

underground. But I couldn't do it. I was so alone, and even the idea of climbing down into the darkness of the well frightened me.

'The next night I did not sleep well. Probably my health had suffered a little. I was confused and unhappy. Once or twice I had a feeling of great fear for which I could see no definite reason. I remember walking noiselessly into the great hall where the little people were sleeping – that night Weena was among them – and feeling more comfortable in their company. I realised that the moon was in its last quarter and the nights were growing darker, and that there might be more appearances of those unpleasant creatures from below. And on both these days I had the restless feeling of someone who is trying to escape a duty. I felt that I could only get the Time Machine back if I understood these underground mysteries. But I wasn't brave enough to solve the mysteries, and I never quite felt safe.'

'These worries drove me further and further in my walks around the country. Going south-west towards the higher country, I saw, far away, an enormous building. It was larger than the largest of the palaces or ruins I knew, and the front was pale green. The difference in appearance suggested a difference in use, and I thought about going to look around. But it was growing late so I decided to wait until the following day, and I returned to Weena's welcome.'

'But the next morning I realised that my interest in the Green Palace was just helping me to delay an experience I was afraid of. I decided that I would go down without wasting any more time, and walked in the early morning towards a well near the ruins.'

'Little Weena danced beside me to the well, but when she saw me bend over the opening and look down, she seemed upset. "Goodbye, little Weena," I said, kissing her, and then I began to feel over the edge for the metal steps.'

'At first she watched me with surprise. Then she gave a most

heartbreaking cry and, running to me, began to pull at me with her little hands. I think her fear made me braver. I shook her off and in another moment I was inside the well. I saw her frightened face over the top and smiled to make her feel better.'

'I had to climb down a well perhaps two hundred metres deep. There were metal bars all the way down, but these were made for a person much smaller and lighter than I was and I was quickly tired by the climb. And not simply tired! One of the bars bent suddenly under my weight and almost threw me off into the blackness below. For the moment I hung by one hand, and after that I didn't dare to rest again.'

'Although my arms and back were very painful, I continued climbing down as quickly as possible. Looking up, I saw the opening, a small blue circle, where Weena's head was round and black. The noise of a machine grew louder. Everything except that little circle above was very dark, and when I looked up again she had disappeared.'

'I was in great discomfort and thought of going up again. But I continued to climb down. At last, with great happiness, I saw, half a metre to the right of me, a thin opening in the wall. Pulling myself in, I found it was the start of a narrow tunnel in which I could lie down and rest. It was not too soon.'

'I lay there, I don't know how long, until I felt a soft hand touching my face. Quickly getting to my feet in the darkness, I pulled out my matches. I struck one and saw three white figures moving quickly back, away from the light. Their eyes, unusually large from living in darkness, were like those of deep-water fish, and reflected the light in the same way. I have no doubt they could see me and they didn't seem to have any fear of me, only of the light.'

'The thought of running away was still in my mind, but I told myself that the job had to be done. As I felt my way along the tunnel, the noise of machinery grew louder. Soon I came to a