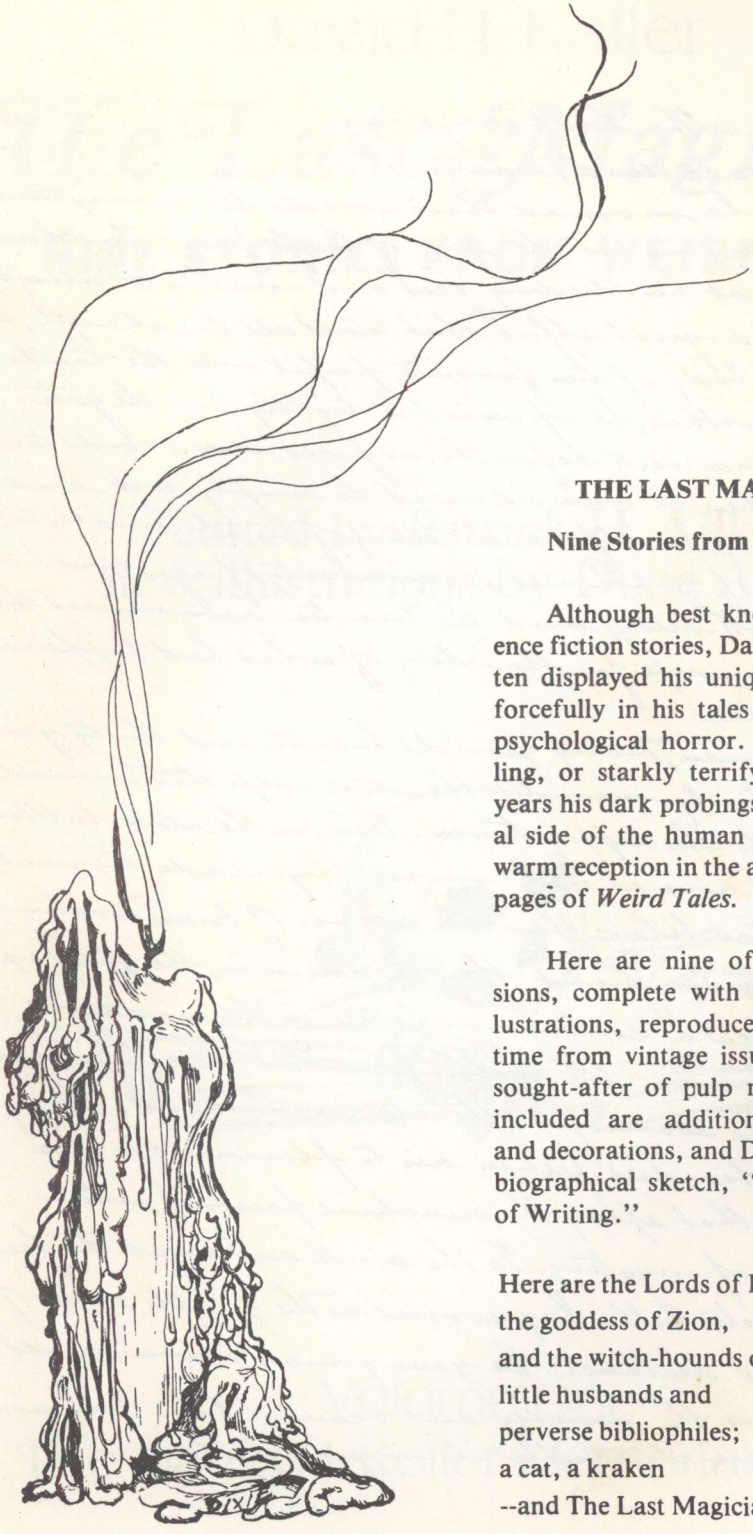
David H. Keller

The Last Magician

NINE STORIES FROM WEIRD TALES

- Volume One -

The David H. Keller Memorial Library



THE LAST MAGICIAN

Nine Stories from Weird Tales

Although best known for his science fiction stories, David H. Keller often displayed his unique talents most forcefully in his tales of fantasy and psychological horror. Fanciful, chilling, or starkly terrifying--for fifteen years his dark probings of the irrational side of the human psyche found a warm reception in the almost legendary pages of *Weird Tales.*

Here are nine of those dark visions, complete with their original illustrations, reproduced for the first time from vintage issues of the most sought-after of pulp magazines. Also included are additional illustrations and decorations, and Dr. Keller's autobiographical sketch, "Half a Century of Writing."

Here are the Lords of Ice,
the goddess of Zion,
and the witch-hounds of Salem;
little husbands and
perverse bibliophiles;
a cat, a kraken
--and The Last Magician!

The Last Magician.

"They are all dead, Master!"

Even as he moaned these words the weary man fell unconscious at the gate of Castle Doom. The old man looked down at his bleeding feet and mutilated arms, and then, with a great effort that taxed all his strength, he carried the body of his favorite pupil into the Castle: but, once within, he paused to tightly bar the gate.

It was a week before the injured man could talk and even then he was advised to simply rest and not torture himself with the telling of his tale. Finally the eagerness of youth and the curiosity of age could no longer brook delay, and the Master announced that the time was ripe for the story of what had happened in Astrobella.

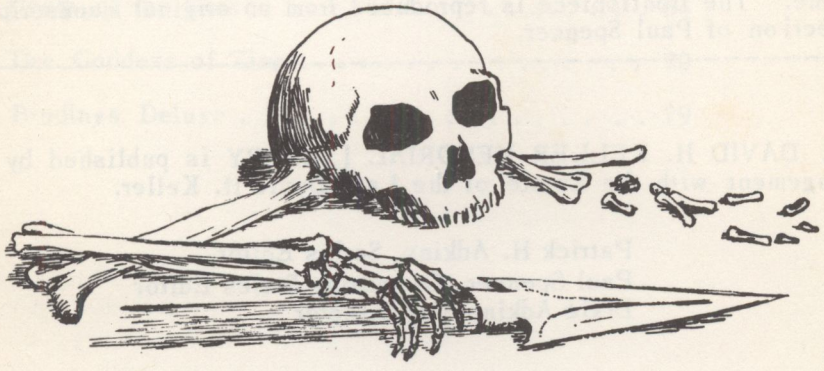
The two men, ninety year old Master and thirty year old pupil, slowly mounted the stone steps that wound their way to the upper tower. There, on the stone battlement, soft covered with moss, they made themselves at ease. Far below them the waves of Mare Nostrum beat ceaselessly against their old enemies, the piled up rocks. It was a continuous battle in the narrow channel between the waters from Lac Aranguin going out and the waves from the sea coming in. Spray dashed a hundred feet in air to pleasure the sea gulls. In that spray the sunshine prisoned into a rainbow of mystery. To the south and west the fair land of Astrobella lay covered in the purple mist of enchanted distance. The young man never could cease from the wonder and beauty of it. Even now he sat quiet under its mysterious lure.

David H. Keller

The Last Magician

NINE STORIES FROM WEIRD TALES

edited by Patrick H. Adkins
new illustrations by Dixie Adkins



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We regret the occasional fuzziness to be found on a few of the following pages, which results from imperfections in the original magazines.

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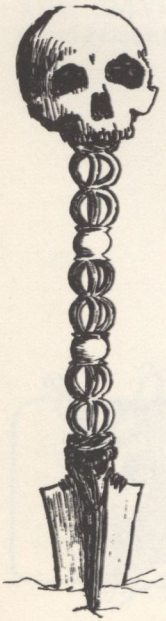


Dr. DAVID H. KELLER on his
HALF A CENTURY OF WRITING

FANTASY COMMENTATOR SPRING 1947

Sometime, before/after I have gone West, some courageous publisher will venture to bring forth a selection of Keller stories and search for someone who knew Keller to write an introduction. There are only a few who know anything about this man and none who know everything, so perhaps it will not be amiss to tell you about the growth of this writer/author.

I feel deeply that there is a vast void between the writer and the author. The writer spends many words for which he receives ample reward. His stories are usually published once and read once. They contain nothing that receives anything but temporary recognition as a form of time-passing that can be classified as a form of anesthesia, such as the movies and the radio afford. The author, on the other hand, strives for immortality. He judges the grade of his writing by the number of reprints, the number of stories that are read twice or more by the same person, the spread of his work to other countries, and the appreciation of his work by the superior adult rather than by the average reader of twelve years' mentality.

In addition, the author writes for the pleasure of writing while the writer turns out his stories for financial reward. Obviously the man trying to become an author has to have other sources of income besides that derived from the sale of his work or he dies early from starvation or disillusionment. Dickens, Tolstoy and their kind I feel to be writers; so, in the field of fantasy, are Burks and Williamson. Eddison, however, took thirty years to write *The Worm Ouroborus,* which showed him immediately to be an author. He's written other novels since but none of them as good. Lovecraft, here and there, is an author, too. One book will make a man an author. In fact, I think a single paragraph will sometimes do so.

It must be admitted that when the spur of necessity drove hard into my posterior I deliberately assumed the position of a writer, but did so with little pleasure and abandoned the role as soon as the need ceased. For I've always wanted and tried to be an author.

I was born on December 23, 1880 in Philadelphia. When I was six, my parents sent me to public school. I was sent home after remaining in grade one half a day. For, being unable to talk intelligently in English or in any other known language, I was diagnosed an idiot. My next three years were spent in a small private school where three old ladies endeavored to teach me the English language, which I learned very much as a traveller from Mars. Thus words became very important as a means of conveying thought. I had to think in English before I could talk in it. In conversation there were periods of hesitation caused by uncertainty concerning the proper word to convey my

thought. Psychologists would probably say I had a "block." And my family was frequently annoyed by my hesitation in speaking. Much of this background you will find in my story "The Lost Language."

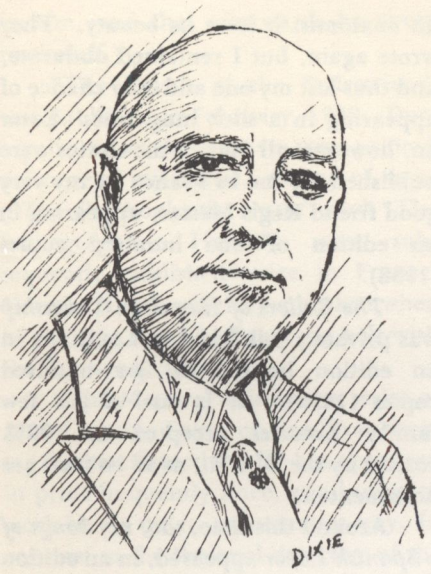
Before men wrote stories they told stories. Writing is relatively new and printing is almost a modern art. And very early in life, perhaps before I learned to speak English, I put myself to sleep with stories in most of which I was the hero. Finally, at the age of fifteen, I wrote one and had it published in a country newspaper. It was "Aunt Martha."

But I am getting a bit ahead of myself. At the age of nine I was reentered in grammar school, where I went through the first twelve grades--believe it or not--in five years. It was during this period, too, that I "discovered" books. (Up until then I had been exposed only to the limited offerings of a Sunday school library.) A branch of the Carnegie Library opened near my home, and, like Benjamin Franklin upon entering the French Bibliotheque Nationale, I at once resolved to read everything in it. It did not take me long to find that life was too short for that, but by the time I entered high school I was familiar with Dickens, Thackery, Poe, Kipling, Emerson and Tennyson. I had read the "jungle tales" in *St. Nicholas,* and was well acquainted with Jules Verne, A. Conan Doyle, H. G. Wells and the New England poets. Always I was hunting for new words and new thoughts.

In my fourteenth year I entered the Philadelphia Central High School for boys. Beside the school was the Apprentice's Library which, I believe, was founded by Benjamin Franklin. I spent as much time in it as I could--for as usual I wanted to read all the books there. In my second year in this school I wrote my first long mystery story, "Anima Postia" ("Life after Death"); the manuscript--some eighty pages in longhand--is still in my library, having survived fifty years of extensive travel. One of my stories was published in *The Mirror,* the school paper. There were also some poems in this period, for I was fond of this form of expression. That is about all that happened in the four years of high school: certainly not very much.

The fall of 1899 found me a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. This was to my great regret, for I wanted to attend Princeton and take a cultural course. My father would not finance that desire, however. Had I followed my own wishes at the time I believe I would have gone through life as a college professor, avoiding much trouble but probably missing great adventures. Teaching is something I have come to love. But--I studied medicine and was graduated in 1903.

In the meantime, of course, I had kept on writing. In my library is a bound volume of some stories written while at college. One ("University Story") was published in a church paper, and two others ("Judge Not" and "The Silent One") appeared in the college paper *Red and Blue.* "Shadows and Reality," a short novel, was never published, but is interesting in that it shows the influence of Marvel on my style. I had read and greatly enjoyed his *Dream Life* and *Reveries of a Bachelor.* At that time Frank Stockton was also one of my favorite authors, and we were beginning to hear of the de Maupassant short story and the O. Henry ending.



In 1901 I fell in with a group of literary optimists who believed that they could start a new magazine. At that time *The Black Cat* was the outstanding publisher of the short story in America. So we named our venture *The White Owl.* It lasted seven issues, long enough to print five of my stories, for which I employed the pen name of Henry Cecil. Despite the hard work involved--we editors plugged it personally among the newsdealers--it was great fun. Perhaps my experiences as co-editor of this publication have made me sympathetic toward producers of fan magazines; at least I can share with them their hopes when their journals are born and their grief when they die.

After four years of college and one of interneship I became, to all intents and purposes, a physician. And after two years more of city life I began the great adventure of being a horse-and-buggy doctor in Russell, Pennsylvania, a general practitioner in a town having a population of three hundred. There are two manuscript novels in my library which tell in part how and why I went there and what I accomplished. These are "Wanderers in Spain" and "The Fighting Woman." It was a sorry, thinly-populated region of little valleys between barren hills. Those who may be interested will find that I have sketched in this town as the background to my story "The Bridle."

During these eight years of country practice I wrote very little but read a great deal. The town's most prosperous man had a library of five thousand volumes, and every Sunday afternoon I would visit it to borrow the next week's reading. It seemed that I never could find time enough to read all I wanted to. This desire has been a constant benefit/curse to me all my life. Even now the two problems remain: the buying of new books and finding room for them.

There followed a bitter year as a physician in Pleasantville, New Jersey. After that I spent almost a year as a junior physician in the Anna State Hospital of Illinois. There I wrote some stories about the abnormals. Then came World War I, in which I served as First Lieutenant and Captain in the Medical Corps. Following peace I applied for and received a commission in the Medical Reserves, which I held long enough to be ordered to active duty as a Lieutenant Colonel on August 1, 1941.

Following my discharge from active service on February 28, 1919 I went from New Mexico's Camp Codie to Pineville, Louisiana. There I spent nearly ten years as physician and assistant superintendent in the state hospital. When Huey Long came in, I resigned; as I remember, other doctors left soon after, also--though they didn't resign.

It was while at Louisiana that I became obsessed with the idea of

writing the great American novel. I wrote prodigiously--over five thousand pages of manuscript. At the time, I never tried to sell any of it. During these years I wrote such novels as "The Lady Decides," "The Adorable Fool," "The Fighting Woman," "Wanderers in Spain," "Life Is What You Make It," "The Gentle Pirate," "The Sign of the Burning Hart," "The Stone Fence" and "A Stranger in Kunkletown." A family history, *The Kellers of Hamilton Township,* also appeared then. Some of these have an interesting history.

"The Stone Fence" and "A Stranger in Kunkletown" were later consolidated and sold to Simon and Schuster as *The Devil and the Doctor.* This was published in 1940, with an excellent format and fine illustrations. It received favorable reviews, but the company advertised it but once--and then quickly dropped it as though it contained TNT. Shortly after publication, Simon and Schuster refused booksellers' orders for the volume, claiming it to be "unavailable." Yet this was before their stock was sold for paper costs to "remainder" firms. Precisely what was behind all this I don't know. Possibly applied pressure of orthodox religious groups stopped distribution of the book. I think it deserved a better fate. In any event, it evoked many letters to me from people who enjoyed it--and who, on their own words, had many stone fences of their own.

"The Sign of the Burning Hart" is composed of four connected stories. The leading one I submitted to a *Harpers Magazine* prize contest. They wanted to buy and print it, but said I would have to tell them what it meant, for no two of their readers saw the same thing in it. I refused to draw blue prints, explaining that a humming bird is beautiful alive, but that dead and dissected by an anatomist it loses its beauty. They wrote again, but I remained obdurate, and thus lost my one and only chance of appearing in a slick magazine. Later on, however, all four of the stories were published for me in France by my very good friend Regis Messac, appearing in an edition of one hundred copies (1938).

The Kellers of Hamilton Township was privately published in Louisiana in an edition limited to five hundred copies (1922). It is one of the few family histories accepted as 100% correct by the D.A.R., as all its facts are documented.

Around this time, too, my *Songs of a Spanish Lover* appeared, in an edition limited to fifty copies (1924). I used the Henry Cecil pseudonym for this title. As might be guesed, this is a book of poems; some of these were, I must confess, foisted on readers as being "translated from the Chinese."

All these--and later--writings were written without thought of sale, either sheerly for self-expression and the satisfaction, often, of seeing them in print, or simply because I had to write them to get them out of my system. Then late in 1926 my wife showed me a copy of *Amazing Stories,* and suggested that I try to sell some work. So I wrote "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" and submitted it. Gernsback promptly accepted it, and offered to take a dozen more of my stories at forty dollars each. Before I had a chance to reply I received another letter from him, this time offering sixty dollars apiece. I accepted, though at the time I had no idea that I could write more, and was not at all certain that Gernsback thought I could, either. (He told me later that he felt every writer had only one good story

in him, and that afterwards he wrote poor stuff.)

"The Revolt of the Pedestrians" was published in February, 1928. During the rest of the year *Amazing* printed six more of my stories. As two of them ("The Psychophonic Nurse" and "The Stenographer's Hands") were subsequently published twice in France, Gernsback was evidently mistaken when he thought that I had shot my bolt with the first acceptance.

"The Menace" initiated a series of stories about Taine of San Francisco, my favorite detective. He has appeared in print frequently since, continuing to work in his quiet, unassuming way. In contrast to the fictional detective of the present day he is not a tough, hard-drinking, powerful brute. He simply brings the criminal to justice without fanfare of trumpets. Married and the father of several daughters, he unfailingly gives his wife ten per cent of his earnings, which she donates to the local church society, thus remaining its president. I suspect that Taine uses his skill as a detective as an excuse for remaining away from his feminine family, as great writers such as Burton, Paul and Perry have done. In one of his unpublished adventures he refuses to arrest the criminal, and I believe that those who read the story will not blame him.

Some of my experiences with Gernsback were happy, some were not. But he owes me no money-- a fact I mention with reluctance, since other authors may wonder how I managed to do it! In the fall of 1928 I visited the man in New York and met his brother Sidney. Gernsback tried to "sell" me New York, but I would have none of it. In fact, ever since then I've tried to destroy it. That started with "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" and continued on through "The Metal Doom," in which I did a rather thorough job.

Sidney Gernsback was starting a new magazine along popular medical lines at the time of my visit, and he asked me for a series of articles on psychoanalysis, which I agreed to write. Thus began my writing medical articles in a language that could be understood by the common man. In the course of several years I produced nearly seven hundred of them, a ten volume set of books, a long essay on anatomy and literally thousands of letters. The work was interesting but time-consuming. During a period of forty-nine consecutive days, for example, I wrote some 300,000 words.

Along about this time I found myself turning out some fiction that did not fit into any category I had previously tried my hand at. One, "The Little Husbands," I sent to Farnsworth Wright of *Weird Tales* magazine. He bought it and also the next three stories I submitted. Then I sent him in one mail the first three of the Cornwall stories, "The Tailed Man of Cornwall," "The Battle of the Toads" and "No Other Man," which Wright accepted *en masse*. When I met him soon after he told me he had taken my first stories as fillers, not thinking that they showed much ability, but that my Cornwall stories definitely established me as an author. (These stories were inspired by a branch of my mother's family, which came from Cornwall in southwest England. Some have not yet been printed, but the last one, called "Heredity," is scheduled to appear in an English periodical this spring.) I always remembered his words, for no one had ever called me an author before. From then on, Wright published anything

worthwhile I sent him. Our meeting was the beginning for me of a very pleasant friendship with a very remarkable editor. Much of that story is confidential, but I can reveal that I was able to attain him a wife and child in spite of his serious handicaps. I always look back at *Weird Tales* with great pleasure, and I do not think it has been the same since Farnsworth Wright's death.

Once starting in the fantasy and weird field I found it as interesting as science-fiction, sometimes more so. Twenty-two of my stories have been printed in *Weird Tales,* and some of these have been reprinted in the *Not at Night* anthologies in England. The most popular is "The Thing in the Cellar," which has been reprinted five times--one London newspaper going so far as to pirate it.

When I first started writing science-fiction one of my ardent fans was Regis Messac, then a professor in Montreal, Canada. Upon returning to France, he and several others founded the periodical *Les Primaires,* which was to present to the cultured French a comprehensive view of literature by living authors. Each editor had a certain field, Messac's being science-fiction. He was to pick out the best living science-fiction author; then choose his best story and translate it. He selected me, and "The Stenographer's Hands." This magazine published four more of my stories, financed a book containing three of them, and started to print my novel "The Eternal Conflict" in serial form. Before the latter was concluded World War II started. Messac was interned, and later died as so many other great men died. *Les Primaires* came to an end, and that finished my French adventure. One of the stories published in France, "Pourquoi," has never been printed in English.

I have Messac's book on Edgar Allan Poe. In his presentation inscription he calls me "the spiritual grandson of Edgar Allan Poe." When he translated and printed "The Flying Fool" he said that I was as great a satirist as Voltaire, but kindlier because I always loved and pitied those I made sport of. Had the war not intervened I might have become well known in French literature. There is one other view of Messac that might be of interest to readers. He once wrote me that my English was very easy to translate into French because I wrote as if I first thought in French and then translated my thought into English, and all he had to do was translate it back into French once more. In this connection you might recall my story "The Lost Language."

From Louisiana I went to Tennessee, where I spent a very hard year in the hospital at Bolivar. The background there has been used in my later story, "The Tree of Evil." Thence I arrived at the state hospital for the feeble-minded at Pennhurst, Pennsylvania, where I remained as assistant superintendent for four and a half years. Much of my spare time was spent in medical writing for Gernsback, but I continued producing stories and an occasional bit of poetry.

By late 1929 I began to wonder about the questionable prophecies of science-fiction and the beautiful fancies of weird fiction. It seemed to me that I wasn't writing enough about real life and real people. It was then that I began a series of stories about the little people such as the A. & P. salesman, the bank clerk, and so on. Many have not been printed, but fifteen found a place

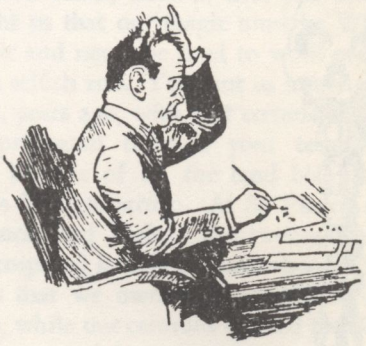
in *Ten Story Book* magazine under the pen name of Amy Worth. The first one, "Eight, Sixty-Seven," was printed in the November, 1929 issue. These stories were so utterly different in style from my usual ones that no one ever identified Amy without my help. These tales netted me six dollars apiece except for the last one, "The Mystery of the Thirty-Three Stolen Idiots," for which I received double that. My wife, incidentally, had told me that such stories would never sell.

After leaving Pennhurst I came back to my ancestral home in Pennsylvania's Monroe County, where the Kellers have lived since 1736. There I determined fo finish my days in spoiling many pages of white paper with black letters. I wrote a long account of my twenty-five years with abnormals of society, calling it *Through the Back Door.* I sold *The Devil and the Doctor.*

I was then called to active duty, and served most of the time as Medical Professor on the faculty of the Army Chaplain's School at Harvard. Here I taught over six thousand clergymen of all denominations. I remained on duty until September, 1945. (I still am an officer in the reserves, on retired pay.) The army life was hard but pleasant. There was some writing, chiefly a primer and first reader for use in my school for illiterates at Camp Lee, Virginia. My duties gave me little time for writing fiction, and what little I produced had difficulty in finding a market. Wright and Sloane had gone West, and the new editors either did not know me or, knowing me, were unwilling to see anything worthwhile in my plots or my style.

Now, back in my home at Underwood, South Stroudsberg ("the big house at the top of the hill"), possessed as always by the daemon of composition, I am working on a novel centering around an idea that as far as I know is absolutely new to modern literature. This brings me up to date---exactly fifty-one years since my first story was printed.

How do I write a story? To my mind, a story has to have three important parts. First, an idea. Sometimes it's very hard to get a new idea, but once you have it, you've gone half the distance. Most of mine have answered apparently simple questions. What would have happened to civilization if all metal disappeared? Could babies be raised more successfully by machinery than by human parents? What would be the result of life without disease, crime or death? And so on. Second, a story must have a good beginning. It is important because the reader must be made interested immediately. Third, there is the ending. This to me is as essential as the other two requirements. I must have all three clearly in my mind before I start



"Plus puto, minus scio."
DAVID HENRY KELLER

Keller letterhead with motto, "The more I learn, the less I know."

