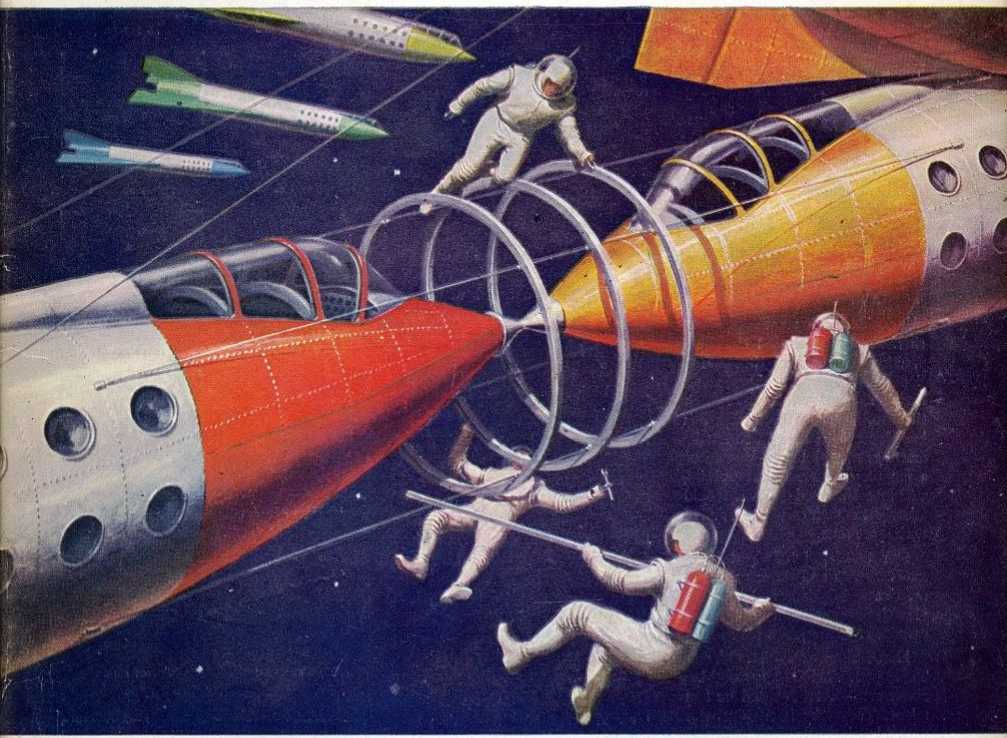
→ NOW MONTHLY! → NEW LARGE SIZE!

SATELLITE

APRIL
35c

THE BEST IN SCIENCE FICTION

PDC



THE SOLOMON PLAN — *AN ASTONISHING SHORT NOVEL*

by J. T. McINTOSH

THE MARVELOUS A. MERRITT
Lord of Fantasy
by SAM MOSKOWITZ

PSYCHOSIS FROM SPACE
A Complete Novelet
by FRITZ LEIBER

WHAT OUR SPACEMEN ARE DOING
An Informative Article
by ELLERY LANIER

"We're looking for people who like to draw"

By ALBERT DORNE
Famous Magazine Illustrator

Do you like to draw or paint? If you do – America's 12 Most Famous Artists are looking for you. We'd like to help you find out if you have talent worth developing.

Here's why we make this offer. About ten years ago, my colleagues and I realized that too many people were missing wonderful careers in art . . . either because they hesitated to think they had talent . . . or because they couldn't get top-notch professional art training without leaving home or giving up their jobs.

A Plan to Help Others

We decided to do something about this. First, we pooled the rich, practical experience; the professional know-how; and the precious trade secrets that helped us reach the top. Then – illustrating this knowledge with over 5,000 special drawings and paintings – we created a complete course of art training that folks all over the country could take right in their own homes and in their spare time.

Our training has helped thousands of men and women win the creative satisfactions and the cash rewards of part-time or full-time art careers. Here are just a few:

Don Smith lives in New Orleans. Three years ago Don knew nothing about art – even doubted he had talent. Today, he is an illustrator with a leading advertising agency – and has a future as big as he wants to make it.

Helps Design New Cars

Halfway through our training, Don Golemba of Detroit landed a job in the styling department of a major automobile company. Now he helps design new car models.

Harriet Kuzniewski was bored with an "ordinary" job when she sent for our talent test. Soon after she began our training, she was offered a job as a fashion artist. A year later, she became assistant art director of a big buying office.

John Whitaker of Memphis was an airline clerk when he began studying with us. Recently, a huge syndicate signed him to do a daily comic strip.

Earns Seven Times as Much

Eric Ericson of Minneapolis was a clerk when he enrolled with us. Now, he heads an advertising art studio business and earns *seven times* his former salary.

Having taken our training, busy New York mother, Elizabeth Merriss, now adds to her family's income by designing greeting cards and illustrating children's books.

Cowboy Starts Art Business

Donald Kern – a Montana cowboy – studied with us. Now he paints portraits, sells them for $250 each. And he gets all the business he can handle.

Gertrude Vander Poel had never drawn a thing until she started studying with us. Now a swank New York gallery exhibits her paintings for sale.

Free Art Talent Test

How about you? Wouldn't you like to find out if you have talent worth training for a full-time or part-time art career? Simply send for our revealing 12-page talent test. Thousands paid $1 for this test, but we'll send it to you *free*. If you show promise, you'll be eligible for at-home training under the program we direct. No obligation. Mail the coupon today.

America's 12 Most Famous Artists


ALBERT DORNE


NORMAN ROCKWELL


JON WHITCOMB


AL PARKER

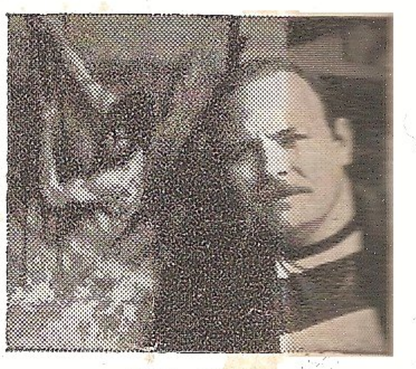

HAROLD VON SCHMIDT


STEVAN DOHANOS


FRED LUDEKENS


PETER HELCK


ROBERT FAWCETT


BEN STAHL


DONG KINGMAN


AUSTIN BRIGGS

FAMOUS ARTISTS SCHOOLS
Studio 844, Westport, Conn.

Send me, without obligation, your Famous Artists Talent Test.

Mr.
Mrs. .....Age.....
Miss (please print)

Address .....

City .....Zone.....

County .....State.....

This Practical Self-Study Course will give you

A COMPLETE MASTERY OF MATHEMATICS EASILY, QUICKLY

Learn Mathematics...get a BETTER JOB!

Now you, too, can learn mathematics and get the basic training for a better job . . . the kind of training that is quickly recognized today and gladly paid for.

In today's fast-moving scientific age, there are countless wonderful opportunities for men who know mathematics: superintendents and foremen, technicians and laboratory workers, designers, draftsmen, mathematicians and engineers. Companies are continually looking for trained men, men who know mathematics, to help them keep up with the ever-increasing demands in aviation, electronics, nuclear science, automation, jets and missiles. In fact, the man who has prepared himself can practically "write his own ticket."

Now you can learn mathematics – the foundation of all technical work – quickly, easily, inexpensively and right in your own home. A very simple and interesting course in book form has been prepared for you by an expert who has devoted a lifetime to teaching practical men the fundamentals of this important subject. Every minute you spend on this complete, practical course in mathematics will pay you big dividends.

MATHEMATICS For Self Study

By J. E. Thompson, B.S. in E.E., A.M., Dept. of Mathematics, Pratt Institute

A COMPLETE COURSE AND REFERENCE LIBRARY

You start right from the beginning with a review of arithmetic that gives the special short cuts and trick problems that save countless hours of time. Then, step by step, you go into higher mathematics and learn how simple it all can be when an expert explains it to you.

An Expert Gives You His Simplified Methods

Prof. Thompson, the author of these books, is an expert at teaching *practical* Mathematics. He presents each problem in the clearest, simplest way. He gives you the kind of information you need for *success!*

Get This Training in Only Ten Minutes a Day

You can gain all the benefits of a mathematical training in just a few months if you will devote only ten minutes each day to these easy, practical lessons.

Here are but a few of the hundreds of subjects simplified and explained in this complete self-study course in mathematics:

ARITHMETIC: Starting with a quick review of principles, this book gives you the special calculation methods used in business and industry that every practical man should know. Above all else it shows you how to attain speed and accuracy with fractions and decimals, ratio and proportion, etc. Fundamentals in all computations in engineering—in both plant and field—and the essential methods for rapid calculation are made clear and simple.

ALGEBRA: This volume makes algebra a live, interesting subject. The author starts with simple problems that can be solved by arithmetic and then shows you how to apply algebraic methods. Among other subjects, it teaches you all about logarithms—the method of computation that engineers use to save time. It also shows you how to solve problems which are involved in business and industrial work relating to machines, engines, ships, autos, planes, etc.

GEOMETRY: This book gives you the practical, common-sense method for solving all problems in both plane and solid geometry —problems ranging from the simplest distance problems to the geometry of spheres which have applications ranging all the way from the atom to the earth itself.

TRIGONOMETRY: Practically every problem in machine work, land surveying, mechanics, astronomy and navigation is solved by methods of trigonometry, and this interesting volume makes the methods of solving them clear and easy. These methods are explained simply with actual examples of calculations of height and distance as applied to meteorology, the position of a ship at sea, the construction of buildings, bridges and dams, the cutting of gears, etc.

CALCULUS: This branch of mathematics deals with rate problems and is essential in computations involving objects moving with varying rates of speed. It also enables you to find the most efficient design for any kind of mechanism, engine, or moving vehicle.

Thousands of Jobs Are Waiting for Trained Men

IN good times or bad, the man with "know-how" is the man with a secure future. Trained mechanics and technicians are always in urgent demand, and in practically ALL OF THESE JOBS a knowledge of mathematics is required.

Remember, mathematics is the foundation of all technical work. Give yourself this basic preparation now by this quick, convenient, inexpensive method.

SEND NO MONEY

EXAMINE 10 DAYS *FREE*

Send no money now, not a penny! The coupon at right will bring you the complete course in book form for 10 days free trial. Unless you are convinced that this course is exactly what you need and want you may return the books and owe nothing; or you may keep them by sending us the small down payment of $1.85, balance in four monthly payments of $2.00 each. Take advantage of this opportunity. Mail the coupon NOW!

MAIL THIS COUPON

D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., Dept. 594,
120 Alexander Street, Princeton, New Jersey

Send me MATHEMATICS FOR SELF STUDY in 5 volumes. Within 10 days I will either return the books or send you $1.85 as first payment and $2.00 per month for four months until the total price of $9.85, plus a small shipping cost, is paid.

(If you send $9.85 with this coupon, we will pay all shipping costs. Same return privilege, refund guaranteed.)

Name.....

Address.....

City.....Zone.....State.....

In Canada: Order from D. Van Nostrand Company Ltd.
25 Hollinger Road, Toronto 16, Canada

A MARGULIES MAGAZINE

NOW PUBLISHED EVERY MONTH

SATELLITE science fiction

APRIL, 1959 Vol. 3, No. 5

LEO MARGULIES, *Publisher* CYLVIA KLEINMAN, *Editorial Director*

FRANK B. LONG, *Associate Editor* KEITH AYLING, *Article Editor*

Cover Painting by **RAY PIOCH**

SATELLITE Volume 3, No. 5. Published monthly by Renown Publications, Inc., 501 Fifth Avenue, N. Y. 17, N. Y. Subscriptions, 12 issues $4.00; single copies 35¢. Entered as second class matter at the post office, New York, N. Y. Additional entry at Concord, N. H. April 1959. Printed in U. S. A. *Postmaster* —Return 3579 to Renown Publications, Inc., 501 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., 17, N. Y.

How You Can Master GOOD ENGLISH

— — *In 15 Minutes a Day*

THOUSANDS of persons make mistakes in their everyday English—and don't know it. It is surprising how many persons fail in spelling such common words as "business," "judgment," "beneficiary," and "receive"; say "between you and I" instead of "between you and me"; use "who" for "whom"; and mispronounce the simplest words. And it is equally astonishing how few know whether to use one or two "c's" or "m's" or "s's" (as in "recommend" or "disappoint"), or when to use commas in order to make their meaning absolutely clear. Most persons use only common words—colorless, flat, ordinary. Their speech and their letters are lifeless, dull, humdrum, largely because they *lack confidence* in their use of language.

What Does Your English Say About You?

Does your English help or hinder you? Every time you talk, every time you write, you show what you are. When you use the wrong word, when you mispronounce a word, when you punctuate incorrectly, when you use trite, commonplace words, you handicap yourself enormously. English, the very tool you should use to improve your business or social position, holds you back. And you don't realize it, for people are too polite to tell you about your mistakes.

But now Sherwin Cody offers you a common-sense method of acquiring a mastery of English in only a few minutes a day. It's so easy for you to stop making the mistakes in English which have been hindering you and learn to present your ideas clearly, forcefully, convincingly, on all occasions—*without even thinking about it!*

What Cody Did at Gary

For years Mr. Cody studied the problem of creating instinctive habits of using good English. Some time ago he was invited by the author of the famous Gary System of Education to teach English to all upper-grade pupils in Gary, Indiana. By means of unique practice exercises, Mr. Cody *secured more improvement in these pupils in five weeks than previously had been obtained by similar pupils in two years under the old methods.*

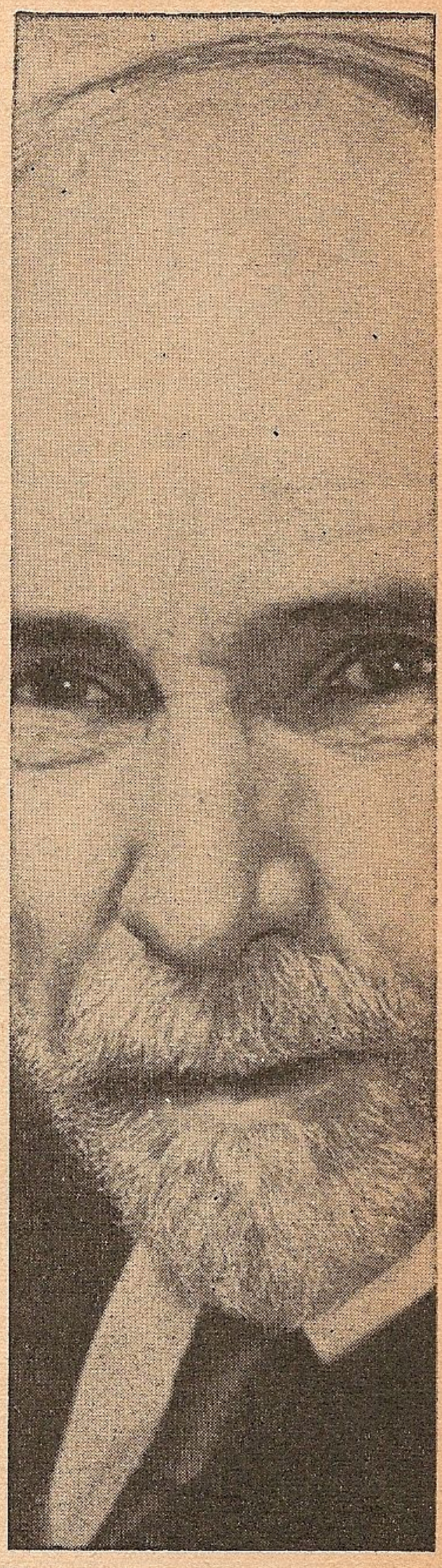
Even more recently, in the schools of Colorado Springs, an experiment was conducted under the supervision of Dr. F. H. Bair, then Superintendent of Schools in that city. Dr. Bair kept part of the school system under the old method of English instruction and put two elementary schools and one of the Junior High Schools (about seven hundred pupils in all) under the Cody method. Results were astounding! In his report at the end of the experiment, Dr. Bair states, in part, "The general results as shown by the statistical summaries and by the materials that I looked over were astonishing. It will be seen that the experimental schools in every case gained very sharply over the control schools. It would appear that Mr. Cody has come upon an idea and to some extent a procedure almost revolutionary in the teaching of English."

100% Self-Correcting Device

The basic principle of Mr. Cody's method is habit-forming. Suppose he himself were standing forever at your elbow. Every time you mispronounced or misspelled a word, every time you violated correct grammatical usage, every time you used the wrong word to express your meaning, suppose you could hear him whisper: "That is wrong, it should be thus and so." In a short time you would habitually use the correct form and the right words in speaking and writing.

Mr. Cody's 100% Self-Correcting Device (upon which he holds a patent) does exactly this. It is his silent voice behind you ready to speak whenever you commit an error. It finds your mistakes and concentrates on *them*. You are not drilled upon anything you already know; and, unlike the old ways of learning English, there are no rules to memorize.

The study of English has been made so simple that much progress can be made in a very short time. No more than *fifteen minutes a day is required*—and not of study, but of fascinating practice! Those who take advantage of Mr. Cody's method gain something so priceless that it cannot be measured in terms of money. They gain a stamp of breeding that cannot be erased. They gain a facility of speech that marks them as educated persons in whatever society they find themselves. They gain the self-confidence and self-respect which this ability inspires. As for material reward, certainly the importance of good English in the race for success cannot be over-estimated. Surely no one can advance far without it.



Write for FREE BOOK

A book explaining Mr. Cody's invention is yours free. If you are ever embarrassed by mistakes in grammar, spelling, pronunciation, punctuation, or if your vocabulary is limited, this book, "How You Can Master Good English in 15 Minutes a Day," will prove a revelation to you. It can be had free upon request. There is no obligation. Send the coupon or a letter or postal card for it now. SHERWIN CODY COURSE IN ENGLISH, 1844 Central Drive, Port Washington, N. Y.

SHERWIN CODY COURSE IN ENGLISH
1844 Central Drive, Port Washington, N. Y.

Please send me, without obligation on my part, your free book, "How You Can Master Good English in 15 Minutes a Day." No agent will call.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... *Zone No. (If Any)* ... *State*.....

☐ If 18 years or under check here for Booklet A

THE SOLOMON PLAN

AN AMAZING

SHORT NOVEL OF THE FUTURE

by

J. T. McIntosh

THE ENGINEER SIDLED apologetically into Harnell's tiny office. "Excuse me, sir," he said. "I won't be a minute. Just checking the office phones."

And he proceeded to do just that, though Harnell wasn't deceived. He knew that the routine check was only the excuse for the man's visit, not the real reason.

Most of Bynald's complex administration took place in this one large building. Grafted on to Administration House, which was square, was the very imposing Capitol, which was round. If there was any symbolism, hidden or overt, in the shape of the two sections, the significance of it wasn't generally known.

As a matter of fact, not only legislation, taxes, education, public works, galactic affairs, and surprising offshoots like the state opera were controlled from this vast building in Scio, Bynald's principal city, but also Bynald's formidable espionage and counter-espionage departments.

That knowledge wasn't public property, of course. Harnell was aware of it because he had once been in CE himself, and had been accustomed to watch the messengers of the period tensely, with rapidly beating heart, because the summons might be for him.

But that had been ten years ago and more. Now Harnell was forty-seven, and felt every year of it. CE had worn him out, he told himself resentfully. With a life expectation of well over a hundred years, a man of forty-seven ought to be merely in his prime. Harnell wasn't—and he knew it. He was a jumpy, touchy, worn-out, middle-aged, ex-man of action. He only wanted to be left alone—not that he was in any doubt that he would be, now.

Any doubt he might have entertained had vanished when the engineer had said, "All right, sir," and had picked up his tools and left the office, closing the door quietly behind him.

On the desk before Harnell was a small sheet of paper.

He stared at it in disbelief and growing terror. A summons for him? After all this time? Yes, there could be no doubt about it. It read curtly: *See me at 11:30 . . . GS.*

Harnell forgot the rules he had once known so well. Communication in writing like this was considered less dangerous than communication by word of mouth, because tiny microphones could be more easily concealed than the smallest vision transmitter. He knew perfectly well that even here, in Bynald's CE HQ, he was supposed to read and dispose of such a card so casually that nobody watching through a peephole, real or televisual, would have his suspicions aroused.

But instead he stared at the paper. He picked it up and turned it over, he held it up to the light, he practically took it apart. Three things convinced him the message was genuine—the tiny, almost invisible black dot in the bottom left-hand corner, the fact that there was an aggressive, speared period after the initials GS, and the faint thumbnail mark near the margin.

It couldn't be for him. The messenger must have made a mistake. But even as he told himself this, Harnell knew he was trying to deceive himself, and

Welkin was a brilliant antagonist in the deadly game of counter-espionage. But the world he had come to spy upon refused to abide by the rules. The dice were heavily loaded and every pitfall bore a warning sign: "You'll never live to guess our secret, Earthman!"

failing. Mistakes like that just weren't made. Here he was, at forty-seven, being called back into CE service.

Belatedly he did what he should have done with the message straight off. He put a cigarette in his mouth, flicked the lighter two or three times, as it was nearly empty, and when the flame came, lit the slip of paper from it quickly, as though the lighter were on the point of flickering out. He then lit his cigarette and waved the burning slip carelessly in the air, letting it burn to ash before he dropped the embers in the disposal chute beside his desk.

It was more than ten years since he had done that.

His nerve was gone. There was no doubt about that, and he admitted it. "Just give me a chance to get out of it," he prayed silently as he sat at his desk, staring at nothing. "Anything, anything, so long as I don't have to—"

He wasn't praying to any god in particular, never having been a religious man. He just wanted out of it, at any price. He didn't care about pride or patriotism or money any more. So long as he was allowed to sit at his desk and grow old peacefully he was content to stay on the sidelines.

Veronica, that was it. He had to look after Veronica. He couldn't take on a dangerous job with a daughter of eighteen to look after. Who could blame him for that?

He was uneasily aware, however, that ten years ago, when his wife had been alive and Ronnie was only eight, self-justification would have been much easier. He could have made out a far stronger case for his right to feel the way he did.

At 11:22 he got up and walked out of the office. His legs weren't very steady. He tried to rally himself with a reassuring consideration which he knew to be true—that counter-espionage wasn't very dangerous, really, and that his chances of surviving whatever job GS had lined up for him were better than ninety percent. It was no good. He was too nervous to be rational.

He walked into a little nest of offices and got lost. Intentionally lost. He'd never found out whether the very miscellaneous men and women who had offices in that section of the building were really carefully selected, and were all in the secret, or if it was just fortuitous that there was always so much noise and bustle, so many different things happening all at once that people visiting GS were never missed.

GS was behind an empty desk, waiting for him. More years than it was pleasant to remember had gone by since Harnell had seen him as GS, but he'd met him socially as somebody else once or twice in the intervening period. He'd known, of course, that even counter-espionage chiefs had to have a social life.

GS looked very much younger than he was. But how GS looked was immaterial. If one face became an embarrassment to him, he replaced it with another. Faces were only skin deep.

"Sit down, Harnell," said GS. "I won't waste any time. It's not you I want. It's your daughter."

Harnell almost shouted for joy in his relief. In that instant of blessed reprieve it was woefully clear that he was no great shakes as a father. But he didn't care. Let them do anything they liked with Ronnie, so long as they didn't call on him.

GS, who knew something about reading faces didn't miss Harnell's reaction. He, too, felt relieved. GS was hard and ruthless and dedicated to the Solomon Plan, but he was still a human being. GS knew it wasn't very likely that Veronica Harnell would be alive in a week's time, and he didn't care, because if she died it would be because she had proved herself a traitor. Harnell he had been sorry for. But if the man was glad it was Veronica and not himself who was being given a dangerous job it was no longer necessary to feel sorry for him.

"Has any approach been made to Ronnie?" Harnell asked, feeling called upon to say something.

"Not yet. I want you to tell her what to do. She has no idea that you ever worked in CE?"

"None at all," said Harnell. He was beginning to get nervous again. Apparently, he wasn't being relieved of all responsibility after all. He had to give Ronnie her instructions. If anything went wrong, they'd blame him . . .

"Then we won't tell her. I take it she has no knowledge whatever of the Solomon Plan?"

"None. I myself have never—I mean—"

"You aren't familiar with it either? So much the better. It's an embarrassing secret to know." He smiled slightly. "The death-rate among people who've even heard of it is alarmingly high."

Harnell, who knew that, changed the subject hurriedly. He could have briefed himself about the Solomon Plan, but he had thought the less he knew about it the better, and refused all knowledge of it. He'd never been sorry. What you didn't know, people could never accuse you of betraying.

"I'm surprised," he said rather wildly, saying the first thing that came into his head, "that CE should want Ronnie, of all people."

"Because she's unpatriotic, doesn't give a damn for Bynald, and has a schoolgirl crush on Earth and everything connected with Earth?" inquired GS. He didn't wait for Harnell's nervous rejoinder. "I should have thought it would be obvious that that's precisely why we want her. If she turns out to be a traitor, it will be to our advantage to know, so that we can take appropriate action."

He looked coolly at Harnell, who was shivering at the idea of his own daughter being disloyal, and what the consequences might be if some of it rubbed off on him.

"Never mind," said GS, not unkindly. "If she isn't a traitor, we'll find that out too. I'd better tell you what this is all about. A spy from Earth arrives here in Scio tomorrow. His name is Welkin—Adrian Welkin. He's been sent pretty openly. In fact Earth has requested in a semi-official way that we should look after him . . . Put another way, Earth has more or less warned us that if anything happens to Welkin, it'll be resented and Earth will make a considerable nuisance of herself. Is that clear?"

"Not entirely," said Harnell, who had himself seen two Earth spies shot with no great compunction. "Earth hasn't sent this man here as a spy and told us that, surely?"

"No, he's described as an historian. In fact he *is* an historian—we've checked on him, of course. He's supposed to be writing a book on Cedrica or something analogous in Bynald's history."

"I see. Has he written any books before?"

"Oh, yes. Earth's espionage department wouldn't fall down over a detail like that. The man really is an historian. Whether he stands any chance of discovering the Solomon Plan through study of our history I don't know. I doubt very much if it's possible. There aren't many history books, and the few we have have been carefully cleared of anything which would remotely—"

GS paused, observing with some amusement that Harnell was squirming in his chair, terrified lest he should be entrusted with the secret. He couldn't resist making the man still more uncomfortable.

"Actually the clues are all around us," he said. "So thick it's amazing that CE has been able to guard the secret for two and a half centuries. I'm surprised that you could actually have been working for CE and not know a great deal about it."

Harnell had to interrupt him, to keep from succumbing to utter panic. "Are you going to let this man study our history?" he asked unsteadily.

"We can hardly stop him. That's where Veronica comes in. We want to know what Welkin actually does learn. Now it happens that this Welkin is a keen amateur musician, and our agents suggest that the first thing he does when he has a spare moment here will be to seek out a music shop."

"He'll go to that little place where Ronnie works?"

"We must endeavour to see that he does, in such a way that he's unlikely to suspect he's been directed there."

WHEN HARNELL BRIEFED Ronnie she hailed the prospect with delight. "You mean he's a real spy—from Earth?" she asked excitedly.

"Yes."

"And I'm to be a sort of spy too, and spy on him?"

"Yes."

"What is he trying to find out?"

"I don't know. All they told me was to tell you—"

"Will I have to sleep with him?"

Harnell choked. "Hell, no!" he said violently, when he got his breath back.

"How old is he?"

Harnell had asked that too. "Forty-eight," he said slowly. In some ways that was the worst part of it. He himself was worn out at forty-seven. Apparently this Welkin was still going strong at forty-eight.

"Oh," Ronnie said disappointedly. You couldn't get romantic over someone who was forty-eight."

"Anything else you want to know?"

"Yes. Can I get Roy to help me?"

"No!" exclaimed Harnell again. "Nobody must know about this. Nobody, understand?"

Roy was Ronnie's current boy-friend. How serious it was Harnell didn't know. It was forced on him once again that he had never paid much attention to Ronnie, never taken a fatherly interest in her problems or seriously tried to understand her. He pushed the thought aside.

"Ronnie," he said nervously.

She looked at him inquiringly.

He could warn her that this was a test of her loyalty. He could tell her that she was going to be watched as closely, if not more closely, than the man she was watching, that if she did or said or even thought anything disloyal, CE would know.

But if he warned her in any way, CE might find that out too, and he as well as Ronnie would suffer.

"Be careful, Ronnie," he said weakly at last. "It won't be an easy task."

Ronnie shrugged impatiently. Imagine telling a counter-spy to be *careful*. You had to be reckless and daring if you were a beautiful spy—she was beautiful, wasn't she? In her bedroom she looked at herself critically, and couldn't quite make up her mind. She wasn't old enough to have been told by many young men that she was beautiful.

Anyway, most of her boy-friends, even Roy, got red and looked at their boots and blurted things out and never got around to telling her anything about how she looked. So she couldn't be sure, though she thought she was rather pretty. Perhaps if you were someone romantic anyway, like a spy, it didn't matter so much, and you'd pass as a beauty more easily.

She was disappointed that she couldn't tell Roy about the adventure. Roy was always telling her that she ought to be more patriotic, and a lot prouder of her world, and it would have been grand to tell Roy that she'd been given the job of watching a spy. But she brightened before the thought could really discourage her. She'd be able to tell Roy aferwards, when it was all over and she was a heroine and everyone was proud of her.

II

ADRIAN WELKIN WAS OBVIOUSLY an experienced space traveller. His luggage consisted of only one small case, for he had learned what some people never learn, that is is always much cheaper for a traveller to buy what he wants when he reaches his destination than it is to take it with him. Another noticeable thing was that he had outgrown the novelty of spaceships, spacefields, customs examinations and all the other things which were common to space travel everywhere, and was more concerned about the important thing—what was particularly characteristic of the world he was visiting, what was different, and individual, and important for a stranger to know.

Also it was clear from the way he walked that he had learned to adjust rapidly to the various approximations of IG which were native to the worlds colonized by human beings. Bynald's was 0.8$_9$G. It might have been IG precisely, for all the trouble it gave Welkin.

The first, most obvious thing about Scio was that it was cold. Not keenly, bitterly cold, but never far from freezing-point. Snow lay everywhere, for it was still morning and the sun, which was quite warm, was only gradually melting the night's inches-deep hoarfrost and ice, and starting rivulets flowing off the roads and along the choked gutters.

Every now and then an avalanche of soft snow would crash down from a high building. Fortunately the overhang was constructed in such a way that these toppling banks landed in the street, missing the sidewalks by a wide margin. The people hurrying about didn't even look up.

The second obvious thing about Scio was that it was old-fashioned. It was like a twentieth-century Earth city transported many light-years and four centuries to Bynald. The buildings were heavy and solid, not built in the light, graceful architectural style of the twenty-fourth century. The vehicles were big and heavy and powerful, not the nimble fairy cars that flashed like tropical fish about the cities of Earth and most of the other colonized worlds.

The clothes the people in Scio's streets wore were heavy and dull, things like coats and pants and gloves and boots, not the colorful, dashing, infinitely varied garments of men and women who didn't have to wear clothes that would keep out the cold.

Welkin had got this far in his observations as he emerged from the spaceport and looked about him. Almost instantly a man came up to him, and tapped him lightly on the arm. "Mr. Adrian Welkin, from Earth?" the stranger asked.

Welkin studied him without seeming to do so. An old-young man, with the chubby cheeks and baby face of a youngster, but probably thirty or thirty-five. Enthusiastic, shy, intense. Determined to do his job well, whatever it was. A counter-espionage agent, naturally.

"Yes," Welkin said.

"I'm Dick German," said the old-young man, "I've been asked to look after you, and give you any help I can."

"That's very nice of you," said Welkin cordially. "Er—*who* asked you?"

"Government people," said German eagerly. "CE, I believe."

Welkin's opinion of Bynald's CE division went up sharply. He could admire a counter-espionage section which had the cool audacity to tell a spy it had its eye on him, and who one of their agents was.

The Bynald's CE division *must* be good. At least twenty different intelligence departments had tried to solve the Bynald enigma, and Welkin would have known if any one of them had succeeded.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. German," said Welkin, shaking hands. "Are you an historian?"

"No, you've got me there," said German frankly. "I can't help you on your research, or whatever it is, Mr. Welkin. But if you want to know anything about hotels, currency, libraries, stores, things like that. . ."

"I do," said Welkin, promptly. "Hotels first. Where should I go?"

At the earliest opportunity he meant to find out how easy or how difficult it was to shake off German and wander about on his own. But there was no doubt about it—a CE man could be very useful in the first few hours of one's visit to a strange world, before one meant to do anything important anyway.

Welkin automatically discounted German's eagerness, awkwardness and deliberate lack of subtlety. German could be a very dangerous man, and it certainly wasn't safe to try to deceive him. With German Welkin proposed to tell nothing but the truth, to reveal no other aspect of himself. Honesty is always the best policy—if possible.

German hesitated. "They told me you'd probably want peace and quiet, and a room where you could work, where nobody would disturb you. Just simple service. Is that right?"

"Well, yes, I guess so."

"Then perhaps you'd rather not go to one of the luxury hotels, Mr. Welkin. If you'd like quiet lodgings instead, I know a place where—"

"Why, certainly," said Welkin, perfectly prepared to let CE put him where it liked. It would do that anyway.

Less than an hour later he was comfortably established in a small boarding-house off Commerce Street, the nerve centre of Scio. Moreover, German, far from being difficult to shake off, was looking at his watch and saying he'd have to go.

"You can phone me either at Administration House or at my home," he told Welkin, giving him two numbers. "And I'll look in from time to time to see if there's anything I can do. Okay?"

Welkin credited the Bynald CE department with more and more intelligence. Naturally if CE stuck a leech on him he'd have to make some attempt to get rid of it. But German gave promise of being a most useful, and gratifyingly unembarrassing warder.

"Just one thing before you go, Dick—may I call you Dick? Do you know where I can get my hands on a French horn?"

German stared at him. "A what?"

"French horn."

"One of those curled-up things they use in orchestras?"

"Exactly," said Welkin gravely.

German, who until now had been most useful and knowledgeable, was now clearly at a loss. "I could find out," he said hopefully.

