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Cover by Bill Hughes, illustrating HARTMANN THE ANARCHIST.
Interiors by Fred T. Jane, Christopher Hart, Birch, and Sarah S. Stilwell.
THE December, 1935 issue of WEIRD TALES was an exceptional one. The contents page revealed an impressive lineup of authors and stories: Robert E. Howard began his serial, THE HOUR OF THE DRAGON, which was to become perhaps the most famous of all the Conan stories, later published in book form as CONAN THE CONQUEROR; Clark Ashton Smith contributed "The Chain of Aforomon," later included in the now out-of-print volume, OUT OF SPACE AND TIME; Edmond Hamilton was represented by one of his "Kaldar" stories, "The Great Brain of Kaldar;" Arlton Eadie's serial, "The Carnival of Death," reached its conclusion; and perhaps the most famous story by Edward Lucas White — "Lukundoo" — was reprinted from WEIRD TALES of ten years before. But this December issue was exceptional in another way as well: it marked the first appearance in a fantasy magazine of a young artist who signed his work "Virgil."

Readers of WT in the thirties were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the interior artwork of the magazine, and rightly so. With only a few exceptions, it was pretty awful. New talent was badly needed. And so, with the illustration for Paul Ernst's "Dancing Feet," Farnsworth Wright introduced a new artist to the highly critical and articulate readership of the most famous fantasy magazine of all time, and a career was launched — a career that blossomed immediately and has happily spanned more than three decades of book and magazine illustration; a career that has given us some of the most beautiful fantasy art ever penned; and a career that now, sadly, is over.

Virgil Warden Finlay died on January 18, 1971, at the age of 56.

The pen that he dipped in wonder and delight is stilled forever — but his work will live as long as fantasy is read and remembered.

For who, having seen them, can forget:
The illustrations for the Farnsworth Wright Shakespeare Library Edition of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM;
The A. Merritt Memorial Edition of THE SHIP OF ISHTAR;
The series of illustrations of famous poems in WEIRD TALES from 1937 through 1940;
The incredibly beautiful covers for Merritt's novels in FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and FANTASTIC NOVELS?
The illustration for H. P. Lovecraft's "The Shunned House," called "the finest Lovecraft illustration ever done," and used on the dust jacket of HPL's MARGINALIA;
Lovecraft's favorite portrait, which depicts him dressed in 18th-century garb, quill pen in hand, while behind him eldritch gods and monsters snarl and gibber;
The Finlay Portfolios, reprints of his best work from FFM, FN and other magazines of the 40's and 50's, now highly-prized collectors' items;
And the hundreds of other superb covers and interiors with which he graced nearly every science fiction and fantasy magazine of the 40's, 50's, and 60's.
In recent years, many of his finest illustrations were reprinted on the covers of Robert Lowndes' magazines, while Finlay himself produced a great many excellent drawings for the covers of astrology magazines.
His art is as eagerly collected and admired by fans today, as it has been for many years. Indeed, many consider him one of the two greatest fantasy illustrators of all time — sharing his pedestal only with the great Hannes Bok. He is constantly being "discovered" by new generations of fantasy fans, and his techniques have helped to shape the styles of some of the finest young fantasy artists working today.
Virgil Finlay was a man of rare talent and superb imagination; a craftsman of infinite patience who lavished great care and love on everything he created; a man who, as H. P. Lovecraft put it, could "both dream and draw." He gave us images of wonder and terror and great beauty, and now he is gone.
The worlds of fantasy and science fiction will never be the same.

We'd like to express our thanks to all of you who have taken advantage of our offers in the "Forgotten Fantasy Bookmart." We hope you've been pleased with the books, and we'd also like to apologize to those of you who've had to wait overlong for THE CONAN READER. Mirage Press has been tardy in filling our orders, a tardiness which we've regretfully had to pass on to you. But have faith, we'll get the books to you as soon as we get them. Further apologies to those of you who've ordered books that have recently gone out of print. We got stuck on our British paperback edition of THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND that way: our stock on hand was quickly exhausted, and our reorder was returned with an "OP" notice on it. The same thing has happened with two other books: THE DARK BROTHERHOOD AND OTHER PIECES by Lovecraft and Others, and Sam Moskowitz's SCIENCE FICTION BY GASLIGHT.
In racking our collective brains for ways to raise more revenue for FF, in this issue we've decided to offer a selection of discounted best-sellers,
both fiction and non-fiction, along with the fantasy books, on the theory that many people who read fantasy don’t read only fantasy, but also like to keep up with what’s current and choice in other fields as well. So if you’d like a break on current best-sellers without joining a book club and hasseling a computer, see page 126.

If there has been one request repeated most often in the many letters we have received from all over the United States and Canada it is surely the request for stories from the old Munsey magazines. In view of this almost unanimous wish, we are taking steps to look into the possibility of reprinting some of these old classics for you. So stick with us, and let’s see what develops.

We’re also trying another innovation in this issue, as FF continues to evolve. We’ve reduced the type size slightly on our new serial. This will enable us to bring it to you in only two installments, instead of three or four. If it works out satisfactorily, we may go to this new type size for the entire issue next time. It enables us to get almost 20% more on a page without sacrificing readability. So let us know how you like it.

DM
HARTMANN THE ANARCHIST;

OR,

THE DOOM OF THE GREAT CITY.

by

E. Douglas Fawcett

Illustrated by Fred T. Jane
The storm gathering.
INTRODUCTION

DURING the fifteenth century the great Renaissance genius, Leonardo da Vinci, described and illustrated in amazing detail machines for achieving heavier-than-air flight. Man had always dreamed of conquering the air someday, but the means had always been just beyond his grasp. Even Leonardo could not supply a successful power source for his inventions.

Then, in 1783, the first successful ascent in a lighter-than-air craft was made in a balloon by the brothers Montgolfier. The dream of wings took a different turn: perhaps the future of flight lay in the aerostat, or lighter-than-air ship. Many scientists and dreamers experimented with aerostats, but there were still those who believed that the future of aviation lay not with the balloon, but with the aeronef, or heavier-than-air craft.

Among those who held this view was a young French writer of scientific romances named Jules Verne. Although his first great success had been an adventure story called FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON, published in 1863, he had studied Leonardo’s sketches and notes carefully, as well as the experiments of several French and Italian aeronautical engineers. In 1875, a steam-driven helicopter made a flight of 20 seconds duration, reaching a height of almost 14 yards. Trivial as this might sound to us today, to Verne it had enormous significance. He became convinced that the future of air travel belonged to the heavier-than-air helicopter, and with the incredible foresight that was his, anticipated this future as one of tremendous advancement for civilization.

In 1886, his ideas on aviation were presented to the public in a new serial, ROBUR THE CONQUEROR, later published in English as THE CLIPPER OF THE CLOUDS. Although an inferior copy of his earlier 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, the story is a fascinating one, and the brutal, mannerless Robur is in sharp contrast to the coldly courteous Captain Nemo. Robur’s “Nautilus” is the “Albatross,” a huge helicopter resembling a clipper-ship, lifted by 74 vertical screws, driven by powerful propellers fore and aft, and powered by electricity of unprecedented strength. But for all his fearsomeness, Robur’s main intention is to demonstrate the superiority of his concept to the skeptical scientists of his day who championed the aerostat. Although he kidnap two members of a scientific institute and takes them on a harrowing adventure, he does not harm them, even when they destroy his aircraft and imperil his life. In fact, he undergoes a remarkable change of character at the end of the story, leaving these prophetic words with the citizens of the United States: “My experiment is finished; but my advice to those present is to be premature in nothing, not even in progress. It is evolution and not revolution that we must seek. . . . Nations are not yet fit for union.

“I go, then; and I take my secret with me. But it will not be lost to humanity. It will belong to you the day you are educated enough to profit by it and wise enough not to abuse it.”

Verne saw Robur as the science of the future, a science which could turn civilization into a Utopia in the hands of men of reason and sanity.

But there were other writers of the nineteenth century who saw more
accurately into the hearts and minds of men; writers who anticipated the terrible potential of the airship to terrorize and destroy. Such a writer was Edward Douglas Fawcett, a relatively obscure English author and philosopher, who was deeply influenced by Verne’s works. When he was only 17 years old, Fawcett produced the first of three science-fiction novels closely patterned after the works of Verne — HARTMANN THE ANARCHIST OR, THE DOOM OF THE GREAT CITY. Born in Brighton in 1866, Fawcett was educated at Newton College, South Devon, and Westminster School, where he was an outstanding student. He became intensely interested in political reform, but rejected the radical ideas of the anarchists and terrorists who were gaining strength toward the end of the nineteenth century. What, he must have conjectured, if Verne’s Robur had been an anarchist — a madman intent on using the terrible power of his airship to overthrow and destroy the established governments of England and Europe. Rudolf Hartmann is such a man, and his story is a terrible one indeed.

The first half of the novel is pure Verne, as a young Socialist reformer named Stanley is kidnapped by Hartmann and taken for an awesome journey through the skies aboard the anarchist’s aircraft. But there are ominous differences, such as the name of Hartmann’s craft — the "Attila"— and the anarchist’s cold-blooded destruction of a ship to demonstrate his power. The horrified Stanley, whose idealistic credo is summed up in a phrase taken directly from Robur’s farewell speech — "evolution, not revolution" — finds himself the prisoner of a group of fanatical madmen who are grimly determined to destroy first London, and then all of civilization, in order to abolish all governments forever!

After a series of aerial adventures a la Verne, Stanley manages to escape from the "Attila" during the nightmarish bombardment of London — a nightmare that was to become hideous reality half a century later during World War II!

Today, HARTMANN is fascinating as an example of a more realistic interpretation of one of the prophecies of Jules Verne — that man would someday achieve the mastery of flight. Unlike Verne’s generalized warning against the misuse of science, Fawcett specifically warned of the sinister potential of aerial warfare, a warning echoed by later prophets such as H. G. Wells in THE WAR IN THE AIR (1908).

In 1904, toward the end of his career, Verne himself wrote again of Robur the Conqueror in THE MASTER OF THE WORLD, a Robur now older and blinded by pride and power, who attempts to conquer the world in a new super-craft, the "Terror," but succeeds only in destroying himself. Verne had come to realize more fully the terrible consequences of the misuse of technology. Perhaps the pupil had brought home this lesson to the master, for Robur had now become a Hartmann.

Fawcett’s career spanned nearly a century, and he lived to see the bombardment of London he predicted come true, not by one airship but by many — directed by a madman far more dangerous than Rudolf Hartmann. Although Fawcett wrote two other science fiction adventure stories in imitation of Verne — SWALLOWED BY AN EARTHQUAKE (1894), inspired by A JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH; and THE SECRET OF THE DESERT OR, HOW WE CROSSED ARABIA
IN THE “ANTELOPE” (1895) — he never again achieved the dark, prophetic power of his first novel. During his later career, Fawcett produced a number of works on philosophy, his distinctive mark being the discussion of Imagination in the fundamental reality of the universe. In 1957 he published a long philosophical poem, THE LIGHT OF THE UNIVERSE. He died in 1960, almost entirely unknown to readers in this country, but in some ways a more accurate prophet than his famed mentor. Indeed, many of the ideas expressed by Hartmann the Anarchist and his villainous lieutenant Schwartz could be taken straight from the revolutionary speeches and writings of today’s radicals and “dynamitards” (isn’t that a wonderful word?). Many of today’s youngsters, who have little or no use for the lessons of history, may be amazed to discover that it has all happened before, thus bringing home with infinite clarity the warning of the great Spanish philosopher, George Santayana, that “Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.”

HARTMANN, then, is a quaint and long-forgotten science-fiction adventure from the era of Jules Verne, reprinted here for the first time in almost 80 years, with the original illustrations by Fred T. Jane.

CHAPTER I.

DARK HINTS.

ALL things considered, I rate October 10th, 1920, as the most momentous day of my life. Why it should be so styled is not at once apparent. My career has not been unromantic; during many years I have rambled over the globe, courting danger wherever interest led me, and later on have splashed through shambles such as revolutions have seldom before been red with. More than once I have tripped near the cave where Death lies in ambush. I am now an old man, but my memory is green and vigorous. I can look back calmly on the varied spectacle of life and weigh each event impartially in the balance. And thus looking, I refer my most fateful experience to an hour during an afternoon conversation in my dull, dingy, severe-looking quarters in Bayswater.

From romance to the commonplace is seldom a long trudge. On this occasion a quite commonplace letter determined my destiny. There was nothing of any gravity in the letter itself. It was a mere invitation to meet some friends. Most people would stare vacantly were I to show it to them. They would stare still more vacantly were I to say that it enabled me to write this terrible story. Bear in mind, however, that a lever, insignificant in itself, switches an express train off one track on to another. In a like manner a very insignificant letter switched me off from the tracks of an ordinary work-a-day mortal into those of the companion and biographer of a Nero.
Some two years before the time of which I write I had returned to
London, having completed a series of adventurous travels in Africa and
South-West Asia. My foregoing career is easily briefed. Left an orphan of
very tender years, I had grown up under the aegis of a bachelor uncle, one
of those singularly good-hearted men who rescue humanity from the
cynics. He had always treated me as his own son, had given me the
advantages of a sterling education, and had finally crowned his
benevolence by adopting me as his heir. An inveterate politician, he had
early initiated me into the mysteries of his cult, and it is probably to his
guidance that I owed much of my later enthusiasm for reform. As a
youngerster of twenty-three I could not, however, be expected to abandon
myself to blue-books and statistics, and was indeed much more intent on
amusement than anything else. Among my chief passions was that of
travel, a pursuit which gratified both the acquired interests of culture and
the natural lust of adventure. Of the raptures of the rambler I accordingly
drank my fill, forwarding, in dutiful fashion, long accounts of my tours to
my indulgent relative. Altogether I spent three or four years harvesting
rich experience in this manner. I was preparing for a journey through Syria
when I received a telegram from my uncle’s doctor urging me immediately
to return. Being then at Alexandria I made all haste to comply with it,
only, however, to discover the appeal too well grounded, and the goal of
my journey a death-bed. I mourned for my uncle’s loss sincerely, and my
natural regrets were sharpened when his will was read. With the exception
of a few insignificant bequests, he had transferred his property to me.

The period of mourning over, I was free to indulge my whims to the
utmost, and might well have been regarded as full of schemes for a life of
wild adventure. Delay, however, had created novel interests; some papers I
had published had been warmly welcomed by critics; and a new world —
the literary and political — spread itself out seductively before me.
Further, I had by this time seen “many cities and men,” and the
hydra-headed problem of civilization began to appeal to me with
commanding interest. The teachings also of my uncle had duly yielded
their harvest, and ere long I threw myself into politics with the same zeal
which had carried me through the African forests, and over the dreary
burning sands of Araby. I became, first a radical of my uncle’s school, then
a labour advocate and socialist, and lastly had aspired to the eminence of
parliamentary candidate for Stepney. A word on the political situation.

Things had been looking very black in the closing years of the last
century, but the pessimists of that epoch were the optimists of ours.
London even in the old days was a bloated, unwieldy city, an abode of
smoke and dreariness startled from time to time by the angry murmans of
labour. In 1920 this Colossus of cities held nigh six million souls, and the social problems of the past were intensified. The circle of competence was wider, but beyond it stretched a restless and dreaded democracy. Commerce had received a sharp check after the late Continental wars, and the depression was severely felt. That bad times were coming was the settled conviction of the middle classes, and to this belief was due the Coalition Government that held sway during the year in which my story opens. In many quarters a severe reaction had set in against Liberalism, and a stronger executive and repressive laws were urgently clamoured for. At the opposite extreme flew the red flag, and a social revolution was eagerly mooted.

I myself, though a socialist, was averse to barricades. "Not revolution, but evolution" was the watchword of my section. Dumont has said that "the only period when one can undertake great legislative reforms is that in which the public passions are calm and in which the Government enjoys the greatest stability." Of the importance of this truth I was firmly convinced. What was socialism? The nationalization of land and capital, of the means of production and distribution, in the interests of a vast industrial army. And how were the details of this vast change to be grappled with amid the throes of revolution? How deliberate with streets slippery with blood, the vilest passions unchained, stores, factories, and workshops wrecked, and perhaps a starving populace to conciliate? What man or convention could beat out a workable constitution in the turmoil? What guarantee had we against a reaction and a military saviour? By all means, I argued, have a revolution if a revolution is both a necessary and safe prelude to reform. But was it really necessary or even safe?

Feeling ran high in this dispute. Many a time was I attacked for my "lukewarmness" of conviction by socialists, but never did I hear my objections fairly met. Though on good terms with the advanced party as a whole, I was opposed at Stepney by an extremist as well as by the sitting Conservative member. My chances of election were poor, but victorious or not, I meant to battle vigorously for principle. To a certain extent my perseverance bore good fruit. During the last month I had been honoured with the representation of an important body at a forthcoming Paris Convention, and was in fact on the eve of starting on my journey. There was no immediate call for departure, but the prospect of a pleasant holiday in France proved overwhelmingly seductive. The Socialist Congress was fixed for October 20th, and I proposed to enjoy the interval in true sybaritic fashion. Perhaps my eagerness to start was not unconnected with a tenderer subject than either rambling or politics. Happily or unhappily, however, these dispositions were about to receive short shrift.
It was a raw dismal afternoon, the grim fog-robed buildings, the dripping vehicles, and the dusky pedestrians below reminding one forcibly of the "City of Dreadful Night." Memories of Schopenhauer and Thomson floated slowly across my mind, and the gathering shadows around seemed fraught with a gentle melancholy. Having some two hours before me, I drew my chair to the window and abandoned myself wholly to thought. What my meditations were matters very little, but I remember being vigorously recalled to reality by a smart blow on the shoulder.

"No, Stanley, my boy, it's no use — she won't look your way."

I looked up with a laugh. A stalwart individual with a thick black beard and singularly resolute face had broken upon my solitude.

This worthy, whose acquaintance we shall improve hereafter, was no other than John Burnett, journalist and agitator, a man of the most advanced revolutionary opinions, in fact an apostle of what is generally known as anarchical communism. No law, no force, reference of all social energies to voluntary association of individuals, were his substitutes for the all-regulating executive of the socialists. He made no secret of his

A visit from Burnett.

intentions — he meant to wage war in every effective mode, violent or otherwise, against the existing social system. Though strongly opposed to
the theories, I was not a little attached to the theorist. He talked loudly, but, so far as I knew, his hands had never been stained with any actual crime. Further, he was most sincere, resolute, and unflinching – he had, moreover, once saved me from drowning at great risk to himself, and, like so many other persons of strong character, had contracted a warm affection for his debtor.

That his visits to me were always welcome I cannot indeed say. Many rumours of revolutions and risings were in the air, and some terrible anarchist outrages reported from Berlin had made the authorities unusually wary. Burnett, in consequence, was a marked man, and his friends and acquaintances shone with a borrowed glory. Moderate as were my own views, they might conceivably be a blind, and this possibility had of late been officially recognized. It was wonderful what a visiting list I had, and still more wonderful that my callers so often chose hours when I was out. However, as they found that I was guiltless of harbouring explosives and had no correspondence worth noting, their attentions were slowly becoming infrequent. Burnett, too, had been holding aloof of late, indeed I had not been treated to his propaganda for some weeks. To what was the honour of this unexpected visit due? “Off to Paris, I hear,” he continued. “Well, I thought I might do worse than look in. I have something to tell you too.”

“My dear fellow,” I cried, “you choose your time oddly. I must leave this place in a trice. Meanwhile, however, tell me where you’ve been of late, and what this latest wrinkle is.”

“I? Well, out of London. If you had not been rushing off at short notice I might have spoken more to the point. You can’t stay a couple of days longer, can you? Say yes, and I will engage to open your eyes a bit.”

“No, I fear I can’t: the Congress is not till the 20th, but meantime I want rest. I am positively done up. Time enough, however, later on.”

Burnett laughed. “It is worth while sometimes to take time by the forelock. Look here, I am bound hand and foot at present, but this I will say, your congresses and your socialism – evolutionary, revolutionary, or what not – are played out.”

“I think I have heard that remark before,” I somewhat coldly rejoined; “still, say what you like, you will find that we hold the reins. I won’t say anything more of the paracticability of anarchism, we have talked the matter over ad nauseam. But this I will say. Compared with us you are a handful of people, politically speaking of no account, and perhaps on the whole best left to the attention of the police. Forgive my bluntness, but to my mind, your crusade, when not absurd, appears only criminal.”

“As you like,” said Burnett doggedly; “the world has had enough
barking — the time for biting has come. Restrain your eloquence for a season, and I’ll promise you a wonderful change of convictions.”

“What, have your Continental friends more wrecking in hand? What idiocy is this wretched campaign! It converts no one, strengthens the hands of the reactionaries, and, what is more, destroys useful capital. Why, I say, injure society thus aimlessly?”

“Curse society!” — and a heavy fist struck my writing-table — “I detest both society as it is and society as you hope it will be. To-day the capitalist wolves and a slavish multitude; to-morrow a corrupt officialism and the same slavish multitude, only with new masters. But about our numbers, my friend, you think that we must be politically impotent because we are relatively so few. We count only our thousands where you tot up your millions of supporters. Obviously we could hardly venture to beard you after the established orthodox fashion. But suppose, suppose, I say, our people had some incalculable force behind them. Suppose, for instance, that the leaders of these few thousands came to possess some novel invention — something that — that made them virtual dictators to their kind” — and looking very hard at me he seemed to await my answer with interest.

“Suppositions of this sort are best kept for novels. Besides, I see no scope even for such an invention — it is part of the furniture of Utopia. But, stay! was not this invention the dream of that saintly dynamiter Hartmann also? Hartmann! Now there’s a typical case of genius wasted on anarchy. A pretty story is that of your last martyr — tries to blow up a prince and destroys an arch and an applewoman. For the life of me I can’t see light here!”

“All men bungle sometimes,” growled the revolutionist, ignoring the first part of my reply; “Hartmann with the rest — ten years ago was it? Ah! he was young then. But mark me, my friend, don’t call people martyrs prematurely. You think Hartmann went down with that vessel — permit me to express a doubt.”

“Well,” I responded, “it matters little to me anyhow, but, anarchy apart, how that poor old mother of his would relish a glimpse of him, if what you hint at is true!”

He nodded, and involuntarily my thoughts ran back to the days of 1910, when my uncle read me, then a mere boy, the account of Hartmann’s outrage.

As Hartmann’s first crime is notorious I run some risk of purveying stale news. But for a younger generation it will suffice to mention the attempt of this enthusiast to blow up the German Crown Prince and suite when driving over Westminster Bridge on the occasion of their 1910 visit.
Revenge for the severe measures taken against Berlin anarchists was the motive, but by some mischance the mine exploded just after the carriages had passed, wreaking, however, terrible havoc in the process. My sneer about the applewoman must not be taken too seriously, for though it is quite true that one such unfortunate perished, yet fifty to sixty victims fell with her in the crash of a rent arch. There was a terrible burst of indignation from all parts of the civilized world and the usual medley of useless arrests; the real culprits, Hartmann and his so-called “shadow” Michael Schwartz, escaping to sea in a cargo-boat bound for Holland. The boat went down in a storm, and, failing further news, it was believed that all on board had gone down with her. Hartmann was known to have possessed large funds, and these also presumably lined the sea-bottom. Such was the official belief, and most people had agreed that the official belief was the right one.

I should add that among Hartmann’s victims must, in a sense, be classed his mother. At the time of which I am now writing she was leading a very retired but useful life in Islington, where she spent her days in district-visiting and other charitable work. She still wore deep mourning, and had never, so it seemed, got over the shock caused by the appalling crime and early death of her son. Burnett knew her very well indeed, though she scarcely appreciated his visits. I was myself on excellent terms with the old lady, but had not seen her for some weeks previous to the conversation here recorded.

My time running fine, Burnett shortly rose to go.

“Be sure,” he said, “and look me up early on your return. Mischief, I tell you, is brewing, and how soon I shall have to pitch my camp elsewhere I hardly know.”

He was moving to the door when my landlady entered with a note. She had probably been listening to the conversation, for she glanced rather timorously at my guest before depositing her charge.

“Wait one moment, Burnett, and I’ll see you out,” said I, as I hastily broke the envelope. Yes, there was no mistaking the hand, the missive was really from my old friend, Mrs. Northerton. Its contents were fated to upset my programme. Only two days back I had arranged to meet the family in Paris at the express invitation of her husband, a genial old Liberal who took a lively interest in my work. This arrangement now received its death-blow.

