

Science Fiction Series

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THE BRAIN OF THE PLANET

BY

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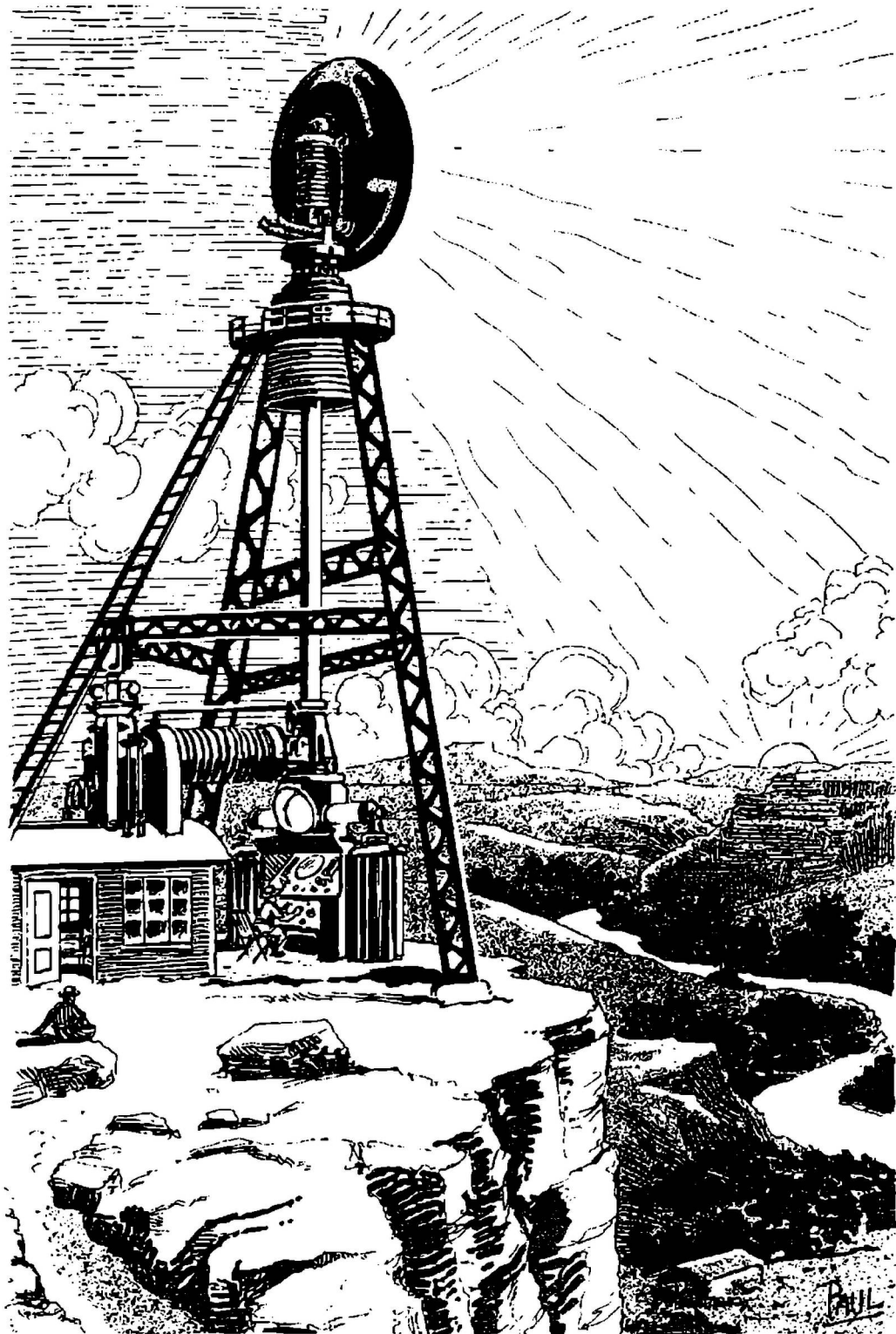


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The polished metal monster was squatting on the edge of the precipice, catching the rays of the sun and sending them flashing across the valley

The Brain of the Planet

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CHAPTER I

A Lecture on Telepathy



It all began back in 1935 when the secretary of the Arizona Institute of Applied Psychology submitted his report on some recent experiments in thought transference. The chairman accepted the bulky documents handed him by the spectacled young man and rose from his chair pompously.