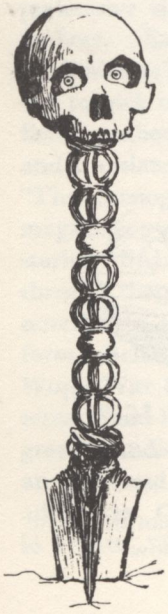
to write. My newest novel, for example, waited for a year to get written simply because I had no ending for it; then one night I got that by means of a dream. In endings, moreover, one has to know when to stop. In between, my formula is to avoid unnecessary words and try always to keep the reader interested. I let the prose flow as fast as I can type, trying to express the thought as clearly and beautifully as possible with simple words. The shorter the word the better, if it gives my exact meaning.

Perhaps there should be an element of suspense. This certainly is present in "The Thing in the Cellar," "The Dead Woman," "The Parents." The new editors call loud and long for action; they want scripts timed for radio, air travel and the cinema. Personally, I do not care for such style, though occasionally I do write rapid action. In my novels I am more inclined to meander in the manner of Laurence Sterne--but who would publish his *Tristam Shandy* today?

It appears to be the custom of schools for writers to encourage pupils to read "type" stories of various known writers and then try to imitate their styles. How many thousands have tried to produce another "Lady or the Tiger?" I have found that if a man ever hopes to arrive in literature he must create his own style. And when my critics say that my work is hopeless because no other "pulp" writer writes as I do, I consider I have attained one of my objectives.

As you can see, my life has been a busy one of unusual adventures. What future years will bring is a very pertinent question. I look forward with interest to the answer. It may be that I will dream more stories and write fewer pages. But in spite of the hard work I have had ample reward in the pleasure of trying to become an author.

David H. Keller, M.D.



The Last Magician

By DAVID H. KELLER

A thrilling fantasy about a monster so vast that forests grew upon its back and people dwelt unsuspecting in towns upon its hide

"THEY are all dead, Master!" Even as he moaned these words the weary man fell unconscious at the gate of Castle Doom. The old man looked down at the bleeding feet and mutilated arm, and then, with a great effort that taxed all his strength, he carried the body of his favorite pupil into the Castle: but, once within, he paused to bar the gate.

It was a week before the injured man could talk, and even then he was advised to rest and not torture himself with the telling of his tale. Finally the eagerness of youth and the curiosity of age could no longer brook delay, and the Master announced that the time was ripe for the story of what had happened in Astrobella.

The two men, ninety-year-old Master and thirty-year-old pupil, slowly mounted the stone steps that wound their way to the upper tower. There, on the stone battlement, soft-covered with moss, they made themselves at ease. Far below them the waves of Mare Nostrum beat ceaselessly against their old enemies, the piled-up rocks. It was a continuous battle in the narrow channel between the waters from Lac Aranguiz going out and the waves from the sea coming in. Spray dashed a hundred feet in the air to pleasure the sea-gulls. In that spray the sunshine prismed into a rainbow of mystery. To the south and west the fair land of Astrobella lay, covered in the purple mist of enchanted distance. The young man never could cease from the wonder and beauty of it. Even now he sat quiet under its mysterious lure.

At last the aged man woke the day-dreamer from his fantasies. The young man looked around him and shivered at the reality of life. The master worried to see his enlarging pupils and the tremor of his wasted hand.

"Tell me what happened to you—and the Brothers in Astrobella?" the old man asked; and the answer came:

"Must I tell all?" and the command was:

"All! For only thus can you find peace."

Then like a breath from the Pit came the blistering tale.

"You recall, Master, that you always taught us that our magic must be White Magic and never be used to work evil or for a selfish end. You sent us into Astrobella, years ago, with that command, and we prospered through your teachings; and, because of us, the land blossomed like a Persian garden. At St. Paulos and Valencia and Melaga the twenty-one of us prospered in a firm brotherhood. The ships that we owned sailed Mare Nostrum, while our caravans crossed the Sierra Darro and brought back copper, tin and amber from Terra Incognita.

"But you know all this. Each month one of us came to report and receive your advice and bring our gifts, not of tribute, but of love. You know everything we have done in these years. We became

"Suddenly it raised in the air, passed in a graceful curve, and disappeared in the waters of Mare Nostrum."

prosperous—nay, even wealthy, but it was all due to your teachings, Master, and the White Magic we learned at your feet.

"We knew that the merchants envied us, but we never realized the extent of the hatred held against us by the King and his barons. Their ways were not our ways. We believed in peace, freedom and brotherly love, while they never seemed happy unless they were warring or wenching. There was no charge they could bring against us, for we were good citizens, paid our taxes and walked uprightly.

"Finally the King sought out the Cardinal, him who ruled in the Cathedral at St. Paulos. He was a grasping man, always scratching the inside of his hand. This Cardinal advised that we be tried

as evil-doers, sorcerers, heretics and magicians, workers in deviltry and Black Magic. We were to be found guilty and killed and all our property confiscated, half for the King and the rest for the Cathedral—and that really meant the Cardinal.

"Our enemies worked secretly and so well that on the day appointed they caught us all. Lacking warning, we had no thoughts of escape. By night the twenty-one brothers, with their wives and families, were in the dungeons. Everything we had was taken from us—our houses, goods and ships. Seven of our little ones died of hunger in the next week while we awaited trial. That was a wonderful good fortune for them.

"The trial? Why, it was no real trial, Master, just a hideous farce. We were charged with every known crime. They said we drank the blood of children, consorted with the Devil, attended a strange thing they called the Black Mass, worked desperately against the good of the country. Of course, we were declared guilty—we were not even allowed to defend ourselves—Giles was killed in the court because he asked permission to speak in our defense. Still, he said some words even as he died—you would have been proud of little Giles had you seen him that day—always so timid, but then he cursed the Bishop and the King and the Cardinal and all the Unholy Band, and even as he died he told them of a monster that would destroy the land. Doubtless he raved in his death agony, but it was a brave sight to see him dare tell such things to the King, even as he bled to death.

"Giles' wife was there and heard all he said, and as he quieted in death she turned to me and whispered, 'That is the kind of a brave man I married!' and, with a dagger snatched from a soldier's belt, she killed herself, but she kissed her poor man ere she died.

"They all died. By fire and steel and drowning they died, and only I remain of all those fair young men you taught your wisdom to. They were going to cut me up piecemeal, and there they made their mistake. First, they killed my wife—she was with child—then they cut off my left hand. At that I departed from your teaching and used Black Magic."

"You never learned such magic from me!" interrupted the old man, surprized that such a thing had happened.

"No—I learned it not from you: but I know some. My ships had brought me manuscripts from Araby and mystery books from the far East. I read them and pondered over them, but I never tried to use the wisdom I learned from them. I never needed it, but when I saw my wife die, I called on Asmodeus for help—you know of him, the Devil with two sticks?"

"A wild fiend from Hell," commented the Master, gravely.

"Wild he was that day. He came in a storm that blew the cross off the Cathedral. The day darkened into night. The blood-stained bodies of our loved ones were washed clean by the torrents of rain and lay in the square, bleached and free from stain or pain. Hail, the size of your fist, drove the soldiers to shelter and I was carried through the air into the Dark Forest.

"Slowly, through the mountain passes and along the river, I made my way to you and Castle Doom. There is nothing more for me to tell you—that is what happened. We will spare the telling of details—imagine the worst and that will tell you what happened."

The grief-stricken man looked silently to the east over the desolate sea. Two pigeons started to build their nests among the rocks. The Master Magician sighed.

"The work of years destroyed in one day," he whispered. "Nothing remains to repay the effort of years."

"There is still revenge!" replied the sick man.

"An evil word, my dear lad."

"But a necessary one. Shall such evil go unrewarded?"

"I have lived a long time," replied the Magician. "In fact, I am now over ninety years old. In these years I have learned much. Here is some of my wisdom: 'One swallow does not make a summer.' 'What goes up in the air must come down.' 'It is a long lane that has no turning.' 'Two and two make four.' What think you of such wisdom?"

The young man looked at his Master but kept silent.

"What think you?" repeated the Magician.

"I dare not tell you."

"Nay, Marcus, speak thy mind. Only you and I are left and certainly we can be frank with each other. Say your say. Why should you fear me?"

"I fear to hurt your pride."

"That is something I never had—not as you mean it—so, speak your mind freely."

"Then I would say this. It was not *your* wife and unborn child who were killed in the square at St. Paulos, and if my tale stirs you not to revenge, then you are growing old and childish." The young man spoke rapidly as though forced to finish at once ere he was stopped by regret and love for his Master: but the aged Magician only smiled.

"That was the speech of youth and not of age. Long before you were born I also had a wife. Just sixty years ago we lived in St. Paulos. I was away for a month, and during that time she was burned as a witch, and when I came back to Astrobella there was nothing left—even her ashes had been scattered over Mare Nostrum. I came here and had this Castle built—only I know of the building by unseen hands—the cheeping voices directing the construction.

"After it was built I pondered over the Wherefore and the Why of life and then I determined to return good for evil and bless the land that had cursed me. I studied and learned many things and then I gathered you boys and made a Brotherhood of Twenty-one. You learned all that was needed to make a land prosperous, and each became an expert in his art, profession or trade. Then I sent you out to make Astrobella blossom into an earthly paradise. Now, at ninety years of age, this is my reward. You alone are left to me, Marcus, I tell you; it is time for me to think seriously about these matters and not decide lightly what to do. I must meditate, but when I finish, you will find that I am neither fatally old, childish nor have I forgotten my wife—or yours! Now help me to my room—and let me sleep—do not disturb me—no matter how long I slumber, respect my resting. When I am ready, I will send for you. In the time you wait for me, rest and eat and sleep. Grow strong, for you will need that sleep and rest and strength in days to come. If you can not slumber, drink Wine of Poppy. You will find it in the storeroom."

DOWN the winding steps of ancient stone they went slowly, and there, into the Magician's room, they came to put him to sleep. He had a couch of ebony, inlaid with gold and ivory, and on it was a white silken bag, full of swan's down, to serve as a buffer between his bones and the hardness of the bed. On this he lay, and, folding his hands across his breast, he sighed and shut his eyes. Marcus took a black silk coverlet, emblazoned with stars of silver, and cov-

ered his Master. Then he left, wondering at the Magician's peaceful face and white hairs—and ere he reached the door the old man was asleep.

Marcus stood at the doorway, watching the old man, then walked slowly to the storeroom in the cellar, lighted with torches that never burned shorter. There was Wine of Poppy in a flask of yellow crystal, the stopper of which was shaped like the seed pod of the *Papaver Orientalis*. From this flask he poured what he knew was necessary and drank it slowly. Later on in his own room he joined his Master in repose, and, as he slept, no dreams of terror came to torment him in his rest: but in a garden of lilies his sweet lady and he walked, while she told him of the deep-tasted joys of Paradise: Around them ran a little child in a white shirt, bordered with purple, and on the breast thereof the name "Joy" embroidered. He judged that the child was the one unborn on earth, and his wife's pride at the baby's sturdy ways confirmed this thought—but he dared not ask her the truth of it. . . .

Thus, when he awoke on the morrow, he was healed of part of his hurt and went down and battled in the waves as he had done so often in his youth.

From the small bathing-beach he looked up to the Castle, five hundred feet above him, cunningly built on the overhanging crest of a mountain crag. Once again he wondered at the skill of the building and of the wonderful magic that had kept it concealed all these sixty years so that none had seen it or come to it in all the days save only those welcomed by the Master Magician. He and the Brotherhood had spent happy months there.

THREE days later, as he slept after bathing, a martlet awakened him by insistent fluttering of wings on closed eyes. So Marcus knew that the old man had roused from his sleep and was calling for him. Dressing carefully, he joined the Magician in the library. As they sat there facing each other in their cushioned chairs, Marcus marveled to see his Master's hands gently stroke the chair arms, made out of the tusks of the African elephant. For the hands were youthful and strong and the eyes were wild and fired with the joy of early manhood, but the rest of the body was wasted and worn.

As though reading his pupil's thoughts the Magician said, "To solve the problem ahead of me I had to have clear vision, and to do the work my hands had to be strong and cunning. So, during my sleep, I willed that strength from me should flow to these parts. Thus you see them enriched at the expense of the rest of me.

"To me in my dreams came what I sought for. There came to me out of the past the answer to my questionings and here is what we will do—I, while I live, and you to finish when I am gone; for the ending may be delayed many years—it would be a shame to hasten it. Now, listen and tell me if my mind is as old as you thought.

"A long time ago there were animals in this land. No one knows how large they were, how many, or the size of them. Most of them must have died: or, perhaps, they still live at the bottom of the Mare Nostrum. We have tales of such monsters, told by sailors in the old books. You can read of such fancies in the manuscripts in these very rooms. There is a tale of a vessel landing on an island. The sailors went ashore and raised a crop of wheat and filled the vessel with cocoanuts and rice and sweet water. Then, one way or another, as they prepared to sail, the island moved away, and they knew it then for what it really was—a giant turtle, and what they thought was an island was only part of its back stick-

ing out of the water. The large animal had slept there for years, wondering dully what to do next, while trees grew upon its back.

"They must have been marvelously big animals with little minds, wandering about the world as they vainly tried to reason the real meaning of their own existence. Finally they disappeared, or so we think, though they may still live in some land unknown to our voyagers. Lesser animals came after that—veritable ants in comparison, but, even so, over one hundred paces long. Their bones whiten the desert spots of the earth, while the imprints of their feet and toes, two paces long, cause men to puzzle over the mysteries of the past. These, too, have gone. Such animals were too dull to defend themselves, too clumsy to procreate, too big to live. When they passed out of the picture, our ancestors, my dear lad, timidly came down from the tree tops, and man appeared on earth.

"It was the age of little animals, the saber-toothed tiger, cave bear and mammoth. Man fought them and finally conquered, not by strength, but by the power of his mind. It was the beginning of Magic. Always there has existed this wonderful force. How did it come and from where? How shall I tell? One man in a lifetime learned a trifle and he taught what he knew to a younger man, who added a trifle to it and taught it in turn to a third. It must have taken thousands of years! At first there was no word-writing, only pictures, and before pictures there was a language, but only of grunts. In every generation there were wise men, a few, and stupid men, many. The wise men grew to know more, but the stupid men seemed to grow more base. Else, why do they kill as they did the other day at St. Paulos?

"The wise men either became Magicians or Priests. If they lived only for the joy of learning and were never satisfied unless they had their noses between the leaves of a musty book, they became workers of Magic: but if they loved power and wealth and were greedy and selfish, then they became Priests and lived upon the ignorance and stupidity of the commoners. They became powerful, and, as they did so, they tried hard to exterminate the bookworms, as they called the Magicians.

"They made a good job of it, Marcus. Try as hard as we could, it was difficult to survive. Yonder is a book bound in black leather with clasps of gold. It has a thousand pages written in ink by my own hand, and the ink is red and the pages spotted with tears. Each page tells the death of a Magician, friend of mine, at the hands of these Priests. I am the last one left in these parts and you are the last pupil. There are some of the old Brotherhood in the Deserts of Arabia and a few more in a place you wot not of, called the Mountains of Gobi.

"They live on there, but they dare not show their faces in the civilized parts of earth lest they be hunted and killed like wild animals.

"Yet our wisdom helped in past ages, and only through our aid did man win in his fight against the wild creatures, who constantly tried to kill him. Were it not for our magic, there would be no human race on the ground: we would still share the tree tops with the apes.

"To prove this to you, I will tell you what these Magicians did over in Hispania, far beyond the mountains. There were bears there, large savages, that seemed to live only for the pleasure of tearing man to pieces. Primitive man had to live in caves. He had to select caves with little openings, too small for the bears to crawl through, but large enough for the man. Outside, the bears would watch till finally their enemies were

driven out by cold and hunger and darkness. The savages would rush out with their stone spears and flint axes and finally a bear would be killed, but more men than bears died in the fight. It was a sorry way to live and die for our ancestors.

"Then the Magicians began to study and see what could be done. When a bear was killed, they watched it as it was cut up, and thus they found that the heart was the life of him. When their weapons reached the heart, the bear began to die slowly but surely. Then in their innermost caves they began to experiment. They took clay and fashioned a bear, a large bear ten feet long. When they finished, it looked a little like a real bear. They put teeth in the open mouth and patches of hair over the curving flanks. No doubt, the image scared the dull ones, who thought it was alive.

"After that they brought the hunters in and showed them how to fight the bear. The wise men, too feeble to fight, showed the dull strong men the proper place to thrust their spears so that they would always reach the heart. They had a school in which the hunters took turns in rushing up to the bear and spearing it while the Magicians held torches and sang hymns and one of them back of the bear made horrible bear noises.

"Year after year they performed this magic, and every year it became easier to kill the bears. A skilful hunter could kill a bear by himself if he was expert enough. What was more wonderful was the fact that the bears died without waiting to be killed. The Magicians would hold a class of instruction for bear-hunters and the next morning a dead bear would be found near the cave—no holes in its hide, but the heart torn open.

"At last all the bears were killed and the men were able to come out of the caves and stay out. Huts and houses were now homes instead of caves. The common people forgot. They never could remember about the past, but the Magicians had added one more fact to their ever growing store of knowledge.

"I know all this is true. When I was but a lad my Master told me the tale and made me read about it in the old books. Wanting to know for sure whether it was true, I went there, and over in Hispania I found the caves that those bear-hunters used to live in. The clay bears were still there, with the spear holes in their sides where the hunters had stabbed them. The hunters used red clay to represent blood. It was clever, the way those men had made the bears. One had a real skull for the head. I brought back some of the bear teeth but later on lost them.

"That trip showed me the truth of the old stories. The bears were actually killed by the power of the Magicians. It is true that the Magicians taught the hunters where to stab, but there was something greater than just that education. Some of those bears died without being touched by the spears, yet their hearts were torn open. How did that happen?

"It was magic, Marcus, magic! I do not know why it happened, but it did and it still does. The old Magicians discovered it by accident; the following generations developed it and profited therefrom. In the hands of the unscrupulous it became Black Magic of the most horrible kind. This is the way it was used. You can see at once how terrible it was, used in the wrong way by the wrong person.

"Let us imagine a Magician who has developed a hatred of some important person, such as a King or a Baron. All the Magician has to do is to take wax and make a doll, shaped like his enemy. He puts clothes on the doll, he puts on a wig, shoes and a little sword. Then, to completely identify the doll and the man,

he baptizes the doll with the man's name. To do this, he has to use Holy Water, stolen from a church. Now, everything is ready for the important part of the magic. The doll is put on a table or chair and the Magician runs a red-hot needle into some part of its body. The wax, touched by the needle, melts. Suppose he puts the needle in under the right ribs where the liver is supposed to be—what happens? At that minute the Baron or King becomes ill with a disease of the liver. The next day another needle goes into the liver and again on the third day, and as the wax man melts, the real man dies. In this way a man's spine can be softened, his eyes destroyed or his bowels made to rot. What do you think of that, Marcus?"

"I have read of it, Master, but I have always doubted it," replied the young man as he tried in vain to get the drift of the old Magician's story.

"Would you believe if I showed you?"

"Certainly—but I will believe you anyway."

"Come with me to my laboratory. Let us see what we can see."

IT TOOK some time for the old man to descend to his workshop. There, surrounded by his drugs, glassware and curiosities, he had spent sixty years of his life. He would work for a day and that night write what he had done, and at the end of every year he condensed all of his learning of that year on one piece of parchment in a very special book. Thus, at this time, he had sixty pages to represent sixty years of work. Over half of the pages were crossed out and the word "Errata" written in red ink. Of late years he had worked less and thought more.

One wall of the laboratory was of black marble, with words inlaid in it of a yellow color. This motto read: "All knowledge is golden." In the dark, these words glowed with phosphorescent brilliance. The old Magician never tired of looking at that motto. The only thing that spoiled his pleasure was the fact that he had not originated it. He hoped some day to improvise one that was as true.

It was to this room that the two men went. They came to a pause in front of a long table which held two glass jars. In one was a small turtle, a very small one indeed, no larger than a thumb nail. In the other jar was its twin, identical in shape and color. Between the two jars a tripod stood, holding a copper brazier, filled with burning charcoal.

"In thinking this matter over," began the Magician, "I determined to make an experiment. I have read a thousand tales of such Black Magic, but so far I have never wanted to practise it. In order to do what we shall soon have to do, we must have faith, a firm belief in our own power. So, we have here two turtles. One is alive and the other is made out of wax. I fashioned the wax one myself. The name of the live turtle is Obediah. It had to have a name; so that is what I have called it. Last night I christened the wax turtle by the same name. Now, the two turtles are identical. They look alike and have the same name. I will take the live turtle out of the water and put him in the black bowl, from which he can not escape. Now, here is the wax turtle. We will wipe it carefully and place it on the burning charcoal. It is not a trick I am playing. I am simply dropping a wax turtle on a hot fire so that it will melt. We see at once that it is melting, but watch the live turtle."

The little reptile made a few convulsive movements and then suddenly melted into a dozen drops of fluid. The two men looked at each other. Finally the old man sighed as he said:

"It really does work, Marcus. Just the

same with a little turtle as it did with those old bears in Hispania."

"It certainly does work," agreed Marcus, slowly, but he looked at the Master sidewise as he spoke. "But you have said it is Black Magic, and all the years I sat at your feet as a student you berated such as unworthy of our Brotherhood. Suppose it does work? What then? Will you depart from your moral code of years and thus kill the King and the Cardinal?"

"No. We can not do that," replied the Magician slowly, "for if we did, we were nothing but sorcerers and devil-worshippers and witches ourselves: but we can kill wild animals, and if a man deliberately decides to live in a dangerous country, how can we be blamed if he dies during an earthquake?"

"That is all true, but what has it to do with my dead wife? Or with your wife, either, for that matter?"

"You see nothing to my talk?"

"Pardon me for being blunt—but so far it is just words, going around in a circle—like a snake, swallowing his tail—just that, and a poor dead turtle."

"More words would but confuse you. Can you carry sand and pebbles and clay from the seashore?"

"How much?"

"A great deal. Many buckets of each. It will take you days. Bring it to this room, and we will do some things with it. I have wax here, and while you are working, I will also be toiling with these strong hands of mine, and my clear vision will tell me how well I toil."

MARCUS was unable to tell why the sand, pebbles and clay had to be brought from the beach: in fact, he wondered more and more whether the old man was not truly crazed with grief and age. The beach lay five hundred feet below the castle. To carry a bucket of sand up that winding road was a task for a well man with two hands. Marcus, however, had never disobeyed his Master, and did not intend doing it now. Taking the bucket that the Master gave him, he soon reached the beach and there decided to fill it by thirds with clay, with sand and with white pebbles; thus he could in one load carry a sample of each to the Castle. If the samples were satisfactory, he could start to work in earnest.

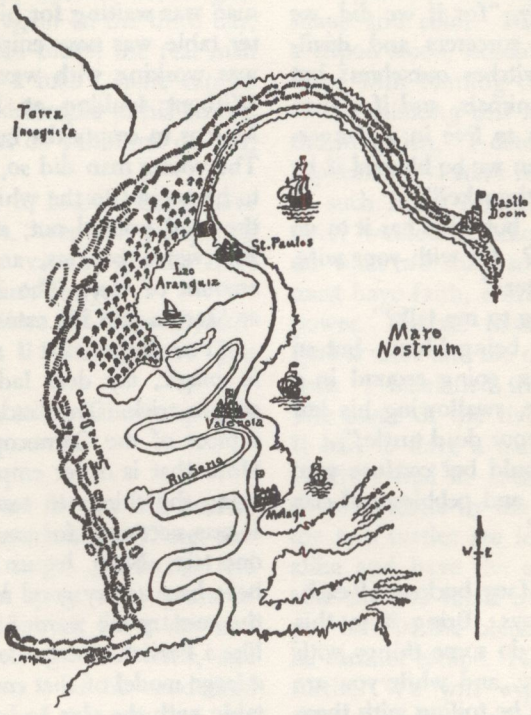
After what seemed hours of toil he at last reached the laboratory, where the old man was waiting for him. The long center table was now empty. The old man was working with wax at a side bench. Without looking at him, he ordered Marcus to empty the bucket on the floor. The young man did so, but there seemed to be no end to the white pebbles; finally the sand poured out, at least enough to fill twelve buckets, and then an equal amount of clay. The Magician laughed at Marcus and his astonishment.

"You forget that I am a real worker in magic, my dear lad. That is but a simple trick. The bucket is made from a piece of the Cornucopia of Plenty, the Horn that is never empty. I told you to bring the things to test your obedience. It was necessary for you to make at least one trip. Now, let us start working. I have here a very good map of Astrobella, the country we wanted to make blossom like a Persian rose-garden. We will make a large model of that country on this long table with the clay and wet sand. It will show all the land between the Sierra Darro and the Mare Nostrum. We will put pebbles in piles for mountains and little twigs for trees. I will make houses and castles and trees out of wax. Now, let us begin to model, Marcus, and follow the lines of the map carefully. It must be like Astrobella in every way."

For three days they worked and finally the land was done. With green paint Marcus put in the ocean and the lakes and

rivers, while the Magician placed wax ships upon the water and an exact Castle Doom on the high peak of land, overlooking the water. In some of the meadows little sheep stood silent, while, on a grassy plain, under an open tent, the King in wax sat, talking to the Cardinal and Barons.

The two men stood looking at the beautiful map, but the face of the young man showed his deep grief and worry, for he had lost all hope.



"'Tis a fine map!" he finally said softly, "but it has nothing to do with the death of your wife or mine. It can not bring us back our lost brothers and departed loved ones. There is no revenge in it for my unborn child. It is a pretty map—and that is all."

"Is it a true map?"

"I believe so."

"Accurate in every way?"

"Yes. I have travelled all over Astrobella. It is an accurate picture of the accursed country."

