# GIANT 40TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

# Amazing stories

*First in Science Fiction · Since 1926*

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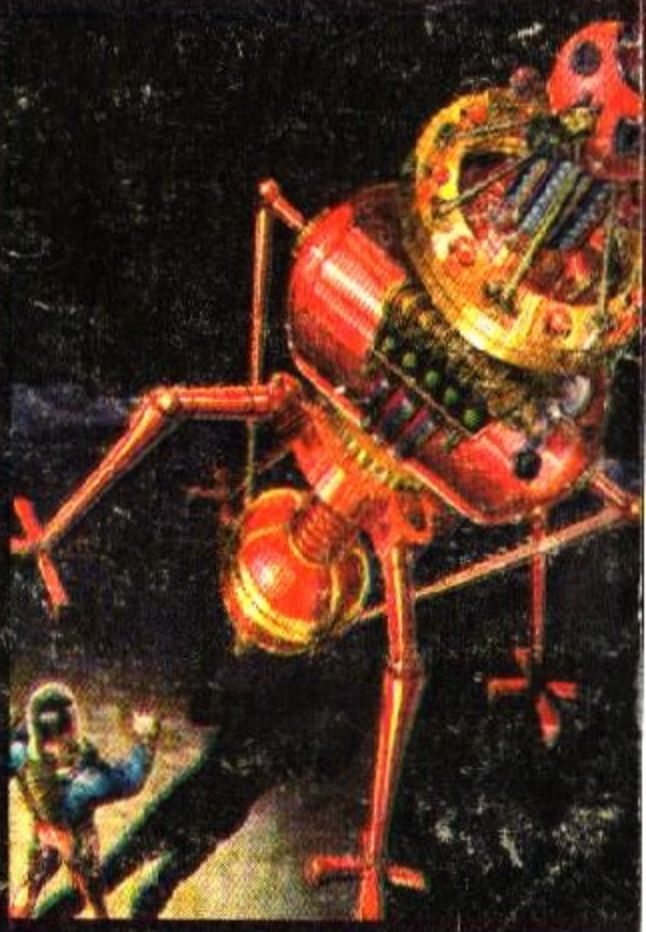
## 8 OF THE GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES EVER WRITTEN

BEAST OF THE ISLAND
**ALEXANDER M. PHILLIPS**

PILGRIMAGE
**NELSON BOND**

THE LAST MAN
**WALLACE WEST**

WHITE COLLARS
**DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.**



THE VOYAGE THAT LASTED 600 YEARS
**DON WILCOX**

THE MAN FROM THE ATOM
(Sequel)
**G. PEYTON WERTENBAKER**

OPERATION R.S.V.P.
**H. BEAM PIPER**

INTELLIGENCE UNDYING
**EDMOND HAMILTON**

First In Science Fiction ● Since 1926

# Amazing stories

April, 1966 Vol. 40, No. 5



**COVER**: A Classic Trio from **Amazing**
Paul (1927), Fuqua (1939), and Wesso (1930)

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## EDITORIAL

*Ideally, of course, this 40th Anniversary number of* Amazing *should have been edited by Hugo Gernsback, who started it all —back in April of 1926—when he brought out the world's first science-fiction magazine. But that wasn't possible, so we've tried to do the next best thing—to keep in mind some of the things he might have done if he were still in this chair.*

*For one thing, we're pretty sure that the man who gave us that first big* Annual *(in 1927)—and, later on, the large-size quarterlies —would approve of the giant-size 192-page issue you're now holding. The same for the original artwork we've reproduced for all the stories in this issue—to give you some idea of the changing styles in s-f art over the past four decades. And since he had a special fondness for Paul—the man as well as the artist—we're certain he'd like the special feature on the greatest s-f artist of them all.*

*As for the stories themselves—the main reason for* Amazing's *continuous publication during the past forty years—we know we'd have his critical nod—because all eight of them, no matter when they were written, pass the basic test for quality fiction: they were entertaining then, they're entertaining now, and—when you reread this issue years from now—they'll be entertaining tomorrow.*

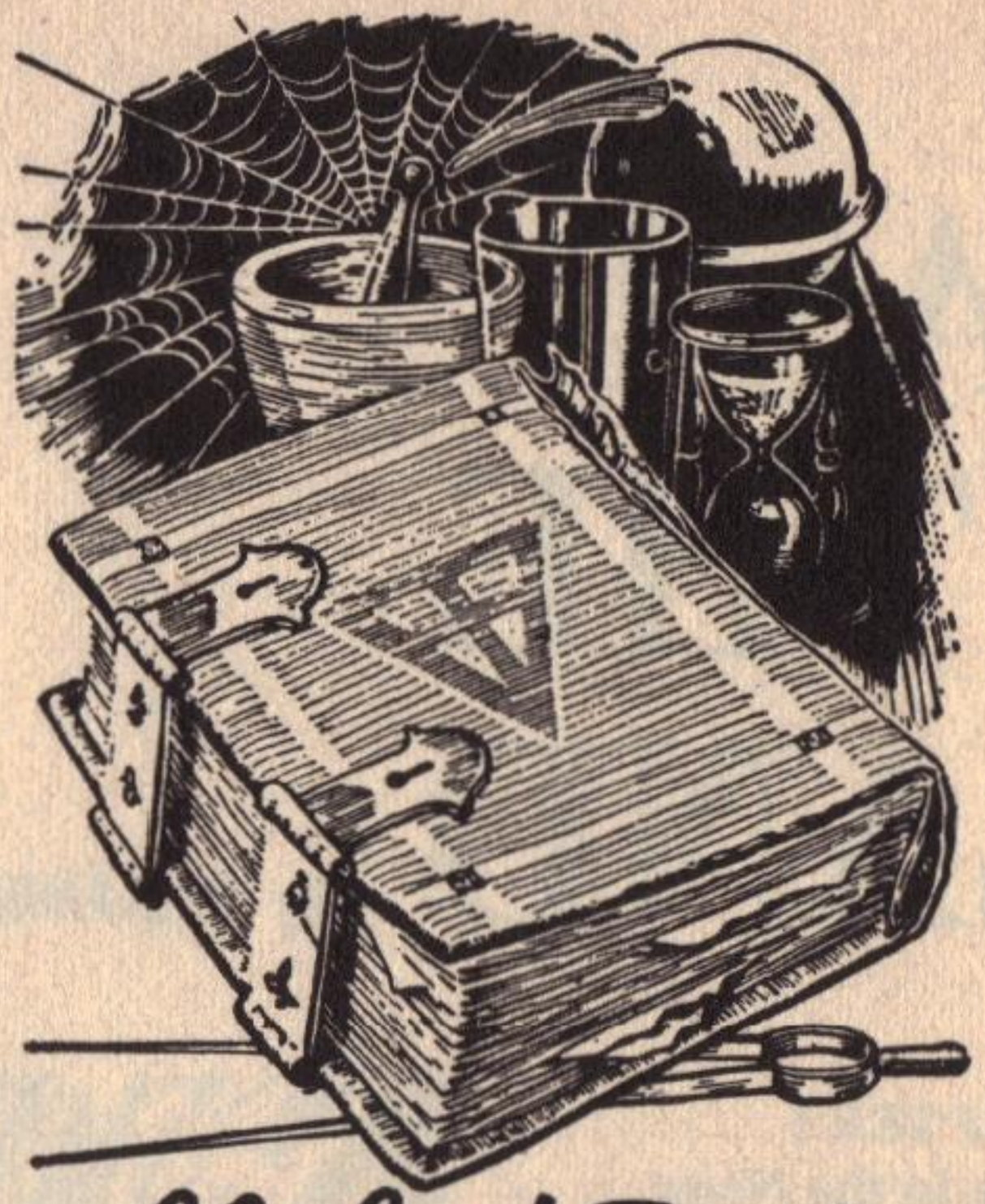
*Finally, as to what sort of editorial he would have considered for an issue such as this, we don't have to speculate—because we can show you a fine sample of his skill on a former occasion. In fact, it was* the *occasion—the one on which he wrote the* first *science-fiction editorial ("A New Sort of Magazine") for the first issue of* Amazing.

*So here it is now—in its entirety—surely one of the most historic documents in all of science fiction.—JR*

Another fiction magazine!

At first thought it does seem impossible that there could be room for another fiction magazine in this country. The reader may well wonder, "Aren't there enough already, with several hundreds now being published?" True. But this is not "another fiction magazine," AMAZING STORIES is a *new* kind of fiction magazine! It is entirely new—entirely different—something that has never been done before in this country. Therefore, AMAZING STORIES deserves your attention and interest.

*(Continued on page 188)*



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# BEAST OF THE ISLAND

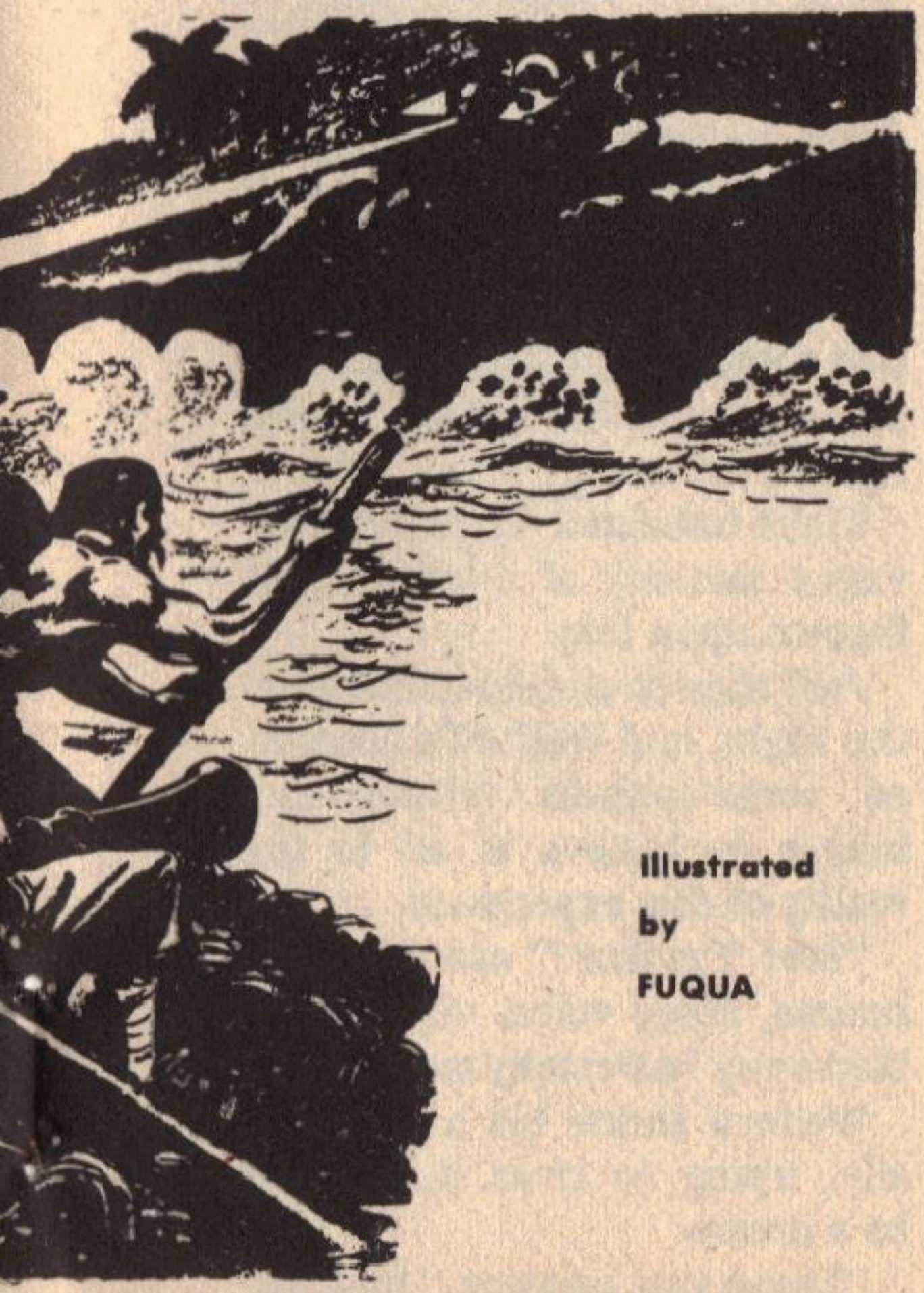
By ALEXANDER M. PHILLIPS

## CHAPTER I
### The Thing in the Night

THE two young men had evidently just walked out of the lagoon, for the water still streamed from their white aviators' overalls. Behind them, on a jutting coral reef, a silver monoplane lay tipped over on one wing. It was utterly out of place lying crippled there on the coral, washed by the placid, sun-dappled water, in a scene that might have come from Earth's childhood.

"So this is our finish," said the taller of the two men. His deep-set eyes, grey and clear with long gazing at far horizons, followed the still, green slopes up to the final, bare, black rocks; the last outpourings of the ancient crater which had formed the island. "No more ocean hopping

*An uncharted island somewhere in the Pacific, two young aviators—their plane down in the surf off its shores, their radio knocked out—and* something *out there in the dark, something* alien *still walking the night—after centuries—now heading straight for them!—What better way to start off our 40th Anniversary number than with that unforgettable opening to Alexander M. Phillips' suspenseful "Beast of the Island," probably the one story that everyone agrees should have been revived long ago—because it's still a fine example of what happens when the writer obviously gets as much of a kick out of telling his tale as we do reading it.*



Illustrated by FUQUA

for us; because of a lousy gas-leak!"

"It's a miracle that we're alive, Mac," said the other. He brushed the dark hair back from his forehead, and glanced along the empty beach, which ended in a line of weathered cliffs a few hundred yards to his right. "This island's not charted..."

He broke off and stood transfixed, his head turned in an attitude of listening.

"What's the matter?" asked his companion.

"I thought I heard metal clanking, banging on rock..."

The other grunted.

For long moments they stood side by side on the beach and stared at the island; an island shown on no charts in their possession, a deserted bit of land lost in the vastest of oceans, and prob-

ably unvisited by man since time began.

Finally MacGlennon wandered along the beach, returning presently with an arm full of driftwood.

"A fire?" asked Welford. "It's not cold."

The Scotchman nodded. "No. But I want light tonight. There's something about this place..."

The other agreed. He too felt the mystery of the island's green-cloaked hills and shadowed ravines. "We can look for a spring in the morning," he suggested. "And I'll get at the radio. The plane'll last in that water as long as this calm holds. Soon's we can report our position they'll pick us up. Nothing to it but waiting, and there should be plenty of cocoanuts around here."

MacGlennon looked at him but didn't reply. He busied himself with starting the fire, using the matches he carried in his upper pockets, unwetted in the shallow water of the lagoon.

Night descended solemnly over the island, and the men disposed themselves on the sand to sleep. Large and bright, the tropic stars burned in their season in the high vault of the sky.

MacGlennon slept soundly, in spite of the uneasiness the island inspired. But Welford found himself in for one of those nights of horror when the mind, dulled by fatigue, finds it impossible to separate dreaming and waking, confuses fact and nightmare fancy.

The dreams that haunted his sleep at last drove him into a dull vigilance beside the dying fire.

He sat staring into the blaze with fixed and hypnotized eyes. The fire crackled, and burned blue with brine and MacGlennon groaned in his sleep.

With a horrible feeling of being watched, of being studied by cold and inhuman eyes, Welford jerked up his head. The fire had died to a sullen red glow of coals, and a damp chill was in the air. Whether he was truly awake or again in the grip of some grotesque dream he was helpless to determine, but he had the fearful assurance that something stood opposite him, that something watched him from the darkness beyond the feeble light of the coals.

There remained in his mind the vague memory of a bright light thrown upon him.

And then sound emanated from the night, and Welford's staggered consciousness refused any longer to believe at all in the reality of this experience.

"Mor T'evikor?" asked a deep, hoarse, rusty voice, which rumbled away in scratchy monotones.

Welford shook his head clumsily, trying to clear it. It *must* be a dream.

"Damn you, go away," he grow-

led softly as the night.

There was a rustle of movement in the darkness, a shifting of sand and a strange squeaking. The rasping voice spoke again.

"Mor T'evikor!" it said loudly, and a faint light began to glow, then faded. There was a crunching of sand that moved farther away, and once, much later, Welford thought he saw a bright light moving about the cliffs; then in spite of himself he went deeply asleep and so slumbered until Mac Glennon aroused him in the fresh bright light of morning.

"First, water," said the Scotchman. "If I'm not mistaken I saw a falls leaping from those cliffs, just before I set her down. Shall we go together Bob or separate?"

"Let's stick together Mac. Water won't be hard to find here. That central peak has more than a thousand feet altitude. It'll stop plenty, but I suppose most of the streams will be on the east."

MacGlennon had moved around to the other side of the bed of ash where their fire had been. He stopped abruptly and stared at the sand.

"Bob! Come here! What the hell's this?"

The memory of his fantastic dream surged over Welford as he sprang to his friend's side. And then he stood and stared in amazement at the tracks in the sand.

"What is it, Bob? Were you dragging something around in the night?"

"N—no," said Welford. Before him two ruts or channels in the sand, about a yard apart, led back into the shadow of the palms. They were perfectly parallel, and looked as though made by two marching columns of the big crabs, but crabs, even by accident, didn't walk in columns, and if they did the columns wouldn't proceed in parallel lines, three feet apart.

Sea-birds, beating out to their fishing, screamed over the two men as they stood staring.

"I tell you this damned place has something wrong with it," said MacGlennon. "I knew it when we walked ashore. Why hasn't it been discovered? And what the hell sort of an animal left these marks?"

They followed the ruts and found that they emerged from among the palms, trailed down to their camp, where the sand was beaten and scuffed over a large area on one side, and then led back to the palms again, losing themselves at last on the harder, higher ground.

Welford suddenly turned and marched out into the lagoon.

"Where are you going, Bob?" asked Mac, in surprise.

"Out to the plane to get guns." He continued splashing determinedly through the shallow

water, and MacGlennon saw him disappear within the plane. A few moments later he emerged and retraced his path over the rough coral, holding two automatics above his head.

"Here," he said, handing one of the guns to MacGlennon and thrusting the other into an upper pocket where it would not be wetted.

They moved on then to the easy slopes beyond the beach, stepping over dense masses of the glossy green vine, to enter the shadows of the forest. Here, in the green gloom, they both paused, listening.

A solemn hush pervaded the forest, muffling even the ceaseless roar of the surf, and the vaguely sinister air which seemed a part of this island was here intensified a hundredfold.

As the two men ascended the slight gradient and turned to the left toward the cliffs they came upon small groves of bananas, the ripened fruit fallen in places and heaped in dissolving mounds.

"God, but this is an eerie place," said Welford, his voice echoing oddly through the still groves. "Let's hurry and find that water. I want to get out of here and get working on the radio."

He had hardly ceased speaking when the heavy tranquillity was shattered and dispersed by a shrill whistle. They had just entered a small clearing and, over the tops of the trees, the steep face of the cliffs could be seen in profile. The sound had come from there, and, as the men stopped transfixed, they saw something moving on the summit. It was hidden in vegetation, and by the rise of the ground, and was moving away from them, but before it vanished they caught a glimpse of a smooth surface and a dull gray color.

There was a faint and distant crashing of branches and then the same gruff voice Welford had heard before cried: "Mor T'evikor!"

Silence flowed back over the forest while MacGlennon and Welford stood staring wordlessly at the cliffhead.

"Come on!" yelled the Scotchman, abruptly, and raced across the clearing. "That's something we can see, at last!"

Welford sprang in pursuit, and they ran up the steepening slope, the trees thinning as the land rose, until they came out upon the top of the cliff. Here a gently undulating plateau, waist deep with tall grass, extended to the sharp break of the cliff itself. It was deserted, only the grasses moving to the thrust of the stiff breeze.

"I wasn't dreaming!" gasped Bob, as he caught up with his companion. "That — that thing. I heard it last night — "

Breathless, he gasped out the

story of the events of the night to the staring Scot.

"But, Mac, what in God's name is it?" he concluded.

"It doesn't sound like any animal I ever heard of," stated MacGlennon, pulling thoughtfully at his lean jaw, on which a two-day stubble of sandy hair bristled. "And if it is a man — It might be a castaway, crazy from the solitude."

"But what about the marks in the sand?"

Mac was silent and the two men waded into the grass, moving toward the cliff.

"This place just *can't* be inhabited," said MacGlennon. "If it was we'd have seen a village, some people, some signs of the natives, when we were over the island, and I saw nothing."

They had a good idea of the extent and topography of the island, for it had stood out sharply from the blue water as they dropped their plane toward it for a landing.

It was about 2 miles long in a northeast-southwest direction, and a half mile wide at the widest point, which lay in the southern half. Along the eastern coast the reef lay close to the shore, and was faced by steep cliffs. On the west the reef stood further off, forming a wide lagoon, and the land behind it was weathered and broken. At the waist the island narrowed, its coast line hollow on the lagoon side, and here was located the small beach where they had come ashore.

Most of the island was a rolling plateau, cut by ravines and shallow valleys. In the south, two peaks rose to craggy summits, where a few conifers clung grimly to the black rock. The smaller northern end was almost level extending to the sheer cliffs, which broke and fell sharply to the water.

Together and in silence they came to the weathered lip of the cliffs and turned north. Beneath them — perhaps fifty feet below — lay the lagoon, its water a myriad shades of green; in places transparent as crystal, in others dazzling with reflected sunlight. Farther out, the sea beat with a white thunder on the reef, the leaping spray gleaming in the sunlight, and flying off in pale mist on the steady wind.

They came to the waterfall MacGlennon had seen. Here the stream had formed for itself a shallow cup-like pool from which it sent a narrow cantaract leaping out into the sparkling air to plunge down the steep face of rock, striking and leaping again, until it dove at last, with a white boiling of water, into the lagoon.

A shelf of rock bordered this pool, and upon the shelf lay a crumbling human skeleton.

MacGlennon, refusing to be further startled by anything this

unpredictable island might offer, stared dourly at the white bones, rubbing his long jaw thoughtfully. Welford stepped closer, leaned over to peer at the skeleton.

"So we were wrong," said MacGlennon. "This place has been visited. Maybe there *are* people living here."

Welford shook his head. "That fellow's been lying there a long while, Mac. Look at those bones —they'd crumble to dust if you touched them. And he was a white man. See the clothes?"

Tatters of a faded cloth lay under the skeleton, and rusted buckles were lodged in the bones of the feet.

They studied in silence the dry things that had once been part of a living man. A faraway bird uttered a rattling cry, like rapid, foolish laughter.

"Mac, did you ever read "Treasure Island?'"

MacGlennon looked at his friend in surprise. "You're not going looking for pirate gold, are you?"

"Maybe not, but in Stevenson's book a skeleton was used to point the way to the treasure. Does it suggest anything?"

"You're right!" exclaimed Mac. "Damned if somebody hasn't arranged these bones! They point toward the northwest! I wonder—"

The skeleton lay on its face, although the skull had rolled to one side, and its arms, extending in a line with the body, pointed stiffly, in a position that was unquestionably a gesture.

They followed its direction with their eyes. The line crossed the cliffs at an oblique angle, extended out over the empty ocean.

"But what's out there, Bob? Probably the poor devil died here — dropped down thinking of home, and reaching for it."

"Toward the northwest? His home was probably in Europe or America. Maybe he's pointing toward some point along the cliff."

"Well, we'll go and see. But first, let's get a drink."

They drank thirstily, and started off, conscious of the grinning skull that mocked them with empty, shadowy eyesockets.

It was MacGlennon who found the narrow ledge leading down from the edge of the cliff. It lay directly in line with the skeleton's outthrust arm. They examined it in silence. It went steeply down, then bent around a bold face of rock and vanished.

"Come on." Mac lifted the automatic from his pocket and started down. Welford followed him.

The ledge was not difficult to traverse, for it widened as it descended, and the clear void on their left with its rippling, sparkling floor of water was no frightening sight to an aviator. Be-

yond the buttress of rock, the ledge terminated in a tiny amphitheatre. At the rear of this natural balcony the mouth of a cave yawned darkly.

"Have you got your flash?" asked Mac.

Bob drew a flashlight from a hip pocket.

Inside the cave, in spite of the flashlight, they were blinded for some minutes, their eyes accustomed to the brilliance of the outside sunlight. As the objects about them gradually began to emerge from the darkness the first thing which seized their attention was a second skeleton. It lay close to the entrance, its position eloquently testifying that death had overtaken its possessor as he crawled laboriously toward the opening. It, too, lay on its face, but the knees were drawn up, and one arm was sprawled before it, the fingers clawing at the hard rock. The other, the left arm, dragged at the side.

Great, cool gushes of salty air burst now and again into the cave, to lift and flap the rags that still clung to the skeleton.

"Bob, what is this we've stumbled into?" MacGlennon looked helplessly at his companion. "Are we going nuts? A talking animal that comes and looks at us at night, and leaves tracks like nothing on earth; that yells at us from the hills. And now this. Who were these men, and what killed them? Who made a pointer out of that one up there, and why does it point to this place?"

Welford was studying the skeleton. "Mac, look at his ribs, up near the left shoulder. Do you see? They're burnt, burnt almost away. I'd swear that's a burn, and there's no marks on the rock under him so he must have got it while he was alive. And I'll bet that's what killed him. Let's see what else is here."

He swung the light around. It swept over the black, rugged walls and a crude and time-wracked table and stool, evidently made on the island. The cave appeared to have been carved by water out of the hard, igneous rock, which suggested a tremendous antiquity for the island.

Bob swung the torch further — and a large battered chest sprang into the circle of light. Both men gasped.

"By heavens, Bob, it *is!*" exclaimed MacGlennon, striding toward the chest. "A pirate's hideout! But these skeletons — they must be old. Old!"

"They are old, Mac. Didn't you notice the clothes on this one? Eighteenth century, by the look of them."

Bob was beside him, and together, in a fever of excitement, they raised the unlocked lid of the chest.

## CHAPTER II
## The Walker

It came up slowly, the rusty hinges complaining, and the dry-rotted wood crumbling and splintering with soft, sucking noises.

Inside lay a pile of mouldering clothes, and on top of them, a hidebound volume.

MacGlennon's breath burst out in an involuntary grunt of disappointment, and Bob found his expression so ludicrously fallen that he laughed.

"Gold! You expect to see a pile of yellow doubloons and pieces-of-eight, hey, Mac? What good would they be to us here? And you know as well as I do that there's damned little chance of us getting off."

The light died out of Mac's eyes and he dropped the lid back in place.

"You're right about the gold, Bob. But we'll get off, all right. Somebody'll pick up our signals. It's the damned thing here on the island that worries me. If it shows itself again I'm going to throw a slug at it. What is it? What could it be?"

Bob shrugged and lifted the lid of the chest. "Let's see what's in here. This is a mystery we can learn something about, anyway."

He lifted the book and laid it aside, pulled at the rotten, ripping clothes. Beneath was a sextant of antique design and a few tins of ship's biscuits. A rusted cutlass and several side arms, one of them a beautiful pistol, well preserved and set with Spanish filigreework, rested on the bottom. There was a huge and cumbersome watch, stopped at the hour of three, and a small pouch that clinked when moved.

"Here's your gold, Mac," said Welford, handing him the pouch. MacGlennon opened it absently and a trickle of sovereigns and assorted coins of the 1700's ran out on his hand. He stuffed them back and returned the pouch to the chest.

"These are the belongings of an officer, Bob. Let's see that book. I'll bet it's a log."

He took the book back to the cave mouth and the light. It opened creakily, the leaves stiff and yellow with age.

"Bob! Listen to this! This is the log-book all right. But listen to what this guy writes at the back. The man must have been delirious! Or crazy! This is the weirdest island in the—"

"Go on—read it! Or give it to me!"

MacGlennon forced the book open again, and began reading:

"'I, Captain Miles Trevichord, master and part owner of the bark, *Devon Fortune,* do leave this record of our most terrifying and horrible murders here on this

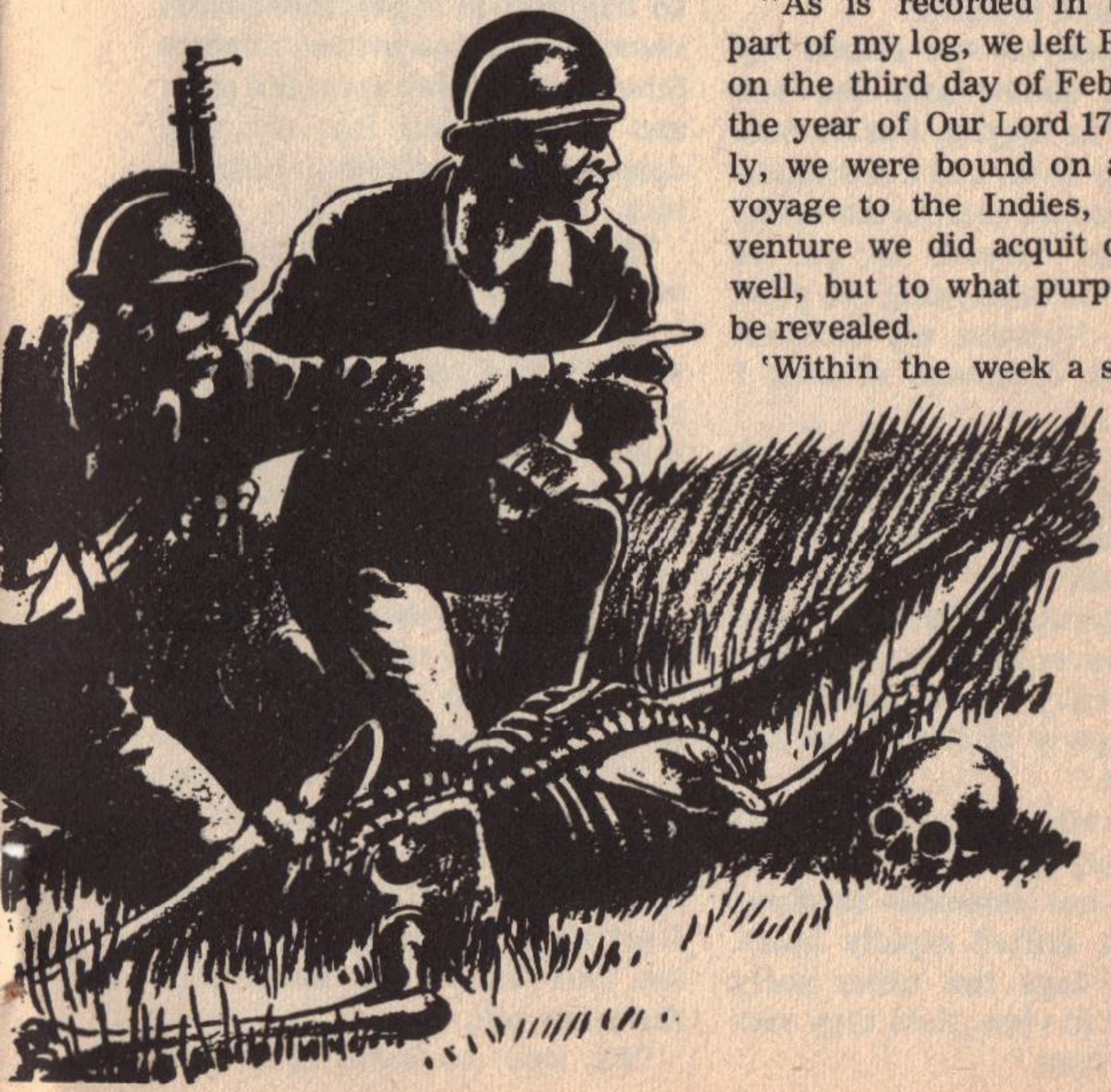
accursed isle to warn any others who may be so misfortunate as to come upon its shores.

'My shipmates are dead; slaughtered most fiendishly by the demon which here has its dwelling. I am the last. All the others, or such of them as I did discover, excepting only George Willson, I did give Christian burial, knowing that in that future life into which they were so cruelly thrust, they shall find recompense for their suffering here. George Willson, the last save myself to die, I stretched upon the rocky shelf by the pool, in the hope that any mariner coming after us would follow his pointing arm, and so find this cavern, and this my warning.

'I am stricken grievously, and sick unto death, yet me thinks I have some little while yet; and this record to which I am devoting my last moments of Earthly life may perchance be of service to any who come after me.

"As is recorded in the forepart of my log, we left Plymouth on the third day of February, in the year of Our Lord 1789. Briefly, we were bound on a trading voyage to the Indies, in which venture we did acquit ourselves well, but to what purpose shall be revealed.

'Within the week a storm de-



scended upon us, a storm like unto which all other storms, even in the memory of the most aged members of our crew, were as the summer rain to the fury of the surf of the sea.

'Three days and nights we drove before it, and did not see the sky. The noise was as the crashing of cannon; the sea raged about us and o'erleaped our highest spar. The wind wrecked and dismantled us until we were no more than a floating hull, and I marveled that the ship held together.

'And then on the fourth day the wind abated and the sun peered at us foggily. But the seas did not go down and our shattered wreck could bear no more. She came apart beneath us, but we succeeded in fashioning two great rafts. Mr. Nystone, my excellent mate, took command of one; I the other.

'I had with me on my raft eight men. Mr. Nystone, six; all that remained of our crew.'"

"He lists their names," said Mac, interrupting himself, "and asks whoever finds this to notify the Admiralty Board and the Devon Company of Gentlemen Adventurers."

"'Our rafts,'" MacGlennon began reading again; "'being clumsy, were not amenable to direction, and drifted rapidly apart. For two days the other party remained in view, then they vanished forever.

'A week longer we drifted, before being cast upon this place, and I curse the fate which spared us the terrors of the sea, to deliver us into this abode of demons. The creature, a horrid monster, met us upon the shore, whither we were dashed, our raft destroyed upon the reef. It addressed us in a language I know not but I doubt me not it is the speech of Hell. It is a creature of nightmare, a thing not to be believed. So dreadful in shape, so frightful in appearance is this demon, our carpenter, James Smout, went mad upon the spot, and cast himself into the sea, despite all our efforts to restrain him.

'This demon is like unto a centipede or scorpion, and yet it is neither. In size it stands as high as a tall man, and near as long as a man's body. Although it lacks a head it has many eyes, and they glow brightly so that at night it sees by its own illumination.

'Tanieta, the native who had journeyed with us from Otaheiti, said his people knew of this demon, and named it the Walker.

'Many of our people were wounded on the sharp coral, and when presently the demon withdrew and took itself off into the forest, I set about dressing their injuries. Our doctor had been upon the other raft.

'We saw no more of it that

day, but perceived its eyes among the hills all night.

The following day we were more recovered, and had found water. When the demon walked abroad we hid ourselves from it, although it hallooed and shouted along the shore some while. After that it came more cautiously, and stalked us. Sometimes we discovered it had hid itself and had been watching us for hours at a time, displaying much interest in our movements and in the shelter we had erected on the beach.

'This demon fears the sea, and will not enter it. For that reason, fearing no doubt it might fall from the ledge, it comes not to this cavern, and any seeking escape from it will find sanctuary here.

'Two more of our men died; one from the fever caused by his injuries and the other from fear of the demon, which drove him mad.

'We discovered this cave on the second day and took council among ourselves whether we should attempt to destroy the Walker or fashion a second raft and cast ourselves once more on the mercies of the sea.

'Several of our men had at divers times already fired upon the demon, but the shot embarrassed it no whit; it is impervious to bullets.

'We determined on the raft and set to work at once upon its construction. From the goodly forest on the southern upland we recruited our timber, rolling the trunks down the steep slope into the lagoon, where others of our party bound them together with vine.

'All this the demon observed, watching us continually to the terror of the men, and speaking often in its own tongue. At this time it offered us no injury.

'At night we slept in this cave, where we had learned the Walker would not come. On the fifth day, to my horror, the demon called me by name, and asked haltingly who we were and what we did upon the island. I cursed it, and abjured it to return to its master, and whatever Hell had spewed it forth.

'It seemeth not to understand, nor do any of the exorcisms I wot of take the least effect.

'The end of the week saw our labors complete—our raft lay ready and we had found a broad passage in the northern part of the reef.

'The demon spoke more freely, but still in limping English, and now understood it was our purpose to leave the island upon our raft, for it came to us on the morning of the seventh day and demanded that we destroy the raft, ordering us to remain where we were.

'Thomas Westfield fired upon

it and did it no hurt, as had several of our men before. And then the demon revealed its true hellishness, for it belched fire upon Westfield and burned his head from his shoulders.

'The rest of us fled for the raft but the Walker went leaping before us. Coming to the beach whereto the raft was moored, it poured forth more fire so that our raft was set alight and burned, and broken up. Where its fire struck the water, the water hissed and boiled. So heated was its breath some logs of the raft we later found upon the sand were charred and black throughout, even though they had lain in the water.

'The remainder of our tale is quickly told, and I must be brief, for I weaken swiftly.

'One by one the Walker hunted us down and breathed its fire upon us, murdering us in most cruel fashion.

'We sought escape here in this cavern, but thirst and hunger drove us out. One by one I heard my shipmates die; I heard their screams and the hissing of the demon's fiery breath.

'It lay in wait for us by the pool where we went to drink, and when we avoided that pool and drank from the divers streams of the island it stalked us through the woods. The days came and went until at last there remained only George Willson and myself.

'Some days, particularly days of heavy storm and rain, the Walker came not forth, hiding itself in some fastness of the southern peaks, and on those days we did lay in what store of food and water we could manage, and so, by remaining here in our cavern, were safe for some little while.

'At other times we made traps for the demon, and set heavily charged pistols to fire at a touch. Although we heard them explode on more than one occasion, they did not at any time do injury to the Walker.

'George Willson at this time I think was going slowly mad, and in truth I marvel that we both did not run screaming through the woods, or fling ourselves into the sea.'"

"The next line or two is smeared and blotted, and runs off the page," said MacGlennon. "You can see he's getting weaker." He peered closer, frowning. "The next word I can make out is—nor? Yes, that's it."

"'...nor have I at any time,'" he read on, "'seen the Walker take food or water, and what its sustenance may be I know not.

'When I returned to the cave I found that Willson had broken his bonds and fled. I followed and came upon him at the pool, but the Walker had been before me, and I found him dead.

'I have lost count of time and know not the days that lapsed,

but on a morning somewhile later, when I ventured out in search of food, the demon found me. I had with me my two pistols, and fired at once, but the Walker paid no heed, and came leaping toward me. Knowing the uselessness of flight, I charge the demon, calling on Heaven for aid, and attacked the Walker with my cutlass. But it was as though I struck at steel; my blows glanced from his hideous body, and the next moment he breathed upon me, he thrust his fiery tongue into my chest, and the agony of death was on me. My lungs were consumed by fire, and I fell unconscious from the dreadful pain.

'When I awoke the Walker was vanished, and as I had gone not far, I dragged myself back to this cavern, each breath the most terrible agony.

'A numbness is on me now, and a great weakness, and I know that death is close. I would have ended my suffering ere this, but that I thought it my duty to leave this warning.

'Pray for my repose, ye who find this, if ye be Christian men.'''

"There's a few more scratches underneath," said MacGlennon", slowly. "Probably the poor devil tried to sign his name."

## CHAPTER III
## Encounter with the Unknown

MacGlennon became silent, and his voice died away in whispering echoes in the depths of the cave.

Welford sat utterly motionless, his eyes fixed on vacancy. He looked hypnotized. Before them, the mute bones strove with one clawing hand toward the sunlight. The tattered clothing that clung to the skeleton quivered and moved as cool air surged into the cave, bringing with it the sonorous requiem of the pounding surf.

"God!" said Welford, at last. "What a story!"

He rose to his feet, brushing his hands across his face, as though to clear his eyes of the dread visions they beheld, and strode out into the light. MacGlennon followed him. As they left the cave the full thunder of the reef broke upon them, like an organstop pulled out. The wind whipped at their hair, and the hot sunlight burned through their clothing. Gradually reality came back to them; Miles Trevichord and his grim and incredible tragedy retreated to the dead year that had known them, but still Welford seemed to hear that last appeal: "Pray for me, if ye be Christian men!"

"Great Heavens, Mac!" he exclaimed, striding up and down the narrow ledge. "What is this? Are we crazy? Is this island bewitched? Devils! Exorcisms! What's happening anyway?"

"I don't believe in devils, Bob," said MacGlennon. "At least not the kind of a devil Captain Miles thought he saw. But I do believe this island harbors something stranger than anything we've ever seen. I felt it before we were on the beach. Something inhuman, incredible. It's here—and it's watching us."

Welford stopped his nervous pacing along the ledge. "You mean to say that you believe that whatever killed these men a hundred and fifty years ago is still here? Still alive?"

"Do you remember what that thing yelled at us from the cliffs?"

"Sure." Bob pondered a moment. "Three or four syllables, wasn't it? It said the same thing when it came down to our camp during the night. 'Mor . . . *Mor tevikor!*. Great God, Mac, you think—?"

"You've got it, Bob. It was saying, 'More Trevichord.' Do you remember, he said it called him by name? It must have heard the men speaking to him, and assumed 'Trevichord' to be the generic name for man. It must be the same creature. After all, there are animals that outlive man. Turtles, for instance."

"You think this thing's an animal?"

"I don't know what it is. But I don't doubt that we'll know more about it—soon."

Welford led the way back along the ledge, gun in hand. When they reached the summit of the cliff they searched the plateau with suspicious and wary eyes, but they saw no signs of life; the island seemed empty and deserted, but for themselves.

They walked on in silence, both men busy with their thoughts, until they came to the skeleton by the pool. Where before it had lain in the bright sunlight, it was now shadowed by the crumbling, low rock wall on the northern border of the pool. Their expedition had consumed most of the morning.

"I'm hungry," said Welford, with sudden realization.

MacGlennon grunted assent. "We'll gather fruit on the way down. And there'll be streams closer to the beach." He filled with water a gourd he had picked up in the cave. "This'll do till we find one."

Although they said nothing to each other, both men entered the wooded slope with tense nerves. The shadowed silence of the ancient forest engulfed them, sank them in green gloom across which an occasional bar of misty sunlight fell slantingly from high in the dim, green roof of the woods.

Strange noises broke now and again through the heavy silence—a sound like someone chopping brought them to a simultaneous halt, and sometime later what

seemed the distant laughter of women sent cool shivers racing over them.

But no horrific monster manifested itself. As they left the forest, however, their arms laden with the rich fruit they had gathered, they were both startled more than they would admit to come upon fresh tracks upon the beach. The few belongings they had brought ashore were roughly tumbled about, and MacGlennon's coveralls were ripped and torn as though handled by someone or something unfamiliar with them.

"You know, Mac," said Welford, staring at the incomprehensible marks, "I was just wondering if we hadn't imagined the whole thing. After all, Trevichord might have been delirious when he wrote all that. If it wasn't for what we've seen and heard here, I'd be sure of it."

"Aye," said MacGlennon. "Maybe we're both daft. But I'm not counting on it. Let's eat, and then get at the radio."

They waded out to the plane, and felt safer there, remembering Trevichord's statement that the demon would not enter the sea. All afternoon they labored over their radio, and by nightfall they had the receiver operating. Fortunately, no essential parts had been broken which they couldn't replace.

The small broadcasting unit was a more difficult subject.

The night was well advanced when, driven by thirst, they at last gave up, and set out for the shore. There was no word said about separating; they went together, Welford carrying an empty gasoline tin, and MacGlennon with his automatic in his hand.

By the light of their flash they picked their way across the rough, sharp coral.

The two friends spoke seldom, and then in whispers. The white beach, as they crossed it, was ghostly, glimmering like pale cloth in the faint starlight.

They had to enter the fringes of the bush to get their water for as the shallow stream met the fine sand of the beach it sank into minor streamlets that deployed in shifting channels down to the lagoon.

With the gasoline tin filled they started back along an avenue of cocoanut palms. Dense shrubbery bordered either side.

MacGlennon was leading, an automatic in one hand, the torch in the other. Welford followed, carrying the tin filled with water.

With a suddenness that was breathtaking something whipped out of the shrubbery and snatched the torch from MacGlennon's hand. In the exchange the switch was thrown and the light extinguished. Almost coincident with the touch of the thing from the

bush came the crash of MacGlennon's heavy automatic. Its brief blue flashes scarred the darkness as MacGlennon held down the trigger and sent the heavy slugs ripping into the cryptic night. The acrid odor of burnt powder drifted along the avenue of palms, eddied about them.

Welford had almost plunged into MacGlennon's back. For a long moment surprise held him speechless. He had seen nothing, was unaware that Mac had lost the flashlight to some unknown thing in the bush. Now he set the heavy tin on the ground, caught his friend's arm.

"What's the matter, Mac? Where's the light? What are you shooting for?"

He felt Mac's tense muscles relax somewhat; the rapid barking of the automatic stopped as he released the trigger. Its echoes rolled over the listening island.

"It's here, Bob," Mac whispered through set teeth. "The Walker—it grabbed the flashlight. It's here in these bushes!"

They waited, listening, trying to see into the darkness.

"Who you? What you do here? T'evikor!" The hoarse, expressionless voice for which they had been listening suddenly spoke.

Mac's arm jerked up, but Bob gripped it tighter. "Wait," he whispered. "Wait. Let's talk to it."

From the bushes at their side a pale light seeped out. It grew stronger and brighter and soon they stood in a clear illumination, a light as bright as an electric torch, yet differing in quality—a strange brilliance curiously suggestive of sunlight.

The two men tried to peer past it at its source. But the light was too bright, and whatever made it stood deep in shrubbery. The light appeared to originate in a round lens not unlike a flashlight in size and shape. The lens was about five feet above the ground.

As they watched, their own flash came into view, gripped in a weird, segmented tentacle; a slender, gleaming, tapering thing that held their torch in the light, turned it over and over as though some one or something behind the light were inspecting it.

"Who and what are you?" demanded Welford, standing a little in advance of MacGlennon.

A curious purring sound came from the shrubbery, and the tentacle withdrew into the darkness, carrying their flashlight with it.

"I Ava-Stob-Ava," said the voice after a moment. "I wait for—wait for masters come back."

It spoke very slowly, seemingly groping for each word.

"You T'evikor? You come in—come in thing in water?"

"We came in the plane. What are you? Where did you learn English? Where are you from?"

Again there was silence, but for the faint purring. Then the voice creaked into sound again. "I wait for masters come back. Wait many time. Long. I Ava-Stob-Ava. Trob-bercamb—I dig.

"Long many time I wait. Rocks wear away. Masters not come back. T'evikor come. I listen; learn English T'evikor talk. Now you T'evikor come. What is plane?"

"Plane?" said Welford. His mind was whirling, shaken with a horror of this incredible thing that was not human yet spoke. "Plane? A plane is a flying machine, a ship that flies. Are you the Walker? Did you kill Trevichord?"

"T'evikor call I Walker. T'evikor try go away. I kill T'evikor. I kill you you try go away."

Through all this MacGlennon had been silent. Standing in the shadow behing Welford he had been rapidly reloading his gun. As the thing they faced said, "I kill T'evikor," he thrust Welford aside, flung up the weapon and fired at the light.

Over the thunder of the gun there sounded a furious clangor, a bell-like reverberation as of blows on metal. The noise swept over the island, smashed the silence in a wild, nerve shattering alarm. Startled birds sprang screaming into the air, their wings beating the foliage, adding a surf-like roaring to the din. With a sudden, swift movement Bob seized MacGlennon and flung him backward into the undergrowth, diving after him barely in time to avoid the charge of the Walker.

