew. The big building was situated on the slope of a broad river valley, but the Thames had shifted

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

a mile from its present position. I resolved to climb the small hill to the summit of its crest, approximately a mile and a half away, where I could get a wider view of the surrounding area.

As I walked, I watched for signs that could help explain the ruinous condition of this future world — for ruinous it was. A little way up the hill, for instance, was a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminum, a vast labyrinth of precipitous walls and crumpled heaps, amidst thick layers of beautiful pagoda-like plants wonderfully tinted with an array of bright colors around the leaves. The mass of granite I found was the derelict remains of some vast structure, although to what end a previous age built it I could not determine. It was here that I was destined to have a strange experience — the first intimation of a still stranger discovery — but I will explain that later.

“Looking around from a terrace where I rested, I realized that there were no small houses to be seen. Apparently, the single household had vanished. Here and there among the greenery were palace-like buildings, but the houses and cottages, which form the basic characteristic features of our English landscape had disappeared.”

‘So, Communism is the final winner of the global socio-economic race,’ I sadly muttered to myself.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“On the heels of that realization came another thought. I looked at the half-dozen diminutive figures following me. They had the same costume, the same soft hairless visage, and the same rotundity of limb. It was strange that I did not notice this before. Now, everything was becoming extremely strange. I was beginning to see my surroundings and these people more objectively. Their clothes, for example, even in their varied array of colors, did not differentiate gender as in our age. Their children were miniatures of their parents, although extremely precocious. Aside from this one behavioral difference, everyone was a duplicate of the other and alike in every way.

Observing the ease and security in which these people lived, this close resemblance of genders was after all what one would expect. I realized that the strength of a man and the softness of a woman, the institution of the family, and the differentiation of occupations are the militant necessities of an age anchored by physical brute force. When the general population reaches balance and abundance, too much childbearing becomes an evil rather than a blessing to the State. Where violence is rare and offspring secure, there is less necessity — in fact, there is no necessity — for an efficient family, and the specialization of genders with reference to their children’s needs disappear. We see the beginnings of this trend even in our own time, and in this future age the transformation found its endpoint. This, I must remind you, was my speculation at the time. Later, I discovered how far it fell short of the incarnate conditions that existed in this world.

THE TIME MACHINE

AN INVENTION

While I was musing upon these things, a beautiful but modest structure, like a well under a cupola, attracted my attention. In a transitory way, I thought of the oddness of wells still existing, but stopped thinking about what I saw and continued my quest. There were no large buildings as I climbed higher on the hill. Then as my path grew steeper, I noticed that the people following me suddenly stopped. Exhausted, they could not continue walking and left me alone for the first time. This brief isolation allowed me to appreciate the sense of personal freedom we see in our age. Imagine if your life consisted of living in a group, never sensing independence or personal freedom, but instead tightly huddled together day and night. This strange sense of freedom and adventure gave me the push I needed to ascend to the crest.

There I discovered an old chair made of an unfamiliar yellow metal, corroded in parts with red rust, half smothered in soft moss, and the armrests, resembling a griffin's head, was cast in the same unknown metal. I sat down on it, glad of a place to rest after a long day, and surveyed the panoramic view of our old world under the future's sunset. It was one of the most beautiful views I ever saw. The sun had already set below the horizon and the west was flaming gold, touched with an array of horizontal bars colored in purple and crimson. Below was the valley of the Thames, in which the river lay like a band of burnished steel, and great palaces dotted the variegated greenery, some in ruins and some still occupied. Here and there rose silvery figures in the waste garden of the earth, spotted with sharp

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

vertical lines of some cupola or obelisk. There were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights, or no evidence of agriculture. It appeared as if the whole earth was a garden.

Watching, I began to interpret the things I witnessed, and as I assessed my thoughts that evening, it appeared I landed in a garden paradise. Afterwards and most unfortunately, I found my observations to form only a half-truth, a surface glimpse of one facet of this futuristic civilization.

It then dawned on me that I stumbled upon humanity on the wane. I realized the ruddy sunset was metaphorically the sunset of humanity. When I assessed what I had seen up to this point, it was clear to me that this future culture was a clear and logical consequence of the world in which we currently live. Strength is the outcome of need. Feebleness sets a premium on security. The process of constantly striving to ameliorate the brutal conditions of life — the true civilizing mechanism that makes life more secure — had moved steadily toward a futuristic climax. Over many generations, the triumph of softening social conditions over Nature's need of ruthless strength had finally occurred. Things that are now mere dreams today became deliberate projects and carried forward into the future. The harvest of our present modernity is what I saw in front of me!

In our times, the continued sanitation of the cities, and the advancements in the production and delivery of food to city populations are still in rudimentary stages of development. Even though the sciences have

THE TIME MACHINE

AN INVENTION

attacked only a miniscule realm in the field of human disease, it continues its progressive efforts steadily and persistently. Our agricultural advancements cultivate only a score or so of wholesome plants, leaving the greater number to dwindle in size and eventually to succumb to extinction. We steadfastly improve plants and animals through selective breeding. We cultivate a new and better peach, a seedless grape, a sweeter orange, larger flowers, and a heartier breed of cattle. We improve them gradually, because our ideals are vague and tentative and our knowledge limited. In our clumsy hands, Nature lingers shy and slow in revealing her secrets. Someday, we will become more efficient at increasing the number of marvelous discoveries as we proceed into the future. That is the drift of the modern current despite the eddies. The world will be intelligent, educated, and co-operating, and our efforts will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and carefully, we readjust the balance of all animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs.

I observed that these changes were successful and undeniably done in the space of time that my machine surged across the ages. The air was free from gnats, the earth free from weeds and fungus. Everywhere there were sweet fruits and delightful flowers, and brilliantly colored butterflies flew gracefully in all directions. Humanity finally attained the ideal of preventive medicine and stamped out all human diseases, evidenced by the fact that I saw no signs of contagious diseases or infirmity during my stay.

THE TIME MACHINE AN INVENTION

To my amazement, they realized unprecedented social triumphs. I saw people housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed in intricately tailored silk and leather garments, and during my stay I never saw them engaged in work of any type. There were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economic. Shops, advertisements, traffic, and all the elements of business and commerce that constitutes the body of our world, were gone. It seemed to me at that time that they finally solved the difficult problem of population growth and stabilized it to a sustainable level. On that golden evening, in deference to everything I witnessed, I naturally concluded that I had arrived in a quixotic social paradise made tangible through the passage of time.

With shifting human conditions comes inevitable adaptations to change. I ask you, what is the cause of human intelligence and vigor? Unless biological science is a mass of errors, human vitality is a derivative of hardship and freedom, building itself under conditions where the active, strong, and adaptable survive and outliers fall into despair and wretchedness only to perish. We thrive on conditions that put a premium upon the loyal alliance of capable people, upon self-restraint, patience, and critical thinking. The institution of the family brings many benefits in its dogged attempts of survival, such as parental devotion and tenderness for offspring that deflect the imminent dangers present to a young life. The human spirit arises out of natural conflicts it faces in the world. Yet, I ask you, in today's civilized world, where are these imminent dangers? What does our modern society wish to create when it comes to the dangers we face? If you think deeply

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

enough on the subject, the rising sentiment of our social values is to rid the world of anything that makes us uncomfortable, and to vanquish everything that requires course savagery to survive. The objective of our age is to make these dangers unnecessary in the future.

When I thought of the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins, it strengthened my belief that civilization had succeeded in a perfect conquest of Nature. It appeared to me that after all the battles of the earth's savageries, society finally fell into an age of peace. Humanity had been strong, energetic, and intelligent, and used all its abundant vitality to alter the conditions under which it lived. The future I experienced was humanity's conclusive reaction to these altered conditions.

Under these new conditions of perfect comfort and security, the restless energy within us that creates our strength becomes weakness. Even in our own time certain tendencies and desires, once necessary to survival, become unnecessary, unsuitable, and a constant source of failure. Physical courage and the love of battle, for instance, are not necessary any longer, and may even be hindrances to a civilized society. In a state of physical balance security, social power, physical prowess, and intellectuality become out of place. If my theory is correct, for countless years, there existed no dangers of war, no criminal violence, no danger from wild beasts, no devastating diseases, no overpowering need of strength, and no need of toil.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

For such a life, what we call the weak are as well-equipped as the strong and are thereby no longer weak. In fact, they are better equipped, since the strong, fretted by a restless energy, would no longer have an outlet. No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw was the outcome of the last surge of the now purposeless efforts of civilization before it settled down into perfect harmony — the flourish of that triumph that initiated the last great peace. This has always been the fate of energy in dwelling in comfort and security. It succumbs to art and eroticism, and then decays into languor and putrefaction.

Yet even this artistic impetus would die away — it had almost died in the time in which I arrived. To adorn themselves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight, every action focused on the artistic spirit — and if my speculations of the future serves true, in due time that spirit would be no more. Even that beatific era of tranquil harmony would fade in the end into a contented inactivity. In our age, humanity keeps sharp on the grindstone of pain and necessity. It seemed to me that here in the future what I witnessed was that hateful grindstone broken at last!

As I stood there in the emboldened dark, I thought that in this simple explanation I had mastered the problems of the world — mastered the whole secret of these wondrous and delicate people. It appeared the checks and balances they had devised for a perfect utopian world had succeeded too well, their languid behaviors attested to that. My theory would also account

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

for the abandoned ruins no longer necessary with the extinguishment of human intellect. My explanation was simple and plausible enough — as most wrong theories are!

CHAPTER VII. A SUDDEN SHOCK

As I stood there musing over this perfect triumph of humanity, the full moon's light glowed in the northeast horizon in an overflow of silver. The bright figures ceased to move around below, a noiseless owl flitted by, and I shivered with the chill of the night. I was determined to descend the hill and find a place to sleep.

As I searched for the large building of stone to find rest, I surreptitiously scanned the landscape. I spotted the White Sphinx sitting stoically on its pedestal of bronze, growing distinct as the light of the rising moon grew brighter. I could see the silhouette of silver birch trees, and a tangle of rhododendron bushes black in the pale light, and then I saw the small green lawn I recognized. I looked at the lawn again. A curious doubt chilled my complacency. 'No,' I said stoutly to myself, 'that was not the lawn I saw before.'

However, it *was* the lawn. For the white leprous face of the Sphinx faced it. You cannot imagine what I felt when I realized that the Time Machine was gone!