"We have here, ladies and gentlemen," he began, "the net results of our investigations, covering a period of some six months. These experiments have been conducted fairly, painstakingly, scientifically, and with all due allowance for the law of averages. They have been carried out exactly like an experiment in chemistry or mechanics, for every psychologist knows that the human brain is only a machine. We have selected subjects from every walk of life and of all degrees of culture and education. Kings of finance and children of the slums, leaders of the social whirl and outcasts of the underworld; all have been brought as grist to our mill—flattered by our interest in their petty, personal selves and lured by the ancient lust of curiosity. In every age the time-worn platitude holds good that the most fascinating study of mankind is man.

"At last we are prepared to submit a report from the indisputable evidence of thousands of experiments. Each one has been submitted to the most stringent test conditions. Each one has been safeguarded with unwavering vigilance against fraud and that which is even subtler; the tendency of human nature to deceive itself, to believe what it wants to believe. Not only have our methods won the endorsement of the rankest materialists, but our conclusions have been accepted by them; and today we are pre-

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pared to state without equivocation that—telepathy is *a fact*. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, communication between mind and mind can be established just as surely as communication by telephone or radio.

"But, my friends, though this is true, we must not permit ourselves to become over-enthusiastic about it. We state conservatively that telepathy is possible and that the laws governing it have been discovered. Nevertheless, the conditions under which it operates are so difficult to create that the possibility of utilizing our discovery with benefit to man is exceedingly remote.

"These conditions, or more correctly speaking, the one paramount condition that must be fulfilled if telepathy is to be established, is the *attuning* of the communicating minds to each other. But, you will say, there is nothing remarkable about that. No form of communication can occur unless the communicating instruments are in tune with each other. And what is the human brain but an instrument?

"True, indeed, but there is a difference. Man-made instruments of communication are built from the ground up, to serve the pre-conceived purpose of the builder. Human brains come to us second-hand, constructed by the twin forces of heredity and environment to serve some inscrutable purpose of Nature. This purpose, whether we care to admit it or not, may be entirely at variance with our own designs. These second-hand machines have a tendency to revolve in closed circuits, fiercely protective of the individuality of the minds that controls them. They build impregnable ramparts of complexes, prejudices and crystallized ideas which serve as barriers against attunement with other mental instruments save through the faulty and cumbersome channels of the objective senses."

Here the speaker was interrupted by a question from the spectacled young professor of psychology who served as secretary.

"Will you kindly tell me," asked this eccentric-looking individual, "by what theory you account for this seemingly senseless struggle on the part of the human instincts to prevent mental

communication? It seems that even in fulfilling the inscrutable designs of nature the co-operation and time-saving efficiency of thought-transference would be a coveted gain."

"It would be, indeed," said the Chairman indulgently, "but for one thing and that happens to be the law of polarity. Every electron, every atom, every entity in the Universe is either positive or negative in its relation to every other electron, atom, or entity. Likewise every individual brain-entity is positive or negative in relation to every other brain-entity. A positive brain can only *transmit* in relation to a negative brain and a negative brain can only *receive*. The negative brain, in turn, however, may become the *sender* to a brain to which it may become positive. If you will give the matter a moment's thought, my dear professor," continued the Chairman with a fatherly air, "you will realize that the positive minds of the planet have already wrought irreparable havoc among men by influencing their actions through the open channels of the senses. Why invite further disaster by giving them access to the plastic substance of the brain?"

The secretary was not yet convinced. "The positive minds have done harm to humanity," he objected, "only because economic conditions under the competitive system are such that it *pays* far more to use a positive will to exploit our fellows than it does to use that will for the common good. There is a premium on dishonesty, and virtue is the only reward that virtue gets. Granted a system wherein all possibility of exploitation is removed, granted that the only thing that *pays* under such a system is service to the state; then, might not the positive minds of the race, aflame with . . ."

The Chairman's patience was exhausted. It was evident that this well-fed individual had no sympathy with radicalism.

"Aflame with nonsense!" he interrupted. "Your socialism is all very well; its efficiency is perfect, its logic is incontestable, its ethics are Christ-like; but how are you going to create a *demand* for it? How are you going to prepare human minds to receive it? If they could all wake up some fine morning and find

themselves enjoying the privileges of your Utopia they might decide to perpetuate your theories. But mark my words, young man—" here he waxed poetic—"that which is content to grovel in the mire can know nothing of the glory and beauty of the stars. Man must desire the new, before he is willing to destroy the old. He must desire it with an all-consuming ardor that literally burns away his ape-like terror of a change. How can he desire what he has never tasted, what he has never even glimpsed? The masses do not desire culture, beauty, leisure, for the very simple reason that they have never had these things. The only way to create this desire is to force your Socialism on them till it becomes a habit. At first they will rebel as strenuously as a child of the slums rebels against a tooth-brush. But after socialism becomes a habit, *try* to take it away from them. But where, my friend, are the capitalistic altruists who are going to force socialism down their throats?"