Welkin grinned again. "Never mind. I'll manage by myself. What's the biggest music dealer in Scio?"

German brightened at that. "Keynote, just around the corner in Commerce Street," he said. "Maybe they could help you there."

"Just what I was thinking," said Welkin agreeably. "Thanks, Dick."

German colored. "It's nothing," he said uncomfortably. "I'll look in this evening and see how you're making out."

Welkin lunched at the boarding-house and had to admit that CE had done very well for him. He'd never have found lodgings so quiet, comfortable and convenient if he'd been left to himself. Mrs. Henbald was the perfect landlady—always there when you wanted her, never there when you didn't, and intelligently short with words. If "yes" or "no" was enough, Mrs. Henbald wasn't the one to add anything, and there were many occasions when she managed to get by without words at all.

Of course, if Bynald had nothing to hide, which was unlikely but not completely impossible, a Terran spy might be treated in precisely this way. An

intelligent counter-espionage department on a world which had no secrets would realize that the only way to convince the intelligence groups of other worlds of their complete sincerity in that respect would be to let them find it out for themselves. They would treat foreign agents very much as Welkin was being treated now, would place no curbs at all upon their freedom.

There was no one else at lunch, but just as he was thinking of leaving a woman came in, sat down at the table and called out in a sharp, impatient tone of voice for Mrs. Henbald.

If this woman was another CE agent, she was acting beautifully. She was a career woman in a hurry, probably an artist of some kind, and no more than mildly interested in Welkin's presence. It was only when she had started her lunch that she turned to speak to him.

"Staying here?" she inquired.

Welkin nodded.

The woman was about thirty-five or forty, handsome in a frank, powerful way. She reminded him more of a spirited Venus than a startled nymph. She had big, but well-shaped features, well-kept hair and hands, and a figure which health and strength had kept attractive despite the fact that she was past her first youth. Her waist wasn't slim in inches, but her otherwise Amazon-like proportions made it seem so.

"I'm Jane Bolt," she said. "You won't see much of me; I'm too busy."

"Adrian Welkin," he introduced himself.

She stopped her fork on its way to her mouth. "The historian?" she inquired, with some interest.

Welkin nodded, a little surprised. "I didn't think anyone would know about me here."

"I don't imagine anyone does," said Jane bluntly. "I read some of your books in Heimat. They think a lot of you there."

She spoke without a trace of adulation, flattery, or hero-worship.

"You're good in your job," her manner said in effect, "just as I am in mine." She had met other famous men—many of them a great deal more famous than he was.

"Yes, I did them a bit of good there," he admitted. "Often an historian can, poking around into pioneer periods where there was very little writing done, very few records kept."

"Then this place will suit you down to the ground," said Jane briskly. "There's no history to speak of. Nothing written down, I mean—plenty taking place."

"I shouldn't think," said Welkin shrewdly, "you'd have much time for reading, Miss Bolt."

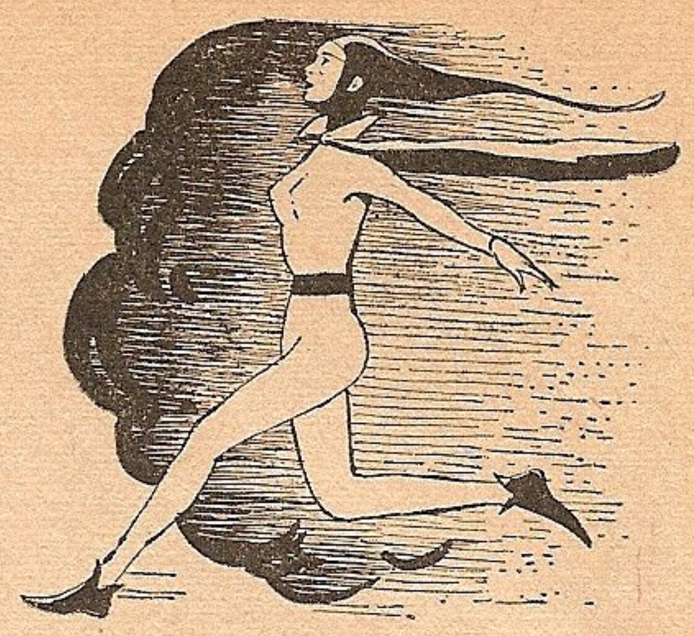
"Haven't," she said frankly. "None at all for novels. When I do read it's history—or biography."

"And you say there's hardly any written history here? What about biography?"

"Some," she said. "But take away the thirty or forty Lives of Cedrica, the half-dozen of George Solomon, and there's not much left."

Welkin nodded. "That's in accord with what I've heard."

"Why is there so little exchange of information between worlds?" Jane asked bluntly. "Do you know?"



Welkin shrugged. "Expense of transport," he said. "Say that a book is published on Bynald. If bound copies were to be taken to Earth they'd cost about seven hundred dollars apiece. All that ever goes is a microfilm copy of the most important books—and that is sent to the Library of Congress or the British Museum or some such place. Generally straight into the vaults at that, and the general public never sees it. Oh, occasionally some publisher gets hold of something from Rigel II, Maverick, Cawn Persis, Heimat or here, decides it's a good risk—usually it's a novel—and publishes it. But most worlds have too many books of their own to have much time for the literature of other worlds."

Jane reflected for a few moments, without pausing in her disposal of a substantial lunch.

"Interesting," she said. "Then there's no censorship or anything like that—just lack of interest?"

"I don't know that you can even call it that," said Welkin. "In the seventeenth century about five percent of the world's population could read. One man was capable of reading everything new under the sun, if he could get his hands on it. By the nineteenth century more than a hundred times as many people were reading and writing. When space travel started there were so many books that people were making digests of digests. And now in the twenty-fourth century there are so many books and journals and magazines and reference volumes that you could publish something important, something vital, and it might be a hundred years before anybody even noticed it."

"You're exaggerating," said Jane, buttering a large slice of bread.

"No, I'm not. All I did on Heimat was correlate three original observations which had been written down a hundred and fifty, and a hundred and seventy years ago. For seventy years they'd been on record for anyone to find. The conclusions weren't difficult. They were so obvious, in fact, that anyone who had the three original references could draw them. But nobody had ever happened to read all three."

"How did *you* find them?"

"Well, anyone who dabbles in history gets to know where to look." He had been speaking easily, but with obvious interest in his subject.

"So you go around looking for what's been discovered, and what hasn't been discovered?"

"That's exactly right," said Welkin with a grin.

Jane had come to the end of her rapid meal. She had eaten twice as much as Welkin in half the time. She got up, wiping her mouth.

"That's very interesting, but now I've got to get back to rehearsal. Are you cultured, Adrian?" Welkin blinked at the sudden switch, but she didn't wait for an answer. "Get some culture if you're not. There's two tickets for the theatre. No, they don't cost you anything. I work in the state opera."

She was gone. Suddenly Welkin realized something he should have suspected at a glance. She was a singer. Her remarkable chest development, and powerful, well-controlled voice—it gave the impression, even when she talked quietly, that when she cut loose she could rattle the window-panes and make people in the street stop and stare over their shoulders—could hardly belong to anyone but an opera singer.

It was all very interesting. Could she really be a CE agent, an even shrewder one than German? He'd been subconsciously assuming she was. He realized that now. He'd been setting the scene for what he was going to do in Scio—and the satisfying thing about it was that he didn't have to act, didn't have to be anyone but himself. He could speak the truth quite openly, without pretending to be concerned with more complex things.

Welkin would have been very happy with the whole situation had there not been a fly in the ointment—the fact that so many Terran agents had failed to return from Bynald. There was no doubt about it. Having a family and children made one very reluctant to put one's head in a noose. But for Viola, Danny, Anne and Freddy, he'd be enjoying himself hugely.

He liked the look of things, and he didn't have a doubt about his eventual success. However, this confidence extended only to his ability to discover Bynald's secret. To carry it off with a whole skin was another matter. He wasn't as young as he had been. Why hadn't he been satisfied with previous successes—or near successes?

No, he had to be the Master Spy. Which meant, very likely, that Viola would soon be a widow—and she so young.

Meantime, it was a pity he hadn't asked Jane about French horns. She would know.

III

THE YOUNG LADY AT KEYNOTE, a typically old-fashioned music store, knew nothing about French horns or anything else to do with music. But she passed Welkin to a small, bald, knowledgeable looking man.

"Well, you see, sir," the balding clerk said, "Scio isn't the best place to buy musical instruments. There's nothing here but government offices and things like that. Bennis would be better. You might try Fernie's. It's a little place that deals chiefly in brass instruments."

Fortified by detailed directions, Welkin trudged through the snow along streets that became successively narrower and shorter until he wondered how anyone could be expected ever to find Fernie's. When he got there at last he discovered it was a tiny shop with a window of microscopic dimensions, affording a mere glimpse of an astonishing number of cornets, trumpets, trombones, euphoniums, tubas and horns. He pushed the door open, having to stoop to enter, and blinked at the girl who looked up at him in surprise.

She was the last—positively the last thing he expected. She was very young, only seventeen or so, and very pretty. More than that, she was smart and intelligent-looking. He'd have expected a female assistant in such a place to sniff, peer at him myopically and wear woolen stockings. Instead she looked like the kind of young woman one would expect to find behind a perfume counter in a store back on Earth, except that she was so very girlish. She must, he told himself, be fresh out of school.

"Yes?" she said.

"I want a horn," he said simply.

"Yes, sir. Single or double?"

She knew something about instruments too, apparently. "Single, probably," he said. "Depends what you've got."

She smiled, and the illumination in the shop went up by about two hundred percent. "I've got everything," she said.

"So I see," said Welkin politely.

The girl smiled delightfully. "Let's stick to French horns," she suggested.

"If we must," Welkin retorted regretfully.

"We've got a good second-hand German horn, if that would suit you?"

"I'd rather have an ordinary French horn. But you're not busy, are you?"

"No."

"Then you can show me everything you've got in stock. Musical instruments, I mean," he added reassuringly. "I can decide better when I've checked on their tonal qualities."

She looked startled. She started to laugh, blushed, caught his eye, and they both laughed. Welkin, who had learned a thing or two in his forty-eight years, was making it clear that though making mild passes at her was no more than her due, he was perfectly harmless.

The girl, for her part, attended to her job conscientiously. Her attitude was frankly inviting, but equally frankly *so-far-and-no-further*.

It took a long time to satisfy him, and by the time he had decided on a horn, and paid for it, the girl had agreed to come to the theatre with him. He had a suspicion that the date agreement had been contrived rather easily, with little or no action on his part. But her frank admission that she was only stepping out with him because she had never known anybody from Earth and had a million questions to ask quickly offset any uneasiness he might have entertained.

"Shall I pick you up here?" he asked.

"Goodness, no!" she exclaimed. "Do you think I'd go to the theatre dressed like this?"

Welkin could hardly say that, since this was Bynald, he'd been thinking that there might be no need for her to change her attire.

"I'll meet you at the theatre," she said.

Welkin was on the point of insisting on picking her up at her home, but realized that since he didn't know the conventions of Bynald he'd better be guided by the girl.

At the door he paused. "Oh!" he exclaimed. "Names. I'm Adrian Welkin."

She laughed. "And I'm Ronnie Harnell."

"Ronnie?"

"Veronica—but don't dare call me that."

"Does that mean I can call you Ronnie?"

She looked surprised. "What else *would* you call me?"

"I like both names," he said.

On the way back to his lodgings his mind dwelt thoughtfully on the three people he had met. It looked very much as if CE had nothing to hide, or, conversely, wanted him to come to that conclusion. German was a CE agent, undoubtedly; Jane Bolt was a CE agent, and it was just barely possible that Ronnie Harnell might be.

German had directed him to Mrs. Henbald's, so the boarding house was quite obviously where CE wanted him to be. Jane could very easily have been planted there. On the other hand, could CE know that he'd ask about French horns, and knowing that, tell German to direct him to Fernie's, and plant Ronnie there to meet him and induce him to date her?

It was perfectly possible, of course, but extremely unlikely. Bynald's espionage must be very good for them to have found out enough about him on Earth to know that he'd buy a French horn on Bynald almost immediately upon his arrival. No, they couldn't have meant him to meet Ronnie.

Back at his lodgings he warned Mrs. Henbald of what was going to happen, went up to his room, shut all the doors and windows, took out his horn and started to play.

Like most horn players in the last four hundred years, he tried the horn tune from *Till Eulenspiegel* to warm up, and again like most horn players in the last four hundred years, fluffed a couple of the notes. He played some more Richard Strauss horn tunes, then came back to *Till*. It came out right this time, even to the two low notes at the end. Played some of the Mozart fourth horn concerto.

Really, it was a very good horn. A very fair proportion of the notes came out as intended.

No, Ronnie Harnell was just what she seemed to be. He was glad of that. He didn't want that child to be a spy. Not that he intended to be any more than an elderly friend to her—he calculated that he was nearly three times her age—but he liked her. He liked her very much.

In the early evening, before he set out for the theatre, German called on him and was shown up to his room. German stared at the gleaming brass instrument.

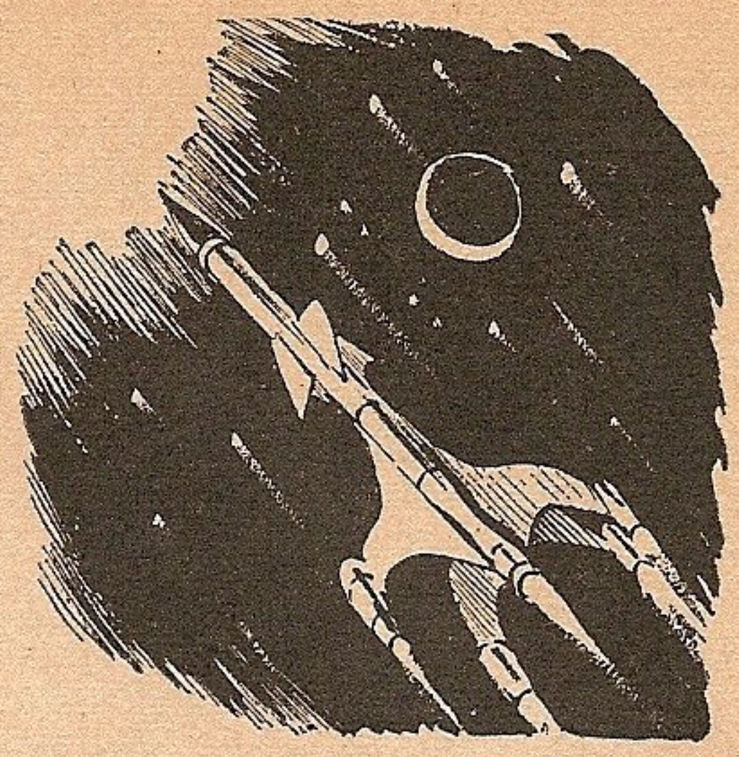
"What do you want that for?" he asked, at a loss.

"To make music with, naturally," said Welkin amiably.

"But what for?"

Welkin shrugged, grinning. German was a serious, intense young man, and obviously had no time for music. It clearly was beyond him that a serious-minded visitor to a planet—particularly a spy—should buy a horn and sit in his room playing it. He could have done that on Earth, couldn't he?

German came back to things he could understand. "Well . . . is there anything you want to know? I mean—where to go, what to see, or anything of that nature?"



"Yes," said Welkin. "Where can I take a girl, after the theatre?"

German looked at him as if he has never heard of anyone taking a girl to the theatre. Clearly German had no time for girls either.

At last he had it worked out, however. "I guess you could bring her back here," he said, with what seemed to be meant for a leer.

"I'm not going to make a pass at her," snapped Welkin, unaccountably annoyed. He nearly added "idiot!"

"I meant—when one takes a girl to a show in Scio, isn't there anywhere to go afterwards?"

"Only the park," said German.

"The park!" Welkin exclaimed. "To sit holding hands in the snow?"

German stared at him. "But I meant Solomon Park . . . oh, of course. You wouldn't know. It's a wonderful place—seventy degrees, covered in, and it stretches for miles."

Heated gardens on cold worlds were commonplace. Nevertheless, Welkin was rather surprised to hear that Scio boasted such a park. Gardens like that needed atomic power to run—everything else was far too expensive, on such a scale—and he hadn't seen any sign of atomics in Scio.

In any case, Dick German obviously wasn't the person to ask about entertaining a girl. "Thanks, Dick," Welkin said, "Maybe we'll take a look at Solomon Park. You've been a great help."

It was always a mistake to underestimate people. German colored and said bluntly, "You mean I haven't?" And it took Welkin some time to soothe his ruffled sensibilities.

RONNIE HARNELL ARRIVED AT THE theatre, breathless, only a few seconds after Welkin. "Am I late?" she gasped.

"You're the only girl I ever knew who wasn't," said Welkin, smiling.

She digested that, her expression thoughtful. "Oh, but I'm not sophisticated," she said frankly.

"I'm glad you told me," he replied gravely.

The theatre, like so much of Scio, had an air of twentieth-century Earth about it. It was shining with chromium and glass, and the carpets were soft and predominantly red and brown.

Inside it was more comfortable than Welkin had

expected it would be. The foyer was warm and scented, and the women standing about wore dresses much more in conformity with Welkin's preconceived notions about evening gowns than he had imagined would be possible—especially in chilly Scio.

"I didn't know that . . ." he began, turning to Ronnie, but she was gone. The cloakrooms, he soon discovered, were more elaborate than in Terran theatres, because more of a transformation had to take place in them.

He came back to wait for Ronnie, looking about him curiously.

Ronnie came out at last, hesitantly, unsure of the impression she was going to make. She had reason to be doubtful, he saw at once. At first glance he guessed that her mother was dead and that she had no older sisters.

The gown she wore would have been fine for a dashing widow of thirty-five. On Ronnie it was a ghastly mistake. Bynald's fashions weren't those of Earth, of course, but certain general principles were common to both worlds and Ronnie's dress was obviously just as wrong in Scio as it would have been in London or Paris. It was a translucent red foam that was rather daring down to the waist and positively foolhardy below it. No wonder she looked anxious.

"You look lovely, Ronnie," said Welkin heroically. "Absolutely lovely."

She blushed, obviously pleased, and flattered by his compliment. He took her arm and led her inside, treating her like precious china. It was the only sensible way to treat her, he decided. He'd try to give her a good time but make it unmistakably clear as early as possible that he was married and had three children. You could never be sure what wild ideas romantic girls of eighteen might get into their heads.

The name of the piece was *Hail Bynald*! with an obligatory exclamation mark. Welkin didn't expect much of it, but from the moment the curtain went up he was astonished. The piece was part opera, part ballet, part play, and in every respect it was good. Supremely good, he thought for a while. In fact, he had never seen anything quite like it. When the surprisingly strong plot was being developed, the characters played it straight, in prose, and without exaggeration.

When the emotional stress became high, they burst into song, and it was grand opera until the stress was over. Then they were back to prose again. And when action or beauty or grace or emotion could best be expressed by the dance, the ballet began.

Jane Bolt, a contralto, had a part that rated about fourth in order of importance. She was very good but overshadowed, as she had to be, by the soprano who played Cedrica. Welkin had already seen in the playbill that Jane Bolt was not only one of the principals of the opera, but its librarian and an assistant stage manager.

At the first interval Welkin turned to Ronnie and found that she shared his enthusiasm.

"I never knew Bynald has such a high cultural level of its own," he said.

"Well, there aren't many operas like *Hail Bynald*!" she said, glad to have found a topic of conversation she knew more about than he did.

"How long ago was it written?"

"Oh, two hundred—more than two hundred years ago."

Welkin wondered why the opera hadn't been taken up in other parts of the galaxy. As it proceeded, however, he began to see why.

It wasn't, after all, quite first rate. The patriotism was overdone. Instead of being noble and sincere the nationalism of the opera became at times fanatical. The motives of the main characters, too, were heavily overlaid with a too-strong love of Bynald, so that one was expected to find it right that the hero, who wasn't called Solomon but quite obviously *was* George Solomon, should sacrifice love of Cedrica to Bynald, and later Cedrica herself.

The Bynald bias was so strong that by the end, after nearly three hours of it Welkin found himself sickened by the propaganda, the false motives, the false values, the sheer, over-all unbalance of it, and a little angry that what could have been a great work had been spoiled by an inartistic obsession. The blemishes weren't essential to it. They seemed tacked on, like commercials written into a Shakespeare tragedy.

The opera was so long, and finished so late, that there was no question of going anywhere afterwards, though they did take time out for a cup of coffee at the theatre cafe before Welkin took Ronnie home.

She had forgotten all about her crimson dress by this time, but Welkin hadn't and as they went upstairs he intercepted a score of curious startled glances and wondered if he should drop a gentle hint about the gown. He decided he couldn't—there was no way of doing it without making her feel foolish and ashamed. He had seen a daughter safely through the stage Ronnie was at now, and knew something about the problems of being eighteen, female and very pretty.

He was wondering whether Ronnie was going to be of any help to him or not, and whether he was justified in dating her. He didn't want her to get in trouble with her own people.

They sat down and ordered coffee, and Welkin was surprised to find that Ronnie agreed with him completely about *Hail Bynald!*

"I think dying for love is a beautiful idea," she confided. "But dying for a country is crazy, and sacrificing the girl you love for your world is even crazier. Whenever it comes to that bit I want to be sick."

"You've seen it often"?

"Not often. Four or five times. They told us at school we had to see it."

Welkin hadn't meant to do any investigating at all before he had worked out his plan of campaign, but here was a chance not to be missed.

"You don't sound very patriotic, Ronnie."

"I'm not," she said frankly. "Oh, if I had a chance to do something wonderful and exciting and romantic for Bynald I'd do it like a shot. But I could never go for this *My world right or wrong* stuff they drummed into us in school."

"And are you allowed to get away with that?" he asked quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"In some countries or worlds where extreme nationalism is cultivated—nobody's allowed to stay outside it. People who talk like you . . . disappear."

Ronnie laughed, at least she started to laugh. Then she looked at him, startled, doubtful. "Take me home," she said suddenly, breathlessly. "I . . . I have to start early tomorrow."

Welkin took her home. In the taxi he sat decorously in the corner opposite Ronnie, not even touching her, though he sensed that she expected *something* and was going to be a little disappointed when nothing happened at all. But for that last manifestation of hard-to-explain uneasiness on Ronnie's part he might have refrained from asking to see her again—for her own safety. However, he was certain now that she knew something, or guessed something, and he had to find out what it was.

"What's this Solomon Park I've been hearing about?" he asked idly.

She became enthusiastic at once. "It's a marvelous place," she said. "Do you want to see it? I've an afternoon off tomorrow. I'll show you around."

So that was that. Tomorrow afternoon he would find out why she had become uneasy when he'd mentioned people disappearing. He knew he had made a hit with Ronnie, for she made no attempt to hide the fact. He doubted very much if there was anything she'd refuse to tell him.

"Goodnight, Ronnie," he said at her front door. The taxi was waiting.

"Goodnight, Adrian," she said breathlessly, standing very still beside him. If she had asked him in words to kiss her, it couldn't have been any plainer.

He smiled down at her. "Goodnight, Ronnie," he said firmly, and went back to the taxi, his smile giving way to a frown.

Welkin went home and straight to bed. But Ronnie couldn't go to bed right away. Her father was waiting up for her. "Well?" he asked before she had her coat off.

She was suddenly angry, a rare emotion with her. It had been a lovely evening, and Adrian was a marvellous person. Of course, he was rather old, but there was something about him she had never encountered in a man before, something none of her teen-age boy-friends had ever had. She hated her father for reminding her that this was just business, that she was supposed to spy on Adrian and report everything, through him, to CE.

She forgot that only the day before she had been thrilled at the idea. It was still an exciting idea to cross swords with a spy, but . . . she didn't want to cross swords with Adrian. She liked Adrian. He was nice. She had wanted him to kiss her, had desperately wanted it, yet she admitted to herself that she liked him even more because he had not done so.

However, nothing had happened that would be of any interest to CE. So she reported the events of the evening as well as she could remember them, and her father noted it all down. She looked at him thoughtfully, wondering if it were wrong not to love one's father.

Well, she did love him, in a way, but . . . He seemed a small man, somehow. A small, nervous, jumpy man, not at all like Adrian. No, nothing like Adrian.

"Goodnight, Daddy," she sighed.

She lay in bed for a long time, thinking. Adrian was trying to find out some secret of great importance concerning Bynald, evidently. He was handsome, kind, thoughtful . . . as she had always imagined Earthmen would be. What he was doing couldn't be *wrong*.

Why couldn't she . . . help Adrian? Between him and Bynald there was no question where her loyalties lay. There was no harm, surely, in working with him, helping him, at least until she knew what kind of information he was looking for?

Then . . . she would see.

IV

NEXT MORNING WELKIN GOT UP, had breakfast, and rapidly read two morning and two evening papers he found lying about. Then he went back to his room, put his feet up and thought.

The problem was simple. Bynald had been colonized three hundred years ago and had then been one of the best prospects in the galaxy. There was oil, coal, steel, uranium, diamonds, silver, platinum, rich agricultural land, everything a world could want. Within fifty years there had been a population of nearly a hundred million. So far so good.

Now, two hundred and fifty years later, the population was two hundred million and Bynald was about the most backward world in the galaxy, certainly the most backward of the twenty-three settlements of Bynald's age or more.

There was no obvious reason. Bynald still had all her mineral riches, emigration from Bynald was uncommon, and people appeared to live as long on Bynald as anywhere else. Men and women got married in their early twenties and had as a rule three or four children.

The population should at least have doubled itself every generation. *At least*. Bynald issued no statistics, and never had. But simply on the appearance of things, the population ought to rise by anything from a hundred to five hundred percent every thirty years.

And it just hadn't. Moreover, Bynald, which should have been rich, was a comparatively poor world, with a low standard of living, a technology that lagged behind that of any other world in the galaxy and only a trickle of exports in comparison with what Bynald might have been expected to produce.

This state of affairs had puzzled most of the occupied planets for some time. Bynald wasn't aggressive, nor particularly secretive—just stubbornly non-productive, non-fertile.

If there was a simple explanation—which seemed more than likely—Earth, Heimat and all the other worlds which had anything to do with Bynald wanted to know what it was.

The possibility of a Bynald *secret* had arisen be-

cause certain spies sent to find the explanation of the Bynald enigma had failed to return. Most did, of course, with little or nothing to report. But the disappearance of the others could only be satisfactorily explained by the theory that they had found out something of vital significance and hadn't been allowed to get away with it. Hence the appearance on the scene of Adrian Welkin, with one or two tricks up his sleeve.

When he had everything he knew or had guessed so far securely in place in his mind, he went to the Scio public library. It was the principal library on Bynald, presumably, yet it was no bigger than the public library in any city of a hundred thousand people on Earth.

More than that, Welkin soon discovered that the library contained only eight thousand original books. No more than that number had apparently been published in the whole of Bynald! Eight thousand in three hundred years! The rest were Bynald reprints of standard texts.

Of the eight thousand local books, four thousand were novels. Three thousand dealt with the natural lore of the planet—its geography, geology, botany, flora and fauna, exploration, et cetera. That left just one thousand miscellaneous books to include all the social history, biography, poetry, essays, drama, research, philosophy and psychology of a world three hundred years old.

Certainly it wasn't much.

Welkin learned all he could in the library, and it took him only an hour and a half. He didn't believe he had missed much of importance. Before lunch he had time for a visit to two second-hand bookshops, buying some three dozen old volumes not in the library catalogue. He took the most interesting of these with him and had the others sent to his lodgings.

By lunch time he was convinced that Bynald's secret would soon be no secret to him, and was chiefly concerned about what CE was going to do to stop him from getting away with it. That was the essential point, of course. Often it was easy enough to secure the required information, but virtually impossible to take it to Earth with a whole skin.

However, worrying about that now, he told himself, would be premature.

He saw Jane at lunch and complimented her on her performance. She accepted the praise as her due and asked what he thought of the opera as a whole.

He told her frankly. She raised her eyebrows. She must have been more interested than she had been the day before, because she actually stopped eating.

"I suppose we here in Bynald take our nationalism for granted," she said rather coldly. "I always thought the real beauty of *Hail Bynald!* was its moral."

"I thought the didactic implications were the only thing that spoiled it."

She was silent, resenting his criticism.

"Was the performance last night authentic?" Welkin asked.

"What do you mean, authentic?" She was still annoyed, though trying not to show it.

"Was it from the original score, the original libretto?"

She considered. "No. It's been modified from time to time."

Welkin was silent. "Well?" she said challengingly.

"I'd very much like to see it in the original version."

"Why? Changes are made only if they're improvements."

He shook his head, deliberately baiting her.

"Damn it," she said, almost openly angry. "I'm a stage manager and the librarian. I ought to know whether these changes are improvements or not."

"You ought to, but you don't. Some of the additions stand out like sore thumbs. Art and propaganda never did mix very well."

She was quietly furious. "If all you could see in *Hail Bynald!* was propaganda—"

"That's just the trouble. I could see a lot more, but it was difficult. Strip some of the sentimentality, fanaticism and propaganda off the top of it and the opera I saw last night would be a masterpiece. Not just here, but anywhere."

He was watching her closely now.

"Sentimentality, fanaticism . . ." she repeated. Then, suddenly, she burst out: "Oh, go to hell. You don't know what you're talking about."

Welkin said no more, but continued to watch her curiously. He was wondering even more than he had wondered the day before whether she was a CE agent or not. Probably, he decided, she was a CE contact only—they had asked her to report on him.

He picked Ronnie up at her home. From the moment he saw her he sensed there was something strange about her, some suppressed excitement. He was afraid for a moment that she'd really fallen in love with him, which would be awkward, but he soon decided it couldn't be that.

He knew her pretty well by this time. She was imaginative, romantic, ready to do a thing the adventurous way, though she'd never even consider doing it the ordinary way. She was with him partly because he was an Earthman and partly because he had made last night's outing very pleasant for her. He had learned a thing or two about women in his forty-eight years.

Welkin could have found out about the Park at the library, but he had had other things to do. He was rather surprised when they arrived at a vast dome, fully as large as the largest superficially similar structure on Mars. It was of plastiglass too, coated to reflect as little light as possible, and was quite invisible at a distance of more than a few feet.

He was even more impressed when they got inside. Ronnie lingered in the pavilion at the entrance, and that gave him a chance to look round.

Solomon Park would have been a showpiece on any world but Earth. He wondered why he'd never heard of it—probably because it was man-made. There were so many man-made wonders on the colonized worlds that generally the wonders which one heard about were the natural ones.

Just outside Scio, beside the cemetery, Solomon Park was a vast, well-planned, well-maintained garden, warm as June in the northern hemisphere of Earth, totally enclosed but with no sign of it, cooled and aired by soft, warm breezes. And this on a world the mean temperature of which was 40° Fahr-

enheit, in a city where it snowed all the year round.

It was quite untypical of Bynald.

Ronnie joined him and he saw the reason for the park. It had obviously been constructed so that Ronnie could wear her green playsuit, a neat little garment that fitted her much better than a glove. It more than made up for the unsuitability of her dress the night before. Ronnie could hardly have been shown to worse or better advantage than at the theatre and in the park.

You had to expect that of young girls—no one could look righter, or wronger.

"Aren't you going to change, too, Adrian?" she inquired.

"I'm not eighteen," he said. "You look wonderful Ronnie. I wish I were about twenty-one."

She said nothing, but that pleased her.

They strolled along the walks and lanes of the gardens. They must have been about a mile from the pavilion when Ronnie said: "Will you let me help you, Adrian?"

"In what way?" he asked.

"I know you're a spy," she said, her voice surprisingly level and firm.

It was a shock chiefly because he had been pretty certain she couldn't be in CE's employ. It wasn't much of a surprise that she'd told him the truth about herself so honestly and simply. Yet he recognized her candor immediately as an innocent, terrible mistake.

"Who told you?" he asked gently.

"My father. I'm supposed to report on you. I'll do that. I can't see that it will do any harm. Can you?"

"No." He wondered whether they should sit in some quiet spot, and decided it would be better to go on walking. The people they passed could hear only a word or two. "Just one thing, Ronnie. Were you told to bring me here?"

She looked up at him in surprise. "No. I've hardly been told anything. That's why I thought I'd help you, so that I'd find out . . . whatever it is you came here to do."

He knew already that one of his difficult jobs on Bynald, perhaps the most difficult job, was going to be getting Ronnie away safely. For he didn't want her to die, and it was pretty certain that she would not be spared unless he could save her.

"Do you fully understand the great danger you're in, Ronnie?" he asked.

"You mean—my own people might punish me for helping you?"

"What you're proposing could be called treason," he said gently. He knew he couldn't make her understand the deadly peril she was in, and there wasn't much point in trying too hard. He had some idea of the efficiency of CE. She probably had none.

She frowned. "You wouldn't do anything bad, would you, Adrian?"

"Not anything *I* thought bad. But in conflict you often have two sides both thinking honestly that they're right."

"I'd rather trust you than Bynald," said Ronnie.

"You don't like your own world—is that it?"

"I like it all right—except for all the effort they put into *making* you like it."

"Tell me about that, Ronnie." She had already said enough to get herself executed, if and when

CE found out about it. If she told him all she knew it wouldn't make much difference. Of course, the possibility that Bynald had no secret still remained —but by this time Welkin was regarding it as a very thin possibility indeed.

"There's not much to tell you. You saw the opera last night. Well, the school books are all like that. Our *wonderful Bynald*. You don't dare say a word against it. And I was thinking about what you said—about people disappearing. They do, you know."

Welkin stopped sharply and put his hands on her shoulders. "Are you telling the truth, Ronnie?" he asked. "Were you instructed to tell me this?"

She looked straight up into his eyes. If she was lying he'd never be able to trust his judgment of anybody again.

"I'm not lying," she said quietly. "I'm guessing—so of course I may be wrong. But I'm not lying, Adrian."

"What's this about people disappearing?" he asked.

"Well, it's just a rumor," she admitted. "I have heard about people disappearing, but I never could really prove . . ."

"Did you believe the rumors?"

"Not until Ellen Marks left. She wasn't exactly a friend of mine. But I knew her, and once when I'd been away on vacation she made me promise to write. So when she went away—Adrian, I'm *sure* she'd have written!"