The light the Walker carried had gone out. Whether destroyed by Mac's bullets or extinguished intentionally by its owner, Welford didn't know. He rolled sideways through the brush and came to his knees beside MacGlennon.

Their enemy was plunging through the bush behind them, and now Bob became aware of an ominous ticking sound emanating from the Walker. A fraction of a second later a blinding beam of light struck out—a white-hot, almost solid jet of living light. It flamed and was gone, leaving Bob's eyes seared and blinded momentarily, and bearing the fading impression of the flash.

Vegetation crackled and burst into flame. A scorched, burnt odor spread through the forest.

Silence fell back on the island. Bob crouched on his knees, peering, listening. Somewhere nearby the Walker stood, awaiting some sound that would betray their position. He clutched Mac's arm tightly, warningly.

Presently the first light the Walker had turned on them began to glow, grew brighter. So MacGlennon hadn't smashed it.

The creature was further from them than Bob had thought. It was deep in the bush on the other

side of the path, while the two men were near its edge, crouched by the bole of a cocoanut palm.

The light swung round, splintered by intervening vegetation. It moved again, and broad leaves glistened and shone metallically as it passed over them.

A deep and resistless horror swept Welford in rapid, successive waves. Cold sweat formed and evaporated on his body, chilled him even in the warmth of the tropics. Human enemies he would have faced courageously. The great forces of nature he had met and fought as a mere part of the day's work. But here was something beyond nature, outside all experience: an alien thing that moved in darkness, inhuman, unknown, a creature whose very existence was a mockery of reason and all natural laws.

His gun was in his hand, but he had seen that bullets affected the Walker not at all. Together he and MacGlennon crouched in the darkness and watched the Walker searching for them.

## CHAPTER IV
## Search for a Beast

As the slow minutes passed it became evident that the monster was moving further away from them. Its light grew fainter and the crashing of branches died away. Once the blinding, incandescent bar of flame split the darkness; its vicious sibilance came to them faintly through the intervening forest. Probably a sea bird, disturbed by the Walker's approach, had stirred in the undergrowth and brought its doom upon it.

For long moments after the light had vanished and all sound had ceased, MacGlennon and Welford remained silent. Finally the Scot stood up, slid the gun back into his pocket.

"I'm going to kill that thing," said MacGlennon in a queer, strained voice, "before I leave this island. I'm going to kill it, if it can be killed. That's it—if it can be killed."

Welford stepped out into the path, picked up the tin of water. Nearby he trod upon their flashlight, dropped, probably, when the Walker charged them. He picked it up and thrust it into a pocket.

"Come on, Mac," he whispered, "let's get back to the plane."

The remainder of the night they passed in watches, and while Welford sat hunched on one wing of the plane, in the chill, black hours before dawn, he pondered deeply the situation.

A fear greater than that inspired by the prospect of their death under the blazing ray of Walker held him. There had been something in MacGlennon's voice when he had spoken that last time in the forest that had chilled

him; an odd tone he had never heard before. "—if it can be killed. That's it—if it can be killed!" What had MacGlennon meant?

Dawn came and he eyed his friend seriously, but the lean Scot said nothing further of their incredible encounter of the night. Instead he fell to work upon the transmitter with increased vigor.

By noon they had it working, deriving their power from the batteries of the plane. The signal they sent out was very weak. Atmospheric conditions would have to be at a peak of perfection to carry their call even a relatively short distance.

Welford was confident that no land station would pick them up. If they were to be heard at all, it must be by a ship. Would their signal reach any of the nearest shipping lanes? He didn't know.

MacGlennon had been very silent all day. It was evident that something beyond the radio occupied his attention—that he was pursuing some engrossing train of thought. A number of times he went to the door over the wing and stared at the island in silence. Bob watched him furtively.

Once he put down the pliers with which he had been working and said suddenly: "You know, Bob, the Pacific is the most mysterious ocean of earth. It's the largest—there are thousands of miles of water that have never been cut by the prow of a ship. It's old—ancient. And there are stories—yarns of the natives, and of the Indians of South America.

"Have you ever heard of Mu—of the continent that was supposed to have been engulfed by the Pacific? Some say that the Incas and the Aztecs were colonies established by the inhabitants of Mu before it was destroyed; that they were left to revert to savagery, to gradually lose the knowledge which the people of Mu had taught them. Even up to historic times they had an exact knowledge of astronomy—their calendar was almost perfect.

"And there are ruins scattered around the islands of the Pacific that nobody can explain—wreckage of gigantic walls and buildings. These people that are here now—the Polynesians, Melanesians, Micronesians—came later; anthropologists say within the last one thousand years or less. Was there anyone—or anything—ahead of them?

"This island, now. It's evidently never been occupied by natives. There are no maraes—temple sites. At least, we haven't found any. I wonder if the Walker—"

That night the blazing dome of the star-set sky was blotted out by a great curtain of clouds that swept in over the island. It

seemed limitless, unending, and for three days the low-lying, close-packed ranks rolled by overhead. Now and again a heavy, tropical downpour of rain came marching across the island, its loud drumming audible long after it had passed over the beach and advanced inland.

During this period of sunlessness they had no evidence of the presence of the Walker; the still, green forest echoed only to the rattle of the rain and the calls of the countless birds, and nothing moved upon the slopes of the hills that was not recognizable as a part of nature. The two castaways had yet to see the Walker by daylight—they had no knowledge of its appearance other than that offered by the manuscript of Captain Trevichord, and the obscure vision they had seen in the night in the forest.

On the second of these days MacGlennon and Welford returned to the cave on the cliffs, and buried the skeletons of Trevichord and Willson on the small plateau at the summit.

MacGlennon recited from memory part of the burial-service-at-sea, and they marked the graves with two wooden slabs they had found in the cavern.

The remainder of the time, except for short trips ashore for food and water, they spent in operation of the broadcasting set. They used the receiver very sparingly, conserving their power for the transmitting unit.

Hour after hour they sent out their call, and now and again listened in. They received only scattered, broken fragments of boradcasts—messages from ships, parts of programs from Australia, and once, clearly, the call letters of a station in the Hawaiis.

Throughout this time it was evident that MacGlennon was deep in whatever speculation it was which he had begun to expound to Welford earlier.

Occasionally he uttered an exclamation, as though some part of a puzzle had fallen into place, and once he slapped his open palm down upon his knee and jerked out: "That's it! By God, that's it! We've got to get close enough to locate the intake..."

Bob, startled, sat up quickly. "Mac! What's the matter? What is it?"

The abstract look faded from MacGlennon's eyes.

"Oh. Not now, Bob. Later. If I were to tell you what I believe now..." He shrugged. "But, by heavens, I'm right, and I'll prove it to you. There's no other answer."

With the fourth day came clear skies. The sun rose between the shoulders of two hills, and the lush forest of the island steamed in the warm rays.

The shadow of the island shrank

back from the plane as the sun crept higher in the sky and the damp chill melted under its heat. When noon came MacGlennon snapped off the transmitter switch and rose to his feet. Welford watched him in growing surprise as MacGlennon carefully loaded his automatic and slipped some clips of ammunition in his pocket.

"Where are you going?"

MacGlennon turned. "I'm going hunting, Bob. Going ashore and get a look at this thing. I'd like you to come with me, but it's up to you. I've got to get a look at the Walker—a close look. And I think I will today."

"Mac! You're mad! You're stark, raving crazy! You'll be killed! Great God, man, don't you realize what you're saying? Close to the Walker! Don't you understand that thing can kill you as you would a fly? That you've no defense against it at all? That gun—what good is it? You might as well throw rocks at the Walker. I can't let you do it, Mac—it's utter madness!"

MacGlennon listened to the tirade without a change of expression. When Welford paused, he nodded.

"I know you think this place is getting me; that I'm going soft in the head. Bob. I've seen you watching me. And I can't tell you what I'm thinking, because you'd be sure of it then. But let me ask you something else. Where's the end of this trail? There's not much chance of anyone picking us up. That means we're going to stay here—and the Walker's staying, too. He's been staying a long time already—God, when I try to think how long! And you're proposing that we play cat-and-mouse, with you and I as the mice.

"Day after day, creeping, hiding, sneaking ashore for water and a few cocoanuts, until one day he catches us away from our mouse-hole and does for us.

"And this plane won't last forever. After it falls apart there's nothing left for us but Trevichord's cave. You've read of how they made out in that kind of a game with the Walker—you know what the end would be. How long do you think either of us would stay sane living like that?

"I'm not having any of that, Bob. I've got a theory about the Walker and if I'm right we may be able to kill—to destroy it. But I've got to get a close look at it—to find out something. I'd like to have you with me, but if you won't come—well, I'm going alone."

Mac waited, watching Welford's thoughts mirrored in his changing expression.

"Suppose somebody—A ship might come, Mac. It might come soon. We don't know. Maybe we could get away from this damned

place next week or the week after. Why not wait for awhile, and then, if no ship comes, we can go after the Walker."

"I think you underestimate our friend, the Walker," said Mac, calmly. "He doesn't want us to get away—probably because he doesn't want the outside world to know of his existence. It's true that Trevichord says he won't enter the sea, but it wasn't necessary for the Walker to do so to kill them. He knows this plane's wrecked—we can't get away in it. But if a ship came here and sent a small boat in, it wouldn't surprise me to see him wading out to us. What you're suggesting is that we call men here to their death. And it's even possible that the Walker may have some method of reaching or striking at a ship anchored beyond the reef. I'm going after him now. Are you coming?

Welford stared through a window at the deceptively peaceful green of the island. It seemed impossible that that quiet foliage cloaked a lurking, horrible death—and yet as he watched he sensed again that air of mystery, that untamable, alien quality the island possessed.

He glanced at MacGlennon's waiting, incommunicative face, and sensed somehow the irresistible drive behind his resolve to destroy the Walker. Abruptly Welford realized what that drive was—the instinctive reaction against anything which challenged Man's dominion over the earth.

And however right or wrong the theory MacGlennon had formed, his arguments for immediate action were unanswerable. Better to face the Walker now, and let the issue and their fate be swiftly decided. And to call others here to die in like fashion was miserable cowardice.

MacGlennon made an impatient movement. "Well? Are you coming?"

"Of course I am." Welford sprang to his feet, looked to his own automatic, and slipped fresh cartridges into a pocket. He added a knife and a flashlight, and then followed MacGlennon, wading shoreward through the shallow lagoon.

## CHAPTER V
### Lair of the Walker

An hour later, high on the slope of one of the southern peaks, the two men halted to survey their surroundings. The terrain here was rough and broken. Huge boulders were scattered everywhere upon the slope.

Far below, the island lay spread out, curiously diminished, its green ridges and hills small with distance. Over it circled and planed tiny dots that were sea birds, and its foaming reef encir-

cled it like a setting of tiny pearls about an emerald. Beyond all, dominating all, was the blue plain of the sea, immense, flawless, and utterly empty.

MacGlennon swept his glasses over the lower slopes, and then, slowly, across the entire island. He lowered them with a grunt of satisfaction.

"He's up here somewhere." Unconsciously he spoke in a subdued voice. "In among these boulders—or higher, up in the old crater, probably. Come on, Bob, let's get up there."

"Mac. Look." Bob was staring up the slope, up through aisles between the shapes of stone. "There's something up there—something that shines. It looks like metal. See it?"

MacGlennon followed his pointing arm. He could see something, a dazzling, blinding spot of light, like the reflection of sunlight on metal. It was some distance away and hidden by intervening rocks. Without motion, it gleamed steadily on, the light flickering only when they changed their position.

"The Walker," breathed Mac, and began a slow, cautious stalking of the object. Bob followed him. Taking advantage of every rock and crevice they crept silently toward the spot of light.

Thin grass grew here. Tiny lizards, basking on the hot stones, scuttled from their path as they approached.

The sense of a deadly presence bore in upon the two men. The silence became tense—ominous—nerve-straining. As they came to each new boulder and peered cautiously around it, they were prepared for some horrendous vision, some monstrous thing that would be awaiting them, waiting to strike with unearthly weapons.

But the still, hot, sunny silence remained undisturbed. The thing they had first seen was now invisible, hidden by the rocks, but MacGlennon had carefully studied the region around it, and was directing their course toward the position he knew it occupied.

As they neared it they moved even more slowly. At last only a line of huge, time-shattered boulders stood between them and the spot where they had last seen the gleaming enigma.

Bob entered a narrow canyon in the crumbling rock which appeared to lead in the right direction, but MacGlennon pursued him and caught his arm.

"Up on top," he whispered. "Get above it."

In the canyon, where the sun did not penetrate, the seawind was dank and cool. Its rustle and whisper against the rock walls drowned out the faint sounds the men made as they climbed them. To the summit was a distance of ten or twelve feet, and they

attained it with a minimum of noise.

They lay flat on the sun-heated rocky surface and listened, strained their ears to the whispering silence, trying to detect some sound.

There was nothing. Not even the shrill cries of the sea birds reached this lonely height.

Together they inched their way forward, crawling to the end of the boulder, and peered down into the sunny hollow of which if formed a side.

The floor of the hollow was higher than the ground outside, and carpeted with a lush grass. As its rocky walls were no more than six feet in height, and it was all of twenty-five feet in diameter, the sun beat down into it in unimpeded and smother-waves of heat and light.

And in the center of that hollow, in the full flood of torrid sunlight, stood—something.

It was roughly a rectangular box, about five feet in length and two by its other dimensions. It was mounted on four slender legs, and the whole thing was undeniably metal, for it glistened in the sunlight like polished gunmetal.

The surface of the box was studded with knobs. In places were raised spirals, tightly coiled. On the upper surface were several small, flat domes ringed with what resembled tiny ports. Otherwhere all over it were scattered incomprehensible bulbs and extensions, some of which appeared to be made of glass.

One end of the box was toward them, and on its face were queer characters — red hieroglyphs set between two flat coils that looked like cable. Directly in the center of its upper surface was a lens-like disc of bright colors. The disc was about four inches in diameter, and Bob thought he could see a curdling going on within it — a slow swirl of color that eddied and flowed deep below the surface.

Save for this enigmatic and almost imperceptible flux of color, the thing was absolutely motionless. It stood as though rooted in the soil of the hollow, and, in fact, the narrow, pipe-like legs did vanish in the tall grass.

For long minutes the two stared at the thing, too astonished to speak. No sound or movement but the soft and fluctuant hiss of the sea breeze disturbed the weighty silence — the heat poured down upon the amphitheatre in an almost physical tide, and the strange structure in the centre seemed to absorb it, drink it up.

"What — what in God's Name is it, Mac?" whispered Bob, at last.

MacGlennon didn't answer. Instead he slowly and cautiously advanced his automatic until its

steely barrel bore directly upon the thing below.

Seconds passed, then Mac lowered the muzzle of his gun. "The angle's too great," he whispered tensely. "The bullet might ricochet. And we daren't miss—we daren't miss. We'll have to get directly above it to kill it."

Sudden wild terror flooded over Welford. He sprang to his feet.

"Mac!" he cried. "Mac! That's only a hunk of tin. That's not alive—"

"For God's Sake, Bob, get down! GET DOWN!"

Bob saw MacGlennon reach for him, and in that instant the somnolent, flawless peace of the mountain peak was shattered as by the legions of Hell. A savage roaring that burst from behind him Bob dimly recognized as the voice of the Walker; faintly a ticking sound punctuated the unintelligible uproar, and then that blinding beam of white-hot radiance struck past him, splitting the air with a grating, hissing shriek of power. A wave of swelling heat rolled over him and in the next second Mac had tumbled him from the rock and they were racing along its base.

Into the narrow, rocky canyon they plunged—the canyon from which they had climbed to the summit of the rock—to trip over the loose debris and plunge headlong just as a second blast of living light smashed above them to crack and splinter the rocks beyond.

The canyon bent and angled into the mountain, sinking deeper as it progressed. MacGlennon wasted not a second, but dragged his befuddled friend to his feet and hurried on, following the sharp twists of the defile with what speed they permitted.

The canyon terminated abruptly in a raggedly circular aperture in one wall. Without hesitation MacGlennon shoved Bob toward the gaping black hole, forced him into it. An instant later—and not a second too soon—he followed him, as the white, killing light of the Walker crashed down into the canyon floor.

Together they crouched in the darkness and got their breath. They could hear the Walker moving about on the rocks above them; the canyon was too narrow and winding for the Walker to penetrate, but it had followed the canyon's course over the surface of the rocks and now proceeded to rake every corner of its terminus with the incandescent light-beam. Rocks cracked sharply; burst, flung rock-splinters to spang against rock; the heat was killing, and the air laden with an odor of burning.

When the beam had not slashed out for several minutes Mac uncovered his eyes and peeped around the shoulder of rock

against which they crouched. The opening of the low tunnel was slightly above him, but he could, by stretching, peer out on the canyon floor. It was blackened, burnt—not a twig remained. He saw with astonishment that rocks had been actually fused, melted.

"That—*thing* was the Walker!"

Welford's dazed voice drew MacGlennon's attention from his survey of the canyon.

"Yes. I was sure it was a machine."

Welford was silent, recovering from the surprise of the last few moments. The Walker—a thing of metal! A dully gleaming box on pipe-like legs!

MacGlennon picked up a loose rock and tossed it out—and almost as it fell to the canyon floor they were blinded by the Walker's bolt of light.

Instinctively they drew further back into the narrow passage, and, in the blackness, tumbled unexpectedly down a short slope.

"Got your flash?" asked MacGlennon, picking himself up.

Bob tried it, but the torch, broken in some way in their wild flight, refused to light. McGlennon struck a match, and by its feeble light they saw that they stood in a narrow, low-roofed tunnel, which, in one direction, led downward into darkness, and in the other, up to the small entrance.

As the match winked out a faint purring became audible, and then the hoarse voice of the Walker boomed hollowly in the tunnel.

"You T'evikor. Come out. Now time I kill."

"Mac!" Bob's voice was tight. "What is this thing? If you know—if you have any idea, tell me, for God's Sake!"

"Not now. Wait. We've got to destroy it—"

"But how? How?"

"There's not time to explain, but if I'm right we can smash the Walker, stop it forever. You saw that lens on its upper surface? I believe if we can smash that—drive a bullet into it—the Walker will be stopped, done. And if that's a lens it may be weaker than the metal body. It must be. If we can fire from directly above it—at short range—I think a bullet will do the trick. At least, it's our only chance. Is your gun O.K.?"

Before Welford could answer, the Walker spoke again.

"T'evikor. I tell you come out, T'evikor."

"What are you?" called Bob, advancing a step or two. "Where did you come from?"

"Be careful," murmured Mac, drawing his friend back behind a buttress of rock.

There was silence for a while, then a sharp cracking as rock fractured. Peering out the two men saw the Walker stationed before the entrance to their tun-

nel, several tentacles moving over the surface of the rock as though examining it, testing its texture.

Then the purring which invariably preceded speech on the part of the Walker became audible, and it announced: "I trobbercamb—trobbercamb. I dig. I not come. I here. Long many time I here. I wait for masters come back. You T'evikor come out."

"Who are the masters?" asked Bob. "Where are they? Where did they go?"

"The masters," began the Walker, "the masters . . ." A definition of the masters in English appeared too much for the metal monster. It fumbled and broke off into a confusion of sounds utterly unintelligible to the two men. "Cabbervar toh mirch . . . velisance . . . toh cabbertion indle spard. Dantion trobbercamb Ava-Stob-Ava." Abruptly the Walker reverted to its halting English. "Masters go away. Many, many away. Go Varvarwendal. You T'evikor come out."

"Why did you kill Trevichord? Why do you want to kill us?"

"This place masters' place. Cabbertion. You T'evikor come back more T'evikor. No. I kill T'evikor, I kill you T'evikor. Master come back no T'evikor here. Ava-Stob-Ava here. Come out."

"Are you alive?" asked Welford.

## CHAPTER VI
## Trapped

Either the question had no meaning for the thing in the canyon, or it had wearied of the exchange.

"You no come out," its hoarse, expressionless voice announced. "I kill now."

Mac and Bob crouched back against the tunnel wall, expecting the light beam to strike past them. Nothing of the sort happened, although the purring halted and the familiar ticking began, but at a much slower rate.

They peered cautiously around the buttressed angle in the tunnel. The Walker stood as before, squarely before the entrance. No tentacles were moving, but a light flooded over the rock of the tunnel's entrance, a light not one hundredth as bright as the blinding bolt with which they were familiar, but of the same peculiar quality.

They stared at it, conscious of a tantalizing suggestion of opaqueness in the illumination. When they glanced away the retinas of their eyes retained a sensation of redness, although the light itself was of a yellowish-white hue.

The temperature of the tunnel was rapidly increasing, and a taint of something like sulphur became noticeable.

"What now?" whispered Bob.

He struck a match, and beheld his companion's face tight-drawn in frowning concentration. Sweat trickled down his gaunt cheeks, to lose itself in the thickening beard.

With a suddenness that knocked the match from Bob's hand, plunging them into darkness, MacGlennon gripped his friend's arm.

"By God, of course! The digger. Come on, Bob! Be quick, man, be quick!"

He started down the passage, down into the unrelieved blackness, dragging Bob after him.

"What is it, Mac? What's the matter?"

Without stopping, feeling his way forward, one hand against the wall of the tunnel, Mac spoke over his shoulder: "There may be pits or faults, but we'll have to chance it. Keep hold of me, Bob. God knows where this leads, and we mustn't get separated."

"But what is it, Mac? What are we going down here for?"

"Don't you see? The Walker—he calls himself the digger. The digger—that light. Don't you get it? He's melting the very damned rock! If we'd waited much longer a stream of lava would have been pouring down on us. If this is a blind tunnel we're sunk. Let's hope there's an outlet somewhere else."

They went on, as fast as they could in the darkness, stumbling, tripping. The tunnel led steadily down, angling seldom. And the warm air and the sulphurous odor followed them. Glancing back, Welford thought he could still see a pin-point of light, the entrance. Then he realized that twice the passage had angled slightly. The entrance was invisible.

He halted, pulling MacGlennon to a stop. Behind them the darkness was not quite so deep. It was faintly red.

"It's started," said MacGlennon quietly, "and now we're in for it. Let's go, Bob. In a little while," he added, grimly, "we should be able to see better."

Bob Welford fought down a wild desire to turn and run back, to take his chances on getting past anything that blocked his way to the surface. To die in the sunlight was one thing—but here, deep in the earth, in blackness. A soulshaking horror welled up in him; the surrounding rock seemed suddenly pressing in, crushing him; the darkness a physical enemy.

They pressed on. The air was getting thick, and the heat oppressive. The only sound was the clump and rustle of their feet.

And then it began to get lighter. The rocky walls began to take shape in a reddish gloom, and they were visited with a new and horrible torture, for as the fiery glow strengthened their field of

vision extended, they could see the tunnel beyond them, and each slight angle seemed its terminus. What lay ahead? A blank wall of rock, a pit where they must stop, and await the molten death that slowly but inexorably followed?

They were moving faster now that they could see, and came more quickly to the angles. Each they approached with growing hopelessness. At the last moment it would reveal the tunnel extending further, its course slightly altered.

The unwavering, cherry-red light grew stronger, the air more foul. Both men were panting, breathing in quick, short gasps —a sign of diminishing oxygen.

They were stumbling more often, and in their eyes the crimson walls of the tunnel were unstable, wavering. Heat beat at them, tortured them.

It was Bob who first noticed the movement of the air around them. A slow current came from behind, bringing a greater heat, a trace of smoke, and a more powerful odor of gases.

Dimly he wondered at it, staggering along the hellishly illuminated passage. He still gripped MacGlennon's belt, and pulled at it, tried to tell his friend of his discovery, but his voice was no more than a croak, and MacGlennon, slipping toward unconsciousness, had fixed his fading energies on the single purpose of moving laboriously forward.

Then MacGlennon went down, and this time did not rise. His limbs made slow, awkward movements on the uneven floor. Bob fumbled at him, tugged at him, somehow turned him over on his back.

MacGlennon's eyes, turned to the roof of the tunnel were glazed and dull, but as he stared up they gradually sharpened and focused.

Feebly, dully, but doggedly, Welford tried to drag him to his feet.

That black spot in the roof. He struggled weakly, and aided by Bob, got himself up on wobbling legs. Clinging to the rough wall, he stared at the spot in the roof of the tunnel.

There above was a cavity, a chimney fault leading up into blackness.

They got up into it —by what super-human efforts they never remembered —just as the slow, red-hot, but cooling stream of lava entered that part of the tunnel. They would have collapsed on the little shelf they found just above the roof, but the fierce heat from the lava, as it crept beneath the fault, drove them on.

The walls of the narrow shaft were rough and irregular, and the fault itself far from the perpendicular, or they would never have made it. When they fell they were caught by the unequal configuration of the walls, and when ex-

haustion overcame them they had merely to lie flat against the rock.

At last MacGlennon with a wordless croak, tumbled out into sunlight, turned and helped Welford from the pit, then collapsed in a burnt, tattered, grimy heap on the bare rock of the surface. Welford fell beside him, conscious only of the exquisite sweetness of cool air, of the soft cool fingers of the sea breeze. Behind them, from the fault, a trickle of smoke drifted up, to be caught and swept away by the wind.

When MacGlennon recovered sufficiently to open smarting eyes to the cool blue of the sky, his first thought was of water. And from somewhere nearby he could hear its trickle and gurgle, an irresistible call that dragged him to his feet and toward the nest of boulders from which the sound came.

They were much lower on the slope of the little mountain, he discovered, when he looked about him.

He cupped his hands and brought water to Bob, splashing it over his face. With his help Welford got to the spring, and after he drank, they took off their torn, charred clothing and splashed the water over themselves, then did what they could toward washing their clothes.

While their garments dried in the hot sunlight they examined their surroundings more closely.

They were on the opposite flank of the mountain to that they had climbed. The terrain was just as bare—huge boulders, lines of old lava flows, a surface of black, volcanic soil and sharp fragments of obsidian. Here and there a stunted pine struggled valiantly with an antagonistic environment, and small, delicately beautiful mountain flowers peeped from crevices in the rock.

Again they were conscious of the museum-like stillness of the island, intensified here in the high places to a monumental calm, but after the crushing silence of underground it had lost much of its sinister quality.

When their clothing was dry, and they were once more dressed, Bob said: "I wonder where the Walker is? Do you think we can get back to the plane without meeting it?"

"We're not going back to the plane, Bob. At least, I'm not. The Walker remains to be smashed, and he's here—near us somewhere. If you're with me, we'll make our play, and bust him—or he'll get us. That's what we started out to do, and that's the play I'm making."

Welford drew out his automatic and examined it carefully.

"O.K., Mac," he said quietly. "Let's go. And we'd better get started. It's getting late."

"We won't have to go any-

where. Don't forget he's hunting us. Got a match? I used mine up in the tunnel."

Welford handed him a pad of matches and watched silently while MacGlennon broke some of the limbs from a nearby pine and heaped them together on the rocks. He took his cigarettes from their package and pushed the paper under the wood. When all was ready he stood up.

"Here's the plan, Bob," he said. "You see those boulders? You'll notice the two of them are standing close together. The aisle between them winds round and comes out further down the slope. I went part way down it when I went up to the spring the first time. Right behind that boulder is another one. You can see it from here. It's flat on top, and anyone lying up there would be invisible from the ground. It's just the place I've been looking for.

"Now. You get up on top the boulder. Lie flat, but be ready to move like hell when the time comes. I'll light this fire, and when the Walker sees the smoke, he'll head this way. He can't be sure he got us down there, and he'll come to investigate. I'll be standing between the two boulders. When he comes for me I'll make a dive past the rock you're on. He'll have to pass right under you — the aisle's too narrow for him to swing wide. And then you shoot — for the lens, remember. You'll take my gun, too, and let him have all the slugs you can throw. And if I'm right the Walker is going to stop walking — for good."

He snapped open the cartridge chamber of his gun, made sure it was loaded, and held it out. Welford made no move to take it.

"Well? What's the matter?"

"It's all O.K.," said Bob, "but one thing. How did you get nominated to be bait for this damned tin killer? I'm to sit comfortably up on a rock, out of the way, with both guns, while you, unarmed, let this monstrosity chase you? Nothing doing, Mac. Think of something else."

"Just a minute, Bob. Think it over a minute. You think this set-up lets you out easy? Suppose the Walker gets me. Suppose I'm wrong, and you can't smash that lens — or you miss. In that case, it's just you and the Walker from then on — unless he gets you, too. Just you and the Walker, Bob — here, alone. And you not knowing when it's coming, day or night. Old Captain Trevichord told us what that was like.

"No, Bob, I'm taking the easy part. Besides that, you're the better shot. Come on, let's get started."

After some further argument Welford reluctantly allowed him-

self to be led along the aisle between the boulders to the high, flat rock that overlooked it.

MacGlennon climbed it with him, saw that his plan was feasible. When satisfied, he turned to climb down, then halted, and, with a trace of self-consciousness, held out his hand. Bob gripped it tightly. The two men stared long into each other's eyes.

"O. K.?"

"O. K., Mac."

The lank Scot dropped quickly down into the aisle between the boulders, where the shadows were already beginning to gather. He moved along it slowly, clearing it as best he could of loose rocks and bits of timber.

The chill damp vanished as he stepped out into the sunlight. He noted the sun's position. There were still hours before sunset—plenty of time.

He struck one of Bob's matches and touched it to the cigarette package. It caught and flared up. He piled on dry wood he had picked up among the boulders.

When the little fire was crackling energetically he piled on the greener wood, then returned to the entrance to the aisle, took up his position between the two boulders. He waited.

## CHAPTER VII
### Can the Walker Be Killed?

The sea wind whispered among the rocks, the fire crackled. Other than that the soundless peace held everything entranced. To MacGlennon, a hushed expectancy was added to the heavy silence. The whole island was waiting, in the reddening sunlight. Its green slopes, dropping away from him, were motionless, tense; the darkening sea a flat calm.

A trickle of thick smoke worked its way through the green branches, climbed sluggishly and was caught, whisked away by the wind. It came thicker, darker, less easily dispersed. Then it stood above him, a defiant, black scrawl against the soft blue of the sky. A challenge.

MacGlennon waited. Every sense was alert, taut. His grey eyes scanned each boulder in turn, darted from side to side, alert for the slightest movement.

There came the sudden, clear clang of metal.

MacGlennon froze, staring. Far down the slope something moved. A sapling pine was twitched aside and the Walker stepped forward into the sunlight, gleaming, polished.

It was in no haste. It stood there, expressionless, unrevealing, apparently surveying him. It was too far, he hoped, for the light-beam. It would have to come closer. It *would* come closer.

But how near dare he let it approach? His eyes ached from the furious concentration of their

gaze. Half-crouched, his sweating palms against the rock walls, he waited.

The Walker went into motion with a military precision. It advanced without hurry, and without hesitation. A tentacle suddenly sprang out of its coil on the flat fore-end of the thing. It motioned, curling and waving, in a weirdly insectine manner. In the tiny ports set in the front end the sunlight picked out deep lights like the spark in a living eye. The curious, red hieroglyphics—also on the fore part—shone with a crimson luster.

MacGlennon waited, although his legs ached to run. The Walker steadily advanced.

Without warning, with no sound, the metal thing launched itself forward. In great bounds, clearing the dwarf pines and low boulders, it came up the slope. A clock-like ticking began.

Mac waited no longer. Like a sprinter from the mark he plunged into the shadowy aisle. The light-beam smashed and crackled against the boulder where he had stood.

Welford lay flat on the rock, the sun beating on his back. He knew he had not been waiting long when he heard the crash of the light-beam, but it seemed an eternity. During those few minutes the silence of the island had become baleful, malignant.

With the crash of the light-beam a frightful doubt stormed over him. Had Mac been . . . ? The sudden, swift, wild clatter of his friend's footsteps reassured him.

Forgetting instructions, forgetting everything, Bob surged to his feet with an echoing yell, answered, to his surprise, by a booming, reverberating clangor from the Walker.

The sound warned him, and he crouched low. MacGlennon tore past, hidden by the shoulder of rock, and close, dangerously close, came the Walker. It had evidently determined on a kill this time, for it charged heedlessly through the narrow aisle, its metal body slamming into the rocky walls at each turning.

Bob straightened, legs wide, the two guns, pointing down, seeming to strain forward in his hands.

The Walker crashed into the wall, slued into view, grotesque, bizarre, a being unbelievable. There, below him, was the vital lens. Bob fired.

The world dissolved into chaos. A golden fountain of light smote him. It tossed him aloft. An agony ran through him; then he dropped into darkness.

MacGlennon, when he passed the rock on which Bob lay concealed, slackened his pace. He knew if their plan failed there was no hope, no need to run

further. And he was sure it would not fail. Bob was a marksman, and if bullets could pierce that lens the Walker's time was ended.

He heard the bell-like clanging as the metal body collided with the rock. And then the sudden thunder of the guns. The next instant there was a dazzling flash of light, and a terrific explosion lifted him, flung him forward, battered him with bits of rock and flying debris. He fell sprawling, rolled over and over, to come to a jarring stop against the foot of a boulder.

Dazed, he lay there while the echoes rolled across the island; while the shaken air slowly settled.

MacGlennon rolled over, sat up. His brain began to clear and he stood up gingerly. No bones broken, but he was sore and bruised all over, and had a nasty cut over the eye.

What had happened? Where was Bob? The Walker? He stumbled toward the spot where the flat-topped rock should have been, but the scene looked unfamiliar. Broken fragments of rock tripped him. Abruptly he stumbled over a length of metal. He picked it up, stared at it uncomprehendingly.

At one end it was burnt, scorched; at the other, grey — a polished, glistening gun-metal.

Slowly MacGlennon's eyes widened and his hands tightened on the mute fragment. He lifted his head and stared about him, then began to run.

"Bob! Bob, where are you? We've done it! We've smashed the Walker!"

He almost fell into the pit, with its litter of unearthly, incomprehensible bits of shattered machinery. Destruction was everywhere — boulders were smashed, splintered, split. The earth about the pit was blackened, raw; rocks were fused.

The flat-topped boulder was now two, split clean across its centre, as though a gargantuan knife had sliced through it. Its face was pitted, mutilated, scarred by heat, and bits of shapeless metal were driven into it.

It took him long anxious minutes to find Welford — twenty dreadful minutes in which he dared not think of what he might find. And when he finally found him, more than twenty feet from the boulder, he thought his worst fears were realized.

Bob was lying in a hollow, a small pine crushed under him. His shirt was all but ripped off him, his eye-brows and short beard burnt almost away. A sliver of metal protruded from one shoulder, and he was bleeding from a score of minor cuts.

MacGlennon sprang to his side, placed a hand on his chest, and felt, with a gasp of thanksgiving, the strong beat of his heart.

That sliver of metal — If he pulled it out, would Bob bleed to death? But it would have to come out — it couldn't be left there. It was deep, and tightly embedded, high in the shoulder. Too high for the lung, thank God. While these thoughts raced through Mac's mind, he was pulling gently at the dagger-like splinter. It yielded at last and came out, and was followed by surprisingly little blood. Mac sighed with relief. No vein or artery touched.

He got water from the nearby spring, tore his own shirt into strips for bandage. For an hour he worked over the unconscious man; all efforts to revive him were in vain.

It was nearing sunset. The globular, dull-orange sun hung like a ripe fruit above the empty edge of the sea. Although the wind was dropping it was getting colder.

MacGlennon got Bob's limp body across his shoulders and started down the slope.

They stood together on the beach three days later. The sun had set, and the swift, tropic darkness was already closing over the vast world of sky and water. MacGlennon stared out into the indefinite distance, watching the deepening indigo of the sea, and the purple approach of night.

"How about telling me this theory you've had about the Walker?" asked Welford. "You were right — we smashed the thing, but what was it, Mac? What in God's Name was it?"

"Haven't you guessed, Bob? You know what happened when your bullets smashed that lens."

"You mean — you mean, the thing wasn't alive at all? It was only a machine?"

"What else? A robot. But by God," his voice deepened with respect' "what a piece of machinery the Walker was. Why, Bob, that thing could think! Whatever master craftsman built the Walker—"

"But that's it, Mac — nobody could have built a thing like that. We don't know enough. It's impossible."

"*We* don't know enough, but the Masters did."

"The Masters — ?"

"The Masters the Walker mentioned. Those he was waiting for."

"Who were they?"

"Yes. Who were they?" MacGlennon's voice was low. "Listen, Bob. Here's the story as I piece it together. Little by little I was picking up the threads — from Trevichord's manuscript, from things the Walker said, from what I saw and what I know about this region.

"Remember what I said about the mystery of the Pacific? It's ancient, Bob, ancient. There are men who claim that the Egyptians, the Mayas, the Aztecs and

Incas were nothing but colonies that Mu had established before it sank under the ocean.

"They say Mu was a country of tremendously advanced knowledge, and there's no doubt that those civilizations of Central America, that appeared so suddenly in the heart of the jungle, had an excellent knowledge of astronomy. According to these men, the colonies of Mu — Egypt, Maya, and the others — gradually sank back to barbarism, after their mother country was gone.

"There's no question about the inexplicable wreckage scattered around the Pacific — ruins of huge walls, broken obelisks, parts of indecipherable inscriptions, and queer statuary. They're still to be seen on some of the islands. Where did they come from? Who built them?

"Maybe the people of Mu. I don't know. But somebody, or something, was here. That's what I'm trying to establish. Far back in the past something was here in the Pacific — and that's what I started with when we met the Walker.

"When we read Trevichord's story, I was inclined to think as you did — that the man was delirious. But there was too much evidence backing him up. The thing that spoke to you at night; the tracks in the sand; the thing that yelled at us from the hill; and last, the burns on Trevichord's skeleton. Before we left that cave I was convinced we were up aganst something — something nobody but Trevichord and his men had ever had to face before.

"I knew it was unlike anything else. It was not human, but it spoke to us — and it had lived for at least one hundred and fifty years, for it called us Trevichord.

"Then that night it went after us and I shot at it. Do you remember that shot? That's what tipped me off to the truth. When I fired and hit the Walker it rang like metal. And I knew I had it. Nothing else would explain the fact that the thing had survived the attacks of Trevichord's men, unless you wanted to believe in evil spirits.

"It wasn't alive. It was a machine — a robot. Trevichord himself told us so, when he described his own fatal last encounter with the Walker. He said he attacked it with his cutlass, after firing both pistols in vain, and that it was like striking at steel.

"Well," went on MacGlennon, "there were some things that did not tie in very well with the idea of a marvelous machine running loose on the island. What kept it going, for one thing? It had to have fuel, and there didn't seem any place on the island where it could get it. There were other things, but that matter of fuel had me down.

"And then, one afternoon in the plane, when we were shooting our call out, it came to me—I knew I had the answer.

"What would the builders of the Walker use for fuel? To build a thing like that they had to have knowledge that would make our scientists, our brainest men, look like witch-doctors.

"They'd take the best source of fuel we know, the one that's always ready, always there—right overhead. The sun!

"You know we can generate power from sunlight. A square sheet of copper, twenty feet on a side, coated with an alloy of selenium and silver, will generate a horse-power of electric energy. Cumbersome, impractical, and costly. But with the brains that built the Walker working on it, it wasn't anything like that. They did it with that lens on the Walker's back. That was his mouth, if you want to call it that, and he ate sunlight. Remember how we found him, standing there in the full flood of sunshine?

"There it was. I had it all. All I had postulated was the lens. I had to see the back of the thing to be sure of that. And that was the reason I wanted to get close to the Walker. After I saw the lens I just gambled that we could smash it. It was a foregone conclusion that, with his fuel gone, the Walker was done. I didn't expect the explosion, but I should have. I'm sorry I let you in for that, Bob."

"Forget it, Mac. Good Lord, how could you know that! I think you did well to work out so much. And so you think the Walker was built by the inhabitants of Mu, or some race, far advanced in knowledge, that lived here in the Pacific thousands of years ago?"

"Aye. Perhaps these islands of the Pacific were the scene of a great ancient empire. Can't you picture it? Strange cities rising where now there is only jungle—strange machines, strange men, erecting the civilization of another age.

"And then something happens, and they go, and never come back. The giant walls crumble, the cities fall before the years, and the sun and the storm that they bring. The jungle creeps back. Islands sink and rise, and volcanos burn or bury the wreckage. And now there is nothing left but a few shards, a few piled stones, and some broken columns, and inscriptions we can't read.

"Maybe that's the story. Maybe they had mines here. That's what the Walker was for you to know. He said he was a trobbercamb—a digger. In other words a digging machine. And when you asked him where he came from he told you he was here. I think he meant he was built here. Further, he said he was called Ava-Stob-

Ava. I don't think that was a name—I think it was a number. It sounds like a number, because the syllable 'Ava' is repeated; for example, as in 707. That would mean that there were more like him, or he was one of a number of different types of machine. Maybe he was forgotten, or deserted, when his builders went away.

"But all that's just guessing, Bob. But one thing I know. We have glanced down a door Time left open, and seen and spoke to Mystery, and the remote past. But let's get back to that radio. I've rigged up a hand charger for those batteries. We ought to be able to get a little distance now. You signal and I'll turn the crank."

THE END

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*Quite a while ago, at one of the first fan gatherings we ever attended, we overheard a rather sharp-witted middle-ager ask a gangling youth to name his favorite s-f writer. Would it be Asimov? Heinlein? Van Vogt? But, no, without hesitation, the boy blurted out, "Edmond Hamilton." Why? Because in almost every Hamilton story, he explained, there was a sheer storytelling power that never let him down. The older fan nodded politely. — But though some would have to wait for "Requiem" and "Sunfire" before they'd agree, those of us lucky enough to read early Hamilton—such as "Intelligence Undying"—know exactly what that boy meant—and we've known it all along.*

# INTELLIGENCE UNDYING

**By EDMOND HAMILTON**

**Illustrator: MOREY**



THE young chemistry instructor, chatting with two fellow-teachers in one of the halls of Mid-western University, had no notion that his next words were to change all human history to come.

It was in the most casual of conversations that he spoke, nodding toward the stooped, elderly, gray-haired man who had just limped past them in the hall.

"Doctor Hanley looks pretty feeble lately. I expect his work is about done—too bad, too."

Then he added with more liveliness, "Say, did I tell you how I made out in the poker game last night?"

That young man never dreamed what he had done. He never even knew that Doctor John Hanley had heard him.

Nor did anyone else know until on a night some weeks later,

young Edwin Snow visited the elderly scientist.

There was a curious friendship between the old and the younger man, between the world-renowned biophysicist who was supposed to think only of his work, and the quiet, modest young instructor in English literature.

Everyone else at Midwestern was awed by Doctor Hanley's great reputation. His infrequent lectures were listened to with bated breath by students striving to understand. Even the President of the University approached him with the deference due to a superior.

But young Snow had come to Mid-western and had seen what the others had failed to see, that in spite of all his eminence Doctor Hanley was a lonely old man. So he had disregarded the scientist's fame, which indeed Snow's unscientific mind could not appreciate, and had made overtures of simple friendship. In a few months he was Hanley's closest, almost his only friend.

At least two nights a week the gray-haired, impatient-faced and acid old scientist and the spectacled, smiling, easy-going young instructor sat in Hanley's house, and smoked and talked till midnight. But on this night Doctor Hanley was different. He stared for a while at the younger man from under his gray brows, and then spoke abruptly. "Snow, you know I've been busy lately on private research. To-night I'm going to tell you What I've been doing."

The young English teacher took his pipe from his mouth. "If you like. The chances are I won't understand you anyway."

"I'll make you understand, all right," the scientist said a little grimly.

He hesitated a moment, then spoke more slowly. "Snow, a few weeks ago I heard someone, a young fool over there at the University, say something about me that brought me up short.

"It suddenly made me realize what I never realized before. It made me realize that my life, my work, are practically finished."

Snow looked at him with more attention. "I wouldn't let a few chance-heard words upset me if I—" he started to say.

Doctor Hanley interrupted forcefully. "I tell you, it's true. I never realized it before, I couldn't realize that life could be so short, but it's so."

"I'm almost seventy now. The physicians I went to told me that my heart may pop out any time, that I have only months at best. It's all over, my life, my work, the work I planned to do in the future, all over, finished."

He stared broodingly into the fire, his hard eyes dreaming.

"That a human life can be so short! Why, it seems only yesterday that I was your age, starting to work. Just yesterday!"

"The things I've planned to do, the problems I've always meant to solve, the secrets I've meant to discover!"

He made a harsh movement with his hand. "And now it will never be done. It's taken all my life really to learn the fundamentals of my science, to get the tools and skill to do great things, and now when I'm ready at last to do them, this miserable body of mine fails me and it's all lost."

Edwin Snow nodded, his eyes deeply sympathetic behind his glasses. "It has always seemed hard to me that we should have to die just when we have at last learned to live," he said.

"I'm not thinking of myself, not of any individual," Doctor Hanley declared. "It's man, the race, I'm thinking of.

"Snow, have you ever stopped to think what progress might be if we did not all have to spend half or more of our lives learning what the world already knows?

"Suppose a child were born into the world knowing all that I now know? That child would not have to spend years learning things already known, but could go on from present knowledge; he could spend all his life contributing to new knowledge.

"Think of the discoveries he could make, the problems he could solve! He could go deeper into the mysteries that confront us than any man has ever been able to do."

Young Snow's whimsical, pleasant face wrinkled in thought. "It's certainly an attractive fancy." he said.

Doctor Hanley was silent for a few moments, eyeing the younger man strangely.

Then he said, "It's no fancy, Snow. I'm going to do it."

"What?" The young instructor was startled out of his usual easy-going calm. "Going to do what?"

"I'm going to transmit my intelligence, my memory, my mind, to a newborn child's brain," the scientist answered.

Edwin Snow looked so earnestly at him that despite his seriousness, Doctor Hanley smiled bleakly.

"No, my wits aren't turned. I'm really going to do the thing. I've been working on it these last weeks, ever since I realized that my life was almost over.

"I said to myself, 'If I could just transfer my mind, my knowledge, to a newborn child, *he* could go ahead and do all the things I won't live to do, without having to waste time learning. And I've found a way to transfer my mind like that."

"But how—what—," the now thoroughly amazed Snow began to stammer when a wave of Hanley's hand cut him short.

"It's simple enough at bottom, though it has entailed the devising of wholly new principles of apparatus."

He leaned forward. "When we come into this world, Snow, our minds are a blank sheet except for certain reflexes which we all inherit. But from our birth onward, our minds are affected by all about us, our reflexes are conditioned, as the behaviorists say. All we experience is printed on the sheet of our minds.

"I will try to explain to you how this is done. The seat of the human intelligence is in the cortex or outer layer of the cerebrum, which is the upper and bigger part of the brain. The cortex consists of a vast number of gray nerve-cells or neurones, some concerned with sight sensations, some with taste sensations, and so on.

"When someone gives you a strange fruit and you first look at it, the sensation passes from your eye retinas up the optic nerves to the group of sensory cells in the cortex that receive visual impressions. Then when you bite the fruit a sensation of pleasant taste is transmitted to the taste-cells of the cortex, and thereafter between sight-cells and taste-cells a certain individual connection is thereby formed.

"Because of that connection, the next time you look at such a fruit the stimulation of your sight-cells will continue along that previously formed connection and will stimulate the sensation of pleasant taste in the brain's taste-cells. In other words, merely looking at the fruit this time will cause your brain to feel a sensation, an associated memory, of pleasant taste. For the first experience established a definite physical connection between certain of your visual and taste neurones, and that is what you mean by saying that you *learned* that the fruit tastes good.