At this the audience gave vent to unrestrained laughter, but the young secretary instead of being chagrined simply dropped into deep reflection. When he left the hall after listening abstractedly to the reading of the endless reports, there was a spring in his step and a dream in his eyes. All the way home he kept muttering to himself as though repeating a magic formula—"Force it down their throats till it becomes a habit, then *try* to take it from them."

They Go to Work

ABOUT three months following the foregoing events on a sweltering day in August, two men climbed wearily up a narrow mountain trail in the state of Coahuila, Mexico. Behind them trudged four tired burros, heavily laden, and urged on by two equally exhausted peons. At last the perspiring caravan reached the summit and the two men ahead looked down upon the peaceful scene below, and mopped their brows vigorously.

With one of these strangers the reader is already acquainted; he is the young psychology professor with spectacles and—a dream.

His companion, Jerry Brand—blonde, robust, handsome—bore all the earmarks of an intelligent young mechanic and such, indeed, he was. Notwithstanding his humble calling, something of the pioneer and of the dreamer must have been woven into his fabric. Otherwise he would not have been here on a mission of whose real purpose he knew nothing save that it took him over unknown trails and was flavored with the spice of danger.

He now addressed his employer, Harry Maxwell, erstwhile professor of psychology at the University of Arizona and Secretary of the Arizona Institute of Applied Psychology.

"By the way, Harry, old boy, did you get that permit?"

"Yes, I have it in my pocket, which means that we can proceed with our plans at once with the full consent of the government."

"What did you tell the Governor that you were going to do?"

"I told him I wanted to erect a broadcasting station to test out some new discoveries."

Brand whistled.

"Yes? Well, if it wouldn't be asking too much, now that we've reached the end of the trail—what *are* you going to do?"

"Exactly what I told the Governor, erect a broadcasting station to test out some new discoveries."

"What kind of broadcasting station?"

The professor smiled queerly.

"The Governor didn't ask me that," he answered quietly.

"But I do," persisted the young mechanic. "I've got enough sense to know that you wouldn't throw up a good job and drag another man with you into the wilds of Mexico simply to build a broadcasting station. Besides radio isn't your line—though I have heard that you're a sort of inventor on the side."

"You begin to exhibit signs of that divine curiosity which precedes the dawn of intelligence," said the professor jovially. "Well, since you've been so patient up to now, you might as well know all about it. But don't forget your contract, that you're willing to try anything once."

"Shoot," said Jerry laconically.

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"What you are going to install under my instructions is a broadcasting station, but it is *more* than that. It is the brain of the planet."

"The planet will be needing a brain if everybody gets as loco as you are," remarked Jerry, but he still showed a willingness to listen.

"You are right about the planet needing a brain, my boy," went on the professor seriously, taking no heed of his friend's sarcasm. "It needs a centralized intelligence to direct the rudimentary ganglionic centers that pass for the brains of human beings. It needs a centralized control just as the body needs a centralized control. It needs a super-will that can impose its mandates upon the lesser lives that unite to form that Greater Life—Society—and unite the warring individual wills in service to the whole.

"Let me make myself clear by telling you something of the evolution of the brain," the professor went on warming up to his subject. "As you doubtless know, the great pre-historic animals, the monarchs of the ancient world, could hardly be said to have a central brain at all. What they did have was a number of small brains distributed throughout the body at strategic points where they were needed for the control of local functions. True, there was an embryonic brain in their small heads but it was only the germ of what the brain has evolved into today. It was relatively insignificant in comparison with other centers exercising cerebral functions. Why one of these cumbersome creatures could have been killed—struck in a vital spot—and yet could have turned and slain the slayer, simply because the poor fool didn't know it was dead."

"Of all the unutterable nonsense—" began Jerry.

"Just wait till I finish," interrupted the imperturbable professor. "I repeat that a prehistoric monster after being *technically* dead might have turned and annihilated his enemy. You can readily understand how this could have come about when you consider the gigantic bulk of these creatures, the slowness of their reflexes and the absence of a well-developed central control to co-ordinate their responses and to receive and register outside stimuli."

CHAPTER II

The Secret Revealed

"**I** GET you," replied Jerry, "You're not half so crazy as you look. But go on. What's all this got to do with the brain of the planet?"

"Everything," answered the professor. "What I told you was more than an example, it was an exact analogy."

"You mean that the world is like the monster that had a lot of brains, but no real intelligence. You mean that we might all be dead and don't know it?"

