

INCLUDES THREE CHAPTERS OF *THE MAP OF TIME* BY FÉLIX J. PALMA

the
Time
Machine

H. G. WELLS

INCLUDES THREE CHAPTERS OF *THE MAP OF TIME* BY FÉLIX J. PALMA

the
Time
Machine

H. G. WELLS

Dear Reader,

The Time Machine plays a great part in inspiring Félix J. Palma's international bestseller *The Map of Time*. As a special gift to our readers, we are including the first three chapters of Palma's magical narrative in the back of this edition. We hope that you enjoy this sample and should you desire to continue on Palma's adventure, please pick up a complete copy of *The Map of Time*.

Kind Regards,

Judith Curr

Publisher, Atria Books

THE TIME MACHINE



H. G. Wells

ATRIA PAPERBACK
New York London Toronto Sydney



Atria Paperback
A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020
www.SimonandSchuster.com

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Supplementary materials copyright © 2004 by Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Originally published in a different format.

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever. For information address Pocket Books Subsidiary Rights Department, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

First Atria Paperback ebook edition May 2011

ATRIA PAPERBACK and colophon are trademarks of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

The Simon & Schuster Speakers Bureau can bring authors to your live event. For more information or to book an event contact the Simon & Schuster Speakers Bureau at 1-866-248-3049 or visit our website at www.simonspeakers.com.

Designed by

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

eBook ISBN 978-1-4516-5886-6

There are no footnotes in this copy of *The Time Machine*.
For all enrichments, please see the Simon & Schuster
Enriched Classic, 978-0-7434-8773-3

THE TIME MACHINE

Contents

Chapter I

Chapter II

Chapter III

Chapter IV

Chapter V

Chapter VI

Chapter VII

Chapter VIII

Chapter IX

Chapter X

Chapter XI

Chapter XII

Epilogue

The Map of Time

Part One

I



THE TIME TRAVELLER (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding a recondite matter to us. His grey eyes shone and twinkled, and his usually pale face was flushed and animated. The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights in the lilies of silver caught the bubbles that flashed and passed in our glasses. Our chairs, being his patents, embraced and caressed us rather than submitted to be sat upon, and there was that luxurious after-dinner atmosphere when thought runs gracefully free of the trammels of precision. And he put it to us in this way—marking the points with a lean forefinger—as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness over this new paradox (as we thought it:) and his fecundity.

“You must follow me carefully. I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted. The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception.”

“Is not that rather a large thing to expect us to begin upon?” said Filby, an argumentative person with red hair.

“I do not mean to ask you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it. You will soon admit as much as I need from you. You know of course that a mathematical line, a line of thickness nil, has no real existence. They taught you that? Neither has a mathematical plane. These things are mere abstractions.”

“That is all right,” said the Psychologist.

“Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube have a real existence.”

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

“So most people think. But wait a moment. Can an instantaneous cube exist?”

“Don’t follow you,” said Filby.

“Can a cube that does not last for any time at all, have a real existence?”

Filby became pensive. “Clearly,” the Time Traveller proceeded, “any real body must have extension in four directions: it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and—Duration. But through a natural infirmity of the flesh, which I will explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact. There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and a fourth, Time. There is, however, a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the former three dimensions and the latter, because it happens that our consciousness moves intermittently in one direction along the latter from the beginning to the end of our lives.”

“That,” said a very young man, making spasmodic efforts to relight his cigar over the lamp; “that . . . very clear indeed.”

“Now, it is very remarkable that this is so extensively overlooked,” continued the Time Traveller, with a slight accession of cheerfulness. “Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know they mean it. It is only another way of looking at Time. There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it. But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension?”¹

“I have not,” said the Provincial Mayor.

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

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

“Well, I do not mind telling you I have been at work upon this geometry of Four Dimensions for some time. Some of my results are curious. For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at seventeen, another at twenty-three, and so on. All these are evidently sections, as it were, Three-Dimensional representations of his Four-Dimensioned being, which is a fixed and unalterable thing.

“Scientific people,” proceeded the Time Traveller, after the pause required for the proper assimilation of this, “know very well that Time is only a kind of Space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather record. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of the barometer. Yesterday it was so high, yesterday night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and so gently upward to here. Surely the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of Space generally recognized? But certainly it traced such a line, and that line, therefore, we must conclude was along the Time-Dimension.”²

“But,” said the Medical Man, staring hard at a coal in the fire, “if Time is really only a fourth dimension of Space, why is it, and why has it always been, regarded as something different? And why cannot we move in Time as we move about in the other dimensions of Space?”

The Time Traveller smiled. “Are you sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go, back-ward and forward freely enough, and men always have done so. I admit we move freely in two dimensions. But how about up and down? Gravitation limits us there.”

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

“But before the balloons, save for spasmodic jumping and the inequalities of the surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement.”

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

“Easier, far easier down than up.”

“And you cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the present moment.”

“My dear sir, that is just where you are wrong. That is just where the whole world has gone wrong. We are always getting away from the present moment. Our mental existences, which are immaterial and have no dimensions, are passing along the Time-Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the grave. Just as we should travel down if we began our existence fifty miles above the earth’s surface.”

“But the great difficulty is this,” interrupted the Psychologist. “You can move about in all directions of Space, but you cannot move about in Time.”

“That is the germ of my great discovery. But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absentminded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilized man is better off than the savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?”

“Oh, this,” began Filby, “is all—”

“Why not?” said the Time Traveller.

“It’s against reason,” said Filby.

“What reason?” said the Time Traveller.

“You can show black is white by argument,” said Filby, “but you will never convince me.”

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

“To travel through Time!” exclaimed the Very Young Man.

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

Filby contented himself with laughter.

“But I have experimental verification,”³ said the Time Traveller.

“It would be remarkably convenient for the historian,” the Psychologist suggested. “One might travel back and verify the accepted account of the

Battle of Hastings, for instance!”

“Don’t you think you would attract attention?” said the Medical Man. “Our ancestors had no great tolerance for anachronisms.”

“One might get one’s Greek from the very lips of Homer and Plato,” the Very Young Man thought.

“In which case they would certainly plough you for the Little-go. The German scholars have improved Greek so much.”⁴

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

“To discover a society,” said I, “erected on a strictly communistic basis.”⁵

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

“Yes, so it seemed to me, and so I never talked of it until—”

“Experimental verification!” cried I. “You are going to verify that?”

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

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

The Time Traveller smiled round at us. Then, still smiling faintly, and with his hands deep in his 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. “I wonder what he’s got?”

“Some sleight-of-hand trick or other,” said the Medical Man, and Filby tried to tell us about a conjurer he had seen at Burslem;⁶ but before he had finished his preface the Time Traveller came back, and Filby’s anecdote collapsed.

The thing the Time Traveller held in his hand was a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and very delicately made. There was ivory in it, and some transparent crystalline substance. And now I must be explicit, for this that follows—unless his explanation is to be accepted—is an absolutely unaccountable thing. He took one of the small octagonal tables that were scattered about the room, and set it in front of the fire, with two legs on the hearthrug. On this table he placed the mechanism. Then he drew up a chair, and sat down. The only other

object on the table was a small shaded lamp, the bright light of which fell upon the model. There were also perhaps a dozen candles about, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces, so that the room was brilliantly illuminated. I sat in a low arm-chair nearest the fire, and I drew this forward so as to be almost between the Time Traveller and the fireplace. Filby sat behind him, looking over his shoulder. The Medical Man and the Provincial Mayor watched him in profile from the right, the Psychologist from the left. The Very Young Man stood behind the Psychologist. We were all on the alert. It appears incredible to me that any kind of trick, however subtly conceived and however adroitly done, could have been played upon us under these conditions.

The Time Traveller looked at us, and then at the mechanism. "Well?" said the Psychologist.

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

The Medical Man got up out of his chair and peered into the thing. "It's beautifully made," he said.

"It took two years to make," retorted the Time Traveller. Then, when we had all imitated the action of the Medical Man, he said: "Now I want you clearly to understand that this lever, being pressed over, sends the machine gliding into the future, and this other reverses the motion. This saddle represents the seat of a time traveller. Presently I am going to press the lever, and off the machine will go. It will vanish, pass into future Time, and disappear. Have a good look at the thing. Look at the table too, and satisfy yourselves there is no trickery. I don't want to waste this model, and then be told I'm a quack."

There was a minute's pause perhaps. The Psychologist seemed about to speak to me, but changed his mind. Then the Time Traveller put forth his finger towards the lever. "No," he said suddenly. "Lend me your hand." And turning to the Psychologist, he took that individual's hand in his own

and told him to put out his forefinger. So that it was the Psychologist himself who sent forth the model Time Machine on its interminable voyage. We all saw the lever turn. I am absolutely certain there was no trickery. There was a breath of wind, and the lamp flame jumped. One of the candles on the mantel was blown out, and the little machine suddenly swung round, became indistinct, was seen as a ghost for a second perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering brass and ivory; and it was gone—vanished! Save for the lamp the table was bare.

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

The Psychologist recovered from his stupor, and suddenly looked under the table. At that the Time Traveller laughed cheerfully. “Well?” he said, with a reminiscence of the Psychologist. Then, getting up, he went to the tobacco jar on the mantel, and with his back to us began to fill his pipe.

We stared at each other. “Look here,” said the Medical Man, “are you in earnest about this? Do you seriously believe that that machine has travelled into time?”

“Certainly,” said the Time Traveller, stooping to light a spill at the fire. Then he turned, lighting his pipe, to look at the Psychologist’s face. (The Psychologist, to show that he was not unhinged, helped himself to a cigar and tried to light it uncut.) “What is more, I have a big machine nearly finished in there”—he indicated the laboratory—“and when that is put together I mean to have a journey on my own account.”

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

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

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

“Why?” said the Time Traveller.

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

“But,” I said, “if it travelled into the past it would have been visible when we came first into this room; and last Thursday when we were here; and the Thursday before that; and so forth!”⁷

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

“Not a bit,” said the Time Traveller, and, to the Psychologist: “You think. You can explain that. It’s presentation below the threshold, you know, diluted presentation.”

“Of course,” said the Psychologist, and reassured us. “That’s a simple point of psychology. I should have thought of it. It’s plain enough, and helps the paradox delightfully. We cannot see it, nor can we appreciate this machine, any more than we can the spoke of a wheel spinning, or a bullet flying through the air. If it is travelling through time fifty times or a hundred times faster than we are, if it gets through a minute while we get through a second, the impression it creates will of course be only one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of what it would make if it were not travelling in time. That’s plain enough.” He passed his hand through the space in which the machine had been. “You see?” he said, laughing.

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

“It sounds plausible enough to-night,” said the Medical Man; “but wait until to-morrow. Wait for the common sense of the morning.”

“Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?” asked the Time Traveller. And therewith, taking the lamp in his hand, he led the way down the long, draughty corridor to his laboratory. I remember vividly the flickering light, his queer, broad head in silhouette, the dance of the shadows, how we all followed him, puzzled but incredulous, and how there in the laboratory we beheld a larger edition of the little mechanism which we had seen vanish from before our eyes. Parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal. The thing was generally complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets of drawings, and I took one up for a better look at it. Quartz it seemed to be.

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

“Upon that machine,” said the Time Traveller, holding the lamp aloft, “I intend to explore time. Is that plain? I was never more serious in my life.”

None of us quite knew how to take it.

I caught Filby's eye over the shoulder of the Medical Man, and he winked at me solemnly.

II



I THINK THAT at that time none of us quite believed in the Time Machine. The fact is, the Time Traveller was one of those men who are too clever to be believed: you never felt that you saw all round him; you always suspected some subtle reserve, some ingenuity in ambush, behind his lucid frankness. Had Filby shown the model and explained the matter in the Time Traveller's words, we should have shown him far less scepticism. For we should have perceived his motives; a pork butcher could understand Filby. But the Time Traveller had more than a touch of whim among his elements, and we distrusted him. Things that would have made the frame of a less clever man seemed tricks in his hands. It is a mistake to do things too easily. The serious people who took him seriously never felt quite sure of his deportment; they were somehow aware that trusting their reputations for judgment with him was like furnishing a nursery with egg-shell china. So I don't think any of us said very much about time travelling in the interval between that Thursday and the next, though its odd potentialities ran, no doubt, in most of our minds: its plausibility, that is, its practical incredibleness, the curious possibilities of anachronism and of utter confusion it suggested. For my own part, I was particularly preoccupied with the trick of the model. That I remember discussing with the Medical Man, whom I met on Friday at the Linnaean.¹ He said he had seen a similar thing at Tübingen, and laid considerable stress on the blowing out of the candle. But how the trick was done he could not explain.

The next Thursday I went again to Richmond—I suppose I was one of the Time Traveller's most constant guests—and, arriving late, found four or five men already assembled in his drawing-room. The Medical Man was standing before the fire with a sheet of paper in one hand and his watch in the other. I looked round for the Time Traveller, and—"It's half-

past seven now,” said the Medical Man. “I suppose we’d better have dinner?”

“Where’s ——?” said I, naming our host.

“You’ve just come? It’s rather odd. He’s unavoidably detained. He asks me in this note to lead off with dinner at seven if he’s not back. Says he’ll explain when he comes.”

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

The Psychologist was the only person besides the Doctor and myself who had attended the previous dinner. The other men were Blank, the Editor aforementioned, a certain journalist, and another—a quiet, shy man with a beard—whom I didn’t know, and who, as far as my observation went, never opened his mouth all the evening. There was some speculation at the dinner-table about the Time Traveller’s absence, and I suggested time travelling, in a half-jocular spirit. The Editor wanted that explained to him, and the Psychologist volunteered a wooden account of the “ingenious paradox and trick” we had witnessed that day week. He was in the midst of his exposition when the door from the corridor opened slowly and without noise. I was facing the door, and saw it first. “Hallo!” I said. “At last!” And the door opened wider, and the Time Traveller stood before us. I gave a cry of surprise. “Good heavens! man, what’s the matter?” cried the Medical Man, who saw him next. And the whole tableful turned towards the door.

He was in an amazing plight. His coat was dusty and dirty, and smeared with green down the sleeves; his hair disordered, and as it seemed to me greyer—either with dust and dirt or because its colour had actually faded. His face was ghastly pale; his chin had a brown cut on it—a cut half healed; his expression was haggard and drawn, as by intense suffering. For a moment he hesitated in the doorway, as if he had been dazzled by the light. Then he came into the room. He walked with just such a limp as I have seen in footsore tramps. We stared at him in silence, expecting him to speak.

He said not a word, but came painfully to the table, and made a motion towards the wine. The Editor filled a glass of champagne, and pushed it towards him. He drained it, and it seemed to do him good: for he looked

round the table, and the ghost of his old smile flickered across his face. "What on earth have you been up to, man?" said the Doctor. The Time Traveller did not seem to hear. "Don't let me disturb you," he said, with a certain faltering articulation. "I'm all right." He stopped, held out his glass for more, and took it off at a draught. "That's good," he said. His eyes grew brighter, and a faint colour came into his cheeks. His glance flickered over our faces with a certain dull approval, and then went round the warm and comfortable room. Then he spoke again, still as it were feeling his way among his words. "I'm going to wash and dress, and then I'll come down and explain things. . . . Save me some of that mutton. I'm starving for a bit of meat."

He looked across at the Editor, who was a rare visitor, and hoped he was all right. The Editor began a question. "Tell you presently," said the Time Traveller. "I'm—funny! Be all right in a minute."

He put down his glass, and walked towards the staircase door. Again I remarked his lameness and the soft padding sound of his footfall, and standing up in my place, I saw his feet as he went out. He had nothing on them but a pair of tattered, blood-stained socks. Then the door closed upon him. I had half a mind to follow, till I remembered how he detested any fuss about himself. For a minute, perhaps, my mind was wool-gathering. Then, "Remarkable Behaviour of an Eminent Scientist," I heard the Editor say, thinking (after his wont) in headlines. And this brought my attention back to the bright dinner-table.

"What's the game?" said the Journalist. "Has he been doing the Amateur Cadger?² I don't follow." I met the eye of the Psychologist, and read my own interpretation in his face. I thought of the Time Traveller limping painfully upstairs. I don't think any one else had noticed his lameness.

The first to recover completely from this surprise was the Medical Man, who rang the bell—the Time Traveller hated to have servants waiting at dinner—for a hot plate. At that the Editor turned to his knife and fork with a grunt, and the Silent Man followed suit. The dinner was resumed. Conversation was exclamatory for a little while, with gaps of wonderment; and then the Editor got fervent in his curiosity. "Does our friend eke out his modest income with a crossing?[?] or has he his Nebuchadnezzar³

phases?" he inquired. "I feel assured it's this business of the Time Machine," I said, and took up the Psychologist's account of our previous meeting. The new guests were frankly incredulous. The Editor raised objections. "What was this time travelling? A man couldn't cover himself with dust by rolling in a paradox, could he?" And then, as the idea came home to him, he resorted to caricature. Hadn't they any clothes-brushes in the Future? The Journalist, too, would not believe at any price, and joined the Editor in the easy work of heaping ridicule on the whole thing. They were both the new kind of journalist—very joyous, irreverent young men. "Our Special Correspondent in the Day after To-morrow reports," the Journalist was saying—or rather shouting—when the Time Traveller came back. He was dressed in ordinary evening clothes, and nothing save his haggard look remained of the change that had startled me.

"I say," said the Editor hilariously, "these chaps here say you have been travelling into the middle of next week! Tell us all about little Rosebery,⁴ will you? What will you take for the lot?"

The Time Traveller came to the place reserved for him without a word. He smiled quietly, in his old way. "Where's my mutton?" he said. "What a treat it is to stick a fork into meat again!"

"Story!" cried the Editor.

"Story be damned!" said the Time Traveller. "I want something to eat. I won't say a word until I get some peptone⁵ into my arteries. Thanks. And the salt."

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

"Yes," said the Time Traveller, with his mouth full, nodding his head.

"I'd give a shilling a line for a verbatim note," said the Editor. The Time Traveller pushed his glass towards the Silent Man and rang it with his fingernail; at which the Silent Man, who had been staring at his face, started convulsively, and poured him wine. The rest of the dinner was uncomfortable. For my own part, sudden questions kept on rising to my lips, and I dare say it was the same with the others. The Journalist tried to relieve the tension by telling anecdotes of Hettie Potter. The Time Traveller devoted his attention to his dinner, and displayed the appetite of a tramp. The Medical Man smoked a cigarette, and watched the Time Traveller through his eyelashes. The Silent Man seemed even more

clumsy than usual, and drank champagne with regularity and determination out of sheer nervousness. At last the Time Traveller pushed his plate away, and looked round us. "I suppose I must apologize," he said. "I was simply starving. I've had a most amazing time." He reached out his hand for a cigar, and cut the end. "But come into the smoking-room. It's too long a story to tell over greasy plates." And ringing the bell in passing, he led the way into the adjoining room.

"You have told Blank, and Dash, and Chose about the machine?" he said to me, leaning back in his easy-chair and naming the three new guests.

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

"I can't argue to-night. I don't mind telling you the story, but I can't argue. I will," he went on, "tell you the story of what has happened to me, if you like, but you must refrain from interruptions. I want to tell it. Badly. Most of it will sound like lying. So be it! It's true—every word of it, all the same. I was in my laboratory at four o'clock, and since then . . . I've lived eight days ... such days as no human being ever lived before! I'm nearly worn out, but I shan't sleep till I've told this thing over to you. Then I shall go to bed. But no interruptions! Is it agreed?"

"Agreed," said the Editor, and the rest of us echoed "Agreed." And with that the Time Traveller began his story as I have set it forth. He sat back in his chair at first, and spoke like a weary man. Afterwards he got more animated. In writing it down I feel with only too much keenness the inadequacy of pen and ink—and, above all, my own inadequacy—to express its quality. You read, I will suppose, attentively enough; but you cannot see the speaker's white, sincere face in the bright circle of the little lamp, nor hear the intonation of his voice. You cannot know how his expression followed the turns of his story! Most of us hearers were in shadow, for the candles in the smoking-room had not been lighted, and only the face of the Journalist and the legs of the Silent Man from the knees downward were illuminated. At first we glanced now and again at each other. After a time we ceased to do that, and looked only at the Time Traveller's face.

III



“I TOLD SOME OF YOU last Thursday of the principles of the Time Machine, and showed you the actual thing itself, incomplete in the workshop. There it is now, a little travel-worn, truly; and one of the ivory bars is cracked, and a brass rail bent; but the rest of it’s sound enough. I expected to finish it on Friday, but on Friday, when the putting together was nearly done, I found that one of the nickel bars was exactly one inch too short, and this I had to get remade; so that the thing was not complete until this morning. It was at ten o’clock to-day that the first of all Time Machines began its career. I gave it a last tap, tried all the screws again, put one more drop of oil on the quartz rod, and sat myself in the saddle. I suppose a suicide who holds a pistol to his skull feels much the same wonder at what will come next as I felt then. I took the starting lever in one hand and the stopping one in the other, pressed the first, and almost immediately the second. I seemed to reel; I felt a nightmare sensation of falling; and, looking round, I saw the laboratory exactly as before. Had anything happened? For a moment I suspected that my intellect had tricked me. Then I noted the clock. A moment before, as it seemed, it had stood at a minute or so past ten; now it was nearly half-past three!

“I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever with both hands, and went off with a thud. The laboratory got hazy and went dark. Mrs. Watchett came in and walked, apparently without seeing me, towards the garden door. I suppose it took her a minute or so to traverse the place, but to me she seemed to shoot across the room like a rocket. I pressed the lever over to its extreme position. The night came like the turning out of a lamp, and in another moment came to-morrow. The laboratory grew faint and hazy, then fainter and ever fainter. To-morrow night came black, then day again, night again, day again, faster and faster still. An eddying murmur filled my ears, and a strange, dumb confusedness descended on my mind.

“I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time travelling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling exactly like that one has upon a switchback—of a helpless headlong motion! I felt the same horrible anticipation, too, of an imminent smash. As I put on pace, night followed day like the flapping of a black wing. The dim suggestion of the laboratory seemed presently to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping it every minute, and every minute marking a day. I supposed the laboratory had been destroyed and I had come into the open air. I had a dim impression of scaffolding, but I was already going too fast to be conscious of any moving things. The slowest snail that ever crawled dashed by too fast for me. The twinkling succession of darkness and light was excessively painful to the eye. Then, in the intermittent darkneses, I saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters from new to full, and had a faint glimpse of the circling stars. Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous greyness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color like that of early twilight; the jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch, in space; the moon a fainter fluctuating band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a brighter circle flickering in the blue.

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

“The unpleasant sensations of the start were less poignant now. They merged at last into a kind of hysterical exhilaration. I remarked indeed a clumsy swaying of the machine, for which I was unable to account. But

my mind was too confused to attend to it, so with a kind of madness growing upon me, I flung myself into futurity. At first I scarce thought of stopping, scarce thought of anything but these new sensations. But presently a fresh series of impressions grew up in my mind—a certain curiosity and therewith a certain dread—until at last they took complete possession of me. What strange developments of humanity, what wonderful advances upon our rudimentary civilization, I thought, might not appear when I came to look nearly into the dim elusive world that raced and fluctuated before my eyes! I saw great and splendid architecture rising about me, more massive than any buildings of our own time, and yet, as it seemed, built of glimmer and mist. I saw a richer green flow up the hill-side, and remain there without any wintry intermission. Even through the veil of my confusion the earth seemed very fair. And so my mind came round to the business of stopping.