Silently the old man took from a leather box an emerald. Polishing it, he handed it to his pupil for examination. Then he took it back and placed it carefully on the top of the mountain, eastward of the wax Castle Doom.

"How does that look?"

"A pretty gewgaw. A sparkling piece of glass. At the most, a valuable semi-precious jewel."

"Have you ever been on that side of the Castle?"

"You know I have not. You always forbade it."

"I had a reason then—but we will go there now—very slowly—my legs, Marcus, are failing me. Wait till I get a cane. I fear old age is a curse no Magic can fight against."

Finally they stood on a smooth rock. Below them a green lake glistened on the top of the promontory—a lake five hundred feet above the ocean, and its greenness carried with it the black malignity of night.

"I never saw such water!" exclaimed Marcus. "It moves not even to a ripple, and yet the trees are swaying with the wind."

"No one else ever saw the like," agreed the Magician. "Now, take a small stone and throw it out to the middle of the pond."

The young man did so. To his surprize, the stone bounced several times and then rested on the emerald surface. Slowly, from each side of the lake, the shore moved toward the center, the two shores met, and the lake was gone.

"Nothing surprizes me any more," said the pupil. "Here is a lake that a

stone will not sink into—a lake that now is covered with land and trees. What does it mean, Master, if I may be so bold as to ask the question?"

"It is an eye," replied the old man, but would say nothing more.

Slowly, with the young man by his side helping him, the Magician toiled back to the laboratory. Exhausted, he sank into his chair, and it was some time before he could breathe.

"Now, Marcus," he finally began, "I am going to tell you something that only I know, but before I tell you, look at the map of Astrobella, and find it out for yourself. Remember the eye and tell me what you see—or have you forgotten to really look and see things for what they are? While I am waiting, I will close my eyes and rest."

MINUTES passed, and suddenly Marcus waked the Magician with a shout.

"Master! Master! I have it. This is the figure of a dragon, a salamander, a veritable giant of an animal. See the eye, the mouth, the head and neck, the feet and tail! See how the mountains look like unto a backbone. As I see it now, it grows in my imagination—a strange light comes from the emerald which serves for an eye. Can it be alive? Or am I mad?"

The Magician smiled at his pupil's eagerness and excited interest. He slowly replied:

"What you see on the table, Marcus, is but a map, made of wax, sand, clay, stones and little twig-trees. However, it is a true image of the land of Astrobella, which land killed our loved ones. But remember the lake and the land which closed over it when you threw the stone. That lake, represented by this piece of glass on the map, is an eye. That is, I believe it to be an eye, and it is my feeling and idea that all this country is simply one of those large, wonderfully enormous animals that used to live in the world we now live in. For centuries it has slept, with its back to the shore, with its feet, neck and head sticking out into the water. It has rested here so long that its hide has been covered with sand and soil. Forests have grown on its back, and cities have been built on its plains. It has slept on because nothing has happened to make it move. Lately, the Castle has swayed and the eye opens and shuts. It seems as though the salamander is waking from its long sleep.

"On this monster, a small people have made their home. They have a King, Cardinal, barons and slaves. Three cities shelter the common folks, the stupid children of stupid parents. Always these people have been unkind to those who have tried to help them. Our brothers have died, trying to uplift them. Your wife and mine were killed without mercy. It is now time for them to die!"

"But you say we can not kill people by Black Magic?"

"We can not, but we can kill a wild animal! All their worshipped Saints and beloved heroes have always done that! We will destroy him, and if the people are killed in his writhings, are we to blame?"

Marcus wondered at the old man's cunning. At the same time he doubted it all; so he asked the question, "But will it work?"

"I believe so. We will rest for now and begin the experiment tomorrow. Tonight I will christen this map animal. In order to doubly identify it, I will doubly name it Astrobella and also Terra Prodigiosis. Surely that should suffice. The baptism is a secret thing—not even you must see it. I must name it and yet

not consecrate it; Holy Water must be used, but for unholy means. You must trust me and sleep and join me on the morrow."

"And no harm can befall you?"

"Nothing. Fear not! Nothing can hurt me since my wife died."

EAGERLY Marcus waited for the morrow, which, like all next days, finally dawned. He found the Magician pottering around the laboratory, anxiously waiting to start work.

"I am going to destroy the little piece of land under St. Paulos first," announced the Magician. "You go up on the high tower and look seaward. 'Tis a clear day, and across the bay you can see the copper roof of the Cathedral glisten in the sun. You stay there and watch, and when you see anything unusual, come and tell me. Meantime I will slowly dig out the sand under these pretty wax houses. I use a gold knife. While at the tower, observe if there is anything unusual swaying Castle Doom."

Up to the top climbed Marcus, a trifle disappointed at not being permitted to stay in the laboratory. The morning was bright, the air more than clear. Far across the bay the copper roof of the Cathedral glittered golden in the glow of early dawn. He waited anxiously, unwilling to let a single moment's gaze depart from that golden building. Suddenly it raised in the air, passed in a graceful curve and disappeared in the waters of Mare Nostrum.

At the risk of his neck, Marcus ran breathless down the steps to the laboratory. He found the Magician in his armchair, a small garden trowel in his hand —his eyes closed.

"What did you do, Master?"

The old man opened his eyes and smiled.

"I picked up the Cathedral very carefully and put it over on the painted ocean. What happened?"

"I saw the copper roof glisten in a long circle through the air and drop into the water."

The two men looked at each other.

"Then it works!" said the old man at last, and, even in the saying of it, he seemed to age.

After that the two men worked daily in the laboratory to irritate the monster, but not to fully rouse him, and, as they worked, strange things happened in the land of Astrobella. First, the land caved away from St. Paulos so that the entire city fell into the sea, and, with it, the Cardinal's palace and the Cardinal himself. The city was standing one evening in all its grandeur, and the next morning it was sunken in the Mare Nostrum. A few days later the Rio Serio changed its course and flowed, a torrent, through Valencia, and when the fugitives fled to Melaga, that city, like St. Paulos, dropped into the sea. Now the whole land began to quiver, and the folk fled in vain to the mountains, which shook down on them rocks and uprooted trees. Part of the country was covered with tidal waves, drowning the cattle and destroying the crops.

A few of the citizens escaped in boats. Also, a few, but very few in number, reached Terra Incognita. The rest died where they had lived. The King and all his nobles and clergy died, never knowing why. On the table in the laboratory the sand monster remained, but little changed. The damage to him had only irritated him. No vital spot had been touched. His hide had been scraped till he had moved restless in his sleep, but the only real harm had been to the parasites living on him.

THE Magician was growing older—he was more reckless and childish. It became harder for his pupil, Marcus, to understand him. There had been repeated arguments as to the final disposition of the sand monster. The Magician wanted to sweep it all to the floor. Marcus protested and tried to show the danger. The old man lived in the past: hallucinating, he called on loved ones, long dead, to come and see his final vengeance.

Marcus watched him, fed and cared for him, but daily the fear of him grew. For now Marcus was satisfied with vengeance, but the Master demanded the utmost sacrifice. Marcus asked the Master to leave the room and lock the door; to let the sand monster, sleeping, lull the real monster to repose. The aged one, antagonized by the constant interference with his will, lost touch with reality and became suspicious and paranoidal. Who was this young man who watched him so closely? Had he not taught him all he knew? Or was he a substitute for Marcus? Marcus was dead! Marcus had two hands! So he determined to be alone again and send this interfering stranger to a safe place.

With this thought in mind he worked a magic, and from the East, over the Mare Nostrum, in the full moonlight of a night in June, came a boat with purple sails, and in it sailors in white linen. Ambassadors it carried from the Mountains of Gobi and the Magicians dwelling therein.

The chief of these wonder-workers climbed the narrow path to Castle Doom and told his errand to the Master. The brethren from Gobi needed help in this way and that and would the Master himself come to Gobi? But the aged Magician said, "No!" He pleaded his age and weakness, but he was willing to send his pupil, a young man, well versed in all the lore of the West: and naught would content him but that Marcus should go back with the Ambassadors in the boat with purple sails.

And the young man, in spite of his vague apprehensions and uneasy forebodings, promised to obey and do as the Master bade him. The sailors were called, and they were given treasures, jewels and gold ornaments and wondrous furnishings to carry with Marcus as gifts to the brethren in Gobi; and they carried also to the ships all the books from the Master's library.

Now the Master sat on his easy-chair at the gate of Castle Doom, and as his treasures were carried out, he rested, dry-eyed, but when he saw his books, his lovely manuscripts with inlaid leather bindings and those with pages of parchment and vellum, when he saw these being carried out of the Castle to go to strangers in Gobi to read, then the tears rolled down his cheeks, and though he tried to hide them in his white beard, they rested there like pearls.

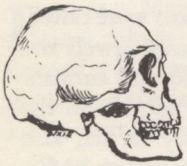
Finally, all was on board, and Marcus knelt before him for his blessing, and the Master, now soberly sane, though determined to do what he had decided, gave him his thumb ring which some say had been worn by King Sulliman. So, finally, the purple sails bellowed in the blustering breeze and wafted the ship to the East and toward the land of Gobi, where the Master sent Marcus by a magic—sending in order to save the young man's life.

Then and then only did the aged Magician, last of his race in all those lands, go tottering down the stone steps to the laboratory. He went to the table, and with his hands, those hands made strong at the expense of all of him, he tore the sand dragon apart into a thousand pieces

and cast them upon the floor. Exhausted and tired of life, he sank back into his chair and closed his eyes.

To him came youth and the Wonder Woman whom he had called his wife ere the flames burned her in the square at St. Paulos. As she kissed him, his body died, but the soul of him joined his love in that land where she awaited him.

A few minutes later the monster shrieked, and with a mighty leap plunged into the boiling waters of Mare Nostrum, and of all the land of Astrobella there remained naught but an evil memory.



Valley of Bones

By DAVID H. KELLER

What weird tragedy took place in that African spot where the bones of a murdered people were scattered?

"YOU were kind to me in England," said the Zulu.

I looked at him, and tried to remember, but I could not drag the past out of the subconscious. Not wishing to offend him, I simply said,

"It is nice to know that you have some reason to remember me."

He smiled.

"After all, you do not remember. We were in the same classes at Oxford. All the men there were courteous to me, but they never accepted me as their social equal. You had me in to tea several afternoons. We talked about psychology. You were majoring in it, and I told you some things about my people."

"I remember now!" I replied, rather sharply. "In fact, I wonder why I did not recognize you in the first place. But it was a long time ago, over thirty years. We were young then, and—now? You look young, but I know that I am nearly sixty. Yet we were interested in the same thing at that time, and I saw no real reason for not accepting you as, well, as a brother; because, after all, there was something of kin between us. Strange that we meet after all those silent years; meet in Africa!"

"Hunting?"

"I suppose you might call it that."

"But you have not killed anything. I have been watching you for five days. Game all around you, and you do not kill."

"No. There has been enough killing. I carry a gun for protection in emergencies, but I do not kill, except when I have to."

"I remember. You used to think that animals had rights and souls. You even thought that they might live on after the first death."

"Yes," I said, laughing, "but I never have proved it, and I have not talked about that idea for a great many years. My close friends started to worry about me—thought I was insane. Are you hunting?"

"Yes; but I also hunt without a gun."

"You don't mean you use a spear?" I asked, curiously.

"At times; when I need food, but on this trip I am going to use something older than a spear. In fact, I am going to be, like you, simply an observer, of life, and death."

WE CAMPED together that night. He was alone, and I had only two porters. Before supper I suggested that we dress for the occasion.

"Two Oxford men," I remarked. "We should not omit the conventions of polite society. I came from Idaho, you from Africa. For the evening let us forget our origins and remember our cultural education."

Rather to my surprize he agreed. So, we dined according to the best traditions of Oxford. It was moonlight when we finished, and I asked him to share the camp with me that night. We even sat on camp chairs near the fire. He was silent. I tried to make conversation. At last he seemed to wake from his dreams.

"You thought animals lived after death?"

"Yes."

"Do men?"

"Perhaps."

"Should you like to be sure?"

"Delighted! I should be the first man to know it."

"Not the first. My ancestors have always known it. Often they sleep for years, perhaps for centuries. But, when they wish to, they awake and live again till their work is done. Then they sleep again."

"Tradition? Folk-lore?" I asked.

"Fact."

"Can you show me?"

"Yes. Years ago you gave me cups of tea, little cakes and some hours of your time. You were kind to me. I said to myself that some day I would repay you. Will you leave your camp and porters here and come with me?"

"Yes."

"We will start at once."

"Tonight?"

"Yes. It is necessary. First, I will take off these clothes. For supper I was willing to wear them. Now, I am going back."

Half an hour later we left the camp. and started over the veldt. Fortunately, it was moonlight, almost as light as day.

For three days and nights we walked, with little talking. Every hour seemed to increase the moodiness of my companion.

On the evening of the third day we came to a hill. Below us was a little cup-shaped valley.

"This is the end," the Zulu said, and sat down on a stone.

I was glad to follow him. Tough as I was, the trip had taxed my endurance. For two hours we rested. Then the moon started to shine.

"Now, I will talk," said the dark man.

"I am listening," I replied, and took a deep sigh.

"The story starts when I was a boy of twelve," he said. "I was the son of the chief of a Zulu tribe. It was just a little tribe, not more than a hundred warriors, but we were rather rich. We kept our isolation, refused to become involved in the Zulu wars with the white people. Because of this reservation, we lived on. The world did not know there was such a tribe.

"One day a hunter came and found us. He said that we were friends. To show that he meant that, he said he would give us a feast. My father believed his words. All of our warriors believed him, but

there was one old man who doubted. He told me to go hunting and not to come back for three days. I did as he told me, and, when I returned, I found all of my people dead. Down in that valley that lies before us they were on the rocks, dead. All of them: the warriors, the women and the little ones. But the hunter was gone, and he had taken with him all of our wealth: the gold bracelets, the ornaments of the women, the things of gold that we had for many generations."

"Poison?" I asked.

"Yes. He fed them and killed them."

"But the old man who warned you? He must have known something."

"Perhaps, but we are fatalists. No doubt he thought that it had to happen, because it had to happen. I do not know. He was a very old and very wise man. I sat here on this very rock for two days, and then I left. After that I met another hunter. He liked me. We lived together. He took me to England. He educated me. When he died, he made me his heir. But I came back to Africa."

"And you made no effort to find the man who had killed your people?"

"Yes. I hunted him, but not with a gun. I simply kept him under observation."

"I guess it must have been the Oxford influence!"

"No. Not that. But I had an idea that when the time came my people would act."

"But you said that they were all dead?"

"Yes. They were dead. I have walked among them, year after year, and I could take you down there now and show you the bones. Some of the bones are still together; others have been torn apart by animals. But the bones are there. See that little fire over there? That is the campfire of the hunter. He has come back, and perhaps my people knew it. I knew that he intended to."

"It is a small fire."

"That is because he is alone. He could not hire any native to come with him, but he wanted to come; so, he came alone, with a wagon and four oxen. He was after something."

"But you said that he took all the gold!"

"Yes, but that is spent. He sold many of the ornaments to museums. I have seen them. I even bought some of the duplicates. Now, he has learned that he left part of the riches behind him. The war-axes, and spears. He can sell them to the museums. Some are very old. So, he decided to come back and take the last of our treasures."

"In a way, he must be a brave man."

"Yes, but only through ignorance. He thinks that my people are dead, just so many bones. So, he camps among them, and tomorrow he will search among those bones for things that he can sell. At least, he thinks he can. Perhaps my people have other thoughts. That is why I brought you with me. Tonight I want to show you something. I want to pay you for being kind to me."

"Are you going to kill him?"

"No. I am going to sit here in the moonlight with you, and help you watch."

"It is full moon."

"Yes. We can see. It is not far to his camp; so, we can hear."

I LOOKED at my watch. It was only a little after nine. Tired as I was, I knew that I could not sleep. The Zulu sat motionless, his eyes shut. At ten I touched him.

"Do you know what is going to happen?" I asked.

"I know what should happen, but I am uncertain. You see, there are two sets of

emotions tearing at each other inside me. My Oxford education tells me that the thing is impossible and my inherited memories tell me that it has to happen. So, I am going to sit here. The old man who saved my life was a very wise man. He is down there, and, perhaps, he knows better than you or I."

Eleven o'clock came and then, finally, a quarter of twelve.

"The cattle are restless," said the Zulu, softly. "They feel something that the sleeping man cannot feel. I think that they will run away. It would be best. They have done nothing for which they should be punished."

During the next five minutes the four oxen broke. We could see them galloping across the rocks. The fire started to burn brighter, and near it we could see a man standing.

"He heard his cattle and awoke," commented my friend. "It is good that he is awake."

"There are white things moving down there!" I whispered sharply. "They all seem to be moving toward the fire."

"Yes. We see them. Now the hunter sees them. We had better flatten ourselves against the rock. He will start shooting very soon. I do not want you to be hurt."

Then those white things started to run toward the fire, and we heard the sharp explosion of a magazine rifle, followed by the staccato of two automatic revolvers. After that, the gun-fire ceased, and we heard the shrieks of a man, afraid and dying. Then came silence, and the fire was out.

"It is over!" cried the Zulu. "Now, you go to sleep, and in the morning we will see what happened to the hunter."

I tried to sleep, but I could not. Even with my eyes shut I could still see those white-lined things running toward the hunter and the fire.

Morning came at last. I turned to the Zulu. He sat there, eyes open, but, seemingly, in a dream. I shook him by the shoulder.

"The day has come!" I said.

"I know it," he replied. "Shall we go down into the valley?"

We walked down to the bottom of the cup, toward the camp of the hunter. While still a hundred yards away I saw a little hill of bones. When we came nearer, we saw that the camp, the wagon and the dead fire were covered with bones, and with the bones there were spears and battle-axes, sticking here and there among the long and rounded and whitened ivory.

The Zulu turned to me and said,

"You are a white man and the hunter was a white man. The traditions of your race should be remembered. Will you bury him? You will find him at the bottom of the bones. His skull is crushed with battle-axes; his body is pierced with a hundred lances. In his heart there is a dagger, and the handle is still held by the white hand of my father. Will you go and throw the bones to this side and that and bury your white man?"

"How do you know?" I asked, almost hysterically.

"I was there last night. I saw the hunter killed by my family, by my tribe. I sat by you while the killing was on, but my spirit was with my own people. It seems that I remember seeing my father bury his dagger."

"The hunter has dug his own grave, and your people have raised a monument above him!" I cried.

"Go back to the world and tell them what you saw."

"Never! I saw it happen, and you saw it happen, and we know, but the world would never believe."

"Oxford is, after all, very ignorant," replied the Zulu.

A Tale of the Witchcraft Craze

The Dogs of Salem

By DAVID H. KELLER

FOR several reasons the people of Salem did not feel kindly toward the two cobblers who had decided to make that town their home. It is true that they made very good shoes, which were greatly needed by the settlers: not only made good new shoes but were more than willing to repair old ones—an economy which should have appealed to the thrifty Puritans. It was also remarked to their credit that they always attended church on the Lord's day, and on that day and all others behaved and conducted themselves with the greatest propriety.

Yet, in spite of all this, the fact remained that they were foreigners, probably Italians or Spaniards. For all anyone knew they might be papists, spies, traitors to the very people who kept them alive by wearing their shoes. Then, too, the twin daughters of the richest man in town were more friendly to these nobodies than the other young men liked to see. In fact, the brother cobblers were not at all popular socially as far as the men were concerned, even though the women all looked at them sidewise.

Timothy Thomas did not like them; he hated them both equally, Amos of the dark hair and Andrew of the fair skin. Repeatedly he warned his daughters not to have any dealings with them, but Anna and Ruth kept on making trips to the cobbler shop. It was astonishing how fast their shoes wore out. The father scolded and threatened and chided and prayed over his daughters, but they kept on wearing out their shoes and going to have them repaired, and nothing could keep the four young people apart. Angry and vexed, Timothy Thomas grew melancholy.

He had almost reached the point where he was ready to lock his daughters in their bedroom when the entire settlement was agitated and disturbed by the working of witches among the simple folk. After a lot of talk and gossip, Bridget Bishop was brought to trial on the 2nd of June, 1692.

Her case was a very clear one. Even the judges felt that the trial was simply a legal formality, but none the less took testimony of several persons. One said that this witch had looked at her and at once she had been seized by the colic. Another man stated that he was standing in the door of his house with an apple in his hand; the witch looked at him and the apple jumped out of his hand and landed in his mother's lap. A young woman told how she had had a dream of a man assaulting her, but when she cried out the man proved to be Bridget Bishop. There was no doubt that she had power over the people: if she so much as scratched her head during the trial at least a dozen young girls in the courtroom did the same, like so many monkeys. One very important witness, who had been caused to fall into fits for many years by this witch, came to tell her story, but Bridget looked at her and she was kept from talking by the appearance of another fit.

There was nothing to do but to condemn this follower of the Devil to death, and this was done.

Susanna Martin was tried on the 29th of June, 1692. She was accused of many things, but mainly of keeping imps of darkness around her house in the shape of black dogs. If she disliked a man she would give him a black puppy, and in the course of time this young dog would have fits and run and bite the man and his children. She also took unfortunate Joseph Ring with her to a Sabbat, at which place he was given a knock on the back, which made him motionless, unable to move or to speak. At these places the Devil tried to make him sign a book, but this he refused to do. After his return to his bed he would awake sore in the muscles and bruised over his body. Susanna Martin showed plainly that she was guilty by pleading that she had led a most virtuous and holy life. This, of course, was a most absurd statement for her to make when everyone knew that she actually kept black dogs.

As a result of these and similar trials nineteen persons were hanged. Among these was Mr. George Borroughs, a preacher, who showed positively that he was a witch by affirming often in public that the whole excitement was due to ignorance and superstition. There were some who believed him and opposed his execution, but the Reverend Cotton Mather appeared near the scaffold on horseback and said he knew the man was a witch and impostor and that those who pitied him were his comrades and likewise under the power of the Devil. After this speech Borroughs was hanged without any more protest, save from his own lips, which did not count.

To the surprize of all, the more witches that were hanged, the more the good people were afflicted by the evil works of the Devil and his emissaries. Many young girls had fits, were found with hair in their mouths and crooked pins inside their fast-closed hands. Persons who were unsuspected came forward and stated that they were witches and asked to be hanged with their comrades. Occasionally a suspected person was obdurate and would neither answer questions nor plead guilty or innocent. One such case, a man, was put between two boards and pressed to death. At the very end he made signs that he was willing to speak, but the blood filled his mouth and he died silent. Those who saw this were satisfied that the Devil had sent the blood to keep him still, which was a very satisfactory explanation to all, especially the judges who had ordered the pressing.

TIMOTHY THOMAS attended many of these trials. He was even a juryman when Elizabeth How was tried at Salem on the 30th of June, 1692. After such a liberal education he felt that he knew considerable about the diabolical mechanisms of these followers of Satan. The entire community considered him an authority on the subject.

Meantime the intimacy between his daughters and the two young cobblers continued, and Mr. Thomas, for all his wealth and power, seemed unable to stop it. He continued to brood over it.

To his great surprize a half-witted boy came to his house one evening and whispered to him that he had seen the two cobblers while they were in swimming and that each of them had the Devil's mark on his shoulder. The imbecile also declared that they looked at him and laughingly whispered to themselves, and that on the way home he was set upon by two large black dogs. Mr. Thomas talked at length to the boy, and the next day, which was the Lord's day, this same boy shrieked out in meeting that he was being bitten by two dogs and that their names were Amos and Andrew. There were marks on the boy's arms which looked like the signs of teeth. The minister, Mr. Price, immediately consulted with the magistrate and

with Mr. Timothy Thomas, with the result that the two cobblers were at once arrested—indeed they were captured by the soldiers in the meeting-house before they had time to escape—and were securely placed in the town prison.

When they were brought to trial there were some among the citizens who said in whispers that the whole matter was worthless as all knew Smiling Samuel to be a natural and a nit-wit. However, it was a different matter when Mr. Thomas himself took the stand and swore to these things as of his own knowledge and not as hearsay. He demanded that the cobblers be examined for the mark of the Beast. There it was on the left shoulder of each, a red mark similar to the head of a goat; of course it had been changed since Smiling Samuel saw it, for he stated after kissing the Book, that it was three times larger and looked like the pit of hell itself.

Things began to look bad for the cobblers. Mr. Thomas said he saw the boy when he fell and said the dogs were after him. Even while he was giving his testimony, a woman in the audience, a very good and pious lady of great charity, cried out so all could hear, "They come and bite me. Lord Jesus, save me from the black dogs!" and fell in a fit. When she was examined, the marks of teeth were found on her wrist and in her hand a bent pin stuck into the flesh, which she said Amos Canning had thrown at her from his eye.

Dr. Smithers was called to examine the Devil's marks. He found that they did not bleed when stuck by a pin.

At this part of the trial the judge asked the two men what they had to say concerning the accusations and just who the dogs were who had bitten all these people. The brothers whispered between themselves, and then Amos, being the elder, arose and said that they were innocent of any harm, that they had led good lives, and as for the marks on them, they had been born with them. He also stated that it was time for the people of Salem to come to their senses and stop believing such nonsense.

Of course, after that, there was nothing to do save give the matter to the jury, and while they took longer at it than was the usual habit of juries in such cases, still they finally declared the two brothers guilty. Without delay the judge sentenced them to be hanged on the third day from that time.

On the morning of this day the jailer, going, as was his habit, to carry to the condemned their breakfast, was startled to find the brothers not in their cell. But in the cell securely fastened by fetters and chains were two black dogs, who howled dismally and tried to break their bonds and attack the frightened man.