"You have the general idea," he replied, "although you're getting ahead of the story. What I do mean is that through lack of a super-brain, the disconnected and crystallized brains of individuals are perpetrating fossilized and primitive institutions long after these institutions have outlived their usefulness. Mechanically we surpass the very gods, in our control of natural forces, but our capacity to think, logically and without prejudice in regard to religion, morals and government is comparable to that of a twelve-year-old child. In our thinking we have followed the path of least resistance, finding it easier to pay others to think for us than to do our own reasoning. As a result we are enslaved by a mass psychology dictated by a few positive and unscrupulous minds, who are actually laughing up their sleeves at our stupidity.

"We accept our morals ready-made from these positive minds who would not think for a moment of practicing the restrictions they dictate for their inferiors, knowing full well that the masters of the planet have always dwelt beyond the law. These precepts come down to us with the sanction of tradition, and are embodied in cant phrases which we repeat like parrots, fondly imagining them to have originated in our own intelligence. According to the law of suggestion, well known to our mental masters, the ceaseless repetition of a thing finally engraves itself on the plastic substance of the brain, and all our thoughts must necessarily re-

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volve around those fixed ideas, which usurp the throne of reason and dictate all our actions.

"It has become a crime to give birth to an original idea and we are becoming increasingly intolerant, as the events of the last few years testify. Many hate-inspired factions have reverted to the superstitions of our ancestors and we stand face to face with another inquisition. The Masters of the Machines, as we have begun to call those who control the means of production and distribution, have sent agents into every land who, with clever appeals to the lower emotions, have justified the continuance of the animal instincts for murder, jealousy and fanaticism, by clothing them in the garb of patriotism, honor and religion. Festering and puritanical inhibitions are garbed in the robes of virtue; and secret vices, born of the repression of man's normal functions, leer and chatter in the twilight of civilization.

"We cower in terror at the utterance of any word that they have bid us fear, no matter how noble an idea it may represent; and we wage wars of personal profit for the Masters of the Machines. The only thing that has saved the race so far is that these selfish leaders, through their very selfishness resulting in conflicting individual goals, have been unable to unite their forces in one grand campaign for the enslavement of humanity. But notwithstanding, humanity has reached the end of its rope. It is divided into innumerable factions each rallying around the leader capable of making the strongest appeal to the most deep-seated prejudice of his respective faction. Today, as you well know, these factions are at each other's throats and no one knows how soon the storm will break."

Jerry yawned, "I've heard all this before," he said wearily, "and, of course, it's more or less true, but what are you going to do about it?"

"We are going to install the brain of the planet—the Super-brain. We are going to create a central governing control that will be more powerful and therefore have a potential positive to every mind on earth. It will be the greater Intelligence around

which all lesser intelligencies will revolve as the planets revolve around the sun. The idea came to me that if human minds can be swayed by evil wills that work *against* human progress, why can they not be swayed by a beneficent will that works *for* human progress? And the beneficent will will have this stupendous advantage, it will not be divided against itself."

"But," objected Jerry, "In either case, whether man is controlled by many evil wills or by one good will, it amounts to the same thing, that freedom of choice will be destroyed, that man will not be permitted to think for himself."

The professor looked at his companion with a new respect and answered with a perceptible warmth of comradeship.

"I have thought long and earnestly over just that point, and this is my conclusion. It is true that free will is the most precious heritage of the race. It is true that anything which endangers man's right to formulate and act upon his own decisions, will destroy that which is man's essential essence—his manhood. Yet you must admit that mankind is face to face with that very calamity now. We have become a race of automatons who have sold our birthright for the crumbs of material comfort that fall from the masters' tables. Yet, as you say, if all this were changed and a beneficent autocrat were substituted for the Masters of the Machines, the same result would ultimately ensue—decline. History bears this out; but I have a solution.

Jerry Is Convinced

"**L**ISTEN carefully," he said, peering into Jerry's face. "If you had a child, would you permit him to exercise his free will without restraint?"

"Why of course not," Jerry smiled, "that goes without saying."

"Would the temporary restrain that you impose upon him, provided it were exercised in such a way as not to break his will, in any way detract from his self-respect and his ability to exercise his power of choice on reaching manhood?"

"Of course not."

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"In other words," the professor concluded, "you would not hesitate to impose a temporary restraint on the free will of your child, until he became capable of exercising mature judgment. You would not even hesitate to use mental influence to mould his plastic mind and to foster in his soul a desire for those material and spiritual things which are the heritage of every man?"

"Certainly," yawned Jerry lapsing back into boredom.