"In the same way that you learn to *know* things like that, you learn to *do* things. The first time you perform some action requiring skill, it is hard to do, because the connections between the brain's neurones which receive sensations and thus see what to do, and those which issue commands to the muscles to do them, are not well formed. But each time you perform that action the connections between the sensory neurones and motor centers are better formed, and so you soon perform the action without conscious thought, so well are the connections formed.

"Everything a human being learns, therefore, simply establishes new connections between the nerve-cells of the brain.

There are millions of nerve-cells in the cortex of the cerebrum and therefore you will see that the different connections and combinations between them are infinite in number. No two people ever have exactly the same combinations of connections between their neurones, which is to say that no two people ever have exactly the same mind, memories, and knowledge.

"As I said, a newborn child has no such knowledge-connections in his cortex at all—he has not yet formed any. Now if I take that child immediately after birth and establish in his brain exactly the same web of intricate neurone-connections I have built up in my own brain, he will have exactly the same mind, memories, knowledge, as I have. He will remember everything that has happened to me, everything I have ever learned, have ever done. He will not be I, yet his mind will be exactly identical with my mind!"

Edwin Snow's pipe had dropped from his hand and the young instructor was staring at the scientist with protruding eyes.

"Do you mean that you can do *that?*"

Doctor Hanley nodded. "I can. I've devised a way to *scan* my brain's intricate web of neurone connections by electrical impulses, and by means of those impulses to build up an exactly identical web of neurone connections in the infant's brain. Just as a television scanning-disk can break down a complicated picture into impulses that reproduce the picture elsewhere."

Snow got to his feet, staring at the old scientist in an ill-concealed species of horror.

"But what child—"

"That's all arranged," waved Hanley. "Plenty of infants are born in this city each year whose mothers don't want them.

"I've arranged for such an infant to be given to me as soon as born, a white male child. I will adopt the child legally and as soon as it is here I will transfer my mind to it.

"You understand, this experiment means death for me, physically. The shock of those searching electrical impulses in my brain will without doubt kill me, in my present feeble condition.

"But the counter-impulses, that build up my neurone-connections in the child's brain, will not harm him. And his mind will at once be the same as mine. Even before he can walk or talk, he will have all the knowledge and memories that I've amassed."

"There's something unholy about it!" burst from Snow. "To put one of the greatest scientific minds in the world, a mentality with a life-time of experience behind it, into a newborn child!"

"Man, can't you see what it will mean to the world!" exclaimed the scientist passionately. "Can't you see what John Hanley 2nd, will be able to give the world? He won't have to waste time learning but will go on from where I'm leaving off.

"And not only he, but others beyond him. When his life nears its end, he can pass on his mind, *my* mind, to another child to John Hanley, 3rd. And that infant will become possessor of all the mental power build up in two lifetimes.

"Why, it can go on and on, my mind passing down from generation to generation, growing and growing, giving to the world gifts of power of which it does not now dream. An undying intelligence that grows ever greater!"

His eyes flamed with the vision. Then the flame passed, and almost complacently he spoke to the dazed young man.

"You're to have part in this too, Snow. I'm naming you as guardian of John Hanley 2nd, in my will, to care for him, for *me,* after this body of mine is dead."

Edwin Snow shook his head, that horror still strong in his eyes.

"I'm not sure that I want anything to do with the thing at all, Hanley."

Yet two weeks later Snow was in the scientist's private laboratory, when Hanley, wire-taut with excitement, prepared to effect the incredible transfer of his mentality to the new-born baby an ambulance had just brought to the house.

On a prepared table Hanley placed the scrawny, squalling red baby. Beside it was another table, and at the head of the two tables was a metal stand bearing a squat, enigmatical bulk of apparatus. Tentacles and cables joined it to other mechanisms in the room, pulsing tubes in it glowed violet through slits in its metal cover. From it led two insulated wires that each ended in a metal cap, one of them twice as large as the other.

Rapidly, gently, Hanley placed the smaller metal cap upon the head of the now dozing infant. Without speaking he laid a pencil and pad beside the child, then climbed upon the other table and adjusted the larger, metal helmet on his own head.

He reached for the controlling switch. "Remember, Snow," he warned, "you are not to touch the apparatus no matter what happens. It is set to turn itself off automatically at the proper time."

Snow swallowed, nodded, unable to speak. Hanley suddenly smiled at him. "Goodbye, Snow. Or should I say—*au revoir?*"

He threw the switch. The

mechanism on the stand hummed loud, and instantly Hanley sank back, his eyes closing.

The child too lay in stupor, breathing slowly. Edwin Snow watched them, conscious that he was trembling.

The incredible apparatus hummed on. Minutes passed, that seemed eternities to the watching teacher. Then a red light winked somewhere inside the apparatus and its humming abruptly died.

Edwin Snow bent hastily over Doctor Hanley, examined him with trembling hands. Even to his untrained eyes, but a moment was needed to show that the scientist was dead, his gray face set and cold.

Young Snow turned toward the infant. And as he did so, the child opened its eyes.

It looked up at him, steadily, and at the gaze of those strangely steady, brown eyes. Edwin Snow shuddered.

The child had such an expression in its eyes as he had never before seen in an infant's. Slowly, steadily, it turned its little head until it could look at Doctor Hanley's dead form.

Then its tiny hand moved uncertainly until it reached the pad and pencil beside it. With the preternaturally strong handgrasp of a newborn child, it clutched the pencil in its fingers.

The little hand moved awkwardly, the pencil scratched slowly, unsteadily, over the surface of the pad. Then it released the pencil. Mechanically Edwin Snow picked up the pad, and as he read the crudely scrawled, almost indecipherable letters, he uttered a shuddering sob.

"I-T W-O-R-K-E-D S-N-O-W. E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G'S A-L-L R-I-G-H-T A-N-D M-Y M-I-N-D I-S J-U-S-T T-H-E S-A-M-E."

John Hanley—John Hanley 21st—stood in taut attention beside a beryllium table upon which two beams of concentrated electrical force played upon a tiny speck of bismuth. In body, John Hanley, 21st, was a thin, bald man of middle age, with a severe mask of a face. But the blue eyes in that face were astoundingly in contrast to the rest of it, impatient, keen penetrating eyes, fixed with sowrd-like intensity on the bismuth speck.

Suddenly the silence of the silvery-walled, sunlit laboratory was broken as a door opened.

A young man entered, one clad like Hanley in a short white tunic and sandals. His dark, mobile young face was excited.

John Hanley turned in amazed indignation. "You, Kriss? You dare to enter without summons?"

The young man's features expressed utmost respect struggling with uncontrollable excitement.

"Your pardon, master, I know

I break the rules. But something has happened."

"Well, what is it?" Hanley demanded impatiently. "What's gone wrong now?"

Kriss pointed toward the silvery west wall of the laboratory. "Master, rocket-ships are fighting up there in the sky, many of them! They look like Northern and Southern battleships."

The scientist's blue eyes were incredulous. "Ships fighting —war—in this year 3144?" he exclaimed. "Impossible! There has been no war between the two great Federations for twelve centuries."

"Yet they are fighting now," Kriss persisted. "You can see from the balcony."

The scientist hesitated, glancing at the experiment on the table. "To leave now when I'm on the very verge of at last releasing atomic power—but yes, I must learn what is happening."

He reached abruptly and moved levers, and the twin electrical beams died. Then he strode toward the door.

He went, the obsequious, excited Kriss following closely, through splendid, silvery halls and connecting laboratories deserted now of their occupants. He emerged through a door into sunlight, and thin air of biting chill.

It was a small balcony, on which were a score of youngmen clad like himself and his follower. The balcony jutted from the edge of an oblong, flat-topped structure of silvery metal, which housed the laboratories of the world's greatest scientist.

This silvery parallelopipedon was perched sheer on the edge of a great cliff and looked out over scores of soaring, snow-crowned mountain peaks and vertical, black chasms. John Hanley, 21st had established his laboratories here in the great peaks of the North American Rockies where he would be far from the interferences and annoyances of the teeming cities that benefited by his discoveries.

John Hanley strode through his respectful young servants on the balcony and stared with them into the western sky.

There above the distant peaks hovered a boiling ball of whirling black specks that shot tiny jets of white fire at each other.

John Hanley snapped an order and swiftly a stubby-looking telescope was brought, through which he peered at that distant aerial conflict.

He turned from the instrument in a moment, his expression one of shaken incredulity.

"Northern and Southern ships fighting there, yes! This means that war has broken out somehow between the Northern and Southern Federations."

His face flushed angry red.

"The fools, the blind fools! After I've worked a thousand years and more to give them greater and greater powers, and they use them—"

He broke off, turned toward the uncomprehending, listening young men.

"You who are my servants, is your allegiance now to me or to the Federations from which you come?" he asked them.

Kriss answered for them all. "To you, of course, master! Did we not all swear to execute all your commands, to become the hands and limbs by which you could carry out your work?"

"Very well!" Hanley approved. "Quick, then, there is work for you to do before any of those ships get here. Yes, some of them will be here, whichever manage to destroy the others."

His rapid orders sent the young men running into the laboratories. Quickly they began assembling a strange and bulky mechanism.

They knew not what it was they were building, had no slightest comprehension of what lay behind their master's orders. It was enough for them that he so ordered. His was the brain and they were but extensions of his limbs.

Thirty minutes later the work was finished and John Hanley, 21st, stood with his servants on the balcony and watched the two surviving rocket-ships approach. He and the young men now wore curious circular shields of metal over their ears.

The two fish-like battleships came on fast with thudding rocket-blasts, and the crossed arrow of the Northern Federation could be discerned on their prows. They were the victors and the only survivors of the fight. They landed on the roof of the silvery building and down upon the balcony came a little troop of men from them.

These men wore blue harnesses over their tunics and flame-tubes at their belts, and their faces still flamed with light of battle. But their leader bowed with deep respect as he faced the chill, immobile figure of the scientist.

"Sir we are of the Rocket Fleet of the Northern Federation and have been sent to protect you," he said rapidly. "War has been declared between the two Federations."

"We met a Southern force bound here, no doubt to abduct you, and, in destroying them, all of us but two ships were also destroyed."

"What are your orders regarding me?" John Hanley, 21st, asked coldly.

The Northern captain's eyes flickered but he did not lose his attitude of deep respect.

"We are to take you for your own protection to the Capitol,

sir. There you will be housed in safety and comfort befitting the world's greatest scientist."

"Safety and comfort," repeated John Hanley bitterly. "What you mean is that you're taking me so that I will invent weapons for you to destroy the Southern Federation with, weapons that will depopulate half of the earth.

"And the Southern Federation had the same idea and sent ships here to get me, only they didn't send quite as many as your headquarters did.

"I thought that after all the great gifts that I and my predecessors, twenty other John Hanley's, made to the world, the comforts and powers we gave it, it would have forgotten this ancient madness of war as I had forgotten it.

"I see now that I was wrong. You've taken all the things I gave you, and all the time you've kept plotting to murder each other. And to make me part of that wholesale murder!"

The captain, looking a little doubtful of his own temerity, stepped forward and laid his hand on the scientist's shoulder.

"I am sorry, sir—but my orders—we must go now—"

Without moving from where he stood, John Hanley, 21st, pressed the switch at the end of a cord running along the balacony rail.

Instantly the Northern captain and his followers swayed and staggered, pitched wildly into each other, losing their balance and falling on the silvery floor of the balcony.

They cried out as they fell, and one got his flame-tube out and loosed a random burst of white fire that angled sharply up and struck John Hanley's side. The scientist pressed his hand to the scorched spot on his side, and meanwhile his young servants, like himself unaffected by this staggering madness, leaped forward and disarmed the soldiers.

John Hanley 21st looked down at the fallen men, who were struggling vainly to get to their feet. Each time they raised themselves a little they overbalanced and fell again.

The scientist said icily to them, "You begin to comprehend that I, who have given you almost all the powers you possess, have powers still of which you know nothing."

"What—what have you done?" gasped the captain, ceasing his vain efforts to rise.

"Something that you could hardly understand even when I tell you, you who are content with the rest of the world to receive all *your* scientific discoveries from my brain," said Hanley.

"In there in the laboratories is a machine that broadcasts sounds, sonic waves inaudible to your ears or any human ears

because their wave-lengths lie outside the range of human audibility. And those sonic waves violently disturb the semi-circular canals in your inner ears.

"You do not know, you who think only of killing, that inside the human ear lie three little semi-circular tubes or canals containing liquid, and that by the position of that liquid in the canals the body can tell when it stands erect and when it leans, and so is able to balance itself enough to walk and stand and sit.

"The sonic waves I am broadcasting disturb the liquid in those canals and so you cannot stand or walk. And these continuous waves of mine are passing around the whole globe, and nowhere on earth now can men, except those with me here, stand, not any more than you can."

He uttered a word and one of the servants hurried out with a televisor screen. John Hanley 21st touched its pointers and scene after scene appeared rapidly in the screen.

Cities appeared in it, great metropolises of bedlam in which the streets were choked with stumbling, crawling people, none of whom could stand erect.

Mighty rocket ships were seen driving aimlessly through the sky, their officers unable to stand up to their controls.

The world had suddenly lost man's achievement, the ability to stand erect.

John Hanley 21st spoke into the instrument, his voice strangely level and emotionless.

"People of the Northern and Southern Federations, men and women of earth, it is I, John Hanley 21st, who have loosed this staggering terror on you.

"For long I have given you power and now you would use that power to make war on and destroy each other. I see now that not only must I drag you upward in material progress but that I also must rule you.

"Therefore I now assume role over you and I will appoint those who are to execute my commands. My will shall be law from now on, and nations are no more. Leaders of the Federations, do you agree?"

From the instrument came the gasping, confused answers of dozens of voices, terror-filled. "We hear! We agree!"

"Then obey my first command, which is to cease immediately all war and preparations for war."

"My second edict is that in case of my death he whom I shall designate as my heir, as John Hanley 22nd, shall be obeyed by you all, as I am."

He snapped off the instrument and then touched the switch at the rail. From the instrument came a world's choked cries of relief.

John Hanley, faced the dazed, unsteady captain and his men, who had risen to their feet.

"Your ship is fast," he said. "Go instantly to the nearest city and bring back a newborn male child. Hurry!"

As the rocket-ship roared away, the scientist's servants sprang to his side. "You are wounded, sir!" they cried.

"Never fear, I will live until that ship returns with a child," John Hanley told them inflexibly. "Help me inside."

They assisted him into his own innermost laboratory and there, at his command, they laid him upon one of two tables, placing beside them a squat, bulky apparatus which he ordered brought from a cabinet.

He lay there silently until the drumming blasts of a rocket-ship came to their ears from outside. A few moments later the Northern captain entered hurriedly, a carefully wrapped burden in his arms.

"The child, sir. It is a new born one we got from the nearest State Nursery."

"Put it on this other table," John Hanley, 21st, directed.

Then he raised himself a little. "I name this child John Hanley, 22nd, and my successor. Do you all hear?

"Very well. Now all of you go away."

"But, sir, we cannot leave you now when—" they cried.

John Hanley pointed to the door, and they went.

With feeble hands John Hanley adjusted the two metal caps of the apparatus, one on the infant's head and one on his own.

He examined with dulling eyes the connections, saw that all was correct, and then put his hand on the switch.

He smiled at the infant. Another body, another life, for this undying mind of his. The atomic power — he wouldn't complete that in this body, but his mind would do it in this child's body. John Hanley, 22nd, would go on and do it.

He was going to die but his mind, his experience, his knowledge, would not die but would still live on for the world. Still with the smile on his tired face, John Hanley, 21st, closed the switch.

John Hanley 416th — or the Great Jonanli, as he was worshipped by the humans of this year 22,918 — sat in his spherical metal observation chamber a thousand miles inside earth's crust.

It was a violet-lit globular chamber, two thousand feet in diameter, crammed with scientific instruments that would have been unintelligible to any other man on earth. It lay here at the bottom of a shaft bored down through

the soil and rock and magma.

In it John Hanley, 416th, had been for many months investigating the interior stresses of the earth. He needed no sleep or food, only the necessary fatigue anti-toxins and nutrition injections which he had devised for himself.

Bodily, he was extremely small and slight, not much over four feet in height, his limbs smoothly rounded, his face almost effeminate in its prettiness. Only the spark in his pale blue eyes showed the vast force of the mind that dwelt in this slight body.

John Hanley rose from the bank of cryptic dials and quivering needles, which he had been examining for many hours.

He stretched a little, and looked at a chronometer on the wall.

"Eight months," he muttered. "Better see if all's going well up there."

Passing contempt showed itself on his face. "They'd never know or care if anything did go wrong, the way they leave everything to be done by the Great God Jonanli."

He turned toward the screens and dials that connected this subterranean observation chamber with his many other observation chambers on earth's surface.

Rapidly as John Hanley touched switches, he was connected visually, auditorily and tactually to those other chambers.

Some of them gave him views of great, sunlit garden-cities. In these beautiful park-like scenes many throngs of women and men, small of body and graceful and pretty as himself, were wandering, laughing, playing games.

John Hanley eyed them for but a moment before switching to other stations. These gave views of large factories and workshops, built in unihabited regions remote from the garden-cities.

Huge, automatic machines worked in them in an ordered wilderness of complex metal, turning forth all the necessaries of life and transporting them, without need of any directing human hand.

From other stations colossal electrical mechanisms could be seen controlling the weather, keeping temperature precipitation and humidity at unvarying constants without any human supervision.

Still other stations gave him a view of underground and undersea mines, all machine-operated. Everywhere were automatic recorders that told him at a glance the progress of the last months.

Satisfied, John Hanley switched to screens in his laboratories on the surface, all enclosed in a colossal cubical building that was the sacred Temple of Jonanli. There too recorders told him the progress of certain slow processes being tested in his ab-

sence. There too all was done by machinery, and none of the graceful humans were visible.

The last shift of scene brought his vision into an astronomical observatory where a great battery of flat, disk-like electro-cinema telescopes peered unceasingly at the heavens, slowly moving on their mounts. He examined the visual and spectroscopic records of these.

Suddenly, down there in the sphere a thousand miles under earth's surface, John Hanley started violently. He quickly shifted a control and ran through a section of the astronomical record again.

Then he cut off the instrument and stood for a brief time plunged in thought. Quickly the spell broke and he entered a short, torpedo-like projectile attached to the top of the sphere. He closed its doors, atomic power hissed from it, and it flashed up the vertical tunnel toward the surface of earth at great speed.

At the surface, he emerged directly into the Temple of Jonanli and went at once to the astronomical observatory. He turned certain cumbersome instruments toward the sun.

Two hours later the viewscreens in the garden-cities all over the world rang out a certain signal. It was the sacred call of Jonanli and quickly, hurriedly, the people of earth flocked to the nearest screens and waited.

They bowed themselves in deep reverence as the face of Jonanli himself appeared in the screen.

"My people," John Hanley addressed them from his observatory, "a great peril has come upon us.

"Our sun, which you, who know nothing of science, no doubt consider unchanging and eternal, is only a star like any other star. And it is about to undergo a change that in time occurs to all stars.

"Every star gets the energy it radiates by the breakdown of electrons in its own atomic structure. This continues until the atoms of the star have been so stripped of their planetary electrons that they can be packed together in exceedingly smaller space than before.

"When this condition reaches a certain stage, the instability of the star is so great that it collapses suddenly into a white sun only a fraction as large as the original sun. It becomes what was once called a "white dwarf" and thereafter gives off only a tiny fraction of the heat and light it formerly radiated.

"I have just discovered that our sun is about to become a 'white dwarf.' In a short time this thing is going to happen to our own sun, and thereafter our earth will receive so little heat and light that it will become a

frozen planet on which nothing can live."

There was stunned silence and then from the view-screens came back to him a tremendous, wailing outcry of terror.

"Save us, Jonanli! Save us from this death that comes upon us!"

"I will try to save you," John Hanley told them impatiently. "But you too must help. You must act like men.

"Panic will do you no good. There is but one course open for the race, to move to Mercury which is so close to the sun that it, alone of the planets, will be inhabitable and warm after the sun's collapse.

"It will first be necessary to prepare Mercury for human habitation, and then to move all of you there. There is small time to do this, but, if all help, it can be done. For the first time, Jonanli asks your help. Will you try to aid in saving yourselves?"

The only answers were cries of increased terror. "Have mercy on us, great Jonanli! Do not loose this death upon us!

"We have been wicked, we have not sufficiently worshipped you! But do not destroy us now."

"But I tell you you won't be destroyed if you'll work like men to save yourselves!" John Hanley cried.

"Be, merciful, Jonanli," was their reply.

"All things are in your hands —we pray you to let us live."

With an exclamation of anger John Hanley snapped off the instrument.

"Children!" he exclaimed to himself. "All the things I've done for them through the thousands of years, the tasks I've lifted from them, it's all made them weak children, solely dependent on my mind.

"And I thought that my mind, living forever and towering above theirs in knowledge, would let me make a super-race, where now it's made one of children who know no longer how to fight and do for themselves.

"Well, it's not too late to undo my error. Not if I can manage to save them from this thing—"

From the great temple of Jonanli, John Hanley reached and singlehandedly altered the processes and rhythms of earth's production.

The machines in the great workshops began to turn forth other machines, hordes of robots. They were unhuman in shape, but capable of greater variety of tasks than the more specialized mechanisms.

John Hanley concentrated a great host of these robots on building and equipping a fleet of space ships.

When this was done the robot-manned ships sailed at once for Mercury at his command, to prepare that sorched little planet

for coming human occupancy.

The robots left behind began construction of a still greater fleet of space ships of enormous size. The humans of earth helped in none of this but lay supine in terror, crying out constantly to Jonanli and staring in terror at the sun.

The sun was changing ominously, its light taking on a bluish tinge and then a violet. Its instability was increasing and the collapse would not long be delayed.

Meanwhile the robot-manned space-ships had reached Mercury. Across space John Hanley directed the robots in the tremendous task of preparing the planet. The first essential was to give the little planet a rotatory motion, since it had always turned the same face sunward.

This was done by pushing at the equator of the little world with immense beams of force, using the sun itself as a base and brace. Gradually Mercury began to spin and its rotatory motion steadily accelerated under the steady push.

Then came the task of giving the planet an atmosphere and hydrosphere. John Hanley's robots accomplished this under his orders by conducting chemical transmutation of elements on a colossal scale. Vast quantities of the rock substance of the planet were converted, atom for atom, into oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen that were combined into air and water vapor that formed a gaseous envelope for the little planet.

John Hanley's plans had seen to it that the molecules of this artificial atmosphere had a velocity far less than the 1500 feet a second velocity of the molecules in earth's atmosphere Thus Mercury, which, with its low surface gravity, would otherwise have been unable to hold the rapidly darting particles of an atmosphere, could retain this one.

The last work of the robots on Mercury was to erect cities for the housing of the people of earth, and to start into growth the plant-life that would assure a constant supply of oxygen to the new atmosphere. Then they returned to earth.

The aspect of the sun was now terrifying. Great changes could be seen with the naked eye on its surface and the air seemed full of electrical force, the whole solar system breathless. John Hanley ordered the embarkation of the people of earth in the great space fleet that had been prepared to transport them to Mercury.

Terrified as they were at the prospect, the people entered the ships at Jonanli's order. As they entered, robots detailed for the purpose administered to them certain drugs designed to prepare

them bodily for the lesser gravitation of the new world.

Then the ships sailed. The robots who manned them had orders to transport their human cargo to Mercury, and then the robots were to destroy themselves. John Hanley was taking no chance of the human race being supplanted on the new world by its own creations.

On the earth now were left only John Hanley himself and a host of robots who had not been needed to man the ships. John Hanley commanded these to destroy themselves, and calmly they did so. He remained, the only being left on earth.

His instruments told him that the end was at hand. From the roof of the mighty Temple of Jonanli, John Hanley watched that end. He saw the surface of the sun change and break as though it were boiling. Then the sun seemed suddenly shrinking.

Its color changed as it shrank, from yellow to pale gold to white. Almost before the eye could comprehend the extent of the change, the yellow, dazzling sun had become a little glowing white disk looking only a few times larger than one of the larger planets.

The sky above John Hanley darkened almost instantly, and a deep dusk fell upon earth. It was a dusk that would never end until earth itself ended. In that heavy twilight the stars became visible in the firmament, even close to the shrunken little sun.

A chill came quickly upon the air, and rapidly it grew colder. The flowers down in the deserted garden-cities curled and withered in the quick frost. A few flakes of snow drifted down through the heavy dusk.

John Hanley sat on, unmoving. He felt content, now. The peoples of earth would take up life on that new world, without him. They would cry out for Jonanli's help for a time, but soon under the pressure of circumstance they would learn once more to do for themselves, would become again a strong and self-reliant race.

He had been wrong in living as a single super-mind down through the ages. He saw that now, and now he was undoing that wrong. And he felt content now to bring an end to the life of his mind, to let the one undying intelligence in the world die at last.

His memory went back through the hundreds of bodies his mind had inhabited, through the changing centuries and milenniums even to that first John Hanley who had conceived the great plan. Strange, how he and his memories were still clearest in his mind.

The snow was falling heavily, now, and icy frost was covering the world as the cold increased. He did not feel the cold, he sup-

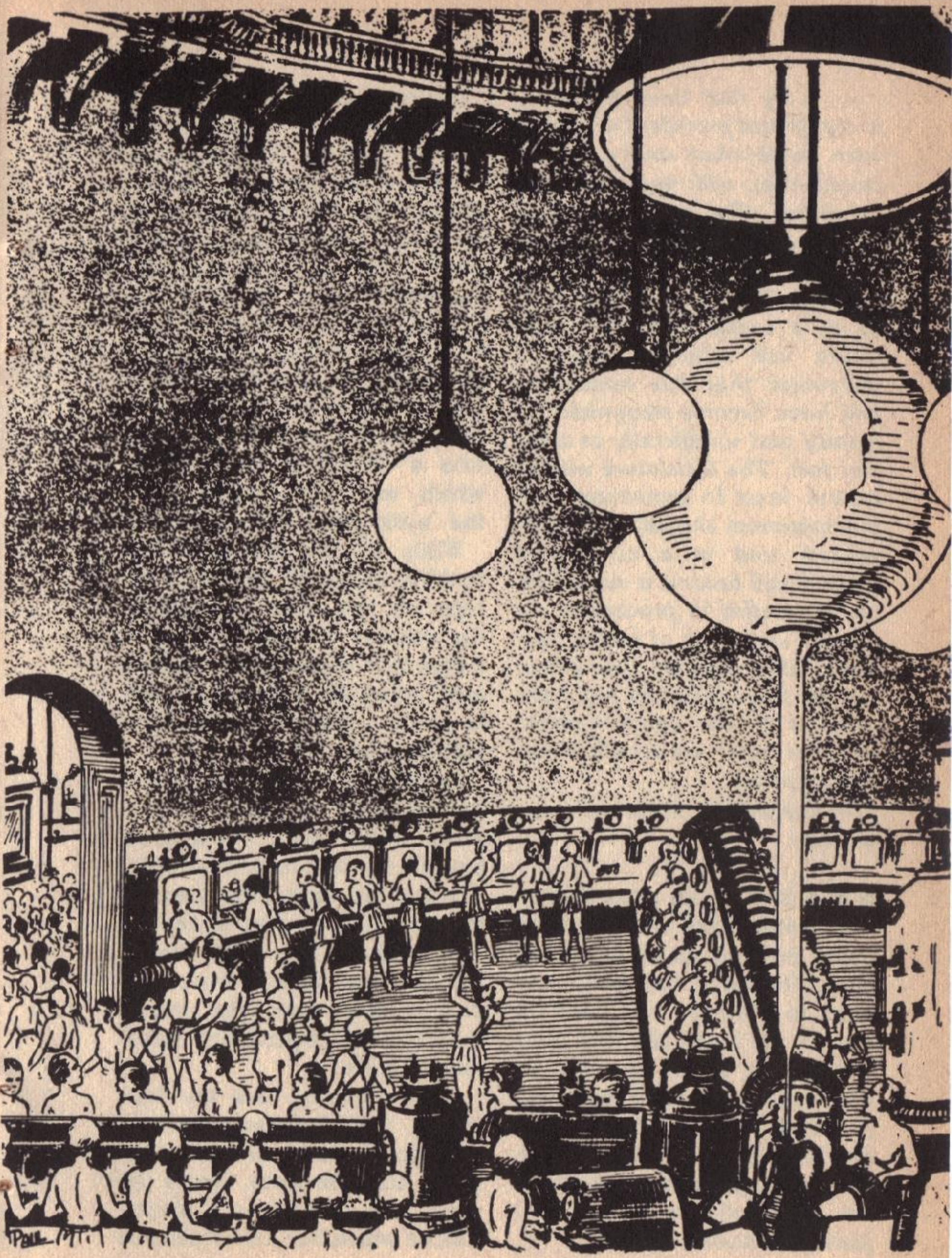
posed because he was too numb. The snow fell, and the frost fell, and the frost crept, and soon even the atmosphere was freezing and falling in great flakes. Only a small white mound on the great roof showed where sat the god of a world. THE END

*Anyone aspiring to a permanent place in the annals of science fiction doesn't really have to write very many top stories in order to get there. Simply follow the example of Wallace West—who started off (in 1929) with "The Last Man," then consolidated his position (in the thirties) with a few gems like "Plane People," and just recently came through with the timely "Glimpses of the Moon." And that's all there is to it, really, except for one thing—better make that first story of yours—as West did—a classic that can be read many times without losing its luster. But don't title it "The Last Man." That one's taken.*

# THE LAST MAN

By WALLACE G. WEST

*Illustrator:* FRANK R. PAUL



*. . . . By that time, however, a significant precedent will have been established and a lesson learnt that will not easily be forgotten. The superfluousness of men above a certain essential minimum will have become recognized officially and unofficially as a social fact. The legislature will establish laws to guarantee that this minimum. will have become recognized officially and unofficially as a social fact. The legislature will establish laws to guarantee that this minimum should not be surpassed, and in a very short while it will become a mere matter of routine to proceed to an annual slaughter of males who have either outlived their prime or else have failed to fulfill the promise of their youth in meekness general emasculateness and stupidity.*

*—Anthony M. Ludovici's Lysistrata.*

M-1 SAT in his glass demonstration cage and hated. He hated the endless, sultry afternoon. He hated the dusty museum in which he had spent all his life. He hated the limp trees of the park which stretched in all directions, their fronds, sagging and listless in the midsummer heat, half obscuring, half revealing the gigantic structures of the metropolis in which they panted for breath.

But most of all he hated himself! Why could he not have been born a woman? He stared enviously at the crowd of narrow-flanked flat-breasted workers, who stood outside the cage and gazed at him with dull curiosity on their soulless faces. Women at least had a purpose in life, he ruminated. They could work, straining their muscles and minds eternally at tasks that exhausted them, so that at night they sank into a stupor of forgetfulness which was only broken when the work gong sounded again.

While he, the last man, had nothing to do but appear in his cage on rest days to appease the workers' curiosity as to what a man had been during the dark ages when the human race was bi-sexual. Otherwise his time was his own.

Nobody molested him unless he attempted to leave the museum unattended. His keepers brought the best food obtainable, saw that his wants were attended to, and allowed him to browse long months away in the files of the museum library, where the dust of ages were piled inches thick over the imperishable metal-foil volumes.

Even curiosity, that one trait which had dragged mankind through the mire of prehistoric times, into the trees, across the seas, and at least to a magnificence which had almost allowed

him to touch the stars, was dying. It was only the fact that the last man might be seen there, that dragged the plodding toilers through the little park on rest days. Otherwise they strictly avoided the place, spending their time sleeping, or staring blankly in front of them like wearied cattle. It was useless to think of new things.

The museum was a mystery, even to M-1. Built ages ago before the race had started its long decay into automatism, it towered story on story above the ground level, and burrowed additional stories beneath the earth. Vast stretches of it he had never explored. In other wings the lights had long ago expired, and he was forced to creep through tottering skeletons of prehistoric animals, among the ruins of towering bookstacks, searching here, there, everywhere in effort to find the meaning of all this.

The bloated sun sank with infinite slowness behind a gigantic glittering structure which occupied one whole side of the park. The crowd of curious drifted away with equal slowness. The rest day was over. Tomorrow the human hive would drone again with unceasing, breath-taking activity, striving, ever striving, to produce enough food to supply the myriads of beings, which inhabited Nu Yok.

Why, he wondered, was not the population cut? With reproduction reduced to a mere matter of chemistry, that should be an easy matter. Then he realized that if the population were reduced, factories would be idle; wheels would cease to turn. He nodded to himself as he gathered up the few books with which he had been killing time during the day. That would be against the economy of the hive. No one must be idle—no one must cease from unremitting toil —except himself. He ruminated on these strange things as he slowly retraced his steps toward the little room where he ate and slept.

Perhaps it would be well to describe this museum freak, as he loiters down a long, crumbling corridor in the half-darkness, broken here and there by spots of semi-incandescent glow. He is tall, well-formed, hardly distinguishable from the man of the twenty-fifth or thirtieth century, except that his cranial development is somewhat more marked. He appears to be in mature youth, he is perhaps sixty or seventy years of age. He is slim and taut of body, like one who has taken care of himself physically, but he has a slight stoop which indicates that he has spent much of his life pouring over books. His form is trim and masculine, with flat hips and broad

shoulders, and lacks the sexless smoothness which was so noticeable in his watchers of the afternoon.

In fact he is a throwback, an unexplainable atavar, which the physicians have decided to preserve for a while as a warning and a curiosity.

He lounged listlessly in his room where a gaunt, sour-faced woman—if you could call a creature a woman who was as sexless as a worker bee—was stirring a mess in a bubbling kettle.

"What!" he grumbled, "Carbohydrate 5482 again? Why don't the food laboratories vary their formula once in a while? They used to, when I was a youngling."

"Costs labor; costs labor," she snapped back. "The sources of supply are getting scarcer, too. Besides it's not for the likes of such as you to be complaining."

"But why not discover new sources of supply?" he puzzled.

She straightened from her stirring and surveyed him with loathing and undisguised hatred. "Tis a good thing you are the last man," she stormed. "Such crazy ideas! New sources of supply! When you well know the last source of supply was discovered two hundred thousand years ago! Shame! To suggest such blasphemy! Atavist!"

With that last shot, which made him wince, she left him.

He attacked the chemically manufactured soup with something like gusto. He knew it contained all the vitamins, proteins and other ingredients, combined into just the right form to sustain life at the lowest possible cost.

He ate in the shortest possible time. Then, relaxed and surfeited, he dropped into a reverie which, as always, revolved around his uselessness in this feminine world. From his reading of forgotten books he understood pretty well the conditions which had brought about the monosexual world in which he lived. The enormous release of feminine energy in the twentieth to thirtieth centuries, due to the increased life span and the fact that the world had been populated to such an extent that women no longer were required to spend most of their time bearing children, had resulted in more and more usurpation by women of what had been considered purely masculine endeavors and the proper occupations of the male sex.

Gradually, and without organized resistance from the "stronger" sex, women, with their unused, super-abundant energy, had taken over the work of the world. Gradually, complacent, lazy and decadent man had confined his activities to war and sports, thinking these the only worth-while things in life.

Then, almost over night, it seemed, although in reality it had taken long ages, war became an impossibility, due to the unity of the nations of the earth, and sports were entered into and conquered by the ever-invading females.

After that the rest of the pitiful story was simple. The useless ornamental males began to be treated in much the same fashion in which the worker bees treat the drones. Having lost the mastery of the world, the men found themselves helpless and in the way. Slowly but steadily they were exterminated by the ambitious females.

There had been fighting, of course. M-1 recalled with a thrill the tales of those last battles. It was during the great famine, just before chemists had discovered how to manufacture food out of inorganic matter.

"Then, suddenly," to quote a book of that period, "a few of the leading women perceived with apocalyptic clarity, not only that the superfluity of men had become a burden on the community and a menace to the food of the children, but also that the reduction of their number to the barest minimum indispensable for the purposes of fertilization would be a two-fold boon—it would relieve the food crisis both for the moment and possibly also for the future, and obviate forever the danger of a masculine or slave rising.

"A sex-fight at the distributing station of a large store sufficed to light the first spark of this new conflagration. A dead set was made against the men, not only around the original focus of the trouble, but everywhere. The legislature, recognizing their opportunity, supported the popular fury, and proceeded to a systematic slaughter of males, until, with the help of the regular troops, it was found practicable to protect and preserve a small nucleus for next year's fertilization."

Oddly enough M-1 admired the neatness and dispatch with which his kind had been wiped out. What use were they?

Finally some last genius of that glorious age had discovered the method of reproducing human life by chemical formula and the men were dispensed with altogether. Only a few museum specimens were retained to warn the world of the horror from which it had escaped.

In the ages which followed, great physiological changes took place. Women, no longer having need of sex, dropped it, like a worn-out cloak, and became sexless, tall, angular, narrow-hipped, flat-breasted and un-beautiful.

But the world was perfect now, M-1 realized. No further change was necessary. He grew ashamed

of his suggestion that new discoveries might be made. Everything was known! Life was complete, vibrant! The millenium was at hand, and he was the only discordant factor.

But somehow, he was dissatisfied, nervous, excited. Catching up a warm robe—for the long nights, caused by the gradual slowing down of the earth's rotation during the ages, were as icy as the days were sultry—he wrapped it about him and started pacing the corridor again toward the observation cage. Something at variance with his environment stirred within him, he knew not what. Some urge of the summer which he could not drive away. The world was perfect. Yet he felt a note of misery which sickened him.

He remembered the dull, work-besotted faces of those for whom he posed once every ten days. There was not the joy among them that should be expected in a perfect world—the joy that the old, old books of poetry and love, which he had deciphered, indicated the world to be full of. What was wrong?

His steps muffled by the thick dust, he stumbled along, finally emerging into the glass cage, where he had spent the day, to stand staring hopelessly at the stars. For the first time he had become shamefully muddled somehow.

Shaking himself out of his lethargy, he glanced about him—at the city which glittered not far off, its lights flashing like the signals of fairyland—at the dreaming trees, now revived from the universal weariness—at the half moon just peeping over the horizon.

Suddenly he felt that he was not alone. Glancing sharply over his shoulder, he fancied that he saw a dark shape take form among the trees.

Then, winging its way through the impenetrable glass of the cage, came a voice, clear and musical; unlike the dead accents which he had become accustomed to from his keepers and from occasional curious celebrities.

In his astonishment he forgot the purport of the words—if they were words—for the message seemed to ring inside his head rather than in his ears. Like a flash he realized that the person outside was using telepathy, that mythical art supposedly lost since almost the dawn of history.

"Who are you?" Like a knife thrust the query flashed into his consciousness through the soundproof glass.

As in a dream he felt the segments of his brain click into a long-forgotten connection to reply in kind: "M-1, The Last Man."

The figure outside approached the cage and in the dim moon-

light he stared in wonder. Hair red as slumberous fire—eyes blue as the heavens—a face fair as the dream face which sometimes tortured him.

Unconsciously, true to his training, he recoiled. "An atavist!" he gasped, "A throwback! How did you escape?"

She laughed, and though he could not hear the fairy sound, he saw the back thrown head, the rounded throat, the laughing eyes. "The keepers are so dumb," she answered. "it is so easy to be free. Why don't you join me?"

He shivered as at a sacrilege.

"Don't talk so," he protested. "It would mean your death if the keepers heard. It is wicked."

Again she laughed and this time tossed one milk-white arm against the moon. "Nothing is wicked," came the message. "And their dead minds are too dull to understand. Come out and dance in the moonlight with me."

For a splendid instant he had the impluse to seize a chair and smash his prison of glass, but lifelong inhibitions were too strong. A wave of horror and loathing seized him. "Go away, demon," he gasped. "You are a rebel. I shall warn the guard."

Unafraid she wrinkled her nose at him, then wrapping about her a long black robe which but half concealed her deep breasts and the forgotten womanly grace of her carriage she whispered, "Another time," and vanished among the shadows of the park.

Frightened, horrified, yet fascinated as though by a devil, he stood staring after her for a long moment before he fled back down the protecting corridor to his room as if he were pursued by a ghost.

For long hours he sat at his desk staring into the shadows which the light did not dispel. Well he knew that it was his duty to report an atavist at large. Well he knew the havoc they had wrought in the past by waking uprisings against the established order, by fanning dying sparks of revolt into short-lived conflagrations, with their talk of beauty and love—and liberty. But that was long ago, while there were still men, although a dwindling minority.

Now he was the last man. The call was to him. A witch like those in the old, old stories, was lying in wait for him.

He fell into a fitful slumber, but was beset by dreams—strange, mad dreams of beauty and soft arms and flashing limbs which brought him to his feet in a sweat of agony a dozen times during the night.

Old WA 10 NA 56, whom in defiance of the rules he always called Wana, found him, dishevelled and feverish, when she brought the morning meal.

"What's the trouble?" she queried anxiously, for the position of warden to the last man had its responsibilities. "Are you ill? Shall I call a physician?"

"No," he snapped. "I need a change, Wana, that's all. Let's drive to the seashore for a day. This place chokes me."

"All right," she grumbled. "Though what good you get out of sitting and staring at the waves I can't understand. Nobody else does it. But you're a freak," and in spite of her surliness, a wisp of pathos crept into the last words and her face, which looked as if the soul had been eroded from it long ago, assumed a haunted expression.

A car was brought round and they clambered in—Wana dressed in nothing at all, for with the passing of sex the need for clothing had ceased to exist, and the man swathed in a long, black robe, such as those used to cover the infirmities of the aged.

Through the wide, straight boulevards, flanked on either side by glistening skyscrapers of surpassing beauty, they drove at breathless speed. Everything was clean with a dazzling, agonizing cleanness which made the senses reel. He longed, before they had driven half an hour, for the forgotten dust and gloom of the museum.

There, there was no traffic jam, no noise, no hurry—but only a dogged, persistent energy that was capable of moving mountains, but knew not where to move them. Through the sides of the plate glass edifices of the metropolis, he caught glimpses of myriads of workers, toiling frantically in perfectly hygienic surroundings, soaked in the health-giving ultra-violet rays of the sun, which the crystal walls admitted in their full power. He found himself panting for breath like a runner in a nightmare, and cursed his stupidity in allowing himself always to be thus affected when he was taken through the manufacturing district.

At last they passed between two thousand foot high structures and emerged abruptly into the open country. There were no suburbs, no encircling truck farms. The city ended with the abruptness of a thunderclap, and towered behind them like a heap of diamonds.

Wana pushed forward a silver handle. A rocket motor in the rear of the car began coughing gently. The machine rose into the air and shot, at tremendous speed, over the deserted countryside. Then, under the skilful guidance of the driver it settled to the ground on a sunny, tree-covered knoll near the seashore.

On all sides stretched unutterable desolation, for the race long ago had abandoned the un-

profitable tilling of the soil, and now resorted solely to the converting of inorganic into organic matter for food. The countryside round about was as wild and abandoned as in the forgotten days when Sir Walter Raleigh first stepped ashore there.

Never straying from under the watchful eye of his keeper, M-1 strolled about the beach or swam in the warm waters of the Atlantic. He had tossed aside his disguising robe, now that there were no spectators, and, relieved from the tension of the city, romped in the warm sunshine like a child.

At noon he swallowed some food pills and, tired by his morning's exercise, went to sleep under a massive oak tree.

He awakened by a sibilant hissing close beside him. Looking up, he beheld the girl he had met in the moonlight the night before.

"Shh!" she cautioned. "Your nurse is asleep."

"How did you get here?' he gasped.

"Vacation," she giggled. "My guards are searching for me in the woods."

"You followed us," he accused.

She nodded and her face assumed a faint pink tinge which puzzled him, yet set his pulses throbbing. "I heard you talking about your vacation, so I became conveniently ill and suggested a trip to the same place."

"Heard me?" he puzzled.

"Well, yes. Or thought you—or—something. Telepathy, you know."

"Why ARE you?" was his next question as he stared at her supple grace. "I mean, why are you alive?"

"Oh a sub-normal development, like yourself," she replied, and oddly enough there was no shame in her voice. Rather, he decided, she gloried in the fact that she was a hundred thousand years behind her age.

"You see, they thought I was normal while I was a child," she added. "Then, when I went queer—you know their horror of killing things."

"Do you work?" he asked, remembering the universal law.

"Oh, sometimes," she nodded, as she seated herself beside him. "You know they" (she spoke almost, he realized as if she were mentioning some lower order of animals) "have lost their sense of color values to a large extent, and they find me very valuable in the food factories, where the color of the slides has a great deal to do with the ionization."

"Why," he asked her, "do you stay in the food factory?—Because you can't escape."

"Can't I?" she mocked.

"Yes, you could run away," he admitted, "but then what? Away from the food distributing

stations, you'd starve to death in two weeks. What would you eat?" he demanded, his exasperation rising at her superior smile. "Bugs? Grass? Animals?" the horror of this last suggestion almost choked him.

"Why, yes," she admitted serenely, and to his consternation began stripping a bush of its fruit and putting the dark red berries into her mouth.

"Stop!" he cried, grasping her arm. "That stuff will kill you! You must know that the human stomach has atrophied from eating concentrated food for thousands of years."

"Mine hasn't. I've tried these berries before. Yours hasn't. You forget that we were born out of our time. Of course these—these animated fossils—would die," she admitted, turning up her nose at the reclining figure of Wana, "But not us! Try these." She dropped a cluster of the ripe fruit into his hands.

Hesitantly he complied. His mouth, unused to anything but pills and liquids, puckered strangely. But, fired by her example, he persisted. Long idle salivary glands came slowly into action. His jaws, unaccustomed to munching, began to ache. But a satisfying feeling of warmth and well-being pervaded him. Taste, that long-lost fifth sense, returned.

"Music," he muttered. "It's like music inside of one." He reached for another bunch of the fruit.

"Easy," she laughed, dancing nimbly out of reach. "Don't forget that this is your first trial. You'll probably be sick as it is."

Their voices unconsciously had risen during this exchange, and Wana stirred in her sleep.

"Shh!" whispered his companion. "I'll see you next restday night. "Goodbye." Like a shadow she fled through the trees before his keeper could rub her ancient eyes and sit up.•

"What have you been doing—letting me sleep like this?" she scolded, jumping to her feet, for Wana was very active in spite of the fact that she had about reached the limit of usefulness and would be shuffling off this mortal coil in the lethal chambers not many years hence. "Come. It's time to go," she said, throwing his funeral robe about his shoulders. "The sun is setting. Climb into the car."

Escape! The idea, not entirely new, interested him as they rushed homeward through the evening sky. Was it possible to live as the birds and animals did? He was fascinated.

Then, as if in answer to his query, an awful stomach-ache gripped him as his digestive track, unused to solid nourishment, rebelled against the berries. He writhed in agony, and

knew the horror of approaching dissolution. Luckily Wana was in the control cabin and saw nothing of what transpired.

But he did not die. The pains subsided, leaving him limp and covered with cold sweat. Was liberty worth such a price? He wondered.

During the next ten days he prowled in unaccustomed corners of the museum library, and, as chance would have it, came upon a book entitled: "Natural Food. A Warning of its Perils." Written at a time when concentrated nourishment had been in universal use but a short time, this volume warned back-sliders into gourmandism, of the awful penalty which would ensue if vegetable or animal food was consumed. Unconsciously it dropped hints now and then, however, of the manner of preparing those odious viands. He read and remembered.

