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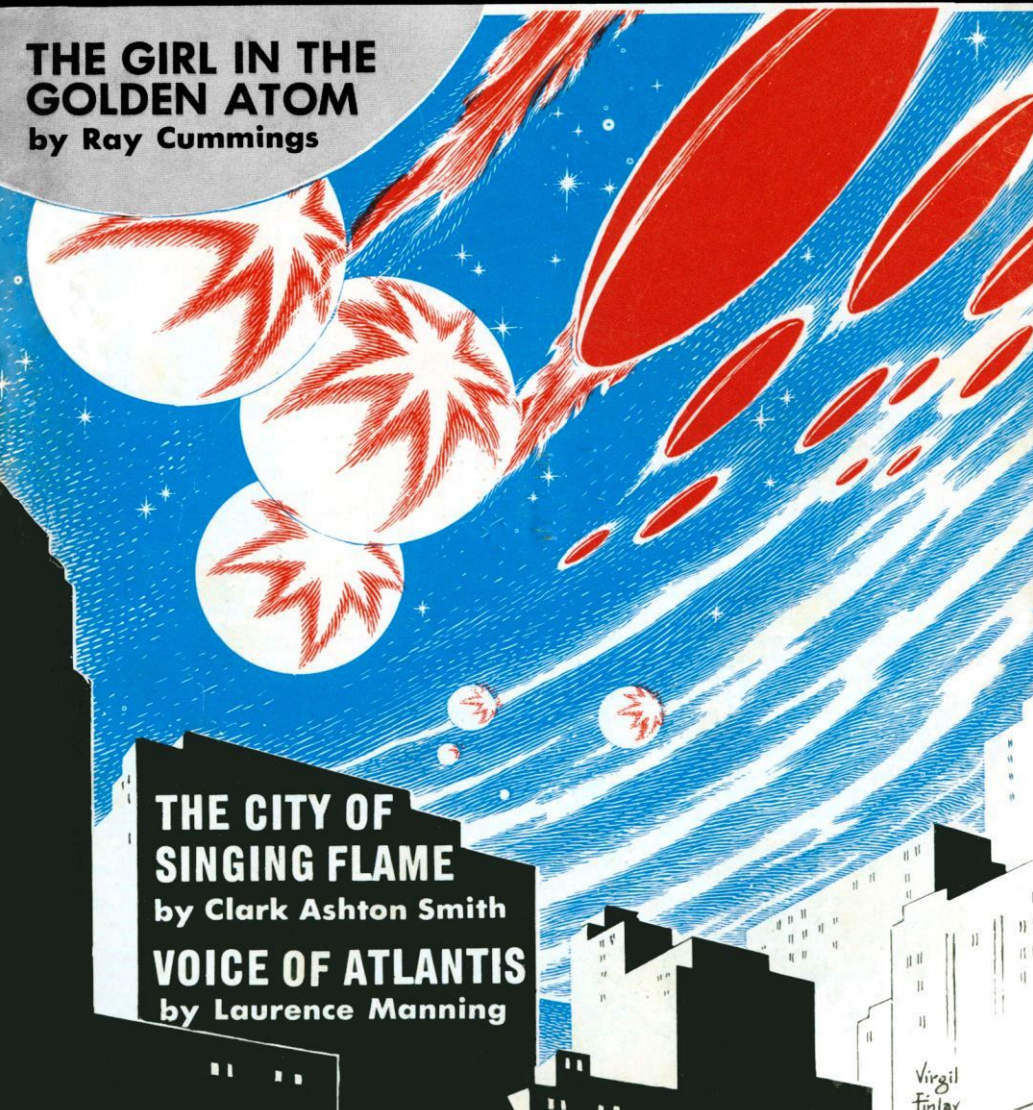

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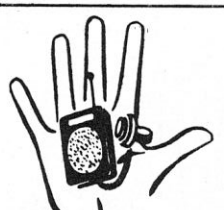

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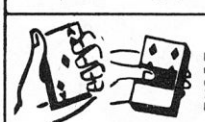

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FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION

TALES OF WONDER

Volume 1 CONTENTS FOR WINTER *Number 1*

NOVELLA

NOVELET

SHORT STORIES

DEPARTMENTS

Cover by Virgil Finlay Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION, Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter 1966/67 (whole number 1) Published quarterly by Health Knowledge, Inc. Executive and editorial offices at 119 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., N. Y. 10003. Single copy 50c. Manuscripts accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes will be carefully considered, but the publisher and editors will not be responsible for loss or damage

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editorial

Why "Famous"?

THE DICTIONARY closest to me as I write, Webster's Seventh New Collegiate, gives as the primary definitions of the word "famous" (a) widely known (b) honored for achievement. Now it stands to reason that everything you see in *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* will not necessarily fit into either of these classifications, if for no other reason than that some of the material will be new stories. Obviously a story being offered to the public for the first time cannot be said to be "widely known"; and while an argument could be made to the effect that the story's acceptance rather than rejection, by the editor confers an element of "honor for achievement", I do not think that justifies the use of "famous".

The "famous" is being used in our title because each issue will contain a very sizeable fraction of stories which can be said to be either "widely known" or "honored for achievement" or both. However, being a discerning person (and we think of almost anyone who selects a science fiction magazine in preference to the more mundane type of entertainment fiction as "discerning"), you will want to know in what sense we are now using the two terms.

Science fiction started to become respectable in 1945, when the newspapers ran the account of an atomic bomb being dropped in Hiroshima. I would have preferred that a less horrifying example of human failure (whatever the technological success) were the occasion, but when you write historically you have to take the facts as they are. A dozen years later, when the first Sputnik went into orbit, science fiction became so re-

spectable that, in the eyes of many who knew little about it, it became virtually obsolete. You still hear arguments to the effect that, with Sputnik, science outstripped science fiction and science fiction has never caught up. That is nonsense, of course; but, unfortunately, the fact that a statement is nonsense does not in any way prevent people from believing it to be true.

No matter. Science fiction became "respectable", and it caught on in a way that it never had done before—a market opened up for hard cover books (and I particularly refer to anthologies) that has remained open and continues to be open. For the most part, however, the anthologists tried to be respectable in their selection of material—they concentrated on what they called modern science fiction and set the demarcation line between "modern" and "ancient" or "middle" somewhere around the beginning of the Campbell era. (John W. Campbell became editor of *ASTOUNDING STORIES* late in 1937; he told me in 1940 that he considered that the magazine became "his *ASTOUNDING*" with the March 1938 issue, the first to bear the new title, *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION.)*

Dr. Isaac Asimov, quoting Alva Rogers, author of *A Requiem for Astounding* (the title of the magazine changed to *ANALOG* in 1960) noted that the "golden age" of science fiction started with the July 1939 issue. He, Asimov, was entirely content with this date: that issue contained, in addition to A. E. van Vogt's first-published science fiction tale, *Black Destroyer,* and a very fine story by C. L. Moore, *Greater Than Gods,* a short story entitled *Trends*—the initial appearance in this magazine of one Isaac Asimov. Most of the science fiction fans are inclined to accept this demarcation line, and certainly most of the anthologists have adhered to it.

THE RESULT has been that not much more than a handful (relatively) of stories that appeared in the various magazines prior to the golden age have been considered worthy of notice, mention, or reprinting. Now if your main interest is in respectability there are a number of very sound reasons for this; for if, as I think the case actually is, the stories appearing in this "golden" period have been over-rated in many instances, it is also true that in many ways they were both more respectable and more "scientific" than the earlier examples. If only a relative handful of the modern tales which have

been so touted are really worth perpetuating between hard covers, it can justly be argued that the older stories were less so.

But does this mean that the older stories cannot be read with pleasure, just for the fun of reading a highly imaginative tale that achieves entertainment whatever else it may fail to achieve? We think it doesn't.

The recent revival of the innumerable novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs—and a very successful revival it has been, despite the fact that it sought completism to an excessive point—proves that some stories can be a great deal of fun to read, despite the fact that they may not be very well written, that they may not "say" anything of lasting literary value, and that plots, characters, and "science" (as in the Mars, Venus, and Pellucidar series) may be more amusing than amazing—very amazing, too!

Science fiction has been presented in comic magazines for a long time, with varying degrees of success. At one time there was a wide spectrum of science fiction available on the newsstands, ranging from the comics, through the somewhat juvenile adventure science fiction magazines, to the most respectable version of newsstand science fiction—and, for all its faults, the top publication has usually been Campbell's book, whatever its title at the moment, although at times such titles as *GALAXY* and *FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION* have given *ASTOUNDING/ANALOG,* etc. very worthy competition, under the aegis first of Horace L. Gold, and presently Frederik Pohl. Whether you consider Campbell or Pohl the editor of the top magazine in science fiction at this moment is less important than the fact that both men are aiming at the top in the way of what each considers to be most respectable, sciencewise and literary. But now, what Sam Moskowitz calls the "bridge" magazines, have largely disappeared; the gap between the others and *AMAZING STORIES* (even though this publication is reprinting some of the pre-1938 material) is not very great—while the gap between the comics and *AMAZING STORIES* is wide indeed.

FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION seeks to fit into this gap. In each issue we want to bring you several stories which were widely known and honored for achievement in their own time, by readers who may or may not have considered them fine examples of speculation rooted

(turn to page 116)

THE GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM

by RAY CUMMINGS

"A Jules Verne returned, and an H. G. Wells going forward," Bob Davis said of Ray Cummings nearly half a century ago. Recent years have seen both hardcover and softcover reprints of many of his popular novels, such as *The Exile of Time* (Ace), *Explorers Into Infinity* (Avalon), and *Tama of the Light Country* (Ace). A sequel to the Tama novel has just appeared from Ace, and Avalon will do *The Insect Invasion* next year.

I

A UNIVERSE IN AN ATOM

THEN YOU mean to say there is no such thing as the *smallest* particle of matter?" asked the Doctor.

"You can put it that way if you like," the Chemist replied. "In other words, what I believe is that things can be infinitely small just as well as they can be infinitely large. Astronomers tell us of the immensity of space. I have tried to

imagine space as finite. It is impossible. How can you conceive the edge of space? Something must be beyond—something or nothing, and even that would be more space, wouldn't it?"

"Gosh," said the Very Young man, and lighted another cigarette.

The Chemist resumed, smiling a little. "Now, if it seems probable that there is no limit to the immensity of space, why should we make its smallness finite? How can you say that the atom cannot be divided? As a matter of fact, it already has been. The most powerful microscope will show you realms of smallness to which you can penetrate no other way. Multiply that power a thousand times, or ten thousand times, and who shall say what you will see?"

The Chemist paused, and looked at the intent little group around him.

He was a youngish man, with large features and horn-rimmed glasses, his rough English-cut clothes hanging loosely over his broad, spare frame. The Banker drained his glass and rang for the waiter.

"Very interesting, "he remarked.

"Don't be an ass, George," said the Big Business Man. "Just because you don't understand, doesn't mean there is no sense to it."

"What I don't get clearly..." began the Doctor.

"None of it's clear to me," said the Very Young Man.

The Doctor crossed under the light and took an easier chair. "You intimated you had discovered something unusual in these realms of the infinitely small," he suggested, sinking back luxuriously "Will you tell us about it?"

"Yes, if you like," said the Chemist, turning from one to the other. A nod of assent followed his glance, as each settled himself more comfortably.

"Well, gentlemen, when you say I have discovered something unusual in another world—in the world of the infinitely small—you are right in a way. I have seen something and lost it. You won't believe me, probably." He glanced at the Banker an instant. "But that is not important. I am going to tell you the facts, just as they happened."

The Big Business Man filled up the glasses all around, and the Chemist resumed:

"It was in nineteen ten that this problem first came to interest me. I had never gone in for microscopic work very much, but now I let it absorb all my attention. I secured larger, more powerful instruments—I spent most of my money"—he smiled

ruefully—"but never could I come to the end of the space into which I was looking. Something was always hidden beyond—something I could almost, but not quite, distinguish.

"Then I realized that I was on the wrong track. My instrument was not one thousandth the power I needed.

"So I began to study the laws of optics and lenses. In nineteen thirteen I went abroad, and with one of the most famous lens-makers of Europe I produced a lens of an entirely different quality, a lens that I hoped would give me what I wanted. So I returned here and fitted up my microscope that I knew would prove vastly more powerful than any yet constructed.

"It was finally completed and set up in my laboratory, and one night I went in alone to look through it for the first time. It was in the fall of nineteen fourteen, I remember.

"I can recall now my feelings at that moment. I was about to see into another world, to behold what no man had ever looked on before. What would I see? What new realms was I, first of all our human race, to enter? With furiously beating heart, I sat down before the huge instrument and carefully adjusted the eyepiece.

"Then I glanced around for some object to examine. On my finger I had a ring, my mother's wedding ring, and I decided to use that. I have it here." He took a plain gold band from his little finger and laid it on the table.

"You will see a slight mark on the outside. That is the place into which I looked."

His friends crowded around the table and examined a scratch on one side of the band.

"What did you see?" asked the Very Young Man eagerly.

"GENTLEMEN," resumed the Chemist, "what I saw staggered even my own imagination. With trembling hands I put the ring in place, looking directly down into that scratch. For a moment I saw nothing. I was like a person coming suddenly out of the sunlight into a darkened room. I knew there was something visible in my view, but my eyes did not seem able to receive the impressions. I realize now they were not yet adjusted to the new form of light. Gradually, as I looked, objects of definite shape began to emerge from the blackness.

"Gentlemen, I want to make clear to you now—as clear as I can—the peculiar aspect of everything that I saw under this microscope. I seemed to be inside an immense cave. One side, near at hand, I could now make

out quite clearly. The walls were extraordinarily rough and indented, with a peculiar phosphorescent light, for that is the nearest word I can find to describe it—a curious radiation, quite different from the reflected light to which we are accustomed.

"I said that the hollows inside of the cave were blackness. But not blackness—the absence of light—as we know it. It was a blackness that seemed also to radiate light, if you can imagine such a condition; a blackness that seemed not empty, but merely withholding its contents just beyond my vision.

"Except for a dim suggestion of roof over the cave, and its floor, I could distinguish nothing. After a moment this floor became clearer. It seemed to be—well, perhaps I might call it black marble—smooth, glossy, yet somewhat translucent. In the foreground the floor was apparently liquid. In no way did it differ in appearance from the solid part, except that its surface seemed to be in motion.

"Another curious thing was the outlines of all the shapes in view. I noticed that no outline held steady when I looked at it directly; it seemed to quiver. You see something like it when looking at an object through water—only, of course, there was no distortion. It was also like looking at something with the radiation of heat between.

"Of the back and other side of the cave, I could see nothing, except in one place, where a narrow effulgence of light drifted out into the immensity of the distance behind.

"I do not know how long I sat looking at this scene; it may have been several hours. Although I was obviously in a cave, I never felt shut in—never got the impression of being in a narrow, confined space.

"On the contrary, after a time I seemed to feel the vast immensity of the blackness before me. I think perhaps it may have been that path of light stretching out into the distance. As I looked, it seemed like the reversed tail of a comet, or the dim glow of the Milky Way, and penetrating to equally remote realms of space.

"PERHAPS I fell asleep, or at least there was an interval of time during which I was so absorbed in my own thoughts I was hardly conscious of the scene before me.

"Then I became aware of a dim shape in the foreground—a shape merged with the outlines surrounding it. And as I looked, it gradually assumed form, and I saw it was the figure of a young girl, sitting beside

the liquid pool. Except for the same waviness of outline and phosphorescent glow, she had quite the normal aspect of a human being of our own world. She was beautiful, according to our own standards of beauty; her long braided hair a glowing black, her face, delicate of feature and winsome in expression. Her lips were a deep red although I felt rather than saw the color.

"She was dressed only in a short tunic of a substance I might describe as gray opaque glass, and the pearly whiteness of her skin gleamed with iridescence.

"She seemed to be singing, although I heard no sound. Once she bent over the pool and plunged her hand into it, laughing gaily.

"Gentlemen, I cannot make you appreciate my emotions, when all at once I remembered I was looking through a microscope. I had forgotten entirely my situation, absorbed in the scene before me. And then, all at once, a great realization came upon me—the realization that everything I saw was inside that ring. I was unnerved for the moment at the importance of my discovery.

"When I looked again, after the few moments my eye took to become accustomed to the new form of light, the scene showed itself as before, except that the girl had gone.

"For over a week, each night at the same time I watched that cave. The girl came always, and sat by the pool as I had first seen her. Once she danced with the wild grace of a wood nymph, whirling in and out the shadows, and falling at last in a little heap beside the pool.

"It was on the tenth night after I had first seen her that the accident happened. I had been watching, I remember, an unusually long time before she appeared, gliding out of the shadows. She seemed in a different mood, pensive and sad, as she bent down over the pool, staring into it intently. Suddenly there was a tremendous cracking sound, sharp as an explosion, and I was thrown backward upon the floor.

"WHEN I recovered consciousness—I must have struck my head on something—I found the microscope in ruins. Upon examination I saw that its larger lens had exploded—flown into fragments scattered around the room. Why I was not killed I do not understand. The ring I picked up from the floor; it was unharmed and unchanged in any way.

'Can I make you understand how I felt at this loss? Because of the war in Europe I knew I

could never replace my lens—for many years, at any rate. And then, gentlemen, came the most terrible feeling of all; I knew at last that the scientific achievement I had made and lost counted for little with me. It was the girl. I realized than that the only being I ever could care for was living out her life with her world, and, indeed, her whole universe, inside an atom of that ring."

The Chemist stopped talking and looked from one to the other of the tense faces of his companions.

"It's almost too big an idea to grasp," murmured the Doctor."What caused the explosion?" asked the Very Young Man.

"I do not know." The Chemist addressed his reply to the Doctor, as the most understanding of the group. "I can appreciate, though, that through that lens I was magnifying tremendously those peculiar light-radiations that I have described. I believe the molecules of the lens were shattered by them—I had exposed it longer to them that evening than any of the others."

The Doctor nodded his comprehension of this theory.

Impressed in spite of himself, the Banker took another drink and leaned forward in his chair. "Then you really think that there is a girl now inside the gold of that ring?" he asked.

"He didn't say that necessarily," interrupted the Big Business Man.

"Yes, he did."

"As a matter of fact, I do believe that to be the case," said the Chemist earnestly. "I believe that every particle of matter in our universe contains within it an equally complex and complete a universe, which to its inhabitants seems, as large as ours. I think, also, that the whole realm of our interplanetary space, our solar system and all the remote stars of the heavens are contained within the atom of some other universe as gigantic to us as we are to the universe in that ring."

"Gosh!" said the Very Young Man.

"It doesn't make one feel very important in the scheme of things, does it?" remarked the Big Business Man dryly.

The Chemist smiled. "The existence of no individual, no nation, no world, nor any one universe is of the least importance."

"Then it would be possible," said the Doctor, "for this gigantic universe that contains us in one of its atoms, to be itself contained within the atom of another universe, still more gigantic than it is, and so on."

"That is my own theory," said the Chemist.

"And in each of the atoms of the rocks of that cave there may be other worlds proportionately minute?"

"I can see no reason to doubt it."

"Well, there is no proof," said the Banker. "We might as well believe it."

"I intend to get the proof," said the Chemist.

"Do you believe all these innumerable universes, both larger and smaller than ours, are inhabited?" the Doctor asked him.

"I should think probably most of them are. The existence of life, I believe, is as fundamental as the existence of matter without life."

"How do you suppose that girl got in there?" asked the Very Young Man, coming out of a brown study.

"What puzzled me," resumed the Chemist, ignoring the question, "is why the girl should so resemble our own race. I have thought about it a good deal, and I have reached the conclusion that the inhabitants of any universe in the next smaller or larger plane to ours probably resemble us fairly closely. That ring, you see, is in the same—shall we say—environment as ourselves. The same forces control it that control us. Now, if the ring had been created on Mars, for instance, I believe that the universes within its atoms would be inhabited by beings like the Martians—if Mars has any inhabitants. Of course, in planes beyond those next to ours, either smaller or larger, changes would probably occur, becoming greater as you go in or out from our own universe."

"Good Lord! It makes one dizzy to think of it," said the Big Business Man excitedly.

"I wish I knew how that girl got in there," sighed the Very Young Man, looking at the ring.

"She probably didn't," retorted the Doctor. "Very likely she was created there, the same as you were here."

"I think that is probably so," said the Chemist. "And yet, sometimes I am not at all sure. She was very human." The Very Young Man looked at him sympathetically.

"How are you going to prove your theories?" asked the Banker, in his most irritatingly practical way.

The Chemist picked up the ring and put it on his finger. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have tried to tell you facts, not theories. What I saw through that ultramicroscope was not an unproven theory, but a fact. My theories you have brought out by your questions."

"You are quite right," said

the Doctor, "but you did mention yourself that you hoped to provide proof."

The Chemist hesitated a moment, then made his decision. "I will tell you the rest," he said.

"After the destruction of the microscope, I was quite at a loss how to proceed. I thought about the problem for many weeks. Finally I decided to work along another altogether different line—a theory about which I am surprised you have not already questioned me."

He paused, but no one spoke.

"I am hardly ready with proof tonight," he resumed after a moment. "Will you all take dinner with me here at the club one week from tonight?" He read affirmation in the glance of each.

"Good. That's settled," he said rising. "At seven, then."

"But what was the theory you expected us to question you about?" asked the Very Young Man.

The Chemist leaned on the back of his chair.

"The only solution I could see to the problem," he said slowly, "was to find some way of making myself sufficiently small to be able to enter that other universe. I have found such a way, and one week from tonight, gentlemen, with your assistance, I am going to enter the surface of that ring at the point where it is scratched!"

II

INTO THE RING

THE CIGARS were lighted and dinner over before the Doctor broached the subject uppermost in the minds of every member of the party.

"A toast, gentlemen," he said, raising his glass. "To the greatest research Chemist in the world. May he be successful in his adventure tonight."

The Chemist bowed his acknowledgement. "You have not heard me yet," he said smiling.

"But we want to," said the Very Young Man impulsively.

"And you shall." He settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "Gentlemen, I am going to tell you, first, as simply as possible, just what I have done in the past two years. You must draw your own conclusions from the evidence I give you.

"You will remember that I told you last week of my dilemma after the destruction of the microscope. Its loss and the impossibility of replacing it, led me into still bolder plans than merely the visual examination of this minute world. I reasoned, as I have told you, that because of its physical proximity, its similar environment, so to speak,

this other world should be capable of supporting life identical with our own.

"By no process of reasoning can I find adequate refutation of this theory. Then, again, I had the evidence of my own eyes to prove that a being I could not tell from one of my own kind was living there. That this girl, other than in size, differs radically from those of our race, I cannot believe.

"I saw then but one obstacle standing between me and this other world—the discrepancy of size. The distance separating our world from this other, is infinitely great or infinitely small, according to the viewpoint. In my present size it is only a few feet from here to the ring on that plate. But to an inhabitant of that other world, we are as remote as the faintest stars of the heavens, diminished a thousand times."

He paused a moment, signing the waiter to leave the room.

"This reduction of bodily size, great as it is, involves no deeper principle than does a light contraction of tissue, except that it must be carried farther. The problem, then, was to find a chemical, sufficiently unharmful to life, that would so act upon the body cells as to cause a reduction in bulk without changing their shape. I had to secure a uniform and also a proportionate rate of contraction of each cell, in order not to have the body shape altered.

"After a comparatively small amount of research work, I encountered an apparently insurmountable obstacle. As you know, gentlemen, our living human bodies are held together by the power of the central intelligence we call the mind. Every instant during your lifetime your subconscious mind is commanding and directing the individual life of each cell that makes up your body. At death this power is withdrawn; each cell is thrown under its own individual command, and dissolution of the body takes place.

"I found, therefore, that I could not act upon the cells separately, so long as they were under control of the mind. On the other hand, I could not withdraw this power of the subconscious mind without causing death.

"I progressed no farther than this for several months. Then came the solution. I reasoned that after death the body does not immediately disintegrate; far more time elapses than I expected to need for the cell-contraction. I devoted my time, then, to finding a chemical that would temporarily withhold, during the period of cell-contraction, the power of the subcon-

scious mind, just as the power of the conscious mind is withheld by hypnotism.

"I AM NOT going to weary you by trying to lead you through the maze of chemical experiments into which I plunged. Only one of you"—he indicated the Doctor—"has the technical bases of knowledge to follow me. No one had been before me along the path I traversed. I pursued the method of pure theoretical deduction, drawing my conclusions from the practical results obtained.

"I worked on rabbits almost exclusively. After a few weeks I succeeded in completely suspending animation in one of them for several hours. There was no life apparently existing during that period. It was not a trance or coma, but the complete simulation of death. No harmful results followed the revivifying of the animal. The contraction of the cells was far more difficult to accomplish; I finished my last experiment less than six months ago."

"Then you really have been able to make an animal infinitely small?" asked the Big Business Man.

The Chemist smiled. "I sent four rabbits into the unknown last week," he said.

"What did they look like going?" asked the Very Young Man. The Chemist signed him to be patient.

"The quantity of diminution to be obtained bothered me considerably. Exactly how small that other universe is, I had no means of knowing, except by the computations I made of the magnifying power of my lens. These figures, I know, must necessarily be very inaccurate. Then, again, I have no means of judging by the visual rate of diminution of these rabbits, whether this contraction is at a uniform rate or accelerated. Nor can I tell how long it is prolonged, or the quantity of drug administered, as only a fraction of the diminution has taken place when the animal passes beyond the range of any microscope I now possess.

"These questions were overshadowed, however, by a far more serious problem that encompassed them all.

"As I was planning to project myself into this unknown universe and to reach the exact size proportionate to it, I soon realized such a result could not be obtained were I in an unconscious state. Only by successive doses of the drug, or its retardant about which I will tell you later, could I hope to reach the proper size. Another necessity is that I place myself on the exact spot on that ring where I wish to enter and to climb down among

its atoms when I have become sufficiently small to do so. Obviously, this would be impossible to one not possessing all his faculties and physical strength."

"And did you solve that problem, too?" asked the Banker. "I'd like to see it done," he added, reading his answer in the other's confident smile.

The Chemist produced two small paper packages from his wallet. "These drugs are the result of my research," he said. "One of them causes contraction, and the other expansion, by an exact reversal of the process. Taken together, they produce no effect, and a lesser amount of one retards the action of the other." He opened the papers, showing two small vials. "I have made them as you see, in the form of tiny pills, each containing a minute quantity of the drug. It is by taking them successively in unequal amounts that I expect to reach the desired size."

