

large open space and, striking another match, saw that I had entered an enormous underground room. It stretched into total darkness beyond my light.

'Great shapes like large machines rose out of the darkness, and made strange shadows in which I could see the shapes of Morlocks hiding. The air wasn't very fresh and there was a faint smell of fresh blood. Some way down the central path was a little table of white metal, covered with food. So the Morlocks, at least, were meat-eaters!

'Even at the time, I remember wondering what large animal still lived to produce the red piece of meat that I saw. Then the match burned down to my fingers and fell, a moving red spot in the darkness.

'I have thought since then how very badly-prepared I was for such an experience. When I had started building the Time Machine, I had had the stupid idea that the people of the future would certainly be far ahead of us in all their inventions. I had come without weapons, without medicine, without tobacco, even without enough matches.

'I didn't even think of bringing a camera, so I couldn't take a picture of that Under-world, to examine later. I stood there with only the weapons that nature had given me – hands, feet and teeth – and the four matches that I had left.

I was afraid to push my way in among all this machinery in the dark, and then I discovered that I had almost finished my matches. I had never thought that there was any need to save them and I had wasted almost half the box surprising the Eloi. Now I had four left, and while I stood in the dark a hand touched mine and cold fingers began feeling my face.

'I thought I could hear the breathing of a crowd of those horrible little creatures around me. I felt the box of matches in my hand being gently pulled away, and other hands behind me pulling at my clothes. I shouted as loudly as I could.

'They jumped back, and then I could feel them coming towards me again. They took hold of me more strongly, whispering odd sounds to each other. I shook violently and shouted again. This time they weren't so worried, and they made a strange laughing noise as they came back at me.

'I was horribly frightened. I decided to strike another match and escape under the protection of its light. I did so and, keeping the flame burning with a piece of paper from my pocket, I moved quickly into the narrow tunnel. But I had just entered this when my light was blown out, and in the blackness I could hear the Morlocks hurrying after me.

'In a moment I was held by several hands, trying to pull me back. I struck another light and waved it in their faces. You can't imagine how horribly inhuman they looked in their blindness and surprise. But I didn't stay. I moved back again and when my second match went out, I struck my third. It had almost burned down when I reached the opening into the well.

'I lay down on the edge and felt for the metal bars. As I did so, my feet were held from behind and I was violently pulled backwards. I lit my last match . . . and it went out. But I had my hand on the bars now and, kicking violently, I got myself free of the hands of the Morlocks and quickly climbed up the well. They stayed, afraid of the light, all except one little one who followed me for some way, and almost got my shoe as a prize.

'That climb never seemed to end. In the last eight or ten metres of it, a terrible feeling of sickness came over me. I had the greatest difficulty holding the bars. Several times I thought that I might fall. At last, though, I got over the top of the well, and walked shakily out of the ruin into the blinding sunlight.

'I fell on my face. Even the earth felt 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 remember nothing.