The next rest-day dawned and brought its usual crowd of worn toilers to stare into his crystal cage. But he no longer envied them. He no longer hated himself. In fact he was not thinking of such things. He was thinking only of the night that was coming.

Forgotten was his horror of the witch girl. Subconsciously his mind had made common cause with hers. They were one, fighting an alien world.

Darkness came at last. After consuming his nourishment, he avoided Wana, crept into the park, garbed in his black robe, and waited. Almost at once a soft, strong hand slipped into his.

"The spell works," said the well-known laughing voice. "The witch has you charmed. Did I not tell you escape was easy?"

They stopped and looked at each other under the moon, which had just passed the zenith. A great wave of tenderness and admiration swept over him. Awkwardly he seized both her hands in his.

"You're so different," he marveled. "You make me feel queer here." He tapped his chest. "Like tears," he stumbled, "and sunshine, and flowers."

She smiled, and leaning forward, gently touched her lips to his. A shock, like that from a dynamo, passed through him. He leaped back as though she had struck him, then re-approached.

"What was that?" he asked stupidly.

"A kiss," she answered.

Through the long avenue of elm trees, just the same as those which lined parks when the world was young, they wandered into the flood-lighted streets.

They attracted little attention as they loitered along. A few persons crossed their hands on their chests as they passed in a sign of respect. With their cowls

closely drawn, and their slow pace, M-1 and his companion were easily mistaken for the Ancients, or Law Givers, and so passed unquestioned.

For, although it was a universal rule that persons should enter the lethal gas chambers as soon as they had passed the limit of usefulness—that is, when they could no longer do their twelve hours of labor daily— exceptions were made in the case of legislators and captains of working units, who were presumed to retain their intellectual facilities after their physical powers had declined.

These lucky ones lived until they died natural deaths, but they went clothed in long black robes to avoid awakening envy in those who were doomed to die much younger.

"What is your number?" M-1 asked suddenly as they entered a long, roofed thoroughfare lined on both sides with great warehouses and humming factories.

"My name is Eve," she replied, smiling. "I gave it to myself. I have forgotten my number."

A half-memory of some old myth stirred him. "The first woman? he mused. "And I am the last man. Strange!"

He felt her mocking eyes upon him. "I shall call you Adam," she said softly.

"But that would be wrong, he stated. "Adam was the first man."

She merely laughed at him.

They turned into the portal, a vast structure which stretched for thousands of feet along the street.

"Where do we go?" he queried.

"This is unit 1,000 of the food factory," she explained. "I work here. Have you seen the inside of the hive?"

"Only in pictures," he replied. "I never was allowed to enter the factories."

They wandered down a long corridor, doors in which opened into what seemed endless rooms humming with monstrous machinery. Here and there, however, a room stood idle, its machines covered with dust.

"Those engines are broken," she explained. "The mechanics have forgotten how to fix them.

They went on, through labyrinthian tunnels, under overhead bridges, and on dizzy galleries that looked down on unremitting industry.

"Decay," she said suddenly. "Look at it, all about you, in spite of their breathless efforts. See," she pointed to a great mill, its screens broken and torn, its cogs rusted from centuries of disuse. "The world is dying. Soon—in a few thousand years, perhaps, when this almost perfect machinery crumbles yet more —it will be dead."

"And you and I will be dead, too," he said bitterly.

"And the world will be given over to the animals and the birds and the insects. Oh, the pity of it. A living tomb!"

"But I thought the world had attained perfection," he puzzled; "that all the great secrets of life had been attained; that life purred gently, like a perfect machine."

"So they say," she replied, "to hide the horror of the thing. But the machine is not eternal, and they have forgotten so much, so much!"

Passing into the street once more they stepped on one of the rapidly moving surface platforms which long ago had supplanted the clumsy street cars and elevateds, and sped, at breakneck pace, through the heart of the city.

"Where to now?" he asked.

"To the birth factory," she answered nonchalantly.

He gasped and something of his old fear of her returned.

"But you dare not," he cried clutching her arm. "Remember the law reads: 'No atavist, on pain of death, shall enter the precincts of the birth factory.'"

She laughed gayly. "We shall not be discovered. Remember, they have forgotten so much.— You have seen pictures of the place?"

He nodded.

"Remember the dome?"

"Yes."

"Well there is a little gallery half way up it. Looks like a mere frieze from the floor. They have forgotten it. I found the secret in an old book. We shall not be discovered."

They stopped in front of a magnificent building, not of glass but of marble. It was without adornment and beautiful as a naked sword blade. Unlike the other buildings of the city, it was detached from the crystal roof that capped all the streets, and stood alone in a little park.

Before its portals paced a strong guard, heavily armed, strangely enough, with weapons closely resembling those used in the last wars. Rifles and automatic revolvers were the only mobile killing machines known, for progress in that direction, as in all others, had stopped long ago.

"Come," Eve directed.

They skirted the building under the watchful eye of the guard and entered a warehouse half a block away. Through a long series of storerooms, which were deserted at that late hour, she led him, finally to stop in front of a blank wall. Drawing a pitch pipe from her robe, she blew three soft notes.

"What do you want?" said a hollow, mechanical voice above their heads. Adam (for we shall call him thus hereafter) cowered in terror at this new develop-

ment, but the girl replied slowly and distinctly:

"10, 42, 2, 74."

Slowly, ponderously, a panel in the wall swung back. They stepped into a tiny hall. The door closed behind them.

"A clever safe combination," she smiled. "I hope it doesn't wear out while we're in here. It hasn't been cared for in ages. Wonderful artificers these ancients must have been.

They climbed endless narrow stairs after passing through what must have been a subterranean gallery connecting the warehouse with the birth factory, and at last emerged upon the tiny balcony she had spoken of. They looked down. Far below in the middle of a vast hall pulsed six amber globes of light, arranged about a great globe of crystal.

The central globe, he knew, was filled with germ plasm from which reservoir the human race was perpetuated. From it flowed the eternal stream of life which turned the wheels and manned the factories the world over.

The system, in its essentials, had been discovered in the twentieth century when a surgeon had placed a bit of tissue from the heart of a chicken in a sterile medium, fed it carefully, and kept it in an ideal environment. He and his successors had watched that tissue live for a hundred years. It was growing so rapidly that it had to be watched carefully and trimmed continually to keep it within the limits of the container.

As the growing scarcity and uselessness of the males, and the antagonism of the "free women" to becoming mothers, had grown in the old days, the legislators hit upon a similar scheme for perpetuating the race by chemical means. It might have been called the last creative work of the human mind.

A small quantity of germ serum was enclosed in the gigantic crystal globe under proper conditions, given the right type of food and allowed to grow, which it did at a tremendous rate. Then it was fertilized by the same methods, which the ancient French physicians, Alexis Carrel, Ebleing and Fische, had used to produce fatherless frogs.

This fertilized ovum, cultivated in embryonic tissue juice, then was allowed to grow in a type of incubator until it developed skin, bones and muscles and was ready to be taken to the nursery, a normal infant.

Two things the ancients had not calculated upon, however. First, they forgot that the eternally growing germ plasm could not continue the development of the race. Every child produced in this manner was on the same intellectual, spiritual and physical level with every other child. With the

development of artificial birth the long increase in human brain capacity had stopped short; in fact, a slow decay had set in, as the serum lost its original virility through the ages.

The second mistake was in creating one gigantic birth factory instead of a number of branches. This resulted in terrific congestion as millions of children yearly had to be started in their growth and then shipped to distant lands where their adolescence was to be spent. In the old days there always had been danger of an uprising among the males to smash the plant, but this had long since passed and the guard about the portal was merely a formality.

Adam was interrupted in his revery by the voice of his companion.

"You understand, of course, why atavists are forbidden here."

He nodded. "Because in the dark ages they always tried to destroy the life factory."

"But now it is too late for that," he continued soberly. "Children no longer can be produced naturally, even if any one so desired." Then, forgetting his oft-repeated assertion that the world was perfect, the utter blankness into which the race was drifting, swept down upon him like a bank of fog and he added bitterly:

"We are doomed. I see it all so clearly now. There can be no more progress. There can be no more supermen to drag mankind forward in spite of its blindness.

"No," Eve whispered, "but there are atavists to drag mankind backward to a point where it can get a fresh start."

The idea dazzled him. "You mean—we—we could have children—and build a new clean race?"

She looked down, blushing.

Still trying to grasp the immensity of her suggestion, he turned back to the scene below. "But," he muttered, "we would have to stop all this—stop all this, or they would crush us by the sheer weight of numbers." He stared at the softly glowing container below with a new and bitter loathing. Instead of the cradle of mankind, it suddenly had become a race's prison house.

Unwittingly he had leaned farther and farther over the railing of the balcony. Now, without warning, its ancient moorings parted and a large section of the balustrade tottered slowly outward and fell!

He heard a shriek behind him, felt his robe caught as he reeled on the edge and was jerked backward to the safety of the balcony. Unable to tear his gaze from the falling railing, he stared aghast. Would it strike the precious globe and shatter it? Would it? Would it? But the mass of twisted metal

fell to one side, crushing one of the many guards below into a horrid pulp of blood and brains.

For a moment there was stunned silence in the hall. Then a babble of shrill voices arose, and a battery of spectacled eyes turned toward the two who clung to their perch on the balcony.

"Atavists! Atavists! Man the doors! Open fire! Guard the crystal!" shouted a captain of the guards waving her arms in strangely ant-like gestures. Adam found time to marvel at the ineffectiveness of it all; at the foreshortened figures scurrying about below; at their feeble shouts; at his impotence.

An explosive rifle bullet which tore a hole as big as a barrel in the wall beside him, brought him to his senses but, unmindful of his danger, he crouched at the edge of the floor and stared.

Bedlam had broken loose as guards strove to draw an armor plate cover over the precious globe of life serum. Shouts, shrieks, prayers, mingled to make a sound strangely like that of pigs squealing. For it must be understood that the people worshipped the crystal as their only god. It was the giver of life. Long ago they had discarded all idea of personal immortality, but the dream of immortality for the race through the germ plasm still persisted, and the human bees sprang into battle formation, as ready to sting to death anything, any person that attacked their life stream, as a real swarm of bees is to fight for its queen.

Adam was shaken out of dazed horror by his companion. "Quick," she screamed. All her gaiety vanished—her fair face drawn into a mask of fear. "The stairs. It is the only way. They will throw a guard about the district, but perhaps we can squeeze through. Hurry, for God's sake!"

Down those endless stairs they ran—fell—rolled—their robes first in shreds, then lost. Bleeding and bruised they reached the panel.

Eve blew three shaky notes on the pitch pipe, which she had held clutched in her hand. "What do you want?" grumbled the mechanism.

"10—2, 2—74," she gasped between breaths.

The panel remained immovable!

Clenching her fists until the blood started where the nails cut into palms, Eve strove to regain her breath while the precious moments passed.

Finally she tried again—three short notes.

"What do you want?" queried the sullen, impersonal voice, within which seemed to lurk a note of mockery.

This time she repeated the combination with a clear voice.

Slowly the panel turned.

Down the dimly lighted warehouse alleys they fled Back of them a voice raised the view halloo. The game seemed ended. The world's last chance gone.

Somehow, nevertheless, they kpet ahead of their pursurers. Winding, twisting, dodging through piles of machinery, bales of goods, past unknown bruising, lurking, inanimate objects, which seemed designed to beat out their brains, they finally saw a floodlighted street ahead.

A bolt of dark cloth caught his eye as they raced for the entrance. "Here," he gasped, tearing off two lengths. "Wrap this around you as a cloak. We'll make it yet. The alarm has not spread this way. They have forgotten to inform the radio controls."

"You go ahead,' she panted. "I'm done for. My cell house is back the other way. I'll never get in unnoticed now."

"Come with me," he directed, propelling her toward the deserted, speeding platforms. "They never can find you in the museum. Probably they'll never think to look. And if they do I know every nook and hiding place. Hurry! Don't forget our purpose."

The platform swept them away, but not before they could hear the cell houses bursting into frenzy behind them as the workers learned of the attack and poured forth to the chase.

Still, for some strange reason, the radio alarms were silent. No one impeded them, as the almost deserted ways swept along.

At the park they leaped to the ground and fled through the dark trees. Wasting no time, he dragged her through the museum entrance, hid her behind a mass of bones that once might have been the skeleton of a mastodon, and, divesting himself of his robe, threw himself on his couch and lay as though asleep.

And not a moment too soon. The alarms were working at last. Loud, raucous and shrill, they blared throughout the city the news of the outrage. "Check all atavists," came the message. "Kill instantly those who are not in their cells. Kill! Kill! The humanitarian laws are in abeyance. Spare no suspicious atavist. Our race must be preserved."

Shaking with fright and apprehension, old Wana, who had pledged her life to keep watch over M-1, but who could not resist taking a nap now and then, peered into his shadowy cell.

He lay at ease, breathing deeply—evenly. With a sigh of relief she closed the curtains. A minute later he heard her reporting to the chief that her charge was in his bed.

The next weeks were full of formless terror, yet lighted by

the growing love between the last man and the woman he now had chosen as his mate. During the long, dusty days, when they prowled the shadowy alcoves together, their love blossomed like a flower.

Endlessly they planned escape, but in their hearts they felt it was useless. Endlessly he toiled through brittle volumes seeking some method of destroying the hateful life factory but, although there were hints of forgotten explosives, the formulae were meaningless to him. Besides, he had not the materials to manufacture even black powder.

Adam shared his food rations with Eve, without exciting the suspicions of Wana, but he and the girl grew wan and weak from lack of sufficient nourishment. She still hid in the dark recesses of the building, where he would find her waiting for him, with the same gay smile on her pinched face every morning, after Wana had made inspection.

Hand in hand they would wander for hours in the dreary ruin, stopping to wonder at some monstrous skeleton; shouting with delight when they found a beautiful trinket or ancient scarab among the debris of an exhibit.

Or, their arms about each other, they would sit in some far-away sunny corner and dream great, impossible dreams of the world they would create.

Somewhere he had run across a scrap from a forgotten poet which kept running through his head as though in mockery:

Awake! could you and I with fate conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to our Hearts' Desire."

He quoted it to Eve one day, and comforted her when she burst into tears.

Then, when all seemed lost, when the shrinking of undernourished tissues made them nervous and irritable; when it seemed they no longer could hold out, he found the secret!

In an unexplored subterranean gallery, where cobwebs hung in yard-long streamers, where bats flitted squeaking from rafter to rafter, and where the only light was furnished by a flashlight he carried, they came upon rows and rows of hermetically sealed jars with unfamiliar inscriptions.

Rubbing the dust from several of the labels, he puzzled over them.

Suddenly Eve clapped her hands in delight. "It's ancient English script," she cried excitedly. "See! The kind that was used before the phonetic alphabet was brought into use. Let's see—I know a little about 19th century writing—

"'Samples of high ex-plos-ives used in the World War,' " she spelled out laboriously. "'In this group are some of the dead-li-est chem-cals ever dis-covered by man. The m-a-t-e-r-i-a-l con-tained in the cen-tral can-i-ster is T.N.T. (trinitrotoluene). Do not touch!'"

Their lips trembling, they stared at each other over the feeble lamp. "T.N.T.," he breathed. "I've heard of it."

Slowly she continued her translation: "'Enough T.N.T. is contained in this canister to sink a b-a-t-t-l-e-s-h-i-p' What's that?" she puzzled.

"A big floating war vessel, I suppose," he whispered.

"Read on!"

"'A slight concussion is enough to explode this material'" she continued more rapidly. "'For this reason especial care has been taken to seal the canister hermetically, and to protect it from shock in a subterranean room.'" Then followed instructions for moving the exhibit if it were ever found necessary.

"Do you suppose it has deteriorated?" she pondered.

He said nothing for a moment, then replied: "Suppose it has. It's our only chance. If we can destroy the life factory, it probably will disrupt the air patrol so that we can escape—if we can steal an air car."

Hunger and the desperateness of their situation forgotten, Eve threw back her splendid head with the old reckless gesture.

"I'll drop the canister from the balcony," she cried. "If I live, we shall escape. I feel it."

But Adam shook his head. "It's my place to do this thing. I will creep over the roof spaces tonight to the warehouse entrance and may succeed in reaching the gallery. One chance in a thousand to escape or overpower the guards—and I am stronger than you."

In spite of her entreaties, he persisted. Finally she stopped trying to dissuade him, kissed him tenderly and said no more.

Gently they lifted the long steel canister and carried it as near as they dared to the entrance of the museum. There they wrapped it in cloths and adjusted straps about it so that Adam could swing it over his shoulders.

"I will ask to take a night flight in the air car," the last man plotted. "Wana will humor me, because I look so ill, and she suspects nothing. Then, before the car arrives, I will take the canister and try to drop it from the balcony. When you hear the explosion, overpower Wana instantly and drive to the entrance of the warehouse. Can you do that?" he queried, noticing her sagging shoulders.

She straightened quickly and the tired lines left her face.

"Yes," she nodded. "Wana is old and I am yet strong."

The final arrangements were quickly made. Wana acceded to what she called her ward's foolish whim. He asked her not to disturb him while he took a short sleep and to bring the car in an hour. This also she agreed to.

Then, as midnight approached, he slipped to the entrance, shouldered the grey canister, wrapped his robe about him in concealing folds and crept into the park.

Cautiously he worked his way among the trees, then, when the way seemed clear, crept into a building across the square. Evading the watchwoman, he started mounting the many flights of unused stairs toward the roof spaces. His heart pounded under the unused exertion, but he persisted, resting at landing after landing.

As he had hoped, the door to the roof was unlocked. He pushed it open and crept out upon the city's glassy shield, which extended for miles in all directions, and was broken only by the tops of the greatest of the crystal skyscrapers.

A heavy rain was falling. The glass was wet and slippery and his load made him clumsy, but he staggered along toward the life factory which, he knew, lay about a mile to the northward.

Hiding under eaves and projections when search-lights from the skyscraper tops swept the blank expanse, and dodging out as soon as the beams passed, he pushed forward doggedly.

At last the tower of the factory loomed before him, across the open expanse of its park. He tried the roof door of the warehouse in which lay the secret passage. It was locked. The legislature was taking no chances with roaming atavists. In fact, he knew that several hundred female retrogrades had been killed since the falling of the balustrade.

In desperation he hammered upon the door with clenched fists. Perhaps someone would investigate. He held his ear to the jamb. Footsteps approached from within. It was a lower level guard.

"Who's there," came the challenge.

"One of the roof guard," he replied in feigned excitement. "There's an atavist at large on the roof spaces. I need help."

Quickly he laid the canister on the roof and crouched beside the door. Would the ruse work?

Unsuspecting, the dull-witted guard turned the lock and stepped upon the roof. He flung himself upon her with fury before she realized the situation. Pinioning her arms so that she could not reach her weapons, he hurled her to the roof. Her head struck sharply against a grating. Her struggles ceased.

Snatching the canister, he

leaped inside and locked the door. He would have to chance her reviving and warning the real roof guard.

Not daring to use the elevators, he raced down the stairs, just escaping disastrous falls more than once. By a miracle he missed the other guards and at last stood before the panel.

Shielding the noise as much, as possible, he blew the whistle and gave the combination.

The door swung open and closed behind him. Safe so far!

At last he stood again upon the balcony. Below, the room seemed filled with armed soldiers. A rope ladder dangled from the ledge to the floor hundreds of feet below. Not five feet in front of him, drowsing over her rifle, stood a guard. The secret had been discovered. A second perhaps and she would turn!

Tearing the T.N.T. from his back, he hurled it at the steel armor which still covered the life globe below and said a swift prayer to a forgotten God.

Things happened with amazing swiftness and clarity. The guard in front had heard him. She whirled, her rifle at ready.

Then—there was nothing. He felt himself drifting in a world without sound or light. At peace hours afterward, it seemed, an agonizing pain awakened him into consciousness.

He peered into blackness—a soundless, still opacity. A wild desire to scream came over him. He shouted, but heard no sound. Remembering his flashlight, he tried to find it in the pocket of his robe, only to discover that the robe was gone and that his right arm dangled uselessly.

With his sound arm he felt about him. Two feet along the balcony he hand descended into space. Back of him the wall had a jagged rent extending as far as he could reach. The truth of the situation dawned upon him. The explosion had been so terrific as to tear away all of the balcony, except a tiny projection upon which he lay.

Fearfully he felt his way along this. Was his escape cut off? He touched the edges of the doorway. Safe! Unable to stand, he crept down the stairs on hands and knees. Half of the steps seemed missing. Once he fell five or six feet. But he persisted.

A surge of power filled him. The life serum was no more, he knew. The top of the life factory dome must have been blown off by the concussion. He owed his life to a miracle. But he had succeeded!

There was one thing more to be done. What was that? His brain reeled and plunged. Escape! Escape! The thought spurred his lagging senses. Down—down—always down. One step—two—a dozen—then a dizzy slip through

darkness where the steps had been torn away by the blast. On! On! Into the depths of darkness.

At last he reached the portal. The pitch pipe! Where was it? Gone, with his robe and the flashlight!

Drawing himself together he tried to remember the notes. Were they C, D and A, or S, D and F. He whistled the latter as nearly in the tone of the pipe as possible.

In reply came merely a jumbled whirring, clicking sound. He tried again—C, D and F. This time the whirring was a little clearer and he fancied he heard a blurred corpse of the word "Want."

"10—42—2—74," he answered; then held his breath.

A jarring sound of dislocated machinery was the only answer. The door remained closed!

Frantically he hurled himself against it and beat upon the edge.

It gave!

Slowly, grinding and jarring, it swung open—an inch—two—six. There it stuck. He forced his shoulder through the aperture. Still more it gave. Once again! Push! It swung wide open and he fell fainting to the floor outside.

Another interval. Then an insistent voice seemed calling.

"Where are you, Adam?" The words rang inside his head. Who was it? He was dead. Why bother? Nothing mattered.

But again the command came: "Hurry, Adam, Hurry. I am waiting. It is Eve. All the lights have gone out. The guard is demoralized. We can escape. You are not dead, foolish one. Come!"

Slowly, with swaying head, he crept on all fours toward the entrance of the warehouse. Even here the force of the explosion had been felt. Bales of goods, parts of machine mangled bodies were scattered in all directions. Semi-conscious, he squirmed under the debris—over it—on and on toward the entrance, where Eve, with the air car ready, was bending every atom of her being into that telepathic urge. Once he placed his hand on a cold face and screamed.

He reached the door. Cool air fanned his bleeding forehead. He saw the car. But the effort had been too great. He slumped forward, a sudden heap.

He recovered consciousness to find Eve bathing his face and talking tenderly to him as to a child. He opened his eyes. His head was in her lap in the cockpit of the air car. It was morning. Behind them the motor coughed gently. He was alive and free!

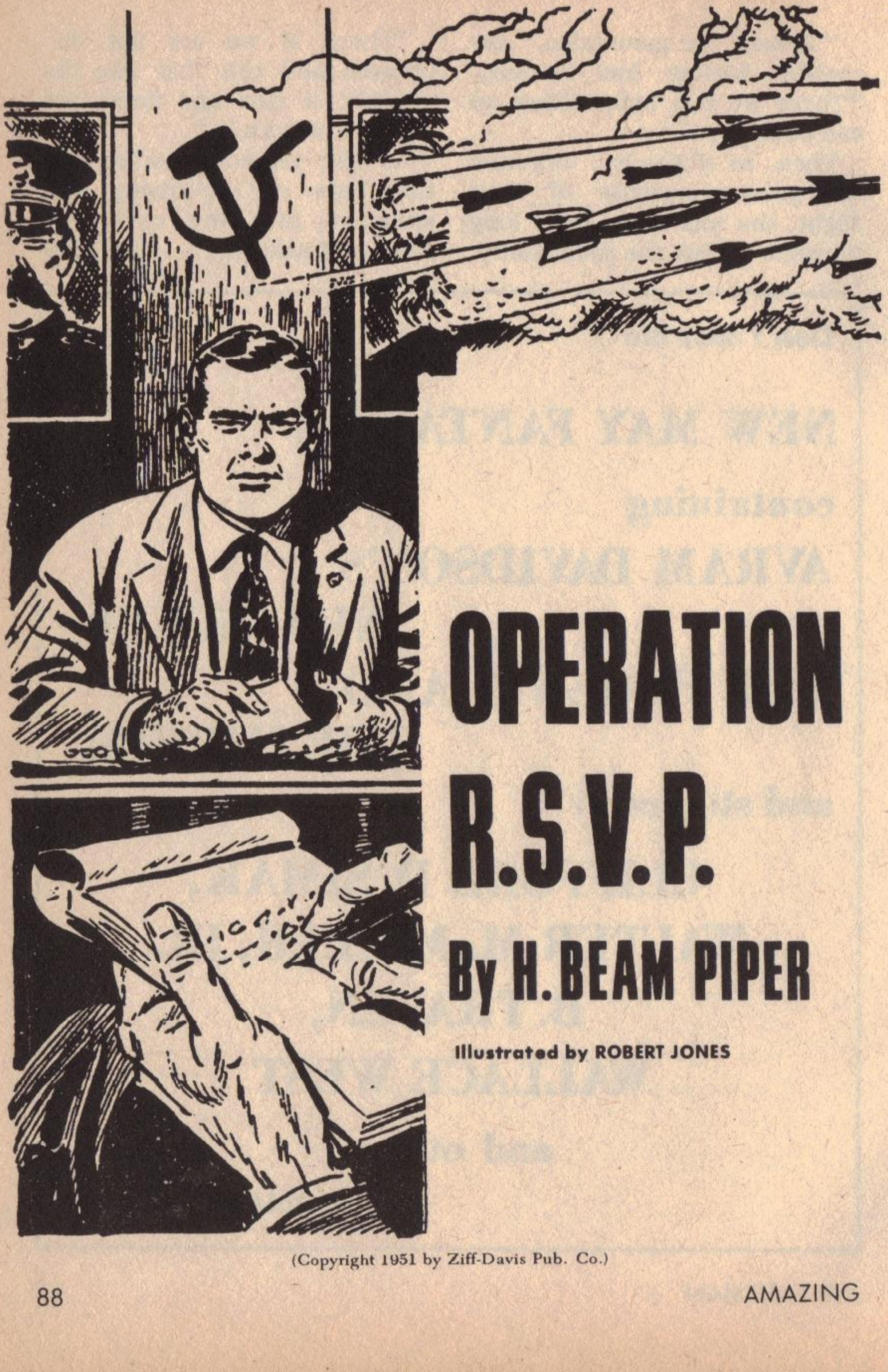
"Where are we headed?" he breathed as he smiled up at her dear face through the waves of pain which threatened to engulf him again.

"Toward the mountains," she replied, kissing him tenderly. "There we can hide. There we can be happy."

Then, as if she had forgotten the greater purpose of their flight, she was silent for a long moment. At last she added softly:

"There, if we are not discovered and can live like the animals, a new and finer race may yet be born."

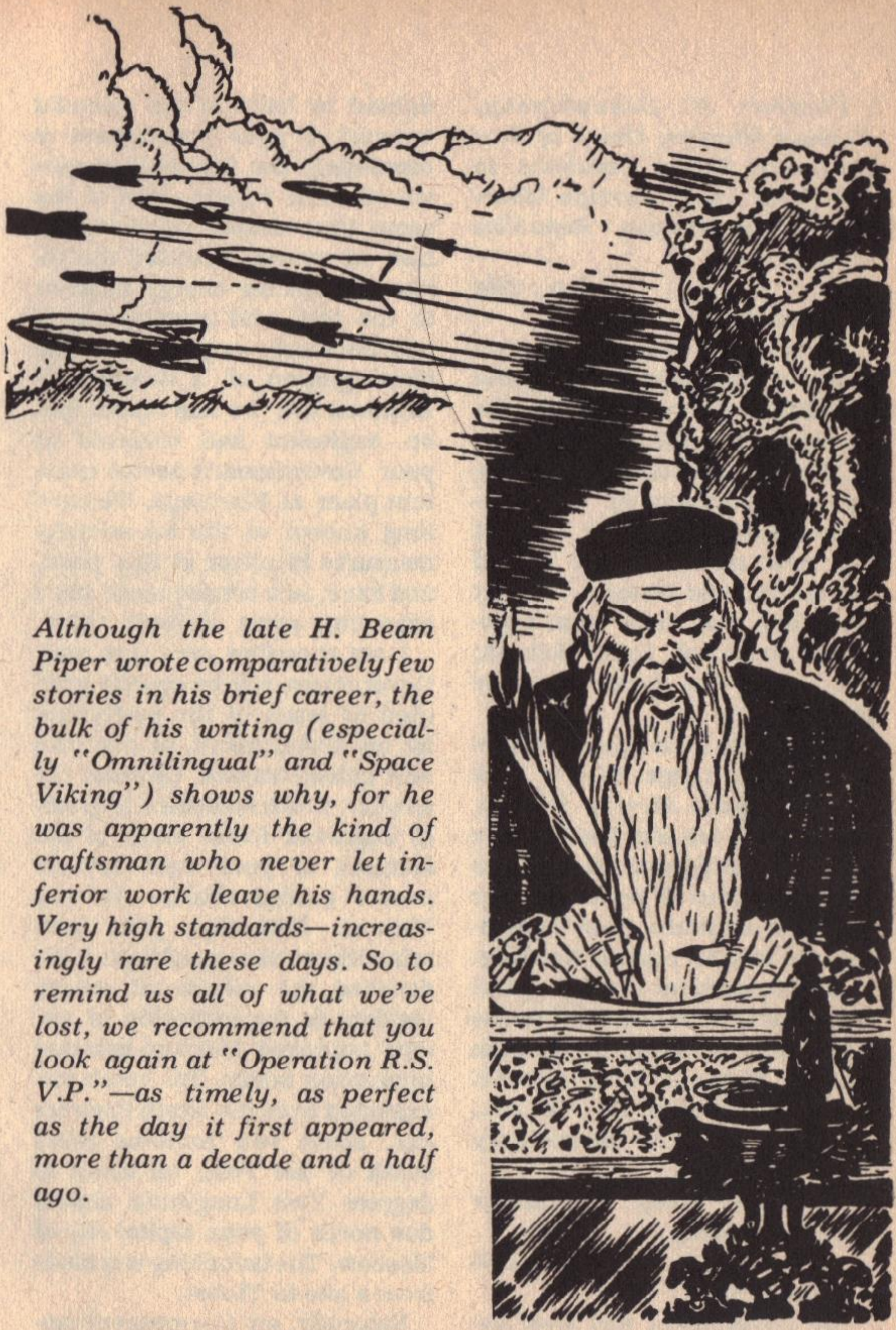
As she ceased speaking, the first rays of the rising sun splashed into the cockpit a shower of pale gold. THE END



# OPERATION R.S.V.P.

## By H. BEAM PIPER

**Illustrated by ROBERT JONES**



*Although the late H. Beam Piper wrote comparatively few stories in his brief career, the bulk of his writing (especially "Omnilingual" and "Space Viking") shows why, for he was apparently the kind of craftsman who never let inferior work leave his hands. Very high standards—increasingly rare these days. So to remind us all of what we've lost, we recommend that you look again at "Operation R.S.V.P."—as timely, as perfect as the day it first appeared, more than a decade and a half ago.*

*Vladmir N. Dzhoubinsky, Foreign Minister, Union of East European Soviet Republics, to Wu Fung Tung, Foreign Minister, United Peoples' Republics of East Asia:*

15 Jan., 1984

Honored Sir:

Pursuant to our well known policy of exchanging military and scientific information with the Governments of friendly Powers, my Government takes great pleasure in announcing the completely successful final tests of our new nuclear-rocket guided missile *Marxist Victory*. The test launching was made from a position south of Lake Balkash; the target was located in the East Siberian Sea.

In order to assist you in appreciating the range of the new guided missile *Marxist Victory*, let me point out that the distance from launching-site to target is somewhat over 50 percent greater than the distance from launching-site to your capital, Nanking.

My Government is still hopeful that your Government will revise its present intransigeant position on the Khakum River dispute.

I have the honor, etc., etc., etc.,

V. N. Dzhoubinsky

*Wu Fung Tung, to Vladmir N. Dzhoubinsky:*

7 Feb., 1984

Estimable Sir:

My Government was most delighted to learn of the splendid triumph of your Government in developing the new guided missile *Marxist Victory*, and at the same time deeply relieved. We had, of course, detected the release of nuclear energy incident to the test, and inasmuch as it had obviously originated in the disintegration of a quantity of Uranium 235, we had feared that an explosion had occurred at your Government's secret uranium plant at Khatanga. We have long known of the lax security measures in effect at this plant, and have, as a consequence, been expecting some disaster there.

I am therefore sure that your Government will be equally gratified to learn of the perfection, by my Government, of our own new guided missile *Celestial Destroyer*, which embodies, in greatly improved form, many of the features of your own Government's guided missile *Marxist Victory*. Naturally, your own scientific warfare specialists have detected the release of energy incident to the explosion of our own improved thorium-hafnium interaction bomb; this bomb was exploded over the North Polar ice cap, about two hundred miles south of the Pole, on about 35 degrees East Longitude, almost due north of your capital city of Moscow. The launching was made from a site in Thibet.

Naturally, my Government can-

not deviate from our present just and reasonable attitude in the Khakum River question. Trusting that your Government will realize this, I have the honor to be, Your obedient and respectful servant,

Wu Fung Tung

*From N. Y. TIMES, Feb 20, 1984:*

AFGHAN RULER FETED AT NANKING

Ameer Shere Ali Abdallah Confers With UPREA Pres. Sung Li-Yin

*UEESR Foreign Minister Dzhoubinsky to Maxim G. Krylenkoff, Ambassador at Nanking:* 3 March, 1984

Comrade Ambassador:

It is desired that you make immediate secret and confidential, repeat, secret and confidential inquiry as to the whereabouts of Dr. Dimitri O. Voronoff, the noted Soviet rocket expert, designer of the new guided missile *Marxist Victory,* who vanished a week ago from the Josef Vissarionovitch Djugashvli Reaction-Propulsion Laboratories at Molotovgorod. It is feared in Government circles that this noted scientist has been abducted by agents of the United Peoples' Republics of East Asia, possibly to extract from him, under torture, information of a secret technical nature.

As you know, this is but the latest of a series of such disappearances, beginning about five years ago, when the Khakum River question first arose.

Your utmost activity in this matter is required.

Dzhoubinsky

*Ambassador Krylenkoff to Foreign Minister Dzhoubinsky:* 9 March, 1984

Comrade Foreign Minister:

Since receipt of yours of 3/3/'84, I have been utilizing all resources at my disposal in the matter of the noted scientist D. O. Voronoff, and availing myself of all sources of information, e.g., spies, secret agents, disaffected elements of the local population, and including two UPREA Cabinet Ministers on my payroll. I regret to report that results of this investigation have been entirely negative. No one here appears to know anything of the whereabouts of Dr. Voronoff.

At the same time, there is considerable concern in UPREA Government circles over the disappearances of certain prominent East Asian scientists, e.g., Dr. Hong Foo, the nuclear physicist; Dr. Hin Yang-Woo, the great theoretical mathematician; Dr. Mong Shing, the electronics expert. I am informed that UPREA Government sources are attributing these disappearances to us.

I can only say that I am sin-

cerely sorry that this is not the case.

Krylenkoff

*Wu Fung Tung to Vladmir N. Dzhoubinsky:*

21 April, 1984

Estimable Sir:

In accordance with our established policy of free exchange with friendly Powers of scientific information, permit me to inform your Government that a new mutated disease-virus has been developed in our biological laboratories, causing a highly contagious disease similar in symptoms to bubonic plague, but responding to none of the treatments for this latter disease. This new virus strain was accidentally produced in the course of some experiments with radioactivity.

In spite of the greatest care, it is feared that this virus has spread beyond the laboratory in which it was developed. We warn you most urgently of the danger that it may have spread to the UEESR; enclosed are a list of symptoms, etc.

My Government instructs me to advise your Government that the attitude of your Government in the Khakum River question is utterly unacceptable, and will require considerable revision before my Government can even consider negotiation with your Government on the subject.

Your obedient and respectful servant,

Wu Fung Tung

*From N. Y. Times, May 12, 1984:*

AFGHAN RULER FETED AT MOSCOW

Ameer sees Red Square Troop Review;

Confers with Premier-President Mouzorgin

*Sing Yat, UPREA Ambassador at Moscow, to Wu Fung Tung:*

26 June, 1984

Venerable and Honored Sir:

I regret humbly that I can learn nothing whatever about the fate of the learned scholars of science of whom you inquire, namely: Hong Foo, Hin Yang-Woo, Mong Shing, Yee Ho Li, Wong Fat, and Bao Hu-Shin. This inability may be in part due to incompetence of my unworthy self, but none of my many sources of information, including Soviet Minister of Police Morgodoff, who is on my payroll, can furnish any useful data whatever. I am informed, however, that the UEESR Government is deeply concerned about similar disappearances of some of the foremost of their own scientists, including Voronoff, Jirnikov, Kagorinoff, Bakhorin, Himmelfarber and Pavlovinsky, all of whose dossiers are

on file with our Bureau of Foreign Intelligence. I am further informed that the Government of the UEESR ascribes these disappearances to our own activities.

Ah, Venerable and Honored Sir, if this were only true!

Kindly condescend to accept compliments of,

Sing Yat

*Dzhoubinsky to Wu Fung Tung:*

6 October, 1984

Honored Sir:

Pursuant to our well known policy of exchanging scientific information with the Governments of friendly Powers, my Government takes the greatest pleasure in announcing a scientific discovery of inestimable value to the entire world. I refer to nothing less than a positive technique for liquidating rats as a species.

This technique involves treatment of male rats with certain types of hard radiations, which not only renders them reproductively sterile but leaves the rodents so treated in full possession of all other sexual functions and impulses. Furthermore, this condition of sterility is venereally contagious, so that one male rat so treated will sterilize all female rats with which it comes in contact, and these, in turn, will sterilize all male rats coming in contact with them. Our mathematicians estimate that under even moderately favorable circumstances, the entire rat population of the world could be sterilized from one male rat in approximately two hundred years.

Rats so treated have already been liberated in the granaries at Odessa; in three months, rat-trappings there have fallen by 26.4 percent, and grain-losses to rats by 32.09 percent.

We are shipping you six dozen sterilized male rats, which you can use for sterilization stock, and, by so augmenting their numbers, may duplicate our own successes.

Curiously enough, this effect of venereally contagious sterility was discovered quite accidentally, in connection with the use of hard radiations for human sterilization (criminals, mental defectives, etc.). Knowing the disastrous possible effects of an epidemic of contagious human sterility, all persons so sterilized were liquidated as soon as the contagious nature of their sterility had been discovered, with the exception of a dozen or so convicts, who had been released before this discovery was made. It is believed that at least some of them have made their way over the border and into the territory of the United Peoples' Republics of East Asia. I must caution your Government to be on the lookout of them. Among a people still prac-

ticing ancestor-worship, an epidemic of sterility would be a disaster indeed.

My Government must insist that your Government take some definite step toward the solution of the Khakum River question; the present position of the Government of the United Peoples' Republics of East Asia on this subject is utterly unacceptable to the Government of the Union of East European Soviet Republics, and must be revised very considerably.

I have the honor, etc., etc.,
Vladmir N. Dzhoubinsky

*Coded radiogram, Dzhoubinsky to Krylenkoff:*

25 OCTOBER, 1984
ASCERTAIN IMMEDIATELY CAUSE OF RELEASE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY VICINITY OF NOVA ZEMBLA THIS AM
DZHOUBINSKY

*Coded radiogram, Wu Fung Tung to Sing Yat:*

25 OCTOBER, 1984
ASCERTAIN IMMEDIATELY CAUSE OF RELEASE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY VICINITY OF NOVA ZEMBLA THIS AM
WU

*Letter from the Ameer of Afghanistan to UEESR Premier-President Mouzorgin and UPREA President Sung Li-Yin:*

26 October, 1984

SHERE ALI ABDALLAH, Ameer of Afghanistan, Master of Kabul, Lord of Herat and Kandahar, Keeper of Khyber Pass, Defender of the True Faith, Servant of the Most High and Sword-Hand of the Prophet; Ph. D. (Princeton); Sc. B. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology); M. A. (Oxford): to their Excellencies A. A. Mouzorgin, Premier-President of the Union of East European Soviet Republics and Sung Li-Yin, President of the United Peoples' Republics of East Asia,

Greetings, in the name of Allah!

For the past five years, I have watched, with growing concern, the increasing tensions between your Excellencies' respective Governments, allegedly arising out of the so-called Khakum River question. It is my conviction that this Khakum River dispute is the utterly fraudulent device by which both Governments hope to create a pretext for the invasion of India, each ostensibly to rescue that unhappy country from the rapacity of the other. Your Excellencies must surely realize that this is a contingency which the Government of the Kingdom of Afghanistan cannot and will not permit; it would mean nothing short of the national extinction of the Kingdom of Afghanistan, and the enslavement of the Afghan people.

Your Excellencies will recall

that I discussed this matter most urgently on the occasions of my visits to your respective capitals of Moscow and Nanking, and your respective attitudes, on those occasions, has firmly convinced me that neither of your Excellencies is by nature capable of adopting a rational or civilized attitude toward this question. It appears that neither of your Excellencies has any intention of abandoning your present war of mutual threats and blackmail until forced to do so by some overt act on the part of one or the other of your Excellencies' Governments, which would result in physical war of pan-Asiatic scope and magnitude. I am further convinced that this deplorable situation arises out of the megalomaniac ambitions of the Federal Governments of the UEESR and the UPREA, respectively, and that the different peoples of what you unblushingly call your "autonomous" republics have no ambitions except, on a rapidly diminishing order of probability, to live out their natural span of years in peace. Therefore:

*In the name of ALLAH, the Merciful, the Compassionate: We, Shere Ali Abdallah, Ameer of Afghanistan, etc., do decree and command that the political entities known as the Union of East European Soviet Republics and the United Peoples' Republics of East Asia respectively are herewith abolished and dissolved into their constituent autonomous republics, each one of which shall hereafter enjoy complete sovereignty within its own borders as is right and proper.*

Now, in case either of you gentlemen feel inclined to laugh this off, let me remind you of the series of mysterious disappearances of some of the most noted scientists of both the UEESR and the UPREA, and let me advise your Excellencies that these scientists are now residents and subjects of the Kingdom of Afghanistan, and are here engaged in research and development work for my Government. These gentlemen were not abducted, as you gentlemen seem to believe; they came here of their own free will, and ask nothing better than to remain here, where they are treated with dignity and honor, given material rewards — riches, palaces, harems, retinues of servants, etc. — and are also free from the intellectual and ideological restraints which make life so intolerable in your respective countries to any man above the order of intelligence of a cretin. In return for these benefactions, these eminent scientists have developed, for my Government, certain weapons. For example:

1.) A nuclear-rocket guided mis-

sile, officially designated as the *Sword of Islam,* vastly superior to your Excellencies' respective guided missiles *Marxist Victory* and *Celestial Destroyer.* It should be; it was the product of the joint efforts of Dr. Voronoff and Dr. Bao Hu-Shin, whom your Excellencies know.

2.) A new type of radar-radio-electronic defense screen, which can not only detect the approach of a guided missile, at any velocity whatever, but will automatically capture and redirect same. In case either of your Excellencies doubt this statement, you are invited to aim a rocket at some target in Afghanistan and see what happens.

3.) Both the UPREA mutated virus and the UEESR contagious sterility, with positive vaccines against the former and means of instrumental detection of the latter.

4.) A technique for initiating and controlling the Bethe carbon-hydrogen cycle. We are now using this as a source of heat for industrial and even domestic purposes, and we also have a carbon-hydrogen cycle bomb. Such a bomb, delivered by one of our *Sword of Islam* Mark IV's, was activated yesterday over the Northern tip of Nova Zembla, at an altitude of four miles. I am enclosing photographic reproductions of views of this test, televised to Kabul by an accompanying *Sword of Islam* Mark V observation rocket. I am informed that expeditions have been sent by both the UEESR and the UPREA to investigate; they should find some very interesting conditions. For one thing, they won't need their climbing equipment to get over the Nova Zembla Glacier; the Nova Zembla Glacier isn't there, any more.

5.) A lithium bomb. This has not been tested, yet. A lithium bomb is nothing for a country the size of Afghanistan to let off inside its own borders. We intend making a test with it within the next ten days, however. If your Excellencies will designate a target, which must be at the center of an uninhabited area at least five hundred miles square, the test can be made in perfect safety. If not, I cannot answer the results; that will be in the hands of Allah, Who has ordained all things. No doubt Allah has ordained the destruction of either Moscow or Nanking; whichever city Allah has elected to erase, I will make it my personal responsibility to see to it that the other isn't slighted, either.

However, if your Excellencies decide to accede to my modest and reasonable demands, not later than one week from today, this test-launching will be cancelled as unnecessary. Of course, that would leave unsettled a bet I have made with Dr. Hong Foo—

a star sapphire against his favorite Persian concubine—that the explosion of a lithium bomb will not initiate a chain reaction in the Earth's crust and so disintegrate this planet. This, of course, is a minor consideration, unworthy of Your notice.

Of course, I am aware that both your Excellencies have, in the past, fomented mutual jealousies and suspicions among the several "autonomous" republics under your respective jurisdictions, as an instrument of policy. If these peoples were, at this time, to receive full independence, the present inevitability of a pan-Asiatic war on a grand scale would be replaced only by the inevitability of a pan-Asiatic war by detail. Obviously, some single supra-national sovereignty is needed to maintain peace, and such a sovereignty should be established under some leadership not hitherto associated with either the former UEESR or the former UPREA. I humbly offer myself as President of such a supra-national organization, counting as a matter of course upon the whole-hearted support and cooperation of both your Excellencies. It might be well if both your Excellencies were to come here to Kabul to confer with me on this subject at your very earliest convenience.

The Peace of Allah be upon both your Excellencies!

*Shere Ali Abdallah,*
*Ph. D., Sc. B., M. A.*

*From N. Y. Times, Oct. 30, 1984*

MOUZORGIN, SUN LI-YIN,
FETED AT KABUL
Confer With Ameer;
Discuss Peace Plans
Surprise Developments Seen...