"There's one point that you don't mention," said the Doctor. "Those vials and their contents will have to change size as you do. How are you going to manage that?"

"By experimentation I have found," answered the Chemist, "that any object held in close physical contact with the living body being contracted is contracted itself at an equal rate. I believe that my clothes will be affected also. These vials I will carry strapped under my armpits."

"Suppose you should die, or be killed, would the contraction cease?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes, almost immediately," replied the Chemist. "Apparently, though I am acting through the subconscious mind while its power is held in abeyance, when this power is permanently withdrawn by death, the drug no longer effects the individual cells. The contraction or expansion ceases almost at once."

The Chemist cleared a space before him on the table. "In a well-managed club like this," he said, "there should be no flies, but I see several around. Do you suppose we can catch one of them?"

"I can," said the Very Young Man, and forthwith he did.

The Chemist moistened a lump of sugar and laid it on the table before him. Then, selecting one of the smallest of the pills, he ground it to powder with the back of a spoon and sprinkled this powder on the sugar.

"Will you give me the fly, please?"

The Very Young Man gingerly did so. The Chemist held the insect by its wings over the

sugar. "Will some one lend me one of his shoes?"

The Very Young Man hastily slipped off one of his shoes.

"Thank you," said the Chemist, placing it on the table with a quizzical smile.

The rest of the company rose from their chairs and gathered around, watching with interested faces what was about to happen.

"I hope he is hungry," remarked the Chemist, and placed the fly gently down on the sugar, still holding it by the wings. The insect after a moment, ate a little.

Silence fell upon the group as each watched intently. For a few moments nothing happened. Then, almost imperceptibly at first, the fly became larger. In another minute it was the size of a large horse-fly, struggling to release its wings from the Chemist's grasp. A minute more and it was the size of a beetle. No one spoke. The Banker moistened his lips, drained his glass hurriedly and moved slightly farther away. Still the insect grew; now it was the size of a small chicken, the multiple lens of its eyes presenting a most terrifying aspect, while its ferocious droning reverberated through the room. Then suddenly the Chemist threw it upon the table, covered it with a napkin, and beat it violently with the shoe. When all movement had ceased he tossed its quivering body into a corner of the room.

"GOOD GOD!" ejaculated the Banker, as the white-faced men stared at each other. The quiet voice of the Chemist brought them back to themselves. "That, gentlemen, you must understand, was only a fraction of the very first stage of growth. As you may have noticed, it was constantly accelerated. This acceleration attains a speed of possibly fifty thousand times that you observed. Beyond that, it is my theory, the change is at a uniform rate." He looked at the body of the fly, lying inert on the floor. "You can appreciate now, gentlemen, the importance of having this growth cease after death."

"Good Lord, I should say so!" murmured the Big Business Man, mopping his forehead. The Chemist took the lump of sugar and threw it into the open fire.

"Gosh!" said the Very Young Man. "Suppose when we were not looking, another fly had..."

"Shut up!" growled the Banker.

"Not so skeptical now, eh, George?" said the Big Business Man.

"Can you catch me another fly?" asked the Chemist. The

Very Young Man hastened to do so. "The second demonstration, gentlemen," said the Chemist, "is less spectacular, but far more pertinent than the one you have just witnessed." He took the fly by the wings, and prepared another lump of sugar, sprinkling a crushed pill from the other vial upon it.

"When he is small enough I am going to try to put him on the ring, if he will stay still," said the Chemist.

The Doctor pulled the plate containing the ring forward until it was directly under the light, and everyone crowded closer to watch; already the fly was almost too small to be held. The Chemist tried to set it on the ring, but could not; so with his other hand he brushed it lightly into the plate, where it lay, a tiny black speck against the gleaming whiteness of the china.

"Watch it carefully, gentlemen," he said as they bent closer.

"It's gone," said the Big Business Man.

"No, I can still see it," said the Doctor. Then he raised the plate closer to his face. "Now it's gone," he said.

The Chemist sat down in his chair. "It's probably still there, only too small for you to see. In a few minutes, if it took sufficient amount of the drug, it will be small enough to fall between the molecules of the plate."

"Do you suppose it will find another inhabited universe down there?" asked the Very Young Man.

"Who knows," said the Chemist. "Very possibly it will. But the one we are interested in is here," he added, touching the ring.

"Is it your intention to take this stuff yourself, tonight?" asked the Big Business Man.

"If you will give me your help, I think so, yes. I have made all arrangements. The club has given us this room in absolute privacy for forty-eight hours. Your meals will be served here when you want them, and I am going to ask you, gentlemen, to take turns watching and guarding the ring during that time. Will you do it?"

"I should say we would!" cried the Doctor, and the others nodded assent.

"It is because I wanted you to be convinced of my entire sincerity that I have taken you so thoroughly into my confidence. Are those doors locked?" The Very Young Man locked them.

"Thank you," said the Chemist, starting to disrobe. In a moment he stood before them attired in a woolen bathing suit of pure white. Over his shoulders was strapped tightly a narrow leather harness, supporting two silken pockets, one under each

armpit. Into each of these he placed one of the vials, first laying four pills from one of them upon the table.

At this point the Banker rose from his chair and selected another in the farther corner of the room. He sank into it a crumpled heap and wiped the beads of perspiration from his face with a shaking hand.

"I have every expectation," said the Chemist, "that this suit and harness will contract in size uniformly with me. If the harness should not, then I shall have to hold the vials in my hand."

On the table, directly under the light, he spread a large silk handkerchief, upon which he placed the ring. He then produced a teaspoon, which he handed to the Doctor.

"Please listen carefully," he said, "for perhaps the whole success of my adventure, and my life itself, may depend upon your actions during the next few minutes. You will realize, of course, that when I am still large enough to be visible to you, I shall be so small that my voice may be inaudible. Therefore, I want you to know, now, just what to expect.

"When I am something under a foot high, I shall step upon that handkerchief, where you will see my white suit plainly against its black surface. When I become less than an inch in height, I shall run over to the ring and stand beside it. When I have diminished to about a quarter of an inch, I shall climb upon it, and, as I get smaller, will follow its surface until I come to the scratch.

"I WANT YOU to watch me very closely. I may miscalculate the time and wait until I am too small to climb upon the ring. Or I may fall off. In either case, you will place that spoon beside me and I will climb into it. You will then do your best to help me get on the ring. Is all this quite clear?"

The Doctor nodded assent.

"Very well, watch me as long as I remain visible. If I have an accident, I shall take the other drug and endeavor to return to you at once. This you must expect at any moment during the next forty-eight hours. Under all circumstances, if I am alive, I shall return at the expiration of that time.

"And, gentlemen, let me caution you most solemnly, do not allow that ring to be touched until that length of time has expired. Can I depend on you?"

"Yes," they answered breathlessly.

"After I have taken the pills," the Chemist continued, "I shall not speak unless it is absolutely necessary. I do not know what

my sensations will be, and I want to follow them as closely as possible." He then turned out all the lights in the room with the exception of the center electrolier, that shone down directly on the handkerchief and ring.

The Chemist looked about him. "Good-by, gentlemen," he said, shaking hands all around. "Wish me luck." And without hesitation he placed the four pills in his mouth and washed them down with a swallow of water.

Silence fell on the group as the Chemist seated himself and covered his face with his hands. For perhaps two minutes the tenseness of the silence was unbroken, save by the heavy breathing of the Banker as he lay huddled in his chair.

"Oh, my God! He *is* growing smaller!" whispered the Big Business Man in a horrified tone to the Doctor. The Chemist raised his head and smiled at them. Then he stood up, steadying himself against a chair. He was less than four feet high. Steadily he grew smaller before their horrified eyes. Once he made as if to speak, and the Doctor knelt down beside him. "It's all right, good-by," he said in a tiny voice.

Then he stepped upon the handkerchief. The Doctor knelt on the floor beside it, the wooden spoon ready in his hand, while the others, except the Banker, stood behind him. The figure of the Chemist, standing motionless near the edge of the handkerchief, seemed now like a little white wooden toy, hardly more than one inch in height.

Waving his hand and smiling, he suddenly started to walk and then ran swiftly over to the ring. By the time he reached it, somewhat out of breath, he was little more than twice as high as the width of its band. Without pausing, he leaped up, and sat, astraddle, leaning over and holding to it tightly with his hands. In another moment he was on his feet, on the upper edge of the ring, walking carefully along its circumference toward the scratch.

The Big Business Man touched the Doctor on the shoulder and tried to smile. "He's making it," he whispered. As if in answer the little figure turned and waved its arms. They could just distinguish its white outline against the gold surface underneath.

"I don't see him," said the Very Young Man in a scared voice.

"He's right near the scratch," answered the Doctor, bending closer. Then, after a moment, "He's gone." He rose to his feet. "Good Lord! Why haven't

we a microscope!" he added.

"I never thought of that," said the Big Business Man. "We could have watched him for a long time yet."

"Well, he's gone now," returned the Doctor, "and there is nothing for us to do but wait."

"I hope he finds that girl," sighed the Very Young Man, as he sat chin in hand beside the handkerchief.

THE BANKER snored stertorously from his mattress in a corner of the room. In an easy-chair near by, with feet on the table, lay the Very Young Man, sleeping also.

The Doctor and the Big Business Man sat by the handkerchief conversing in low tones.

"How long has it been now?" asked the latter.

"Just forty hours," answered the Doctor, "and he said that forty-eight hours was the limit. He should come back at about ten tonight."

"I wonder if he *will* come back," questioned the Big Business Man nervously. "Lord, I wish *he* wouldn't snore so loud," he added irritably, nodding in the direction of the Banker.

They were silent for a moment, and then he went on: "You'd better try to sleep awhile," he said to the Doctor. "You're worn out. I'll watch here."

"I suppose I should," answered the Doctor wearily. "Wake up that kid; he's sleeping most of the time."

"No, I'll watch," repeated the Big Business Man; "you lie down over there."

The Doctor did so while the other settled himself more comfortably on a cushion beside the handkerchief, and prepared for his lonely watching.

The Doctor apparently dropped off to sleep at once, for he did not speak again. The Big Business Man sat staring steadily at the ring, bending nearer to it occasionally. Every ten or fifteen minutes he looked at his watch.

Perhaps an hour passed in this way, when the Very Young Man suddenly sat up and yawned. "Haven't they come back yet?" he asked in a sleepy voice.

The Big Business Man answered in a much lower tone. "What do you mean—they?" he said.

"I dreamed that he brought the girl back with him," said the Very Young Man.

"Well, if he did, they have not arrived," answered the Big Business Man. "You'd better go back to sleep. We've got six or seven hours yet."

The Very Young Man rose and crossed the room. "No, I'll watch awhile," he said, seating

himself on the floor. "What time is it?"

"Quarter of three."

"He said he'd be back by ten tonight. I'm crazy to see that girl."

The Big Business Man rose and went over to a dinner-tray standing near the door. "Lord, I'm hungry. I must have forgotten to eat today." He lifted up one of the silver covers. What he saw evidently encouraged him, for he drew up a chair and began his lunch.

The Very Young Man lighted a cigarette. "It will be the tragedy of my life," he said, "if he never comes back."

The Big Business Man smiled. "How about *his* life?" he answered, but the Very Young Man had fallen into a reverie and did not reply.

THE Big Business Man finished his lunch in silence and was just about to light a cigar when a sharp exclamation brought him hastily to his feet.

"Come here, quick, I see something." The Very Young Man had his face close to the ring and was trembling violently.

The other pushed him back. "Let me see. Where?"

"There by the scratch; he's lying there; I can see him."

The Big Business Man looked and then hurriedly woke the Doctor.

"He's come back," he said briefly; "you can see him there." The Doctor bent down over the ring while the others woke up the Banker.

"He doesn't seem to be getting any bigger," said the Very Young Man; "he's just lying there. Maybe he's dead."

"What shall we do?" asked the Big Business Man, and made as if to pick up the ring. The Doctor shoved him away. "Don't do that!" he said sharply. "Do you want to kill him?"

"He's sitting up," cried the Very Young Man. "He's all right."

"He must have fainted," said the Doctor. "Probably he's taking more of the drug now."

"He's much larger," said the Very Young Man; "look at him!"

The tiny figure was sitting sidewise on the ring, with its feet hanging over the outer edge. It was growing perceptibly larger each instant, and in a moment it slipped down off the ring and sank in a heap on the handkerchief.

"Good Heavens! Look at him!" cried the Big Business Man. "He's all covered with blood."

The little figure presented a ghastly sight. As it steadily grew larger they could see and recognize the Chemist's haggard face,

his cheek and neck stained with blood, and his white suit covered with dirt.

"Look at his feet," whispered the Big Business Man. They were horribly cut and bruised and greatly swollen.

The Doctor bent over and whispered gently, "What can I do to help you?" The Chemist shook his head. His body, lying prone upon the handkerchief, had torn it apart in growing. When he was about twelve inches in length he raised his head. The Doctor bent closer. "Some brandy, please," said a wraith of the Chemist's voice. It was barely audible.

"He wants some brandy," called the Doctor. The Very Young Man looked hastily around, then opened the door and dashed madly out of the room. When he returned, the Chemist had grown to nearly four feet. He was sitting on the floor with his back against the Doctor's knees. The Big Business Man was wiping the blood off his face with a damp napkin.

"Here!" cried the Very Young Man, thrusting forth the brandy. The Chemist drank a little of it. Then he sat up, evidently somewhat revived.

"I seem to have stopped growing," he said. "Let's finish it up now. God! How I want to be the right size again," he added fervently.

The Doctor helped him extract the vials from under his arm, and the Chemist touched one of the pills to his tongue. Then he sank back, closing his eyes. "I think that should be about enough," he murmured.

NO ONE spoke for nearly ten minutes. Gradually the Chemist's body grew, the Doctor shifting his position several times as it became larger. It seemed finally to have stopped growing, and was apparently nearly its former size.

"Is he asleep?" whispered the Very Young Man.

The Chemist opened his eyes.

"No," he answered. I'm all right now, I think." He rose to his feet, the Doctor and the Big Business Man supporting him on either side.

"Sit down and tell us about it," said the Very Young Man. "Did you find the girl?"

The Chemist smiled wearily.

"Gentlemen, I cannot talk now. Let me have a bath and some dinner. Then I will tell you all about it."

The Doctor rang for an attendant, and led the Chemist to the door, throwing a blanket around him as he did so. In the doorway the Chemist paused and looked back with a wan smile, over the wreck of the room.

"Give me an hour," he said.

"And eat something yourselves while I am gone." Then he left, closing the door after him.

When he returned, fully dressed, in clothes that were ludicrously large for him, the room had been straightened up, and his four friends were finishing their meal. He took his place among them quietly and lighted a cigar.

"Well, gentlemen, I suppose that you are interested to hear what happened to me," he began. The Very Young Man asked his usual question.

"Let him alone," said the Doctor.

"Was it all as you expected?" asked the Banker.

It was his first remark since the Chemist returned.

"To a great extent, yes," answered the Chemist. "But I had better tell you just what happened." The Very Young Man nodded his eager agreement.

"When I took those first four pills," began the Chemist in a quiet, even tone, "my immediate sensation was a sudden reeling of the senses, combined with an extreme nausea. This latter feeling passed after a moment.

"You will remember that I seated myself upon the floor and closed my eyes. When I opened them my head had steadied itself somewhat, but I was oppressed by a curious feeling of drowsiness, impossible to shake off.

"My first mental impression was one of wonderment when I saw you all begin to increase in size. I remember standing up beside the chair, which was then half again its normal size, and you"—indicating the Doctor—"towered beside me as a giant of nine or ten feet high.

"Steadily upward, with a curious crawling motion, grew the room and all its contents. Except for the feeling of sleep that oppressed me, I felt quite my usual self. No change appeared happening to me, but everything else seemed growing to gigantic and terrifying proportions.

"Can you imagine a human being a hundred feet high? That is how you looked to me as I stepped upon that huge expanse of black silk and shouted my last good-by to you!

"Over to my left lay the ring, apparently fifteen or twenty feet away. I started to walk toward it, but although it grew rapidly larger, the distance separating me from it seemed to increase rather than lessen. Then I ran, and by the time I arrived it stood higher than my waist—a beautiful, shaggy, golden pit.

"I jumped upon its rim and clung to it tightly. I could feel it growing beneath me as I sat. After a moment I climbed upon its top surface and started to

walk toward the point where I knew the scratch to be.

"I found myself now, as I looked about, walking upon a narrow, though ever broadening, curved path. The ground beneath my feet appeared to be a rough yellowish quartz. This path grew rougher as I advanced. Below the bulging edges of the path, on both sides lay a shining black plain, ridged and indented, and with a sunlike sheen on the higher portions of the ridges. On the one hand this black plain stretched in an unbroken expanse to the horizon. On the other, it appeared as a circular valley, enclosed by a shining yellow wall.

"The way had now become extraordinarily rough. I bore to the left as I advanced, keeping close to outer edge. The other edge of the path I could not see. I clambered along hastily, and after a few moments was confronted by a row of rocks and boulders lying directly across my line of progress. I followed their course for a short distance, and finally found a space through which I could pass.

"This transverse ridge was perhaps a hundred feet deep. Behind it and extending in a parallel direction lay a tremendous valley. I knew than I had reached my first objective.

"I sat down upon the brink of the precipice and watched the cavern growing ever wider and deeper. Then I realized that I must begin my descent if ever I was to reach the bottom. For perhaps six hours I climbed steadily downward. It was a fairly easy descent after the first little while, for the ground seemed to open up before me as I advanced, changing its contour so constantly that I was never at a loss for an easy downward path.

"My feet suffered cruelly from the shaggy, metallic ground, and I soon had to stop and rig a sort of protection for the soles from a portion of the harness over my shoulder. According to the stature I was when I reached the bottom, I had descended perhaps twelve thousand feet during this time.

"The latter part of this journey found me nearing the bottom of the canon. Objects around me no longer seemed to increase in size, as had been constantly the case before, and I reasoned that probably my stature was remaining constant.

"I noticed, too, as I advanced, a curious alteration in the form of light around me. The glare from above (the sky showed only a narrow dull ribbon of blue) barely penetrated to the depths of the canyon's floor. But all about me there was

a soft radiance, seeming to emanate from the rocks themselves.

"The sides of the canyon were shaggy and rough, beyond anything I had ever seen. Huge boulders, hundreds of feet in diameter, were imbedded in them. The bottom also was strewn with similar gigantic rocks.

"I surveyed this lonely waste for some time in dismay, not knowing in what direction lay my goal. I knew that I was at the bottom of the scratch, and by the comparison of its size I realized I was well started on my journey.

"I have not told you, gentlemen, that at the time I marked the ring I made a deeper indentation in one portion of the scratch and focused the microscope upon that. This indentation, I now searched for. Luckily I found it, less than half a mile away—an almost circular pit, perhaps five miles in diameter, with shining walls extending downward into blackness. There seemed no possible way of descending into it, so I sat down near its edge to think out my plan of action.

"I realized now that I was faint and hungry, and whatever I did must be done quickly. I could turn back to you, or I could go on. I decided to risk the latter course, and took twelve more of the pills—three times my original dose."

The Chemist paused for a moment, but his auditors were much too intent to question him. Then he resumed in his former matter-of-fact tone.

"After my vertigo had passed somewhat—it was much more severe this time—I looked up and found my surroundings growing at a far more rapid rate than before. I staggered to the edge of the pit. It was opening up and widening out at an astounding rate. Already its sides were becoming rough and broken, and I saw many places where a descent would be possible.

"The feeling of sleep that had formerly merely oppressed me, combined now with my physical fatigue and the larger dose of the drug I had taken, became almost intolerable. I yielded to it for a moment, lying down on a crag near the edge of the pit. I must have become almost immediately unconscious, and remained so for a considerable time. I can remember a horrible sensation of sliding headlong for what seemed like hours. I felt that I was sliding or falling downward. I tried to rouse but could not. Then came absolute oblivion.

"When I recovered my senses I was lying partly covered by a mass of smooth, shining pebbles. I was bruised and battered from head to foot—in a far

worse condition than you first saw me in when I returned.

"I sat up and looked around. Beside me, sloped upward at an apparently increasing angle, a tremendous glossy plane. This extended, as far as I could see, both to the right and left and upward into the blackness of the sky overhead. It was this plane that had evidently broken my fall and I had been sliding down it, bringing with me a considerable mass of rocks and boulders.

"As my senses became clearer I saw I was lying on a fairly level floor. I could see perhaps two miles in each direction. Beyond that there was only darkness. The sky overhead was unbroken by stars or light of any kind. I should have been in total darkness except, as I have told you before, that everything, even the blackness itself, seemed to be self-luminous.

"The incline down which I had fallen was composed of some smooth substance suggesting black marble. The floor underfoot was quite different—more of a metallic quality with a curious corrugation. Before me, in the dim distance. I could just make out a tiny range of hills.

"I rose, after a time, and started weakly to walk toward these hills. Though I was faint and dizzy from my fall and the lack of food, I walked for perhaps half an hour, following closely the edge of the incline. No change in my visual surroundings occurred, except that I seemed gradually to be approaching the line of hills. My situation at this time, as I turned it over in my mind, appeared hopelessly desperate, and I admit I neither expected to reach my destination nor to be able to return to my own world.

"A sudden change in the feeling of the ground underfoot brought me to myself; I bent down and found I was treading on vegetation—a tiny forest extending for quite a distance in front and to the side of me. A few steps ahead a little silver ribbon threaded its way through the trees. This I judged to be water.

"New hope possessed me at this discovery. I sat down at once and took a portion of another of the pills.

"I MUST AGAIN have fallen asleep. When I awoke, somewhat refreshed, I found myself lying beside the huge trunk of a fallen tree. I was in what had evidently once been a deep forest, but which now was almost utterly desolated. Only here and there were the trees left standing. For the most part they were lying in a crushed and tangled mass, many of them partially embedded in the ground.

"I cannot express adequately to you, gentlemen, what an evidence of tremendous superhuman power this scene presented. No storm, no lightning, nor any attack of the elements could have produced more than a fraction of the destruction I saw all around me.

"I climbed cautiously upon the fallen tree-trunk, and from this elevation had a much better view of my surroundings. I appeared to be near one end of the desolated area, which extended in a path about half a mile wide and several miles deep. In front, a thousand feet away, perhaps, lay the unbroken forest.

"Descending from the tree-trunk I walked in this direction reaching the edge of the woods after possibly an hour of the most arduous traveling of my whole journey.

"During this time almost my only thought was the necessity of obtaining food. I looked about me as I advanced, and on one of the fallen tree-trunks I found a sort of vine growing. This vine bore a profusion of small gray berries, much like our huckleberries. The proved similar in taste, and I sat down and ate a quantity.

"When I reached the edge of the forest I felt somewhat stronger. I had seen up to this time no sign of animal life whatever. Now, as I stood silent, I could hear around me all the multitudinous tiny voices of the woods. Insect life stirred underfoot, and in the trees above an occasional bird flitted to and fro.

"Perhaps I am giving you a picture of our own world. I do not mean to do so. You must remember that above me there was no sky, just blackness. And yet so much light illuminated the scene that I could not believe it was other than what we would call daytime. Objects in the forest, were as well lighted—better probably than they would be under similar circumstances in our own familiar world.

"The trees were of huge size compared to my present stature: straight, upstanding trunks, with no branches until very near the top. They were bluish-gray in color, and many of them well covered with the berry-vine I have mentioned. The leaves overhead seemed to be blue—in fact the predominating color of all the vegetation was blue, just as in our world it is green. The ground was covered with dead leaves, mold, and a sort of a gray moss. Fungus of a similar color appeared, but of this I did not eat.

"I had penetrated perhaps two miles into the forest when I came unexpectedly to the bank of a broad, smooth-flowing river, its silver surface seeming to radiate waves of the char-

acteristic phosphorescent light. I found it cold, pure-tasting water, and I drank long and deeply. Then I remember lying down upon the mossy bank, and in a moment, utterly worn out, I again fell asleep."

III

LYLDA

"I WAS awakened by the feel of soft hands upon my head and face. With a start I sat up abruptly; I rubbed my eyes confusedly for a moment, not knowing where I was. When I collected my wits I found myself staring into the face of a girl, who was kneeling on the ground before me. I recognized her at once—she was the girl of the microscope.

"To say I was startled would be to put it mildly, but I read no fear in her expression, only wonderment at my springing so suddenly into life. She was dressed very much as I had seen her before. Her fragile beauty was the same, and at this closer view infinitely more appealing, but I was puzzled to account for her older more mature look. She seemed to have aged several years since the last evening I had seen her through the microscope. Yet, undeniably, it was the same girl.

"For some moments we sat looking at each other in wonderment. Then she smiled and held out her hand, palm up, speaking a few words as she did so. Her voice was soft and musical, and the words of a peculiar quality that we generally describe as liquid, for want of a better term. What she said was wholly unintelligible, but whether the words were strange or the intonation different from anything I knew, I could not tell.

"Afterward, during my stay in this other world, I found that the language of its people resembled English quite closely, so far as the words went. But the intonation with which they were given, and the gestures accompanying them, differed so widely from our own that they conveyed no meaning.

"The gap separating us, however, was very much less than you would imagine. Strangely enough, though, it was not I learned to speak her tongue, but she who mastered mine."

The Very Young Man sighed contentedly.

"We became quite friendly after this greeting," resumed the Chemist, "and it was apparent from her manner that she had already conceived her own idea of who and what I was.

"For some time we sat and tried to communicate with each other. My words seemed almost as unintelligible to her as hers

to me, except that occasionally she would divine my meaning, clapping her hands in child-like delight. I made out that she lived at a considerable distance, and that her name was Lylda. Finally she pulled me by the hand and led me away with a proprietary air that amused me and, I must admit to you, pleased me tremendously.

"We had progressed through the woods in this way, hardly more than a few hundred yards, when suddenly I found that she was taking me into the mouth of a cave or passageway, sloping downward at an angle of perhaps twenty degrees. I noticed now, more graphically than ever before, a truth that had been gradually forcing itself upon me. Darkness was impossible in this new world. We were now shut in between narrow walls of crystalline rock, with a roof hardly more than fifty feet above.

"No artificial light of any kind was in evidence, yet the scene was lighted quite brightly. This, I have explained, was caused by the phosphorescent radiation that apparently emanated from every particle of matter in this universe.