"And she never did?"

"No, she was supposed to have gone to Blueville, in the south. But when I tried to pin her friends down, they said they weren't sure it was Blueville. It might have been Walton City—"

"Who would know for certain?"

"Well . . . I don't know. There's her brother, but he wouldn't care much. And her folks went away too—"

"Could they have disappeared as well?"

Ronnie was startled. "Maybe—I don't know. I never thought of it."

"How many people know about these rumors?"

"It depends whether they take them seriously or not. Or even listen to them. Adrian, does this make any sense to you?"

"If Bynald makes sense at all," said Welkin grimly, "someone must disappear to somewhere."

"What do you mean?"

He explained briefly, studying her face closely as he talked.

Ronnie became excited. "Then that's the secret—where these people go?"

"Only part of it, the less important part. What we want to know is *why* they go. And who makes them go, who runs the whole business."

"Have you any ideas?" Ronnie asked.

"I will have when I've found out a little more. Ronnie, how much history do they teach at school?"

"Not much. Only dull things like the names of the presidents and so on."

"Anything about Cedrica?"

"Oh yes."

"Tell me about Cedrica."

"What we're told, or what I really think?"

"What you really think."

"Well, Cedrica was a girl who had beauty and brains—and ambition, too, of course. I think she was very selfish. She never really cared for any of her lovers, only herself. It was said—"

"Ronnie," interrupted Welkin, amused, "you're giving me a very different picture from the one in the books."

"I've thought about Cedrica a lot," said Ronnie seriously. "She's in so many books, operas, plays, movies, songs, poems and so on that you get plenty of chance to make up your mind about what's true and what's false. She must have been selfish, don't you think?"

"Yes, I do. Go on."

"She lived at the time when this world was just settling down into something. George Solomon was the president of the Assembly at the time. She knew what she wanted—everything she could get. Solomon built his park for her. Did you know that?"

"No, I didn't," said Welkin interested.

"There's a plaque somewhere in it. He called it Cedrica Park, but after she left him he changed the name."

"I've always wondered why Cedrica took such a hold on the imagination of this world," Welkin mused.

Ronnie's brow furrowed. "They say she was a scientist too, but I've never seriously believed that," she said. "She must have got mixed up with someone else—probably another woman living at the same time. It isn't in character for her to be a scientist."

"Why not?"

"Research is solitary work, usually. And I can't imagine Cedrica ever being alone."

Welkin grinned. "You're going to be a wonderful woman yourself some day, Ronnie."

"We were talking about Cedrica," said Ronnie a little doubtfully, not quite sure what Welkin meant.

"So we were."

They talked for quite a while about Solomon, the first important president, Cedrica, the only woman of note in Bynald's history (she took the place of all the sirens in Earth's history and legends, Welkin reflected—Venus, Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, Pompadour and Nell Gwynn rolled into one), Cleeholme, the president after Solomon, and Jarvis the one after that.

Then without letting Ronnie know what he was doing Welkin led the subject away so that they couldn't get back to history and the question of disappearances, and then sat down with her on the warm grass close to some other couples to make quite sure that they didn't return to the earlier subjects.

Ronnie had said enough. In fact, Ronnie had said far too much for her own good, without helping Welkin very considerably.

V

RONNIE WENT STRAIGHT up to her bedroom when she got home. There was a murmur of voices from the lounge. Her father had a visitor, and the tones of the visitor's voice weren't familiar.

She dropped her heavy coat on the bed and started to undress. She had made no definite date with Roy that evening, because she'd thought she might have to meet Welkin. But nothing had been

said about that, so she might as well call Roy.

Roy might, understandably, have been awkward about this business. But he hadn't been, and as soon as he'd heard that Ronnie had to do a small job for the government—she'd given him no details—he'd agreed that she must do it, and hadn't pressed her to tell him more about it.

Suddenly Ronnie caught a phrase from the conversation below. The stranger, whoever he was, was saying: ". . . not sure we can trust her, Harnell."

Ronnie tensed. They must be talking about her.

She didn't waste time wondering whether she was justified in listening or not. She had to hear what they were saying. From her bedroom she couldn't hear more than a word here and there, but the boxroom beside it was only partly floored and she was sure she'd be able to hear through the unfloored plasterboard.

Without more ado she hurried silently into the boxroom, shut the door quietly, squatted by the open rafters and listened.

Her father was saying something she couldn't hear.

"If we give her a shot of napoline or even sodium pentothal we can be sure it's the truth," said the other man. Ronnie started violently.

Another mumble from her father.

"All right, we'll wait till she's seen him again," said the stranger. "But then—we've got to know exactly what they were saying in the park this afternoon. We caught some of it, and though all we could get didn't help us much, it made us want to know exactly what they *did* say. Frankly, I haven't the least faith in your daughter telling just the truth about it. But we'll ask her anyway."

More mumbles. If the stranger hadn't had such a harsh, incisive voice she was quite sure she wouldn't have been able to hear him at all.

"Okay, I'll talk to her when she comes in," her father said. "She probably already has a date with Welkin again for tonight or tomorrow. And after that—the drugs. We'll know exactly what's going on."

Ronnie went back quietly to her bedroom. The overheard conversation changed things completely. She realized with shame and disillusionment that when she thought of helping Welkin, when she spoke to him openly as she had, she'd had no idea of the danger she was running. She'd had some vague idea that if she was questioned she'd brush off the questions cleverly and easily, and an even vaguer idea of third degree men torturing her in a not too unbearable way and herself insisting bravely that she'd told the truth.

She hadn't seen them drugging her to take her will away from her and make her talk. There was nothing romantic about that. It was an outrage you couldn't fight . . .

She put her coat on again, went very quietly downstairs again, opened the front door and slammed it as if she'd just come in.

IN THE BOOKS HE HAD bought that morning Welkin found two small but interesting items.

One was George Solomon's view of foreign policy and what ought to be Bynald's future policy. Solomon believed passionately that if Bynald were fully developed it would inevitably be ruined by the predators who would be drawn to a rich successful world. He believed that if Bynald were to grow up strong and free and healthy, it *must grow up poor.* He thought that Bynald must put five hundred years of patient toil behind it before it took advantage of its resources and decided to be rich.

Whether the theory was sound or not, Solomon had believed in it, and his advice and convictions had been taken seriously. Welkin could find this attitude set down in only one volume, but it rang true. Solomon had been a fanatical patriot, even a crazy patriot, and somehow he had set the Bynald scene as he wanted it and kept it that way centuries after his death. That little piece of lore made sense because it was true, not because it was sensible.

The other item that interested Welkin was Cedrica's insistence that she died a virgin. Perhaps it was neither true nor important, but Welkin found he couldn't dismiss it easily. If Bynald's greatest courtesan, the woman who epitomized sex to her age and to the next two centuries, had died a virgin—if there was even a possibility that she had—she was completely misunderstood and anyone who wanted to understand the part she had played in history would have to make some new and drastically different guesses about her.

Welkin found himself following out the hypothesis that Cedrica's claim *was* true and that Ronnie's picture of her was completely false. That *Hail Bynald!* was even more wrong about her. That she had been a scientist, after all. That her plan for the future, and Solomon's, and perhaps Cleeholme's had mingled and gained strength and subtlety from each other, the strength from Solomon and the subtlety from Cedrica. That the state of Bynald now had been settled in the first century of the colony's existence, when Solomon and Cedrica and Cleeholme were making plans, not just slavishly carrying them out and 'improving' them, as Jane Bolt and others like her had 'improved' *Hail, Bynald!*

He was just finishing his solitary evening meal—there was no sign of Jane Bolt—when Dick German called, again asking if there was anything he could do.

Welkin decided to find out if he was going to be allowed to get rid of German.

"No, thanks, Dick," he said. "In fact, I can manage by myself now. Thanks for your help earlier. I appreciated it. But I think I'm settled in now, and I needn't trouble you again.

German looked awkward and at a loss. "Okay," he said huskily. "I guess you don't want me hanging about any more, is that it? If you do need me, you know how to get in touch with me. So long."

It seemed to be as easy as that.

Welkin was on the point of retiring to his room to play his horn when something much more interesting presented itself.

Jane Bolt came in, obviously in a hurry, and placed a large volume in front of him. "You can keep that," she said gruffly. "It's a copy of the original *Hail Bynald!*"

Welkin was touched, and let her see it. "Thanks, Jane," he said. "You make me feel a heel, after all I said."

"You said this was good," she said, indicating the

book. "Maybe you're right. Look and see. Now I've got to run."

Welkin took the book up to his room. It was unlikely that it would help him in his main job on Bynald, otherwise CE would have seen to it that it never came into his hands. But life wasn't all work, particularly Welkin's life, and he looked forward to an evening studying the book.

He found it was a complete copy of the work, copied by a photographic process on very thin paper. It had complete stage direction, dialogue, vocal and orchestral score, and notes on the choreography. He was interested to see that in the original cast Cedrica had sung the soprano part (did the woman do everything?) and that the part itself was *Erica,* not Cedrica. That was no surprise. Cedrica was such a figure in Bynaldian tradition that it was all of a piece that she should give her name to a theatrical character she had created.

A quick glance through the dialogue showed that he had been right—this was very much better than the version he'd seen the night before. He forgot all about Bynald's secret. He was back to his first love, discovery of the jewels of the past.

He was quite annoyed when Mrs. Henbald interrupted him to tell him there was a young lady downstairs to see him.

He pulled himself together. It must be Ronnie. He got up at once. It was a mistake for Ronnie to come here, where everything he did must be under observation and probably all the walls had ears. He'd have to act as if he had been expecting her, and hope she'd have the good sense to wait until they were safely outside before she said anything of importance.

He hadn't underestimated her good sense, at least. She hadn't taken off her coat, and was waiting as if they had arranged to go out together. He thought there was something a little tense about her smile, but decided not to press her for an explanation.

Ronnie waited until they were well away from the boardinghouse, walking along Commerce Street, before she told him rapidly what had happened. It was getting dark, and a soft, fine snow was falling.

"I never thought of them suspecting me, using drugs to make me talk," she said, bitterly. "Naturally I had to tell them at least a part of the truth."

Welkin stared at her in consternation. "What *did* you tell this man?"

"I told him as close to the truth as I could—nearly everything we said, hoping they'd have caught some of it and think I was telling the whole truth. Oh, Adrian, I didn't think it was going to be like this!"

She didn't have to tell him that. The main difference about romantic adventure and real adventure was that in romance the hero and heroine always stood firm. In real life, you came through if you could, but it was never so certain, and you couldn't take the risks that romantic characters took—you didn't dare.

"Don't you realize, Ronnie," he said gently, "that you were meant to hear exactly what you did hear? They expected you to do exactly what you've done—come running to me in a panic."

She drew herself up sharply. "I'm not in a panic!" she protested.

"You should be. I would be, if I were you."

"Why—what do you mean?"

"I've got some protection," Adrian said. "I haven't broken any international or local law."

"But you're a spy!"

"Don't shout it in the middle of the street, Ronnie. In a sense I am, but I never had to get outside of the law to do what I want to do. I'm quite sure that CE will try to put me out of the way if they decide it's *got* to be done. But they know Earth will get very nasty if they kill me and perhaps take the opportunity of clamping down on Bynald and ordering a full-scale investigation. And in the course of that investigation they'll have an excellent chance of finding out what I was sent here to discover. CE knows that. But you—"

"What about me?" she asked half-defiantly.

He didn't particularly want to tell her, but he knew that no useful purpose would be served by letting her deceive herself about her own position.

"Well, you see, Ronnie," he said kindly, "only Bynald has any responsibility for you. If they decide, without trial or any public mention of your case, that you're a traitor—and they'll be sure of it when they get you under drugs—there's nothing whatever to stop them."

She stared at him in horror. "You mean I'm going to be executed—and there's nothing you can do?"

He pulled her down on a bench at a street corner. It wasn't a comfortable place to sit, with the snow sifting down, but they were much safer out in the open than in any place where they might be overheard.

"I don't want to be unkind, Ronnie" he said, "but you've landed yourself in this mess all by yourself. You're in a much worse mess than I am. Now let's see how we can get you out of it."

He considered for a moment. Ronnie didn't speak; she was trying hard not to cry.

"Whom can you trust?" Welkin said at last. "Really trust—literally with your life? Not your father, I'm afraid. He's in this too deep."

"I know," she said, with a sudden flash of anger. "I hope I never see him again!"

She never did.

Welkin was still waiting. "Roy," said Ronnie in a small voice. "Just Roy."

"Who's Roy?"

"My . . . my boy-friend."

"Are you sure you can really trust him?"

"I . . . I think so. If I can't trust him I can't trust anybody. Certainly not my father. How could he have allowed them to make a tool of me? Doesn't my happiness—my very life—mean anything to him?"

"Let's go and see Roy," said Welkin.

"But—are you sure nobody's following us?"

"I'm sure somebody is. We'll see what we can do about that first."

Stage-managed by Welkin, they gave the man or men tailing them a very bad time of it. They got on and off buses, into buildings one way and out another way, hurried through crowds and fastened themselves on to large groups. They even elbowed their way between cinema celebrities and waited for their pursuers to overtake them, taking full advantage of Welkin's experience and Ronnie's knowl-

edge of the city. Fortunately Ronnie's coat was grey, a common color for women's coats, and Welkin's attire was dark and inconspicuous.

Presently he declared himself satisfied. "It's always easy to drop a tail," he said. "I know because I've often got lost when I was doing the tailing. The trick is not to get flustered, and not to be afraid to stand still for a considerable time. The man behind you is after someone who's moving, not someone leaning against a wall, quietly observing the pedestrians, and apparently waiting to keep a date."

They called at Roy's lodgings. Welkin was fully aware that they might pick up their tail again by calling at the young man's apartment, but didn't consider it necessary to tell Ronnie so. She had enough to worry about as it was. He'd stressed the danger of her position solely to make it clear to her that her only chance was to do as he said.

"Why, hallo, Miss Veronica," said the landlady, with a faint note of surprise in her voice. "Didn't Roy call on you before he left?"

"Before he left for where?" asked Ronnie, with foreboding.

"Letterston, I think he said. But he must be meaning to write. I tell you what, Miss Veronica—there'll be a letter from him tomorrow. I'm sure of it."

Ronnie was about to protest, but with Welkin's hand gripping her elbow like a vise she merely thanked the landlady and returned with him in silence to the street.

"Where's Letterston?" asked Welkin, disappointment and concern in his voice.

"On the other side of the planet. He couldn't have—"

"Don't talk too much," Welkin warned. "Keep your voice at a low pitch."

They went through another tail-dodging operation. When they decided it was safe they sat on another bench, huddled together so that anyone who saw them would take them for lovers.

"That's another way of vanishing from sight," said Welkin grimly.

"But what are we to do?" Ronnie demanded, her voice ragged with strain. "We can't escape, can we? I mean—hope to outwit them permanently?"

"Oh, quite possibly," said Welkin cheerfully. "But you see—I can't go yet. If I were to go now, my entire mission would be a failure."

"But *now* they suspect you. You're in great danger—"

"They suspected me long before I came. As for you—you'll have to come to Earth with me Ronnie. I can see no other way."

She gave a little cry of delight. "Can I? You mean—right now?"

"I imagine if I took you away with me now there wouldn't be too much trouble. But, as I was just saying, my immediate departure would be an admission of failure. I haven't got what I came for. I have one or two interesting clues, and the germ of an idea. Nothing more."

"You could save me, and you won't? Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

Welkin smiled at her rather sadly.

"I'm afraid you're finding out where romantic ideas break down, Ronnie," he said. "I can't take you back to Earth and tell my superiors, 'No, I failed disastrously at the task you assigned me, but I saved a Bynald girl's life. I'm sorry you lost seven hundred million dollars for nothing.' "

"Then I've no chance? I just disappear, like Ellen Marks and . . . and Roy?"

The way she talked about Roy, Welkin decided, showed she'd never really been in love with the youth.

"We'll see," he said. He might have told her that he hadn't asked her to declare herself for him the way she had, and that, in sober fact, his own position would have been much better if she'd refrained from indulging her passion for the romantic. But he decided that nothing would be gained by shattering all of her illusions and making her hate him.

"We can't stay here, anyway," he said. "Where can we go? It's a serious problem."

"Some other town?"

"No, a close check will be made at all travel depots."

"An hotel?"

"Even worse. I'll settle for some place where we can be comfortable and work out what must be done."

"The park?"

"They know us there, too. But if it comes to that, we can't go anywhere where people aren't checked over in some way. It might as well be the park, I suppose—if it's still open."

"It's always open. And we can go in by another entrance."

In deciding on the park Welkin knew perfectly well that CE would be able to find them there if it wished to do so. But again he didn't force the knowledge on Ronnie. Ronnie wasn't a fool. But she was very young and very romantic, and just didn't realize that as far as governments and espionage departments were concerned one young girl was quite as expendable as a sheet of government notepaper.

"There's a precaution we'd better decide on right now," he said. "They may catch up with us at any time, possibly within the next hour or so. We'll need a code."

"A code!" she exclaimed excitedly. He was rather glad that she was too buoyant to be kept depressed by her desperate situation. Apparently any mention of anything exciting or interesting was enough to make her forget her danger for the moment.

"Just a simple one," he said. "If I think we're being overheard, and I want you to follow my lead, I'll say something complimentary about—well, I'll say you're lovely."

"If you want me to say nothing you'll say—I'm lovely?"

"No. If I want you to say *nothing*, I'll call you Veronica. Once I've said the word Veronica, say nothing that matters. Is that clear? As for the other comment, about your loveliness—often it's very valuable to be able to talk, overheard, without the listeners suspecting you know you're under close observation. If I tell you you're beautiful, follow my lead—say what I seem to want you to say, even if you fear it might be dangerous. Is that clear also?"

"I think so. And if I notice anything I think you should know, what am I to say?"

He had no idea how well she could act. He preferred not to let her say anything as a signal, for

fear that she would display such obvious nervousness that the game would be up.

"Don't say anything," he told her. "Do something. Do something to your coat."

"I won't have my coat on. I'll take my jacket off. All right?"

"Yes. Only remember not to take it off if you *don't* see anything."

They made their way to the park in much better spirits, Ronnie cheered up by the business of the code and Welkin by the quite strong possibility that he *would* get a chance to get in some double-talk. If he did, it was bound to be useful.

VI

SOLOMON PARK BY NIGHT was an enchanted place, especially to people coming straight in out of the snow.

It wasn't brilliantly lit. It was lit just enough not to be menacing, or garish. There was no sign of the illumination's source. Probably the light was electactinic, Welkin decided, synchronized with some reflecting index of the plastic dome which did not interfere with the passage of sunlight in the opposite direction.

Whatever its source, all near objects were bathed in a steady, well-modulated glow while more distant objects disappeared into shadow. Considering how cold the rest of Scio was and how warm, friendly and intimate the park seemed, it could easily lay claim to being the lovers' lane *par excellance* of the entire galaxy. The number of couples they saw, or whose presence they sensed without quite seeing them, indicated that love-making was the parks' principal nocturnal function.

"How are morals on Bynald, Ronnie?" he asked idly.

She looked startled. "What do you mean?"

"You don't have shocked and protesting letters in the papers about what goes on here after dark, do you?"

She laughed. "Love-making is what the park's for, silly."

"Have you been here often with Roy?"

"Of course." But definitely she couldn't have been in love with him, or some shadow would have fallen over her at the mention of his name. Did she realize the boy was probably dead?

"And . . . with anyone else?"

She laughed again. "Well, I'm here with you," she said ingenuously. "Isn't there supposed to be a wrong time for asking questions?"

She was at the selfish period of adolescence, Welkin reflected, a little sadly. All that really mattered to her was whether others found her attractive or not.

But then to his surprise, as if she had sensed what he was thinking, she suddenly asked: "Adrian, do you think Roy's all right?"

He was startled and relieved by the anxiety in her tone. He liked Ronnie, and wanted to think well of her.

"Perhaps," he said. "Does the lad mean a lot to you, Ronnie?"

"I don't know," she said. Then her face darkened. "No, he doesn't. He can't. He's gone and I may never see him again. And I feel nothing. Unless maybe . . . maybe I'm even glad."

"Glad he's gone?"

"He said he loved me. And I couldn't see any reason why I shouldn't love him in return. But now that he's gone I don't feel so guilty about the fact that I had to pretend.

That was better. She was sounding more like a girl with a heart—a heart that had still to be touched and made aware of love's meaning.

They had left their coats at the pavilion. They looked, in the semi-darkness like most of the other couples around them. Welkin could have been quite a few years younger and Ronnie a woman of twenty-five.

Welkin pointel and they sat in an intimate corner several feet from the main path, and enclosed on three sides by shrubs.

"Do you mind?" Welkin asked, taking Ronnie in his arms.

"Of course not!" She smiled up at him, nestling closer, her lips parted.

"Well, remember it doesn't mean anything," he said bluntly. "Now that we've been granted a little time to work things out, let's do it. Point one—CE can place us under arrest whenever they decide to double or triple the men on our trail. I've a healthy respect for CE. Point two—at the moment I'm on the threshold of Bynald's secret, but not over it yet. In another two or three days I should be able to crack it. Point three—when we leave here we've got to go somewhere and I'm not sure where that 'somewhere' should be."

"Together?" asked Ronnie.

"We'll have to stay together," he said grimly. "I've a strong suspicion that if I once let you out of my sight I'd never see you again."

She shuddered.

"Had enough of adventure?" he asked sardonically.

"I'd be enjoying this tremendously," she said with startling candor, "if I could be sure everything would come out all right."

"That's just it," he agreed. "And I've got a wife and three children to worry about."

Ronnie moved a little restlessly in his arms, and he decided he'd dropped the reminder not an instant too soon. She was a young, vital creature, hungry for love, and he found himself reflecting that the youth who had vanished couldn't have been much of a fellow, or he would have awakened in Ronnie what Welkin, at his age, could hardly help awakening.

"You said you were on the threshold of . . . Bynald's secret," said Ronnie. "Tell me about it."

"Two and a half centuries ago," said Welkin reflectively, "Bynald was pretty much as it is now. George Solomon was president. Cedrica was . . . Cedrica. Cleeholme was Solomon's deputy. Solomon loved Bynald more than his own life. Everything he did was for Bynald's future. Even when he was under Cedrica's spell he had one eye on Bynald. His fear was that if Bynald developed its vast mineral wealth, there would be wars, legal battles, commercial strife, and Bynald would be torn to pieces again and again . . . and I'm not going to say that he was wrong. He believed that the only way for Byn-

ald to stay safe was to stay poor, and never allow outsiders to settle here and expand the economy in any way, never sell a square inch of Bynald's soil."

"Where did you learn all this?" demanded Ronnie wonderingly.

"From many sources. From you, from that opera, from books, and from the way Bynald is now. I'm a historian, Ronnie. A good one. Give me an inch of fact, and I'll spin a mile of theory—reasonably sound theory. Well, to go on . . . Solomon founded the sort of government that kept and would continue to keep things as they were. His aim was to stop development, make moderate but never spectacular progress, and build up an enduring tradition. The head of CE, whatever his real name is, is always referred to as GS—one of our unsuccessful spies told us that. GS for what? George Solomon, of course.

"Solomon built to last. He passed his beliefs on to others, and by the time they retired from office, the machine was running smoothly. Dead slow, but smoothly. Except for espionage and counter-espionage activities, of course.

"Now Cedrica. I think you and everybody else are wrong about Cedrica. I think she was a psychologist rather than a power-mad siren. And I think she and Solomon worked together far more closely and rationally than the legends would have us believe. They laid the ground plan—the master design—for Bynald's secret, whatever it is. I'm certain of that. Solomon and Cedrica cooked it up two hundred years ago, and it's been running smoothly ever since."

Ronnie was staring up at him fascinated, like a child being told an enthralling story. Of course, this was new light on people she'd been hearing about—vaguely, in legend—all her life.

Welkin wondered if she'd forgotten she was in a man's arms. No—no woman could ever quite forget that.

"What I can't fit into the picture is this question of disappearances," he said, frowning. "We can guess that if the plan is to work a large number of people *must* disappear. I'm sure of it. There are no figures, but you have only to take a bird's-eye view. Every two people produce at least three more, and those three produce perhaps four or five. The four or five produce a larger number, all before the first two are dead—that's a two in a sixteen or eighteen or twenty ratio equation in less than a hundred years—"

"But they've all got to marry other people. I mean—"

"I know what you mean, and I'm allowing for that. Even so, population should be multiplying itself by at least six every century."

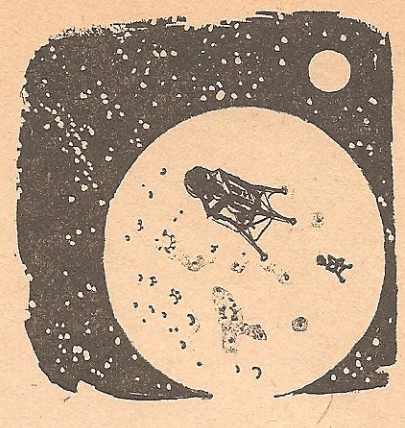
"You mean—that many people are dying?" Ronnie exclaimed.

"I don't know whether they're dying or not. They may be going some place else."

"Where?"

"How should I know? But there's plenty of room in the galaxy."

He paused, his lips tightening. "There's one ugly possibility that *would* make some sort of sense—Solomon sense. Suppose everybody who didn't think Bynald wonderful was killed—removed, anyway. Suppose for generations this ruthless extermination



process went on, so that every child was brought up in an atmosphere of fanatic nationalism. Gradually that kind of nationalism would be almost inbred in the population. A Darwinian Natural Selection by Unnatural Means. Nationalist strains survive, non-nationalist die out. In the end you might have—"

"Well, I can't believe it's that," said Ronnie. "But you've thought about it and I haven't. Didn't I tell you about Ellen Marks? That's what I didn't like about her—she never talked about anything but Bynald. She was crazy about Bynald, just like Solomon must have been, if what you say is true. And Roy's the same way. That's one of the reasons why I never really fell for him. He always cared more about Bynald than he did about me."

"Ronnie," said Welkin urgently. "Think of all the people you've ever known—the people who *might* have disappeared."

"But I only know about Ellen and Roy. In fact, I can't even be sure about them—"

"I understand that. But see if you can get your mind to cover all the people you've known and don't know now—people you've lost sight of, people who have moved to other cities, people you've just forgotten. Can you do that?"

"I . . . I think so."

"Well, generally, are these people old or young. I mean, were they old or young when they disappeared?"

"Young, mostly. Nearly all young."

"Men or women?"

"Both."

"Were they patriotic or indifferent?"

"Patriotic," she said, quite definitely.

"And can you ever remember anyone like yourself, anyone who didn't give a damn for Bynald—can you remember anyone like that disappearing?"

She hesitated for a long time, while Welkin waited tensely.

"No," she said at last.

Welkin was silent for a long time. He still had to speculate on a ground that wasn't too firm, but he had something to go on now. Solomon, Cedrica, Solomon's policy— and what Ronnie had just told him.

"Ronnie," he said, "you've really helped me. Perhaps now—"

"Just a minute, Adrian," she said quietly, and sat up, pushing his arms aside. He stared at her in wonder, his mind wholly occupied with something else.

It was only when she dropped the little jacket

which had covered her shoulders to the ground that he remembered the sign language they had agreed upon.

He took her in his arms again. He was careful not to look about him. "I'd take you back, Ronnie," he said gently, "if I had the whole problem worked out. But there would be no point in our going now. I'd only have to come back."

He let his eyes wander slightly, but he could see nothing in the shadows.

Apparently Ronnie's eyes were much sharper than his.

Abruptly he realized she couldn't say anything yet because he hadn't given her her cue.

"You're really very lovely," he said kissing first her cheek, and then her lips.

In the bushes, something was dropped. It wasn't much of a noise, and for a second Welkin debated the advisability of pretending he hadn't heard it. But he knew the pretense wouldn't ring true. They would expect more of an experienced espionage agent.

"Who's there?" he inquired in a conversational tone. "Yehudi?"

Three men stood up. Welkin and Ronnie stood up too. Welkin was surprised to see that one of the men, evidently the leader, was Dick German.

"Come on," said German briefly. "It will be simpler and easier for all of us if you come quietly. You can talk later, but not here."

There was nothing Welkin and Ronnie could do but go with them. Ronnie bent to pick up her jacket, but one of the men stopped her.

"It doesn't matter, Veronica," said Welkin, nudging her gently on her arm.

She took the hint. She said hardly another word, leaving it all to Welkin. At the gate, German refused to allow either of them to take their coats, probably suspecting there might be something about Welkin's coat especially that could be dangerous to a CE man —a concealed weapon in one of the pockets perhaps.

"You're not going to make Ronnie go out into the snow dressed like that?" Welkin protested.

"There's a car just outside the door," German said reassuringly.

Ronnie shivered violently as the snowflakes settled on her bare shoulders. But then they were in the car, on the way to be questioned by CE men, and she had more to worry about than the cold.

VII

THEY WERE TAKEN TO A ROOM in the Administration Building—a small blank-walled room containing no furniture except a table and three chairs. With German were the two men who had been with him in the park—two nondescript men, not in uniform.

"We won't do any pretending, shall we?" asked German.

"Not if you'd rather not," said Welkin, looking him steadily in the eye.

"Frankly," said German, "I'd rather you simply decided to go away, Welkin. It would be better for you—and better for us."

"Taking Ronnie with me?"

"You can't do that. No—it's out of the question. She stays here, whatever happens."

The cold tone of his voice made the statement sound like a calmly pronounced death sentence. Ronnie went pale.

"She never took to Bynald's nationalism," said Welkin easily. "I took great pains to verify that. I think you'd better let her come to Earth with me."

German shook his head, refusing to argue.

"How did you come to pick a girl like Ronnie, anyway?" Welkin asked.

German shrugged. "We thought you'd talk more readily to a girl like her."

"Well—you were right. You're sending me away, then?"

"Probably—after you've both been questioned under drugs."

"I see." Welkin looked at German. He had no doubt at all that the man was speaking the truth. He wasn't bluffing and never had been.

"In that case," said Welkin, "I might as well talk now and save us all time. Am I addressing GS in person?

German nodded, undisturbed. Welkin managed to catch Ronnie's eye, and tried to tell her in one glance to keep out of this—not to draw attention to herself by as much as a start or a quickly indrawn breath. She seemed to catch the message. She sat down quietly out of the way, so that German couldn't even watch her and Welkin at the same time.

"What I have to say is highly confidential," said Welkin. "Do you want these two to hear it?"

Without hesitation German nodded to the two guards and they went outside. That, at least, was interesting. Welkin knew that the guards would remain outside the door, and that his chances of escaping remained nil. But the fact that German had sent them away at all meant that they weren't in on the secret. Probably few people were.

"I've found out quite a lot about the Solomon plan," said Welkin. The reaction was very slight, but there definitely was a reaction. Welkin was pleased. If German was going to let him guess and see whether he had guessed right or not, he would have gained a definite advantage. Already he had established that there *was* something called the Solomon Plan.

Welkin didn't know the whole story, but neither did a fortune-teller when a client entered. Yet she was trained to make an initial good guess and go on guessing, shrewdly abandoning a false trial and following up anything which got a reaction, until she succeeded in convincing her client that she really had a clairvoyant source of information. Welkin was surprised that German let him get away with it. But then, German thought he had all the cards.

"Perhaps I should say the Solomon-Cedrica-Cleeholme plan," Welkin went on. "It's been operating for two hundred and fifty years, and I should say at a guess that it's got at least another two-fifty years to go." No reaction this time, yet even the absence of an emotional response was significant.

"It's a crazy plan, and it's not going to work," said Welkin. It was time to take the first plunge. "We guessed about the disappearances," he said slowly, "but we never knew about the *army*. We

thought people were simply eliminated, not saved up, put in the bank, so to speak."

Again no reaction. Nevertheless, Welkin could sense a hidden tension in the other and knew he'd guessed right—or nearly right.

"It was just the kind of thing Solomon would think of," Welkin said, hoping German couldn't see the sweat on his forehead and realize how hazy he really was about all this. "Anything to put Bynald on top—anything. I don't know what's been done all these years with the patriots, but I know they've been collected, banded together. What precisely *has* been done with them, GS?"

German returned Welkin's stare quite blankly, not even acknowledging that a question had been asked. But he was still listening.

And Welkin knew that if he didn't have everything, he had enough. He went on in a surge of confidence: "Is it some sort of suspended animation?" he asked. "Yes I'm sure it is . . . Cedrica's contribution, no doubt. George Solomon wanted Bynald to stay apparently poor, but actually get stronger year by year. So he formed the plan of stashing away about half of each generation, I don't pretend to know exactly how. Some of them are volunteers, I suppose, but if they're not volunteers they've got to go anyway, once they've been asked. These are the people, the chosen people who think as Solomon thought about Bynald—as you think, GS."

Ronnie was staring at him with wide, disbelieving eyes. But now GS had apparently forgotten about her completely. His face was very pale.

"The end of the plan, I guess, must be something like this," said Welkin. "In about two hundred and fifty years from now Bynald will wake up from its five-century long lethargy. Exports will rise, assets will be converted into cash and machinery. Thousands of young people will be sent to Earth and the other planets to attend colleges. They'll come back as trained, up-to-the-minute technicians, and they'll set about the business of turning Bynald into a slick, high-powered, efficient world. There'll probably be some law, or some excuse to keep foreigners out for a year or two. No such prohibition would hold up for long, but for a year or two . . .

"Then—" Welkin's voice had an edge of steel to it now. "You awaken, train and equip your army. Let's see—it could be anything from four billion strong to, say, ten billion. An *army* of ten billion. That could only be meant to take over the whole galaxy, eh, GS?"

German said nothing, but there was no longer a trace of color in his face.

"Obviously Solomon was a megalomaniac," Welkin said. "I don't know what measures he took to make sure that only other megalomaniacs should be chosen to play their part in this plot through the centuries. But obviously he managed it."

German's gun came up. It was all too apparent that he had no intention of arguing the matter. Welkin and Ronnie were marked for death unless—

"I wouldn't do it if I were you," said Welkin, without a tremor in his voice. "Suppose you listen to what I have to say first."