“The peculiar risk lay in the possibility of my finding some substance in the space which I, or the machine, occupied. So long as I travelled at a high velocity through time, this scarcely mattered; I was, so to speak, attenuated—was slipping like a vapour through the interstices of intervening substances! But to come to a stop involved the jamming of myself, molecule by molecule, into whatever lay in my way; meant bringing my atoms into such intimate contact with those of the obstacle that a profound chemical reaction—possibly a far-reaching explosion—would result, and blow myself and my apparatus out of all possible dimensions—into the Unknown.¹ This possibility had occurred to me again and again while I was making the machine; but then I had cheerfully accepted it as an unavoidable risk—one of the risks a man has got to take! Now the risk was inevitable, I no longer saw it in the same cheerful light. The fact is that, insensibly, the absolute strangeness of everything, the sickly jarring and swaying of the machine, above all, the feeling of prolonged falling, had absolutely upset my nerve. I told myself that I could never stop, and with a gust of petulance I resolved to stop forthwith. Like an impatient fool, I lugged over the lever, and incontinently the thing went reeling over, and I was flung headlong through the air.

“There was the sound of a clap of thunder in my ears. I may have been stunned for a moment. A pitiless hail was hissing round me, and I was sitting on soft turf in front of the overset machine. Everything still seemed grey, but presently I remarked that the confusion in my ears was gone. I looked round me. I was on what seemed to be a little lawn in a garden, surrounded by rhododendron bushes, and I noticed that their mauve and purple blossoms were dropping in a shower under the beating of the hailstones. The rebounding, dancing hail hung in a cloud over the machine, and drove along the ground like smoke. In a moment I was wet to the skin. ‘Fine hospitality,’ said I, ‘to a man who has travelled innumerable years to see you.’

“Presently I thought what a fool I was to get wet. I stood up and looked round me. A colossal figure, carved apparently in some white stone, loomed indistinctly beyond the rhododendrons through the hazy downpour. But all else of the world was invisible.

“My sensations would be hard to describe. As the columns of hail grew thinner, I saw the white figure more distinctly. It was very large, for a silver birch-tree touched its shoulder. It was of white marble, in shape something like a winged sphinx, but the wings, instead of being carried vertically at the sides, were spread so that it seemed to hover. The pedestal, it appeared to me, was of bronze, and was thick with verdigris.² It chanced that the face was towards me; the sightless eyes seemed to watch me; there was the faint shadow of a smile on the lips. It was greatly weather-worn, and that imparted an unpleasant suggestion of disease. I stood looking at it for a little space—half a minute, perhaps, or half an hour. It seemed to advance and to recede as the hail drove before it denser or thinner. At last I tore my eyes from it for a moment, and saw that the hail curtain had worn threadbare, and that the sky was lightening with the promise of the sun.

“I looked up again at the crouching white shape, and the full temerity of my voyage came suddenly upon me. What might appear when that hazy curtain was altogether withdrawn? What might not have happened to men? What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if in this interval the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? I

might seem some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness—a foul creature to be incontinently slain.

“Already I saw other vast shapes—huge buildings with intricate parapets and tall columns, with a wooded hill-side dimly creeping in upon me through the lessening storm. I was seized with a panic fear. I turned frantically to the Time Machine, and strove hard to readjust it. As I did so the shafts of the sun smote through the thunderstorm. The grey downpour was swept aside and vanished like the trailing garments of a ghost. Above me, in the intense blue of the summer sky, some faint brown shreds of cloud whirled into nothingness. The great buildings about me stood out clear and distinct, shining with the wet of the thunderstorm, and picked out in white by the unmelted hailstones piled along their courses. I felt naked in a strange world. I felt as perhaps a bird may feel in the clear air, knowing the hawk wings above and will swoop. My fear grew to frenzy. I took a breathing space, set my teeth, and again grappled fiercely, wrist and knee, with the machine. It struck my chin violently. One hand on the saddle, the other on the lever, I stood panting heavily in attitude to mount again.

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

“Then I heard voices approaching me. Coming through the bushes by the White Sphinx were the heads and shoulders of men running. One of these emerged in a pathway leading straight to the little lawn upon which I stood with my machine. He was a slight creature—perhaps four feet high—clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt. Sandals or buskins—I could not clearly distinguish which—were on his feet; his legs were bare to the knees, and his head was bare. Noticing that, I noticed for the first time how warm the air was.

“He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail. His flushed face reminded me of the more beautiful kind of consumptive³—that hectic beauty of which we used to hear so

much. At the sight of him I suddenly regained confidence. I took my hands from the machine.

IV



“IN ANOTHER MOMENT we were standing face to face, I and this fragile thing out of futurity. He came straight up to me and laughed into my eyes. The absence from his bearing of any sign of fear struck me at once. Then he turned to the two others who were following him and spoke to them in a strange and very sweet and liquid tongue.

“There were others coming, and presently a little group of perhaps eight or ten of these exquisite creatures were about me. One of them addressed me. It came into my head, oddly enough, that my voice was too harsh and deep for them. So I shook my head, and, pointing to my ears, shook it again. He came a step forward, hesitated, and then touched my hand. Then I felt other soft little tentacles upon my back and shoulders. They wanted to make sure I was real. There was nothing in this at all alarming. Indeed, there was something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence—a graceful gentleness, a certain child-like ease. And besides, they looked so frail that I could fancy myself flinging the whole dozen of them about like nine-pins. But I made a sudden motion to warn them when I saw their little pink hands feeling at the Time Machine. Happily then, when it was not too late, I thought of a danger I had hitherto forgotten, and reaching over the bars of the machine I unscrewed the little levers that would set it in motion, and put these in my pocket. Then I turned again to see what I could do in the way of communication.

“And then, looking more nearly into their features, I saw some further peculiarities in their Dresden-china¹ type of prettiness. Their hair, which was uniformly curly, came to a sharp end at the neck and cheek; there was not the faintest suggestion of it on the face, and their ears were singularly minute. The mouths were small, with bright red, rather thin lips, and the little chins ran to a point. The eyes were large and mild; and—this may

seem egotism on my part—I fancied even that there was a certain lack of the interest I might have expected in them.

“As they made no effort to communicate with me, but simply stood round me smiling and speaking in soft cooing notes to each other, I began the conversation. I pointed to the Time Machine and to myself. Then hesitating for a moment how to express time, I pointed to the sun. At once a quaintly pretty little figure in chequered purple and white followed my gesture, and then astonished me by imitating the sound of thunder.

“For a moment I was staggered, though the import of his gesture was plain enough. The question had come into my mind abruptly: were these creatures fools? You may hardly understand how it took me. You see, I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, everything. Then one of them suddenly asked me a question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five-year-old children—asked me, in fact, if I had come from the sun in a thunderstorm! It let loose the judgment I had suspended upon their clothes, their frail light limbs, and fragile features. A flow of disappointment rushed across my mind. For a moment I felt that I had built the Time Machine in vain.

“I nodded, pointed to the sun, and gave them such a vivid rendering of a thunderclap as startled them. They all withdrew a pace or so and bowed. Then came one laughing towards me, carrying a chain of beautiful flowers altogether new to me, and put it about my neck. The idea was received with melodious applause; and presently they were all running to and fro for flowers, and laughingly flinging them upon me until I was almost smothered with blossom. You who have never seen the like can scarcely imagine what delicate and wonderful flowers countless years of culture had created. Then someone suggested that their plaything should be exhibited in the nearest building, and so I was led past the sphinx of white marble, which had seemed to watch me all the while with a smile at my astonishment, towards a vast grey edifice of fretted stone. As I went with them the memory of my confident anticipations of a profoundly grave and intellectual posterity came, with irresistible merriment, to my mind.

“The building had a huge entry, and was altogether of colossal dimensions. I was naturally most occupied with the growing crowd of

little people, and with the big open portals that yawned before me shadowy and mysterious. My general impression of the world I saw over their heads was a tangled waste of beautiful bushes and flowers, a long-neglected and yet weedless garden. I saw a number of tall spikes of strange white flowers, measuring a foot perhaps across the spread of the waxen petals. They grew scattered, as if wild, among the variegated shrubs, but, as I say, I did not examine them closely at this time. The Time Machine was left deserted on the turf among the rhododendrons.

“The arch of the doorway was richly carved, but naturally I did not observe the carving very narrowly, though I fancied I saw suggestions of old Phoenician² decorations as I passed through, and it struck me that they were very badly broken and weather-worn. Several more brightly clad people met me in the doorway, and so we entered, I, dressed in dingy nineteenth-century garments, looking grotesque enough, garlanded with flowers, and surrounded by an eddying mass of bright, soft-coloured robes and shining white limbs, in a melodious whirl of laughter and laughing speech.

“The big doorway opened into a proportionately great hall hung with brown. The roof was in shadow, and the windows, partially glazed with coloured glass and partially unglazed, admitted a tempered light. The floor was made up of huge blocks of some very hard white metal, not plates nor slabs—blocks, and it was so much worn, as I judged by the going to and fro of past generations, as to be deeply channelled along the more frequented ways. Transverse to the length were innumerable tables made of slabs of polished stone, raised perhaps a foot from the floor, and upon these were heaps of fruits. Some I recognized as a kind of hypertrophied³ raspberry and orange, but for the most part they were strange.

“Between the tables were scattered a great number of cushions. Upon these my conductors seated themselves, signing for me to do likewise. With a pretty absence of ceremony they began to eat the fruit with their hands, flinging peel and stalks, and so forth, into the round openings in the sides of the tables. I was not loath to follow their example, for I felt thirsty and hungry. As I did so I surveyed the hall at my leisure.

“And perhaps the thing that struck me most was its dilapidated look. The stained-glass windows, which displayed only a geometrical pattern, were broken in many places, and the curtains that hung across the lower end were thick with dust. And it caught my eye that the corner of the marble table near me was fractured. Nevertheless, the general effect was extremely rich and picturesque. There were, perhaps, a couple of hundred people dining in the hall, and most of them, seated as near to me as they could come, were watching me with interest, their little eyes shining over the fruit they were eating. All were clad in the same soft, and yet strong, silky material.

“Fruit, by the by, was all their diet. These people of the remote future were strict vegetarians, and while I was with them, in spite of some carnal cravings, I had to be frugivorous also. Indeed, I found afterwards that horses, cattle, sheep, dogs, had followed the Ichthyosaurus into extinction. But the fruits were very delightful; one, in particular, that seemed to be in season all the time I was there—a floury thing in a threesided husk—was especially good, and I made it my staple. At first I was puzzled by all these strange fruits, and by the stranger flowers I saw, but later I began to perceive their import.

“However, I am telling you of my fruit dinner in the distant future now. So soon as my appetite was a little checked, I determined to make a resolute attempt to learn the speech of these new men of mine. Clearly that was the next thing to do. The fruits seemed a convenient thing to begin upon, and holding one of these up I began a series of interrogative sounds and gestures. I had some considerable difficulty in conveying my meaning. At first my efforts met with a stare of surprise or inextinguishable laughter, but presently a fair-haired little creature seemed to grasp my intention and repeated a name. They had to chatter and explain the business at great length to each other, and my first attempts to make the exquisite little sounds of their language caused an immense amount of amusement. However, I felt like a schoolmaster amidst children, and persisted, and presently I had a score of noun substantives at least at my command; and then I got to demonstrative pronouns, and even the verb ‘to eat.’ But it was slow work, and the little people soon tired and wanted to get away from my interrogations, so I

determined, rather of necessity, to let them give their lessons in little doses when they felt inclined. And very little doses I found they were before long, for I never met people more indolent or more easily fatigued.

“A queer thing I soon discovered about my little hosts, and that was their lack of interest. They would come to me with eager cries of astonishment, like children, but like children they would soon stop examining me and wander away after some other toy. The dinner and my conversational beginnings ended, I noted for the first time that almost all those who had surrounded me at first were gone. It is odd, too, how speedily I came to disregard these little people. I went out through the portal into the sunlit world again so soon as my hunger was satisfied. I was continually meeting more of these men of the future, who would follow me a little distance, chatter and laugh about me, and, having smiled and gesticulated in a friendly way, leave me again to my own devices.

“The calm of evening was upon the world as I emerged from the great hall, and the scene was lit by the warm glow of the setting sun. At first things were very confusing. Everything was so entirely different from the world I had known—even the flowers. The big building I had left was situated on the slope of a broad river valley, but the Thames had shifted perhaps a mile from its present position. I resolved to mount to the summit of a crest, perhaps a mile and a half away, from which I could get a wider view of this our planet in the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One A.D. For that, I should explain, was the date the little dials of my machine recorded.

“As I walked I was watchful for every impression that could possibly help to explain the condition of ruinous splendour in which I found the world—for ruinous it was. A little way up the hill, for instance, was a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous walls and crumbled heaps, amidst which were thick heaps of very beautiful pagoda-like plants—nettles possibly—but wonderfully tinted with brown about the leaves, and incapable of stinging. It was evidently the derelict remains of some vast structure, to what end built I could not determine. It was here that I was destined, at a later date, to have a very strange experience—the first intimation of a still stranger discovery—but of that I will speak in its proper place.

“Looking round with a sudden thought, from a terrace on which I rested for a while, I realized that there were no small houses to be seen. Apparently the single house, and possibly even the household, had vanished. Here and there among the greenery were palacelike buildings, but the house and the cottage, which form such characteristic features of our own English landscape, had disappeared.

“‘Communism,’⁴ said I to myself.

“And on the heels of that came another thought. I looked at the half-dozen little figures that were following me. Then, in a flash, I perceived that all had the same form of costume, the same soft hairless visage, and the same girlish rotundity of limb. It may seem strange, perhaps, that I had not noticed this before. But everything was so strange. Now, I saw the fact plainly enough. In costume, and in all the differences of texture and bearing that now mark off the sexes from each other, these people of the future were alike. And the children seemed to my eyes to be but the miniatures of their parents. I judged, then, that the children of that time were extremely precocious, physically at least, and I found afterwards abundant verification of my opinion.

“Seeing the ease and security in which these people were living, I felt that this close resemblance of the sexes was after all what one would expect; for the strength of a man and the softness of a woman, the institution of the family, and the differentiation of occupations are mere militant necessities of an age of physical force; where population is balanced and abundant, much childbearing becomes an evil rather than a blessing to the State; where violence comes but rarely and offspring are secure, there is less necessity—indeed there is no necessity—for an efficient family, and the specialization of the sexes⁵ with reference to their children’s needs disappears. We see some beginnings of this even in our own time, and in this future age it was complete. This, I must remind you, was my speculation at the time. Later, I was to appreciate how far it fell short of the reality.

“While I was musing upon these things, my attention was attracted by a pretty little structure, like a well under a cupola. I thought in a transitory way of the oddness of wells still existing, and then resumed the thread of my speculations. There were no large buildings towards the top of the

hill, and as my walking powers were evidently miraculous, I was presently left alone for the first time. With a strange sense of freedom and adventure I pushed on up to the crest.

“There I found a seat of some yellow metal that I did not recognize, corroded in places with a kind of pinkish rust and half smothered in soft moss, the arm-rests cast and filed into the resemblance of griffins’ heads. I sat down on it, and I surveyed the broad view of our old world under the sunset of that long day. It was as sweet and fair a view as I have ever seen. The sun had already gone below the horizon and the west was flaming gold, touched with some horizontal bars of purple and crimson. Below was the valley of the Thames, in which the river lay like a band of burnished steel. I have already spoken of the great palaces dotted about among the variegated greenery, some in ruins and some still occupied. Here and there rose a white or silvery figure in the waste garden of the earth, here and there came the sharp vertical line of some cupola or obelisk. There were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights, no evidences of agriculture; the whole earth had become a garden.

“So watching, I began to put my interpretation upon the things I had seen, and as it shaped itself to me that evening, my interpretation was something in this way. (Afterwards I found I had got only a half-truth—or only a glimpse of one facet of the truth.)

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

“After all, the sanitation and the agriculture of to-day are still in the rudimentary stage. The science of our time has attacked but a little department of the field of human disease, but, even so, it spreads its

operations very steadily and persistently. Our agriculture and horticulture destroy a weed just here and there and cultivate perhaps a score or so of wholesome plants, leaving the greatest number to fight out a balance as they can. We improve our favourite plants and animals—and how few they are—gradually by selective breeding; now a new and better peach, now a seedless grape, now a sweeter and larger flower, now a more convenient breed of cattle. We improve them gradually, because our ideals are vague and tentative, and our knowledge is very limited; because Nature, too, is shy and slow in our clumsy hands. Some day all this will be better organized, and still better. That is the drift of the current in spite of the eddies. The whole world will be intelligent, educated, and co-operating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and carefully we shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs.

“This adjustment, I say, must have been done, and done well; done indeed for all Time, in the space of Time across which my machine had leaped. The air was free from gnats, the earth from weeds or fungi; everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither. The ideal of preventive medicine was attained. Diseases had been stamped out. I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during all my stay. And I shall have to tell you later that even the processes of putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected by these changes.

“Social triumphs, too, had been effected. I saw mankind housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed, and as yet I had found them engaged in no toil. There were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economical struggle. The shop, the advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the body of our world, was gone. It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The difficulty of increasing population had been met, I guessed, and population had ceased to increase.

“But with this change in condition comes inevitably adaptations to the change. What, unless biological science is a mass of errors, is the cause of human intelligence and vigour? Hardship and freedom: conditions under which the active, strong, and subtle survive and the weaker go to the wall;

conditions that put a premium upon the loyal alliance of capable men, upon self-restraint, patience, and decision. And the institution of the family, and the emotions that arise therein, the fierce jealousy, the tenderness for offspring, parental self-devotion, all found their justification and support in the imminent dangers of the young. Now, where are these imminent dangers? There is a sentiment arising, and it will grow, against connubial jealousy, against fierce maternity, against passion of all sorts; unnecessary things now, and things that make us uncomfortable, savage survivals, discords in a refined and pleasant life.

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

“Under the new conditions of perfect comfort and security, that restless energy, that with us is strength, would become weakness. Even in our own time certain tendencies and desires, once necessary to survival, are a constant source of failure. Physical courage and the love of battle, for instance, are no great help—may even be hindrances—to a civilized man. And in a state of physical balance and security, power, intellectual as well as physical, would be out of place. For countless years I judged there had been no danger of war or solitary violence, no danger from wild beasts, no wasting disease to require strength of constitution, no need of toil. For such a life, what we should call the weak are as well equipped as the strong, are indeed no longer weak. Better equipped indeed they are, for the strong would be fretted by an energy for which there was no outlet. No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw was the outcome of the last surgings of the now purposeless energy of mankind before it settled down into perfect harmony with the conditions under which it lived—the flourish of that triumph which began the last great peace. This has ever been the fate of energy in security; it takes to art and to eroticism, and then come languor and decay.

“Even this artistic impetus would at last die away—had almost died in the Time I saw. To adorn themselves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the

sunlight: so much was left of the artistic spirit, and no more. Even that would fade in the end into a contented inactivity. We are kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity, and, it seemed to me, that here was that hateful grindstone broken at last!

“As I stood there in the gathering dark I thought that in this simple explanation I had mastered the problem of the world—mastered the whole secret of these delicious people. Possibly the checks they had devised for the increase of population had succeeded too well, and their numbers had rather diminished than kept stationary. That would account for the abandoned ruins. Very simple was my explanation, and plausible enough—as most wrong theories are!

V



“AS I STOOD THERE musing over this too perfect triumph of man, the full moon, yellow and gibbous, came up out of an overflow of silver light in the northeast. The bright little figures ceased to move about below, a noiseless owl flitted by, and I shivered with the chill of the night. I determined to descend and find where I could sleep.

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

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

“At once, like a lash across the face, came the possibility of losing my own age, of being left helpless in this strange new world. The bare thought of it was an actual physical sensation. I could feel it grip me at the throat and stop my breathing. In another moment I was in a passion of fear and running with great leaping strides down the slope. Once I fell headlong and cut my face; I lost no time in stanching the blood, but jumped up and ran on, with a warm trickle down my cheek and chin. All the time I ran I was saying to myself: ‘They have moved it a little, pushed it under the bushes out of the way.’ Nevertheless, I ran with all my might. All the time, with the certainty that sometimes comes with excessive dread, I knew that such assurance was folly, knew instinctively that the machine was removed out of my reach. My breath came with pain. I suppose I covered the whole distance from the hill crest to the little lawn, two miles perhaps, in ten minutes. And I am not a young man. I cursed

aloud, as I ran, at my confident folly in leaving the machine, wasting good breath thereby. I cried aloud, and none answered. Not a creature seemed to be stirring in that moonlit world.

“When I reached the lawn my worst fears were realized. Not a trace of the thing was to be seen. I felt faint and cold when I faced the empty space among the black tangle of bushes. I ran round it furiously, as if the thing might be hidden in a corner, and then stopped abruptly, with my hands clutching my hair. Above me towered the sphinx, upon the bronze pedestal, white, shining, leprous, in the light of the rising moon. It seemed to smile in mockery of my dismay.

“I might have consoled myself by imagining the little people had put the mechanism in some shelter for me, had I not felt assured of their physical and intellectual inadequacy. That is what dismayed me: the sense of some hitherto unsuspected power, through whose intervention my invention had vanished. Yet, for one thing I felt assured: unless some other age had produced its exact duplicate, the machine could not have moved in time. The attachment of the levers—I will show you the method later—prevented any one from tampering with it in that way when they were removed. It had moved, and was hid, only in space. But then, where could it be?

“I think I must have had a kind of frenzy. I remember running violently in and out among the moonlit bushes all round the sphinx, and startling some white animal that, in the dim light, I took for a small deer. I remember, too, late that night, beating the bushes with my clenched fist until my knuckles were gashed and bleeding from the broken twigs. Then, sobbing and raving in my anguish of mind, I went down to the great building of stone. The big hall was dark, silent, and deserted. I slipped on the uneven floor, and fell over one of the malachite tables, almost breaking my shin. I lit a match and went on past the dusty curtains, of which I have told you.

“There I found a second great hall covered with cushions, upon which, perhaps, a score or so of the little people were sleeping. I have no doubt they found my second appearance strange enough, coming suddenly out of the quiet darkness with inarticulate noises and the splutter and flare of a match. For they had forgotten about matches. ‘Where is my Time

Machine?’ I began, bawling like an angry child, laying hands upon them and shaking them up together. It must have been very queer to them. Some laughed, most of them looked sorely frightened. When I saw them standing round me, it came into my head that I was doing as foolish a thing as it was possible for me to do under the circumstances, in trying to revive the sensation of fear. For, reasoning from their daylight behaviour, I thought that fear must be forgotten.

“Abruptly, I dashed down the match, and, knocking one of the people over in my course, went blundering across the big dining-hall again, out under the moonlight. I heard cries of terror and their little feet running and stumbling this way and that. I do not remember all I did as the moon crept up the sky. I suppose it was the unexpected nature of my loss that maddened me. I felt hopelessly cut off from my own kind—a strange animal in an unknown world. I must have raved to and fro, screaming and crying upon God and Fate. I have a memory of horrible fatigue, as the long night of despair wore away; of looking in this impossible place and that; of groping among moon-lit ruins and touching strange creatures in the black shadows; at last, of lying on the ground near the sphinx and weeping with absolute wretchedness. I had nothing left but misery. Then I slept, and when I woke again it was full day, and a couple of sparrows were hopping round me on the turf within reach of my arm.