"As we advanced, many other tunnels crossed the one we were traveling. And now, occasionally, we passed other people, the men dressed similarly to Lylda, but wearing their hair chopped off just above the shoulder line.

"Later, I found that the men were generally about five and a half feet in stature: lean, muscular, and with a grayer, harder look to their skin than the iridescent quality that characterized the women.

"They were fine-looking chaps these we encountered. All of them stared curiously at me, and several times we were held up by chattering groups. The intense whiteness of my skin, for it looked in this light the color of chalk, seemed to both awe and amuse them. But they treated me with great deference and respect, which I afterward learned was because of Lylda herself, and also what she told them about me.

"At several of the intersections of the tunnels there were wide open spaces. One of these we now approached. It was a vast amphitheater, so broad its opposite wall was invisible, and it seemed crowded with people. At the side, on a rocky niche in the wall, a speaker harangued the crowd.

"We skirted the edge of this crowd and plunged into another passageway, sloping downward still more steeply. I was so much interested in the strange scenes opening before me that I remarked little of the distance we

traveled. Nor did I question Lylda very often. I was absorbed in the complete similarity between this and my own world in these general characteristics, and yet its complete strangeness in details.

"I felt not the slightest fear. Indeed the sincerity and kindliness of these people seemed absolutely genuine, and the friendly, naive manner of my little guide put me wholly at my ease. Toward me Lylda's manner was one of child-like delight at a new-found possession. Toward those of her own people with whom we talked, I found she preserved a dignity they profoundly respected.

"We had hardly more than entered this last tunnel when I heard the sound of drums and a weird sort of piping music, followed by shouts and cheers. Figures from behind us scurried past, hastening toward the sound. Lylda's clasp on my hand tightened, and she pulled me forward eagerly. As we advanced the crowd became denser, pushing and shoving us about and paying little attention to me.

"In close contact with these people I soon found I was stronger than they, and for a time I had no difficulty in shoving them aside and opening a path for us. They took my rough handling all in good part; in fact, never have I met a more even-tempered, good-natured people than these.

"AFTER A TIME, the crowd became so dense we could advance no more. At this Lylda signed me to bear to the side. As we approached the wall of the cavern she suddenly clasped her hands high over her head and shouted something in a clear, commanding voice. Instantly the crowd fell back, and in a moment I found myself being pulled up a narrow flight of stone steps in the wall and out upon a level space some twenty feet above the heads of the people.

"Several dignitaries occupied this platform. Lylda greeted them quietly, and they made place for us beside the parapet. I could see now that we were at the intersection of a transverse passageway, much broader than the one we had been traveling. And now I received the greatest surprise I had had in this new world, for down this latter tunnel was passing a broad line of men who obviously were soldiers.

"The uniformly straight lines they held; the glint of light on the spears they carried upright before them; the weird, but rhythmic music that passed at intervals, with which they kept step; and, above all, the cheering enthusiasm of the crowd,

all seemed like an echo of my own great world above.

"This martial ardor and what it implied came as a distinct shock. All I had seen before showed the gentle kindliness of a people whose life seemed far removed from the struggle for existence to which our race is subjected. I had come gradually to feel that this new world, at least, had attained the golden age of security, and that fear, hate, and wrong-doing had long since passed away, or had never been born.

"Yet here, before my very eyes, made wholesome by the fires of patriotism, stalked the grim God of War. Knowing nothing yet of the motives that inspired these people, I could feel no enthusiasm, but only disillusionment at this discovery of the omnipotence of strife.

"For some time I must have stood in silence. Lylda, too, seemed to divine my thoughts, for she did not applaud, but pensively watched the cheering throng below. All at once, with an impulsively appealing movement, she pulled me down toward her and pressed her pretty cheek to mine. It seemed almost as if she were asking me to help.

"The line of marching men seemed now to have passed, and the crowd surged over into the open space and began to disperse. As the men upon the platform with us prepared to leave, Lylda led me over to one of them. He was nearly as tall as I, and dressed in the characteristic tunic that seemed universally worn by both sexes. The upper part of his body was hung with beads, and across his chest was a thin, slightly convex stone plate.

"After a few words of explanation from Lylda, he laid his hands on my shoulders near the base of the neck, smiling with his words of greeting. Then he held one hand before me, palm up, as Lylda had done, and I laid mine in it, which seemed to be the correct thing to do.

"I repeated this perfromance with two others who joined us, and then Lylda pulled me away. We descended the steps and turned into the broader tunnel, finding near at hand a sort of sleigh, which Lylda signed me to enter. It was constructed evidently of wood, with a pile of leaves, or similar dead vegetation, for cushions. It was balanced upon a single runner of polished stone, about two feet broad, with a narrow, slightly shorter outrider on each side.

"Harnessed to the shaft were two animals, more resembling our reindeer than anything else, except that they were gray in color and had no horns. An attendant greeted Lylda respect-

fully as we approached, and mounted a seat in front of us when we were comfortably settled.

"We drove in this curious vehicle for over an hour. The floor of the tunnel was quite smooth, and we glided down its incline with little effort and at a good rate. Our driver preserved the balance of the sleigh by shifting his body from side to side so that only at rare intervals did the side-runner touch the ground.

"Finally, we emerged into the open, and I found myself viewing a scene of almost normal, Earthly aspect. We were near the shore of a smooth, shining lake. At the side a broad stretch of rolling country, dotted here and there with trees, was visible. Near at hand, on the lakeshore, I saw a collection of houses, most of them low and flat, with one much larger on a promontory near the lake.

"Overhead arched a gray-blue, cloudless sky, faintly star-studded, and reflected in the lake before me I saw that familiar, gleaming trail of star-dust hanging like a huge straightened rainbow overhead, and ending at my feet.

THE CHEMIST paused and relighted his cigar. "Perhaps you have some questions," he suggested.

The Doctor shifted in his chair.

"Did you have any theory at this time"—he wanted to know—"about the physical conformation of this world? What I mean is, when you came out of this tunnel, were you on the inside or the outside of the world?"

"Was it the same sky you saw overhead when you were in the forest?" asked the Big Business Man.

"No, it was what he saw in the microscope, wasn't it?" said the Very Young Man.

"One at a time, gentlemen." The Chemist laughed. "No, I had no particular theory at this time—I had too many other things to think of. But I do remember noticing one thing which gave me the clue to a fairly complete understanding of this universe. From it I formed a definite explanation, which I found was the belief held by the people themselves."

"What was that?" asked the Very Young Man.

"I noticed, as I stood looking over this broad expanse of country before me, one vital thing that made it different from any similar scene I had ever beheld. If you will stop and think a moment, gentlemen, you will realize that in our world here the horizon is caused by a curvature of Earth below

the straight line of vision. We are on a convex surface. But as I gazed over this landscape — and even with no appreciable light from the sky, I could see a distance of several miles — I saw at once that quite the reverse was true. I seemed to be standing, obviously, on a concave surface, on the inside, not the outside of the world.

"The situation, as I now understand it was this: According to the smallest stature I reached, and calling my height at that time roughly six feet, I had descended into the ring at the time I met Lylda several thousand miles, at least. By the way, where is the ring?"

"Here it is," said the Very Young Man, handing it to him. The Chemist replaced in on his finger. "It's pretty important to me now," he said, smiling.

"You bet!" agreed the Very Very Young Man.

"You can readily understand how I descended such a distance, if you consider the comparative immensity of my stature during the first few hours I was in the ring. It is my understanding that this country through which I passed is a barren waste — merely the atoms of the mineral we call gold.

"Beyond that I entered the hitherto unexplored region within the atom. The country at that point where I found the forest, I was told later, is habitable for several hundred miles. Around it on all sides lies a desert, across which no one has ever penetrated.

"This surface is the outside of the Oroid world, for so they call their world. At this point the shell between the outer and inner surface is only a few miles in thickness. The two surfaces do not parallel each other here, so that in descending these tunnels we turned hardly more than an eighth of a complete circle.

"At the city of Arite, where Lylda first took me, and where I had my first view of the inner surface, the curvature is slightly greater than that of Earth, although, as I have said, in the opposite direction."

"And the space within this curvature — the heavens you have mentioned — how great do you estimate it to be?" asked the Doctor.

"Based on the curvature at Arite, it would be about six thousand miles in diameter."

"Has this entire inner surface been explored?" asked the Big Business Man.

"No, only a small portion. The Oroids are not an adventurous people. There are only two nations, less than twelve million people altogether, on a surface nearly as extensive as our own."

"How about those stars?" suggested the Very Young Man.

"I believe they comprise a complete universe similar to our solar system. There is a central sun-star, around which many of the others revolve. You must understand, though, that these worlds are infinitely tiny compared to the Oroids, and, if inhabited, support beings nearly as much smaller than the Oroids, as they are smaller than you!"

"Great Caesar!" ejaculated the Banker. "Don't let's go into that any deeper!"

"Tell us more about Lylda," prompted the Very Young Man.

"You are insatiable in that point," said the Chemist, laughing. "Well, when we left the sleigh, Lylda took me directly into the city of Arite. I found it an orderly collection of low houses, seemingly built of uniformly cut, highly polished gray blocks. As we passed through the streets, some of which were paved with similar blocks I was reminded of nothing so much as the old jingles of Spotless Town. Everything was immaculately clean. Indeed, the whole city seemed to be built of some curious form of opaque glass, newly scrubbed and polished.

"Children crowded from the doorways as we advanced, but Lylda dispersed them with a gentle, though firm, command. As we approached the sort of castle I have mentioned, the reason for Lylda's authoritative manner dawned on me. She was, I soon learned, daughter of one of the most learned men of the nation and was—handmaiden, do you call it?—to the queen."

"So it was a monarchy?" interrupted the Big Business Man. "I never should have thought it that."

"Lylda called their leader a king. In reality, he was the president, chosen by the people, for a period of about what we would term twenty years; I learned something about this republic during my stay, but not as much as I would have liked. Politics was not Lylda's strong point, and I had to get it all from her, you know.

"FOR SEVERAL DAYS I was housed royally in the castle. Food was served me by an attendant who evidently was assigned to look after my needs. At first, I was terribly confused by the constant, uniform light, but when I found certain hours set aside for sleep, just as we have them, when I began to eat regularly, I soon fell into the routine of this new life.

"The food was not greatly different from our own, although I found not a single article I could identify. It con-

sisted principally of vegetables and fruits, the latter of apparently an inexhaustible variety.

"Lylda visited me at intervals, and I learned that I was awaiting an audience with the king. During these days she made rapid progress with my language—so rapid that I shortly gave up the idea of mastering hers.

"And now, with the growing intimacy between us and our ability to communicate more readily, I learned the simple, tragic story of her race—new details, of course, but the old, old tale of might against right, and the tragedy of a trusting, kindly people blindly thinking others to be as just as themselves.

"For thousands of years, since the Master life-giver had come from one of the stars to populate the world, the Oroid nation had dwelt in peace and security. These people cared nothing for adventure. No restless thirst for knowledge led them to explore deeply the limitless land surrounding them. Even from the earliest times, no struggle for existence, no doctrine of the survival of the fittest, hung over them as with us. No wild animals harassed them, no savages menaced them. A fertile, boundless land, a perfect climate, nurtured them tenderly.

"Under such conditions they developed only the softer, gentler qualities of nature. Many laws among them were unnecessary, for life was so simple, so pleasant to live, and the attainment of all the commonly accepted standards of wealth so easy, that the incentive to wrongdoing was almost non-existent.

"Strangely enough, and fortunately, too, no individuals rose among them with the desire for power. Those in command were respected and loved as true workers for the people, and they accepted their authority in the same spirit with which it was given. Indolence, in its highest sense the wonderful art of doing nothing gracefully, occupied the greatest part in their life.

"Then, after centuries of ease and security, came the awakening. Almost without warning another nation had come out of the unknown to attack them.

"With the hurt feeling that comes to a child unjustly treated, they all but succumbed to this first onslaught. The abduction of numbers of their women, for such seemed the principal purpose of the invaders, aroused them sufficiently to repel this first crude attack. Their manhood challenged, their anger as a nation awakened for the first time, they sprang as one man into the horror we call war.

"With the defeat of the

Malites came another period of ease and security. They had learned no lesson, but went their indolent way, playing through life like the kindly children they were. During this last period some intercourse between them and the Malites took place. The latter people, whose origin was probably nearly opposite them on the inner surface, had by degrees pushed their frontiers closer and closer to the Oroids. Trade between the two was carried on to some extent, but the character of the Malites, their instinctive desire for power, for its own sake, their consideration of themselves as superior beings, caused them to be distrusted and feared by their more simple-minded companion nation.

"You can almost guess the rest, gentlemen. Lylda told me little about the Malites, but the loathing disgust of her manner, her hesitancy even to bring herself to mention them, spoke more eloquently than words.

"Four years ago, as they measure time, came the second attack, and now, in a huge arc, only a few hundred miles from Arite, hung the opposing armies."

The Chemist paused. "That's the condition I found, gentlemen," he said. "Not a strikingly original or unfamiliar situation, was it?"

"By Jove!" remarked the Doctor thoughtfully. "What a curious thing that the environment of Earth should so effect that world inside the ring. It does make you stop and think, doesn't it, to realize how those infinitesimal creatures are actuated now by the identical motives that inspire us?"

"Yet it does seem very reasonable, I should say," the Big Business Man put in.

"Let's have another round of drinks," suggested the Banker. "This is dry work!"

"As a scientist you'd make a magnificent plumber, George!" retorted the Big Business Man. "You're about as helpful in this little gathering as — an oyster!"

The Very Young Man rang for a waiter.

"I've been thinking . . . " began the Banker, and stopped at the smile of his companion. "Shut up!" he finished. "That's cheap wit, you know!"

"Go on, George," encouraged the other, "you've been thinking . . . "

"I've been tremendously interested in this extraordinary story" — he addressed himself to the Chemist — "but there's one point I don't get at all. How many days were you in that ring do you make out?"

"I believe about seven, all told," returned the Chemist.

"But you were only away from us some forty hours. I

ought to know, I've been right here." He looked at his crumpled clothes somewhat ruefully.

"The change of time-progress was one of the surprises of my adventure," said the Chemist. "It is easily explained in a general way, although I cannot even attempt a scientific theory of its cause. But I must confess that before I started, the possibility of such a thing never even occurred to me.

"To get a conception of this change you must analyze definitely what time is. We measure and mark it by years, months, and so forth, down to minutes and seconds, all based upon the movements of Earth around our sun. But that, is the measurement of time, not time itself. How would you describe time?"

The Big Business Man smiled. "Time," he said, "is what keeps everything from happening at once."

"Very clever," said the Chemist, laughing.

THE DOCTOR leaned forward earnestly. "I should say," he began, "that time is the rate at which we live—the speed at which we successively pass through our existence from birth to death. It's very hard to put intelligibly, but I think I know what I mean," he finished somewhat lamely.

"Exactly so. Time is a rate of life-progress, different for every individual, and only made standard because we take the time-duration of Earth's revolution around the sun, which is constant, and arbitrarily say: 'That is thirty-one million five hundred and thirty-six thousand seconds.'"

"Is time different for every individual?" asked the Banker argumentatively.

"Think a moment," returned the Chemist. "Suppose your brain were to work twice as fast as mine. Suppose your heart beat twice as fast, and all the functions of your body were accelerated in a like manner. What we call a second would certainly seem to you twice as long. Further than that, it actually would be twice as long, so far as you were concerned. Your digestion, instead of taking perhaps four hours would take two. You would eat twice as often. The desire for sleep would overtake you every twelve hours instead of twenty-four, and you would be satisfied with four hours of unsciousness, instead of eight. In short, you would soon be

living a cycle of two days every twenty-four hours. Time then, as we measure it, for you at least, would have doubled—you would be progressing through life at twice the rate that I am through mine."

"That may be theoretically true," the Big Business Man put in. "Practically, though it has never happened to anyone."

"Of course not—not to such a degree as the instance I put. No one, except in disease, has ever doubled our average rate of life-progress, and lived it out as a balanced, otherwise normal existence. But there is no question that to some much smaller degree we all differ, one from the other. The difference, however, is so comparatively slight that we can each one reconcile it to the standard measurement of time. And so, outwardly, time is the same for all of us. But inwardly, why, we none of us conceive a minute or an hour to be the same. How do you know how long a minute is to me? More than that, time is not constant even in the same individual. How many hours are shorter to you than others? How many days have seemed almost interminable? No, instead of being constant, there is nothing more inconstant than time."

"Haven't you confused two different issues?" suggested the Big Business Man. "Granted what you say about the slightly different rate at which different individuals live, isn't it quite another thing how long time seems to you? A day when you have nothing to do seems very long, or, on the other hand, if you are very busy it seems short. But mind, it only *seems* short or long, according to the preoccupation of your mind. That has nothing to do with the speed of your progress through life."

"Ah, but I think it has!" cried the Chemist. "You forget that we none of us have all of the one thing to the exclusion of the other. Time seems short; it seems long, and in the end it all averages up, and makes our rate of progress what it is. Now if any of us were to go through life in a calm, deliberate way, making time seem as long as possible, he would live more years, as we measure them, than if he rushed headlong through the days, accomplishing always as much as possible. I mean in neither case to go to extremes, but only so far as would be consistent with the maintenance

of a normal standard of health. How about it?" He turned to the Doctor. "You ought to have an opinion on that."

"I rather think you are right," said the latter thoughtfully, "although I doubt very much if the man who took it easy would do as much during his long life as the other with his energy would accomplish in the lesser time that had been alloted to him."

"Probably he wouldn't," said the Chemist, "but that does not alter the point we are discussing."

"How does this apply to the world in the ring?" ventured the Very Young Man, somewhat timidly.

"I believe there is a very close relationship between the dimensions of length, breadth, thickness, and time. Just what connection with them it has, I have no idea. Yet, when size changes, time-rate changes; you only have to look at our own universe to discover that circumstance."

"How do you mean?" asked the Very Young Man.

"Why, all life on Earth, in a general way illustrates the fundamental fact that the larger a thing is, the slower its time-progress is. An elephant, for example, lives more years than we humans. Yet a fly is born, matured, and aged in a few months. There are exceptions, of course; but in a majority of cases it is true.

"So I believe that as I diminished in stature, my time-progress became faster and faster. I am seven days older than when I left you day before yesterday. I have lived those seven days, gentlemen. There is no way of getting around that fact."

"This is all tremendously interesting," sighed the Big Business Man; "but not very comprehensible."

IV

STRATEGY AND KISSES

"IT WAS the morning of my third day in the castle," began the Chemist again, "that I was taken by Lylda before the king. We found him seated alone in a little anteroom, overlooking a large courtyard, which we could see was crowded with an expectant, waiting throng. I must explain to you now, that I was considered by Lylda somewhat in the light of a Messiah, come to save her nation from the destruction that threatened it.

"She believed me a supernatural being; which, indeed, if you come to think of it, gentlemen, is exactly what I was. I tried to tell her something of

myself and the world I had come from, but the difficulties of language and her smiling insistence and faith in her own conception of me, soon caused me to desist. Thereafter I let her have her own way, and did not attempt any explanation again for some time.

"For several weeks before Lylda found me sleeping by the river's edge, she had made almost a daily pilgrimage to that vicinity. A premonition, a feeling that had first come to her several years before, told her of my coming, and her father's knowledge and scientific beliefs had led her to the outer surface of the world as the direction in which to look. A curious circumstance, gentlemen, lies in the fact that Lylda clearly remembered the occasion when this first premonition came to her. And in the telling she described graphically the scene in the cave, where I saw her through the microscope." The Chemist paused an instant and then resumed.

"When we entered the presence of the king, he greeted me quietly, and made me sit by his side, while Lylda knelt on the floor at our feet. The king impressed me as a man about fifty years of age. He was smooth-shaven, with black, wavy hair, reaching his shoulders. He was dressed in the usual tunic, the upper part of his body covered by a quite similar garment, ornamented with a sort of buckskin; at his side hung a crude-looking metal spear.

"The conversation that followed my entrance, lasted perhaps fifteen minutes. Lylda interpreted for us as well as she could, though I must confess we were all three at times completely at a loss. But Lylda's bright, intelligent little face, and the resourcefulness of her gestures, always managed somehow to convey her meaning. The charm and grace of her manner, all during the talk, her winsomeness, and the almost spiritual kindness and tenderness that characterized her, made me feel that she embodied all those qualities with which we of Earth idealize our own womanhood.

"I found myself falling steadily under the spell of her beauty, until—well, gentlemen, it's childish for me to enlarge upon this side of my adventure, you know; but—Lylda means everything to me now, and I'm going back for her just as soon as I possibly can."

"Good for you!" cried the Very Young Man. "Why didn't you bring her with you this time?"

"Let him tell it his own way," remonstrated the Doctor. The

Very Young Man subsided with a sigh.

"During our talk," resumed the Chemist, "I learned from the king that Lylda had promised him my assistance in overcoming the enemies that threatened his country. He smilingly told me that our charming little interpreter had assured him I would be able to do this. Lylda's blushing face, as she conveyed this meaning to me, was so thoroughly captivating, that before I knew it, and quite without meaning to, I pulled her up toward me and kissed her.

"The king was more surprised by far than Lylda, at this extraordinary behavior; obviously neither of them had understood what a kiss meant, although Lylda, by her manner, evidently comprehended pretty thoroughly.

"I told them then, as simply as possible to enable Lylda to get my meaning, that I could, and would gladly aid in their war. I explained, then, that I had the power to change my stature, and could make myself grow very large or very small in a short space of time.

"This, as Lylda evidently told it to him, seemed quite beyond the king's understanding. He comprehended finally, or at least he agreed to believe my statement.

"This led to the consideration of practical questions of how I was to proceed in their war. I had not considered any details before, but now they appeared of the utmost simplicity. All I had to do was to make myself a hundred or two hundred feet high, walk out to the battle lines, and scatter the opposing army like toys."

"What a quaint idea!" said the Banker. "A modern *Gulliver.*"

THE CHEMIST did not heed this interruption.

"Then like three children we plunged into a discussion of exactly how I was to perform these wonders, the king laughing heartily as we pictured the attack on my tiny enemies.

"He then asked me how I expected to accomplish this change of size, and I very briefly told him of our larger world, and the manner in which I had come from it into his. Then I showed the drugs that I still carried carefully strapped to me. This seemed definitely to convince the king of my sincerity. He rose abruptly to his feet, and strode through a doorway onto a small balcony overlooking the courtyard below.

"As he stepped out into the view of the people, a great cheer arose. He waited quietly for them to stop, and then raised

his hand and began speaking. Lylda and I stood hand in hand in the shadow of the doorway, out of sight of the crowd, but with it and the entire courtyard plainly in our view.

"It was a quadrangular enclosure, formed by the four sides of the palace, perhaps three hundred feet across, packed solidly now with people of both sexes, the gleaming whiteness of the upper parts of their bodies, and their upturned faces, making a striking picture.

"For perhaps ten minutes the king spoke steadily, save when he was interrupted by applause. Then he stopped abruptly, and turning, pulled Lylda and me out upon the balcony. The enthusiasm of the crowd doubled at our appearance. I was pushed forward to the balcony rail, where I bowed repeatedly to the cheering throng.

"Just after I left the king's balcony, I met Lylda's father. He was a kindly-faced old gentleman, and took a great interest in me and my story. He it was who told me about the physical conformation of his world, and he seemed to comprehend my explanation of mine.

"That night it rained—a heavy, torrential downpour, such as we have in the tropics. Lylda and I had been talking for sometime, and, I must confess, I had been making love to her ardently. I broached now the principal object of my entrance into her world, and, with an eloquence I did not believe I possessed, I pictured the wonders of our own great Earth above, begging her to come back with me and live out her life with mine in my world.

"Much of what I said, she probably did not understand, but the main facts were intelligible without question. She listened quietly. When I had finished, and waited for her decision, she reached slowly out and clutched my shoulders, awkwardly making as if to kiss me. In an instant she was in my arms, with a low, happy little cry.

"THE CLATTERING fall of rain brought us to ourselves. Rising to her feet, Lylda pulled me over to the window-opening, and together we stood and looked out into the night. The scene before us was beautiful, with a weirdness almost impossible to describe. It was as bright as I had ever seen this world, for even though very heavy clouds hung overhead, the light from the stars was never more than a negligible quantity.

"We were facing the lake—a shining expanse of silver radiation, its surface shifting and crawling, as though a great

undulating blanket of silver mist lay upon it. And coming down to meet it from the sky were innumerable lines of silver—a vast curtain of silver cords that broke apart into great strings of pearls when I followed their downward course.

"And then, as I turned to Lylda, I was struck with the extraordinary weirdness of her beauty as never before. The reflected light from the rain had something the quality of our moonlight. Shining on Lylda's body, it tremendously enhanced the iridescence of her skin. And her face, upturned to mine, bore an expression of radiant happiness and peace such as I had never seen before in a woman's countenance."

The Chemist paused, his voice dying away into silence as he sat lost in thought. Then he pulled himself together with a start. "It was a sight, gentlemen, the memory of which I shall cherish all my life.

"The country before us, under the cloudless, starry sky, stretched gray-blue and beautiful into the quivering obscurity of the distance. At our feet lay the city, just awakening into life. Beyond, over the rolling meadows and fields, wound the road that led out to the battle-front, and coming back over it now, we could see an endless line of vehicles. These, as they passed through the street beneath our window, I found were loaded with soldiers, wounded and dying. I shuddered at the sight of one cart in particular, and Lylda pressed closer to me, pleading with her eyes for my help for her stricken people.

"My exit from the castle was made quite a ceremony. A band of music and a guard of several hundred soldiers ushered me forth, walking beside the king, with Lylda a few paces behind. As we passed through the streets of the city, heading for the open country beyond, we were cheered continually by the people who thronged the streets and crowded upon the house-tops to watch us pass.

"Outside Arite I was taken perhaps a mile, where a wide stretch of country gave me the necessary space for my growth. We were standing upon a slight hill, below which, in a vast semicircle, fully a hundred thousand people were watching.

"And now, for the first time, fear overtook me. I realized my situation—saw myself in a detached sort of way—a stranger in this extraordinary world, with only the power of my drug to raise me out of it. This drug you must remember, I had not as yet taken. Suppose it were not to act? Or were to act wrongly?

"I glanced around. The king stood before me, quietly waiting my pleasure. Then I turned to Lylda. One glance at her proud, happy little face, and my fear left me as suddenly as it had come. I took her in my arms and kissed her there before that multitude. Then I set her down, and signified to the king I was ready.