“3, Carshalton Terrace, Bayswater.

“DEAR MR. STANLEY,

“We have just returned from Paris, where we had, as you know,
intended to stay some time. Old Mr. Matthews, whom you will recollect, died about a fortnight ago, leaving the Colonel one of his executors. As the estate is in rather a muddled condition, a good deal of attention may be necessary, so we made up our minds to forego the rest of our trip for the present. I shall be 'at home' to-morrow afternoon, when we shall be delighted to see you. With best wishes from all.

"Always yours sincerely,
"MAUDE C. NORTHERTON.

"P.S. — Lena comes in for a bequest of £5000 in Mr. Matthews’s will."

Lena in London! This was quite decisive.

"Excuse me, Burnett," I said, turning to my neglected friend; "but this letter is most important. A nice business pickle I am in, I can tell you."

"What nicely-scented note-paper your business correspondents use. You have my deep sympathies. Well, farewell for the present."

"Don’t be in a hurry," I said; "I am afraid I must postpone this Continental trip after all. Business is business, whoever one’s informant may be. No, I must really knock a few days off my rest."

Burnett stared, and concluded that something really serious was on hand.

"So you will be available for two or three days longer. That being so, I shall expect to see you at the old place about eight o’clock to-morrow evening. Be sure and come, for I have a guest with me of peculiar interest to both of us. His name? Oh! don’t be impatient. It is a fixture, then? All right. No, I can’t stay. Good-night."

I laughed heartily after I had seen him out. What a chequered life, what curious connections were mine — now a jostle with fashion, now with fanatics of anarchy like Burnett. Travelling, it is said, planes away social prejudices, and certainly in combination with Karl Marx it had done so in my case. Many friends used to rally me about my liking for the haunts of luxury, and some even went so far as to say it was of a piece with my other "lukewarm" doctrines. The answer, however, was ready. I hated revolution, and I equally hated the pettiness of a sordid socialism. We must not, I contended, see the graces of high life, art and culture, fouled by the mob, but the mob elevated into a possession and appreciation of the graces. It was just because I believed some approach to this ideal to be possible that I fought under the banners of my party, and forewent travel and independence in the interests of the wage-slave. That I was no Orator
Puff I yearned for some opportunity to show. Cavillers would have then found that my money, my repute, and, if needful, my life, were all alike subservient to the cause I had at heart.

That night, however, lighter visions were to beguile my thoughts. When I dwelt upon once more meeting Miss Northerton, even Burnett’s sombre hints lost their power to interest me. And when later on I did find time to sift them, they received short shrift at my hands. Bluster in large part, no doubt, was my verdict as I turned into bed that night. However, to-morrow I should be in a better position to judge. The interview would, at any rate, prove interesting, for Burnett’s anarchist friends, however desperate, would furnish material in plenty for a student of human nature.

CHAPTER II.

THE ‘SHADOW’ OF HARTMANN.

IT was with a light heart that I made my way to the Northertons’ the following afternoon. The prospect of a chat with the smart old gentleman and his ladies was delightful, and my only apprehensions concerned the assemblage I possibly might find there. As a rule receptions of this sort are tedious; prolific only of dyspepsia and boring conversations. Upper middle-class mediocrity swarms round Mammon, and Mammon, the cult of the senses apart, is uninteresting. With Mill I was always of opinion that the thinker is corrupted by the pettinesses of ordinary “social” intercourse. True, one occasionally meets a celebrity, but celebrities who are not professional talkers are best left unseen — their repute usually so outshines their deportment and conversation. Still, the celebrity is tolerable provided that not too much incense is required. The same thing cannot be said of the camp-following of mediocrities: of contact with this the effects may be as serious as they will certainly prove painful to a well-wisher of the human species. Happily, I rarely suffered at the Northertons’. Ever and anon lions stalked through their premises, and the legions of well-to-do imbeciles thronged them. But there was generally the host or hostess to fall back upon, to say nothing of the companionship of Lena, to whom, if the secret must be revealed, I had for some time been engaged. The understanding was for the present to be privy to ourselves, but I had no reason to suppose that her worthy parents would have cause to object to the match. My politics, which might have scared most people of their
standing, merely interested the excommissioner and were wholly indifferent to his wife. But still it was satisfactory to think that Lena would shortly come of age, and that our joint means would be sufficient to enable us to ignore any probable obstacles. Old Mr. Matthews’s legacy had removed the last formidable barrier.

Two years before I had the good fortune to meet the family, on that memorable occasion when I was so hurriedly summoned from Egypt. The promenade deck of a P. and O. steamer offers boundless facilities for forming friendships, and during the brief interval which bridged my start from Suez and arrival at London, I was not slow in harvesting these advantages to the full. Old Mr. Northerton was returning home after serving his time in the Indian Civil Service, and with him were his wife, his two sons, and an only daughter. My singular interest in the family hinged mainly on the latter, a charming young girl of some eighteen summers. What that interest culminated in I have already said. It only remains to add that the cordial relations set up between the family and myself were never allowed to drop. The two sons were now serving on the Indian Staff Corps, but I corresponded with them ever and anon, and even reckoned the younger among my numerous socialist proselytes. Old Northerton was well aware of this, and though himself a Liberal of the old school, had no reproach for the teacher. After all a “sub” reading Karl Marx under the punkahs of Dum-Dum was scarcely a formidable convert.

A short walk carried me to the terrace, and ere long I was being warmly greeted by the only three available members of the family. Mrs. Northerton was too busy with her guests to pay me much attention, so after a few explanations and regrets for the spoilt trip, I was borne off in charge of the genial commissioner.

“Well, how go your election prospects?” he said, as cheerily as if my programme favoured his class.

“Not as well as I could wish. They say I am too moderate for the constituency. You know, of course, that Lawler, a ‘blood and thunder’ tub-thumper, is standing against me in the interests of the extreme party.”

“So I hear, but I should scarcely have thought he would have stood a chance.”

“On the contrary, I assure you he speaks for a numerous and very ugly party – a party which arrears to legislation have done as much as anything to create. Talking of this, I am not at all sure that we may not have trouble before long. I shall do my best to have the peace kept, but there’s no knowing to what the more reckless agitators may drive the
"There I agree with you, sir," broke in an acute-looking old gentleman with spectacles; "but how do you reconcile that opinion with your own doctrines? How can you speak and write for socialism when you grumble at its practical enforcement? You state that you oppose revolution, but is a constitutional settlement of the problem possible?"

"Why not? You must remember that a large section of us socialists is against revolution. Looking back at the graduated nature of the transition between feudalism and modern capitalism, these men would meditate, if possible, a similar though perhaps more rapid transition between modern capitalism and socialism. Any sudden metamorphosis of society would, they believe, breed appalling evils. I am quite of this way of thinking myself."

My interlocutor laughed. He evidently thought me a reasonable enough creature for my kind. The commissioner remarked that it was a pity that all the party were not of my way of thinking.

"But," I added, "I have no hesitation in saying that if I thought a revolution would pay, for revolution I would declare myself. It is only a question of cost complicated by dangers of reaction and anarchy. The consideration which weighs most with me is the difficulty of organizing and legislating at a time when panic and brutality would be rampant. I know no men competent to stand at the helm in such tempests. Even with civil peace to help us, a settlement would require, to my thinking, years of patient labour. Mere revolutionary conventions, with some ready-made constitution and brand-new panaceas for suffering, would be impotent."

"Impotent," echoed the old gentleman. "By the way, you have not answered my question."

"The object, sir, of my agitation is to force the projected reforms on public attention, and so to secure that most important of allies, an effective mob-backing. But let me add that once elected to Parliament I am prepared to stand by any Government, Tory or Radical, in supporting the cause of order. We contend that should the revolutionary socialists or the anarchists initiate a crusade in the streets, they must take the consequences of their temerity."

"Well said," observed the ex-commissioner. "I notice in this regard that some very disquieting rumours are afloat. Not only are many of the East and South London workers becoming dangerous, but these miscreants, the anarchists, are moving. You remember the fiendish massacre ten years back when Hartmann blew up the bridge?"

"Rather."
"Well, the police have had information that this wretch is not dead after all. At the present moment he is believed to be in England stirring up more mischief."

"The deuce he is!" cried the old gentleman. "I hope they will run him to earth."

At this point our colloquy was broken off by Lena, who sailed gracefully through the crowd.

"I want you for a moment, Mr. Stanley. A friend of mine, Mrs. Gryffyn, is very anxious to make your acquaintance. She's mad about land law reform and women's suffrage."

The old gentleman grinned and Mr. Northerton eyes me pityingly. There was no escape from the inquisitor. "Why on earth couldn't you spare me this, Lena?" I whispered. "I want a talk with you all alone, not an hour with this virago."

"Oh, it's all right. I shall keep you company, and as she is going soon we shall be able to get into a quiet nook and have a long chat."

The ordeal over, I had the luxury of a tête-à-tête with my fiancée, and excellent use I made of the limited time at my disposal. I was very fond of Lena, who was not only a charmingly pretty girl, but, thank goodness! sympathized most cordially with the bulk of my political opinions. She never of course mixed with the peculiar circles I
frequented, but dearly loved to follow my reports of the movements which they represented. The only person remotely connected with them she knew was Mrs. Hartmann, to whose house I had brought her in the hope that the old lady might find a friend. Lena was often to be seen in the little parlour at Islington, and knew probably more about the poor widow's troubles than any one else. As her parents gave her complete freedom of action, she had plenty of opportunities for cultivating the acquaintance. After our private confidences had been duly exchanged, the conversation naturally drifted to this topic. I was anxious to know about the old lady's welfare, and casually mentioned the rumour which concerned her son. Had it reached her ears?

"I am sure I don't know," said Lena; "she seemed in marvellously good spirits when I saw her last, but she made no allusion whatever to the subject. How could she, when you come to think of it? It is all very well rejoicing over a prodigal son's return, but this son was a fiend, and would be much better lying quiet at the bottom of the sea, where people imagined him."

"But you forget, dear, that he was her only son, and always good to her."

"That's true, but look at the blood on his hands. By the bye, Mrs. Hartmann once told me the whole story. Hartmann, you know, was educated for the profession of an engineer, and was always looked on as a prodigy of intellectual vigour. Whatever he did he did well, and as he came into a considerable fortune when of age, a brilliant career was predicted for him. Mrs. Hartmann says that at that time she never knew he had any other interests than those of his calling, but it appears from later discoveries that when twenty-three years of age he made the acquaintance of a German exile, one Schwartz, a miscreant of notorious opinions and character. This man gradually inspired him with a hatred of the whole fabric of society, and the end of it was that he became an anarchist. That Hartmann was deeply in earnest seems perfectly clear. He sacrificed to his aim, position, comfort, reputation, his studies — in short, everything. He regarded civilization as rotten from top to foundation, and the present human race as 'only fit for fuel.' Schwartz was a pessimist, and his pupil became one of an even deeper dye."

"But what was his ultimate aim?"

"He thought, like some eighteenth-century writers, that man must revert to simpler conditions of life and make a new start. He hoped, so his mother says, that his example would fire the minds of others, and so topple over the very pedestals of governments and law. It was absurd, he held, for a few men to war against society, but, he added, the affection
he laboured under was catching. He trusted that one day London and the great cities of Europe would lie in ruins.”

“But,” I interposed, “this is fanaticism, or rather madness, It is a disease bred by an effete form of civilization. Is this all the wily anarchist plotted for?”

“Well, it’s a pretty large ‘all,’ is it not? By the way, he had one persistent craze, the belief in some invention which was one day to place society at his mercy.”

“So? Awkward that for society.”

We talked for some time longer, when I called my appointment to mind, and tearing myself away from my kind friends sallied forth into the street. It was not easy to refuse the ex-commissioner’s invitation to dinner in view of Burnett’s dismal parlour at Stepney. Still I was not a little interested in his guest, and anxious, so far as was possible, to keep Burnett himself out of mischief. Hitherto he had been a mere theorist with a very kindly side, and there seemed no reason why, with care, he should not remain one. But he required, so I thought, watching. With these thoughts uppermost in my mind I hailed a hansom, and ordered the driver to drop me in the East End in a road running hard by the anarchist’s house.

* * *

I can recall my entrance into that parlour most vividly. Burnett had let me in with his usual caution. Whisking off my coat I followed him to the parlour. There was a bright fire burning in the grate, and the gleam of the flames – the only light in the room – lit up a whisky-bottle and some glasses on the table, and ever and anon revealed the rude prints on the walls and the rough deal shelves heaped with books. Everything smelt of the practical. In the place of the Louis XIV furniture of the Northertons’ only a wooden table and some three or four deal chairs met the eye, the sole article rejoicing in a cushion being a rudely-carved sofa in the corner. The single window, I noticed, was carefully curtained and barred. Stepping toward the mantelpiece Burnett struck a match, and proceeded to light a couple of candles which crowned that dusty eminence.

I then saw to my surprise that we were not alone. On a chair by the left-hand corner of the fire sat an elderly man apparently of the higher artisan class. His face was most unprepossessing. There was a bull-dog’s obstinacy and attachment about it, but the eyes were unspeakably wicked and the mouth hard and cruel. I diagnosed it at once as that of a man whose past was best unread, whose hand had in dark by-ways been persistently raised against his fellowmen. It takes time to analyze
this impression, but originally it seized me in a moment. I was prejudiced, accordingly, at the outset, but judge of my astonishment and disgust when Burnett cried, “Here, Schwartz, is my old pal Stanley.” It was the shameless miscreant known as the shadow of Hartmann!

Coldly enough I took the proffered hand. So this was the fanatic supposed to be long ago dead. One felt like abetting a murderer.

“Stanley seems startled,” laughed Burnett. “He is not much accustomed to high life. Come, man, acknowledge you had a surprise.”

The meeting was half of my seeking, and decency after all forbade openly expressed dislike. Besides, Schwartz was in practice only what Burnett was in theory, and what possibly even I and other moderates might become at a pinch.

“I confess,” I replied, “I was taken somewhat aback. It is seldom the sea gives up its dead, and one does not meet celebrities like Herr Schwartz every day.”

Schwartz laughed grimly. I could see he was pleasantly tickled. Monstrous conceits sprout from the shedding of blood. He seemed to chuckle that he, outcast and rebel, had hurled so many of his fellows into nothingness. If this was the man, what of the master?

“Fill up your glass, Stanley,” and Burnett pushed the whisky across the table. “Sit down and ask what questions you like.”

Schwartz looked me carefully over. “You say again that you answer for this friend,” he muttered to Burnett.

“As I would for myself.”

“It is well.”

“Hartmann is alive then,” I ventured, “after all?”

“Very much so,” put in Burnett. “The most he got was a wetting. He and Schwartz were picked up by a fishing-boat and carried to Dieppe. Hence they made their way to Switzerland, where they have been for some years. Hartmann had money, Schwartz devotion. Money bred money — they grew rich, and they will yet lead anarchy to triumph, for at last, after long years of danger, delay, and disappointment, the dream of Hartmann is realized!”

My companions exchanged meaning glances. Evidently they were in high spirits.

“And the deputy, the socialist, will he join us?” cried Schwartz. “He will have no struggles, no dangers; he will tread capital underfoot; he will raise his hand, and fortresses will rattle around him.”

Both the anarchists broke into renewed laughter. I was tired of hyperbole and wished to get at the facts. But do what I would my men refused to be “squeezed.” For a long time I could only glean from them
that Hartmann was in London, and plotting mischief on some hitherto unimagined scale. At last I grew irritated at the splutter.

"Nonsense, Herr Schwartz, nonsense! Stir a step worth the noting and the very workers will rise and crush you. I tell you your notions are fantastic, your campaign against society maniacal. How can a few scattered incendiaries or dynamitors, ceaselessly dodging the law, hope to defy a state? The thing is ridiculous. As well match a pop-gun against a Woolwich infant."

"My friend speaks of a struggle such as one man might wage against a mob in the street. It is not for this that Hartmann has plotted so long. It is not to be shot by soldiers or hunted by police that he will once more shake this city. Do you wish to guess his weapon? Take this piece of stuff in your hand, and tell me what you think of it."

As he spoke he rummaged his pockets and produced a small plate, apparently of silvery grey metal, of about two square inches of surface, and one-tenth of an inch or so in thickness. I examined it carefully.

"Now take this steel knife and hammer and test its hardness and texture." I did so. Burnett looked on knowingly.

"Well, it is extremely tough and hard, for I can make no impression. What it is, however, I can’t say."

"But its weight, its weight!" said Burnett.

I must have changed colour. "Why, it is as light or lighter than cardboard. What an extraordinary combination of attributes!"

"Extraordinary indeed! It is the grandest of Hartmann’s strokes! But you cannot guess its use?"

I shook my head.

"Well, suppose you try to think it out between now and Saturday night, when I will promise to introduce you to the inventor himself."

"What, Hartmann?"

"Yes; let us see, you address a meeting down at Turner’s Hall in this quarter on Saturday. I will be in the audience, and we will beard the captain in company. Midnight, Kensington Gardens, by the pond to the left as you enter from the Queen’s Road – that is the rendezvous. Come, are you ready? I think I may tell you that you will run no risks, while at any rate you will see something strange beyond compare."

I hesitated, the mystery was deepening, and to confront and "have it out" with the celebrated, if hateful, anarchist, would be interesting. And these queer hints too?

"Yes, I’m your man; but we must have no companions – for obvious reasons."

Burnett nodded. Shortly afterwards the obnoxious German took his
departure and left us to ourselves. I am not sure that he quite trusted my intentions, for the dread of the police spy was ever present with him.

We two talked on till midnight. On rising to go I made a final effort to "squeeze" the anarchist.

“You cannot guess its use?”

“Come, John, it’s no use playing the mystery man any longer. I shall know everything by Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning. You trust me with your other secrets, trust me with this; at any rate, a three days' interval can’t make much difference.”

Burnett thought a moment, stepped to his shelves, and took down a work of somewhat antique binding. It was from the pen of a nineteenth-century savant of high repute in his day.¹ Slowly, and without comment, he read me the following passage: — “Yet there is a

¹Duke of Argyll, Reign of Law.
real impediment in the way of man navigating the air, and that is the
excessive weight of the only great mechanical moving powers hitherto
placed at his disposal. When science shall have discovered some moving
power greatly lighter than any we yet know, in all probability the
problem will be solved.”

The silvery grey substance had solved it!

CHAPTER III.

A MOTHER’S TROUBLES.

A RAW London morning is a terrible foe to romance — visions that
have danced elf-like before the view on the foregoing night tend to lose
their charm or even to merge themselves wholly in the commonplace. So it
was with me. When I came down to breakfast and reviewed the situation
calmly, I was ready to laugh at my faith in what seemed the wild vagaries
of Schwartz and Burnett. The memory of the queer little parlour and its
queerer tenants had lost its overnight vividness and given place to a
suspicion that either I or my hosts had indulged too freely in whisky. The
little plate, however, was still in my possession, and this very tangible
witness sufficed, despite a growing scepticism, to give me pause. “A
striking discovery no doubt,” was my verdict, “but the dream of
Hartmann, as Burnett calls it, is not so easily realized.” Still I should know
all — if anything worth the mention was to be known — on Saturday night
if I showed up at the odd trysting-place named by Burnett — a
trysting-place which at that hour meant a scramble over palings, and a
possible trouble with the police. But these things were trifles. All things
considered, I should do well to present myself with or without Burnett,
for the boasted aeronef apart, the threats of the anarchists had begun to
perplex me mightily, and the wish to meet their notorious leader, the so
terrible son of my old friend Mrs. Hartmann, was not to be summarily
exorcised.

I had passed the morning in study. Luncheon over, I jotted down some
notes for my speech on the following Saturday. Next, I sent Lena a note
promising to look in on Sunday afternoon, sallied out with it to the post,
and then ensconced myself in an omnibus which was plying in the
direction of Islington. Whither was I bound? For the house of my friend
Mrs. Hartmann, whom, as already mentioned, I had not seen for some
time, and whose conversation just now might be fraught with peculiar interest. Had the son as yet seen the mother? Had any inkling of these vaguely discussed new plots reached her? Had she any clue to the mystery tapped over-night? Questions such as these surged up in dozens, and I determined, if possible, to feel my way to their answers.

It was late in the afternoon when I reached Mrs. Hartmann's modest villa in Islington. The maid who admitted me said that she was not at home, having gone to visit a sick child in the neighbourhood. She expected her back to tea, and meanwhile perhaps I would like to wait. There was clearly no resource open to me but to do so, and entering the narrow hall I was shown into a drawing-room, simply but withdraw not uncomfortably furnished. The bay window which lighted the apartment looked on to a neat grass-plot diversified by some small but well-kept parterres.

There was little within to catch the eye. Exploring the walls I came across a shelf full of musty books, mathematical and engineering text-books, and a variety of treatises on political economy and the sciences, evidently mementos of the son! While glancing through some and noting the numerous traces of careful study, the thought struck me that the photograph of their misguided possessor might also be accessible. I had been many times in the room before, but had never been favoured with the old lady's confidences on the score of her son. The wound caused by his crime was ever green, and I, at least, was not cruel enough to disturb it. However, being now left alone I resolved to consult her albums, which, at any rate, might serve to while away the hour. Loosening the clasp of one that lay near to hand, I turned over its leaves rapidly. As a rule, I dislike collections of this sort; there is a prosiness peculiar to albums which forbids incautious research. But here the hunt was of interest. True, there were mediocre denizens in plenty, shoals of cousins, sisters, and aunts, hordes of nonentities whom Burnett would have dubbed only "fit for fuel," but there was discoverable one very satisfactory tenant — a loose photograph marked on the back, "R. Hartmann, taken when twenty-three years of age," just about the time of the celebrated bridge incident.

It was the face of a young man evidently of high capacity and unflinching resolution. A slight moustache brushed the upper lip, and set off a clear-cut but somewhat cruel mouth. A more completely independent expression I never saw. The lineaments obscured by time defied accurate survey, but the general effect produced was that they indicated an arbitrary and domineering soul, utterly impatient of control and loftily contemptuous of its kind.

I was carefully conning the face when I heard the garden-gate creak on its hinges, a sound followed by the rattle of a latch-key in the lock of the
front door. Mrs. Hartmann had returned. Passing into the room, she met me with a pleasant smile which showed up in curious contrast to the look of depression so familiar to me of yore. I interpreted that brightness in an instant. Hartmann had returned, and had paid her the visit of one raised from the dead. But of his terrible designs, of his restless hatred of society, he had clearly told her nothing.

Hers was an expressive face, and the shadows upon it were few enough to warrant that inference. Probably he had smoothed over the past and fooled her with some talk of a reformed life and a changed creed. It is so easy for an only son to persuade a mother — particularly when he rises after long years from a supposed grave.

"Well, Mr. Stanley, you are the last person I expected to see. I heard you were to be in Paris to-day."

"So, my dear Mrs. Hartmann, I was, but the Northertons, you see, have returned, and I had hoped to have done some touring with the old gentleman."

"Or perhaps with Miss Lena. No, don't look so innocent, for she tells me more than you think. But what of this return? I had a note from her when she was in Paris, but she said nothing about it?"

"The photograph."

"Some will business," I explained. "You will be glad to hear she comes in for £5000 by it."
"A nice little nest-egg to begin house-keeping upon. I think, Mr. Stanley, you two young people ought to do very well."

"I hope so," I said, foregoing useless secrecy — what a chatterbox Lena could be! "At any rate I see no very dangerous rocks ahead at present."

The conversation wandered for some time among various topics, when I mentioned that I had been looking over the album.

"And very stupid work you must have found it," she said.

"Oh, it kept me busy while waiting. By the way, one of the photographs is loose," and I handed her that of her son, this time with the face upwards. The ruse was effective, and the conversation took the desired course.

"Have you never seen that face before? It is that of Rudolf, my misguided son, of whom you must have heard. Poor boy! Ten years have rolled by since his death."

Admirably cool this mother; she at least was not to be "squeezed" offhand. But my watched-for chance had come.

"My dear Mrs. Hartmann, he is alive, and you know it. Two days ago he was in this very house." I had drawn my bow at a venture, but the shaft served me well. The coup was decisive. The old lady’s face betrayed complete discomfiture mingled with obvious signs of alarm. She made no attempt to contradict me. "What!" she stammered out at length. "Are you also in the secret? Are you, too, one of — "

"No," I replied bluntly, anticipating her meaning. "I have never met your son, though I know something perhaps of his movements. But believe me you may trust me as you would yourself. He was a dynamitard, but he is your son, and that is enough for me. Rest assured of my silence."