"Well, that is exactly what the brain of the planet will do for humanity. Like a great broadcasting station it will hurl into the world thought vibrations which will be indelibly imprinted on every brain as its own ideas. No brain on earth will be immune from this bombardment of ideas, because my machine has given me control of the mental essence of the planet, that etheric *substance* which as psychologists have recently discovered, penetrates all individual minds and in which individualized minds may be said to float like bubbles on the ocean. Only by gaining control of this all-permeating essence, hitherto a sluggish Sargasso sea, becalming our brain-ships in the sea-weeds of tradition and in the octopus tentacles of mass psychology, could I hope to accomplish my purpose, but I've invented an instrument made of a metal, which is my own discovery. With this machine I can literally dynamite this Sargasso sea of mental stagnation, turn its currents in the *direction* of evolution and open pathways of new ideas into the limitless ocean of thought that stretches shoreless into Omnipotence. As a result of this bombardment, humanity *en masse* will first reject the false system under which it is living, and secondly it will become inspired with such a fervent desire for better things, that each man in proportion to his own potentialities will joyfully co-operate with his fellowmen in the materialization of the universal dream.

"The machine will make no attempt to dictate the manner in which the change shall come nor the innumerable details to be worked out in the reconstruction of society. All that the mass mind needs for its salvation is the breaking of its crystallization, and a vision of perfection. Man is just as capable of achieving

that vision, once liberated from the shackles of fear and superstition, as he was capable of achieving mechanical perfection.

"The positive minds will doubtless remain positive still, in relation to negative intellects, but their positive energy will be turned in another direction. Around these positive wills, there will rally their former followers fired by their zeal and saved from disaster by the executive ability of their leaders."

"Your logic is incontestable," mused Jerry, "but where is this brain of the planet?"

"In my mind," said the professor, "but in a few years with your assistance, it will be in operation. Back of that brain will be a mind—the mind of the operator—my mind. I shall record upon it those general ideas which humanity will receive and act upon. Unlike the world's present mental masters, many of whom have been slain by the hatred of lesser minds, I will be doubly immune from the reaction. First, I shall be protected by the fact that the world is ignorant of my operations and secondly, by barriers of iron and steel, for between the action and the re-action I have interposed—a machine."

Jerry was only half convinced.

"Are you sure this contraption will work?" he questioned.

"Its principle has been adequately tested. Yes," repeated the professor, "I am sure."

"If it does, you're taking a tremendous responsibility."

"Yes," answered the professor as he straightened up. And in this moment there was a grandeur about him that transfigured even his lanky awkwardness as he stood there silhouetted against the deepening night.

"He who died upon the cross," he said simply, "also took a great responsibility."

Both men fell strangely silent as the swift tropical night leaped through the sunset like a great beast and swallowed the earth in one gulp.

Far below in the valley lay the ancient city of Saltillo, by day a typical Mexican capital with all its startling contrasts of luxury

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and filth; by night a jewel of many facets flashing on the bosom of the vibrant dusk.

The two men stood for a moment drinking in beauty as in great draughts and then the desire for slumber claimed them. Even those who are to change the course of destiny tomorrow must sleep—tonight.

But the unsleeping stars shone on, over a world that lay gasping in the tentacles of materialism—over a race that was groping like a child in the night crying aloud for a Savior. Impotently man beat his hands against the gates of heaven crying, "How long, oh Lord, how long?" The stars flung back no answer, for is it not written that in the soul of man itself is contained the solution to all man's problems? Meanwhile the hour awaited the man.

CHAPTER III Confusion in the World

THREE years later the strangers had installed their broadcasting station. Weary goatherds, guarding their flocks on the sparsely-vegetated slopes below them, were startled at first by a low, humming sound. Later they became accustomed to it. Some one told them that it was just two more crazy Americans fooling with Satan's latest device, the radio. A polished metal monster might have been seen squatting on the edge of a certain precipice, a machine made of a metal so brilliant that it caught the rays of the sun and sent them flashing across the valley in streamers of light. But the novelty soon wore off after several visitors to the "gringo" camp had reported that it was simply a new-fangled broadcasting station which they had been courteously shown without any attempt at concealment. The strangers had learned the art of talking much and saying nothing, for silence always breeds resentment.

The gringos, however, seemed to be having ill luck with their project, as no messages were ever picked up from station O.H.M.—as it was called in the permit.

After months of testing accompanied always by the low humming sound, the hum gave way to an eerie low-pitched note incessantly repeated. Days on end the professor sat at the switch before the instrument gazing intently at a glass-like disk that finally began to glow as with a milky radiance. This eventually gave place to a rosy luminescence and the disk took the appearance of a gigantic opal. When this rosy color became fixed the professor rose from his camp-stool, closed the aperture through which he had been gazing, and turned to his companion, who had been sitting on a flat rock, regarding the whole proceeding with rapt attention.