“I sat up in the freshness of the morning, trying to remember how I had got there, and why I had such a profound sense of desertion and despair. Then things came clear in my mind. With the plain, reasonable daylight, I could look my circumstances fairly in the face. I saw the wild folly of my frenzy overnight, and I could reason with myself. ‘Suppose the worst?’ I said. ‘Suppose the machine altogether lost—perhaps destroyed? It behoves me to be calm and patient, to learn the way of the people, to get a clear idea of the method of my loss, and the means of getting materials and tools; so that in the end, perhaps, I may make another.’ That would be my only hope, perhaps, but better than despair. And, after all, it was a beautiful and curious world.

“But probably, the machine had only been taken away. Still, I must be calm and patient, find its hiding-place, and recover it by force or cunning. And with that I scrambled to my feet and looked about me, wondering

where I could bathe. I felt weary, stiff, and travelsoiled. The freshness of the morning made me desire an equal freshness. I had exhausted my emotion. Indeed, as I went about my business, I found myself wondering at my intense excitement overnight. I made a careful examination of the ground about the little lawn. I wasted some time in futile questionings, conveyed, as well as I was able, to such of the little people as came by. They all failed to understand my gestures; some were simply stolid, some thought it was a jest and laughed at me. I had the hardest task in the world to keep my hands off their pretty laughing faces. It was a foolish impulse, but the devil begotten of fear and blind anger was ill curbed and still eager to take advantage of my perplexity. The turf gave better counsel. I found a groove ripped in it, about midway between the pedestal of the sphinx and the marks of my feet where, on arrival, I had struggled with the overturned machine. There were other signs of removal about, with queer narrow footprints like those I could imagine made by a sloth. This directed my closer attention to the pedestal. It was, as I think I have said, of bronze. It was not a mere block, but highly decorated with deep framed panels on either side. I went and rapped at these. The pedestal was hollow. Examining the panels with care I found them discontinuous with the frames. There were no handles or keyholes, but possibly the panels, if they were doors, as I supposed, opened from within. One thing was clear enough to my mind. It took no very great mental effort to infer that my Time Machine was inside that pedestal. But how it got there was a different problem.

“I saw the heads of two orange-clad people coming through the bushes and under some blossom-covered apple-trees towards me. I turned smiling to them and beckoned them to me. They came, and then, pointing to the bronze pedestal, I tried to intimate my wish to open it. But at my first gesture towards this they behaved very oddly. I don’t know how to convey their expression to you. Suppose you were to use a grossly improper gesture to a delicate-minded woman—it is how she would look. They went off as if they had received the last possible insult. I tried a sweet-looking little chap in white next, with exactly the same result. Somehow, this manner made me feel ashamed of myself. But, as you know, I wanted the Time Machine, and I tried him once more. As he

turned off, like the others, my temper got the better of me. In three strides I was after him, had him by the loose part of his robe round the neck, and began dragging him towards the sphinx. Then I saw the horror and repugnance of his face, and all of a sudden I let him go.

“But I was not beaten yet. I banged with my fist at the bronze panels, I thought I heard something stir inside—to be explicit, I thought I heard a sound like a chuckle—but I must have been mistaken. Then I got a big pebble from the river, and came and hammered till I had flattened a coil in the decorations, and the verdigris came off in powdery flakes. The delicate little people must have heard me hammering in gusty outbreaks a mile away on either hand, but nothing came of it. I saw a crowd of them upon the slopes, looking furtively at me. At last, hot and tired, I sat down to watch the place. But I was too restless to watch long; I am too Occidental¹ for a long vigil. I could work at a problem for years, but to wait inactive for twenty-four hours—that is another matter.

“I got up after a time, and began walking aimlessly through the bushes towards the hill again. ‘Patience,’ said I to myself. ‘If you want your machine again you must leave that sphinx alone. If they mean to take your machine away, it’s little good your wrecking their bronze panels, and if they don’t, you will get it back as soon as you can ask for it. To sit among all those unknown things before a puzzle like that is hopeless. That way lies monomania. Face this world. Learn its ways, watch it, be careful of too hasty guesses at its meaning. In the end you will find clues to it all.’ Then suddenly the humour of the situation came into my mind: the thought of the years I had spent in study and toil to get into the future age, and now my passion of anxiety to get out of it. I had made myself the most complicated and the most hopeless trap that ever a man devised. Although it was at my own expense, I could not help myself. I laughed aloud.

“Going through the big palace, it seemed to me that the little people avoided me. It may have been my fancy or it may have had something to do with my hammering at the gates of bronze. Yet I felt tolerably sure of the avoidance. I was careful, however, to show no concern and to abstain from any pursuit of them, and in the course of a day or two things got back to the old footing. I made what progress I could in the language, and

in addition I pushed my explorations here and there. Either I missed some subtle point, or their language was excessively simple—almost exclusively composed of concrete substantives and verbs. There seemed to be few, if any, abstract terms, or little use of figurative language. Their sentences were usually simple and of two words, and I failed to convey or understand any but the simplest propositions. I determined to put the thought of my Time Machine and the mystery of the bronze doors under the sphinx as much as possible in a corner of memory, until my growing knowledge would lead me back to them in a natural way. Yet a certain feeling, you may understand, tethered me in a circle of a few miles round the point of my arrival.

“So far as I could see, all the world displayed the same exuberant richness as the Thames valley. From every hill I climbed I saw the same abundance of splendid buildings, endlessly varied in material and style, the same clustering thickets of evergreens, the same blossom-laden trees and tree-ferns. Here and there water shone like silver, and beyond, the land rose into blue undulating hills, and so faded into the serenity of the sky. A peculiar feature, which presently attracted my attention, was the presence of certain circular wells, several, as it seemed to me, of a very great depth. One lay by the path up the hill, which I had followed during my first walk. Like the others, it was rimmed with bronze, curiously wrought, and protected by a little cupola from the rain. Sitting by the side of these wells, and peering down into the shafted darkness, I could see no gleam of water, nor could I start any reflection with a lighted match. But in all of them I heard a certain sound: a thud-thud-thud, like the beating of some big engine; and I discovered, from the flaring of my matches, that a steady current of air set down the shafts. Further, I threw a scrap of paper into the throat of one, and, instead of fluttering slowly down, it was at once sucked swiftly out of sight.

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

apparatus of these people. It was an obvious conclusion, but it was absolutely wrong.

“And here I must admit that I learned very little of drains and bells and modes of conveyance, and the like conveniences, during my time in this real future. In some of these visions of Utopias and coming times which I have read, there is a vast amount of detail about building, and social arrangements, and so forth. But while such details are easy enough to obtain when the whole world is contained in one’s imagination, they are altogether inaccessible to a real traveller amid such realities as I found here. Conceive the tale of London which a negro, fresh from Central Africa, would take back to his tribe! What would he know of railway companies, of social movements, of telephone and telegraph wires, of the Parcels Delivery Company, and postal orders and the like? Yet we, at least, should be willing enough to explain these things to him! And even of what he knew, how much could he make his untravelled friend either apprehend or believe? Then, think how narrow the gap between a negro and a white man of our own times, and how wide the interval between myself and these of the Golden Age! I was sensible of much which was unseen, and which contributed to my comfort; but save for a general impression of automatic organization, I fear I can convey very little of the difference to your mind.

“In the matter of sepulture, for instance, I could see no signs of crematoria nor anything suggestive of tombs. But it occurred to me that possibly, there might be cemeteries (or crematoria) somewhere beyond the range of my explorings. This, again, was a question I deliberately put to myself, and my curiosity was at first entirely defeated upon the point. The thing puzzled me, and I was led to make a further remark, which puzzled me still more: that aged and infirm among this people there were none.

“I must confess that my satisfaction with my first theories of an automatic civilization and a decadent humanity did not long endure. Yet I could think of no other. Let me put my difficulties. The several big palaces I had explored were mere living places, great dining-halls and sleeping apartments. I could find no machinery, no appliances of any kind. Yet these people were clothed in pleasant fabrics that must at times need

renewal, and their sandals, though undecorated, were fairly complex specimens of metalwork. Somehow such things must be made. And the little people displayed no vestige of a creative tendency. There were no shops, no workshops, no sign of importations among them. They spent all their time in playing gently, in bathing in the river, in making love in a half-playful fashion, in eating fruit and sleeping. I could not see how things were kept going.

“Then, again, about the Time Machine: something, I knew not what, had taken it into the hollow pedestal of the White Sphinx. Why? For the life of me I could not imagine. Those waterless wells, too, those flickering pillars. I felt I lacked a clue. I felt—how shall I put it? Suppose you found an inscription, with sentences here and there in excellent plain English, and interpolated therewith, others made up of words, of letters even, absolutely unknown to you? Well, on the third day of my visit, that was how the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One presented itself to me!

“That day, too, I made a friend—of a sort. It happened that, as I was watching some of the little people bathing in a shallow, one of them was seized with cramp and began drifting downstream. The main current ran rather swiftly, but not too strongly for even a moderate swimmer. It will give you an idea, therefore, of the strange deficiency in these creatures, when I tell you that none made the slightest attempt to rescue the weakly crying little thing which was drowning before their eyes. When I realized this, I hurriedly slipped off my clothes, and, wading in at a point lower down, I caught the poor mite and drew her safe to land. A little rubbing of limbs soon brought her round, and I had the satisfaction of seeing she was all right before I left her. I had got to such a low estimate of her kind that I did not expect any gratitude from her. In that, however, I was wrong.

“This happened in the morning. In the afternoon I met my little woman, as I believe it was, as I was returning towards my centre from an exploration, and she received me with cries of delight and presented me with a big garland of flowers—evidently made for me and me alone. The thing took my imagination. Very possibly I had been feeling desolate. At any rate I did my best to display my appreciation of the gift. We were

soon seated together in a little stone arbour, engaged in conversation, chiefly of smiles. The creature's friendliness affected me exactly as a child's might have done. We passed each other flowers, and she kissed my hands. I did the same to hers. Then I tried talk, and found that her name was Weena, which though I don't know what it meant, somehow seemed appropriate enough. That was the beginning of a queer friendship which lasted a week, and ended—as I will tell you!

“She was exactly like a child. She wanted to be with me always. She tried to follow me everywhere, and on my next journey out and about it went to my heart to tire her down and leave her at last, exhausted and calling after me rather plaintively. But the problems of the world had to be mastered. I had not, I said to myself, come into the future to carry on a miniature flirtation. Yet her distress when I left her was very great, her expostulations at the parting were sometimes frantic, and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from her devotion. Nevertheless she was, somehow, a very great comfort. I thought it was mere childish affection that made her cling to me. Until it was too late, I did not clearly know what I had inflicted upon her when I left her. Nor until it was too late did I clearly understand what she was to me. For, by merely seeming fond of me, and showing in her weak, futile way that she cared for me, the little doll of a creature presently gave my return to the neighbourhood of the White Sphinx almost the feeling of coming home; and I would watch for her tiny figure of white and gold so soon as I came over the hill.

“It was from her, too, that I learned that fear had not yet left the world. She was fearless enough in the daylight, and she had the oddest confidence in me; for once, in a foolish moment, I made threatening grimaces at her, and she simply laughed at them. But she dreaded the dark, dreaded shadows, dreaded black things. Darkness to her was the one thing dreadful. It was a singularly passionate emotion, and it set me thinking and observing. I discovered then, among other things, that these little people gathered into the great houses after dark, and slept in droves. To enter upon them without a light was to put them into a tumult of apprehension. I never found one out of doors, or one sleeping alone within doors, after dark. Yet I was still such a blockhead that I missed the

lesson of that fear, and in spite of Weena's distress I insisted upon sleeping away from these slumbering multitudes.

"It troubled her greatly, but in the end her odd affection for me triumphed, and for five of the nights of our acquaintance, including the last night of all, she slept with her head pillowed on my arm. But my story slips away from me as I speak of her. It must have been the night before her rescue that I was awakened about dawn. I had been restless, dreaming most disagreeably that I was drowned, and that sea-anemones were feeling over my face with their soft palps. I woke with a start, and with an odd fancy that some greyish animal had just rushed out of the chamber. I tried to get to sleep again, but I felt restless and uncomfortable. It was that dim grey hour when things are just creeping out of darkness, when everything is colourless and clear cut, and yet unreal. I got up, and went down into the great hall, and so out upon the flagstones in front of the palace. I thought I would make a virtue of necessity, and see the sunrise.

"The moon was setting, and the dying moonlight and the first pallor of dawn were mingled in a ghastly half-light. The bushes were inky black, the ground a sombre grey, the sky colourless and cheerless. And up the hill I thought I could see ghosts. There several times, as I scanned the slope, I saw white figures. Twice I fancied I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running rather quickly up the hill, and once near the ruins I saw a leash of them carrying some dark body. They moved hastily. I did not see what became of them. It seemed that they vanished among the bushes. The dawn was still indistinct, you must understand. I was feeling that chill, uncertain, early-morning feeling you may have known. I doubted my eyes.

"As the eastern sky grew brighter, and the light of the day came on and its vivid colouring returned upon the world once more, I scanned the view keenly. But I saw no vestige of my white figures. They were mere creatures of the half-light. 'They must have been ghosts,' I said; 'I wonder whence they dated.' For a queer notion of Grant Allen's² came into my head, and amused me. If each generation die and leave ghosts, he argued, the world at last will get overcrowded with them. On that theory they would have grown innumerable some Eight Hundred Thousand Years

hence, and it was no great wonder to see four at once. But the jest was unsatisfying, and I was thinking of these figures all the morning, until Weena's rescue drove them out of my head. I associated them in some indefinite way with the white animal I had startled in my first passionate search for the Time Machine. But Weena was a pleasant substitute. Yet all the same, they were soon destined to take far deadlier possession of my mind.

“I think I have said how much hotter than our own was the weather of this Golden Age. I cannot account for it. It may be the sun was hotter, or the earth nearer the sun. It is usual to assume that the sun will go on cooling steadily in the future. But people, unfamiliar with such speculations as those of the younger Darwin, forget that the planets must ultimately fall back one by one into the parent body. As these catastrophes occur, the sun will blaze with renewed energy; and it may be that some inner planet had suffered this fate. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the sun was very much hotter than we know it.

“Well, one very hot morning—my fourth, I think—as I was seeking shelter from the heat and glare in a colossal ruin near the great house where I slept and fed, there happened this strange thing: clambering among these heaps of masonry, I found a narrow gallery, whose end and side windows were blocked by fallen masses of stone. By contrast with the brilliancy outside, it seemed at first impenetrably dark to me. I entered it groping, for the change from light to blackness made spots of colour swim before me. Suddenly I halted spellbound. A pair of eyes, luminous by reflection against the daylight without, was watching me out of the darkness.

“The old instinctive dread of wild beasts came upon me. I clenched my hands and steadfastly looked into the glaring eyeballs. I was afraid to turn. Then the thought of the absolute security in which humanity appeared to be living came to my mind. And then I remembered that strange terror of the dark. Overcoming my fear to some extent, I advanced a step and spoke. I will admit that my voice was harsh and illcontrolled. I put out my hand and touched something soft. At once the eyes darted sideways, and something white ran past me. I turned with my heart in my mouth, and saw a queer little ape-like figure, its head held down in a peculiar manner,

running across the sunlit space behind me. It blundered against a block of granite, staggered aside, and in a moment was hidden in a black shadow beneath another pile of ruined masonry.

“My impression of it is, of course, imperfect; but I know it was a dull white, and had strange large greyishred eyes; also that there was flaxen hair on its head and down its back. But, as I say, it went too fast for me to see distinctly. I cannot even say whether it ran on all-fours, or only with its forearms held very low. After an instant’s pause I followed it into the second heap of ruins. I could not find it at first; but, after a time in the profound obscurity, I came upon one of those round well-like openings of which I have told you, half closed by a fallen pillar. A sudden thought came to me. Could this Thing have vanished down the shaft? I lit a match, and, looking down, I saw a small, white, moving creature, with large bright eyes which regarded me steadfastly as it retreated. It made me shudder. It was so like a human spider! It was clambering down the wall, and now I saw for the first time a number of metal foot and hand rests forming a kind of ladder down the shaft. Then the light burned my fingers and fell out of my hand, going out as it dropped, and when I had lit another the little monster had disappeared.

“I do not know how long I sat peering down that well. It was not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human. But, gradually, the truth dawned on me: that Man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the Upper-world were not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages.

“I thought of the flickering pillars and of my theory of an underground ventilation. I began to suspect their true import. And what, I wondered, was this Lemur doing in my scheme of a perfectly balanced organization? How was it related to the indolent serenity of the beautiful Upperworlders? And what was hidden down there, at the foot of that shaft? I sat upon the edge of the well telling myself that, at any rate, there was nothing to fear, and that there I must descend for the solution of my difficulties. And withal I was absolutely afraid to go! As I hesitated, two of the beautiful Upperworld people came running in their amorous sport

across the daylight in the shadow. The male pursued the female, flinging flowers at her as he ran.

“They seemed distressed to find me, my arm against the overturned pillar, peering down the well. Apparently it was considered bad form to remark these apertures; for when I pointed to this one, and tried to frame a question about it in their tongue, they were still more visibly distressed and turned away. But they were interested by my matches, and I struck some to amuse them. I tried them again about the well, and again I failed. So presently I left them, meaning to go back to Weena, and see what I could get from her. But my mind was already in revolution; my guesses and impressions were slipping and sliding to a new adjustment. I had now a clue to the import of these wells, to the ventilating towers, to the mystery of the ghosts; to say nothing of a hint at the meaning of the bronze gates and the fate of the Time Machine! And very vaguely there came a suggestion towards the solution of the economic problem that had puzzled me.

“Here was the new view. Plainly, this second species of Man was subterranean. There were three circumstances in particular which made me think that its rare emergence above ground was the outcome of a long-continued underground look common in most animals that live largely in the dark—the white fish of the Kentucky caves,³ for instance. Then, those large eyes, with that capacity for reflecting light, are common features of nocturnal things—witness the owl and the cat. And last of all, that evident confusion in the sunshine, that hasty yet fumbling awkward flight towards dark shadow, and that peculiar carriage of the head while in the light—all reinforced the theory of an extreme sensitiveness of the retina.

“Beneath my feet, then, the earth must be tunnelled enormously, and these tunnellings were the habitat of the new race. The presence of ventilating shafts and wells along the hill slopes—everywhere, in fact, except along the river valley—showed how universal were its ramifications. What so natural, then, as to assume that it was in this artificial Under-world that such work as was necessary to the comfort of the daylight race was done? The notion was so plausible that I at once accepted it, and went on to assume the how of this splitting of the human

species. I dare say you will anticipate the shape of my theory; though, for myself, I very soon felt that it fell far short of the truth.

“At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer, was the key to the whole position. No doubt it will seem grotesque enough to you—and wildly incredible!—and yet even now there are existing circumstances to point that way. There is a tendency to utilize underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilization; there is the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new electric railways, there are subways, there are underground workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply. Evidently, I thought, this tendency had increased till Industry had gradually lost its birthright in the sky. I mean that it had gone deeper and deeper into larger and ever larger underground factories, spending a still-increasing amount of its time therein, till, in the end—! Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?

“Again, the exclusive tendency of richer people—due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor—is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land. About London, for instance, perhaps half the prettier country is shut in against intrusion. And this same widening gulf—which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich—will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social stratification, less and less frequent. So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort and beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour. Once they were there, they would no doubt have to pay rent, and not a little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they refused, they would starve or be suffocated for arrears. Such of them as were so constituted as to be miserable and rebellious would die;

and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the survivors would become as well adapted to the conditions of underground life, and as happy in their way, as the Upper-world people were to theirs. As it seemed to me, the refined beauty and the etiolated pallor followed naturally enough.⁴

“The great triumph of Humanity I had dreamed of took a different shape in my mind. It had been no such triumph of moral education and general co-operation as I had imagined. Instead, I saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and working to a logical conclusion the industrial system of to-day. Its triumph had not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a triumph over Nature and the fellow-man. This, I must warn you, was my theory at the time. I had no convenient cicerone in the pattern of the Utopian books. My explanation may be absolutely wrong. I still think it is the most plausible one. But even on this supposition the balanced civilization that was at last attained must have long since passed its zenith, and was now far fallen into decay. The too-perfect security of the Upperworlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence. That I could see clearly enough already. What had happened to the Under-grounders I did not yet suspect; but from what I had seen of the Morlocks—that, by the by, was the name by which these creatures were called—I could imagine that the modification of the human type was even far more profound than among the ‘Eloi,’ the beautiful race that I already knew.

“Then came troublesome doubts. Why had the Morlocks taken my Time Machine? For I felt sure it was they who had taken it. Why, too, if the Eloi were masters, could they not restore the machine to me? And why were they so terribly afraid of the dark? I proceeded, as I have said, to question Weena about this Under-world, but here again I was disappointed. At first she would not understand my questions, and presently she refused to answer them. She shivered as though the topic was unendurable. And when I pressed her, perhaps a little harshly, she burst into tears. They were the only tears, except my own, I ever saw in that Golden Age. When I saw them I ceased abruptly to trouble about the Morlocks, and was only concerned in banishing these signs of the human

inheritance from Weena's eyes. And very soon she was smiling and clapping her hands, while I solemnly burned a match.

VI



“IT MAY SEEM odd to you, but it was two days before I could follow up the new-found clue in what was manifestly the proper way. I felt a peculiar shrinking from those pallid bodies. They were just the half-bleached colour of the worms and things one sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum. And they were filthily cold to the touch. Probably my shrinking was largely due to the sympathetic influence of the Eloi, whose disgust of the Morlocks I now began to appreciate.

“The next night I did not sleep well. Probably my health was a little disordered. I was oppressed with perplexity and doubt. Once or twice I had a feeling of intense fear for which I could perceive no definite reason. I remember creeping noiselessly into the great hall where the little people were sleeping in the moonlight—that night Weena was among them—and feeling reassured by their presence. It occurred to me even then, that in the course of a few days the moon must pass through its last quarter, and the nights grow dark, when the appearances of these unpleasant creatures from below, these whitened Lemurs, this new vermin that had replaced the old, might be more abundant. And on both these days I had the restless feeling of one who shirks an inevitable duty. I felt assured that the Time Machine was only to be recovered by boldly penetrating these underground mysteries. Yet I could not face the mystery. If only I had had a companion it would have been different. But I was so horribly alone, and even to clamber down into the darkness of the well appalled me. I don’t know if you will understand my feeling, but I never felt quite safe at my back.

“It was this restlessness, this insecurity, perhaps, that drove me further and further afield in my exploring expeditions. Going to the south-westward towards the rising country that is now called Combe Wood, I observed far off, in the direction of nineteenth-century Banstead,¹ a vast green structure, different in character from any I had hitherto seen. It

was larger than the largest of the palaces or ruins I knew, and the façade had an Oriental look; the face of it having the lustre, as well as the pale-green tint, a kind of bluish-green, of a certain type of Chinese porcelain. This difference in aspect suggested a difference in use, and I was minded to push on and explore. But the day was growing late, and I had come upon the sight of the place after a long and tiring circuit; so I resolved to hold over the adventure for the following day, and I returned to the welcome and the caresses of little Weena. But next morning I perceived clearly enough that my curiosity regarding the Palace of Green Porcelain was a piece of self-deception, to enable me to shirk, by another day, an experience I dreaded. I resolved I would make the descent without further waste of time, and started out in the early morning towards a well near the ruins of granite and aluminium.