Her distress visibly abated.

"Thanks, many thanks. I feel I can rely on you — even to lend him a helping hand should the time ever come. Ah! he is a changed man, an entirely changed man. A bright future may await him even now across the sea. But this visit to me — so sudden, so brief — I fear lest it may cost him dear. You, a private man, have found it out; why may not the lynx-eyed police also? It is terrible, this suspense. How can I be sure that he is safe at this moment?"

"Oh, as to that, happily I can reassure you. Your son is safe enough — nay, as safe as the most anxious mother could desire. How or where I cannot say, but I have it on the best possible authority. In fact, only last night I heard as much from the lips of one who should surely know — Michael Schwartz himself!"

"That evil genius! Is he too in London? Ah! if he is content, all is well. No tigress ever watched better over her cub than Schwartz over my son.
Would his likings had blown elsewhere! That man was my son’s tutor in vice. But for him Rudolf might have been an honour to his country. And what is he now? An outlaw, in the shadow of the gallows,” — and she hid her face in her handkerchief and wept bitterly. I waited patiently till the tempest was over, putting in a soothing phrase here and there and painting black white with the zeal of a skilful casuist. One need not be too scrupulous when sufferers such as this are concerned.

“He has told you nothing of his movements?” I remarked cautiously.

“Nothing, except that he was leaving shortly for Hamburg, whence he was to proceed immediately to New York. Some months later on I may join him there, but for the present all is uncertain.” One more deception of Hartmann’s, but a kindly one; obviously it was better not to disturb the illusions which the old lady thus fondly cherished — her reformed son, his prospective honourable life, the vision of a lasting reunion abroad. Were she to suspect that mischief was again being plotted by the anarchist, I assured her that the chances were all in her son’s favour, and that once in America he could set at naught all possibilities of discovery. Meanwhile, I had become aware that nothing of importance to my quest was to be drawn from Mrs. Hartmann. Her son’s meteoric visit, prompted by some gleam of noble sentiment, had evidently left her ignorant of his new inhuman plottings. Ere long I rose to leave, not, however, without having promised that, should Hartmann ever cross my path, I would stand by him for her sake in a possible hour of danger. Under what circumstances I was to meet this extraordinary man — how absurd then my poor well-meant promise of assistance was to appear — will be manifest from the ensuing narrative.

CHAPTER IV.

FUGITIVES FROM THE LAW.

ON Saturday evening I addressed a stormy meeting at Stepney.
Since I bade adieu to Mrs. Hartmann much had occurred to rouse the sleeping tigers in the country. Riots had been reported from many great towns, while handbills of the most violent sort were being thrust on the workers of London. Revolutionary counsels had been long scattered by a thousand demagogues, and it appeared now that the ingathering of the harvest was nigh. A renewal of anarchist outrages had terrorized the well-to-do and fanned the extremists into vehemence. A terrible explosion was reported from Kensington, three houses, including that of the Home
Secretary, Mr. Baynton, having been completely wrecked, while ten of
their inmates had been killed and some fourteen more or less severely
injured. A disastrous catastrophe had been narrowly averted from the
Mansion House. It may be imagined, therefore, that it was with a grave face
that I ascended the platform that evening; my course being rendered so
difficult by reason of the extremists—on the one hand by the
Conservatives, who, to my thinking, were perpetuating the conditions
whence anarchy drew its breath, namely, a wretched proletariat exploited
by capital; on the other by the extreme socialists, who despaired of
effective advance by way of ordinary parliamentary reforms. Both parties
were strongly represented that night, and, political feeling running so high,
the prospect of an orderly meeting seemed shadowy. I had some
unpleasant truths to press home, and was not to be deterred from this
duty.

Before rising to speak I glanced anxiously around the hall, and imagine
my feelings when I found that Burnett was missing. This breach of his
engagement was ominous. That he had a hand in the outrages was
possible—his tone had of late been most threatening, and the influence of
Schwartz was malefic—though the supposition was one I did not like to
entertain. At any rate he might well have been suspected of complicity,
and forced to seek refuge in flight. It was with a heavy heart that I obeyed
the behest of the chairman and rose to address the meeting.

What I said matters little. Severe condemnation of the outrages, a sharp
critique of the individualist-Conservative groups, an appeal for unity and
order in our agitation, were the points upon which I laid emphasis. I had
spoken for about half-an-hour when my audience refused to let me
proceed. Previously to this, interruptions had been frequent, but now a
violent uproar arose, the uproar led to a fight, and a rush was made for the
platform, which, albeit gallantly defended, was speedily enough stormed. I
had the pleasure of knocking over one ruffian who leapt at me brandishing
a chair, but a brutal kick from behind sent me spinning into the crush by
the steps. Severely cuffed and pommelled, I was using my fists freely when
the gas was suddenly turned off, and the struggle being summarily
damped, I managed somehow to get into the street.

And now came the exciting business of the night. In the mass of
shouting enthusiasts outside it was useless to look for Burnett. I
determined, therefore, to track him down to his own quarters. Passing
back into the committee-room I hastily scribbled some rather indignant
lines to my chairman, and then pulling my hat over my eyes elbowed my
way through the press.

By the time I got clear of the street I was considerably flushed and
heated, and the rate at which I was going by no means conducted to refresh me. After ten minutes’ sharp walk I plunged down the narrow street where Burnett’s house lay, and a few seconds later had kicked back the gate and marched up to the door. I was startled to find it ajar. Burnett was so habitually cautious that I knew something must be amiss. Pushing it slowly open I stole noiselessly into the passage and glanced through the keyhole of the door which led into the little parlour. It was well I had not tramped in. Two policemen and a man in plain clothes were standing round a hole in the floor, and the whole apartment was strewn with prized-up planks. On a chair close by was a heap of retorts, bottles, and canisters, while three ugly-looking bombs lay on the hearthstone.

Burnett, then, had really been mixed up in those outrages, and the police were on his trail, if indeed they had not already arrested him. And what about my own position? The best thing for me was to make off in a trice, for the entanglements, troubles, and disgrace in which capture there would plunge me were too appalling to contemplate. Instantly I glided to the door, and gently – this time – revolving the gate, slipped out hurriedly into the street. Fortunately there was no one on watch, or my arrest would have been speedy. As it was I rapidly gained the main street and was soon lost in the broad stream of pedestrians.

Having still three hours before me, I turned into a confectioner’s, and over a substantial tea endeavoured to think the matter out. That I was furious with Burnett goes without saying. Only his fanatical theories separated him to my mind from the common murderer. But that he should be caught was a thought utterly revolting, for I had liked the man warmly, and had owed my life to his pluck. No; our friendship must cease henceforth, but it was at least my duty to warn him, if still at large, or the discovery. But how? There was only one course open to me. Outrages or no outrages, police or no police, I must be present at the meeting in the park that night. It was quite possible that Burnett, ignorant of the search made at his house, might be still strolling about London, a prize for the first aspiring police-officer who should meet him. Yes, I would go and chance meeting the group, for I should mention that the exact spot for the rendezvous was unknown to me. All I knew was that it was somewhere near the pond to the left as you enter from the Queen’s Road. The best thing I could think of was to idle outside the park, until I could climb the palings unnoticed.

The sky was overcast with clouds, and so far the project was favoured. Hazardous as was the affair, my resolution was speedily made and fortified. Leaving the shop I sallied out for a stroll and passed the remaining interval as best I could. Then I called for a hansom, and, leaping
in, ordered the driver to take me to the Marble Arch. He demurred at first, saying the journey was too much for his horse at that time of night, but his scruples were silenced by the offer of a half-sovereign for his pains. The mute objections of his steed were quashed with a sharp cut of the whip, and I was whirled swiftly on to an adventure which was to beggar the wildest creations of romance.

At the Marble Arch I dismissed the cab and walked briskly along the Hyde Park side in the direction of Notting Hill. I had gone some few hundred yards when a hansom sped by me rapidly, and a well-known face within it flashed on my vision like a meteor. It was Burnett, of all persons! Shouting and waving my stick I rushed wildly in chase of the vehicle, and, by dint of desperate efforts, succeeded at last in stopping it. As I approached the window, the trap flew up. "Drive on, man, drive on, never mind," growled a hoarse voice, and I heard the click of a revolver. "Here I am," I said, getting on the step and rapping the window just as the man was about to whip up. Burnett stared. "What, you here!" he said, flinging apart the leaves. "Come in quick. I don't know who may be behind." I mounted in a trice, and the cab flew on faster than ever.

"Look here," I said, breathlessly, "I have come to warn you. The police are on your track."

"I know it, my boy," he rejoined, "but I think they have some way to run yet. No fear. I leave London in an hour."

What was the man talking of — was he raving, or boasting, or what? "Hi, stop!" We got out, and the cab rolled away complacently.

"Now over the palings," cried Burnett. "You will see Hartmann?"

"Yes, for an instant." The demon of curiosity was urgent, and the coast seemed clear.

"All right. Come, sharp."

It was no easy task for me, tired as I was, but with the help of my companion I got through it somehow.

"Hallo! Look!" A second cab (probably informed by ours) was bearing down rapidly with two occupants, one of whom stood excitedly on the steps. "Detectives! We're spotted!" I leapt to the ground desperately. Heavens! where had my curiosity landed me?

"Put your best leg foremost and follow me," yelled Burnett, and his revolver flashed in the gas-light.

In my foolish excitement I obeyed him. As we rushed along I heard the men leap out and their boots clink on the iron of the palings. I felt like the quarry of the wild huntsman of German legend. If arrested in such a plight, and in such company, a deluge of disgrace, if not worse, awaited me. I ran like a deer from a leopard, but I felt I could not hold out very
A salvo of cracks of revolvers.
long at so break-neck a speed.

"Keep — your — pecker — up," shouted Burnett brokenly.
"Hartmann — is — waiting."

"To be arrested with us," was my thought, or was more murder imminent? God! how I cursed my foolhardiness and useless sacrifice!

"Here — we are — at last!" cried my companion, looking back over his shoulder. "One — effort — more."

Half dizzy with fear and fatigue I made a despairing sprint, when, my foot striking a root, I was hurled violently to the ground. All I remember is seeing two dusky forms rushing up, and Burnett hurriedly wheeling round. Then from some unknown spot broke a salvo of cracks of revolvers. A heavy body fell bleeding across my face, and almost at once consciousness left me.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE AWAKENING.

WHERE was I? I seemed to be escaping from the throes of some horrible dream, and that too with a headache past endurance. I stretched out my right hand and it struck something cold and hard. I opened one eye with an effort, and I saw three men bending over me as one sees spectres in a nightmare. Slowly there was borne upon me the sound of voices, and then the cruel remembrance of that struggle. I was in a police cell, and might have to expiate my misfortunes with shame or even death. Who was to believe my tale? Horrified at the thought, I gave utterance to a deep groan.

"There’s not much up with your pal, Jack," said one of the spectres aforesaid; "give him some more whisky; he’s hit his head and got knocked silly, that’s all."

What was this? A surge of blood coursed through me. I made a supreme effort and opened both eyes fully. The light was poor, but it was enough. The face of the man nearest me was the face of Burnett, by him stood a rough-looking artisan, and, by all that is marvellous, Michael Schwartz!

"Here, take this," said Burnett, as the rough-looking man handed him the glass, "you’ll be all right in a minute." I drank it off mechanically and, imbued with new strength, sat bolt upright on the bench. Burnett watched me satirically as I tried to cope with the situation. By the light of a small lamp hanging in a niche over my head I saw that I was in a low small room
about twelve feet square, with bare greyish-looking walls and a few slit-like openings near the ceiling which did duty, no doubt, for windows. A few chests, several chairs, and a table of the same greyish colour constituted its furniture. Almost directly opposite me was a low door through which blew gusts of chilly mist, but as to what lay beyond it I could not of course form a conjecture. Having made this rapid survey I turned in astonishment to my three stolid companions, mutely entreating some sort of clue to the mystery.

Schwartz then made an attempt to rouse me by asking how I had enjoyed my nocturnal run in the park. But I was still too surprised to answer. I was thinking how Burnett could have carried me safe away, where he could possibly have brought me, what had become of our pursuers, where the mysterious Hartmann was, who had fired the shots? These and a multitude of like riddles rendered me speechless with bewilderment. When I had more or less fully regained voice and strength I turned to Burnett, and ignoring the impish Schwartz, said curtly —

“Where on earth am I?”

“You aren’t on earth at all,” was the answer, and the three burst into a hearty laugh. “Nor in heaven,” added the speaker; “for if so neither Schwartz nor Thomas would be near you.”

“Come, a truce to humbug! Am I in London, on the river, in an anarchist’s haunt, or where?”

“I am quite serious. But if you want something more explicit, well, you are not in London but above it.”

I looked at the three wonderingly. A faint light was beginning to break on my mind. But no, the thing was impossible!

“Are you able to walk now?” said Burnett. “Come, Schwartz, you take one arm and I’ll take another. Between us we’ll give Mr. Constitutionalist a lesson. Stanley, my boy, in all your days you never saw a sight such as I am going to show you now.”

“But it is nothing to what we shall see, comrade, when the captain gives the word,” added Schwartz.

“Thank you,” I replied, “I will lean on you, Burnett. I can do without Herr Schwartz’s assistance.”

We moved across the room.

“Hist!” whispered Burnett, “don’t be nasty to the German. He’s the captain’s right hand. It was he, too, who knocked over your man just now and so saved you from trouble. Take my advice and be discreet.”

I nodded.

“But who — ”

“Wait a moment and look around you.”
I was being carried over London in the craft of Hartmann the Anarchist.
We had crossed the doorway and were standing in a sort of open bulwarked passage which evidently ran on for some length on either side. I stepped to the bulwarks.

"Look below," said Burnett.

I looked long and earnestly, while Schwartz and Thomas stood silently in the background. It was a strange sight, and it was some time ere I seized its meaning. It was very dark outside, the only light being that coming through the doorway of the chamber I had just quitted. But far below, as it seemed, glittered innumerable specks like stars, a curious contrast to the inkiness of the cloudy pall above us. As I gazed down into the depths I became conscious of a dull murmur like that of whirling machinery, and forthwith detected a constant vibration of the ledge on which my elbow rested. Then, and then only, the truth rushed upon me.

I was being carried over London in the craft of Hartmann the Anarchist.

Horrified with my thoughts — for the potentialities of this fell vessel dazed me — I clung fiercely to Burnett’s arm.

"I am, then, on the — ?" I gasped.

"Deck of the Attila," put in Burnett. "Behold the craft that shall wreck civilization and hurl tyrannies into nothingness!"

But my gaze was fixed on those lights far below, and my thought was not of the tyrannies I had left, but of the tyranny this accursed deck might minister to. And Hartmann, they said, was remorseless.

"Yes," growled Thomas hoarsely, "I live for the roar of the dynamite." Schwartz, stirred to enthusiasm, shouted a brutal parody of Tennyson.

"The dynamite falls on castle walls,
And splendid buildings old in story.
The column shakes, the tyrant quakes,
And the wild wreckage leaps in glory.
Throw, comrades, throw; set the wild echoes flying;
Throw, comrades; answer, wretches, dying, dying, dying."

If the remainder of the crew resembled this sample, I was caged in a veritable inferno. As yet, of course, I knew nothing of their numbers or feelings, but my expectations were far from being roseate.

"But, man!" I cried, turning to Burnett, "would you massacre helpless multitudes? you, who prate of tyranny, would you, also, play the role of tyrants?"

Before the gathering horror all my wonder at the Attila had vanished. I felt only the helpless abject dismay with which one confronts an appalling
but inevitable calamity. At that moment some disaster to the aeronef
would have been welcome. The masterful vice of the fanatics maddened
me. Rebel, however, as I might, I was of no account. The snake that
snapped at the file had more in his favour.

"We don't argue here," said Burnett, "we act. If you want arguments,
you must wait till you see the captain. Disputes with us are useless."

So even he was becoming surly. It was natural enough, however, as a
moment's reflection showed. The alligator on land is ordinarily mild
enough, in his element he is invariably a terrible monster. The "suspect"
anarchist of Stepney was courteous and argumentative, but the free and
independent anarchist of the Attila dogmatic and brutal. It was obviously
best policy to humour him, for he alone, perhaps, might stand by me at a
pinch. I endeavoured to throw oil on the troubled waters.

"You used not to mind criticism," I urged.

"Oh no! but those days are past. Don't take what I say unkindly, for
we all mean you well. The captain will always talk, but we here are tired of
it. We only exist now to act - when the word is passed. So you will
consult our convenience and your own much more effectually if you drop
all such homilies for the future."

"Yes," put in Thomas, "I had enough of it in London. Fifteen years of
revolutionary socialist talking and nothing ever done! But wait a few
weeks and I warrant it will be said that we here have atoned wonderfully
well for arrears. Come, a glass to our captain - the destined destroyer of
civilization!" The gallant three, acting on this hint, left me to digest their
advice and retired within. How long I remained thinking I know not. Some
one brought me a chair, but I was too abstracted to thank him. For fully
an hour I must have looked down on those twinkling lights with a terror
beyond the power of words to express. All was as Burnett had said. The
dream of Hartmann was realized. The exile and outcast, lately sheltered
from the law in the shadow of Continental cities, now enjoyed power such
as a hundred Czars could not hope for. The desperadoes with him, hated
by and hating society, were probably one and all devoured by lust of
blood and revenge. The three I knew were all proscribed men, loathing not
only the landlord and capitalist but the workers, who would most of them
have rejoiced over their capture. They attacked not only the abuses and
the defects but the very foundations of society. Their long-cherished
thought had been to shatter the trophies of centuries. And the
long-contemplated opportunity had come at last!

One resource remained. What they meant to do with me was uncertain.
But my relations with Burnett and the friendship of Hartmann's mother
were sufficient to avert any apprehension of violence. My endeavour then
henceforward must be to work on the mind of Hartmann, to divert this engine of mischief into as fair a course as possible, to achieve by its aid a durable and relatively bloodless social revolution, and to reap by an authority so secure from overthrow a harvest of beneficial results. Buoyed up by these brighter thoughts, I now began to find time for a more immediate interest. What of this wonderful vessel or aeronef itself? What was it built of? how was it propelled, supported, steered, manned, constructed? Rising from my chair, I felt my way along the railing forward, but found the way barred by some door or partition. As I made my way back I met Burnett, who emerged from the low door already mentioned.

"What, exploring already?" he said. "It's no good at this hour, as you have doubtless discovered. Come inside and I'll see you are made cosy for the night. You must want sleep, surely."

I followed him in without a word. Passing into the chamber he pressed a spring in the wall, and a concealed door flew back revealing a dark recess. He struck a light, and there became visible a comfortable berth with the usual appurtenances of a homely cabin such as one would occupy in the second-class saloon of an ordinary ocean-going steamer.

"By the way," I said, "you have not told me what happened in the park; I am dying to know."

"It is easily told. When you fell, the two detectives were up in a moment. I turned round meaning to shoot, but before I emptied a barrel, crack, crack, crack, came a series of reports from aloft, and both men were settled, one spinning right across you - see, your coat is covered with blood. The explanation is that thirty feet up between the alleys of the trees floated the Attila, and Hartmann and Schwartz were indulging in a little sport. I very soon climbed up the ladder which was swinging close by the tree we were to have come to, and you were shortly afterwards hauled up in a carefully tied sheet. Why did we take you on board? I am surprised at your asking. We could not stop, and the idea of leaving you stunned, and in the compromising company of dead men, was not arguable. Would you have relished the idea of a trial as murderer and anarchist? You meant well, you see, by me, and the captain was strong in your favour. Some of the men know of you, and no one had a bad word to say - save that your theories were rather Utopian. But you may change."

For a while I was silent. I thought of my Utopian project. Then I said, "So far as my theories go, I will confine my self now to one remark. An air-ship may be used as well as abused."

Burnett laughed. "That's better! Don't forget, however, to define your view of us to the captain. Hallo! I must be off on watch!" An electric bell
tinkled sharply in the outer chamber. "Good-night."

"Good-night."

Just before turning in I looked closely at the basin of my wash-hand stand. It was of the same silvery grey colour which I had noted on the walls of the cabin, and which, indeed, seemed ubiquitous. A sudden thought struck me. I emptied out the water and lifted it up. Its weight seemed so absurdly small that I could hardly believe my senses. But one thing was clear. The mystery of the thin silvery grey plate was explained. It was out of such materials that the body of the Attila was fashioned. The riddle of Schwartz previously half brushed aside was at last solved completely.

As I was dropping off to sleep a novel reflection assailed me. What would Lena think of my absence to-morrow? Of this terrible night in the park she would not, of course, dream. Still — , but sleep speedily quenched my thinking.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE DECK OF THE 'ATTILA'.

IT was late the next morning when thought and feeling came back to me, the blurred imagery of my dreams mingling strangely with the memories of the preceding night. Despite a slight headache, and a suspicion or two of giddiness, I felt as well as could be expected, and lying back snugly on my pillow began to meditate rising. For once my resolution was quick in the making. My uncle used to say that, all things considered, life was not worth the trouble of dressing. But on this particular morning it most certainly was. The apprehensions of the past night had given way to a hopeful spirit, while the interest of exploring this aeronef thrilled me through and through. I was about to spring out of the berth in readiness for the labours of the toilet when Burnett looked in through the door.

"All right! Glad to hear it. Where are we? Over the North Sea. Take my advice, and get up sharp. The captain has asked to see you. You'll find me knocking about somewhere round here when you're ready."

Thoroughly alive to the situation, I was not long in getting into my clothes. But my disgust was great on finding sundry half-dried splashes of blood on my coat, a souvenir of my luckless pursuer. In the excitement and darkness I had overlooked these hideous traces which
now seemed to threaten me with the brand of Cain. Throwing aside the polluted garment, I stepped into the outer chamber, my pleasure quite overcast for the moment. Burnett was there, and a hearty breakfast was awaiting me, to which I promised to do summary and sweeping justice. The room, but feebly apparent the foregoing night, was now flooded with the sunlight, but the height at which we floated rendered the air most chilly and penetrating. The silvery grey colour of the walls, floor, chairs, benches, tables, and even the dishes and mugs, wrought on me an impressive effect, curiously set off by the red cap worn by Burnett. Through the open doorway gleamed the same silvery grey livery of the flooring and bulwark of the passage already mentioned, and framed, as it were, in silver, glowed a truly magnificent cloud-picture. This skyscraper, however, was unstable, mass after mass of mist, shaped into turrets, battlements, and mountains, rolled by in picturesque splendour, bearing artistic testimony to the speed at which we or they were moving. “Beautiful, isn’t it?” said Burnett. “Here, eat your breakfast, and then I’ll show you round our cloud empire. Or perhaps you had best see the captain as soon as possible.”

I said I thought that would be best.

“But where’s your coat, man? Oh, I remember. Wait and I’ll fetch you one of mine.”

In a short time the missing garment was made good, and I was falling to with avidity: —

“Of course not. We are anarchists, and everything depends on private initiative. Every man is as good as another, and every man is a volunteer. Later on you will be expected to bestir yourself also.”

“But how do you avoid chaos?”

“There is no chaos to avoid. Outside the engine-room and conning-tower there is little a man cannot quickly learn to do at need. We are very simple in our wants — that is part of our creed — and, consequently, have a deal of leisure. The watches are the worst part, for the captain is very particular.”

“Ah, wait a minute. What authority has he?”

“The authority of the soul of this enterprise, and its best man. We would voluntarily support him in a crisis. Five days ago a couple of Italians turned rusty. He shot both where they stood, and the men in their hearts approved of it. But he is an iron man. Wait till you see him?”

“Is any one on the Attila free to go where he likes?”

“Yes, except into the captain’s quarters. To pass there a permit is required to all except myself, Schwartz, and Thomas. The engine-room
watchers pass through every three hours, and a passage runs from it to the conning-tower and magazine below. You may guess what the latter contains."

"How many men are aboard?"

"Twenty-five, excluding ourselves. Eight are Germans, six Englishmen, four French, two Russians, one an Italian, and the others Swiss, some of those whom Hartmann employed at Berne."

"Berne; was that where the Attila was built?"

"That's it. Hartmann, Schwartz, and his Swiss workmen put her together. He made money there, as you know, and this was his grand investment. It was kept beautifully dark in the wooded grounds of his villa. We are going there now, so you will see the place for yourself."