Closing and locking the door, he at once ran to the house of the magistrate, who, when he heard the tale, went to see the minister, Mr. Price. The two, on their way to the jail, called out Mr. Timothy Thomas to go with them. It was early in the day, and neither of the Thomas damsels had arisen to begin the day's work, so Mr. Thomas, interested beyond measure at the news, went eagerly with the other officials, and on the way a large crowd joined them, the jailer's wife having lost no time in spreading the news of the metamorphosis, though of course she did not use that name in telling the story.

Arriving at the cell, they found it an easy matter to confirm the jailer's story. The men were not there but the dogs were. The sharp eyes of the minister, however, saw something that the jailer had not noticed. This was a message written on parchment, and while the body of the letter was printed in capital letters, still the signa-

tures were in bold script. Clearing his throat, the minister read in loud tones, so that all could hear:

TO OUR DEAR FRIENDS IN SALEM:

HAVING NO DESIRE TO DIE YOUNG AND IN SUCH A MANNER AS HANGING WE CONSIDERED IT THE PROPER THING TO ASK FOR AID AND WE THEREFORE APPEALED TO OUR GOD AND HE DIRECTED US THAT UPON A CERTAIN NIGHT HE WOULD CHANGE OUR SHAPES INTO THOSE OF BLACK DOGS & THEY TO STAY IN PRISON AND SUFFER FOR US THE PENALTY OF OUR SINS. OUR GOD TOLD US THAT OUR SPIRITS WOULD ROAM FREE OF SALEM & NORTHWARD INTO THE GREAT WOODS THERE TO ABIDE WITH TWO SALAMANDERS IN PEACE AND HAPPINESS AS A REWARD FOR OUR SUFFERINGS IN SALEM & WE WARN EVERY ONE NOT TO FOLLOW US IN OUR FLIGHT THROUGH THE AIR AS WE WILL BE PROTECTED BY A MIGHTY FOLLOWING OF MAN-EATING BIRDS OF PREY.

WITNESS OUR HAND AND SEAL GIVEN IN THIS YEAR OF THE DEVIL ASMODEUS ***1692.

AMOS CANNING
ANDREW CANNING.

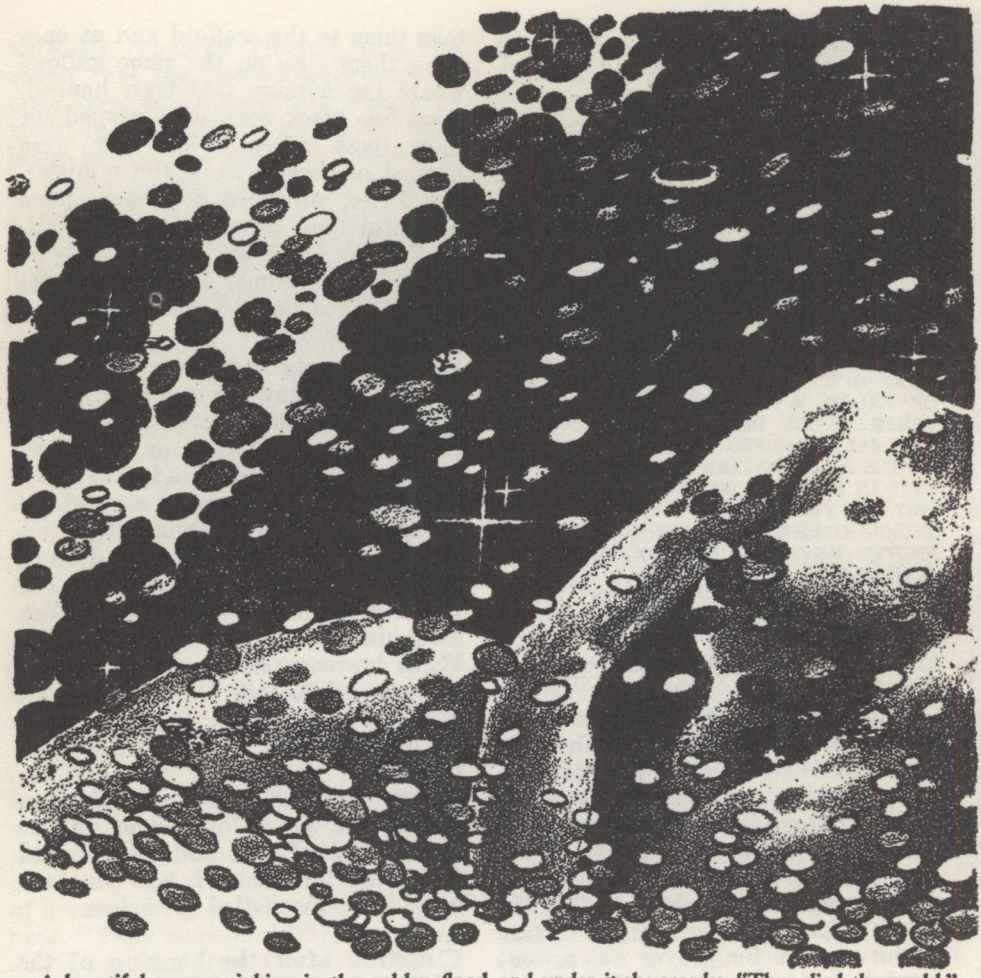
This letter caused a sensation, even among the most hardened witch-hunters. If this Devil could thus save two of his witches where would his power stop? Denunciations were heard on all sides and the excitement rose to such a pitch that the minister, Mr. Price, suggested that he lead them in prayer for divine guidance. After doing so—and his prayer was a wonderful one in many ways, in spite of the howling of the dogs—he asked Mr. Timothy Thomas if he felt the spirit of the Lord directing him. That gentleman, without the least hesitation, replied that he felt God telling him in the spirit that these two familiars of the witches should suffer the penalty of death. Thereat the magistrate directed the soldiers to take them to the scaffold and at once hang them. So on the same gallows where the witches had been hanged, these two black devil dogs gasped out their lives, after which they were burned on fagots while the minister, Mr. Price, preached a sermon, more powerful than usual in its denunciation of the Devil and his worshipers. During this sermon Smiling Samuel cried, "I see them, I see them flying through the air!"

It was nearly 10 in the morning before Mr. Timothy Thomas returned to his home. There were no signs of either of his daughters, or breakfast. A frantic search failed to locate either Anna or Ruth. A more careful investigation showed him that his strong-box was broken into and much of his wealth taken from it. This loss threw him into a brain fever, which held him bedfast for many months. When he recovered he found that no one wanted to talk about witchcraft any more, the good folk of Salem having recovered from their period of hysteria.

None the less he counted the two damsels as being dead and in the hands of the Devil, and he mourned for them the rest of his life, nor could he be reconciled to his loss.

SHORTLY after the hanging of the two dogs, the jailer, who had always been a poor man and therefore considered honest, moved to Pennsylvania, where he bought a large plantation from the Penns, paying for it outright in gold.

For many years after that there lived in Quebec two cobblers, noted for the excellency of their work and for the beauty of their wives.



A beautiful woman sinking in the golden flood and under it the words: "Thus died the world."

Lords of the Ice

By DAVID H. KELLER

A strange and imaginative tale of the world gone mad with war-lust, of the oceans rising in their beds to engulf the globe, and a super-civilization in the Antarctic

1. Raw Material

"WHAT we need," repeated the Dictator, "is more raw material."

Having said that for the third time, there was no danger that any of his audience could fail to understand just what he meant. But evidently he thought it necessary to explain.

"We have men by the millions for

labor; we have scientists and inventors; in our country there are hundreds of large factories built to turn out every possible kind of material needed in peace—or in war. But our laborers are idle and starving, our scientists starting in to dream, and our factories are working about two days a week. I ask you, why? Simply because we have not the raw material to feed the factories and keep our inventors and laborers busy.

"There is a demand for iron, copper, oil, coal, all kinds of metals. If we had gold and silver we could buy, but we have nothing except credit and paper money, and one is as useless as the other. Our inventors have produced synthetic products till we are all sick of seeing, using and eating them. But they cannot make iron, steel, copper, coal; and without these there can be no war till the time comes when our enemies are ready to wipe us out.

"I have sent for you today. I have called three men to my home, not to my office. One is the rich man of our land, the other owns most of the manufactories, and the third is a scientist. And I ask you. I command you! Give the land raw material. Shambert, can you buy it from other nations?"

"No!" was the sharp answer. "Those who have it will not sell; they know our need. If they did sell, how would we pay for it? In credits? Exchange? Our money? You call me rich, but I have nothing I can buy iron with. Perhaps an old ship now and then." He laughed rather sadly. "Can I exchange my farms for copper, my houses for steel?"

The Dictator turned suddenly to the scientist.

"Harlkin! Where is your science? Can you find or make these things?"

"I can find them," was the answer, "but not in our land. My men have examined almost every square foot of our land, and what could be found has been found. As for making them! Listen to me. I can take wood fiber and make silk, but I cannot make iron with wood or corn-stalks. You talk of synthetic preparations. It is a wonderful field of invention, but so far no one can make iron, or coal, or crude oil. Years ago we had some of these things within our land, but they have all been used. They are gone. They were made by nature millions of years ago, and we have used them in a century."

"So you can give nothing to Schmidt to keep his factories and men busy?"

"Nothing."

"But I must have battleships, guns, tanks, railroads, airplanes, submarines, ammunition. No matter how many I have I cannot have too many of these things. We have six million men to put in the army. Can they fight with their hands? Harlkin, you say that you know where these things are, and that they are in another country. Where?"

"In the Antarctic. The South Pole is covered with ice from six feet to two miles thick. Under that ice is the richest field of raw material the world has ever dreamed of—iron, copper, coal, all the precious metals. It is larger than Europe, larger than America. One can only guess how many millions of tons of metal lie useless under the ice cap. And under the metal there is oil, an ocean of blackness. If our country had even a tenth of that wealth we would run our factories eight days a week and sixty weeks a year. But what good does it do us?"

"Who owns it?"

"Half a dozen countries. A man flies above part of it, and claims all he sees for his country. No one lives there. No one can, no one ever will."

"Then any nation who settled it, sent a thousand, ten thousand colonists there, could claim it?"

"No doubt. The other nations would laugh. It would be a joke. And soon there would be ten thousand dead men there instead of ten thousand colonists."

Schmidt, the practical man, the owner of many factories, suddenly woke from his sleep of despair.

"I WAS in Louisiana once," he said softly, "and there is a lot of sulfur there, but some hundreds of feet under the surface. First they dug it out and then they drove large pipes down, two pipes near each other. Down one pipe they pumped steam and up the other pipe they pumped the boiling water with the melted sulfur. They turned this melted sulfur into large wooden frames, and when the water evaporated nothing was left but blocks of pure sulfur, one hundred feet long, thirty feet high. It was beautiful stuff and so easy to get. Would it not be wonderful if you could drive pipes through the ice cap, melt the metal and pump it up? Harlkin says that there is oil there, and that means power and heat. With power work can be done; with heat men can live even near the South Pole. How about it, Harlkin?"

"I wonder. Some years ago my men made a tunnel excavator. Few saw it, because the tunnels we made with it were for

military purposes. It worked on a rotary principle, and on some days we completed five hundred feet of tunnel, smooth sides and perfectly rounded. We could drive it through ice as easily as through rock, and I presume that if we set it on end it would go down as far as we wanted it to. If you want to know just what is under that ice cap, this tunnel-maker could tell you. As for applying the sulfur-mining principle to iron, I guess it could be done. No doubt all the iron was fluid at one time, and is yet near the center of the earth."

"I know about that tunnel machine," commented the Dictator. "I saw it work. It is very clever. I thought once of using it to bore a tunnel under the sea to the land of one of our friendly neighbors. But the time was not ripe for such adventures. Some day we may do it. How heavy is such a machine? Could it be taken apart and carried in submarines? Show me a map of this country of ice!"

A map could not be found, but instead a large globe of the world, used as an ornament in his library, was studied.

"A good joke!" he laughed. "See, my friends. Here England rules and here France and here the United States. Between them they have eaten up this continent of ice; yet no one lives there. We could go down there, and no one would know the difference, till it was too late to remonstrate. Harlkin, prepare to take your tunnel-excavator apart and place the pieces in as many naval submarines as you need. Bore a tunnel into the ice and through the rock.

"Take your metal experts with you. Make a survey of what you find. For a while do not try for depth, but simply go miles into one of those mountains you tell me about. And if you find gold, leave the machine there and send me the golden metal back as fast as you can. I will consult at once with my officers and we will pick the men who will go on this modern argosy. No one must know of this. Afterward we will tell the world, but not yet."

2. Gold Is King

THREE Europeans came across the Atlantic Ocean to New York. Establishing a small office in their hotel rooms, they sent for a few hard-headed business men. To these they presented their letters of introduction. Shambert did the talking for the trans-Atlantic group.

"We have come to the United States to buy some steel, some copper, and a few other forms of raw material. I understand that you gentlemen are interested in marketing these things. Will you sell us some?"

"How much are you spending? asked Paul Parker.

"Our first order will be for one million tons. If this is satisfactory we will want a hundred times that amount."

"That is a fairly large order, but we could handle it. We could have it at the seaboard as fast as you could arrange to ship it. How are you going to pay us?"

"That is the big thing," commented another business man. "We know your country. In fact this knowledge cost us a lot of money. We refuse to take goods in exchange. We have had experience in loaning you the cash so you could buy from us and then reneg on the loan. If we sell you anything from a collar button up we want cash on delivery. We want the cash before we even will let you put the stuff on your ships. I do not know how Parker feels, but I think that he will agree with me."

Shambert smiled.

"What do you want? Gold?"

"Now you are talking!" replied Parker. "You give us the order, sign it, give us the gold, and the iron and copper and whatever you want is yours. But no credits, no exchange, no loans. You might pick up

some stuff here and there in America on some other terms, but when it comes to anything big like what you mention, a million tons of mixed metals, it just has to be paid for. We have the stuff, we want to sell it, but it has to be paid for."

"We expected you to say that," said Shambert, and he was still smiling, "so we brought over with us fifty millions in gold and have certificates of deposit in the Bank of England for three hundred million more, and if you name a bank here in New York we will place the entire amount there subject to your bills. What we buy from you from now on will be paid for in gold. I think that our total purchases will run into three or four billion, but whatever it is, we will pay for it, in gold."

"That is a lot of gold," said Parker. "You people must have found a mine. When some of our senators hear about this they will be wondering why you have not paid your debts. They may even ask us why we were willing to sell to you when you have not paid for the last order of copper we sold you. But if what you say is true we will take your order. But first we will go to the banks and check up on your statement.

"It is good news for us if what you say is true. I do not think that it will take many minutes for the bankers to tell us all about it."

The meeting adjourned.

To the astonishment of Parker and his business associates, everything told them by the European visitors was absolutely true. The prospective customers actually had three hundred and fifty millions in gold to spend, and seemed to be perfectly willing to spend it. There seemed to be no reason why they should not have anything they wanted, so long as they were willing to pay for it.

After that it was only a question of details. So many million tons of iron, so much steel, so much copper, aluminum, bronze, coal. Even wool, cotton and foodstuffs were included in the order. When the list was completed and arrangements made for distributing it among the producers in the United States, it was easy to see that at least in some parts of the nation there would be a few years of prosperity.

Ocean transportation prospered. Every kind of vessel that could float, travel and carry was prepared for the shuttle voyages to Europe. Railroads prepared for a great increase in freightage. Men by the hundreds of thousands were put to work.

Shambert kept on smiling. His last words to Parker were:

"I will be back in six months with another three hundred million dollar order. You people have a lot of raw material we need. And you ned not worry about the money."

To the Dictator he sent a single message, and it was not in code. It read, *"Gold is king!"*

3. The Mine

A REMARKABLE thing had happened. The plan of sending submarines to the Antarctic had gone ahead according to the details arranged at the first meeting of the Dictator and his advisers. Six of the largest submarines had been prepared for the long voyage. Two tankers were filled with fuel oil, and two freighters had been equipped with every form of supplies. The fleet had sailed without the slightest publicity.

They had arrived without accident in the summertime, if there is any summertime around the South Pole. After some cruising they found what they were hunting for, an isolated harbor, a shelving beach surrounded by lofty ice-capped mountains. The supplies had been landed, a very small camp built, and the tunnel-machine placed in position against the base of the mountain. After a month of intensive work it was started on its bur-

rowing journey into the heart of the mountain.

An endless chain of carriers removed the fine powder from the hole as far as the relentless machine chewed and ground and bored its way into the rock. Hour after hour it worked its way, and hour after hour chemists and metallurgists studied the dust. For a week, two weeks, there was nothing but granite. Suddenly it happened. They had expected to find coal, iron, copper, but instead they found gold.

Not gold ore, but solid gold.

It looked like a gigantic joke of Mother Nature.

Millions of years before, she had scattered the precious yellow metal in different parts of the earth to arouse the cupidity and longings of the human race. But in one place she had kept most of her wealth. Hidden beneath millions of tons of rock and ice she had banked a million times more gold than all the men of all the ages had ever seen, gold that assayed almost 95 percent pure. Without warning the yellow dust came out in the endless conveyers, and when the metallurgists saw it they gasped with astonishment. They doubted their own findings.

They had the machine slowed to a foot a day. Even then they were unable to handle the yellow wealth. At last they made crude machinery to melt the metal and form it into bricks, and in three weeks' time they had the two ships and the six submarines loaded and ready for the return voyage. And they had gone only fifty feet into the lode. No one knew how much gold there was left; perhaps no one cared.

Harlkin had accompanied the expedition. He decided to stay. He was having the thrill of his life. The fact that he had saved his country did not excite him, and the fact that iron, copper or any of the baser metals had not been found did not depress him. He knew that with unlimited gold the Dictator could buy everything the country needed. What was the use of mining and smelting and shipping iron from one end of the world to the other when these things could be bought for gold, and when there was more gold in sight than had ever been heard or dreamed of?

And he had found the gold!

Of course it was a pure accident. A hundred yards to the right or to the left and it would have remained untouched for another million years. It was more than wonderful, it was miraculous. There was only one thing to worry him.

There was too much gold!

That might lower its value, force every nation to adopt some other kind of money.

The submarines made one more trip, loaded again with thousands of yellow bricks. And then the short summer was over. It was thought best to close the little city. But Harlkin decided to stay. He asked three men to stay with him. He explained the reason to them:

"We can live very comfortably inside the tunnel. It will be warm, and fairly dry. There is much work to be done, and I want to be alone to think this matter out. The laboratory can be set up in the tunnel and we can go ahead with our scientific work. The thing that still disturbs me is the size of this gold lode. Is it possible that it is not gold? If it is really gold—and every known test says it is—how much more is there? I think we should make a few little lateral tunnels. We can do that by hand.

"Wealth has never meant anything to me, but now that we have an unlimited supply of what the human race calls richness, I do not want to leave it. I think that someone should stay here till next summer. Think of what would happen if everyone left and when the ships came back they could not find the place? A landslide could easily change the entire

topography of the region. This gold has been buried for a million million years. What if it should be buried for another million years?"

The three men looked at each other and then at their leader.

Finally one man, a white-haired miner, who had hunted for gold all over the world, uttered what was in the minds of all:

"If we are in the tunnel, and there is a landslide, and the gold is buried forever, we will certainly have a rich place to sleep through eternity. I do not know how the other feels, but for myself I want to stay. I am having the time of my life. I have helped find a real mine. Once I found a deposit that gave the owners thirty million before it was worked out, but here we could take that much out in one day by trying to. We can take out more than we can care for. Some day this adventure will be written up, and then people will know that John Johnson finally struck real paying ore."

HARLKIN stayed, and John Johnson, William Smathers and Richard Young stayed with him. The four men were not entirely isolated. They had a radio with which they could communicate with the world if they wanted to, but they did not want to. The world was not to know what had happened or what would happen in that tunnel.

Meanwhile the factories in the Dictator's country were working day and night. Everyone was busy. Even the women had been put to work. Food, clothing, supplies of every kind were beginning to arrive on a thousand ships. Not only the United States but every other country that had raw materials to sell found a cash customer. It looked like an era of world prosperity.

The thinkers in the rest of the world were beginning to worry, but the business men were happy. They had a market at last. Every dollar of the gold was turned over again and again. People made money and spent it. The more they made the more willing they were to spend it. Hoarding ceased. Saving became unfashionable. Gambling in stocks once more became a popular sport.

In the Dictator's country every preparation pointed toward another World War. But nobody cared and few worried. They had enough to wear, more than enough to eat, and the future was a long way ahead.

Another year passed. As soon as the summer started and the ice broke, more ships appeared in the harbor. Three trips were made that year. The tunnel was made three hundred feet longer and still went into solid gold. That fall the land of the Dictator paid its international debts. It owed no one, joined the League of Nations and asked for and received absolute equality with the rulers of the world.

Harlkin decided to stay through a second winter. This time he asked John Johnson to stay with him. The big reason this time was simply that he was afraid to return to civilization.

Primarily he was a scientist.

He was afraid of what would happen when the crash came. All the news from his home country told him that such a debacle was likely to occur at any time. It was not war he feared, but the destruction of all former monetary standards. What would happen when the world found that gold was worthless?

"The trouble with me," he explained to John Johnson, "is that I have too much imagination."

4. Another Tunnel

THE two men had spent one month of rather peaceful solitude. They had a definite routine of work, reading, exercise and sleep.

John Johnson had a rather interesting

hobby. He was making things out of gold.

"I got the idea from a book," he explained to the scientist. "It was an imaginative book written about a country called Utopia where gold was so common they used it instead of any other metal. So I am going to see how many things I can make out of the stuff. Did you ever read the *Conquest of Peru,* by Prescott? The Mexicans offered to fill a room with gold if the Spaniards would release their king. That has always been my idea, to have a golden room. All the furniture of gold, not plated stuff, but solid. Seems as though a man should sleep easier in a golden bedstead. It's a pity the metal is so soft that you cannot cook in it, but I am going to make a complete set of dishes, and a golden calf. Think of that! The Jews in the desert made one, but it took all the gold they had to make it. Perhaps I will make a golden woman. How do you like that idea?"

"That is better," laughed Harlkin. "Gold and women have a great deal in common. They have been associated for thousands of years. Rome was lost once because a woman wanted the golden bracelets the enemy wore. She sent word she would open the gate if they gave her what they had on their arms; so they double-crossed her and buried her crushed body under a pile of shields. Why not make a woman sinking in a quicksand of gold, her arms in the air and an agonized smile on her face, buried in the riches she gave her soul for? That shows not only women but the entire world. Think of that, Johnson! Not a nation that sold a pound of copper or iron but knew the Dictator was going to turn it into instruments for their ultimate destruction, but they all wanted the gold. They sold their future life for gold, and what did they do with it when they had it? Put it into vaults, built larger, stronger, deeper vaults to put more gold in. And there is so much here that some day all their gold will be worthless. Iron will rule, not gold. Explosives, chemicals will beat the human race to bleeding, suffocating pulp amid their useless gold. The Dictator knows humanity and how to destroy it. But he made one mistake. He thinks that in the end his country will be a paradise and the rest of the world a shambles, but he is wrong. Our country will go down to ruin with the rest of the nations. So make your beautiful woman sinking in the golden flood and under it place the words: *'Thus died the world.'* "

Johnson started his piece of golden statuary in a rather silent but enthusiastic manner. He knew that he was more of a miner than an artist. He was not sure just how a woman would look sinking into a quicksand of gold, but he was a rather stubborn personality and hated to admit that he had an idea that he could not carry to completion. On the third day of his work he was interrupted by Harlkin.

"Something is happening above us!" declared the scientist. "I have noticed that you are a little deaf, so perhaps you have not noticed it. Something or somebody is boring into the rock right above one of our empty rooms. I noticed it first as a vibration when I placed the palm of my hand against the wall. Now I can hear the grinding noise, first with my stethoscope, but now it is so loud that I can hear it anywhere in the chamber. I wish you would come in with me and tell me what you think of it."

Johnson went into the room with him. Even with the handicap of his deafness he could hear the grinding vibrations. He climbed up on some empty boxes and placed his hands on the curving ceiling of the tunnel. He was not satisfied, but worked his way over to one side. At last he said:

"I think I have it. Someone is boring a tunnel sidewise into ours. I think they

are still going through the rock, because the vibrations are too strong to be produced by passing through the solid gold. It seems to me that the instrument they are using must be at least ten feet in diameter, and if such a thing were possible, it works easier than our tunnel-borer."

"Do you think that it is a machine worked by human beings, or is it some kind of a worm?"

"A worm?" asked the astonished miner.

"Yes. I read a story once which told of a giant earthworm making a hole in a New England farm. It was just like a little worm, only it had a head thirty feet in diameter, and no one knew how long it was because the only man who saw it was swallowed before he could tell just what he did see. Of course it was a science-fiction story and perhaps had more fiction than science in it. But remember this: we are on the edge of the unknown! Back of us is a continent that has never been really explored. Millions of years ago there were large insects. Could they have lived on here under the ice? But whatever it is, there is no doubt that it is headed our way. A few days more will tell the story."

"Have we any guns?"

"I think so, but I don't think we will use them. If it is a worm it would be useless. If some other men are back of the machine I think it would be also useless to try and fight it out with them. The best thing is to wait and see what is going to happen."

5. The Strangers

THERE followed two days of waiting. At the end of the first day the vibrations became softer.

"They have struck the gold," explained Johnson. "Now they will eat their way through in a little while."

"You think that it is a machine operated by men?"