“Little Weena ran with me. She danced beside me to the well, but when she saw me lean over the mouth and look downward, she seemed strangely disconcerted. ‘Good-bye, little Weena,’ I said, kissing her; and then, putting her down, I began to feel over the parapet for the climbing hooks. Rather hastily, I may as well confess, for I feared my courage might leak away! At first she watched me in amazement. Then she gave a most piteous cry, and, running to me, she began to pull at me with her little hands. I think her opposition nerved me rather to proceed. I shook her off, perhaps a little roughly, and in another moment I was in the throat of the well. I saw her agonized face over the parapet, and smiled to reassure her. Then I had to look down at the unstable hooks to which I clung.

“I had to clamber down a shaft of perhaps two hundred yards. The descent was effected by means of metallic bars projecting from the sides of the well, and these being adapted to the needs of a creature much smaller and lighter than myself, I was speedily cramped and fatigued by the descent. And not simply fatigued! One of the bars bent off into the blackness beneath. For a moment I hung by one hand, and after that experience I did not dare to rest again. Though my arms and back were presently acutely painful, I went on clambering down the sheer descent with as quick a motion as possible. Glancing upward, I saw the aperture, a small blue disk, in which a star was visible, while little Weena’s head showed as a round black projection. The thudding sound of a machine

below grew louder and more oppressive. Everything save that little disk above was profoundly dark, and when I looked up again Weena had disappeared.

“I was in an agony of discomfort. I had some thought of trying to go up the shaft again, and leave the Underworld alone. But even while I turned this over in my mind I continued to descend. At last, with intense relief, I saw dimly coming up, a foot to the right of me, a slender loophole in the wall. Swinging myself in, I found it was the aperture of a narrow horizontal tunnel in which I could lie down and rest. It was not too soon. My arms ached, my back was cramped, and I was trembling with the prolonged terror of a fall. Besides this, the unbroken darkness had had a distressing effect upon my eyes. The air was full of the throb and hum of machinery pumping air down the shaft.

“I do not know how long I lay. I was roused by a soft hand touching my face. Starting up in the darkness I snatched at my matches and, hastily striking one, I saw three stooping white creatures similar to the one I had seen above ground in the ruin, hastily retreating before the light. Living, as they did, in what appeared to me impenetrable darkness, their eyes were abnormally large and sensitive, just as are the pupils of the abysmal fishes, and they reflected the light in the same way. I have no doubt they could see me in that rayless obscurity, and they did not seem to have any fear of me apart from the light. But, so soon as I struck a match in order to see them, they fled incontinently, vanishing into dark gutters and tunnels, from which their eyes glared at me in the strangest fashion.

“I tried to call to them, but the language they had was apparently different from that of the Over-world people; so that I was needs left to my own unaided efforts, and the thought of flight before exploration was even then in my mind. But I said to myself, ‘You are in for it now,’ and, feeling my way along the tunnel, I found the noise of machinery grow louder. Presently the walls fell away from me, and I came to a large open space, and striking another match, saw that I had entered a vast arched cavern, which stretched into utter darkness beyond the range of my light. The view I had of it was as much as one could see in the burning of a match.

“Necessarily my memory is vague. Great shapes like big machines rose out of the dimness, and cast grotesque black shadows, in which dim spectral Morlocks sheltered from the glare. The place, by the by, was very stuffy and oppressive, and the faint halitus of freshly shed blood was in the air. Some way down the central vista was a little table of white metal, laid with what seemed a meal. The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous! Even at the time, I remember wondering what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw. It was all very indistinct: the heavy smell, the big unmeaning shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the shadows, and only waiting for the darkness to come at me again! Then the match burned down, and stung my fingers, and fell, a wriggling red spot in the blackness.

“I have thought since how particularly ill-equipped I was for such an experience. When I had started with the Time Machine, I had started with the absurd assumption that the men of the Future would certainly be infinitely ahead of ourselves in all their appliances. I had come without arms, without medicine, without anything to smoke—at times I missed tobacco frightfully—even without enough matches. If only I had thought of a Kodak! I could have flashed that glimpse of the Under-world in a second, and examined it at leisure. But, as it was, I stood there with only the weapons and the powers that Nature had endowed me with—hands, feet, and teeth; these, and four safety-matches that still remained to me.

“I was afraid to push my way in among all this machinery in the dark, and it was only with my last glimpse of light I discovered that my store of matches had run low. It had never occurred to me until that moment that there was any need to economize them, and I had wasted almost half the box in astonishing the Upper-worlders, to whom fire was a novelty. Now, as I say, I had four left, and while I stood in the dark, a hand touched mine, lank fingers came feeling over my face, and I was sensible of a peculiar unpleasant odour. I fancied I heard the breathing of a crowd of those dreadful little beings about me. I felt the box of matches in my hand being gently disengaged, and other hands behind me plucking at my clothing. The sense of these unseen creatures examining me was indescribably unpleasant. The sudden realization of my ignorance of their ways of thinking and doing came home to me very vividly in the darkness.

I shouted at them as loudly as I could. They started away, and then I could feel them approaching me again. They clutched at me more boldly, whispering odd sounds to each other. I shivered violently, and shouted again—rather discordantly. This time they were not so seriously alarmed, and they made a queer laughing noise as they came back at me. I will confess I was horribly frightened. I determined to strike another match and escape under the protection of its glare. I did so, and eking out the flicker with a scrap of paper from my pocket. I made good my retreat to the narrow tunnel. But I had scarce entered this when my light was blown out, and in the blackness I could hear the Morlocks rustling like wind among leaves, and pattering like the rain, as they hurried after me.

“In a moment I was clutched by several hands, and there was no mistaking that they were trying to haul me back. I struck another light, and waved it in their dazzled faces. You can scarce imagine how nauseatingly inhuman they looked—those pale, chinless faces and great, lidless, pinkish-grey eyes!—as they stared in their blindness and bewilderment. But I did not stay to look, I promise you: I retreated again, and when my second match had ended, I struck my third. It had almost burned through when I reached the opening into the shaft. I lay down on the edge, for the throb of the great pump below made me giddy. Then I felt sideways for the projecting hooks, and, as I did so, my feet were grasped from behind, and I was violently tugged backward. I lit my last match . . . and it incontinently went out. But I had my hand on the climbing bars now, and, kicking violently, I disengaged myself from the clutches of the Morlocks and was speedily clambering up the shaft, while they stayed peering and blinking up at me: all but one little wretch who followed me for some way, and wellnigh secured my boot as a trophy.

“That climb seemed interminable to me. With the last twenty or thirty feet of it a deadly nausea came upon me. I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my hold. The last few yards was a frightful struggle against this faintness. Several times my head swam, and I felt all the sensations of falling. At last, however, I got over the well-mouth somehow, and staggered out of the ruin into the blinding sunlight. I fell upon my face. Even the soil smelt sweet and clean. Then I remember Weena kissing my

hands and ears, and the voices of others among the Eloi. Then, for a time,
I was insensible.

VII



“NOW, INDEED, I seemed in a worse case than before. Hitherto, except during my night’s anguish at the loss of the Time Machine, I had felt a sustaining hope of ultimate escape, but that hope was staggered by these new discoveries. Hitherto I had merely thought myself impeded by the childish simplicity of the little people, and by some unknown forces which I had only to understand to overcome; but there was an altogether new element in the sickening quality of the Morlocks—a something inhuman and malign. Instinctively I loathed them. Before, I had felt as a man might feel who had fallen into a pit: my concern was with the pit and how to get out of it. Now I felt like a beast in a trap, whose enemy would come upon him soon.

“The enemy I dreaded may surprise you. It was the darkness of the new moon. Weena had put this into my head by some at first incomprehensible remarks about the Dark Nights. It was not now such a very difficult problem to guess what the coming Dark Nights might mean. The moon was on the wane: each night there was a longer interval of darkness. And I now understood to some slight degree at least the reason of the fear of the little Upper-world people for the dark. I wondered vaguely what foul villainy it might be that the Morlocks did under the new moon. I felt pretty sure now that my second hypothesis was all wrong. The Upper-world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants: but that had long since passed away. The two species that had resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carovingian¹ kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylight surface intolerable. And the Morlocks made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs,

perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service. They did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or as a man enjoys killing animals in sport: because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism. But, clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. The Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back—changed! Already the Eloi had begun to learn one old lesson anew. They were becoming reacquainted with Fear. And suddenly there came into my head the memory of the meat I had seen in the Underworld. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not stirred up as it were by the current of my meditations, but coming in almost like a question from outside. I tried to recall the form of it. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I could not tell what it was at the time.

“Still, however helpless the little people in the presence of their mysterious Fear, I was differently constituted. I came out of this age of ours, this ripe prime of the human race, when Fear does not paralyse and mystery has lost its terrors. I at least would defend myself. Without further delay I determined to make myself arms and a fastness where I might sleep. With that refuge as a base, I could face this strange world with some of that confidence I had lost in realizing to what creatures night by night I lay exposed. I felt I could never sleep again until my bed was secure from them. I shuddered with horror to think how they must already have examined me.

“I wandered during the afternoon along the valley of the Thames, but found nothing that commended itself to my mind as inaccessible. All the buildings and trees seemed easily practicable to such dexterous climbers as the Morlocks, to judge by their wells, must be. Then the tall pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain and the polished gleam of its walls came back to my memory; and in the evening, taking Weena like a child upon my shoulder, I went up the hills towards the southwest. The distance, I had reckoned, was seven or eight miles, but it must have been nearer eighteen. I had first seen the place on a moist afternoon when distances are deceptively diminished. In addition, the heel of one of my shoes was loose, and a nail was working through the sole—they were comfortable

old shoes I wore about indoors—so that I was lame. And it was already long past sunset when I came in sight of the palace, silhouetted black against the pale yellow of the sky.

“Weena had been hugely delighted when I began to carry her, but after a time she desired me to let her down, and ran along by the side of me, occasionally darting off on either hand to pick flowers to stick in my pockets. My pockets had always puzzled Weena, but at the last she had concluded that they were an eccentric kind of vase for floral decoration. At least she utilized them for that purpose. And that reminds me! In changing my jacket I found...”

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

“As the hush of evening crept over the world and we proceeded over the hill crest towards Wimbledon, Weena grew tired and wanted to return to the house of grey stone. But I pointed out the distant pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain to her, and contrived to make her understand that we were seeking a refuge there from her Fear. You know that great pause that comes upon things before the dusk? Even the breeze stops in the trees. To me there is always an air of expectation about that evening stillness. The sky was clear, remote, and empty save for a few horizontal bars far down in the sunset. Well, that night the expectation took the colour of my fears. In that darkling calm my senses seemed preternaturally sharpened. I fancied I could even feel the hollowness of the ground beneath my feet: could, indeed, almost see through it the Morlocks on their anthill going hither and thither and waiting for the dark. In my excitement I fancied that they would receive my invasion of their burrows as a declaration of war. And why had they taken my Time Machine?”

“So we went on in the quiet, and the twilight deepened into night. The clear blue of the distance faded, and one star after another came out. The ground grew dim and the trees black. Weena’s fears and her fatigue grew upon her. I took her in my arms and talked to her and caressed her. Then, as the darkness grew deeper, she put her arms round my neck, and, closing her eyes, tightly pressed her face against my shoulder. So we went

down a long slope into a valley, and there in the dimness I almost walked into a little river. This I waded, and went up the opposite side of the valley, past a number of sleeping houses, and by a statue—a Faun, or some such figure, minus the head. Here too were acacias.² So far I had seen nothing of the Morlocks, but it was yet early in the night, and the darker hours before the old moon rose were still to come.

“From the brow of the next hill I saw a thick wood spreading wide and black before me. I hesitated at this. I could see no end to it, either to the right or the left. Feeling tired—my feet, in particular, were very sore—I carefully lowered Weena from my shoulder as I halted, and sat down upon the turf. I could no longer see the Palace of Green Porcelain, and I was in doubt of my direction. I looked into the thickness of the wood and thought of what it might hide. Under that dense tangle of branches one would be out of sight of the stars. Even were there no other lurking danger—a danger I did not care to let my imagination loose upon—there would still be all the roots to stumble over and the tree-boles to strike against.

“I was very tired, too, after the excitements of the day; so I decided that I would not face it, but would pass the night upon the open hill.

“Weena, I was glad to find, was fast asleep. I carefully wrapped her in my jacket, and sat down beside her to wait for the moonrise. The hill-side was quiet and deserted, but from the black of the wood there came now and then a stir of living things. Above me shone the stars, for the night was very clear. I felt a certain sense of friendly comfort in their twinkling. All the old constellations had gone from the sky, however: that slow movement which is imperceptible in a hundred human lifetimes, had long since rearranged them in unfamiliar groupings. But the Milky Way, it seemed to me, was still the same tattered streamer of star-dust as of yore.³ Southward (as I judged it) was a very bright red star that was new to me; it was even more splendid than our own green Sirius. And amid all these scintillating points of light one bright planet shone kindly and steadily like the face of an old friend.

“Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of terrestrial life. I thought of their unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into

the unknown future. I thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes. Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed. And during these few revolutions all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organizations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence. Instead were these frail creatures who had forgotten their high ancestry, and the white Things of which I went in terror. Then I thought of the Great Fear that was between the two species, and for the first time, with a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be. Yet it was too horrible! I looked at little Weena sleeping beside me, her face white and star-like under the stars, and forthwith dismissed the thought.

“Through that long night I held my mind off the Morlocks as well as I could, and whiled away the time by trying to fancy I could find signs of the old constellations in the new confusion. The sky kept very clear, except for a hazy cloud or so. No doubt I dozed at times. Then, as my vigil wore on, came a faintness in the eastward sky, like the reflection of some colourless fire, and the old moon rose, thin and peaked and white. And close behind, and overtaking it, and overflowing it, the dawn came, pale at first, and then growing pink and warm. No Morlocks had approached us. Indeed, I had seen none upon the hill that night. And in the confidence of renewed day it almost seemed to me that my fear had been unreasonable. I stood up and found my foot with the loose heel swollen at the ankle and painful under the heel; so I sat down again, took off my shoes, and flung them away.

“I awakened Weena, and we went down into the wood, now green and pleasant instead of black and forbidding. We found some fruit wherewith to break our fast. We soon met others of the dainty ones, laughing and dancing in the sunlight as though there was no such thing in nature as the night. And then I thought once more of the meat that I had seen. I felt assured now of what it was, and from the bottom of my heart I pitied this last feeble rill from the great flood of humanity. Clearly, at some time in the Long-Ago of human decay the Morlocks’ food had run short. Possibly they had lived on rats and such-like vermin. Even now man is far less discriminating and exclusive in his food than he was—far less than any

monkey. His prejudice against human flesh is no deep-seated instinct. And so these inhuman sons of men—! I tried to look at the thing in a scientific spirit. After all, they were less human and more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago. And the intelligence that would have made this state of things a torment had gone. Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of. And there was Weena dancing at my side!

“Then I tried to preserve myself from the horror that was coming upon me, by regarding it as a rigorous punishment of human selfishness. Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labours of his fellow-man, had taken Necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had come home to him. I even tried a Carlyle-like⁴ scorn of this wretched aristocracy in decay. But this attitude of mind was impossible. However great their intellectual degradation, the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy, and to make me perforce a sharer in their degradation and their Fear.

“I had at that time very vague ideas as to the course I should pursue. My first was to secure some safe place of refuge, and to make myself such arms of metal or stone as I could contrive. That necessity was immediate. In the next place, I hoped to procure some means of fire, so that I should have the weapon of a torch at hand, for nothing, I knew, would be more efficient against these Morlocks. Then I wanted to arrange some contrivance to break open the doors of bronze under the White Sphinx. I had in mind a battering-ram. I had a persuasion that if I could enter those doors and carry a blaze of light before me I should discover the Time Machine and escape. I could not imagine the Morlocks were strong enough to move it far away. Weena I had resolved to bring with me to our own time. And turning such schemes over in my mind I pursued our way towards the building which my fancy had chosen as our dwelling.

VIII



“I FOUND THE Palace of Green Porcelain, when we approached it about noon, deserted and falling into ruin. Only ragged vestiges of glass remained in its windows, and great sheets of the green facing had fallen away from the corroded metallic framework. It lay very high upon a turfy down, and looking northeastward before I entered it, I was surprised to see a large estuary, or even creek, where I judged Wands-worth and Battersea must once have been. I thought then—though I never followed up the thought—of what might have happened, or might be happening, to the living things in the sea.

“The material of the Palace proved on examination to be indeed porcelain, and along the face of it I saw an inscription in some unknown character. I thought, rather foolishly, that Weena might help me to interpret this, but I only learned that the bare idea of writing had never entered her head. She always seemed to me, I fancy, more human than she was, perhaps because her affection was so human.

“Within the big valves of the door—which were open and broken—we found, instead of the customary hall, a long gallery lit by many side windows. At the first glance I was reminded of a museum. The tiled floor was thick with dust, and a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects was shrouded in the same grey covering. Then I perceived, standing strange and gaunt in the centre of the hall, what was clearly the lower part of a huge skeleton. I recognized by the oblique feet that it was some extinct creature after the fashion of the Megatherium. The skull and the upper bones lay beside it in the thick dust, and in one place, where rainwater had dropped through a leak in the roof, the thing itself had been worn away. Further in the gallery was the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus. My museum hypothesis was confirmed. Going towards the side I found what appeared to be sloping shelves, and clearing away the thick dust, I found the old familiar glass cases of our own time. But they

must have been air-tight to judge from the fair preservation of some of their contents.

“Clearly we stood among the ruins of some latter-day South Kensington!¹ Here, apparently, was the Palaeon-tological Section, and a very splendid array of fossils it must have been, though the inevitable process of decay that had been staved off for a time, and had, through the extinction of bacteria and fungi, lost ninety-nine hundredths of its force, was nevertheless, with extreme sureness if with extreme slowness at work again upon all its treasures. Here and there I found traces of the little people in the shape of rare fossils broken to pieces or threaded in strings upon reeds. And the cases had in some instances been bodily removed—by the Morlocks as I judged. The place was very silent. The thick dust deadened our footsteps. Weena, who had been rolling a sea-urchin down the sloping glass of a case, presently came, as I stared about me, and very quietly took my hand and stood beside me.

“And at first I was so much surprised by this ancient monument of an intellectual age, that I gave no thought to the possibilities it presented. Even my preoccupation about the Time Machine receded a little from my mind.

“To judge from the size of the place, this Palace of Green Porcelain had a great deal more in it than a Gallery of Palaeontology; possibly historical galleries; it might be, even a library! To me, at least in my present circumstances, these would be vastly more interesting than this spectacle of old-time geology in decay. Exploring, I found another short gallery running transversely to the first. This appeared to be devoted to minerals, and the sight of a block of sulphur set my mind running on gunpowder. But I could find no saltpeter; indeed, no nitrates of any kind. Doubtless they had deliquesced ages ago. Yet the sulphur hung in my mind, and set up a train of thinking. As for the rest of the contents of that gallery, though on the whole they were the best preserved of all I saw, I had little interest. I am no specialist in mineralogy, and I went on down a very ruinous aisle running parallel to the first hall I had entered. Apparently this section had been devoted to natural history, but everything had long since passed out of recognition. A few shrivelled and blackened vestiges of what had once been stuffed animals, desiccated mummies in jars that

had once held spirit, a brown dust of departed plants: that was all! I was sorry for that, because I should have been glad to trace the patent readjustments by which the conquest of animated nature had been attained. Then we came to a gallery of simply colossal proportions, but singularly ill-lit, the floor of it running downward at a slight angle from the end at which I entered. At intervals white globes hung from the ceiling—many of them cracked and smashed—which suggested that originally the place had been artificially lit. Here I was more in my element, for rising on either side of me were the huge bulks of big machines, all greatly corroded and many broken down, but some still fairly complete. You know I have a certain weakness for mechanism, and I was inclined to linger among these; the more so as for the most part they had the interest of puzzles, and I could make only the vaguest guesses at what they were for. I fancied that if I could solve their puzzles I should find myself in possession of powers that might be of use against the Morlocks.

“Suddenly Weena came very close to my side. So suddenly that she startled me. Had it not been for her I do not think I should have noticed that the floor of the gallery sloped at all.* The end I had come in at was quite above ground, and was lit by rare slit-like windows. As you went down the length, the ground came up against these windows, until at last there was a pit like the ‘area’ of a London house before each, and only a narrow line of daylight at the top. I went slowly along, puzzling about the machines, and had been too intent upon them to notice the gradual diminution of the light, until Weena’s increasing apprehensions drew my attention. Then I saw that the gallery ran down at last into a thick darkness. I hesitated, and then, as I looked round me, I saw that the dust was less abundant and its surface less even. Further away towards the dimness, it appeared to be broken by a number of small narrow footprints. My sense of the immediate presence of the Morlocks revived at that. I felt that I was wasting my time in this academic examination of machinery. I called to mind that it was already far advanced in the afternoon, and that I had still no weapon, no refuge, and no means of making a fire. And then down in the remote blackness of the gallery I

heard a peculiar pattering, and the same odd noises I had heard down the well.

“I took Weena’s hand. Then, struck with a sudden idea, I left her and turned to a machine from which projected a lever not unlike those in a signal-box. Clambering upon the stand, and grasping this lever in my hands, I put all my weight upon it sideways. Suddenly Weena, deserted in the central aisle, began to whimper. I had judged the strength of the lever pretty correctly, for it snapped after a minute’s strain, and I rejoined her with a mace in my hand more than sufficient, I judged, for any Morlock skull I might encounter. And I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one’s own descendants! But it was impossible, some-how, to feel any humanity in the things. Only my disinclination to leave Weena, and a persuasion that if I began to slake my thirst for murder my Time Machine might suffer, restrained me from going straight down the gallery and killing the brutes I heard.

“Well, mace in one hand and Weena in the other, I went out of that gallery and into another and still larger one, which at the first glance reminded me of a military chapel hung with tattered flags. The brown and charred rags that hung from the sides of it, I presently recognized as the decaying vestiges of books. They had long since dropped to pieces, and every semblance of print had left them. But here and there were warped boards and cracked metallic clasps that told the tale well enough. Had I been a literary man I might, perhaps, have moralized upon the futility of all ambition. But as it was, the thing that struck me with keenest force was the enormous waste of labour to which this sombre wilderness of rotting paper testified. At the time I will confess that I thought chiefly of the *Philosophical Transactions* and my own seventeen papers upon physical optics.

“Then, going up a broad staircase, we came to what may once have been a gallery of technical chemistry. And here I had not a little hope of useful discoveries. Except at one end where the roof had collapsed, this gallery was well preserved. I went eagerly to every unbroken case. And at last, in one of the really air-tight cases, I found a box of matches. Very eagerly I tried them. They were perfectly good. They were not even

damp. I turned to Weena. ‘Dance,’ I cried to her in her own tongue. For now I had a weapon indeed against the horrible creatures we feared. And so, in that derelict museum, upon the thick soft carpeting of dust, to Weena’s huge delight, I solemnly performed a kind of composite dance, whistling *The Land of the Leal* as cheerfully as I could. In part it was a modest cancan, in part a step-dance, in part a skirt-dance (so far as my tailcoat permitted), and in part original. For I am naturally inventive, as you know.