"But does any one know of the Attila?"

"No outsider probably who would be believed if he said anything. We have our friends down below, of course — never you fear — but they are mum. The hour has not yet struck, but the preparations for the festival are being merrily carried out. The Attila is a secret for the present. To avoid being seen we take every precaution possible, and never approach the ground except at night; in the daytime, well, there are clouds, and, if none, we simply mount higher, and then our colour is enough to conceal us."

"But what if you meet a balloon?"

"Oh, there's very little chance of that. And if there was, the balloonist might find cause to regret the meeting. But come, and I'll take you round to the captain. He is a better spokesman than I."

"Right you are."

We stepped out on to the passage, and rushing to the bulwark (if I may so call it) I gazed rapturously into the abyss below. It was indeed a glorious sight. The clouds hung around and below us, but here and there through their rents flashed the blue of a waste of rolling waters. Ever and anon these gaps would be speckled with rushing sea-birds, whose cries, mellowed by the distance, broke on the ear like music. Above in the clear blue sky shone the sun at the keystone of his low winter arch, lighting up the cloud masses with a splendour words cannot describe. Far ahead through a break on my right a faint thin streak like distant land seemed visible.

"Hallo," I cried, "look there, land!"

Burnett shaded his eyes.

"I can see nothing. Ah, yes! By Jove! who's on watch? We ought to be rising."

As he spoke a sudden pitch of the aeronef nearly upset us — the
speed rapidly increased, and the wind became positively cutting.

"We are rising fast," said Burnett. "See, we are leaving the cloud-bank far below us."

But a new marvel had just caught my eye, and, clinging to the hand-rail, I gazed upwards in astonishment. The wall of the chamber behind us was continuous with the main mass of the aeronef, which, looking from where we stood, exhibited the graceful lines of a ship's hull. Round this hull and presumably half-way up it ran the railed passage where we were standing, communicating here and there with doorways let into the grey side. Some thirty feet above us this side curved upwards and inwards so as to terminate in a flat, railed deck on which a few moving heads were just visible. But above this again rose a forest of thin grey poles running up to a vast oblong aeroplane which stretched some way beyond the hull. All these props were carefully stayed together, and those towards the bow were somewhat higher than those in the stern; provision being thus made for the inclination of the aeroplane consistently with due maintenance of the hull's equilibrium below. In the latter part of the nineteenth century much progress had been made in experiments with aeroplanes; those of Maxim being particularly suggestive and interesting. I was, therefore, at no loss to probe the significance of this portion of the mechanism.

"The captain wishes to see you," said Burnett, who was talking to a sullen-looking fellow by the doorway; "come along."

He stepped briskly along the passage, and, when we had gone some fifteen yards, turned up one of the alleys. Entering behind him I came to a small court surrounded with rooms and cabins, leaving which we ascended a spiral staircase to the upper deck. Glancing hastily around I saw five or six men pacing about chatting, while from other courts below came the sounds of singing and laughter. This deck, which capped the entire hull, was no less than eighty yards in length with an extreme breadth of at least thirty-five. Broad at the stern it narrowed off to a sharp point at the bow. The props attached to the aeroplane were set in six rows, curving close together amidships where there stood a small circular citadel, evidently the stronghold of the captain. Here were mounted three or four cannon of the quick-firing sort fashioned out of the same grey substance as the Attila, but the utility of which in a vessel carrying dynamite was not immediately obvious. The citadel itself bore no outward signs of comfort. It had four square windows and a plain hole of an entrance let into bare shining walls. An exterior wall six feet high, surmounted with spikes, and having here and there a recess sheltering a machine gun, enclosed it. A fitter abode for the man I could
not conceive. Sullen, isolated, and menacing, it inspired me with a vague premonitory dread.

Burnett strode up to the entrance and pressed a knob. I heard the ting of an electric bell, and a man (Thomas, if I remember aright) came out and said the captain would see me alone. Mastering some natural excitement I bowed and followed him in. We passed through the inner portal and found ourselves in a narrow hall, flights of steps from which led down into the inmost vitals of the Attila. On our right was a door half open. My escort motioned me to enter and, pulling the door to, left me face to face with Hartmann.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE ‘ATTILA.’

TEN years had not rolled away for nothing; still the face which looked into mine vividly recalled my glimpse into the album in the little villa at Islington. Seated before a writing-desk, studded with knobs of electric bells and heaped with maps and instruments, sat a bushy-bearded man with straight piercing glance and a forehead
physiognomists would have envied. There was the same independent
look, the same cruel hardness that had stamped the mien of the youth,
but the old impetuous air had given way to a cold inflexible sedateness,
far more appropriate to the dread master of the Attila. As I advanced
into the room, he rose, a grand specimen of manhood, standing full six
feet three inches in his shoes. He shook hands more warmly than I had
expected, and motioned me tacitly to a seat.

“You have heard about my mischance,” I began tentatively. “I had
hoped to meet you for an hour or so, but fear I have outstayed my
welcome.”

I felt he was weighing me in the balance.

“I know probably more of that mischance than you do. Those
luckless detectives were certainly embarrassing, but, after all, they
afforded us an incident. Of course, you can understand why we were
bound not to leave you. And now that you are restored to vigour, are
you sorry that you have seen the Attila?”

“Oh, the men – such incidents must be looked for. Do generals
dissolve into tears when two hostile sentries have to be shot? Do they
shrink from the wholesale slaughter which every campaign entails?
Nonsense, sir, nonsense!”

“But your war is not against this or that army or nation, but against
civilization as a whole.” I was determined to take the bull by the horns
at the outset. “You can scarcely justify that on those lines.”

“Easily enough. The victory in view is the regeneration of man, the
cost will be some thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands or millions
of lives, the assailants are our small but legitimate army. We can say that
our friends below are sincerely devoted to us and to our objects; most
of the ordinary soldiers of your princes have to be drummed into the
ranks either by want or the law. As to the cost, look back on history.
How many wars in those annals have been waged for the service of
mankind? On how many massacres has one ray of utility shone? Now
you must admit that our ideal is a worthy one even if unattainable. At
the worst we can shed no more blood than did a Tamerlane or a
Napoleon.”

“Certainly the ideal is a grand one, and might, if reliable, be worth
the outlay. But how many of your crew appreciate its beauty? Most, I
will venture, love destruction for its own sake. Is Schwartz a reformer? Is Thomas?"

"My crew are enthusiasts, Mr. Stanley; nay, if you like, fiends of destruction. Every man is selected by myself. Every man is an outlaw from society, and most have shed blood. They burn to revenge on society the evils which they have received, or, given the appropriate occasion, would receive from it. In this way I secure resolute, fiery, and unflinching soldiers. But do not mistake my meaning. I know how to use these soldiers."

"I understand."

"Regard me according to Addison's simile, as the angel who guides the whirlwind. Look on these men - well, as you will. They are like the creatures generated in decaying bodies. They are the maggots of civilization, the harvest of the dragons' teeth sown in past centuries, the Frankenstein's monsters of civilization which are born to hate their father. You have read Milton, of course. Do you recall the passage about Sin and the birth of Death who gnaws his wretched parent's vitals? It is the Sin of this industrial age which has bred the crew of this death-dealing Attila."

"But are all these men here morally rotten? The man Schwartz, they call your 'shadow,' is he a type?"

"Not at all. Your friend Burnett (who has just startled the Kensington notables) seems sound. He is a madman of the more reputable sort. There is another like him with us, a German of the name of Brandt, a philosopher recruited from the ranks of the Berlin socialists."

"May I ask you two important questions?"

"Say on."

"The world says you were once a mere fanatical destroyer. Have you changed your creed?"

"You refer to my old days. Yes, you are right. I was then a pessimist, and despaired of everything around me."

"And you became an anarchist - "

"To revenge myself on the race which produced and then wearied me. I had no tutor but Schwartz, a faithful fellow, but a mere iconoclast. Our idea was simple enough. We were to raze, raze, raze, and let the future look to itself. Our mistake was in dreaming even of moderate success. Immunity from the police was impossible. But those wasted days are past."

He smiled ironically and bent his gaze on the wall, devouring, as it seemed, some specially pleasurable object. Following its direction, I
became aware of a splendid sketch of the *Attila*, which constituted the sole aesthetic appanage of this singular sanctum. What a contrast it must have awakened between his present power and the abjectness of the fugitive of ten years back!

"One more question. How do you propose to conquer, now you have the *Attila*?

"I cannot say much as yet. But, understand, the day when the first bomb falls will witness outbreaks in every great city in Europe. We have some 12,000 adherents in London, many more in Paris, Berlin, and elsewhere – they will stir the tumult below. London is my objective to start with. During the tempests of bombs, the anarchists below will fire the streets in all directions, rouse up the populace, and let loose pandemonium upon earth. In the confusion due to our attack, order and precautions will be impossible."

"You horrify me. And the object?"

"Is, as I repeat, to wreck civilization. If you are interested, Brandt will probably attract you. He lectures to-morrow on the upper deck. We are Rousseaus who advocate a return to a simpler life."

"But how is the new order to take shape? How educe system from chaos?"

"We want no more ‘systems,’ or ‘constitutions’ – we shall have anarchy. Men will effect all by voluntary association, and abjure the foulness of the modern wage-slavery and city-mechanisms."

"But can you expect the more brutal classes to thrive under this system? Will they not rather degenerate into savagery?"

"You forget the *Attila* will still sail the breeze, and she will then have her fleet of consorts."

"What! you do not propose, then, to leave anarchy unseasoned?"

"Not at once – the transition would be far too severe. Some supervision must necessarily be exercised, but, as a rule, it will never be more than nominal."

"Your ideal, captain, amazes me. But the prospect, I admit, is splendid. Were you to succeed, I say at once that the return would well repay the outlay. I am a socialist, you know, but I have felt how selfishness and the risks of reaction hampered all our most promising plans. The egotism of democrats is voracious. It is the curse of our movement. But this scheme of supervised anarchy, well, in some ways it is magnificent – still it is only a theory."

"The *Attila* was once ‘only a theory,’" rejoined Hartmann. "One word, now, Mr. Stanley. I ask you neither to join us nor to agree with us. You are your own master, and should you dislike this tour, say the
word and at nightfall you shall be landed in France. If you elect to stay, well and good. I am your debtor. Don’t look surprised, for you have been a good friend to my mother, and least of all men I forget debts. I only ask you to observe silence respecting our conversations, and never to interfere in anything you see in progress. Which is it to be?"

"I elect to stay. I can do no good by leaving, and by staying I court an absolutely unique experience. Believe me, too, captain, I am not insensible to what you have said. Between the anarchist Schwartz and yourself yawns an abyss."

"Good."

"One thing, captain. Could I find means to despatch a letter — a letter to a lady?" I added, as I saw his eyebrows rise slightly.

"Certainly, if you conform to the rules voluntarily agreed upon. You are not one of us — you will not, therefore, object to the letter being read. I will spare you undue annoyance by formally glancing over it."

"The rule is reasonable enough, captain, and requires no defence."

"It shall be given to one of the delegates when we touch land in Switzerland. A convention of importance is to be held there. But, come, I will take you round the Attila," and striding by me he passed out of the study.

"What was that land visible just now, captain?" I asked, as we reached one of the stairways that led down into the vessel.

"Holland. The course has since been altered; we find the clouds are lifting, and not wishing to run too high are making off towards the English Channel. To-night we shall cross France, steering above Havre along the channel of the Seine, over Paris, Dijon, the Saone, and the Jura mountains into Switzerland. I had intended to go to Berne, but have been forced to change my plans. We shall stop over a forest not far from Lake Leman, where some fifty delegates will meet us. After that we return to London."

"For war?"

"For war."

Down into the depths of the Attila we went, the spiral stair running down a deep and seemingly interminable well. On reaching the bottom my conductor turned off into a passage brightly lit up with the electric light. A rumble and thud of machinery broke on the ear, and in a few seconds we stood in the engine-room of the Attila. My readers are aware of the wonderful advances in electricity made in the early part of the twentieth century, and I need not, therefore, recapitulate them here. In the mechanism of this engine-room there was nothing specially peculiar, but the appropriation of the best modern inventions left nothing to be
desired. Electricity, according to the newly introduced method, being generated directly from coal, the force at the disposal of the aeronaut was colossal, and, what was even more expedient, obtained for a trifling outlay of fuel. A short but very thick shaft, revolving with great speed, led, I was told, to a screw without, and by the sides of this monster two others of far humbler dimensions were resting idly on their rollers.

I was now able to solve the riddle of the Attila's flight. The buoyancy of the vessel was that of an inclined plane driven rapidly through the air by a screw, a device first prominently brought into notice by the nineteenth-century experiments of Maxim. The Attila, albeit light, was, of course, under normal conditions, greatly heavier than the quantity of air she displaced — indispensable condition, indeed, of any real mastery over the subtle element she dwelt in. The balloon is a mere toy at the mercy of the gale and its gas — the Attila seemed wholly indifferent to both. But, desirous of probing the problem to the bottom, I put Hartmann the question —

"What would happen supposing that shaft broke, or the machinery somehow got out of order?"

"Well, we should fall."

"Fall?"

"Yes, but very gradually at first, so long as our speed was fairly well maintained. The aeroplane, as you know, will only buoy us up on the condition that we move, and that pretty quickly. Still, there are always the two spare steering screws to fall back upon."

"But what if they stopped as well?"

"It's most unlikely that they would stop. The three shafts are worked independently. But if they did, the sand-valves would have to be opened."

"The sand-valves?"

"Yes. You have doubtless been surprised at the huge size of the Attila. Well the main parts of the upper and middle portions of her hull are nothing more nor less than a succession of gas-meters — of compartments filled with hydrogen introduced at a high temperature, so as to yield the maximum amount of buoyancy. Below these compartments again lie the sand reservoirs. When these latter are three parts full their natural effect is to keep the Attila at about the level of the sea, supposing, that is to say, the screws are completely stopped. If your so-much-dreaded event was to happen, the watch in the conning-tower would simply shift the sand-levers, a quantity of ballast would be released, and we should at once begin to rise. We can thus regulate our weight at will. The secret of it all is the marvellous lightness
of these walls. I am not free to tell you to what discovery that lightness is due, but you may test and analyze as much as you like, on the off chance of a correct guess."

"It's all superb!" was my enthusiastic comment. "But how about an ordinary complete descent to earth?"

"A very simple matter. From the outer gallery the Attila looks as if her bottom was gently curved, terminating in the customary orthodox keel. That is what the upper lines suggest. But three feet below the level at which we stand lies a flat projecting bottom studded underneath with springs resting on the axles of wheels. I wish to touch land. I press

![Looking down into space.](image)

certain knobs and this, that, perhaps all three screws, ease off, run down, or may be reversed. The Attila then sweeps onward much after the fashion of an albatross with outspread motionless wings. Steering is easy — a 'ting' in the engine-room sets this or that side screw shaft rotating. Slowly — perhaps fast — she falls, then faster and faster.
Meanwhile I stand by the sand-levers— I pull this and the stern rises, we swoop down like a hawk; I pull that, the bow rises, the impetus thus gained carries the *Attila* in a noble curve aloft. Finally she hovers over the ground, and, opening a hydrogen valve, I adjust her descent delicately, so as to spare the springs."

"But you must lose a great deal of hydrogen in this manner."

"Not so much as you would think. And, besides, the loss is of no moment. We carry an immense quantity of the gas compressed in tubes at a pressure of many thousand pounds to the square inch. What loss there is can therefore always be made good at intervals. You will have a chance of watching our procedure very shortly, as we 'sand up' and replenish three or four gas-reservoirs at a sand-dune not very far distant."

We passed through the gaily-lit passage back to the well, where for fifty feet above us the long stair curled upward to the citadel.

"These side walls," observed Hartmann, "with those constituting the outer skin of the *Attila*, bound the huge gas compartments I mentioned. They are independent, so that serious accidents are impossible. In the cavities and corridors between them lie the cabins and quarters of the crew, the courts enclosed by which you must have noticed from the upper deck. All these courts open on to the outer gallery, and communicate by the deck with the common room. To the centre divisions of the ship, the engine-room, and the conning-tower, no one has access except with my leave. This," and he opened a small carefully guarded door, "is the magazine."

He pressed a button, and the gleam of a vacuum lamp pierced the darkness. Half awestruck I stepped within.

"There is nothing to see now. We have to be so cautious. Stay! look here."

He seized a ring and lifted a trap in the floor. I started back, for it opened into a well some three feet deep and then into the aerial abyss below!

"That well will vomit disaster one day."

He let down the trap, and we left the gloomy chamber.

"The *Attila*, you see, Mr. Stanley, combines the advantages of the bird and the balloon, of the aeronef and the aerostat. It has been my dream from boyhood, and at last, after infinite pains, it is realized. Still, even for me it is but a means to an end. But you will admit it is not a bad one."

We ascended the stairway and stepped on to the upper deck. Some twenty men were assembled, and they respectfully saluted my companion.
"Comrades," he said, "my friend Stanley comes among you. Though he is not yet one of us, he may be. His devotion to the cause of Labour is his passport. Take him and treat him as our guest."

He bowed to me and retired into his citadel. The crew crowded eagerly round me with a warmth wholly unlooked for. The terrible captain had evidently not spoken in vain. During the next half-hour I was escorted round their quarters in state. Naturally I volunteered my services for the necessary work of the vessel, but somewhat to my surprise was firmly asked to desist. A guest, they said, could not be expected to conform to their habits at once, and two of the objectors were urgent in entreatying me to accept their services. In the end I was vanquished, not entirely to my regret, and the first day of my sojourn on the Attila passed pleasantly enough. Would that all the others had passed in a like manner, for in that case I should have to describe an Elysium instead of an Inferno!

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE VOYAGE.

RELEASED for the moment from care, I gave myself up to the full enjoyment of the voyage. Of the grandeur of the cloud pictures, the glory of the sunsets and the twilights, of the moonlight flooding our decks as we sped over the streaky mists below, of the mystic passage by night and the blushes of early morn, I cannot trust myself to speak. Such things ordinarily belittle words, but framed in the romance of this voyage they wrought indescribable effects upon me. The economist was merged in the artist, I no longer reasoned but lay bathed in the flood of feeling. And not only these beauties enthralled me, but the motion of the Attila was itself a poem.

Have you never in the drowsy noon of a long summer's day lain back on the sward watching the evolutions of a rook round its elm, noted the rapturous poise of its wings and the easy grace of its flight? Even such was the flight of the Attila. Let me detail an incident which took place over-night, and the ground for my enthusiasm will be obvious. Hartmann had summoned me to his study, and taken me along to the conning-tower, the passage to which ran under deck from the citadel. The tower (capped with search-light apparatus for night work when requisite) rested on the nozzle or ram-like projecting bow of the
aeronef, and was so constructed as to command a superb outlook. Two men were on watch when we arrived, and these respectfully saluted the captain.

"Is the shore far off?"
"About five miles."
"Any vessels in sight?"
"No, sir."
"All right."

"Now, Mr. Stanley," said he, turning to me, "I am going to show you how the Attila obeys its master. We require to load up with sand and refill five or six of the hydrogen compartments. That strip yonder is one of our favourite docks. Watch me."

He pressed one of the knobs communicating with the engine-room.
"That stops the force supply to the main shaft, the revolutions of which will speedily ease down. We are falling fast, do you observe? Hold tight. There!"

The bow dipped several degrees and we shot onward and downward like an arrow. Were we rushing into the sea, the billows of which seemed to leap up at us larger and larger each second? Another pitch, the bow rose considerably, and we were carried by the aeroplane hundreds of yards upwards, the onward motion being at the same time inconceivably rapid. Once more these tactics were repeated, and so closely we neared the ocean that the waves must have splashed the screw-blades. Meantime Hartmann rapidly twisted a wheel with each hand.

"This works the sand levers of the bow, that of the stern. Ballast is dropping quickly."

At once we rose, and to my unconcealed wonder stopped at a height of about 300 feet above sea-level, still, however, riding forward with a lazy careless motion. We were now near the sand-pits, whither a few turns of the screw bore us gently. Hartmann, watching his opportunity, began twisting a small wheel in the centre of a medley of others.

"A hydrogen valve."

We fell sharply, but a touch to the other wheels eased us, and alighting gently on the spit the wheels of the Attila were buried up to their naves.

It was then getting late, so every one was as expeditious as possible. First bag after bag of sand was dried and cast into the sand reservoirs, binding the craft immovably to the dune. The process resembled a coaling operation at Port Said, and amused me greatly. I worked hard, and earned a shower of praises. Afterwards I stood by while the five
Over the Sea.
huge centre compartments were filled with the rarefied gas. It was a tiresome affair, because each in turn had to be pumped and re-pumped out, then filled with cold hydrogen, then with a fresh supply highly heated so as to contract and become rare on cooling. About one hour was consumed in the operation, and at its close the Attila still lay motionless on the sand-spit. Everything, however, having been duly overhauled, the sand levers were gently worked, the surplus ballast slipped away, and breaking away from our couch we floated twenty feet above the spit. The three screws were then set rotating, and speed having been attained, we curved upwards into the bosom of the sunset clouds. An experience more superb romance itself could not furnish.

Later on we passed at high speed over Havre, the lights of which twinkled merrily through a mist patch. Next Rouen glided away beneath us, and at seven we swept over the gorgeous city of Paris. Satiated in some measure with these sights I stepped down into a court and entered the cozy smoking-room. Burnett was there, and Brandt, the "philosopher" whom Hartmann had mentioned. I was very fond of German thought, and did not fail to improve the timely occasion. Brandt was not only a meta-physician, but readily listened to my very guarded criticisms of the anarchists. He was, however, inflexible, and professed the most supreme confidence in Hartmann. "He is the heart of the enterprise, and it was he who gave the Attila wings. Look at what he effected with small resources, and you may rely on him with great." He evinced a sturdy faith in the scheme of supervision, and prophesied as its result a grand moral and intellectual regeneration of man. But, he added, the initial blows will be terrible. One remark filled me with apprehension. "London," he said, "in three days will be mere shambles with the roof ablaze."

"Heavens!" I cried, "so soon!"

"Yes. The object of this trip is merely to settle details with some terrestrial friends who meet us tomorrow evening — delegates from the various affiliated bodies of Europe."

Shortly afterwards I had an interview with Hartmann, and urged that some warning might at least be given to our friends.

"By all means," he remarked, "warn yours to keep away from London. One of the delegates will act for you after due inspection of the message. For myself, I have already taken my private precautions."

* * *

DIARY. Tuesday Morning. — Crossed Dijon and the river Saone in the night. Rising rapidly, as the slopes of the Jura mountains are ahead of us,
and "the captain," as they call him, will insist on keeping high! No doubt it is safer, but I suspect the real truth is that he wants to appear unannounced over London — a portent as mysterious as terrible. Shows himself ironical and inflexible. I suggest a mild course of action, and he asks me whether I aspire to be captain of the Attila. Am becoming nevertheless almost inured to the thought of the impending calamity. Brandt says philosophically that "the advance of man is always over thorns." Unhappily the thorns do not always lead to happiness. Will they do so in this case? The bluster of the vulgar dynamitards is revolting. Even Burnett is forgetting the end in the means. As to Schwartz, his vile parody is being sung freely by all the English-speaking hyaenas of his stamp: —

"The dynamite falls on castle walls,
And splendid buildings old in story.
The column shakes, the tyrant quakes,
And the wild wreckage leaps in glory.
Throw, comrades, throw; set the wild echoes flying:
Throw, comrades; answer, wretches, dying, dying, dying."

Am getting to loathe the crew, now the novelty of their reception is beginning to wear off.

Tuesday (Afternoon). — Still higher, great discomfort being experienced. The barometer readings make us three and a half miles above sea-level over the pine-covered summits of the Jura mountains. I find it necessary to breathe much more rapidly, the rarity of the air is unsatisfying. At times a dizziness seized me, and on examining my hands and body I find my veins standing out like whipcord. Hartmann shortly eases off the screws — he was experimenting, so it appears, with his machinery. A change of tactics is observable. He ignores possible sightseers now, probably because he knows that reports from tourists and mountaineers stand no chance of being believed. Hence we almost brush the mountains, and a superb privilege it is. The magnificent pines here surpass anything else of the kind. Sometimes we glide midway along a valley with a rushing torrent beneath us and these pine-fringed precipices on our sides; sometimes we amaze a luckless mountaineer or shepherd as we thread a defile; sometimes we curve over valley-heads with a grace an eagle might imitate; then, again, we breast the cloud-rack and are lost in its mantling fleeces. We are now bearing south-east by south, and are not far off from the beautiful lake of
Geneva.