"The thought is stamped upon the super-brain," said the professor in a solemn voice. "Look!" He pointed to the valley.

Flashing across it were no longer the sun rays caught and reflected by the gleaming metal but darting lightning shapes of rosy light.

"Why the color?" asked the astonished mechanic.

"Thoughts are things," replied the professor, "and may be seen if sufficiently concentrated. Being things, each thought has its distinctive color. Those rosy rays, that dart through the valleys and penetrate the uttermost ends of the earth, are of the color of love—love that shall transfigure the earth with its glory."

From then on things began to happen in the world below. The men on the mountain top kept in touch with these events by radio and increased or decreased the intensity of the thought-vibrations as conditions seemed to warrant.

The first reports that came in were of a strange epidemic—a sort of wave of insanity—that seemed to take two contrary forms, both fatal. People of known radical tendencies became fanatical over-night and in their zeal to force their theories into immediate practice, went raving mad and died. Hard conservatives—well known for their unswerving devotion to the creed of Mammon—perished by thousands from the curse of a different malady. This disease seemed to resolve itself into an intense mental conflict between their former ideas and new ideas, absolutely con-

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trary, that seemed suddenly to obsess them. Their cerebral functions were disorganized and finally shattered by this war of ideas, and they died cursing themselves as madmen. Doctors wrote learned treatises on multiple personalities and spiritualists spoke to packed houses on the subject of obsession.

The man on the mountain top looked grave as the death roll grew.

"Their minds cannot adjust themselves," he sighed. "The radical theorists have no safety-valve through which to expend their energies wisely. They lack firm foundation of mental poise and of scientific and material training which would enable them to expend their energies conservatively. The money-grabbers are fighting against their better natures hitherto smothered under their hard doctrine of 'every man for himself.' The struggle has shattered their intellects, for the light is greater than they can bear. They have seen themselves in the mirror of spiritual awakening, they have gazed upon that ugliness which drives men mad.

"Out of the struggle will emerge triumphant three great factions: the unfortunate masses whose thinking processes have been temporarily perverted by mass psychology, but whose souls hunger for better things; the conservative reformers who have never been deceived but who have been silenced by the Great Persecution, and a great percentage of those who exercise real material power, who at heart were sick of the whole system but who had become slaves themselves to the very system by which they had enslaved the masses."

A New World

THINGS came to pass with unerring accuracy just as the professor had predicted. The epidemic died down but in its wake came reforms that were conceived and consummated with such lightning swiftness that the mind could hardly adjust itself to the change.

All the mighty energies of man's superhuman machinery were enlisted on the side of human progress. Strange and powerful

new inventions were launched and welcomed—inventions that overnight practically lifted from the race the ancient curse of toil. The germs of these inventions had long slumbered in the minds of geniuses, but they were hindered from perfecting them because no capitalist would dare employ a labor saving device that would throw millions out of employment at once, and hence precipitate a revolution. With the devil's own arithmetic they had carefully computed—these Masters of the Machines—just how many hundred of thousands could safely remain on the verge of starvation without stirring up appreciable discontent. No one cared to be the one to furnish the last straw to break the camel's back. It never occurred to them to reduce the hours of labor for *all* as each new invention was perfected. That would be Socialism, and Socialism was one of the bogie-words from which men fled in terror. But now the bogies of mass psychology were dissipated by the clear sunlight of spiritual insight. The capitalistic system crumbled on its rotten foundations and with it crumbled national boundaries and the old superstitious religions, those animated corpses whose skeleton fingers pointed to paradise beyond, and lulled men into an opium dream of future glory to compensate them for poverty and inequality here. Whatever spiritual light had ever burned upon the altars of men's creeds had long since been smothered by the iron hand of Mammon, for only those who were willing to sell their small souls for the flesh-pots of Egypt were permitted to pose as the spiritual leaders of men. The last Christ had been crucified upon the altar of greed, and flesh could no longer endure the rigors of the Great Persecution.

It came about that the World-State was ushered in, just as the professor had predicted, by the very ones who had formerly opposed it—the Lords of the Machines. Those who, through long experience in power, had learned to use that power judiciously became the initiators of the new regime. Mankind was not forced again to witness the spectacle of amateurs in government playing with forces of whose nature they were ignorant.

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Time and time again in the past the nations had exchanged one master for another only to find the new one more ignorant and hence more arrogant than the old.