"I took a minute quantity of one of the drugs, and as I had done before, sat down with my eyes covered. My sensations were fairly similar to those I have already described. When I looked up after a moment, I found the landscape dwindling to tiny proportions in quite as astonishing a way as it had grown before. The king and Lylda stood now hardly above my ankle.

"A great cry arose from the people—a cry wherein horror, fear, and applause seemed equally mixed. I looked down and saw thousands of them running away in terror.

"Still smaller grew everything within my vision, and then, after a moment, the landscape seemed at rest. I kneeled now upon the ground, carefully, to avoid treading on any of the people around me. I located Lylda and the king after a moment; tiny little creatures less than an inch in height. I was then, I estimated, from their viewpoint, about four hundred feet tall.

"I put my hand flat upon the ground near Lylda, and after a moment she climbed into it, two soldiers lifting her up the side of my thumb as it lay upon the ground. In the hollow of my palm, she lay quite securely, and very carefully I raised her up toward my face. Then, seeing that she was frightened, I set her down again.

"At my feet, hardly more than a few steps away, lay the tiny city of Arite and the lake. I could see all around the latter now, and could make out clearly a line of hills on the other side. Off to the left the road wound up out of sight in the distance. As far as I could see, a line of soldiers was passing out along this road—marching four abreast, with carts at intervals, loaded evidently with supplies; only occasionally, now, vehicles passed in the other direction. Can I make it plain to you, gentlemen, my sensations in changing stature? I felt at first as though I were tremendously high in the air, looking down as from a balloon upon the familiar territory beneath me.

"That feeling passed after a few moments, and I found that my point of view had changed. I no longer felt that I was looking down from a balloon, but

felt as a normal person feels. And again I conceived myself but six feet tall, standing above a dainty little toy world. It is all in the viewpoint, of course, and never, during all my changes, was I for more than a moment able to feel of a different stature than I am at this present instant. It was always everything else that changed.

"ACCORDING TO the directions I had received from the king, I started now to follow the course of the road. I found it difficult walking, for the country was dotted with houses, trees, and cultivated fields, and each footstep was a separate problem.

"I progressed in this manner perhaps two miles, covering what the day before I would have called about a hundred and thirty or forty miles. The country became wilder as I advanced, and now was in places crowded with separate collections of troops.

"I have not mentioned the commotion I made in this walk over the country. My coming must have been told widely by couriers the night before, to soldiers and peasantry alike, or the sight of me would have caused utter demoralization. As it was, I must have been terrifying to a tremendous degree. I think the careful way in which I picked my course, stepping in the open as much as possible, helped reassure the people. Behind me, whenever I turned, they seemed rather more curious than fearful, and once or twice when I stopped for a few moments they approached my feet closely. One athletic young soldier caught the loose end of the string of one of my buskins, as it hung over my instep close to the ground, and pulled himself up hand over hand, amid the enthusiastic cheers of his admiring comrades.

"I had walked nearly another mile, when almost in front of me, and perhaps a hundred yards away, I saw a remarkable sight that I did not at first understand. The country here was crossed by a winding river running in a general way at right angles to my line of progress. At the right, near at hand, and on the nearer bank of the river, lay a little city, perhaps half the size of Arite, with its back up against a hill.

"What first attracted my attention was that, from a dark patch across the river which seemed to be woods, pebbles appeared to pop up at intervals, traversing a little arc perhaps as high as my knees, and falling into the city. I watched for a moment, and then I understood. There was a siege in progress, and the catapults of the

Malites were bombarding the city with rocks.

"I went up a few steps closer, and there the pebbles stopped coming. I stood now beside the city, and as I bent over it, I could see by the battered houses the havoc the bombardment had caused. Inert little figures lay in the streets, and I bent lower and inserted my thumb and forefinger between a row of houses and picked one up. It was the body of a woman, partly mashed. I set it down again hastily.

"Then as I stood up, I felt a sting on my leg. A pebble had hit me on the shin and dropped at my feet. I picked it up. It was the size of a walnut—a huge boulder six feet or more in diameter it would have been in Lylda's eyes. At the thought of her I was struck with a sudden fit of anger. I flung the pebble violently down into the wooded patch and leaped over the river in one bound, landing squarely on both feet in the woods. It was like jumping into a patch of ferns.

"I stamped about me for a moment until a large part of the woods was crushed down. Then I bent over and poked around with my finger. Underneath the tangled wreckage of tiny tree trunks lay numbers of the Malites. I must have trodden upon a thousand or more, as one would stamp upon insects.

"The sight sickened me at first, for after all, I could not look upon them as other than men, even though they were only the length of my thumbnail. I walked a few steps forward, and in all directions I could see swarms of the little creatures running. Then the memory of my coming departure from the world with Lylda, and my promise to the king to rid his land once and for all from these people, made me feel again that they, like vermin, were to be destroyed.

Without looking directly down, I spent the next two hours stamping over this entire vicinity. Then I ran two or three miles directly toward the country of the Malites, and returning I stamped along the course of the river for a mile or so in both directions. Then I walked back to Arite, again picking my way carefully among crowds of the Oroids, who now feared me so little that I had difficulty in moving around without stepping upon them.

"When I had regained my former size, which needed two successive doses of the drug, I found myself surrounded by a crowd of the Oroids, pushing and shoving each other in an effort to get close to me. The

news of my success over their enemy had been divined by them, evidently. Lord knows it must have been obvious enough what I was going to do, when they saw me stride away, a being four hundred feet tall.

"Their enthusiasm and thankfulness now was so mixed with awe and reverent worship of me as a divine being, that when I advanced toward Arite they opened a path immediately. The king, accompanied by Lylda, met me at the edge of the city. The latter threw herself into my arms at once, crying with relief to find me the proper size for her world once more.

"I need not go into details of the ceremonies of rejoicing that took place this afternoon. These people seemed little given to pomp and public demonstration. The king made a speech from his balcony, telling them all I had done, and the city was given over to festivities and preparations to receive suitably the returning soldiers."

The Chemist pushed his chair back from the table, and moistened his dry lips with a swallow of water. "I tell you, gentlemen," he continued, "I felt pretty happy that day. It's a wonderful feeling to find yourself the actual savior of a nation."

At that the Doctor jumped to his feet, overturning his chair, and striking the table a blow with his fist that made the glasses dance.

"By God!" he fairly shouted. "That's just what you can be here to us."

The Banker looked startled, while the Very Young Man pulled the Chemist by the coat in his eagerness to be heard. "A few of those pills," he said in a voice that quivered with excitement, "when you are standing near enemy country, and you can kick the houses apart with the toe of your boot."

"Why not?" said the Big Business Man, and silence fell on the group as they stared at each other, awed by the possibilities that suddenly opened up before them.

V

"I MUST GO BACK!"

THE TREMENDOUS PLAN for the salvation of their own suffering world through the Chemist's discovery occupied the five friends for some time. Then laying aside this subject, that now had become of the most vital importance to them all, the Chemist resumed his narrative.

"My last evening in the world of the ring, I spent with Lylda, discussing our future, and mak-

ing plans for the journey. I must tell you now, gentlemen, that never for a moment during my stay in Arite was I once free from an awful dread of this return trip. I tried to conceive what it would be like, and the more I thought about it, the more hazardous it seemed.

"You must realize, when I was growing smaller, coming in, I was able to climb down, or fall down, or slide down into the spaces as they opened up. Going back, I could only imagine the world as closing in upon me, crushing me to death unless I could find a larger space immediately above into which I could climb.

"And as I talked with Lylda about this, tried to make her understand what I hardly understood myself, I gradually was brought to realize the full gravity of the danger confronting us. If only I had made the trip once before, I could have ventured it with her. But as I looked at her fragile little body, to expose it to the terrible possibilities of such a journey was unthinkable.

"There was another question, too, that troubled me. I had been gone from you nearly a week, and you were only to wait for me two days. I believed firmly that I was living at a faster rate, and that probably my time with you had not expired. But I did not know. And suppose, when I had come out on to the surface of the ring, one of you had had it on his finger while walking along the street? No, I did not want Lylda with me in that event.

"And so I told her—made her understand—that she must stay behind, and that I would come back for her. She did not protest. She said nothing—just looked up into my face with wide, staring eyes and a little quiver of her lips. Then she clutched my hand and fell into a low, sobbing cry.

"I held her in my arms for a few moments, so little, so delicate, so human in her sorrow, so superhuman in her radiant beauty. Soon she stopped crying and smiled up at me bravely.

"Next morning I left. Lylda took me through the tunnels and back into the forest by the river's edge where I had first met her. There we parted. I can see her now, her pathetic, drooping little figure as she trudged back to the tunnel.

"When she had disappeared, I sat down to plan out my journey. I resolved now to reverse as nearly as possible the steps I had taken coming in. Acting on that decision, I started back to that portion of the forest where I had trampled it down.

"I found the place without difficulty, stopping once on the way to eat a few berries, and some of the food I carried with me. Then I took a small amount of the drugs, and in a few moments the forest-trees had dwindled into tiny twigs beneath my feet.

"I started now to find the huge incline down which I had fallen, and when I reached it, after some hours of wandering, I followed its bottom edge to where a pile of rocks and dirt marked my former landing place. The rocks were much larger than I remembered them, and so I knew that I was not so large, now, as when I was here before.

"Remembering the amount of the drug I had taken coming down, I took now twelve of the pills. Then, in a sudden panic, I hastily took two of the others. The result made my head swim most horribly. I sat or lay down, I forget which. When I looked up, I saw the hills beyond the river and the forest coming toward me, yet dwindling away beneath my feet as they approached. The incline seemed to be folding up upon itself, like a telescope. As I watched, its upper edge came into view, a curved, luminous line against the blackness above. Every instant it crawled down closer, more sharply curved, and its inclined surface grew steeper.

"All this time, as I stood still, the ground beneath my feet seemed to be moving. It was crawling toward me, and folding up underneath me where I was standing. Frequently I had to move to avoid rocks that came at me and passed under my feet into nothingness.

"Then, all at once, I realized that I had been stepping constantly backward to avoid the incline wall as it showed itself toward me. I turned to see what was behind, and horror made my flesh creep at what I saw. A black, forbidding wall, much like the incline in front, entirely encircled me. It was hardly more than half a mile away, and towered four or five thousand feet overhead.

"And as I stared in terror, I could see it closing in, the line of its upper edge coming steadily closer and lower. I looked wildly around with an overpowering impulse to run. In every direction towered this rocky wall, inexorably swaying in to crush me.

"I think I fainted. When I came to myself the scene had not greatly changed. I was lying at the bottom and against one wall of a circular pit, now about a thousand feet in diameter and nearly twice as deep. The wall all around I could see was al-

most perpendicular, and it seemed impossible to ascend its smooth, shining sides. The action of the drug had evidently worn off, for everything was quite still.

"My fear had now left me, for I remembered this circular pit quite well. I walked over to its center, and looking around and up to its top, I estimated distance carefully. Then I took two more of the pills.

"Immediately the familiar, sickening, crawling sensation began again. As the walls closed in upon me, I kept carefully in the center of the pit. Steadily they crept in. Now only a few hundred feet away! Now only a few paces—and then I reached out and touched both sides at once with my hands.

"I tell you, gentlemen, it was a terrifying sensation to stand in that well (as it now seemed) and feel its walls closing up with irresistible force. But now the upper edge was within reach of my fingers. I leaped upward and hung for a moment, then pulled myself up and scrambled out, tumbling in a heap on the ground above. As I recovered myself, I looked again at the hole out of which I had escaped; it was hardly big enough to contain my fist.

"I knew, now, I was at the bottom of the scratch. But how different it looked than before. It seemed this time a long, narrow canyon, hardly more than sixty feet across. I glanced up and saw the blue sky overhead that I knew was the space of room above the ring.

"The problem now was quite a different one than getting out of the pit, for I saw that the scratch was so deep in proportion to its width that if I let myself get too big, I would be crushed by its walls before I could jump out. It would be necessary, therefore, to stay comparatively small and climb up its side.

"I selected what appeared to be an especially rough section, and took a portion of another of the pills. Then I started to climb. After an hour the buskins on my feet were torn to fragments, and I was bruised and battered as you saw me. I see, now, how I could have made both my descent into the ring, and my journey back, with comparatively little effort, but I did the best I knew at the time.

"WHEN THE CANYON was about ten feet in width, and I had been climbing arduously for several hours, I found myself hardly more than fifteen or twenty feet above its bottom. And I was still almost that far from the top. With the stature I had then attained, I could have climbed the remaining dis-

tance easily, but for the fact that the wall above had grown too smooth to afford foothold. The effects of the drug had worn off, and I sat down and prepared to take another dose. I did so—the smallest amount I could—and held ready in my hand a pill of the other kind in case of emergency. Steadily the walls closed in.

"A terrible feeling of dizziness now came over me. I clutched the rock beside which I was sitting, and it seemed to melt like ice beneath my grasp. Then I remembered seeing the edge of the canyon within reach above my head, and with my last remaining strength, I pulled myself up, and fell upon the surface of the ring. You know the rest. I took another dose of the powder, and in a few minutes was back among you."

The Chemist stopped speaking, and looked at his friends. "Well," he said, "you've heard it all. What do you think of it?"

"It's a terrible thing to me," sighed the Very Young Man, "that you did not bring Lylda with you."

"It would have been a terrible thing if I had brought her. But I am going back for her."

"When do you plan to go back?" asked the Doctor after a moment.

"As soon as I can—in a day or two," answered the Chemist.

"Before you do your work here? You must not," remonstrated the Big Business Man. "Our war here needs you, our nation, the whole cause of liberty and freedom needs you. You cannot go."

"Lylda needs me, too" returned the Chemist. "I have an obligation toward her now, you know, quite apart from my own feelings. Understand me, gentlemen," he continued earnestly, "I do not mean to place myself and mine before the great fight for democracy and justice being waged in this world. But it is not quite that way, actually; I can go back for Lylda and return here in a week. That week will make little difference to the war. On the other hand, if I go to Europe first, it may take a good many months to complete my task, and during that time Lylda will be using up her life several times faster than I do. No, gentlemen, I am going to her first."

Two days later, the company met again in the privacy of the club-room. When they had finished dinner, the Chemist began in his usual quiet way.

"I am going to ask you this time, gentlemen, to give me a full week. There are four of you—six hours a day of watching for each. It need not be too

great a hardship. You see," he continued, "I want to spend a longer time period in the ring world this time. I may never go back for a third visit, and I want to learn as much, in the interest of science, about it as I can. I was there such a short time before, and it was all so strange and remarkable, I confess I learned practically nothing.

"I told you all I could of its history. But of its art, its science, and all its sociological and economic questions, I got hardly more than a glimpse. It is a world and a people far less advanced than ours, yet with something we have not, and probably never will have—the universally distributed milk of human kindness. Yes, gentlemen, it is a world well worth studying."

THE BANKER came out of a brown study. "How about your formulas for these drugs?" he asked abruptly: "Where are they?"

The Chemist tapped his forehead, smilingly.

"Well, hadn't you better leave them with us?" the Banker pursued. "The hazards of your trip—you can't tell, you know . . ."

"Don't misunderstand me, gentlemen," broke in the Chemist. "I wouldn't give you those formulas if my life and even Lylda's depended on it. There again you do not differentiate between the individual and the race. These drugs are the most powerful thing for good in the world today—and they are equally as powerful for evil. I would stake my life on what you would do, but I will not stake the life of a nation."

"I know what I would do if I had the formulas," began the Very Young Man.

"Yes, but *I* don't know what you'd do," laughed the Chemist. "Don't you see I'm right?"

They admitted that they did, though the Banker acquiesed very grudgingly.

"The time of my departure is at hand. Is there anything else, gentlemen, before I leave you?" asked the Chemist, beginning to disrobe.

"Please tell Lylda I want very much to meet her," said the Very Young Man earnestly, and they all laughed.

When the room was cleared, and the handkerchief and ring in place once more, the Chemist turned to them again. "Good-by, my friends," he said, holding out his hands. "One week from tonight, at most." Then he took the pills.

No unusual incident marked his departure. The last they saw of him he was sitting on the ring near the scratch.

Then passed the slow days of

watching, each taking his turn for the allotted six hours.

By the fifth day, they began hourly to expect the Chemist, but it passed through its weary length, and he did not come. The sixth day dragged by, and then came the last—the day he had promised would end their watching. Still he did not come, and in the evening they gathered, and all four watched together, each unwilling to miss the return of the adventurer and his woman from another world.

But the minutes lengthened into hours, and midnight found the white-faced little group, hopeful yet hopeless, with fear tugging at their hearts. A second week passed, and still they watched, explaining with an optimism they could none of them feel, the non-appearance of their friend. At the end of the second week they met again to talk the situation over, a dull feeling of fear and horror possessing them. The Doctor was the first to voice what now each of them was forced to believe. "I guess it's all useless," he said. "He's not coming back."

"I don't hardly dare give him up," said the Big Business Man.

"Me, too," agreed the Very Young Man sadly.

The Doctor sat for some time in silence, thoughtfully regarding the ring. "My friends," he began finally, "this is too big a thing to deal with in any but the most careful way. I can't imagine what is going on inside that ring, but I do know what is happening in our world, and what our friend's return means to civilization here. Under the circumstances, therefore, I cannot, I will not give him up.

"I am going to put that ring in a museum and pay for having it watched indefinitely. Will you join me?" He turned to the Big Business Man as he spoke.

"Make it a threesome," said the Banker gruffly. "What do you take me for?" and the Very Young Man sighed with the tragedy of youth.

* * *

And so today, if you like, you may go and see the ring. It lies in the Museum of the American Society for Biological Research. You will find it near the center of the third gallery, lying on its black silk handkerchief, and covered by a glass bell. The air in the bell is renewed constantly, and near at hand sit two armed guards, watching day and night. And as you stand before it, thinking of the wonderful world within

its atoms, you well may shudder at your infinite unimportance as an individual and yet glow with pride at your divine omnipotence as a fragment of human life.

BOOKS

SEEKERS OF TOMORROW, 433 pp. plus 7 p. index; MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE FICTION, 518 pp, including Introduction; both by Sam Moskowitz; The World Publishing Co., 2231 West 110th Street, Cleveland 2, Ohio. $6.00 each.

The first of these two volumes is an excellent follow-up to the author's previous book *Explorers of the Infinite* (World, $6.00), which dealt with the great authors of science fiction who flourished prior to the inception of science fiction magazines. *Seekers of Tomorrow* presents a biographical and critical study of 22 of the leading lights in contemporary science fiction, plus a chapter discussing others more briefly. Nine of these authors—Edward E. Smith, Ph.D., John W. Campbell, Murray Leinster, Edmond Hamilton, Jack Williamson, John Wyndham (John Beynon Harris), Clifford D. Simak, C. L. Moore, and Henry Kuttner, were either "names" or well known in science fiction during the period in which FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION is interested. Robert Bloch was a name in weird fiction; and L. Sprague de Camp and Eric Frank Russell first appeared at the end of the period. The rest: Lester del Rey, Robert A. Heinlein, A. E. van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon, Fritz Leiber, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, and Philip Jose Farmer, came up after 1937.

Mortimer Weisinger is present due to his work on *Superman Comics*. Whether you like it or not, and I do not, the fact is that he belongs in a discussion of science fiction of the times.

This volume is a labor of love, one which involved painstaking research and correspondence and is a "must" for anyone who wants to understand the history of modern science fiction and its authors. The buyer should be warned that there are numerous typographical errors, many of them in the dates of old magazines containing particular stories discussed.

MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE FICTION contains stories by all of the authors mentioned above, except Weisinger, and makes good reading. My own feeling is that while the authors themselves can be said to be distinguished, only Campbell, Hamilton, Wyndham, Simak, and Leiber are really represented with top-division stories. And Sturgeon is particularly misrepresented; not only is *Microscopic God* not the sort of story which has made him respected outside the circle of *aficiandos*, but it is a story he particularly dislikes. There ought to have been better choices for Kuttner and Moore, too—but the problem of rights, budget, and duplication of stories previously anthologized often forces an anthologist to decisions with which he is not entirely happy. Then one finds problems such as the one with Dr. Smith; none of his shorter works give more than a faint hint of his stature, and his faults stick out painfully in them. RAWL

THE CITY OF SINGING FLAME

by CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Arkham House brought out Smith's *Poems in Prose,* with a very fine introduction by Donald S. Fryer, last year; and still in print from the same source are *Genius Loci* and *Tales of Science and Sorcery.* The theme of an Earthman going through a dimensional door to another world of strangeness and beauty was not brand new when this tale appeared in 1931, but no one had done it so vividly in the short story length.

FOREWORD

WE HAD BEEN friends for a decade or more, and I knew Giles Angarth as well as anyone could purport to know him. Yet the thing was no less a mystery to me than to the others at the time; and it is still a mystery.

Sometimes I think that he and Ebbonly designed it all between themselves as a huge, insoluble hoax; that they are still alive somewhere, and are laughing at the world that has been so sorely baffled by their disappearance. And sometimes I make tentative plans to re-visit Crater Ridge and find, if I can, the two boulders mentioned in Angarth's narrative as having a vague resemblance to broken-down columns.

In the meantime, no one has uncovered any trace of the missing men or has heard even the faintest rumor concerning them; and the whole affair it would seem, is likely to remain a most singular and exasperating riddle.

Angarth, whose fame as a writer of fantastic fiction will probably outlive that of most other modern magazine contributors, had been spending the summer among the Sierras, and had been living alone until the artist, Felix Ebbonly, went to visit him. Ebbonly, whom I had never met, was well known for his imaginative paintings and drawings; and he had illustrated more than one of Angarth's novels. When neighboring campers became alarmed over the prolonged absence of the two men and the cabin was searched for some possible clue, a package addressed to me was found lying on the table; and I recieved it in due course of time, after reading many newspaper speculations concerning the double vanishment. The package contained a small, leather-bound notebook. Angarth had written on the fly-leaf:

Dear Hastane: You may publish this journal sometime if you like. People will think it the last and wildest of all my fictions — unless they take it for one of your own. In either case, it will be just as well. Good-by. Faithfully, Giles Angarth.

I am now publishing the journal, which will doubtless meet the reception he predicted. But I am not so certain myself, as to whether the tale is truth or fabrication. The only way to make sure will be locate the two boulders; and anyone who has ever seen Crater Ridge, and has wandered over its miles of rockstrewn desolation, will realize the difficulty of such a task.

THE JOURNAL

July 31, 1930. I have never acquired the diary-keeping habit — mainly, because of my uneventful mode of existence, in which there had seldom been anything to chronicle. But the thing which happened this morning is so extravagantly strange, so remote from mun-

dane laws and parallels, that I feel impelled to write it down to the best of my understanding and ability. Also, I shall keep an account of the possible repetition and continuation of my experience. It will be perfectly safe to do this, for no one who ever reads the record will be likely to believe it.

I had gone for a walk on Crater Ridge, which lies a mile or less to the north of my cabin near Summit. Though differing markedly in its character from the usual landscapes roundabout, it is one of my favorite places. It is exceptionally bare and desolate, with little more in the way of vegetation than mountain sun-flowers, wild currant-bushes, and a few sturdy, wind-warped pines and supple tamaracks.

Geologists deny it a volcanic origin; yet its outcroppings of rough, nodular stone and enormous rubble heaps have all the air of scoriac remains — at least to my non-scientific eye. They look like the slag and refuse of Cyclopean furnaces, poured out in pre-human years to cool and harden into shapes of limitless grotesquery.

Among them are stones that suggest the fragments of primordial bas-reliefs, or small prehistoric figurines; and others that seem to have been graven with lost letters in an indecipherable script. Unexpectedly there is a little tarn on one end of the long, dry Ridge — a tarn that has never been fathomed. The hill is an odd interlude among the granite sheets and crags, and the fir-clothed ravines and valleys of this region.

It was a clear, windless morning; and I paused often to view the magnificent perspectives of varied scenery that were visible on every hand — the titan battlements of Castle Peak, the the rude masses of Donner Peak, with its dividing pass of hemlocks, the remote, the luminous blue of the Nevada Mountains, and the soft green of willows in the valley at my feet. It was an aloof, silent world; and I heard no sound other than the dry, crackling noise of cicadas among the currant-bushes.

I strolled on in a zig-zag manner for some distance; and coming to one of the rubble-fields with which the Ridge is interstrewn, I began to search the ground closely, hoping to find a stone that was sufficiently quaint and grotesque in its form to be worth keeping as a curiosity. I had found several such in my previous wanderings.

Suddenly I came to a clear space amid the rubble, in which nothing grew — a space that was round as an artificial ring. In the center were two isolated

boulders, queerly alike in shape, and lying about five feet apart. I paused to examine them. Their substance, a dull, greenish-gray stone, seemed to be different from anything else in the neighborhood; and I conceived at once the weird, unwarrantable fancy that they might be the pedestals of vanished columns, worn away by incalculable years till there remained only these sunken ends.

Certainly the perfect roundness and uniformity of the boulders was peculiar; and though I possess a smattering of geology I could not identify their smooth, soapy material.

My imagination was excited, and I began to indulge in some rather overheated fantasies. But the wildest of these was a homely commonplace in comparison with the thing that happened when I took a single step forward in the vacant space immediately between the two boulders. I shall try to describe it to the utmost of my verbal ability; though human language is naturally wanting in words that are adequate for the delineation of events and sensations beyond the normal scope of human experience.

Nothing is more disconcerting than to miscalculate the degree of descent in taking a step forward on level, open ground, and find utter nothingness underfoot! I seemed to be going down into an empty gulf, and at the same time the landscape before me vanished in a swirl of broken images and everything went blind. There was a feeling of intense, hyperborean cold; and an indescribable sickness and vertigo possessed me, due, no doubt, to the profound disturbance of equilibrium. Also—either from the speed of my descent or for some other reason—I was totally unable to draw breath.

My thoughts and feelings were unutterably confused, and half the time it seemed to me that I was falling *upward* rather than downward, or was sliding horizontally or at some oblique angle. At last I had the sensation of turning a complete somersault; and then I found myself standing erect on solid ground once more, without the least shock or jar of impact. The darkness cleared away from my vision, but I was still dizzy, and the optical images I received were altogether meaningless for some moments.