Tuesday (Night).—Wrote my letter and telegram, and gave them to Hartmann for the delegate. We have stopped over a pine forest some five miles distant from Morges, on the shore of the lake. Switzerland, I am told, was selected as the rendezvous because of its central position. Many Russians, Poles, Austrians, and Italians, besides delegates from other nationalities, are expected. They are to arrange details of the forthcoming revolution. Had a friendly talk with Burnett, who once more tried to proselytize me. Told him if any one could shake my convictions it is Hartmann and not he. How bloodthirsty the men are getting! Query.—What if the lust for blood grows by what it feeds on? What if this crew gets out of hand? Happily, a strong man stands at the helm.

(Later.)—The convention is in full swing. What enthusiasm must inspire these “tourists,” for, of course, it is in this character that they travel. Most, I hear, are very badly off, their funds being supplied by their associations. A great deal of provisions and materiel has been brought aboard. How well this crusade is organized!

Hartmann remains on board, he has never left the vessel except on the occasion when he visited his mother. Burnett and Schwartz take his instructions to the delegates, and most of the crew escort them. We are floating very near the ground in a rude clearing on the mountain side, two rope-ladders and some cables link us with the soil. After several hours’ conference below, the delegates visit the Attila. Heavens! what desperadoes some look! Yet they control, so Burnett says, vast societies. Hartmann interviews each. He works patiently through the list, and finally addresses them en masse, launching terms of the most animated invective against modern civilization. Am, of course, excluded, but learn that everything has gone off admirably. Five of the delegates are to join the crew, the rest carry back their instructions. We start early in the morning. What a spectacle there is before us! However, two days’ breathing time is something. Trust that delegate, whoever he is, will not forget the telegram and letter to Lena.

CHAPTER IX.

IN AT THE DEATH.

DURING the return to England two incidents of note, both alike terrible, but terrible in widely different ways, chequered our voyage, and
the first of these it will now be my task to detail.

Wealth of romance, witchery of mountain scenery, and panoramas of ever-varying landscapes in the plains — whatever happiness can be gleaned from these was mine in bounteous plenty. Hitherto, however, the *Attila* had met with gentle winds and fairly clear skies; she was a gay butterfly by day and a listless moth by night. She had shortly to display to me her prowess as a rider of the tempest. This experience, along with its sequel of grim incident, impressed me deeply. I shall try to awake in the reader some echo of the emotions which it stirred into fervour within me.

No one, at any rate, could charge Hartmann with boring his unsolicited guest. Feasted as I had been with pictures, I was destined to be swept through ever novel galleries of natural marvels. I had anticipated that we should return by a like route to that by which we had arrived, but a pleasant reversal of this view was in store for me. Leaving the slopes of the Jura behind her, the *Attila* sped in a southwesterly direction across the department of Aisne, over Lyons, westward across the extinct volcanoes of Auvergne, then curving slightly to the south she leapt the river Dordogne, and, finally, passing at a great height over Bordeaux, reached the ocean rim over the desolate *Landes* which span the coast-line betwixt the Garonne estuary and the Adour. Had I been exploring Central Africa in the interests of science, I should feel justified in presenting my observations at length. But the tracts beneath me being so familiar, such procedure would be both useless and troublesome. I must therefore leave the imaginative to put themselves in my place and picture these well-known districts as transfigured by the romance of air-traveling.

In looking down on such natural maps one is transported with a sense of power and exultation that renders even homely sights attractive. Burnett, it is true, assured me that even this luxury of travel palls on one after a time. Judging from the indifference of the crew, I should say that he had right on his side. But, whether my artistic appetite was abnormal, or the banquet provided was not of the proper duration, I can only say that this part of my residence on the *Attila* always wore the livery of a gorgeous dream.

It was becoming dark when the pine forests and sand wastes of the *Landes* gave place to the rim of Biscay surf. In accordance with custom we rapidly began to descend, and were soon coursing over the billows at a height of some 200 feet. It was one of those evenings which ordinarily favour melancholy and lassitude. Above us stretched inky layers of stratus or “fall” cloud, wrought of mists driven from the upper regions by the chills that hurried after the setting sun. The wind blew in gusts and preyed vampire-like on our energies — an electric tension of the atmosphere was
becoming unmistakably manifest. Clouds were rising smoke-like from the ocean rim and mingling with the flatter masses overhead, and even as I gazed the waves seemed to flash whiter and whiter through the veil of the nether darkness. I was standing on the upper deck debating social problems with Brandt, greatly to the enjoyment of three of the crew who watched the contest. Some few yards in front of us the platform tapered off to a point at the convergence of the bow railings, and directly in front of this the hull sloped downwards and outwards to form the projecting ram. At the extremity of this, with crest barely visible from the spot where my listeners were reclining, rose the conning-tower like a horn on the snout of a rhinoceros. Amidships and astern hummed the forest of stays and props which hung us to the aeroplane, clustering thick over the rounded boss of the citadel, now half shrouded in gloom. It was a scene to inspire the painter — this weird vessel and its weird crew borne along between an angry welkin and the riotous surges of the ocean.

"Violent diseases often demand violent remedies," said Brandt, as he developed his favourite topic. "The surgeon may be gentle at heart, but he spares not the gangrenous limb. In modern times he has anaesthetics to soothe his patient, but did he shrink from his task when such artifices as these were unknown? Regard us anarchists as excising the foul ulcers of Humanity and as forced to perform that duty with no anaesthetics to aid us. Could we throw all London, all Paris, all Berlin into a trance, how painless would be our surgery! But, unhappily, we have to confront struggling patients vividly sensitive to the knife. Nevertheless, for their own sakes, or rather the sake of Humanity, we must cut."

"But you overlook one important contrast. The surgeon lops off a limb or roots up an ulcer to save his patient's life or better his health. But you attack civilization not to reform it but to annihilate it."

"That is true, but civilization — your industrial civilization — what is it? Not a system to be identified with the cause of human welfare, and hence worth preserving in some form or other at all costs, but a mere vicious outgrowth prejudicial to that welfare as we conceive it. The test of the worth of a civilization is its power to minister to human happiness. Judged by this standard your civilization has proved a failure. Mankind rushed to her embraces in hope, fought its way thither through long and weary centuries, and has for a reward the sneers of a mistress as exacting as she is icy:

'The third day comes a frost, a killing frost.'"
During the delivery of this harangue the wind had been steadily rising, and it now began to shriek through the stays in a fashion positively alarming. Foregoing further parley, I bent over the railing and strove to catch a glimpse of the angry sea-horses beneath us. But it was by this time too dark for the non-feline eye. Glancing upwards and around the horizon, I could see the awnings of the storm unrolling, with here and there a rift through which stole the feeble moonlight. A man came from the citadel and stepped up to us. It was Hartmann.

“Well,” he said, “we are in for it. The barometer is falling rapidly, and the storm is already gathering. Have a care for yourselves, comrades,” he added to his followers. “You, Stanley, follow me to the conning-tower. The log of the Attila may be worth writing to-night.”

I followed him gladly into the citadel, and down the stair leading to the narrow corridor which ran on to the bow. As we entered it the Attila seemed to reel with a violent shock that sent me spinning against wall. The storm had burst. By the time I had picked myself up Hartmann had disappeared. I found my way after him into the tower, where he was standing, regulator in hand, with his eyes on the glass plate that looked forward into the night.

“We are rising,” he said, laconically. “Look!”

A fan of vivid glory cleft the darkness. Illumined by the electric search-light great masses of driving vapour were rushing by us; but other sight there was none. Suddenly a second squall struck us, and the Attila rolled like a liner in a cyclone; the lurch was horrible, and for a moment I though we were capsizing — it must have been one of at least forty-five degrees followed by a very slow recovery. Hartmann was busy over a medley of wheels, levers, and regulators.

“We are passing through the cloud-belt at a very high speed,” he continued, as if the shock was a trifle. “My intention is, first, to let you see a storm from the quiet zone above it; secondly, to rush downwards into it that the Attila may show her mettle.”

I said nothing, for my feelings were in truth somewhat mixed. With the ascent portion of the programme I concurred heartily; the second I would gladly have abandoned, as it seemed to me so utterly foolhardy. But faint heart was not the commodity for Hartmann, and wishing to earn his favour through his respect, I suppressed my fears resolutely. Not noticing my silence he kept on throwing in his comments on the situation. As the minutes wore on I observed that the mist masses were blowing thinner and thinner against the bow of the Attila. Suddenly the electric light was turned off, and a gentle silvery glow took its place. And as we swept on I perceived that the wind had fallen also. Hartmann pressed a bell-knob, and
the two men on watch reappeared.

"Now to the deck again, and you shall see a fine picture."

As we stepped into the court of the citadel I had reason to appreciate this remark. Down in the conning-tower I had stood behind the captain and seen little save the dawn of a gentle radiance among the thinning mists. But up here the vista was glorious. A brisk but by no means stinging wind swept the deck. Above shone the horned moon in unclouded majesty, casting a weird light on the rolling masses of cloud-battalions underneath us. From below came the roar of the strife of elements and the crooked gleam of the levin-bolt, while the echoes of the thunder leapt grimly across the halls and palaces of the storm-king. As if arbiter of the struggle, the Attila rode serenely over the turmoil in the quiet zone.

"How high are we now?" I asked Hartmann, for the air was oppressively rare.

"A trifle over two miles. A sublime spectacle this, is it not?

"Uniquely so. The sense of serene power is so striking. But you do not propose to rest here?"

"Oh no. I must show that this serene power is not fraudulent. I shall shortly plunge the Attila into the very vortex of the storm, and teach you how nobly she can wing her way through it."

"It would not be safe, I suppose, on deck, what with the rolling, pitching, and wind? Still one can scarcely enjoy these scenes in the conning-tower, where the engineer and watchman usurp the best places."

"You would like, if possible, to stay here?"

"Yes." If the experience had to be undergone, there was no reason why I should not brave it out thoroughly. Better the deck than a back seat in the conning-tower.

"Well, so let it be. But you must be lashed securely. Where shall it be? Why not to the railing over the bow? You could not have a finer coigne of vantage."

I assented at once, and, a couple of the crew being hailed, I was speedily made fast in a sitting posture by the waist and liberally invested with wraps. My position was excellent. I could see down the sloping bow to the conning-tower, and would be fairly sheltered from the worst of the wind. All the preparations being complete, the captain and the crew retired, leaving the deck altogether deserted. No light, save that of the moon, fell on its cold surface, and that only where the umbrella-like aeroplane did not bar off the sheets of slanting silver.

The Attila rode grandly over the gloomy wool-packs below, and, thrilling with excitement and some fear, I waited for the coming plunge. The suspense was short. Suddenly the electric eye of the aeronef glowed.
the two men on watch reappeared.

"Now to the deck again, and you shall see a fine picture."

As we stepped into the court of the citadel I had reason to appreciate this remark. Down in the conning-tower I had stood behind the captain and seen little save the dawn of a gentle radiance among the thinning mists. But up here the vista was glorious. A brisk but by no means stinging wind swept the deck. Above shone the horned moon in unclouded majesty, casting a weird light on the rolling masses of cloud-battalions underneath us. From below came the roar of the strife of elements and the crooked gleam of the levin-bolt, while the echoes of the thunder leapt grimly across the halls and palaces of the storm-king. As if arbiter of the struggle, the Attila rode serenely over the turmoil in the quiet zone.

"How high are we now?" I asked Hartmann, for the air was oppressively rare.

"A trifle over two miles. A sublime spectacle this, is it not?

"Uniquely so. The sense of serene power is so striking. But you do not propose to rest here?"

"Oh no. I must show that this serene power is not fraudulent. I shall shortly plunge the Attila into the very vortex of the storm, and teach you how nobly she can wing her way through it."

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Amongst the cloud-battalions.
forth from the crest of the conning-tower, behind and above which I was lashed to the railing. Then the bow dipped and the speed began to increase. Again and again it dipped with a series of little jolts, and then cut obliquely into the tenuous rim of the cloud-belt, through which it began to plough with an energy almost distressing.

Those who have stood on an express engine running sixty miles an hour will know what it is to breathe in the teeth of a rushing blast; let them then conceive my experience when 120 and probably more miles an hour were being done in a hurricane. Drenching clouds swept over me, the wind and thunder roared round me, as I was borne into that angry stratum below. Burying my mouth within my neckcloth, and sheltering my eyes with my hands, I looked straight ahead at the glow which cleft the darkness before us. In a very brief time we had shot through the belt, and were rushing wildly down to the windlashed desolation below. The pitching and rolling of the aeronef now became terrible, and once more awoke my fears. What if the guns were to break adrift or the props of the aeroplane to yield! As it was I could see that the squalls caused a startling irregularity of course, the Attila swerving furiously from right to left, now dropping like a stone, now being checked in her descent and hurtled upwards. Surely Hartmann would not run too close to the waves on such a fearful night!

Looking downwards, I now saw that the glow had reached the face of the waters, everywhere in violent turmoil with huge waves at least twenty-five feet high from trough to crest, spanned by clouds of wind-drift. And sight still more enthralling was a large dismasted steamer labouring heavily as she lay hove-to under the strokes of a thousand hammers. With boats smashed, bridge carried away, bulwarks in many places shattered, and decks continually swept, she was a spectacle fit to move even a Hartmann. Assistance, however, was out of the question. Every art of the captain must be required to guide the course of the Attila, and our tremendous speed could not safely be relaxed for a moment. It would have been, indeed, easy to “hover” in the teeth of a furious blast, but what if the blast were to drop and leave us momentarily stationary, while a side roll or pitch were to succeed?

Screws and sand levers notwithstanding, it was better to risk nothing. But what an experience was this! The Attila with flaming electric eye circled round the doomed vessel, lighting up a deck crowded with panic-stricken passengers, groups of whom every larger wave washed pell-mell through the broken bulwarks. Cry or shrie, none could be heard, the roar of the elements was too frightful, but the gestures of the wretches were too piteous to misinterpret. Shutting my eyes, I refused for some
Sighting a doomed vessel.
minutes to look on the dreadful holocaust, but once more I had to yield to
the fascination. By that time the drama was over. The *Attila* was still
circling, but in the place of the luckless vessel leapt the white-maned
savage billows.

I now began to feel chilled and miserable; the excitement of the outset
had dwindled, and a reaction, enhanced by the rigours of the night and the
foregoing drama, mastered me. Happily the *Attila* had by this time
weathered enough of difficulties. Rising through the cloud-belt, she left
the angry winds and rain once more below her. Some of the crew
ascended to the deck and released me from my bondage. It was now
going late, so after thanking Hartmann for his courtesy, I
descended into my berth to sleep off the ill effects of exposure,
and dream horrible dreams of wrecks and drowning victims.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST BLOW.

I ROSE late the next morning somewhat the worse for my exposure,
but nevertheless far too interested in my voyage to heed a mere cold and a
few rheumatic twinges. No sooner, indeed, was I awake than I leapt out of
my berth, and busying myself energetically with my toilet, was speedily
pacing the bulwarked passage of which mention has already been made.
The zone through which we were ploughing was cloudy, and a strong
bitter head wind was blowing. Looking over the bulwarks I could see
nothing but driving mists, and above the vast aeroplane a thinner layer of
mist, through several rifts in which the sun thrust his slanting columns of
light. No one was visible in the passage, but I heard a medley of excited
voices which suggested that some controversy was in progress on the upper
deck.

Listening attentively, I became convinced that some unusual affair was
in hand, and anxious to miss nothing of interest, I entered an arch that led
into one of the courts, and passed up the enclosed spiral staircase to the
scene of this animated talking. On gaining the deck I saw nearly all the
crew standing in groups round the citadel. Burnett was there gesticulating
wildly to Brandt, so stepping briskly up to them I asked the cause of this
muster.

"Ah, you here!" said Burnett. "In time for the first blow, eh! Well,
there will be something to see shortly, eh, Brandt!" and the
anarchist-philosopher addressed smiled approvingly. But his merriment recalled the bland purring of a cat over a captured mouse.

“What’s up, then?” I continued, somewhat startled, for during the pause the ominous words “ironclad,” “bombs,” uttered by some of the eager disputants around, had caught my ear.

“The captain has sighted an ironclad, and we are about to try conclusions,” said Brandt. The words had scarcely passed his lips when the inner door of the citadel swung ajar, and through the enclosure into our midst stalked the redoubtable captain himself.

“Comrades,” he said, “below us steams a large British ironclad just sighted through the mist. I propose to test her mettle – it will serve as a practice test of our bomb-fire – are you agreeable?”

A burst of applause greeted this iniquitous proposal, and a sturdy rascal stepped out of the throng and saluted him. Hartmann bent forward. “Well, Norman,” he said.

“May I strike the first blow, captain?” a chorus of similar applications followed. Hartmann thus appealed to suggested that the applicants should draw lots for the privilege, and the ruffians proceeded forthwith to settle their claims in this fashion.

Their levity so disgusted me that I longed to rush forward and attack the whole scheme. I had actually moved forward some steps when I felt a tight grip on my arm. I turned round sharply, to face Brandt, who had providentially sensed my project.

“Back, man! Are you mad? These men will stand no nonsense, and if you insult the captain, even his personal influence could not save you.”

Bah! it was hopeless. I slunk back with a feeling of utter helplessness. There was clearly nothing for it but to see the whole hideous affair out in silence. Still, indignation all but mastered me. What ruffians were these anarchists! “Cowards!” I hissed involuntarily, but by this time they were too absorbed in their lot-drawing to hear me. “Shut up, fool,” reiterated Brandt. “I warn you that you will be brained or chucked overboard if they hear you.” I bit my lips in despair. “Schwartz has it! Schwartz has it!” I heard Hartmann say at last – they were drawing the lots – “he strikes the first blow, and no better man could do it. Next, Norman; next – ”

I walked away and leant on the bow railing, glad to be left alone. The hubbub continued for some time, when the men dispersed, almost all going below. Torn by useless emotions I gazed down at the mists that swam beneath us, striving to pierce the veil which separated us from the doomed ship. To tear myself away from the spot was impossible – the fascination of the projected crime was irresistible. Have you ever watched a scene in a slaughter-house, loathing it while nevertheless unable to avert
your gaze? Possibly you have. Well, that situation is akin to the morbid curiosity which nailed me unwillingly to my post.

The mists were thinning around us, but I observed with some surprise that a dense cloud below us — cut off sharply from its now unsubstantial fellows — maintained its position relatively to the *Attila* unchanged. Evidently Hartmann was purposely lurking behind this barrier, and proposed to deliver his first blow on an absolutely unsuspecting victim. Looking more attentively I noted a thin longitudinal rift in this cloud through which could be seen, though dimly, the sea, and in this something dark and indistinct, no bigger than an ordinary pea. It was the ironclad!

The *Attila* began to sink rapidly — the rift lengthened and broadened as I gazed, the pea swelled into a two-masted, two-funnelled battle-ship with a trail of black smoke faintly decipherable in her wake. Down, down, down we dropped — we were now on the fringe of the upper surface of the cloud, and the great ship, now only some 300 feet below us, was revealing itself clearly to the eye. At this point our downward motion ceased, and the *Attila* began to describe short curves at the level of the screening cloud, now skimming over its dank masses, now flashing over the rift that stretched directly over her unsuspecting prey. Four evolutions of this sort had taken place, and now for the fifth time we were gliding over the rift, when I heard a cheer raised by some men on the lower gallery, and craning my head over the railing, saw something black flash through space and splash in a big green wave that was flinging itself against the vessel’s stern. It was the moment of the “first blow,” and — might the omen hold good! — the first blow had failed.

Again a curve over the rift, and once more a failure, at first, for this time, again, a splash by the stern rejoiced me. But my satisfaction was momentary. A few seconds after I saw a cloud of smoke shoot upwards from the ironclad, followed by a deafening crash. The third bomb had told. And in the horrid confusion that followed, the *Attila* threw off her secrecy, slipped through the cloud, and floated down to the vessel like some huge bird of prey — the very embodiment of masterful and shameless power.

As the smoke cleared away, revealing the strange visitor from the clouds, the feelings of the officers and crew must have been as unique as they were terrible. Amazement, a sense of complete unpreparedness and helplessness, going along with the disastrous results of the explosion, must have unnerved even the boldest. The great battle-ship was wholly at the mercy of the foe that rode so contemptuously above it.

How the situation was viewed from its decks has been told at length in the admirably graphic letter of Captain Boyes, R.N., to the *Times,*
The battle-ship at the 'Attila's' mercy.
and to that source I must refer you for details. Looking down from my eyrie, I was of course only able to gauge very roughly the havoc wrought by the bomb. Hartmann had previously told me that nothing constructed by man could withstand his enormous missiles, and the scene below well bore out his boast. Apparently the bomb had burst amidships nearly, I should say, between the funnels. Of these latter one had been shorn of half its length, the other had been blown away completely, its base forming part of a chasm whence rolled volumes of black smoke, through which the shrieks of wounded men rose faintly upward. Across this chasm had fallen the fore-mast, while fragments of spars, ventilators, steel plates, fittings, boats, and human victims were scattered confusedly over the low-lying fore-deck. And even as I looked two more appalling explosions shook the ironclad from stem to stern; through the uprush of smoke I saw a great telescope of a gun tossed out of its shattered turret into the water and a huge cantle of the steel deck torn away, as if it were paper, exposing a new chasm, at once invaded by flames. But the other bomb was even more deadly, bursting in the great hollow excavated between the funnels and wrecking the very vitals of the ironclad; the steam from the shattered boilers rushing tumultuously up the gap with the effect of speedily shrouding the whole vessel. Some horrible deaths, says Captain Boyes, sprang from this explosion, as all those on duty in the port stoke-hole and engine-room were either blown to pieces by the bomb or subsequently boiled alive. I did not, of course, know of this at the time, but the volumes of escaping steam told too clearly how hideous must be the massacre, and imagination thus stimulated could not very well go far wrong. I felt giddy with horror when I thought of the scenes which that vapour-pall hung over.

How long was this drama to continue? Doubtless until the ironclad was gutted or sunk, a consummation which could not be very far distant. Two or three bombs more would surely complete the work, and leave perhaps no witness to tell the hideous tale to history. I could look no longer — to do seemed almost abetting these cruel fanatics — but flinging myself on the deck awaited tremulously the next burst of thunder. A minute ebbed away, another, and then another, and still no shock. The suspense was becoming acute.

Suddenly the Attila pitched violently, the bow shifting thrice vehemently upwards, and along with this the hum of the great screw-blades began to swell higher and higher. I sprang to my feet — these tactics meant, of course, a rapid ascent, but what was the object in view? Glancing over the railing I perceived that we were slanting at
great speed into the cloud-zone, leaving the crippled battle-ship far behind and below. Ah, yes! The reason was clear enough. Not a mile to the south-west a large ironclad attended by some smaller vessels, probably cruisers, was making its way to the scene. Owing to my absorption in the attack they had hitherto escaped my notice.

"A poor job this," said some one who had stolen up unperceived behind me. I turned round – it was Burnett.

"Very," I answered. "I must congratulate you, I suppose, on the heroism you have just displayed. A pity not to enhance it by engaging this vessel's consorts."

Burnett took the sneer coolly.

"Why waste material? Besides, you must see that the Attila would be uselessly exposing herself. It would be folly to risk the salute of heavy guns with the great campaign yet before us."

He was wise after his kind. The Attila dared not face the new-comers, who by elevating their guns might well succeed in winging her. A shell from a five-ton gun would have proved a most damaging visitor. Only so long as she circled directly above a vessel could she count on immunity from serious injury. A contest at her old level with numerous scattered foes was impracticable; so huge a target would inevitably be holed in the long run, while an attempt to drop bombs from a higher level would defeat its object by rendering accuracy of aim impracticable. Perforce, then, she had dropped the prey from her talons and was seeking safety aloft. Mounting into cloud-land, she was departing as mysteriously as she had come, a tigress who, having once tasted blood, yearned to slake her thirst in the heart of civilization itself. To-morrow we were to reach the metropolis, and then – Sick with my forebodings and savage at my sense of impotence, I turned surly away from Burnett, whose very presence was now becoming obnoxious, and descending into a court passed thence through the gallery to my berth, resolved from that hour to see as little of my fell associates as the conditions of my stay rendered possible.