“Now, I still think that for this box of matches to have escaped the wear of time for immemorial years was a most strange, as for me it was a most fortunate thing. Yet, oddly enough, I found a far unlikelier substance, and that was camphor.² I found it in a sealed jar, that by chance, I suppose, had been really hermetically sealed. I fancied at first that it was paraffin wax, and smashed the glass accordingly. But the odour of camphor was unmistakable. In the universal decay this volatile substance had chanced to survive, perhaps through many thousands of centuries. It reminded me of a sepia painting I had once seen done from the ink of a fossil Belemnite that must have perished and become fossilized millions of years ago. I was about to throw it away, but I remembered that it was inflammable and burned with a good bright flame—was, in fact, an excellent candle—and I put it in my pocket. I found no explosives, however, nor any means of breaking down the bronze doors. As yet my iron crowbar was the most helpful thing I had chanced upon. Nevertheless I left that gallery greatly elated.

“I cannot tell you all the story of that long afternoon. It would require a great effort of memory to recall my explorations in at all the proper order. I remember a long gallery of rusting stands of arms, and how I hesitated between my crowbar and a hatchet or a sword. I could not carry both, however, and my bar of iron promised best against the bronze gates. There were numbers of guns, pistols, and rifles. The most were masses of rust, but many were of some new metal, and still fairly sound. But any cartridges or powder there may once have been had rotted into dust. One corner I saw was charred and shattered; perhaps, I thought, by an explosion among the specimens. In another place was a vast array of idols—Polynesian, Mexican, Grecian, Phoenician, every country on earth I

should think. And here, yielding to an irresistible impulse, I wrote my name upon the nose of a steatite monster from South America that particularly took my fancy.

“As the evening drew on, my interest waned. I went through gallery after gallery, dusty, silent, often ruinous, the exhibits sometimes mere heaps of rust and lignite, sometimes fresher. In one place I suddenly found myself near the model of a tin-mine, and then by the merest accident I discovered, in an air-tight case, two dynamite cartridges! I shouted ‘Eureka!’ and smashed the case with joy. Then came a doubt. I hesitated. Then, selecting a little side gallery, I made my essay. I never felt such a disappointment as I did in waiting five, ten, fifteen minutes for an explosion that never came. Of course the things were dummies, as I might have guessed from their presence. I really believe that, had they not been so, I should have rushed off incontinently and blown Sphinx, bronze doors, and (as it proved) my chances of finding the Time Machine, all together into nonexistence.

“It was after that, I think, that we came to a little open court within the palace. It was turfed, and had three fruit-trees. So we rested and refreshed ourselves. Towards sunset I began to consider our position. Night was creeping upon us, and my inaccessible hiding-place had still to be found. But that troubled me very little now. I had in my possession a thing that was, perhaps, the best of all defences against the Morlocks—I had matches! I had the camphor in my pocket, too, if a blaze were needed. It seemed to me that the best thing we could do would be to pass the night in the open, protected by a fire. In the morning there was the getting of the Time Machine. Towards that, as yet, I had only my iron mace. But now, with my growing knowledge, I felt very differently towards those bronze doors. Up to this, I had refrained from forcing them, largely because of the mystery on the other side. They had never impressed me as being very strong, and I hoped to find my bar of iron not altogether inadequate for the work.

* It may be, of course, that the floor did not slope, but that the museum was built into the side of a hill.—ED.

IX



“WE EMERGED FROM the palace while the sun was still in part above the horizon. I was determined to reach the White Sphinx early the next morning, and ere the dusk I purposed pushing through the woods that had stopped me on the previous journey. My plan was to go as far as possible that night, and then, building a fire, to sleep in the protection of its glare. Accordingly, as we went along I gathered any sticks or dried grass I saw, and presently had my arms full of such litter. Thus loaded, our progress was slower than I had anticipated, and besides Weena was tired. And I began to suffer from sleepiness too; so that it was full night before we reached the wood. Upon the shrubby hill of its edge Weena would have stopped, fearing the darkness before us; but a singular sense of impending calamity, that should indeed have served me as a warning, drove me onward. I had been without sleep for a night and two days, and I was feverish and irritable. I felt sleep coming upon me, and the Morlocks with it.

“While we hesitated, among the black bushes behind us, and dim against their blackness, I saw three crouching figures. There was scrub and long grass all about us, and I did not feel safe from their insidious approach. The forest, I calculated, was rather less than a mile across. If we could get through it to the bare hill-side, there, as it seemed to me, was an altogether safer resting-place; I thought that with my matches and my camphor I could contrive to keep my path illuminated through the woods. Yet it was evident that if I was to flourish matches with my hands I should have to abandon my firewood; so, rather reluctantly, I put it down. And then it came into my head that I would amaze our friends behind by lighting it. I was to discover the atrocious folly of this proceeding, but it came to my mind as an ingenious move for covering our retreat.

“I don’t know if you have ever thought what a rare thing flame must be in the absence of man and in a temperate climate. The sun’s heat is rarely

strong enough to burn, even when it is focused by dewdrops, as is sometimes the case in more tropical districts. Lightning may blast and blacken, but it rarely gives rise to widespread fire. Decaying vegetation may occasionally smoulder with the heat of its fermentation, but this rarely results in flame. In this decadence, too, the art of fire-making had been forgotten on the earth. The red tongues that went licking up my heap of wood were an altogether new and strange thing to Weena.

“She wanted to run to it and play with it. I believe she would have cast herself into it had I not restrained her. But I caught her up, and, in spite of her struggles, plunged boldly before me into the wood. For a little way the glare of my fire lit the path. Looking back presently, I could see, through the crowded stems, that from my heap of sticks the blaze had spread to some bushes adjacent, and a curved line of fire was creeping up the grass of the hill. I laughed at that, and turned again to the dark trees before me. It was very black and Weena clung to me convulsively, but there was still, as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, sufficient light for me to avoid the stems. Overhead it was simply black, except where a gap of remote blue sky shone down upon us here and there. I struck none of my matches because I had no hand free. Upon my left arm I carried my little one, in my right hand I had my iron bar.

“For some way I heard nothing but the crackling twigs under my feet, the faint rustle of the breeze above, and my own breathing and the throb of the blood-vessels in my ears. Then I seemed to know of a pattering about me. I pushed on grimly. The pattering grew more distinct, and then I caught the same queer sound and voices I had heard in the Underworld. There were evidently several of the Morlocks, and they were closing in upon me. Indeed, in another minute I felt a tug at my coat, then something at my arm. And Weena shivered violently, and became quite still.

“It was time for a match. But to get one I must put her down. I did so, and, as I fumbled with my pocket, a struggle began in the darkness about my knees, perfectly silent on her part and with the same peculiar cooing sounds from the Morlocks. Soft little hands, too, were creeping over my coat and back, touching even my neck. Then the match scratched and fizzed. I held it flaring, and saw the white backs of the Morlocks in flight

amid the trees. I hastily took a lump of camphor from my pocket, and prepared to light it as soon as the match should wane. Then I looked at Weena. She was lying clutching my feet and quite motionless, with her face to the ground. With a sudden fright I stooped to her. She seemed scarcely to breathe. I lit the block of camphor and flung it to the ground, and as it split and flared up and drove back the Morlocks and the shadows, I knelt down and lifted her. The wood behind seemed full of the stir and murmur of a great company!

“She seemed to have fainted. I put her carefully upon my shoulder and rose to push on, and then there came a horrible realization. In manœuvring with my matches and Weena, I had turned myself about several times, and now I had not the faintest idea in what direction lay my path. For all I knew, I might be facing back towards the Palace of Green Porcelain. I found myself in a cold sweat. I had to think rapidly what to do. I determined to build a fire and encamp where we were. I put Weena, still motionless, down upon a turfy bole, and very hastily, as my first lump of camphor waned, I began collecting sticks and leaves. Here and there out of the darkness round me the Morlocks’ eyes shone like carbuncles.

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

“Now, the smoke of the fire beat over towards me, and it must have made me heavy of a sudden. Moreover, the vapour of camphor was in the air. My fire would not need replenishing for an hour or so. I felt very weary after my exertion, and sat down. The wood, too, was full of a

slumbrous murmur that I did not understand. I seemed just to nod and open my eyes. But all was dark, and the Morlocks had their hands upon me. Flinging off their clinging fingers I hastily felt in my pocket for the match-box, and—it had gone! Then they gripped and closed with me again. In a moment I knew what had happened. I had slept, and my fire had gone out, and the bitterness of death came over my soul. The forest seemed full of the smell of burning wood. I was caught by the neck, by the hair, by the arms, and pulled down. It was indescribably horrible in the darkness to feel all these soft creatures heaped upon me. I felt as if I was in a monstrous spider's web. I was overpowered, and went down. I felt little teeth nipping at my neck. I rolled over, and as I did so my hand came against my iron lever. It gave me strength. I struggled up, shaking the human rats from me, and, holding the bar short, I thrust where I judged their faces might be. I could feel the succulent giving of flesh and bone under my blows, and for a moment I was free.

“The strange exultation that so often seems to accompany hard fighting came upon me. I knew that both I and Weena were lost, but I determined to make the Morlocks pay for their meat. I stood with my back to a tree, swinging the iron bar before me. The whole wood was full of the stir and cries of them. A minute passed. Their voices seemed to rise to a higher pitch of excitement, and their movements grew faster. Yet none came within reach. I stood glaring at the blackness. Then suddenly came hope. What if the Morlocks were afraid? And close on the heels of that came a strange thing. The darkness seemed to grow luminous. Very dimly I began to see the Morlocks about me—three battered at my feet—and then I recognized, with incredulous surprise, that the others were running, in an incessant stream, as it seemed, from behind me, and away through the wood in front. And their backs seemed no longer white, but reddish. As I stood agape, I saw a little red spark go drifting across a gap of starlight between the branches, and vanish. And at that I understood the smell of burning wood, the slumbrous murmur that was growing now into a gusty roar, the red glow, and the Morlocks' flight.

“Stepping out from behind my tree and looking back, I saw, through the black pillars of the nearer trees, the flames of the burning forest. It was my first fire coming after me. With that I looked for Weena, but she was

gone. The hissing and crackling behind me, the explosive thud as each fresh tree burst into flame, left little time for reflection. My iron bar still gripped, I followed in the Morlocks' path. It was a close race. Once the flames crept forward so swiftly on my right as I ran that I was outflanked and had to strike off to the left. But at last I emerged upon a small open space, and as I did so, a Morlock came blundering towards me, and past me, and went on straight into the fire!

“And now I was to see the most weird and horrible thing, I think, of all that I beheld in that future age. This whole space was as bright as day with the reflection of the fire. In the centre was a hillock or tumulus, surmounted by a scorched hawthorn. Beyond this was another arm of the burning forest, with yellow tongues already writhing from it, completely encircling the space with a fence of fire. Upon the hill-side were some thirty or forty Morlocks, dazzled by the light and heat, and blundering hither and thither against each other in their bewilderment. At first I did not realize their blindness, and struck furiously at them with my bar, in a frenzy of fear, as they approached me, killing one and crippling several more. But when I had watched the gestures of one of them groping under the hawthorn against the red sky, and heard their moans, I was assured of their absolute helplessness and misery in the glare, and I struck no more of them.

“Yet every now and then one would come straight towards me, setting loose a quivering horror that made me quick to elude him. At one time the flames died down somewhat, and I feared the foul creatures would presently be able to see me. I was thinking of beginning the fight by killing some of them before this should happen; but the fire burst out again brightly, and I stayed my hand. I walked about the hill among them and avoided them, looking for some trace of Weena. But Weena was gone.

“At last I sat down on the summit of the hillock, and watched this strange incredible company of blind things groping to and fro, and making uncanny noises to each other, as the glare of the fire beat on them. The coiling uprush of smoke streamed across the sky, and through the rare tatters of that red canopy, remote as though they belonged to another universe, shone the little stars. Two or three Morlocks came

blundering into me, and I drove them off with blows of my fists, trembling as I did so.

“For the most part of that night I was persuaded it was a nightmare. I bit myself and screamed in a passionate desire to awake. I beat the ground with my hands, and got up and sat down again, and wandered here and there, and again sat down. Then I would fall to rubbing my eyes and calling upon God to let me awake. Thrice I saw Morlocks put their heads down in a kind of agony and rush into the flames. But, at last, above the subsiding red of the fire, above the streaming masses of black smoke and the whitening and blackening tree stumps, and the diminishing numbers of these dim creatures, came the white light of the day.

“I searched again for traces of Weena, but there were none. It was plain that they had left her poor little body in the forest. I cannot describe how it relieved me to think that it had escaped the awful fate to which it seemed destined. As I thought of that, I was almost moved to begin a massacre of the helpless abominations about me, but I contained myself. The hillock, as I have said, was a kind of island in the forest. From its summit I could now make out through a haze of smoke the Palace of Green Porcelain, and from that I could get my bearings for the White Sphinx. And so, leaving the remnant of these damned souls still going hither and thither and moaning, as the day grew clearer, I tied some grass about my feet and limped on across smoking ashes and among black stems, that still pulsated internally with fire, towards the hiding-place of the Time Machine. I walked slowly, for I was almost exhausted, as well as lame, and I felt the intensest wretchedness for the horrible death of little Weena. It seemed an overwhelming calamity. Now, in this old familiar room, it is more like the sorrow of a dream than an actual loss. But that morning it left me absolutely lonely again—terribly alone. I began to think of this house of mine, of this fireside, of some of you, and with such thoughts came a longing that was pain.

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

X



“ABOUT EIGHT OR NINE in the morning I came to the same seat of yellow metal from which I had viewed the world upon the evening of my arrival. I thought of my hasty conclusions upon that evening and could not refrain from laughing bitterly at my confidence. Here was the same beautiful scene, the same abundant foliage, the same splendid palaces and magnificent ruins, the same silver river running between its fertile banks. The gay robes of the beautiful people moved hither and thither among the trees. Some were bathing in exactly the place where I had saved Weena, and that suddenly gave me a keen stab of pain. And like blots upon the landscape rose the cupolas above the ways to the Under-world. I understood now what all the beauty of the Over-world people covered. Very pleasant was their day, as pleasant as the day of the cattle in the field. Like the cattle, they knew of no enemies and provided against no needs. And their end was the same.

“I grieved to think how brief the dream of the human intellect had been. It had committed suicide. It had set itself steadfastly towards comfort and ease, a balanced society with security and permanency as its watchword, it had attained its hopes—to come to this at last. Once, life and property must have reached almost absolute safety. The rich had been assured of his wealth and comfort, the toiler assured of his life and work. No doubt in that perfect world there had been no unemployed problem, no social question left unsolved. And a great quiet had followed.

“It is a law of nature we overlook, that intellectual versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble. An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism. Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and instinct are useless. There is no intelligence where there is no change and no need of change. Only those animals partake of intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and dangers.

“So, as I see it, the Upper-world man had drifted towards his feeble prettiness, and the Under-world to mere mechanical industry. But that perfect state had lacked one thing even for mechanical perfection—absolute permanency. Apparently as time went on, the feeding of the Under-world, however it was effected, had become disjointed. Mother Necessity, who had been staved off for a few thousand years, came back again, and she began below. The Under-world being in contact with machinery, which, however perfect, still needs some little thought outside habit, had probably retained perforce rather more initiative, if less of every other human character, than the Upper. And when other meat failed them, they turned to what old habit had hitherto forbidden. So I say I saw it in my last view of the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One. It may be as wrong an explanation as mortal wit could invent. It is how the thing shaped itself to me, and as that I give it to you.

“After the fatigues, excitements, and terrors of the past days, and in spite of my grief, this seat and the tranquil view and the warm sunlight were very pleasant. I was very tired and sleepy, and soon my theorizing passed into dozing. Catching myself at that, I took my own hint, and spreading myself out upon the turf I had a long and refreshing sleep.

“I awoke a little before sunset. I now felt safe against being caught napping by the Morlocks, and, stretching myself, I came on down the hill towards the White Sphinx. I had my crowbar in one hand, and the other hand played with the matches in my pocket.

“And now came a most unexpected thing. As I approached the pedestal of the sphinx I found the bronze valves were open. They had slid down into grooves.

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

“Within was a small apartment, and on a raised place in the corner of this was the Time Machine. I had the small levers in my pocket. So here, after all my elaborate preparation for the siege of the White Sphinx, was a meek surrender. I threw my iron bar away, almost sorry not to use it.

“A sudden thought came into my head as I stooped towards the portal. For once, at least, I grasped the mental operations of the Morlocks. Suppressing a strong inclination to laugh, I stepped through the bronze

frame and up to the Time Machine. I was surprised to find it had been carefully oiled and cleaned. I have suspected since that the Morlocks had even partially taken it to pieces while trying in their dim way to grasp its purpose.

“Now as I stood and examined it, finding pleasure in the mere touch of the contrivance, the thing I had expected happened. The bronze panels suddenly slid up and struck the frame with a clang. I was in the dark—trapped. So the Morlocks thought. At that I chuckled gleefully.

“I could already hear their murmuring laughter as they came towards me. Very calmly I tried to strike the match. I had only to fix on the levers and depart then like a ghost. But I had overlooked one little thing. The matches were of that abominable kind that light only on the box.

“You may imagine how all my calm vanished. The little brutes were close upon me. One touched me. I made a sweeping blow in the dark at them with the levers, and began to scramble into the saddle of the machine. Then came one hand upon me and then another. Then I had simply to fight against their persistent fingers for my levers, and at the same time feel for the studs over which these fitted. One, indeed, they almost got away from me. As it slipped from my hand, I had to butt in the dark with my head—I could hear the Morlock’s skull ring—to recover it. It was a nearer thing than the fight in the forest, I think, this last scramble.

“But at last the lever was fixed and pulled over. The clinging hands slipped from me. The darkness presently fell from my eyes. I found myself in the same grey light and tumult I have already described.

XI



“I HAVE ALREADY told you of the sickness and confusion that comes with time travelling. And this time I was not seated properly in the saddle, but sideways and in an unstable fashion. For an indefinite time I clung to the machine as it swayed and vibrated, quite unheeding how I went, and when I brought myself to look at the dials again I was amazed to find where I had arrived. One dial records days, and another thousands of days, another millions of days, and another thousands of millions. Now, instead of reversing the levers, I had pulled them over so as to go forward with them, and when I came to look at these indicators I found that the thousands hand was sweeping round as fast as the seconds hand of a watch—into futurity.

“As I drove on, a peculiar change crept over the appearance of things. The palpitating greyness grew darker; then—though I was still travelling with prodigious velocity—the blinking succession of day and night, which was usually indicative of a slower pace, returned, and grew more and more marked. This puzzled me very much at first. The alternations of night and day grew slower and slower, and so did the passage of the sun across the sky, until they seemed to stretch through centuries. At last a steady twilight brooded over the earth, a twilight only broken now and then when a comet glared across the darkling sky. The band of light that had indicated the sun had long since disappeared; for the sun had ceased to set—it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red. All trace of the moon had vanished. The circling of the stars, growing slower and slower, had given place to creeping points of light. At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a dull heat, and now and then suffering a momentary extinction. At one time it had for a little while glowed more brilliantly again, but it speedily reverted to its sullen red heat. I perceived by this slowing down of its rising and setting

that the work of the tidal drag was done. The earth had come to rest with one face to the sun, even as in our own time the moon faces the earth. Very cautiously, for I remembered my former headlong fall, I began to reverse my motion. Slower and slower went the circling hands until the thousands one seemed motionless and the daily one was no longer a mere mist upon its scale. Still slower, until the dim outlines of a desolate beach grew visible.

“I stopped very gently and sat upon the Time Machine, looking round. The sky was no longer blue. North-eastward it was inky black, and out of the blackness shone brightly and steadily the pale white stars. Overhead it was a deep Indian red and starless, and south-eastward it grew brighter to a glowing scarlet where, cut by the horizon, lay the huge hull of the sun, red and motionless. The rocks about me were of a harsh reddish colour, and all the trace of life that I could see at first was the intensely green vegetation that covered every projecting point on their south-eastern face. It was the same rich green that one sees on forest moss or on the lichen in caves: plants which like these grow in a perpetual twilight.

“The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin where the water sometimes broke was a thick incrustation of salt—pink under the lurid sky. There was a sense of oppression in my head, and I noticed that I was breathing very fast. The sensation reminded me of my only experience of mountaineering, and from that I judged the air to be more rarefied than it is now.

“Far away up the desolate slope I heard a harsh scream, and saw a thing like a huge white butterfly¹ go slanting and fluttering up into the sky and, circling, disappear over some low hillocks beyond. The sound of its voice was so dismal that I shivered and seated myself more firmly upon the machine. Looking round me again, I saw that, quite near, what I had taken to be a reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me.

Then I saw the thing was really a monstrous crab-like creature. Can you imagine a crab as large as yonder table, with its many legs moving slowly

and uncertainly, its big claws swaying, its long antennae, like carters' whips, waving and feeling, and its stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic front? Its back was corrugated and ornamented with ungainly bosses, and a greenish incrustation blotched it here and there. I could see the many palps of its complicated mouth flickering and feeling as it moved.

“As I stared at this sinister apparition crawling towards me, I felt a tickling on my cheek as though a fly had lighted there. I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it returned, and almost immediately came another by my ear. I struck at this, and caught something thread-like. It was drawn swiftly out of my hand. With a frightful qualm, I turned, and I saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that stood just behind me. Its evil eyes were wriggling on their stalks, its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast ungainly claws, smeared with an algal slime, were descending upon me. In a moment my hand was on the lever, and I had placed a month between myself and these monsters. But I was still on the same beach, and I saw them distinctly now as soon as I stopped. Dozens of them seemed to be crawling here and there, in the sombre light, among the foliated sheets of intense green.

“I cannot convey the sense of abominable desolation that hung over the world. The red eastern sky, the northward blackness, the salt Dead Sea, the stony beach crawling with these foul, slow-stirring monsters, the uniform poisonous-looking green of the lichenous plants, the thin air that hurts one's lungs: all contributed to an appalling effect. I moved on a hundred years, and there was the same red sun—a little larger, a little duller—the same dying sea, the same chill air, and the same crowd of earthy crustacea creeping in and out among the green weed and the red rocks. And in the westward sky, I saw a curved pale line like a vast new moon.

“So I travelled, stopping ever and again, in great strides of a thousand years or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth's fate, watching with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away. At last, more than thirty million years hence, the huge red-hot dome of the sun had come to obscure nearly a tenth part of the darkling heavens. Then I stopped once more,

for the crawling multitude of crabs had disappeared, and the red beach, save for its livid green liverworts and lichens, seemed lifeless. And now it was flecked with white. A bitter cold assailed me. Rare white flakes ever and again came eddying down. To the north-eastward, the glare of snow lay under the starlight of the sable sky and I could see an undulating crest of hillocks pinkish white. There were fringes of ice along the sea margin, with drifting masses further out; but the main expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still unfrozen.