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

A light flashed across my face. I suddenly realized the possibility of losing the age from which I came and the prospect of becoming stranded in this strange new world. The crippling thought rippled through my body. I could feel it grip me at the throat and stop my breathing. I panicked as fear came over me and I started running with great leaping strides down the slope. I fell headlong and cut my face. I lost no time in halting the blood, and immediately jumped up and continued running as a warm trickle of blood ran down my cheek and chin. As I ran, I was saying to myself, 'They have moved it and pushed it under the bushes out of the way.' Nevertheless, I ran as fast as I could. With the certainty that comes with excessive dread, I knew that running was pure foolhardiness. Instinctively, I knew they moved the machine to a place where I could not find it. My breathing became immensely painful. I covered the two mile distance from the hill crest to the lawn in less than ten minutes, a surprising feat knowing full well that I am not a young man. As I ran, I cursed at my recklessness in leaving the machine. I cried aloud, but no one answered. Not a creature stirred in that moonlit world.

When I reached the lawn, my worst fears became realized. There was not a trace of the machine. I felt faint and cold as I faced the empty space among the black tangle of bushes. I ran around furiously, hoping that the machine lay hidden in some nearby dark corner. Exasperated, I abruptly stopped, my hands clutching my hair. Above me towered the Sphinx sitting

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

unemotional upon the bronze pedestal, white, shining, leprous, in the light of the rising moon. It seemed to smile in mockery at my frantic dismay.

I might have consoled myself by imagining the people of this age had put the mechanism in a shelter for me. I slowly realized this could not be true due to their physical and intellectual inadequacy. What dismayed me was the sense that some unsuspected power I could not identify somehow vanquished my invention and stole it away into some unknown space. Yet, for one thing I felt assured, the machine could not have moved in time. When I removed the levers, it prevented anyone from tampering with the machine. It certainly had moved, and someone had hidden it, yet not in time, but only in space. With dread, I asked myself where it could be.

I went into a frenzy. I remember running violently around moonlit bushes surrounding the Sphinx, and startling some white animal that in the dim light I took for a small deer. I remember late that night beating the bushes with my clenched fist until my knuckles bleed from smashing them against the trees. Then sobbing and raving, I went down to the great building of stone. The big hall was dark, silent, and deserted. I slipped on the uneven floor, and fell over one of the malachite⁸ tables, almost breaking my shin. I lit a match and walked past the dusty curtains.

⁸ MALACHITE: Malachite is a copper mineral, and that gives malachite a high specific gravity that ranges from 3.6 to 4.0. This property is so striking for a green mineral that malachite is easy to identify. Malachite

THE TIME MACHINE

AN INVENTION

There I located a second great hall covered with cushions where twenty people were sleeping. I had no doubt they found my appearance strange coming suddenly out of the quiet darkness with inarticulate and frenzied noises, holding the spluttering flare of a match.

‘Where is my Time Machine?’ I shouted without warning, bawling like an angry child, pushing and shaking them. My ranting behavior must have been peculiar to them. Some laughed, but most of them looked sorely frightened. When I saw them standing around me, I realized it was foolish to create a sense of urgency in them, since I reasoned by their previous behavior that they did not have the ability to react to anything outside their contented perspectives of serene life.

Abruptly, I flung the match on the ground, and knocking people over in my way, went blundering across the big dining hall out into the moonlight. I heard cries of terror as their feet scampered through the hall. I felt hopeless as the sudden angst of separation from my age came upon me, as well as the realization that here in this distant future I am nothing but a strange being in a dystopic world. I raved as I ran around in a mad rush, screaming and crying about my maligned misfortune. I became horribly fatigued as the long night of despair wore on, as I looked everywhere,

stones used since 3,000 B.C. to make jewelry. In the Middle Ages, people wore Malachite jewelry to protect people from the evil eye and to cure various stomach.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

groping among moonlit ruins, and touching strange creatures in the black shadows. Finally, I fell on the ground near the sphinx weeping with absolute wretchedness, angry over my foolishness of leaving the machine. As the frantic search ebbed away with my fading strength, I had nothing left but misery. Then I fell into a deep sleep. When I woke again it was morning, and a couple of sparrows were hopping on the turf within the reach of my arm.

I sat up in the freshness of the morning, trying to remember how I got there, and why I had such a profound sense of desertion and despair. Then my dire situation began to crystalize through the cloud of sleep, and the ghastly dread of the previous night returned. I decided to look at my desperate situation squarely in the face and figure out a rational solution.

‘Suppose the worst?’ I said to myself. ‘Suppose the machine *is* lost — destroyed? It is incumbent on me to remain calm and patient, to learn the way of the people, to get a clear idea of the method of my loss, and the means of getting materials and tools to make another machine.’ That was my last desperate hope, an improbable hope but better than despair. I stopped and looked around. It was a beautiful and curious world.

I started to think that someone had only hidden the machine. All I had to do was remain calm and patient, find its hiding place, and recover it either by force or cunning if necessary. With a recovery plan in place, I scrambled to my feet and looked around wondering where I could bathe. I felt weary,

THE TIME MACHINE

AN INVENTION

stiff, and travel soiled, and the freshness of the morning enticed me to wash the dirt from my body. As I went about the business of bathing, I found myself wondering about my intense frenzy the night before. I began to make a careful examination of the ground around the lawn. I wasted time by asking questions to people passing by. They all failed to understand my gestures. Some were simply stolid, and some thought it was a jest and laughed. I had to hold myself back from anger and the sense of revenge that overcame me. They were foolish impulses, but the darkness in me created ill curbed fear and blind acrimony. Fortunately, the turf gave me an indication of what may have happened to my machine. The turf had grooves ripped in it, about midway between the pedestal of the Sphinx and the marks the machine made on my arrival when I struggled with it when it overturned. There were other signs of removal around the ground with curious narrow sloth-like footprints. This directed me to pay closer attention to the pedestal of the Sphinx. It was made of bronze, and highly decorated with deep framed panels on either side. I rapped at the panels. The pedestal was hollow. Examining the panels with care I found them discontinuous within the frames. There were no handles or keyholes, but I reasoned that if the panels were doors, they may open from the inside. One thing was clear to me. It took no great mental effort to infer that my Time Machine was inside that pedestal. How it got there was a different problem.

I saw the heads of two orange-clad people coming towards me through the bushes and blossom covered apple trees. I turned smiling to

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

them and motioned them over to me. They came, and then pointing to the bronze pedestal I tried to relate my wish to open it. However, their reaction caused an odd behavior in them. It was as if I had made an inappropriate gesture, and they huffed and hurriedly walked away. Next, I tried a sweet looking chap in a white robe, but the result was the same. Somehow, his manner made me feel ashamed of myself. As he walked off, my temper got the better of me. In three strides I was after him, and grabbed him by the loose part of his robe around his neck, and began dragging him back to the Sphinx. When I saw the horror and repugnance of his face, I let him go. It seems any emotion outside of their collective placidity was inexcusable.

I did not give up my effort to find the machine and began banging my fist on the bronze panels. For a moment, I thought I heard something stir inside, but then realized it was probably the structure creaking like old houses do in our time. Then I retrieved a big stone from the river and began hammering the panels. I hammered so intently that people must have heard me a mile away in all directions. As I expected, a crowd assembled on the slopes cautiously looking at me. At last, hot and tired, I sat down to rest — too exhausted to continue.

Soon I got up and began walking aimlessly through the bushes. ‘Patience,’ I said to myself. ‘If you want your machine back you must leave the Sphinx alone. If they meant to take the machine away, it does no good wrecking their bronze panels, and if they hid it out of malice, I will get it

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

back by any means. The more I examined the puzzle in front of me, I felt that the task of finding the Time Machine was becoming more hopeless. In hopelessness lies the way to exaggerated obsession and monomania⁹. I realized I must face this world, learn its ways, carefully observe it, and attempt to find its hidden meanings. ‘Regardless,’ I said to myself, ‘I will find all the clues needed to recover the machine.’ Then suddenly the humor of my situation came to mind. I thought of the years I spent in study and toil to travel into the future, and now that I am here, I felt the irony in my fervent anxiety to leave it. I made the most complicated and hopeless trap ever devised by civilized man. Although it was at my own expense, I could not help myself — I laughed aloud.

As I walked through the big palace, people avoided me. It may have been my imagination, or it may have something to do with my hammering the bronze panels. I was careful not to show any concern or to directly address them. In a day or two, things returned to normal. I made what progress I could in their language, and in addition I pushed my explorations throughout the region. I felt that either I missed some subtle point in understanding their language or, as I soon realized, it was excessively simple — exclusively composed of simple, concrete nouns and verbs. There seemed to be few, if any, abstract concepts or figurative phrases in their language. Their

⁹ MONOMANIA: Exaggerated or obsessive enthusiasm for or preoccupation with one thing; obsession, fixation, consuming passion.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

sentences were simple and composed of two words, a simple noun and a simple verb. I knew my growing knowledge of their culture would allow me to communicate with them and, in turn, find out more about what happened to the Time Machine. For the time being, I felt it best to put any thought of my machine and the mystery of the bronze doors in the back of my mind. Yet I was certain that the discovery of the Time Machine tethered around a circle of only a few miles around the point of my arrival.

CHAPTER VIII. EXPLANATION

As far as I could see, this world of the future displayed the same exuberant richness as the Thames Valley of our age. From every hill I climbed, I saw an abundance of splendid buildings, endlessly varied in material and style, the same clustering thickets of evergreens, blossom-laden trees, and large overgrown ferns. The surrounding water shone like silver, and beyond, the land rose into blue undulating hills, and faded into the serenity of the sky. A peculiar feature of the landscape was the presence of certain circular wells, several of great depth. One lay by the path on the hill I followed during my first walk. Like the others, its entry rim was bronze, curiously fashioned, and protected by a cupola from the rain. I went to the side of one these wells and peered into the shaft's shadowed obscurity. I could not see a gleam of water, nor could I see any reflection when I lit a match and shone it down the murkiness of the well. As I looked down into the darkness, I heard a certain repetitive sound, a constant thud — thud —

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

thud, like the beating of a big engine. As I continued flaring my matches down the shaft, I discovered a steady current of air flowing downward in a fast funneling tide. I threw a scrap of paper into the throat of the well, and instead of slowly fluttering down as I expected, the current of the wind gulped it swiftly downward and out of sight into the obscure blackness below.

I came to connect these wells with tall towers standing upon the slopes near the wells, belching a surreal gas in waves as one sees on a sweltering day above a sun-scorched beach. Putting things together, I reached the conclusion that they were an extensive system of subterranean ventilation, whose utilization was difficult for me to ascertain at the time. At first, I was inclined to associate it with the sanitation system for these people. It was an obvious conclusion, but it was categorically wrong.