TO BE CONCLUDED
CALIBRATIONS


Sometimes, when I'm particularly weary at the close of a day's efforts, when my head is aching and my body fatigued, I enjoy just listening to a good story. Don't particularly want to work at it, you understand, and yet really don't want to be eased into that profoundest of critical judgments, sleep. THE BROKEN SWORD is a good book for such a time — for Poul Anderson, whatever else he may or may not be as a writer, has been from the very start of his career a damn good story-teller.

I remember how, years ago, my father would take my brothers and me on trips into the woods; and how at night, by the only lights available — the moon and a small campfire — we'd gather around the warmth, hands and faces burning in the heat, backs ashiver with the forest chill — and he'd tell stories, grand, wondrous tales of adventure — mostly his own — of war and hunting and logging, of human foibles and human grandeur, of little things that made us want to laugh or feel sad. He was very good at what he did.

And somehow, in a very small but analogous way, I think that this was much as it must have been centuries ago, when violent men would gather together at the end of a (perhaps literally) bone-shattering day and call for the bards and the singers. They'd be entertained, by god, and pity the tunesmith who failed to do it: ridicule was the best he could hope for, laughter all he deserved.

The feeling of listening to a heroic saga, produced by the skillful interpositioning of a personal narrator between story and reader, is achieved remarkably well in THE BROKEN SWORD. Form, language, and story all work as one to simulate a Nordic air; particularly effective is the use by the major characters of short, unrhymed verses, or staves, in a regular trochaic meter: these are generally reserved for songs and charms, or times of particular stress and importance, such as the beginning of major battles or love scenes. In combination with occasionally semi-archaic language and phrasing, this sprinkling of poetry does much to imply the world Anderson attempts to create. It's remarkable to find verse handled
with any sort of finesse within the text of a larger fictional work; that
both mesh as well as they do is a tribute to the author's skill.

The tale itself fits its setting well. In a medieval world of elves and trolls
and mortal men, it mixes together a grand war, a curse, an ill-destined but
truly wondrous love, a possessed sword, a few defrocked gods (and some
others, including the Christian one, who are very potent indeed), and a
berserker-doppelganger, to produce a curious assortment of bloody battles,
behind-the-scenes machinations, and cut-throat politics. The Nornic
philosophy of subtle predestination permeates the story, and indeed, one
wonders at times if the characters ever truly act with freedom, or if all is
part of some vast chess game played by one group of gods against another.
And yet this, too, adds to the calculated effect, and heightens the tragedies
that fill the book. The plot itself is so tightly spun that although the
inevitable ending can be spied long ahead, one's only desire is to reach the
last page. And once finished, the book is put away with sadness.

In a new introduction to this revised edition (THE BROKEN SWORD
was originally published in hard covers in 1954) Poul half apologizes for a
work written early in his career, in a style quite unlike that of his later
writing. You're too modest, old man: you've written one hell of a good
story, perhaps a minor classic in its field, and this reader, at any rate, is
willing to trade a flagon of ale for the pleasure. Name your wayhouse.

Anderson makes one final comment: "As for what became of those
who were still alive at the end of the book, and the sword, and Faerie
itself — which obviously no longer exists on Earth — that is another tale,'n
which may someday be told." Aye, let us hope so.

RR

During the late 40's and early 50's, the sudden boom in science fiction
and fantasy was reflected strongly in the paperback publishing market,
with the gratifying result that many old classics, long out of print,
appeared once again, some in book form for the first time. Many titles,
unobtainable for decades, by authors like A. Merritt, Jack Williamson, Ray
Cummings, C. S. Lewis, Ralph Milne Farley, H. P. Lovecraft, and Stanton
A. Coblenz, graced the newsstands and drug stores, bearing covers only
slightly less lurid than the pulp magazines of the day. Some of these
paperbacks are high-priced collectors' items today. As the 50's advanced,
more and more titles appeared, often reprints of hard-cover science fiction
and fantasy books published only a year or two before; and finally, as the
demand began to outstrip the supply, original SF paperbacks began to
appear. These originals have been published with increasing frequency ever
since, until today they far outnumber the reprints.

However, the on-sale life of a paperback is not long in most places, and
as a result, two unfortunate things have occurred: many excellent
paperback originals have gone out of print; and their flimsy formats have
deteriorated under re-readings and handling over the years.

Therefore, I am pleased to report that a major hard-cover publisher —
Walker and Company — has embarked upon the ironic but much-needed
project of rescuing some of the best of the paperback science fiction and
fantasy originals of yesterday from dog-eared oblivion. The books
themselves are quite handsome, well bound, with easily readable type, and
simple but effective dust jackets by Jack Gaughan and others. Currently
available is a fine selection of science fiction and fantasy novels and short
story collections, some old, some fairly recent, with more on the way.
Titles include: BRAIN WAVE by Poul Anderson, A CASE OF
CONSCIENCE by James Blish, THE WHOLE MAN by John Brunner, A
SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS by Fritz Leiber, BUG JACK BARRON
by Norman Spinrad, THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS by John Wyndham, OF
MEN AND MONSTERS by William Tenn, THE LEFT HAND OF
DARKNESS by Ursula LeGuin, RE-BIRTH by John Wyndham, THE
WANDERER by Fritz Leiber, I AM LEGEND by Richard Matheson, THE
SPACE MERCHANTS by Pohl and Kornbluth, THE STAINLESS STEEL
RAT by Harry Harrison, and NIGHTWINGS by Robert Silverberg.

Walker is doing a fine job with this series, and should be encouraged to
continue bringing us good, permanent copies of books that deserve
permanency on the shelves of libraries and collectors. They also publish a
handsome science fiction news bulletin called “The Walker Watchword,”
which you can have for the asking by writing to: Walker and Company,
Science Fiction Dept., 720 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10019. If your
local bookstore doesn’t carry the Walker line, ask them to stock it. You
won’t be sorry.

Still more current reprints, highly recommended:

THE HAND OF KANE by Robert E. Howard. Centaur Press Time-Lost

The second of three paperback volumes reprinting the Solomon Kane
stories from the now-out-of-print hard-cover collection, RED SHADOWS,
published by Donald M. Grant in 1968. The first volume was THE MOON

THE TREASURE OF ATLANTIS by J. Allan Dunn. Centaur Press

A rare lost-race novel rescued from the pages of ALL AROUND
Magazine, December 1916.

THE MIGHTY SWORDSMEN, Edited by Hans Stefan Santesson.

A new anthology of sword-and-sorcery tales, featuring all the crowd
favorites: Thongor, Conan, Elric, Lin Carter, Roger Zelazny, Robert E.
Howard, Michael Moorcock, and a few others. Grand fun, with a fine cover
by Jim Steranko, who must have painted it after seeing THE THIEF OF
BAGDAD.

BEYOND THE GOLDEN STAIR by Hannes Bok. Ballantine 02093,

A welcome addition to the Adult Fantasy series: the first publication in
its original form of a fine fantasy novel by the late fantasy artist, Hannes
Bok. It originally appeared, greatly condensed, as THE BLUE FLAMINGO
in the January, 1948 STARTLING STORIES.

THE OCTOBER COUNTRY by Ray Bradbury. Alfred A. Knopf, New
CALIBRATIONS

A handsome new hard-cover edition of one of Bradbury’s most popular books, illustrated with reproductions from Goya’s eerie and grotesque series of prints, “Los Caprichos.” Here are some of the most original weird tales ever written; 15 of them originally appeared in the 1947 Arkham House collection, DARK CARNIVAL, now a collectors’ item.

ERRATA: Apologies for the confusion here last time: a couple of last-minute line transpositions in April’s “Calibrations” got by the proof-reader:

P. 45: The sentence beginning in paragraph 3, line 9, should read: “Carter draws from what is obviously a vast store house of knowledge on the subject to provide extensive notes, biographies, publishing histories, and running commentaries on his feelings about each piece.”

P. 46, paragraph 1, lines 3, 4, and 5 should read: “They are simplistic, naive, contrived; fairyland is just over the next hill with an odd name attached, viewed through the infamous rose-tinted spectacles.”

DM
ALGERNON BLACKWOOD (1869 — 1951) was the author of some of the finest and most terrifying stories of the psychic and the supernatural produced in this century. He was born into a fanatically religious family of English aristocrats and suffered through a childhood terrorized and stifled by visions of “sin” and damnation. He later acknowledged that many of his most chilling stories derived from memories of his early years. After a short education at Edinburgh and Wellington, Blackwood was pronounced “worthless” by his parents, and left England for Canada at the age of 20. The next ten years were spent wandering from job to job: newspaper reporter, private secretary to a millionaire, actor in an American stock company, cologne manufacturer, farmer, hotel owner, and artist’s model for Charles Dana Gibson, who was fascinated by Blackwood’s gaunt, ascetic face. It was during these uncertain years that his yearning for something better led him into a fascination for the occult and a love for the serenity of nature. He returned to England in 1900 and began writing short stories about the psychic forces that surround unsuspecting mankind. In 1906 his first collection of stories was published — THE EMPTY HOUSE — and was followed by over 40 other volumes of short stories, novels, children’s books, and plays. Among his best known works are the “John Silence” stories, featuring the exploits of one of the earliest psychic detectives; “The Willows” and “The Wendigo,” two often-reprinted terror tales of the outdoors; and THE DOLL AND ONE OTHER, a slim volume of two horror stories published by Arkham House in 1946 — his last new book before his death at the age of 82. Here, from his first book, THE EMPTY HOUSE, is a seldom-reprinted tale of occult terror.
"WHEN I was a medical student," began the doctor, half turning toward his circle of listeners in the firelight, "I came across one or two very curious human beings; but there was one fellow I remember particularly, for he caused me the most vivid, and I think the most uncomfortable, emotions I have ever known.

"For many months I knew Smith only by name as the occupant of the floor above me. Obviously his name meant nothing to me. Moreover I was busy with lectures, reading, clinics and the like, and had little leisure to devise plans for scraping acquaintance with any of the other lodgers in the house. Then chance brought us curiously together, and this fellow Smith left a deep impression upon me as the result of our first meeting. At the time the strength of this first impression seemed quite inexplicable to me, but looking back at the episode now from a standpoint of greater knowledge I judge the fact to have been that he stirred my curiosity to an unusual degree, and at the same time awakened my sense of horror — whatever that may be in a medical student — about as deeply and permanently as these two emotions were capable of being stirred at all in the particular system and set of nerves called Me.

"How he knew that I was interested in the study of languages was something I could never explain, but one day, quite unannounced, he came quietly into my room in the evening and asked me point-blank if I knew enough Hebrew to help him in the pronunciation of certain words.

"He caught me along the line of least resistance, and I was greatly flattered to be able to give him the desired information; but it was only when he had thanked me and was gone that I realized I had been in the presence of an unusual individuality. For the life of me I could not quite seize and label the peculiarities of what I felt to be a very striking personality, but it was borne in upon me that he was a man apart from his fellows, a mind that followed a line leading away from ordinary human intercourse and human interests, and into regions that left in his atmosphere something remote, rarefied, chilling.

"The moment he was gone I became conscious of two things — an intense curiosity to know more about this man and what his real interests were, and secondly, the fact that my skin was crawling and that my hair had a tendency to rise."
The doctor paused a moment here to puff hard at his pipe, which, however, had gone out beyond recall without the assistance of a match; and in the deep silence, which testified to the genuine interest of his listeners, someone poked the fire up into a little blaze, and one or two others glanced over their shoulders into the dark distances of the big hall.

"On looking back," he went on, watching the momentary flames in the grate, "I see a short, thickset man of perhaps forty-five, with immense shoulders and small, slender hands. The contrast was noticeable, for I remember thinking that such a giant frame and such slim finger bones hardly belonged together. His head, too, was large and very long, the head of an idealist beyond all question, yet with an unusually strong development of the jaw and chin. Here again was a singular contradiction, though I am better able now to appreciate its full meaning, with a greater experience in judging the values of physiognomy. For this meant, of course, an enthusiastic idealism balanced and kept in check by will and judgment—elements usually deficient in dreamers and visionaries.

"At any rate, here was a being with probably a very wide range of possibilities, a machine with a pendulum that most likely had an unusual length of swing.

"The man's hair was exceedingly fine, and the lines about his nose and mouth were cut as with a delicate steel instrument in wax. His eyes I have left to the last. They were large and quite changeable, not in color only, but in character, size and shape. Occasionally they seemed the eyes of someone else, if you can understand what I mean, and at the same time, in their shifting shades of blue, green, and a nameless sort of dark gray, there was a sinister light in them that lent to the whole face an aspect almost alarming. Moreover, they were the most luminous optics I think I have ever seen in any human being.

"There, then, at the risk of a wearisome description, is Smith as I saw him for the first time that winter's evening in my shabby student's rooms in Edinburgh. And yet the real part of him, of course, I have left untouched, for it is both indescribable and un-get-atable. I have spoken already of an atmosphere of warning and aloofness he carried about with him. It is impossible further to analyze the series of little shocks his presence always communicated to my being; but there was that about him which made me instantly on the qui vive in his
presence, every nerve alert, every sense strained and on the
watch. I do not mean that he deliberately suggested danger, but
rather that he brought forces in his wake which automatically
warned the nervous centers of my system to be on their guard
and alert.

"Since the days of my first acquaintance with this man I
have lived through other experiences and have seen much I
cannot pretend to explain or understand; but, so far in my life,
I have only once come across a human being who suggested a
disagreeable familiarity with unholy things, and who made me
feel uncanny and 'creepy' in his presence; and that unenviable
individual was Mr. Smith.

"What his occupation was during the day I never knew. I
think he slept until the sun set. No one ever saw him on the
stairs, or heard him move in his room during the day. He was a
creature of the shadows, who apparently preferred darkness to
light. Our landlady either knew nothing, or would say nothing.
At any rate she found no fault, and I have since wondered often
by what magic this fellow was able to convert a common
landlady of a common lodginghouse into a discreet and
uncommunicative person. This alone was a sign of genius of
some sort.

"'He's been here with me for years — long before you come,
an' I don't interfere or ask no questions of what doesn't
concern me, as long as people pays their rent,' was the only
remark on the subject that I ever succeeded in winning from
that quarter, and it certainly told me nothing nor gave me any
encouragement to ask for further information.

"Examinations, however, and the general excitement of a
medical student's life for a time put Mr. Smith completely out
of my head. For a long period he did not call upon me again,
and for my part, I felt no courage to return his unsolicited visit.

"Just then, however, there came a change in the fortunes of
those who controlled my very limited income, and I was obliged
to give up my ground floor and move aloft to more modest
chambers on the top of the house. Here I was directly over
Smith, and had to pass his door to reach my own.

"It so happened that about this time I was frequently called
out at all hours of the night for the maternity cases which a
fourth-year student takes at a certain period of his studies, and
on returning from one of these visits at about two o'clock in the
morning I was surprised to hear the sound of voices as I passed his door. A peculiar sweet odor, too, not unlike the smell of incense, penetrated into the passage.

"I went upstairs very quietly, wondering what was going on there at this hour of the morning. To my knowledge Smith never had visitors. For a moment I hesitated outside the door with one foot on the stairs. All my interest in this strange man revived, and my curiosity rose to a point not far from action. At last I might learn something of the habits of this lover of the night and the darkness.

"The sound of voices was plainly audible, Smith’s predominating so much that I never could catch more than points of sound from the other, penetrating now and then the steady stream of his voice. Not a single word reached me, at least, not a word that I could understand, though the voice was loud and distinct, and it was only afterwards that I realized he must have been speaking in a foreign language.

"The sound of footsteps, too, was equally distinct. Two persons were moving about the room, passing and repassing the door, one of them a light, agile person, and the other ponderous and somewhat awkward. Smith’s voice went on incessantly with its odd, monotonous droning, now loud, now soft, as he crossed and recrossed the floor. The other person was also on the move, but in a different and less regular fashion, for I heard rapid steps that seemed to end sometimes in stumbling, and quick sudden movements that brought up with a violent lurching against the wall or furniture.

"As I listened to Smith’s voice, moreover, I began to feel afraid. There was something in the sound that made me feel intuitively he was in a tight place, and an impulse stirred faintly in me — very faintly, I admit — to knock at the door and inquire if he needed help.

"But long before the impulse could translate itself into an act or even before it had been properly weighed and considered by the mind, I heard a voice close beside me in the air, a sort of hushed whisper which I am certain was Smith speaking, though the sound did not seem to have come to me through the door. It was close in my very ear, as though he stood beside me, and it gave me such a start, that I clutched the banisters to save myself from stepping backwards and making a clatter on the stairs.

"There is nothing you can do to help me,’ it said distinctly,
‘and you will be much safer in your own room.’

“I am ashamed to this day of the pace at which I covered the flight of stairs in the darkness to the top floor, and of the shaking hand with which I lit my candles and bolted the door. But, there it is, just as it happened.

“This midnight episode, so odd and yet so trivial in itself, fired me with more curiosity than ever about my fellow lodger. It also made me connect him in my mind with a sense of fear and distrust. I never saw him, yet I was often, and uncomfortably, aware of his presence in the upper regions of that gloomy lodginghouse. Smith and his secret mode of life and mysterious pursuits somehow contrived to awaken in my being a line or reflection that disturbed my comfortable condition of ignorance. I never saw him, as I have said, and exchanged no sort of communication with him, yet it seemed to me that his mind was in contact with mine, and some of the strange forces of his atmosphere filtered through into my being and disturbed my equilibrium. Those upper floors became haunted for me after dark, and, though outwardly our lives never came into contact, I became unwillingly involved in certain pursuits on which his mind was centered. I felt that he was somehow making use of me against my will, and by methods which passed my comprehension.

“I was at that time, moreover, in the heavy, unquestioning state of materialism which is common to medical students when they begin to understand something of the human anatomy and nervous system, and jump at once to the conclusion that they control the universe and hold in their forceps the last word of life and death. I ‘knew it all,’ and regarded a belief in anything beyond matter as the wanderings of weak or, at best, untrained minds. And this condition of mind, of course, added to the strength of this upsetting fear which emanated from the floor below and began slowly to take possession of me.

“Though I kept no notes of the subsequent events in this matter, they made too deep an impression for me ever to forget the sequence in which they occurred. Without difficulty I can recall the next step in the adventure with Smith, for adventure it rapidly grew to be.”

The doctor stopped a moment and laid his pipe on the table behind him before continuing. The fire had burned low, and no one stirred to poke it. The silence in the great hall was so deep
that when the speaker’s pipe touched the table the sound woke audible echoes at the far end among the shadows.

“One evening, while I was reading, the door of my room opened and Smith came in. He made no attempt at ceremony. It was after ten o’clock and I was tired, but the presence of the man immediately galvanized me into activity. My attempts at ordinary politeness he thrust on one side at once, and began asking me to vocalize, and then pronounce for him, certain Hebrew words; and when this was done he abruptly inquired if I was not the fortunate possessor of a very rare Rabbinical Treatise, which he named.

“How he knew that I possessed this book puzzled me exceedingly; but I was still more surprised to see him cross the room and take it out of my bookshelf almost before I had had time to answer in the affirmative. Evidently he knew exactly where it was kept. This excited my curiosity beyond all bounds, and I immediately began asking him questions; and though, out of sheer respect for the man, I put them very delicately to him, and almost by way of mere conversation, he had only one reply for the lot. He would look up at me from the pages of the book with an expression of complete comprehension on his extraordinary features, would bow his head a little and say very gravely—

“That, of course, is a perfectly proper question,” — which was absolutely all I could ever get out of him.

“On this particular occasion he stayed with me perhaps ten or fifteen minutes. Then he went quickly downstairs to his room with my Hebrew Treatise in his hand, and I heard him close and bolt his door.

“But a few moments later, before I had time to settle down to my book again, or to recover from the surprise his visit had caused me, I heard the door open, and there stood Smith once again beside my chair. He made no excuse for his second interruption, but bent his head down to the level of my reading lamp and peered across the flame straight into my eyes.

“I hope,” he whispered, “I hope you are never disturbed at night?”

‘Eh?’ I stammered, ‘disturbed at night? Oh no, thanks, at least, not that I know of—’

‘I’m glad,’ he replied gravely, appearing not to notice my confusion and surprise at his question. ‘But, remember, should
it ever be the case, please let me know at once.'

"And he was gone down the stairs and into his room again.

"For some minutes I sat reflecting upon his strange behavior. He was not mad, I argued, but was the victim of some harmless delusion that had gradually grown upon him as a result of his solitary mode of life; and from the books he used, I judged that it had something to do with medieval magic, or some system of ancient Hebrew mysticism. The words he asked me to pronounce for him were probably 'Words of Power,' which, when uttered with the vehemence of a strong will behind them, were supposed to produce physical results, or set up vibrations in one's own inner being that had the effect of a partial lifting of the veil.

"I sat thinking about the man, and his way of living, and the probable effects in the long run of his dangerous experiments, and I can recall perfectly well the sensation of disappointment that crept over me when I realized that I had labelled his particular form of aberration, and that my curiosity would therefore no longer be excited.

"For some time I had been sitting alone with these reflections — it may have been ten minutes or it may have been half an hour — when I was aroused from my reverie by the knowledge that someone was again in the room standing close beside my chair. My first thought was that Smith had come back again in his swift, unaccountable manner, but almost at the same moment I realized that this could not be the case at all. For the door faced my position, and it certainly had not been opened again.

"Yet, someone was in the room, moving cautiously to and fro, watching me, almost touching me. I was as sure of it as I was of myself, and though at the moment I do not think I was actually afraid, I am bound to admit that a certain weakness came over me and that I felt that strange disinclination for action which is probably the beginning of the horrible paralysis of real terror. I should have been glad to hide myself, if that had been possible, to cower into a corner or behind a door or anywhere so that I could not be watched and observed.

"But, overcoming my nervousness with an effort of the will, I got up quickly out of my chair and held the reading lamp aloft so that it shone into all the corners like a searchlight.

"The room was utterly empty! It was utterly empty, at least,
to the eye, but to the nerves, and especially to that combination of sense perception which is made up by all the senses acting together, and by no one in particular, there was a person standing there at my very elbow.

"I say 'person,' for I can think of no appropriate word. For, if it was a human being, I can only affirm that I had the overwhelming conviction that it was not but that it was some form of life wholly unknown to me both as to its essence and its nature. A sensation of gigantic force and power came with it, and I remember vividly to this day my terror on realizing that I was close to an invisible being who could crush me as easily as I could crush a fly, and who could see my every movement while itself remaining invisible.

"To this terror was added the certain knowledge that the 'being' kept in my proximity for a definite purpose. And that this purpose had some direct bearing upon my well-being, indeed upon my life, I was equally convinced; for I became aware of a sensation of growing lassitude as though the vitality were being steadily drained out of my body. My heart began to beat irregularly at first, then faintly. I was conscious, even within a few minutes, of a general drooping of the powers of life in the whole system, an ebbing away of self-control, and a distinct approach of drowsiness and torpor.

"The power to move, or to think out any mode of resistance, was fast leaving me, when there rose, in the distance as it were, a tremendous commotion. A door opened with a clatter, and I heard the peremptory and commanding tones of a human voice calling aloud in a language I could not comprehend. It was Smith, my fellow lodger, calling up the stairs; and his voice had not sounded for more than a few seconds, when I felt something withdrawn from my presence, from my person, indeed from my very skin. It seemed as if there was a rushing of air and some large creature swept by me at about the level of my shoulders. Instantly the pressure on my heart was relieved and the atmosphere seemed to resume its normal condition.

"Smith's door closed quietly downstairs, as I put the lamp down with trembling hands. What had happened I do not know; only, I was alone again and my strength was returning as rapidly as it had left me.

"I went across the room and examined myself in the glass. The skin was very pale, and the eyes dull. My temperature, I
found, was a little below normal and my pulse faint and irregular. But these smaller signs of disturbance were as nothing compared with the feeling I had — though no outward signs bore testimony to the fact — that I had narrowly escaped a real and gastly catastrophe. I felt shaken, somehow, shaken to the very roots of my being."

The doctor rose from his chair and crossed over to the dying fire, so that no one could see the expression on his face as he stood with his back to the grate, and continued his weird tale.

