

'At last an unchanging half-light covered the world. The sun's line of light had disappeared, because it simply came up and went down in the west and grew wider and redder. The moon had totally disappeared. The movement of the stars had grown slower and slower. Finally, some time before I stopped, a large, red sun stopped moving. At one time it had become brighter for a short time, but it quickly lost its light again.

I understood that the Earth had stopped turning and was resting with one side facing the sun, just as in our own time the moon faces the Earth. Very nervously, because I remembered my first fall, I began to slow the machine down. The hands on the dials moved slower and slower until the thousands dial seemed to stop and the daily one could be seen again. I slowed down more, until I could begin to see an empty beach.

I stopped very gently and sat in the Time Machine, looking round. The sky was no longer blue. To the north-east it was inky black, and out of the darkness the pale white stars shone clearly and brightly. Overhead it was deep red and starless, and to the south-east it grew brighter to the point where half of the sun could be seen above the line of the land. The rocks around me were of a dull reddish colour. Some very green plants covered every part of their south-eastern side, and these were the only living things that I could see.

The machine was standing on a beach. The sea was to the south-west. There were no waves, because there was no wind. The sea moved very slowly up and down like gentle breathing. And along the edge of the water was a thick line of salt - pink against the brightly-coloured sky. I noticed that I was breathing very fast. This reminded me of my only experience of climbing mountains, and I knew that the air was thinner than it is now.

Far away up the empty beach I heard a scream and saw a thing like an enormous insect go flying up into the sky. It circled and disappeared over some low hills beyond. The sound of its

voice was so sad that I shook and sat myself more safely on the machine.

'Looking round me again, I saw that, quite near, a large red rock - I had thought it was a rock - was moving slowly towards me. Then I saw that the thing was really a large crab-like creature. Can you imagine a crab as large as that table, with its many legs moving slowly and uncertainly and its eyes looking at you?

'As I stared at this horrible creature, I felt something on my face. I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it returned and almost immediately I felt another by my ear. I struck at this and found something like a long string. It was pulled quickly out of my hand. With a great feeling of fear, I turned and saw that another enormous crab was standing just behind me. Its horrible eyes were moving, its mouth was open with hunger and it was going to attack me.

'In a moment my hand was on the lever and I had put a month between myself and these creatures. But I was still on the same beach and I saw them clearly now when I stopped. Large numbers of them seemed to be moving here and there, in the dull light, among the strong green plants.

'I can't make you understand the feeling of great emptiness that hung over the world. The red eastern sky, the darkness to the north, the salt Dead Sea, the thin air, all had a horrible effect. I moved a hundred years further into the future, and there was the same red sun - a little larger, a little darker - the same dying sea, the same cold air, and the same crowd of crabs moving slowly in and out of the green plants and the red rocks. And in the west I saw a curved pale line like a large new moon.

'So I travelled, stopping now and again, in great steps of a thousand years or more, wanting to know what happened to the Earth. I watched, with a strange interest, the sun grow larger and duller in the western sky, and the life of the old Earth die away. At last, more than thirty million years from