"Yes. I never have taken that worm idea of yours seriously."

"Time will tell," sighed the scientist.

And it did. At the end of the second day, the wall of the tunnel caved in, and out of the opening came, not a worm, but the polished metal head of a long, slowly revolving cylinder which kept on till it bit into the opposite wall of the golden tunnel and then once again kept on boring until it had completely disappeared.

The two men watched it.

In less than ten minutes there was nothing to show except the two holes, eight feet in diameter, perfectly round, and a heap of pulverized yellow metal.

"A machine without men!" cried Johnson.

"That is impossible," retorted Harlkin. "Every machine, no matter how complicated, has to have the human mind behind it. Some form of intelligence made this machine, started it to move, and directed it this way. Our finding the gold may have been an accident, but when one tunnel absolutely cuts through another tunnel, that means engineering skill of the highest type. We can do one of two things: Go into that new tunnel and find the brains back of it, or wait for that intelligence to show itself."

"You will not have long to wait," spoke a clear, almost musical voice, as out of the tunnel walked two men.

Harlkin shook his head as though to clear his emotions, and then said quietly:

"Perhaps we had better introduce ourselves."

"That is not necessary. We know who you are. You are Harlkin, the celebrated scientist, and the man with you is called John Johnson. My name is Alhazen and my companion is Ebn Junis. We are from the land of the ice, where we are called lords. We have been talking about you, and when we found that Johnson was going to build a symbolic statue of the effect

of gold on humanity we decided that it was time to come and see you."

"You knew we were here?" asked Harlkin, in astonishment.

"Of course. How do you suppose you would have come here and found the gold had it not been for us? Suppose we go and sit down in your rooms and let me explain the thing to you."

THE scientist led the way, the two strangers following, very much at their ease. They were tall men, rather thin, dark, with clean-cut, rather aristocratic faces. Except for their color they would have passed for members of the English nobility. Once seated, Alhazen began his promised explanation.

"Though we are far removed from what you think is civilization, we have never lost our interest in our fellow men. Occasionally we direct their actions, by our ability to use tele-psychology. We send ideas through the ether to their brains and they think that these ideas are their own inventions. Most of the time we let men go on their blind, bloody, blundering course, but occasionally we interfere. We have noticed you in past years, and many of your ideas, especially those of service to your fellow men, were given you by our leaders. We suggested to you that raw material could be found in this isolated part of the world.

"After you started, my friend, Ebn Junis thought it would be interesting to have you find gold, instead of iron or copper or coal. Perhaps I should let him tell you about that."

The other stranger took up the conversation.

"Gold has always been the curse of the race. They never had enough for everyone. The idea came to me that if there were enough gold given to the world things might be a little better; so I suggested to the other lords that we give you all you wanted. We knew about this underground field of the yellow metal, just as we know everything else of interest concerning our country. They agreed with me, so we directed you here. We showed you the very place to land and the exact spot to start your tunnel."

The scientist looked at him in amazement.

"Do you mean to tell me that it was not luck?"

"There is no such thing in science. You found the gold because you were constantly working in an automatic manner under our control. The gold was found. You knew and your Dictator knew that there was enough gold here to make everyone comfortable, so long as gold remained the standard of world finance. He used that gold to prepare for another war. No doubt he thinks that with the nations conquered he can take back the gold he has given them and then his nation will be the only one with gold. And what will he have? So many tons of a metal. That is all. The human race will be no better. His country will be no better.

"But we allowed you to have the gold, just to see what you would do with it. When Johnson and you worked out the idea of making a golden image showing the curse to the world from the yellow metal we decided that you were two men who were worth cultivating. At least we might make you our emissaries to the outside world."

"Allow me to interrupt you," apologized the scientist, "but all you say is so very much out of the ordinary that I just have to ask you some questions. Who are you? Where do you live? How long have you lived there? Where did you come from?"

"All very proper questions," answered Alhazen. "To answer very briefly: we are Moors from Spain, driven from Cordova many centuries ago. With us came a few Jews, who decided to cast their lot with us. Our dwelling-place is two hundred miles

from here, built on a tableland of solid rock, many miles wide. We have lived there since the Spaniards conquered our people in Spain. Much of our wisdom is inherited from our Cordovan ancestors. To that we have added, because for centuries we have had nothing to do except study.

"If you will come and live with us for a few weeks or months you will learn more about our life and work. Of course, you do not have to accept the invitation unless you wish to. You will not be coerced. But tell me one thing: If there was peace in your country, if every man and every nation tried to help his neighbor instead of killing them, would there be enough food, clothing, fuel, necessities of life to make all happy?"

"I believe so," replied the scientist, "but so many people want more than the necessities of life and, if they can get them, the luxuries of existence, by robbing and killing, then that is what they have done and always will do."

"You are not rich?"

"No. I have been so busy trying to learn the secrets of the universe that I have had no time to play in the stock markets."

"And your friend, John Johnson, is he rich?"

"I do not think so. He told me the other day that his great desire in life was to find gold, but after he found a new field he lost interest in it. He has found more gold and has less money than any other man I know of."

"We know all that," commented Ebn Junis. "We knew about Johnson when we suggested to you that he, and he alone, spend the winter with you. Now suppose you come with us, and be our guests for a little while."

6. *The Ice City*

"IT TOOK us several days to bore the tunnel," commented Alhazen, "but the return trip will only take a little over an hour. Back of our tunneling-machine we traveled in a small car which we left inside the tunnel. If you will come with us, we will start at once. Our machine is very similar to yours except that we do not have to get rid of the powdered rock. We simply drive it into the walls of the bore as we go ahead. This makes a very dense wall, and avoids any danger from seepage of oil or water. Perhaps this idea has occurred to you, Harlkin?"

"Yes, but I never could work out the question of power."

"Power never bothers us. Since we learned to split the atom we have all the power we need for any work. But let us start. You need not worry about your personal belongings. Everything you need will be provided for, and what you leave here will be perfectly safe."

Ten minutes later the four men were in a cylindrical car, exactly fitting the tunnel and twenty feet long. Alhazen touched a button and the car moved. It was difficult to estimate its speed, but in what seemed to be a very short time another button was pressed and the car stopped.

"We take an elevator from here," explained Alhazen. "At present we are about two miles under our city. Perhaps you have noticed the pressure on your ears. Please step this way, and enter this little car. These elevators are a very necessary part of our life. Living as we do, high in the air, our tunnel systems are absolute necessities."

In five minutes more the four men walked out of the elevator car into a large room.

"We will leave you here," said Alhazen. "You will be furnished a guide to your rooms. Once there, you will be provided for in every way. Your guide will remain with you and you will be permitted to visit all parts of our small city. I recommend especially our library and science buildings. Later on you might be interested in visit-

ing our temple, where we have a very large collection of gods. I am especially anxious to learn what you think of our food. It is largely synthetic, but we find it stimulating and it certainly has kept us alive. When we first came here the climate was milder, but as the centuries passed we had more and more trouble with our food supply and finally were forced to manufacture it. In your rooms you will find clothing, such as we wear. With us clothing is partly a necessity but in the city wholly ornamental, as we live constantly in a temperature of 72 degrees."

The two men left, and a third man walked over to the Europeans. He said, rather quietly:

"My name is Hiram. I am to take care of you while you are with us. Will you please follow me to your rooms?"

The three walked out of the building into a wide street, illumined with a clear, steady light. Flowers and trees were not only growing in parks but were in full bloom.

The air was warm. There seemed to be no sky, simply an opolescent haze above them.

"I notice," said Harlkin, "that you speak our language."

"A few of us speak all languages," replied Hiram. "We had to learn them all to benefit by the radio. Our common language is Arabic, but I know a dozen languages. A few of the lords of the ice who have trained themselves for years do not have to talk. They simply exchange thoughts silently. I am working on that, but so far am not an expert. No doubt Lord Alhazen told you of our use of telepsychology. That is most interesting, but it is never practised here, because everyone is equal and free to act as he wishes. We have rank, but it is based only on intelligence. Anyone can become a lord who is mentally capable."

They walked down the street. Harlkin commented on its cleanliness, the absence of people, and especially the quiet.

"It certainly seems deserted," agreed Johnson.

"Everyone is resting," explained Hiram. "There is no night here, no periods of daylight or darkness. We simply accustom ourselves to rest at regular intervals. Those who do not care to sleep simply relax completely. I suppose that explains the total absence of what you people call nervousness. We have nothing to worry us, are never fatigued, and the work we do is either mental or the mechanical supervision of machinery that is almost human in its ability to do complicated work. There are some pieces of city machinery that have run for ten years with practically no attention. Here is the little building which will be your home. I am sure you will find it convenient and comfortable in every way. You have radio service with the world; so you will not be lonely because of lack of news from your home. I will show you to your rooms and call for you later on, in what you call morning."

THE two Europeans walked through the one-story house. It was John Johnson who at last broke the silence.

"Everything is made of gold, Mr. Harlkin. Furniture and even the floors. What do you think of it all?"

"Even in my wildest dreams I never imagined such a city in such a place possible. Two miles above sea level and perhaps two miles under the ice cap. There must be a roof to the city. How did they ever build it? It is wonderful, Johnson, the most wonderful thing I ever saw. Their ancestors were from Cordova. Do you know anything about that city?"

"Not that I know of. Now I remember that Hiram said there was some kind of telephone here. He told me that if I wanted to know anything I should ask for the information over the phone. He said

that it was not like our phones, but a red circle in the wall of the living-room. I guess we had better try it out before going to sleep. Here it is. I suppose you just stand or sit in front of the red circle and talk to it. At least I will try it."

RATHER slowly he asked:

"What kind of weather is there in Berlin?"

From the circle came the reply.

"Six inches of snow fell last night. Today the temperature is 31, and the sun is shining."

"What kind of a city was Cordova when it was occupied by the Moors?"

"It was a city of two hundred thousand houses and a million population. Its longest street was ten miles long and paved and lighted. The houses were air-conditioned, cool in summer and comfortable in winter. The furniture of the rich was made of sandal and citron wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Every house was piped with hot and cold water. The city library was so large that the index filled forty volumes. There were hospitals and universities. At one time it was the center of world education. Medicine, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry and all the arts and sciences were studied. When the Moors left Spain and the Jews were driven out, Spain lost something it has never been able to regain."

Harlkin turned to Johnson.

"That helps us to understand," he commented. "That was the old Cordova. Some of those Moors left Spain, and determined to go as far away from civilization as they could. They either came here deliberately or were carried here by storms. Alhazen said that the climate was milder centuries ago. It must have been, because otherwise they never could have built a city like this—not when the wind was blowing sixty miles an hour and the temperature fifty below zero most of the time. They must have known a change was coming, and so they built that dome over the city. How they did it I do not know. What they have for a lighting-system I do not know. Some form of electricity, no doubt. And they have lived here, peacefully, quietly, comfortably, learning more every year, using their knowledge to better their lives. Eight hundred years without war. Think of that! Any nation could become great if it were able to live in peace that long. They must have laughed at us, Johnson, when we were passing through the Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, the Inquisition, the conquest of America, the Napoleonic wars, the famines, pestilences, bloodshed that have darkened the face of the world century after century. They have lived in isolation but it has been splendid, magnificent. We will spend the winter here. I must learn all I can of this city and its people."

"Perhaps," sighed Johnson, "one of them will tell me how they locate their gold mines."

Finally the two men, in spite of their excitement, went to sleep.

7. The Temple

FOR the next week Halkin lived in a period of intense interested excitement. In Europe he had been considered one of the greatest scientists of all ages. In the White City he realized that all his life he had been a child playing with toys and groping in the dark, in comparison with the men he now came in contact with. They knew how to do so many things that he had only thought of doing but had never even started to learn to do.

For example, heatless light, almost frictionless machinery, production of electricity so that 95 percent of the power was utilized instead of less than 5 percent. What interested him most was their ability to concentrate. They could turn their intelligence on one problem and think of

nothing else for five years, or ten, until they secured the proper answer, the correct explanation, the complete solution. During this time there was a total absence of anxiety, and a beautiful freedom from worry of any kind. The routine problems of civilization had all been solved.

Hiram tried to explain it to him.

"I am not particularly interested in religion," he said in his usual quiet, musical voice, "but perhaps this will tell you something that may interest you. For many centuries the human race has worried over the matter of gods. Some races had thousands and other races had only one, but no matter how many or how few they had they were never sure they were right; so they compensated for this inability to be sure by trying to make other people think the way they did. That is one of the reasons our ancestors had to leave Cordova. One of the primary decisions of the emigrants to this land was that everyone should be allowed to believe in any god he wished; there was to be free instruction but no coercion as far as religion was concerned.

"Centuries ago we started to make images of all the gods we knew or ever heard of. Because we had so much gold and because it could be so easily handled we made these statues of that metal. Our histories were consulted, and from every nation all over the known world we recalled the memories of their gods, and made them as we remembered them. Always there are a few young men who do nothing but make new gods. No matter how many we have, there are always more to make; because even in this age of science the imaginations of men run wild when it comes to religion.

"Here is the temple. We will walk inside and you can see for yourself. There are gods here that are animals, and half-animals, images of men and women beautiful and also with every conceivable form of monstrous physical deformaties. In one wing of the building there are symbolic gods of the wind, of the waterfalls, of rocks, trees and flowers. One entire section is devoted to the special gods of medicine, of the household, of hunting and the stars.

"You can study these images in any way you want; from the viewpoint of anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and even psychiatry. Any of our young men and women can come here, select a god and worship it for the rest of their lives."

"What has the result of this freedom been?" asked the scientist.

"Rather interesting. We know more about religion and practise less of it as an avocation than any people since history was written. We have no services and no priests. And yet our morals are rather fine compared with the races you know. Now and then a young man or woman deliberately forgets his obligations to himself and our city, and then we feel that he is sick. We try to restore them to mental health and if we fail they are simply given their freedom. They leave the city and they die."

The scientist spent two entire days wandering through the long rows of gods and goddesses. Then he asked Hiram:

"Where is John Johnson?"

"He has been down in the tunnels with the metallurgists. They are showing him how to find the various deposits of metals. He says that after he has learned how to do this he wants to go ahead and make his image of a woman sinking in a quicksand of gold. He says that it is symbolic of a new god the Europeans are worshipping and he wants to add it to our collection. He seems very happy and contented. Now that you are through with the temple, would you like to see our library, or our collection of model machinery? Or would you care to learn about our use of electricity or the things we make out of crude oil? Or how about studying a few days with the men who have learned to split the atom?"

"I want to talk some matters over with Alhazen," said Harlkin. "Is he a busy man?"

"No. At present he is working on a very interesting problem. He thinks that flowers and plants have a language and he is trying to learn it. Simply a pastime with him, and I do not believe that he will object to being interrupted. I will take you to his garden. He spends hours there with his eyes shut. He thinks that he can hear better that way."

They found the Moor in his garden laboratory surrounded by irises, peonies, pansies, bleeding-hearts and oriental poppies. He seemed very glad to see his visitors.

8. Serious News

"I AM glad you have come to see me," said Alhazen. "I have most interesting news for you, from the rest of the world."

"What is it?"

"When your Dictator started in to use his gold, all of the other countries were rather interested, not only in selling him raw products, but also in finding out where he was getting the gold from. I suppose there were some who even thought that he had learned the secret of the alchemists and was making it. But someone who knew the real facts decided to commercialize it. He loved the idea of personal wealth more than he loved his country; so he traveled here and there and sold the secret, and each nation buying it thought it was the only one in the secret. As a consequence, when the winter ends and the ice breaks at the beginning of our short summer your little harbor will look like a filled sardine can. I know that eight nations are preparing to send warships, freighters, colonists and troops to your gold mine. Perhaps the Dictator knows it, but perhaps he does not. He has a peculiar mind, and so far none of our psychologists has been able to get into rapport with him. Some days he thinks one thing and some days something entirely different. He has a many-track mind and no definite time-table or direction for his mental trains. But next October he is going to start his air fleet in action, and London, Paris, Rome, New York will be conquered before the nations know that war has been started. His first declaration of war will be the destruction of every large city in the world except his own capital. Did you know that?"

"I was afraid of it. That is one reason why I wanted to stay here. I am not sure that I ever want to go back. I am a scientist and not a fighter."

"That was well said. I am glad to hear you say it. What do you think will happen in your little harbor?"

"That is easy. There will be a battle royal. Everybody will start fighting everybody else. When they finish there will be nothing left except the tails, like the time the Kilkenny cats settled their differences."

"I feel that you are right. And that is what we do not want. If these nations want to stage a war and kill each other by the millions we are willing to look on with indifference, but we do not want it to happen on our front door-steps. Perhaps you think that we never worry, but there is one thing we are afraid of and that is the loss of our isolation. For centuries all we have asked is to be left alone. We gave the Dictator gold as a social experiment. Perhaps it was a mistake. There was just a chance that if everybody felt he had enough to pay his debts and be comfortable, all would cease hating one another; but it seems that no matter how much gold anyone has he always wants more.

"So we decided over a hundred years ago that if necessary we would give the world a shock that would keep them so busy for a few centuries they would forget their strife and jealousies. I am going to

tell you about it, because I feel that someone should know it. Perhaps if the world is warned they will stop in time."

"But what can I do?"

"You are going back to carry the warning. We are arranging to send you in one of our submarines. You need not be surprised at that. We used underwater travel years before your nations perfected it. Go to the Dictator or King or President of the eight large countries and tell them to make peace with each other, or something very serious will happen. You are known internationally. You are respected. Perhaps they will listen to you."

"And perhaps they will not. But what can you do that would harm the world? Hiram tells me your population is less than five hundred, counting the women and children. It is a rather small number to frighten the whole world with."

"Numbers do not count. One man could do it. Perhaps you recall the ancient scientist who said he could move the world if he had a long-enough crowbar and a place to stand on. In a way he was correct. Come into the house with me and I will show you a small working-model of a very interesting piece of machinery."

In a few minutes he was showing his visitor something that looked like a twelve-inch shell. It was conical at one end and flat on the other. At its pointed end it was grooved.

"That," explained Alhazen, "is a small model of our tunnel-borer. The actual size can be anything up to fifty feet in diameter. It can be charged with enough energy to travel twelve miles through solid rock at one charging. At the present time we have five thousand of them in place pointed downward toward the center of our continent. These are all connected in such a way that the pressure of a single contact will start them all sinking their way into the ice.

"Under the ice is rock. Then come layers of metal, and large deposits of coal. No one knows how much coal there is in these veins. Under the coal are lakes of oil; and under the oil there is more rock and below that lies the fire. Occasionally in Siberia, Alaska, and in our own country this fire has broken through and formed volcanoes. In parts of Antarctica there are still a few that break out occasionally.

"Our city is peculiarly located. We are on a granite rock that is at least three miles deep and several hundred miles wide. Whatever happens to the rest of this continent, we feel that we are safe. To quote the words of a very celebrated man, 'We have builded our house upon a rock.'

"Now as a scientist I am going to ask you a question. Take one of these machines and start it downward on a twelve-mile journey. It will go through ice, rock, coal, rock, a lake of oil, through the lake into more rock and then into the fire. What will be the result?"

"You will have a chimney, and through it will come fire, and the fire will keep on and on till all the oil and coal has been burned and till the pressure of the molten mass underneath is exhausted."

"That is correct. In other words there will be a volcano. Explosions will increase the size of the hole, and heat will be formed. Remember that. *Heat will be formed.* Over Antarctica there is enough ice to cover the entire world 120 feet if it were spread out in a thin layer. Suppose it would start to melt, not slowly as it is doing now, but rapidly, inside of a year? The increased amount of water would raise the surface of the oceans over 100 feet. Suppose only half of it melted? I think that New York, London, Berlin would be flooded. The Gulf of Mexico would become three times larger than it is now. A great inland sea would form in the Desert of Sahara. The geography of the world would be changed. And the temperature would also be changed. Vegetation would

increase at a tremendous rate. Insect life would threaten the lives of the human race. Am I right?"

"I believe so!"

"Tell your world that. Tell them that if they do not live in peace we will start melting the ice. We will turn this continent into a sea of fire. We will give them so much to think of that they will have to use all their energy saving themselves, instead of preparing for wholesale murder and territorial conquests. You have seen enough of our city and the people in it to know that this is not an idle threat. We do not want to do it, but if we are forced to we will. We are willing to destroy our continent to keep it from being exploited for the greed of your peoples."

"There is one thing that worries me," cried the scientist, "and that is, they will not believe me!"

"Give them the chance. And tell them that if their fleets come here next summer to fight for gold we will bury them under a rain of fire."

"You are in earnest?"

"Absolutely!"

"All right. When do I start?"

"At once. Leave Johnson here. He is happier than he has ever been in his life."

9. *The World Doubts*

HALKIN had been talking to eight men for over two hours. He had told them about his experiences and had given them the message from the lords of the ice. His language had been plain, and simple. There was no need of any of the eight failing to understand what he said.

The eight men represented eight countries. Not one of those countries trusted any of the other seven. Each country had been preparing for war as rapidly and as silently as possible. Now they were being asked to stop thoughts of war, live in perpetual peace and work for the mutual happiness of the human race. It was too much. The Dictator, who had decided to represent his own country at this conference, watched the other seven with half-shut eyes. Six of the other men remained quiet. The American spoke.

"It looks to me like a beautiful piece of propaganda. One country has secured a vast amount of gold. I might say that we know definitely that this gold was taken from land that belonged to the United States. They have used that gold to build a powerful war machine. Now a scientist from that country comes and tells us that we must not go on our own land and take any of our own gold. He also says that we must stop all our preparations for national security, break up our army and navy and air fleet and from now on live in peace. His threat tells of a land of supermen who can, when they wish to do so, change the surface of the earth.

"I do not know what the rest of you are going to do, but just as soon as it can the United States fleet will sail south. Where our flag flies we are going to be masters. We know how to play poker and we refuse to be bluffed. That is my answer in plain words. The rest of you can do as you please, but there will be no more gold taken by anyone from our lands."

And he left the room.

The other six left without a word. Harlkin was left with the Dictator.

"I ought to kill you, Harlkin!" purred the Dictator, "but instead I am going to decorate you. You have exploded a mine that is greatly to our benefit. Tonight our air fleets start in six directions. Instead of explosives they will drop bacteria. In a month thirty million of our enemies will be dead from disease. And now because I cannot trust you I am going to make you a prisoner. You will be very comfortable, but nevertheless you are going to be in prison."

"I expected that," replied the scientist.

"You are doing something that is very terrible, and something that you will live to regret. I am going to advise you not to take the offensive without giving the matter a few days of serious thought."

"No! The order goes out tonight."

Just then a messenger knocked at the door. He said he bore a radiogram for the Dictator. The ruler tore the envelope open, read the short letter and handed it with a sneer to Harlkin, who read:

"IF CONFERENCE HAS FAILED, WE START OUR MACHINERY AT ONCE.

SIGNED,

ALHAZEN."

"Just another reason for issuing the order," cried the Dictator. "It looks to me like a part of the American bluff. Do you know that I doubt your entire story? And this radiogram confirms my thought. You are in a conspiracy against your country. This message probably was prepared by you in advance."

The thinker shrugged his shoulders as he sighed:

"I guess there is nothing more for me to do. If you doubt me, there is nothing I can say to change your mind. Go on with your plans to destroy humanity."

10. The World Goes Mad

THE Dictator had not counted fully on his enemies. Every other nation except the United States launched its air fleets that night. His thousand planes were met in air before they had crossed their own borders. All that night raged the battle. With morning came the beginning of another world war in which the science of seven nations did its best to destroy and kill.

It was different from the last World War. Not one nation had a friend or an ally it could trust. Every nation started in to fight the world, each thinking that its instruments of destruction were greater and more deadly than those of all other nations. The United States and Canada remained on guard, thinking that they were protected by the oceans; but when the Panama Canal was blown up and the Hawaiian Islands were captured by the Asiatics they plunged into the multi-war.

For two weeks the various parts of the human race gripped one another by the throats, and then came the flood. Tidal waves and earthquakes should have given warning of what was going to happen, but the nations were too busy killing and being killed to pay any attention. But when the oceans started to cover their lands they were forced to start thinking about it.

The ice of Antarctica was melting. The whales knew it, the sea-lions had fled for their lives, but no human being actually saw what was happening. Five thousand volcanoes had opened their flaming throats in that land of perpetual ice. The water flowing down their maws only excited them to fresh fury. Fire that had rolled restlessly for millions of years now started in gigantic, super-heated fury to the surface. Antarctica was being turned into a furnace. The world was being covered with the water it spewed out.

The rock on which the lords of the ice had built their little city swayed, but finally held firm; the ice cap above melted but no water came through the perfect roof. Their world changed around them, but inside the city life went on as usual. London, Berlin, New York turned into ultra-modern Venices. Half of the world was either finding new homes or working frantically and vainly to build dikes to save their cities. Gone were thoughts of gold and conquest and the terrors of war. Humanity had all it could do to adjust itself to the new geography. Through it all, the ice lords continued on with their calm life, though there was not much ice left to justify their names.

11. Two Friends Meet

DURING the rioting that had followed the downfall of the Dictator's country he had been killed. Halkin escaped from prison and finally made his way to Switzerland. That little country, on its lofty mountains, had been one of the very few countries not seriously affected by either the war or the floods. As always, it served as a place of refuge for the suffering ones and the oppressed. The scientist was made welcome, it being felt that his knowledge would be a great asset to any country. A little laboratory was given him and he was provided with the necessities of life. To that little room came Alhazen.

The scientist was both surprised and pleased.

"I never expected to see you again," he cried.