As I looked at the wells and their accompanying towers, I remember writing in my journals before my voyage into time of the possible variations in future Utopias. I imagined advanced civilizations with far superior technology and intelligence, reflected in the advanced architectural design of their buildings, and in complex social and political structures governing their populace. While such details are easy to obtain when one understands the general workings of an era, the intricacies of a future age remain cloaked in secrecy and inaccessible to a migrator from a different eon. I was sensible of

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

what I saw, but except for a general impression of how their life was mechanically organized, I could not explain how their world operated.

In the matter of sepultures¹⁰ for instance, I could see no signs of crematoria nor anything suggestive of graves or tombs. It occurred to me that there might be cemeteries and crematoria somewhere beyond the area I explored. This, again, was a question I deliberately asked myself. Yet, I was never able to find any signs of them anywhere in the surrounding countryside. It puzzled me, but what puzzled me more was the realization that there were no aged or infirmed people in the crowds I saw.

I must confess that my theories of a Utopian civilization did not endure long. Let me explain my difficulties. The several palaces I explored were common living spaces, great dining halls, and sleeping apartments. I did not find any machinery or appliances of any kind. Yet these people clothed themselves in pleasant fabrics. Their sandals, though undecorated, were complex specimens of leather and intricate metalwork. Someone must have made them, and yet, the people displayed no vestige of any creative skills. There were no food stalls, no trade workshops, no sign of imported commodities, exchanges, or markets in all my stay there. They spent all their time gently playing, bathing in the river, making love in a half-playful

¹⁰ SEPULTURE: A tomb or grave; a place for the burial of a corpse especially beneath the ground and marked by a tombstone.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

fashion, eating fruit, and sleeping. I could not see how they kept their material lives going.

Then as I reflected upon the Time Machine, I could not fathom who had taken it to the hollow pedestal of the White Sphinx. Nor could I stop asking myself *why* they would take it. What was their motivation?

Later that day, I made a friend. It happened when I was watching people bathing in a shallow rivulet. Suddenly, a cramp seized a woman and she began drifting downstream, her head bobbing up and down in the water until she was unconscious. The main current ran swift, but not too strong for a moderate swimmer. This inconsequential event will give you an idea of an idiosyncratic characteristic of these people. None of them made the slightest attempt to rescue the woman drowning before their eyes. When I realized this, I slipped off my clothes, and, wading in at a point lower down the river, I caught the poor soul and drew her safely to land. I rubbed her limbs and pushed up and down on her chest, and fortunately, she began spitting up water and breathing again. As soon as I saw she was all right I left her. I did not expect any gratitude from her due to my experience of the short attention span with everyone I met. In that assumption, however, I was wrong.

This happened in the morning. In the afternoon, I met the same woman as I returned from an exploration. To my surprise she received me with cries of delight and presented me with a big garland of flowers, evidentially, made for me and me alone. The offering surprised me, and I did

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

my best to display my appreciation of the gift. We sat down together in a little stone arbor, engaged in conversation consisting chiefly of smiles and exaggerated hand gestures. The woman's friendliness affected me exactly as a child's attentiveness might have done. We passed each other flowers, and she kissed my hands. I did the same to hers. Then I tried to talk to her and eventually discovered that her name was Weena. That was the beginning of a curious friendship, which lasted a week and then suddenly ended — I will tell you more about its terrifying end in a moment!

She was exactly like a child. She always wanted to be with me and tried to follow me everywhere. On my next journey, I felt a need to end this quaint interaction. I decided that by taking her with me she would become bored of our play or become exhausted as she followed me as was the tendency of her people. At that point, it would be a simple matter to leave her. However, as I left, she continued calling after me mournfully. I attempted to ignore her lamenting cries. I had to master the problems of the world first and reminded myself that I did not come into the future to experience an inconsequential flirtation. Yet when I left, her distress was evident, and her protests were frantic. I decided to turn back to allow her to follow me. I felt as much trouble as I did comfort from her devotion. Nevertheless, she was a great comfort. I thought it was her childish affection that made her cling to me. Until it was too late, I did not clearly understand what I had inflicted upon her when I left her; nor did I understand what she meant to me. I completely missed the significance of her growing fondness

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

of me, as well as the subtleties of her diminutive manner in showing that she cared for me. For example, when I went on explorations throughout the countryside, I would leave Weena behind to ensure her safety. It was on my return to the White Sphinx when I saw Weena waving her arms as soon as I came over the hill that gave me the feeling of coming home. It was a sorely needed comfort for me during my stay in future time.

It was from her that I learned that fear had not yet left this world. She was fearless enough in the daylight, and she had unyielding confidence in me. Once, in a foolish moment, I made threatening grimaces at her, and she simply laughed at them. However, she dreaded the dark, dreaded the shadows, and dreaded all things that reminded her of darkness. Darkness to her was complete terror. It was a singularly inflamed emotion, and it got me thinking how to find out what was behind that fear. I discovered that these people gathered into the great houses after dark and slept in droves for safety from the dark. To enter a place without light put them into a tumult of apprehension. After dark, I never found one of these people outdoors or sleeping alone inside their resting places. Yet, I missed the lesson of that fear, and despite Weena's distress, I insisted upon sleeping away from these slumbering multitudes in a remote part of the Great Hall.

It troubled her, but in the end her odd affection for me triumphed, and for five nights she slept with her head pillowed on my arm. My story slips away from me as I speak of her. It must have been the night before her

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

rescue that I awakened at dawn. I had a restless night, dreaming that I drowned, and that sea anemones were all over my face with their soft palps. I awoke startled, and with an odd feeling that some greyish animal had just rushed out of the chamber. I tried to get back to sleep again but continued to feel restless and uncomfortable. It was that dim hour when strange entities begin to creep out from the darkness, when everything is colorless, gray, and surreal. I got up and went outside to the front of the Great Hall and wandered around the flagstones. To clear my mind from my troubled sleep and bizarre imaginations of invading creatures, I thought I would make a virtue of necessity and watch the sunrise.

The moon was setting as the first blush of dawn shone an unwelcoming, somber, dusk-filled light. The bushes were inky black, the ground a desolate grey, the sky colorless and cheerless. As I scanned the slope, I thought I saw ghosts. No less than three times I saw white figures flittering in the distance. I imagined I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running quickly up the hill, and again in the ruins I saw a troop of creatures carrying what looked like a dark body. They moved rapidly. I did not see where they went, although they vanished hurriedly among the bushes. The dawn was still indistinct, and I was experiencing a chill of uncertainty that made me doubt my eyes.

As the eastern sky grew brighter, I scanned the hill again and saw no vestige of white figures. I determined at the time that they were mere

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

illusions of a sultry dawn. Yet, I could not help associating them in some indefinite way with the white animal I startled on my first search for the Time Machine. I thought of these illusory figures all morning, until the thought of Weena drove them out of my thoughts. The thought of Weena was a pleasant substitute. Yet it would not take long for these creatures of the night to take a far deadlier possession of my mind.

I mentioned how much hotter this Golden Age weather was compared to our own. Well, one hot morning — my fourth, I think — as I was seeking shelter from the heat and glare in a colossal ruin near the Great House, a strange thing happened. Clambering among the heaps of masonry, I found a narrow gallery, with its windows blocked by fallen masses of stone. By contrast with the brilliant light outside, it seemed at first impenetrably dark. I entered it, groping with my hands in front of me. The change from light to complete blackness made spots of color swim in front of my eyes. Suddenly, I halted spellbound. A pair of eyes, luminous by reflection against the daylight outside, was watching me in the darkness.

Immediately, an instinctive dread overwhelmed me. I clenched my hands and stared into the glaring eyeballs facing me. I was afraid to turn and run. Then I advanced a step and spoke to whatever creature was staring at me. I will admit that my voice was harsh and ill-controlled. I put out my hand and touched something soft. At once the eyes darted sideways, and something white ran past me. I turned with my heart in my mouth, and saw a

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

curious small ape-like figure, its head held down in a lumbering manner, running across the sunlit space behind me. It blundered against a block of granite, staggered, and in a moment hid in a black shadow beneath another pile of ruined masonry.

My impression of it is imperfect, but as I lit a match, I was able to see an ape-like creature with strange large red eyes and flaxen hair on its head and back. However, it ran away too fast for me to see it distinctly. I cannot say whether it ran on all fours, or only with its forearms held low. After a pause, I followed it into the second heap of ruins. I could not find it at first, but in the profound obscurity, I came upon one of the creatures standing around a well-opening in the ground, half closed by a fallen pillar. Then the creature vanished when it saw me approaching. A sudden thought came to me. Did this creature crawl down the open shaft? I lit a match, and, looking down, I saw the creature staring at me as it retreated. The sight of it made me shudder. It looked like a human spider as it clambered down the wall! As I scanned the shaft, I saw a ladder with metal footrests running down the shaft. Then the match burned my fingers and fell out of my hand, going out as it dropped. When I finally lit another match, the creature had already disappeared.

I don't know how long I sat peering down that well. It took some time persuading myself that the thing I saw was human. Gradually, the truth dawned on me. Humanity had not remained one species but had

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

differentiated into two distinct animals. I concluded that the graceful child-like people of the Upper World were not the sole descendants of our generation. The split in humanity's ascendance also created another heir of the future. It was this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing that had flashed before me.

I thought of the flickering pillars and my theory of an underground ventilation system. I began to suspect their true importance and questioned the significance of my discovery. What, I wondered, was this Lemur doing in the scheme of a perfectly balanced and organized culture? How was it related to the peaceful serenity of the beautiful Overworlders? What creatures hid down there at the foot of that shaft? I sat on the edge of the well telling myself there was nothing to fear, and that I must descend the well to find the solution to my inquires and possibly to the mysterious disappearance of the Time Machine. Nevertheless, I was afraid to go! As I hesitated, two beautiful Upperworld people came running down the hill playing at their amorous sport. The male pursued the female, flinging flowers at her as he ran.

When they saw me, they seemed distressed to find me with my arms against the overturned pillar peering down the well. When I pointed to the opening and tried to frame a question about it, they became extremely agitated and turned away from me. However, they were interested in my matches, and I struck one to amuse them. I again tried to talk to them about

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

the well, and again I failed. I left them, meaning to go back to Weena to see what information about the shaft I could get from her. My mind was already in revolt as my previous theory was slipping into new dimensions. At least now, I had a clue to the importance of these wells, to the ventilation 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! Vaguely, a solution of the economic problem came to me that previously puzzled me.