The Masters of the Machines retained their mastery until a purely natural process deprived them of it. Greater minds even than they—minds which had been formerly suppressed and crowded back—came to the front with greater ideas and, working to the top, peacefully supplanted their former masters by the simple fact of greater efficiency. A strange thing was discovered, namely that those exercising the actual authority were not the real intellects of the race. They were simply those sufficiently selfish to advance their personal interests regardless of consequences to others, and sufficiently intelligent to discover and enlist the services of greater minds in their campaign of self-aggrandizement. The real brains did not exercise power because, through the *breadth* of their intellects, they had glimpsed a higher goal than money-grabbing, and could not, therefore, concentrate their *whole* souls on this end as did the Lords of the Machines. Even a *small* brain with *all* its energies concentrated on *one* object may dominate a greater brain whose energies are scattered. Since material wealth was the standard by which all was measured, it came about that the greater minds were forced to concentrate a great part of their energies on its acquisition. By refusing to concentrate, *all* still pitifully holding to a higher vision became enslaved by those whose concentration was undivided.

Now it was only natural that these really great minds should eventually dominate, once *their* standard became the universal standard. Humanity with every material comfort within the reach of all, with every desert blossoming as the rose, with their giant machines become the slaves of man instead of man being the slaves of the machines—the world found itself with undreamed leisure within its reach. Under the invisible direction of the Super-brain, and under the visible guidance of a real intellectual aristocracy, man began to employ this leisure in the exploration of the realms of mind. The world began to bring its mental evolu-

tion up to the level of its mechanical evolution, and finally to surpass it. Things which were formerly luxuries had become necessities, yet necessities attainable by the pressing of a button. Relieved of the compulsion of expending all their energies in acquiring the *means* to live, humanity began to savor life itself—to probe it to its uttermost and to grasp something of its meaning and its goal. Relieved from physical labor and seeking an outlet for the unbounded energy that comes with perfect health and freedom, men released this energy in the realms of art and scientific research. A golden age began to which the golden ages of the past were but as dark nights of mental obscurity.

The relations between the sexes became perfect, for with both sexual jealousy and economic pressure removed at a single stroke, all marriages were based on real love, on affinity of tastes; and such marriages were, of course, impregnable. Crude and anthropomorphic religion of fear that had been such a potent weapon in the hands of the Machine Kings gave way to a belief in a Supreme Intelligence permeating every soul and intuitively directing all who listened to its guidance. Humanity that through the long, dark ages had sought their god in the uncharted heavens found him at last in the human heart.

Volumes could be written on the reconstruction of society, but we moderns of 1970 have only to look around us to see the result—a perfect race in a perfect world, a race that having overcome the earth, pierces the heavens with an endless arc of light seeking new wrongs to right, new worlds to conquer.

CHAPTER IV

The Professor Retires

MEANWHILE how fared the strangers on the mountain top? For years they lived like hermits, never once descending to the valley below. Their food was brought them by their faithful peons, now peons no longer, but bound to them by chains of roses, the love of man for his brother. With

the radio they kept in touch with the world and, year by year, as the changes multiplied, the original low hum of the machine gave way to a mighty roar as its vibrations were increased and intensified in proportion to man's increasing ability to bear them. In the valley below them the strangers could see the changes actually occurring. As though at the touch of a magic wand, squalor gave way to beauty, and a white-domed city rose in airy splendor under tropic skies. Fertile fields stretched far and wide, where in the old days ragged peons drove their sweating beasts over bare deserts, and graceful white-winged planes from sister-lands skimmed swiftly above the sombre mountains like messengers of peace. Mexico, long-suffering, had come into its own at last. The languorous queen of the Southland smiled in the midst of plenty and her ships sailed every sea laden with the fruits of her tropical gardens.

At last came the day when the inventor looked down from his mountain fastness over a well-nigh perfect world. He was an old man now, a man in whose face shone a light of a strange wisdom. On that day a button was touched and the mighty engine ceased to roar. What mind can conceive the grandeur and the godliness of a soul, that attaining sovereignty over all surrenders it, that manhood may not die.

Strange and terrible things happened for awhile after the great brain was silenced. Old and savage impulses awoke in the night and a phantom army from the channel vaults of superstition beleaguered the white fortress of the new civilization.

But there is a power stronger than the primeval impulses. That is the power of habit. The world had become accustomed to its new institutions. It had become accustomed to leisure, to freedom, to equality of opportunity, even to a universal love of study and investigation. Very soon irrefutable logic convinced it that any catering to selfish and individualistic impulses would destroy the very goal it sought—the happiness of the individual. The human atom had attained a larger life aye, even a more *intensified* individuality, by merging itself into that greater life, the State.