"I was not sure of it myself," was the quiet answer. "We thought our city was secure; but for a few days, during the worst of the earthquakes, we had serious doubt as to whether our rock foundation was as secure as we had fancied it. But we came through in good condition. Many of our rock tunnels were ruined, and our future supply of oil destroyed, but we are doing very well, considering everything. When the earth became a little quiet we drove a new tunnel to the seashore, contacted with our submarines, and here I am. It took a good deal of mental concentration to find you. Everyone in your old country thought you were dead, but I felt that your time for death had not come."

"How is John Johnson?"

"Fine. He finished his symbolic god of gold, refused to be satisfied with it, melted it and made it over again. You see the first time he made it, he was not very well acquainted with the feminine face. He met one of our women, fell in love with her, and she is his model for what he thinks is going to be a masterpiece."

"I suppose he will marry and live happily ever after?"

"No doubt. Now in regard to our plan. You would be surprised to know how it worked. There is little left of the old Antarctica you found the gold in. No ice, and only a few isolated lofty mountains rising out of the water. We blew a continent to pieces to make the word recover from its madness."

"Do you think it worked?"

"I do not know. We hear talk of a world confederacy. No doubt even now various groups are at work trying to form such a union and head it. Human nature changes very little. You can change the shape of continents, but when it comes to the emotions of mankind they are rather unchangeable. But I want you to go back to the City of Ice with me. You have no family and no ties. We like you and have work for you. It is something new. We solved so many of our problems that we felt we had to have something new and entirely different to puzzle over in order to retain our national youth. We want you to share the adventure with us."

"What is your idea?"

"It is the sky and the stars and the moon."

"Interspace travel?"

"No. We have begun to doubt the existence of space. We think that perhaps there is a solid covering to the earth, on the other side of what we call the stratosphere. No one has ever been up there to actually see what really is there. Perhaps the things we see there are optical delusions. It is hard for me to put it into words, but the main idea is that we are not sure what really is above us and we are going up there to find out. Will you come with us?"

"I think that you are wrong. But I would like to be there when you find out that you are. So I will go. When do we start?"

A Short and Eery Story Is

THE DAMSEL AND HER CAT

By DAVID H. KELLER

IT ALL happened in the fall of 1270.

The Damsel Susanne had developed a sickness that frightened her parents and drove Friar Sinistrari to extra hours of devotion. She would retire as usual in the evening, and, after some hours had passed, there would come a cry from her as though she had suffered from a nightmare in her sleep. Going to her daughter's room, the mother would find her in a deep sleep and very white, with little beads of perspiration on her face. Moisture gathered on a mirror held before her mouth but she could not be seen to breathe. This way she would stay for hours. often till the first dawn of day, and then she would sigh deeply, grow roses in her cheeks and fall into a natural sleep from which she would awake by noon. These periods of deep unconsciousness, hours of stupor, came at first a week apart, then twice a week, and finally every night. During the daytime the damsel lost her buoyancy and light heart and became listless.

The duke, her father, was poor. Fortunately for him the forests were full of deer and the rivers abundant with fish. Grain was raised by the vassals, and firewood was plenty. Everyone contributed toward the welfare of the little community. There was but little gold, and few jewels, some dresses that had been worn for three generations, plenty of armor, and at least some degree of security. The very poverty of the duke and the isolated position of his castle kept at a distance the robber bands that roamed over France during those lawless centuries.

The duke and his Lady Arabella, however, considered themselves rich in one respect, and that was in the possession of their daughter. She was not only a well-behaved young lady, but she had some degree of beauty and in addition was intelligent enough to learn to read and write, a most unusual accomplishment in those days for a woman. The old friar was proud of her, as she was the only pupil of his old age. He was almost enthusiastic over her scholastic attainments and frequently spoke of her wisdom.

In 1270 Susanne was seventeeen years old. Life must have seemed very quiet to her during those years, and no doubt she took long breaths and sighed deeply when the friar told her tales of Paris and the French court. I presume that she thought nothing ever happened in Aragon—and just when the child was ready to die from the very sameness of her life, the cat had come to the castle.

There is no doubt that this was a very unusual cat in every way. She was much larger than the average cat, and striped like a tiger. The eyes were yellow and at night shone like large stars. During the entire time the cat was at the castle she was never seen to eat; while she often

sat on the table at mealtime, not even the choicest titbit was fine enough to tempt her appetite. As soon as this cat came to the castle all the other cats left, at once, and their absence was not a cause for concern, for all the rats and mice left at the same time.

The cat came and went according to no rule or reason and seemed to have no trouble in going anywhere she wished to, even though the doors were closed and the windows locked. She was never seen in the small chapel. Her favorite room was that occupied by the Damsel Susanne, and she seemed fonder of that child than of any other person in the castle. She would lie for hours at a time on the floor, watching Susanne, her eyes first narrow slits in the yellow and then deep pits of a peculiar green.

The damsel liked the cat, and for that reason the animal was tolerated. Friar Sinistrari protested from the first and said that it would end in some horrible disaster, but the damsel cried and the Lady Arabella looked concerned and the duke said that he saw nothing of harm in a cat; so it ended in the cat's staying. Yet in the fall of the year the damsel was ill more often than ever.

To add to the worries of Duke Jacobus Hubelaire, strange tales began to come to the castle. First a goose was found dead with blood coming from little punctate holes in the neck; then little lambs were somehow killed during the night and their bodies sucked dry of blood; and finally a child was taken from its crib and the torn and lifeless body left in a thicket near the grief-stricken parents' hut.

The common folk were dependent on the duke for protection, so it was natural that they send a delegation to him telling him what they feared and asking him for help. They were no cowards though they were serfs, and the tale they told to the duke, his lady and the friar was no story to tell to little children.

To put it briefly, their tale was this—that several of them had seen a woman wandering through the woods on the nights when the lambs and the baby had been slain. It was the opinion of those who had seen her most clearly in the moonlight that the woman had the dress and general appearance of the Damsel Susanne. At this statement the duke swore, the Lady Arabella fainted, and the friar crossed himself. The nobility in the castle assured the serfs that they must be mistaken, as they were sure that on these nights the damsel had been asleep in her bed—not only asleep, but so deeply asleep that she could not be aroused.

For a wonder the simple folk believed the duke and his lady. They left the castle convinced that their eyes had betrayed them. The friar went at once to his room, where he spent long hours in study and prayer, nor did he neglect to fast, to purge, and to drink large amounts of water mingled with the juice of limes. Then the secret was revealed to him by merciful Saint Anthony.

What he realized was this:

When the cat was in the room with the damsel, she was always awake or sleeping peacefully. On occasions when the damsel was in her deep and deathlike stupor the cat was never to be seen. When she roused from this deep sleep the cat was always in the room, crouched in one corner or hidden back of a chest. In some way the cat was associated with the strange sickness of the girl. Another fact was evident. The child had been perfectly well before the cat came. Also the killing of the animals and the child had all happened since the coming of the cat.

If the cat could be killed, then the whole trouble would stop. At least Friar Sinistrari hoped so. Unfortunately, the thinking about killing the animal and the actual kill-

ing of it were two separate things. There was no doubt about its having nine lives; perhaps it had ninety. Secretly the duke offered a gold piece as a reward for the killing of the cat; everyone wanted the money and tried to earn it, but when they saw the cat they were weaponless, and when they had their weapons ready the cat was never to be seen.

Then another lamb was killed, and the very next night an attempt was made to take a baby out of the cradle. This time the mother was watching and when her baby cried she sprang forward in its defense. She saw a woman in white picking the baby up. There was a struggle, and finally the intruder fled. The mother was sure that it was another woman who had tried to rob her. She had scratched the thief's neck and, the next morning, while telling the story to the duke and the friar, showed them the blood, still under her fingernails.

The duke tried to comfort her, but all the time he and the friar were looking sidewise at each other, and as soon as they could do so they went to the room of the damsel. She had passed through another hard night, one that was worse than usual, but when they saw her she was sleeping naturally. There was a red spot on the sheet, and when they turned her head they saw several long red scratches on her neck.

The cat sat as usual up on the window-sill, leisurely washing her face.

The duke was not a coward but at the sight of the scratches he turned pale and started to gnaw upon his fingers. The friar thought harder than ever, but all he could say was to repeat the statement that they should kill the cat, at which statement the animal disappeared through the window and was seen no more that day.

But the Damsel Susanne was whiter than her usual wont that dinner-time, and against the pallor of her face her red lips blushed. Friar Sinistrari had something on his mind, it seemed, something that he dared not speak to the damsel's father. None the less, he made two suggestions: first, that from then on the damsel be watched constantly, and second, that a lamb be tied as a decoy and a bait in the grass circle of the dark wood in back of the castle. He advised that all the people hide themselves in a great circle around this lamb and watch in the full of the moon for whatever might come to kill the lamb and suck its blood.

His advice and argument were so good that the duke promised him that no matter who came for the lamb, they would kill him in any manner the friar considered best. The friar went to the blacksmith and had a long talk with him, and all that day the smith toiled at his forge.

That night the lamb was tied in the middle of the bare circle. No tree or shrub grew there—only a small green grass—and all around the edge were mushrooms. The simple peasants, shivering but at the same time determined to do what they could to rid the place of this horrid pest, hid in the thick wood some distance away. They were told to come to the circle when they heard the screech of the great horned owl.

The Damsel Susanne complained of being tired and went went to bed earlier than usual. In the next room, looking through holes bored in the wooden partition, watched the duke and the friar. The window was open and the night was still; there was no breeze, and the candle by the bed burned without a flicker. Just as they were growing tired, the moon came above the trees and shone into the room. There was now

light from three sources—the moon, the candle, and the fire on the hearth. They had no trouble in seeing the cat come through the open window and jump up on the bed. They had no trouble at all in seeing the great green globes of the cat's eyes as it leaned over the damsel and seemed to suck the breath of life from her. Friar Sinistrari had to hold the duke to keep him from rushing into the room. Then, with one jump, the cat disappeared through the window. When they reached the room, Susanne seemed as though touched by the hand of death. Leaving her in the care of her mother and the aged nurse, the duke ran out of the castle, followed as rapidly as possible by the old friar. A few men-at-arms joined them in their hurried walk to the bare circle. There they joined the blacksmith and the others who were waiting.

The full moon, just above the tree-tops, was like a harvest moon, yellow like an orange, round as a ball and large as a bushel basket. It seemed to rest on the top of the pines, flooding the circle with light. In the middle of the spot the white lamb baaed uneasily.

Then the woman appeared.

The duke gasped. The friar prayed. Every peasant who saw what was to be seen crossed himself, for the woman was the Damsel Susanne, but her eyes were yellow globes in the moonlight. She glided over to the lamb and struck it with her left hand. A feline cry echoed through the wood, and then, without further pause, the woman seized the lamb, bit it in the neck and started to suck the blood. Once she raised her head to listen, and her lips were red in the moonlight.

Out of the stillness came the hooting of an owl!

From every side the peasants gathered to form a complete circle, greatly afraid but determined to do the thing they had been asked to do. They carried axes and hoes and sharpened stakes, and a few had spears and swords. The circle finally was three deep with determined men.

Too late the woman realized that she was surrounded. She glided away from the dead lamb, and her face was covered with blood and hate. Several times she jumped savagely at different portions of the encircling ring only to be met by the threatening hedge of weapons. Then the friar whispered to the smith, and he shouted an order to close upon the woman.

To the duke's credit he kept silent; he had promised to keep silent and not interfere, but his face disclosed the feeling in his heart to find that this woman, this fiend from hell, was his daughter. Closer and closer the threatening ring of peasants pressed, and finally a few of the bravest jumped and bore the woman to the ground under their weight. The blacksmith had her by the throat, but not before she had drawn blood from his arm.

The friar called for the brazier of glowing charcoal. In it, white-hot, was a brand in the shape of a cross. Shaking with excitement, the old man managed to control himself long enough to say earnestly, "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost;" then he took the handle of the brand in his hands and pressed it against the skull of the woman, just above and between the eyes—pressed it with all his strength. . . .

The woman writhed beneath the weight of those above her. All the powerful strength of the smith was barely enough to hold her head to the ground. Shriek after shriek filled the air as the hot crucifix burned its way into her brain and into her soul, searing and destroying the very centers of her life.

And to the horror of all, to the

surprize and amazement of those who held her, she changed suddenly in shape, and when she died, it was not the Damsel Susanne they held, but a twisted cat.

The duke was brave, but for all his bravery he fainted.

When he came to his senses, he found that a large fire had been built and the cat was searing amid the flames. There was nothing to do but to stumble back to the castle.

The Lady Arabella told her husband that she had sat by the side of her daughter holding a golden cross in her hands and praying. At a certain time the damsel had screamed, sat up in bed, and then dropped backward. The mother and the old nurse thought she was dead, but her regular breathing soon showed the return of life. The rest of the night they spent in the bedroom, one on each side of their beloved daughter, holding her hands.

The morning dawned, a lovely rose.

The damsel, waking, called for food. When milk was brought to her she drank it eagerly but complained that it hurt her to swallow. Then she fell asleep.

In the daylight they saw a red cross on her forehead.

On her neck were the livid marks of fingertips.

An Utterly Strange Story Is

THE LITTLE HUSBANDS

By DAVID H. KELLER

ON THE decks of a small steamer which was slowly making its way along the upper stretches of the Amazon, a white man sat on the shaded side and longed for something to relieve the dull monotony of the journey. He had tried everything from learning Spanish to shooting at sleeping alligators, and yet every day became more unendurable. There seemed to be no end to the river, and each day's mileage was small, unappreciable, compared with what was yet to come. That day was hot—the flies worse than usual—nothing interested him—he was bored with life. Then he saw the bottle glinting in the sunlight. He sent for his rifle and was on the point of shooting it when something made him stop, think, and ask one of the deckhands to jump over and get it—for a silver coin. Five minutes later he was trying to get the cork out. His inability to do so at once irritated him so that he smashed the bottle with a hammer. Inside he found a number of rolls of paper, leaves from a little note-book, and every page was numbered. The writing was fine, but legible. Smithson, the celebrated anthropologist, on his way to the unknown, read with interest the following:

I STARTED this after my capture and I am ending it on the day of my death. It will not make any difference to me personally whether it is ever found, but it may be of great interest to the world. I can think of a thousand things that will prevent a

bottle from reaching civilization and only one thing that will bring it through, and that is—God's desire.

My name is Johnson Jeremiah Jenkins, special oil investigator for the Empire Oil Production Company, headquarters, London. They have the names of my nearest relatives, also all of my personal belongings. I trust they will properly provide for my mother and see that she is cared for in her later years.

As this company knows, I was on a special investigation to locate new sources of oil on the upper Amazon. They have my last reports. After I wrote to them, I had trouble with my guides. They did not want to go on with the trip, but finally I bribed them to go with me one week's journey up the river. We would paddle in the early morning and late evening and rest in the heat of the day. While they rested I would walk around the jungle hunting for oil indications. On the fifth day of this week I came upon a series of tracks in the soft earth. They looked a little like those made by a human foot, but ten times larger, and their depth into the earth showed a considerable pressure, possible only by a tremendous weight. I called the head porter and showed him the tracks. He refused to explain them—at least he said he could not tell about them—but that night, after I refused to go with them, the entire party of natives took French leave while I was asleep and left me alone, some thousands of miles from nowhere.

They did leave me a canoe, and I was not frightened—not then—for I figured that a white man who acted peacefully was as safe there as he would be on Piccadilly in London. I have always thought this, and never went armed except against wild animals. Unfortunately the natives had taken the boat in which I had my firearms. All I had was a canoe with some food and bedding in it.

I had promised myself to go on for one week, and I still had two days to go. The fact that I had to go alone made no difference, so on I went. The first day and night nothing happened. The second day nothing happened, so I felt rather cheered up as I made camp, ate a little supper, and started to sleep. While falling asleep I made plans for my return to civilization, starting the next morning.

Sometime during the night I was awakened by a sense of pressure and suffocation. Something had picked me up, wrapped as I was in my blankets, and was carrying me away. My struggles seemed useless, so I ceased to kick. It seemed futile to cry; nothing to be done but wait and see what happened.

I was carried on through the night and finally put down on the ground. As soon as I could I unwrapped myself from the twisted folds of my blanket and tried to find out where I was. I felt the walls of a hut which were woven out of reeds. The top was just high enough to touch with my head. In the darkness I thought it felt like a large beehive, such as I had seen so often at home, made out of rope. There being nothing else to do, I spread my blanket on the ground and tried to sleep. I was sure that morning would show me I had fallen into the hands of a tribe of savages.

Morning came at last and I could see streaks of sunlight through the cracks of the hut, I heard a voice sing, "It's a long way to Tipperary," and I knew then that I had found a friend. Later the door of my hut was untied and the same Irish voice asked me to come out.

IT WAS a new and peculiar world I found myself in. There was a collection of little huts such as I had spent the night in. Around these huts was a cleared space, and around that a circular fence, made of tree trunks bound together with thick ropes. It was a fence such as I had often seen in France, but this fence

was fifty feet high, and on the top was a crown of tangled cactus. As a prison it seemed perfect. I saw the huts; I saw the fence; and then I saw the men.

Later on I found there were eighteen of them, and I was one more. They were of all nationalities and all colors, and they all seemed to be trying the best they could to keep from showing that they were very unhappy. My Irish friend was singing and some of the Frenchmen were dancing the tango. Everything was nice and spotless, and the men all seemed clean and well fed. Several had on rather elaborate suits of skins and others very ornate head-dresses of multicolored feathers.

They saw me and at once ran to where the Irishman and I were standing. A dozen questions were asked me in almost as many different languages. Who was I? Where did I come from? Who really had won the war?

I tried to talk, but they made so much noise for a few minutes that they could not hear me. Finally they became quiet, and I told them all about myself that I thought worth while, and gave them the latest news of the world. Then I asked them what it all meant. At that they looked worried and said I would find out soon enough. When I urged them for decency's sake not to keep me waiting, they talked the matter over and delegated one of their number to do the talking for them. He was an Englishman, Sir Rollo Rowland of the Dorchestershire Rowlands, and seemed to be rather an expert on birds; at least that is what had brought him into the upper Amazon valley.

"This is going to be rather hard to tell you, Jenkins, old chappie, but the fact is that we are all the captives of a bally lot of women. They have a hobby of collecting men, just as I used to do with birds, and keeping them in these dinky little huts. Each man belongs to one woman; rather a clever arrangement, what? They wash him and dress him and give him little gimcracks to eat and make little clothes for him, and every woman wants her man to look a little bit snappier than the other men. So long as the man behaves himself the woman is devilishly nice to him and shows him a bally good time, but when she gets on the outs with him she puts him under the sod and hunts around for another man. Part of the time they have to be content with niggers, but what they really like most is white men, and the snappier the men are the longer they last. The woman that caught you has had a Portuguese; he is in his hut now in a blue funk, and small wonder, my lad, small wonder! It is good-bye to him and how do you do to you.

"You understand that we are their husbands. How does that seem? Some fine ending for an Oxford man, what? I have lasted longer than most of them, on account of my education, and then I learned to speak their language. That made me the official interpreter and had a lot to do with keeping me alive.

"There are just eighteen of these women—that is, just that many old enough to have husbands. There are a lot of girls, and no boys and no men, except us. I guess they kill the boy babies—perhaps they only have girls born to them.

"This woman who was married to the Portuguese was not very well pleased with him: I guess he was rather surly when alone with her, and one has to please them, my lad, one has to please them. So he gets killed and you have his place. His wife was away for some days hunting for a man, and I guess he will suit her—young, English, good-looking.

"There is not much use of telling you more. You will find out about it in time. Just a word of caution. Forget the world and do not try to

escape. Death is not so bad, but it is unpleasant to be hung up on those cacti and just left there to die. If you look closely you will see some bones up there—I was here when the last man was put up there."

That was about all he would say just then.

ALL day we were left alone. Night came, and I went to my hut and tried to sleep. The next morning the Irishman called me to come out and have breakfast with them. As we were eating, a shrill cry rang through the air and every man went and sat down, rather docile-like, in front of his hut. The Portuguese, shaking with fright, crawled inside his hut.

When I first saw it come over the fence I thought it was some odd kind of a snake, light brown, and then I saw that it was an arm, and the fingers reached down to the front of the Portuguese's hut, and, not finding him there, pushed the hut over, picked him up, screaming as he was with fright, and carried him over the fence. All the men kept very still and I noticed that they looked at me in a rather peculiar manner. I did not know what it all meant, but I knew enough to keep quiet. Then the arm came over again and the fingers picked me up.

There was not much use of protesting, so I just shut my eyes, only I had a sick feeling in the bottom of my stomach like a sea-sickness. In just a few minutes I felt that I was on the ground again and slowly opened my eyes and looked around. The women were evidently having some kind of a meeting.

If they had been smaller they would not have been so bad-looking, but any woman seventy feet high looks rather peculiar. They were all sitting in a circle, a ring of gigantic figures squatting on the ground. Alongside of me was the Portuguese, and he was not very happy. We were right between the legs of one of the women. I tried not to look at her face but I just couldn't help it, and she saw that I was looking at her and smiled. I smiled back and waved my hand to her, sort of jolly-like, though I did not feel that way at all. The woman seemed pleased with me, because she started to laugh and even clapped her hands; it sounded like thunder. She even reached down and patted me with one of her fingers.

Then they had some kind of ceremony with singing. Their song was harmonious enough, but the sound was like exploding cannon, and I held my hands over my ears.

I wish that I had kept my eyes shut too. For after the singing the woman who seemed to own us took a sharp stick shaped like a lead-pencil, only it was about fifty feet long, and right there in front of us all she scraped a hole in the ground; and then she took the Portuguese and squeezed him between her thumb and finger, just as you would squeeze a bug. He gave one yell and that was the end of him; so she threw him into the hole and covered him up with loose dirt, and then with a wild yell that echoed through the jungles she jumped up and stamped on his grave with her feet till it was all nice and smooth. Reaching over, she picked me up and started to rub me against her face and mouth. Her lips were soft enough—but it was a devilish unpleasant sensation.

Months passed after that.

I was well treated, had lots to eat, and no mother could have kept her baby cleaner than the woman who was my wife kept me. She used to go on long trips through the jungle carrying me in a little fur bag on her back. She tried to talk to me and wanted me to teach her English. It seems that some of her husbands had been Americans and she had picked up some of the language.

I was well enough treated, but the life was hard in a way. It took a philosopher to stand it—a regular Stoic—lots of the men they caught couldn't stick it at all—tried to escape or committed suicide in some other way. I saw that it was helpless and hopeless—nothing to do till they caught some chap with firearms and dynamite or poison.

Two years later. Things are no better. I am heartsick and homesick. The woman had a child, but it was a boy, and without saying a word to me they killed it—like as if it were a dog. She tried to cheer me up but I was too heart-broken to respond. She said she hoped the next one would be a girl, and tried to speak softly to me, but her voice at best is like distant thunder—hoped the next one would be a girl.

One year later. Have lost track of the time, but think I have been here four years. Things change a lot. Only the three of us—the Englishman, the Irishman and I—are left of those who were here when I came. The rest are all new—most of them a surly lot. It is harder for the women to get new men, and the men they do get are not gentlemen and make poor companions to the rest of us. I have the fever a lot and am losing weight. Am going to try to put these papers in a bottle and watch my chance to drop it in the water the next time the woman takes me out.

The fever keeps up. I have been sick three weeks. Part of the time I was out of my head. The Englishman told me that when the woman picked me up I cursed her. Does she know enough to understand?

Later on. The women have been out and gathered up a group of American explorers—all college men and young fellows. I believe that my woman got one of the men. Yesterday one of the old crowd was killed and one of the new men married to his widow.

Next day. Another marriage took place today.

Later. All the new men are married but one. I believe he belongs to my woman.

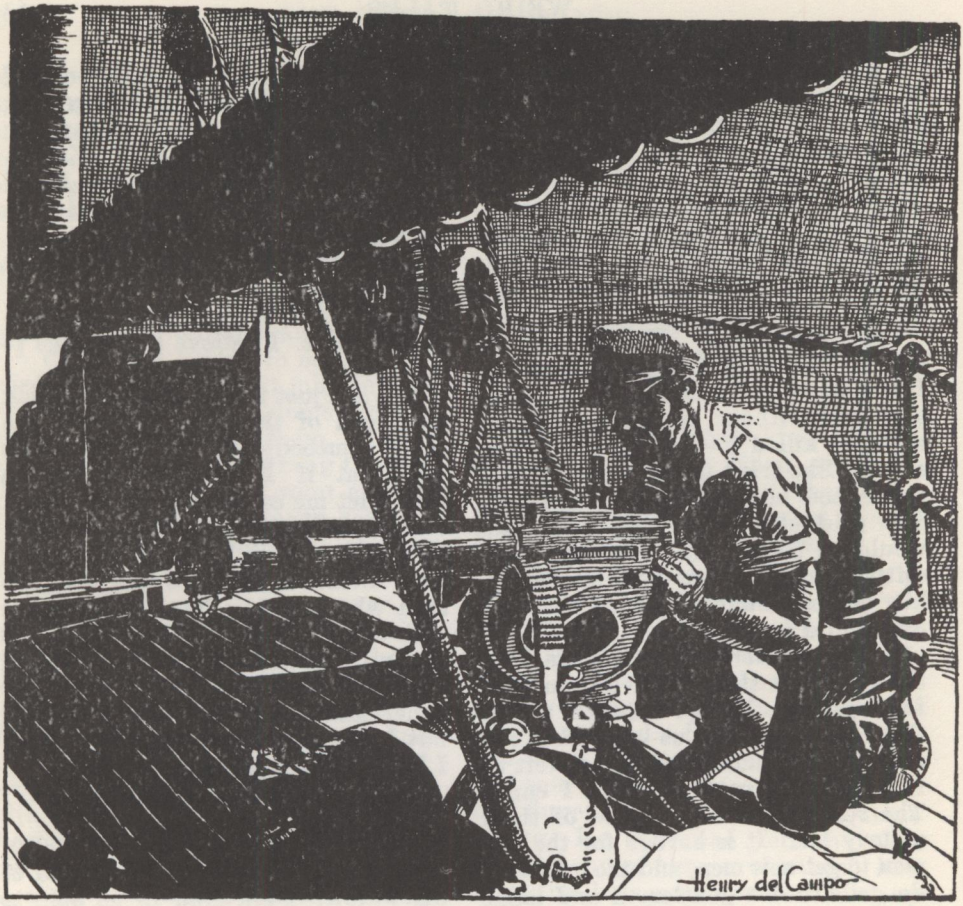
She has just told me that I am sick too much of the time and that she wants somebody that is younger. She said that if I wanted her to she would let me escape. Took her offer.