Here was my new view of the situation. Plainly, this second species was subterranean. There were three circumstances that made me think its rare emergence above ground was the outcome of a long-continued underground lifestyle. In the first place, there was the bleached look common in most animals that live in the dark, and their large eyes with the capacity for reflecting light are common features of nocturnal animals. Last of all, their evident confusion in the sunshine, that hasty, fumbling, awkward flight towards dark shadows, coupled with the peculiar way they carried their heads, always facing downward and swaying from side to side, reinforced the theory of an extreme sensitivity to light.

Beneath my feet, the earth must be intricately tunneled, and these tunnels were the habitat of this newly discovered race. The presence of ventilation shafts and wells along the hill slopes — everywhere, in fact, except along the river valley — showed how widespread these shafts ran. It

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

was natural to assume that the work necessary to create the comfortable life of the Upperworld people occurred in this artificial Underworld.

It was here that I decided to understand more about the creatures I had seen. After many hours of communication with my hosts, and going from group to group in short bursts of questioning, I was able to tease out the proper name of the beasts I saw. They were called Morlocks. I then proceeded to find out the identity of my hosts. They called themselves Eloi. For some strange reason, finding out that the Eloi attributed a name to their culture as well as a name to their nemesis gave me comfort, and allowed me to continue formulating my theory of how this world was formulated.

The perfect security of the Eloi had led them to slowly degenerate to a dwindling size, strength, and intelligence. That observation was clear enough. What had happened to the Morlocks I did not know, but their existence had profound implications for my immediate dilemma.

Then came troublesome doubts. Why had the Morlocks taken my Time Machine? I was sure they were the ones who had taken it. Why, too, if the Eloi were the masters, why couldn't they get my machine back for me? Why were they so terribly afraid of the dark? I proceeded to question Weena about this Underworld, but again I was disappointed. At first, she did not understand my questions, and then when she grasped what I meant she refused to answer them. Every time I broached the subject, she shivered as though the topic was unbearable. As I continued to press her, she burst into

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

tears. They were the only tears I ever saw in that Golden Age, and as a result, I ceased abruptly to trouble her about the Morlocks. Soon she was smiling and clapping her hands, while I solemnly burned a match.

CHAPTER IX. THE MORLOCKS

It may seem odd to you, but it took two days before I could follow up the new-found clue in the proper way. I felt a peculiar repulsion from those pallid bodies. They were the half-bleached color of worms and looked like jarred specimens that one sees preserved in a zoological museum. They were pugnacious and frigid to the touch. My attitude was due to my emphatic sympathy for the Eloi, whose fear of the Morlocks I now began to appreciate.

The next night I did not sleep well. My health was not optimum, and I grew oppressed with perplexity and doubt with a feeling of intense fear. I remember creeping noiselessly into the great hall where the people were sleeping in the moonlight with Weena among them and feeling reassured by their presence. It occurred to me even then that in a few days the moon would pass through its last quarter, and the nights would grow darker. I surmised the appearance of these unpleasant creatures from below would become more abundant. I had the restless feeling of one who shirks an inevitable duty. I felt assured that the Time Machine was only recoverable by boldly penetrating these underground mysteries. Yet I could not face the

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

enigma. I felt horribly alone, and even to think about clambering down into the darkness of the well appalled me, and I never felt safe at the thought of facing the Morlocks.

It was this restlessness, this insecurity that drove me farther and farther in my explorations. Going to the southwest towards the rising country that we call Combe Wood, I observed far in the direction of nineteenth century Banstead, a vast green structure, different in character from any I had seen. It was larger than the largest of the palaces and ruins I knew up to this point. The façade had an Oriental look, the face had a lacquered luster, as well as a pale bluish green tint of Chinese porcelain. This difference in appearance suggested a difference in use and at once I made up my mind to explore it. The day was growing late, and I had come upon the sight after a long and tiring circuit of exploration. I resolved to wait until the following day to continue my adventure and I returned to the welcome caresses of precious Weena. The next morning, I recognized that my curiosity of the Palace of Green Porcelain was a conjured piece of self-deception that enabled me to shirk by another day the dreaded exploration of the Morlock's underground home. I knew then and there I must change my dread into courage. I resolved to immediately make the descent without wasting any more time and started out in the early morning towards a well near the ruins of granite and aluminum.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

Weena ran with me. She danced beside me to the well, but when she saw me lean over the mouth and look downward, she became strikingly disconcerted. 'Good-bye, little Weena,' I said kissing her, and then put her down. Then I turned to look over the parapet for the climbing hooks. I might as well confess, I did so hastily because I feared that my courage would leak away! At first, Weena watched in amazement. Then she gave out a piteous cry, and running over to me, she began to pull me back as hard as she could. Her opposition gave me the nerve to proceed. I shook her off and began my descent into the throat of the well. I saw her agonized face as I looked back over the parapet and smiled and waved to reassure her. Then I looked down at the unstable hooks to which I clung.

I clambered down the shaft as the metallic bars projecting from the sides of the well helped my decent. One of the bars suddenly bent under my weight and I almost fell into the blackness beneath. For a moment I hung by one hand, and after that experience I knew my venture was strewn with unknown dangers. Though my arms and back were painful, I continued clambering down the sheer descent as quickly as possible. Glancing upward, I saw the well's aperture high above, a small blue disc in which a star was visible, while little Weena's head looking down was a round black projection. The thudding sound of a machine grew louder and more oppressive. Everything except the small disc of blue sky at the top of the well was profoundly dark, and when I looked up again Weena had disappeared.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

I was in agony and felt an intense discomfort. I had thoughts of going up the shaft again and leave the Underworld alone. Even while I turned this thought over in my mind, I decided to continue my descent. Then I saw a step-hook to the right of me and next to it a small cavern carved out of earth's crust. Swinging myself into the chamber, I discovered that it was a narrow horizontal tunnel where I could lie down and rest. It was not too soon. My arms ached, my back cramped, and I was trembling with the prolonged terror of falling. Besides this, the unbroken darkness had a distressing effect upon me. To compound these effects, the air was full of the throbbing and humming of machinery pumping air down the shaft.

I do not know how long I laid there when suddenly a soft hand touching my face aroused me from my rest. Sitting up in the darkness I grabbed my matches and, hastily striking one, I saw three Morlocks retreating from the light. Living as they did, in what appeared to me an impenetrable darkness, their eyes were abnormally large and sensitive and reflected the light from my burning match. I had 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. As soon as I struck my match, they rapidly fled, 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 different from that of the Eloi. I felt my way along the tunnel as the noise of machinery

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

grew louder. Then I came to a large open space, and striking another match, I saw that I had entered into another vast arched cavern, which stretched into utter darkness beyond the range of my light.

Great shapes like big machines rose out of the dimness and cast grotesque black shadows in which the dim spectral Morlocks sheltered from the glare. The place was stuffy and oppressive, and the faint halitus of freshly shed blood was in the air. Down the central vista was a little table of white metal with what seemed like fresh meat laid upon it. It became obviously apparent that the Morlocks were carnivorous! What I saw in front of me was all indistinct, the lumbering, noisy machinery, the heavy smell of blood, and the vague shapes of the Morlocks lurking in the shadows. Then the match burned down, stung my fingers and fell, a wriggling red spot in the surrounding blackness.

I remember thinking how ill-equipped I was for such an experience. When I had begun with the Time Machine, I had the absurd assumption that the people of the Future would be infinitely ahead of ourselves in every aspect of life. I had come without arms, without medicine, without anything to smoke — at times I frightfully missed tobacco! — even without enough matches. My biggest regret was not thinking of bringing a Kodak camera! I could have flashed that glimpse of the Underworld in a second and examine it at leisure when I arrived back home. I stood there only with the weapons

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

and powers that Nature had endowed me with — hands, feet, and teeth, and these four safety-matches that remained.

I was afraid to push my way among the machinery in the dark, and it was only at the last glimpse of light that I discovered my store of matches had run low. It had never occurred to me until that moment that there was any need to economize them, and I had wasted half the box in astonishing the Eloi to whom fire was a novelty. Now I only had four left. While I stood in the dark, a hand touched mine, lanky fingers felt my face, and there was an unpleasant odor. I imagined I heard the breathing of a crowd of those dreadful beings around me. I felt the box of matches in my hand gently disengage, and other hands behind me plucking at my clothing. The sense of these unseen creatures examining me was indescribably unpleasant. The sudden realization of my ignorance of their ways of thinking came home to me vividly in the darkness. I shouted at them as loudly as I could. They jumped away, and then I felt them approaching me again. They clutched me more boldly this time, whispering odd sounds to each other. I shivered violently and shouted again — discordantly. This time they were not seriously alarmed, and they made a curious laughing noise as they came back at me. I was horribly frightened. I determined to strike another match and escape under the protection of its glare. I pulled a scrap of paper from my pocket and lit it to provide a brighter and longer lasting light and then made my retreat to the narrow tunnel. I had barely entered it when my light

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

blew out, and in the blackness, I could hear the Morlocks rustling like wind among leaves, and pattering like rain, as they hurried after me.

In an instant, several hands clutched me, and there was no mistaking that they were trying to haul me back into their dwelling. I struck another light and waved it in their faces dazing them momentarily. You can barely imagine how dispelling and inhuman they looked as they stared in blindness and bewilderment at me. I did not stay to look. I retreated again, and when my second match had ended, I struck my third. It had almost burned through when I reached the opening into the shaft. I hugged the edge, for the air rushing downward from the throbbing pump below made me giddy. Then I felt sideways for the projecting hooks, and as I did so, a group of beasts began grabbing me from behind and violently tugged me backward. I lit my last match — to my demise it went out. I had my hand on the climbing bars, and kicking violently, I disengaged myself from the clutches of the Morlocks, and speedily clambered up the shaft, while they stayed peering and blinking at me, that is, all but one little wretch who ruthlessly followed me almost securing my boot as a trophy.

That climb seemed interminable to me. With the last twenty feet of the climb a deadly nausea came upon me. It was with the greatest difficulty that I was able to keep my hands clamped on the climbing bars. The last few yards were a frightful struggle against the faintness I felt from the air and the fear of that dreaded creature chasing me. Several times my head swam, and I

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

felt the sensation of falling. At last, I got over the mouth of the well and staggered into the blinding sunlight. I fell upon my face. The soil smelled sweet and clean. Then I remember Weena kissing my hands and ears, and the voices of numerous Eloi gathering around me. Then I lost consciousness from the effort and trauma of my experience.