WHEN FINALLY I recovered the power of cognizance, and was able to view my surroundings with a measure of perception, I experienced a mental confusion equivalent to that of a man who might

find himself cast without warning on the shore of some foreign planet. There was the same sense of utter loss and alienation which would assuredly be felt in such a case—the same vertiginous, overwhelming bewilderment, the same ghastly sense of separation from all the familiar environmental details that give color and form and definition to our lives and even determine our very personalities.

I was standing in the midst of a landscape which bore no degree or manner of resemblance to Crater Ridge. A long, gradual slope, covered with violet grass and studded at intervals with stones of monolithic size and shape, ran undulantly away beneath me to a broad plain with sinuous open meadows and high stately forests of an unknown vegetation whose predominant hues were purple and yellow. The plain seemed to end in a wall of impenetrable golden-brownish mist, that rose with phantom pinnacles to dissolve on a sky of luminescent amber in which there was no sun.

In the foreground of this amazing scene, not more than two or three miles away, there loomed a city whose massive towers and mountainous ramparts of red stone were such as the Anakim of undiscovered worlds might build. Wall on beetling wall, and spire on giant spire, it soared to confront the heavens, maintaining everywhere the severe and solemn lines of a rectilinear architecture. It seemed to overwhelm and crush down the beholder with its stern and crag-like imminence.

As I viewed this city, I forgot my initial sense of bewilderment, loss, and alienage, in an awe with which something of actual terror was mingled; and at the same time, I felt an obscure but profound allurement, the cryptic emanation of some enslaving spell. But after I had gazed awhile, the cosmic strangeness and bafflement of my unthinkable position returned upon me; and I felt only a wild desire to escape from the maddeningly oppressive bizarrerie of this region and regain my own world. In an effort to fight down my agitation, I tried to figure out, if possible, what had really happened.

I had read a number of trans-dimensional stories—in fact, I had written one or two myself; and I had often pondered the possibility of other worlds or material planes which may co-exist in the same place with ours, invisible and impalpable to human senses. Of

course, I realized at once that I had fallen into some such dimension. Doubtless, when I took that step forward between the boulders, I had been precipitated into some sort of flaw or fissure in space, to emerge at the bottom in this alien sphere—in a totally different kind of space. It sounded simple enough in a way—but not simple enough to make the *modus operandi* anything but a brain-racking mystery.

In a further effort to collect myself, I studied my immediate surroundings with a close attention. This time, I was impressed by the arrangement of the monolithic stones I have spoken of, many of which were disposed at fairly regular intervals in two parallel lines running down the hill, as if to mark the course of some ancient road obliterated by the purple grass.

Turning to follow its ascent, I saw right behind me two columns, standing at precisely the same distance apart as the two odd boulders on Crater Ridge, and formed of the same soapy, greenish-gray stone! The pillars were perhaps nine feet high, and had been taller at one time, since the tops were splintered and broken away. Not far above them, the mounting slope vanished from view in a great bank of the same golden-brown mist that enveloped the remoter plain. But there were no more monoliths—and it seemed as if the road had ended with those pillars.

Inevitably I began to speculate as to the relationship between the columns in this new dimension and the boulders in my own world. Surely the resemblance could not be a matter of mere chance. If I stepped between the columns, could I return to the human sphere by a reversal of my precipitation therefrom? And if so, by what inconceivable beings from foreign time and space had the columns and boulders been established as the portals of a gateway between two worlds? Who could have used the gateway, and for what purpose?

My brain reeled before the infinite vistas of surmise that were opened by such questions.

HOWEVER, what concerned me most was the problem of getting back to Crater Ridge. The weirdness of it all, the monstrous walls of the nearby town, the unnatural hues and forms of the outlandish scenery, were too much for human nerves; and I felt that I should go mad if forced to remain long in such a milieu. Also, there was no telling what hostile powers or entities I might encounter if I stayed.

The slope and plain were de-

void of animate life, as far as I could see; but the great city was presumptive proof of its existence. Unlike the heroes in my own tales, who were wont to visit the fifth dimension or the worlds of Algol with perfect *sang-froid* I did not feel in the least adventurous; and I shrank back with man's instinctive recoil before the unknown. With one fearful glance at the looming city and the wide plain with its lofty, gorgeous vegetation, I turned and stepped back between the columns.

There was the same instantaneous plunge into blind and freezing gulfs, the same indeterminate falling and twisting, that had marked my descent into this new dimension. At the end I found myself standing, very dizzy and shaken, on the same spot from which I had taken my forward step between the greenish-gray boulders. Crater Ridge was swirling and reeling about me as if in the throes of earthquake; and I had to sit down for a minute or two before I could recover my equilibrium.

I came back to the cabin like a man in a dream. The experience seemed, and still seems, incredible and unreal; and yet it has overshadowed everything else, and has colored and dominated all my thoughts. Perhaps by writing it down I can shake it off a little. It has unsettled me more than any previous experience in my whole life; and the world about me seems hardly less improbable and nightmarish than the one that I have penetrated in a fashion so fortuitous.

Aug. 2nd. I have done a lot of thinking in the past few days—and the more I ponder and puzzle, the more mysterious it all becomes. Granting the flaw in space, which must be an absolute vacuum, impervious to air, ether, light and matter, how was it possible for me to fall into it? And having fallen in, how could I fall out—particularly into a sphere that has no certifiable relationship with ours?

But, after all, one process would be as easy as the other, in theory. The main objection is, how could one move in a vacuum, either up or down or backward or forward? The whole thing would baffle the comprehension of an Einstein; and I do not feel that I have even approached the true solution.

Also, I have been fighting the temptation to go back, if only to convince myself that the thing really occurred. But, after all, why shouldn't I go back? An opportunity has been vouchsafed to me such as

no man may ever have been given before; and the wonders I shall see and the secrets I shall learn are beyond imagining. My nervous trepidation is inexcusably childish under the circumstances.

Aug. 3rd. I went back this morning, armed with a revolver. Somehow, without thinking that it might make a difference, I did not step in the very middle of the space between the boulders. Undoubtedly as a result of this, my descent was more prolonged and impetuous than before, and seemed to consist mainly of a series of spiral somersaults. It must have taken me minutes to recover from the ensuing vertigo; and when I came to, I was lying on the violet grass.

This time, I went boldly down the slope; and keeping as much as I could in the shelter of that bizarre purple and yellow vegetation, I stole toward the looming city. All was very still; and there was no breath of wind in those exotic trees, which appeared to imitate, in their lofty upright boles and horizontal foliage, the severe architectural lines of the Cyclopean buildings.

I had not gone far when I came to a road in the forest — a road paved with stupendous blocks of stone at least twenty feet square. It ran toward the city. I thought for awhile that it was wholly deserted — perhaps disused; and I even dared to walk upon it, till I heard a noise behind me and turning saw the approach of several singular entities. Terrified, I sprang back and hid myself in a thicket, from which I watched the passing of those creatures, wondering fearfully if they had seen me. Apparently my fears were groundless, for they did not even glance at my hiding-place.

It is hard for me to describe or even visualize them now, for they were totally unlike anything that we are accustomed to think of as human or animal. They must have been ten feet tall, and they were moving along with colossal strides that took them from sight in a few instants beyond a turn of the road. Their bodies were bright and shining, as if encased in some sort of armor; and their heads were equipped with high, curving appendages of opalescent hues which nodded above them like fantastic plumes, but may have been antennae or other sense-organs of a novel type.

Trembling with excitement and wonder, I continued my progress through the richly-colored undergrowth. As I went on, I perceived for the first time

that there were no shadows anywhere. The light came from all portions of the sunless amber heaven, pervading everything with a soft, uniform luminosity.

All was motionless and silent, as I have said before; and there was no evidence of bird, insect or animal life in all this preternatural landscape. But when I had advanced to within a mile of the city (as well as I could judge the distance in a realm where the very proportions of objects were unfamiliar) I became aware of something which at first was recognizable as a vibration rather than a sound.

There was a queer thrilling in my nerves, the disquieting sense of some unknown force or emanation flowing through my body. This was perceptible for some time before I heard the music; but having heard it, my auditory nerves identified it at once with the vibration.

It was faint and far-off, and seemed to emanate from the very heart of the titan city. The melody was piercingly sweet, and resembled at times the singing of some voluptuous feminine voice. However, no human voice could have possessed the unearthly pitch, the shrill, perpetually sustained notes that somehow suggested the light of remote worlds and stars translated into sound.

Ordinarily I am not very sensitive to music; I have even been reproached for not reacting more strongly to it. But I had not gone much farther when I realized the peculiar mental and emotional spell which the far-off sound was beginning to exert upon me. There was a siren-like allurement which drew me on forgetful of the strangeness and potential perils of my situation; and I felt a slow, drug-like intoxication of brain and senses. In some insidious manner, I know not how nor why, the music conveyed the ideas of vast but attainable space and altitude, of superhuman freedom and exultation; and it seemed to promise all the impossible splendors of which my imagination has vaguely dreamt.

THE FOREST continued almost to the city walls. Peering from behind the final boscage, I saw their overwhelming battlements in the sky above me, and noted the flawless jointure of their prodigious blocks. I was near the great road, which entered an open gate that was large enough to admit the passage of behemoths. There were no guards in sight; and several more of the tall, gleaming entities came striding along and went in as I watched. From where I stood, I was unable to see inside the gate; for the wall

was stupendously thick. The music poured from that mysterious entrance in an ever-strengthening flood and sought to draw me on with its weird seduction, eager for unimaginable things.

It was hard to resist, hard to rally my will-power and turn back. I tried to concentrate on the thought of danger—but the thought was tenuously unreal. At last I tore myself away and retraced my footsteps, very slowly and lingeringly, till I was beyond reach of the music. Even then the spell persisted, like the effects of a drug; and all the way home I was tempted to return and follow those shining giants into the city.

Aug. 5th. I have visited the new dimension once more. I thought I could resist that summoning music; and I even took some cotton-wadding along with which to stuff my ears if it should affect me too strongly. I began to hear the supernal melody at the same distance as before, and was drawn onward in the same manner. But this time I entered the open gate!

I wonder if I can describe that city. I felt like a crawling ant upon its mammoth pavements, amid the measureless Babel of its buildings, of its streets and arcades. Everywhere there columns, obelisks, and the perpendicular pylons of fane-like structures that would have dwarfed those of Thebes and Heliopolis.

And the people of the city! How is one to depict them or give them a name! I think that the gleaming entities I first saw are not the true inhabitants, but are only visitors—perhaps from some other world or dimension, like myself. The real people are giants too; but they move slowly, with solemn, hieratic paces. Their bodies are nude and swart and their limbs are those of caryatides—massive enough, it would seem, to uphold the roofs and lintels of their own buildings. I fear to describe them minutely: for human words would give the idea of something monstrous and uncouth; and these beings are not monstrous but have merely developed in obedience to the laws of another evolution than ours, the environmental forces and conditions of a different world.

Somehow, I was not afraid when I saw them—perhaps the music had drugged me till I was beyond fear. There was a group of them just inside the gate; and they seemed to pay me no attention whatever as I passed them. The opaque, jet-like orbs of their huge eyes were

impassive as the carven eyes of andro-sphinxes; and they uttered no sound from their heavy straight, expressionless lips. Perhaps they lack the sense of hearing, for their strange, semi-rectangular heads were devoid of anything in the nature of external ears.

I followed the music, which was still remote and seemed to increase little in loudness. I was soon overtaken by several of those beings whom I had previously seen on the road outside the walls; and they passed me quickly and disappeared in the labyrinth of buildings. After them there came other beings, of a less gigantic kind, and without the bright shards or armor worn by the first-comers. Then, overhead two creatures with long, translucent wings, intricately veined and ribbed, came flying side-by-side and vanished behind the others. Their faces, featured with organs of unsurmisable use, were not those of animals; and I felt sure that they were beings of a high order of development.

I saw hundreds of these slow-moving, somber entities whom I have identified as the true inhabitants. None of them appeared to notice me. Doubtless they were accustomed to seeing weirder and more unusual kinds of life than humanity. As I went on, I was overtaken by dozens of improbable-looking creatures, all going in the same direction as myself, as if drawn by the same siren melody.

DEEPER AND DEEPER I went into the wilderness of colossal architecture, led by that remote, ethereal, opiate music. I soon noticed a sort of gradual ebb and flow in the sound, occupying an interval of ten minutes or more; but by imperceptible degrees it grew sweeter and nearer. I wondered how it could penetrate that manifold maze of builded stone and be heard outside the walls.

I must have walked for miles, in the ceaseless gloom of those rectangular structures that hung above me, tier on tier, at an awful height in the amber zenith. Then, at length, I came to the core and secret of it all. Preceded and followed by a number of those chimerical entities, I emerged on a great square in whose center was a temple-like building more immense than the others. The music poured, imperiously shrill and loud, from its many-columned entrance.

I felt the thrill of one who approaches the sanctum of some hierarchal mystery, when I entered the halls of that building. People who must have come from many different worlds or dimensions, went with

me and before me along the titanic colonnades whose pillars were graven with indecipherable runes and enigmatic bas-reliefs.

Also, the dark, colossal inhabitants of the town were standing or roaming about, intent, like all the others, on their affairs. None of these beings spoke, either to me or to one another; and though several eyed me casually, my presence was evidently taken for granted.

There are no words to convey the incomprehensible wonder of it all. And the music? I have utterly failed to describe that, also. It was as if some marvellous elixir had been turned into sound-waves—an elixir conferring the gift of superhuman life, and the high, magnificent dreams which are dreamt by the immortals. It mounted in my brain like a supernal drunkenness as I approached the hidden source.

I do not know what obscure warning prompted me now to stuff my ears with cotton before I went any farther. Though I could still hear it, still feel its peculiar, penetrant vibration, the sound became muted when I had done this; and its influence was less powerful henceforward. There is little doubt that I owe my life to this simple and homely precaution.

The endless rows of columns grew dim for awhile as the interior of a long basaltic cavern; and then, at some distance ahead, I perceived the glimmering of a soft light on the floor and pillars. The light soon became an overflooding radiance, as if gigantic lamps were being lit in the temple's heart; and the vibrations of the hidden music pulsed more strongly in my nerves.

The hall ended in a chamber of immense, indefinite scope, whose walls and roof were doubtful with unremoving shadows. In the center, amid the pavement of mammoth blocks, there was a circular pit above which there seemed to float a fountain of flame that soared in one perpetual, slowly lengthening jet. This flame was the sole illumination; and also it was the source of the wild, unearthly music. Even with my purposely deafened ears, I was wooed by the shrill and starry sweetness of its singing; and I felt the voluptuous lure and the high, vertiginous exaltation.

I knew immediately that the place was a shrine, and that the trans-dimensional beings who accompanied me were visiting pilgrims. There were scores of them—perhaps hundreds; but all were dwarfed in the cosmic immensity of that chamber. They were gathered before the flame in various at-

titudes of worship; they bowed their exotic heads or made mysterious gestures of adoration with unhuman hands and members. And the voices of several, deep as booming drums, or sharp as the stridulation of giant insects, were audible amid the singing of the fountain.

Spellbound, I went forward and joined them. Enthralled by the music and by the vision of the soaring flame, I paid as little heed to my outlandish companions as they to me.

The fountain rose and rose, till its light flickered on the limbs and features of throned, colossal statues behind it — of heroes or gods or demons from the earlier cycles of alien time, staring in stone from a dusk of illimitable mystery. The fire was green and dazzling, it was pure as the central flame of a star; it blinded me, and when I turned my eyes away, the air was filled with webs of intricate color, with swiftly changing arabesques whose numberless, unwonted hues and patterns were such as no mundane eye had ever beheld. I felt a stimulating warmth that filled my very marrow with intenser life.

THE MUSIC mounted with the flame; and I understood now its recurrent ebb and flow. As I looked and listened, a mad thought was born in my mind — the thought of how marvellous and ecstatical it would be to run forward and leap headlong into the singing fire. The music seemed to tell me that I should find in that moment of flaring dissolution all the delight and triumph, all the splendor and exaltation it had promised from afar. It besought me, it pleaded with tones of supernal melody; and despite the wadding in my ears, the seduction was well-nigh irresistible.

However, it had not robbed me of all sanity. With a sudden start of terror, like one who has been tempted to fling himself from a high precipice, I drew back. Then I saw that the same dreadful impulse was shared by some of my companions. The two entities with scarlet wings, whom I have previously mentioned, were standing a little apart from the rest of us. Now, with a great fluttering they rose and flew toward the flame like moths toward a candle. For a brief moment the light shone redly through their half-transparent wings, ere they disappeared in the leaping incandescence, which flared briefly and then burned as before.

Then, in rapid succession, a number of other beings who represented the most divergent trends of biology, sprang forward and immolated them-

selves in the flame. There were creatures with translucent bodies, and some that shone with all the hues of the opal; there were winged colossi, and titans who strode as with seven-league boots; and there was one being with useless, abortive wings, who crawled rather than ran, to seek the same glorious doom as the rest. But among them there were none of the city's people: these merely stood and looked on, impassive and statue-like as ever.

I saw that the fountain had now reached its greatest height and was beginning to decline. It sank steadily but slowly to half its former elevation. During this interval there were no more acts of self-sacrifice; and several of the beings beside me turned abruptly and went away, as if they had overcome the lethal spell.

One of the tall, armored entities, as he left, addressed me in words that were like clarion-notes, with unmistakable accents of warning. By a mighty effort of will, in a turmoil of conflicting emotions, I followed him. At every step the madness and delirium of the music warred with my instincts of self-preservation. More than once I started to go back. My homeward journey was blurred and doubtful as the wanderings of a man in an opium-trance; and the music sang behind me and told me of the rapture I had missed, of the flaming dissolution whose brief instant was better than aeons of mortal life.

Aug. 9th. I have tried to go on with a new story, but have made no progress. Anything that I can imagine, or frame in language, seems flat and puerile beside the world of unsearchable mystery to which I have found admission. The temptation to return is more cogent than ever, the call of that remembered music is sweeter than the voice of a loved woman. And always I am tormented by the problem of it all, and tantalized by the little which I have perceived and understood. What forces are these whose existence and working I have merely apprehended? And who are the beings that visit the enshrined flame? What rumor or legend has drawn them from outland realms and ulterior planets to that place of blissful danger and destruction? And what is the fountain itself, and what the secret of its lure and its deadly singing? These problems admit of infinite surmise, but no conceivable solution.

I am planning to go back once more—but not alone. Someone must go with me this time, as a witness to the wonder and the peril. It is all too strange for credence—I must

have human corroboration of what I have seen and felt and conjectured. Also, another might understand where I have failed to do more than apprehend.

Who shall I take? It will be necessary to invite someone here from the outer world—someone of high intellectual and aesthetic capacity. Shall I ask Philip Hastane, my fellow fiction-writer? Hastane would be too busy, I fear. But there is the Californian artist, Felix Ebbonly, who has illustrated some of my fantastic novels.

Ebbonly would be the man to see and appreciate the new dimension, if he can come. With his bent for the bizarre and the unearthly, the spectacle of that plain and city, the Babelian buildings and arcades, and the temple of the flame, will simply enthrall him. I shall write immediately to his San Francisco address.

Aug. 12th. Ebbonly is here—the mysterious hints in my letter regarding some novel pictorial subjects along his own line, were too provocative for him to resist. Now I have explained full and have given him a detailed account of my adventures. I can see that he is a little incredulous, for which I hardly blame him. But he will not remain incredulous very long, for tomorrow we shall visit together the city of the singing flame.

Aug. 13th. I must concentrate my disordered faculties, I must choose my words and write with exceeding care. This will be the last entry in my journal, and the last writing I shall ever do. When I have finished, I shall wrap the journal up and address it to Philip Hastane, who can make such disposition of it as he sees fit.

I took Ebbonly into the other dimension today. He was impressed, even as I had been, by the two isolated boulders on Crater Ridge.

"They look like the guttered ends of columns established by prehuman gods," he remarked. "I begin to believe you now."

I told him to go first, and indicated the place where he should step. He obeyed without hesitation, and I had the singular experience of seeing a man melt into utter, instantaneous nothingness. One moment he was there—and the next, there was only bare ground and the far-off tamaracks whose view his body had obstructed. I followed, and found him standing in speechless awe on the violet grass.

"This," he said at last, "is the sort of thing whose existence I have hitherto merely suspect-

ed and have never even been able to hint in my most imaginative drawings."

We spoke little as we followed the range of monolithic boulders toward the plain. Far in the distance, beyond those high and stately trees with their sumptuous foliage, the golden-brown vapors had parted, showing vistas of an immense horizon; and past the horizon were range on range of gleaming orbs and fiery, flying motes in the depth of that amber heaven. It was as if the veil of another universe than ours had been drawn back.

We crossed the plain, and came at length within earshot of the siren music. I warned Ebbonly to stuff his ears with cotton-wadding; but he refused.

"I don't want to deaden any new sensations which I may experience," he observed.

We entered the city. My companion was in a veritable rhapsody of artistic delight when he beheld the enormous buildings and the people. I could see, too, that the music had taken hold upon him: his look soon became fixed and dreamy as that of an opium-eater. At first he made many comments on the architecture and the various beings who passed us, and called my attention to details which I had not perceived heretofore.

However, as we drew nearer to the temple of the flame, his observational interest seemed to flag, and was replaced by more and more of an ecstatic inward absorption. His remarks became fewer and briefer; and he did not even seem to hear my questions. It was evident that the sound had wholly bemused and bewitched him.

Even as on my former visit, there were many pilgrims going toward the shrine — and few that were coming away from it. Most of them belonged to evolutionary types that I had seen before. Among those that were new to me, I recall one gorgeous creature with golden and cerulean wings like those of a giant lepidopter and scintillating, jewel-like eyes that must have been designed to mirror the glories of some Edenic world.

I too felt, as before, the captious thralldom and bewitchment, the insidious, gradual perversion of thought and instinct, as if the music were working in my brain like a subtle alkaloid. Since I had taken my usual precaution, my subjection to the influence was less complete than that of Ebbonly; but nevertheless it was enough to make me forget a number of things — among them, the initial concern which I had felt when my companion refused to em-

ploy the same mode of protection as myself. I no longer thought of his danger or my own, except as something very distant and immaterial.

The streets were like the prolonged and bewildering labyrinth of a nightmare. But the music led us forthrightly; and always there were other pilgrims. Like men in the grip of some powerful current, we were drawn to our destination.

AS WE PASSED along the hall of gigantic columns and neared the abode of the fiery fountain, a sense of our peril quickened momentarily in my brain, and I sought to warn Ebbonly once more. But all my protests and remonstrances were futile: he was deaf as a machine, and wholly imperivous to anything but the lethal music. His expression and his movements were those of a somnambulist. Even when I seized and shook him with such violence as I could muster, he remained oblivious of my presence.

The throng of worshippers was larger than upon my first visit. The Jet of pure, incandescent flame was mounting steadily as we entered, and it sang with the pure ardor and ecstacy of a star alone in space. Again, with ineffable tones, it told me the rapture of a moth-like death in its lofty soaring, the exultation and triumph of a momentary union with its elemental essence.

The flame rose to its apex; and even for me, the mesmeric lure was well-nigh irresistible. Many of our companions succumbed; and the first to immolate himself was the giant lepidopterous being. Four others, of diverse evolutional types, followed in appallingly swift succession.

In my own partial subjection to the music, my own effort to resist that deadly enslavement, I had almost forgotten the very presence of Ebbonly. It was too late for me to even think of stopping him, when he ran forward in a series of leaps that were both solemn and frenzied, like the beginning of some sacerdotal dance, and hurled himself headlong into the flame. The fire enveloped him, it flared up for an instant with a more dazzling greenness; and that was all.

Slowly, as if from benumbed brain-centers, a horror crept upon my conscious mind, and helped to annul the perilous mesmerism. I turned, while many others were following Ebbonly's example, and fled from the shrine and from the city. But somehow the horror diminished as I went; and more and more I found myself envying

my companion's fate, and wondering as to the sensations he had felt in that moment of fiery dissolution . . .

NOW, AS I write this, I am wondering why I came back again to the human world. Words are futile to express what I have beheld and experienced, and the change that has come upon me beneath the play of incalculable forces in a world of which no other mortal is even cognizant.

Literature is nothing more than the shadow; and life, with its drawn-out length of monotonous, reiterative days, is unreal and without meaning now in comparison with the splendid death which I might have had —the glorious doom which is still in store. I have no longer any will to fight the ever insistent music which I hear in memory. And—there seems to be no reason at all why I should fight it out. Tomorrow I shall return to the city.

VOICE OF ATLANTIS

by LAURENCE MANNING

All of Laurence Manning's short stories and short novels appeared in Hugo Grensback's magazines, *Science Wonder Stories, Wonder Stories,* and *Wonder Stories Quarterly,* between 1930 and 1936. The "Stranger Club" is a very exclusive society which does not welcome strangers; you understand the meaning of the name when you see the motto of the club close to the ceiling in the great hall: TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION.

I HEARD THIS STORY last winter, but have just now got around to writing it out. There were half a dozen of us sitting around the great fireplace up at the Stranger Club on West 53d Street. Colonel Marsh was there, for one, and Jean LaBert had been telling us tales of the country just southwest of the Atlas range in Africa. We all grouped our chairs close together and I remember the circle of intent faces with the light flickering upon them. Above, on the walls, the Club's collection of animal heads, their glassy eyes glittering in half-light, seemed

to be intent, too, upon the story.

His name was Bernard Volking. I had not met him before—a quiet mountain of a man with a smooth uninterested-looking face. In utter frankness, I should explain that drinks were served. Volking had sipped three or four whiskey and sodas at least while LaBert was talking and I noticed from time to time that his face was growing pinker and his eyes seemed to sparkle more with each sip. Presently LaBert's story came to an end and Volking made a gesture with his shoulders, his face flushed and his lips trembling as though he had something he must say. Colonel Marsh, at the same time, seemed on the verge of speech, and I, wondering what sort of a man Volking might be and I feeling that I might never know if the colonel once started upon a tale, spoke up quickly.

"I rather think Volking can cap that story of yours, LaBert," I hazarded.

There was a moment's silence and every eye was upon him. He, most surprisingly, started half to his feet, his face expressing blank surprise. He looked at me searchingly a second. "You don't happen to be a mind-reader?" he asked. "How did you know what I was thinking?"

I tried to wave off the question, but it seemed important to Volking for some mysterious reason. He grew more excited.

"Never mind how I knew," I said. "As a matter of fact, I merely guessed from your appearance. But what is your story?—that's the important thing."