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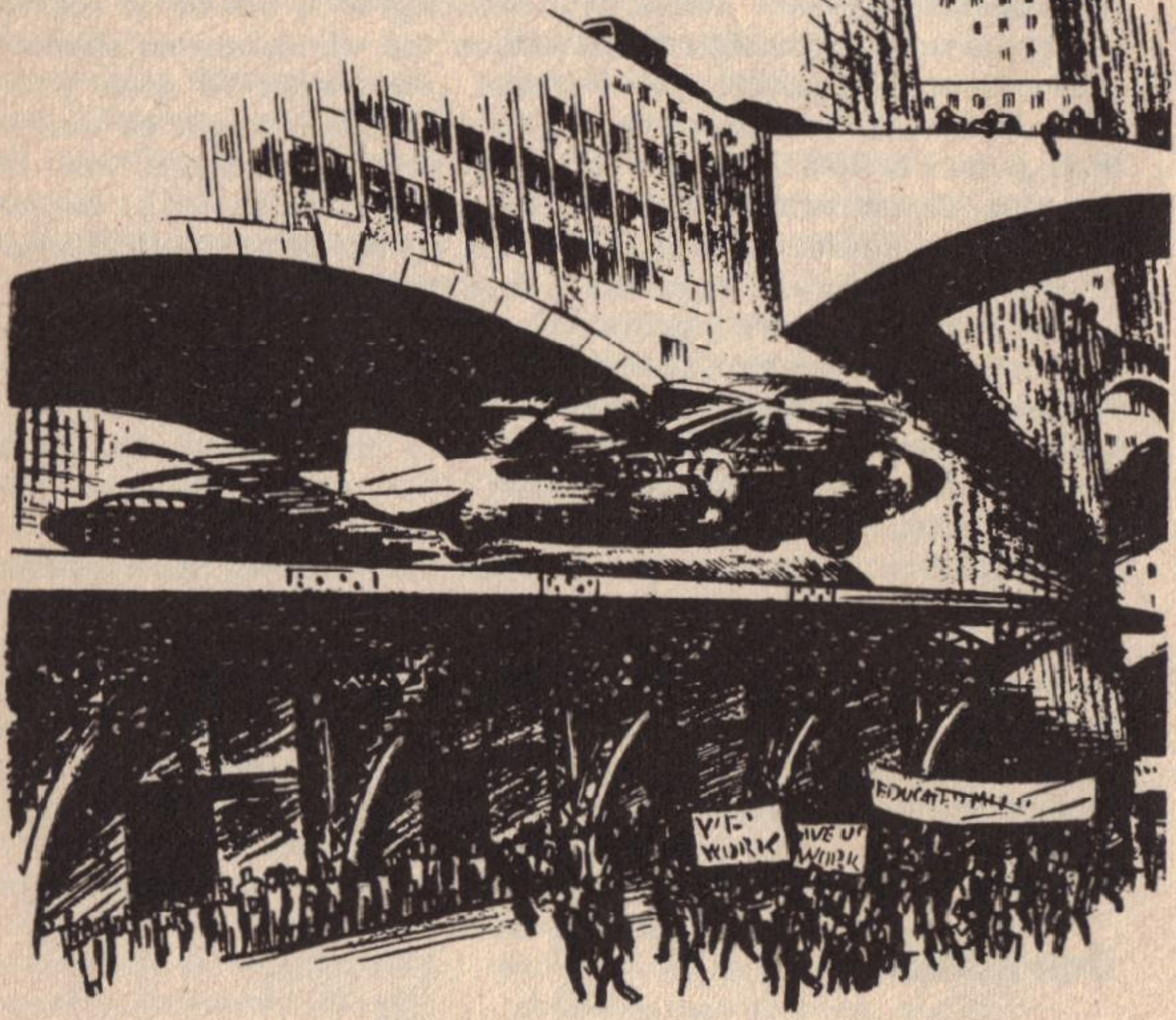
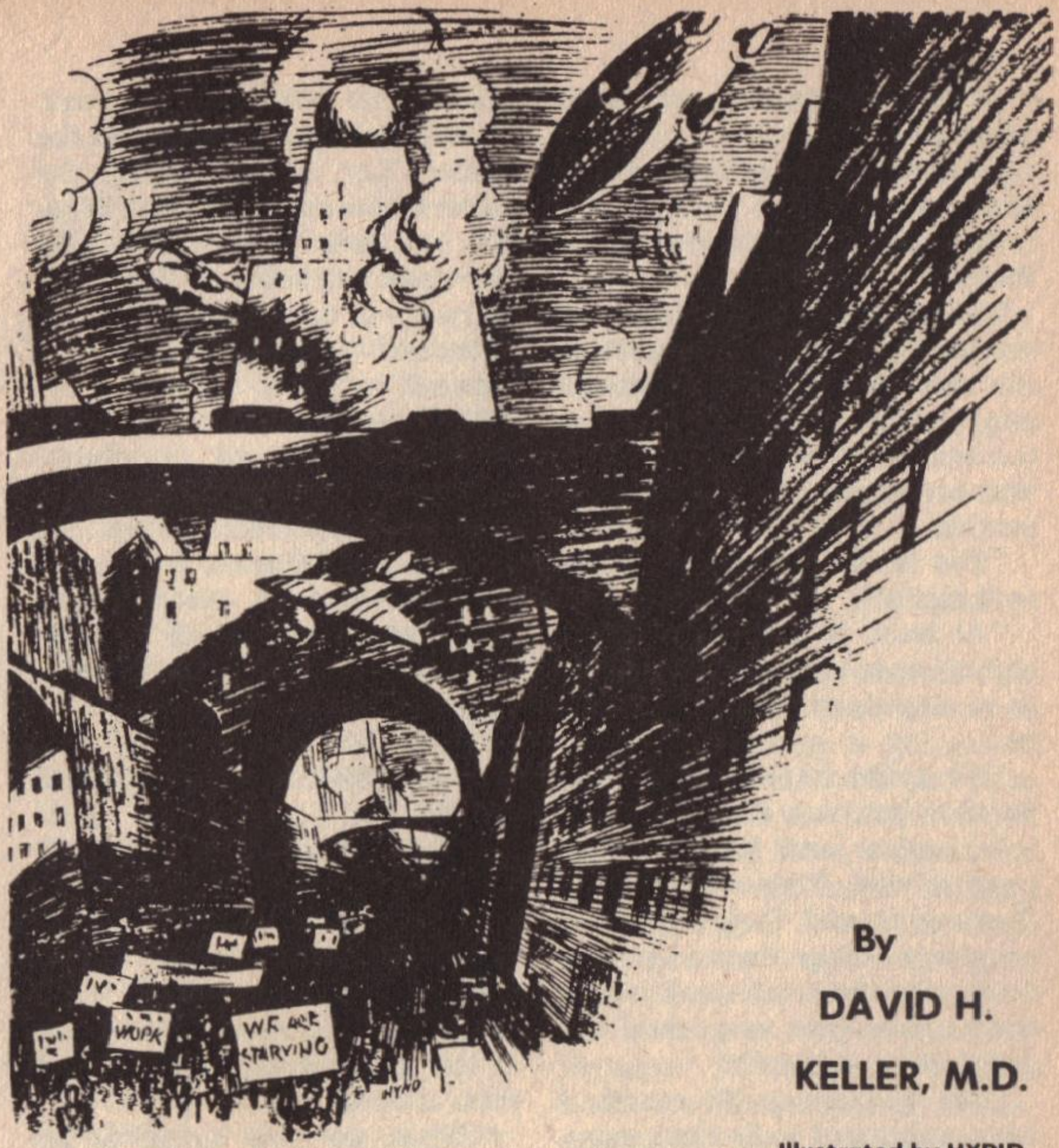
# WHITE COLLARS




*When "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" (his first s-f story) appeared in* Amazing *for February, 1928, just about overnight David H. Keller became one of the more popular writers in a literary genre which—in magazine form at least—was itself only two years old. From then on, he turned out scores of memorable "Kelleryarns," some of which made pretty shrewd guesses about the shape of things to come, even though—as we see in "White Collars"—Keller may have called them by another name.*




By

# DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

Illustrated by HYDID

THE White Collars are on parade again!"

The words were spoken with a mild contempt.

Far below, in the canyon of Fifth Avenue, a thin line of men and women were struggling against the traffic. They carried banners, painted signs, and at the head of the column an American flag. It was a disorderly march, though they were all moving in one direction. That, and the fact that they were all united in purpose, were the only evidences of harmony. Their painted signs expressed their desires; their anxious faces told of the utter hopelessness of their ambitions.

What they wanted was work and food.

In order to gain the food they had to work.

And there was no work for them!

The two well-dressed men, who watched the struggling mass from the vantage point of an eleventh story office window, gazed on the marchers with mingled pity and contempt. One of them repeated:

"The White Collars are on parade again!"

"At least it is an interesting sight," answered his companion, in a slightly disinterested manner.

"No doubt interesting to you, Senator, but, as a demonstration, it is useless and hopeless. The poor devils! They cannot help themselves and they will allow no one to help them. Let's go down on the curb and watch them. Have you ever seen the group close at hand?"

"Not as a group. Of course, I have employed individual members of the class when necessary, but they are so conscious of their superiority that they are unpleasant employees. Taking them as a group, I fancy that I am not at all interested in them. What is their complaint?"

"They claim that they want a chance to earn an honest living. Of course, that is all bluff. There is a lot of work for everyone, provided he really wants to work. It would pay you to look into the matter. Let us go down to the street and watch them. As a Senator, you may have to deal with the question soon in Congress. It really is becoming a national question —perhaps a national menace."

The two men took the elevator and were soon on the street. Only a few feet away, amid the traffic, they saw the disintegrated column of marchers, tired, worried, soiled with dust and the sweat of fatigue. Their banners and signs told the story of their despair.

"GIVE US WORK!"

"HELP US MAKE AN HONEST LIVING!"

"EDUCATED MEN DEMAND ADEQUATE INCOMES!"

"WHITE COLLARS, AS WELL AS COLORED ONES, NEED FOOD!"

The two business men looked at the army of unemployed and then at each other.

"What do you think of it, Hubler?" finally inquired Senator Whitesell. "I have been so busy with my construction work on the Colorado River that I have paid but little attention to conditions in the larger cities. I have not even been attending to my senatorial duties as I should."

"Suppose you come over to the Club and let me tell you about it," suggested Jacob

Hubler, heading for the corner.

The traffic was so thick and noisy that for a few minutes it was only possible to exchange monosyllables, but once inside the quiet of the Engineers' Club, in the luxurious armchairs provided for the relaxation of the tired business men, Hubler lit his cigar, passed one to his friend, made himself comfortable and started in with the explanation of the strange parade of the White Collar men.

"There have been a number of curious parades in history, but this one is probably unique for any age or country. There have been demonstrations of slaves, political groups and muscle workers. Victorious armies have passed down the Appian Way in Rome and up Fifth Avenue. Hundreds of thousands have showered Caesar with roses and Lindbergh with confetti. But a parade of White Collars is absolutely new.

"Of course, you are acquainted with the educational programme that has always been considered so important to the life of our nation. Early in our history the average man could only read and write, while the unusual man, on account of his financial and social position, was capable of receiving a collegiate education. Later on, small colleges multiplied, till every city boasted of one or more, and every town had its academy. No community was satisfied till it possessed a center of higher learning. These schools had to have pupils to justify their existence. There were useless classrooms and wasted professors without a constant supply of pupils. Consequently, the young people were urged to acquire an education, and if they could not finance it, they were aided in every way.

"Gradually, many of the smaller colleges were merged into larger ones. The remaining universities became gigantic in the scope of their effort to uplift the individual. At first, a college of five thousand pupils was exceptional, but later on some universities had fifty and even sixty thousand pupils. Education became synonymous with culture; a college degree was supposed to be the necessary pass into the higher levels of society. Instead of asking a man what he could do or what he was worth, the questions of choice were: 'What is your Alma Mater?' or 'What Fraternity did you make?'

"Gradually, the rich men of the country became interested. The original endowments were thousands and hundreds of thousands. Later on, millions of dollars were given. Men like Hiram Smith of Universal Utilities thought nothing of giving a quarter billion dollars at one time to a single university. We have

several such endowments right here in this city.

"What was the result? Naturally, everybody who wanted a higher education got it; at least, everybody received all that he was able to absorb. Goodness knows it was little enough in many cases, because there seems to be no real relation between education and intelligence, and a real clever man once told me that nineteen-twentieths of what we know is gained outside of the class room. The colleges and universities of our country turned out, with almost machine-like regularity and precision, lawyers, dentists, journalists, surgeons, architects, engineers of every type, and any number of professors. Tens of thousands were added each year to all the so-called learned professions.

"These men and women were trained to plead legal cases, fill teeth, write editorials, cut out tumors and plan buildings. All this, and many other forms of highly technical work, they became proficient in, but none of them was taught to make an adequate living.

Meantime, while the opportunity for employment of those skilled in such mental labor increased, it did not increase in proportion to the number trained in those various fields. Scientific management made it possible for one doctor, or one lawyer, to serve a far larger clientele than he was formerly able to do. Ford showed the world how to speed up mass production in machinery and the same principle was used in every line of the higher specialties. A man used to have a private lawyer or a family doctor. Now, he employs a corporation for legal matters and a clinic for his physical ills. I went to one of those clinics last year. They see over twelve hundred new patients a day. In two days, exactly eleven hours of actual time, I was examined by twenty-seven doctors, each a specialist in his line. I had everything examined except my soul, was told that there was nothing wrong with me, and was charged ten thousand dollars. They knew my Dun and Bradstreet rating before they started with the examination. Just think of twelve hundred a day going through a medical mill like that! And think of the number of old-fashioned doctors who could be supported by that many patients! It is the same way with all the professions. Standardization, specialization and efficiency make it possible for every educated man to serve ten-fold as many as he used to—and yet there are ten times as many highly educated persons to do the work as there were twenty-five years ago. Ten years ago there was a suspicion that the importance of higher

education had been overstressed. Five years ago the economists were frankly worried. We have had these parades in New York and in all of our large cities for the last two years.

"Those are the White Collar men and women on parade. They are the great mass of the population who are highly and intensely educated; they are all dressed up intellectually, and there is no place for them to work; consequently, they are starving to death.

"They are learned and aristocratic and proud. Possessed of a strong class consciousness, they refuse to do anything that they have not been educated to do. Can you imagine a trained physician working as a hired chauffeur? A graduate of a law school working as a ticket seller in the subway? They say that they are starving; they demand work; they cry for food; but what are we going to do with them? Civilization cannot go back. Modern methods of labor in every department are here to stay. The supply far exceeds the demand.

"There always has been and always will be work for the manual laborer. Even in the age of the greatest mechanical advancement, the era of electricity, there is always work for the artisan—the plumber, carpenter, plasterer, structural steel worker and paper hanger. We cannot, in my business, get enough plumbers to do the work, and twenty dollars is their standard pay for a seven-hour day."

The Western Senator laughed as he interrupted.

"You talk mighty well for an uneducated man, Hubler. Where did you get all this line of talk and the big words?"

Hubler, chuckling, replied:

"Naturally, it is not original. I am a plumber, not a sociologist, but I was interested in this White Collar question, so I hired a man by the name of Pitkin to make a survey of the problem for me, and most of the ideas he gave me I have been rehashing to you. In fact, I read a paper on the subject before the International Association of Plumbers. After Pitkin studied the matter, he became rather interested in it. He feels that we are facing a crisis by reason of the great increase of high grade intelligence, for which the nation can find no fitting employment. He said that a few years ago there were five times as many highly educated men and women as there were positions for them, and that matters are much worse now. He told me that he was frankly worried about it, because when these highly educated people failed to find satisfactory and remunerative work, they became maladjusted, developed mental disturbances, complexes,

blocked activities, and finally brooded into an unhappy anxiety state and then even became insane. Those are almost his exact words. I learned part of his report verbatim. Even now I am not sure what some of the words mean, but I do know that these people make poor citizens—they are really super-mendicants and refuse to do the kind of work that needs to be done.

"You know how I was raised, Whitesell. We were boys together. You worked and so did I. We had to work to keep from starving and freezing to death. I went a little to night school and always I have been a great reader. You went to night school at Cooper Institute. We learned a little, but always we worked with our hands; we knew what it was to be muscle tired; we were familiar with sweat.

"I have a boy. A mighty fine fellow! I want you to meet him on this trip if you can manage to come up to the house. You ought to have a meal with the wife, anyway. I could have sent that boy to college, but I saw this White Collar trouble ahead; I saw what it was going to be earlier than most people saw it. I told Larry that his future lay in the plumbing business. Society has used plumbing since the days of Rome and it is going to keep on needing it. There will always be plumbing and more plumbing and better plumbing. So I taught him my trade. And by the Seven Sacred Caterpillars he is a fine plumber.

"It has worked out fine for him. He is a Master Plumber. I give him fifty plunks a day for his time, and he is worth every cent of it. He works in overalls and get his hands dirty. He has a fair income, and when he inherits my millions he will know what to do with them. He has learned the value of a dollar. He drives a Ford car, though he could get a Rolls Royce merely by asking for one. He knows that he is a plumber, and he is rather proud of being a good one. He is satisfied with his work and his chance for advancement in life. He is not nervous—but he is in love.

"Of course, he should have fallen in love with a plumber's daughter, but he met a young lawyer, the daughter of a doctor. He met her at some kind of a party, and fell in love with her at first sight, and after that she gave him one date. When she found out that he was nothing but a plumber, she cut him cold, just wouldn't have anything more to do with him. The boy was so unhappy that I investigated the family. They are regular White Collar people. The father is a physician, some kind of a specialist, the mother is a college graduate and teaches

Greek when she can find anyone who wants to take lessons and the daughter, as I told you, is a lawyer. They are starving to death—simply because they are too highly educated. They do not know how to work. In spite of all their education, there is not enough income between the three to pay even the barest necessary expenses. They are dependent on charity this very minute, and yet the proud young lady refused to consider the love of my son, because she is a college graduate and he is a plumber.

"They were in the parade today. Last year only ten thousand had the desperate courage to march and carry unemployment signs. The morning paper estimated that there would be seventy-five thousand White Collars in line today. Every one of those marchers was a college graduate; and all of them are out of work.

"That, Whitesell, is the explanation of what you have just seen on Fifth Avenue in the proudest city of the world. You are a United States Senator. Have you any solution?"

The Western Senator frowned as he replied:

"You know how I became a Senator. I made my money building dams. My wife and daughter became restless and wanted social recognition; so, I bought a seat in the Senate. In fact, my business associates wanted me to go there, because they felt that our group was not being properly cared for. But first, last and all the time, I am a Western man and I still love to mix concrete. Out where I live there is a lot of work, and we never have enough men and women to do it. We could use all of those seventy-five thousand men and women. I do not see why being a college graduate should keep a man from earning a living mixing concrete or making forms or herding cattle, and a woman would make a better housewife and cook if she did have a university education. I am sure that I could find work for all these White Collar people if they would come West."

Hubler laughed.

"That is the very point of the whole matter. They could support themselves here in New York if they were willing to work; but they want to do only the specialized work that they were prepared for. Do you know anything about the Simon-Binet test? It is a kind of yardstick with which to measure the intellect of a person. The superior adult, according to this test, has an intellectual quota of 130, or over. It used to be considered that one per cent of the population possessed this grade of intellect. This made a superior population of 1,200,000. But these superior

adults were apt to breed their kind, the universities made more, and now it is believed that there are nearly 5 per cent of these extraordinary individuals, all capable of doing very fine work, and unwilling to do anything of a manual nature—and there is not enough high grade work to go around. A sociologist told me that there were three highly trained minds for every special place in our modern society. Consequently, two-thirds of our White Collars are out of employment—and are starving—not for luxuries, but for the actual necessities of life.

"And the world does not want them at any price. The economics of labor, the standards of mass production dictate the formula, 'NEVER GIVE TO ANY MAN WORK, WHICH A MAN OF LESS ABILITY CAN DO EQUALLY WELL, AS FAR AS THE FINISHED PRODUCT IS CONCERNED.' Why then should they give work to a 130 per cent mind at a high salary when the same work can be done by a 100 per cent mind at a smaller wage? And they believe that men, who are barely able to do certain work do it better than superior minds, because they are content and are never ambitious to improve their condition. They realize that they are at the top of the ladder, as far as their minds are concerned. It is far different with the White Collars. Unless the Government does something, the States will have to do something in order to protect their own economic safety. Private capital is uninterested and unsympathetic. Universal Utilities are working now on the stenographic problem. Of course, they are trying to keep it quiet, but facts leak out. Unless something is done, we will find that instead of developing a race of supermen, we have formed a breed of superpaupers, highly educated mendicants. We have physicians, journalists, dentists, architects, lawyers with ragged clothes, empty stomachs, and cold and unfurnished apartments, but possessed of unlimited pride and an unwillingness to improve their own condition or to help themselves in any way. Naturally, they are poor citizens, and unpatriotic. They blame the Government for all their troubles, and do not realize that they alone are to blame. They will do all that they can to promote political unrest and even revolution."

"They cannot hurt the Government," declared Senator Whitesell, in a most decided manner.

"That may be true. You may be right, but they may become a real menace. They have the brains of the nation at their command; you have to realize that fact. Do you think that I am exaggerating facts and making

conditions seem worse than they really are?"

"I certainly do, Hubler."

"Then come with me on a tour of their district. They all live together, almost in a Ghetto. They have been driven to that part of the city by the low rents that prevail there. Laborers are making such high wages that they refuse to live in such tumble-down rookeries. I tell you what we can do. Let us go and visit this family that has so persistently told my son that he is not their social equal. Let's visit the girl and see how my son's love affair is progressing. She will probably be at home tonight with her parents, tired from the long march and exhausted with hunger. Fortunately, they do not know me personally, though I know a great deal about them from the report of the Detective Agency. Suppose we offer the entire family positions out West and see what their reaction is?"

After a hearty supper at the Club, the two men drove in Hubler's car to one of the oldest sections of the Bowery. The streets, houses, and stores all spoke of decay and poverty. Finally, they came to a stop before a four-story house. After climbing long flights of rickety stairs, almost equal in danger to an Alpine mountain, the two men came to the Reiswick apartment. Their reception there was dignified but extremely cool. Evidently, the White Collars had learned to look with suspicion on all visitors showing signs of wealth. However, Dr. Reiswick asked them to be seated on the only two visible chairs while he and his wife and daughter sat on the narrow daybed.

The situation seemed to be an awkward one, until Senator Whitesell showed the reason for the visit.

"I am a large employer of labor, Dr. Reiswick, and I understand that you and your family might be induced to accept positions that would pay a satisfactory salary. The proposition is this: I am from the West. I want to employ an educated man who will serve as timekeeper and paymaster for a force of about two hundred day laborers. I also need a woman to look after the washing and ironing and mending of the camp. She will be in charge of about twenty Mexican women who will do the actual work. She can have an assistant, and when I talked to my friend about these three positions, he thought you might be induced to accept them. The combined salaries would be about three hundred a month, with all expenses paid."

He had hardly finished when Dr. Reiswick stood up. He was trembling with rage and could hardly speak.

"Do you realize," he demanded, "that I am a physician? A graduate of Yale? Do you understand that my wife is a graduate of Vassar and can teach Greek? And do you further know that my daughter is a graduate of Columbia? She had a scholarship granted her, and we sacrificed everything to help her gain her degree in International Law. Do you not see how insulting you are to ask us to keep time and mend and wash for Mexicans in a desert?"

"No insult intended," said Whitesell, soothingly. "We simply thought that you wanted to work. We had a right to think so after you appeared in the parade today."

"We do want to work," answered Mrs. Reiswick, proudly. "My husband is an expert in removing tonsils. In fact, that is his specialty. No one in New York can remove tonsils better than he. I teach Greek. My daughter headed her class in International Law. We should be glad if you would give us work, but it must be the kind of work that we are trained to do, the kind that we have devoted our lives to. We should even be willing to go to a Western town, if my husband could take out tonsils and I could teach the rural people the Greek language."

Suddenly, impulsively, Jacob Hubler arose and walked over to the young lady:

"Miss Reiswick," he said quietly, "my son is very much interested in you. If you will permit him to see you socially, to become better acquainted with you, I will give you and your parents a chance to really work at your professions in New York, right here in the city,"

Miss Reiswick looked puzzled.

"Who is your son?" she asked.

"Larry Hubler. You spent an evening with him a few months ago, but after that you refused to see him."

"I remember now," she replied. "He was that interesting plumber. O, Mother dear, you remember him, do you not? You talked a little in Greek to him, and he thought it was Yiddish. Father, you will recall that you tried to explain to him your particular technique of tonsillotomy, and he was so uninterested in your lecture. Naturally, nothing could be expected of a man who had never gone to college. I am afraid," and here she walked over to Hubler and looked him full in the face. "I am afraid that my social standing forbids any intimacy with a plumber. Undoubtedly, his parents are very ordinary people, without ambition. No doubt, you are some kind of an artisan, of some nondescript variety. The door is open, and the interview is over. Walk' quietly as you go down-

stairs, because there are families of culture living in this house who do not like to be disturbed by day laborers.''

There being nothing else for them to do, Senator Whitesell and Jacob Hubler walked down the steps and out to their car, swearing none too gently.

Jacob Hubler was inclined to disregard the entire incident. He wanted to forget it and he tried his best to help his son to do the same. He was confident that Larry would soon overcome his infatuation for the beautiful young lawyer.

When Senator Whitesell left New York for Washington, Hubler lost sight of the White Collar parade, and it was not until a few weeks later, when the newspapers were filled with the details of a proposed investigation into the question of unemployment of the educated masses, that he recalled his part in the movement that was to end in such a striking and dramatic manner.

For he had started Senator Whitesell thinking, and to think, with that gentleman, was to act, and to act was to do so in a decisive manner. He was a power in the Senate. In fact, the financial group that he represented dominated and overshadowed the great business interests of the country. They told Whitesell what to demand, and he told the nation. This time he did his own dictating.

His remedy was very simple.

There was to be no unemployment in the entire nation. All over the country public works of a vital and necessary nature were to be started. A Federal Reserve Fund of three billion was to be set aside to pay for these works and they were to be started and carried to completion, just as fast as was necessary to furnish employment to every adult male. His wage was to be sufficient to support his wife and little children. All males over eighteen were required to work, and all females over that age were either to marry or to work as domestics and housekeepers in the labor camps. Thus, all in the nation would be enabled to support themselves and provide their families with the necessaries of life.

The Employment Bill was accompanied by an educational section, providing for the closing of many of the colleges and for the turning of others into trade schools. A careful survey was made of all of the professions, and each year only a very few of the brightest applicants were allowed to begin the study of each profession. Thus, it was definitely provided that yearly only the absolutely necessary number of doctors, dentists, journalists, architects, and teachers would

be graduated, and each of them would have a definite position and that position would be his for the rest of his life. Thus, he would be assured of receiving an adequate income, equal at least to the income of the bricklayers, steel men, and plasterers, and plumbers in the nation.

As soon as the details of this proposed act were published in the daily press, rioting started in all the large cities. The White Collars lost no time in making known their opinion of such legislation. With concerted action, they raided the sections of the city where the artisans lived in luxury, and many windows were broken and heads cracked before the educated masses were driven back to their dingy quarters. In some cities, the police force was inadequate, and the fire department was called upon to turn high pressure streams of water on the rioting collegians.

Opposition made Senator Whitesell more determined than ever. He forced his bills through Congress and personally made the President see that his political future depended on his signing them. Before Congress adjourned, one of the most remarkable pieces of constructive legislation ever known became a law. Its legality was at once confirmed by a test case before the Supreme Court, and theoretically, the White Collar problem was no longer an unsolved question.

But there was resistance!

It was not to be supposed that the White Collars immediately submitted. This opposition was anticipated and provided for by an Enforcement Act. Every adult of both sexes had to register and show satisfactory and permanent employment, or accept the work assigned to him or her by the Government Bureau of Work. All refusing to accept the assigned positions were forced to leave the country. They were given a thousand dollars in gold and were permitted to go anywhere they pleased. But they lost their citizenship. At once, there was a rush of highly educated people to foreign shores; but it was not to be supposed that the other nations, who were having troubles of their own with their surplus of intelligence, would calmly permit an invasion of their lands by hordes of White Collars. Stringent immigrant laws were passed, and finally only a few of the Central and South American Republics welcomed the emigrants from the United States. This welcome was accorded more for the gold that they carried with them than for their massive intelligence.

The law was enforced. At first, it was pathetic to see professors, dentists, physicians, journalists, architects actually working, mix-

ing concrete, building roads, and working on the goverment farms. Books were written, showing the horror of it all, but these were confiscated by the Secret Service Department as dangerous propaganda. Finally, the long hours of actual muscle work, the three hearty and regular meals each day, and the long sleep each night, made possible by tired bodies and satisfied stomachs, so cleared the intellectuals of the toxins that had formerly flooded their systems, that life looked entirely different to them. They became different men and women, they sang at their work, and the number of babies born in the Labor Hospitals to happy mothers and proud fathers steadily increased.

In the meantime, Larry Hubler had never ceased to continue his suit to win the beautiful young lawyer, Angelica Reiswick. She tried every known method of snubbing him and discouraging him, though she did occasionally accompany him to a hotel or restaurant for an evening meal, which her empty interior (one part of her body was not highly educated) thoroughly enjoyed. She felt that even a hungry International Lawyer could accept an occasional meal now and then from an opulent plumber, but not a thing else. Consequently, she refused his plea for a relationship more intimate than a gastronomical one. She laughed at love and refused his offer of marriage.

The National Labor Law was strictly enforced, in spite of the determined and strenuous resistance. Pale undernourished men and women were given their choice between the labor camps and emigration. Thousands voluntarily left the country without waiting to be shipped out like so many cattle, but each one was careful to claim the thousand dollars in gold.

The Reiswicks led the resistance in New York City. Finally, they alone of the White Collars were left idle in that metropolis. The morning papers featured the fact that there were only three White Collars left among eight million workers. Dr. Reiswick wrote long articles to the medical magazines, claiming that there must be at least a few tonsils left for him to operate on, and that his days of usefulness as a specialist were certainly not numbered. His wife delivered impassioned Philippics in the foreign sections of the city in the forlorn hope that some among her audience would understand her Greek and support her, while Angelica argued the matter from soap-boxes, even in Wall Street, with the faithful Larry ever in attendance to chase away the newsboys who were enthusiastic over her beauty.

Larry did not work very much as a master plumber for several months. He was too much in love.

He argued with the family.

He and his father argued with the family.

All of the arguments failed, and finally, in spite of everything, the last White College family left in America prepared to take their three thousand dollars in gold and go to Honduras. They selected this country after a great deal of deliberation. The Doctor had found that practically every citizen of that country still had his tonsils, and he was confident that when they found out how clever he was in removing them, they would not delay in having the operation performed; his wife learned that no one in that country spoke Greek, so she was sure that they all would want to learn it, while Angelica, when she found how many small republics were neighbors to Honduras, was confident that she would have every opportunity of practicing International Law.

The day finally came for their sailing. The papers featured it. Sob-sisters on several newspapers wrote tearful articles about the fair Angelica, who might have married the son of a millionaire plumber, had she deserted her family and principles.

Escorted by members of the Secret Service, who were instructed not to give them a single opportunity to escape, the Reiswick family embarked for Honduras. As a family and as individuals, they did not regret their decision. Life in New York had been one of hardship and hunger, and they were satisfied that things could not be worse in Honduras, especially, if the bananas were cheap, and tonsils plenty.

The boat steamed slowly down the harbor, passed the Statue of Liberty and sailed out through the misty narrows and Ambrose Channel, and then—

The Doctor and his wife discovered that their daughter was missing.

Search as they would, not a trace of her could be found.

To put the matter plainly, she had been kidnaped.

Larry Hubler, by the use of bribery, had been able to spirit her off the vessel. In spite of her cries and struggles, he had carried her back to the city, and while her parents were hopelessly bound for Honduras, she was traveling in a taxi to an apartment on Riverside Drive.

A preacher awaited them there; also Jacob Hubler and his wife. In the little parlor her wraps were removed, and Larry, excited and dominant, told her, in no uncertain language, that he had brought her there to marry him,

and that they were going to live happily ever after in that apartment. He went on to explain that she was going to do the cooking and washing and housekeeping and, while he had many time-saving electrical appliances, still, there would be enough to keep her busy.

Meantime, the older people waited anxiously in the background. They did not have the least idea of how it was all going to end.

Angelica Reiswick rushed through the apartment, ostensibly to escape, but not a detail of the furnishings was unobserved by her eyes. When she saw the kitchenette, with the electrical stove and shining pots and pans and White House Cook-book, and rows of every possible kind of canned goods, she sighed a little and walked slowly back to the parlor where her lover and the preacher waited.

"I never heard of an International Lawyer marrying a plumber," she declared indignantly.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Larry.

"I do not know. Such a situation was never mentioned in my four-year law course."

"In that case, let's marry," said Larry.

"Marry Larry?" she asked.

"Whom else?" he replied.

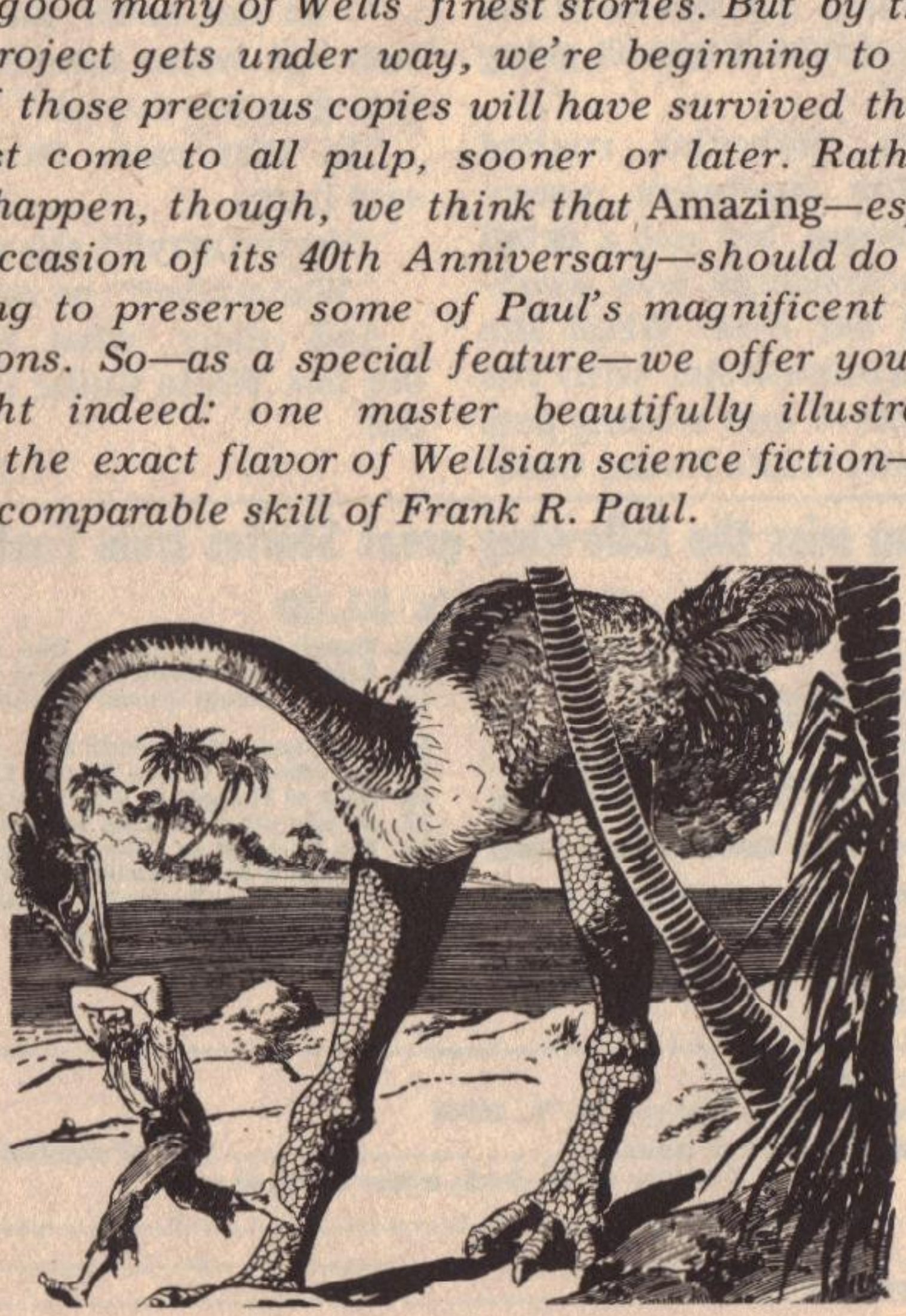
And really, what else could the last White Collar in America do?

THE END

# A SCIENCE-FICTION PORTFOLIO:

## Frank R. Paul Illustrating H.G. Wells

*When some enterprising scholar gets around to planning the Collected Works of H. G. Wells—to be issued in a deluxe, annotated, and profusely illustrated edition—we are sure that he will begin hunting for those rare 1926-1927 issues of* Amazing Stories *in which the late Frank R. Paul illustrated a good many of Wells' finest stories. But by the time such a project gets under way, we're beginning to wonder if* any *of those precious copies will have survived the death that must come to all pulp, sooner or later. Rather than let that happen, though, we think that* Amazing*—especially on the occasion of its 40th Anniversary—should do its part in helping to preserve some of Paul's magnificent interior illustrations. So—as a special feature—we offer you a very rare sight indeed: one master beautifully illustrated by another, the exact flavor of Wellsian science fiction—caught by the incomparable skill of Frank R. Paul.*



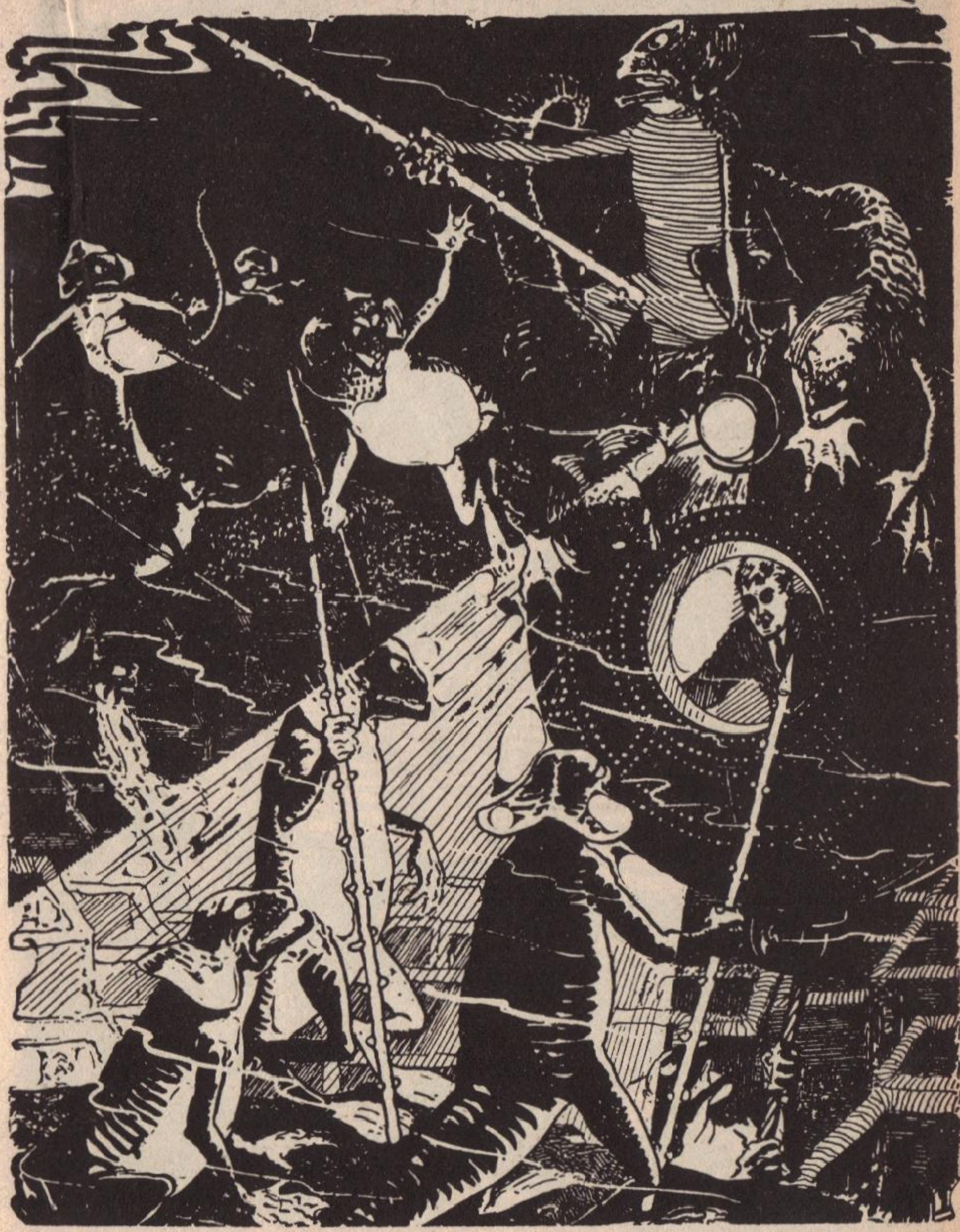
**Aepyornis Island (1927)**

The Time Machine (1927)

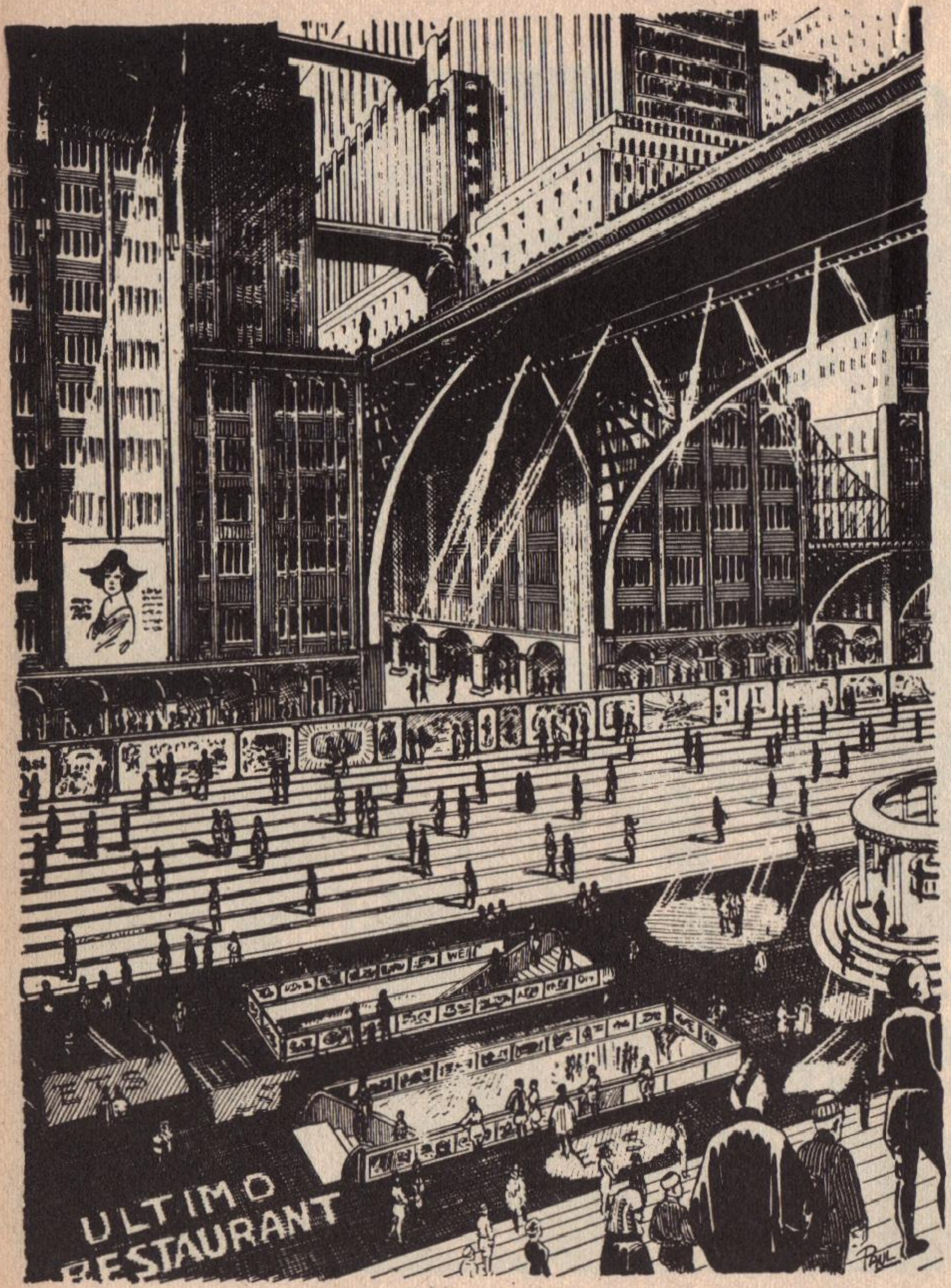
The Crystal Egg (1926)


The Island of Dr. Moreau (Part 1) (1926)


The War of the Worlds (Part 1) (1927)



In the Abyss (1926)




A Story of Days to Come (1928)

*At a time when most science-fiction writers were either turning out potboilers or intricate "gadget" stories, Nelson Bond (author of "The Fountain" and "Cunning of the Beast") had already won himself a large following of grateful readers who immediately recognized his special kind of talent. Inventive, literate, a marvelous storyteller, Bond was never better than in "Pilgrimage" (originally titled "The Priestess Who Rebelled"), which we now offer you in the revised version preferred by the author.*

**By Nelson S. Bond**

# PILGRIMAGE

**Illustrated by STANLEY KAY**

IN HER twelfth summer the illness came upon Meg and she was afraid. Afraid, yet turbulent with a sense of exaltation unlike anything she had ever before known. She was a woman now. She was become a woman, and she knew suddenly and completely that which was expected of her from this day forth. Knew. . .and dreaded.

She went immediately to the *hoam* of the Mother, for such was the Law. But as she moved down the walk-avenue she stared with eyes newly curious at the Men she passed. At their pale and pitifully hairless bodies. At their soft, futile hands and weak mouths. One lolling on the doorstep of 'Ana's *hoam* returned her gaze brazenly, made a small enticing gesture. Meg shuddered and curled her lips in a refusal-face.

Only yesterday she had been a

child. Now suddenly she was a woman. And for the first time Meg saw her people as they really were.

The warriors of the Clan. She looked with distaste upon the tense angularity of their bodies: the corded legs, the tightset jaws, the cold eyes and the brawny arms scarred to the elbow with ill-healed cicatrices. The tiny, thwarted breasts, flat and hard beneath leather harness-plates. Fighters they were, and nothing else.

This was not what she wanted.

She saw, too, the mothers: the full-lipped, flabby-breasted bearers of children; whose skins were soft and white as those of the Men; whose eyes were humid, washed barren of all expression by desires too oft aroused, too often sated. Their bodies bulged at hip and thigh, swayed when they walked like ripe grain billowing in a lush and fertile field. They lived only that the tribe might continue to exist. They reproduced.

This was not what she wanted.

Then there were the workers. Their bodies retained a vestige of womankind's inherent grace and nobility. But if their waists were thin, their hands were blunt-fingered and thick. Their shoulders sagged with the weariness of toil, were coarsened by adze and hod. Their faces grimly mirrored eternal struggle with an unyielding earth. And the earth of which they had made themselves a part had in return made itself a part of them. The workers' hides were browned with soil, their bodies stank of dirt and grime and unwashed perspiration.

This was not what she wanted. No, none of these was what she wanted.

So great was Meg's concentration that she entered into the *hoam* of the Mother without crying out, as was required. Thus it was that she discovered the Mother making great magic to the gods.

In her right hand the Mother held a stick. With it she scratched upon a smooth, bleached, calfskin scroll. From time to time she let the stick drink from a pool of midnight cupped in a dish before her. When she moved it again on the hide it left its spoor, a spidery trail of black.

For a long moment Meg stood and watched, wondering. Then dread overcame her; fear-thoughts shook her body. She thought suddenly of the gods. Of austere Jarg, their leader; of lean Ibrim and taciturn Taamuz. Of far-seeing Tedhi, she whose laughter echoes in the roaring summer thunders. What wrath would they visit upon one who had spied into their secrets?

She covered her eyes and dropped to her knees. But there were footsteps before her, and the Mother's hand upon her shoulders.