CHAPTER X. WHEN NIGHT CAME

As I regained my composure, I seemed in a worse position than before. Up to now, except during my night's anguish at the loss of the Time Machine, I had felt a sustaining hope of ultimate escape, but these new discoveries uprooted my hope. Up to now, I had merely felt impeded by the childish simplicity of the Eloi, and by some unknown force which I merely had to understand to find my machine and return home. Now, there was an altogether new element with the introduction of the Morlocks — a maligned divergence of our species. Instinctively I loathed them. Before meeting the Morlocks, I felt as if I had fallen into a small pit, and my concern was merely how to get out of it. Now, I felt like a beast caught in a trap, whose enemy would soon come with the intent of devouring it.

I began to feel apprehensive about the darkness of the new moon. Weena had an incomprehensible dread of dark nights and with my new discovery it was not difficult to understand her apprehension. The moon was on the wane, and each night there were longer interval of darkness, and I

THE TIME MACHINE

AN INVENTION

wondered what foul villainy the Morlocks did under the new moon. I felt sure that my second hypothesis was all wrong. The Eloi might have once been the favored aristocracy and the Morlocks their mechanical servants, but that had long since passed away. The two different species that had resulted from the evolution of the human species of our age had slide into an altogether new relationship. The Eloi had decayed to a beautiful but shallow species. I was assured of this notion as I gained a deeper knowledge of their culture. The Eloi still maintained tenancy of the earth's surface, since the Morlocks had come to find daylight intolerable. I inferred that the Morlocks made their garments and maintained the Eloi's well-being out of a long-standing predisposition of servitude. The Morlocks did this in the same way a culture enjoys a practice rooted in the tradition of their old social order, even though the practice is obsolete and has no useful function. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, an elite sector of society had thrust the less fortunate out of the sunshine and into subterranean caverns. Evolution changed the rejected Underworld people into something savage and vengeful. The once proud elite, drenched in pleasure, were becoming reacquainted with fear. Suddenly, I remembered the meat I had seen in the Morlock's den. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind as I tried to recall its form. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I could not tell what it was at the time.

However helpless and fearful the Eloi were in the presence of their mysterious enemy, my reaction differed. I came out of this age of ours, this

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

ripe prime age of humanity, when fear does not paralyze, and mystery had lost its terror. Thus I knew I would defend myself. Without further delay I determined to make arms and find a fortress where I could sleep. With those in hand, I could face this strange world of terrifying creatures with confidence. I felt I could never sleep again until my bed was secure from the Morlocks. I shuddered with horror to think they were possibly learning my nature as a human being and were rapidly unwrapping my vulnerabilities.

I wandered during the afternoon along the Thames Valley but found nothing that was inaccessible to these creatures. All the buildings and trees seemed easily accessible to such dexterous climbers as the Morlocks, to judge by the manner they climbed their wells so easily. Then the tall pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain and the polished gleam of its walls came to mind. In the evening, taking Weena upon my shoulders, I climbed the hills to the southwest where I had first seen the Palace on a foggy afternoon. Unfortunately, as I trekked to the Palace, one of the heels on my shoe came loose and a nail on the sole dug into my heel causing my leg to go lame. This troubled me, but I knew I had to continue on my quest to find a suitable defense against the Morlocks. It was already long past sunset when I caught sight of the Palace, a welcomed sight standing tall in black silhouette against the pale yellow of the sky.

Weena was delighted when I initially carried her on my back, but after a while she wanted me to let her down. She began to run along side me,

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

occasionally darting off to pick flowers to stick in my pockets. My pockets had always puzzled Weena, but eventually she concluded that they were an eccentric kind of vase for floral decoration. At least she utilized them for that purpose. That reminds me! In changing my jacket, I found the flowers Weena had placed there.”

The Time Traveler paused, put his hand into his pocket, and silently placed two withered flowers, not unlike large white mallows, upon the table. Then he resumed his narrative.

“As the hush of the evening crept over the world and we proceeded to climb to the crest of the hill towards Wimbledon, Weena grew tired and wanted to return to the house of grey stone. I pointed out the distant pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain and tried to make her understand that we were seeking refuge there. She seemed to finally understand and relented in my pursuit.

You know that long silent pause that comes before the dusk? Even the breeze stops in the trees. To me there is always an air of expectation surrounding the evening’s stillness. The sky was clear, remote, and empty except for a few horizontal orange bars in the sunset. That night the expectation took the color of my fears. In that dark calm, my senses seemed uncannily sharp. I imagined I could feel the hollowness of the ground beneath my feet, and that I could see the Morlocks hiding in the shadowed recesses on the hillside waiting for the dark to arrive. In my agitation, I

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

imagined they would receive my invasion of their burrows as a declaration of war. Then I once again asked myself, ‘Why had they taken my Time Machine?’

We continued in the quiet dusk, and the twilight deepened into night. The clear blue sky in the distance faded, and one star after another came out in the night sky. The ground grew dim and the trees black. Weena’s fears and her fatigue grew. I took her in my arms, talked to her, and caressed her. Then, as the darkness grew deeper, she put her arms around my neck, and closing her eyes, tightly pressed her face against my shoulder. We went down a long slope into a valley, and there in the dusk I walked into a shallow river outlet. I waded into the river, and climbed up the opposite side of the valley, past a group of sleeping houses, and by a statue of a Faun, an old human deity with the hind legs of a goat *minus* the head. So far, I had seen nothing of the Morlocks, but it was still early in the evening, and the darker hours before the moon rose were still to come.

From the brow of the next hill, I saw a thick wooded area spreading wide and black before me. I hesitated when I saw it. I could see no end to it, either to the right or the left. Feeling tired and my feet sore, I carefully lowered Weena from my shoulder and sat down on the turf. I could no longer see the Palace of Green Porcelain, and I was in doubt of my direction. I investigated the dense woods and thought of what it might hide. Under that crammed tangle of branches, Morlocks could easily hide in them, ready to

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

ambush us without notice. Even if there were no Morlocks lurking in the dark there were still debris and tree trunks I could stumble over and injure myself. In addition, I felt exhausted from both walking up the hill and the stress of the day's trauma and decided to pass the night in the open on the hillside.

Weena was fast asleep. I carefully wrapped her in my jacket and sat down beside her to wait for the moonrise. The hillside was quiet and deserted, but from the black of the woods there came a stir of something rustling in the bushes.

Above me, shone an infinite number of twinkling stars in the clear night. Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of this future's terrestrial life. As my mind gained this higher perspective, a sudden insight came to me, and I realized why the Eloi's trembled in the dark. With a cold riveting shiver, it became clear to me the source of the meat I saw in the Morlock's subterranean world. It was the dead corpus of an Eloi. The idea was too dreadful to imagine! I looked at little Weena sleeping beside me, her face white and starlike under the stars, and immediately dismissed my hideous thought.

Through that long night I kept my mind off the Morlocks to ensure I did not panic in the dangerous open ground. I continued to distract myself by looking at the night sky. The sky remained clear, except for a hazy cloud or so, and my attention diverted to finding signs of old constellations in the

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

new clusters. No doubt I dozed off at times from exhaustion but would suddenly wake up from the shock of my astonishing realization about the Morlock's diet. As the long night wore on, the eastward sky grew faint, like the reflection of some colorless fire, the old moon rose thin, peaked, and white. Close behind, overtaking it and overflowing it, the dawn came, pale at first, and then growing pink and warm. The morning's sunrise had arrived. No Morlocks had approached us, and I had seen none of them on the hill that night. In the confidence of the renewed day, it seemed to me that my fear had been unreasonable. I stood up and found my ankle swollen and my heel tender and painful. I sat down again, took off my shoes, and flung them away.

I awakened Weena, and we went down hill into the woods, now green and pleasant instead of black and forbidding, and found some fruit to eat for breakfast. We soon met others, laughing and dancing in the sunlight as though there was no such thing in nature as the night.

Then I thought once more of the meat I had seen in the Morlock's subterranean habitat, this time accepting the fact its source was the Eloi. I reasoned that at some point in the distant past, there was an evolutionary split in the human species that created two distinct categories of beings — one, the Eloi, and the second, the Morlocks, most likely descended from today's cultural distinctions. I came to understand that the Morlocks were the more advanced species between the two and the Eloi had become the soft

THE TIME MACHINE AN INVENTION

and unlearned inferior species. The superiority of the Morlocks accounted for their complicated underground network of machinery and ventilation systems. The fact that they live underground or took the form of light-deprived ape-like creatures does not matter in true evolutionary terms. What mattered most is that they preserved their intelligence, although slightly decayed in terms of today's standard, in part due to their historical vestige of understanding and maintaining machinery. Evolutionary progress created a highly functioning industrial culture. As their food source, they breed the Eloi, much like we breed animals as our food source today. They cared and maintained the Eloi until their time of slaughter, and then prepared them in the same way a butcher cuts a side of beef into various parts. This is what I witnessed when I was underground. If you think about it in today's terms, the rich do not think about the processes that supports their wealth. Instead, they expect workers to maintain these intricate systems so they can continue in their leisurely lifestyle. Except for the one person running the family-owned enterprise the rest of the family do not work or even think, they merely idle their day away on trivial pleasures. Somewhere along the evolutionary path, the Morlocks had taken advantage of the Eloi. The Eloi, born from our Elite, continued to lose their need to work and think until they lost those qualities altogether. This accounts for their continual happiness, their lack of advanced cognitive processes, their sophisticated garments, I now surmised made by the Morlocks, and their deathly fear of the dark, the

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

time of day the Morlocks harvest their food. The Eloi were merely fatted cattle, which the superior Morlocks preserved, preyed upon, and breed.

There was Weena dancing at my side!

I tried to forget the horrific idea I had conceived by regarding it as a harsh punishment of human selfishness. The elitist class had been content to live in ease and pleasure upon the back of laborers of its estranged workforce. They had taken Necessity as its watchword and excuse, only to experience in the fullness of time, that Necessity had come home to haunt those living in this future age. I even tried a Carlyle-like¹¹ scorn, scathing at the materialistic ideals of this wretched aristocracy in decay. However, I could not deny the truth, no matter how repugnant it was. I could not dissuade myself from feeling sympathy toward the Eloi. They were too near the human form I came from, and however great their intellectual degradation, I could not escape the feeling of sharing in their decay and fear. I deeply pitied the Eloi, this last feeble stream from the great flood of humanity.