"It's most extraordinary," he muttered as he sank back into his chair. He turned to me once more. "There *is* such a thing as mind-reading, you know. Mental telepathy is what scientists call it. It's fully recognized as a subject on which we have no data beyond a few empiric cases—but they are enough to prove the thing . . . I was going to say something about it when you spoke. You see, I've spent the past two years experimenting with the mind electrically, upon the theory that thought emits a slight electrical discharge (as we know it does) and that this emission may have some reaction upon the ether waves in the same manner as a radio sending station—or at least analogous to that. I made helmets of metal and surrounded them with cages of wire and tapped the gadget at the dozen places to take voltmeter readings—generally mucking about, as you see, to find out the best place to start working on my subject. I didn't get any results at all during the first

year, but finally I tried a helmet so elaborate and complicated that I couldn't begin to describe it without a diagram. It had a magnetic field over all and gave me rather a headache when I wore it for more than a few minutes. With this I got a definite movement on the of one of my voltmeters—about a thousandth of a volt. The meter was tapped in at a difficult place to reach and I took off the helmet and fumbled around, trying to make sure which one of the half-dozen meter lines produced the result, when it fell to the laboratory floor."

Volking took a sip from his glass and glanced around at us. "You know, this is a queer story," he said, "and I'm not at all sure that it is wise to tell it to you—you won't believe it, anyway."

Five howls of remonstrance cut him short. Colonel Marsh glared severely. "No sportsman would back down after he names the stakes!" he snorted. Volking hitched himself uncomfortable in his chair. "Well—all right, but none of you is to say a word until I'm done."

And here is the story almost word for word as he told it.

THE HELMET SEEMED to have suffered not at all from the accident—it wasn't even dented on the outside. I determined to make more tests and tied a piece of string to the line that had to be investigated, my intention being to take the helmet apart later on and see what I could find out. Then I put the helmet on my head once more, sat myself down in an easy chair and turned on the current. I composed my mind to calmness and in a vague way cast out my thoughts. That is to say, I tried to think outside of myself . . . I've said that my fiddling with wires and such was in no sense real experimenting? I was just trying any curious combination of things I could twist apparatus into—hoping that something would happen on my measuring dials. When the helmet fell, something must have bent out of shape or into contact—I barely knew its wiring scheme and a lot of it I depended upon examining afterwards when it came to writing down results. All this is important in the light of what came to pass later on.

I had hardly sat there five minutes wearing the helmet after its fall when I began to feel things going on in my head—chiefly a long sustained ringing, like a telephone bell. I glanced over at the voltmeters and saw three of them with quivering pointers. I was quite excited and vastly curious and when my vision became blurred and the

walls of my room seemed to melt and run together, it never occurred to me to take off the helmet. I didn't think of possible damage to my brain resulting from my wild empiric tests. Rather, I thrilled to the idea that my eyes had been affected by the helmet and I waited expectantly.

The corner of the room at which I was staring became dark and velvety; then I perceived long folds running along it and the color became an intense glowing purple and at the same time ceased to be cloudy and shapeless—it stood out clear and sharp and I saw that it was a huge velvet curtain. The rest of the room seemed to be bathed in a faint light and to be far away and on a smaller scale of existence. The curtain was the only real thing in creation, and I stared at it tensely and felt the hairs prickle on the back of my neck.

Then clear and loud a metal gong clanged brazenly from behind the hangings. I scarcely dared breathe while the echo of the barbaric sound lasted. It was indescribably full of mystery and vague suggestion. And as it ceased to ring, the curtain trembled and a hand—a skinny claw of a hand—was thrust through and pulled them aside slightly to permit the entrance of a little old man. He was really the most extraordinary figure . . . scarcely five feet high and with his huge bespectacled head bobbing and nodding ridiculously about on the top of a thin gangling neck. He was dressed in black, very severe black, but a belt of gold fastening in his robe at the waist gave it a dignified and rich-looking appearance. He seemed impatient, as though he had been busily engaged and hoped to be free in a moment to return to his task.

"Well! Well! What is it?" he called in a sharp querulous voice as he peered near-sightedly in my direction.

I could only gasp. I felt my mouth so dry that I could not have spoken had I known what to say.

"Am I to be kept here all day?" snapped the old man. "Make your report and be done with it. What year do you call from?"

"Wh—what do you mean?" I managed to ask.

"Mean! Mean!" he shrilled furiously. "Could anything be more plain? What year is it with you?"

"Nineteen thirty-three," I said, stupefied with astonishment.

"I don't know what you're talking about," came the scolding answer. "Nineteen thirty-three since what or before what?"

I was puzzled for a moment

and my head buzzed but I could think of nothing to reply except, "Anno domini."

"If this is a joke," snapped the man at the curtain, "then it is in extremely poor taste. My time is exceedingly valuable."

"But I simply do not know what you want, sir."

He stared myopically at me and muttered some words to himself and rubbed his shining bald pate indignantly. Then his face cleared and brightened. "Ah! Have you a chart of the sky?"

IT SO HAPPENED that I had one of those cardboard things they sell in the stores. It was on a bookshelf behind me and I turned to find it. Instantly I became dizzy and the things in my own familiar room seemed to recede and become smaller. I swayed unsteadily a moment and the furniture and walls behind me became normal. I reached for the chart and, turning, walked toward the purple hangings. Wonderingly I handed it to the old man—started to, that is. There was a scintillating flash and I dropped it with a cry and stood rubbing my arm. The incident seemed to make my mysterious visitor more interested than he had been.

"Hold it up close, so that I can see it," he commanded, "but do not try to pass it to me." I did so, and after a few absorbed seconds, he nodded violently, his head jigging absurdly on the scrawny neck. From a sleeve he produced a tablet and stylus and scratched with them a moment as though figuring.

"No wonder!" he said and sighed excitedly. "This is unbelievable! I don't suppose the chart is accurate within ten thousand years—but still! . . . You are about twenty thousand years ahead of me; there's no denying that!"

He seemed quite delighted and at the same time profoundly puzzled. "This contact must in some way affect future history beyond you again," he muttered half to himself, "and yet no record will remain fifty thousand years after you, for that is the period of future history with which we are constantly having intercourse. Well, that's not my job, though I'd better speak to Antiochus. Come, how does it happen you have pierced the Veil?"

I grunted my incomprehension.

"I asked you how you managed to pierce the Veil?"

"What do you mean—my helmet?"

"Your thought-thrower; I suppose that is your helmet . . . how did you happen to invent

it? Don't you understand what you have done? Gods! Coincidence could hardly go further! Know then, that you and I talk—or rather *think* we talk, for no words are really heard by either of us, across a gulf of twenty thousand years! Ah! That touches your imagination, doesn't it? Yet you cannot be a savage, for I see wires and electricity were used by you. Tell me, have the ice ages passed yet?"

"*Ice ages!* Good Lord!" Thousands of years ago!"

"Good! And you no longer have storms and hurricanes with constantly freezing and thawing winters?"

"No, I wouldn't say that. But the continents are no longer covered with ice—wait a minute, though. Greenland is still buried under ice. I suppose that *is* a relic of the last age, at that. Never thought of it that way."

"One of your continents?"

"Yes. But quite near the North Pole."

"Ah well, then you would have a constant anti-cyclone over that place and weather so variable as to make living uncomfortable near the equator."

"But we keep indoors in cold weather and heat our houses with coal and oil."

The man started violently and his brow frowned profusely. "You mean that you burn the world's organic reserves for the warmth that is in them? Gods, what a waste! Why do you not use the sun's heat and store it in warm weather to use in cold? Or your electricity; what is the matter with that?"

I stared in dull wonder. "Electricity," I mentioned, "is largely produced from coal—more and more comes from water-power each year, but a great deal is still from steam plants."

"But you are savages, after all! Have you no thought for your children and their children who shall inhabit a world without coal and oil?"

"I am very unimportant in the world's affairs," I replied, "and have nothing to say about the control of such matters. I rather agree with you, but what can I do?"

He nodded understandingly. "I must talk to a historian of the future and ask about these matters. I really know nothing of them myself. By the way, your thought-thrower is very poorly adjusted. Your signals come in like a thunderclap and there seems to be some vibration set up between your two waves that makes it difficult for me to keep my receiver focussed."

"I'm sorry," I said, "but I hardly know a single principle upon which I chanced to build this apparatus. I was merely

adding wire to coil and coil to magnet, attempting to produce a phenomena which I could study. It's all the merest luck and if I try to change it, I shall probably spoil everything . . . I still don't understand what happened nor do I understand who you are or where or why. You are living and talking twenty thousand years before me, you say—then at this moment in my life you no longer exist and at the time you lived and spoke I had no existence. These things seem incredible to me."

"Just so! Of course they do.. yet they need not. My hand" (he held it up) "has crumbled to dust twenty thousand years before you see it. How can you see it? You cannot do so. My voice cannot be heard by you—nor do you hear it. All that is happening is that your thoughts are so being affected in a certain way so that the part of your brain which receives light waves through the optic nerves is receiving the suggestion of light waves through your thought-thrower or helmet. It is translating suggested waves that give the illusion of sound. Surely you have mental telepathy in your civilization."

"No. At least, many of our scientists insist such a thing exists and points to proof not generally accepted by the rest of the world. In the East, in India and Tibet, there is supposed to be some not understood method for conveying thought quickly over hundreds of miles—as quickly as telegraph wires can do it in America. But while these things exist, or are claimed to exist, we do not use mental telepathy nor understand it in any way. It was to learn more about it that I have made the experiment which resulted in our conversation."

"Then you understand that thought travels through space as freely as light?"

"Yes. If mental telepathy exists at all, of course thought waves would travel with the speed of light and with as little regard for the distance traveled."

"Correct, indeed. And it also travels through time as quickly and surely."

"That's what I don't understand, I'm afraid. You stand there receiving my thoughts, you say, thousands of years before my thoughts exist. How?"

"Very simple: thought can travel through time—do you recognize in your science that time is a dimension?"

"Well, yes, in a sort of way—but not the same way as space."

"You can, however, call to mind thoughts of the past or imagine thoughts of the future?"

"Hmm," said I, for this was a teaser, "I remember what

things looked like and how I felt on certain past occasions. I can imagine that a perfect mind would remember all it had observed. But for the future—I guess I can. Certainly I can plan a house and imagine living in the rooms when completed. I will answer yes, but I have this ability to a very limited extent."

"No matter," replied the old man in black, "for the rest is merely improving your mental equipment and supplementing it with the proper machinery. Now, have you never gazed at relics and pictures of the distant past and imagined yourself walking down an ancient street, or taking part in forgotten battles? Of course you have. Where is your thought then?"

"Right here in my head!" I exclaimed. "My thought stays here with me."

"Good! So it does. Now in mental telepathy one person thinks and another receives an impression. Where is the thought of the thinker?"

And that stumped me, rather. Certainly the thought must leave one's body to be received elsewhere. It must travel through space—why not through time? I nodded doubtfully. "I understand it all now," I replied. "It still seems impossible, mind you, but I understand how it could be."

"How it could be, indeed!" snorted my visitor. "How it *is!* We two are actually performing the feat of which you doubt the possibility!"

The Socratic form of argument may be efficacious, but it irritates me—always has. It made things seem so plausible and yet I felt far from convinced. But I determined to consider the matter closed. I was talking to someone; that was certain. What he said was interesting, so let the conversation proceed.

"Please continue with your explanation," I said politely—though I felt like swearing. "You are speaking from an age twenty thousand years or so before mine. How do you come to be equipped with a device for transmitting thought?"

II

VOLKING PAUSED a moment in his narrative and I glanced around the circle of intent faces. Blanchard, a member I had never met, had let his pipe go out and struck a match that lit up his pale face redly. Colonel Marsh sipped a whiskey and soda with the gravity of a wooden Indian. LaBert was gazing sardonically into the fitful flare of the fire with one eyebrow raised, as I judged, skeptically. As for myself, well, the story was interesting, what-

ever else might be said of it.

"Go on," I suggested.

Volking blushed slightly and turned toward me. "This must sound like frightful rot," he began apologetically. "But I'll try to tell you just what happened—or rather, what was said, for my yarn hasn't one hand's turn of action in it. You asked for it, though, and I'll give it to you."

HERE I WAS in my laboratory having a placid argument with an old man who had died twenty thousand years ago—according to him. I didn't believe it any more than you do—but at the same time, what was I to believe? The room was a plain one and familiar to me in its every corner and appurtenance. The room was set on the corner of a building and on the fifth floor and that was the corner in which the curtains hung. Behind me was the only door and on my left the only window. These things have a certain weight upon one's judgment and—well, his story appealed to my imagination, I suppose. I really began to believe him.

"Enough of such time-wasting nonsense," he cried out shrilly. "You have called my station; what do you wish to know?"

"Who are you?" I asked.

"And why do you have a station?"

"I am Marron, assistant psychologist at Imperial Atlantis. We maintain a thought station for communication with the future. We exchange daily messages with the science laboratories of the World Federation at a distance of seventy thousand years. You, in some fortuitous fashion, have blundered into our line of communication—but whether it will prove a desirable or regrettable blunder I cannot as yet tell."

"But what advantage is there in communicating with the future?"

"We are passing all our knowledge of science on to a safer age, to make sure that it will not be lost to the race. Your appearance may change all our notions, however, though it leaves two gaps of long ages to account for."

"Why do you think your knowledge in danger?"

"For the simple reason that we have never before been able to communicate to anyone closer to us than seventy thousand years. Two thousand years ahead we talk freely with our own descendants upon the Atlantic continent. After that comes silence—silence for nearly seventy thousand years. From this we deduce that no men of science will be left capable of

making a thought-thrower. Our geologists and astronomers tell us that the world will inevitably undergo another period of intense cold and be covered with ice except, perhaps, for the equator. We therefore deduce from these two premises that civilization will be destroyed and will not revive for seventy thousand years. At that time we know the race will have mastered most of the secrets of nature and the date of the doom that is to overtake us remains unknown. The distant future has no record of our existence—their written history dates back to a time of suffering and warfare from which their present civilization emerged by bloody revolution."

Needless to say, I was enormously stirred by this speech. Atlantis! At least I could give him the story of its downfall!

"Our history, Mr. Marron, tells of the island of Atlantis which, thousands of years ago, sank suddenly into the sea. A few escaped into Europe and, according to local tradition, taught the inhabitants of those countries which received them the arts of husbandry and engineering."

His eyes grew large as I spoke and his manner eager. "Are you sure?" he snapped excitedly. "Atlantis will sink into the ocean, you say? It is incredible—how do you know?"

Then I had to admit that the whole account was legendary in the extreme. "Most of our historians will not admit that such a place as Atlantis ever existed, sir. A man called Plato wrote an account of the sinking from memory. He had heard the story from his grandfather, it is said, who had been told it by Egyptian priests. The priests—well, it was traditional knowledge with them and was thousands of years old even then. So, you see, I can't swear to the truth of the matter in any way."

"Gods! If I could be sure! But the settlements in America along the Great River—what is supposed to have become of them?"

I stared. "No traces exist of such settlements today—archeologists trace human occupation back three thousand years at the most."

He nodded sombrely. "Yes. It is possible. No one really makes his home in the colonies—that's a great fault of my race. We are Atlantean and we are not content to live more than a few years away from the circular lagoons of our own city. America for the metal mines, and back when the years of service are complete—it's true enough . . . Pardon my abstraction (he seemed to be thinking) but . . . sunk into the ocean.

Have you never explored the ocean bed—it must be shallow over sunken Atlantis? Can the White Mountains of the North be covered with water?"

"Certain islands in the North Atlantic are supposed to be the tops of Atlantean mountains," said I. "Their sides run steeply down into very deep water."

He bowed his head in silence for a moment. "It would account for it . . . it would indeed. First Atlantis vanishes and in the long fight of a few survivors against nature, science sinks beyond recovery." He looked up at me and his face was twisted with sorrow. "You do not know, young man, how sad your words make me. I do not doubt that they are true in general—but no doubt legend has twisted the events into a story of drowning. Possibly it was an earthquake; perhaps volcanic action or a fall of meteors struck our city and destroyed it. What does it matter? That it is doomed, we know. No man can change what is to be."

"But surely," I exclaimed, "if you know what danger to expect, you can provide against it and prevent it!"

"How so? Your legend is that Atlantis *did* sink. We were evidently *not* prepared or science and civilization would have continued uninterrupted."

"But what use is it to know the future if you cannot provide against it?"

He laughed mirthlessly. "What good to know the past, if you cannot change it?"

My head was in a whirl of new ideas and half-explained hints. I had a dozen more important questions to ask but promptly forgot them, for this seemed to me such utter nonsense.

"What has happened is all over and can never be changed—what is to come has not yet been determined. Of course you can change the future."

He peered at me sourly. "A mighty popular fallacy," he snapped, "but fallacious for all its popularity. If we are warned by you that something will have happened to our island twenty thousand years from now and if we take precautions, as you put it, and prevent that happening, then will your history books be miraculously rewritten in a flash of magic to read in accordance with the change?"

WELL, YOU KNOW, of course that made it look different. Their civilization would be lost—for where is it today? Sunk with Atlantis. But it seemed hard to understand. I said as much to the old man and he nodded.

"The future," said he, "is laid out in a pattern altogether unchangeable. It is a projection

based upon what is. You seek to change it by, let us say, performing some act that seems to you to have been utterly illogical—such as could not be drawn to any pattern. Fool! That act was itself foreshadowed. Let me illustrate: only a few years ago we succeeded in communicating with the distant future. We had a long conversation during which we were informed that we should be in communication with the speaker's ancestors hundreds of years before he was born—for it was so recorded in his histories. And, thereupon, we did succeed in contacting a station several hundred years closer to our own. Which of the two conversations came first? From our point of view, here in Atlantis, we talked with the year 71,000 before we reached the year 70,000 on our thought throwers. From the other end it appeared, of course, that the first contact was made a thousand years after the second one. Both were matters of recorded history—hence could not be avoided nor changed. One man's future is another man's history and for this reason, the future is unalterable. To say a thing might have been is inaccurate—if it did not happen, then it never could have happened. Yet," he added with a half-smile, "I must confess these conclusions are based upon no law of nature that we have found—they are merely arrived at by reasoning upon such data as we have before us. Possibly further knowledge may change our ideas slightly, though I doubt it."

I waved my hand in a gesture of assent, feeling that anything was better than wasting more of this extraordinary opportunity upon pure metaphysics. What was the history of Atlantis? How did it originate and what sort of people were they? Was their science as enormously advanced as it seemed to be? Had they airplanes and automobiles? All these and a dozen other questions were crowding around in my mind, but the one I picked on first was the most puzzling—Marron had said that their scientists could foretell the ice ages then approaching. How?

"What causes an ice age, Marron? Our scientists have a number of conflicting theories. You say that your scientists have prophesied them."

"Come, come! Scientists, do you call them? What could cause them but the moon? The sun keeps shining—not always with the same strength of heat, it is true, but without enough variation to cause an ice age. The earth cannot escape that steady flow of heat by itself, certainly. What else is there? The moon, of course."

"The moon! How?"

"Have you no astronomers?"

"Thousands — constantly watching the heavens through telescopes."

"Then it must be known that the moon's orbit is irregular and variable."

"Some exceedingly minute changes have been noticed."

He stared in amazement. "Certainly then it must be a different moon from ours. Right now the distance from the earth is increasing slowly, year by year. The moon circles the earth in about ten weeks . . ."

It takes four weeks with us and has always done so," I interrupted.

He nodded. "When it acquires a sufficient distance of radius from the earth so that it rotates in six months or more, it will provide a continuous eclipse during the summer months for either the northern or the southern hemisphere. Our scientists believe that it will be the northern hemisphere. If it continues to recede from the earth until it circles the planet in twelve months, a large portion of the sun's rays will be constantly withheld from the earth. We do not know yet just how far the movement will continue, but one thing is certain: a sunless summer could never melt winter's accumulation of ice. The next year would see still colder weather and for thousands of years the cold would increase and the ice caps spread down from the northern pole. Do you understand now, man of the future?"

I knew better by now than to argue the point, though I thought and still think there are flaws in that reasoning. "And is that the whole cause? We are noticing periodic changes in the amount of heat that flows from the sun and supposed, among other things, that the ice ages represented a period of little solar radiation."

"There are such changes with us, also, but nothing we have observed would indicate that solar heat variations alone could endanger the world — the moon, however, is predictable . . . I should like to talk to one of your astronomers, but first I must learn something of your civilization. Tell me," he said . . .

(Volking turned toward us in the firelight and raised his placid eyebrows.) There's no use retailing this part of it (he said). The old man asked questions about every mortal thing, and I answered him, so far as I could. First he wanted to know how we were governed. When I said that we had self-government, he seemed to froth at the mouth.

"Tribal rule!" he shouted. "Savagery in its lowest form — I suppose you count heads and the side with the largest number of votes wins!"

"Of course," said I. "We have a democracy."

"And how about your people of low intelligence — without training or education? Do they rule themselves, too?"

"Every male and female child is educated by compulsion."

His eyes fairly popped out when I said that. "But how can they be? Three quarters of any race is unfit to think for itself. Do you teach your criminals and peasants the secrets of science? They would use its power blindly and destroy you!"

"They haven't so far," I replied, "though a peasant government armed with scientific weapons is not a pleasant thing to contemplate."

"Well . . . this is childish . . . how is the world's labor apportioned?"

"You mean what each man shall work at? Of course, well — he can take up any trade he wants to try; or he can go to college and study for any profession he is able to qualify for. Is that what you mean?"

"Partly . . . partly . . . Gods! And if there be too many physicians and not enough blacksmiths?"

"Then the physicians make less money and some turn to other work; the blacksmiths are paid so highly that many men adopt that trade. Just demand and supply."

"And if too much grain be grown by your peasants — who tells them to plant less the next year?"

"Hmm! They cannot sell it, so they can't afford to plant more. That's the theory, but to tell the truth, we've just been going through a period of too much grain. The peasants (we call them farmers) didn't stop planting grain soon enough and there was too much for three years in succession. They borrowed money to grow grain when the granaries were filled with last year's still unused. They could not repay the money and broke down the trade and industry of the whole country by that failure. Millions were unemployed and starving."

"Starving — with too much grain?"

I gave a short laugh, for the paradox is an old one.

"You are joking," said the old man simply. "There is no such mad civilization as you describe and never will be."

"How are these things managed in Atlantis?" I asked politely, determined not to argue.

"As they should be!" he snapped. "We are ruled by the ten kings on the throne of Neptune. We have few laws, for each new one must be approved by the kings and afterwards written on a sheet of gold which the lawmaker must pay for. It can never be changed. By those laws are we governed, whether we like it or not. Our children are observed carefully from an early age and those that show special aptitude are taken apart and educated while the others are trained to whatever craft or calling best suits them — usually that of their father, for heredity and environment are strong molders of character. When there is too much grain, the peasants have a holiday. There are none unemployed, for are there not always canals to be dug and buildings to be labored upon? Food, shelter, and clothing are given to every man who obeys the laws. What could be simpler?"

"Sounds all right," I commented, "but our farmers have automobiles, radios, and gasoline tractors. Mere food and shelter don't make much of an appeal to them."

"Ah! You told me that you were burning the coal and oil you found in your country. While it lasts, your people will, of course, enjoy great material wealth. We could have done the same — suppose we had? Suppose we in Atlantis had scoured the earth and burned up all its natural resources? Could you still have your peasants living like lords?"

"I suppose not — although we soon will have enough electric power from waterfalls to provide all the power we need for luxurious living. I am not defending my own age, you know, merely answereing your questions."

He grunted and thought a minute. "Well, it is extraordinary to think of. Your scientists, then? What sort of work do they do? You tell me little is known about things mental. Do they study the physical body?"

I told him what I could of our science. My head was aching horribly, but it never occurred to me to remove the helmet. In fact, it never occurred to me to do anything or say anything that the old man had not asked me to do or say.

III

VOLKING PAUSED AGAIN and someone handed him a whiskey and soda which he sipped thirstily. "It sounds like a story that goes on forever and never gets anywhere," said he. "Well, it got somewhere all right — though I'm not quite sure

where. But I don't want to skip on to the end before I give you a complete picture, for it seems to me that it all ties together—everything he asked and everything I told him. You see, I thought when I told him about our scientific progress during the last century that he would be impressed and beg me to explain how a radio worked and all that sort of thing. You know, like showing Julius Caesar a modern tank with machine-guns mounted—ready to mow down a whole army of barbarians." Volking stared soberly into the fire a moment.

"He wasn't impressed—not the least bit," said Volking, and continued his tale.

When I thought I had opened the gates of knowledge to old Marron and sat back a bit in my chair, feeling rather proud of our modern achievements, he grunted.

"Gods!" he said. "It's like a machine run mad. Your whole labors have been aimed at transportation—steam engines, automobiles, and airplanes to carry you about faster and faster; telegraph, telephone and radio carry your words here and there with the utmost possible speed. What on earth can be the use of that?"

"Transportation and civilization go hand in hand," said I quoting.

He only stared. "Stupid remark! Civilization is a student in a laboratory—a scholar in a library. If your inventors had been rushing around the earth in aeroplanes and listening to radios, they would never have had time to invent."

He had the queerest ideas I've ever imagined. They sounded like sheer absurdities, and yet, when I came to study them over, they made some sort of sense. What does transportation do?

"But transportation makes mass production possible," I put in, suddenly inspired by a thought, "and in addition, we have literally hundreds of machines for lessening labor and freeing mankind for other tasks."

He nodded. "Of course—what tasks? What does your leisured peasant do with his free time?"

"Well . . . some study and . . . mostly they amuse themselves, of course."

"Exactly! So you agree that the free time is usually wasted?"

"Well . . . perhaps—but later on, maybe . . ."

"Human nature will change, you think?"

"Oh yes! Bound to change!"

"Wish fathers thought, young man! Human nature will change if the race evolves. You

still have two ears, two legs, and one nose!"

"Well, suppose the free time *is* wasted. What of it?" I asked impatiently.

"Then, of course, the machinery and inventions that produce wasted time are also wasted—useless—absurd, childish foolery."

"Oh come, sir! What would you have scientists do, then?"

"Devote their time to important things—how to improve the human brain and body. That is most important. How to sway human nature toward the good things—the important things. That is vital. Then, with everything under control, how to remove from the race all traces of stupidity, disease, passion, laziness, and greed. With that done, time enough to turn to material things and free mankind from mechanical tasks of all kinds and turn the whole force of the race upon the one problem that still baffles imagination—what life is and why does it exist!"