Men were able not only to enjoy a greater degree of individual freedom, but to draw upon the boundless resources of the whole. The realization had at last been born in upon man that no man can be happy while others are miserable. The old fable of the body and its members was told again, how if the members war with the body and destroy it, the members also perish, how if sickness and starvation hinders the functioning of one part, the whole must suffer proportionately.

Finally the sublime significance of the simple fable penetrated the consciousness of the race, with the result that the wave of reaction began to be regarded as a cerebral epidemic. Medical men and psychologists, many of who had read the history of the previous epidemic, came to the aid of the World-State and insisted on the confinement of all who showed signs of atavism, in institutions for the mentally unsound. Finally the crisis passed, human life resumed its course, and man having himself subdued his lower nature forged on to greater conquests.

Then came a day, after long and watchful waiting for the outcome, that the two old men on the mountain-top looked down upon their work and found it good. With one accord they turned to the long silent monster that still squatted on the edge of the precipice. By the concentrated exertion of all their power, against the gigantic bulk, it thundered down into the rocky canyon a thousand feet below. There it lay—the brain of the planet—a twisted tangled mass of copper and steel. But the world no longer needed an artificial brain, for the wisdom born of experience in both good and evil sat enthroned in the temple of reason. The God Within, the true Christ, had come into his kingdom in the heart of man and had put all his enemies under his feet.

When the last reverberation of the great machine impact with the rocks died out in sobbing echoes, like the death-wail of a tortured living thing, the two men clasped hands in unspoken understanding—and parted. One took the path to the city to end his life with his fellows and share the limitless opportunities of a regenerated world, the other took a dim trail that led further into

the mountains where—the Indians said—undying fires still burned upon the altars of the golden gods.

He paused for a moment at the parting of the ways, as the last beams of the setting sun transfigured his features like the halo of a saint. He turned for a moment and extended his arms toward the white-domed city. The perfume from its tropic gardens floated into his dreams like incense ascending to a well-loved deity. He breathed deeply as though in one breath he would draw into his being the essence of the bliss that he had given. Then he turned resolutely down the narrow trail. A deep hush settled over the sombre hills, a reverent hush such as once fell in old cathedrals when men paid homage to the Savior of the World.

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Note by the Writer: It is to be hoped that none of my readers will view this tale in any other light than that of fiction, in spite of the series of queer coincidences that served as its inspiration. Among these coincidences I might mention the well-known fact of Professor Maxwell's disappearance in August, 1935, some four years before the establishment of the World-State. Everybody is of the opinion, however, that he secluded himself from the world because of the persecution to which he was subjected because of his radical ideas. It is also true that a recent exploring party discovered a twisted mass of machinery, whose function could not be deduced, in an isolated canyon in the State of Coahuila. An examination of the official records of that State show that a permit was issued by the Governor in August, 1935, to erect a broadcasting station for experimental purposes. The two Americans who secured this permit must have given false names, as they could not be traced.

Added to all this is the further coincidence that the material on which this story is based was found among the effects of Jerry Brand, a promising young inventor, who disappeared about the same time and reappeared many years later. His friends say that in spite of splendid public recognition of his merits he seemed lonely and strangely restless. He seemed possessed of a belated

desire to find Prof. Maxwell, who, he said, had gone alone into the mountains of Mexico to investigate some old Indian tradition concerning an undying fire. He had a foolish idea, his friends said, that the man was calling him.

Despite all these rather startling coincidences, it is manifestly illogical to give credence to any tale which would attribute to any one intelligence plus a machine, the remarkable changes that began to take place since 1938. These changes were the natural and inevitable outcome of the collapse of an artificial economic system that had exploited its last field and had outlived its usefulness. While it is true that the changes were startling in their rapidity, coupled with a still more unexplainable change in human nature itself, there must be some psychological explanation. There seems to be a growing conviction, however, among brilliant psychologists and scientists that there was something out of the ordinary about the two cerebral epidemics, one of which occurred previous to and the other several years after the founding of the World-State. The latter wave of insanity, while shorter in its duration and less fatal than the preceding one, was a serious menace to the government in that it threatened to cause a reversal to the primitive institutions of 1930. My private opinion, however, is that it was nothing but the last stand of the old savage instincts against the new-born altruism of a liberated humanity. It would be strange, though, if some human instrument of that Divinity whose existence no sane man questions had really snatched us from the edge of the abyss in 1938, while we in our colossal egotism attributed all our achievements to ourselves. Perhaps it is true, after all, that many meet the gods but few salute them.

THE END

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