"Well?" said GS, his gun pointed straight at Welkin's heart.

"You've let yourself get behind technologically here in Bynald," said Welkin steadily. "So far behind that it probably never even occurred to you that everything that was said in this room was being picked up and recorded for delivery to Earth?"

GS tightened his lips. If Welkin was bluffing, he would merely be postponing his death by a few minutes. If he wasn't, neither GS nor Welkin himself mattered much any more.

"See these," said Welkin, fingering the buttons on his shirt. "I expect you had these buttons examined pretty closely. I noticed how thorough the customs inspection was. True, they're simple, ordinary plastic buttons, and if you cut them in half you'd still find nothing strange about them. But actually they resonate with sound vibrations, as almost everything does to some extent. This resonance is picked up by two short-wave beams that don't need wires to operate any more than a carrier beam does. At the other end of the beams, in two Terran Navy ships hovering just clear of Bynald's atmosphere, the resonance is recreated and blown up by the most powerful amplifier I ever saw. Every word I've spoken since I landed on this planet, every word spoken to me, has been noted and recorded."

"How do I know you aren't bluffing?" GS demanded sharply.

"Would you like some colored streamers in the sky? A bomb dropped on Solomon Park? Would it not be far better to make it a tender for Ronnie and me, landing in front of the Capitol in . . . say two hours' time?"

GS was staring at him.

"If I'm bluffing, I gain an hour or two—no more," said Welkin. "But you know I'm not bluffing, don't you, GS?"

Apparently German did. "Get out of those clothes," he said grimly. He turned to Ronnie, "You too. I'm taking no chances."

Welkin laughed. "Shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted only prevents him from getting back in," he observed.

"Quickly!" said German sharply. "Or I'll shoot you both here and now. Then there won't be anything else for those ships to overhear."

Trying hard to control her trembling Ronnie stood up straight, took a deep breath and started to unfasten her playsuit.

Welkin said: "Hold it, Ronnie. GS, show some

sense. If I'm lying, there's no point in destroying my clothes, as you seem determined to do. And if I'm not, it's too late. I've said enough already, and anything else that's said now will hardly be worth recording."

German made no reply. He simply swung about on his heels and passed from the room. The door slammed violently behind him.

Naturally Welkin tried the door, and naturally it was locked.

He looked back at Ronnie, who was slowly fastening her playsuit again, and realized that she'd half *wanted* to be searched, as most beautiful spies were at some time or other during their adventures.

But now she was staring at him in shuddering disbelief. "You mean all these people who ever disappeared are alive, and can be *brought* back!"

"It's the only explanation that makes sense. I wonder where they are? I suspect Solomon Park. I wondered when I saw it—why should George Solomon, of all people, build such a place? It had to be a cover for something else. If this other thing needs a lot of power, as it probably does, the drain from the atomic plant running the park could easily be camouflaged."

Ronnie moistened her lips. "Do you think GS will let us go?"

"I don't know," Welkin said. "We'll have to wait and see."

VIII

THEY WAITED, BUT THERE wasn't much to see. Not until nearly two hours later, when GS came back.

"A small ship just landed in front of the Capitol," he said.

"So?"

"So you'd better get on it."

"And what are you going to do?"

GS hesitated. "You can tell Earth, Welkin," he said, "that it can't do a thing to us. The Solomon Plan is reversed, as of now. We've more than ten billion workers, you know—and that's a formidable *peacetime* army of industrial builders and planners. Would Earth want them to adopt a passive resistance attitude? Could Earth afford that?"

Welkin said, "So that's the way of it? That's your business, so long as the original Solomon Plan is buried. Earth will meet new problems as they arise. Come on, Ronnie."

"Ronnie isn't going," said GS softly.

"Then neither am I," said Welkin just as quietly.

"Don't be a fool, Welkin," said GS harshly. "She's our business. You know that."

"I can make things awkward for you—or easy. Which is it to be?"

GS hesitated again. "I haven't the power to let her go," he said.

"But you want me to go, isn't that so? So I'm staying."

Welkin let the deadlock hang for a few moments. He himself was in a strong enough position. He was pretty sure now that GS had been told, or rather, *instructed* to let him go.

"I have a suggestion to make," said Welkin at last. "Let us get to the tender. Then fire a shot at Ronnie and miss. That should clear you personally."

GS remained silent, but his expression was revealing.

"Another thing. There's a book at my lodgings I'd like to take back with me."

"All your things are at the tender already. Including your French horn."

The last was said with a touch of viciousness, the only time German had allowed the slightest hint of his own feelings toward Welkin to escape him.

"Thanks, GS," said Welkin cordially. "That's very kind of you. Let's go."

They walked through the Administration Building, which was silent and empty, but with most of its lights blazing.

They marched out at the front of the Capitol. Again Ronnie shivered as she stepped out into the below-freezing chill of Scio at night. The tender was about two hundred yards away, a miniature spaceship, sleek, gleaming and terribly efficient-looking.

Welkin wondered if the Bynald Navy had any ideas about following the tender and trying to destroy the two ships in the hope that that would prevent the secret of Bynald reaching Earth. If that was so, they'd be wasting their time. For one thing, even this tender, let alone the parent ship, could laugh at anything the Bynald Navy could bring up. For another, one of the two ships must be billions of miles on its way to Earth already.

As they approached the tender Welkin saw his things being handed to a naval officer who looked very doubtful about whether he should accept them or not. However, when he looked up and actually saw Welkin coming his face cleared and he took them.

Welkin hung back to let Ronnie go first. They were almost at the ship. Ronnie could have stretched out her arms and touched the hull.

Unfortunately it was GS whom Welkin was watching principally. GS did nothing. It was one of the guards—Welkin never learned whether he was acting under orders or not—who raised his gun suddenly and took careful, deliberate aim.

The instant before the shot rang out, Welkin dragged on Ronnie's arm as if he were trying to wrench it off, and she lurched toward him. Nevertheless, the shot didn't miss her. She dropped in the snow with a small red hole in her back.

Welkin didn't stop to argue. He swept her up in his arms and got her inside the lock, remembering that there was always a doctor on a tender by regulation.

"Get off, quick," he shouted, and looked for the tender's doctor, still holding Ronnie tightly in his arms. She stirred and moaned a little, then went completely limp.

A tall, grave bearded man came forward and led the way to a tiny cabin. Welkin eased Ronnie gently to the bunk, and stood for a moment staring down at her, too shaken to speak.

Welkin saw that the bullet hole was just below the tip of the right shoulder-blade. Through the lung certainly, if not through the heart—it depended on the angle.

"You'd better leave us now," said the doctor.

A moment later Lester was shaking his hand. "Well, you made it, Adrian. Did ever you hear anything so crazy? *Would* they have got away with it?"

"They might have," said Welkin. "It would have depended on our espionage department two hundred and fifty years from now. It *should* have been able to find out in time."

He found talking difficult, wanted to tell Lester to go to hell.

"I must say," said Lester, half protestingly, "that you took rather a lot on yourself when you insisted on that girl's coming with you. You'd better play that down a bit in your report, Adrian. After all—"

His face sobered, became completely earnest. "You did it anyway, Adrian. You'll get a citation. Queer lot, these Bynaldians. Is that GS character crazy?"

"Only in one way," said Welkin. He was managing not to look at the door of the tiny cabin he had left. But he couldn't keep from listening for the slightest sound in the stillness.

"Funny business altogether," said Lester, who was a good naval officer but not gifted with much imagination. "Hard to believe some of it. In fact I'm not sure I believe it even now."

"We'll leave that to Security," said Welkin. It was just as well, he thought, that people like Lester weren't given the task of deciding whether to take notice of things or not. The only menace Lester would recognize was a visible, three-dimensional, present-time one.

The tender shot faster and faster toward its parent ship. It hadn't needed anything like two hours to reach the Bynald Capitol. Welkin had given GS that much warning notice solely to enable him to get in touch with his superiors. Twenty minutes would have been enough.

The tender was swallowed neatly by the battleship it had come from, and immediately thereafter the battleship was piling on acceleration for Earth. Still the door of the little cabin in the scout hadn't opened, though presumably the doctor knew they were aboard the naval ship.

Welkin had to make his report to Fenworthy as soon as possible, and change his clothes before he could go back to the tender, resting in the middle of the large, otherwise empty hold.

At last the doctor emerged.

"Will she live?" Welkin asked anxiously.

"Oh, I shouldn't be surprised," said the doctor, brushing lint from his sleeve. "It would have saved me a lot of trouble, though, if you'd managed to stop them firing that shot. I've had the devil of a job."

"Can I see her?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

Welkin went into the cabin quietly. Ronnie looked ghastly. If Welkin had seen her looking like that a few moments earlier, he'd have been sure she was dying. But he knew the doctor's "shouldn't be surprised" meant that he'd be very surprised indeed if Ronnie did die.

"Next stop Earth," he said gently.

She looked up at him, her lips moving soundlessly. Finally she managed to say: "What's it like, Adrian? What's going to happen to me there? What will they—"

"Don't talk," he said, smoothing her hair, "or you won't get there at all. And don't worry. We'll find something for you on Earth. As a matter of fact, I can promise you a good job right now. An interesting, exiciting, romantic job."

For a moment Ronnie's eyes brightened. She seemed almost to smile. "What is it? Tell me."

"I can get you a job as a spy," Welkin said.

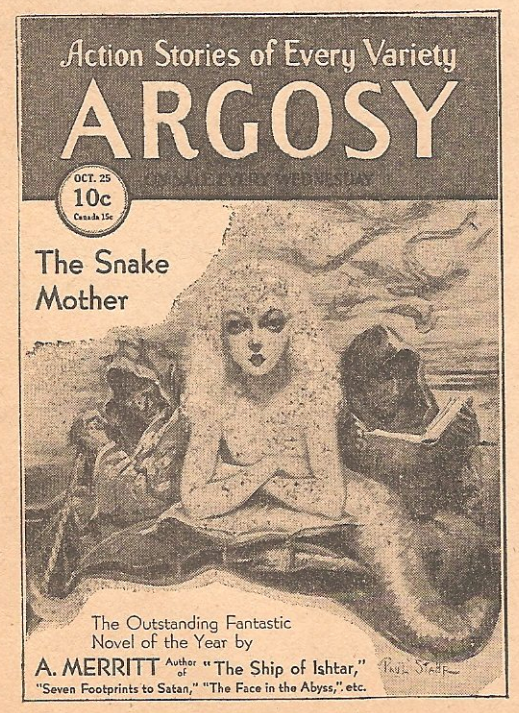
Her expression showed what she thought of the idea. "No, thanks," she said and her voice, despite its tremulousness, seemed somehow very firm.

The Marvelous A. Merritt

Lord of Fantasy

A. MERRITT

by Sam Moskowitz



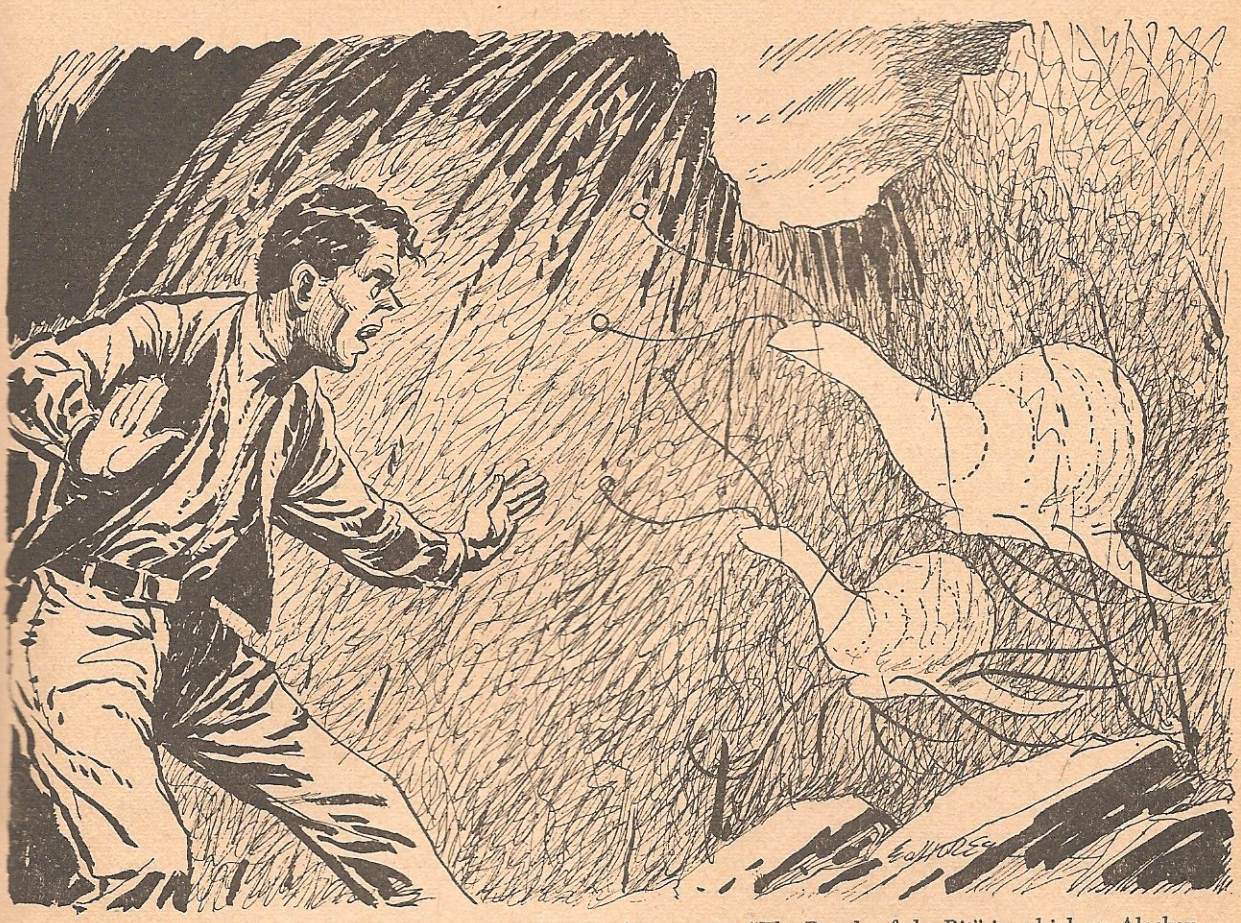
Reproduction of the cover from Argosy, October 25, 1930, by Paul Stahr, illustrating the first appearance of one of Merritt's greatest science fantasies, "The Snake Mother."

THE WEEKLY ADVENTURE fiction magazine ARGOSY, fifty-eight years old in 1938, conducted a poll of its readers to determine the most popular story published in the history of the magazine. That story was to be reprinted. ARGOSY was then the most prominent adventure story magazine in the history of the Western World. At one time it had achieved a greater circulation than any other magazine in America, regardless of type!

The votes pouring in honored a fabulous group of storytellers: Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of the imagination-stirring *Tarzan;* Albert Payson Terhune, gifted writer of dog stories; Frank L. Packard, renowned for *The Miracle Man* and his Jimmy Dale series; John Buchan, whose *Thirty Nine Steps* is a cloak-and-dagger show-piece; James Branch Cabell, author of perhaps the most widely discussed novel of the twenties, *Jurgen;* Howard R. Garis, beloved chronicler of the children's animal favorite, Uncle Wiggily; Johnston McCulley, whose flashing tales of *Zorro* still thrill on TV's magic mirror; Erle Stanley Gardner, perennially best-selling detective novelist; Gaston Leroux, universally known through the motion picture versions of *Phantom of the Opera;* Max Brand, one of the truly great writers of the old west and Ludwig Lewisohn, whose fiction will probably endure as literature, to name only a few of the many outstanding authors who made it possible for ARGOSY, in 1938 to "point with pride" to a record of more than seven hundred hardcover books reprinted from its pages!

The winner was *The Ship of Ishtar* by A. Merritt and the reprinting of that story in six weekly installments commenced with the October 29,

It isn't often that a writer of fantasy leads an outwardly adventurous life or even an extremely active one. But A. Merritt was a far-roaming traveler in his youth, and a newspaper supplement editor of outstanding brilliance in his middle and later years. But one suspects, somehow, that he would have liked best to be remembered as—a dreamer of dreams!



A dramatic scene from one of Merritt's most effective short stories, "The People of the Pit" in which an Alaskan explorer is trapped by remnants of an ancient race at the bottom of an extinct volcano. Its literary quality has been favorably compared with Poe.

1938 issue of ARGOSY. The ranks of adventure writers, the legions of pulp magazine followers and, more particularly, the editorial vote-counters were astounded. But to Albert J. Gibney, associate published of The Frank A. Munsey Company this evidence of popularity seemed to confirm and justify a top-level ARGOSY decision made many years before.

"We paid A. Merritt the highest word-rate given anyone in the history of the magazine," he revealed, in a fascinatingly candid appraisal. "This only proves he was worth it!"

A. Merritt loved the craft of writing. It is doubtful if he wrote a single line of fiction with monetary considerations in mind. For 25 years he had been right-hand man to Morrill Goddard, editor of THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, a magazine supplement distributed with the Hearst newspapers with a weekly circulation of five million copies. Morrill Goddard earned $240,000 a year in that capacity.

It seems reasonable to suppose that as second man in the organization, Merritt also received rather exceptional remuneration. That such was the case was evidenced by a second home in Indian Rock Key, Pinellas County, Florida; a 75-acre experimental farm in Brandenton, Florida, where he raised avocados, mangoes and litchi, and an experimental farm near Clearwater, where he planted the first olive groves in Florida. He also maintained a hot house of rare poisonous plants. In 1937 Morrill Goddard died and Merritt became the editor of THE AMERICAN WEEKLY

Recognition similar to ARGOSY's had been given Merritt by his most devoted followers, the science fiction readers, a few years earlier. WONDER STORIES, under the aegis of Hugo Gernsback, conducted a survey of its readers aimed at determining the favorite science fiction of their entire reading experience. *The Moon Pool* by A. Merritt headed the list, even though the story had been published in magazine form almost a decade previously and no stories by Merritt had ever appeared in WONDER STORIES!

The first sampling the science fiction readers had of A. Merritt was his 6,000-word short-story *Through the Dragon Glass,* which appeared in the November 24, 1917 issue of ALL-STORY. Merritt's initial effort might have attracted little attention, if the cover of that issue had not illustrated a new four-part interplanetary novel, *The Cosmic Courtship,* by Julian Hawthorne, son of the great American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Lured by the promise of Hawthorne's cosmic romance, science fiction readers found themselves considerably more enthralled by Merritt's brief fantasy of Herndon, who raided the Imperial Palace of Peking during the Boxer rebellion and came away with a green stone on which was carved twelve dragons with emerald eyes.

Herndon passes through this stone into another world, where seven artificial moons revolve perpetually around a mist-shrouded valley walled with fire. There he meets the maiden Santhu and is attacked by a winged beast, whose master hunts him as a quarry in a cruel and ingenious game. Badly clawed, he escapes from the Dragon Glass, to pass through a second time with an elephant gun. He never returns.

The next tale from Merritt's typewriter was bona fide science fiction. The January 5, 1918 issue of ALL-STORY carried *The People of the Pit.* This story of an Alaskan explorer who discovers a stairway leading down into a volcanic crater, at the bottom of which exists a strange city inhabited by tentacled, transparent, snail-like monstrosities, who float in the air and exert a powerful psychological influence upon him, is a polished masterpiece. It is trite and sometimes condescending to state that an author's work is worthy of Edgar Allan Poe, but had Poe written *The People of the Pit,* it would today be held up as one of the brightest jewels in the diadem of literary masterpieces which crown his genius.

Fame was not to come to Merritt the hard way He would not have to build a tremendous literary pyramid composed of rhetorical blocks and mortared with imaginative inspiration, to show above his contemporaries. One more novelette, *The Moon Pool,* published in ALL-STORY for June 22, 1919, and letters by the hundreds began to pour across the desk of Robert H. Davis, the famous Munsey editor who had discovered Merritt.

The master touch in the handling of the highly individualistic prose that had been so conspicuously evident in *The People of the Pit* was repeated in *The Moon Pool.* The imaginative concept of a pool of force created by the vibrational pattern of seven different lights, which provided the transfer mechanism from the surface to some strange realm below and "The Shining One," an alien entity of radiant matter which acted as a guide between worlds, fired the imagination, arousing a clamor for a sequel which could not be ignored.

Bob Davis, who had felt that fifty dollars a story had been generous pay for Merritt's shorter lengths, dangled forth forty times that sum if he would write a full-length sequel.

With the publication of only two short stories and a novelette, Merritt had become the "hottest" writer in science fiction since Edgar Rice Burroughs. Though there was a divergence in styles, there was also a pronounced affinity between Burroughs and Merritt.

Merritt represented the furthest extreme that the scientific romance—ushered into phenomenal popularity when Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Under the Moons of Mars* delighted the ALL-STORY readership of 1912—was to go. Much of Merritt was then and would continue to be, sheer fantasy. Stories which because of their scientific aspects—never obtrusively introduced—qualified as science fiction, were in mood and spirit fantasy.

Like Burroughs, Merritt's intent was solely to entertain. Yet no single author of his period was to exert greater influence upon his contemporaries and upon the science fiction writers still in embryo.

Son of quaker parents, Abraham Merritt was born January 20, 1884, in Beverley, N. J., a small community near Philadelphia. Merritt, in his youth, had a predilection for the Law. He attended lectures at the University of Pennsylvania but was mostly self-educated. Poor family finances compelled him to abandon law and at the age of nineteen he obtained a reporting job with the PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER. That first job was the turning point of his life.

As a cub reporter he was an eyewitness to an event—the nature of which he assiduously kept secret—which was to have serious political implications. To avoid repercussions and to prevent young Abe Merritt from "spilling the beans," he was prevailed upon by parties unknown to leave the country, with all of his expenses paid.

The following year, spent in Mexico and Central America, played a strong developmental role in Merritt's thinking. As a youth he had been profoundly influenced by the novelist S. Weir Mitchell, who had encouraged free inquiry into folklore and strange phenomena. Dr. Charles Eucharist de Medicis Sajous, renowned for his pioneer studies into the functions of the ductless glands, taught him a respect for science and the scientific method. Both of these intellectual fevers he fed at the "sacred well" of Chichen Itza; exploring the Mayan city of Tuluum; treasure hunting in Yucatan and undergoing rites by which he became the blood-brother of an Indian tribe in Miraflores.

When the heat lifted, he returned to the PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER and eventually rose to the position of night city editor. Veteran companion journalists, James J. O'Neill and Colonel George Kennedy remembered him as a "superlative" newspaperman whose flair for vividly covering executions, murders, suicides, hangings and at least one "personally conducted lynching," was unsurpassed.

Inordinately sensitive, Merritt drank himself into restfulness after each of these sessions. This wholesale contact with the more gruesome and soul-sickening aspects of life were later compensated for by escape into fantasy.

His work as Philadelphia correspondent for Morrill Goddard, editor of THE SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT of the Hearst newspapers, resulted in an offer which brought him to New York in 1912 and a life-time career on the publication which was to evolve into THE AMERICAN WEEKLY.

Always a six-day-a-week job during Goddard's reign, life on THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, while well paid, permitted a young writer little time for side ventures. Yet, encouraged by the adulation he plunged into the writing of his first novel-length story, a sequel to *The Moon Pool,* entitled *The Conquest of the Moon Pool.* The reaction that followed the completion of the sequel, published in six weekly installments beginning in the February 15, 1919 ALL-STORY, verged on hysteria.

Speaking of his personal feelings, Edmond Hamilton, veteran science fiction author, echoed the fascination of thousands when he said: "I had a newspaper route about that time and when Merritt's long-awaited sequel to *The Moon Pool* came out, I carried papers one night each week with the ALL-STORY MAGAZINE held three inches before my eyes, avoiding automobiles and street-cars by the grace of God, and heaving every paper on the wrong porch."

Re-read from the vantage point of the somewhat more sophisticated modern reader, *The Conquest of the Moon Pool* reveals glaring flaws. In contrast to *The Moon Pool* there are sequences that show obvious signs of haste. The movement of events follows the standard pattern of earlier period thrillers. The characters are stereotypes: Larry O'Keefe, the Irishman; Olaf, the Scandinavian and Von Hertzdorf, the treacherous German (who, in a later edition and in a different political climate, is converted to Marakinoff, the Russian devil); Lakla, the hand-maiden (personification of good), and Yolara, dark priestess of evil.

Along with them are such stock chillers as frog men, dwarf men, and dead-alive men and the love scenes make no concession to a world already climbing out of Victorian prudery.

Yet the novel holds a unique magic for readers. It is an honest story. It evokes more than a hint of the strangest mysteries and the imagination of the author never falters in his brilliant preoccupation with the unearthly, the terrifying and the bizarre.

It also promises rich, colorful, heroic action in the tradition of the *Odyssey* and it keeps that promise. The age-old struggle between good and evil with the cleavage sharply differentiated, forms the basis of the plot. In this contest, the reader is thrilled by flights of imaginative fantasy reminiscent of the best of H. Rider Haggard.

Greatest victory of all, Merritt transcended the coldness and dehumanization that frequently accompanies pure fantasy. His word pictures form a mood.

Humanity shines from this work. For every stock character there is a brilliantly original one of his own creating. The Shining One, a robot of pure force with fantastic powers, becomes believable as its intelligence acquires human-like drives of personal pride, and desire for achievement and power.

The Silent Ones, ageless, godlike men from an ancient civilization which created The Shining One —now aloof and inscrutable—call upon ancient science to thwart the ambitions of this strange thinking force and its dreadful omniscience. When they have destroyed their creation: "No flames now in their ebon eyes—for the flickering fires were quenched in great tears, streaming down the marble white faces."

Basic patterns for other Merritt novels were established in *The Moon Pool.* Future stories would always be built on the conflict of light against darkness. There would always be a beautiful priestess of evil, and the villains would be memorably, brilliantly characterized. Forms which are generally symbols of repulsion, the frog men in *The Moon Pool;* the spider men and the snake women in *The Snake Mother;* Ricori, the gangster in *Burn, Witch, Burn,* are converted by literary sorcery into sympathetic and admirable characters.

One of the most impressive aspects of Merritt's success was the period in which it was achieved. Within the space of not much more than a year, the era of the scientific romance had blossomed to its fullest flower. Competing with Merritt for the public's attention, often in the same publications, were a glittering assemblage of fantasy classics by masters of the art. J. U. Giesy had broken new ground only eight months previously with the first of his occult-interplanetary trilogy, *Palos, of the Dog Star Pack.* Praise for Victor Rousseau's surgical fantasy, *Draft of Eternity,* still echoes in the readers' departments. *Citadel of Fear* was the work of Francis Stevens, a woman whose stories displayed such beauty of style and narrative skill that for years it was thought that Merritt had written them under a pen name. *Who Wants a Green Bottle?,* a brilliant effort by the greatly underrated Tod Robbins, had appeared only three months before.

A young man who—forty years later—would earn the title of "The Dean of Science Fiction Writers," Murray Leinster, had an early story, *The Runaway Skyscraper* in that year's ARGOSY. Max Brand was also making memorable contributions to fantasy with *Devil Ritter, John Ovington Returns* and the grisly *That Receding Brow,* which ran in the very same issue as the first installment of *The Conquest of the Moon Pool.*

While Merritt's novel was still being serialized, Ray Cummings' *The Girl in the Golden Atom* appeared and a clamor for a sequel, only slightly less intense than that which had greeted Merritt's *Moon Pool* arose. *The Planeteer, The Lord of Death* and *The Queen of Life,* the threesome that established Homer Eon Flint's reputation were soon to follow.

Scarcely was Merritt's novel concluded, than Austin Hall's imaginative triumph, *Into the Infinite,* was begun. Before the year's end the brilliant scientific romancer, George Allan England was to thrill a wide audience with *The Flying Legion.* BLUE BOOK had a short time previously pub-

lished what many believe to be Edgar Rice Burrough's best story, *The People That Time Forgot*, sequel to *The Land That Time Forgot*. In the same magazine, a brilliant but little-known Britisher, William Hope Hodgson, increased his reader following with *The Terrible Derelict*.

ARGOSY, had old-hand Garrett Smith taking bows for *After a Million Years*. On every side, competing for attention were such renowned story tellers as Sax Rohmer, Edison Marshall, Philip M. Fisher, Charles B. Stilson and Loring Brent.

That Merritt was singled out and accorded unique prestige amidst such a brilliant galaxy of performers, reveals how completely he captivated the imagination of the readers, and explains why no one has contested the title conferred on him—*A. Merritt: Lord of Fantasy*.

Using the battlefields of France as a locale, Merritt next wrote a short story entitled *Three Lines of Old French*, which appeared in the August 9, 1919 issue of ALL STORY. The style was an abrupt departure from that of his just-published novel. It was restrained, almost journalistic in tone, but still had about it much of the same hauntingly imaginative quality which had characterized *The People of the Pit* and *The Moon Pool*.

It deals with a surgeon in France who decides to conduct a psychological experiment on a soldier almost paralyzed with battle fatigue and half-hypnotized by strain. The medical man presses a piece of paper in the soldier's hand with a line from a French ballad, *And there she waits to greet him when all his days are done*. Then he passes a sprig of flowers before the man's eyes.

The soldier's subconscious mind accepts these symbols and he is plunged into a fantasy world in which he is carried into the past, to the garden of beautiful Lucie de Tocquelain. He falls in love with her, but rejoicing in the knowledge that there is another life, he wills to return so that he can tell his comrades that death is an illusion. Before he leaves, the French lass scribbles three lines on a piece of paper and thrusts it into his pocket.

Emerging from his trance, the soldier is crushed by the realization that it was all an experiment—until he finds the crumpled slip of paper and reads the girl's brief and moving message.

Nor grieve, dear heart, nor fear the seeming—
Here is waking after dreaming.
She who loves you,
Lucie

As a work of art, there is no question that *Three Lines of Old French* would not be out of place in an anthology of outstanding American short stories, even though elements of it show the influence of Robert W. Chambers' charming fantasy, *The Demoiselle D'Ys*. A stranger tribute was to be Merritt's reward, however; one similar to that experienced by Arthur Machen when his short story, *The Bowmen*, appeared in the LONDON EVENING NEWS for September 29, 1914. Letters began to pour in, particularly from England, praising Merritt and thanking him. Bereaved parents, grasping for a spark of reason in the tragic loss of a loved one in battle had taken hope from Merritt's intimation of a life after death.

The Moon Pool and *The Conquest of the Moon Pool* were combined under the title of the original novelette and issued in hard covers by Putnam in 1919. The book sold well and Liveright later took over the reprint rights. *"The Moon Pool" has been constantly in print for forty years, selling steadily through prosperity, war and depression, despite three magazine reprintings and pocket book editions totaling several hundred thousand copies.* Never a hard-cover best seller, it has nevertheless become an established classic of fantasy.

The most controversial work of Merritt's has always been *The Metal Monster*, published as an eight-part serial in ARGOSY—ALL-STORY, beginning with the August 7, 1920 issue. Merritt said of the story: "I have never been satisfied with it. It has some of the best writing in it that I ever did and some of the worst. It has always been a problem child."

The novel is in a sense, a sequel to *The Conquest of the Moon Pool*, since one of the lead characters and narrator Dr. Walter T. Goodwin appears again, and references are made to incidents in the previous stories. Sensitive to the slightest criticism, Merritt lost confidence in this work when reader reaction proved mixed.

Merritt let out all the stops on *The Metal Monster*. That it is overwritten, Merritt himself was the first to acknowledge, but far from being a failure it is probably his most successful novel. Beginning with its opening passage: *"In this great crucible of life we call the world—in the vaster one we call the universe—the mysteries lie close packed, uncountable as grains of sand on ocean's shores. They thread gigantic the star-flung spaces; they creep, atomic, beneath the microscope's peering eye. They walk beside us, unseen and unheard, calling out to us, asking why we are deaf to their crying, blind to their wonder,"* the novel strikes a serious philosophical and later an intellectual note which interpenetrates the action.

Ray Bradbury in his short story, *Forever and the Earth*, tries to imagine how Thomas Wolfe would have described space and other worlds, had he put his mind to it or had the opportunity to visit them. Wolfe could hardly have improved on the inspired cosmic passages in which Merritt visualizes a world of metal intelligences hurtling through interstellar space, seeding uncounted worlds with offspring—one of them our earth!

The Metal Monster is the best unified of all Merritt's earlier novels and the tremendous descriptive passages delineating the fantastically alien concept of sentient, intelligent, metallic life succeeds admirably in poetically transmitting a mood of near-belief. A triumph for so difficult a theme.

Three years passed before Merritt completed another work, *The Face in the Abyss*, a 35,000-word short novel. Restraint was evident throughout the narrative, a restraint enlivened by a masterful technique and a bell-like clarity. There were invisible flying snakes, dinosaurs, spider-men and, most striking of all, a superb characterization of the Snake-Mother—part woman, part serpent. She was the last survivor of an ancient race, custodian of

secrets and wisdom far in advance of human achievement. All this Merritt projected against the inspired backdrop of a tremendous carven image of an evil face, from which flowed tears of molten gold!

Readers who had reservations as to Merritt's entertainment index, and who had found his *tour de force, "The Metal Monster,"* too much for them, were completely won over by the spell of this new fantasy. With so much hinted at, and so very much left unsaid, *The Face in the Abyss,* which appeared in the September 8, 1923 issue of ARGOSY—ALL-STORY, demanded a sequel.

But Merritt was no longer compelled or disposed to drive himself night and day to turn out inspired follow-ups for fickle audiences. His revenge was incomparable.

He made them wait six years for the sequel! He could hardly have been hard-pressed for time, because two other novels appeared during the interim, but he had apparently made up his mind to write only what he wanted, when he wanted.

Some months after the appearance of *The Face in the Abyss,* Bob Davis received a novelette from Merritt entitled *The Ship of Ishtar.* He returned it to the author, saying it was a shame to cramp so wondrous an idea by confining it to novelette length. Why not expand the basic concept to full novel length?

Merritt tried, but chafed under the task.