"It would be wearisome," he went on in a lower voice, looking over our heads as though he still saw the dingy top floor of that haunted Edinburgh lodginhouse; "it would be tedious for me at this length of time to analyze my feelings, or attempt to reproduce for you the thorough examination to which I endeavored then to subject my whole being, intellectual, emotional and physical. I need only mention the dominant emotion with which this curious episode left me — the indignant anger against myself that I could ever have lost my self-control enough to come under the sway of so gross and absurd a delusion. This protest, however, I remember making with all the emphasis possible. And I also remember nothing that it brought me very little satisfaction, for it was the protest of my reason only, when all the rest of my being was up in arms against its conclusions.

"My dealings with the 'delusion,' however, were not yet over for the night; for very early next morning, somewhere about three o'clock, I was awakened by a curiously stealthy noise in the room, and the next minute there followed a crash as if all my books had been swept bodily from their shelf onto the floor.

"But this time I was not frightened. Cursing the disturbance, with all the resounding and harmless words I could accumulate, I jumped out of bed and lit the candle in a second, and in the first dazzle of the flaring match — but before the wick had time to catch — I was certain I saw a dark gray shadow, of ungainly shape, and with something more or less like a human head, drive rapidly past the side of the wall farthest from me and disappear into the gloom by the angle of the door.

"I waited one single second to be sure the candle was alight, and then dashed after it, but before I had gone two steps, my foot stumbled against something hard piled up on the carpet
and I only just saved myself from falling headlong. I picked
myself up and found that all the books from what I called my
‘language shelf’ were strewn across the floor. The room,
meanwhile, as a minute’s search revealed, was quite empty. I
looked in every corner and behind every stick of furniture, and
a student’s bedroom on a top floor, costing twelve shillings a
week, did not hold many available hiding places, as you may
imagine.

“The crash, however, was explained. Some very practical and
physical force had thrown the books from their restingplace.
That, at least, was beyond all doubt. And as I replaced them on
the shelf and noted that not one was missing, I busied myself
mentally with the sore problem of how the agent of this little
practical joke had gained access to my room, and then escaped
again. For my door was locked and bolted.

“Smith’s odd question as to whether I was disturbed in the
night, and his warning injunction to let him know at once if
such were the case, now of course returned to affect me as I
stood there in the early morning, cold and shivering on the
carpet; but I realized at the same moment how impossible it
would be for me to admit that a more than usually vivid
nightmare could have any connection with himself. I would
rather stand a hundred of these mysterious visitations than
consult such a man as to their possible cause.

“A knock at the door interrupted my reflections, and I gave
a start that sent the candle grease flying.

‘Let me in,’ came in Smith’s voice.

“I unlocked the door. He came in fully dressed. His face
wore a curious pallor. It seemed to me to be under the skin and
to shine through and almost make it luminous. His eyes were
exceedingly bright.

“I was wondering what in the world to say to him, or how he
would explain his visit at such an hour, when he closed the door
behind him and came close up to me — uncomfortably close.

“You should have called me at once,’ he said in his
whispering voice, fixing his great eyes on my face.

“I stammered something about an awful dream, but he
ignored my remark utterly, and I caught his eye wandering
next — if any movement of those optics can be described as
‘wandering’ — to the bookshelf. I watched him, unable to move
my gaze from his person. The man fascinated me horribly for
some reason. Why, in the devil’s name, was he up and dressed at three in the morning? How did he know anything had happened unusual in my room? Then his whisper began again.

"'It’s your amazing vitality that causes you this annoyance,' he said, shifting his eyes back to mine.

"I gasped. Something in his voice or manner turned my blood into ice.

"'That’s the real attraction,' he went on. 'But if this continues one of us will have to leave, you know.'

"I positively could not find a word to say in reply. The channels of speech dried up within me. I simply stared and wondered what he would say next. I watched him in a sort of dream, and, as far as I can remember, he asked me to promise to call him sooner another time, and then began to walk around the room, uttering strange sounds, and making signs with his arms and hands until he reached the door. Then he was gone in a second, and I had closed and locked the door behind him.

"After this, the Smith adventure drew rapidly to a climax. It was a week or two later, and I was coming home between two and three in the morning from a maternity case, certain features of which for the time being had very much taken possession of my mind, so much so, indeed, that I passed Smith’s door without giving him a single thought.

"The gas jet on the landing was still burning, but so low that it made little impression on the waves of deep shadow that lay across the stairs. Overhead, the faintest possible gleam of gray showed that the morning was not far away. A few stars shone down through the skylight. The house was still as the grave, and the only sound to break the silence was the rushing of the wind round the walls and over the roof. But this was a fitful sound, suddenly rising and as suddenly falling away again, and it only served to intensify the silence.

"I had already reached my own landing when I gave a violent start. It was automatic, almost a reflex action in fact, for it was only when I caught myself fumbling at the door handle and thinking where I could conceal myself quickest that I realized a voice had sounded close beside me in the air. It was the same voice I had heard before, and it seemed to me to be calling for help. And yet the very same minute I pushed on into the room, determined to disregard it, and seeking to persuade myself it was the creaking of the boards under my weight or the rushing
noise of the wind that had deceived me.

"But hardly had I reached the table where the candles stood when the sound was unmistakably repeated: 'Help! help!' And this time it was accompanied by what I can only describe as a vivid tactile hallucination. I was touched: the skin of my arm was clutched by fingers.

"Some compelling force sent me headlong downstairs as if the haunting forces of the whole world were at my heels. At Smith's door I paused. The force of his previous warning injunction to seek his aid without delay acted suddenly and I leaned my whole weight against the panels, little dreaming that I shuld be called upon to give help rather than to receive it.

"The door yielded at once, and I burst into a room that was so full of a choking vapor, moving in slow clouds, that at first I could distinguish nothing at all but a set of what seemed to be hugh shadows passing in and out of the mist. Then, gradually, I perceived that a red lamp on the mantelpiece gave all the light there was, and that the room which I now entered for the first time was almost empty of furniture.

"The carpet was rolled back and piled in a heap in the corner, and upon the white boards of the floor I noticed a large circle drawn in black of some material that emitted a faint glowing light and was apparently smoking. Inside this circle, as well as at regular intervals outside it, were curious-looking designs, also traced in the same black, smoking substance. These, too, seemed to emit a feeble light of their own.

"My first impression on entering the room had been that it was full of — people, I was going to say; but that hardly expresses my meaning. Beings, they certainly were, but it was borne in upon me, beyond the possibility of doubt, that they were not human beings. That I had caught a momentary glimpse of living, intelligent entities I can never doubt, but I am equally convinced, though I cannot prove it, that these entities were from some other scheme of evolution altogether, and had nothing to do with the ordinary human life, either incarnate or discarnate.

"But, whatever they were, the visible appearance of them was exceedingly fleeting. I no longer saw anything, though I still felt convinced of their immediate presence. They were, moreover, of the same order of life as the visitant in my bedroom of a few nights before, and their proximity to my
atmosphere in numbers, instead of singly as before, conveyed to
my mind something that was quite terrible and overwhelming. I
fell into a violent trembling, and the perspiration poured from
my face instreams. into a violent trembling, and the perspiration
poured from my face in streams.

"They were in constant motion about me. They stood close
to my side; moved behind me; brushed past my shoulder; stirred
the hair on my forehead; and circled around me without ever
actually touching me, yet always pressing closer and closer.
Especially in the air just over my head there seemed ceaseless
movement, and it was accompanied by a confused noise of
whispering and sighing that threatened every moment to
become articulate in words. To my intense relief, however, I
heard no distinct words, and the noise continued more like the
rising and falling of the wind than anything else I can imagine.

"But the characteristic of these ‘Beings’ that impressed me
most strongly at the time, and of which I have carried away the
most permanent recollection, was that each one of them
possessed what seemed to be a vibrating center which impelled
it with tremendous force and caused a rapid whirling motion of
the atmosphere as it passed me. The air was full of these little
vortices of whirring, rotating force, and whenever one of them
pressed me too closely I felt as if the nerves in that particular
portion of my body had been literally drawn out, absolutely
depleted of vitality, and then immediately replaced — but
replaced dead, flabby, useless.

"Then, suddenly, for the first time my eyes fell upon Smith.
He was crouching against the wall on my right, in an attitude
that was obviously defensive, and it was plain he was in
extremities. The terror on his face was pitiable, but at the same
time there was another expression about the tightly clenched
teeth and mouth which showed that he had not lost all control
of himself. He wore the most resolute expression I have ever
seen on a human countenance, and, though for the moment at a
fearful disadvantage, he looked like a man who had confidence
in himself, and, in spite of the working of fear, was waiting his
opportunity.

"For my part, I was face to face with a situation so utterly
beyond my knowledge and comprehension, that I felt as
helpless as a child, and as useless.

" ‘Help me back — quick — into that circle,’ I heard him half
cry, half whispers to me across the moving vapors.

"My only value appears to have been that I was not afraid to act. Knowing nothing of the forces I was dealing with I had no idea of the deadly perils risked, and I sprang forward and caught him by the arms. He threw all his weight in my direction, and by our combined efforts his body left the wall and lurched across the floor toward the circle.

"Instantly there descended upon us, out of the empty air of that smoke-laden room, a force which I can only compare to the pushing, driving power of a great wind pent up within a narrow space. It was almost explosive in its effect, and it seemed to operate upon all parts of my body equally. It fell upon us with a rushing noise that filled my ears and made me think for a moment the very walls and roof of the building had been torn asunder. Under its first blow we staggered back against the wall, and I understood plainly that its purpose was to prevent us getting back into the circle in the middle of the floor.

"Pouring with perspiration, and breathless, with every muscle strained to the very utmost, we at length managed to get to the edge of the circle, and, at this moment, so great was the opposing force that I felt myself actually torn from Smith's arms, lifted from my feet, and twirled round in the direction of the windows as if the wheel of some great machine had caught my clothes and was tearing me to destruction in its revolution.

"But, even as I fell, bruised and breathless, against the wall, I saw Smith firmly upon his feet in the circle and slowly rising again to an upright position. My eyes never left his figure once in the next few minutes.

"He drew himself up to his full height. His great shoulders squared themselves. His head was thrown back a little, and as I looked I saw the expression on his face change swiftly from fear to one of absolute command. He looked steadily round the room and then his voice began to vibrate. At first in a low tone, it gradually rose till it assumed the same volume and intensity I had heard that night when he called up the stairs into my room.

"It was a curiously increasing sound, more like the swelling of an instrument than a human voice; and as it grew in power and filled the room, I became aware that a great change was being effected slowly and surely. The confusion of noise and rushings of air fell into the roll of long, steady vibrations not
unlike those caused by the deeper pedals of an organ. The
movements in the air became less violent, then grew decidedly
weaker, and finally ceased altogether. The whisperings and
sighings became fainter and fainter, till at last I could not hear
them at all; and, strangest of all, the light emitted by the circle,
as well as by the designs round it, increased to a steady glow,
casting their radiance upwards with the weirdest possible effect
upon his features. Slowly, by the power of his voice, behind
which lay undoubtedly a genuine knowledge of the occult
manipulation of sound, this man dominated the forces that had
escaped from their proper sphere, until at length the room was
reduced to silence and perfect order again.

"Judging by the immense relief which also communicated
itself to my nerves I then felt that the crisis was over and Smith
was wholly master of the situation.

"But hardly had I begun to congratulate myself upon this
result, and to gather my scattered senses about me, when,
uttering a loud cry, I saw him leap out of the circle and fling
himself into the air — as it seemed to me, into the empty air.
Then, even while holding my breath for dread of the crash he
was bound to come upon the floor, I saw him strike with a dull
thud against a solid body in mid-air, and the next instant he was
wrestling with some ponderous thing that was absolutely
invisible to me, and the room shook with the struggle.

"To and fro they swayed, sometimes lurching in one
direction, sometimes in another, and always in horrible
proximity to myself, as I leaned trembling against the wall and
watched the encounter.

"It lasted at most but a short minute or two, ending as
suddenly as it had begun. Smith, with an unexpected
movement, threw up his arms with a cry of relief. At the same
instant there was a wild, tearing shriek in the air beside me and
something rushed past us with a noise like the passage of a flock
of big birds. Both windows rattled as if they would break away
from their sashes. Then a sense of emptiness and peace suddenly
came over the room, and I knew that all was over.

"Smith, his face exceedingly white, but otherwise strangely
composed, turned to me at once.

"God! — if you hadn't come — You deflected the stream;
broke it up —' he whispered. 'You saved me.'"

The doctor made a long pause. Presently he felt for his pipe
in the darkness, groping over the table behind us with both hands. No one spoke for a bit, but all dreaded the sudden glare that would come when he struck the match. The fire was nearly out and the great hall was pitch dark.

But the storyteller did not strike that match. He was merely gaining time for some hidden reason of his own. And presently he went on with his tale in a more subdued voice.

"I quite forget," he said, "how I got back to my own room. I only know that I lay with two lighted candles for the rest of the night, and the first thing I did in the morning was to let the landlady know I was leaving her house at the end of the week. "Smith still has my Rabbinical Treatise. At least he did not return it to me at the time, and I have never seen him since to ask for it."
NEXT issue, the exciting conclusion of HARTMANN THE ANARCHIST, in which the fanatical inventor hurls the might of the "Attila" against the great city of London in a nightmare of blood and fire. We'll round out the issue with a story over a hundred years old by the Old Master himself — Jules Verne. But unlike most of his work, this story is a fantasy — one of most unusual he ever published! And, if space permits, another treat: a long-forgotten SF tale by C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, the author of the great Atlantis novel, THE LOST CONTINENT. I think it'll be an issue you'll long remember.

DM
THE MER-MOTHER

THE PINE LADY

Verses by

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE
(1866 – 1947)

Illustrated by

Sarah S. Stilwell
THE MER-MOTHER

ONE day, walking by the sea,
I heard a sweet voice calling me:
I looked—but nothing could I see;
I listened—but no more I heard;
Only the sea and the sea-bird
And the blue sky were there with me.

But on another happier day,
When all the sea was sun and spray,
And laughing shout of wind and foam,
I seemed to hear the voice once more,—
Wilder and sweeter than before,
O wild as love and sweet as home.

I looked, and lo! before me there
A maiden sat in sea-weeds drest,
Sea-flowers hiding in her breast,
And with a comb of deep-sea pearl
She combed, like any other girl,
Her golden hair—her golden hair.

And, as each shining yellow curl
Flickered like sunshine through the pearl,
She laughed and sang—but not to me:
Three little babies of the sea
Were diving in and out for joy—
Two mer-girls and a small mer-boy.

That fairy song was not for me,
Nor those green eyes, nor that gold hair;
Deep in the caves beneath the foam
There was a husband and a home—
It was a mermaid taking care
Of her small children of the sea.
And with a comb
of deep-sea pearl
She combed, like
any other girl,
Her golden hair.
THE PINE LADY

O

HAVE you seen the Pine Lady—
Or heard her how she sings!
Have you heard her play
Your soul away
On a harp with moonbeam strings?
In a palace all of the night-black pine
She hides like a queen all day,
Till a moonbeam knocks
On her secret tree,
And she opens her door
With a silver key,
While the village clocks
Are striking bed
Nine times sleepily.

O come and hear the Pine Lady
Up in the haunted wood!
The stars are rising, the moths are flitting,
The owls are calling,
The dew is falling:
And, high in the boughs
Of her haunted house,
The moon and she are sitting.

Out on the moor the nightjar drones
Rough-throated love,
The beetle comes
With his sudden drums,
And many a silent unseen thing
Frightens your cheek with its ghostly wing;
While there above,
In a palace builded of needles and cones,
The pine is telling the moon her love,
Telling her love on the moonbeam strings—
O have you seen the Pine Lady,
Or heard her how she sings!
And, high in the boughs
Of her haunted house,
The moon and she are sitting.
"'I admire the bindings,' said the little fellow, as he paced to and fro along the shelf."
A LOST OPPORTUNITY

by

TUDOR JENKS

Illustrated by Birch

TUDOR STORRS JENKS (1857 – 1922) was the direct descendant of Joseph Jenks who is credited with the invention of the first fire engine in America in 1654. Tudor was born in Brooklyn, New York, and graduated from the Polytechnic Institute, Brooklyn, in 1874, from Yale in 1878, and received an LL.B. degree from Columbia in 1880. After studying art for a year in Paris, he returned to New York to practice law for seven years before deciding to try his hand at writing. His wide range of interests provided him with a wealth of subject matter, and he produced a successful series of books for young people, presenting history, literature and popular science in a lively and witty fashion. In 1882 Jenks married Mary Ford of Brooklyn and began contributing short stories to various popular magazines, including THE ARGOSY. In 1887 he became associate editor of ST. NICHOLAS and remained on its staff until 1902, when he resumed the practice of law. Jenks had a lively, satiric sense of humor and a mind full of odd bits of knowledge. These qualities are reflected in his many amusing tales of fantasy which are almost completely unknown to us today. However, a collection of them was published in 1894 under the title IMAGINOTIONS, from which the present story is taken. I am greatly indebted to Fred Patten of Culver City, California, for bringing this volume to my attention and for lending me his copy.
MY biographer, if I should ever have any, would say in his first chapter: "From boyhood he evinced an aptitude for the Natural Sciences. He was seldom without a magnifying-glass in his pocket, and put it to most excellent use in familiarizing himself with those exquisite details of Mother Nature's handiwork which are sure to escape the mere casual observer." And in a later part of the same future rival to "Boswell's Johnson" will probably be seen these words: "In later life we see the traits of his boyhood deepened and broadened. The magnifying-glass of his school-boy days has become the large and costly binocular microscope surrounded by all the apparatus which the cunning workers in metals know so well how to produce in limitless profusion for the ruin of the scientific amateur."

If such statements should be made, they will be based upon facts.

There are, however, other facts which no biographer will dare to tell, and which, therefore, I must write for myself. The following experience is one of them. Whether to my credit or to my discredit, I shall tell the plain story and leave it, with all its improbability, to your fair judgment.

Already knowing my taste for the use of the microscope, you can understand the following letter without further introduction:
AMAGANSETT, L. I., August 5th.

DEAR PHILIP: I suppose the thermometers in the city are the only scientific instruments now studied with any interest. Being cool enough here to be reasonably unselfish, I am willing to divert your mind from the thermometer to the microscope.

I inclose what seems to my prosaic mind a pebble. It was picked up on the beach and playfully thrown by me at our “Professor.” He, of course accidentally, caught it. After an examination, he declared that it differed from anything he had ever seen: that it was neither animal, vegetable, nor mineral. In short, he knows that he doesn’t know what it is, and therefore says (speaking in true scientific vein)— “Although of indeterminate nature, certain fusiform bosses, in conjunction with a general spheroidal tendency, seem strong a priori indications of aerolitic flight through our own atmosphere, or other gaseous medium of similar density”! I make no comments. So bring out your microscope and let us know what it is. If you should come and join us you would find little but sand and salt-water; but then there is plenty of each.

Sincerely yours, CARROLL MATHERS.

He inclosed a small rounded object wrapped in tissue-paper. It was light blue in color and a trifle smaller than a hazel-nut. The surface seemed, as the Professor hinted, to have been somewhat melted. It certainly had claims to be considered a curiosity.

That evening, after dinner, I took out my microscope, and after carefully cleaning the pebble, I examined the surface under a strong condenser, but thereby simply magnified the irregularities. “I shall have to cut it in two,” I said to myself. It was very hard, and I succeeded only after some effort. I cut it through a little away from the center, and so divided it almost into halves. Examining the flat surfaces, I found a small dark spot in the center of one of them.

“I thought so!” I exclaimed triumphantly; “I will now cut off a section and shall undoubtedly find a petrified insect— perhaps of an extinct species!”

I sawed away the rounded side, and when I could see that the dark spot was nearer the surface, polished the section down with oil and emery-paper until I had obtained a thin disk with a
dark spot in the middle.

It was now ready for the microscope. The focus was carefully found by slowly turning the fine-adjustment screw. The spot gradually defined itself and seemed about to assume the appearance of an insect — when, just at the point where I had expected it to be plainly visible, it suddenly disappeared, leaving a hole in the disk through which the light streamed! I was perplexed, and gazed stupidly. The light seemed suddenly to flicker, and then was shut off altogether.

I inspected the instrument carefully, but all seemed to be in perfect order.

I picked up the disk. There certainly was a hole through it.

"Perhaps there is something in the tube," I said, and unscrewed the eye-piece. Just as the eye-piece came loose something jumped from the tube, knocking the glass from my fingers.

I thought it was a moth or bug — but how did it come there?

"Well, that’s very strange," said I, aloud.

"Most extraordinary," a voice replied; a very small voice, but the words were clearly audible. I looked around the room.

"Don’t trouble yourself to search. I am not afraid. I’m right here on the table!"

I faced the table again and discovered that what I had supposed to be a bug was, apparently, a man; and a very commonplace, quiet, and gentlemanly man, not at all remarkable, except for the fact that he was only about three inches tall. When I saw him he was straightening out his odd little hat, which had in some way become slightly crushed.

My eyes at times deceive me somewhat, as my microscope work has made them sensitive; so I stooped to take a closer view of my visitor.

He appeared to be startled, and cried:

"Keep off! Do you mean to eat me? Beware! Giant though you be, I can defend myself!"

"Eat you!" I answered, laughing. "I am not a cannibal, even on a very small scale! And I have just dined. It was but curiosity. What in the world are you?"

"Curiosity, indeed!" he replied. "What in the world are you?" And he mimicked my tone to perfection.

I saw that he stood upon his dignity, and thought it best to humor him.
"After an examination, he declared it was neither animal, vegetable, nor mineral."
"You must pardon me," I began, "if my surprise on seeing a gentleman of your small presence caused me for the moment to forget the respect due to a stranger. But you yourself will not deny that the sight of such a mere atomy — a *lusus naturae*, if I may be allowed the expression — would tend to excite curiosity rather than to remind one of the demands of courtesy."

This seemed to mollify him, for he replied, with a smile, "It is a strange sensation to hear one's self styled a *lusus naturae*, but I cannot in justice complain, as I was about to apply the same term to yourself; and you certainly are colossally enormous — prodigious! I trust, however, that I have controlled my curiosity, and have accorded you such treatment as is due a gentleman — even on the very largest scale!"

"Keep off! Do you mean to eat me?"

He paused and gazed upon me with undisguised amazement. "How did you get here?" I asked, after a moment's silence. "I should be delighted to know," he answered, with evident sincerity. "It may be I can tell you, when you are good enough to begin by letting me know where I am."
“Nothing easier,” I said. “This is my room.”
“A valuable piece of information,” he said, with some sarcasm, “and the apartment appears to be comfortable and rather well arranged — with exceptions. I see you cling to antiquated styles.”
“Indeed! I was not aware of it.”
“Why,” he said, seeing I did not understand, “you light the room with coal-gas, as the ancients did. You still use the mechanical clock instead of the vocable chronophotometer; your furniture is, I see, of wood instead of coherent alcyite, while — but I do not object to the effect — it is delightfully archaic in tone!”
“I really don’t follow you,” I replied, somewhat piqued, “but you might remember that, archaic or not, this room is my own, and your criticism upon it is as gratuitous as your presence in it!”

I admit that this was not precisely courteous, but his manner was very supercilious and provoked me.
“Why did you bring me here? I am sure I didn’t request it,” he angrily retorted.
“My atomic friend,” I said impressively, “who or what you are, I neither know nor care. But kindly bear in mind this fact: I did not bring you here. I don’t ask you to stay here; whenever you wish to go, I can bear your departure without a pang. Nevertheless, so long as you remain I shall expect you to behave in a gentlemanly manner!” Here I thumped upon the table, and he fell over. He recovered nimbly, and drawing himself up to his full three inches, replied with the greatest dignity:
“My colossal acquaintance, there is one fact you must kindly bear in your mind: Who or what you are is of little or no importance to me. How I came here, I know no more than yourself. Suffice it to say, I didn’t come of my own accord; and, from my experience so far,” — here he paused and glanced scornfully about him, — “I have no desire to prolong my stay. But while I do stay I shall insist upon all proper courtesy and all due respect!”

His dignity was so absurdly out of keeping with his size that I could not refrain from a burst of laughter, and I became better-natured at once.
“Well,” I replied, when I had recovered my composure, “now that we have come to an understanding, tell me quietly,
in a friendly way, as one gentleman to another, something about yourself. If you will allow me the question, where do you live? Were you born a dwarf, or — ”

“Born a dwarf!” he broke in angrily, “born a dwarf! You great, coarse, overgrown giant — what do you mean, sir?”