"Go on!" said I, becoming interested in spite of myself. "What then?"

The old man's face gleamed and his eyes shone with enthusiasm. "Then! We shall be as gods holding mastery over all things—what our will desires, that shall we accomplish!"

He stood with lifted face a moment and the light went out of his eyes. "Meanwhile, suppose you show me around your city. I should like to see for myself the things you describe—not that I consider them important, but they are doubtless clever and should be of some value to Atlantis."

"Show you about! Can you then leave your curtains and walk around?"

"Of course I can! I can go wherever you take your helmet."

"Ah, but that requires electricity and I have it plugged in to the house circuit."

"Not portable? Well, you can fix up a portable source of current the next time we converse—no matter."

"But," I said with sudden excitement, "is *your* apparatus portable? Could you show me around Atlantis?"

"I can and will," said the old man, and my heart seemed to jump up and hit my ribs at his words. "As a matter of fact, you must be presented to the throne of Neptune anyway and we will make that an excuse to walk through the city and up the royal hill."

I rose to my feet and started across the laboratory floor toward him, but he stared in surprise and smiled. "You cannot come with me *physically!* Only your thought can come! Sit back in your chair and you will see."

I sank back, my eyes glued upon the curtains. The old man raised his hand and vanished behind them. There came another stroke on the gong that rang out wild and clear and the curtains stirred and commenced to roll aside. It was like the opening of a play at the theater—but much more thrilling. I was to see Atlantis!

What actually happened was startling, for the drawn hangings moved toward me and beyond them was a room—severely plain with a blue line running along white walls—and the room moved toward me! I saw Marron's black velvet back with the gold belt and I seemed about ten feet from him. He was walking away from me and yet never got any farther. Instead, the world he walked through seemed to move past me while I sat spellbound in my laboratory chair; an odd and curious sensation, like riding through a city in a vibrationless vehicle. But it seemed real! The wind blew in my face from the sea beyond the distant outer harbor; I smelt the freshness of a spring morning; I heard the *klop klop* of unshod horses in the streets, the babble of a long-dead language and the creak and rattle of gears from the shipping in the nearby docks. Of course I know I could not have heard these sounds actually—I heard by mental transfer precisely what old Marron heard as he walked slowly along, his hands tucked like a Chinese mandarin's into his sleeves.

Atlantis! Ah, what a city—what a sight it was! If I were only an artist, damn it, and could paint what I saw instead of putting glory into mean, crawling, inexpressive verbiage! But I'll try . . .

We passed through a square-arched doorway of stone and looked down a short flight of steps upon a broad street that ran right and left. It was a vantage point from which, over the white flat buildings, facing us, we saw uninterruptedly to the inner harbor. It was a curving belt of water—wide and placid—and beyond it buildings rose again and green trees among them. Then came the middle harbor, another more distant width of land, the outer harbor, the sea-wall, and the Atlantic. Each belt of land and of water made a sweeping circle except that, on my right, the sea-wall merged into the shore and beyond stretched the continent—one flat plain to the horizon.

BUT THE COLORS were what hit you first—roads and walls and buildings all of sheer glistening white and the clear

green of foliage around their base; water so blue and level, ruffled and rippled with wind and whipping so that it gave no reflection of the land zones but seemed made of velvet—and looked as solid a blue, too. The buildings facing us were near enough to see in detail and I noticed how aptly the bottom row of stones were deep blue in tint, while all the rest were white—blue and white with green of trees! I have never seen a more restful and cool a scene—yet it lived! The streets were thronged—mostly by Negroes naked except for a loin-piece of white or gray cloth. Here and there were bronzed almost-white men dressed in long white robes, bordered around the bottom with a broad blue band. There were many degrees of color between the black and the white, in all possible variations of hue and physique, but the Negroes stepped aside to let the tall stately robed figures pass and, once or twice, Marron's black robe swept past subservient white men—so I had a very fair hint of the social gradations without being told. Me they seemed not to see, nor could I see them once Marron had passed them. A misty wall of gray swept along beside me and once when I turned around to look at the harbor, I found that the gray mist hemmed me in. I could hear all the noises of a busy city from behind the wall (Marron's ears, you see) but could see nothing. It was a weird and frightening experience and I kept thinking of the mist as a visual expression of the wall of years that separated me from the scene. I even got myself into a state of mind where I half-believed I was lost in the centuries—in the river of time—doomed to roam forever spaceless and formless. Then suddenly the gray vanished and the city flashed sharply into view. I turned in my chair and saw Marron with raised eyebrows looking at me.

"You cannot see anything I am not looking at. It would be more profitable for you to look toward me, I should think. We are coming into view of the royal hill now—look!"

He turned and the wall of gray that had seemed to hem *him* in gave way to a breath-taking sight. Steep and picturesque there rose many hundred feet into the air a rocky hill of reddish hue. Grotesque shapes of shrubs and gorgeous cascades of flowers adorned its flanks. At the top gleamed and sparkled the stupendous temple of Neptune—one mass of polished gold! It was a pyramid, so proportioned as to carry farther upward the slope of the

hillside and around its base half-hidden by trees were dozens of red and white buildings of the utmost delicacy of design. But the great golden pyramid was dominant—huge and yet graceful, with its smooth sloping sides sharply etched against a clear sky in which a few fat clouds billowed whitely.

AH, THAT CITY! How little I saw of it and how poorly I can tell of what I saw! We were twenty minutes going from the room of the curtains to the top of the Royal hill—a distance of a mile. I can only remember glimpses and snatches: Once we passed twenty black slaves dragging a block of stone through the street on a wooden sled. The sweat ran down their bodies and the muscles of their legs stood out like whipcords. The overseer struck them twice with a long leather whip—struck out blindly and coolly and uttered a short sharp command—and the stone ground forward like a live thing each time. The broad streets were of cut stone and ran from wall to wall without a sidewalk, but on each side was a gutter a foot or more deep and water ran briskly there, not the least foul, though it carried the sewage of the city.

"The houses were crowded tightly together and were never more than two stories in height. There were no glass windows—only square apertures in walls, though these were often laced with wooden lattice and, once or twice, with bronze bars. The shops we passed advertised their wares by placing them in these windows and I saw a varied collection of the products of the country—wine jars and barrels, cloths of all descriptions, jewelry, fruit, freshly killed sheep and fowl, armorer's shops with helmets, spears, swords, and shields of bronze, carpenters' shops with gloomy interiors filled with the sound of shopping and scraping and curiously uncomfortable looking beds and chairs visible through the doorway. Once we rounded one corner of a large vacant square, muddy and unpaved, where horses were being trotted about and auctioned off—short and stocky animals they were, but full of spirit and giving the boys who held their heads a lively time of it . . .

"Oh yes, then there was the tannery—a foul-smelling place—with a long wooden gallery on which a dozen slaves sat working over the leather with an open vat before their noses . . . and the horses we passed with fierce-looking riders urging them to break-neck speed and the devil take the man who couldn't get out of the way! And twice

we saw crude two-wheeled chariots. They must have been war-chariots, for their sides were covered with leather and studded with bronze nails and the drivers wore metal helmets. Once Marron paused at a street crossing and we watched a little procession go by.

First came two horsemen and after them a chariot in which an armed man stood stiffly at attention. They made slow progress, curbing the horses tightly, and were followed by sixteen men on foot—armed with spears, javelins, bows, and slings and two ponderous giants with helmets and shields.

"It is a leader's following going for yearly service. The great plain supports a large population and ten thousand such followings are at the command of each of the ten kings of Atlantis. See the last four? The woolen jackets with the trident on the sleeve marks them for sailors who will do service with the fleet."

There! I haven't said a word about the ships. They were tall high-sided affairs with row on row of holes in the free-board out of which stuck incredible numbers of oars—triremes, I guess they would be, for there were three rows of oar-holes. High in the nose and at the stern and low in the middle—with one stout mast and on it a sail, they were. And in the whole harbor were hundreds such ships and no two sails were of the same color—purple and pink and green and black and cerise and violet and sky-blue—there was color enough! The ships themselves were dirty brown and gray except for an occasional gilt figure-head at the prow. Then there were innumerable small craft with lateen sails or oars to propel them hither and yon over the water. And the docks were of stone—solid ponderous barns filled with bales and barrels and the sight of human activity.

The road up the royal hill circled twice around it as we ascended and from this height I could see in all directions and get a clear plan of the city. It lay, I judged, originally on a promontory jutting into the sea. On three sides it was surrounded by water and on the fourth side—the southwest—stretched away a great plain mile upon mile. The harbors were circles of land through which were cut connecting channels. On the north, clouds seemed to be banked white and serene and it was a full minute before I could believe otherwise. They were snow-capped mountains standing distant and pale in the sky—but to what incredible heights! Between the city and

the mountains was a large arm of the sea and far away on this sailed a ship with a purple sail. I wondered where—to Britain for tin or perhaps to America for copper? We kept circling upward and came in sight of the southern plain once more. I observed a dark line running like a road of enormous width out of sight on the sun-drenched horizon. Marron saw my interested look.

"That's the irrigation ditch," he said. "It circles the whole continent and all our rivers empty into it instead of wasting their water in the ocean. In the dry season we draw it off to give us better crops."

"But its *size!*

"It must carry all the water of all the rivers of Atlantis! It is not yet finished, but is has taken two thousand years already in building." And he set off once more up the hill and I (though I would have stayed and looked for hours) kept sliding along in my chair ten feet or so behind him, willy-nilly, with the impenetrable wall of two hundred centuries hemming me in behind.

AS MY GUIDE'S steps brought us near the top of the hill, we saw more closely the bizarre and barbaric plan of the palaces and temples with which it was set about. Stones of red, of black, and of white were used to give still greater variety to the towers and pillars and flying arches that sprang into view everywhere among the grotesque forms of the shrubs and trees that covered the ground with green and brown and purplish foliage. At one place, a half-concealed arch set in the side of the hill showed where one palace had been built underground and the greatest care had been taken to preserve a wild and natural appearance about the entrance. A few feet above the arch and to the left was a smaller aperture in which a woman with long coppery hair and dressed in a robe of glistening white fabric sat sunning herself on cushions. The face was beautiful and the half-closed eyes followed my guide lazily a moment and then lifted to look out upon the spacious scene of city and continent that spread before her. Me she did not, of course, see . . . I seemed to pass so close that I could have reached out and touched her, but when we came abreast, the fog of the time-wall shut her out and ghost-like from its grayness, I heard a sigh.

Then we came into full view of the temple of Neptune and I gasped at the shining splendor of it. A triangular doorway of spacious design was set

in the center of each of the four sides and the purplish gloom within was warm and mysterious in contrast to the brazen gilt of that huge pyramid. Three men in black, with gold belts, turned in toward the nearest arch and vanished into the dark interior as we approached, and almost immediately a magnificent white bull sauntered insolently out into the sunshine and started toward us. It came right up to old Marron who stepped respectfully aside (I sliding sideways in my chair) and I heard a snort from the misty nothingness into which it stamped.

Then we too approached the dark entrance and just before we entered came in sight of a lake hidden between two folds in the hill. The water was so blue that it almost hurt to look at it, and reflected in its mirror surface was a white-columned temple of exquisite proportions flanked with green trees. To break that reflection, two scarlet flamingoes swam slowly around and around. Over all was the utmost quiet and peace —so that I heard the sandaled feet of the old man before me shuffling in the white dust of the roadway. I had that one last glimpse—then the massive stone archway slid around me and I could see nothing until my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom.

The ceiling was fifty feet above us and supported by ten square columns of gold on which was engraved writing of some sort—I have never seen any quite like it. In one corner was a dais (also of gold) and ten richly ornamented thrones —one raised higher than the others. Five or six black-robed figures were visible in the vast reaches of the temple and two white bulls—one lying sprawled on the paved floor.

"We will not have long to wait," said Marron, turning to me. "The ten rulers of our world will be here in a few minutes. Meanwhile, look about you—for you will never see the like of this again. On the pillars are carved the laws of Atlantis, unchangeable, just, and humane. The metal is electrum—gold and silver alloyed. The entire wealth of the world is brought to this temple. Up above our heads are rooms and passages by means of which our astronomers read the sky. Here is stored the knowledge gathered by our science priests during all past time. To the ignorant rabble of the city, this is the temple of Neptune whom they worship; in reality it is the seed germ of racial thought and learning. The white bulls are sacred—future sacrifices to the gods, a necessary sop to superstition."

I WAS TOO awed by my surroundings and too much occupied with mere looking to ask questions. Before I had looked my fill, there was a stir at the archway to the left of the thrones. Ten men entered in a single file and behind and around them a dozen or more priests. The ten men were tall and straight with exceedingly white faces and long beards—it may sound queer, but every man had red or golden hair. Their robes were of the deepest imaginable purple hue—all exactly alike. On their feet gleamed sandals of gold encrusted with jewels. Slowly they continued their stately procession over to the thrones and sat in them one by one until the ten seats were occupied. Then the priests handed each man a crown which he placed upon his head and the king in the highest throne was handed a scepter bearing a trident upon the end. This he raised in the air and the other nine kings bowed their heads while the priests, including my guide, bowed their bodies almost to the ground.

I sat forward in my laboratory chair interestedly.

"Rulers!" said Marron, "I have to present a man of the two hundredth century after us!"

Then, suddenly, I knew that I was visible to the ten kings and not knowing what else to do, rose to my feet and bowed self-consciously. In response, they inclined their heads and the king spoke over all:

"Welcome to Atlantis, man of the future! This is a welcome surprise, but how can it be explained when the records of the future make no mention of your appearance before us?" And he frowned doubtfully.

"We have nothing to learn from their customs, ruler," put in Marron.

"How then has a savage solved the problem of constructing a thought-thrower?"

"Their science is directed by madmen or apes so that its power is greatest in unimportant things. Yet, their fingers are skillful and their minds curious and busy. By chance, this one man alone came upon the secret—and he himself knows not how!"

"But this is unseemly! Why have you asked audience?"

"Because of a legend current in his age concerning the fate of our beloved city."

There was an instant stir and rustle among the ten kings and their eyes were fixed intently upon me. "Tell!" commanded the ruler.

Well, you know, it suddenly struck me as absurd—the whole thing. They were so stiff and formal and domineering and they judged our twentieth

century civilization so offhandedly that I rather resented it. After all, I thought to myself, this whole scene is not credible: I'm dreaming, I suppose. I laughed and the ten pairs of eyes stared coldly at me. Then I suddenly felt sorry for them — dreams or not — and told them what tradition remains about their civilization.

"It is written in the folk-lore of a dozen countries that once a great race flourished and was drowned in the sea. Some accounts of the more savage and ignorant races are not clear nor trustworthy, but one account names that country Atlantis. It says that the land sank and the water covered all and the nation perished save for a few men who escaped to the shores of Europe and along the Mediterranean Sea. This acount places ancient Atlantis on a huge island in the Atlantic— ringed on the north by tall mountains. Today — in my own age — the Atlantic is deep but a few groups of islands thrust up still above the surface of the sea — on them has never been found any trace of former buildings. So little is known that many of our scientists deny that an island called Atlantis that was inhabited by a civilized race ever existed."

THERE WAS A long silence following my words. Then one of the lesser kings spoke: "What is to be, can never change."

"Moreover, he is a savage," put in another.

"In all the world no continent is so firm as Atlantis — nor set about with such massive mountains," remarked a third.

"Not only that, but besides being improbable, his story is admitted to be only a fable," said the king who sat above them.

"If it were true, we could establish colonies even stronger and more prosperous than now," suggested the first king.

"Both in Egypt and America our colonies suffer from the people's longing to return to Atlantis. We could do no more than we are doing now," said the second.

The ruler of Atlantis held up his trident. "What you say, stranger, is almost incredible to us who know what rocks the continent rest on. Yet if it be true, we cannot prevent it — nor can we do more than preserve our knowledge from destruction. But your prophecy itself would run like a flame through the minds of our people, causing rebellion and fear. It must never be known to them."

"Suppose in his aimless experiments he should throw his thoughts to another later age here in Atlantis that might use

his prophecy to sway the populace—all priests are not as faithful as Marron!" And having spoken, a huge red-bearded king nodded his head very determinedly.

"True," said their leader thoughtfully. "And our command can have no force upon this stranger. His prophecy is a dangerous thing, not to be lightly considered."

"Yet his thought-thrower was made quite by chance," said Marron softly. "Could he remake it if it became broken?"

"Have you the strength of will needed?" asked the king, and he looked at Marron with secret meaning.

"I have been his guide almost a full hour, O ruler," said the old man.

"Let it be law as desired," said the king, raising his trident. The ten pairs of eyes became fixed expectantly upon me. I sat there looking back, trying for the life of me to decide what they meant. I was about to ask when Marron turned to me and stood blackly against that sudden blank wall of gray that shut the ten thrones suddenly from my sight. Marron raised his hand and pointed his finger sternly at me. I was startled.

"What is the matter—have I done something to break one of your laws?"

He did not answer and I gazed at him puzzled and fascinated. His eyes were jet-black pools and lights glowed in them. I found myself staring almost against my will and the eyes grew larger, or seemed to, and the wall of foggy emptiness began to swirl around me and him. Now it covered his feet from sight and crept up his body until presently I saw only his white stern, powerful features. Time ceased to be measured in minutes and seconds but flowed on in a continuous unmeasured stream around me and I could hear nothing and feel nothing. There were only two blazing eyes—like twin stars reflected in two pools of black ink. A wind seemed to whistle around me and I was lost in **oblivion—seeing nothing.** I felt curiously light-headed and tenuous, as though I had no body—only a mind that thought dreamily and placidly of all I had seen.

I do not know how long it was before I saw some lines in the gray fog. They began like a drawing and then detail after detail was filled in and I saw that I was looking down into a room. It was familiar, but I did not remember where I had seen it before. A bench was littered with wires and batteries and tools. There was a carpet on the floor and one window. In a chair, I saw a man,

his hands quietly resting on the chair arms. As I looked, he rose to his feet and, reaching up, tore from off his head a complicated helmet that looked like a huge bird's nest in a cage. Down to the floor he hurled the thing and began stamping upon it, bending and twisting it out of shape. He seemed to be in a fury of haste and took up the chair he had been sitting in to smash it down on the already hopelessly shattered apparatus. All this while I had been drawing nearer and nearer and I was inside the room when the man fell forward and lay silent upon his face . . . I don't remember anything more. When I woke up (or recovered consciousness, or whatever you call it) I was lying on the floor of my laboratory. The chair lay smashed beside me, and so lay every bit of apparatus in the room.

* * *

THERE WAS A full minute's silence, there in the club lounge. The fire had died down to a red glow and the comfortable darkness had closed us in around it.

"That's all the story there is, said Volking.

"Hmm!" said Colonel Marsh, switching on a lamp that stood beside his chair and looking tentatively around at the rest of us as we sat up, blinking in the sudden light.

LaBert's face expressed puzzlement. "Somehow," he remarked, "I believe the damn' thing happened. Now why should I?"

"Because it jolly well *did* happen," answered Volking warmly.

"Did you rebuild the helmet?"

"Tried to. I'd have sworn it was rebuilt exactly the same way — but I'd dropped the first one, you remember, before I got any results. The fall must have bent it slightly to make some different contact or arrangement of circuits — anyway, I've spent the last year trying to do it again the same way . . . nothing!"

"Well, he capped your yarn, at all events, LaBert," I said, rising to start homeward.

The Plague

by GEORGE HENRY SMITH

George H. Smith has been writing short science fiction for some time, but has just lately branched out into hard covers. We didn't actually plan it that way, but it turns out that four of the five authors in this issue have had hardcover books published within the past year or or so, and the fifth has a book in process. G. H. Smith's *The Forgotten Planet* was issued by Avalon in this period, and his second appearance there will take place in 1967.

"BRING THEM OUT!"

The mechanical blast of the voice brought Father Joseph to his feet and then to his knees. "Oh Saint Joseph," he prayed to his patron. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, intercede for me! No, not for me . . . for the children . . . the children!"

"Bring out the Dead!" The voice was a battering ram against the wall of the convent. Its words were the same as those of the death cart drivers who had carried away the bodies of the dead left by the Black Plague, but this voice wasn't talking about the dead, it was talking about the living, the young and the living who had been entrusted to his care.

"Bring out the Dead!" A windowpane nearly shattered from the force of the voice.

"Father . . . Father!" It was the Mother Superior. She had

broken the strict rule of never entering his sanctuary. "Father, don't you hear? Don't you hear it?"

"I hear," he said with what calm he could summon.

"It wants them! It wants our girls! All of our sixteen-year-olds!"

"No, not all," he said, thinking of the two out of twenty he could save. The two he had already chosen after a week of heartrending thought.

"Eighteen girls," Mother Superior said. "Eighteen sweet virgins! You can't let them, Father Joseph, you can't!"

He felt a weakness come over him. She had interrupted his prayer. Somehow he couldn't summon the strength for another attempt. He reached out and placed a trembling shoulder on her shoulder. "We must save the two," he said.

"The two . . . only two out of twenty of our girls!" Mother Superior's voice was almost a scream.

"What else can I do?" he asked, his voice hardly audible. "I've appealed to the Commission time after time. If we don't give up the eighteen, that thing can burst its way in and take all the children, all nine hundred of them."

Mother Superior dissolved into tears. "Why did we put so much love into their upbringing? Why did we give them the faith?"

"The faith is all they have now," he said, taking the list of those who were to go out of his pocket. "These are the eighteen. Are they ready?"

Mother Superior raised her head, defiance and pride in her eyes. "All of our girls are ready! Not one of them has faltered! Not one even thought of choosing the other way."

Father Joseph's shoulders sagged. For a moment he wished his patron were that other Saint Joseph, the one of Copertino who could float in the air. Then he could leave all this behind him and . . . but no, that Saint Joseph had lived in the 17th Century and this was 2200. The Death Thing waited outside and he must face it as it took his girls.

Anger stirred in him, heated his blood and shook him out of his languor. "That thing! That monstrous creation of a monstrous age! I'll . . . " He rushed from his sanctuary, fists doubled and face red with the righteous anger that had carried his Irish ancestors to deeds of valor.

Then he was in the street, looking up at it and all his courage faded before its overwhelming presence. The Death Thing was three stories high, squatting on caterpillar treads,

its all-consuming mouth open to receive the girls.

"Oh, Mary, Mother of God, no, no!" Father Joseph moaned in helpless fury.

THE GIRLS were coming out of the convent now, walking in single file, all looking beautiful and innocent in their white veils. Slowly they moved toward the yawning mouth, the mouth through which they would be drawn into the converter within the Death Thing. The converter which would change their sweet young bodies into so much protein, chemicals and minerals and whatever else *their* science had programmed into it.

Of course the girls weren't showing their fear. From the moment they had reached the age of reason, they had known there was a choice . . . permanent sterilization or this, eighteen chances of death out of twenty.

"You can't take them, you can't!" Father Joseph yelled, reason deserting him.

The blinking lights that served the Death Thing as eyes focused on him and the mechanical voice rumbled. "I must control the plague. They are part of the plague that infects this planet. To take them is my reason for existing. You know yourself, Father Joseph, that the human body which was once worth only 98 cents is now worth 5,000 dollars in precious chemicals."

"But those aren't bodies . . . those are living human beings!"

"*Bring out the Dead! Bring out the Dead!*" the converter roared, and the girls in their bridal dresses began to walk two by two into the hell mouth.

"Oh no . . . God, no!" Father Joseph fell to his knees and then as rage surged through him again, leaped to his feet and ran toward the machine.

"You thing! You devil's creation! You slaughterer of young maidens! Y . . . "

"Call me a machine, Father," it said. "A machine created by man. Remember there are only a few square yards per person left on this planet. The human race is a plague that must be controlled. These innocent maidens as you call them will become bearers of the plague through their fertility."

As the last of the eighteen girls disappeared inside it, the Death Thing started to rumble off down the street, but its voice boomed back at him. "And don't blame me, Father . . . don't blame me!"

The Question

by J. HUNTER HOLLY

J. Hunter Holly's first novel, *Encounter,* was a shocker when Avalon introduced her to science fiction some years back; her two latest books from the same source are *The Mind Traders* and *The Gray Aliens,* the latter being a particularly fine exploration of a theme generally avoided in science fiction.

THE WAITING was intolerable. Rolfe Woodward paced back and forth across the floor, counting strides, wiping sweat from his palms, anything to keep his mind from becoming numb with fright. It had been fifty years since he had stood with his father and looked up into the bright blue eyes of the Vegan. He had not been frightened then—just awed. Of course, he hadn't understood the full import of what was being said. Now he understood, and now he was to face the Vegan alone.

He knew consciously that there was nothing to fear. Everything the Vegan had ordered had been done. In the given fifty years, Man had rallied, joined, and swept war and its weapons from the map of the Earth. No one even threatened violence any more, but still there was that horrible doubt that seemed attached to his feet, pacing with him. He couldn't shake it. So much depended on him, the President had said. "On you, Woodward. You'll meet the Vegan for our sector, so

your words and your activities are the ones that will count."

He knew it and wanted to shrink out of sight with the knowledge; at the same time, he wouldn't believe it. Earth was on trial, not him alone.

For four days now the Vegan ship had been watched in the sky and on radar, circling the planet, watching in turn. The Vegans already had discovered part of their answer then. What there would be left for him to do—and the other three men around the world like him—he couldn't guess.

He glanced at his watch. Eleven-fifty. There were only ten minutes left before the silver ship came down and the Vegan stepped out of its depths. He wondered if the envoy would know him. Rolfe had changed from a child of seven to a man of fifty-seven; his blond hair was gray, and there were tanned wrinkles on his face. Surely the Vegan would have changed, too. He would be over one hundred years old. But a life-span of three hundred years made him seem eternal, and how could an eternal man grow old?

Bill Crawford opened the door and came into the room. "About ready, Mr. Woodward?"

Rolfe nodded and followed him out without a word. They passed through the long hall and walked into the sun. The field was smooth and empty, waiting for the only ship that would ever touch it, as it had waited since it was built two years ago.

Rolfe looked at Bill, trying to find something reassuring in his face. It was there. Bill had no doubts; he had methodically followed the plan set down fifty years ago and had laid out the tour of inspection in perfect detail. Nothing the Vegan wanted to inspect would be missed.