And there was but gentle chiding in the voice of the Mother as she said, "My child, know you not the Law? That all must cry out before entering the Mother's *hoam?*"

Meg's fear-thoughts went away. The Mother was good. It was she who fed and clothed the Clan, warmed them in dark winter and found them meat when meat was scarce. If she who was the gods' spokesman on earth saw no evil in Meg's unintentional prying. . .

Meg dared look again at the magic stick. There was a question in her eyes. The Mother answered that question. She said:

"It is 'writing,' Meg. Speech without words."

Speech-without-words? Meg crept to the table, bent a curious ear over the spider-marks. But she heard no sound. Then the Mother was beside her again, saying, "No, my child. It does not speak to the ears, but to the eyes. Listen, I will make it speak through my mouth."

She read aloud:

"Report of the month of June, 3478 A. D. There has been no change in the number of the Jinnia Clan. Still we are five score and seven, with chattels of nineteen Men, twelve kine, thirty horses. But there is reason to believe that 'Ana and Sahlee will soon add to our number.

"Last week Darthee, Lina and Alis journeyed into the Clina territory in search of game. They met there several of the Durm Clan and exchanged gifts of salt and bacca. Pledges of friendship were given. On the return trip Darthee was trapped by one of the Wild Ones, but was rescued by her companions before the strain could be crossed. The Wild One was destroyed.

"We have in our village a visitor from the Delwurs of the east, who says that in her territory the Wild Ones have almost disappeared. Illness, she says, has depleted their Men, and she begs that we lend their Clan studs. I have promised her Jak and Ralf, both strong and proven—"

The Mother stopped. "That is as far as I had gone, my child, when you entered."

Meg's eyes were wide with wonder. It was quite true that Darthee, Lina and Alis had recently returned from a trip to Clina. And that there was now a visitor in camp. But how could the speech-without-words know these things, *tell* these things? She said, "But, Mother. . .will not the speech-without-words forget?"

"No, Meg. *We* forget. The books remember always."

"Books, Mother?"

"These are books." The mother moved to the sleeping part of her *hoam,* selected one of a tumbled pile of calf-skin scrolls. "Here are the records of our Clan from

ages past. . since the time of the Ancient Ones. Not all are here. Some have been lost. Others were ruined by flood or destroyed by fire.

"But it is the Mother's duty to keep these records. That is why the Mother must know the art of making the speech-without-words. It is hard work, my little one. A labor without end."

Meg's eyes were shining. The trouble that had been cold within her before was vanished now. In its place had come a great thought. A thought *so* great, *so* daring, that Meg had to open her lips twice before the words came.

"Is it—" she asked breathlessly—"is it very hard to become a Mother?"

The Mother smiled gently. "Very hard, Meg. But you should not think of such things. It is not yet time for you to decide—" She paused, looking at Meg strangely— "Or . . . or is it, my child?"

Meg flushed, and her eyes dropped.

"It is, Mother."

"Then be not afraid, my daughter. You know the Law. At this important hour it is yours to decide what station in life will be yours. What is your wish, Meg? Would you be a warrior, a worker, or a breeding mother?"

Meg looked at the Clan leader boldly.

"I would be," she said, "a Mother!" Then, swiftly, "But not a breeding mother. I mean a *Clan* Mother . . . like you, O Mother!"

The Mother stared. Then the harsh lines melted from her face and she said, thoughtfully, "Thrice before has that request been made of me, Meg. Each time I have refused. It was Beth who asked first, oh, many years ago. She became a warrior, and died gallantly lifting the siege of Loovil . . .

"Then Haizl. And the last time it was Heln. When I refused, she became the other type of mother.

"But I was younger then. Now I am old. And it is right that there should be someone to take my place when I am gone—"

She stared at the girl intently. "It is not easy, my daughter. There is much work to be done. Labor, not of the body but of the mind. There are great problems to be solved, stern vows to be taken, a hard pilgrimage to be made—"

"All these," swore Meg, "would I gladly do, O Mother! if you will but let me—" Her voice broke suddenly— "I cannot become anything else. I would not be a warrior, harsh and bitter, nor a worker black with dirt. And the breeders. . .I would sooner mate with a Wild One than with one of the Men. The thought of their soft hands—"

She shuddered. And the Clan Mother nodded, understanding.

"Very well, Meg. Tomorrow you will move into this *hoam*. You will live with me and study to become the Jinnia Clan's next Mother . . ."

So began Meg's training. Nor was the Mother wrong in saying that the task was not an easy one. Many were the times when Meg wept bitterly, striving to learn that which a Mother must know. There was the speech-without-words, which Meg learned to call "writing." It looked like a simple magic when the Mother did it. But that slender stick which moved so fluidly beneath the Mother's aged fingers slipped and skidded and made ugly blotches of midnight on the hide whenever Meg tried to make spider-marks.

Meg learned that these wavering lines were not meaningless. Each line was made of "sentences," each sentence of "words," and each word was composed of "letters." And each letter made a sound, just as each combination of letters made a word-sound.

These were strange and confusing. A single letter out of place could change the whole meaning of a word. Sometimes it altered the meaning of the whole sentence. But Meg's determination was great. There came finally the day when the Mother allowed her to write the monthly report in the Clan history. Meg was thirteen then. But already she was older in wisdom than the others of her Clan.

Then it was that the Mother began to teach her yet another magic. This was the magic of "numbers." Where there had been twenty-six letters, there were only ten numbers. But theirs was a vast and potent magic. Put together they formed other and greater numbers. Yet those same numbers taken from each other formed still a third group. The names of these magics Meg never did quite learn. They were strange-sounding meaningless terms: "multiplication" and "subtraction." But she learned how to do them.

Her task was very hard, for it was about this time that the Evil Ones sent a little pain-imp to torment her. He stole through her ear one night while she was sleeping, and for many months he lurked in her head, above her eyes. Each time she would set herself to study the magic of the numbers he would begin dancing up and down, trying to stop her. But Meg persisted, and finally the pain-imp died or was removed. And Meg knew the numbers . . .

There were the rites and rituals to be learned. There was the Sacred Song which must be learned by heart. This song had no tune but was accompanied by the beating of the tribal drums. Its words

were strange and terrible, echoing the majesty of the gods in its cryptic phrasing.

*"Oh, Saken! You see by Tedhi on his early Light—"*

This was a great song. A powerful magic. It was the only tribal song Meg learned which dared name one of the gods. And it had to be sung reverently, lest far-seeing Tedhi be displeased and show her monstrous teeth and destroy the invoker with her mirthful thunders.

Meg learned, too, the tribal song of the Jinnia Clan. She had known it from infancy, but its words had been obscure. Now she had learned enough to probe its import. She did not know the meanings of some of the forgotten words, but for the most part it made sense when the tribe gathered on festive nights to sing, *"Caämé back to over Jinnia—"*

And Meg grew in age and stature and wisdom. In her sixteenth summer her legs were long and firm and straight as a warrior's spear. Her body was supple, bronzed by sunlight save where her doeskin breechcloth kept the skin white. Unbound, her hair would have trailed the earth, but she wore it piled upon her head, fastened by a netting woven by the breeding-mothers too ancient to bear.

The vanity-god had died long ages since, and Meg had no way of knowing she was beautiful. But sometimes, seeing her reflection in the pool as she bathed, she approved the soft curves of her slim young body, and was more than ever glad and proud that she had become a neophyte to the Mother. She liked her body to be this way. Why, she did not know. But she was glad she had not turned lean and hard, as had those of her age who had become warriors. Or coarse, as had become the workers. Or soft and flabby, as were the breeding-mothers. Her skin was clear and clean, brown where the sunlight burnished the find down on her arms and legs, pure gold in the secret hollow of her high, firm breasts.

And finally there came the day when the Mother let Meg conduct the rites at the Feast of the Blossoms. This was in July, and Meg had then entered upon her seventeenth year. It was a great occasion and a great test. But Meg did not fail. She conducted the elaborate ceremony from beginning to end without a single mistake.

That night in the quiet of their *hoam* the Mother made a final magic. She drew from her collection of aged trophies a curl of parchment. This she blessed. Then she handed it to Meg.

"You are ready now, Oh my daughter," she said. "In the morning you will leave."

"Leave, Mother?" asked Meg.

"For the final test. This which I give you is a map: a teller-of-places. Here at this joining of mountain and river lies our village in the heart of the Jinnia territory. Far away westward and to the north, as here is shown, is the Place of the Gods. There will all be made clear to you, even that final secret which the Clan must never know."

"I do not understand, Mother."

"You will, my daughter. . .later. And now to sleep. For at dawn tomorrow begins your pilgrimage. . ."

Off in the hills a wild dog howled his savage tribute to a melancholy moon. His thin song clove the stirring silence of the trees, the incessant movement of the forest. Meg wakened at that cry, wakened and saw that already the red edge of dawn tinged the eastern sky.

She uncurled from the broad tree crotch in which she had spent the night. Her horse was already awake, and with restless movements was nibbling the sparse grass beneath the giant oak. Meg loosed his tether, bathed the sleep-imps from her eyes at a nearby spring, then set about making breakfast. There was not much food in her saddlebags. A side of rabbit carefully saved from last night's dinner. Two biscuits, slightly dry. A precious handful of salt. Meg ate sparingly, resolved to build camp earlier tonight in order to set a few game traps and bake another batch of biscuit.

She cleared a space, scratching a wide circle of earth bare of all leaves and twigs, walking thrice around it widdershins to chase away the fire-demon. Then she scratched the fire-stone against a piece of the black metal from a town of the Ancient Ones—a gift of the Mother—and kindled her little fire.

Two weeks had passed since she had left the Jinnia territory. She had come from the rugged mountainlands of her homeland, through the river valleys of the Hylan Clan. On the flat plains of the Yana section she had made an error. Her map had shown the route clearly, but she had come upon a road built by the Ancient Ones: a road of white *creet*, still in fair repair. And because it was easier to travel on this highway than to thread a way through the jungle, she had let her path drift southward.

It was not until she reached the time-crumbled village of Slooie that friendly Zurries had pointed out her mistake. Then she had turned northward and westward again, going up the Big River to the territory of the Demoys.

Now, her map showed, she was in Braska territory. Two more weeks—perhaps less than that—

would bring her to her goal. To the sacred Place of the Gods.

Meg started and roused from her musings as a twig snapped in the forest behind her. In one swift motion she had wheeled, drawn her sword, and was facing the spot from which the sound had come. But the green bushes did not tremble; no further crackling came from the underbrush. Her fears allayed, she turned to the important business of roasting her side of rabbit.

It was always needful to be on the alert. Meg had learned that lesson early, even before her second day's journey had carried her out of Jinnia territory. For as the Mother had warned, there were still many Wild Ones roaming through the land, searching for food, for the precious fire-metal from the ruined villages of the Ancient Ones. . .most of all for mates. The Wild Ones were slowly dying out because there were few females left among them. Most of the wild ones were male. But there was little in their shaggy bodies, their thick, brutish faces, their hard, gnarled muscles, to remind one of the Men.

A Wild One had attacked Meg in her second night's camp. Fortunately she had not yet been asleep when he appeared, else her pilgrimage would have ended abruptly. Not that he would have killed her. The Wild Ones did not kill the Women they captured. They took them to their dens. And a priestess could not cross her strain with a Wild One and still become a Mother.

So Meg had fought fiercely, and the Wild One's bones lay deep in the Jinnia hills, picked white by the vultures. But since that escape Meg had slept nightly in trees, her sword clenched in her hand.

The food was cooked now. Meg removed it from the spit, blew upon it, and began to eat. She had many things on her mind. The end of her pilgrimage was nigh. The hour when she would enter into the Place of the Gods, and learn the last and most carefully guarded secret.

That is why her senses failed her. That is why she did not even know the Wild One lurked near until with a roar of throaty satisfaction he had leaped from the shrubbery, seized her, and pinioned her struggling arms to her sides.

It was a silent struggle but a bitter one. For all her slimness, Meg's body was sturdy. She fought pantherlike, using every weapon with which the gods had endowed her: her fists, her legs, her teeth. But the Wild One's strength was as great as his ardor was strong. He crushed Meg to him fiercely; the stink of his sweat burned her nostrils. His arms bruised her breasts, choked the breath from her straining

lungs. One furry arm tensed about her throat, cutting off the precious air.

Meg writhed, broke free momentarily, buried her strong teeth in his arm. A howl of hurt and rage broke from the Wild One's lips. Meg tugged at her sword. But again the Wild One threw himself upon her, this time with great fists flailing. Meg saw a hammerlike hand smashing down upon her, felt the shocking concussion of the Wild One's strength. A lightning flashed. The ground leaped up to meet her. Then all was darkness. . .

She woke, moaning weakly. Her head was splitting and the bones of her body ached. She started to struggle to her feet, had risen halfway before she discovered with a burst of hope that she *could* move! She was not bound. Then the Wild One . . .

She glanced about her swiftly. She was still lying in the little glade where she had been attacked. The sun's full orb had crept over the horizon, threading a lacework of light through the tiny glen. Her fire smoldering still. And beside it crouched a—a—

Meg could not decide *what* it was. It looked a little like a Man. But that, of course, was impossible. Its body was bronzed by the sun, smooth and almost as hairless as her own. But it was not the weak, soft body of a Man. It was muscular, hard, firm; taller and stronger than that of a warrior.

Flight was Meg's first thought. But her curiosity was even stronger than her fear. This was a mystery. And her sword was beside her. Whoever or whatever this Thing might be it did not seem to wish her harm. She spoke to it.

"Who are you?" asked Meg. "And where is the Wild One?"

The stranger looked up, and a happy-look spread over his even features. He pointed briefly to the shrubbery. Meg's eyes followed the gesture, saw lying there the dead body of the Wild One. Her puzzled gaze returned to the Man-thing.

"You killed him? Then you are not one of the Wild Ones? But I do not understand. You are not a Man."

"You," said the Man-thing in a voice deeper than Meg had ever heard from a human throat, "talk too much. Sit down and eat, Woman."

He tossed Meg a piece of her own rabbit-meat. Half unaware that she did so, Meg took it and began eating. She stared at the stranger as he finished his own repast, wiped his hands on his clout and moved toward her. Meg dropped her half-eaten breakfast, rose hastily and groped for her sword.

"Touch me not, Hairless One!"

she cried. "I am a priestess of the Jinnia Clan. It is not for such as you to—"

The stranger brushed by her without even seeming to hear her words. He reached the spot where her horse had been tethered, shook ruefully a section of broken rein.

"You women!" he snorted. "You do not know how to train a horse. See, he ran away."

Meg thought anger-thoughts. Her face burned with the sun though the sun's rays were dim in the glade. She cried, "Man-thing, know you no better than to talk thus to a Woman and a master? By Jarg, I should have you whipped."

"You talk too much," repeated the Man-thing wearily. Once more he squatted on his hunkers, studied her thoughtfully. "But you interest me. Who are you? What are you doing so far from the Jinnia territory? Where are you going?"

"A priestess," said Meg coldly, "does not answer the questions of a Man-thing."

"I'm not a Man-*thing,*" said the stranger pettishly, "I am a Man. A Man of the Kirki tribe which lives many day walking south of here. I am Daiv, known as He-who-would-learn. So tell me, Woman."

His candor confused Meg, Despite herself, she found the words leaving her lips. "I . . . I am Meg. I am making pilgrimage to the Place of the Gods. It is my final task ere I become Mother of my clan."

The Man's eyes appraised her with embarrassing frankness. "So?" he said. "Mother of a Clan? Meg, would you not rather stay with me and mother your own clan?"

Meg gasped. Men were the mates of Women, yes, but never had any Man had the audacity to *suggest* such a thing. Matings were arranged by the Mother with the agreement of the Women. And surely this Man must know that priestesses did not mate.

"Man," she cried, "know you not the Law? I am soon to become a Clan Mother. Guard your words, or the wrath of the Gods—"

The Man, Daiv, made happy-sounds again. "It was I who saved you from the Wild One," he chuckled, "not the Gods. In my land, Golden One, we think it does no harm to ask. But if you are unwilling—" He shrugged—"I will leave you now."

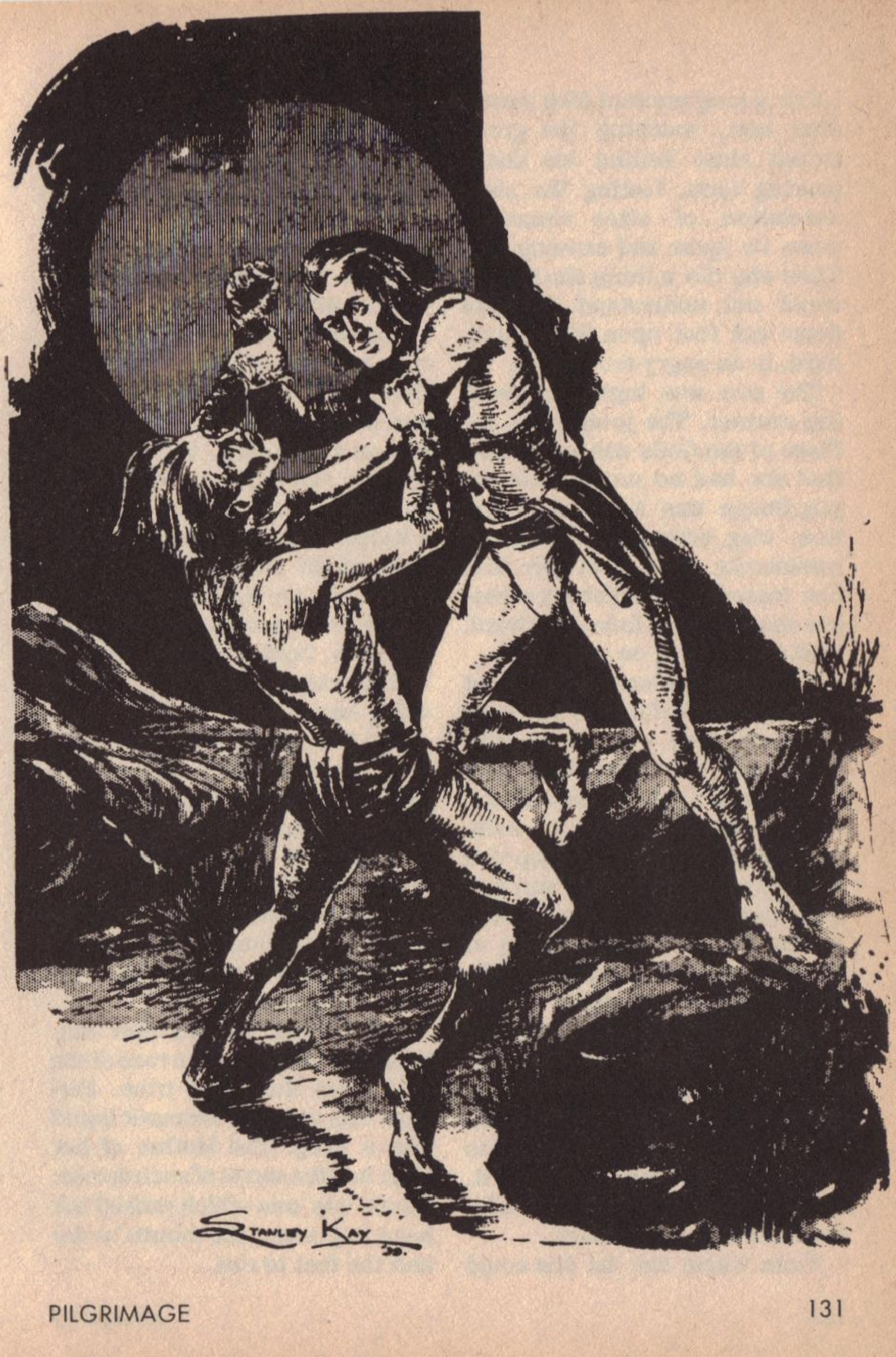
He rose and started to leave. Meg's face reddened. She cried out angrily, "Man!"

He turned. "Yes?"

"I have no horse. How am I to get to the Place of the Gods?"

"Afoot, Golden One. Or are you Women too weak to make such a journey?"

He laughed . . . and was gone.


STANLEY KAY '39.

For a long moment Meg stared after him, watching the green fronds close behind his disappearing form, feeling the stark desolation of utter aloneness close in upon and envelop her. Then she did a thing she herself could not understand. She put down her foot upon the ground, hard, in an angry-movement.

The sun was high and growing warmer. The journey to the Place of the Gods was longer now that she had no mount. But the pilgrimage was a sacred obligation. Meg scraped dirt over the smoldering embers of her fire. She tossed her saddlebags across her shoulder and faced westward. And she pressed on.

The way was long, the day hot and tedious. Before the sun rode overhead, Meg was sticky with sweat and dust. Her feet were sore and her legs ached with the unaccustomed exercise of walking. By afternoon every step was an agony. And while the sun was still too strong to be looked at she found a small spring of fresh water and decided to make camp there for the night.

She set out two snares for small game, took the flour and salt from her saddlebags, and set about making a batch of biscuit. As the rocks heated she went to the stream and put her feet in it, letting the water-god lick the fever from her tender soles.

From where she sat she could not see the fire. She had been there perhaps half an hour when a strange, unfamiliar smell wrinkled her nostrils. It was at once a sweet-and-bitter smell, a pungent odor like strong herbs, but one that set the water to running in her mouth.

She went back to her camp hastily and found there the Man, Daiv, once again crouching over her fireplace. He was watching a pot on the stones. From time to time he stirred the pot with a long stick. Drawing closer, Meg saw a brown water in the pot. It was this which made the aromatic smell. She would have called out to the Man, but he saw her first.

"Hello, Golden One," he said.

Meg said angrily, "What are you doing here?"

The Man shrugged.

"I am Daiv; they call me He-who-would-learn. I got to thinking about this Place of the Gods and decided I, too, would come and see it." He sniffed the brown, bubbling liquid, seemed satisfied. He poured some of it into an earthen bowl and handed it to Meg. "You want some?"

Meg edged toward him cautiously. This might be a ruse of the Man from the Kirki tribe. Perhaps this strange, aromatic liquid was a drug. The Mother of her Clan had the secret of such drinks. There was one which caused the head to pucker, the mouth to dry and the feet to reel.

"What is it?" she demanded suspiciously.

"Cawfi, of course." Daiv looked surprised. "Don't you know? But, no . . . I suppose the bean-tree would not grow in your cold northern climate. It grows near my land. In Sippe and Weezian territories. Drink it."

Meg tasted the stuff. It was like its smell: strong and bitter, but strangely pleasing. Its heat coursed through her, taking the tired-pain from her body as the water of the spring had taken the burn from her feet.

"It is good, Man," she said.

"Daiv," said the Man. "My name is Daiv, Golden One."

"It is not fitting," she said, "that a priestess should call a Man by his name."

Daiv seemed to be given to making happy-sounds. He made one again.

"You have done a lot of things today that are not fitting for a priestess, Golden One. You are not in Jinnia now. Things are different here. And as for me—" He shrugged— "My people do things differently. We come from the Land of the Escape."

"The Escape?" asked Meg.

"Yes." As he talked, Daiv busied himself. He had taken meat from his pouch and was wrapping it now in clay. He tossed the caked lumps into the embers of the crude oven. He also had something Meg had not tasted for many weeks: taters. He took the skins off these, cut them into slices with his hunting-knife, and browned the pieces on the slab of heated rock. "The Escape of the Ancient Ones, you know."

"I don't understand," said Meg.

"Neither do I . . . quite. It happened many years ago. Before my father's father's father's people. There are books in the tribe Master's *hoam* which tell. I have seen some of them.

"Once things were different, you know. In the days of the Ancient Ones, Men and Women were equal throughout the world. In fact, the Men were usually the Masters. But the Men were warlike and fierce—"

"Like the Wild Ones, you mean?"

"Yes. But they did not fight, like the Wild Ones, with clubs and spears. They made war with great catapults that threw fire and flame and exploding death. With little bows that shot steel arrowheads. With gases that destroy, and waters that burn the skin.

"On earth and sea they made these battles, and even in the air. For in those days the Ancient Ones had wings like birds. They soared high, making great thunders. And when they warred, they dropped huge eggs of fire which killed others."

Meg cried sharply, "Oh—!"

"Don't you believe me?"

"The taters, Daiv. They're burning."

"Oh!" Daiv made a happy-face and carefully turned the scorching tater slices. Then he continued.

"It is written that there came a last and greatest war of all. It was a conflict not only between the Clans but between the forces of the entire earth. For many years this war lasted, but neither side could gain a victory. In those days it was the Men who fought, while the Women remained *hoam* to keep the Men's houses. But the Men died by the thousands. And there came a day when the Women grew tired of the slaughter.

"They banded together, all of them who lived in the civilized places. They decided to rid themselves of the brutal Men. They stopped sending supplies and fire-eggs to the battling Men across the sea. They built walled forts and hid themselves in them.

"The war ended when the Men found they had no more weapons to fight with. They came back to their *hoams,* seeking their Women. But the Women would not receive them. There was bitter warfare once again. . .this time between the sexes. But the Women held their walled cities. And so—"

"Yes?" said Meg.

"The Men," said Daiv somberly, "became the Wild Ones of the forest. Mateless, save for the few Women they could capture. Their numbers died off. The Clans grew. Only in a few places—like Kirki, my homeland—did humanity not become a matriarchy."

He looked at Meg. "You believe?"

Meg shook her head. Suddenly she felt very sorry for this stranger, Daiv. She knew, now, why he had not harmed her. Why, when she had been powerless before him, he had not forced her to mate with him. He was mad. Totally and completely mad. She said, gently, "Shall we eat, Daiv?"

Mad or not, there was great pleasure in having Daiv's company on the long, weary, remaining marches of her pilgrimage. Thus it was that Meg made no effort to discourage him in his desire to accompany her. He was harmless, and he was pleasant company . . . for a Man. And his talk, wild as it was at times, served to pass wearisome hours.

So the slow days passed, turning into weeks. Not many miles did they cover in those first few days while Meg's feet were tender and her legs full of jumping little pain-imps. But when hard walking had destroyed the pain-imps, they traveled faster. And the time of their journey's ending drew ever nearer. They crossed the Braska territory and enter-

ed at last into the 'Kota country. Near here at the far western end, near Yomin, was the Place of the Gods.

"You started, once, to tell about the Escape, Daiv," said Meg one night, "but you did not finish. What is the legend of the Escape?"

Daiv sprawled lazily before the fire. His eyes were dreamy.

"It happened in the Zoni territory," he said, "not far from the land of my own tribe. In those days there was a Man-god named Renn who foresaw the death of the Ancient Ones. He built a gigantic sky-bird of metal, and into its bowels climbed two score Men and Women.

"They flew away, off there—" Daiv pointed to a shining white dot in the sky above— "to the evening star. But it is said that one day they will return. That is why our tribe tries to preserve the customs of the Ancient Ones. Why even misguided tribes like yours preserve the records—"

Meg's face reddened.

"Enough!" she cried. "I have listened to many of your tales without comment, Daiv. But tell me no more such tales as this. This is blasphemy!"

"Blasphemy?"

"It is bad enough that your deranged mind should tell of days when Men ruled. But when you speak of a *Man-god*—"

Daiv looked worried. He said, "But, Golden One, I thought you knew that all the gods were Men."

"Daiv!" Meg swung suddenly to face him, covered his lips with her hands. Her eyes sought the darkness fearfully; she made a swift gesture and a swifter prayer. "Daiv, do not tempt the fury of the Gods! I am a priestess, and I know. All the Gods are—*must be*—Women!"

"But why?"

"Why, because they are," said Meg. "It could not be otherwise. All Women know the gods are great, good and strong. How, then, could they be Men, great Jarg, and mighty Ibrim, strong Taamuz, and the laughing Tedhi—?"

Daiv's eyes narrowed in a wonder-look.

"I do not know those names," he mused. "They are not gods of our tribe. And yet . . . I have heard legends. Ibrim . . . Tedhi . . . "

There was vast pity and a sorrow in Meg's voice.

"We have been comrades for a long journey, Daiv," she pleaded. "Never before since the world began have a Man and a Woman met as you and I; as friends, almost as equals. Often you have said mad, impossible things. But I have forgiven you because . . . well, because you are, after all, only a Man.

"But tomorrow, or the day af-

ter that, we will come to the Place of the Gods. There will my pilgrimage be ended, and I will learn that which is the ultimate secret. Then I shall return to my Clan to become the Mother. So let us not spoil our last hours of comradeship with vain argument."

Daiv sighed.

"The elder ones are gone and their legends tell so little. It may be you are right, Golden One. But I have a feeling that it is *my* tribal lore which does not err. Meg . . . I asked this once before. Now I ask again. Will you give up this quest and mate with me?"

"It is impossible, Daiv. Priestesses and Mothers do not mate. I am a Priestess; soon I will be a Mother. But—" Meg's voice was gentle— "I will take you back with me to Jinnia, if you wish. And I will see to it that you are taken care of always, Daiv, as a Man should be taken care of."

Daiv shook his head.

"No, Meg. Our ways are not the same. There is a custom in our tribe . . . a mating custom which you do not know. Let me show you—"

He leaned over swiftly. Meg felt the great, warm strength of his bronzed arms closing about her, drawing her close. Then he was touching his mouth to hers; closely, brutally, frighteningly.

She struggled and tried to cry out, but his lips silenced her. Anger-thoughts swept through her like a flame. But it was not anger, it was something else that gave life to that flame. Suddenly her veins were aflow with liquid fire. Her heart beat upon rising breasts like something captive that would be free. Her fists beat upon his shoulders vainly . . . but there was little strength in her blows.

Then he released her, and Meg fell back exhausted. Her eyes glowed with anger and her voice was husky in her throat. She tried to speak and could not. And in that moment a vast and terrible weakness trembled through Meg. She knew suddenly and helplessly that if Daiv sought now to mate with her not all the wisdom of the priestessdom could save her. There was a body-hunger throbbing within her that hated Daiv's manhood. . .and cried in wanting for it.

But Daiv, too, had stepped back. And his voice was low as he said, "Meg?"

She scrubbed her lips with the back of her hand. Her voice was vibrant, breaking. "What magic is that, Daiv? What custom is that? I hate it. I hate you!"

"It is the touching-of-mouths, Golden One. It is the right of a Man with his Woman. It is my plea that you enter not the Place of the Gods but return with me now to Kirki, there to be my mate."

For a moment indecision sway-

ed Meg. But then, slowly, "No. I must go to the Place of the Gods." she said.

And thus it was. For the next day Meg marked on the teller-of-places the last line that indicated the path of her pilgrimage. And at eventide, when the sun threw long, ruddy rays upon the rounded hills of black, she and Daiv entered into that gateway which she had been told led to the Place of the Gods.

It was here they lingered a moment. There were many words each would have said to the other. But both knew this was the end.

"I know no Law, Daiv," said Meg, "which forbids a Man from entering the Place of the Gods. So you may do so if you wish. But it is not fitting that we should enter together. Therefore I ask you to wait here while I enter alone.

"Here I will learn the secret. And having learned, I will go out by another path and return to Jinnia."

"You will go . . . alone?"

"Yes, Daiv."

Daiv nodded.

"It is yours to decide, Golden One. But . . . should you change your mind—"

"I will not, Daiv."

"But if you should—" he persisted.

"If by some madness I should change my mind," said Meg, "I will return to you here. But it will not happen. Therefore do not wait."

"I will wait, Golden One," said Daiv soberly, "until all hope is dead."

Meg turned away, then hesitated and turned back. A great sorrow was within her. She did not know why. But she knew of one magic that for a little time could heal her heart.

"Daiv—" she whispered.

"Yes, Golden One?"

"No one will ever know. And before I leave you forever . . . could we not once more do the rite of the touching-of-mouths?"

So it was that alone and with the recollection of a moment of stirring glory in her heart, Meg strode proudly at last into the Place of the Gods.

It was a wild and desolate place. Barren hills of sand rose about, and of vegetation there was none save sparse weeds and scrubby stumps that flowered miserly in the bleak, chill air.

The ground was harsh and salt beneath her feet; no insects sang an evensong in that drab wilderness. Afar, a nightjar pierced the sky with its lonely call; the great hills echoed that cry dismally.

Above the other hills towered a greater one. To this, with unerring footsteps, Meg took her way. She knew not what to expect. It might be that here a band of

singing virgins would appear to her, guiding her to a secret altar before which she would kneel and learn the last mystery. Here might she meet those fabled Mothers who rule all the earth. It might be that the Gods themselves reigned here, and that she would fall in awe before the sweeping skirts of austere Jarg, to hear from the Gods' own lips that which she had come so far to learn.

Whatever the secret that would be revealed to her, Meg was ready. Others had gained this place and had survived. She did not fear death. But . . . death-in-life? Coming to the Place of the Gods with a blasphemy in her heart? With the memory of a Man's mouth upon her own?

For a moment, Meg was afraid. She had betrayed her priestess-dom. Her body was inviolate, true . . . but would not the Gods search her soul and know that her heart had forgotten the Law, had mated with a Man?

But if death must be her lot. . . so be it. She pressed on . . .

So Meg turned down a winding path between two tortuous clefts of rock and came at last unto the Place of the Gods. Nor could she have chosen a better moment for the ultimate reaching of this place. The sun's roundness had now touched the western horizon, bathing the dark valley with an avenue of light. Meg's eyes, wondering, followed that avenue. And then, with awe in her heart, Meg fell to her knees. She had glimpsed that-which-was-not-to-be-seen. The Gods themselves, in omnipotent majesty looking down upon her from the crest of the towering rocks.

For tremulous moments Meg knelt there, whispering the ritual prayers of appeasement. At any moment she expected to hear the voice of Tedhi, thunderous in judgment, or to feel upon her shoulder the weighty hand of Jarg. But there came no sound save the frenzied beating of her own heart, of the wind stirring fretfully through the crevices of the ageless rocks.

And she lifted her head and looked once more . . .

It was they. A race-recollection deeper and more sure than her own meagre learning told her at once that she had not erred. This was, indeed, the Place of the Gods. And these she faced were indeed the Gods . . . stern, implacable, eternal, carven in timeless stone by hands of the Ancient Ones.

Here they were: the Great Four. Stern Jarg and mighty Taamuz, with ringletted curls framing their stern, judicial faces; sad Ibrim, lean of cheek and hollow of eye; far-seeing Tedhi, whose eyes were concealed behind the giant telescopes; whose lips, even now, were peeled back as though to loose

the dreadful laughter.

And the Secret?

Even as the question leaped to her mind it had its answer. Suddenly Meg knew that here was no visitation to be made upon her. Here would appear no circle of singing virgins; here she would have no message from those great stone lips. For the Secret which the Mother had hinted . . . the Secret which the Clanswomen must not know . . . was a truth Daiv had confided to her during the long marches of their pilgrimage.

The Gods . . . Were Men!

Oh, not men like Jak and Ralf, whose pale and furtive bodies were but instruments by which the breeding mothers' bodies were fertilized. Nor male beasts like the Wild Ones. But Men like Daiv . . . lean and hard of jaw, strong of muscle, sturdy of body.

Even the curls could not conceal the strong, clean masculinity of Jarg and Taamuz. Tedhi's lip was covered with Man-hair, clearcut and bristling above his happy-mouth. And Ibrim's cheeks were haired, even as Daiv's before each dawn he made his tribal cut-magic with a keen knife.

The Gods, the rulers, the masters of the Ancient Ones had been Men. It was as Daiv had said: long years ago the Women had rebelled, and now in sterile penance they pursued their cold and loveless courses save where—in a few places like the land of Kirki—the old way still maintained.

It was a great knowledge and a bitter one. Now Meg understood why the Mother's lot was so unhappy. Only the Mother knew how artificial this new life was. How one day the Wild Ones would die out, and the captive Men as well. When that day came there would be no more young. No more Men *or* Women. No more civilization . . .

The Gods knew this. That is why, here in the gray hills of 'Kota, they stood so sad, forlorn, forgotten, the dying gods of a dying race. The Gods knew that by an ancient folly humankind had doomed itself to slow but certain death. They knew, and grieved because there was no hope. Sharing this secret, Meg must return to her Clan with lips sealed. There, like the Mother before her, she must watch with haunted eyes the slow dwindling of their tiny number. . .see the weak and futile remnants of Man die off. Until, al last. . .

Then, like the clear, cold vision of the newborn moon, came a burst of hope to Meg.

The Mother had been wrong. For the Mother on *her* pilgrimage had not been so fortunate as had Meg. She had not learned that in the world were still places where Man had preserved himself

*(Continued on page 190)*

# THE VOYAGE THAT LASTED 600 YEARS

*Both Robert A. Heinlein's "Universe" (1941) and A. E. Van Vogt's "Far Centaurus" (1944) are rightfully considered to be s-f landmarks in the development of the interstellar theme—the Heinlein because it shows what might happen if the purpose of the voyage were lost, the Van Vogt because it beautifully delineates what ironies can follow if one form of travel were to supersede another. But Don Wilcox's "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years"* (Amazing, *1940) shows that sometimes a very popular writer can introduce the same two variants in a single story* before *more illustrious contemporaries make classics out of them—and still receive little or no recognition—until now.*

# by DON WILCOX

**Illustrated by KRUPA**

THEY gave us a gala send-off, the kind that keeps your heart bobbing up at your tonsils.

"It's a long, long way to the Milky Way!" the voices sang out. The band thundered the chorus over and over. The golden trumpaphones blasted our eardrums wide open. Thousands of people clapped their hands in time.

There were thirty-three of us —that is, there was supposed to be. As it turned out, there were thirty-five.

We were a dazzling parade of red, white and blue uniforms. We marched up the gangplank by couples, every couple a man and wife, every couple young and strong, for the selection had been rigid.

Captain Sperry and his wife and I—I being the odd man—brought up the rear. Reporters and cameramen swarmed at our heels. The microphones stopped us. The band and the crowd hushed.

"This is Captain Sperry telling you good-by" the amplified voice boomed. "In behalf of the thirty-three, I thank you for your grand farewell. We'll remember this hour as our last contact with our beloved Earth."

The crowd held its breath. The mighty import of our mission struck through every heart.

"We go forth into space to live—and to die," the captain said gravely. "But *our children's children,* born in space and reared in the light of our vision, will carry on our great purpose. And in centuries to come, *your children's children* may set forth for the Robinello planets, knowing that you will find an American colony already planted there."

The captain gestured good-by and the multitude responded with a thunderous cheer. Nothing so daring as a six-century nonstop flight had ever been undertaken before.

An announcer nabbed me by the sleeve and barked into the microphone, "And now one final word from Professor Gregory Grimstone, the one man who is supposed to live down through the six centuries of this historic flight and see the journey through to the end."

"Ladies and gentlemen," I choked, and the echo of my swallow blobbed back at me from distant walls, "as Keeper of the Traditions, I give you my word that the S. S. *Flashaway* shall carry your civilization through to the end, unsoiled and unblemished!"

A cheer stimulated me and I drew a deep breath for a burst of oratory. But Captain Sperry pulled at my other sleeve.

"That's all. We're set to slide out in two minutes."

The reporters scurried down the gangplank and made a center rush through the crowd. The band

struck up. Motors roared sullenly.

One lone reporter who had missed out on the interviews blitzkrieged up and caught me by the coattail.

"Hold it, Butch. Just a coupla words so I can whip up a column of froth for the *Star*—Well, I'll be damned! If it ain't 'Crackdown' Grimstone!"

I scowled. The reporter before me was none other than Bill Broscoe, one of my former pupils at college and a star athlete. At heart I knew that Bill was a right guy, but I'd be the last to tell him so.

"Broscoe!" I snarled. "Tardy as usual. You finally flunked my history course, didn't you?"

"Now, Crackdown," he whined, "don't go hopping on me. I won that Thanksgiving game for you, remember?"

He gazed at my red, white and blue uniform.

"So you're off for Robinello," he grinned.

"Son, this is my last minute on Earth, and *you* have to haunt me, of all people—"

"So you're the one that's taking the refrigerated sleeper, to wake up every hundred years—"

"And stir the fires of civilization among the crew—yes. Six hundred years from now when your bones have rotted, I'll still be carrying on."

"Still teaching 'em history? God forbid!" Broscoe grinned.

"I hope I have better luck than I did with you."

"Let 'em off easy on dates, Crackdown. Give them 1066 for William the Conqueror and 2066 for the *Flashaway* take-off. That's enough. Taking your wife, I suppose?"

At this impertinent question I gave Broscoe the cold eye.

"Pardon me," he said, suppressing a sly grin—proof enough that he had heard the devastating story about how I missed my wedding and got the air. "Faulty alarm clock, wasn't it? Too bad, Crackdown. And you always ragged *me* about being tardy!"

With this jibe Broscoe exploded into laughter. Some people have the damnedest notions about what constitutes humor. I backed into the entrance of the space ship uncomfortably. Broscoe followed.

The automatic door cut past me. I jerked Broscoe through barely in time to keep him from being bisected.

*Zzzzippp!*

"Tardy as usual, my friend," I hooted. "You've missed your gangplank! That makes you the first castaway in space."

We took off like a shooting star, and the last I saw of Bill Broscoe, he stood at a rear window cursing as he watched the earth and the moon fall away into the velvety black heavens. And the more I laughed at him,

the madder he got. No sense of humor.

Was that the last time I ever saw him? Well, no, to be strictly honest I had one more unhappy glimpse of him.

It happened just before I packed myself away for my first one hundred years' sleep.

I had checked over the "Who's Who Aboard the *Flashaway*"—the official register—to make sure that I was thoroughly acquainted with everyone on board; for these sixteen couples were to be the great-grandparents of the next generation I would meet. Then I had promptly taken my leave of Captain Sperry and his wife, and gone directly to my refrigeration plant, where I was to suspend my life by instantaneous freezing.

I clicked the switches, and one of the two huge horizontal wheels —one in reserve, in the event of a breakdown—opened up for me like a door opening in the side of a gigantic doughnut, or better, a tubular merry - go - round. There was my nook waiting for me to crawl in.

Before I did so I took a backward glance toward the ballroom. The one-way glass partition, through which I could see but not be seen, gave me a clear view of the scene of merriment. The couples were dancing. The journey was off to a good start.

"A grand gang," I said to myself. No one doubted that the ship was equal to the six-hundred-year journey. The success would depend upon the people. Living and dying in this closely circumscribed world would put them to a severe test. All credit, I reflected, was due the planning committee for choosing such a congenial group.

"They're equal to it," I said optimistically. If their children would only prove as sturdy and adaptable as their parents, my job as Keeper of the Traditions would be simple.

But how, I asked myself, as I stepped into my life-suspension merry-go-round, would Bill Broscoe fit into this picture? Not a half bad guy. Still—

My final glance through the one-way glass partition slew me. Out of the throng I saw Bill Broscoe dancing past with a beautiful girl in his arms. The girl was Louise—*my* Louise—the girl I had been engaged to marry!

In a flash it came to me—but not about Bill. I forgot him on the spot. About Louise.

Bless her heart, she'd come to find me. She must have heard that I had signed up for the *Flashaway,* and she had come aboard, a stowaway, to forgive me for missing the wedding—to marry me! Now—

A warning click sounded, a lid closed, my refrigerator merry-go-round whirled—blackness!

## CHAPTER II
### Babies, Just Babies

In a moment — or so it seemed — I was again gazing into the light of the refrigerating room. The lid stood open.

A stimulating warmth circulated through my limbs. Perhaps the machine, I half consciously concluded, had made no more than a preliminary revolution.

I bounded out with a single thought. I must find Louise. We could still be married. For the present I would postpone my entrance into the ice. And since the machine had been equipped with *two* merry-go-round freezers as an emergency safeguard — ah! Happy thought — perhaps Louise would be willing to undergo life suspension with me!

I stopped at the one-way glass partition, astonished to see no signs of dancing in the ballroom. I could scarcely see the ballroom, for it had been darkened.

Upon unlocking the door (the refrigerator room was my own private retreat) I was bewildered. An unaccountable change had come over everything. What it was, I couldn't determine at the moment. But the very air of the ballroom was different.

A few dim green light bulbs burned along the walls — enough to show me that the dancers had vanished. Had time enough elapsed for night to come on? My thoughts spun dizzily. Night, I reflected, would consist simply of turning off the lights and going to bed. It had been agreed in our plan that our twenty-four hour Earth day would be maintained for the sake of regularity.

But there was something more intangible that struck me. The furniture had been changed about, and the very walls seemed *older*. Something more than minutes had passed since I left this room.

Strangest of all, the windows were darkened.

In a groggy state of mind I approached one of the windows in hopes of catching a glimpse of the solar system. I was still puzzling over how much time might have elapsed. Here, at least, was a sign of very recent activity.

"Wet Paint" read the sign pinned to the window. The paint was still sticky. What the devil —

The ship, of course, was fully equipped for blind flying. But aside from the problems of navigation, the crew had anticipated enjoying a wonderland of stellar beauty through the portholes. Now, for some strange reason, every window had been painted opaque.

I listened. Slow measured steps were pacing in an adjacent hallway. Nearing the entrance, I stopped, halted by a shrill sound from somewhere overhead. It came from one of the residential

quarters that gave on the ballroom balcony.

It was the unmistakable wail of a baby.

Then another baby's cry struck up; and a third, from somewhere across the balcony, joined the chorus. Time, indeed, must have passed since I left this roomful of dancers.

Now some irate voices of disturbed sleepers added rumbling basses to the symphony of wailings. Grumbles of "Shut that little devil up!" and poundings of fists on walls thundered through the empty ballroom. In a burst of inspiration I ran to the records room, where the ship's "Who's Who" was kept.

The door to the records room was locked, but the footsteps of some sleepless person I had heard now pounded down the dimly lighted hallway. I looked upon the aged man. I had never seen him before. He stopped at the sight of me; then snapping on a brighter light, came on confidently.

"Mr. Grimstone?" he said, extending his hand. "We've been expecting you. My name is William Broscoe—"

"William Broscoe, the second. You knew my father, I believe."

I groaned and choked.

"And my mother," the old man continued, "always spoke very highly of you. I'm proud to be the first to greet you."

He politely overlooked the flush of purple that leaped into my face. For a moment nothing that I could say was intelligible.

He turned a key and we entered the records room. There I faced the inescapable fact. My full century had passed. The original crew of the *Flashaway* were long gone. A completely new generation was on the register.

Or, more accurately, three new generations: the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren of the generation I had known.

One hundred years had passed—and I had lain so completely suspended, owing to the freezing, that only a moment of my own life had been absorbed.

Eventually I was to get used to this; but on this first occasion I found it utterly shocking—even embarrassing. Only a few minutes ago, as my experience went, I was madly in love with Louise and had hopes of yet marrying her.

But now — well, the leather-bound "Who's Who" told all. Louise had been dead twenty years. Nearly thirty children now alive aboard the S. S. *Flashaway* could claim her as their great-grandmother. These carefully recorded pedigrees proved it.

And the patriarch of that fruitful tribe had been none other than Bill Broscoe, the fresh young athlete who had always been tardy

for my history class. I gulped as if I were swallowing a baseball.

Broscoe — tardy! And I had missed my second chance to marry Louise — by a full century!

My fingers turned the pages of the register numbly. William Broscoe II misinterpreted my silence.

"I see you are quick to detect our trouble," he said, and the same deep conscientious concern showed in his expression that I had remembered in the face of his mother, upon our grim meeting after my alarm clock had failed and I had missed my own wedding.