He wrote some of the last chapters first as independent episodes, then gradually filled in the gaps between. The novel showed it. The early portion, where the two ends of the ship are separated by a wall of force, is quite clearly a different sort of tale from the central section which hinges on action adventure or the final portion which is composed of a series of superbly wrought literary exercises. Yet superb craftsmanship is evident in every line and the singing rhythm of the prose carries one along with intense fascination to the very end, despite glaring inadequacies of plot and narrative construction.

This story is not science fiction, even by courtesy. It is sheer fantasy, but a truly remarkable fantasy with at least one chapter, "The King of Two Deaths," closer to genius than to talent.

The Ship of Ishtar began in ARGOSY—ALL-STORY for November 8, 1924, and ran for six weekly installments. The accolades that followed were sincere, as ARGOSY's poll fourteen years later confirmed. But now something new was happening in the science fiction world. Even as the period of the scientific romance blossomed and reached its height, another concept of science fiction was being revived. It challenged romance solely for entertainment's sake, and demanded that science fiction incorporate the plausible logic of Edgar Allan Poe and the prophetic vision of Jules Verne to become an expression of man's thirst for knowledge and progress. It was headed by Hugo Gernback, who, as far back as 1911, in his popular scientific magazine, MODERN ELECTRICS, had written *Ralph 124C41 Plus,* a true miracle of plausible prophecy.

As his MODERN ELECTRICS metamorphised into ELECTRICAL EXPERIMENTER and finally into SCIENCE AND INVENTION, he continued to promote science fiction of this type. Shortly after *The Ship of Ishtar* appeared, ARGOSY—ALL-STORY was forced to take cognizance of the new trend by introducing Ralph Milne Farley with a great hullabaloo as to his scientific qualifications and the technical accuracy of his *The Radio Man.*

The instantaneous success of the first science fiction magazine, AMAZING STORIES, introduced in 1926 by Gernback, with the accent on more science, was the handwriting on the wall for the scientific romance. As high priest of the old order, A. Merritt stood to lose the most.

Then a remarkable thing happened. With the entire honor roll of the past to choose from in the field of reprints; with the necessity of selecting stories that most closely typified his ideas imperative, Hugo Gernsback made a startling exception. That exception was A. Merritt. He elected to reprint every science fiction story Merritt had written up to that time—the book version of *The Moon Pool, The Face in the Abyss, The People of the Pit* (twice, once in the monthly and once in AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL). Most astonishing of all, he had Merritt revise *The Metal Monster* and ran it as *The Metal Emperor* in SCIENCE AND INVENTION in twelve monthly installments.

The reading public's response was electric. It was as if Merritt had been discovered for the first time. Readers referred to him as a "genius." Manuscripts from new writers distinctly betrayed his influence and such later well-known names as Jack Williamson and P. Schuyler Miller openly acknowledged their literary debt to him.

The old order would die, and with it most of the "Elder Gods." But Merritt would reign on!

To conquer the specialized new world of the science fiction magazines Merritt had fired a fusilade; the realm of weird-fantasy he toppled with a single shot.

It happened this way. A novelette whose theme symbolized the ages of struggle between man and the forest, *The Woman of the Wood,* was submitted by Merritt to ARGOSY—ALL-STORY. In one of his rare errors of judgement, Bob Davis rejected it as being "plotless." On condition that not a single word be altered, A. Merritt offered it to WEIRD TALES, where it was published in the August, 1926 number. Merritt did have to prove himself again. Years later, Farnsworth Wright admitted that this hauntingly atmospheric tale of the birch forest which assumed human shape to save itself from destruction, was the most popular novelette which WEIRD TALES had ever published.

Bent on campaigns of literary imperialism, Merritt next invaded the mystery field with *Seven Footprints to Satan,* a five-part novel beginning in ARGOSY—ALL-STORY for July 2, 1927. Loyal science fiction and fantasy fans were disappointed, but the mystery fans were delighted. Built around the sinister figure of a man who calls himself Satan, the novel deals with the activities of a cult formed to play a deadly game where the stakes are fortune or death. Replete with dozens of unique melodramatic devices and a full retinue of stock ones, the novel was a set-up for Hollywood and First National had it in movie houses even before the appearance of the Boni & Livewright hard cover edi-

tion in February, 1928. Within a month the book had gone through three editions and into a low-price Grossett & Dunlap reprint, illustrated with stills from the motion picture.

This was heady brew for A. Merritt. Only one year earlier, Putnam had been unable to sell a pitifully small edition of a thousand copies of *The Ship of Ishtar* in book form and the sheets for the last 300 copies were finally purchased by Munsey, bound and distributed to readers of ARGOSY—ALL-STORY MAGAZINE.

For the next three years Merritt rested on his laurels, toying with a new novel he had picked up and put down without completing since 1923—*The Fox Woman.* Unable to develop the plot properly he put it aside with only about 15,000 words completed—he never did complete it—and started work on a sequel to *The Face in the Abyss.*

Seven years had passed since that story had first appeared in ARGOSY—ALL-STORY. With *The Snake Mother* he returned to the fold. The title character is the best rounded, most sympathetic and memorable one he ever created, though in this novel, which ran to seven installments beginning in the October 25, 1930 ARGOSY, he fashioned a villain with truly captivating appeal—Nimer! Nimer is a disembodied intelligence—evil incarnate—who is able to take over a human body as easily as changing to a new suit. The calibre of his strategy and his unquestionable courage, even against formidable odds makes him a figure of irresistible appeal.

A marvelous blend of action, superb characterization, philosophy, poetic prose, involving such elements as atomic powers and the strange Dream Makers (who could fabricate a hypnotic illusion like a story on a moving picture screen) *The Snake Mother* is an imaginative triumph.

If there has ever been any doubt that Merritt was escaping from the brutalities and injustices of the world in his novels and short-stories, it was dispelled by *The Dwellers in the Mirage,* which began in the January 23, 1932 number of ARGOSY. The yellow-haired Leif Langdon is unquestionably the youthful A. Merritt. Tsantawu, the Cherokee, Leif's guide, parallels the Indian who accompanied Merritt during his early sojourn in Mexico. The architecture and surroundings in the fictional land of the mirage is reminiscent of the Mayan ruins he explored.

With many Merritt readers this story is an all-time favorite. The tiny golden people, the nightmarish Kraken, the good and beautiful Evalie, Leif himself, (whom all believe to be a reincarnation of Dwayanu, once lord of this underground realm and lover of Lur the witch woman) are elements unified by the struggles of two women to gain the love of Leif. One, the dark Lur, believes him to be the reincarnation of Dwayanu, who once loved her and whom she loved in return. The other Evalie, is the epitome of everything fine, noble and good in women. In the magazine and book version, Lur, with her faithful white wolf, is killed trying to destroy Evalie. Then Leif takes Evalie back to the surface world.

Laying bare the human temptation and gnawing doubts that haunt all men, the author has Leif reflect:

"Ai, Lur—Witch-woman! I see you lying there, smiling with lips grown tender—the white wolf's head upon your breast! And Dwayanu still lives within me!

Abruptly, Merritt did another switch. With a theme borrowed from Fitz-James O'Brien's *The Wondersmith,* he produced a tale of witchcraft which he originally called *The Dolls of Mme. Mandilip,* but which ARGOSY changed to *Burn Witch Burn!* The novel, which began in the October 22, 1932 number, bears the stamp of a skilled professional as it moves at a breathless pace to unfold the story of a sinister old woman who sends her animated mannikins from a night-shadowed doll house with their poisoned needle-swords to slay her unsuspecting victims. Like *Seven Footprints to Satan,* the film producers quickly seized upon this one, casting Lionel Barrymore in the role of Mme. Mandilip in *The Devil Dolls.*

Creep, Shadow!, commencing in ARGOSY for September 8, 1934, marked the end of Merritt's most productive period. *Creep, Shadow* is a sequel to *Burn Witch Burn!* This time, Merritt dwelt in sombre imaginative fashion on the near-lost powers of witchcraft surviving from 10,000 years in the past, implying shadow life and shadow creatures. Where before he was impatient to plunge into his wonder-worlds, now he proceeds deliberately, examining the problem intellectually before increasing the tempo of the action. There are some brilliant scenes and fine artistic passages in the novel, but it reveals a Merritt more concerned with the method than the substance of his art. Though he lived another nine years, Merritt never completed another story, contenting himself with revising his old ones.

Pride in his art remained, but he ceased to dream.

Always gracious toward his admirers, Merritt gave generously of his time to the science fiction fan movement. When ARGOSY begged for something from his pen, he pleaded lack of time, but he presented as a gift to the editors of FANTASY MAGAZINE, a short story, *The Drone,* to commemorate the second anniversary of that fine fan magazine in 1934.

Even in this tiny realm of amateur publication, Merritt was to establish his supremacy. Seventeen authors were asked by the editors of the same magazine to write a chapter each in a round-robin novel, *Cosmos.* Each writer was requested to continue from where another left off, but the chapters had to be complete in themselves. The authors were Ralph Milne Farley, David H. Keller, Arthur J. Burks, Bob Olsen, Francis Flagg, John W. Campbell Jr., Otis Adelbert Kline, E. Hoffman Price, Abner J. Gelula, Raymond A. Palmer, J. Harvey Haggard, Edward E. Smith, P. Schuyler Miller, L. A. Eshbach, Eando Binder, Edmond Hamilton, and A. Merritt himself. A vote of the readers established that Merritt's chapter, *The Last Poet and the Robots,* describing how a scientist-poet destroys a world of robots who have rebelled and conquered man was overwhelmingly the favorite.

Emile Schumacher, a well-known feature writer

for THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, returned to New York on Thursday, August 29, 1943, after completing an unusual assignment given him by A. Merritt, who was now full editor. He had been sent to secure eye-witness material about a volcano that had blasted out of a Mexican cornfield to cover seventy-five square miles of surrounding countryside with ash.

"I knew the story would appeal to A. Merritt with his tremendous fondness for the occult," Schumacher said, quite possibly to justify his linking of the mysterious volcano's eruption with the dying curse of an Aztec Emperor, which he fabricated from whole cloth. He found Merritt cheerful, but looking tired and haggard and about to fly down to Florida for a rest.

"Have the library dig up a really spectacular photograph of the volcano belching smoke and fire," was the last order that Merritt gave him. "Then I'll have Lee do a portrait drawing of Moctezuma the Second, who mistook the invading Cortes for the fair god Quezacoatl of the Aztec legend—a mistake that subsequently proved fatal," he added contemplatively.

The next morning Merritt was dead of a heart attack suffered at the age of fifty-nine while at Indian Rock Beach, Florida.

His work lives on. Popular Publications, Inc. brought out a new periodical—A. MERRITT'S MAGAZINE—so entitled because of his continuing popularity with readers everywhere. It appeared in December 1949 and ran five bi-monthly issues. No other fantasy author has been so honored.

Avon Publications, publishers of pocket editions, reprinted *all* of his fiction. Edition has followed edition for the last seventeen years. The seven novels and one short story collection have sold upwards of four million copies, Avon estimates, and the end is not yet. *Seven Footprints to Satan* has sold one million copies alone, and *Burn Witch Burn!*, 500,000.

Liveright reports that five Merritt novels are still in print and selling steadily in hard covers, despite the pocket book editions. The five novels are *The Moon Pool, Dwellers in the Mirage, The Face in the Abyss, Seven Footprints to Satan* and *Burn Witch Burn!*

Abraham Merritt could not have wished for a more appropriate monument.

YOUR SPACE

WHETHER OR NOT it is wise for a science fiction magazine to publish a *letters-from-readers* department has always been a highly controversial subject wherever editors, writers and fans congregate. The arguments, pro and con, if threaded on a single beam of light, would probably stretch from here to Betelgeuse. We won't go into them here—it would only provoke more argument and the end-result would be interspatial chaos, with the contending sides waging a battle which would make Armageddon seem no more than a small, local conflict of minor significance.

We've always believed that the best way for an editor to slice through a problem like that and reach a major decision is—to be guided by his ESP impluses. And those impulses whisper to us—in a very insistent way—that a *letters-from-readers* department strengthens the bond between writers and readers and has so much to commend it that the opposing arguments shrivel up and fall away, however convincing they may seem to the opposition. So—*you* will get space—at least two pages—for as long as you wish to occupy it.

If we had any doubts at all, the many enthusiastic letters we've received since SATELLITE went large-size has completely dispelled them. You *do* want a forum, and we propose to establish one, even though space limitations impose certain restrictions. We can't undertake to comment editorially on your letters, for instance. If we attempted to do so there would be far less space left for the letters themselves and the over-all diversity of the opinions expressed would be diminished. And we've always felt that a really discerning letter speaks for itself and needs no editorial garnishing. Candor and sincerity are the major criterions.

LEO MARGULIES,
Publisher

DEPARTMENT of LOST STORIES

Three months ago we announced that each month SATELLITE *would publish in this department one or two science fiction and fantasy classics from the past—stories lost to all but a pinpoint scattering of readers with very retentive memories across the years. This month we have a quite startling surprise for you. A short while ago Fritz Leiber moved from Chicago to California, and before moving did a considerable amount of packing and cellar-to-attic exploration. Quite by accident he came upon a short-story manuscript with a familiar name in the upper right-hand corner—his own! For a moment he had no clear recollection of having written the story, but then the title and the opening paragraph jogged his memory a bit and he recalled that he had always regarded it as one of his very best stories. He re-read it with a critical eye, saw no reason to change his mind, and submitted it to* SATELLITE. *We in turn read it with a severely critical eye and decided—that it was a very unusual story indeed, a top-vintage Leiber! Here, then, is a* truly *lost science fiction story.*

Psychosis From Space

by FRITZ LEIBER

YOUNG DR. WALLISER'S MIND was in a pleasant whirl, as if he'd just attended a symphony in combined sound, color, and electric vibration. What had really happened was that he'd spent a morning touring I.P.P.R.—the Institute for Psychological and Psychiatrical Research. And that meant a great deal more to Dr. Walliser than any symphony, no matter how stimulating.

For it had been his lifelong ambition to get on the I.P.P.R. staff, and now his ambition had come true. To cap everything, he was actually talking with the Director of the Institute, Dr. Stegman himself, and walking by his side toward the wards.

"Rember, Dr. Walliser," said the older man, "you are entering the first line of defense in a never-ceasing battle for the sanity of mankind. Our ancestors were confident that the future would see all mental ills catalogued and cured. Poor misguided idealists!" He ran his fingers through his iron-grey hair. His eyes looked tired.

"Oh, I won't deny we have learned a great deal about the human mind. But can we cure cosmic shock? Do we have a treatment for gravitational dementia or spaceman's psychosis? It's an inescapable fact, Walliser, that one-fifth of the population of the world is insane or severely neurotic. And the percentage is constantly growing."

Dr. Walliser nodded gravely, but his imagination was busy with what he'd seen earlier—the brain-wave projectors, the gravitational therapy apparatus, and the superb Rand hypnotizers.

"Our task is not an easy one," Stegman said. "I.P.P.R. is constantly under attack. Misguided humanitarians want to stop our work. The Ultimo Party wants to see the Institute transformed into a gigantic laboratory for remaking the germ plasm of the human species. Their rallying cry is: "A New Humanity to Replace the Old." The Spacemen's Co-operative brings powerful political pressure to bear on us. Since we depend on government funds, we must be very careful. Each one of us must watch his step. I know, Dr. Walliser, that you will be a loyal and—well, circumspect member of our staff."

Dr.Stegman indicated with a wave of his hand the doors they were passing. "Each one of these, Dr. Walliser, houses a unique mental problem. For example, take that room ahead—L-Fifty-seven. A most baffling case, though I've not had a chance to look in on it personally. You probably heard of

The Institute of Psychological and Psychiatrical Research waged a never-ceasing battle for the sanity of mankind. But the patients in the wards were not always as unbalanced as they seemed.

it in the tele-news six weeks back. Professor Dickenson."

"You mean the man who claimed to have invented a spaceship that would travel at a speed greater than that of light?"

"He's the fellow. A scientific crank. There was little or no publicity when he took off. But then his ship disappeared, and the news people tried to build up interest. They made a one day's sensation of it when his ship was picked up derelict off Saturn, with Dickenson half-starved and violently insane. He'd wrecked much of his special machinery, evidently because it had not fulfilled his expectations. Now he's in the hands of Doctor Trand, one of our most brilliant younger psychiatrists. But after two weeks Trand reports no progress whatever. Very possibly another failure for I.P.P.R."

A low, well-modulated voice began to issue from the Director's vest pocket. "Dr. Stegman. Dr. Stegman," it said.

The Director sighed and took out a two-way pocket television piece about as big as a watch.

"Is it the Humanitarian Protest Committee?" he asked the pretty blonde girl whose troubled face appeared on the dial.

She nodded. He put the tiny transmitting and receiving instrument back in his pocket.

"Well, Doctor Walliser, I must get along. See as much as you can of our plant before you settle down to your first assignments. Goodbye and good luck."

He hurried down a side corridor.

The door of L-57 opened. A red-haired, capable-looking young nurse stuck her head out.

"Doctor, will you give me a hand," she asked curtly. "Patient's violent and I can't locate Doctor Trand."

Walliser hesitated for a second and then followed her.

"Above all, don't try to talk to him!" she said. "That makes him worse."

A somewhat frail and scrawny looking old man had left his bed and was standing with his back to a wall. He seemed to be trying to mould himself to the smooth plastic. There was something pitiful about his gaunt face and white hair. When Walliser and the nurse approached him, he shuddered violently, and a stream of gibberish issued from his writhing lips.

"A hypodermic would be in order, I think," whispered Walliser, and then felt like biting his tongue. Of course, it was an emergency, but still he had no business making suggestions, especially to an experienced nurse.

The red-head wrinkled her forehead and nodded.

"I was about to give him one," she whispered back. "Otherwise he may injure himself before Trand can be located."

She slid open a wall cabinet and prepared an injection. Walliser helped her hold the old man while he administered it. Dickenson struggled, but only weakly and in a purposeless fashion. Finally his body went limp. As they were getting him back into bed, the door opened.

"Just what have you been doing, Nurse Minter? And just who is this young man with you?" Dr. Trand's voice was as cold and supercilious as his face. The red-head bridled at it.

"Dickenson became violent," she said. "I was unable to reach you. A hypodermic was imperative."

"Your patient's violence was considerable," said Walliser. "As for myself, I am Doctor John Walliser. I have only recently been attached to the staff of the Institute."

Trand's lips tightened in a sardonic grimace. "Your inexperience," he said bitingly, "hardly excuses your behavior. I'm quite sure Nurse Minter misrepresented the case to you, with her cock-and-bull story about being unable to locate me. Nevertheless, your conduct is indefensible. It will be reported to Director Stegman. For the present, you will return to your quarters."

Walliser could see that the nurse was having difficulty keeping her anger in check. He felt a strong impulse to say something more in her behalf, but realized it would be a very unwise move. After all, he *was* a newcomer. Doubtless Trand was in the right. Walliser and the nurse left the room together, with Trand glaring after them, his lips set in tight lines.

Nurse Minter exploded the instant she reached the corridor.

"That was just an act. He's been trying to get rid of me for days, because I know that he's been tormenting that poor old man in order to get hold of his scientific secrets. Trand's one of the Ultimos. He makes no secret of it."

Walliser suddenly felt glad that he had not tried to defend Nurse Minter. Her startling accusation seemed to indicate that she was suffering from a typical nurse's delusion. Trying to steal secrets from a man who was admittedly both insane and a scientific crank made no sense at all.

"Of course," the redhead went on, "I wouldn't dare tell old Stegman or any of the others. They'd side with Trand immediately. For that matter"—here her features relaxed in a smile—"I don't know why I'm telling you. Do you?"

Walliser shook his head. But in spite of himself, he liked her smile.

"I wonder," said the redhead, opening the door of a pneumo-elevator, "if you'd do something for me. Oh, nothing to get you into trouble. You see, it's probably just a matter of time now until I *am* fired. But I really have a good and sufficient reason for believing what I just said about Trand. Would you meet me in the social room tonight after supper? Everybody goes there. I'd like to tell you some more about Trand and Dickenson. Then if you think I've just got a bee in my bonnet, you can tell me so quite frankly. Is it a bet?"

The redhead mistook Wallister's hesitation for agreement.

"Good!" she said. And, before he could decide to stop her, she vanished into the pneumo-elevator, which shot upward with a soft, sighing sound.

Walliser shrugged his shoulders. Then it occurred to him that he barely had time to get to the lecture on brain-wave equations.

That evening Walliser felt both excited and anxious as he entered the large, softly-illuminated

social room. He had just passed through the lobby of the Institute. A group of Ultimos were out in front, picketing. Their portable projectors flashed such statements as "Why Waste Money Curing Individuals, when the Whole Human Race Needs Treatment?" "Devote Yourselves to the Future; Progress Demands a New Species!" "Create a New Species to Fit a New World!" and "This Institution is a Bar to Progress. It does Nothing but Patch Up Misfits."

There was something deadly and chilling about the quiet fanaticism of the pickets—young men and women, all of them. They knew that, as long as the powerful Spaceman's Co-operative was backing the Ultimos the Institute would have to tolerate their bold propaganda.

Walliser looked around the social room, but nowhere could he see Nurse Minter.

"Are you Doctor Walliser?" a petite brunette asked suddenly, emerging from a shadowed recess. She giggled self-consciously when he nodded, and handed him an envelope.

"Nurse Minter asked me to give you this."

Walliser thanked her and she wandered off, smiling at him knowingly. He resented the smile. Evidently Nurse Minter had neglected to tell the girl that this was not a social "date" but a professional one.

The note was brief and to the point, but not very illuminating.

"Sorry I couldn't meet you at the social room, but I'm taking advantage of an unexpected opportunity to expose Dr. Trand. Come to R-38 and I can give you direct proof of my accusations. Please. This is important."

Walliser was irritated. Just where was room R-38? In the living quarters of the staff, wasn't it? Well, he would hardly be compromising himself by going there. After all, it was up to him to see the matter through. He couldn't just forget about it.

At this time of evening R-corridor was deserted. Walliser received a considerable surprise when he noted that the name-plate on the door of 38 read DR. TRAND. But his surprise was greater when Nurse Minter opened the door.

"Come on in," she whispered. "I've just got him hypnotized. Caught him taking a nap and used the usual technique. Come on in before someone notices us."

Walliser saw his career going up in smoke. Why, this sort of business was decidedly criminal, according to the strict hypnotism codes.

"You can't do this!" he whispered angrily. But he let himself be drawn inside.

"Can't I?" grinned the redhead. "Just listen to what he has to say!"

Trand, clad in purple pyjamas and a green dressing robe, was propped up comfortably in bed. His vacant eyes were fixed on the small Rand apparatus, from which a tiny light was flickering and changing colors. From the same apparatus a phonographic voice was issuing, monotonous but subtly soothing.

Nurse Minter went over to it and began to speak in rhythm with the voice, imitating its tone. As her voice became louder, she decreased the volume of the phonographic one. Wallister understood the procedure. She was making a voice-transference. He consoled himself with the thought that it was now his plain duty to see that Trand came to no harm. He would listen for a little, and then step in and put a stop to the whole crazy businses.

Nurse Minter was beginning her questions.

"Doctor Trand, can you hear me?"

The vacantly-staring figure on the bed nodded mechanically.

"Are you a member of the Ultimo Party?"

"Yes." Trand's voice was somewhat thick, as if his tongue had become swollen, filling too much of his mouth.

"Are you interested in obtaining the secret of Professor Dickenson's faster-than-light spaceship?"

An inner resistance in Trand seemed to be fighting the question. His lips opened and closed several times before they emitted a faint but distinctly audible, "Yes."

"All this proves nothing," whispered Walliser. "The Ultimo Party isn't illegal. And anyone would be interested in knowing Dickenson's secret—if he *has* a secret, which I doubt."

The redhead silenced him with an impatient gesture.

"Doctor Trand, would it mean a great deal to the Ultimo Party to obtain Dickenson's secret? Would it be of tremendous help to them in the revolution they are planning?"

Trand's "yes" was slow in coming, but unmistakable. Nurse Minter immediately went on to her next question.

"Do you know what's wrong with Dickenson's mind?"

Again an unwilling "yes." Walliser felt a thrill of excitement. That last "yes" meant something. Stegman had said that Trand had reported himself baffled by the case of the elderly inventor.

"Are you purposely delaying his cure in order to get his secret out of him first? *Are you?*"

Trand's body began to rock a little, and his hands made uneasy, fumbling movements. Obviously the last question had provoked even more inner resistance in Trand than the ones which had preceded it. The unconscious struggle seemed dangerously near to breaking his trance. Walliser waited anxiously for the reply. It came from an unexpected quarter.

"Interesting visitors Doctor Trand has, eh?"

Walliser and Nurse Minter whirled around. Standing outside the opened door were three hard-faced young men. Well-dressed, cultured-looking but coldly menacing. Walliser thought he'd seen one of them with the Ultimo pickets. They filed into the room, the last to enter shutting the door noiselessly behind him.

"Hypnotism," said the first, after a quick glance around. He drew an automatic pistol from an under-arm pocket. He turned to Nurse Minter.

"Wake him," he commanded in a toneless, cultivated voice.

"He's in deep trance," said Nurse Minter. "I refuse to wake him. If you kill me, you won't be able to either."

The young man with the weapon raised an eyebrow quizzically.

"I think you're lying," he said, "but we'll soon make sure. Meanwhile, keep quiet."

He motioned to one of his companions. "See if you can wake him," he said.

Walliser realized it was a tight situation. He knew that these young fanatics would kill without compunction, with a cold, scientific zeal. He was not ashamed of the fear he experienced.

He heard some laughing voices approaching down the hall, and straightneed in sudden wariness. He saw his chance.

"Nurse Minter," he said, in a calm but fairly loud voice, "I think it's time we were going. Doctor Trand is getting rather tired."

The young man lifted his automatic.Then he scowled perplexedly. He knew the approaching staff members were near enough to hear a shriek, or even the sounds of a struggle.

"Yes, Doctor Trand," said Nurse Minter, in an equally loud voice. "I'm sure we should give you a change to get some rest. I know you're tired."

Together they walked toward the door. The young man took a slow step toward them, then paused. He did not speak. Baffled hate gleamed from his eyes.

They opened the door. The laughing group had just passed. Nurse Minter started after them, but Walliser caught her arm.

"Come on," he said. "No use starting anything now. We've got to see Stegman first and tell him everything. I'll back you up."

They were unable to reach Stegman by radiophone. His secretary said he was in an important conference, and refused to dial his television piece, despite their entreaties. So they hurried down to his office. Again the pretty secretary blandly refused to disturb the director. She assured them, however, that he would be free within half an hour.

They had a whispered conference as to whether it would be wiser to wait, or to get in touch with some other official. They decided on the former course. Walliser had great faith in Stegman's ability to take an intelligent and sympathetic view of the whole disturbing matter.

The half hour dragged by. Then the secretary motioned them from her booth.

"He'll see you. Go right in," she said.

Nurse Minter didn't like the calculating look in the wench's eye.

The inner office was large and blank-walled. Behind a dully gleaming metal table stood Stegman, looking tired and grave.

In a large arm chair sat Dr. Trand, fully dressed. His face was serious, but it was a seriousness that masked sardonic triumph.

"Nurse Minter," said Stegman, "I am more than displeased by what you have just done. You have gone much too far. Indeed, you have made yourself subject to prosecution for criminal behavior."

"Wait a moment, sir," interrupted Walliser aggressively. "Nurse Minter's accusations are true. I can substantiate them. I tell you I heard Trand himself admit—"

"Restrain yourself, Doctor Walliser!" Stegman's voice carried the ring of authority. "Let me tell you that I find you guilty of stupidities unworthy of a psychiatrist. Any 'admissions' you may have heard from Dr. Trand were made while he was in hypnosis. Have you forgotten that a person in hypnosis can be cleverly and deceptively led into making such 'admissions?' You didn't see Trand until after he was in a state of trance, did you? I thought not. You surprise me. I took you for an intelligent young man."

"Dr. Stegman!" Nurse Minter's voice was sharp and angry. "Won't you at least listen to our side of the case? Trand is trying to steal Dickenson's secret, and—"

"Really, Nurse Minter, your ideas are preposterous. How can you believe that Dickenson *has* any secret? Everyone knows that it is impossible for an object to travel at a speed greater than that of light. The impossibility of traveling faster than light is the basis of all post-Einsteinian physics."

"But there's another thing," argued Walliser desperately. "While we were in Trand's room, we were accosted and threatened by three young men, obviously Ultimos and accomplices of Trand. One of them had an automatic pistol."

"That," said Stegman sternly, "is a deliberate lie. Four staff members saw you leave Trand's room peaceably. I have checked their statements. Moreover, they heard both of you make remarks utterly incompatible with your story of an attack."

"But that was a trick on our part to enable us to escape."

"Doctor Walliser! I will waste no more time listening to your clumsy prevarications. Nor to Nurse Minter's equally wild accusations. Leave this office immediately. Tomorrow you will learn what action I propose to take. Doctor Trand has generously asked me to let you off lightly, but I am afraid that is something I cannot do. And I shall listen to no more excuses! Leave at once!"

Walliser steeled himself to make a final furious protest. But as he fixed his angry eyes on Dr. Stegman, he saw for the first time just how utterly tired and worn the old man looked. That morning he had felt that Stegman was a well of understanding and patient sympathy, and that there was a deep bond between them. What a fool he'd been! The bent figure he now saw before him was obviously overtaxed with routine, his nerves worn to a frazzle by endless consultations and protests, a man who could not afford to take a minute more than seemed necessary in reaching a decision. What a fool he'd been to think such a man would back the word of a newcomer against the clever lies of Trand!

Walliser swallowed his indignation and followed Nurse Minter from the office. Dr. Trand permitted himself the ghost of a smile.

"Don't feel too badly about Stegman," said Nurse Minter, after the smugly courteous secrteary had watched them leave. "He's a grand old boy, really. But unfortunately he thinks the world of Trand. You couldn't have known that."

"I'd be the last person in the universe to deny that Trand has a brilliant mind," said Walliser bitterly. "Frankly, I myself still can't believe that Dickenson has any secret. Trand must be following a will-o-the-wisp—or else he's after something entirely different. But in any case, we mustn't let him get away with it. Surely there's something we

can do! Do you think we could get hold of those three cultivated young thugs before they leave? We could prove they were carrying weapons."

Nurse Minter shook her head. "Not a chance," she said. "They're gone by now. Anyway, they probably have weapon permits. Trust the Ultimos to stick to the rules!"

Then she added, in a more serious voice, "I'm sorry to have gotten you into this mess. You've been a good sport, and I feel guilty, because I've kept you nine-tenths in the dark. Tell you what, let's go to the social room, and I'll tell you the whole story. Who knows? Maybe you'll have a new slant on it."

Walliser nodded wearily.

The crowd in the social room was thinning out, and they readily found a quiet corner. He felt that he ought to be very angry with Nurse Minter. But somehow, when he looked at her frank, capable face, with its almost irresistible charm, he didn't want to be.

Instead, he found himself managing a feeble grin and murmuring, "By the way, I don't even know your first name."

She nodded, a glint of amusement coming into her eyes.

"Helen—Helen Minter, who tomorrow will be applying for a job as a lady's maid. Able. Even-tempered (I don't think!) A *practical* nurse. Experienced masseuse. Recommendations—better not ask for any. Especially don't ask I.P.P.R., which just kicked me out. Well, Doctor Walliser, shall we forget about that? I've got a long story to tell you."

"Incidentally, my name's John."

"I'll remember, John. Well, the real story begins two weeks ago, when Dickenson was brought here after his ship was picked up derelict off Saturn. The first thing that impressed me about him was the fact that his case was profoundly unlike any I'd ever come into contact with before. You know how all psychoses, no matter how different the symptoms, have a sort of family resemblance? Well, Dickenson's case impressed me as being *completely* different. Of course, the symptoms were common enough—purposeless movements, unintelligible babblings, inability to make the simplest adjustments, even occasional attacks of violence. But somehow I felt that behind all that there was a completely sane mind, trying desperately to make itself understood—and unable to.

"Oh, Trand noticed right at the start that it was something out of the ordinary. He's quick, very quick to observe things. Stegman would have sensed it, too, only he was completely worn out the one and only time he looked in on Dickenson. Yes, I know that my feeling that Dickerson was sane *inside* sounds like a delusion born of sympathy. But wait a minute. You heard what Dickenson said before we gave him the hypodermic, didn't you? Well, wasn't there something that impressed you about his babbling—something out of the ordinary?"

Walliser thought for a moment. "Yes, I believe so," he agreed hesitatingly. "I couldn't make any sense out of it, and yet I got the impression that it wasn't just a lot of meaningless sound. Come to think of it, that *is* unusual. Could it have been a language we just happen to be unfamiliar with?"

"I thought of that, too. But it seems very unlikely. surely someone would have recognized it. Besides, Dickenson was a bred-in-the-bone American. He's never been to Europe, Africa, or South America. Still, it's just barely possible, and it does happen to fit in with the rest of my story. You see, after Trand had been on the case for three days, he began to take phonographic recordings of Dickenson's voice. That's not very unusual, in itself but the *number* surprised me. He made dozens of recordings, literally dozens. And it was just after that that Dickenson began to show an abnormal fear of Trand.

"I haven't told you much about that fear, have I? It was ghastly—horrible. I've had considerable experience, and I can tell almost instantly when a patient is terrified of his nurse or physician—and I can tell when that fear is justified, too! At about the same time, Trand began to keep me out of the room as much as he could. Subtly, of course. He sent me on unnecessary errands. He said I had a disturbing effect on his patient, which interfered with the treatment.

"About three days ago I surprised them together when they weren't expecting me. I opened the door a crack and eavesdropped. Trand was playing some of those 'gibberish' recordings back at Dickenson, and Dickenson was listening intently. Believe me Doctor Walliser, the look on Dickenson's face was that of complete sanity. There was fear in his eyes, too, but it was a *sane* fear. Every once in awhile Trand would stop the recording, and Dickenson would seem to *answer* it with another outpouring of gibberish, and Trand would take a recording of his answer.

