

to see, holding out his hand for one of them. 'It's strange,' said the Medical Man, 'but I certainly don't know what type of flowers these are. Can I have them?'

The Time Traveller thought for a few seconds. Then he suddenly said, 'Certainly not.'

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

The Time Traveller put his hand to his head. I thought he was trying to remember something. 'They were put into my pocket by Weena.' He stared round the room. 'I'm beginning to forget it all. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it only a dream? I must look at that machine. If there is one!'

He picked up the lamp quickly and carried it through the door. We followed him. There in the lamplight was the machine, with brown spots and mud on it, bits of grass on the lower parts and one side bent.

The Time Traveller put the lamp down on the table and touched the damaged side. 'It's all right now,' he said. 'My story was true. I am sorry I brought you out here in the cold.' He picked up the lamp and in total 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, after a few seconds, told him he was suffering from too much work. The Time Traveller laughed loudly. I remember him standing at the open door, shouting good night.

I walked some distance with the Editor. He thought the story was 'a colourful lie'. I was unable to make up my mind. It was so strange, and the telling was so believable and serious. I lay awake most of the night thinking about it.

The next day, I went to see the Time Traveller again. I was told he was in the laboratory. I went there but it was empty.

I stared for a minute at the Time Machine and put out a hand

and touched the lever. It shook like a branch in the wind. Its movements surprised me greatly, and I had a strange memory of childhood days, when I was not allowed to touch things. I went back into the smoking room and found the Time Traveller there. He had a small camera under one arm and a bag under the other. He laughed when he saw me. 'I'm very busy,' he said, 'with that thing in there.'

'But is it not a joke?' I said. 'Do you really travel through time?'

'Really and truly I do.' And he looked straight into my eyes. 'I only want half an hour,' he said. 'I know why you came and it is very good of you. There are some magazines here. If you will stay for lunch I shall prove this time-travelling to you completely. I shall even bring back some things for you to look at. Will you forgive me if I leave you now?'

I agreed, not really understanding the full meaning of his words, and he left the room. I heard the door of the laboratory shut, sat down in a chair and picked up the 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 a friend at two. I looked at my watch and saw that there was just enough time. I got up and went to tell the Time Traveller.

As I took hold of the handle of the laboratory door I heard a shout, then strange noises. A sudden wind blew round me as I opened the door, and from inside came the sound of broken glass falling on the floor. The Time Traveller was not there. I seemed to see a ghostly, unclear figure sitting in a moving machine for a moment, but all of this disappeared. The Time Machine had gone. The window was broken.

I was surprised and unable to understand. As I stood staring, the door into the garden opened and a servant appeared.

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