“I looked about me to see if any traces of animal life remained. A certain indefinable apprehension still kept me in the saddle of the machine. But I saw nothing moving, in earth or sky or sea. The green slime on the rocks alone testified that life was not extinct. A shallow sandbank had appeared in the sea and the water had receded from the beach. I fancied I saw some black object flopping about upon this bank, but it became motionless as I looked at it, and I judged that my eye had been deceived, and that the black object was merely a rock. The stars in the sky were intensely bright and seemed to me to twinkle very little.

“Suddenly I noticed that the circular westward outline of the sun had changed; that a concavity, a bay, had appeared in the curve. I saw this grow larger. For a minute perhaps I stared aghast at this blackness that was creeping over the day, and then I realized that an eclipse was beginning. Either the moon or the planet Mercury was passing across the sun’s disk. Naturally, at first I took it to be the moon, but there is much to incline me to believe that what I really saw was the transit of an inner planet passing very near to the earth.

“The darkness grew apace; a cold wind began to blow in freshening gusts from the east, and the showering white flakes in the air increased in number. From the edge of the sea came a ripple and whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives—all that was over. As the darkness thickened, the eddying flakes grew more abundant, dancing before my eyes; and the cold of the air more intense. At last, one by one, swiftly, one after the other, the white peaks of the distant hills vanished into blackness. The breeze rose to a

moaning wind. I saw the black central shadow of the eclipse sweeping towards me. In another moment the pale stars alone were visible. All else was rayless obscurity. The sky was absolutely black.

“A horror of this great darkness came on me. The cold, that smote to my marrow, and the pain I felt in breathing, overcame me. I shivered, and a deadly nausea seized me. Then like a red-hot bow in the sky appeared the edge of the sun. I got off the machine to recover myself. I felt giddy and incapable of facing the return journey. As I stood sick and confused I saw again the moving thing upon the shoal—there was no mistake now that it was a moving thing—against the red water of the sea. It was a round thing, the size of a football perhaps, or, it may be, bigger, and tentacles trailed down from it; it seemed black against the weltering blood-red water, and it was hopping fitfully about. Then I felt I was fainting. But a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clambered upon the saddle.

XII



“SO I CAME BACK. For a long time I must have been insensible upon the machine. The blinking succession of the days and nights was resumed, the sun got golden again, the sky blue. I breathed with greater freedom. The fluctuating contours of the land ebbed and flowed. The hands spun backward upon the dials. At last I saw again the dim shadows of houses, the evidences of decadent humanity. These, too, changed and passed, and others came. Presently, when the million dial was at zero, I slackened speed. I began to recognize our own petty and familiar architecture, the thousands hand ran back to the starting-point, the night and day flapped slower and slower. Then the old walls of the laboratory came round me. Very gently, now, I slowed the mechanism down.

“I saw one little thing that seemed odd to me. I think I have told you that when I set out, before my velocity became very high, Mrs. Watchett had walked across the room, travelling, as it seemed to me, like a rocket. As I returned, I passed again across that minute when she traversed the laboratory. But now her every motion appeared to be the exact inversion of her previous ones. The door at the lower end opened, and she glided quietly up the laboratory, back foremost, and disappeared behind the door by which she had previously entered. Just before that I seemed to see Hillyer for a moment; but he passed like a flash.

“Then I stopped the machine, and saw about me again the old familiar laboratory, my tools, my appliances just as I had left them. I got off the thing very shakily, and sat down upon my bench. For several minutes I trembled violently. Then I became calmer. Around me was my old workshop again, exactly as it had been. I might have slept there, and the whole thing have been a dream.

“And yet, not exactly! The thing had started from the south-east corner of the laboratory. It had come to rest again in the north-west, against the wall where you saw it. That gives you the exact distance from my little

lawn to the pedestal of the White Sphinx, into which the Morlocks had carried my machine.

“For a time my brain went stagnant. Presently I got up and came through the passage here, limping, because my heel was still painful, and feeling sorely begrimed. I saw the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the table by the door. I found the date was indeed to-day, and looking at the timepiece, saw the hour was almost eight o’clock. I heard your voices and the clatter of plates. I hesitated—I felt so sick and weak. Then I sniffed good wholesome meat, and opened the door on you. You know the rest. I washed, and dined, and now I am telling you the story.

“I know,” he said, after a pause, “that all this will be absolutely incredible to you. To me the one incredible thing is that I am here to-night in this old familiar room looking into your friendly faces and telling you these strange adventures.”

He looked at the Medical Man. “No. I cannot expect you to believe it. Take it as a lie—or a prophecy. Say I dreamed it in the workshop. Consider I have been speculating upon the destinies of our race until I have hatched this fiction. Treat my assertion of its truth as a mere stroke of art to enhance its interest. And taking it as a story, what do you think of it?”

He took up his pipe, and began, in his old accustomed manner, to tap with it nervously upon the bars of the grate. There was a momentary stillness. Then chairs began to creak and shoes to scrape upon the carpet. I took my eyes off the Time Traveller’s face, and looked round at his audience. They were in the dark, and little spots of colour swam before them. The Medical Man seemed absorbed in the contemplation of our host. The Editor was looking hard at the end of his cigar—the sixth. The Journalist fumbled for his watch. The others, as far as I remember, were motionless.

The Editor stood up with a sigh. “What a pity it is you’re not a writer of stories!” he said, putting his hand on the Time Traveller’s shoulder.

“You don’t believe it?”

“Well—”

“I thought not.”

The Time Traveller turned to us. “Where are the matches?” he said. He lit one and spoke over his pipe, puffing. “To tell you the truth . . . I hardly believe it myself.... And yet ...”

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

The Medical Man rose, came to the lamp, and examined the flowers. “The gynaeceum’s odd,” he said. The Psychologist leant forward to see, holding out his hand for a specimen.

“I’m hanged if it isn’t a quarter to one,” said the Journalist. “How shall we get home?”

“Plenty of cabs at the station,” said the Psychologist.

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

The Time Traveller hesitated. Then suddenly: “Certainly not.”

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

The Time Traveller put his hand to his head. He spoke like one who was trying to keep hold of an idea that eluded him. “They were put into my pocket by Weena, when I travelled into Time.” He stared round the room. “I’m damned if it isn’t all going. This room and you and the atmosphere of every day is too much for my memory. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it all only a dream? They say life is a dream, a precious poor dream at times—but I can’t stand another that won’t fit. It’s madness. And where did the dream come from? . . . I must look at that machine. If there is one!”

He caught up the lamp swiftly, and carried it, flaring red, through the door into the corridor. We followed him. There in the flickering light of the lamp was the machine sure enough, squat, ugly, and askew; a thing of brass, ebony, ivory, and translucent glimmering quartz. Solid to the touch—for I put out my hand and felt the rail of it—and with brown spots and smears upon the ivory, and bits of grass and moss upon the lower parts, and one rail bent awry.

The Time Traveller put the lamp down on the bench, and ran his hand along the damaged rail. “It’s all right now,” he said. “The story I told you

was true. I'm sorry to have brought you out here in the cold." He took up the lamp, and, in an absolute silence, we returned to the smoking-room.

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

I shared a cab with the Editor. He thought the tale a "gaudy lie." For my own part I was unable to come to a conclusion. The story was so fantastic and incredible, the telling so credible and sober. I lay awake most of the night thinking about it. I determined to go next day and see the Time Traveller again. I was told he was in the laboratory, and being on easy terms in the house, I went up to him. The laboratory, however, was empty. I stared for a minute at the Time Machine and put out my hand and touched the lever. At that the squat substantial-looking mass swayed like a bough shaken by the wind. Its instability startled me extremely, and I had a queer reminiscence of the childish days when I used to be forbidden to meddle. I came back through the corridor. The Time Traveller met me in the smoking-room. He was coming from the house. He had a small camera under one arm and a knapsack under the other. He laughed when he saw me, and gave me an elbow to shake. "I'm frightfully busy," said he, "with that thing in there."

"But is it not some hoax?" I said. "Do you really travel through time?"

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

I consented, hardly comprehending then the full import of his words, and he nodded and went on down the corridor. I heard the door of the laboratory slam, seated myself in a chair, and took up a daily paper. What was he going to do before lunch-time? Then suddenly I was reminded by an advertisement that I had promised to meet Richardson, the publisher, at two. I looked at my watch, and saw that I could barely save that engagement. I got up and went down the passage to tell the Time Traveller.

As I took hold of the handle of the door I heard an exclamation, oddly truncated at the end, and a click and a thud. A gust of air whirled round me as I opened the door, and from within came the sound of broken glass falling on the floor. The Time Traveller was not there. I seemed to see a ghostly, indistinct figure sitting in a whirling mass of black and brass for a moment—a figure so transparent that the bench behind with its sheets of drawings was absolutely distinct; but this phantasm vanished as I rubbed my eyes. The Time Machine had gone. Save for a subsiding stir of dust, the further end of the laboratory was empty. A pane of the skylight had, apparently, just been blown in.

I felt an unreasonable amazement. I knew that something strange had happened, and for the moment could not distinguish what the strange thing might be. As I stood staring, the door into the garden opened, and the man-servant appeared.

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

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

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

EPILOGUE



ONE CANNOT choose but wonder. Will he ever return? It may be that he swept back into the past, and fell among the blood-drinking, hairy savages of the Age of Unpolished Stone; into the abysses of the Cretaceous Sea; or among the grotesque saurians, the huge reptilian brutes of the Jurassic times. He may even now—if I may use the phrase—be wandering on some plesiosaurus-haunted Oolitic coral reef, or beside the lonely saline lakes of the Triassic Age. Or did he go forward, into one of the nearer ages, in which men are still men, but with the riddles of our own time answered and its wearisome problems solved? Into the manhood of the race: for I, for my own part, cannot think that these latter days of weak experiment, fragmentary theory, and mutual discord are indeed man's culminating time! I say, for my own part. He, I know—for the question had been discussed among us long before the Time Machine was made—thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilization only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end. If that is so, it remains for us to live as though it were not so. But to me the future is still black and blank—is a vast ignorance, lit at a few casual places by the memory of his story. And I have by me, for my comfort, two strange white flowers—shrivelled now, and brown and flat and brittle—to witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man.

Take a Sneak Peek at Félix J. Palma's Novel

The Map of Time

Author Note

Dear Reader:

My inspiration for *The Map of Time* came when I reread *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells, one of my favorite writers. I read this wonderful novel when I was a boy and it immediately became one of my favorite books. Yet when I revisited it as an adult, I was surprised to find I didn't feel that same rush of emotion.

I realized that part of the reason I was so taken with the book as a boy is that I actually believed a time machine could exist and that one day perhaps I could also travel into the future. That must have been how Wells's contemporaries felt, since science was taking such a grand leap forward in the nineteenth century and anything seemed possible. *Travel into the future? Beyond the frame of our normal existence? To see things not destined for our eyes?* And that's when I felt that tingle writers feel when they find a story with possibilities. I couldn't get the image out of my head and that's when I knew I had found the seed of inspiration for a novel of my own.

I wanted to create a fast-paced novel filled with love and adventure, one that would speak to the ways that imagination can save lives, a book that spoke to the nature of time, which, after all, defines who and what we are. A novel that, in short, would pay a modest tribute to the books that made a young boy dream.

Yours,

Félix J. Palma

Part One

WELCOME, DEAR READER, AS YOU PLUNGE INTO THE THRILLING PAGES OF OUR MELODRAMA WHERE YOU WILL FIND ADVENTURES OF WHICH YOU NEVER DREAMT!

IF LIKE ANY REASONABLE PERSON YOU BELIEVE THAT TIME IS A RIVER SWEEPING AWAY ALL THAT IS BORN TOWARDS THE DARKEST SHORE, IN THESE PAGES YOU WILL DISCOVER THAT THE PAST CAN BE REVISITED, THAT MANKIND CAN RETRACE HIS FOOTSTEPS THANKS TO A MACHINE THAT CAN TRAVEL THROUGH TIME.

YOUR EMOTION AND ASTONISHMENT ARE GUARANTEED.

I

ANDREW HARRINGTON WOULD HAVE GLADLY died several times over if that meant not having to choose just one pistol from among his father's vast collection in the living room cabinet. Decisions had never been Andrew's strong point. On close examination, his life had been a series of mistaken choices, the last of them threatening to cast its lengthy shadow over the future. But that life of unedifying blunders was about to end. This time he was sure he had made the right decision, because he had decided not to decide. There would be no more mistakes in the future because there would be no more future. He was going to destroy it completely by putting one of those guns to his right temple. He could see no other solution: obliterating the future was the only way for him to eradicate the past.

He scanned the contents of the cabinet, the lethal assortment his father had lovingly set about assembling after his return from the war. He was fanatical about these weapons, though Andrew suspected it was not so much nostalgia that drove him to collect them as his desire to contemplate the novel ways mankind kept coming up with for taking one's own life outside the law. In stark contrast to his father's devotion, Andrew was impassive as he surveyed the apparently docile, almost humdrum implements that had brought thunder down to men's fingertips and freed war from the unpleasantness of hand-to-hand combat. Andrew tried to imagine what kind of death might be lurking inside each of them, lying in wait like some predator. Which would his father have recommended he blow his brains out with? He calculated that death from one of those antiquated muzzle-loading flintlocks, which had to be refilled with gunpowder and a ball, then tamped down with a paper plug each time they were fired, would be a noble but drawn-out, tedious affair. He preferred the swift death guaranteed by one of the more modern revolvers nestling in their luxurious velvet-lined wooden cases. He considered a Colt Single Action revolver, which looked easy to handle and

reliable, but discarded it when he remembered he had seen Buffalo Bill brandishing one in his Wild West Shows. A pitiful attempt to reenact his transoceanic exploits with a handful of imported Red Indians and a dozen lethargic, apparently opium-drugged buffalo. Death for him was not just another adventure. He also rejected a fine Smith & Wesson: that was the gun that had killed the outlaw Jesse James, of whom he considered himself unworthy, as well as a Webley revolver, specially designed to hold back the charging hordes in Britain's colonial wars, which he thought looked too cumbersome. His attention turned next to his father's favorite, a fine pepperbox with rotating barrels, but he seriously doubted whether this ridiculous, ostentatious-looking weapon would be capable of firing a bullet with enough force. Finally, he settled on an elegant 1870 Colt with mother-of-pearl inlays that would take his life with all the delicacy of a woman's caress.

He smiled defiantly as he plucked it from the cabinet, remembering how often his father had forbidden him to meddle with his pistols. But the illustrious William Harrington was in Italy at that moment, no doubt reducing the Fontana de Trevi to a quivering wreck with his critical gaze. His parents' decision to leave on their trip to Europe the very day he had chosen to kill himself had also been a happy coincidence. He doubted whether either of them would ever decipher the true message concealed in his gesture (that he had preferred to die as he had lived—alone), but for Andrew it was enough to imagine the inevitable look of disgust on his father's face when he discovered his son had killed himself behind his back, without his permission.

He opened the cabinet where the ammunition was kept and loaded six bullets into the chamber. He supposed that one would be enough, but who knew what might happen. After all, he had never killed himself before. Then he tucked the gun, wrapped in a cloth, inside his coat pocket, as though it were a piece of fruit he was taking with him to eat later on a stroll. In a further act of defiance, he left the cabinet door open. If only he had shown this much courage before, he thought. If only he had dared confront his father when it had mattered, she would still be alive. But by the time he did, it was too late. And he had spent eight long years paying for his hesitation. Eight years, during which his pain had only

worsened, spreading its slimy tendrils through him like poison ivy, wrapping itself around his insides, gnawing at his soul. Despite the efforts of his cousin Charles and the distraction of other women's bodies, his grief over Marie's death refused to be laid to rest. But tonight it would all be over. Twenty-six was a good age to die, he reflected, contentedly fingering the bulge in his pocket. He had the gun. Now all he needed was a suitable place to perform the ceremony. And there was only one possible place.

With the weight of the revolver in his pocket comforting him like a good-luck charm, he descended the grand staircase of the Harrington mansion in elegant Kensington Gore, a stone's throw from the Queen's Gate entrance to Hyde Park. He had not intended to cast any farewell glances at the walls of what had been his home for almost three decades, but he could not help feeling a perverse wish to pause before his father's portrait, which dominated the hall. His father stared down at him disapprovingly out of the gilt frame, a proud and commanding figure bursting out of the old uniform he had worn as a young infantryman in the Crimean War until a Russian bayonet had punctured his thigh and left him with a disturbingly lopsided gait. William Harrington surveyed the world disdainfully, as though the universe were a botched affair on which he had long since given up. What fool was responsible for that untimely blanket of fog which had descended on the battlefield outside the besieged city of Sebastopol, so that nobody could see the tip of the enemy's bayonets? Who had decided that a woman was the ideal person to preside over England's destiny? Was the East really the best place for the sun to rise? Andrew had never seen his father without that cruel animosity seeping from his eyes, and so could not know whether he had been born with it or had been infected with it fighting alongside the ferocious Ottomans in the Crimea. But in any event, it had not vanished like a mild case of smallpox, leaving no mark on his face, even though the path that had opened up in front of his hapless soldier's boots on his return could only be termed a fortunate one. What did it matter that he had to hobble along it with the aid of a stick if it helped him reach his present position? For, without having to enter any pact with the Devil, the man with the bushy moustache and clean-cut features depicted on the

canvas had become one of the richest men in England overnight. Trudging around in that distant war, bayonet at the ready, he could never have dreamed of possessing a fraction of what he now owned. How he had amassed his fortune though, was one of the family's best-kept secrets, and a complete mystery to Andrew.

THE TEDIOUS MOMENT IS now approaching when the young man must decide which hat and overcoat to pick from among the heap in the hall closet: one has to look presentable even for death. This is a scene which, knowing Andrew, could take several exasperating minutes, and since I see no need to describe it, I shall take the opportunity to welcome you to this tale, which has just begun, and which after lengthy reflection I chose to begin at this juncture and not another; as though I, too, had to select a single beginning from among the many jostling for position in the closet of possibilities. Assuming you stay until the end of this tale, some of you will no doubt think that I chose the wrong thread with which to begin spinning my yarn, and that for accuracy's sake I should have respected chronological order and begun with Miss Haggerty's story. It is possible, but there are stories that cannot begin at their beginning, and perhaps this is one of them.

So, let's forget about Miss Haggerty for the moment, forget that I ever mentioned her, even, and let's go back to Andrew, who has just stepped forth from the mansion suitably dressed in a hat and coat, and even a pair of warm gloves to protect his hands from the harsh winter cold. Once outside the mansion, the young man paused at the top of the steps, which unfurled at his feet like a wave of marble down to the garden. From there, he surveyed the world in which he had been brought up, suddenly aware that, if things went according to plan, he would never see it again. Night was gently spreading its veil over the Harrington mansion. A hazy full moon hung in the sky, bathing in its soft glow the immaculate lawns surrounding the house, most of them cluttered with flower beds, hedges, and fountains, dozens of oversized stone fountains decorated with excessively ornate sculptures of mermaids, fauns, and other mythical creatures. His father had accumulated such a large number of them because as an unsophisticated soul his only way of showing off his importance was to buy a lot of expensive and useless objects. In the case

of the fountains his extravagance was excusable, because they combined to soothe the night with their watery refrain, making the listener want to close his eyes and forget everything except the sound of that hypnotic burble. Further off, beyond the neatly clipped lawns, stood the immense greenhouse, graceful as a swan poised for flight, where his mother spent most of the day marveling over the exotic flowers that sprouted from seeds brought back from the colonies.

Andrew gazed at the moon for several minutes wondering whether man would ever be able to travel there, as had the characters in Jules Verne and Cyrano de Bergerac's works. And what would he find if he did manage to land on its shimmering surface—whether in an airship or shot out of a cannon or with a dozen bottles of dew strapped to his body in the hope that when it evaporated he would float up to the sky like the Gascon swashbuckler's hero? Ariosto the poet had turned the planet into a warehouse where lunatics' reason was stored in vials, but Andrew was more drawn to Plutarch's idea of it as the place where noble souls went after they left the world of the living. Like Plutarch, Andrew preferred to imagine that the moon was where dead people dwelled. He liked to picture them living at peace in ivory palaces built by an army of worker angels or in caves dug out of that white rock, waiting for the living to meet death and to carry on their lives there with them, exactly where they had left off. Sometimes, he imagined that Marie was living at that very moment in one of those grottos, oblivious to what had happened to her and grateful that death had offered her a better existence than life. Marie, pale in all that white splendor, waiting patiently for him to decide once and for all to blow his brains out and come to fill the empty space in her bed.

He stopped gazing at the moon when he noticed that Harold, the coachman, had followed his orders and was standing at the foot of the stairs with a carriage at the ready. As soon as he saw his young master descending the flight of steps, the coachman rushed to open the carriage door. Andrew had always been amused by Harold's display of energy, considering it incongruous in a man approaching sixty, but the coachman clearly kept in good shape.

"Miller's Court," the youth commanded.

Harold was astonished at his request.

“But sir, that’s where—”

“Is there some problem, Harold?” Andrew interrupted.

The coachman stared at him for a moment, his mouth hanging ludicrously half-open, before adding:

“None whatsoever, sir.”

Andrew gave a nod, signaling that the conversation was at an end. He climbed into the brougham and sat down on the red velvet seat. Glimpsing his reflection in the carriage window, Andrew gave a sigh of despair. Was that haggard countenance really his? It was the face of someone whose life has been seeping out of him unawares, like a pillow losing its stuffing through an open seam. In a certain sense, this was true. Although his face retained the harmonious good looks he was fortunate enough to have been born with, it now resembled an empty shell, a vague impression left in a mound of ashes. The sorrow that had cast a shadow over his soul had taken its toll on his appearance, too, for he could scarcely recognize himself in this aging youth with hollowed cheeks, downcast eyes, and an unkempt beard who stared back at him in the glass. Grief had stunted him, transforming him into a dried-up, sullen creature. Fortunately, the cab began to rock as Harold, having overcome his astonishment, clambered up to his perch. This took Andrew’s attention away from the blurred face sketched onto the canvas of the night. The final act of the disastrous performance that had been his life was about to begin, and he was determined to savor every moment of it. He heard the whip crack above his head and, caressing the steely bulge in his pocket, he let himself be lulled by the carriage’s gentle sway.

THE CARRIAGE LEFT THE mansion and drove down Carriage Drive, which bordered the lush vegetation of Hyde Park. Gazing through the window at the city, Andrew thought that in less than half an hour’s time they would be in the East End. This ride had always fascinated and puzzled him in equal measure, because it allowed him to glimpse in a single sweep every aspect of his beloved London, the world’s greatest metropolis, the giant head of an insatiable octopus whose tentacles stretched over almost a fifth of the world’s surface, holding Canada, India, Australia, and a large part of Africa in its viselike grip. As the handsome cab sped east, the

salubrious, almost countrified atmosphere of Kensington soon gave way to the crowded urban environment of Piccadilly, and beyond to the Circus where Anteros, the avenger of unrequited love, protrudes like an arrow fired at the city's heart. Beyond Fleet Street, the middle-class dwellings seemingly huddled around St. Paul's Cathedral gradually came into view. Finally, once they had passed the Bank of England and Cornhill Street, a wave of poverty swept over everything, a poverty that people from the adjoining West End knew of only from the satirical cartoons in *Punch*, and which seemed to pollute the air, making it foul to breathe as it mingled with the stench rising from the Thames.