"The next day I caught them at it again. This time I listened more carefully to the recordings. Of course, I'd thought they were just the ones Trand had taken of Dickenson's voice, since the gibberish seemed similar. But they weren't at all. The voice was different. And I'm willing to stand up in court and swear that second voice was Trand's. A phonographic recording of Trand's voice. You can imagine my surprise. Trand mouthing what I'd thought was nonsense! Doctor Walliser, can you see any other explanation but that Trand had discovered how to converse with Dickenson and was trying, not to cure him, but to make him divulge some very important information?"

"Strange, very strange," murmured Walliser, frowning. "Why should Trand, if he knew Dickenson's secret language, bother to make recordings of his own voice? I suppose he wanted to preserve his questions, as well as the answers, for future reference."

"That's what I decided, too," said Nurse Minter, somewhat excitedly. "But there's more to it. The second time I eavesdropped, Dickenson gave me the impression that he was refusing to answer one of Trand's questions. At least, he wouldn't speak. Trand got up and walked over the bedside. Dickenson's fear increased. He flopped around grotesquely.

"Then Trand slowly began to feel along the man's spine with those long-fingered, strong hands of his. Oh, he might just have been making an

examination, but I couldn't stand the cold look in his eyes—that, and Dickenson's obvious terror. I barged into the room noisily. Trand straightened up immediately, and bawled me out for disturbing his patient at a crucial moment. I didn't mind.

"Afterwards, when Trand was gone, I made a careful examination of Dickenson. There were some very faint bruises in the skin over the nerve centers at the base of the skull. Another person wouldn't have given them a second thought. But they told me a lot. They told me that Trand wouldn't hesitate to resort to torture.

"Right then and there I wanted to report the whole matter, but a little thought convinced me that I wouldn't be taken seriously. It doesn't do for a nurse to make accusations, unless they're backed up with a pile of evidence. So I tried to spy on Trand even more closely. The most I could do was catch him talking with one of those three Ultimos who threatened us. That didn't mean anything. I was getting desperate. Then, right after I talked with you this morning, I got the idea about hypnotism. I knew I could catch Trand dozing. I thought that you would make a good witness—certainly better than another nurse. We'd have found out what was the matter with Dickenson. We'd have learned the secret of the phonographic recordings. But now—now it's too late for that. Trand won't let himself be caught another time. Well, what do you think of it all?"

Walliser did not reply for some time.

"About Dickenson's invention," he said. "Supposing for the moment that he wasn't a crank, and that he *had* invented a spaceship that would travel faster than light. Well, such a spaceship would give the Ultimos a decisive advantage in the revolution they would like to bring about, wouldn't it?"

He seemed to be speaking his thoughts aloud. "What's more, I have an idea that the solution of the whole problem of Dickenson's case is right within our grasp. I only wish I had a chance to listen to him again. You didn't get hold of any of those re-recordings Trand made?"

Nurse Minter shook her head. "No. I tried to several times, but he was too careful."

"That's bad. I have the feeling that, if I knew a little more, I could put my finger on the truth. I know that sounds boastful, but—Isn't there anything else about Dickenson you can tell me, Helen? Some other symptom you may have noticed? One that may not have seemed of any importance at the time?"

Nurse Minter pondered and then shook her head again regretfully.

"Are you sure?" insisted Walliser. "It might be something very trivial. For instance, did you ever see him try to write anything? Did he ever make any other sounds besides the gibberish? I don't mean speech, but murmurings, cries, whistling . . ."

Nurse Minter sat up straight. "Why yes, he did! He used to whistle something—something that sound almost like a tune. A queer sort of tune."

"Do you remember it?" Walliser's voice was excited now.

"I do. Perfectly well. I heard it several times."

"Can you whistle it for me, or hum it?"

"I'm not sure," said Nurse Minter doubtfully. She tried a couple of notes. "No, that's not it. Wait a minute . . . Now I've got it!"

She softly hummed several bars of odd-sounding music.

Walliser leapt to his feet.

"Come on, Helen, you've given me a brainwave!"

He seated himself at the electric organ. The social room was almost deserted.

"Now hum that tune over again, will you?"

Nurse Minter complied, and he fingered it out on the organ, repeating it several times. Then he took out paper and stylus, drew some scale lines, and jotted down the notes. Looking intently at the paper, he played a different tune on the organ.

"Why, I recognize what you're playing!" said Nurse Minter. "It's that old popular song *I'm Headed for the Stars*. And yet somehow it vaguely reminds me of the other tune. Is there some connection between them?"

"Wait a minute. First I want to ask *you* a question. You must have read a detailed account of what happened when Dickenson's ship was picked up off Saturn. Tell me. He had a television receiver aboard, didn't he?"

"Why, yes, I think there was one in the control panel, right in front of the seat he occupied. I believe he had to have one for the test he was making."

"Good! That clinches it! Now another question. Is there any way we can get at Dickenson tonight? I don't care if we have to run risks. But is there a chance?"

"As it happens, there is. I know the nurse who's on duty at night. She's the one who gave you my note. I ought to be able to bluff or persuade her. But . . ."

"I don't care if we have to tie her up and gag her! Just so long as we can get at Dickenson. Tell me, can you get hold of a phonographic recording outfit right away?"

"Of course. But just what are you planning?"

Walliser was pacing back and forth excitedly. He grinned at Nurse Minter. "No time for that now he said. "Every minute may be important. Besides, you kept me in the dark all day. Now it's my turn. Come on, let's get started!"

A hard-faced young man, standing in the dark alcove where the color symphony had been performed, watched them attentively as they hurried from the social room. Then he took a television piece from his pocket, raised it to his lips, and began to whisper.

Walliser and Nurse Minter reached Dickenson's room without attracting any special attention, as far as they could tell. The petite brunette opened the door.

"Hello, Helen," she said. "I thought you were off this case." Then she noticed Walliser. "Good evening, Doctor."

"No, I'm not, Marie," said Nurse Minter, advancing quickly into the room. "I'm on it more than ever. Is the patient asleep?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Stegman's ordered a complete change of treatment. He's taken the case out of Trand's hands completely, and given it to Doctor Walliser. I'm to assist him."

"But I should have been informed about it. There are strict rules—"

"Now, Marie, you know how sudden Stegman is when he gets a new idea. Doctor Walliser is anxious to get to work."

"Well . . . all right," said Marie, obviously afraid of doing the wrong thing. "Still, I think I should have been informed."

She left reluctantly, casting a dubious glance over her shoulder.

"Something tells me we've got to work fast," said Walliser. "You operate the machine. Put in a fresh metal tape and cut a recording of any gibberish Dickenson gives us. I'll wake him."

Asleep, the elderly inventor was peaceful and distinguished looking, but when Walliser touched him, he awoke with a start, and exhibited symptoms akin to terror. His eyes went wide. He flopped his hands about purposelessly. Then he uttered what Nurse Minter recognized as two or three short sentences of the gibberish with which she had become so familiar. She motioned to Wallister that the machine was cutting.

He nodded encouragingly at the old man, who responded with a longer jumble of strange sounds. Then he seemed to hesitate. Walliser nodded again, then said in a low voice the mysterious syllables, "No og."

Immediately Dickenson's face brightened, and he spoke with more assurance. For fully five minutes he continued to utter fragments of the outlandish gibberish, pausing doubtfully at short intervals. Then Nurse Minter indicated that the machine had come to the end of the tape.

"Good," said Walliser, giving Dickenson another smile and nod. "Now play back to me what you've just recorded. No, don't put the tape in the right way. Put it in *backwards!*"

"Backwards?"

"Yes! Don't hesitate, Helen. I'll explain later. Or, rather, things will explain themselves."

A gleam of doubtful understanding came into Nurse Minter's eyes. She complied with Walliser's instructions.

An instant later the door was thrown open, and Doctor Stegman and the other nurse came into the room. Marie looked frightened. Stegman was furious.

"This is too much!" he cried. "Are you insane? I wanted desperately to avoid scandal. Therefore I didn't have you both put in detainment earlier this evening. Now I see I've made a mistake."

"Helen," said Walliser. "Play the recording!"

Stegman paused doubtfully, his hand fumbling for the television piece in his vest pocket. Then the voice came from the machine—Dickenson's voice.

"That man. *That man Trand.* Save me from him. Can't you see? He is torturing me, trying desperately to force me to tell him what I know about my faster-than-light spaceship. I am Professor Dickenson. I am not insane. Believe me, I am speaking the truth. He will stop at nothing. Are you the new doctor? I am not insane. Only Trand knows what is wrong with me. Save me. I told him something about my invention, but nothing of great importance—nothing he can use. I am sane, but no one but Trand understands what is wrong. I am Professor Dickenson . . ."

And so the words continued, with considerable repetition and jumbling of sentences, but always intelligible.

A look of blank amazement came into Stegman's face. He pointed at the machine. "That recording," he said. "It seems to be reproducing Dickenson's voice! But what is it? Is it . . .? Great Heavens!"

"It *is* Dickenson's voice," said Walliser, nodding emphatically. "It is a recording of Dickenson's characteristic gibberish, played *backwards*. What's more, it indirectly proves that Dickenson, during the first part of the solo test of his spaceship, *did* travel at a speed greater than that of light! Can't you see what happened? When he started the test, he had one eye glued to his television receiver. Also, he probably had the radio going. That was a necessary part of the test, as you'll see. Since he was moving faster than light, he easily outstripped the radio and television waves. Therefore every image and sound that came in on them, came in backwards. Moreover, all terrestrial events, as far as their relationship to *him*, were moving backwards as well.

"He was literally traveling back into Earth's past! Only for a very short time, mind you. But the shock had the effect of *reversing* his mind, of reversing the delicate time-directional mechanisms of his consciousness. Then, when he finished the test and reduced speed, that mental reversal *persisted*. All his motor impulses were reversed, too. He spoke backwards, tried to move backwards. The first time I saw him, he was attempting to push himself into a wall.

"Do you grasp the further implications of all this? Once Dickenson was back in normal time, all his sensations seemed wrong to him, because now—relatively to his reversed mind—*they* were coming in backwards. A terrible struggle began between his mind and his sensations. No sane adjustment was possible for him. It was almost sufficient to topple him over the edge into true insanity.

"Nurse Minter gave me the clue. She remembered a few bars of music she had heard Dickenson whistling. Now I happen to know a little about music and the theory of musical composition. Obviously, when a tune is played backwards, it doesn't sound as completely nonsensical as when words are spoken backwards. I recognized those bars of music as a popular song, *I'm Headed for the Stars,* but hummed in reverse!

"I checked on my guess and found it to be correct. Further proof was easy. I only had to get a recording of Dickenson's voice. If I'd had time, I would have done what Trand did—make a recording of pertinent questions in my own voice, and play them to Dickenson backwards. As it was, when Dickenson hesitated, I tried to say 'Go on' backwards. That was why you heard me say 'No og', Helen."

"My God, yes. I understand now," said Stegman slowly, running his hand through his hair, giving each word a greater emphasis. "Doctor Wallister, I have done you a great wrong. It is hard to believe, but all the facts are in agreement. Undoubtedly your solution is correct. And now it will be very easy to determine on a treatment."

His voice took on the spontaneously confident quality of a younger man. "In any event, we can now communicate with Dickenson. That should stave off any possibility of true insanity. Moreover, it seems very likely that the mind-reversal is wearing off of its own accord. You must have noticed how jumbled his sentences were in the recording. That perhaps indicates his thoughts are only moving backward intermittently—that they occasionally seek to leap forward, only to be met by a time barrier. Great Heavens, but this will be a subtle problem for the psychophysicists! The relationship of mental time and physical time . . . the warping and reversal of an individual's entire subjective space-time system."

His enthusiasm trailed off and his voice became heavy and serious again. "But those statements Dickenson made about Trand," he said, shaking his head gravely. "I can't believe them. They must be the result of a secondary delusion on Dickenson's part—a natural enough delusion, to be sure. Why, I have known Doctor Trand for years . . ."

Nurse Minter, who had moved over to the doorway, suddenly ducked inside, shutting and locking the door behind her.

"Quick, Doctor Stegman," she said, alarm in her voice. "Call for aid! Those three men, accomplices of Trand—they're coming up the corridor."

Stegman looked toward the door doubtfully.

The door leading to the adjoining room opened and Trand walked in quietly. His manner was that of a doctor who had been summoned for consultation. But there was an automatic pistol in his hand.

"Well, well," he said, "so you finally discovered the truth. I was interested in all you had to say. I wanted to know just how far you'd gone. Too far, it seems. Oh, so you've locked the door on my friends. I'm afraid that won't help at all now."

"Trand," cried Stegman hoarsely, "you—you can't be serious. If this is a joke, it is not a funny one."

"No joke," replied Trand coldly. "Well, it seems I must leave the Institute. It's fortunate that my friends have made preparations. We shall take Dickenson with us. In order to insure our escape, you four will die. Immediately."

"And I trusted you," said Stegman bitterly, his face a mask of indignation and misery.

"Sentimental, too," observed Trand, smiling. "Doctor Stegman, the world does not need sentimentality. It needs a new humanity. It shall have one. I believe I shall kill you first."

And then Walliser saw that Nurse Minter was standing very still, her lips white. Trand was calmly pointing the gun at her chest. His finger closed around the trigger. Walliser, hurling himself forward, winced in anticipation of the shot.

It never came. Instead, an astonishing thing happened. Trand did not pull the trigger. With a peculiar, seemingly involuntary gesture, he threw the pistol to the floor, and stood staring down at it in utter bewilderment.

Walliser hit him. A clean blow to the jaw that was as effective as a hypodermic would have been. It took all the fight out of him.

Nurse Minter locked the connecting door. Dr. Stegman spoke rapidly into his television piece. Walliser snatched up the gun. The other nurse caught the back of a chair to steady herself. Her face was like chalk. With their eyes fixed on the door leading to the corridor, they waited. . . five seconds . . . ten . . . twenty . . .

Then they heard the sound of running feet pounding up the corridor, the noise of a scuffle. They relaxed, realizing that the guards had seized the three intruders. The threat was past.

An hour later Walliser and Nurse Minter were sitting in Dr. Stegman's inner office, answering the old man's questions. Trand was in safe custody. Trand's accomplices had been overcome by the guards while attempting to reach the stairway to the roof, where a small gyroplane had been stationed. Two had been killed, one captured.

"Do you suppose the higher-ups of the Ultimo party will be involved?" asked Walliser

Stegman frowned, and shook his head. "I doubt it. Trand and the others probably belonged to a small and 'advanced' splinter group of extreme fanatics within the party itself. In any case, the party leaders will deny all knowledge of the plot. I dislike thinking what might have happened, though, if they'd have been successful in breaking down Dickenson's resistence completely."

He frowned again. It was obvious that Trand's treachery had wounded him deeply. "Dickenson will be a celebrity by tomorrow," he said. "Whether we cure him or not—and I think we will—mankind will shortly know how to travel more swiftly than light. An awe-inspiring thought. Only first we'll have to learn how to avoid the psychological consequences of time-reversal. That will be the Institute's major task. Walliser, I think you will be able to help us a good deal in that direction."

"Thank you, Doctor Stegman. I'd like nothing better. But I hope you aren't forgetting that it wasn't my small knowledge of psychiatry that led to my success with Dickenson. It was only because my hobby happens to be music. Queer."

Doctor Stegman filled his pipe. "There's one little thing that keeps puzzling me," he said reflectively. "It's that almost miraculous fact that Trand dropped his gun just as he was about to shoot Miss Minter. If it hadn't been for that . . . And somehow, Miss Minter, I get the impression that you *expected* him not to shoot."

"I did!" She grinned. "You see, Doctor Stegman, one of the things you said earlier this evening, when you were so angry with me, was quite true."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you remember how you accused me of having schooled Trand to make false statements under hypnosis?"

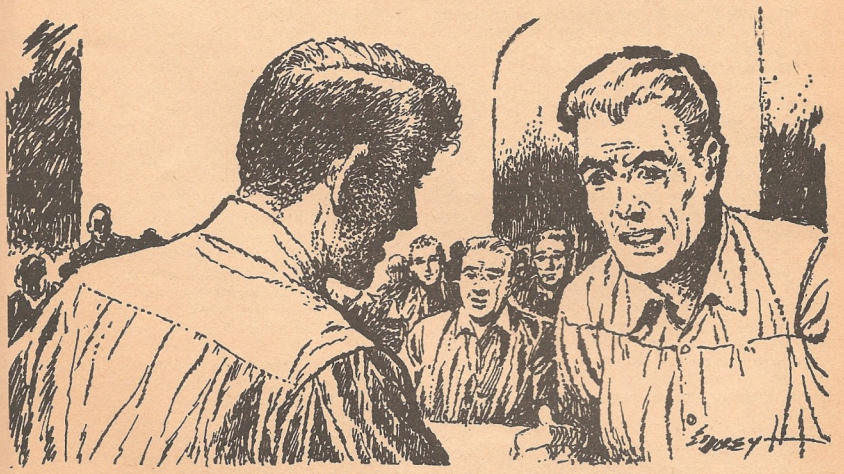
"Yes. But of course I was wrong."

"No, you were almost exactly right, Doctor Stegman. You see, I *did* have Trand hypnotized for a few minutes before Doctor Walliser arrived. As it happened, I knew he was carrying a gun, and I wanted to make sure he'd be unable to use it if he had his back to the wall. No use stealing it, of course, since he could easily procure another. So I imprinted on his mind the post-hypnotic suggestion that whenever he aimed that pistol at someone with intent to kill, he'd have to throw it down. Just in case, you know."

the duel of the insecure man

It was the deadliest of duels, for the combatants were fighting for a stake more precious than life itself. Defeat could bring disgrace and . . . burning shame.

by TOM PURDOM



ON July 10, 1988, I fought a duel. The engagement was set for ten-thirty. I walked into the coffee-house at ten-fifteen. My shirt was bright green and my slacks rust-brown. I hoped I didn't look as insecure as I felt.

A voice I recognized spoke to me. "Hello, Frank."

I looked down at the table by the door. "Hello, Danny," I said.

"Fletcher's in the back room."

"Thanks."

Our eyes met and Danny looked away quickly. I felt embarrassed. I could understand how he felt and it unnerved me further. In a little while my entire mental life would be stripped bare and shown naked to my friends.

I walked toward the back room. Behind me chairs scraped as people got up to follow. No one cared to miss a duel.

Martin Fletcher sat at the center table in the back room. He wore dark slacks and a soft white shirt. He was thirty-two. He had a lean, firm-

muscled body and a disciplined, intelligent face. He was sales director for a research company and would almost certainly go much higher. Integrated in every aspect of his personality, he was everything I wanted to be and knew I couldn't be.

I was mortally afraid of him.

"Hello, Frank."

"Hello, Martin."

I sat down. "How much time have we got?" he asked.

"Three or four minutes."

I lit a cigarette and stretched out my legs. People crowded through the narrow doorway. The room filled in a minute.

"You smoke quite a lot," Fletcher said. "Are you nervous?"

I shrugged. I felt stiff and awkward and convinced I couldn't win. I didn't want to be there. I wanted to be anywhere else but in that crowded room, surrounded by unfriendly faces.

"You always look pretty nervous to me," Fletcher said.

"Wait a minute," I said, moistening my lips. "Can't you wait until it's time, Fletcher?"

I looked up in sudden relief. My friend Lou Cardell had just come through the door. Lou was a big man and I felt better the instant I saw him.

"The duel hasn't started yet," Lou said, staring angrily at Fletcher. "Can't you wait?"

"I just asked if he was nervous."

"You know that's a leading question."

Fletcher shrugged. "Forget it."

I looked around the little room. Not all of the assembled spectators hated me. A few, at least, were my friends. They had come to see two men expose their inner selves in public. After all, they had a lot of free time.

Janet Nagle came in and took the one empty chair. Fletcher smiled at her and I nodded. Her expression remained impassive as she walked to her corner.

She was slender and intensely alive. When I looked at her I felt my pride returning and my young manhood flooding through me in waves. She did that to you. She was so marvelously feminine that every male who looked at her knew he was a man and alive. That was a good way to feel.

I wanted her. I needed her. For her I would take on Fletcher, and go down fighting—if I could not conquer.

Lou stood up.

"You know the rules. You have to answer every question your opponent asks you. Truthfully or not, you have to answer. The duel will continue until somebody leaves or somebody cracks. Go ahead."

I thought Lou looked a little sad. He didn't like duels and had tried to talk me out of this one.

The custom had begun in a San Francisco coffee house less than two years before. In those early years of total automation, Vienesse coffee houses were a great American institution. They were cheap and the temptation was strong to spend a lot of time in them.

We sat around and met people like ourselves and talked. Mostly we talked psychology. We were obsessed with the mysteriousness of the unconscious. We analyzed, we discussed fine points and theories, we studied those about us. And not having a clearly defined moral code or any work that gave us a real chance to prove our worth—creative work belonged to a very talented minority—we had only one standard by which to judge ourselves and others. Virtue resided in being mentally healthy and secure. The only truly unforgivable sin was "sickness."

And what better test of inward strength and healthiness than a relentless mental duel? To face another man, to explore his psyche while he explored yours, to attack the very foundations of his inner security. To destroy his confidence, his self-respect, his sense of his own worth. . . .

"What's your name?" Fletcher asked.

I heard the rustle and creak of the spectators as they settled themselves more comfortably in their chairs. The red light in the ceiling—it was the only light in the room—was warm on my arms.

"Frank Vetter. What's yours?"

"Martin Fletcher. How old are you?"

"Twenty-three. What is your age?"

"Thirty-two. You're still a boy, aren't you?"

"Aren't we all?"

"Some of us are *men*. There are still a few men left in the world."

This was just the start, the feeling-out period. But already we were circling the edges of the secret I had to keep concealed. The big secret, the hidden weakness I had revealed to no one and hardly ever faced openly myself.

I was erotically incompetent. Three times I had tried to complete my love making and failed. I was—I gagged on the word—an unwilling celibate.

Even the girls I dated didn't know that. In my love making I always managed to give the impression that I had remarkable powers of self-control. They all thought I was stable, calm, self-possessed. Some of them even leaned on me, as Janet had, thinking me a moral idealist. But I knew my life was a fraud. I was weak, guilty, incapable of completing an act which gave profound meaning to life.

Naturally, I knew my impotence was probably psychological. I had even hoped Janet would cure it and still believed she could.

I decided to attack.

"Why are you here, Martin?"

"Because Janet said she'd marry the winner. Maybe it's a silly thing to do. But I want her for my wife and I can understand how she feels."

"This isn't your first duel, is it?" I asked.

"I'm afraid not."

Two months before Fletcher had reduced a young button-pusher who thought he was a 'poet' to a weeping, hunched over mass of despair. No one had seen the boy since.

"Do you approve of what you did to Carl Brunner?" I asked.

"I lost some sleep over it. But he brought it on himself. I only gave him what he secretly wanted from the first."

"You're sure? I mean, what right have you to judge others so relentlessly?"

"He was a sick boy. Someone had to show him he *was* sick. Actually, he wanted to be punished for his weakness."

"And you're not sick?"

"Compared to you I'm a tower of robust strength and health."

Fletcher flipped open the order box and pressed the *expresso* button.

"Do you believe you have the right to make that comparison?"

Fletcher nodded. "Don't you agree an extreme hunger for approval is a sickness?"

"I'm not hungry for approval."

"I didn't ask you that."

His voice snapped like a whip. My cheeks warmed. Nobody could talk to me like that with impunity.

"Anything carried to extremes," I said, "is a sign of mental instability. But that doesn't apply in my case."

"You're *not* hungry for approval then?"

"Not extremely so."

"What about those stupid jokes you're always making about sex? You always look so scared it's downright amusing. You're so relieved when we act polite. And yet I'm quite sure you know you're the biggest bore in the place."

I glanced around the room. My friends looked away.

"What are you staring about you for?" Fletcher asked. "Approval? Reassurance?"

A slight acquaintance, a young engineer to whom I had always felt inferior and who usually avoided me, grinned with wolfish satisfaction.

"You do know we all think you a maker of very dull jokes, don't you? Or aren't you even perceptive enough to acknowledge that?"

I had always suspected it. I wasn't witty or clever and I knew it. But I didn't want it to be true.

"I never claimed to be a wit," I said.

"You try to be, though. And you fail miserably. The way you fail at most things."

"I don't think I'm a failure."

"What do you do for a living?"

"You know what I do."

"Tell me."

"I'm the mid-shift engineer at the Siegfried Company. I control an assembly system."

"You mean you merely sit and watch the meters four hours a day—and once or twice get up and turn a knob."

"What's wrong with that?"

"I didn't say it was wrong."

"It's a living. I'm not ambitious. I earn a good pay check every week and the rest of the time I run around and take out girls and read and—I just live, that's all. It's the way I like it."

"That's a nice excuse for the fact that you're not really good at anything else."

"It's not an excuse. It's what I believe."

"Then why did you hesitate when I asked you what you do?"

A girl near the back of the room tittered.

"I didn't say it was wrong," Fletcher went on relentlessly. "You assumed I would *think* it was wrong."

"So what does that prove? You're the kind who *would* think that."

"No, I'm not. If you really believed what you've just said, I wouldn't look down on you. You wouldn't be a failure then. You'd be doing what you want to do. But you *are* a failure. In your own eyes and despite what you've just said, you're a failure. And therefore you're a sham and a fraud."

"Because every now and then I want to do something breath-taking? Sure I do. Doesn't everybody? But I've got enough common sense to know my limitations and try to make the best of them. And I honestly think the best is pretty good."

"You say one thing, Frank, but you think another."

He looked so confident and self-possessed. He looked like my father and my mother and my boss and everybody who had ever tried to tie me in a strait-jacket. I couldn't tell him he was wrong. He would never change.

And maybe he was right. He looked so sure of himself that I was torn apart by doubt.

"Why are you in love with Janet, Martin?"

"You're changing the subject."

"I know. I've every right to question you as probingly as you've questioned me."

"Then you admit I've won my first point."

"Answer my question."

"It's not the kind of thing you discuss in public."

"The rules say you have to answer."

"I know the rules. I'll answer. But I didn't think you thought so little of her feelings."

"Why are you evading the issue?"

"Never mind. You're forcing me to be completely candid. Remember that. You're responsible."

The serving cart rolled into the room and stopped beside our table. Fletcher took the demitasse of bitter Italian coffee and set it down between us.

I knew I should have dropped the question but I was gambling it would lead to something useful.

"I think she'd make me a good wife," Fletcher said. "I've always planned to marry and for the last two or three years I've been looking hard for the right girl. Janet's somebody I think I could live with. And enjoy living with."

"What about *love?* Primarily you want companionship—somebody around. Is that it?"

"You *would* think that. But companionship and understanding includes love. It's not daytime television love, but I think it's something much finer."

"It seems to me that your answer is extremely trite. I think the girl a man chooses should represent something more profoundly romantic in his life."

"Not being insecure and rebellious I can afford to have commonplace emotions. Why are you in love with her?"

"I thought you didn't want to discuss this in public?"

"We may as well finish what you started."

"I think I can define the way I feel more honestly than you."

"Go ahead."

I could sense that the crowd was now vitally

interested. They reminded me of hungry jackals—creatures of predatory furtiveness which the combatants always seem to conjure up in duels.

"She has certain qualities which touch me and move me profoundly," I said. "There's something very brave about her and something very sad, too. She seems alone and lost in a world that has no place for her. I want to protect her. And I love her deeply."

I glanced at Janet. She sat in her dark corner and stared at the floor. I couldn't see her face.

"That's very nice," Fletcher said. "Very romantic. But I can cut out the high-sounding words and tell you what you *really* feel."

"All right. Go ahead."

"She makes you feel like a man. She gives you the illusion that you're alive."

"She does. But I'm too proud to love a girl just for that."

"You're proud."

"That's one thing about myself I can say with complete honesty. I have never had any reason to doubt it."

"You've a brain full of shame and guilt."

"We all have our guilts."

"Like Nelson Kirn?"

My hands stiffened on the table top. "What about Nelson Kirn?" I asked.

"Why don't you tell us? Just who is Nelson Kirn, Frank?"

"You did some research, didn't you?"

"It's part of the game. You did, too. Who's Nelson Kirn?"

I hated him. I hated him. It was the one name—

"You know about Nelson Kirn," I said.

"Sure, I do. But you tell us. Let's hear how you tell it."

I stared at the floor. "He used to work with me at my last job."

"What did you do to him?"

"You son of a witch."

"What did you do to him?"

I didn't even think about Nelson Kirn if I could help it. Sometimes I'd think about it and look at myself with contempt and loathing. That I should have done such a thing . . .

"Tell us what you did, Frank."

"All right. *All right.*

"Then go ahead."

"He was a little guy with glasses and a mustache. He used to quote bad writers all the time—real bad writers—and try to sound intelligent."

"What did you do to him?"

"He got on my nerves and I started taunting him. First a little bit, then all the time."

"You got to where you couldn't stop, didn't you?"

I nodded.

"And then?"

"Can't you leave me alone?"

"What happened then? You can leave if you want to."

I looked at Janet.

"One day he turned around and lashed out at me. We got into a fight and I beat him unconscious."

"You enjoyed it, too, didn't you?"

Janet was still staring at the floor. Her father had been a wife-beater.

"I did it," I said. "And I enjoyed it."

"Did the men you worked with like you? I mean, were you part of the group?"

I shook my head. I couldn't look at the audience. I didn't want to look at anybody. I wanted to leave.

"That's quite a story," Fletcher said. "You'll do anything to ease your insecurity, won't you?"

A snarl rose in my throat. "I'd like to kill you," I said. "You're hitting below the belt."

"See what I mean, Frank? You're an animal. Take away the front you've built up and nice guy Frank turns out to be an animal. He can't even face an honest truth about himself."

I couldn't even talk.

"Why don't you crawl?" he said. "You want to crawl, don't you? We'll forgive you for your cowardice."

I felt a rage I hadn't felt since the day my father shouted at me for an hour because my marks on the Government exams had been too low and I could only go to junior college—not regular college. I was unworthy. I was a savage, an animal, a mass of discontent, fear and cowardice. My life was a fraud.

Attack, I thought. Attack! Get him. Bring him down.

"Aren't you ashamed of anything?" I asked.

"Can't you think up your own questions? God, you're trite. No wonder all the girls think you're dull."

I heard a rustle of skirts and a snicker. Was that true? It couldn't be.

"That's not true. You keep making things up to upset me."

"Then why are you afraid it *is* true? Why are you so panicky? See how easy it is to upset you."

"I've had my share of girls. What does that prove?"

"Sure, you've had a lot of girls. You tell us all the time. But what do the girls say?"

What did they say? No girl had ever said she loved me. Nor had any ever responded to my clumsy, inadequate lovemaking with fervor.

"And yet you want Janet," Fletcher said. "What can a scared, unsure boy like you offer her? Why don't you give her up? It's the kindest thing you could do for her."

"Aren't *you* afraid? Aren't *you* unsure?"

"Not like you."

"Why not?"

"Why are you the other way?"

"This is pointless. It is getting us nowhere."

"Then why don't you leave? Janet surely deserves someone more worthy of her than you've proved yourself to be."

I glanced toward the corner where Janet sat. I wished she would look at me. I wished she would smile and let me know she still believed in me.

"I'll stay," I said. "Maybe I can't win, but I'll stay."

"But you're certain you can't win, aren't you?"

"Perhaps."

"But that's my whole point. I know I can win. I

have inner confidence. Exposing the lack of confidence in one of us was the sole purpose of this duel."

"Perhaps you have a fool's confidence."

"You don't really think that, do you?"

I hated him. God, how I hated him! He was like my father, who had never had a doubt . . . like the teachers and the testers who assigned you your place. Like all the confident people I knew and hated. I who was nothing. I who was little, weak and frightened . . . Why couldn't I be like him?

"You've got a weakness someplace," I said. "Some great, yawning, horrible hidden weakness."

"I do have a weakness. But it isn't on that scale. And can *you* find it?"

We stared at each other and I looked away. I thrust my hands in my pockets and stared at the floor.

"It's a comparative thing," Fletcher said. "We're all weak and we're all strong. It depends on the scale. On this scale, compared to me, you're weak. But after all, I've had more time than you to develop and probably had certain advantages too."

His voice was suddenly surprisingly gentle. "You'll develop, too, in time. I know you will. But you haven't yet. So let me have Janet. It's the wisest—the best—solution for all of us."

I didn't want to stay and I didn't want to leave. He was right, though. I had little to offer her. What could I offer *any* girl?

"I won't give her up," I said.

"You're stubborn. You've lost and you won't admit it."

"I haven't lost. Not until I leave this table."

He smiled. "You say you've had a lot of girls. How many?"

"I didn't say a lot. I said I've had my share."

"How many?"

"You want a case history?"

"Yes."

The rules said I had to give him one. False or not, I had to give him one.

He had prepared very well for this. My big secret wasn't much of a secret. Not to someone who was determined to find my weakness. After all, no one had ever heard me describe a Rabelaisian evening. I had no entertaining store of anecdotes such as a good many young men acquire through experience. When the boys started swapping stories, I made up half-truths, implied I had done more than I cared to mention. It worked for most people.

But I didn't think mere evasive boasting would convince Fletcher.

I could lie again and maybe I could get away with it. But he would question me some more and try to pin me down and in the end they would all know. And I would go away from here, to some other town, to San Francisco, to New Orleans. I would sit in some other coffee house and wait for another girl like Janet. Always dreaming, always hoping, never knowing a moment of real fulfillment.

So why not leave now. Why not tell him he had won, as a well-mannered chess player would have done, and accepted defeat as inevitable.

But for good or ill—I didn't want to go away. I didn't want to dream and be alone and hope for another girl like Janet. You have to make a stand somewhere and the best place is almost always where you are.

But what could I say? How could I attack him? What was his weakness? Where was my strength?

"You're quiet, Frank. Why is it taking you so long to answer?

"I'm thinking."

"Selecting a good story? You're famous for your escapades. Pick one we haven't heard before."

My anger rose. "You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

"I like to win."

"That isn't all you like. You're a sadist."

"Guess again, *Casanova*."

I looked around the room. The hungry eyes watched me. Lou Cardell met my glance and then looked away with a pitying shake of his head. They all knew Fletcher had me in a corner.

"I'll win yet," I said.

"I'm glad you're so confident."