Next morning. Too weak to escape. Had a hard chill and am burning with fever. Have had a talk with the man who is going to take my place and asked him to dispose of this bottle the first time he had a chance. Told him I had no hard feeling. The Americans are arranging to escape but I know they will fail. Good-bye. I hear them singing.

JOHNSON JEREMIAH JENKINS.

POOR Jenkins was killed this morning and I am the new husband of his widow. I am glad to be able to say that he was so sick from the fever that he was unconscious at the time of his death. I am going to drop his message in the river as soon as I can. I have read it and talked to Sir Rollo Rowland and the thing looks rather dark, but we hope that our native American wit will find a way of escape. This is a rather serious business for grown-up men to be in.

JAMES JONES, Prof. Biology,
Reiswick University, U. S. A.



"I jumped around and started that damned gun squirting."

Death of the Kraken

By DAVID H. KELLER

What fearsome shape reared its horrid head over the doomed boat in the Sargasso Sea?—Put this story down before you read the last page—and see if you can guess the ending!

"BROTHER, can you spare a dime?" the man asked me in the low monotone used by the chronic panhandler.

"No money," I replied, "but I will give you a good meal and something to drink."

I took him to a chop house. From the way he ate there was no doubt of his hunger. It seemed that he never would be satisfied. Finally he finished, emptied his glass of beer and accepted a cigarette. He looked across the table at me.

"That is the first meal I have had for two days," he said, "and what do you do for a living that makes you want to feed a man like me?"

"I write for a living," I answered with a little twisted smile, "and sometimes I sell what I write and sometimes I fail to. When my brain gets dull I hunt up a man like you and he tells me a story."

"So you want a story to pay for the meal?"

"If you have one and want to tell it to me. But you do not really owe me anything. I was amply repaid by your enjoyment of the food."

"Ever hear of the Sargasso Sea?"

"Sure. For some thousands of years every traveler has told about it. Maundeville described it. Columbus sailed through it. Oviedo gave it a name from *sargaco*, the Portuguese word for seaweed. Drake sailed through it for five days. The scientist Humboldt described it. What do you know about it?"

"Not much. But I have been there."

"No story in that. Thousands have been there. Used to be a place of mystery, port of lost ships caught in the weeds and rotting till they sunk. But those old stories were based on fancy. Simply a lot of weeds there, mainly the *Sargassum bacciferum*, and ocean trash carried by the Gulf Stream. The old tales of prisoned ships and sea monsters were just the imagination of frightened seamen whose memory became more vivid with every drink of rum."

"Then no matter what I tell you, you will not believe me?"

"What difference does that make so long as I listen? Have a drink?"

"Yes, another beer. Now in regard to the story. I was loafing one day in the lobby of a cheap hotel here in New York, wondering how much longer I could go without food, when up comes a man and asks if I want a job. We started to talk, and it seemed that he wanted a man who could handle a machine-gun or even something bigger. That was right in my line.

"Yes, sir! When it comes to machine-guns I know what I am doing. I have used them in a dozen wars, from a half-pint revolution in South America to real fighting in the World War. Of course I did not know where he was going to take me and the gun, but a job just then looked rather good to me.

It turned out that it was not a real fight he was financing, but a sea voyage. He was interested in this Sargasso Sea. Had an idea that everything the old travelers wrote about it was not so much imagination; told me that there must be some part of their story true, and he was going to find out. Had his ship and crew and only lacked a gunner.

"What do you want a machine-gun for?" I asked him.

"He tried to explain it to me. He said he had been working on the trip for years and had read everything he could put his hands on—all the tales of the old travelers starting in with a Greek called Plato. I happened to remember that name because he called the old cat on the ship Plato. Then he went on to say that one part of the story which was repeated again and again had to do with sea monsters that picked the sailors off the ships and ate them, and if anything like that happened to us a machine-gun would come in handy.

"I signed for the trip. Of course I did not believe his story about those sea monsters; thought he was starting a little private war or something, but the wages were good and when I saw his ship I knew the eating was going to be good. That man Ferguson was certainly a real man, and he tried his best to make the crew have a comfortable time.

"His ship had made several voyages north and it sure was stoutly built—sails when there was a wind and an oil-burning engine to use in the calm. There were

eight of us aboard: the captain, four sailors, the cook, Ferguson and myself.

"SECOND day out of New York he explained his plan to us. Once in the Gulf Stream he was going to drift. If his idea was right the ship would finally find its way right into the middle of this Sargasso Sea, and he claimed that there was no telling what we would find there because for some hundreds of years all the ships had tried their best to keep away from this center instead of hunting for it."

"Have another glass of beer," I suggested. "You are telling a good story and another drink will help you make it better."

"No. I will wait till I finish. We sailed on for about a week and finally get to the place where the captain thinks we can start drifting, and that is what we do. On the third day we see some weeds and in a week the whole ocean is covered with them. From then on, the ship went slower and slower. Some days, for several hours at a time, it hardly seemed to move at all.

"Ferguson was having the time of his life studying the weeds and the little fish that lived among them. He would talk to us every night about the new discoveries of the day. One night he showed us a fish that had legs on it instead of fins, and toes on the end of the legs. Every time he found a new fish he would put it in a glass jar with alcohol to pickle it. Happy as a boy with a new toy. Of course the life was slow for the rest of us, but he was the boss and our pay was good and we sort of jollied him along."

"And how soon did you meet the first wreck?" I asked.

He laughed. "We actually did see them. Five in one day when we came into the dead center of the sea. By that time the weeds made a mat that in some places was over five feet deep. It almost looked as though a man could walk on it, and here and there a ship silently rotting and almost covered with barnacles and weeds. In three days we visited seven of them, and the night of the third day Ferguson asked me to have a talk with him in his cabin.

"He asked me if I had noticed anything peculiar about those seven ships. Of course I told him that they were all old, but what he wanted me to say was that there were no bones on any of them. I laughed at him when he said that. *Bones?* Of course not! Those old ships got stuck in the weeds and when the crews found out that they were not going to get out of the weeds any other way they provisioned boats and tried to get out to open water. Ferguson did not see it that way. You see he still had the idea that some kind of animal had eaten those sailors before they had time to either escape or starve to death. Then he asked me to have the gun ready because there was just a chance that this animal would come after us.

"Of course he was the boss and I was there to obey him; so I humored him and asked him just what kind of an animal he thought was going to eat us, because I wanted to know how to mount the gun and where to shoot at it."

"Wait a minute," I said interrupting him. "Let me tell you what Ferguson told you. I have read a great many of those old tales. Ferguson had nothing else to go by except those stories. He put them all together and from them made a composite animal. It had a body about thirty feet long, four legs and a tail. The neck was as long as the body, ending in a head big as a barrel with large eyes as big as dinner plates. There are whiskers about three feet long. It could swallow a man with one gulp. How is that? Anything like what Ferguson told you?"

"Just about right. Of course I thought he was daffy to even think there could be such a creature, but if he was willing to pretend there was one I was willing to

string along with him. We talked it over and decided that the only way to kill anything like that was to put a dozen bullets into the brain through the eyes or the open mouth. And that would take some clever shooting, because that critter was not going to hold its head still when he was charging on the ship.

"The next morning I got the gun out and put it together and fired a few practise shots. That was sure a sweet gun and worked as easy as a sewing-machine. If you moved it slowly you could cut a tree down with the bullets. Some of the crew asked me what it was for, but I didn't tell them about the idea Ferguson had. What was the use? I knew there wasn't any such animal.

"That next night, the night after I put the gun on deck, two of the crew who had been on deck duty disappeared. Just dropped out of the picture. Not a drop of blood, not a sound of pain or fear. On the deck at early dawn, off the deck at sunrise. Nothing to explain it.

"Ferguson listened to the captain's report and made no comments. He simply went ahead with his study of the little fishes.

"The captain rested all that day, and the next night he stayed on the deck till morning while the two sailors took alternate watches. Nothing happened, and nothing unusually different for another night. Then on the third night, morning came and the captain and one of the sailors were gone. Sounds rather silly to put it that way, to simply say they were gone!

"THAT left four of us, the cook, one sailor, Ferguson. And myself. I talked it over with the sailor and then I went and told the boss that the best thing to do would be to get the engine started if we could and get out of there while the getting was good. But he said no! If those men had been eaten by that animal, sea monster or Kraken or whatever I wanted to call it, it was up to me to kill it and that was why he had brought me along with the crew. I told him I would take a chance at killing anything in the daytime, but what chance was there hitting it at night when it attacked us so silently that there was no alarm given by the one sailor who had escaped?"

"Your story is getting good," I commented.

"You bet it is. And now listen to this. The cook was a rather old man, and he was just plain jittery. Drunk much of the time and trembled like a leaf when he had to go on deck even in the daytime. The next night the three of us were in the cabin waiting for supper. Of course we were not supposed to eat together—not the best of discipline on a ship to have the crew eat with the master—but Ferguson thought it would make things easier for the cook. So we were waiting and wondering why the cook was late bringing the food. Ferguson said he was going to see what was the matter, and he left the cabin and when he came back he simply said that the cook was gone. The three of us hunted all over the ship but we never found him. There was a tray of spilled food on the deck. He must have been carrying it to us when he was caught. At least that was the way Ferguson figured it out."

"That is the only plausible explanation," I said.

"Sure it is. Now that left three of us. I made up my mind to trick that monster. Told Ferguson about my plan and he thought it pretty good. We made a dummy out of some old sails and smeared it all over with lard to make it smell, and then we put that dummy up near the mast with a lantern near him, and I trained the gun so it would spray the bullets about four feet over his head, and I was going to stay there and when the monster dove for him I would start shooting. Ferguson and the

sailor were going to stay on deck but at the other end of the ship.

"Nothing happened—not a thing! Toward morning the boss came up and said he was going down and get some sleep. At sun-up I decided to get something to eat and try to sleep. Not that I felt sleepy, you understand, because my nerves were jumpy, but it seemed that if I had to go through another night of watching I just had to sleep. And when I was drinking my coffee it just occurred to me that I had not seen the sailor. I hunted for him, could not find him and then woke Ferguson. All he knew was that the sailor had been on deck when he had gone to his cabin.

"We talked it over, and decided that while I was watching that dummy the damned thing had sneaked around the other side and caught the last sailor and killed him before he had time to yell even once.

"I told Ferguson that as far as I was concerned I had had just enough. The best thing we could do was to get that engine started if we could and get away from there before we died like the other six. He asked me to stay just one more night and try the dummy bait again. If nothing happened then, he promised to leave the next morning. I did not like the idea, and told him so, but finally I gave in to him. We worked on the engine that day and found it was in perfect condition. He knew a good deal about machinery and showed me just how to start it and run it, in case, he said, anything happened to him the next night. But he promised to say shut in his cabin and not come out till he heard me start the machine-gun. How about that beer?"

I ORDERED it for him and he drank it slowly. Then he continued his story. I was rather sure by this time that the whole thing was a clever lie, but I wanted to know how he was going to finish it.

"Toward dusk I put some bacon on the dummy to make him smell better and then I started to do some tall thinking. There was no moon and not much starlight. That animal, Kraken or whatever you want to call it, was smart. What he would likely do was to recognize the fact that the dummy was just so much bait, and he would sneak up in back of me and take me instead of the bait. The thing to do was to turn the machine-gun around the other way. Then when he came for me I would start firing. I would be standing looking at the bait but at the least noise I would swing around and get the gun working.

"And there in the darkness I waited, and waited, glad that Ferguson was safe in his cabin, and then, just when I felt I simply could not wait any longer, I heard a little swishing sound in back of me. I jumped around and started that damned gun squirting."

"And then what happened?" I asked.

"I stopped the gun and waited. Not a sound. Everything was as black as it could be except for the lantern up by the dummy. I did not have the least idea whether I had hit that monster or only frightened it. I guess I didn't care very much. Here is the peculiar part: I have been through all kinds of hell in my life and it never phased me, but this time I was sick; and I wanted to see Ferguson. It was not the boss especially, just anyone I could talk to. I felt my way down to his cabin. He had a light burning but he wasn't there. Gone! And I was feeling so low that I just locked the door and threw myself down on his bunk. Man, but I felt sick."

"I suppose Ferguson decided to go up on deck during the night and the beast grabbed him?" I asked.

"That was the way I figured it out.

Anyway I stayed there till morning, and then I went on deck. Thought I would have a look around and see if I had hit that sea thing and then start the engine and get out if I could. All I could think of was to get away as soon as I could. Can I have another beer?"

"You certainly can. Now, when you went on deck with the sun shining, what did you find?"

He drank the beer slowly, and then even more slowly said in a whisper:

"I found Ferguson, just about cut in two by the bullets."

"You killed him instead of the monster!"

"Just that. Got jitters and fired at the first noise in back of me, and I guess he never knew what hit him. It was a mess. And now to the end of this story. I managed to start the engine, and raise a few sails, though it took me a long time. But I got out of there, and sailed east, and when I got in sight of the Azores, I set the ship afire and went ashore in a boat. Of course there was an investigation, but I just answered questions, and did not tell the whole story; so finally I was allowed to leave and I took the first tramp steamer back to America."

"And so you never saw the Kraken?"

"No. And I do not think there ever was one."

"What makes you say that?" I asked sharply. "You say those men disappeared. If it wasn't a sea monster, what was it?"

"Ferguson."

"I know you are lying now."

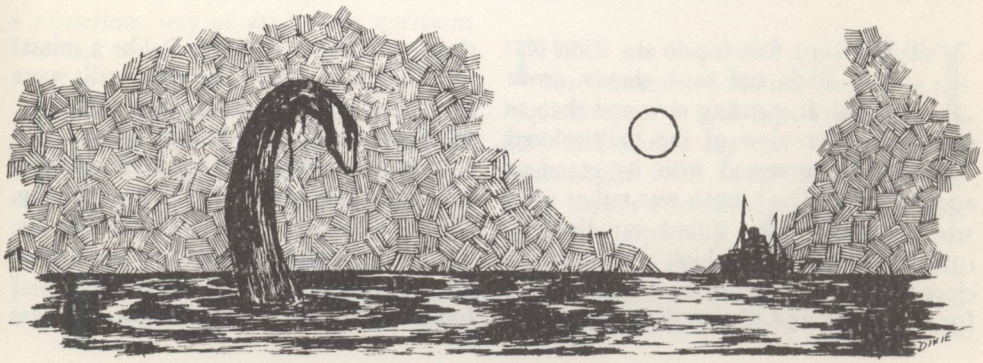
"Knew you would think so. Never told the story to anyone before, 'cause I knew no one would believe me. But Ferguson was a real scientist. He wanted to devote his life to a study of those little animals in the floating seaweed. He knew that no one would willingly stay there month after month with him, but he had to have a crew to get him there. He took me and the gun along to cover up his crime."

"How do you know that? You are practically saying that he killed the men!"

"Am I? Well, I have reason to think so. Why? Because he kept a daily record of everything he did and I found that book in his cabin. He would sneak up behind those men, crush their skulls with a blackjack, tie some lead to their feet and throw them overboard. He did that to the cook when he went out to see why he was late with the meal, and he was going to do it to me, only I outsmarted him. The man must have been insane."

"Sure of all this?"

"Better than sure. He had the blackjack in his hand and his hand up ready to strike when the bullets hit him. Now do I get a night's lodging on that story?"



"And then the mammoth took the two of them in the circle of his trunk and threw them into space."

The Goddess of Zion

By DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

Was she real—or was she a mere painted dream from long ago?

IT WAS my first trip to the Zion National Park and as I slowly drove through it, pausing now and then to obtain a better view of the multicolored cliffs I was impressed with its grandeur and majesty. The canyon was rather wide when I drove into it but rapidly narrowed until finally the high walls were so close together that they barely left space for the road and the rushing mountain stream, which ran through it like a miniature Colorado River. The rock walls were all colors and where the sun hit them, sparkled like gigantic jewels.

The last week in August found few tourists in this waste place of great beauty. Now and then an automobile would pass, but for minutes at a time I had a sense of loneliness and isolation from the world. I found myself regretting that my dog was

not with me; she would not have appreciated the scenery, but, at least, she would have relieved my loneliness. At last I came to the end of the road. There was nothing to do but to turn around and go back, or leave the car and walk a few miles further up the trail. The shadows were now deep, almost twilight at the bottom of the canyon though it was only midafternoon. As I stopped the car and left it by the side of the road I looked to the left and saw the great white throne. A huge mountain with almost smooth sides, rearing its terrific mass upward some thousands of feet to end against a background of blue sky. A mountain of peculiar whiteness, bare of trees or any form of vegetation. And at the very top a circular opening so perfect in shape that it seemed to have been bored there by a gigantic auger.

I made a statement, "What a place to build a temple to worship a God!" and I asked myself a question, "What is on the other side of that hole? Has anyone ever been through it to find out?"

Before I had time to even think of the answer, a car parked in back of mine and the driver walked over and joined me. He was a young man, large, yellow hair and blue eyes. Even before he spoke I mentally classified him as someone like a Greek God. Not Jove or Vulcan but rather Apollo or Mercury.

"Rather fine," he commented, as he looked at the white mountain.

"More than fine," I replied. "It has a mysterious way of asking me questions I cannot, at least so far, find answers to."

"You wonder at it?"

"I do. For example, what is on the other side of that circular hole? Has anyone been back of it to find out? Was it made by water, wind or some long-forgotten race?"

"I judge," he commented, "that this is your first visit to Zion. You have never been up to the top?"

"Never, and it is my first visit. Have you been there?"

"Yes,—at least I think I have, but it was a long time ago—a very long time ago. Would you like to climb it?"

"Not this afternoon," I replied, looking at my watch. "I have no desire to spend the night halfway up. But I might consider the trip tomorrow."

"You really will go with me tomorrow?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes. If you think we can reach the top, and find out something more about that opening, I will accept your invitation. How long ago were you there?"

"I will tell you tomorrow. Suppose we have supper and a night's rest, and then meet here at dawn. We will see a lot of each other tomorrow, so it would be just as well to see little of each other today. I think it will be light soon after four in the morning, and we can leave our cars right here. Better bring some food with you, chocolate and sandwiches, or whatever you want. It will be a long walk."

"Dangerous?"

"Not especially. Slippery in spots, and you'd better wear rubber-soled shoes, but no need of ropes. If you have done any mountain climbing at all you will have no difficulty. Of course it has been some years since I was there, and there may have been changes in the path. If you find it too much for you, I will go on by myself. In fact I have to. I promised to be there."

THERE was no suitable reply to make to that statement. I did not want to be too inquisitive; so I told him I would meet him, and started my car. That night I spent at the small Lodge in the Canyon. After supper I looked up all the available literature, especially historical facts, but found nothing except that the canyon had been discovered by the Mormons, and had only recently been made a National Park

and accessible to tourists through the building of a road.

Before going to bed I asked the desk clerk whether anyone had ever been to the top of the white mountain.

"Not that I know of," he said laughingly. "I do not know why anyone would want to go there for except to brag about having been there. Of course I do not know what there is on the back side, but as far as I can see a man would have to be a human fly to climb it."

I DRESSED, had breakfast, bought some food and was in my car by three-thirty the next morning. At the end of the four-mile drive I saw the tail lights of another car. There was a little light but not much. The man was standing by his car, evidently waiting for me. We exchanged greetings, and he expressed his pleasure and slight astonishment that I had kept the appointment.

"Hardly expected you. Before we do anything else suppose we become acquainted. My name is Lief Larson and lately I have been living in Wyoming."

"And I am John Erickson, from Boston," I replied.

"Educated?"

"You might call it that, if a few degrees mean education."

"Not at all sensitive to the occult?"

"Hardly, though I do not know what you mean; that is, I do not know just how you use the word," I replied.

"Just now it does not make any difference. Not very light, but I guess you can see if you follow me."

"You know the trail?"

"I ought to."

For three hours I followed him along a winding and slightly upward narrow path. He walked rapidly, with the ease and grace of a deer or a mountain lion. Often he had to wait for me. At nine he sat down and I was glad to rest. We were surrounded by sharp sides of what seemed to be a secondary canyon. The walls were high and the rock black and vermilion. He pulled out of his pocket a large piece of chalk.

"Better mark the path from now on. You may be coming back by yourself."

"I am lost already," I remarked with an uneasy laugh.

"No. From here on back just take the easiest way downhill and it will take you back to the road. But as we go ahead just make a cross mark or an arrow every fifty feet on the rocks."

Without any further conversation he started, and now we entered a crack in the rock that was just wide enough for one person, and the walls were white.

"Once you are in here," Larson explained, "there are only two ways to go; forward or backward. The path widens considerably later on, but there are no side trails till we reach the top of the great white throne. It has been some time since I was here last, but it has not changed any. There are some wall pictures around the next turn."

He was right. On the white rock, painted in startling blacks, reds and yellows the pictures rose twenty feet above the bottom of the path. Some day they will be found and copied and a book written about them. All I can say now is that there were at least three hundred figures, life size, rather artistically done, and with the colors hardly faded. Men, women and animals. The men and women were fighting, working, loving and apparently worshiping. The animals? I recognized the mammoth with downward-curving tusks, the buffalo, deer and perhaps the beavers. Others seemed to go back hundreds of thousands of years, perhaps millions of years. There were figures, such as the cross, the swastika and the crescent moon. The men and women were brown and red, but high above all other pictures on the wall was a white

woman with golden hair. She had been painted against a background of black, and in one hand she held a writhing snake and in the other an ear of corn.

I had been walking slowly, but when I saw with sharply twisted neck this white woman's picture, I paused and sat down. My companion joined me.

"This is a most remarkable group of wall paintings," I exclaimed. "Do not pretend to be an expert in such matters but know enough about it to realize that these are as fine as anything in America. What I cannot understand is that no one has ever found them before. There should be a trail up here with satisfactory signs, and everyone who comes to Zion should come here."

"I am afraid that such publicity would spoil it. Can you imagine a stand here for food and drink? With postal cards, and booklets telling all about it? I am afraid that She would not like it."

"You mean that the lovely woman high on the wall would not approve? After all it is just a painted woman."

"I am not so sure about that. Are you? Do you suppose that she was just a dream placed on the rocks by those primitive artists? Or did they have such a woman in their lives?"

THERE did not seem to be any answer. Perhaps he did not want his questions answered. At least not at that time. We walked on and now came to steps carved out of the rock, and the steps were worn, either with water or the feet of men long dead. At times we went through long tunnels. Larson had brought a flashlight. He pointed it upwards and showed me the blackened ceiling.

"They used torches in those days," he explained.

I could tell by my ears that we were going up rather rapidly, and at last we came out through a short tunnel into brilliant daylight. We were on top of a mountain. I looked around. On all sides were great depths. And on one side was a circular hole. Without a word I climbed into it and looked down. Below was the cement road. I could even see our two automobiles, like little beetles, by that road, and going up and down were other little car-bugs. All around us were other mountains. But we were above them.

"I told you," cried Larson, in quite exhaltation, "that I would bring you to the top and show you the circular opening, and there it is. From the bottom of the canyon it looks rather small, but up here you see it is rather large and the base of it is level with the floor of the mesa. I think that it was originally carved out by water, but as we see it now it shows smoothing by human tools. See that large circular stone in back of it? That is the Queen's throne. During the ceremony of sacrifice she sits on it. There is sacrifice of men and women but no blood up here, because the offerings to the Goddess are hurled down into the canyon by a mammoth. They must have landed in the river. It was much larger in those days and their dead bodies were washed out of the canyon and finally eaten by the crows."

I looked at him. He was saying it all rather casually. In fact his matter-of-fact tone roused some resentment in me. I said:

"You seem to know a lot about it. Putting it on rather thick, are you not? Must think I am a tenderfoot, willing to believe anything you say."

"No. I presume you think I am a liar or insane or had a bad dream last night. Suppose we sit down and have something to eat, and while we are eating I am going to tell you a story. But first I want to give you the keys to my car. Tomorrow night there is going to be a full moon. At exactly twelve you stand just where the cars are parked. In my car you will find, in the glove compartment, a rather fine set

of binoculars. You keep looking at the circle. The moon will help you and then I think there will be fires back of the circle that will help you to see a little of what is happening. You can report the affair to the Park Police, call it an accident. No use notifying my family, because I have no one who cares. We will sleep up here tonight, and early tomorrow I want you to start for the bottom as fast as you can."