Andrew had last made this journey eight years earlier, and since then he had always known that sooner or later he would make it again for the very last time. It was hardly surprising then that as they drew nearer to Aldgate, the gateway to Whitechapel, he felt slightly uneasy. He gazed warily out of the window as they entered the district, experiencing the same misgivings as he had in the past. He had never been able to avoid feeling overwhelmed by an uncomfortable sense of shame knowing that he was spying on what was to him an alien world with the dispassionate interest of somebody who studies insects. Although over time his initial revulsion had turned into inevitable compassion for the souls who inhabited that junkyard where the city dumped its human waste. And, peering out of the window, it seemed as if there was every reason for him to feel that compassion still: London's poorest borough had changed relatively little in the past eight years. Wealth brings poverty in its wake, thought Andrew as they crossed the ill-lit, rowdy streets, crammed with stalls and handcarts and teeming with wretched creatures whose lives were played out beneath the menacing shadow of Christ Church. At first, he had been shocked to discover that behind the dazzle of the city's facade there existed this outpost of hell where, with the Queen's blessing, human beings were condemned to live like beasts. But the intervening years had made him less naive, so that he was no longer surprised to see that even as the advances of science were transforming the face of London and the well-to-do amused themselves by recording their dogs' barks onto the wax-coated cylinders of phonographs or conversed via telephone under the glow of Robertson's electric lamps, while their wives

brought their children into the world still groggy from chloroform, Whitechapel had remained immune to all this progress, untouchable beneath its rotten shell, drowning in its own filth. A quick glance was enough to tell him that crossing into this world was still like sticking his hand into a hornets' nest. It was here that poverty showed its ugliest face, here the same jarring, sinister tune was always playing. He observed a couple of pub brawls, heard screams rising from the depths of dark alleyways, and glimpsed a few drunks sprawled in the gutter while gangs of street urchins stripped them of their shoes. They exchanged glances with a pair of pugnacious-looking men standing on street corners, the petty rulers in this parallel kingdom of vice and crime.

THE LUXURIOUS CARRIAGE CAUGHT the attention of several prostitutes who shouted lewd proposals to him, hitching up their skirts and showing their cleavage. Andrew felt a pang of sorrow as he gazed upon this pitiful back-street spectacle. Most of the women were filthy and downtrodden, their bodies bearing the mark of their daily burden. Even the youngest and prettiest could not escape being stained by the misery of their surroundings. He was revisited by the agonizing thought that he might have saved one of these doomed women, offered her a better life than the one her Creator had allotted her, and yet he had failed. His sorrow reached a crescendo as the carriage rattled past the Ten Bells, emitting an arpeggio of creaks as it turned into Crispin Street on its way to Dorset Street, passing in front of the Britannia pub where he had first spoken to Marie. This street was his final destination. Harold pulled the carriage up next to the stone arch leading to the Miller's Court flats, and climbed off the perch to open the carriage door. Andrew stepped out of the coach feeling suddenly dizzy and was aware that his legs were shaking as he looked around him. Everything was exactly as he remembered it, down to the shop with grimy windows run by McCarthy, the owner of the flats which stood beside the entrance. Nothing he saw indicated to him that time also passed in Whitechapel.

"You can go home now, Harold," he told the coachman, who was standing in silence at his side.

"What time shall I fetch you, sir?" asked the old man.

Andrew looked at him without knowing what to say. Fetch him? He had to stifle a sinister laugh. The only thing fetching him would be the cart from the Golden Lane morgue, the same one that had come there to fetch what was left of his beloved Marie eight years before.

“Forget you ever brought me here,” was his reply.

The somber expression that clouded the coachman’s face moved Andrew. Had Harold understood what he had come there to do? He could not be sure, because he had never given a moment’s thought to the coachman’s intelligence, or indeed to that of any servant. He always thought that at the most they possessed the innate cunning of people who from an early age are obliged to swim against the current in which he and his class maneuvered with ease. Now though he thought he detected in old Harold’s attitude an uneasiness that could only have come from his having guessed Andrew’s intentions with astonishing accuracy. And the servant’s capacity for deduction was not the only discovery Andrew made during that brief moment when for once they looked directly at each other. Andrew also became aware of something hitherto unimaginable to him: the affection a servant can feel for his master. Despite the fact that he could only see them as shadows drifting in and out of rooms according to some invisible design, only noticing them when he needed to leave his glass on a tray or wanted the fire lit, these phantoms could actually care about what happened to their masters. That succession of faceless people—the maids whom his mother dismissed on the flimsiest grounds, the cooks systematically impregnated by the stable boys as though conforming to some ancient ritual, the butlers who left their employ with excellent references and went to work at another mansion identical to theirs—all of them made up a shifting landscape which Andrew had never taken the trouble to notice.

“Very well, sir,” murmured Harold.

Andrew understood that these words were the coachman’s last farewell; that this was the old fellow’s only way of saying goodbye to him, since embracing him was a risk he appeared unwilling to take. And with a heavy heart, Andrew watched that stout, resolute man almost three times his age, to whom he would have had to relinquish the role of master if they had ever been stranded together on a desert island, clamber back up onto

the carriage. He urged on the horses, leaving behind an echo of hooves clattering into the distance as the carriage was swallowed up by the fog spreading through the London streets like muddy foam. It struck him as odd that the only person he had said good-bye to before killing himself should be the coachman and not his parents or his cousin Charles, but life was full of such ironies.

That is exactly what Harold Barker was thinking as he drove the horses down Dorset Street, looking for the way out of that accursed neighborhood where life was not worth thruppence. But for his father's determination to pluck him from poverty and secure him a job as a coachman as soon as he was able to climb onto the perch, he might have been one more among the hordes of wretched souls scraping an existence in this gangrenous patch of London. Yes, that surly old drunk was the one who had hurled him into a series of jobs that had ended at the coach house of the illustrious William Harrington, in whose service he had spent half his life. But, he had to admit, they had been peaceful years, which he did when taking stock of his life in the early hours after his chores were done and the masters were already asleep; peaceful years in which he had taken a wife and fathered two healthy, strong children, one of whom was employed as a gardener by Mr. Harrington. The good fortune that had allowed him to forge a different life from the one he had believed was his lot enabled him to look upon those wretched souls with a degree of objectivity and compassion. Harold had been obliged to go to Whitechapel more often than he would have liked when ferrying his master there that terrible autumn eight years ago, a period when even the sky seemed to ooze blood at times. He had read in the newspapers about what had happened in that warren of godforsaken streets, but more than anything he had seen it reflected in his master's eyes. He knew now that young master Harrington had never recovered, that those reckless excursions to pubs and brothels which his cousin Charles had dragged them both on (although he himself had been obliged to remain in the carriage shivering from cold) had not succeeded in driving the terror from his eyes. And that night Harrington had appeared ready to lay down his arms, to surrender to an enemy who had proved invincible. Didn't that bulge in his pocket look suspiciously like a firearm? But what could he

do? Should he turn around and try to stop him? Should a servant step in to alter his master's destiny? Barker shook his head. Maybe he was imagining things, he thought, and the young man simply wanted to spend the night in that haunted room, safe with a gun in his pocket.

He left off his uncomfortable broodings when he glimpsed a familiar carriage coming out of the fog towards him from the opposite direction. It was the Winslow family carriage, and the bundled-up figure on the perch was almost certainly Edward Rush, one of their coachmen. To judge from the way he slowed the horses, Rush appeared to have recognized him, too. Harold nodded a silent greeting to his colleague, before directing his gaze at the occupant of the carriage. For a split second, he and young Charles Winslow stared solemnly at one another. They did not say a word.

"Faster, Edward," Charles ordered his driver, tapping the roof of the carriage frantically with the knob of his cane.

Harold watched with relief as the carriage vanished once more into the fog in the direction of the Miller's Court flats. He was not needed now. He only hoped that young Winslow arrived in time. He would have liked to stay and see how the affair ended, but he had an order to carry out—although he fancied it had been given to him by a dead man—and so he urged the horses on once more and found his way out of that dreaded neighborhood where life (I apologize for the repetition, but the same thought did occur to Harold twice) was not worth thruppence. Admittedly, the expression sums up the peculiarity of the neighborhood very accurately, and we probably could not hope for a more profound appraisal from a coachman. However, despite having a life worthy of being recounted—as are all lives upon close scrutiny—the coachman Barker is not a relevant character in this story. Others may choose to write about it and will no doubt find plenty of material to endow it with the emotion every good story requires—the time he met Rebecca, his wife, or the hilarious incident involving a ferret and a rake— but that is not our purpose here.

And so let us leave Harold, whose reappearance at some point in this tale I cannot vouch for, because a whole host of characters are going to pass through it and I can't be expected to remember every one of their faces. Let us return to Andrew, who at this very moment is crossing the

arched entrance to Miller's Court and walking up the muddy stone path trying to find number thirteen while he rummages in his coat pocket for the key. After stumbling around in the dark for a few moments he found the room, pausing before the door with an attitude which anybody able to see him from one of the neighboring windows would have taken to be incongruous reverence. But for Andrew that room was infinitely more than some wretched lair where people who hadn't a penny to their name took refuge. He had not been back there since that fateful night, although he had paid to keep everything exactly as it had been, exactly as it still was inside his head. Every month for the past eight years he had sent one of his servants to pay the rent for the little room so that nobody would be able to live there, because if he ever went back there, he did not want to find traces of anyone but Marie. The few pennies for the rent were a drop in the ocean for him, and Mr. McCarthy had been delighted that a wealthy gentleman and obvious rake should want to rent that hovel indefinitely, for after what had taken place within its four walls he very much doubted anybody would be brave enough to sleep there. Andrew realized now that deep down he had always known he would come back, that the ceremony he was about to perform could not have been carried out anywhere else.

He opened the door and cast a mournful gaze around the room. It was a tiny space, scarcely more sophisticated than a barn, with flaking walls and a few sticks of battered furniture including a dilapidated bed, a grimy mirror, a crumbling fireplace, and a couple of chairs which looked as if they might fall apart if a fly landed on them. He felt a renewed sense of amazement that life could actually take place in somewhere like this. And yet, had he not known more happiness in that room than in the luxurious setting of the Harrington mansion? If, as he had read somewhere, every man's paradise was in a different place, his was undoubtedly here, a place he had reached guided by a map not charting rivers or valleys but kisses and caresses.

And it was precisely a caress, this time an icy one on the nape of his neck, which drew his attention to the fact that nobody had taken the trouble to fix the broken window to the left of the door. What was the point? McCarthy seemed to belong to that class of people whose motto

was to work as little as possible, and had Andrew reproached him for not replacing the pane of glass, he could always have argued that since he had requested everything be kept just as it was he had assumed this included the window-pane. Andrew sighed. He could see nothing with which to plug the hole, and so decided to kill himself in his hat and coat. He sat down on one of the rickety chairs, reached into his pocket for the gun, and carefully unfolded the cloth, as if he were performing a liturgy. The Colt gleamed in the moonlight filtering weakly through the small, grimy window.

He stroked the weapon as though it were a cat curled up in his lap and let Marie's smile wash over him once more. Andrew was always surprised that his memories retained the vibrancy, like fresh roses, of those first days. He remembered everything so incredibly vividly, as though no eight-year gap stretched between them, and at times these memories seemed even more beautiful than the real events. What mysterious alchemy could make these imitations appear more vivid than the real thing? The answer was obvious: the passage of time, which transformed the volatile present into that finished, unalterable painting called the past, a canvas man always executed blindly, with erratic brushstrokes that only made sense when one stepped far enough away from it to be able to admire it as a whole.

II

THE FIRST TIME THEIR EYES MET, SHE WAS not even there. Andrew had fallen in love with Marie without needing to have her in front of him, and to him this felt as romantic as it did paradoxical. The event had occurred at his uncle's mansion in Queen's Gate, opposite the Natural History Museum, a place Andrew had always thought of as his second home. He and his cousin were the same age and had almost grown up together; to the point where the servants sometimes forgot which of them was their employer's son. And, as is easily imaginable, their affluent social position had spared them any hardship and misfortune, exposing them only to the pleasant side of life, which they immediately mistook for one long party where everything was apparently permissible. They moved on from sharing toys to sharing teenage conquests, and from there, curious to see how far they could stretch the seeming impunity they enjoyed, to devising different ways of testing the limits of what was acceptable. Their elaborate indiscretions and more or less immoral behavior were so perfectly coordinated that for years it had been difficult not to see them as one person. This was partly down to their sharing the complicity of twins, but also to their arrogant approach to life and even to their physical similarity. Both boys were lean and sinewy, and possessed the sort of angelic good looks that made it almost impossible to refuse them anything. This was especially true of women, as was amply demonstrated during their time in Cambridge, where they established a record number of conquests unmatched to this day. Their habit of visiting the same tailors and hat makers added the finishing touch to that unnerving resemblance, a likeness it seemed would go on forever, until one day, without any warning, as though God had resolved to compensate for his lack of creativity, that wild, two-headed, creature they formed suddenly split into two distinct halves. Andrew turned into a pensive, taciturn young man, while Charles went on perfecting the frivolous behavior of his adolescence. This change did not however alter their friendship rooted in

kinship. Far from driving them apart, this unexpected divergence in their characters made them complement one another. Charles's devil-may-care attitude found its counterpart in the refined melancholy of his cousin, for whom such a whimsical approach to life was no longer satisfying. Charles observed with a wry smile Andrew's attempts to give his life some meaning, wandering around secretly disillusioned, waiting for a sudden flash of inspiration that never came. Andrew, in turn, looked on amused at his cousin's insistence on behaving like a brash, shallow youth, even though some of his gestures and opinions betrayed a mind as disappointed as his own, despite his seeming unwillingness to give up enjoying what he had. Charles lived intensely, as though he could not get enough of life's pleasures, whereas Andrew could sit in a corner for hours, watching a rose wilt in his hands.

The month of August when it all happened, they had both just turned eighteen, and although neither showed any signs of settling down, they both sensed this life of leisure could not go on much longer, that sooner or later their parents would lose patience with this unproductive indolence and find them positions for them in one of the family firms. Though in the meantime they were enjoying seeing how much longer they could get away with it. Charles was already going to the office occasionally in the mornings to attend to minor business, but Andrew preferred to wait until his boredom became so unbearable that taking care of family business would seem like a relief rather than a prison sentence. After all, his older brother Anthony already fulfilled their father's expectations sufficiently enough to allow the illustrious William Harrington to consent to his second son pursuing his career of black sheep for a couple more years, provided he did not stray from his sight. But Andrew had strayed. He had strayed a long way. And now he intended to stray even further, until he disappeared completely, beyond all redemption.

But let us not get sidetracked by melodrama. Let's carry on with our story. Andrew had dropped in at the Winslow mansion that August afternoon so that he and his cousin Charles could arrange a Sunday outing with the charming Keller sisters. As usual, they would take them to that little grassy knoll carpeted with flowers near the Serpentine, in Hyde

Park, where they invariably mounted their amorous offensives. But Charles was still sleeping, so the butler showed Andrew into the library. He did not mind waiting until his cousin got up; he felt at ease surrounded by all those books filling the large, bright room with their peculiar musty smell. Andrew's father prided himself on having built up a decent library, yet his cousin's collection contained more than just obscure volumes on politics and other equally dull subjects. Here, Andrew could find the classics and adventure stories by authors such as Verne and Salgari, but still more interesting to Andrew was a strange, rather picturesque type of literature many considered frivolous—novels where the authors had let their imaginations run wild, regardless of how implausible or often down-right absurd the outcome. Like all discerning readers, Charles appreciated Homer's *Odyssey* and his *Iliad*, but his real enjoyment came from immersing himself in the crazy world of *Batrocomiomaquia*, the blind poet's satire on his own work in an epic tale about a battle between mice and frogs. Andrew recalled a few books written in a similar style which his cousin had lent him; one called *True Tales* by Luciano de Samosata which recounted a series of fabulous voyages in a flying ship that takes the hero up to the sun and even through the belly of a giant whale. Another called *The Man in the Moon* by Francis Godwin, the first novel ever to describe an interplanetary voyage, that told the story of a Spaniard named Domingo Gonsales who travels to the moon in a machine drawn by a flock of wild geese. These flights of fancy reminded Andrew of pop guns or firecrackers, all sound and fury, and yet he understood, or thought he did, why his cousin was so passionate about them. Somehow this literary genre, which most people condemned, acted as a sort of counterbalance to Charles's soul; it was the ballast that prevented him from lurching into seriousness or melancholy, unlike Andrew, who had been unable to adopt his cousin's casual attitude to life, and to whom everything seemed so achingly profound, imbued with that absurd solemnity that the transience of existence conferred upon even the smallest act.

However, that afternoon Andrew did not have time to look at any book. He did not even manage to cross the room to the bookshelves because the loveliest girl he had ever seen stopped him in his tracks. He stood staring

at her bemused as time seemed to congeal, to stand still for a moment, until finally he managed to approach the portrait slowly to take a closer look. The woman was wearing a black velvet toque and a flowery scarf knotted at the neck. Andrew had to admit she was by no means beautiful by conventional standards: her nose was disproportionately large for her face, her eyes too close together and her reddish hair looked damaged, and yet at the same time this mysterious woman possessed a charm as unmistakable as it was elusive. He was unsure exactly what it was that captivated him about her. Perhaps the contrast between her frail appearance and the strength radiating from her gaze; a gaze he had never seen before in any of his conquests, a wild, determined gaze that retained a glimmer of youthful innocence, as if every day the woman was forced to confront the ugliness of life. And yet even so, curled up in her bed at night in the dark she still believed it was only a regrettable figment of her imagination, a bad dream that would soon dissolve and give way to a more pleasant reality. It was the gaze of a person who yearns for something and refuses to believe it will never be hers, because hope is the only thing she has left.

“A charming creature, isn’t she?” Charles’s voice came from behind him.

Andrew jumped. He was so absorbed by the portrait he had not heard his cousin come in. He nodded as his cousin walked over to the drinks trolley. He himself could not have found any better way to describe the emotions the portrait stirred in him, that desire to protect her mixed with a feeling of admiration he could only compare—rather reluctantly, owing to the inappropriateness of the metaphor—to that which he felt for cats.

“It was my birthday present to my father,” Charles explained pouring a brandy. “It’s only been hanging there a few days.”

“Who is she?” asked Andrew. “I don’t remember seeing her at any of Lady Holland or Lord Broughton’s parties.”

“At those parties?” Charles laughed. “I’m beginning to think the artist is gifted. He’s taken you in as well.”

“What do you mean?” asked Andrew, accepting the glass of brandy his cousin was holding out to him.

“Surely you don’t think I gave it to my father because of its artistic merit? Does it look like a painting worthy of my consideration, cousin?” Charles grabbed his arm, forcing him to take a few steps closer to the portrait. “Take a good look. Notice the brushwork: utterly devoid of talent. The painter is no more than an amusing disciple of Degas. Where the Parisian is gentle, he is starkly somber.”

Andrew did not understand enough about painting to be able to have a discussion with his cousin, and all he really wanted to know was the sitter’s identity, and so he nodded gravely, giving his cousin to understand he agreed with his view that this painter would do better to devote himself to repairing bicycles. Charles smiled, amused by his cousin’s refusal to take part in a discussion about painting that would have given him a chance to air his knowledge, and finally declared:

“I had another reason for giving it to him, dear cousin.”

He drained his glass slowly, and gazed at the painting again for a few moments, shaking his head with satisfaction.

“And what reason was that, Charles?” Andrew asked, becoming impatient.

“The private enjoyment I get from knowing that my father, who looks down on the lower classes as though they were inferior beings, has the portrait of a common prostitute hanging in his library.”

His words made Andrew reel.

“A prostitute?” he finally managed to stammer.

“Yes, cousin,” replied Charles, beaming with content. “But not a high-class whore from the brothels in Russell Square, not even one of the tarts who ply their trade in the park on Vincent Street, but a dirty, foul-smelling draggletail from Whitechapel in whose ravaged vagina the wretched of the earth alleviate their misery for a few meager pennies.”

Andrew took a swig of brandy, attempting to take in his cousin’s words. There was no denying his cousin’s revelation had shocked him, as it would anybody who saw the portrait. But he also felt strangely disappointed. He stared at the painting again, trying to discover the cause of his unease. So, this lovely creature was a vulgar tart. Now he understood the mixture of passion and resentment seeping from her eyes that the artist had so skilfully captured. But Andrew had to admit his disappointment obeyed a

far more selfish logic: the woman did not belong to his social class, which meant he could never meet her.

"I bought it thanks to Bruce Driscoll," Charles explained, pouring two more brandies. "Do you remember Bruce?"

Andrew nodded unenthusiastically. Bruce was a friend of his cousin whom boredom and money had made an art collector; a conceited, idle young man who had no compunction in showing off his knowledge of paintings at every opportunity.

"You know how he likes to look for treasure in the most unlikely places," his cousin said, handing him the second brandy. "Well, the last time I saw him, he told me about a painter he'd dug up during one of his visits to the flea markets. A man called Walter Sickert, a founding member of the New English Art Club. His studio was in Cleveland Street, and he painted East End prostitutes as though they were society ladies. I dropped in there and couldn't resist buying his latest canvas."

"Did he tell you anything about her?" Andrew asked, trying to appear nonchalant.

"About the whore? Only her name. I think she's called Marie Jeannette."

Marie Jeannette, Andrew muttered. The name oddly suited her, like her little hat.

"A Whitechapel whore . . .," he whispered, still unable to get over his surprise.

"Yes, a Whitechapel whore. And my father has given her pride of place in his library!" Charles cried, spreading his arms theatrically in a mock gesture of triumph. "Isn't it absolutely priceless?"

With this, Charles flung his arm around his cousin's shoulder and guided him through to the sitting room, changing the subject. Andrew tried to hide his agitation, but could not help thinking about the girl in the portrait as they were planning their assault on the charming Keller sisters.

THAT NIGHT, IN HIS bedroom, Andrew lay wide awake. Where was the woman in the painting now? What was she doing? By the fourth or fifth question, he had begun calling the woman by her name, as though he really knew her and they enjoyed a nonexistent intimacy. He realized he was seriously disturbed when he began to feel an absurd jealousy towards

the men who could have her for a few pennies, whereas for him, despite all his wealth, she was unattainable. And yet was she really beyond his reach? Surely, given his position, he could have her, physically at least, more easily than he could any other woman, and for the rest of his life. The problem was finding her. Andrew had never been to Whitechapel, but he had heard enough about the neighborhood to know it was dangerous, especially for someone of his class. It was not advisable to go there alone, but he could not count on Charles accompanying him. His cousin would not understand him preferring that tart's grubby vagina to the sweet delights the charming Keller sisters kept hidden beneath their petticoats, or the perfumed honeypots of the Chelsea madams, where half the well-to-do West End gentlemen sated their appetites. Perhaps he would understand, and even agree to go with him for the fun of it, if Andrew explained it as a passing fancy, but he knew what he felt was too powerful to be reduced to a mere whim. Or was it? He would not know what he wanted from her until he had her in his arms. Would she really be that difficult to find? Three sleepless nights were enough for him to come up with a plan.