"I just thought of something."

I twisted a napkin in my hand. Then I raised my eyes.

"I never had a girl in my life. I'm impotent."

I heard a long sigh. The spectators relaxed and settled back in their chairs.

"That's what I thought," Fletcher said. "Everything you claim to be is a fraud. Everything you tell us is a lie." He looked around the room. "Take a look. Here is a tragic case of over-compensation."

I lit a cigarette. My hands shook.

"Confession is good for the psyche," he said. "Do you feel better now?"

I stood up. "You shouldn't have made me do that."

"I didn't ask for this duel."

"My trouble is probably psychological. It can be cured with the right girl and a little understanding. Yours is incurable."

"Oh?"

"You know what's wrong with me. I'm insecure, like you said. I'm afraid. I do rotten things because I don't have confidence in myself. Sure. But that's because I'm alive. I'm aware. I know what kind of world I'm living in and what goes on inside my mind. But you're never scared, you're never insecure. Because you never let the world through. You never admit you've got the same problems everybody else has. And every time you attack someone like me, you're telling yourself you're not like us."

I leaned on the table. "But you are like us. We're all the same. Only we know it and you don't. And I pity you."

"You don't express yourself very well."

"Oh, go to hell. If she wants you, she can have you. I don't want your kind of strength."

I turned to go. I didn't feel as sure as I tried to look.

"You're leaving."

"So long."

"That means you've lost."

I looked the room over. Some of them were smiling. The rest looked uncomfortable.

(Concluded on page 62)

What Our Spacemen Are Doing

an article by ELLERY LANIER

Here it is—the article you've been waiting for! A dramatic, first-hand account of what is taking place in America's new spacecraft project plants by a writer who knows his Science and is brilliantly adept at communicating his enthusiasms on Earth-Satellite wave length.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE deck of a giant interplanetary liner en route to Mars. The spacious U-shaped conference room had a rather low ceiling from which continuous ceiling-to-floor windows wrapped themselves around the curve of the U looking out into empty space. At the head of a broad conference table that must have been at least twenty feet long, sat a sprinkling of the top brass and braid of America's space program.

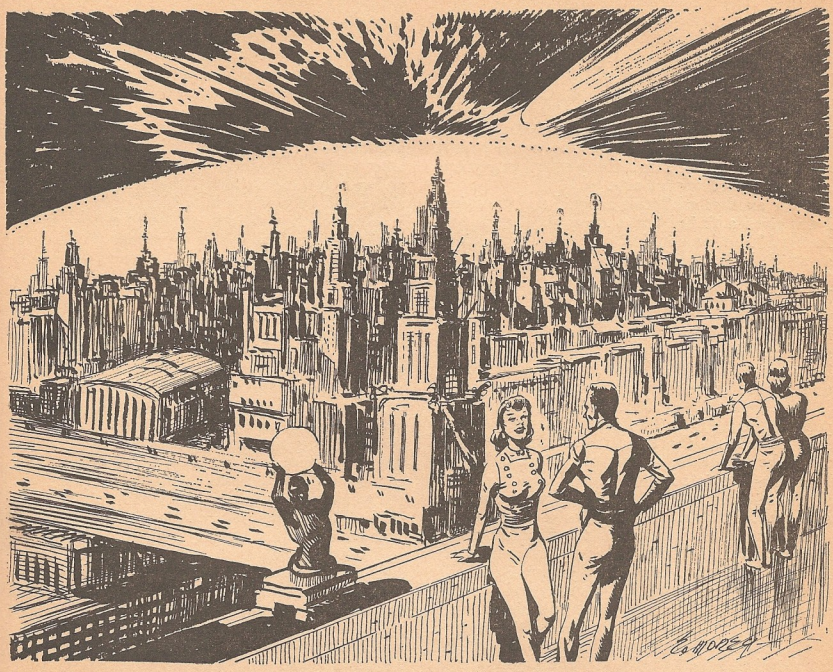
George Sutton, outgoing president of the American Rocket Society presided. To his left sat Colonel Ralph Stapp who would be the new president in 1959. Other key men were grouped around the head of the table. There were General's stars and Colonel's eagles to spare. Seated around the rest of the table were a round score of newsmen. It was a scene straight out of a science-fiction classic—only the purple-headed Venusians were missing.

Outside the conference room, the hotel corridors were buzzing with the voices of five thousand men who had gathered for this historical meeting to further the conquest of outer space. There were secret gatherings behind doors guarded by the alert personnel of our armed forces, and on two floors of the building, a fantastic array of space-craft projects, exhibited with a sober attitude which said, "We mean business."

I have been a science-fiction fan for many years and am fully aware that the old adventure into the unknown stereotype has become completely mundane. But what I saw and heard at this meeting of the American Rocket Society, brought back the old thrill. I felt the kind of excitement that Ralph 124C and his successor Buck Rogers used to bring to me. I remembered how I hid my science-fiction books at school, so that I wouldn't be reprimanded for reading trash. And I remembered the thrill of looking through my homemade reflecting telescope and wondering whether in one hundred or a thousand years we would reach outer space.

There was one booklet I picked up in which William H. Dorrance of Convair, discussed in imaginative detail flights around our galaxy, which is 100,000 light years across. He described how a space ship travelling close to the speed of light would take 200,000 years to complete the voyage. And if, in accordance with the theory of Relativity, time passed very slowly for the space men, the solar system itself might be gone when they returned. Friends and relations as well as the whole human race would have vanished into oblivion, along with the Sun and the planets.

Another equally fascinating proposal would be to send an unmanned instrumented "space-time cap-



sule" on a million year voyage around the galaxy, to bring back surprises for future generations. The real beat of this story is that it was in connection with 'Business Implications of Future Space Flight Systems'.

Getting right down to science-fiction, Russel M. Kulsrud of Project Matterhorn at Princeton University presented a paper in which he dwelt at length on "The Microcosmic God". In this unforgettable story the scientist forces the little men that he has developed to perfect an invisible force field to throw up around his microcity and effectively isolate themselves from the missiles of an enemy.

Many other science-fiction authors have used invisible force-fields to protect their characters from attack by gigantic cosmic forces. But now according to Kulsrud, "This deflection of missiles and other concrete objects by invisible forces which until recently belonged only in the realm of fantasy is gradually coming to realization in the field of hydrodynamics."

This same force could be used to carry men to the stars. A rocket ship that is travelling close to the speed of light in interstellar space will scoop up the rare hydrogen atoms by a magnetic funnel and use the high temperature of the speeding rocket to produce fusion reactions that will work like present ram-jet engines.

Well, all that was great fun to talk about. But then I got to an exhibit which really stopped me cold. It was a small-scale model of just such a propulsion system—and it was working! I spoke to Bernard Gorowitz, a heavyset young man, who stood next to a chunky glass-domed device that looked like an illustration out of one of the earliest science-fiction magazines. Gorowitz had helped to develop this marvel—it was called a Pulsed Plasma Accelerator—at the Space Vehicle Department of General Electric in Philadelphia.

Gorowitz switched on the current and energy stored under the device surged through to jump a spark gap between two huge thumb-like electrodes in a glass cylinder. A 'plasma' of ionized gas was hurled by a magnetic field through another glass tube. It looked like a swollen blow torch flame and when it hit a suspended target in the big glass dome, the target swung sharply away from the impact.

It really works. This whole Plasma field could

bring about the science-fiction dream of limitless power through nuclear fusion. A magnetic field can be made to act like a bottle to enclose the atoms being tapped for energy. The heat created is greater than any known material can withstand.

With a magnetic container it would be possible to control this temperature for useful purposes. In addition, the terrible radiation dangers associated with present atomic power plants could be eliminated. Another practical use for the force field would be to keep incoming spaceships from becoming incinerated in our atmosphere. A wall of fantastic, heat-resisting invisible shielding would protect the ship from burning up the way a bumper protects an automobile from impacts.

Near another exhibit of a liquid rocket engine, I was given a United States Army publication that featured "The Army in the Space Age". It contained an article by Brigadier General Earle F. Cook titled "The New Frontier". Among other data—such as the hazards of running into mile-wide chunks of interplanetary debris—General Cook described the new kind of conversation that would be needed when we started speaking to the planets by radiotelephone. Though the messages travelled as fast as lightning, there would be an awkward delay in conversation.

After saying, "Hello Mars, this is Earth calling," you would have to wait a few minutes until the answer made its way back to Earth. Even if both parties spoke at once they wouldn't interrupt each other because of the time factor. General Cook explained that televisïon transmission to the planets would be even more difficult.

His suggested solution of the problem really flipped me with its tone of the very best in science-fiction—"What may be needed therefore is a wholly new concept of conveying mass data and pictures across space—perhaps a system with little or no relationship to our present electromagnetic usages".

On the lighter side, I came across an idea which leads straight into the realm of hitherto unexplored possibilities for sport and recreation in the space age. This is the 'Photon Sail', which will let the rocket men do some free sailing in small space ships, equipped with gigantic mirrored sails which will catch the photons streaming like a wind from the sun. They will become interplanetary yachtsmen.

All the fun of sailing would be combined with a lively measure of interplanetary competition. Whether it will be possible to tack directly into the sun's direction remains to be discovered, but even now it is possible to buy a toy sunsail in most stationery shops. These are glass bulbs containing a tiny spinner with four small square 'sails' painted black on one side and white on the other. The little sails whirl speedily when they are placed in the sunlight.

Near the entrance to the mezzanine exhibit, I came on another surprise. I hardly expected to see a miniature model of a spaceman shaving in a washroom. But there was, about ten inches tall, standing before a mirror over a washstand in the lower compartment of a beautifully made model of the Atlas Manned Space Station. The model space ship was about ten feet long and had open sides to reveal its inner workings. It was conceived by Krafft Ehricke.

The plan is to put a real spaceship constructed from the model, into a permanent orbit about four hundred miles up, with a four-man crew. In the model ship, the man shaving stands in a washroom, the floor of which slopes toward the blunt end of the ship. Above the washroom there is a galley and recreation room, in which one spaceman is relaxing by throwing darts at a target. Above the galley there are sleeping quarters and higher still the control room where the pilot is seated before a wide console of electronic flight controls.

As planned at present, the crew will be rotated about once every two weeks, and later once a month. Once a year a cargo ship will deliver fresh supplies and equipment. It is claimed that this manned space ship could become a reality within five years.

Much of the dramatic quality of science fiction stories derives from Man's precarious predicament in the alien atmosphere of outer space, his adjustment, in brief, to the unknown. Our only real information about living conditions in outer space comes to us in the reports about Laika, Laska, and Benji.

If you don't know who Laska and Benji are, you should have heard the paper read by van der Wal and Young from the Space Technology Labs. in Los Angeles. Laska and Benji were two mice that were carried in the nose cones of long-range ballistic missiles. They successfully survived re-entry into our atmosphere from outer space. They went further into space than did Laika and they survived the tremendous heat and shock of coming back to earth. They landed in the Atlantic Ocean but the nose cones could not be found.

The project was known as Project MIA (Mouse-In-Able). A special small 'mouse house' was designed with an air-conditioning unit, a ventilating fan, an oxygen tank, water supply, and some food pellets and bits of potato for dessert. A fine wire was inserted under the skin of the mice to send out a radio impulse of their heartbeats through a telmetering device. They were set into a little cradle that could swing in such a way that it would get into a position of greatest resistance to the pull of gravity on take-off and later under the enormous deceleration of coming back to earth. A miniature saddle was fitted to the mice and attached to a rotating ring.

The mice could move but would be unable to chew through the wire that would be sending out their heartbeats. Laska, the female mouse was launched in an Able missile on July 9, 1958, and on July 23, the male mouse Benji followed her to outer space.

During her weightless period in space, the message from Laska indicated that her heart was beating normally. It is almost certain that she returned alive from outer space. She had lived through 45 minutes of weightlessness. The male mouse, Benji was even more resistant to the effects of the rocket take-off—the pressure, the noise, the vibrations and then the weightlessness, hardly daunted him.

Turning from mice to men, Colonel Robert L. Hullinghorst, of the U. S. Army, discussed the human problems of space flight. Man would be isolated in a new world with destruction possible at any moment. His daily habits would be changed

drastically—and a really strange possibility arises, "There is good evidence that man in the weightless state will require little or no sleep".

It is also expected that there will be a 'break through' phenomenon. On reaching a height exceeding 80,000 feet there is "a sudden mixture of elation and sorrow, a feeling that all contact with the world has been severed and you are now a definite part of the vastness of space".

This feeling is compared to the "raptures of the deep" which deep sea divers experience and which they have learned to handle effectively. It is a feeling of eerie unreality—almost like drifting in a dream. But it has a chemical origin with deep sea divers, for the nitrogen in their closed atmosphere acts like a narcotic.

When the break-through into space occurs spacemen will probably experience this unreality sense but its chemical cause can be handled effectively, once it is understood.

Another of the strange experiences which will be almost inevitable will be the challenge of believing your own eyes. All your other senses will contradict your sense of sight. The sense of balance, weight, and touch will have to be re-educated. Actions will be new and strange—the spatial equivalent of a man's getting his sea legs, only now he'll be getting his space body. The impulses of weight, gravity, and balance will be totally different. You will be able to lift huge weights easily and walk on the ceiling. Most important of all will be the new-type training of human reasoning power on which the success of the whole space venture will depend.

Lt. Col. Paul G. Yessler reported on Army studies into the way the human organism responds under varying conditions of stress. At the Walter Reed Army Medical Center studies were conducted covering all sorts of possibilities in space life. Enforced loss of sleep was one of the more interesting aspects of the problem. A group of fifty men—25 experimental and 25 as controls—were kept awake for 98 hours. It was discovered that performance of tasks does not decline in a gradual and consistent way with sleep loss; it is uneven and irregular.

There are brief mental blocks or lapses of awareness which keep increasing. Between these lapses of extreme drowsiness it is possible to do things well. A vigilance test was tried in which a series of carefully worked out stimuli were presented. Only one of these was a critical signal. Mistakes in reacting occurred when there was no signal or there was a failure to react when the signal appeared. Failure to catch the signal was the more frequent error. If an outside observer directed the experiment there were more mistakes than when the subject conducted the tests himself.

A psychiatrist interviewed the subjects to observe changes in speech, thought organization, and the sense of time. It was discovered that sleep loss does not necessarily produce higher irritability, especially when the subjects were handled "tenderly". Often they tried to deny their sleepiness and simply claimed they were fatigued. They tried to avoid work calling for attention and concentration. Finally the subjects experienced distortions of space perception, with the floor looking wavy, and objects seeming to be of wrong sizes and other hallucinations.

A more direct study of this "first human in space" problem was made by Captain Willard R. Hawkins, USAF and George T. Hauty. At Randolph Air Force Base in Texas they have a Department of Astroecology. This word "Astroecology" is one that every science fiction buff should immediately fall in love with. Ecology refers to the total effects of an environment—food, climate, shelter and so forth. With the prefix "Astro" it refers to man living his life in relation to his environment among the stars.

The department of Astroecology has been experimenting with a space cabin called a Terrella or Little Earth, with an inside measure of 96 cubic feet. All the physical equipment for space flight are contained within the cabin. The pilot must maintain a sitting or a supine position and cannot stand up straight. All visual contact with the outside world is cut off.

In one simulated space flight the pilot was fed on baby food concentrates which were found to create resentment. An alternative experiment was tried. Over a week long flight test the future spaceman was fed an exotic diet of lobster, Norwegian shrimp, quail eggs, and boned turkey. Results were excellent.

Over the long stretch of time, little things not ordinarily noticed, become very important. The haphazard storage of equipment and the control instruments themselves become very annoying. Music was tried but even favorite recordings become irritating after too many repetitions. Even whistling became difficult

A strong need for contact with the outside world was felt by all the subjects. The continuous unchanging light needed to record the flight test added to the fatigue and irritability. It was found that skipping meals was very damaging to mental and physical functioning in general. The exotic food diet turned out to be the biggest booster of morale.

Once the spacemen experienced fatigue, they did not feel rested again through the entire trip. The worst aspect of the trip was the hour by hour monotony of the work. The most stimulating and motivating factor was found to be knowing something about the results of the adventure they were going through.

One future space-man was asked to add columns of figures for one hour each day. He was constantly trying to beat his previous day's record. On the sixth day of his flight he was working in the genius category.

Another discovery for improving the morale of space-men was to have "a place for everything and everything in its place", within the space craft. The seats will have to be completely adjustable to relieve muscular tensions as they arise and there will have to be a chance to shave, bathe, and put on clean underwear at intervals during the flight. The pressure suit has been found to be a deterrent and the cabin itself will have to be the pressure suit—allowing the spacemen to work in shirt sleeves. Special exercise equipment will have to be built into the cabin to fight the muscular fatigue and atrophy caused by long confinement.

A new space cabin of 380 cubic feet is now un-

der construction, designed to hold a two-man crew for 30 days. It will have more space than the present cabin and improved arrangement of equipment, the better to train our future "astronauts."

One of the most spectacular space craft models at the meeting was a saucer-shaped Martian Reconnaissance Vehicle. The saucer would measure 40 feet across and weigh 616 pounds. It would be assembled on—and launched from—one of our satellites some 400 miles up, and be driven to Mars by an ion accelerator, which gets its electrical energy from the sun through solar cells. While orbiting the planet Mars it would radio back information.

My early memories of science fiction in the days of Hugo Gernsback's AMAZING STORIES were revived by talk about the kinds of weapons that would be used in space warfare. There were references to cathode ray guns, neutron guns, ion guns, and all the classical equipment of the earlier science fiction writers. The battlefield itself is to be a vacuum with the fighters flying through space at fantastic speeds.

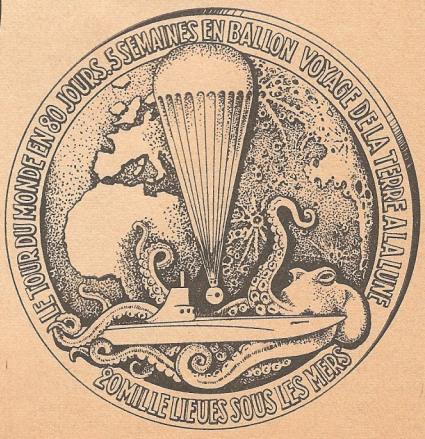
Attack decisions would have to be made in millionths of a second by automatic weapons. Even the equations of Einstein, would enter into battle strategy. The aces of the space age would probably all have doctorates in science.

James M. Gavin delivered an historical speech, which was really an introduction to the entire space age. He compared the position of the space industry forty years ago. For science fiction enthusiasts the quote that Gavin made from one of Dr. Theodore von Karman's recent articles, holds particular interest and importance, since it points out how in a very real sense, the fantasy has been taken out of science-fiction. The big question is: where does science-fiction go from here?

I can think of no better way of ending this article than to quote Gavin's quote of von Karman at length: "It does not take a crystal ball to appreciate that major scientific discoveries will occur over the next twenty-five years. Whole new fields of science will open up as we investigate high energy fuels, ionic and electromagnetic rockets, plasma jets, and study the use of solar energy . . . Techniques, structures and materials as yet undreamed of will be found.

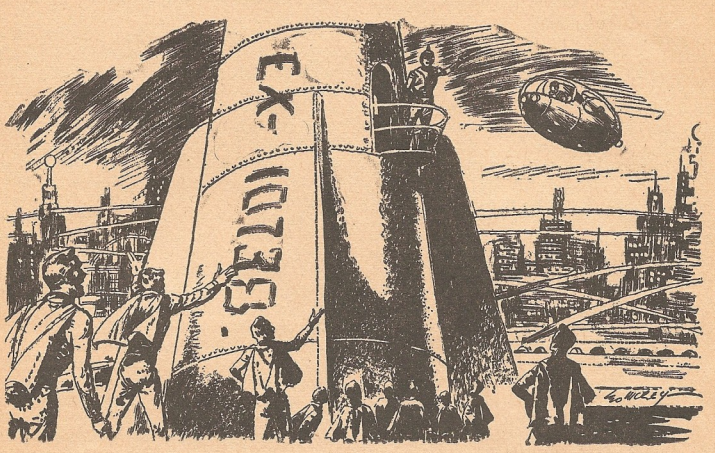
A Hugo Gernsback Discovery

An extraordinary testimonial in bronze to the fame of Jules Verne was discovered by Hugo Gernsback last summer on a visit to Paris. And we are most grateful to him for this unusual opportunity to reproduce it and the description below in clear-cut black and white



A Jules Verne Memorial Medal was recently struck in France. This bronze medal is heavy, and measures 2¾" in diameter and is ⅜" thick. It commemorates the life of Jules Verne and his work. The front is an excellent likeness of Jules Verne; the obverse of the medal reads as follows: AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS—5 WEEKS IN A BALLOON VOYAGE FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON—20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA.

The Last Legend



Human greatness had soared to new heights in Brett Wilkins . . . Spaceman Extraordinary.

by ALGIS BUDRYS

WHEN HE OPENED the outer hatch of the airlock, pandemonium broke loose in the waiting crowd on the field. The roar that struck his ears was like the triumphant scream of a hurricane wind. He had to stand still for a moment at the head of the ladder—it would have been like walking into the teeth of a storm, to move forward into the sound of his own name coming from fifty thousand ecstatic throats.

Brett Wilkins smiled softly into the hovering lenses of the floating stereo-news cameras as they swooped in close to the starship's hull. There was an advance guard of reporters already swarming up the ladder toward him, and the one in the lead, red-faced and out of condition, stared concernedly up at him.

"How do you feel, Captain? How was it?" A remote-directed microphone was already hovering in front of Wilkins' face.

How was it? Wilkins had no way of describing the past eleven months in a few words. He was a worn, tested man in comparison to the calm, self-confident boy he had been when he left. Months of agony and desperate loneliness had done that to him.

Cosmic rays had burned blind spots into his

eyes, and through the cells of his body. Crushing accelerations had taken the resilience out of his bones. The never-neverland of faster-than-light speeds had twisted his time sense and done things to his insides that he could only guess at. He could dimly remember times when he had lain gibbering on his bunk—why, or how long, his brain now mercifully refused to tell him.

"I feel fine," he said for the worldwide televisual audience. "It was tough, but it didn't kill me." He thought for a moment and added, "I'm dying for a cup of good coffee."

There was another roar from the crowd. All over the world, probably, people were chuckling out of all proportion to the slight humor implicit in the remark. It didn't matter, really, what he'd said. What mattered was that he felt fine; that he was alive, and that he could grin about it.

What mattered was that, after two hundred years of trying, mankind had successfully sent a representative to a distant star and back again. After two centuries, humanity had broken out of the confines of the Solar System, and the gnawing fear that it would never be done had been banished at one stroke. It was Brett Wilkins' name they were shouting, but they were shouting for themselves.

There was an escorted car trying to nudge its way through the crowd. Wilkins could see the police guard attempting to part the crowd. But if pressor-beam barriers hadn't been able to keep them off the field after Wilkins' ship had landed, then no hand-held police force wand was going to have an effect on these delirious people.

The car's driver gave up. He fired a short warning blast of air from his suspension tubes and bobbled the car up over the crowd, scattering people aside with the force of the vertical air stream. It was illegal, not going airborne from a takeoff apron, but not even the people he had bowled over were angry. They picked themselves up and cheered the car on, toward the ship.

Apparently nobody minded anything, today. Nobody begrudged Brett Wilkins anything, because nothing could match what he had given to mankind. Wilkins watched the car edge cautiously toward him. He was grateful because he'd been spared the necessity of not having to push through the crowd. He wanted to see his wife and children. He wanted to go home.

DOCTOR ROBIN was waiting in the car as Wilkins scrambled aboard. The steel-grey eyes behind the thick contact lenses studied him sharply, measuring the things the flight had done to him. Perhaps even the things Wilkins wouldn't have thought showed on the surface. Doctor Robin made him uneasy—always had, with his impassive face and his carefully weighed words.

"I'm glad to see you back, Brett," Doctor Robin said, moving over to make room for Wilkins on the back seat.

The greeting meant that Robin was pleased to see that a scientific project had worked out well. It had nothing to do with any regard he had for Wilkins as a human being. Through a year's careful study and testing before the flight, Wilkins had never felt at ease in Robin's company. That, at least, hadn't changed. He still didn't like the way Doctor Robin looked at him.

"I'm glad to be back in human surroundings," Wilkins said, but Robin seemed to miss the intended irony.

Doctor Robin's spindly hands were folded serenely in his lap. Robin's unfathomable eyes faced front while the car drifted slowly toward the administration tower. Robin sat as if alone in the car, and Wilkins didn't even try to say anything more to him.

Wilkins was longing mutely to have it all over with and to be with Sally and the kids. He was going to have to talk to reporters, at least. He might even have to fly to Geneva and be welcomed by World President Vernon. Whatever he was going to have to go through for the sake of humanity's gratitude, he hoped it would be over as soon as possible. He wanted to clasp Sally to him and just rest. He wanted to play with his children. It had been a long trip.

The number of reporters and cameramen was overwhelming. But with ten billion people in the world—with another odd million clinging to barely-liveable bubbles on the Moon, on Mars, and on Callisto—there were ten billion pairs of eyes and ears eager to hear about him, about what he'd gone through—to take a share of the adventure and, through him, to know what it was like to travel to another star; to see a world turn green in the warmth of an alien sun, and to step on the firm ground of a fresh, new world where men could live and grow.

"What's the place like, Captain?" a reporter asked eagerly.

The moment Wilkins began telling him, the room became completely silent. Nobody wanted to miss a syllable.

"It's wild," Wilkins said. "Woods, and prairies. Mountains. One big open ocean, and lots of rivers. A river bigger than the Amazon, I'd say—it looks a lot bigger, anyhow, without any buildings right up to its banks like the Amazon has. No buildings anywhere. It's all open."

Someone sighed in the background.

"No people?"

"None that I could see. The biggest form of life seems to be a sort of cow on the prairies. It's maybe three feet high at the shoulder, the biggest it gets. There're hundreds of thousands of them. I killed one and cooked some of it. It's good."

"Meat? *Real* meat? What did it taste like?"

"I liked it better than steak-yeast, or whale, or plankton loaf, or anything else I've ever eaten in my life."

He could remember it clearly, and he could also remember how good it had made him feel—as if his body had been missing something in its nourishment, all his life, that the scientists didn't know had to be included in the synthetics and compounds everyone ate. But what he wanted to do now was to finish the interview. He was exhausted. He had never been so tired in his life.

"Real meat," the reporter said again, wonderingly.

"We've all known it was there," Doctor Robin

said drily from beside Wilkins. "For a hundred years we've been able to describe Alpha's planet with complete accuracy. There's nothing new in Captain Wilkins' report."

"But this time it's different!" a woman reporter said. "This is the first time a man's actually been there and *seen* it!"

Doctor Robin's mouth twitched. "I'd like to point out that the automatic instruments in the robot ships are much more precise than the observations of even so well-trained an observer as Captain Wilkins."

"Oh, go soak your head," someone muttered from the back rows, and there was a trace of something ugly in the appreciative growl from the other reporters.

Doctor Robin shrugged, unruffled, and fell silent. No one wanted to identify with a robot ship. It was important, even to these professional cynics, that Brett Wilkins be considered above any human failing.

Wilkins could understand that. He answered their questions politely and endlessly, but he wanted to go home.

"I'M PROUD TO SHAKE your hand," World President Vernon said, slowly turning his head to face the broadcasting cameras trained on Wilkins and himself. "I'm proud of your achievement. I think I can say, humbly, that all people everywhere are expressing their gratitude through me. Mankind cannot measure its full debt to you, Captain Wilkins. Your name will live in the history books forever. When Balboa and Columbus are forgotten, children in school will still be reading about you."

"Thank you, Mr. President," Wilkins said huskily, tentatively trying to pull his hand back from the long clasp. But Vernon would not let go. He was speaking for the record. He couldn't really be blamed for being aware of the fact.

"Two hundred years," he said. "Two hundred years have passed since the invention of the faster-than-light drive. And yet in all that time, only one man has been found who could survive the effects of the space-warp necessary to the drive's operation. That man, of course, is yourself.

"Two hundred years is a long time. We had all of us, I think, given up hope. It seemed that the human race must forever be confined to one planet and a bare handful of struggling colonies chained in airtight bubbles by the harshness of worlds never meant for habitation. In two hundred years it began to seem to us that we had accepted our fate—that our robot ships could reach farther than our frail bodies could hope to venture. But we had *not* accepted. In our heart of hearts, we had *not* bowed down. It was only after your departure, Captain, that we became fully aware of how embittered we had been, and how much our will to live was stunted by our forced isolation.

"We could see clearly, now that it was almost too late, that we had taken a downward path—that the human race would sicken and soon die; and so you can understand the triumph in our hearts when we first heard that you were returning, successfully—the joy we feel to clasp your hand today. Captain Wilkins, I thank you in the name of Man's future, and of his destiny, which you have given him today."

Wilkins glanced at Doctor Robin, who was standing to one side against a wall, ignored, his lips pursed in a chilly smile. It had been Doctor Robin who'd built the ship, after all, and worked out the training program that had made Wilkins' survival possible. Because of Doctor Robin's work, the warp fields hadn't crushed Wilkins the way they had every other man who'd tried to fly an interstellar ship.

It didn't seem fair to Wilkins to have Doctor Robin ignored. He started to say something about it, but Robin caught his eye and shook his head. It wouldn't have been like Robin to look for publicity. He'd always managed to direct all of it toward Wilkins.

Wilkins let it go at that. But he wished the President would finish up. Neither Vernon nor any of the other people here in this room were ever going to leave Earth. They were all too successful here. It was the masses of people in the towering buildings all over the world who had been given hope. And even they were not going personally. Their hope was for their children and grandchildren—some few of them.

Even with Doctor Robin's new techniques, it was a brutal voyage. Nine-tenths of the people on Earth could not possible measure up to the physical standards, and nine-tenths of the remainder could not last through the training.

It wasn't the chance for a mass migration that Wilkins had brought back with him. Even the most crowded, most oppressed individual in the world would have thought twice about leaving, when the time actuallly came; he would have found a dozen ties to all that was familiar. What mattered was that someone *could* go—that the way wasn't closed—that a hundred years from now, there would be a human city on Alpha's planet and on a dozen other worlds beyond it.

Probably no more than ten or twenty people would be sent out in Wilkins' lifetime. It was entirely probable that, even in the next generation, masses of people would live out their lives without personally knowing anyone who had gone. But everyone in the world now knew that the human race was spreading out again; that there was a purpose in life, after all, beyond eating in order to work in order to eat tomorrow.

Wilkins listened to the other speeches, and accepted the medal, without really paying much attention. Couldn't anyone understand how much he wanted to rest?

It was Doctor Robin, finally, who stepped in and firmly separated him from the innumerable government officials, and who escorted him to the special plane that would fly him back to his home.

"Thank you, Doctor," Wilkins mumbled exhaustedly. "I know Sally's waiting for me."

"Yes," Doctor Robin said.

WILKINS' HOME WAS AS far from the cities as it could be—built out from the sheer side of a mountain too steep and too rocky to be farmed. Not even a plane possessing hovering equipment

could land there. He had to be lowered down on a sling until he stood on the roof, beside the staked-out personal car that had been waiting for him ever since he'd left.

Sally never left the house—she said she hated crowds—and the children were too young to drive, of course. As he unlocked the roofway door, he thought he saw another plane hurrying toward the mountains, from the east, but if it was one last persistent reporter he was out of luck. Wilkins had slipped inside before the plane could unlimber a camera or a microphone for a glimpse of the hero coming home.

"Sally!" He came cautiously down the steps into the darkened living room.

She had been in his mind, always, through the long terrible hours when it seemed the warp would turn him inside out. She and the kids, waiting for him to come home.

"Sally?" He waited. "Kids?"

There was no sound from inside the remainder of the house. The living room was empty, and musty.

There was a thump on the roof overhead, and quick but measured footsteps moving toward the entrance. Wilkins stopped and craned his neck upward as the door opened to a duplicate key.

"Doctor Robin?" He saw the man, but he couldn't understand what he was doing here so late.

"Hello, Brett," Doctor Robin said gently, coming down the stairs.

"Where's Sally?"

"In the bedroom, Brett, with the children. They're waiting for tomorrow. They'll be needed then, for interviews of you at home."

"Needed?" He didn't like Robin's cold-blooded way of putting it.

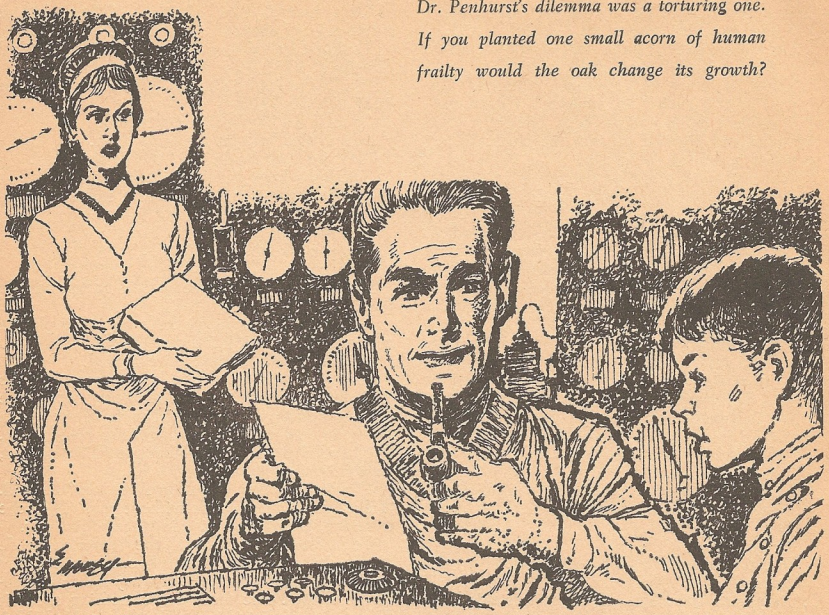
"You're tired, Brett," Doctor Robin said. "You've been away from the power-field generator in your ship for a long time. Your batteries are draining."

Doctor Robin was fumbling at the front of Wilkins' shirt. "You did it, Brett," he said. "You gave people hope again. In another few years, I might have the problem licked. I might really have a man who can make the trip."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Wilkins cried. "Sally! Sally, where are you!"