I had a vague sense on the course I should pursue. As I mentioned, my first priority was to secure a safe place of refuge and to make arms of metal

¹¹ THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881): A British essayist, historian, and the leading social critic of early Victorian England. He disseminated German idealism thought in his country and preached against materialism and mechanism during the industrial revolution.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

or stone. That necessity was immediate. Next, I hoped to procure a source of fire so I could have a torch at hand to function as a weapon knowing nothing would be more efficient than fire to ward off the Morlocks. Then I decided to build a weapon to break open the bronze door under the White Sphinx. I had in mind a battering ram. My idea was simple. If I forcefully entered those doors carrying a blaze of fire before me, I would discover the Time Machine and escape. I did not imagine the Morlocks were strong enough to move it too far away. I had resolved to bring Weena back with me to our own time. Turning such schemes over in my mind, I began hiking towards the building, which I had chosen as our temporary dwelling.

CHAPTER XI. THE PALACE OF GREEN PORCELAIN

When I reached the Palace of Green Porcelain around noon, it lay deserted and had fallen into ruin. Only ragged vestiges of glass remained in its windows, and great sheets of the green facing had fallen away from the corroded metallic framework. It lay high upon a turfy down, and facing north-eastward before I entered it, I was surprised to see a large estuary where I judged Wandsworth and Battersea must once have been.

The material of the Palace's surface proved to be undeniably porcelain, and along the face I saw an inscription in some unknown character. I foolishly thought that Weena might help me to interpret this, but soon learned that the idea of writing had never entered her head. I mistook

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

her capabilities. She always felt more human to me than she was because her affection was so human.

Within the big valves of the door — which were open and broken — I found, instead of the customary hall, a long gallery lit by many windows running down its side. The interior reminded me of a museum. The tiled floor was thick with dust, with a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects shrouded in the same grey covering. Going towards the side of the Palace I found sloping shelves. Clearing away the thick dust, I found the old familiar glass cases of our own time. They must have been air-tight to judge from the fair preservation of their contents.

Then we came to a gallery of colossal proportions. It was ill-lit with the floor running downward at a slight angle. At intervals, white globes hung from the ceiling — many of them cracked and smashed — which suggested that originally the room was artificially lit. Here I was more in my element, for rising on either side of me were huge machines, all terribly corroded, and many broken down, but some still relatively complete. As you know I have a certain weakness for machines, and I lingered among them. For me, they had the interest of puzzles, and I spent some moments making vague guesses at their intended use. I imagined if I could solve their puzzles, I could possess powers I could use against the Morlocks.

Exploring, I found another gallery running transversely to the first. Suddenly, Weena came close to my side so abruptly that she startled me.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

Had it not been for her I would not have noticed that the floor of the gallery sloped. On a second look, it may be that the floor did not slope, but was the construction of the museum carved into the side of the hill. The end I entered was above ground and lit by slit-like windows. Down the length of the building, the ground sloped downward and formed a pit the size of a London house and cast only a narrow stream of daylight at the top. I traversed slowly along the slopped ground, puzzling about the machines, and did not notice the gradual loss of the light until Weena's apprehensions drew my attention to it. Then I saw that the gallery ran down into a thick darkness. I hesitated, and then, as I looked around me, I saw that the dust was less abundant and its surface less even. Further away towards the dimness, it appeared broken by small narrow footprints that incited me to think of the presence of the Morlocks. It was already too late in the afternoon, and I still had no weapon, no refuge, and no means of making a fire. Then down in the remote blackness of the gallery, I heard a peculiar pattering — the same odd noises I had heard down the well.

I took Weena's hand. Then an idea struck me. I left her and turned to a machine with a projected lever like those in a signal-box. Clambering upon the stand and grasping this lever in my hands, I pulled it with all my weight. As I did this, Weena ran into the central aisle and began to whimper. I had judged the strength of the lever correctly and snapped it after straining for a minute. I joined Weena with my new metal club in hand more than sufficient to ward off any Morlocks I might encounter. With my newly fashioned club

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

in hand, I now felt safe to engage the Morlocks. Only my disinclination to leave Weena, and the necessity to find the Time Machine, restrained me from going straight down into the gallery's darkness and warring with the brutes.

With the metal club in one hand and Weena in the other, we came to a gallery of technical chemistry. Here I felt hope I would find useful discoveries. At one end where the roof had collapsed the gallery was well preserved. I went fervently through every unbroken case. At last, in one air-tight case, I found a box of matches. Eagerly I tried them. They lit without fail. They were not even damp. For now, I had a weapon against the horrible creatures we feared. Then in my excitement and amid that derelict museum, upon the thick, soft carpeting of dust, I ecstatically performed a dance of celebration, whistling as cheerfully as I could to Weena's grinning delight.

I still think how extraordinary it was that this box of matches escaped the wear of time for innumerable eons. It was a strange and most fortunate event. Yet, oddly enough, I found a far more unlikely substance — camphor¹². I found it in a jar that by chance had been hermetically sealed. I first thought it was paraffin wax and smashed the glass accordingly. But the odor of camphor was unmistakable. In the universal decay this volatile substance had by chance survived through many thousands of centuries. I

¹² CAMPHOR: A waxy, flammable, transparent solid with a strong aroma.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

was about to throw it away, but I remembered that it was flammable and burned with a good bright flame. It was, in fact, an excellent candle. I found no explosives, however, nor any means of breaking down the bronze doors. It seemed that the iron crowbar was the most helpful thing I found. Nevertheless, I left the gallery elated.

As I continued our search, we came to a small open court within the Palace with a turfed surface and three fruit trees. I decided to stop here to rest and refreshen ourselves. Towards sunset I began to consider our position. Night was creeping upon us, and I still had not found a hiding place inaccessible to the Morlocks. However, that did not trouble me as much now. I had in my possession a weapon that was the best defense against the Morlocks — I had matches! I also had camphor in my pocket if I needed a blaze. It seemed to me that the best thing we could do now is pass the night in the open air protected by a campfire. In the morning, we would continue the search to find the Time Machine.

Now that I had an iron club, I began to rethink my approach to those closed bronze doors. Up to this point, I had refrained from forcing them open, largely because of the possible encounter with the Morlocks. They had never impressed me as being strong, and I felt the iron bar more than adequate for protecting Weena and me.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

CHAPTER XII. IN THE DARKNESS

We emerged from the Palace while the sun was still above the horizon. I was determined to reach the White Sphinx early the next morning, and before dusk I pushed through the woods that had stopped me on the previous journey. My plan was to go as far as possible that night, and then, building a fire, to sleep in the protection of its glare. As we went along, I gathered any sticks or dried grass along the way until my arms were full. With my arms loaded, our progress was slower than I had anticipated and Weena became tired. It was nightfall before we reached the woods. As the night began to grow darker, Weena wanted to stop on the edge of a shrubby hill, but my sense of impending disaster drove me onward. I had been without sleep for a night and two days, and I was feverish and irritable. An inevitable fatigue came upon me and I sensed the Morlocks would soon make their appearance.

While we hesitated among the black bushes, behind us in the dim of blackness, I saw three crouching figures. There was shrubbery and tall grass all around us, and I did not feel safe from their insidious approach. I calculated the forest was less than a mile across. If we could get through to the bare hillside, we could find a safer resting place, and with the matches and camphor I felt I could keep the path illuminated through the woods. Yet it was evident that if I flourished matches with my hands, I would have to abandon my firewood. Reluctantly, I put the load of wood down. Then an

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

idea came to me. I could scare off the Morlocks by lighting the woods on fire behind us. I soon discovered the atrocious foolishness of this idea, but at the time, I saw it as an ingenious move for covering our retreat. I lit the wood I had carried, and red tongues of fire began raging on the ground. The growing fire was altogether new and strange to Weena.

Weena wanted to play with the fire and would have cast herself directly into the flames had I not restrained her. But despite her struggles, I plunged boldly into the woods. As I expected, the glare of the fire lit the path. Looking back, I could see through the crowded woods that the blaze had spread to adjacent bushes, and a curved line of fire was creeping up the grassy hill. I laughed and turned again to the dark trees looming in front of me. It was black, and Weena convulsively clung to me. As my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, there was sufficient light to avoid the protruding stumps on the ground. Overhead it was simply black, except where a gap of remote dark blue sky shone down upon us. I lit none of my matches because I had no hand free. Upon my left arm I carried my friend, in my right hand I firmly grasped the iron bar.

As we traveled down the path, 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 blood vessels in my ears. Suddenly, I heard a pattering behind me as I grimly pushed onward through my makeshift trail. The pattering grew closer and more distinct, and then I caught the sound of the

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

same curious voices I heard in the Underworld. There were several Morlocks following us, and they were rapidly closing in on our position. Then I felt a tug at my coat, then something grabbing at my arm. Weena shivered violently and became quite still.

It was time to light a match, but to get one I had to put her down. As I fumbled with my pocket, a struggle began in the darkness around my knees as the hideous roaring howl of the Morlocks rang out. Soft hands were creeping over my coat and back, and then touched my neck. Then the match scratched and fizzed with a small flame. 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 waned. Then I looked at Weena. She was lying clutching my feet and quite motionless with her face to the ground. With a sudden fright I stooped to grab her, but she scarcely breathed and her tight clutch on my legs prevented me from picking her up. I lit the block of camphor and flung it to the ground. As it split and flared up, it drove the Morlocks back into the shadows. This time I knelt and lifted her up to safety. The woods behind me were full of the stir and murmur of a great company of Morlocks!

Weena fainted. I put her carefully upon my shoulder and rose to push on. Then came a horrible realization. In maneuvering with my matches and Weena, I had turned myself around several times, and now I did not have the faintest idea in what direction lay my path. For all I knew, I might be facing

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

backwards towards the Palace of Green Porcelain. I found myself in a cold sweat. I had to think rapidly on what to do next. I determined to build a fire and encamp where we were. I put Weena down on a turfy bole. She sat motionless and frozen. As my first lump of camphor waned, I began collecting sticks and leaves. Out of the darkness around me the Morlocks' eyes shone like pustules.

The camphor flickered and went out. I lit a match, and as I did so, two white ape-like forms approaching Weena dashed hastily away. One blinded by the light came straight for me, and I felt his bones grind under the blow of my fist. He gave a howling whoop of dismay, staggered, and fell. I lit another piece of camphor and went on gathering wood for a bonfire. I noticed how dry the foliage above me was, and I realized that since my arrival on the Time Machine, a matter of a week, no rain had fallen. Instead of casting around among the trees for fallen twigs, I began leaping and dragging down branches. Soon I had a choking smoky fire of green wood and dry sticks and could economize my camphor. Then I turned to where Weena lay beside my iron mace. I tried what I could to revive her, but she lay like one dead. I could not tell whether she breathed or not.