Trouble? Trouble aboard the S. S. *Flashaway,* after all the careful advance planning we had done, and after all our array of budgeting and scheduling and vowing to stamp our systematic ways upon the oncoming generations? This, we had agreed, would be the world's most unique colonizing expedition; for every last trouble that might crop up on the six-hundred-year voyage had already been met and conquered by advance planning.

"They've tried to put off doing anything about it until your arrival," Broscoe said, observing respectfully that the charter invested in me the authority of passing upon all important policies. "But this very week three new babies arrived, which brings the trouble to a crisis. So the captain ordered a blackout of the heavens as an emergency measure."

"Heavens?" I grunted. "What have the heavens got to do with babies?"

"There's a difference of opinion on that. Maybe it depends upon how susceptible you are."

"Susceptible — to what?"

"The romantic malady."

I looked at the old man, much puzzled. He took me by the arm and led me toward the pilots' control room. Here were unpainted windows that revealed celestial glories beyond anything I had ever dreamed. Brilliant planets of varied hues gleamed through the blackness, while close at hand — almost close enough to touch — were numerous large moons, floating slowly past as we shot along our course.

"Some little show," the pilot grinned, "and it keeps getting better."

He proceeded to tell me just where we were and how few adjustments in the original time schedules he had had to make, and why this non-stop flight to Robinello would stand unequaled for centuries to come.

And I heard virtually nothing of what he said. I simply stood there, gazing at the unbelievable beauty of the skies. I was hypnotized, enthralled, shaken to the very roots. One emotion, one thought dominated me. I longed

for my dear beloved Louise.

"The romantic malady, as I was saying," William Broscoe resumed, "may or may not be a factor in producing our large population. Personally, I think it's pure buncombe."

"Pure buncombe," I echoed, still thinking of Louise. If she and I had had moons like these—

"But nobody can tell Captain Dickinson anything..."

There was considerable clamor and wrangling that morning as the inhabitants awakened to find their heavens blacked out. Captain Dickinson was none too popular anyway. Fortunately for him, many of the people took their grouches out on the babies who had caused the disturbance in the night.

Families with babies were supposed to occupy the rear staterooms—but there weren't enough rear staterooms. Or rather, there were too many babies.

Soon the word went the rounds that the Keeper of the Traditions had returned to life. I was duly banqueted and toasted and treated to lengthy accounts of the events of the past hundred years. And during the next few days many of the older men and women would take me aside for private conferences and spill their worries into my ears.

## CHAPTER III
### Boredom

What's the world coming to?" these granddaddies and grandmothers would ask. And before I could scratch my head for an answer, they would assure me that this expedition was headed straight for the rocks.

"It's all up with us. We've lost our grip on our original purposes. The Six-Hundred-Year Plan is nothing but a dead scrap of paper."

I'll admit things looked plenty black. And the more parlor conversations I was invited in on, the blacker things looked. I couldn't sleep nights.

"If our population keeps on increasing, we'll run out of food before we're halfway there," William Broscoe II repeatedly declared. "We've got to have a compulsory program of birth control. That's the only thing that will save us."

A delicate subject for parlor conversations, you think? This older generation didn't think so. I was astonished, and I'll admit I was a bit proud as well, to discover how deeply imbued these old graybeards were with *Flash-away* determination and patriotism. They had missed life in America by only one generation, and they were unquestionably the staunchest of flag wavers on board.

The younger generations were less outspoken, and for the first week I began to deplore their comparative lack of vision. They, the possessors of families, seemed to avoid these discussions about the oversupply of children.

"So you've come to check up on our American traditions, Professor Grimstone," they would say casually. "We've heard all about this great purpose of our forefathers, and I guess it's up to us to put it across. But gee whiz, Grimstone, we wish we could have seen the earth! What's it like, anyhow?"

"Tell us some more about the earth..."

"All we know is what we get second hand..."

I told them about the earth. Yes, they had books galore, and movies and phonograph records, pictures and maps; but these things only excited their curiosity. They asked me questions by the thousands. Only after I had poured out several encyclopedia-loads of Earth memories did I begin to break through their masks.

Back of this constant questioning, I discovered, they were watching me. Perhaps they were wondering whether they were not being subjected to more rigid discipline here on shipboard than their cousins back on Earth. I tried to impress upon them that they were a chosen group, but this had little effect. It stuck in their minds that *they* had had no choice in the matter.

Moreover, they were watching to see what I was going to do about the population problem, for they were no less aware of it than their elders.

Two weeks after my "return" we got down to business.

Captain Dickinson preferred to engineer the matter himself. He called an assembly in the movie auditorium. Almost everyone was present.

The program began with the picture of the Six-Hundred-Year Plan. Everyone knew the reels by heart. They had seen and heard them dozens of times, and were ready to snicker at the proper moments — such as when the stern old committee chairman, charging the unborn generations with their solemn obligations, was interrupted by a friendly fly on his nose.

When the films were run through, Captain Dickinson took the rostrum, and with considerable bluster he called upon the Clerk of the Council to review the situation. The clerk read a report which went about as follows:

To maintain a stable population, it was agreed in the original Plan that families should average two children each. Hence, the original 16 families would bring

forth approximately 32 children; and assuming that they were fairly evenly divided as to sex, they would eventually form 16 new families. These 16 families would, in turn, have an average of two children each — another generation of approximately 32.

By maintaining these averages, we were to have a total population, at any given time, of 32 children, 32 parents and 32 grandparents. The great-grandparents may be left out of account, for owing to the natural span of life they ordinarily die off before they accumulate in any great numbers.

The three living generations, then, of 32 each would give the *Flashaway* a constant active population of 96, or roughly, 100 persons.

The Six-Hundred-Year Plan has allowed for some flexibility in these figures. It has established the safe maximum at 150 and the safe minimum at 75.

If our population shrinks below 75, it is dangerously small. If it shrinks to 50, a crisis is at hand.

But if it grows above 150, it is dangerously large; and if it reaches the 200 mark, as we all know, a crisis may be said to exist.

The clerk stopped for an impressive pause, marred only by a baby from some distant room.

"Now, coming down to the present-day facts, we are well aware that the population has been dangerously large for the past seven years —"

"Since we entered this section of the heavens," Captain Dickinson interspersed with a scowl.

"From the first year in space, the population plan has encountered some irregularities," the clerk continued. "To begin with, there were not sixteen couples, but seventeen. The seventeenth couple —" here the clerk shot a glance at William Broscoe — "did not belong to the original compact, and after their marriage they were not bound by the sacred traditions —"

"I object!" I shouted, challenging the eyes of the clerk and the captain squarely. Dickinson had written that report with a touch of malice. The clerk skipped over a sentence or two.

"But however the Broscoe family may have prospered and multiplied, our records show that nearly all the families of the present generation have exceeded the per-family quota."

At this point there was a slight disturbance in the rear of the auditorium. An anxious-looking young man entered and signalled to the doctor. The two went out together.

"*All* the families," the clerk amended. "Our population this week passed the two hundred mark. This concludes the report."

The captain opened the meeting for discussion, and the forum

lasted far into the night. The demand for me to assist the Council with some legislation was general. There was also hearty sentiment against the captain's blacked-out heavens from young and old alike.

This, I considered, was a good sign. The children craved the fun of watching the stars and planets; their elders desired to keep up their serious astronomical studies.

"Nothing is so important to the welfare of this expedition," I said to the Council on the following day, as we settled down to the job of thrashing out some legislation, "as to maintain our interests in the outside world. Population or no population, we must not become ingrown!"

I talked of new responsibilities, new challenges in the form of contests and campaigns, new leisure-time activities. The discussion went on for days.

"Back in my times—" I said for the hundredth time; but the captain laughed me down. My times and these times were as unlike as black and white, he declared.

"But the principle is the same!" I shouted. "We had population troubles, too."

They smiled as I referred to twenty-first century relief families who were overrun with children. I cited the fact that some industrialists who paid heavy taxes had considered giving every relief family an automobile as a measure to save themselves money in the long run; for they had discovered that relief families with cars had fewer children than those without.

"That's no help," Dickinson muttered. "You can't have cars on a space ship."

"You can play bridge," I retorted. "Bridge is an enemy of the birthrate too. Bridge, cars, movies, checkers—they all add up to the same thing. They lift you out of your animal natures"

The Councilmen threw up their hands. They had bridged and checkered themselves to death.

"Then try other things," I persisted. "You could produce your own movies and plays—organize a little theater—create some new drama—"

"What have we got to dramatize?" the captain replied sourly. "All the dramatic things happen on the earth."

This shocked me. Somehow it took all the starch out of this colossal adventure to hear the captain give up so easily.

"All our drama is second hand," he grumbled. "Our ship's course is cut and dried. Our world is bounded by walls. The only dramatic things that happen here are births and deaths."

A doctor broke in on our conference and seized the captain by the hand.

"Congratulations, Captain Dickinson, on the prize crop of the season! Your wife has just presented you with a fine set of triplets—three boys!"

That broke up the meeting. Captain Dickinson was so busy for the rest of the week that he forgot all about his official obligations. The problem of population limitation faded from his mind.

I wrote out my recommendations and gave them all the weight of my dictatorial authority. I stressed the need for more birth control forums, and recommended that the heavens be made visible for further studies in astronomy and mathematics.

I was tempted to warn Captain Dickinson that the *Flashaway* might incur some serious dramas of its own—poverty, disease and the like—unless he got back on the track of the Six-Hundred-Year Plan in a hurry. But Dickinson was preoccupied with some family washings when I took my leave of him, and he seemed to have as much drama on his hands as he cared for.

I paid a final visit to each of the twenty-eight great-grandchildren of Louise, and returned to my ice.

## CHAPTER IV
## Revolt!

My chief complaint against my merry-go-round freezer was that it didn't give me any rest. One whirl into blackness, and the next thing I knew I popped out of the open lid again with not so much as a minute's time to reorganize my thoughts.

Well, here it was 2266—two hundred years since the take-off.

A glance through the one-way glass told me it was daytime in the ballroom.

As I turned the key in the lock I felt like a prize fighter on a vaudeville tour who, having just trounced the tough local strong man, steps back in the ring to take on his cousin.

A touch of a headache caught me as I reflected that there should be four more returns after this one—if all went according to plan. *Plan!* That word was destined to be trampled underfoot!

Oh, well (I took a deep optimistic breath) the *Flashaway* troubles would all be cleared up by now. Three generations would have passed. The population should be back to normal.

I swung the door open, stepped through, locked it after me.

For an instant I thought I had stepped in on a big movie "take"—a scene of a stricken multitude. The big ballroom was literally strewn with people—if creatures in such a deplorable state could be called people.

There was no movie camera. This was the real thing.

"Grimstone's come!" a hoarse voice cried out.

"Grimstone! Grimstone!" Others caught up the cry. Then—"Food! Give us food! We're starving! For God's sake—"

The weird chorus gathered volume. I stood dazed, and for an instant I couldn't realize that I was looking upon the population of the *Flashaway*.

Men, women and children of all ages and all states of desperation joined in the clamor. Some of them stumbled to their feet and came toward me, waving their arms weakly. But most of them hadn't the strength to rise.

In that stunning moment an icy sweat came over me.

"Food! Food! We've been waiting for you, Grimstone. We've been holding on—"

The responsibility that was strapped to my shoulders suddenly weighed down like a locomotive. You see, I had originally taken my job more or less as a lark. That Six-Hundred-Year Plan had looked so air-tight. I, the Keeper of the Traditions, would have a snap.

I had anticipated many a pleasant hour acquainting the oncoming generations with noble sentiments about George Washington; I had pictured myself filling the souls of my listeners by reciting the Gettysburg address and lecturing upon the mysteries of science.

But now those pretty bubbles burst on the spot, nor did they ever re-form in the centuries to follow.

And as they burst, my vision cleared. My job had nothing to do with theories or textbooks or speeches. My job was simply to get to Robinello—to get there with enough living, able-bodied, sane human beings to start a colony.

Dull blue starlight sifted through the windows to highlight the big roomful of starved figures. The mass of pale blue faces stared at me. There were hundreds of them. Instinctively I shrank as the throng clustered around me, calling and pleading.

"One at a time!" I cried. "First I've got to find out what this is all about. Who's your spokesman?"

They designated a handsomely built, if undernourished, young man. I inquired his name and learned that he was Bob Sperry, a descendant of the original Captain Sperry.

"There are eight hundred of us now," Sperry said.

"Don't tell me the food has run out!"

"No, not that—but six hundred of us are not entitled to regular meals."

"Why not?"

Before the young spokesman could answer, the others burst out with an unintelligible clamor. An-

gry cries of "That damned Dickinson!" and "Guns!" and "They'll shoot us!" were all I could distinguish.

I quieted them and made Bob Sperry go on with his story. He calmly asserted that there was a very good reason that they shouldn't be fed, all sentiment aside; namely, because they had been born outside the quota.

Here I began to catch a gleam of light.

"By Captain Dickinson's interpretation of the Plan," Sperry explained, "there shouldn't be more than two hundred of us altogether."

This Captain Dickinson, I learned, was a grandson of the one I had known.

Sperry continued, "Since there are eight hundred, he and his brother—his brother being Food Superintendent — launched an emergency measure a few months ago to save food. They divided the population into the two hundred, who had a right to be born, and the six hundred who had not."

So the six hundred starving persons before me were theoretically the excess population. The vigorous ancestry of the sixteen —no, seventeen—original couples, together with the excellent medical care that had reduced infant mortality and disease to the minimum, had wrecked the original plan completely.

"What do you do for food? You must have *some* food!"

"We live on charity."

The throng again broke in with hostile words. Young Sperry's version was too gentle to do justice to their outraged stomachs. In fairness to the two hundred, however, Sperry explained that they shared whatever food they could spare with these, their less fortunate brothers, sisters and offspring.

Uncertain what should or could be done, I gave the impatient crowd my promise to investigate at once. Bob Sperry and nine other men accompanied me.

The minute we were out of hearing of the ballroom, I gasped:

"Good heavens, men, how is it that you and your six hundred haven't mobbed the storerooms long before this?"

"Dickinson and his brother have got the drop on us."

"Drop? What kind of drop?"

"Guns!"

I couldn't understand this. I had believed these new generations of the *Flashaway* to be relatively innocent of any knowledge of firearms.

"What kind of guns?"

"The same kind they use in our Earth-made movies — that make a loud noise and kill people by the hundreds."

"But there aren't any guns aboard! That is—"

I knew perfectly well that the

only firearms the ship carried had been stored in my own refrigerator room, which no one could enter but myself. Before the voyage, one of the planning committee had jestingly suggested that if any serious trouble ever arose, I should be master of the situation by virtue of one hundred revolvers.

"They made their own guns," Sperry explained, "just like the ones in our movies and books."

Inquiring whether any persons had been shot, I learned that three of their number, attempting a raid on the storerooms, had been killed.

"We heard three loud bangs, and found our men dead with bloody skulls."

Reaching the upper end of the central corridor, we arrived at the captain's headquarters.

The name of Captain Dickinson carried a bad flavor for me. A century before I had developed a distaste for a certain other Captain Dickinson, his grandfather. I resolved to swallow my prejudice. Then the door opened, and my resolve stuck in my throat. The former Captain Dickinson had merely annoyed me; but this one I hated on sight.

"Well?" the captain roared at the eleven of us.

Well-uniformed and neatly groomed, he filled the doorway with an impressive bulk. In his right hand he gripped a revolver. The gleam of that weapon had a magical effect upon the men. They shrank back respectfully. Then the captain's cold eye lighted on me.

"Who are *you*?"

"Gregory Grimstone, Keeper of the Traditions."

The captain sent a quick glance toward his gun and repeated his "Well?"

For a moment I was fascinated by that intricately shaped piece of metal in his grip.

"Well!" I echoed. "If 'well' is the only reception you have to offer, I'll proceed with my official business. Call your Food Superintendent."

"Why?"

"Order him out! Have him feed the entire population without further delay!"

"We can't afford the food," the captain growled.

"We'll talk that over later, but we won't talk on empty stomachs. Order out your Food Superintendent!"

"Crawl back in your hole!" Dickinson snarled.

At that instant another bulky man stepped into view. He was almost the identical counterpart of the captain, but his uniform was that of the Food Superintendent. Showing his teeth with a sinister snarl, he took his place beside his brother. He too jerked his right hand up to flash a gleaming revolver.

I caught one glimpse—and laughed in his face! I couldn't help it.

"You fellows are good!" I roared. "You're damned good actors! If you've held off the starving six hundred with nothing but those two dumb imitations of revolvers, you deserve an Academy award!"

The two Dickinson brothers went white.

Back of me came low mutterings from ten starving men.

"Imitations—dumb imitations—what the hell?"

Sperry and his nine comrades plunged with one accord. For the next ten minutes the captain's headquarters was simply a whirlpool of flying fists and hurtling bodies.

I have mentioned that these ten men were weak from lack of food. That fact was all that saved the Dickinson brothers; for ten minutes of lively exercise was all the ten men could endure, in spite of the circumstances.

But ten minutes left an impression. The Dickinsons were the worst beaten-up men I have ever seen, and I have seen some bad ones in my time. When the news echoed through the ship, no one questioned the ethics of ten starved men attacking two overfed ones.

Needless to say, before two hours passed, every hungry man, woman and child ate to his gizzard's content. And before another hour passed, some new officers were installed. The S. S. *Flashaway's* trouble was far from solved; but for the present the whole eight hundred were one big family picnic. Hope was restored, and the rejoicing lasted through many thousand miles of space.

There was considerable mystery about the guns. Surprisingly, the people had developed an awe of the movie guns as if they were instruments of magic.

Upon investigating, I was convinced that the captain and his brother had simply capitalized on this superstition. They had a sound enough motive for wanting to save food. But once their gun bluff had been established, they had become uncompromising oppressors. And when the occasion arose that their guns were challenged, they had simply crushed the skulls of their three attackers and faked the noises of explosions.

But now the firearms were dead. And so was the Dickinson regime.

But the menacing problem of too many mouths to feed still clung to the S. S. *Flashaway* like a hungry ghost determined to ride the ship to death.

Six full months passed before the needed reform was forged.

During that time everyone was allowed full rations. The famine had already taken its toll in weak-

ened bodies, and seventeen persons — most of them young children — died. The doctors, released from the Dickinson regime, worked like Trojans to bring the rest back to health.

The reform measure that went into effect six months after my arrival consisted of outright sterilization.

The compulsory rule was sterilization for everyone except those born "within the quota" — and that quota, let me add, was narrowed down one half from Captain Dickinson's two hundred to the most eligible one hundred. The disqualified one hundred now joined the ranks of the six hundred.

And that was not all. By their own agreement, every within-the-quota family, responsible for bearing the *Flashaway's* future children, would undergo sterilization operations after the second child was born.

The seven hundred out-of-quota citizens, let it be said, were only too glad to submit to the simple sterilization measures in exchange for a right to live their normal lives. Yes, they were to have three squares a day. With an assured population decline in prospect for the coming century, this generous measure of food would not give out. Our surveys of the existing food supplies showed that these seven hundred could safely live their four-score years and die with full stomachs.

Looking back on the six months work, I was fairly well satisfied that the doctors and the Council and I had done the fair, if drastic, thing. If I had planted seeds for further trouble with the Dickinson tribe, I was little concerned about it at the time.

My conscience was, in fact, clear — except for one small matter. I was guilty of one slight act of partiality.

I incurred this guilt shortly before I returned to the ice. The doctors and I, looking down from the balcony into the ballroom, chanced to notice a young couple who were obviously very much in love.

The young man was Bob Sperry, the handsome, clear-eyed descendant of the *Flashaway's* first and finest captain, the lad who had been the spokesman when I first came upon the starving mob.

The girl's name — and how it had clung in my mind! — was Louise Broscoe. Refreshingly beautifu, she reminded me for all the world of my own Louise (mine and Bill Broscoe's).

"It's a shame," one of the doctors commented, "that fine young blood has to fall outside the quota. But rules are rules."

With a shrugg of the shoulders he had already dismissed the matter from his mind — until I handed him something I had scribbled on a piece of paper.

"We'll make this one exception," I said perfunctorily. "If any question ever arises, this statement relieves you doctors of all responsibility. This is my own special request."

## CHAPTER V
## Wedding Bells

One hundred years later my rash act came back to haunt me—and how! Bob Sperry had married Louise Broscoe, and the births of their two children had raised the unholy cry of "Favoritism!"

By the year 2366, Bob Sperry and Louise Broscoe were gone and almost forgotten. But th enmity against me, the Keeper of the Traditions who played favorites, had grown up into a monster of bitter hatred waiting to devour me.

It didn't take me long to discover this. My first contact after I emerged from the ice set the pace.

"Go tell your parents," I said to the gang of brats that were playing ball in the spacious ballroom, "that Grimstone has arrived."

Their evil little faces stared at me a moment, then they snorted.

"Faw! Faw! Faw!" and away they ran.

I stood in the big bleak room wondering what to make of their insults. On the balcony some of the parents craned over the railings at me.

"Greetings!" I cried. "I'm Grimstone, Keeper of the Traditions. I've just come—"

"Faw!" the men and women shouted at me. "Faw! Faw!"

No one could have made anything friendly out of those snarls. "Faw," to them, was simply a vocal manner of spitting poison.

Uncertain what this surly reception might lead to, I returned to my refrigerator room to procure one of the guns. Then I returned to the volley of catcalls and insults, determined to carry out my duties, come what might.

When I reached the forequarter of the ship, however, I found some less hostile citizens who gave me a civil welcome. Here I established myself for the extent of my 2366-67 sojourn, an honored guest of the Sperry family.

This, I told myself, was my reward for my favor to Bob Sperry and Louise Broscoe a century ago. For here was their grandson, a fine upstanding grayhaired man of fifty, a splendid pilot and the father of a beautiful twenty-one year old daughter.

"Your name wouldn't be Louise by any chance?" I asked the girl as she showed me into the Sperry living room.

"Lora-Louise," the girl smiled. It was remarkable how she brought back memories of one

of her ancestors of three centuries previous.

Her dark eyes flashed over me curiously.

"So you are the man that we Sperries have to thank for being here!"

"You've heard about the quotas?" I asked.

"Of course. You're almost a god to our family."

"I must be a devil to some of the others," I said, recalling my reception of catcalls.

"Rogues!" the girl's father snorted, and he thereupon launched into a breezy account of the past century.

The sterilization program, he assured me, had worked—if anything, too well. The population was the lowest in *Flashaway* history. It stood at the dangerously low mark of *fifty!*

Besides the sterilization program, a disease epidemic had taken its toll. In addition three ugly murders, prompted by jealousies, had spotted the record. And there had been one suicide.

As to the character of the population, Pilot Sperry declared gravely that there had been a turn for the worse.

"They fight each other like damned anarchists," he snorted.

The Dickinsons had made trouble for several generations. Now it was the Dickinsons against the Smiths; and these two factions included four-fifths of all the people. They were about evenly divided—twenty on each side—and when they weren't actually fighting each other, they were "fawing" at each other.

These bellicose factions had one sentiment in common: they both despised the Sperry faction. And—here my guilt cropped up again—their hatred stemmed from my special favor of a century ago, without which there would be no Sperrys now. In view of the fact that the Sperry faction lived in the forequarter of the ship and held all the important offices, it was no wonder that the remaining forty citizens were jealous.

All of which gave me enough to worry about. On top of that, Lora-Louise's mother gave me one other angle of the set-up.

"The trouble between the Dickinsons and the Smiths has grown worse since Lora-Louise has become a young lady," Mrs. Sperry confided to me.

We were sitting in a breakfast nook. Amber starlight shone softly through the porthole, lighting the mother's steady imperturbable gray eyes.

"Most girls have married at eighteen or nineteen," her mother went on. "So far, Lora-Louise has refused to marry."

The worry in Mrs. Sperry's face was almost imperceptible, but I understood. I had checked over the "Who's Who" and I knew

the seriousness of this population crisis. I also knew that there were four young unmarried men with no other prospects of wives except Lora-Louise.

"Have you any choice for her?" I asked.

"Since she must marry—and I know she *must*—I have urged her to make her own choice."

I could see that the ordeal of choosing had been postponed until my coming, in hopes that I might modify the rules. But I had no intention of doing so. The *Flashaway* needed Lora-Louise. It needed the sort of children she would bear.

That week I saw the two husky Dickinson boys. Both were in their twenties. They stayed close together and bore an air of treachery and scheming. Rumor had it that they carried weapons made from table knives.

Everyone knew that my coming would bring the conflict to a head. Many thought I would try to force the girl to marry the older Smith—"Batch", as he was called in view of his bachelorhood. He was past thirty-five, the oldest of the four unmarried men.

But some argued otherwise. For Batch, though a splendid specimen physically, was slow of wit and speech. It was common knowledge that he was weak-minded.

For that reason, I might choose his younger cousin, "Smithy," a roly-poly overgrown boy of nineteen who spent his time bullying the younger children.

But if the Smiths and the Dickinsons could have their way about it, the Keeper of the Traditions should have no voice in the matter. Let me insist that Lora-Louise marry, said they; but whom she should marry was none of my business.

They preferred a fight as a means of settlement. A free-for-all between the two factions would be fine. A showdown of fists among the four contenders would be even better.

Best of all would be a battle of knives that would eliminate all but one of the suitors. Not that either the Dickinsons or the Smiths needed to admit that was what they preferred; but their barbaric tastes were plain to see.

Barbarians! That's what they had become. They had sprung too far from their native civilization. Only the Sperry faction, isolated in their monasteries of control boards, physicians' laboratories and record rooms, kept alive the spark of civilization.

The Sperrys and their associates were human beings out of the twenty-first century. The Smiths and the Dickinsons had slipped. They might have come out of the Dark Ages.

What burned me up more than anything else was that obviously both the Smiths and the Dickinsons looked forward with sinister

glee toward dragging Lora-Louise down from her height to their own barbaric levels.

One night I was awakened by the sharp ringing of the pilot's telephone. I heard the snap of a switch. An *emergency* signal flashed on throughout the ship.

Footsteps were pounding toward the ballroom. I slipped into a robe, seized my gun, made for the door.

"The Dickinsons are murdering up on them!" Pilot Sperry shouted to me from the door of the control room.

"I'll see about it," I snapped.

I bounded down the corridor. Sperry didn't follow. Whatever violence might occur from year to year within the hull of the *Flashaway,* the pilot's code demanded that he lock himself up at the controls and tend to his own business.

It was a free-for-all! Under the bright lights they were going to it, tooth and toenail.

Children screamed and clawed, women hurled dishes, old tottering granddaddies edged into the fracas to crack at each other with canes.

The appalling reason for it all showed in the center of the room —the roly-poly form of young "Smithy" Smith. Hacked and stabbed, his nightclothes ripped, he was a veritable mess of carnage.

I shouted for order. No one heard me, for in that instant a chase thundered on the balcony. Everything else stopped. All eyes turned on the three racing figures.

Batch Smith, fleeing in his white nightclothes, had less than five yards' lead on the two Dickinsons. Batch was just smart enough to run when he was chased, not smart enough to know he couldn't possibly outrun the younger Dickinsons.

As they shot past blazing lights the Dickinsons' knives flashed. I could see that their hands were red with Smithy's blood.

"*Stop!*" I cried. "Stop or I'll *shoot!*"

If they heard, the words must have been meaningless. The younger Dinkinson gained ground. His brother darted back in the opposite direction, crouched, waited for his prey to come around the circular balcony.

"Dickinson! Stop or I'll shoot you dead!" I bellowed.

Batch Smith came on, his eyes white with terror. Crouched and waiting, the older Dickinson lifted his knife for the killing stroke.

I shot.

The crouched Dickinson fell in a heap. Over him tripped the racing form of Batch Smith, to sprawl headlong. The other Dickinson leaped over his brother and pounced down upon the fallen prey, knife upraised.

Another shot went home.

Young Dickinson writhed and

came toppling down over the balcony rail. He lay where he fell, his bloody knife sticking up through the side of his neck.

It was ugly business trying to restore order. However, the magic power of firearms, which had become only a dusty legend, now put teeth into every word I uttered.

The doctors were surprisingly efficient. After many hours of work behind closed doors, they released their verdicts to the waiting groups. The elder Dickinson, shot through the shoulder, would live. The younger Dickinson was dead. So was Smithy. But his cousin, Batch Smith, although too scared to walk back to his stateroom, was unhurt.

The rest of the day the doctors devoted to patching up the minor damages done in the free fight. Four-fifths of the *Flashaway* population were burdened with bandages, it seemed. For some time to come both the warring parties were considerably sobered over their losses. But most of all they were disgruntled because the fight had settled nothing.

The prize was still unclaimed. The two remaining contenders, backed by their respective factions, were at a bitter deadlock.

Nor had Lora-Louise's hatred for either the surviving Dickinson or Smith lessened in the slightest.

Never had a duty been more oppressive to me. I postponed my talk with Lora-Louise for several days, but I was determined that there should be no more fighting. She must choose.

We sat in an alcove next to the pilot's control room, looking out into the vast sky. Our ship, bounding at a terrific speed though it was, seemed to be hanging motionless in the tranquil star-dotted heavens.

"I must speak frankly," I said to the girl. "I hope you will do the same."

She looked at me steadily. Her dark eyes were perfectly frank, her full lips smiled with child-like simplicity.

"How old are you?" she asked.

"Twenty-eight," I answered. I'd been the youngest professor on the college faculty. "Or you might say three hundred and twenty-eight. Why?"

"How soon must you go back to your sleep?"

"Just as soon as you are happily married. That's why I must insist that you—"

Something very penetrating about her gaze made my words go weak. To think of forcing this lovely girl—so much like the Louise of my own century—to marry either the brutal Dickinson or the moronic Smith—

"Do you really want me to be *happily* married?" she asked.

I don't remember that any more words passed between us—

A few days later she and I were married—and most happily!

The ceremony was brief. The entire Sperry faction and one representative from each of the two hostile factions were present. The aged captain of the ship, who had been too ineffectual in recent years to apply any discipline to the fighting factions, was still able with vigorous voice to pronounce us man and wife.

A year and a half later I took my leave.

I bid fond good-by to the "future captain of the *Flashaway,*" who lay on a pillow kicking and squirming. He gurgled back at me. If the boasts and promises of the Sperry grandparents and their associates were to be taken at full value, this young prodigy of mine would in time become an accomplished pilot and a skilled doctor as well as a stern but wise captain.

Judging from his talents at the age of six months, I was convinced he showed promise of becoming Food Superintendent as well.

I left reluctantly but happily.

## CHAPTER VI
## The Final Crisis

The year 2466 was one of the darkest in my life. I shall pass over the hopeless situation, I found, briefly.

The captain met me personally and conveyed me to his quarters without allowing the people to see me.

"Safer for everyone concerned," he muttered. I caught glimpses as we passed through the shadows. I seemed to be looking upon ruins.

Not until the captain had disclosed the events of the century did I understand how things could have come to such a deplorable state. And before he finished his story, I saw that I was helpless to right the wrongs.

"They've destroyed 'most everything," the hard-bitten old captain rasped. "And they have not overlooked *you*. They've destroyed you completely. *You are an ogre.*"

I wasn't clear on his meaning. Dimly in the back of my mind the hilarious farewell of four centuries ago still echoed.

"The *Flashaway* will go through!" I insisted.

"They destroyed all the books, phonograph records, movie films. They broke up clocks and bells and furniture—"

And I was supposed to carry this interspatial outpost of American civilization through *unblemished!* That was what I had promised so gayly four centuries ago.

"They even tried to break out the windows," the captain went on. "'Oxygen be damned!' they'd shout. They were mad. You could

not tell them anything. If they could have got into this end of the ship, they'd have murdered us and smashed the control boards to hell."

I listened with bowed head.

"Your son tried like the devil to turn the tide. But God, what chance did he have? The dam had busted loose. They wanted to kill each other. They wanted to destroy each other's property and starve each other out. No captain in the world could have stopped either faction. They had to get it out of their systems..."

He shrugged helplessly. "Your son went down fighting..." For a time I could hear no more. It seemed but minutes ago that I had taken leave of the little tot.

The war—if a mania of destruction and murder between two feuding factions could be called a war—had done one good thing, according to the captain. It had wiped the name of Dickinson from the records.

Later I turned through the musty pages to make sure. There were Smiths and Sperrys and a few other names still in the running, but no Dickinsons. Nor were there any Grimstones. My son had left no living descendants.

To return to the captain's story, the war (he said) had degraded the bulk of the population almost to the level of savages. Perhaps the comparison is an insult to the savage. The instruments of knowledge and learning having been destroyed, beliefs gave way to superstitions, memories of past events degenerated into fanciful legends.

The rebound from the war brought a terrific superstitious terror concerning death. The survivors crawled into their shells, almost literally; the brutalities and treacheries of the past hung like storm clouds over their imaginations.

As year after year dropped away, the people told and retold the stories of destruction to their children. Gradually the legend twisted into a strange form in which all the guilt for the carnage *was placed upon me!*

I was the one who had started all the killing! *I, the ogre,* who slept in a cave somewhere in the rear of the ship, came out once upon a time and started all the trouble!

I, the Traditions Man, dealt death with a magic weapon; I cast the spell of killing upon the Smiths and the Dickinsons that kept them fighting until there was nothing left to fight for!

"But that was years ago," I protested to the captain. "Am I still an ogre?" I shuddered at the very thought.

"More than ever. Stories like that don't die out in a century. They grow bigger. You've become the symbol of evil. I've tried to talk the silly notion down,

but it has been impossible. My own family is afraid of you."

I listened with sickening amazement. I was the Traditions Man; or rather, the "Traddy Man"—the bane of every child's life.

Parents, I was told, would warn them, "If you don't be good, the Traddy Man will come out of his cave and get you!"

And the Traddy Man, as every grown-up knew, could storm out of his cave without warning. He would come with a strange gleam in his eye. That was his evil will. When the bravest, strongest men would cross his path, he would hurl instant death at them. Then he would seize the most beautiful woman and marry her.

"Enough!" I said. "Call your people together. I'll dispel their false ideas—"

The captain shook his head wisely. He glanced at my gun.

"Don't force me to disobey your orders," he said. "I can believe you're not an ogre—but they won't. I know this generation. You don't. Frankly I refuse to disturb the peace of this ship by telling the people you have come. Nor am I willing to terrorize my family by letting them see you."

For a long while I stared silently into space.

The captain dismissed a pilot from the control room and had me come in.

"You can see for yourself that we are straight on our course. You have already seen that all the supplies are holding up. You have seen that the population problem is well cared for. What more do you want?"

What more did I want! With the whole population of the *Flashaway* steeped in ignorance — immorality — superstition — savagery! *

* Professor Grimstone is obviously astounded that his charges, with all the necessities of life on board their space ship, should have degenerated so completely. It must be remembered, however, that no other outside influence ever entered the *Flashaway* in all its long voyage through space. In the space of centuries, the colonists progressed not one whit.

On a very much reduced scale, the *Flashaway* colonists are a more or less accurate mirror of a nation in transition. Sad but true it is that nations, like human beings, are born, wax into bright maturity, grow into comfortable middle age and ofttimes linger on until old age has impaired their usefulness.

In the relatively short time that man has been a thinking, building animal, many great empires—many great nations—have sprung from humble beginnings to grow powerful and then wane into oblivion, sometimes slowly, sometimes with tragic suddenness.

Grimstone, however, has failed to take the lessons of history into account through the mistaken conception that because the colonists' physical wants were taken care of, that was all they required to keep them healthy and contented—Ed.

Again the captain shook his head. "You want us to be like your friends of the twenty-first century. *We can't be.*"

He reached in his pocket and pulled out some bits of crumpled papers.

"Look. I save every scrap of reading matter. I learned to read from the primers and charts that your son's grandparents made. Before the destruction, I tried to read about the Earth-life. I still piece together these torn bits and study them. But I can't piece together the Earth-life that they tell about. All I really know is what I've seen and felt and breathed right here in my native *Flashaway* world.

"That's how it's bound to be with all of us. We can't get back to your notions about things. Your notions haven't any real truth for us. You don't belong to our world," the captain said with honest frankness.

"So I'm an outcast on my own ship!"

"That's putting it mildly. You are a menace and a trouble-maker—*an ogre!* It's in their minds as tight as the bones in their skulls."

The most I could do was secure some promises from him before I went back to the ice. He promised to keep the ship on its course, to do his utmost to fasten the obligation upon those who took over the helm.

"Straight relentless navigation!" We drank a toast to it. He didn't pretend to appreciate the purpose or the mission of the *Flashaway,* but he took my word for it that it would come to some good.

"To Robinello in 2666!" Another toast. Then he conducted me back, in utmost secrecy, to my refrigerator room.

I awoke to the year of 2566, keenly aware that I was not Gregory Grimstone, the respected Keeper of the Traditions. If I was anyone at all, I was the Traddy Man—the ogre.

But perhaps by this time—and I took hope with the thought—I had been completely forgotten.

I tried to get through the length of the ship without being seen. I had watched through the one-way glass for several hours for a favorable opportunity, but the ship seemed to be in a continual state of daylight, and shabby-looking people roamed about as aimlessly as sheep in a meadow.

The few persons who saw me as I darted toward the captain's quarters shrieked as if they had been knifed. In their world there was no such thing as a strange person. I was the impossible, the unbelievable. My name, obviously, had been forgotten.

I found three men in the control room. After minutes of tension, during which they adjusted themselves to the shock

of my coming, I succeeded in establishing speaking terms. Two of the men were Sperrys.

But at the very moment I should have been concerned with solidifying my friendship, I broke the calm with an excited outburst. My eye caught the position of the instruments and I leaped from my seat.

"How long have you been going *that way?*"

"Eight years!"

"Eight—" I glanced at the huge automatic chart overhead. It showed the long straight line of our centuries of flight with a tiny shepherd's crook at the end. Eight years ago we had turned back sharply.

"That's sixteen years lost, gentlemen!"

I tried to regain my poise. The three men before me were perfectly calm, to my astonishment. The two Sperry brothers glanced at each other. The third man, who had introduced himself as Smith, glared at me darkly.

"It's all right," I said. "We won't lose another minute. I know how to operate—"

"No, you don't!" Smith's voice was harsh and cold. I had started to reach for the controls. I hesitated. Three pairs of eyes were fixed on me.

"We know where we're going," one of the Sperrys said stubbornly. "We've got our own destination."

"This ship is bound for Robinello!" I snapped. "We've got to colonize. The Robinello planets are ours—America's. It's our job to clinch the claim and establish the inital settlement—"

"Who said so?"

"America!"

"*When?*" Smith's cold eyes tightened.

"Five hundred years ago."

"That doesn't mean a thing. Those people are all dead."

"I'm one of those people!" I growled. "And I'm not dead by a damned sight!"

"Then you're out on a limb."

"Limb or no limb, the plan goes through!" I clutched my gun. "We haven't come five hundred years in a straight line for nothing!"

"The plan is dead," one of the Sperrys snarled. "We've killed it."

His brother chimed in, "This is our ship and we're running it. We've studied the heavens and we're out on our own. We're through with this straight-line stuff. We're going to see the universe."

"You can't! You're bound for Robinello!"

Smith stepped toward me, and his big teeth showed savagely.

"We had no part in that agreement. We're taking orders from no one. I've heard about you. You're the Traddy Man. Go back in your hole—and stay there!"

I brought my gun up slowly. "You've heard of me? Have you heard of my gun? Do you know that this weapon shoots men dead?"

Three pairs of eyes caught on the gleaming weapon. But three men stood their ground staunchly.

"I've heard about guns," Smith hissed. "Enough to know that you don't dare shoot in the control room—"

"I don't dare *miss!*"

I didn't want to kill the men. But I saw no other way out. Was there any other way? Three lives weren't going to stand between the *Flashaway* and her destination.

Seconds passed, with the four of us breathing hard. Eternity was about to descend on someone. Any of the three might have been splendid pioneers if they had been confronted with the job of building a colony. But in this moment, their lack of vision was as deadly as any deliberate sabotage. I focused my attack on the most troublesome man.

"Smith, I'm giving you an order. Turn back before I count to ten or I'll kill you. One . . . two . . . three . . ."

Not the slightest move from anyone.

"Seven . . . eight . . . nine . . ."

Smith leaped at me—and fell dead at my feet.

The two Sperrys looked at the faint wisp of smoke from the weapon. I barked another sharp command, and one of the Sperrys marched to the controls and turned the ship back toward Robinello.

## CHAPTER VII

### Time Marches On

For a year I was with the Sperry brothers constantly, doing my utmost to bring them around to my way of thinking. At first I watched them like hawks. But they were not treacherous. Neither did they show any inclination to avenge Smith's death. Probably this was due to a suppressed hatred they had held toward him.

The Sperrys were the sort of men, being true children of space, who bided their time. That's what they were doing now. That was why I couldn't leave them and go back to my ice.

As sure as the *Flashaway* could cut through the heavens, those two men were counting the hours until I returned to my nest. The minute I was gone, they would turn back toward their own goal.

And so I continued to stay with them for a full year. If they contemplated killing me, they gave no indication. I presume I would have killed them with little

hesitation, had I had no pilots whatsoever that I could entrust with the job of carrying on.

There were no other pilots, nor were there any youngsters old enough to break into service.

Night after night I fought the matter over in my mind. There was a full century to go. Perhaps one hundred and fifteen or twenty years. And no one except the two Sperrys and I had any serious conception of a destination!

These two pilots and I—*and one other,* whom I had never for a minute forgotten. If the *Flashaway* was to go through, it was up to me and *that one other*—

I marched back to the refrigerator room, people fleeing my path in terror. Inside the retreat I touched the switches that operated the auxiliary merry-go-round freezer. After a space of time the operation was complete.

Someone very beautiful stood smiling before me, looking not a minute older than when I had packed her away for safe keeping two centuries before.

"Gregory," she breathed ecstatically. "Are my three centuries up already?"

"Only two of them, Lora-Louise." I took her in my arms. She looked up at me sharply and must have read the trouble in my eyes.

"They've all played out on us," I said quietly. "It's up to us now."

I discussed my plan with her and she approved.

One at a time we forced the Sperry brothers into the icy retreat, with repeated promises that they would emerge within a century. By that time Lora-Louise and I would be gone—but it was our expectation that our children and grandchildren would carry on.

And so the two of us, plus firearms, plus Lora-Louise's sense of humor, took over the running of the *Flashaway* for its final century.

As the years passed the native population grew to be less afraid of us. Little by little a foggy glimmer of our vision filtered into their number minds.

The year is now 2600. Thirty-three years have passed since Lora-Louise and I took over. I am sixty-two, she is fifty-six. Or if you prefer, I am 562, she is 256. Our four children have grown up and married.

We have realized down through these long years that we would not live to see the journey completed. The Robinello planets have been visible for some time; but at our speed they are still sixty or eighty years away.

But something strange happened nine or ten months ago. It has changed the outlook for all

of us—even me, the crusty old Keeper of the Traditions.

A message reached us through our radio receiver!

It was a human voice speaking in our own language. It had a fresh vibrant hum to it and a clear-cut enunciation. It shocked me to realize how sluggish our own brand of the King's English had become in the past five-and-a-half centuries.

"Calling the *S.S. Flashaway!*" it said. "Calling the *S.S. Flashaway!* We are trying to locate you, *S.S. Flashaway.* Our instruments indicate that you are approaching. If you can hear us, will you give us your exact location?"

I snapped on the transmitter. "This is the *Flashaway.* Can you hear us?"

"Dimly. Where are you?"

"On our course. Who's calling?"

"This is the American colony on Robinello," came the answer. "American colony, Robinello, established in 2550—fifty years ago. We're waiting for you, *Flashaway.*"

"How the devil did you get there?" I may have sounded a bit crusty but I was too excited to know what I was saying.

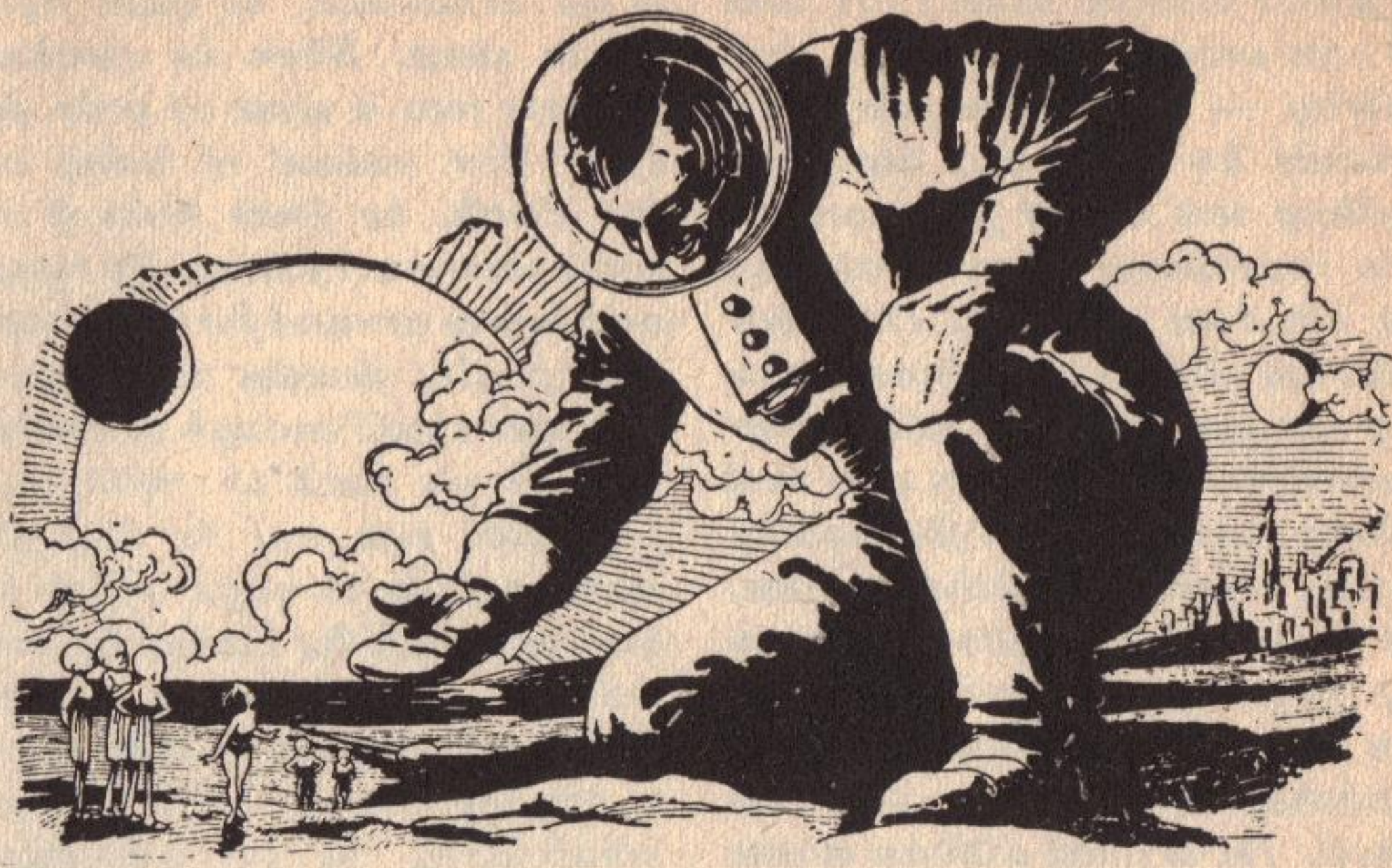
"Modern space ships," came the answer. "We've cut the time from the earth to Robinello down to six years. Give us your location. We'll send a fast ship out to pick you up."