"I wish I felt your confidence," Rolfe whispered.

Bill smiled. "You would under normal conditions, sir. You're nervous about talking to him. Don't be. He's said to have the understanding of a Zeus."

Rolfe swallowed the words he wanted to say. If the Vegan had the understanding of a Zues, he also had the perception to match it. There was no possible sense in alarming Bill with his doubts. Bill was probably right, anyway. Rolfe had to remember that things would look different to him now. He was no longer a child. The eight-foot height of the Vegan had made him a tower to the child, but not to the man. The white hair and blue eyes would lose some of their awesomeness seen through a man's eyes.

The field was quiet. People had been urged to stay away—to show the control they had lacked fifty years before in the rioting, and they had done as asked. Rolfe marveled at the change. They had come a long way. Still, their ghosts were there—watching him act for them—and even causing him to relive the screaming and shouting of that other day when he was seven and was almost trampled to death in the mob flurry.

A SHOUT from the left told him it was time. High up in the blue sky, the silver ship was lowering, a sliver of light. He peered at it, enthralled, yearning. That was another change. Fifty years ago, people had just begun to understand satellites, and space flight was something to leave to the dreamers and the scientists. If it was to come, it would; most people didn't really care. But now that there was a possibility it would be denied them, they had built it into a desire so strong they would die for it. The Vegan had never spoken of destruction if his demands weren't met; only a restriction. But Rolfe didn't think people would have tried any harder if they had been faced with destruction.

As the ship grew steadily larger, Rolfe searched again for some beginning words. How should he approach the Vegan? How would he tell him the people of Earth had decided that all they wanted of the future was space flight, and to join the great intergalactic organization—to take their place and never be alone again? That they had followed his orders and had rid themselves of war and killing, of fighting and brutality?

But of course, he didn't have to tell him. He would be shown.

The ship was down. It pointed its long nose to the sun and a panel in the bottom slid back. It was a rectangle of blackness, broken by the tall form of a man. There was a flash of white hair and bright blue boots, and the Vegan stepped on the field.

Rolfe stood alone. Bill had vanished into the building behind him. Rolfe faced the Vegan with a tremor and quake as he realized the alien *was* actually all he had thought as a child. A tower, topped with scorching blue eyes and white hair, a giant who could give an order and make a world obey. He was walking across the field and Rolfe stirred to meet him. Strange that he had never had a name.

They stood looking at each other for moments, and then Vegan spoke. "Rolfe Wood-

ward?" It was a question, asking if this was the boy who had stared up at him with round eyes fifty years ago.

"Yes," Rolfe said. "Welcome back." He groped for more words. "You are the same."

"And you are very much like your father." The Vegan cast his eyes slowly about the field, and Rolfe knew he was seeing and hearing the riot-ghosts too.

He hurried to change the subject, "Everything is ready, just as you asked. We've done our best."

"And do you think you have succeeded?" the Vegan's voice was deep and steady.

Rolfe tried to duplicate the tone. "I do."

"Then we may proceed." The Vegan turned to a less restrained manner. "We've already flown an aerial survey of what used to be your military installations."

"There are none left," Rolfe said bluntly.

"So I saw. I am entirely satisfied."

Rolfe mentally crossed the tour of old army posts off the list. He supposed the factory inspections could be cancelled, too. But what else was there? He asked the Vegan.

"Only quiet talking," the Vegan answered. "I would like to see your home, enjoy your normal hospitality, and talk with you. I want to see how the change has effected you."

Rolfe felt set back on his heels. Out of every possibility in the world, this was the last one he was prepared for. Expecting to lead the Vegan on official tours of the old areas, he had come armed with words of persuasion. He had men waiting with charts and pictures; now he was put in the role of Host. The Vegan watched him calmly, and Rolfe shrugged, "Of course, if that's what you want . . .

"Could we go to your home, then?" the Vegan asked.

"I don't exactly understand, but you're more than welcome. If you'll just come this way . . ." He led the way back across the field, and after some hurried explanations, got the Vegan into his chaufferred car.

THEY DROVE down quiet streets shaded by ageless trees. The Vegan peered through the windows, relaxed and outwardly pleased with what he saw. But Rolfe was uneasy; this would be a nasty surprise to spring on Julia.

Julia took it all in stride. Nothing could shake her. Seeing the departure from the field on television, and learning the destination, she had trotted out the silver tea service and some little cakes. She even managed to smile when the Vegan refused them and made his way into

the garden. He had been friendly enough, but preoccupied; before Rolfe could follow him, Julia whispered anxiously,

"Carol was here, dear, and she left the children. They're out there now. I shooed them out when I saw you drive up. I didn't expect him to go out, too."

Rolfe hurried through the door. He didn't want the Vegan running into a group of screaming, skipping grandchildren, plus the neighborhood kids they always gathered.

But he was too late, and the picture that met him was incongruous. The Vegan—all eight feet of him—was squatting down, surrounded by seven children, talking to the youngest of Carol's brood of three. Rolfe stopped where he was. If this was what the Vegan wanted, all right. But he couldn't understand it, and the sight brought back his shaky feelings of doubt.

Rather than being frightened by the strange, giant man, the children were intrigued, hardly able to wait their turn to talk to him, treating him like a Santa Claus. At the moment, he was examining little Carol's doll, carefully noting all the things it could do—talk, weep, and dance. Eight-year-old Ritchie caught his attention and proudly stepped forward clutching his favorite toy, a tin ray gun that spit and sputtered when the trigger was pressed.

The children came to him one by one, shy in his presence. It was a procession of dolls, puppets, ray guns and age-old cowboy boots, six-shooters, tops, and roller skates. The most comic sight was a tiny girl wearing a ray-gun belt, a cowboy hat, and a huge star pinned on her chest, proclaiming herself to be Sheriff Benton and Sandy the Spaceman all at the same time.

Finally the Vegan rose and sent the children back to their games. As he turned away from them, his smile changed to a scowl, and when he reached Rolfe, he sighed. But he said, "They are charming. Bright and fresh. By the way, who is Sheriff Benton—and Sandy the Spaceman?"

Rolfe explained that they were characters on two of the children's television programs and tried to hurry him back to the house and the able handling of Julia. But the Vegan stopped just short of the door.

"I must go now. The others will be waiting for me."

This wasn't the only Vegan on Earth at this moment. In each of the four sectors of the world, others were doing the same as this one. They would

pool their reports by radio and their decision would be announced.

IT HAD ALL been too simple to suit Rolfe and he felt cheated. One half hour spent in a garden with a group of children was not the key to a world; but all he could do was drive the man back to the field and wait for his answer. If the Vegan had been brief to the point of rudeness, he couldn't argue. He was just a tool, after all.

He tried not to pace the cement outside the ship as he waited for the reappearance of the giant man. What was needed at that moment was a look of complete assurance, and there was no reason why he shouldn't be assured. The Vegan had been pleased with everything he saw.

He swiveled at a sound from the ship and met the Vegan halfway. The tall man's face was not friendly.

"The reports are in and the decision has been made," he intoned, letting disappointment show plainly on his face. "There really was nothing to decide. We had no choice."

Rolfe stared at him, holding his jaw tight, trying to prepare himself for what he knew was coming.

"The people of Earth," the Vegan said, "will not be allowed into space. We cannot risk it. You will tell your fellows."

Rolfe swallowed, ready to accept it calmly. But years of hoping and preparing caught at him and he bridled. "Wait just a minute. You have to give a reason. We did everything you told us to do. We destroyed all of our weapons. We set up a world government and settled our differences. We have a true peace—what more do you want?"

"You have done well in those respects," came the answer. "But we must wonder what your intentions are."

"What do you mean?"

"You see, you adults are not the important ones. We realize that you can remember war, and what it was. It is the children who count—who will make your future."

"But you liked our children," Rolfe protested.

"Of course I did, but that is not the point. Our position can be summed up in one question, Mr. Woodward. If your world is really planning to remain peaceful, why are you teaching your children to use guns and knives and to play at killing?"

"But those are just children's toys. Kids are kids. It's natural for them. They've always done it." The protest was

weak, but it was all Rolfe had left.

"You give a child a book to stimulate him to read. You give a child a paint set to stimulate him to create. Why do you give a child a gun?" The Vegan shook his head. "We have no alternative. We cannot trust the children you are raising. You had the opportunity to start fresh with a new generation—to let them grow without a though of violence in their minds—without even knowing what war was. Instead, you carefully replanted the seeds." He reached out his hand. "Thank you for your cooperation. I must go now. Please tell your people we are sorry."

Rolfe shook the hand doggedly, watched the Vegan disappear in side his ship, and then walked away. He wasn't angry; he couldn't be, because the worst part of the whole thing was, he knew the Vegan was right.

He delivered the required message to the powers at headquarters, then headed for home and the set of lead soldiers he had bought for Ritchie's birthday. He wondered if they would make too much of a mess melting in the fireplace.

WHY FAMOUS?

(continued from page 9)

soundly in science (as it was at the time), or particularly good writing, but most certainly did find them enjoyable and memorable.

Some stories stick in the memory, year after year, but if you dig them out and re-read them, you may find that they do not seem so enjoyable now, because your tastes have changed. This is the risk of reliving the past by going through once-treasured old magazines. Some stories which did not impress you so strongly come off better now—showing that they were a bit beyond you when you first read them. But there are also stories which, upon re-reading turn out to be great fun—even though you may be aware, today, of faults and defects which did not strike you then. When I first read *The Warlord of Mars*, back in 1930, I thought it was wonderful. I was ready to protest bitterly against any criticism that it was silly. Today, I can re-read this Burroughs novel (I have re-read it within the last five years) and still enjoy it heartily; it's silly, but in its own silly way it is very wonderful indeed, and perhaps in another decade I could re-read it again. But I find I cannot re-read a great deal of respectable science fiction with any enjoyment whatsoever. Such tales had values, and still have the same values, but they were all used up in one perusal. (This does not, of course, apply to *all* presentday respectable science fiction—some of it has the same fundamental staying power that these old disreputable but delightful tales have.)

I AM CONSTANTLY re-reading the old magazines in search of tales memorable that I still find enjoyable—and the percentage is a good deal higher than the pundits of modern science fiction would have you believe. However, since there are hundreds of stories that I have not yet gotten to re-reading (only a small fraction of any day—and not every day—can be devoted to it), your suggestions and nominations are not only in order but will be greatly appreciated.

Novels and, for the most part, extra-long novelets, which would have to be run in instalments, cannot be considered for the time being. And my experience with our sister publications, *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* and *STARTLING MYS-*

TERY STORIES, has shown that some stories requested turn out to be unavailable to us for sundry reasons, despite my agreement that they are well worth using. The cut-off date forward is 1938, meaning that we shall not consider anything first published later than 1937, as a general rule. (But not, perhaps, an absolute one; the circumstances will have to be unusual, though). There is no cut-off date in the other direction.

Obviously, we are not going to be greatly concerned with scientific strictness. Some stories which seemed sound enough when they were first published have been rendered obsolete, scientifically, by discovery and achievement since then. In others, a great deal of poetic license (as Dr. T. O'Connor Sloane used to put it) was taken by the author even in respect to scientific knowledge then current. Nor will we try to make a story written in 1931 sound as if it were written in 1961. When it is possible, we will tell you something about the author and the story. For example, in the issue before you, you see:

RAY (mond King) CUMMINGS: a name that was known and loved by thousands of readers of imaginative literature who purchased the initial issue of *AMAZING STORIES* in March 1926. His name had appeared on novels such as *The Man on the Meteor, Into the Fourth Dimension,* and *Tarrano, the Conqueror,* when they ran seriafly in *SCIENCE AND INVENTION,* each installment illustrated by Frank

(turn page)

R. Paul. And by 1926, *The Girl in the Golden Atom* was already a classic; it had appeared in Munsey's *ALL-STORY MAGAZINE* for the Issue of March 1919.

He was 22 at that time, having already traveled extensively, attended Princeton University where he specialized in physics, worked in oil fields, hunted gold in British Columbia, and gone on timber cruises in the North. From 1914 to 1919, he was personal assistant to Thomas A. Edison, and facsimilies of Ray Cummings' signature can be found on a number of labels for Edison records.

Most of his best novels appeared in the late 20s and early 30s, although Cummings' sole occupation was that of writer from the appearance of "The Girl" to his death in 1957. His popularity began to decline in the 30s, partly because of the fact that his plots and themes were becoming repetitious, and partly due to popular rejection of his somewhat Victorian style as obsolete. (Readers of the early *AMAZING STORIES* objected to the "old-fashioned" writing in H. G. Wells' novels which were reprinted there in 1926, 1927 and 1928.) Today, the Victorian Age is far enough behind us so that we can enjoy good

stories written in the manner of that time; Verne and Wells are being rediscovered. And today many of Ray Cummings' tales can be read with enjoyment for what they are, rather than serve as material to be picked apart because they are not something else.

CLARK ASHTON SMITH (1893-1961) was known to the relative handful of science fictionists who also followed *WEIRD TALES* when *Marooned in Andromeda* appeared in the October 1930 issue of *WONDER STORIES,* for which Frank R. Paul painted a real hair-raising cover; but to most purchasers of science fiction magazines he was entirely a newcomer. That story, and his second in science fiction magazines, *An Adventure Into Futurity,* while as good as many others appearing at the time, was not outstanding; it gave little hint of the special qualities in Smith's writing that had endeared him to readers of *WEIRD TALES.* Then, in 1931, the July issue of *WONDER STORIES* presented on its cover a wonderfully fantastic cover by Paul from Smith's *City of Singing Flame.* This was widely acclaimed by readers and was the first of a run of stories in that magazine, all but one of which, to my mind, are entirely memorable and good for re-reading. Many of the readers of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* have urged us to reprint this story—even some of those who have said they did not like to see science fiction in *MOH.* (Well, you can argue all day and half the night over whether these Smith stories should be called science fiction or fantasy. Fantastic they are—but my feeling is that they are science fiction directed fantasy, rather than "supernatural" directed fantasy.) If you enjoy this story, there is a sequel which we might be able to offer you in a future issue.

(turn page)

LAURENCE MANNING first appeared in the May 1930 issue of *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES,* collaborating with the late Fletcher Pratt in a very good story entitled *The City of the Living Dead.* Later on, he appeared by himself, and rapidly became one of that magazine's favorite authors. The basic theme of the original story is one that he used again in his series, *The Man Who Awoke,* which ran in five consecutive issues in 1933 (each story complete by itself). At the end of the year, readers saw *The Call of the Mech-Men* (reprinted in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR,* November 1965) which was the first of a new series, centering around the doings of various members of the Stranger Club. The second story in the series was entitled *Caverns of Horror,* and this proved to be immensely popular with MOH's readers when we ran it in the November 1964 issue. Upon inquiring, the vote was large and emphatic that we offer the remaining three tales in the series, even though we warned readers that none of the others fit so well into the "horror" category as *Caverns. Voice of Atlantis* was third in the series, and we are running the fourth story, ***The Moth Message*** **in the new Winter issue of MOH; we shall offer the final tale,** ***Seeds From***

Space, to you as soon as we can.

IN HIS very fine book, *Seekers of Tomorrow* (World Publishing Company, Cleveland, 1966 441pp, $6.00), Sam Moskowitz quotes Rollo May on "wonder"—"Wonder is the opposite of cynicism and boredom . . ." The quote goes on for a space and is worth tracking down in its entirety, but this fragment serves my present purpose, which is to assert that "wonder" is the keynote of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION.* This magazine is not even remotely concerned with giving you a scientific education, improving your politics or ethics, etc., (according to what the editor may consider better politics or ethics, etc.), curing your neurosis, or pointing a sure-fire way to your individual self-improvement or salvation. Worthy goals, true—but you'll have to look elsewhere for concerted efforts on those lines in your behalf.

We offer food for imagination; and while we certainly will not refuse to consider a story on the grounds that it may be "too good", entertainment is still our principal aim. That word covers far more ground than many people realize; as mentioned above, I find

(turn page)

The Warlord of Mars entertaining but I also find *Finnegans Wake* entertaining. No, you won't find such extreme examples of limited-audience entertainment as the latter in *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION.* I noted it to suggest that a story does not have to be written down to a very limited intellectual level in order to entertain; and we already know that a story does not have to be great English literature in order to entertain.

What if . . . ?

Ray Cummings' depiction of the atom is no longer in the realm of what "might be", if it ever was in the first place—but what if atoms were like that? If you could make a chemical reducing drug, etc., as described in this story, Richard Macklin, Ph.D., has described succintly what would happen to you. Because any sort of drug has to be absorbed, and this absorption takes time, your insides would shrink away before the rest of you started shrinking—a pretty awful way to die! But what if this objection could be overcome? The more you know of science, the more objections you will be able to find in most of these oldtime stories—but what if . . . ? All but the most dogmatic can make allowances for the objections.

Herein lies wonder. We hope you will want to come along with us.

Robert A. W. Lowndes

Down To Earth

AS WE PREPARED this first issue of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*, we were saddened to hear of the passing of David H. Keller, M.D., the "good doctor" as he was known to thousands of lovers of fine science fiction and weird tales in the 20's and 30's. There was a story by him in the very first issue of *AMAZING STORIES* that I ever got my hands on at the time it came out, *The Psychophonic Nurse*, which appeared in the November 1928 issue. This was a tale about a "modern" couple and a career woman wife who decided that the way to solve the problem of taking care of her child, without this interfering with her work, was to have a robot nurse.

It was not what one would think of as a particularly exciting story, and certainly not awfully exciting on the face of it to a 12-year-old (myself) who had been devouring Jules Verne and was enthralled by such wild tales (in the same issue of the magazine) as *The World at Bay* and *The Moon Men*—what interest could a story based upon the psychology of the "modern" woman, and the down-to-Earth problems of taking care of a small child have? None, you'd think—yet, even so, that story held me and I remembered the author's name, in 1930, when I was permitted to subscribe to *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES* and read the other sceince fiction magazine regularly.

Dr. Keller, I soon learned, was one of the favorites of the readers, but he was very controversial, too. The letter columns were interlarded with letters expressing the same enthusiasm that I myself felt, along with letters tearing his stories to shreds and blistering the editor for running such "junk". Needless to say, the devotees of the remarkable doctor far outnumbered the opposition, and up to the time when the two charter titles in the field, *AMAZING* and *WONDER* changed publishers, the former for a second time, "Kelleryarns" (as they were called by the upcoming crop of fans) were treasured. And when, in 1932, I first got on to *WEIRD TALES*, I found that my favorite appeared there, too.

What the Keller stories have is a simple, down-to-earth quality in writing, and a natural feeling in the characterizations, which was not found very often in science fiction written during the 20's and 30's. On the surface, this looks as if it ought to be very easy to do. It isn't. While Keller did not found any sort of "school" of science fiction writing, the "slice-of-life" fad which infested science fiction in the 50's—when "maturity" was the slogan—brought forth material which reads like very bad imitation Keller. No author—even the remarkable doctor—is perfect; no single style is completely adequate for every idea an author with as fertile a mind as Keller's may get. There were times when a story just wasn't under control or when the simplicity seemed more simple-minded. (But not as simple-minded as the slice-of-life abortions which came later.)

There's a very sound reason for this. David H. Keller did not start to sell his stories until he was in his 40's, and he had many years of experience as a physician and psychiatrist behind him. His people talked and thought and acted like people we see around us daily, or read of in the newspapers, because he had lived fully and knew whereof he wrote. A youngster, filled with literary examples, who tries to write in this manner *may* be able to turn out one or two competent stories if he has either the good fortune or the good luck

to hit on something which he really knows from experience. But he hasn't had enough experience, or variety of experience, to make a steady thing of it. What with a man in his forties, who has written for years for his own satisfaction and in the process learned how he can get his own very unique comprehensions of beauty, wonder, and terror (for Dr. Keller has written a few of the most powerful horror stories in contemporary imaginative literature) becomes art concealing art, shows up as artificiality in the younger person who is trying to write in a way he just has not grown into writing. At his best, and that covers a gratifying number of stories, Dr. Keller is inimitable.

Does this mean that nothing can be learned from not only reading but studying his stories? By no means. The person who finds pleasure in reading Keller's tales, and wants himself to write, can learn a very great deal; but what this person learns must be expressed in his own way, not Keller's—and the end result, if successful, will be that you will not see stories from this person that read like unpublished Keller stories at all. The influence will be there, but it won't advertise itself. (One of my own tales which was rather well received was conceived and written in the Keller manner, as it were; but I made no attempt to imitate, and the result is that no one I heard from spotted it. No reason why they should, if it really was a good story.)

There just isn't space for anything like a complete list of his memorable science fiction—*The Metal Doom, Stenographer's Hands,* and *Life Everlasting* come to mind at once; there are the many tales dealing with his detective character, Taine of San Francisco, and such off-trail yarns as *No More Tomorrows* and *The Worm.* In the weird field, there is *The Thing in the Cellar, The Last Magician,* and *The Seeds of Death* (which we ran in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR,* February 1964), to name just three; *Tiger Cat, The Doorbell,* and *The Dead Woman* are also very effective horror stories, as is *Heredity (MAGAZINE OF HORROR,* Summer 1966)—and that quiet masterpiece of psychological horror, *A Piece of Linoleum* is not a story you will forget. The "Cornwall" stories show another side of the author—whimsy, delightful spoofs on the "swords and sorcery" aspect of weird and fantastic fiction.

We hope to bring you some of Dr. Keller's stories in future issues of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION,* and recommend the collection *Tales From Underwood.* This sells for $3.50, if there are still copies to be obtained from August Derleth, Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583. The last I heard, the stock was low, so it might be wise to inquire.

In future issues, this department will be for you, the readers, although the editor may participate at times when he thinks he has something of interest to contribute to a discussion—hoping that such participation will not tend to choke off debate or your free discussion of matters relating to *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* or science fiction in general. The precise length of the department in any issue will depend upon your response, but we shall take care to see that it does not expand to the point where a story or stories would be crowded out in order to make room for letters. We shall excerpt in some instances, while in others it will be desirable to print a letter in full. In either event, the writer of the letter will receive a complimentary copy of the issue in which the letter appears as a token of our appreciation for his pains. All letters received will be considered for excerpting, or publication in full, unless the writer specifically states that a part, or the whole, is not for publication. Letters must be signed and full address must appear to be available, but we will honor any request to withhold the writer's name, or address, or both.

We shall try to keep you informed on science fiction books either wholly or substantially devoted to material of the 20s and 30s or earlier, where such books are sent to us for review.

Examples would be Edward E. Smith's *Spacehounds of IPC*, which is Doc's best "independent" novel (not tied in with either of his series) and packs all the wonder and excitement it did back in 1931 (Ace Book F-372; 40¢); Ace Book G-585 sells for 50¢, but here you get a John W. Campbell double: *The Ultimate Weapon*, which appeared as *Uncertainty* in 1936, and *The Planeteers*, the five Penton and Blake stories which ran between 1936 and 1938.

(turn page)

April 25, 1934

Mr. Wallace West,
37-08 Boone Ave.,
Flushing, L.I., N. Y.

Dear Mr. West:

I am very glad to hear from you again, but I hope you will not delay so long next time you submit a story. But I like your style, and there is no reason why you cannot hit our requirements, as you have done several times before.

I am sorry that LOST does not make it. I thought I was going to like this story, but after reading it I have decided that there is no story here. You have not motivated the dust sufficiently. The story turns out to have quite an ordinary plot; or perhaps I might better say that it has no plot at all. The story needs a far more imaginative handling; then you have given it. Compare, for example, the cosmic sweep of the dust through the universe in Donald Wandrei's story, THE RED BRAIN.

Sorry that I can't see my way clear to accept LOST.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Wright.

We were sorry to have to postpone a most fascinating "lost" story—*Dust,* by Wallace West, to our second issue—but this gives us a chance to plug the tale a little. It was originally written in 1935, as the reproduction of a letter from Farnsworth Wright shows.

In re-typing it, Wally cut some of the dialogue, added a few modern references, and changed the ending—we won't tell you what it is; originally the refugees sought out deep caves—but the essence of the story, the descriptions of a world smothered in searing, poisonous dust, has not been altered. It sounded like fantastic fiction back in 1935; today, it's still fiction, but uncomfortably close to fact. RAWL

Reader's Preference Page

(there's more space on the flip side)

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(or better still, write us a letter!)

Reader's Preference Page

(there's more space on the flip side)

Please rate the stories in the order of your preference, as many as possible. Ties are always acceptable. If you thought a story was bad (rather than just last place), put an "X" beside it. If you thought a story was truly outstanding, above just first place, mark an "O" beside it. (Then the next-best would be "1".)

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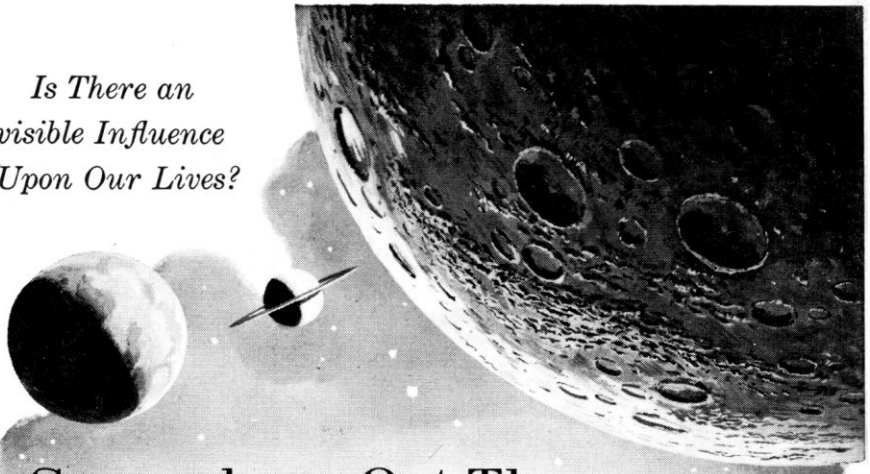
Is There an Invisible Influence Upon Our Lives?



Somewhere Out There Are Other Minds!

Does man stand alone in the tideless ocean of space? Is earth the only habitat of intelligent beings? Certainly the phenomenon of life is not a chance one. Somewhere in the countless shining orbs are minds... how puny by comparison in mental and psychic stature we may be! Those strange, inexplicable feelings we have at times... are they a tugging from the recesses of space upon our senses? Are they the effort of Cosmic beings to reach out—to find a bond of communication with earth?

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