The smoke of the fire beat towards me. Suddenly, I became weary from the smoke and could smell the vapor of camphor in the air. My fire would not need replenishing for at least an hour and feeling weary after all that happened, I sat down to rest. The woods were full of a slumbrous

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

murmur that I did not understand. I seemed to continuously nod off and then open my eyes. Then suddenly, in the middle of the darkness, the Morlock's hands began to grab at me. I flung their clinging fingers off me, and hastily felt in my pocket for the matchbox — it was gone! Then they gripped and closed in on me again. In a moment I knew what had happened. As I slept, my fire had gone out. The bitterness of death came over my soul. The forest was full of the smell of burning wood. Something caught me by the neck, something else by the hair, another by the arms until they pulled me down. It was an indescribable horror to feel these creatures piled on me in the darkness. I felt as if I was in a monstrous spider web. They overpowered me as I went down. I felt little teeth nipping at my neck. I rolled over, and fortuitously my hand came to rest on the iron lever. It gave me strength. I struggled up, as I shook the human rats from me and holding the bar short, and I thrust my hammer where I judged their faces might be. I felt their succulent flesh giving way and the sound of bones cracking under my blows. For a moment I was free.

The hard fighting gave me a sense of relief. Even though I had lost my direction, I was determined to make the Morlocks pay for their detractions. I stood with my back to a tree, swinging the iron bar in front of me, and the woods howled full of their stirs and cries. A minute passed. Their voices seemed to rise to a higher pitch of excitement, and their movements grew faster. Yet none came within my reach. I stood glaring at the empty blackness in front of me. A glimmer of hope suddenly came over me and I

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

wondered if the Morlocks grew afraid of my daunting blows. As the darkness grew more luminous, I began to see the Morlocks dimly around me — three battered at my feet — and then I recognized, with incredulous surprise, that the others were running in an incessant stream behind me through the woods, their backs no longer white, but reddish. As I stood amazed I saw a red spark drifting across a gap of starlight between the branches and then vanish. Then the smell of burning wood, the slumbrous murmur that was growing into a gusty roar, the red glow, and the Morlocks' flight.

Stepping out from behind a tree and looking back, I saw through the black night, pillars of flames of a burning forest. I looked for Weena, but she was gone. The hissing and crackling behind me, the explosive thud as trees burst into flame, left me little time for reflection. Still gripping my iron bar, I followed the Morlocks' path. It was a close race. Once the flames crept forward so swiftly on my right that they outflanked me. I had to strike off to the left. But at last, I emerged in a small open space, and as I did so, a Morlock came blundering towards me, ran blindly past me, and dashed straight into the fire!

Then I witnessed the most horrible occurrence during my time in that future age. The whole space around me shone as bright as day as the fire relentlessly burned. In the center was a hill overcome by the scorching fire. Beyond this was another arm of the burning forest, with yellow tongues

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

already writhing from it, completely encircling the vicinity with a fence of fire. On the hillside were thirty or forty Morlocks dazed by the fire and heat, blundering against each other in bewilderment. At first, I did not realize they were blind, and as they approached me, I struck them furiously with my iron bar in a frenzy of fear, killing one and crippling several more. When I watched one of them groping and moaning as it fell into a shrub of fire, I understood their helplessness. A stolid empathy rushed over me and I could no longer strike them.

Yet every now and then one would come straight towards me, setting loose a quivering horror that rambled through my bones and forced me to quickly maneuver out of its way to elude him. At one time the flames died down, and I feared the foul creatures would be able to see me again. I thought of initiating a preemptive attack, but the fire burst out again, and I held back. I walked around the hill looking for some trace of Weena. But Weena was gone.

But, at last, above the subsiding red of the fire, above the streaming masses of black smoke, above the whitening and blackening tree stumps, and above the diminishing numbers of these dreadful creatures, came the white light of the day. The hill on which I stood was an island in the forest. From its summit I could make out through a haze of smoke the Palace of Green Porcelain, and from that I could get my bearings to the White Sphinx. As the day grew clearer, I left the remnant of these creatures to their fate and

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

began searching for my long-lost Time Machine. I tied grass around my feet and limped across smoking ashes and black stems, still pulsating with fire, towards the hiding place of the Time Machine.

I walked slowly, exhausted as well as lame, and I felt the most intense wretchedness for the horrible death of precious Weena. It seemed an overwhelming calamity, and as I stand here now, the loss of Weena is more like the sorrow of a distant dream. As I walked over the smoking ashes under the bright morning sky, I made a discovery. In my trouser pocket were still some loose matches. The box must have leaked before I lost it.

CHAPTER XIII. THE TRAP OF THE WHITE SPHINX

About eight or nine in the morning, I came to the base of the Palace of Green Porcelain, tired, but delighted to see its dulled yellow metal exterior where I viewed this future world on the evening of my arrival. I thought of the hasty conclusions I drew that evening and could not refrain from laughing bitterly at my misplaced confidence. Here was the same beautiful scene, the same abundant foliage, the same splendid palaces and magnificent ruins, the same silver river running between its fertile banks. As I came back from my revelry, I saw the charming robes of the Eloi moving among the trees. Some were bathing in exactly the place where I saved Weena, which suddenly gave me a somber stab of pain. Scattered cupolas rose like blots upon the landscape above the entrance to the Morlocks underworld domain.

THE TIME MACHINE AN INVENTION

I now understood the significance for the beautiful surroundings of the Eloi and what it truly and dismally meant. Their day was pleasant, as pleasant as the day of cattle in the field. Like cattle, they knew of no enemies and the herdsman provided for all their needs. Then as night fell and darkness prevailed, the placid Eloi met the same end as cattle to the slaughter.

I grieved to think how brief the dream of human intellect had been. The human values we cultivate into a progressive and modern culture had committed suicide somewhere along the path of time. The modernistic world we build today set itself steadfastly towards comfort, safety, and ease, a balanced society with security and permanency as its watchword. Now as I stood in this future time, I witnessed modernity's attainment of its bitter objective. At some point in time, life and property must have reached the absolute pinnacle of its goals. The rich assured of their wealth and comfort, the laborer assured of a life of poverty and never-ending work. There is no doubt that the world evolved to a perfect balance among its inhabitants and found a profound resolution. A Great Age of Tranquility must have followed.

However, the evolving ages overlooked a critical law of nature that positions intellectual acuity as compensation for facing unexpected changes and dangers. An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment never appeals to its intelligence and begins to rely solely on the predictable and mundane repetitiveness of habit leaving them vulnerable to drastic changes

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

in the environment. They lack the ability to adapt, as their instincts and mental sagacity fall into disuse. Nature demands conflict for intelligence to develop.

As I see it, over the ages, the Eloi had drifted towards an increased feeble and quaint lifestyle, while the Morlocks continued to mire in mere mechanical industry. As time went on, the two worlds had become disjointed. The Morlocks were in contact with machinery, which, however imperfect, still needs some thought aside from habit, and by force of necessity had retained more initiative, even if it lacked the Eloi's quality of character. When other sources of meat failed them, they turned to breeding the now soft, unthreatening, unthinking beings living above them. They had become the dominate species because they maintained a modicum of intelligence, however mechanical and mundane. At the same time, the Eloi lost all semblance of thought, and dwindled into mindless, playful creatures, making perfect targets for breeding. Now the dominate Morlocks harvest them as cattle. My explanation could be as wrong as mortal wit could invent; I do not know for certain. However, it is how their world shaped itself in my mind, and in turn, that is what I give to you.

The excitements and terrors of the past days filled me with grief, but as I gazed around me at the place where I then stood, its tranquil view and warm sunlight pleased me, and in turn, calmed my nerves. I was tired and

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

sleepy, and soon my theorizing gave way to fatigue, and spreading myself upon the lush green turf, I had a long and refreshing sleep. XOX

I awoke before sunset. I felt safe against the Morlocks and went down the hill toward the White Sphinx. I had my crowbar in one hand, and the other hand played with the matches in my pocket.

Next came an unexpected yet fortunate occurrence. As I approached the pedestal of the Sphinx, I found the bronze panels open. They had slid down into grooves. I stopped short, hesitating to enter. Soon, the necessity to get back to my home overcame any hesitancy and I entered the Sphinx.

Inside was a small apartment, and on a raised platform in the corner of the building was the Time Machine. I still had the levers in my pocket. So here, after all my elaborate preparations for the siege of the White Sphinx, dwindled to a meek surrender. I threw my iron bar away and stepped through the bronze frame and into the Time Machine. I was surprised to find it carefully oiled and cleaned. I assumed the Morlocks had attempted to work on the machine in their attempt to grasp its purpose, and as was their habit, took great care of the machine, cleaning and oiling it as they worked on it.

As I stood and examined the Time Machine, I found pleasure in the mere touch of it. The hope that I would find the machine intact had happened. Suddenly, the bronze panels slammed shut and struck the floor

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

with a clang. I was in the dark — trapped — at least that is what the Morlocks thought. At that I chuckled elatedly.

I could already hear their murmuring voices as they came lumbering towards me. I only had to fix the levers into their proper place on the Time Machine and depart from them like a ghost. In my attempt to stop the Morlock's advance, I calmly tried to strike a match. But I had overlooked one small but important detail. The matches were of that abominable kind that must have the box to light.

You can imagine how my calm vanished. I could hear by the sound of their voices that the Morlocks were closing in on me. Then one of them touched me, and I made a sweeping blow in the dark with the levers and began to scramble into the saddle of the machine. Then another hand grabbed me and then another. I had to fight against their persistent grasps, at the same time ensuring I held the levers tight in my hands while feeling for the studs to slide the levers into place. They almost got one of the levers away from me. As it slipped from my hand, I had to butt one of the creatures with my head blindly in the dark to recover it. I could hear the Morlock's skull ring. I patted around me to find the lever, and by chance found it on the Time Machine's floor unharmed. This last scramble was a more threatening encounter than the fight in the forest.

At last, I fixed the lever in place and pulled it into position. The clinging hands slipped from me. The darkness fell from my eyes. I found

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

myself in the same grey light and chaotic tumult that I felt when I first began my journey through time.

CHAPTER XV. THE TIME TRAVELER'S RETURN

Finally, I was coming home, back to the present time. I must have been sitting insensible in the machine for a long time. The blinking succession of the days and nights resumed, the sun grew golden again, the sky became blue once more, and I began to breath with a greater sense of freedom. The fluctuating contours of the land ebbed and flowed. The hands spun backward upon the dials. At last, I saw the dim shadow of houses, the evidence of decadent civilization. These, too, changed and passed, and others came into view. When the million dial was at zero, I slackened speed. I began to recognize our own beautiful and familiar architecture as the thousand hand ran backward to the starting point, the night and day cycle spinning slower and slower. Then the old walls of the laboratory surrounded me. Gently, I slowed the Time Machine down to rest near the place of my travel's origin.