“What do I mean?” It was too absurd. “You ridiculous diamond-edition of humanity, what do you suppose I mean? I have always heard that dwarfs were sensitive; but, really, when one is only about half the size of a respectable jack-knife — ”

“And I,” he broke in again, “have always heard that giants were invariably thick-witted and rude; but I did suppose that any human being, even if he were as tall as the tallest trees and had a voice like a clap of thunder (which is far from agreeable to your hearers, by the way), might be sensible enough to — ”

“So you think,” said I, interrupting him, “that I am as large as the tallest trees?”

“Certainly,” he said, with perfect seriousness.

I thought it worth while to convince him of his error, and therefore invited him to step to the window, against which the table stood. He did so, and, upon looking out, threw up his arms in sheer amazement.

“It is a land of giants!” he said, slowly and in an awe-struck tone.

“Ah!” I remarked quietly, pleased with my little object lesson, “you now see how much smaller you are than ordinary men.”

“Ordinary men,” he repeated very slowly and with an absent expression. “What then can he think me?”

He stood in silence, with his hands clasped behind him, and appeared to be deep in thought. When he spoke again it was with an entire change of manner.

“Am I to understand you, sir, that all the men, women, and children known to you are proportionately as large as yourself, and that everything is on the same gigantic scale?”

“It is exactly so,” I replied seriously.

“And may I ask you to believe that I have never seen anything or anybody except upon the smaller scale which you can see exemplified in me? Did you never see any one of my size before, nor hear of us?”

“Never! except in fairy stories,” I said frankly, for now he seemed to be really a very sensible little man.
A LOST OPPORTUNITY

“This is not a question of fairy tales, nor of joking!” he said, with great solemnity. “We are in the very midst of some great mystery. I must belong to a different race of beings — for I never heard, read, or dreamed of such enormous people. Where I live, all are like myself!”

This seemed incredible, but finally I asked, “And where do you live?”

“I live,” he answered, “in the twenty-first range of precinct forty, Telmer Municipal, Waver, Forolaria; and by profession I am an Official Arranger.”

“You are very exact,” I said, with mock admiration.

“And where do you live?” he inquired.

“This is my home,” I said; “the Alfresco, Madison street, New York City.”

“Thank you,” said he, with sarcastic gratitude. “I am as wise as before!”

“You know as much of my residence as I of yours!” I answered sharply.

“You cannot be ignorant of Telmer?” he asked, raising his eyebrows in surprise at my ignorance.

“You surely know New York City?” I rejoined in the same manner. “The largest city in the United States!”

“United States,” he repeated, “and what are those — who united them?”

“Perhaps a history would give you the clearest information,” I suggested.

“I think it might, if I had the time,” he replied soberly, as he drew from his pocket what I supposed to be a watch; but it was too small to be clearly distinguishable. He pressed it in his hand, and I heard a sound or voice clearly enunciating: “Thirty-four degrees after the eighteenth.” Before I could say a word he resumed, “It is too late to-night; perhaps you will save my time by telling me the substance of it?”

“Flattered, I’m sure.” I felt as if I was again in school; but after a moment’s reflection I cleared my throat and began:

“The Kingdom of England — ”

“The what?” he asked, with a puzzled look.

“The Kingdom of England — where the English live — ”

“What are the English?”

“Oh, come,” said I, laughing, “you are talking English! We are both talking English!”
“Well, well,” he said; “I was thinking a while ago how it could be that you were able to speak good Forolarian”; and he burst out laughing. Then suddenly ceasing he went on, “But if we begin on the mysteries we shall never get to the invited states. Pray go on.”

“These English, you see, colonized a portion of America —”
“A portion of America — that is the name of a place?”
“Oh, what is the use!” I broke off angrily. “If I define every word I use, I shall never reach a conclusion. If you would like to pursue the subject further, my library is at your service.”

“Thank you,” he replied, with dignity; perhaps I could glean some information from that source.” I made no reply.

Presently, seeing that he wandered about the table in rather an aimless way, I asked, “Can I be of service?”

“If you could suggest some method of reaching the floor —”
I offered him the ruler. He seated himself cautiously upon it, and I lowered him gently to the floor.

“I lowered him gently to the floor.”

“Quite a walk to the book-case!” was his next observation. I hadn’t thought of it, but proffered my services once more.

“Which shelf would you prefer?” I asked, as respectfully as possible, for certainly it was not an ordinary question.

“A matter of indifference to me, sir,” he replied with a mite of a bow.

“Equally one to me,” I replied, with a bow in return. I was resolved that he should do some thinking for himself.
"Let us say the lowest, then," and he glanced at the upper shelves, perhaps calculating the possible result of a misstep.

I left him on the lowest shelf, returning to the table to put away the microscope. A slight cough drew my attention to the book-case.

"I admire the bindings," said the little fellow, as he paced to and fro along the shelf.

"I am gratified by your approval," was my indifferent reply. "Particularly this one," he went on. "Let me see," he leaned far backward, and with much difficulty read the title: " 'The Works of Sha-kes-peare.' I should like to read them."

"Very well," I answered politely. "Much obliged," said he fiercely. "Please lend me an electric derrick!"

"Pardon my stupidity — let me take it down for you." I stepped to the book-case, laid the book upon the floor, and returned to my work. A silence then ensued, which lasted so long that I looked up to see how he was progressing.

He was sitting on the shelf with his tiny legs hanging despairingly over a gulf of some six inches between himself and the floor. He was afraid to jump and ashamed to ask help. Catching my eye, he laughed and said:

"I am rather out of training just now, and not fond of jumping!"

"Say no more!" I lifted him to the floor, and turned away; but only to be recalled by a faint ejaculation. His mishaps were truly ingenious. He was caught beneath the cover of the book.

"My foot slipped," he explained with some confusion; "but if it hadn't, I believe I could have opened the book all by myself!"

"I will not leave you, now, until everything is in proper order." I replied; for it occurred to me that to have any accident happen to him might be a very perplexing thing. Opening the book, I picked him up gingerly between my fingers, first asking pardon for the liberty, and deposited him softly upon the first page of "The Tempest."

"Are you all right now?" I inquired, to make sure.

"I believe so," said he, as he began to read — running to and fro upon the page. However, I sat down near by and watched him, fearing some new difficulty. He read with much interest, and seemed to enjoy it thoroughly, except when he came to the
turning of a page. That was a nuisance indeed, as he had to turn up one edge, crawl over it, and then lift the page over.

"Haven't you a smaller edition of this fellow's writings?" he asked, somewhat exhausted by his efforts. "This is like reading sign-boards!"

"No," I replied shortly, "but if it tires you, you can read something else."

"But," said he, with some enthusiasm, "this is really quite good. It's equal to some of Wacoth's earlier and cruder work! It shows a talent that would well repay cultivation!"

"Yes, it is very fair," I replied, quietly; "Shakespeare certainly has produced some creditable plays — at least, we think so."

"I should like to have known him," went on my undisturbed vistor. "I think we would have been congenial. Don't you think so?"

I paid no attention to this. What could I say?

"We consider him one of the best writers in the language," I said finally.

"I would like to hear about them," he said.

I pretended not to understand this hint; but he waited very patiently, and returned my gaze with quiet expectation.

"Now, look here," said I, calmly weighing my words, "I have, at present, other occupations which, I regret to say." —
this was sarcastic, — "prevent me from undertaking to give you a really thorough course in English literature. I might be more inclined to do so if I had something to begin on. Have you ever heard of Homer?"

"Yes," he answered eagerly; "my father has a cousin of that name — Homer Woggs!"

"I cannot believe it is the same man," said I, soberly. He seemed much disappointed. "At all events," I went on, "you cannot fail to see the folly of expecting me to explain to you all the events which have taken place since the world began. I finished school some years ago, and have no desire to review the whole curriculum."

I turned resolutely away and left him to his own devices. I worked quietly for a few moments, only to be interrupted by a "Whew!"

"What's the matter now?" I asked, irritably.

"I'm tired of lugging over these pages!"

"Well, don't do it. Sit down. Repose."

"But I'm interested in the play!"

"I'm not going to turn the pages for you."

"Couldn't you read it aloud to me?" he asked, with cool assurance.

"I could, but I won't," I replied, rudely enough; but I was provoked at his impudence.

"You are very obliging," he said, sneeringly.

I made no reply. After a pause he made a suggestion.

"Although determined not to aid me to an occupation, perhaps you will not object to my sitting by and seeing what you are doing?"

I could not refuse so reasonable a request. I raised him to the table and gave him a paper-weight to sit upon.

He quietly watched me until I began to unscrew the glasses from my microscope, when he said carelessly: "I myself am a microscopic amateur!"

"It is an interesting subject." I replied.

"Yes, My success with the Mincroft glass was remarkable."

"The Mincroft glass, — I do not know it, — what is its nature?" I asked, with some natural curiosity.

"Why, the composite lens invented by Mincroft, which enables one to see the whole of a large object at once, all parts being equally magnified — but I bore you?" He pretended to
yawn.

"On the contrary," I said, eagerly, "it has been my keenest desire to invent such an instrument. Pray describe it!"

"But it is simple; any school-boy can explain it to you." he said with feigned indifference.

"But how can such a marvel be accomplished?" I insisted, carried away by curiosity.

"Do you really mean to say you never heard of it?" he inquired in a drawling tone, designed, I thought, to annoy me.

"Never! And I would give anything to understand it!"

He seemed amused by my eagerness, and, smiling indulgently, continued in the same tone: "Why, that is a trifle — a mere toy compared with the wonderful Angertort Tube. Now, that is what I should call an invention!"

"He pretended to yawn."

"What! Another discovery of which I have never heard? The Angertort Tube, did you say? When were these inventions made?

"I believe it was during the third century, before the second great Migration, but for exactness I shall have to refer you to the school-books. I never was good at dates. However, it doesn't matter; these were but the first-fruits of the revival of science —
when chemismication first superseded steam and electricity."

This was too much. "Steam and electricity superseded? They are yet in their infancy with us!"

"Oh," he replied, laughing, "you are far behind the times. We disused both as soon as we learned to control dynamic atomicity."

"You must be ages in advance of us. I beg you to explain some of these marvels to me."

"I have other occupations," said he, roguishly, "and, to my great regret, they will prevent my tutoring you in the A B C's of science. You must think me very obliging!" and he arose, put his hands in his trousers-pockets, and sauntered away across the table, whistling softly to himself.

I lost my temper.

"You cantankerous little midget, you will answer my
Questions or I'll send you back where you came from!"

He turned sharply upon me, and exclaimed:

"You great hulking booby, do you expect me to bore myself
by giving lessons in primary science to a cross-grained,
disobliging fellow who will not take the trouble to tell me who
excited the states, who Shakespeare is, or to read me even one
of his plays? No, sir! YOU KEEP YOUR SECRETS AND I'LL
KEEP MINE. As to going back where I came from, I would be
glad to rid you of my presence instantly — if only I knew how."

"I'll try it, anyhow!" I cried, so angry that I hardly knew
what I said. "You came out of my microscope, and into it you
shall go again!" I caught him up, dropped him into the tube,
screwed on the top, and was pleased to see the little black spot
reappear in the disk. Opening the window, I threw out the disk,
and was amazed to see that, instead of falling, it floated away
through the motionless air like a piece of thistle-down before a
summer breeze. It soon left the area of light coming from my
window, and was lost to view.

"Aha!" I said, with deep satisfaction. "Now you can go back
where you came from!"

I sat down beside my table, and, as my anger cooled, began
to think it all over. At first I felt great relief to be rid of the
little pest, who fretted me by his pertinacity and piqued my
self-esteem by his air of superiority.

But gradually my temper cooled, and as I recovered my sane
judgment I began to reflect that ordinary civility to the little
manikin might have induced him to tell me enough to have
secured me fame and fortune, or even to have made me a
benefactor to my whole race; and I felt bitter shame that my ill
humor and foolish pride had caused me pettishly to throw away
an opportunity greater than had ever been granted to any
human being.

Still, he was so provoking and so altogether irritating that I
am inclined to think you yourself would have done very much
the same.
Dear Editor:

I just picked up FORGOTTEN FANTASY No. 2, and all I can say is "Oh, Boy!" Not the best English for a housewife who also happens to be the mother of two teenagers, but how else to express my delight with your magazine?

In your first issue you named a few of the old-timers. How about it? Will we be seeing Merritt, Cummings, Wandrei, Giesy, England, Farley, Hodgson, Verrill, and Hansen? I've only run into a story by one of the last three in old sci-fi magazines at the second-hand book stores, but I've read Merritt and Cummings (everything in print today) and a couple of books by Farley. I've only heard about the others.

Thanks, too, for THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR. It has been mentioned in books I've read, but I never expected to read it.

Here's hoping FORGOTTEN FANTASY is a success and that it will be around for a long, long time.

Mrs. H. B. Wentworth
7660 Pivot Street
Downey, California 90241

Gentlemen:

FORGOTTEN FANTASY No. 3 was the first issue of your excellent magazine that I received. I was so impressed that I'm ordering the first two and the fourth immediately. I'd also like to inquire about a subscription. I found FF in another town I was visiting. Nowhere in my home town have I seen it. Most of the stores don't even carry the science fiction magazines, and those that do, not on a regular basis.

With that out of the way, I'd like to comment on the stories. I'm only 21 and I'm sure I'll enjoy reading those older tales. "The Valley of Spiders" was excellent (I'm familiar with Wells' work). I enjoyed "The Birthmark" and "Man-Size in Marble." THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR
I left alone until I get the other installments.
    I wish you gentlemen lots of luck with your magazine.
    Randy Johnson
    Route 3, Box 177
    Eden, North Carolina 27288

Dear Mr. Menville:

Enjoyed the first issue very much. The introduction to THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR was more than just informative. It gave a sense of history to the magazine and the theme of the format of your publication. The editorial immersed me in an era of fantasy that was before my time, yet that age of pulps has obviously influenced the writings of more recent works with which I am more familiar. After reading the editorial I found myself so excited at the prospect of reading some material totally new to me. I also had the strange feeling that if I looked up from the magazine fast enough I might just catch a glimpse of the streetlamp-lighter walking slowly down the darkened lane outside my house. If one of the intents of your magazine was to reintroduce both the moods and the writings of buried men and memories, then you have succeeded admirably.

Judging from a rather impressive list of rejection slips that I am compiling, I feel that I am highly qualified to write some fantasy works that would be quickly forgotten. Would you be interested in publishing such material?

Dennis Maloney
920 New Hampshire
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

Sorry, Dennis, but we’re not accepting any new stories for FORGOTTEN FANTASY.

Dear FORGOTTEN FANTASY,

It’s hard to believe. One of my most cherished dreams come true at last! Two years ago I began collecting pulps in a modest fashion, and the favored place goes to FN and FFM, those most wonderful of all magazines. Even WEIRD TALES doesn’t exercise the same fascination over me that they do. And, while reverently re-re-reading those classics, I’d often wish that they were still published, that maybe Popular would revive them with the continuing upsurge of fantasy’s popularity. That dream hasn’t come true, but it has been approximated in FORGOTTEN FANTASY.

Oh, it’s not perfect, of course. For one thing, while it has the same number of pages as FN, they are only digest-size. Alas for the pulp! I still think it’ll come back someday, because of the superiority of the format
for an all-fiction magazine. Possibly that revival has already begun with the change in format (and title) of COVEN 13. 8½" x 11" is larger than the old pulp size, but it's still better than 5½" x 7½", as all the rest of the fantasy and sf mags are. This absurdly small size prohibits publication of any reasonable-sized novel without the loss of everything else in the zine, and the complete novel was the basis of FFM and FN's very existence. I doubt that operating both bimonthly and with serials you'll get very far, whereas with a complete novel you could gain a lot of followers who love fantasy classics.

A second complaint is that from what I can glean from your editorial in Vol. 1 No. 1 your policy will follow that of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES more closely than that of FANTASTIC NOVELS, a wise move from your viewpoint, because FFM was always more secure readershipwise. But from my viewpoint it's bad, because I have a desire that can only be termed lust to read as many of the old Munsey classics as I can get. Just the titles I've read in the old letter columns are enough to set my mind spinning: things like THE TREASURES OF TANTALUS, BLACK BUTTERFLIES, SWORDS OF WAX, THE PLANETEER, etc. Hopefully you'll get a very solid foundation with FF and sometime in the future start a companion mag equivalent to FN.

A third complaint is your choice of a first novel to serialize. THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR has to qualify as one of the dullest, most inane pieces of cruddy fantasy I've ever read. The hollow earth concept itself is pretty good, but the rest! F'rinstance, just take the language thing: even in his own day, Bradshaw couldn't have expected people to be stupid enough to believe Atvatabarese was just English with a different spelling. And the plot is even worse. I thought Burroughs could turn out the most ridiculous plots I've ever read (Relax ERB-lovers; in his better books ERB is one of my favorite authors), but that honor now goes to Bradshaw.

Now for the good parts. Your short stories have been excellent, especially the Doyle and the Dunsany. In fact, if it weren't for them I might not continue reading FF until the current (apparently interminable) serial is over. At least four parts, it seems, at bimonthly intervals, is 2/3 of a year, and it hardly seems worth it. But, for the sake of the existence of the magazine, and for the quality of the shorts, I'll stay on.

The illustrations, too, are excellent, especially the Barr for the Dunsany short. And the covers have been terrific. Visually, the package is a very fine product. Are all the covers going to have blue as the predominant color? It would act as a nice unifier, but people might miss issues if they get one issue confused with the previous. The spines should match, however, like FFM and FN. And the logo doesn't fit; the lettering is all wrong for a fantasy magazine, more suitable for a New Wave SF mag, and besides, it's too hard to read. Finally, I like the art nouveau decorations.

But, the chief thing about the mag is the rear cover. I used to love the back cover of FANTASTIC and AMAZING with the b/w illo, but this is
superb! It is offset by the typesetting, and the large type itself. Bad.

Good luck, get better stories, and get larger! Or else monthly.

John Leavitt
Maple Avenue
Newton, New Hampshire 03858

Thanks for a thoughtful and analytical letter, John. You’ll find that I’ve touched on some of the problems you mention in last issue’s “Excavations.” I, too, mourn the passing of the pulp magazine, but I don’t believe it will ever return. It belongs to our past, like the Saturday afternoon movie serial and the 10c comic book. FF might possibly metamorphose into the 8½” x 11” size, but only by necessity, not by choice. If you don’t fit in with all the other digest-size SF mags, newsdealers don’t know where to put you, so you end up buried among the comic books and occult magazines. Whatever we SF and fantasy mags do in the way of format, we’d better all do together; distribution is difficult enough as it is.

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed please find my check for $1.20 for FORGOTTEN FANTASY No. 1, and No. 3 when published.

Issue No. 2 was beautifully done, and I wish you every success with your new magazine — it is a welcome addition to the slim list of magazines publishing material in the fantasy genre.

Before closing, I’d like to make a nomination for reprinting Bram Stoker, the author of DRACULA. The short stories from his collection DRACULA’S GUEST appear frequently in anthologies, but his novels — outside of DRACULA — are difficult to find. There are at least five or six in the fantasy-horror genre, and from the few I’ve read, I would think they’d be well suited for serialization.

Kenneth W. Faig, Jr.
P.O. Box 7019
Graduate Residence Halls
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island 02912

It’s good to hear from “Miskatonic U.,” Kenneth. We have both short stories and novels by Stoker under consideration for future issues. However, of the novels, only THE JEWEL OF SEVEN STARS and LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM are outright horror-fantasies, and both have been reprinted within the last several years in paperback. The other novels, despite their intriguing titles, are merely adventure stories, with just a pinch of the occult thrown in.
Dear Sir:

Please find enclosed a check for $1.20 with my explanation of check on accompanying blank. Vol. 1, No. 1 and No. 3 (purchased today) appeared on magazine stands here, but, since I have all but declared residency at the local magazine store, I know No. 2 never appeared in St. Louis.

Two out of three's really quite good, all things considered. For instance, GALAXY and IF were not distributed by our "dependable" magazine wholesaler for one solid year (Fall '69 - Fall '70); and two more instances are brought to mind by letters in No. 3: COVEN 13 was never distributed in St. Louis. The stories may have been good, bad, or etc., but St. Louis readers of SF will never know. Also, earlier this evening I finished a note to R. A. W. Lowndes, trying to find out what he's published lately — none of his magazines have appeared here since last June.

I personally think you've got a publication that has all the makings of a success, if you can overcome your biggest obstruction — indifferent distributors.

Ed Vessell
1262 Kiowa
St. Louis, Missouri 63155

Gentlemen:

As a teacher of the Gothic novel and short story to high school seniors, I was very pleased to discover that a magazine of your type, long overdue, was finally available. The course I teach was introduced into the high school curriculum only last year and, in this short time, has become by far the most popular elective of the twenty-odd literature courses offered to seniors. This year over 50% of the class has elected it. While we read the standards of the genre (DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, CARMILLA, etc.), I try to enrich the course with titles not easily obtainable to my students. I was, thus, very pleased to see THE PARASITE in your first issue. Not only is Conan Doyle a favorite of mine, but my class was reading THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES at the time. Coincidentally, a fellow teacher was searching for a copy of Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" only a few days ago, and I noticed that this story is included in the February, 1971, issue of your magazine.

This type of literature, I find, is immensely popular with young people. I look forward to the day when your magazine will be available through subscriptions. Keep up the fine work.

David V. Craig
6 Yeaton Road
Hampton, New Hampshire 03842

I'm delighted to hear of FF being used as textbook, David. I wish I had had a Gothic literature elective when I was in high school — or even in
college! We'll have more Doyle and Hawthorne in future issues.

Dear Doug:

I acquired Vol. 1, No. 3 the other day. I decided not to read Part III of THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR until I receive Nos. 1 and 2, which I am ordering with this writing.

I found the three shorts to be excellent, especially "The Valley of Spiders" by Wells. Keep coming with such stories and FORGOTTEN FANTASY should be here to stay!

Your editorial I found to be extremely interesting. I have been collecting the works of Faust since graduating from high school — the late 1940's. Among the collection I have is a reprint of a sequel to the Dan Barry trilogy, DAN BARRY'S DAUGHTER, originally published in 1924. Can you steer me to a copy of THE SMOKING LAND and MAX BRAND: THE MAN AND HIS WORK?

Do you plan to reprint any of Faust's fantasy in future editions? Best of luck!

Al Heeter
524 Mowrer Road
Circleville, Ohio 43113

THE SMOKING LAND was never published in book form, Al — a serious oversight, and one that should be corrected by some enterprising paperback publisher. Your best bet is to get hold of a copy of the February, 1950 A. MERRITT'S FANTASY MAGAZINE, which reprinted an abridged version of the novel. It originally appeared as a 6-part serial in ARGOSY, beginning with the May 29, 1937 issue. As to MAX BRAND: THE MAN AND HIS WORK, a local Faust fan informs me that copies can still be obtained from Bill Clark, the leading authority on Faust in the United States and publisher of THE FAUST COLLECTOR. His address is: 11744½ Gateway Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90064. I would like to publish some of Faust's shorter fantasy pieces in the future, if possible.

Dear Mr. Menville:

From the comments in the "Articulations" section of your "fab" new publication, FORGOTTEN FANTASY seems to be getting a favorable reception. Even a greeting from my favorite author, Ray Bradbury! And may I add a lanakila wish to the rest, from the women's side!

No matter how Mr. Cook feels about THE GODDESS, it receives a favorable vote from this wahine. I've been a science-fiction fan since grade-school days, and, like a typical woman, I'll only admit to age 39, but will comment that I've read some stories even more archaic!

Was delighted with the choice selections of H. P. Lovecraft stories in your "Bookmart" section. For some odd reason, it's very hard to even find them in a public library here. So you may expect an order in the near
future.

I get the impression that most women just don't read and enjoy science fiction; especially the mythological-fantasy type, but this person does! So keep up the good work.

You mentioned THE UNTAMED by Max Brand . . . read that way back and am looking forward to seeing it in print; also maybe a wee Lovecraft tale? So will close with the enclosed coupon for the no. 4 issue when pau ("finis" in Hawaiian), and wish you and your new mag much kaulana (fame) in the future!

Aloha and Mahalo,

Jean Logan
P.O. Box 573
Kalaheo, Kauai
Hawaii 96741

Actually, there are quite a number of female fantasy fans around, Jean; and we're always delighted to discover another.
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