

'Fruit, I later learned, was all that they ate. These people of the future didn't eat meat, and while I was with them, although I missed it, I could only eat fruit too. In fact, I discovered later that horses, cows and sheep, and dogs, had disappeared from Earth. But the fruits were very pleasant.

'When I had filled my stomach, I tried to learn some of the language of these new people. The fruits seemed an easy thing to start with, and holding one of these up, I began using questioning sounds and movements. I had great difficulty making them understand. At first they stared in surprise and laughed, but soon a fair-haired little female seemed to realise what I wanted and repeated a name.

'They had to talk for some time to explain things to each other, and when I first tried to make the sounds of their language they were very amused. I felt like a teacher among children, but soon I at least knew a number of names for things and even the verb "to eat".

'It was slow work, though, and the little people soon got tired and wanted to get away from my questions, so I decided to let them give short lessons when they wanted to. And they were very short lessons because I have never met people who are lazier or more easily tired. They used to come to me with happy cries of surprise, like children, but like children they soon stopped examining me and went away to find another toy.

'When the dinner ended, I noted the disappearance of almost all the creatures who had surrounded me at first. It is odd, too, how quickly I stopped caring about these little people. I was continually meeting more of them. They followed me a little distance, talked and laughed around me, smiled in a friendly way, then left me alone.

'The evening was calm as I came out of the great hall, and the land was lit by the colour of the sun as it went down. The big building was on the side of a wide river valley, but the Thames had moved a kilometre or two from its present position. I decided to climb to the top of a hill from where I could see more of our world in the year 802,701. That was the date the little dials of my machine had showed.

'As I walked, I looked for anything that could explain the bad condition of things. A little way up the hill, for example, was a great pile of stones held together by pieces of metal. These were the ruins of a great building, although I couldn't imagine what its use had been.

'Looking round with a sudden thought, I realised that there were no small houses. Here and there among the trees and bushes were palace-like buildings, but the single house, and possibly even the family, had disappeared.

'And then came another thought. I looked at the small group of figures who were following me. I saw that all had the same type of clothes, the same soft hairless faces and the same girlish arms and legs.

'It may seem odd, perhaps, that I hadn't noticed this before. But everything was so strange. Now, I saw the fact clearly enough. These people of the future were all very similar in clothes, and in all other ways the differences between men and women had almost disappeared. And the children seemed to my eyes to be just smaller adults.

'Seeing how safely and comfortably these people lived, I felt that this close similarity of the sexes was understandable. If there are enough people, it becomes a problem rather than an advantage to have a lot of children. If violence comes only rarely and children are safe, there is less need for men to be strong and