I saw one thing that seemed odd to me. I told you that when I set out, and before I reached high velocity, Mrs. Watchett had walked across the room traveling like a rocket. As I returned, I landed at the exact minute when she traversed the laboratory, but now her every motion was the exact inversion of her previous one. The door at the lower end opened, and she

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

glided *backward* through the laboratory, and disappeared behind the door which she had previously entered. Just before that I thought I saw my servant Hillyer for a moment, but he passed like a flash.

Then I stopped the machine, and saw my old familiar laboratory, my tools, and my appliances just as I left them. I got off the machine shaking and wobbled to my bench. For several minutes, I trembled violently, but slowly a calmness enveloped me. As I sat on my bench a surreal thought flashed through my mind, and I wondered if I had dreamed my journey into future time.

I noticed one more thing of interest. The machine began its journey from the southeast corner of the laboratory. On my return, it had come to rest in the northwest corner. That is the exact distance from my lawn to the pedestal of the White Sphinx where the Morlocks had carried my machine.

For a brief time, my brain went stagnant. I got up and came through the passage, limping, because my heel was still painful and sorely grimed. I saw the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the table by the door. The date was in fact today, and then the clock on the mantel chimed eight o'clock. I heard your voices and the clatter of plates. I hesitated — I felt sick and weak. Then I sniffed good wholesome meat, opened the door, and saw all of you enjoying your meal. You know the rest. I washed and dined, and now I am telling you my adventure of time travel.”

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

CHAPTER XVI. AFTER THE STORY

“I know,” he said, after a pause, “that all this sounds absolutely incredible to you, 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 you about my strange adventures.”

He looked at the Medical Man. “No! I cannot expect you to believe my story. Take it as a lie, a prophecy if you wish, or that I dreamed it. You may speculate that I wrote about the times and destinies of our race during the night and hatched this fiction in a state of delirium. Treat my assertion of its truth as a mere stroke of art to enhance its interest if this makes you feel more at ease, although I beseech you to assume that my story in fact happened. With that in mind, I ask what you gentlemen think of my experience?”

He picked up his pipe, and in his accustomed manner, began to tap it vigorously upon the bars of the grate. There was a momentary stillness among the group. Then chairs began to creak, and shoes scraped upon the carpet. I took my eyes off the Time Traveler’s face and looked around at his audience. They were in the dark, as spots of color from the fireplace swam in front of them. The Medical Man seemed absorbed in the contemplation of our host. The Editor looked hard at the end of his cigar — his sixth since the start of the story. The Journalist fumbled for his watch. The others stood motionless.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

The Editor stood up with a sigh. “What a pity you are not a writer of fiction!” he said, putting his hand on the Time Traveler’s shoulder.

“You don’t believe it!” said the Time Traveler.

“Well, it is a tall tale. Is it believable? That I cannot say,” stumbled The Editor.

“I knew that a story about an adventure concerning the warpage in the fabric of time is inherently hard to believe,” retorted the Time Traveler. “Time travel is a hard concept to grasp for people in this age.”

Then the Time Traveler turned to us. “Where are the matches?” he asked. He lit one and began to speak over his pipe, briskly puffing. “To tell you the truth, I hardly believe it myself. Yet it happened just as I have explained it to you.”

His eye fell with a muted gaze on the withered white flowers on the table. Then he turned over the hand holding his pipe and looked at the half-healed scars on his knuckles.

The Medical Man rose, came to the lamp, and examined the flowers. “The gynoecium’s¹³ (gee -knee-see-um) odd,” he said. The Psychologist

¹³ GYNOECIUM: Gynoecium’s common use is a collective term for the structures of a flower that produce ovules and develop into the fruit.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

leaned forward to observe the flower himself, holding out his hand for the specimen.

Then turning his head from side to side the Journalist blurted, “I can’t believe it. It’s a quarter to one already. It seems the hour has chimed the end our dinner and pleasant conversation. By the way, what station is still open at this hour to catch a cab home?”

“The station two blocks down are still open with plenty of cabs waiting for late pub drinkers,” responded the Psychologist.

“It’s a curious thing,” said the Medical Man, “but I don’t know the natural order of these flowers. May I have them?”

The Time Traveler looked at the Medical Man and then answered in a soft, calm voice, “Unfortunately, I must say no to your request. However, you may come to my laboratory any time you wish and study them at your leisure.”

“Where did you *really* get them?” asked the Medical Man.

The Time Traveler put his hand to his chin, then spoke with a saddened voice. “They were put into my pocket by Weena. I truly miss her. But, to answer your question more directly, they grow abundantly in the future age I visited.”

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

He stared around the room sensing the skepticism that everyone shared. He thought in silence for a moment and then looking at each of us in turn, he said, "I am cursed if what I told is not true. If my story is not credible, then this room, all of you here, and our exchange tonight is all a mirage. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it all only a dream? Many of my fellow scientists say life is a precarious dream fabricated from the smallest particles that makeup matter and held together by our collective mind. Most people consider that notion madness, as well as the thought of Time Travel. People in general abhor abstract thought. They prefer clumsily bouncing through life with no notion of the Gestalt that holds society together. They do not realize that the values we construct today directly impact future generations, and not necessarily in an effective way. My experience affirms the future devastation of humanity because of our self-centric materialism and our willingness to exploit others to maintain our decadence."

Then without warning he suddenly stopped, gathered himself, stood up straight, and softly but abruptly said, "I must look at my Time Machine," changing the subject to show us that he did not care about our doubt.

He swiftly held up the lamp, carrying it flaring red through the door into the corridor. We followed him. There in the flickering light of the lamp we saw the machine, squat, ugly, and askew, a machine of brass, ebony, ivory, and the mystifying translucent glimmering of quartz. I put out my

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

hand and felt the rail. The machine felt solid to the touch, crusted with hardened brown spots of dirt, smears on the ivory handles with one rail bent awry, and bits of grass and moss on the undercarriage.

The Time Traveler put the lamp down on the bench and ran his hand along the damaged rail. “Here in front of me is the machine tattered by its journey. I’m sorry you doubt my story. There is nothing more I want to say to change your mind.” He held up the lamp, and in absolute silence, we returned to the smoking room.

He came into the hall with us and helped the Editor with his coat. The Medical Man looked directly into his eyes, and with a certain hesitation, told him he was suffering from exhaustion and working too hard. The Time Traveler stood stoic in front of him with a steel gaze, as the Medical Man opened the doorway and shouted good night as he walked away shaking his head slightly laughing.

I shared a cab with the Editor. He thought the tale a “gaudy lie.” For my own part, I was unable to conclude what I thought. The story was fantastic and incredible, the telling credible and sober. I lay awake most of the night thinking about it. I determined that in the next few days, allowing for the Time Traveler to gain his composure from his ordeal, real or imagined, to see him and talk about his adventure into time with no distractions from unbelieving doubters.

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

I finally decided enough time had passed to visit the Time Traveler. When I arrived at his residence, the maid told me he was in the laboratory, then guided me through the hallway, and pointed to the laboratory door. I went in, looked around, but found the laboratory empty. I stared for a minute at the Time Machine, and then reached out my hand and touched the lever. At that, the squat, large, solid mass swayed like a bough shaken by the wind. Its instability startled me, and I had a curious reminiscence of my childhood days when the unwritten rule forbade meddling with things. I hurried back through the corridor. The Time Traveler met me in the smoking room. He was coming from the house. He had a small camera under one arm and a knapsack under the other. He laughed when he saw me and gave me an elbow to shake. "I'm frightfully busy with the machine in there," he said.

"Is what you told us a hoax?" I asked. "Did you really travel through time?"

With a soft demeanor and looking directly into my eyes, he said, "Really and truly, I did." He hesitated, his eyes wandering around the room, and then turned to me and said, "I only need half an hour to fix what I started with the machine. I want to prove to you that time traveling is real by bringing back solid proof, specimens, and more. Now, please forgive me for leaving you now?"

I consented, hardly comprehending the full importance of his words. He nodded and went down the corridor. I heard the door of the laboratory

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

slam. I suddenly remembered that I promised to meet Richardson, the publisher, at two o'clock. I looked at my watch and saw that I must leave immediately to make the engagement. I got up and went down the passage to tell the Time Traveler.

As I took hold of the door handle, I heard a whirling commotion, oddly truncated at the end, and then a click and a thud. A gust of air spun around me as I opened the door, and from within came the sound of broken glass falling on the floor. The Time Traveler was not there. For a moment, I thought I saw a ghostly, indistinct figure sitting in a whirling mass of black and brass — a figure so transparent that behind it the bench with sheets of drawings on it was distinct. Then the phantom vanished as I rubbed my eyes. The Time Machine was also gone. Except for a subsiding stir of dust, the far end of the laboratory was empty, but for the pane from the skylight that fell to the ground.

I felt an awkward amazement. I knew that something strange had happened and could not distinguish any tangible details of the bizarre event I witnessed. As I stood staring, the door into the garden opened, and the servant appeared.

With a look of slight astonishment, I asked him, "Did you pass Mr. Hastings down the hallway before you came into the room?"

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

“No, sir. No one has come this way. I was expecting to find him here,” answered the servant.

At that I understood. At the risk of disappointing Richardson, I stayed waiting for the Time Traveler, waiting for the second, still stranger story, and the specimens and photographs he would bring with him. I am beginning to fear I must wait a lifetime.

The Time Traveler vanished three years ago and never returned.

EPILOGUE

One cannot help but wonder if he ever will return. I conjectured he swept into future time once again, where the human species still exists, and where the unknown riddles of our own time reveal its answers. I do not believe that our age of weak experiment, fragmentary theories, and mutual discord reflect the pinnacle of humanity. I know he cheerlessly thought of the advancement of civilization. He saw in the aberrant pile we call the peak of modernity only an absurd heaping mess that inevitably implodes and falls destructively to its end. If that is the case, it remains for us to change the way we live and change the course of the inevitable extinguishment of humanity. For me, the future is a black, unwritten region; a vast unknown, lit at a few occasional places by the memory of his story. I have by me, for my comfort, two shriveled white flowers, as a witness to the Time Traveler’s adventure in time. I have encased the flowers in one his books titled *On The*

THE TIME MACHINE
AN INVENTION

Philosophical Malleability of Time. I wait patiently for his return. I look forward to listening to his adventures, proving that Time is indeed transformative as he unfolds the secrets of time.

THE END