I gave them our location. That, as I said, was several months ago. Today we are receiving a radio call every five minutes as their ship approaches.

One of my sons, supervising the preparations, has just reported that all persons aboard are ready to transfer—including the Sperry brothers who have emerged successfully from the ice. The eight-five *Flashaway* natives are scared half to death and at the same time as eager as children going to a circus.

Lora-Louise has finished packing our boxes, bless her heart. That teasing smile she just gave me was because she noticed the "Who's Who Aboard the *Flashaway*" tucked snugly under my arm.

THE END



# the Man from the Atom

(Sequel)

BY G. PEYTON WERTENBAKER

Illustrated by PAUL

*As promised last time (see* Amazing, *February, 1966), here is the ingenious sequel to G. Peyton Wertenbaker's precocious "The Man from the Atom," also written when the author was only a lad in his teens.—In this one Kirby is still stranded in the far future—on an alien planet that can never take the place of his own—all because he was plucky enough to try the Professor's latest invention for changing one's size at will. But a ten-minute jaunt into the macrocosmos cost him dearly—because when he got back, everything that had ever meant anything to him—including the Professor—had vanished more than a trillion centuries ago!*

*PROFESSOR MARTYN was an inventor of genius, and Kirby — one of the very few friends he had — was always a willing test object for many of his inventions. Somewhat even to his own surprise, Professor Martyn invents a machine whereby anyone can at will, either increase or diminish in size, and Kirby agrees — with foreboding in his heart — to test the machine. It is put into operation by merely pressing the middle button on this little machine, which is attached with straps, over his chest. He is fitted with an elastic suit, specially made for the purpose of keeping out intense cold or heat and retaining an even degree of temperature. He begins to increase in size and soon is so large that he just naturally slips away from the Earth and goes off into ultra-planetary space. After the first rush of excitement , Kirby becomes alarmed about it all and decides to come back to Earth. He presses the right button and immediately begins to diminish in size. But he has traveled so fast and is so far away that he becomes panic-stricken and decides to press the "stop" button. The velocity of his motion is so great that he travels for hundreds of miles more before he can stop. Then he suddenly finds himself coming up out of water — floating. He swims ashore, but he is so exhausted, he falls right off to sleep. When he awakes, he gets into a state of utter despair, for instead of being on the Earth, he finds himself on some unknown planet. He rages and fumes around for some time and finally decides to decrease to a size small enough to enable him to go back to earth and forthwith sets out to find the same nebula through which he originally left the Earth. He cannot find it and does not reach the Earth, but lands instead on a strange planet, with strange inhabitants, so far advanced in intellect that he feels like a savage among them. He does not understand their language and cannot understand their customs. He is there alone in utter desolation and despair, ever pining for those he left behind, whom he can never hope to see again.*

## THE RETURN

I never hoped — never dreamed, when I wrote the tale you have read, that I should ever see the earth again. Who in the universe could have hoped against all the knowledge of insuperable fate which had come to me? Who could hope to overcome Time and Space, to recapture that which was gone forever? Yet it is just

this that I have done—or something very like it. And it is a story a thousand times more fantastic, more impossible, than the story of my journey. And like that it is true.

When I last wrote, I was living in a state of awful quiescence upon a planet of the star Delni—I do not know yet what it would be called here, or whether it is even existent now for us. Perhaps I exaggerated a little my position, but that was before I had met Vinda. Vinda—shall I ever see her again? I leave tomorrow—but will she be there?

I saw little enough of that world, and what little I did see I shall not attempt to describe here, for it will all go into the report I am drawing up, with Martyn's aid, for a scientific magazine. But when I pressed the bottom button again, and the stars began to grow large, the planets to become visible as they circled in their paths, I had no desire except to sleep. With a reckless abandon that gave no thought for the consequences, I came close to one of the planets and waited for it to grow larger. How can I describe the mad humor of my situation, lying there in space with a world, a living world, revolving a few inches from my chest? I could look down over it as you would down over a model or a globe of the world. I felt a wild desire to put my finger into its great seas, and I could imagine to myself the consternation they would feel — if there were inhabitants — when the awful tempest and the tidal waves came to them. It was just such a desire as we feel sometimes in church, to shout a heresy or to throw something at the priest, not because we are heretics or because we dislike the priest, but for some inexplicable reason—an impulse. Fortunately, I did not surrender to that impulse. But I laughed a great hysterical laugh, and it must have been like the laughter of a god reverberating through the universe, dying thinly away in unimaginable reaches of the distance.

All this time the planet was growing bigger. It was not long before I was able, with the most fascinating acrobatic antics, to propel myself far enough away to place my feet almost upon it. Still it grew—or should I drop this playing with appearances, and say that I shrank? In any case, its heavily veiled face with clouds became vaster and more vast, until it must have been about my own height in diameter. Then I let my feet push through the clouds until they were resting lightly upon the surface. A few minutes later I began to feel for the first time since my departure that my own size was returning to me, the size that God intended

I should have. It was then that I turned Martyn's "gravity" switch, rather undecided what would happen, and caring very little, I suppose. Nothing did happen.

The clouds came closer and closer toward my face, mounting up over my body and growing each moment more billowy and more illimitable. In a little while they had enveloped my face, and a few minutes later they were above me.

It is now, I know, the moment when a writer of romances would introduce some great horrible bird that fought him in the air, or two armies of rival air-men who fought about him. Unfortunately or fortunately, as you will, nothing of that sort happened to me; and, if it had, I think I should have been too sleepy to be interested. Instead, I looked down upon long, rolling plains of golden grain. There were no forests, or even trees, that I could see. The ocean came to within a few inches of my feet, and far away across it, I caught a bright tiny glitter that might have been a city. There seemed to be no mountains, only a few low hills. The sunlight very seldom penetrated through the clouds in all its opulent splendor, but the world was no less bright for that, since its sun was very huge. There seemed to be a clear, diffused, bluish sort of light over the face of the planet.

I need not detail all my thoughts and emotions as I grew smaller, coming closer and closer to the ground. They were confused, meaningless feelings, and I have no memory of them except as a mood half way between a dull sorrow for the loss of my true earth and a dull wonder at the exotic beauty of this earth I had come upon. In a little while, however, I had shut off the machine and was decreasing more gently in size. Once I turned it on again for a moment, finding that I had miscalculated, but I quickly turned it off. During what seemed to me hours, I shrank little by little with increasing slowness, until I stood only a little taller than the grain of the long fields. There was nothing about me by which I could gauge my desired height, so I decided to let myself remain as I was until I had slept. Without any thought for possible differences in the atmospheres of this world and that of my own to which I had become accustomed, I feverishly pulled off my globular helmet and my suit. I was greeted with a great breath of cool air from the sea, and I stood for many minutes bathing in its fresh purity. Then, with a sigh, I sank down into the soft grain, and, watching the tall stalks rippling above me in the wind, I fell asleep.

When I awoke, it was dark.

There were no stars to be seen and no moon, but there was a faint radiance, a phosphorescence, upon the grain in which I lay. I did not rise for a long while, for I was thinking hopelessly of the futility of my life with my world gone, of the new life I should have to build up here, learning everything all over again as though I were a baby. After a while, knowing the madness such thoughts as these might lead me to, I tried to dismiss them, and I stood up. I was amazed at first to discover the grain about a foot above my head now, for it had been at least two feet below my head when I had gone to sleep. Surely it had not grown a yard during the night? I soon realized, however, that it was I who had grown a little smaller, as the machine continued to move with increasing slowness. I now removed the tiny instrument, which I had kept on after taking off the suit, lest it should come to harm.

I was puzzled to know how I might reach civilization, if there was civilization. But, remembering the sea, I set off in the direction I thought it lay, carrying the suit and the machine, both extraordinarily light. I walked for a large part of the night. I did not realize just how far the ocean might be, since I remembered it as no more than a few inches from my huge foot. I was fairly certain after walking many miles that I must have taken the wrong direction. But no. A little while before the dawn I heard the faint sound of its breakers, and I soon was able to see it from the top of a hill.

When I reached the beach, I once more perceived the light of the city, assuming that it was a city, across the water. Of course, I could not see the flashing structures themselves, but an intense golden radiance spread itself over the sky, as though it might really have been the moon rising.

I walked along the beach until dawn, and then I went on for a large part of the morning, trying to reach a point upon the shore that would be directly opposite the City. I should imagine it was a few hours before noon when the flying machines appeared. They came out of the east, from the direction of the City, flying very low. They flew together, several hundred of them I should imagine, until they reached a point on the shore probably ten miles below me. Then they seemed to disperse, some into the country, a few at intervals along the beach. It was not long before one of them came shooting up toward me at a speed enormous beyond my imagination. I began to wave my arms wildly, and apparently I was seen, for the plane immediately decreased its speed.

A few minutes later, after passing perhaps a mile beyond me, the plane turned and glided along the beach until it stopped a hundred yards or so away. It was a small machine of a most curious and delicate design, but it did not differ very radically from those I had seen on the earth.

A man leaped out and came toward me. He, too, was very like myself, but about a foot taller, and with an extremely high forehead. His features were delicate, his build very slight but quite graceful. He was unclothed, except for a belt of metal and several metal ornaments upon his arms and legs. He carried a small, straight instrument of metal in his hand, apparently a weapon, which was turned upon me. I raised my arms, and cried "Wait!" or something equally absurd, which, naturally, he could not understand. He did not trouble to reply, realizing, I suppose, that our languages were different. Instead, he motioned me to approach, and, backing away from me, he allowed me to come up to the plane. I was signalled to enter it. There was no cock-pit, no enclosure. It consisted only of a platform, some five feet wide and ten feet long, with a rail of thin metal about it. A small metal chair of severe design was affixed to the forward end, behind the controls.

I mounted the platform and sat down, at his command, in one corner. Still holding the tiny instrument toward my chest, he then secured one of my wrists and one ankle to a couple of metal cuffs, evidently for that purpose, upon the rail. He flung the suit, after a contemptuous examination, into the corner beside him. I grinned at him several times during these operations, in order to show that my intentions were of the best. But he only stared at me with an expressionless face and turned away to the controls. If any shadow of expression was in his eyes, I fancied it was disgust.

A moment later he rose swiftly from the beach and turned toward the City, leaving me to my own despondent reveries as we flew over the water with amazing swiftness. He must have given some signal to the other planes by wireless, for a short while later I saw them all falling in behind, far back. It was then that I suspected, for the first time, that they might all have been searching for me. I had forgotten how conspicuous my giant body would have looked to them, even from a distance, if anyone chanced to observe it.

At the risk of omitting details which the reader would find very interesting, I am going to say nothing of the City as yet. I saw too little of it to draw any accurate conclusions, and I have

very little more than a vague impression of tall buildings, flashing in the sunlight, mile after mile, extending far out over the horizon; buildings of immense height, standing each many hundreds of yards apart, with parks between. It was all roofed over and kept apparently at a uniform heat, while I suspect that in some way the clouds above were artificially dispelled to permit the huge sun to be seen. We entered through great gates in the glass dome, and joined a throng of other planes, mostly very small ones, and in a few minutes we had landed on the roof of a building near the limits of the City.

A number of the tall men then gathered about us. They were all clean shaven and they were practically without hair. They had an air of age and wisdom, although their faces, like that of the flyer, were smooth, delicate, and impassive. I was released, still under the scrutiny of the little weapon, and conveyed down, through elevators and moving passages, to a cell of white metal containing a low bed, some small chairs, a table, and other mere necessities. Food was put before me, and then I was left alone. I never left that cell thereafter until the moment of my final departure from the planet.

The days I spent in there were a long and monotonous succession of lonely hours and tedious examinations. On the day that I arrived, after I had eaten my meal, two of the men to whose care I was committed came with a guard to inspect me. They said nothing during the whole time they were there. I was motioned to explain myself. Half incredulously, I began to talk, and they nodded as though they understood—I cannot say how; I never learned in what fashion they interpreted my speech. I told of my journey and of its consequences. I told about my world. At intervals they nodded, I suppose to assure me that they were listening. After awhile I was given writing materials. I wrote an appeal to them to explain their world to me, so that I might take up the frayed ends of my life upon it. But always they only nodded at me, and at last they departed, taking with them the words I had written. A little while later, several guards were sent to my cell. They handled me as though I were an animal, washing me with a peculiar sort of water, cutting my hair, shaving my beard. When I was apparently clean enough for their sensibilities, I was left alone again.

This went on for days and days. Sometimes the same two men who had first interviewed me came again. Sometimes there were other visitors. Every day I was forced to submit to the

attendance of the guards, like any caged beast. I was never spoken to. All day long, when I was alone, I would wander restlessly about, thinking over and over again the old, terrible thoughts of what I had seen and lost and would not know. I should have gone mad, I think, had they not acceded finally to my request for writing materials—the only sign they ever gave me that I was understood. I might have given way to some murderous fit of rage against them, had those guards not always been there, with their tiny, threatening weapons.

But I was at least a little consoled with the writing materials. Thereafter I was able to spend hours and hours setting down the details of my adventure, recording all my thoughts and desires. I have given here only a small portion of all that I wrote. I think it must have been this relief in writing that kept me sane. I had never before realized so fully the vast wonder of the alphabet, of this thing we call writing. By pouring out all my heart into words, by expressing the things that hung so oppressively over my heart, I was able to make them a little lighter, and, perhaps, a little heroic, a little flattering and epic.

But this, thank God, did not go on forever. For one day Vinda came. She said afterward that it had been only curiosity which led her to my cell. Everybody in the City, everybody in that world, seems to have been wildly curious to see the strange creature from the distant star. But Vinda was the daughter of the King of the planet, whose family, so far as I could gather, retained its supremacy only so long as it retained its great intellectual power. Vinda's father, the King, was a physicist.

Vinda came in state, with a guard of six men and an escort of six scientists. I will not say that I loved her at first sight. I was, indeed, amazed by her great beauty and the mobility of her features, so fine a contrast with the impassivity of the men. She was not very tall either, just about my own height, and the most graceful woman I have ever known. She smiled at me with a somewhat aloof interest, and then—then she spoke! The first sounds of human speech I had heard on the planet. And she spoke English! Only a few broken words, it is true. But I found afterward that she had learned them, just for the amusement of it, from the reports of the scientists who examined me. She said:

"You—are—Kirby?" Her accent—how could I reproduce the sweetness of that clear accent, so exotic, so perfectly in keeping with the delicacy of her own appearance? For a long time I

could say nothing, just stare at her open-mouthed, amazed, delighted. Then I managed to stutter some foolish reply:

"Kirby? Yes...yes, I am Kirby. Yes..." And she smiled again, and I smiled, unaware of the scornful gleam in the eyes of the men. She smiled even more brightly when she saw my own grin. Indeed, I fancy she was about to laugh, laugh at me, but perhaps my very simplicity made her calm again. For — do you see? — I did not learn for a long time that only women laughed and played, and amused themselves with artistic pursuits on that planet. They did, indeed, scorn me, those men, when they saw me laughing, as we would scorn a man who talked with a piping voice and giggled and stepped mincingly about. But I like to think that there was something in me more appealing to Vinda than the impassive manhood of those scientists. Perhaps, after all, it is only that I was unique. But she did like me — I am certain of it now.

We said very little that time. She was reserved, formal, I was too confused to speak coherently. After a while she retired, and it seemed to me that my cell was ten thousand times as bare and cold and hard as it had been before.

The next time she came alone, except for a single guard. She had appealed to her father, the King, telling him how harmless I was and how different from the men of that planet, and that I should not be judged by their standards. She had persuaded him, so she came alone, with writing materials and a small machine which recorded sound and vision, and which took the place of books. She had decided to learn my language, knowing that hers was incomprehensible to me, since it depended on a sense which is dormant or inexistent in us, something related, perhaps, to the vague thing we call mental telepathy.

Oh, but I spent endless days of wonder and enchantment there with Vinda! Never once was I permitted to leave my cell, but I was content now, for it seemed that she brought all the beauty of the universe in with her, the sunshine, the gold and the green of the fields, the blue of the sea — everything. God knows how I ever failed to realize why those days were so beautiful, but I did not. Not until I was gone, and it was too late.

It was not long before we could converse together, for she had what seemed to me a marvellous mind, although, apparently, the minds of women were not very highly esteemed in that world. She told me, quite simply, that women had never evolved there beyond a certain state of civili-

zation, while men had gone on thousands of years ahead. Women, it seemed, were kept for the sort of intellectual labour which corresponds to the manual labour of the savage women. The men were creators and teachers. They discovered, invented, reproduced, perfected endless marvellous things. Women, on the other hand, understood them only in the detailed way of those who tend them, watch over them, care for them.

But I had to confess to her that my own intellect probably was not so advanced as hers. And it is this, it seems, that made our companionship so delightful. Women to those scientists were merely a biological fact. Except in rare cases, there was no companionship. With us it was different, for mentally we were nearly equal, and that seemed to revive in her an instinct long dead on that planet—the instinct that I now dare to say was love. Not biology, but love.

So we were daily together for a long time. Each moment of our conversation was wonderful to us both, for it revealed to each of us the exotic life of a planet unknown to us. I remember very little of what she told me about that planet—it seems that I can remember nothing but Vinda herself, her low voice with its accent, her eyes, her hair everything that a lover always remembers.

But I had not forgotten my longing for the earth. At first I was able to lose myself in the wonderful things she told me of her planet. But later, when I talked of my own world, I became homesick and hopeless. She seemed to grow more thoughtful as I spoke, but at the time I did not think it was more than an endeavour to form mental pictures of the things I related. One day, however, when we had talked for a long time of the earth, a silence followed which lasted for many minutes. At last she said:

"If you were able, you would return to your earth?" I raised my arms despairingly.

"God, yes!" I cried, "but the desire is all I have. No man can conquer time." She was very thoughtful for a moment.

"It has been done," she replied after a while.

"But Vinda, one cannot re-capture what is gone and past!"

"No," she agreed, "but one can do almost that. I do not know—but my uncle has a secret—"

"A secret! What, Vinda! Tell me what!"

"I must tell you first of a theory..." She pondered while I waited breathlessly, even forgetting her beauty as I watched her face for some sign of the thing she was about to tell me.

"You have spoken," she said, "of a man called Einstein on your earth, and of other men who

believe that time is a fourth dimension and that it is curved. Some of them, you say, believe that space is so curved that, if one goes sufficiently far, he will return to the point from which he started. Years ago we made discoveries on this planet about the curvature of time. And our evidence has taught us that time goes in circles, in cycles. They say that, if one were to live forever, he would find eventually the whole of history repeating itself."

"You mean—?"

"That a time comes when your world or this world, after having lived and died, will live again and again die."

"With the same history, the same civilizations?"

"Yes. For they teach us that there is a destiny in the life of all things, that the growth of the universe follows definite courses in which every fact, every incident, is inseparably woven into a texture which embraces the whole, and that every action of man or nature (and man is part of nature) is inevitable because it grows out of natural forces. The secret of all this we women have never learned: it is the study of the scientists. But the whole history of the universe is rigidly fore-ordained, and so, when time returns to its starting point, the course of history remains the same. That is the best I can do for an explanation."

"Vinda! You mean that some day there will be an earth like mine again?"

"Yes, Kirby." She always called me Kirby.

"And the same people! Martyn, and the rest?"

"That is what they say." I leaped up, and began to walk wildly about. To return! To see Martyn again, and the rest! And then a thought came to me. I grinned bitterly.

"But that will be millions of years away," I said, "and I shall be dead." She looked at me for a long while, and then she answered:

"No, Kirby. You passed millions of years in a few instants during your great journey. Do you not see that you can grow large again and that the millions of years will flash by as swiftly?"

"By Jove—yes!" I shouted.

"But you would be leaving us very soon?" she said.

"If that is true!" I cried. "Why, I would leave tomorrow!"

She turned away, and in a moment answered, "Not to-morrow, perhaps, but in a few weeks." And, suddenly, she went away.

I did not sleep that night with the wonder of this truly unbelievable thing. All night, all the next morning, I paced excitedly about my room, waiting for her return. When she did arrive, I begged her for more details.

"What can I tell you," she said, "who know so little myself? I have spoken with my uncle. He could not tell me much that I understood. There is some great secret underlying it, some great explanation, which is always just a few steps beyond my grasp. I seem to see for an instant what it is—then suddenly it is gone. He said, for instance, that over and above the cycles of time, is a great general progression which makes the civilizations of the universe always just a little further advanced in each successive cycle before they decline again. He described that as a sort of fifth dimension in time, comparable he said, to the path of the sun which carries the planets always just a little farther in space, although each year they return to their starting point in reference to the sun. It is immensely confusing."

"In other words, if I returned to the earth, I should find it a little further advanced than when I left it?"

"Somewhat like that. Except that, if you returned to your year 1937, you would find yourself in an era comparable to the year 1967, let us say, on the earth of the cycle you had left. In order to find your friend, Martyn, it would be necessary to go back to an earlier year which we cannot know, which you would, therefore, have to estimate yourself."

"But," I said, "there are things it is difficult to understand. Is it true, for instance, that there will be another incarnation of my body which will leave the earth at the same time I am returning?"

"It would seem so. And that incarnation would return in the cycle following your return."

"How complicated it all is!"

"That is only because we are not able to understand it as the scientists do. They speak, for instance, of the dimension of *size*. It seems that there is a direction, which we cannot quite grasp mentally any more than we can grasp time as a direction, which extends from the small to the great. That is to say, when you grow you are really moving in a new dimension which is linked, how I do not comprehend, with the dimension of time. The difference between this universe and the universe of which it is a part, an atom, is a difference in space through another dimension—similar to the difference in miles or light-years between our sun and another sun of our universe."

"But really, that is too obscure for me."

"For me, too," she acknowledged. "But our scientists understand." We were silent for a long while, she dreaming some private dream of her own, I pondering these vast conceptions that were beyond my grasp. I

broke the silence first:

"In all theories of time as a dimension, this point has always raised itself in my mind. If I were to return during some crisis in history and foretell the mistake that would be made, could that mistake be rectified, changing the whole course of history?"

"That," she answered, "would come under the head of the progress which civilization makes from cycle to cycle, I think. You must remember that all these things are inevitable. If it were your destiny to return at some earlier point in your world's history, it would be the result of natural laws, and any changes you might effect in history would also be inevitable." Again we were silent.

At last I roused myself from my reveries.

"All this," I said, "seems very dim and unreal to me yet. I suppose that is natural. But we must begin to act. Could your scientists help me in the problem of finding the point in history where my world will be again as I left it?" She looked at me very steadily for a moment.

"You are sure you wish to go?" she said. I smiled.

"I cannot imagine wishing not to," I said. . . .Oh, fool that I was! If I had only known how much I should some day wish to return to her. . . .

"Then," she answered, averting her eyes, "I think I can help you. You kept records of the time you spent in your journey?"

"As well as I could," I replied.

"Can you draw a diagram of the stars as they looked from your earth when you left?"

"I am sure of it," I assured her.

And, for the rest of that day I sat with her, drawing my maps of the sky from memory, setting down extracts from my tale of the journey. When she left, she had all the information which she thought would be required.

Again I shall pass over the next few weeks with a few words. During that time she came each day with news of the progress of her efforts. Once or twice she required new information of me. She had persuaded her uncle to make the calculations for me in his moments of relaxation (what an awful thought that conjured in my mind of the intellectual *labour* of these men!) Apparently the man, by figuring the length of time I had been away and the position of my sun in space, could identify it among the amazing records he possessed of all the stars in our universe, past present, or future—things inconceivable to me. Having identified my world, he could then figure just the size I should have to become and the time I should have to spend in my various

sizes, before I could return again to the world in its next cycle, unimaginable millions of eons in the future.

When the day came on which all these calculations were finished, Vinda brought me my suit, which had been preserved, and the machine. She brought also a chronometer which, she said, would record, upon its numerous dials, the passage of time in the universe I was leaving, regardless of the various sizes I might assume. It had been connected by those marvellous men in some fashion to the machine itself, so that the growth of the machine acted upon the chronometer in such fashion that it would record a corresponding swiftness in the passage of time. One dial recorded years. When the needle reached a certain swiftness of revolution on the dial, it ceased, and the next highest dial, in thousands of years, continued the record alone, having followed the dial of the years so long as it revolved. In turn this dial ceased to record, while the millions of years were registered, and so on—the whole process being reversed as my size decreased, each dial taking upon the record at the correct point.

The precise point when I must stop was recorded on the various dials, and the precise point when I must stop my growth and shrink again was indicated on the highest dial. It was impossible that I could fail, if I followed my directions explicitly.

When all was ready, an escort of two guards was given me, and Vinda came with me, very impassive, very silent. We went from my cell up through the building to the roof, and entered the plane which awaited us. This time I would not be chained to the rail, but I would stand beside it with Vinda.

We passed out through the City precisely as we had come in, reached the sea, and headed across it toward the isolated spot where I had first appeared. Vinda and I stood alone in the stern of the platform, looking out over the retreating water and the City.

"Do you not think," she said, "that you will be disappointed when you return? Will you not find it very ironic to take up a hum-drum life after all these exotic adventures?"

"No doubt I shall," I answered, for, now that I was on my way back, I could admit many things "but there will be the compensations of friendship and other things. And, anyhow, it is my destiny," She sighed.

"Yes. . . it is your destiny. Is there, perhaps, someone whom you love and who calls you back to her?" I laughed lightly.

"By no means!" I said. "I am immune. I have never fallen in

love." For one lies, many times, without knowing it.

"You are very unfortunate," she said, "or perhaps very fortunate; it is hard to say."

"Are you, then, in love?" I asked her. She looked out over the sea, her face turned away.

"Yes," she replied simply.

"Then I wish you the greatest success," I said formally. And—do you know?—I was suddenly a little piqued, without at all knowing why. It may be that men are more intellectual than women, but it is certain that they are sometimes more terrible fools.

So we went rushing on through the air, cool, fragrant, quiet. How can I ever have wished to leave that world? Perhaps, if I had spent all those weeks in the open air and with Vinda, perhaps—but there is no perhaps. I can only know facts. And it is a fact that I left her, and that I loved her—love her yet.

We came to the fields upon which I had landed. There I put on my suit with feverish haste, as though afraid lest it melt away under my hands. I adjusted the machine and the chronometer upon it with Vinda's aid, and then, isolated in a profound silence within my glass globe, I stood waiting for the hour at which I must begin my journey. It seemed to me that endless hours passed while I stood there in keen impatience, with the two curious guards watching me. At the last quarter-hour, Vinda suddenly turned and went behind the machine, where I could not see her. But I was too busily watching the face of my wrist-watch to see her in any case.

At last the moment came. I smiled a Homeric smile, and waved my hand at the two guards as I pressed the top button, while they gave me one last stolid glance and hurried to the machine. I began, with the usual dizziness, to grow, with closed eyes as the tingling electric flash shot through my veins. When, a moment later, these sensations had passed away, and I opened my eyes, I had already grown to thirty feet or so. As I looked down, I saw Vinda struggling between the two guards who evidently held her back from a dangerous proximity to my swiftly enlarging feet. I wondered what she wanted, and I felt a sudden regret that I had not been able to tell her good-bye. I was half inclined to stop my growth for a few minutes, but, instead, I knelt down far enough away from her for safety, and I smiled, waving my arm like some huge, clumsy, ridiculous giant. She stiffened and ceased her struggles. For a moment she stared at me with an expression nearer anger, I thought, than anything else. Then, suddenly, she turned and

walked swiftly to the machine, followed by her guards, while I climbed unsteadily back upon my feet again—already nearly eighty feet high. A moment later the plane rose from the ground and darted away toward the sea. For a long time I followed its flight, until I had pushed up through the clouds, and lost it.

It certainly is not necessary to detail my return, for, in every respect, it was like the first journey. For a long, impatient, monotonous time, I grew larger and larger. Fortunately, it was not necessary to go beyond the limits of the nuclei, as by now I was determined to call them. There, at a certain time, I pressed the middle button and stopped, then I pushed the bottom button, and the last stage of my return was under way.

I came back to the earth without accident. It was the twenty-third day of May, in the year 1847, that I arrived. As Vinda had foretold, that year was quite correspondent with the year 1943 of the cycle during which I had left. I came down, unfortunately enough, in the Sahara desert, but not far from a settlement. I need not describe the difficulties I encountered in securing my passage back to New York. I arrived, of course, without a cent, and without even a stitch of clothing besides the suit, which I discarded at the earliest opportunity in favor of a wretched tatter of rags which left me almost as naked as I would have been without it. Had it not been for the generosity of a certain Consul, who fed and clothed me and bought me my passage, I should no doubt be wandering around the Sahara yet, carrying on my back a machine with which one can overcome time and size and space!

On the day that I arrived in New York, I went at once to Martyn's laboratory. I was amazed to find it deserted. I was absolutely at a loss, for his name was not in the telephone directory. In desperation, I called at the office of a newspaper. You will all recall what happened to Martyn, of course, but to me it was a most horrible and disgusting mistake—imprisoned for manslaughter. They had accused him of murdering me. The poor man had realized, when I failed to return, the hideous mistake he made in forgetting that size would affect the relative length of time. He had explained this, explained the whole story, and it caused a terrible sensation. It seems that laws were enacted all over the country for the "restraint" of scientists, who were said to constitute "the greatest menace to our country since the civil war."

Needless to say, my re-appearance has created a far more ter-

rible sensation. This time, however, it is hoped that it will take the form of a re-action in favour of the scientists. My dramatic clearing of Martyn's name from any suggestion of blame has fired the imagination—such as it is—of the people.

Of course I must remember, difficult as it is sometimes, that the Kirby who left the world of this cycle is not the Kirby who has returned. I have to think of another person, my double in appearance, life, and name, who is now wandering about the universe, watching with amazement the strange formations of the stars, crashing about that huge beach far up there in the illimitable void, or seeing with a sudden rush of despair all the terribly distinct details of his fate. Yes, I can sympathize with that brother of mine.

The world has changed in many details since I knew it in the last cycle. For instance, the America I knew was a Republic still, whereas now, you know that it is the Monarchy which was declared by Theodore Roosevelt during the Great War of 1812, and which is now ruled by the Emporer Theodore II. In spite of this and many other things, however, the world is not materially different from the world I left. Those who are interested in the changes will do well to read the book which I am preparing, in collaboration with Martyn, who at last has come into his own, on the journey which I have recounted only generally here.

To-morrow morning I leave this earth, perhaps for the last time. You, who have read this attentively, must realize by now the love which, all unsuspectingly, I felt for Vinda. After a few months here, I soon realized the terrible mistake I had made —for I am sure that she loved me as well. During the last few years my longing for her has grown more unbearably great with every hour, and I cannot remain here any longer.

To-morrow, Martyn will accompany me for the last time to that laboratory in the country which was the beginning of all my fantastic adventures. He will say good-bye again, a final good-bye this time, and he will adjust about me the suit, the globe, and the machines. I will press the top button—the top button! And then—only a few hours until I see Vinda again.

Martyn has made the calculations. I shall appear to her no more than a few hours after the departure of that person who is following all my adventures. I will, of course, be in the next cycle of time, and there will be changes. But surely my Vinda will be there, and I shall be able to take her in my arms and tell

her of all the love I have for her. I cannot believe that it will be another woman. No—just as this Martyn is the same Martyn I left, so will that Vinda be my Vinda. Surely it is the soul that counts, and the soul is the same.

There is one thing that sometimes worried my leaping mind. There is this other Kirby—this double of mine, this other *me.* Perhaps he will have more perception than I have had (for does not each cycle bring a finer civilization, and is not the man the basis of civilization?). Perhaps he will have the intelligence to remain with Vinda, and I shall meet him there—meet myself! How impossibly it savours of Poe and *William Wilson!* For if we meet, and we both love Vinda, there will be only one way to settle it—we must fight, fight to the death perhaps, for this love is very great. And, if we are the same man, will the death of one mean the death of the other too? It does not matter. At least I shall be able to say at least once to Vinda that I love her. . . . (THE END)

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EDITORIAL *(continued from page 4)*

There is the usual fiction magazine, the love story and the sex-appeal type of magazine, the adventure type, and so on, but a magazine of "Scientifiction" is a pioneer in its field in America.

By "scientifiction" I mean the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story—a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision. For many years stories of this nature were published in the sister magazines of AMAZING STORIES —"SCIENCE & INVENTION" and "RADIO NEWS."

But with the ever increasing demands on us for this sort of story, and more of it, there was only one thing to do—publish a magazine in which the scientific fiction type of story will hold forth exclusively. Toward that end we have laid elaborate plans, sparing neither time nor money.

Edgar Allan Poe may well be called the father of "scientifiction." It was he who really originated the romance, cleverly weaving into and around the story, a scientific thread. Jules Verne, with his amazing romances, also cleverly interwoven with a scientific thread, came next. A little later came H.G. Wells, whose scientifiction stories, like those of his forerunners, have become famous and immortal.

It must be remembered that we live in an entirely new world. Two hundred years ago, stories of this kind were not possible.

Science, through its various branches of mechanics, electricity, astronomy, etc., enters so intimately into all our lives today, and we are so much immersed in this science, that we have become rather prone to take new inventions and discoveries for granted. Our entire mode of living has changed with the present progress, and it is little wonder, therefore, that many fantastic situations—impossible 100 years ago—are brought about today. It is in these situations that the new romancers find their great inspiration.

Not only do these amazing tales make tremendously interesting reading—they are also always instructive. They supply knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain—and they supply it in a very palatable form. For the best of these modern writers of scientifiction have the knack of imparting knowledge, and even inspiration, without once making us aware that we are being taught.

And not only that! Poe, Verne, Wells, Bellamy, and many others have proved themselves real prophets. Prophecies made in many of their most amazing stories are being realized—and have been realized. Take the fantastic submarine of Jules Verne's most famous story, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" for instance. He predicted the present day submarine almost down to the last bolt! New inventions pictured for us in the scientifiction of today are not at all impossible of realization tomorrow. Many great science stories destined to be of an historical interest are still to be written, and AMAZING STORIES magazine will be the medium through which such stories will come to you. Posterity will point to them as having blazed a new trail, not only in literature and fiction, but progress as well.

We who are publishing AMAZING STORIES realize the great responsibility of this undertaking, and will spare no energy in presenting to you, each month, the very best of this sort of literature there is to offer.

Exclusive arrangements have already been made with the copyright holders of the entire voluminous works of ALL of Jules Verne's immortal stories. Many of these stories are not known to the general American public yet. For the first time they will be within easy reach of every reader through AMAZING STORIES. A number of German, French and English stories of this kind by the best writers in their respective countries, have already been contracted for and we hope very shortly to be able to enlarge the magazine and in that way present always more material to our readers.

*(Continued on page 192)*

*(Continued from page 139)*
in the image of the Gods.

But she, Meg, knew! And knowing she was presented with the greatest choice that ever a Woman had been given.

Forward, into the valley, lay the path through which she could return to her Clan. There she would become Mother and would guide and guard her people through a lifetime. She would be all-wise, all-powerful, all-important. But she would be virgin unto death, sterile with the sanctity of tradition.

This she might do. But there was yet another way. And Meg threw her arms high, crying out that the Gods might hear and decide her problem.

The Gods spoke not. Their solemn features, weighted with the sorrows of slow time, moved not nor spoke to her. But as she searched their faces for an answer to her vast despair, there came to Meg a memory. It was a passage from the Prayer of Ibrim. And as her lips framed those remembered words it seemed the slanted rays of the dying sun centered on Ibrim's weary face, and those great, stone eyes were alive for a moment with understanding and approval.

*"—shall not perish from the earth, but have everlasting life—"*

Then Meg, the priestess, decided. With a cry that broke from her heart she turned and ran. Not toward the sterile valley. But back. . .back to the fecund world on feet that were suddenly stumbling and eager. Back from the shadow of Mount Rushmore to a gateway where waited the Man who had taught her the touching-of-mouths.

THE END

Dear Editor:

My thoughts when I first saw the new-type *Amazing* were ones of relief, because I was wondering if I would ever see it again. Now that I have the three new *Amazings* and two new *Fantastics* on my shelf, my thoughts are one of happiness. Never did I think a magazine could make such a recovery. Under Ziff-Davis *Amazing* was still great but something was missing. Having just finished the December ish, I now know that that missing feature has been added. *Amazing* is now complete.

And now for the congratulations. Congrats on reprinting some real masterpieces—"Chrysalis" is the best Ray Bradbury I've ever read; Jack Williamson's "Metal Man" shows no age, nor does Dr. Asimov's "The Weapon Too Dreadful to Use."

The August issue was great. Asimov, Porges and Silverberg saw to that. The October issue was however far better, and now I know that the December issue has beaten both of them. This can't go on forever, but try to keep it up for as long as you can. Please, please get Bob Silverberg to review books again, in both *Amazing* and *Fantastic*. He definitely has the knack for doing that sort of thing. Talking of Silverberg, are there any more in his series on Scientific Hoaxes? Extremely interesting series that.

Since you are reprinting stories from old *Amazings*, may I recommend a few I am dying to read, and perhaps others are too. Such stories as John Campbell's "Piracy Preferred" and "Solarite." Also Alexander Phillips' "The Death of the Moon" and Cyril G. Wates' "Face of Isis" (which perhaps aren't well enough known), and above all Bob Olsen's "The Four Dimensional Escape." By what I've read about these stories, they must be really something, so perhaps they ought to be brought from the *Amazing* archives.

Mike Ashley
8 Shurland Avenue
Sittingbourne, Kent., England

● *All out of Silverberg articles, for the time being, but you can find all the "Scientific Hoaxes" we ran—as well as a dozen more—in Bob's recent* Scientists and Scoundrels *(Crowell, 1965).—Editor.*

Dear Editor:

So far I like everything you have done to *Amazing* and *Fantastic*, but when I first heard about the changes I was a little disappointed. Two thoughts kept repeating themselves: "Good! Maybe they'll make both mags better" and "Oh hell! Why did they have to make them go bi-monthly?" Well, I've seen and read the first few issues of both mags, and I have come to the conclusion that every change has made better magazines of both of them!

You have brought back two of the most important parts of an s-f magazine: namely, the editorial and the lettercol. Both of them being conspicuously absent from the last issue of the Ziff-Davis *Amazing*, which made it feel as if it were the last living cell in a dying body. From now on I am going to believe in reincarnation, for magazines anyway.

—I can't think of any suggestions to make, except more Laumer, Young, and Smith. And keep reprinting those old classics. They are some of the best stories I have seen in a long time!

Jim A. Juracic
P.O. Box 11
Fruitvale, B.C., Canada

● *Laumer everyone likes, so we'll try to get more from him. As for the "old classics," how does this 40th Anniversary number suit you? 192 pages of them—and more coming up!—Editor.*

Dear Editor:

Your editorial in the October *Amazing* concerning Murray Leinster being the "Dean of Science Fiction" is sure to bring in more than one dissenting letter. The logical choice as far as I'm concerned is Robert Heinlein, whose "Glory Road," "Stranger in a Strange Land," and "All You Zombies" are inferior to none of Leinster's tales, and comparable only to Leinster's "Med Ship" stories and his outstanding "Gateway to Elsewhere." The main criticism I have about his latest, "Killer Ship," is that Trent is a super hero who can do no wrong. I've noticed this a bit in Leinster's other works, but in this one, it really stands out. If Trent had been a swordsman, and a little more stupid, he'd have made a perfect John Carter.

I am basically against your policy of reprinting stories, especially from the early pulps. The stories from the forties and fifties are fine, but when you reach back to 1927 to dredge up an outdated, corny, and overwritten Hamilton yarn, you are losing sight of your purpose, to entertain.

Van Albertson
c/o CWO Joe E. Albertson
94th Artillery Group
APO, New York, N.Y. 09227

● *The title of "dean" is usually granted for reasons of seniority as well as talent. Leinster's been writing s-f since 1919. Heinlein hasn't. ("Life-line," his first story, appeared in 1939.)—As for the Hamilton story, it was carefully selected as an example of the type of thing popular in the twenties, and a large majority of present-day readers—so their letters say—were glad to see it revived.*
*—Editor.*

Dear Editor:

Well, it seems as if the old *Amazing* is back in full glory. I just couldn't believe it as I had predicted the demise of Science Fiction's oldest magazine by the end of the year. However, you've suddenly come back into the field with a truly different type of magazine.

"On the Sand Planet" was excellent, and Laumer's serial in *Fantastic* really seems to be an asset to putting *Fantastic* closer to a "Hugo."

—Another thing that I think will concern you is the number of fans that still want a sense of wonder in what they read. For instance, in this basic training flight alone there are nineteen science-fiction fans who compared your magazine with (one of your competitors). Guess which one they preferred? Yes, it was *Amazing* over (the other) 100%. Why? Because of the diversified stories that appeared in the December issue. You haven't made the mistake of using "type" stories. . . In fact, we couldn't agree on the best part of the issue. We took this to mean there was something in it for everyone.

Airman M.G. Zaharakis AF12753140
Box 1511/Flight B-21
Lackland, AFB Texas

● *That "sense of wonder" phrase has become rather tricky of late—all of us seem to use it in a slightly different way—but generally it's pinned to stories written in the early days, in the period we've been mining for your pleasure these past few issues. It doesn't have to be, though, for we also find it in Cordwainer Smith, in the Sturgeon of "Saucer of Loneliness," and in Clarke—when anyone can pry a "Sunjammer" out of him.—Editor.*

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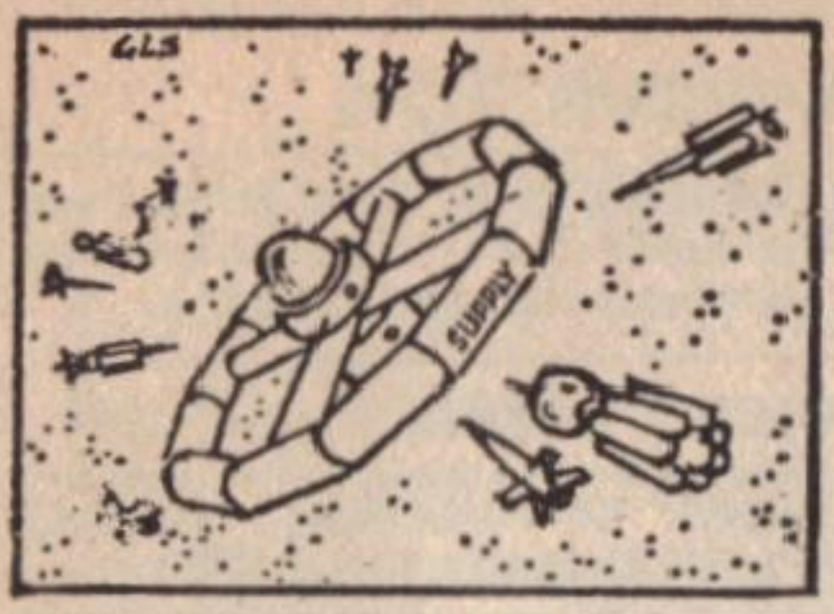
EDITORIAL *(Continued from page 189)*

**How good this magazine will be in the future is up to you. Read AMAZING STORIES—get your friends to read it and then write us what you think of it. We will welcome constructive criticism—for only in this way will we know how to satisfy you.—Hugo Gernsback**

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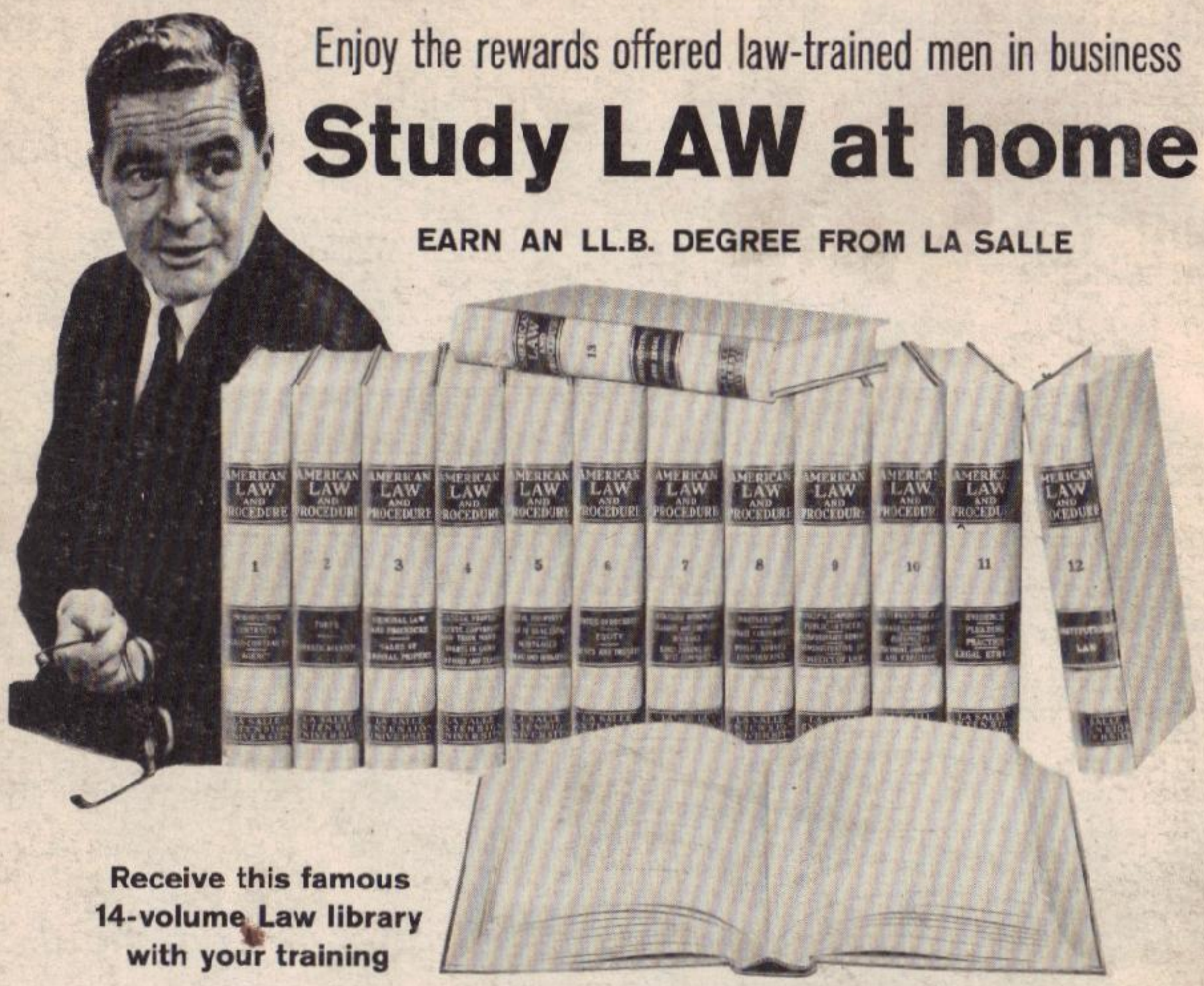


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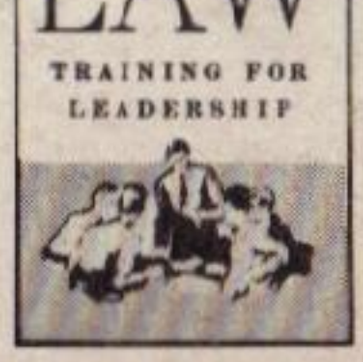


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