I was sure now that there was something wrong with his mind. Of course you cannot tell a man bluntly that he is insane, but I thought it might be best to humor him and try to take him down to civilization. Evidently, for some reason or other, he was thinking of killing himself by jumping through the hole. Must have had it all arranged for and even wanted someone to witness his curving leap through the air.

"Suppose we eat, and then go back together," I suggested.

"No. A promise is a promise. Listen to the story. I came out here the first time about seven hundred years ago, one of a party of Norsemen. I do not know what urge kept us going, but we followed the setting sun, west and still further west. I have a map in my car with our course marked on it as well as I can remember. We came to Niagara Falls and then followed the Great Lakes to the end of Lake Superior, and then west and south from there. Not in one year, you understand, because there were no automobiles then and no horses. We traveled in spring and summer, and in the fall we built huts and gathered firewood and provisions for the winter.

"We kept time by the number of winters. None of us could write; we were warriors and not scholars. Hardships? Plenty of them. Fighting? Plenty of that also. At times we were treated as Gods and at other times hunted like wild beasts. One by one my comrades died. At last I was left alone by the Great Salt Lake. I remember swimming in it. From there I went South and at last came to this Canyon. It was summer and the hunting was good. The river was nearly three times as large as it is now. I saw for the first time this white mountain with the circular opening, and that night I was captured by the brown people."

"Not Indians?" I asked.

"No. At least not like any Indians I have ever seen since. They were little people, none over five feet tall and a peculiar brown, not copper-colored and not black. Had it been daylight I might have escaped but they overpowered me before I was awake. I have to laugh when I think of it. Lief the Fearless, hero of a hundred sea battles, a man who never knew defeat, helpless and the captive of a group of little men I could have brushed aside like so many flies had I met them in the daylight.

"They did not want to hurt me. In fact they gave me food, and tried by signs to show that they wished to be friendly to me. But they had my armor and my sword, and their lances were long and sharp even though the spearheads were of stone. It seemed that all they wanted me to do was to go with them. There was nothing else I could do so I went.

"They were cave people. I never was able to find just where they lived, because they covered my eyes. Not many of them. Perhaps not more than a hundred, counting the women and children. A dying race! At one time there must have been thousands of them because their bone heaps were large. And now I come to the part that will be hard for you to believe. They had a mammoth up here, a very old and large elephant and every day they brought him grass and grain up this path we have just taken. You saw a picture of one of them on the rocks. Remember? With the tusks turned downward?"

"NOW listen to me," I interrupted, "I do not want to be discourteous to you. I am willing to believe all the rest of your story but I draw the line at that elephant. I am willing to admit that there were such animals here at one time but not on top of this mountain. Not if he walked up the way we did. There were places where the space between the rock walls was so narrow he could not have possibly squeezed through."

"I thought you would say something like that. I had the same idea when I saw him for the first time. I said to myself, 'He is up here, but how did he get here?' I found out after I learned to talk to the Queen. They caught him when he was just a baby, took him up to the top and kept him there. Made a pet of him, taught him tricks; and when he grew full size he just stayed there because he could not get down."

"So they made a pet of the elephant?" I asked.

"Yes. Almost considered him as a God. And every year when they had their sacrifices he took a leading part. He would stand near the edge of this circle, and they would bring an offering to him and he would curl his trunk around the man and raise him in the air and then throw him over into the canyon."

"You saw him do that?"

"Yes. For five years. The brown people would go hunting and bring back Indian captives. They would wash them and feed them and take the best of care of them and then once a year they would all gather up here, light their fires, sing their songs and worship their Goddess, and then one at a time the Indians would be brought to the mammoth."

"But of course they never threw you over?" I remarked casually.

"No. I suppose they would have done so, but the Queen took a fancy to me and told them I was a God from the skies, just as she was, and as they worshiped her, they believed her—at least for awhile."

"And you did not try to escape?"

"Why should I try to? Did you see her picture on the rocks? Can you imagine a normal man trying to escape from a woman as beautiful as she was? I tell you that we acted like Gods in the daytime, but at night she was just a woman and I was very much of a man. The brown people worshiped her and because of that they tolerated me. We learned to talk to each other though at first we only used signs. But pantomime is very effective when a man and woman love each other.

"Once a year we all gathered here, right where we are now, for the yearly sacrifice. She would sit on this rock, almost nude, covered only with gold ornaments, anklets, bracelets, armlets, her snake in one hand and a ripe ear of corn in the other. I would sit near her. The brown people would build the fires and sing and dance, and when they beat on their drums the mammoth would sway in time with the music, and at the last, one at a time he would hurl the Indians to their death over two thousand feet below. And then the fires would fade and the brown people one by one leave us, and finally dawn would come and only the Queen and I would be there. And she would kiss me and tell me how happy she was that one more year had passed and I was still alive and able to love her.

"At times when she talked to me I thought she was immortal and would never die, but she said that this was not true. The Brown People had had many Queens. I never was able to find out where they came from. My love looked like a Norsewoman, but she knew nothing about her childhood. Though her people worshiped her she was, in a way, as much of a captive as I was. She thought that somewhere in the caves there was another white girl, growing into womanhood, tenderly

cared for and educated to become the next Queen. At the first sign of old age the Queen simply disappeared and a new one took her place. She remembered the day when she had become Queen.

"I tried to persuade her to escape with me. But she felt that it was useless to try. I suppose she really did not want to. She had lived as a Goddess so long that perhaps she could not have lived as a woman had she wanted to. I can see now that she was rather tangled as far as her thinking about life was concerned."

"I SUPPOSE you know that this is all rather hard for me to believe," I said. "I have no doubt that you think you are telling me the truth, but, at the same time, this is 1938 and you talk as though this experience happened yesterday instead of seven hundred years ago."

"I realize how you feel. But I have to go on with the story. The thing that we feared happened. She became sick. Knowing that if she died the brown people would probably sacrifice me, she thought of a compromise with her worshipers. The new Queen was to take her place and she was to be the grand sacrifice to their spirit God. I was to be given my liberty, but some day, when they sent for me, I was to come back, and in my turn be hurled through the hole. She told them that she would come back, sit on the stone, once again hold the sacred snake and the ripe ear of corn. They believed her. I gave my promise to return when I was sent for. She told me that for long years I would live on, in different bodies but with the same soul. After my final death we would live through eternity united and unseparated. Did you ever love a woman?"

"Yes."

"Then you know how I felt that last day we spent together. It seemed we could not be close enough together. But night came and the full moon. All that day we had been alone up here with the mammoth. She gave me one of her gold bracelets. Night came and the little people built their fires, sang their songs and sacrificed their captives. Then she walked over to the opening in the rock and started to take off all of her golden jewelry. The little people produced, as though by magic, the new Goddess, a beautiful young girl, and on her they placed all the ornaments, the feathered head-dress and the robe of white deerskin. And then something very unusual and unexpected happened. My beloved stood, nude and beautiful, in spite of her illness, waiting for the elephant to pick her up and hurl her through space. Instead he turned, rushed toward the new Queen, picked her up with his trunk, walked over to the edge of the opening and threw her into space."

"I did not expect that ending," I exclaimed.

"No one did," he replied. "It had a terrifying effect on the brown people. You see the elephant was one of their Gods. Whatever he did was right. Now he had refused the sacrifice. Leaving us they fled down the path, leaving us alone. I went over to my beautiful one and took her in my arms. We simply held each other close till the dawn came. I told you she was sick. When the sun rose I knew she was very sick. And so was the mammoth. He walked around us as though he wanted to help in some way but did not know just what to do. At last he rushed against the rocks, deliberately broke off his tusks and then hurled himself through the circular opening.

"My Goddess knew she was dying. She said she was not afraid of death if only she could meet me afterwards. She asked me to hold her close till she died and then throw her body down into the river, and her last words were:

" 'You will live on and on till the time appointed, and then, when I send for you,

I want you to come up here and join me.'

"I did as she requested. Not easy but it had to be done. And now after all these centuries I have come back."

"I am sorry," I said, "but I cannot believe your story."

"I cannot blame you. The next day I left, and the brown people made no effort to detain me. After that, part of my memory is not clear. I suppose I married and had a son, and he married and had a son, but through the generations my soul lived in the oldest son of the family and that soul never forgot what happened and the promise given. My descendants mated but though we had children the love for this Goddess of Zion remained. They went back finally to Norway. And at long last this body that is called Lief Larson was born.

"From my boyhood I had dreams of the long past. I never married but lived and loved a dream woman, the white Queen of Zion."

"I still do not believe you," I insisted.

"I am going to make you believe me. After my beloved died I took the mammoth's tusks and the gold bracelet and buried them under a cairn of stones. See that pile of rock over there? Under it are the ivory and the gold. I am going to uncover them."

I told myself that this was 1938 and such a story could not be true. But he threw stone after stone to this side and that and at last pulled out two tusks, over six feet long, and a massive piece of gold.

"We will sleep here tonight," he said softly. "Tomorrow you will go back by yourself. At midnight use the binoculars. The brown people may come back. Even the mammoth may be reincarnated. And you will see what you will see."

"Don't do it, Larson," I urged, putting my hand on his shoulder. "You are sick, very ill, more so than you think. Rest awhile and then go back with me. Let me take you to a hospital where you can recover from this wild delusion."

He shook his head.

"I love her, Mr. Erickson. For centuries I have waited for her. This time, if we are united, we will never be separated. We will live happily, lovingly through the ages. I tell you she is waiting for me. How can I fail her? Would you disappoint the woman you loved?"

"Perhaps you will feel better tomorrow morning."

"I will feel better but no different. But it has been a hard day for both of us. Suppose we go to sleep."

I SLEPT in spite of the hard stone bed, in spite of my nervousness. It was the sleep of utter exhaustion and with it came dreams. I thought I saw Larson with a wonder woman in his arms. The mammoth stood beside them. Little men came carrying firewood. Drums beat! But when I woke with the dawn Larson and I were alone on the rock. He told me to go and take the flashlight and his car keys. He made me promise I would watch the circular opening at midnight. And he thanked me for coming with him and listening to his story and ended by saying that he was very happy because he had spent the night with the Goddess of Zion, and knew that the end was going to be a glorious one. The last thing he did was to give me the gold bracelet to keep in memory of his wonder woman and their great love.

It was much easier going down the mountain than coming up it. I had little difficulty finding the way. When I came to the rock pictures I sat down for over an hour, making copies of some of the pictures in my notebook. The colors seemed more brilliant than they had the day before. Had I been an artist I would have drawn the Goddess of Zion.

It was nearly dark when I finally arrived at the two automobiles. I opened Lar-

son's car, found the binoculars, locked it and drove back to the lodge in my own automobile. There I ate a much needed supper.

By eleven that night I was back to the place by the road where Larson's car was parked. There was a full moon and a wonderfully clear star-studded sky. The white mountain loomed high in the air and at the top was a circle of red. "A forest fire back in the mountains!" I whispered to myself. The rolling throb of drums came to me. "Thunder from the clouds," I said. All the time I was trying to think clearly, to tell myself that it just simply was not true, that such things could not happen in 1938. Then I took the binoculars and focussed on the circular opening and saw a mammoth against a background of flame and in front of him stood a man, holding in his arms a woman with feathers in her hair and they seemed to be kissing each other.

And then the mammoth took the two of them in the circle of his trunk and threw them into space.

I found the crushed body of Larson near the river bed the next day. The authorities believed the story I told them, which I fabricated simply because I knew they would not believe the real one. They identified him from papers in his pocket, located his car and the coroner decided that it was suicide. Perhaps it was. But I still have the binoculars and the gold bracelet and the pictures in my notebook. Some day when I recover from my mental confusion I am going back and try to find the trail and the rock pictures.

Unless I do find them I think it would be best to simply think that it was all a dream.

Bindings Deluxe

Certainly he hated women. Hadn't one tried to murder him, after first killing twenty-five of his best friends?

By DAVID H. KELLER

"I DON'T like women!"

"I feel the same way," was my reply. "Now when it comes to men or books, why that is something different."

We were in the Turkish bath and just beginning the sweat. Only two of us in the room, on steamer chairs, with the temperature at one-hundred and seventy but feeling more like two hundred. The other man had evidently been in for some time before I entered for his appearance indicated that

he was beginning to suffer. At least he had surely reached the point of irritation. I thought this cutaneous irritability might be the reason for his outburst against the fair sex. At least there was no other obvious reason. To make his antipathy toward women in general all the stronger he repeated the idea with variations.

"I just don't like them. They do things differently; they think differently. I can't even say that I believe they think; perhaps they just react to their emotions. Why, I have seen women calmly do things that a man wouldn't think of. Fond of books?" he asked abruptly changing the subject.

"You bet!" I replied enthusiastically. "Ought to be. I collect and bind them as an avocation. I make some money by binding and spend it collecting. Make a specialty of early Pennsylvania imprints."

"I have some really nice books." He sighed as he said it. "A few of them are distinctly rare. Odd! I'm a binder myself. Must get out of here now. I can stand just so much and then the heat worries me."

He walked out, a rather portly, middle-aged man. Ten minutes later I followed him. An hour later I caught up with him in the sun-ray room. He was exposing his back to the lamps. I looked at that back; sat down quietly on the cot next to his, continuing to look, incredulous. At last I was satisfied that what I saw on his skin was really there and not an illusion, then I made myself comfortable on my cot and began to ponder this thing. I had never seen anything like that back. Not once, on all the thousands and hundreds of thousands of men I had examined in the army had I ever seen a back approaching the like of that one.

Of course it was something that could not be discussed, certainly nothing one man could ask about directly; but if he offered to talk of it freely, of his own accord, it would certainly be interesting.

After the alcohol rub I invited him to have a snack of refreshment. Wrapped in sheets we became better acquainted over a Swiss sandwich and a cup of coffee. We found that, being bookbinders, we had much in common. He was an older man than I by perhaps twenty years and when I told him of having bound an Erotica in the skin of a diamond back rattler, for a customer, he acknowledged it to be both a new and unique idea.

"And rather appropriate," he added, "because it would not have been erotica without having a woman in it for villian, and if a woman is not a rattlesnake, I'd have you tell me just what she is."

I agreed with him. At least I let him think I did. His almost violent dislike of women intrigued me and I wanted his explanation of why he felt as he did. But more than that, I wanted the story I was sure was connected with his back. So I sat there, expounding largely on all the strange behavior of women which I had observed in my medical practice; called them traitors; cited history to prove them scheming, devious and cruel.

All the while I was talking thus I was glad I was in the bathhouse instead of my own home, where my wife might hear me. Of course she would have known I was just egging him on but she never did like it if I gave my opinion of her sisters.

It all ended by his inviting me to visit him the next time I was in Boston. The address he gave was in the Back Bay section. I told him I expected to visit his city soon and he replied that the sooner the better pleased he would be; and added with a sly wink:

"Do you suppose you could bring some rattlesnake skins?"

THREE weeks later I sat in his library. It was an aristocrat's room done in natural burled walnut panels between wide and well-filled glass-enclosed bookcases

which were built into the wall. The ceiling was of the same wood, carved in squares and supported by rough-hewn beams. Two large windows looked out across Boylston Street to the beautiful public gardens, which were colorful with fall foliage. At one end of the room was a great fireplace of Redstone granite facing flanked on either side by deep, restful leather upholstered chairs. Before this fireplace was a table set for supper.

"I thought you might enjoy a quiet evening here," my host remarked. "Besides, Ling, my Chinese boy, is a fine cook. I like the Chinese for many reasons, but chief of all possible reasons is the fact that they, as a nation as well as individuals, despise women."

The supper served by the quiet Chinese boy was excellent indeed; the wine of exquisite bouquet and the tobacco smooth and mild. By the time supper was over we were rather mellow and confidential.

I ventured to recall his great obsession by remarking, quite casually:

"Neither do I like women!"

"Are you married?" he asked.

"Yes," I admitted with a wry twist to my lips to prevent the smile I could hardly resist.

"Too bad! You ought to really know about them. They certainly outdo themselves to make a fool of a man. I was in love once, just once though, but the woman nearly killed me— After that lesson—no more women." He was becoming vocally reminiscent. "Is your wife sadistic? Has she ever tried to kill you?"

"Not yet. Of course she has told me several times what she thinks of me and men in general. But one can never be too sure of the female of the species, you know."

"Better be careful. She may poison you some day," he warned.

"Gracious! I hope not."

"So do I. But be on your guard. I'm naturally suspicious of all these she-devils and that's why I'm alive today—and the other poor trusting fellows dead."

"Some of them died?"

"Yes. Twenty-five of them. Some of them my best friends. Of course there were a few I was not acquainted with, really well, but all were nice boys."

"Was it during the war? Spies?" I queried. I wanted to get him started on that story of his back, and was sure he would tell it if it were properly led up to.

"It was a war; a sure enough war, but terribly one-sided. Men have no show when a woman, especially an unscrupulous one, gets after them."

"Women are clever," I admitted.

"This one was, and beautiful. Just about as wonderful a female as the Devil ever made."

"Genesis states that she was made by another Deity."

"Wrong!" he cried. "Man, perhaps, was made in the Garden, but the woman was made below and crawled over the fence in the dark of the moon. Poor Adam! If he had only had enough sense to hit her on the head with a big stone, and continued the race with some form of parthenogenesis, what a beautiful world it would have been."

"Let's toast these brave men who have, for all these centuries, fought so valiantly against so wily a foe," I suggested.

We drained our glasses.

"Now tell me the story," I urged.

"It was some forty years ago when it started," he began. "You were probably in high school at the time. Some of us in the trade thought of organizing an international association of bookbinders. There were twenty-six of us, all wealthy, young, and enthusiastic over fine books and their covers. The world was our market and playground where we spent countless happy hours digging in musty book piles and museums as children dig in the beach

sand. We were all single, except for the wedding with our art. We held meetings once a year, each in a different country, where we read papers, exhibited specimens and discussed all phases of the work and our discoveries. One week in every fifty-two, spent in goodfellowship, clean, wholesome, profitable pleasure. For four years we carried on the meetings—then a woman applied for membership.

"It was at the London meeting. She came well introduced—it seemed impossible to justify a denial of the privilege for her to attend the meetings of the Society. As a founder of the organization I was able to prevent her being elected to membership, even though some of the younger fellows thought I was wrong. They argued that so long as she was a bookbinder she should be permitted to join; there was nothing in the laws to prevent a woman from becoming a member. I tried to amend the bylaws, but I was outvoted. So—there she was—a member.

"She turned up at Paris the next year with a lengthy paper all ready to read. I guess she knew how to bind a book. In fact I was much later to know that she knew how, but some of the statements made in that paper were all but, if not wholly impossible, and proved her to be a rank amateur. She was not the person to belong to our group of specialists.

"In the open discussion following the reading of her paper we told her so. Man after man rose and explained to her exactly how much in error she was on this point and that. She waited till we were through with our criticisms and then she said emphatically that she knew she was right because she owned an Encyclopædia Brittanica, twenty-six volumes of it, and every statement she had made was in those twenty-six books; that we could discover for ourselves, if we would only trouble to do so. We laughed at the idea that a person could learn to bind a book, especially a fine, rare one, by reading the Brittanica. Finally we became silly about it and passed from simple laughter to masculine hee-hawing and lastly we were sarcastic.

"She sat stiffly, first flushed and then dead white. At last, rising, she said she would see us later on and walked unsteadily from the room. Some of the men realized then they had behaved harshly and most unmannerly to a beautiful and earnest woman and tried to make amends.

"The next meeting was at Chicago. She failed to attend. Ten of our younger members likewise were absent. Just sixteen of us were present. We were disturbed, in a way, for always the response had been unanimous—and now so many absent without any explanation. At San Francisco, the following year, there were only six of us and we were frankly astonished and discussed disbanding. But I pleaded for unity and a continuance—for another year, at least.

"Not one of the old crowd appeared at the meeting in my home in Boston. Not one! I decided they were all either married, dead or fed up on the idea of an international association—or perhaps they were too busy—but why not some word from some of them, especially those whom I had called friend?"

MY HOST paused long enough to replenish the glasses and I found I had been sitting rigidly, intent, as the story flowed from his lips.

"I was worried," he resumed, "and decided to spend a few months and a bit of money seeking some of them out and try to discover the reason of the breaking up of our group. Investigation showed they had all followed the same pattern of behavior; all had done the same thing. One by one they had gone to Spain and there all trace of them vanished. It all seemed very queer.

"I was all the more mystified when

I returned to Boston and found a letter, in a feminine hand, from Spain.

"It was an invitation from the Lady Leonora Sonada to visit her. The reasons she gave were not too clear; merely that she was lonely and was desirous of my advice regarding some difficulty in her work. Would I please come if expenses and other financial matters were attended to?

"Perhaps I was tired and distressed, anyway my mind was not working very fast. However, at last I identified her. She was the bookbinder who had read such a foolish paper at the Paris meeting. But Spain? Spain? Why all the rest of the boys had gone to Spain! And now I was being invited there! Why? And where were the other twenty-five? Spain!

"However, I went. With my fingers crossed and knowing I was doing something foolish, I went to Spain. Not until I met her in her castle did I realize why I had gone. Once I saw her I knew. I was in love with her; realized I had been in love with her from the first time I had seen her.

"Oh! Of course I was a fool, but I was younger then, and she was exquisitely beautiful and dainty as an elf.

"She entertained me delightfully. She sang like a lark and knew how to bedevil a man. We were very much alone; there seemed to be no servants—they must have been extraordinarily well trained—for surely there must have been some serving folk—but I never remember seeing any from the first day after I drove my car into the courtyard of her castle to the day I drove out, we were alone; and as I remarked, she was very lovely and enticing.

"I cannot tell you what we talked about—but it must have been all of romance, because you see, I was in love and I remember distinctly, of telling her so. We swam in the cool, blue lagoon under the palms, both in the warm sunlight and the soft sense-murdering light of the moon. And, lying on the white sands, her fragrant, tempting self close to me, I forgot my hatred of women: I thought no more of the mystery of the twenty-five bookbinders. All I could think of was that she was delectable and desirable; that I was young and in love.

"One night she was especially beautiful in a soft, misty gown which clung to her, revealingly, so that I was half mad with desire to crush her to me, never to let her go from my arms. She was particularly nice to me—even yet I can't remain calm as I remember—for she was sly and full of evil plotting even as she accepted my caresses—and we drank deeply of that rare old Spanish wine.

"AT JUST what point I fell asleep I don't, of course, know, but when I woke I realized I had been drugged. My head was nearly splitting with pain and I found myself, face downward, spread-eagled, tied hand and foot to the four corners of one of her huge Spanish beds.

"And she sat there beside the bed, waiting for me to waken, still in that transparent gown intensifying her ravishing beauty—waiting for me to waken so that she might further torment me and talk to me. I didn't say anything, but I did a lot of thinking, especially about those other twenty-five bookbinders.

"It did not take her long to tell the story. It seems that after the Paris meeting she had become dissatisfied with her Britannica—not with the pages, but the bindings, which she decided to change. So one at a time, she had invited the members of the association to visit her, those men who had laughed at her. One at a time she had driven them insane with her beauty and wiles. I well knew her ability. And one at a time she had drugged them and tied them, as she had me. Then on their backs she had tattoed, in purple ink, the words:

ENCYCLOPÆDIA
BRITTANICA
VOL. I

or two or three or ten as the case might be. Careful lest she damage the skin she removed the derma as a pelt from an animal, tanned it and bound her volumes, one man's skin for each binding. And I was to serve as leather for the last one, Volume Twenty-six.

SHIVERING, I laughed hollowly, at my host. I had suspected all the time and now I knew that he was either insane or the greatest liar of all time.

"But the thing is impossible!" I cried. "You cannot take enough skin off a man's back to bind a Brittanica without killing him!"

"Who said she didn't kill them?" he retorted savagely. "Of course she killed them, and buried them. I saw the graveyard—with a name on the marker at the head of each grave. Perhaps you do not believe me? It is all true. She told me about it and then started to work on me. You saw my back in the bathhouse. She finished the title part—of the last job. Do you want to see it in good light?"

"No. No, thanks," I hastened to disavow any desire for further investigation and ashamed of my suspicions. "I saw your back. The words ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITTANICA VOL. 26, are there in purple ink and properly spaced so if you were skinned it would serve for a binding. But you know it really did not happen—not the way you tell it. Such things don't occur these days!"

"I'll show you the books!" he exclaimed, and flung open a bookcase. "There they are."

I rose to examine them—all the titles in purple ink. I took one in my hand, felt of its smooth leather.

"I agree I never saw leather like that before," I murmured.

"Probably not, since it is made from human skin. Well, there in that case is all that is left of twenty-five friends."

"It's a nice story," I said. "A nice, gentle, bedtime story, but incomplete. You say twenty-five of your friends died. You were prepared for the last volume; your back shows that. Yet there is volume twenty-six, all bound like the rest. How about that?"

"Look at it again," he urged.

I picked it out and carefully examined it.

"It is different," I cried incredulously. "It looks like the others but the leather is finer, softer, of a different grain."

"Certainly. It should be," he admitted, "for that last book is bound with female skin. That is all that is left of the seductive Lady Leonora Sonada."

"No! You don't mean—"

"Just that. She thought she was clever, but I outwitted her. She was very sure of herself. In an unguarded moment she lay the scalpel too close to my fingers—I used it to turn the tables on her. I bound that last volume with her skin. Now I have all the society together."

Gingerly I replaced Volume Twenty-six.

There was a definite discomfort at the pit of my stomach.

"And that is why you hate women with the vengeance you do?" I asked.

"That's why," he laughed coldly—so coldly that I shook as with an ague. "Whenever I feel there is a woman becoming interested in me I come in here and look at my ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITTANICA in Deluxe bindings."

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