And so it was that while the Crystal Palace (which had been moved to Sydenham after displaying the Empire's industrial prowess inside its vast belly of glass and reinforced iron) was offering organ recitals, children's ballets, a host of ventriloquists' acts, and even the possibility of picnicking in its beautiful gardens that Andrew Harrington—oblivious to the festive spirit that had taken hold of the city—put on the humble clothes of a commoner one of his servants had lent him, and examined his disguise in the cheval glass. He could not help giving a wry smile at the sight of himself in a threadbare jacket and trousers, his fair hair tucked under a check cap pulled down over his eyes. Surely looking like that people would take him for a nobody, possibly a cobbler or a barber. Disguised in this way, he ordered the astonished Harold to take him to Whitechapel. Before leaving, he made him swear to secrecy. No one must know about this expedition to London's worst neighborhood, not his father, not the mistress of the house, not his brother Anthony, not even his cousin Charles. No one.

III

IN ORDER NOT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HIM-self, Andrew made Harold pull up the luxurious carriage in Leadenhall and continued alone on foot towards Commercial Street. After wandering a good way down that evil-smelling street, he plucked up his courage and entered the maze of alleyways that made up Whitechapel. Within ten minutes, a dozen prostitutes loomed out of the fog to offer him a trip to Mount Venus for the price of a few pennies, but none of them was the girl in the portrait. Had they been draped in seaweed, Andrew might easily have mistaken them for faded, dirty ship figureheads. He refused them politely without pausing, a dreadful sadness welling up in him at the sight of those scarecrows hunched against the cold who had no better way of earning a living. Their toothless mouths attempting bawdy smiles were more repulsive than desirable. Would Marie look like that outside the portrait, far from the brushstrokes that had transformed her into an angelic creature?

He soon realized he was unlikely to find her by chance. Perhaps he would have more luck if he asked for her directly. Once he was sure his disguise was convincing, he entered the Ten Bells, a popular tavern on the corner of Fournier Street and Commercial Street opposite the ghostly Christ Church. When he peered inside the pub, it looked to him like just the sort of place whores went to in search of clients. As soon as he reached the bar, two of them came up to him. Trying to look casual, Andrew offered them a glass of stout, refusing their propositions as politely as possible. He explained he was looking for a woman called Marie Jeannette. One of the whores left immediately, pretending to be offended, perhaps because she did not want to waste the evening with someone who didn't want to pay for her services, but the other, the taller of the two, decided to accept his invitation:

“I suppose you mean Marie Kelly. That dratted Irishwoman, everybody wants her. I expect she's done a few by now and is in the Britannia—that's

where we all go when we've made enough for a bed and a bit more besides so that we can get drunk quick and forget our sorrows," she said, with more irony than bitterness.

"Where is this tavern?" Andrew asked.

"Near here, on the corner of Crispin Street and Dorset Street."

The least Andrew could do was thank her for the information by giving her four shillings.

"Get yourself a room," he recommended, with a warm smile. "It's too cold out there tonight to be traipsing the streets."

"Why, thank you, mister. You're too kind, I'm sure," said the whore, genuinely grateful.

Andrew said good-bye, politely doffing his cap.

"If Marie Kelly won't give you what you want, come back and see me," she shouted after him with a flash of coquettishness that was blighted by her toothless smile. "My name's Liz. Liz Stride, don't forget."

Andrew had no problem finding the Britannia, a seedy bar with a windowed front. Despite being brilliantly lit by oil lamps, the room was thick with tobacco smoke. At the far end was a long bar, with a couple of private rooms to the left. A crowd of noisy customers filled the large main area cluttered with tables and chairs, the floor strewn with sawdust. A fleet of bartenders in filthy aprons squeezed their way between tightly packed tables juggling metal tankards brimming with beer. In the corner, a battered old piano displayed its grubby keys to anyone wishing to enliven the evening with a tune. Andrew reached the bar, the surface of which was laden with large jugs of wine, oil lamps, and plates of cheese cut into huge chunks that looked more like bits of rubble from a dump. He lit a cigarette from one of the lamps, ordered a pint of beer, and leaned discreetly against the bar, surveying the crowd and wrinkling his nose at the strong smell of cooked sausage emanating from the kitchen. As he had been told, the atmosphere there was more relaxed than at the Ten Bells. Most of the tables were occupied by sailors on shore leave and local people dressed as modestly as he, although he also noticed a few groups of prostitutes busy getting drunk. He sipped his beer slowly and looked for one who fitted Marie Kelly's description, but none did. By his

third beer, he had begun to despair and to wonder what on earth he was doing there, chasing an illusion.

He was about to leave when she pushed her way through the pub door. He recognized her at once. There was no doubt about it: she was the girl in the portrait, but more beautiful still for being endowed with movement. Her face looked drained, yet she moved with the same energy Andrew had imagined she would from seeing her on canvas. Most of the other customers remained oblivious to the apparition. "How was it possible for anyone not to react to the small miracle that had just taken place in the tavern?" thought Andrew. This complete indifference made him feel he was a privileged witness to the phenomenon. And he could not help recalling the time when, as a child, he had seen the wind take a leaf between invisible fingers and balance the tip of it on the surface of a puddle, spinning it like a top until a carriage wheel put an end to its dance. To Andrew it had seemed that Mother Nature had engineered that magic trick for his eyes alone. From then on, he was convinced that the universe dazzled mankind with volcanic eruptions, but had its own secret way of communicating with the select few, people like Andrew who looked at reality as though it were a strip of wallpaper covering up something else. Taken aback, he watched Marie Kelly walk towards him as if she knew him. This made his heart start pounding, but he calmed down when she propped her elbow on the bar and ordered half a pint of beer without even glancing at him.

"Having a good night, Marie?"

"Can't grumble, Mrs. Ringer."

Andrew swallowed, on the verge of blacking out. She was standing next to him! He could scarcely believe it, yet it was true. He had heard her voice. A tired, rather husky voice, but lovely in any case. And if he really tried, ridding the air of the superfluous stench of tobacco smoke and sausages, he could probably smell her, too. Smell Marie Kelly. Mesmerized, Andrew gazed at her in admiration, rediscovering in her every gesture what he already knew. In the same way a shell holds the roar of the sea, so this frail-looking body seemed to contain within it a force of nature.

When the landlady placed the beer on the counter, Andrew realized this was an opportunity he must not waste. He rummaged swiftly in his pockets and paid before she could:

“Allow me, miss.”

The gesture, as unexpected as it was chivalrous, earned him an openly approving look from Marie Kelly. Being the focus of her gaze paralyzed him. As the painting had already shown, the girl’s eyes were beautiful, and yet they seemed buried beneath a layer of resentment. He could not help comparing her to a poppy field where someone has decided to dump refuse. And yet he was completely, hopelessly enthralled by her, and he tried to make that instant when their eyes crossed as meaningful to her as it was to him, but—and my apologies to any romantic souls reading these lines—some things cannot be expressed in a look. How could Andrew make her share in the almost mystical feeling overwhelming him at that moment? How could he convey, with nothing more than his eyes, the sudden realization that he had been searching for her all his life without knowing it? If in addition we consider that Marie Kelly’s existence up to that point had done little to increase her understanding of life’s subtleties, it should come as no surprise that this initial attempt at spiritual communion (for want of a better way of putting it) was doomed to failure. Andrew did his best, obviously, but the girl understood his passionate gaze just as she interpreted that of the other men who accosted her every evening.

“Thanks, mister,” she replied with a lewd smile, no doubt from force of habit.

Andrew nodded, dismissing the significance of a gesture he considered an all-important part of his strategy, then realized with horror that his careful plan had not taken into account how he was to strike up a conversation with the girl once he found her. What did he have to say to her? Or more precisely, what did he have to say to a whore? A Whitechapel whore, at that. He had never bothered speaking much to the Chelsea prostitutes, only enough to discuss positions or the lighting in the room, and with the charming Keller sisters, or his other female acquaintances— young ladies whom it would not do to worry with talk of politics or Darwin’s theories—he only discussed trivia: Paris fashions,

botany, and, more recently spiritualism, the latest craze everyone was taking up. But none of these subjects seemed suitable to discuss with the woman, who was hardly likely to want to summon up some spirit to tell her which of her many suitors she would end by marrying. And so he simply stared at her, enraptured. Luckily, Marie Kelly knew a better way of breaking the ice.

“I know what you want, mister, although you’re too shy to ask,” she said, her grin broadening as she gave his hand a fugitive caress that brought him out in goose pimples. “Thruppence and I can make your dreams come true. Tonight, at any rate.”

Andrew gazed at her, shaken: she did not know how right she was. She had been his only dream those past few nights, his deepest longing, his most urgent desire, and now, although he was still scarcely able to believe it, finally he could have her. His whole body tingled with excitement at the mere thought of touching her, of caressing the slender body silhouetted beneath that shabby dress, of bringing forth deep moans from her lips as he was set alight before her eyes, those of a wild animal, a tormented indomitable creature. And yet that tremor of joy rapidly gave way to a profound sadness when he considered the unjust plight of that fallen angel, the ease with which any man could grope her, defile her in a filthy back alley, without anyone in the world uttering a single cry of protest. Was that what such a unique creature had been created for? He had no choice but to accept her invitation, a lump in his throat, distressed at being compelled to take her the same way as her other clients, as if his intentions were no different from theirs. Once he had accepted, Marie Kelly smiled with what looked to Andrew like forced enthusiasm and tilted her head for them to leave the pub.

Andrew felt odd following the whore like that, walking behind her with birdlike steps as though Marie Kelly were leading him to the gallows instead of to plunge between her thighs. And yet, could their meeting have been any different? From the moment he came across his cousin’s painting he had been penetrating deeper into unknown territory, where he could not get his bearings because nothing around him looked familiar, everything was new, and, judging from the deserted streets, they were going through, quite possibly dangerous. Was he blithely walking into

some sort of trap laid by the whore's pimp? He wondered whether Harold would hear his shouts, and if so, would he bother coming to his aid, or use the opportunity to avenge himself for the offhand treatment he had received from his master all these years? After guiding him part of the way along Hanbury Street, a muddy alley dimly lit by a single oil lamp sputtering on a corner, Marie Kelly beckoned him down a narrow passageway leading into pitch-darkness. Andrew followed her, convinced he would meet his death, or at least be beaten to within an inch of his life by a couple of ruffians much bigger than him, who, having stolen everything including his socks, would spit contemptuously on his bloody remains. That was how they did things here, and his idiotic adventure richly deserved such an ending. But before fear had time to take hold, they came out into a filthy waterlogged backyard, where to his surprise no one was waiting for him. Andrew glanced warily about him. Yes: strange as it might seem, they were alone in that evil-smelling place. The world they had left behind was reduced to a muffled rumble in which a distant church bell's chimes rang out. At his feet, the moon reflected in a puddle looked like a crumpled letter some unhappy lover had tossed on the ground.

"We won't be disturbed here, mister," Marie Kelly reassured him, leaning back against the wall and drawing him to her.

Before he knew it, she had unbuttoned his trousers and pulled out his penis. She did so with startling ease, without any of the provocative foreplay to which the Chelsea prostitutes had accustomed him. The matter-of-fact way she maneuvered his sex beneath her hiked-up skirts made it clear to Andrew that what to him was another magical moment for her was no more than simple routine.

"It's in," she assured him.

In? Andrew had enough experience to know the whore was lying. She was simply gripping his penis between her thighs. He assumed it was common practice among them, a trick to avoid penetration, which, if they were lucky and the client failed to notice or was too drunk, reduced the number of hasty intrusions they were forced to undergo each day, and with them the unwanted pregnancies such a flood of sperm could bring about. With this in mind, Andrew began thrusting energetically, prepared

to go along with the charade, because in reality it was more than enough for him to rub his erect member against the silky skin of her inner thigh, to feel her body pressed against his for as long as the pretense lasted. What did it matter whether it was all a sham if this phantom penetration allowed him to cross the boundary imposed by good manners and force his way into that intimacy only lovers share. Feeling her hot sticky breath in his ear, inhaling the delicate odor from her neck, and clasping her to him until he felt the contours of her body merge with his was worth infinitely more than thruppence. And, as he soon discovered to his consternation when he ejaculated into her petticoats, it had the same effect on him as other greater undertakings. Slightly ashamed at his lack of endurance, he finished emptying himself in quiet contemplation, still pressed against her, until he felt her stir impatiently. He stepped back, embarrassed. Oblivious to his unease, the whore straightened her skirts and thrust out a hand to be paid. Trying to regain his composure, Andrew hurriedly gave her the agreed sum. He had enough money left in his pockets to buy her for the whole night, but he preferred to savor what he had just experienced in the privacy of his own bed, and to get her to meet him the next night.

“My name’s Andrew,” he introduced himself, his voice high-pitched from emotion. She raised an eyebrow, amused. “And I’d like to see you again tomorrow.”

“Certainly, mister. You know where to find me,” the whore said, leading him back along the gloomy passageway she had brought him down.

As they made their way back towards the main streets, Andrew was wondering whether ejaculating between her thighs entitled him to put his arm around her shoulder. He had decided it did, and was about to do precisely that when they ran into another couple walking almost blindly the other way down the dim alleyway. Andrew mumbled an apology to the fellow he had bumped into, who, although scarcely more than a shadow in the darkness, seemed to him quite a burly sort. He was clinging onto a whore, whom Marie Kelly greeted with a smile.

“It’s all yours, Annie,” she said, referring to the backyard they had just left.

The woman called Annie thanked her with a raucous laugh and tugged her companion towards the passageway. Andrew watched them stagger into the pitch-blackness. "Would that burly fellow be satisfied with having his member trapped between her thighs?" he wondered, as he noticed how avidly the man clutched the whore to him.

"Didn't I tell you it was a quiet spot," Marie Kelly remarked matter-of-factly as they came out into Hanbury Street.

They said a laconic good-bye in front of the Britannia. Rather disheartened by the coldness she had shown after the act, Andrew tried to find his way back through the gloomy streets to his carriage. It was a good half hour before he found it. He avoided Harold's eyes as he climbed back into the coach. "Home, sir?"

Harold enquired sardonically.

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT HE arrived at the Britannia determined to behave like a self-assured man instead of the fumbling, timid dandy of their previous encounter. He had to overcome his nerves and prove he could adapt to his surroundings if he was to display his true charms to the girl, that repertoire of smiles and flattery with which he habitually captivated the ladies of his own class.

He found Marie Kelly sitting at a corner table brooding over a pint of beer. Her demeanor unnerved him, but knowing he was not the sort to think up a new strategy as he went along, he decided to stick with his original plan. He ordered a beer at the bar, sat down at the girl's table as naturally as he could, and told her he knew of a guaranteed way to wipe the worried expression from her face. Marie Kelly shot him a black look, confirming what he feared: his remark had been a tactless blunder. Following this reaction, Andrew thought she was going to tell him to clear off without even wasting her breath, with a simple wave of her hand, like someone shooing away an irritating fly. But in the end, she restrained herself and gazed at him quizzically for a few seconds until she must have decided he was as good a person as any to unburden herself to. She took a swig from her tankard, as if to clear her throat, wiped her mouth on her sleeve, and told him that her friend Anne, the woman they had bumped into in Hanbury Street the night before, had been found that morning, murdered, in the same yard they had been in. The poor woman had been

partially decapitated, sliced open, her intestines pulled out, and her womb removed. Andrew stammered that he was sorry, as shocked at the killer's attention to detail as at having collided with him moments before the crime. Evidently that particular client had not been satisfied with the usual service. But Marie Kelly had other worries. According to her, Anne was the third prostitute to be murdered in Whitechapel in less than a month. Polly Nichols had been found dead with her throat slit in Bucks Road, opposite Essex pier, on August 31. And on the seventh of that same month, Martha Tabram had been found brutally stabbed to death with a penknife on the stairs of a rooming house. Marie Kelly laid the blame on the gang from Old Nichol Street, blackmailers who demanded a share of the whores' earnings.

"Those bastards will stop at nothing to get us working for them," she said between gritted teeth.

This state of affairs disturbed Andrew, but it should have come as no surprise: after all, they were in Whitechapel—that putrid dung heap London had turned its back on, home to more than a thousand prostitutes living alongside German, Jewish, and French immigrants. Stabbings were a daily occurrence. Wiping away the tears that had finally flowed from her eyes, Marie Kelly sat head bowed in silence for a few moments as though in prayer, until, to Andrew's surprise, she suddenly roused herself from her stupor, grasped his hand, and smiled lustfully at him. Life went on. Whatever else happened, life went on. Was that what she had meant by her gesture? After all, she, Marie Kelly, had not been murdered. She had to go on living, dragging her skirts through those foul-smelling streets in search of money to pay for a bed. Andrew gazed with pity at her hand lying in his, her dirty nails poking through her frayed mitten. He too felt the need to concentrate for a moment in order to change masks, like an actor who needs some time in his dressing room to concentrate in order to become a different character when he goes back on stage. After all, life went on for him, too. Time did not stop just because a whore had been murdered. And so he stroked her hand tenderly, ready to resume his plan. As though wiping condensation from a windowpane, he freed his young lover's smile from its veil of sadness and, looking her in the eye for the first time, he said:

“I have enough money to buy you for the whole night, but I don’t want any fakery in a cold backyard.”

This startled Marie Kelly, and she tensed in her seat, but Andrew’s smile soon put her at ease.

“I rent a room at Miller’s Court, but I don’t know if it’ll be good enough for the likes of you,” she remarked flirtatiously.

“I’m sure you’ll make me like it,” Andrew ventured to say, delighted at the bantering tone their conversation had finally taken, as this was a register at which he excelled.

“But first I’ll have to turn out my good-for-nothing husband,” she replied. “He doesn’t like me bringing work home.”

This remark came as yet another shock to Andrew on this extraordinary night over which he clearly had no control. He tried not to let his disappointment show.

“Still, I’m sure your money will make up his mind for him, Marie concluded, amused at his reaction.

SO IT WAS THAT Andrew found paradise in the dismal little room where he was now sitting. That night, everything changed between them. When at last she lay naked, Andrew made love to her so respectfully, caressed her body with such tenderness that Marie Kelly could feel the hard shell she had carefully built to protect her soul begin to crack, that layer of ice preventing anything from seeping into her skin, keeping everything locked behind the door, out there where it could not hurt her. To her surprise, Andrew’s kisses marking her body like a pleasurable itch made her own caresses less and less mechanical, and she quickly discovered it was no longer a whore lying on the bed, but the woman crying out for affection that she had always been. Andrew also sensed his lovemaking was freeing the real Marie Kelly, as though he were rescuing her from the bottom of one of those water tanks stage magicians immersed their beautiful assistants in, bound hand and foot, or as though his sense of direction were so good it saved him from getting lost in the maze like her other lovers, allowing him to reach the place no one else could, a sort of secret corner where the girl’s real nature survived intact. They burned with a single flame, and when it waned and Marie Kelly, staring dreamily up at the ceiling, began talking about springtime in Paris, where she had

worked as an artist's model some years before, and about her childhood in Wales and in Ratcliffe Highway in London, Andrew understood that this strange sensation in his chest must be the pangs of love, because without meaning to, he was experiencing all the emotions of which the poets spoke. Andrew was touched by the emotive tone her voice took on when she described the Parisian squares with their riot of gladioli and petunias, and how on her return to London she had insisted everybody say her name in French, the only way she had found of preserving intact that distant fragrance which softened life's sharp edges; but he was equally moved by the hint of sadness in her voice as she described how they hung pirates from the Ratcliffe Highway Bridge until they drowned in the rising waters of the Thames. For this was the real Marie Kelly, this bittersweet fruit, nature's flawed perfection, one of God's contradictions. When she asked what sort of work he did that could apparently allow him to buy her for the rest of his life if he wanted, he decided to run the risk and tell her the truth. Because if their love were to exist it must be nurtured in truth or not at all, and the truth (of how her portrait had captivated him, sending him off on this foolish quest to find her in a neighborhood so different from his own, and of how he had found her) seemed as beautiful and miraculous to him as those stories about impossible love you read in books. When their bodies came together again, he realized that far from being an act of madness, falling in love with her was possibly the most reasonable thing he had ever done. And when he left the room, with the memory of her skin on his lips, he tried not to look at her husband Joe, who was leaning against the wall shivering with cold.

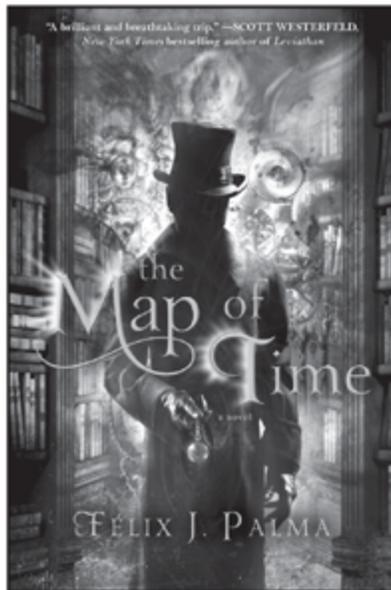
It was nearly daylight by the time Harold delivered him home. Too excited to go to bed, if only to relish the moments he had spent with Marie Kelly, Andrew went to the stables and saddled a horse. It was a long time since he had woken at dawn to go riding in Hyde Park. This was his favorite time of day, when the grass was still dewy and everything appeared untouched. How could he waste such an opportunity? Within minutes, Andrew was galloping through the trees opposite the Harrington mansion, laughing to himself and occasionally letting out a cry of joy, like a soldier celebrating victory, because that is what he felt like as he

remembered the loving look Marie Kelly had given him before they said good-bye until the following night. As though she could see in his eyes that without realizing it, he had been searching for her for years. And perhaps I should take this opportunity to apologize for my earlier skepticism and confess that there is nothing that cannot be expressed in a look. A look, it seems, is a bottomless well of possibilities. And so Andrew rode on, seized by a wild impulse, overwhelmed for the first time by a burning, pulsating sensation, which might reasonably be described as happiness. And, prey to the effects of such a violent infatuation, everything in the universe he rode past appeared to sparkle, as though each of its elements—the paths strewn with dead leaves, the rocks, the trees, even the squirrels leaping from branch to branch—were lit up by an inner glow. But have no fear, I shall not become bogged down in lengthy descriptions of acres of impassioned, practically luminous parkland because, not only do I have no taste for it, but it would be untrue, for despite Andrew's altered vision, the landscape clearly did not undergo any real transformation, not even the squirrels, which are well known as creatures who pursue their own interests.

After more than an hour of strenuous, exhilarating riding, Andrew realized he still had a whole day to get through before he could return to Marie Kelly's humble bed, and so he must find some way of distracting himself from the dreadful feeling that would no doubt assail him when he realized that irrespective of circumstances, or probably because of them, the hands of the clock were not turning at their usual speed, but were actually slowing down on purpose. He decided to drop in on his cousin Charles, which he usually did when he wanted him to share in his joy, even though this time he had no intention of telling him anything. Perhaps he was simply curious to see what Charles would look like to his feverish gaze which had the power to enhance everything, to see whether he would also glow like the squirrels in the park.

Meet the H.G. Wells history has forgotten.

Across time, famous writers are being murdered and their literary creations are being stolen—and only a time traveling H.G. Wells can stop it. But will he be able to save his own masterpiece *The Time Machine*?



“Brilliant!”

—starred *Publishers Weekly* review

“Enthralling!”

—starred *Library Journal* review

“An entertaining romp.”

—starred *Booklist* review

FROM ATRIA BOOKS



www.simonandschuster.com