Doctor Robin had Wilkins' shirt open. His fingernails opened the invisible slit in the skin over Wilkins' chest. "What's a man, Brett?" he asked. "Some well-written press releases and some carefully chosen in-built memories. But I want to thank you." He reached into Wilkins' chest. For the first time, Wilkins saw human warmth in Doctor Robin's eyes. But then Robin switched him off for the night.

Dr. Penhurst's dilemma was a torturing one. If you planted one small acorn of human frailty would the oak change its growth?



PATIENT 926

by

ROBERT WICKS

THE COAL GLOWED CHERRY RED in the bowl of Dr. Penhurst's pipe. He exhaled a stream of gray tobacco smoke and watched it drift in a lazy cloud between his eyes and the file folder on his desk. Finally he fanned the smoke away and stared again at the title on the cover of the folder.

Patient 926.

He opened the folder and stared in disbelief at the carefully prepared, heavily documented report.

"Fantastic!" he said aloud to the empty cavern of his office, as his eyes scanned a page.

He had read of such cases in medical school. But that was history. The last recorded case was forty years ago—in the late 1980's, if he remembered correctly.

He studied the report carefully—read and reread it.

"Utterly fantastic!" he reiterated.

He depressed a crystal button on the master control panel at the edge of his desk.

"Send in patient Nine twenty-six," he said to the desk.

"Yes, sir," replied an efficient feminine voice.

Penhurst removed his pipe from his mouth and looked into the bowl reflectively. Of course, he decided, it still happened in some isolated societies of South America, Africa and perhaps the islands of the Pacific. But even there the missionaries had wiped most of it out.

Machinery hummed and the door slid into the

wall. Penhurst swiveled around in his chair. The frail figure of a small boy was framed in the doorway, clad in a yellow, one-piece school uniform two sizes too big for him. A blue numeral on his thin chest indicated that he was in the fifth grade.

"Come in, Nine twenty-six," Penhurst said.

The boy hesitated, finally stepped into the room. The door whirred shut behind him.

"Come in, come in," Penhurst repeated. "You may sit in that chair." He indicated a large armchair on the other side of the desk. The boy crossed the room and climbed up into the chair. He sat very still, watching the doctor.

Penhurst quickly re-read the report in the file, occasionally stealing a glance at the patient. At last he looked up.

"Do you like school, Nine twenty-six?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered 926 in a weak voice.

"Do you prefer the teletutor screens or the personal counseling sessions with—what's her name?"

"Miss Sedgewick," the boy supplied. "I like talking to Miss Sedgewick best of all."

Dr. Penhurst looked down at the report again. Miss Sedgewick should have spotted it much earlier. Either she was an incompetent counselor or she had deliberately failed to report the symptoms. It had remained for the child's parents to notice it when 926 went home for the holidays.

"What do you talk about?" he asked the boy.

"All kinds of things."

"Can you remember something you discussed recently?"

"Fairy stories."

"Fairy—?"

"She told me about Rumpelstiltskin."

"Rumpel-what?"

. . ."*Rumpelstiltskin.* You see, there was this little man—"

As the boy's voice droned on, Dr. Penhurst tamped the tobacco in his pipe with a finger. Nothing wrong with discussing ancient literature, he thought, provided it was carefully divorced from reality. He applied his desk lighter to the pipe. The yellow flame licked up and down as he puffed.

"—and Rumpelstiltskin was so mad he grabbed his left leg with both hands and tore himself asunder in the middle." The boy stopped talking.

"He did *what?*" asked the doctor between puffs.

"He tore himself asunder in the middle."

Penhurst replaced the lighter on his desk. "Do you believe in fairies?"

"No sir." The boy's answer was hesitant.

"Does Miss Sedgewick believe in them?"

"No, sir." This time the answer was more certain.

"What else do you talk about?"

"Music, art and books."

"Do you ever discuss electricity, atomic energy or gravitation?"

"We used to."

"But not any more."

"Not for a long time."

"Nine twenty-six, what is the universe?"

The boy thought for a moment. "It's—uh—an electro-magnetic field of force—uh—across which—hydrogen—." He looked helplessly at the doctor.

"You're ten years old, Nine twenty-six."

"Nine and a half," the boy corrected.

"How many nine-and-a-half-year-old boys are there, do you suppose, who cannot answer that question?" Penhurst asked.

"Not many," 926 admitted. "The teletutor screen tells us about that every once in awhile."

Penhurst leaned forward in his chair and looked directly at 926. "Who was the Mad Hatter?"

The boy's face brightened. "Oh, he was in *Alice in Wonderland* and—

"That'll do," Penhurst interrupted.

926 settled back in the huge chair.

"Do you ever daydream?" the doctor asked.

The boy's brow wrinkled in thought.

"What I mean is, do you ever make up little adventures in your mind?"

926 nodded.

"Do you like to draw?"

"Yes, sir."

Penhurst depressed the crystal button on his desk.

"Miss Appleton, do we have any examples of art work by patient Nine twenty-six?"

"Yes, sir," the efficient voice replied.

Almost at once the door whirred open and Miss Appleton stepped into the room. She was a severe looking woman of about thirty-five, dressed in a neatly-tailored uniform and wearing no makeup. She handed the doctor another file folder labeled, *Patient 926, Exhibits.*

"You're very efficient, Miss Appleton," he said. "I don't know what I'd do without you." Then she was gone, the door slipping in place behind her.

Penhurst removed from the folder a crude crayon drawing in brilliant colors. It was nothing more than abstract pattern of wavy lines and geometric shapes. But there was something about it that was quite disturbing to the doctor. He held it up for the boy to see.

"What is it supposed to be?" he asked.

"Nothing in particular," 926 answered. "I just sort of drew it the way I felt it."

Penhurst studied the drawing again. He turned it one way, then another. Somehow it was reminiscent of the maniacal paintings of the mid-twentieth century that now hung in museums. It was most disturbing.

"The other children draw houses and trees," he said.

"I don't like to draw houses and trees."

"Art is a mirror to nature," Penhurst observed. "You'll have to learn to draw things as they are in reality, if you wish to be a painter when you grow up."

"But I don't want to be a painter," the boy insisted.

"What do you want to be?"

"A writer."

"What kind of writer—journalism, history, science?"

"I want to write fairy tales."

Penhurst slapped his hand on the desk. He stood up and began to pace the room. The boy watched him closely.

"Nine twenty-six," said the doctor, "do you know what is meant by abnormal?"

"No, sir."

"Well, it isn't a word one hears in this day and age. Long before you were born there were many abnormal people in the world. Some were locked up in institutions, others roamed loose in society. Many were painters, writers, musicians, actors and what were then called inventors."

"Were they bad people?" the boy asked.

"Well, at the time it was felt their creative contributions added to the progress of civilization. Today we know that uncontrolled technological progress is an unhealthy condition. An unhealthy society is caused by unhealthy individuals."

"But we have writers and people like that," the boy protested.

"Yes, but they do realistic work—normal creations rather than abnormal ones. You see, since the vaccination—"

"Which vaccination?" 926 asked.

Dr. Penhurst sighed. There were over a hundred vaccinations required by law. "The sanity vaccination," he said.

The boy fidgeted in his chair.

"It had its roots in the mid-nineteen hundreds," Penhurst explained. "Something called tranquilizer pills were introducted and soon a great many people were taking them."

"Tranquilizer pills?"

"Confound it all! It doesn't matter how it started. The point is, it finally developed into a vaccination which gives life-long protection. Now we are no longer plagued with abnormal personalities with overly active imaginations." Penhurst turned to face the boy. "You have an overly active imagination."

"Is that wrong?" 926 ask, wide-eyed.

"Back in the twentieth century it led to a restless society that was forever changing—unbelievably inefficient government, something called crime and war. I'm sure you've heard of war."

"Yes, sir. Yesterday, on the teletutor—"

Penhurst talked right over the boy's words. "The widespread use of tranquilizer drugs made abnormal men become normal. The mad pace of civilization slowed. Finally the requirement of the sanity vaccination by law stopped civilization at it's present level of perfection. Now we have harmony. No more insane wars or abnormal behavior. We are all of one mind, one purpose—the fullest enjoyment of life."

"But I still want to write fairy tales," said 926.

"No one would read them," the doctor insisted. "Normal people do not indulge in unrealistic thinking.

Patient 926 hung his head.

"We all receive our vaccination at age six," Penhurst continued. "Perhaps through some clerical error, you missed yours."

The doctor stared at the wall. A horrible thought crossed his mind. Or perhaps, patient 926 had developed some sort of immunity to the vaccination. That had happened to the hiccup vaccination with dire results.

Again, he pushed the button.

"Miss Appleton, bring me the medical record on patient Nine twenty-six."

"Right away, sir," was the prompt answer.

Penhurst sighed. It was good to have an efficient secretary like Miss Appleton.

"I don't know what I'd do without you," he told her again as she handed him still another file folder. As she stepped from the room, Penhurst ran his finger down a list of shots and vaccinations given to patient 926.

"Tetanus, typhoid, the common cold, asthma, hay fever, baldness—" he read aloud. Beside each was the date and the witnessing health authority. There was no indication of a sanity vaccination. He glanced down the list again to make certain.

"At least," he said, "it's not an immunity."

"For a moment," the doctor explained, "I was afraid that the human race might be developing an immunity to the serum. I was afraid there might be a few other persons who want to write fairy stories."

It was a bad joke. The boy's eyes moistened.

Penhurst depressed the button again.

"Do you have any sanity serum in the dispensory?"

"I think so, sir," Miss Appleton replied.

"How would you like to have your vaccination now?" he said to the patient.

"Could I still be a writer when I grow up?"

"Certainly. And you would have a clearness of mind and a sense of reality that would make you a fine writer."

"Could I write fairy tales?"

"Well, I doubt if you'd want to. You'd want to write much more important things, in harmony with our society."

A tear rolled down the cheek of patient 926. "But I want to write fairy stories." Another tear joined the first one.

"Here now," said Dr. Penhurst. "We don't cry after age six." Then he remembered, "Oh, that's right, you haven't had the vaccination."

The boy clasped his hands over his eyes and began to sob. His whole body quivered and tears dripped from between his fingers. He made little gasping sounds that the doctor had heard only from very young children.

"Confound it!" the doctor said. "Now don't do that!" The doctor's stern voice served to pry more tears from the boy. Soon he was sobbing with uncontrolled abandon.

Penhurst's trained mind considered the problem. "We must stop that spasmatic heaving of your chest," he told the boy. "Take a few deep breaths and exhale slowly."

But the spasms persisted.

Penhurst tried his best professional tone. "Now, I want you to grip the arms of the chair firmly with your hands. This will help you get firm grip on your emotions."

It didn't.

"You're an extremely serious case, Nine twenty-six," he told the boy. Then he began to wonder. Maybe the patient was about to break down completely like the severe cases of the twentieth century.

He tried a mild tone. "You wouldn't want Miss Appleton to come in here and see you carrying on like that, would you?"

(Concluded on page 62)

JOB OFFER

World War Four had left a very serious employment problem for parents to grapple with. It was tragic . . . heart-rending in more ways than one.

by HENRY SLESAR

THEY SAT AT THE kitchen table and talked, Birnham and his wife; not that the living room wasn't more comfortable, but since the end of War Four they had somehow begun to regard the kitchen as their meeting room, where the peeling linoleum surface served as a council table.

And besides, Wally wouldn't hear them from the kitchen, from behind the locked door of his small bedroom. They could talk freely here, without their words hurting him any more than he was injured now.

"This is what I hate," Birnham said. "Him

loafin' around his bedroom all day, never going out, not a peep outa him."

"He's brooding," his wife said. "You know how he feels, Joe. Sort of mixed up and everything, about this offer. He's thinking it over."

"What's there to think over? Say, you know how many jobs the videopaper listed this morning, in the whole goddamn cityzone? Fifteen!"

"But you *know* how he feels about it. He'll have to do just what he hated all his life. Let people *stare* at him."

"He should be used to it by now. Aw, listen, Sheila, I know what the kid's going through. Hell, of course I do. But he's over twenty-one; he knows the score. He ain't never gonna be drafted, not the way he is, all funny like that, so we can't depend on the Army feeding and housing him. You know I ain't earned more than fifty stamps since the War. He should be grateful Mr. Metelkopf made him the offer."

"He's such a nice man," Sheila said, smoothing her skirt. "He talks so respectable. I thought people like that were—well, you know. Not so educated."

"Metelkopf's the biggest man in the circus business. He knows his stuff, don't worry about that. I mean, it won't be like any old freak show Wally would be in. It would be more like a—well, like a scientific curiosity."

"But the staring," his wife sighed. "Wally always hated the staring. He hated being so different from everybody."

"But he *is* different. He should see a mirror once in a while. He should go out into the Shelters and see people. He should FACE FACTS."

"Don't shout, Joe. Nothing wrong with his ears."

Birnham looked contrite. "I'm sorry, Sheila. But it's tough on me, too. They're talking about another stampcut at the plankton plant. And all this talk about War Five—"

"No," Sheila said, going white. "Don't say that, Joe. I mean, the President told us—"

"So maybe it was just talk. Things are rough, Sheila. We got no excuse not to look facts in the face. Wally, too."

"Shush," his wife said, looking at the doorway of the kitchen where their son stood watching.

"I made up my mind," Wally said.

"That's good," his mother crooned, "Anything you want to do is all right with us, Wally. You know that."

"Sure," the boy said bitterly, and went to the telephone. He looked up before he dialed, and said: "I'm telling Metelkopf yes. In case you want to know."

Birnham and his wife watched their son complete the call. They watched with pain in their eyes, the pain that never eased when his tall slim figure was in their sight, the strange balance of his weird body, the arms equidistant and uniform, the head neatly at midpoint of his square shoulders, the two legs growing straight from his torso to the ground. They sighed, and Birnham put his arms about his wife's shoulders, and the third arm reached up and gently wiped the tear that was squeezing its way from the single eye set into her wrinkled brow.

Coming Soon

THE STRANGE BIRTH

A Remarkable Short Science Fiction Novel

by PHILIP JOSE FARMER

PATIENT 926 *Concluded from page 59*

"No!" sobbed 926, looking up.

"Confound it, your nose is running!" Penhurst stood there uncertainly. Handkerchiefs hadn't been carried since the conquest of hay fever and the common cold. Maybe Miss Appleton would have a tissue. Women carried them to blot their lipstick, he thought. But, no, not Miss Appleton, she didn't wear lipstick. A paper towel, he thought, crossing to a wash stand on the wall behind his desk.

"Blow!" he said holding the stiff paper towel to the patient's nose.

"Brrraaack!" went the boy. He snuffed a couple of times and looked at the doctor with his unblinking, sad eyes.

"I just want to write—"

"I know, I know!" said the doctor. "It's out of the question!" But a doubt was creeping into his mind.

926 began to cry again, this time with even more abandon.

"You don't want to be outside the pale," Penhurst said. "Don't you want to be like all the other little boys—level-headed, practical, realistic?"

"No!" wailed the boy.

Three paper towels later, Penhurst had the situation under control. The patient seemed completely cried out.

But the doctor was doing a lot of thinking. There must be room for a small boy who wants to write little fantasies. What was wrong with a tiny bit of creative talent in the world? Certainly, the patient wasn't so abnormal as to create wars and social disharmony. One person could hardly start civilization on another mad spiral of social evolution. He looked at the frail figure.

"The law says you must have the vaccination," he said. 926 seemed resolved to his fate.

Maybe, thought Penhurst, I could give him another cold shot instead. I could enter in his medical record that he had received his sanity vaccination. Then the law would be satisfied.

There was an exhilarating satisfaction to the idea. Somehow, it was a gratifying rebellion to the confounded order of society. He could even have the boy transferred under his auspices or possibly have a talk with his counselor, Miss Sedgewick. Apparently she had already seen fit to keep quiet about the boy's creative bent.

"Yes," he said aloud. He broke into a smile as he emptied the ashes of his pipe into an ashtray. Reaching across with the stem of his pipe, he touched the crystal button.

"Would you step in here for a moment, Miss Appleton."

Machinery whirred, the door slid into the wall, and Miss Appleton strode up to the desk. She was carrying something in her hand.

"There was just one vial of sanity serum on hand, doctor," she said holding up a full hypodermic needle. Penhurst felt a sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach. He sighed. A great forbidding wall of official "Thou shall not" rose up before him.

"Roll up your sleeve, Nine twenty-six," he said.

Miss Appleton handed him the needle.

"You're very efficient, Miss Appleton," he said. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

THE DUEL OF THE INSECURE MAN by TOM PURDOM

(Concluded from page 47)

"I think I've won," I said. "But that's just my opinion."

Then I walked toward the door.

"You've lost," Fletcher said. "You've lost."

I didn't answer him. I went down the hall to the half-empty front room and sat down. I leaned against the wall and lit a cigarette.

There were many kinds of strength, I thought, and I had a kind I didn't need to be ashamed of. No man could be 'healthy' in the way we talked of health. Not yet anyway. The only strength is to be what all of us are—insecure, moved by passions we don't understand—and to know your limitations and still try to act like a decent human being.

I had that and Fletcher didn't. And Fletcher had to keep attacking me and all the others like me to convince himself he was different.

I looked up and saw Janet coming toward me. I took pleasure in the roll of her hips as she walked.

"May I sit down?"

I nodded, my throat suddenly dry.

People jammed through the door talking heatedly. They all looked away when they saw me.

"Cigarette?" I said.

"Thank you."

I lit it for her. Then I looked at her face and suddenly I laughed.

"What's funny?"

"I feel good. You've got a lovely face."

"Thank you."

"Like to take a walk?"

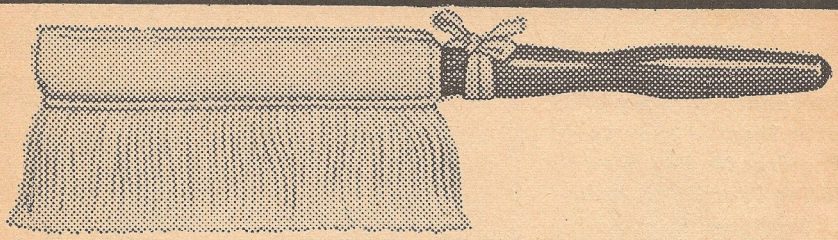
She nodded.

"Let's go."

That was many years ago. Things are different now.

AMAZING NEW IMPORTED SELF POLISHING CAR BRUSH

with MIRACLE CHEMICAL "NENETOL" MAKES DUST DISAPPEAR LIKE MAGIC — GIVES BRILLIANT POLISH JOB at SAME TIME!



Takes work out of all dusting and polishing jobs . . . makes car-washing, dirty rags, water buckets and gloves old-fashioned! Perfect for fine furniture too!

At last—one of the most fabulous dusting-and-polishing devices ever to be designed for car and home—NENETTE. Formulated by a French scientist and imported from England, NENETTE is a remarkable brush with a miracle cotton pile specially impregnated with an amazing chemical called "Nenetol." Acting like a magnet on dust particles, Nenetol picks them up and absorbs them completely. At the same time Nenetol applies an effective polishing action, leaving car and furniture gleaming like new! NO RUBBING — just wipe NENETTE over the surface lightly —and your dusting and polishing job is over!

Works Even on Mud!

NENETTE removes even hard-caked mud and gritty grime from car finish . . . restores brilliance of chrome and glass . . . saves hundreds of dollars by eliminating expensive and troublesome car washes. Now you can clean and polish your car even when fully dressed without soiling hands or clothes! Long hardwood handle reaches easily over car roof. Use NENETTE also for dusting and polishing furniture, venetian blinds, hard-to-reach corners, floors, etc.

Results Guaranteed!

NENETTE comes packed in its own special hanging metal wall receptacle. NENETTE's strong cotton pile is guaranteed to last for years. Special impregnated chemical remains effective up to 9 months in normal use—can be renewed over and over again just by applying Nenetol refill. Order NENETTE today—only $3.98 ppd. or COD plus postage. SAVE by ordering 2 NENETTES for car and for home—only $7.00. Three for $10. Money-back guarantee.

NENETTE SALES CORP., Dept. 506, Port Jefferson, N. Y.

AMAZING MUSIC DISCOVERY

Has You Playing Real Music The Very First Time You Try!

Thousands Now Play Who Never Thought They Could — Requires No Teacher — No Boring Practice of Scales and Exercises . . . QUICK, EASY, INEXPENSIVE!

IF you are one of the many thousands who have always wanted to play music, yet hesitate to learn because "it takes too long," or "it costs too much"—here's wonderful news! Now, with this modern home-study method, you can actually play your favorite instrument *the very first time you try*—and you can go on to master that instrument in a much shorter time than you'd ever imagine possible!

NO "SPECIAL TALENT" REQUIRED

No previous training needed — no "special talent" required. Right from the start, this amazing music discovery will have you playing *real melodies* instead of practicing tedious scales and exercises. Earliest lessons consist of delightful songs, hymns, waltzes, etc. Clear, simple directions and large, show-how pictures teach you exactly what to do, so you can't go wrong . . . even if you don't know a single note of music now! Soon you'll be playing ALL your favorite songs and compositions *by note!*

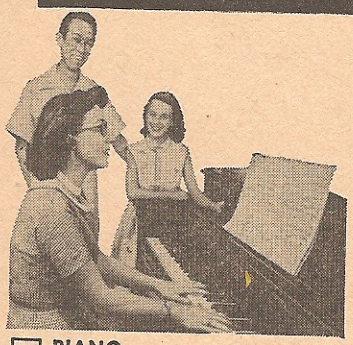
NO BORING SCALES OR EXERCISES

Over 1,000,000 people the world over have taken up this easy-as-A-B-C way to learn music. It's all so clearly explained, so easy to understand that even children "catch on" quickly. Yes, ANYONE can learn to play piano, violin, accordion, guitar or any other instrument. No inconvenient lesson periods—no expensive hourly tuition. You learn in spare time of your own choosing. *You become your own music teacher* . . . and progress as rapidly or as leisurely as *you* wish. And lessons are only a few cents each, including valuable sheet music you'll keep always! The whole family can learn for the price of one.

STOP CHEATING YOURSELF OF THESE JOYS

Why not let this U.S.School of Music method bring the many pleasures of music into YOUR life? Popularity! New friends. Gay parties. Good times. More self-confidence and poise. Extra money from playing or teaching. Possibly even a brilliant musical career. Best of all, the deep *personal satisfaction* of being able to create your own music—provide your own entertainment!

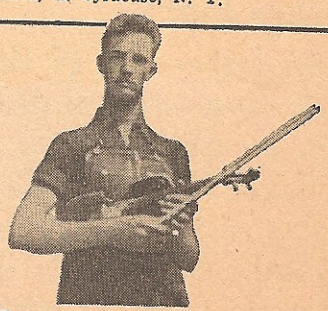
WHICH MUSICAL INSTRUMENT DO *YOU* WANT TO PLAY?



☐ **PIANO** "I hope others will discover how easily and cheaply you can learn with this wonderful method."—Mrs. J. C. Rogers, Roanoke Rapids, N. C.

☐ **GUITAR** "It's been fun. Hasn't cost anywhere near as much as a private teacher. Now invited to affairs, dances."—HOWARD HOPKINS, E. Syracuse, N. Y.

☐ **ACCORDION** "I got my start with a U. S. School of Music Course. How easy it is to play this 'teach yourself' way!—LAWRENCE WELK, Famous Orchestra Leader



☐ **VIOLIN** "I have played for dances, and am now studying Heifetz's 'Hora Stoccata' and a couple of concertos." — IVAN W. DAYLEY, Lisco, Nebr.

. . . OR ANY OF THESE OTHER INSTRUMENTS:

- ☐ Saxophone
- ☐ Trumpet, Cornet
- ☐ Pipe, Hammond, Reed Organ
- ☐ Tenor Banjo
- ☐ Ukulele
- ☐ Clarinet
- ☐ Trombone
- ☐ Flute
- ☐ Steel Guitar
- ☐ Piccolo

61 Successful Years

SEND FOR FREE BOOK

Let us SHOW you why our way to learn music is so EASY—and so much FUN! See for yourself why our method has been so successful for 61 years. Clip and mail coupon for our valuable 36-page FREE BOOK. No obligation; no salesman will call on you. It can mean *so very much* to you for the rest of your entire life — if you will mail the coupon at right TODAY! U. S. School of Music, Studio A554, Port Washington, N. Y. (Special Reduced Prices on Instruments.)

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Studio A554, Port Washington, N. Y.

I am interested in learning to play, particularly the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home." NO SALESMAN IS TO CALL UPON ME.

- ☐ Piano
- ☐ Guitar
- ☐ Steel Guitar
- ☐ Violin
- ☐ Piano Accordion
- ☐ Saxophone
- ☐ Trumpet, Cornet
- ☐ Pipe, Hammond, Reed Organ
- ☐ Tenor Banjo
- ☐ Ukulele
- ☐ Clarinet
- ☐ Trombone
- ☐ Flute
- ☐ Piccolo
- ☐ Modern Elementary Harmony
- ☐ Mandolin
- ☐ Practical Finger Control

Do you have the instrument?.....

Mr. / Mrs. / Miss .....
(Please Print Carefully)

Address.....

City.....State.....
(Insert Zone Number, If Any)

☐ If under 18, check here for Booklet A

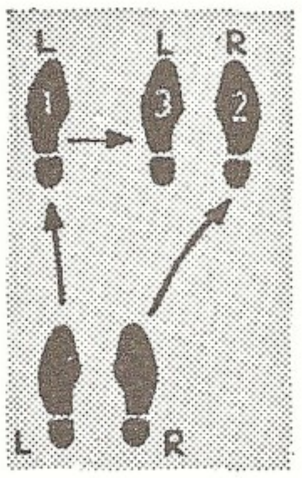
LEARN TO DANCE IN YOUR OWN HOME... in 1 WEEK... or DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK!

Sensational New "Tell-and-Show" Way Enables You To Learn A Complete, New Dance Each Evening!

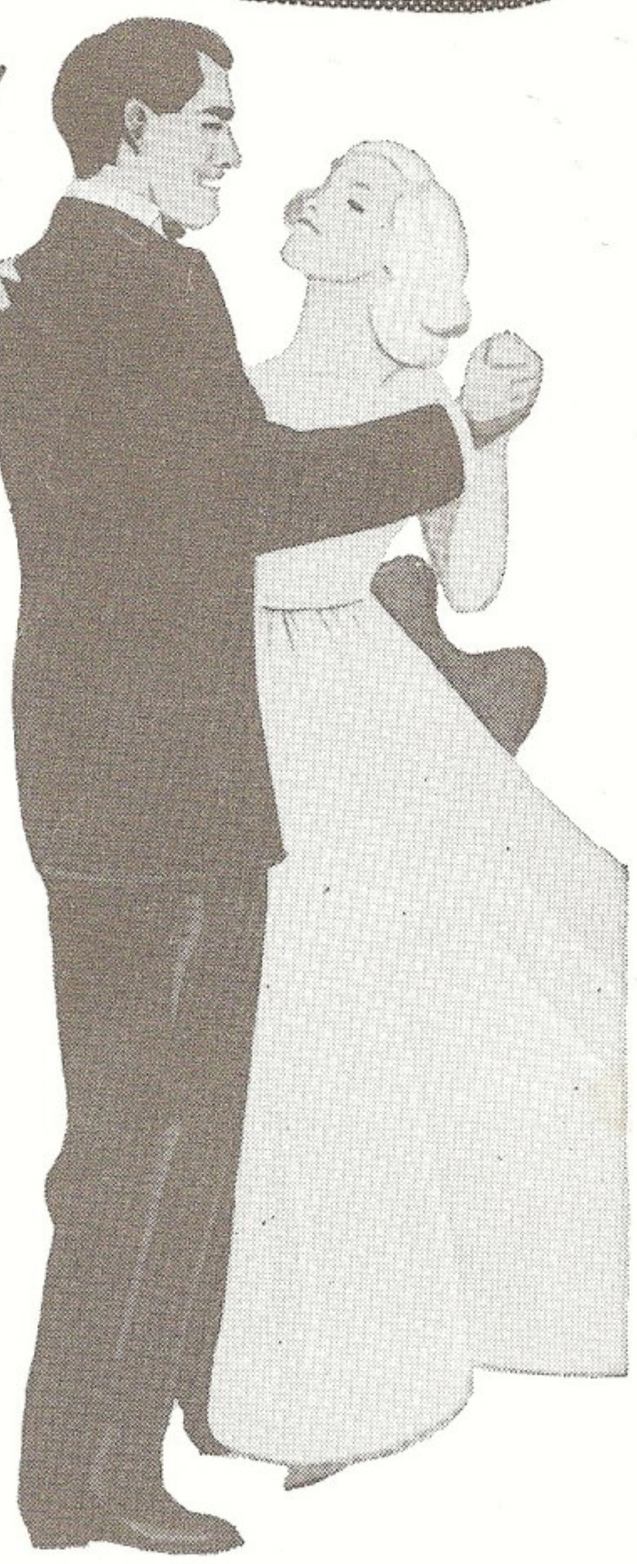
NOW DANCE THE

WALTZ
FOX-TROT
RHUMBA
TANGO
SAMBA
CONGA
LINDY
JITTERBUG
SQUARE DANCES

This new speed-method makes learning to dance so simple, quick and easy — you will amaze your friends in one single week! You'll be able to say "good-bye" to loneliness and "hello" to fun and romance. Of course, if you enjoy being a wallflower this easy, quick, self-teaching method is not for you. But, if you want to get out of your rut and start living — send for this Complete Dance Instruction Course on our DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEE! You have nothing to lose, and popularity and good times to gain, so act now! For your promptness, we include without extra charge, a wonderful book of Square Dances.



A picture of a dancing couple shows you each step and movement; easy follow-the-footprint drawings for every step of each complete dance. Simple-to-read instructions. All together, this new speed-method makes it easy and quick to learn to dance.

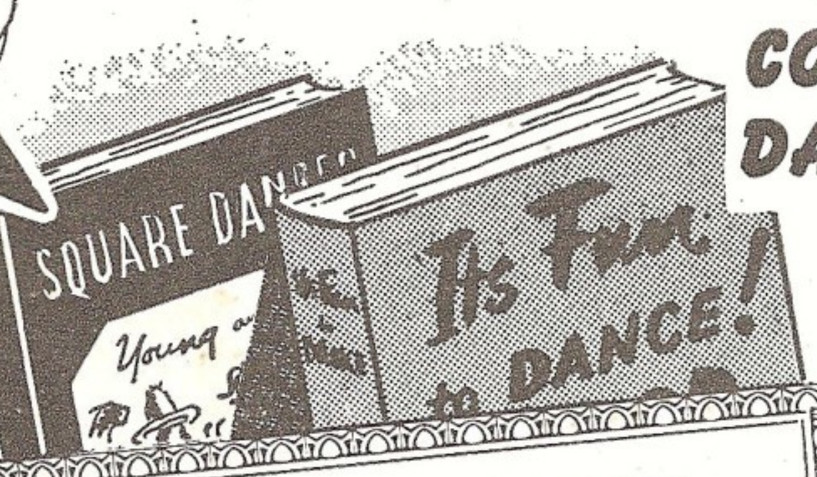


BE POPULAR . . . GET MORE FUN OUT OF LIFE

The good dancers have the best times . . . get the most invitations. Here's your chance to own this new, complete, Short-Cut Course to expert dancing. And, DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK if it isn't everything we say it is. The bonus book of Square Dances is yours.

BONUS for PROMPTNESS

Act today — and for your promptness we send you, without extra charge, a complete book of Square Dances. So mail the coupon now!



COMPLETE COURSE of DANCE INSTRUCTION ONLY 1.98

DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!

You must learn to dance, in the privacy of your own home, in 7 days, or you may return the Complete Course of Dance Instruction for immediate refund of double your purchase price. The Bonus Book of Square Dances is yours to keep.

PICKWICK CO.
Box 463, Midtown Sta., New York 18, N. Y.

MAIL DOUBLE REFUND COUPON NOW!

Pickwick Co., Dept. SAT-4
Box 463, Midtown Sta., New York 18, N. Y.

Send, at once, the Complete Course of Dance Instruction. For my promptness, include the Book of Square Dances. On delivery, will pay postman just $1.98 plus postage. If not delighted and thrilled within 7 days, may return the Dance Course for REFUND OF DOUBLE THE PURCHASE PRICE. The Book of Square Dances is mine to keep.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone..... State.....

☐ SAVE MONEY: Send payment now, and we pay the 48c postage. No APO, FPO, or Foreign C.O.D.'s.

AMAZING! PORTABLE RADIO

WORKS INDEFINITELY!

Complete! Ready to Operate!

NO BATTERIES! NO TUBES!

No Longer Than a Regular Pack of Cigarettes. NEW LIFETIME RADIO GIVES INTERFERENCE FREE RECEPTION!...

WILL LAST INDEFINITELY!

The **Lifetime Pocket Radio** comes built into a colorful, durable, shock-resistant plastic case, completely enclosed . . . no bigger than a pack of cigarettes (regular size). Easily slips into your pocket or purse. Its fine, attractive appearance rivals portable radios selling for many times the price.

FEATHERWEIGHT

Featherweight! The entire **Lifetime Pocket Radio** weighs so little that you'll be amazed. Just 4 ounces complete! So light, so small, so inconspicuous that you'll hardly know you have it with you. Fill in and mail the coupon today while the limited supply lasts.

HOW DOES THIS AMAZING POCKET-SIZE RADIO FUNCTION?

Scientists and electronic engineers working together, perfected and developed the special new circuits found in the **Lifetime Pocket Radio**. The special power source is a new-type, self-powered rectifier called a **germanium diode**. This, together with the specially designed ferrite loop antenna (now standard equipment on many transistor sets) and the new circuit design, receives station's signals and amplifies them through a precision hearing-aid type speaker, enabling you to listen to your favorite programs in complete privacy! Calibrated tuning dial aids in station selection.

GUARANTEED FOR LIFE

Nothing To Plug In

●

No Expensive, Heavy Batteries To Buy or Carry Around

●

No Tubes to Burn Out or Replace

●

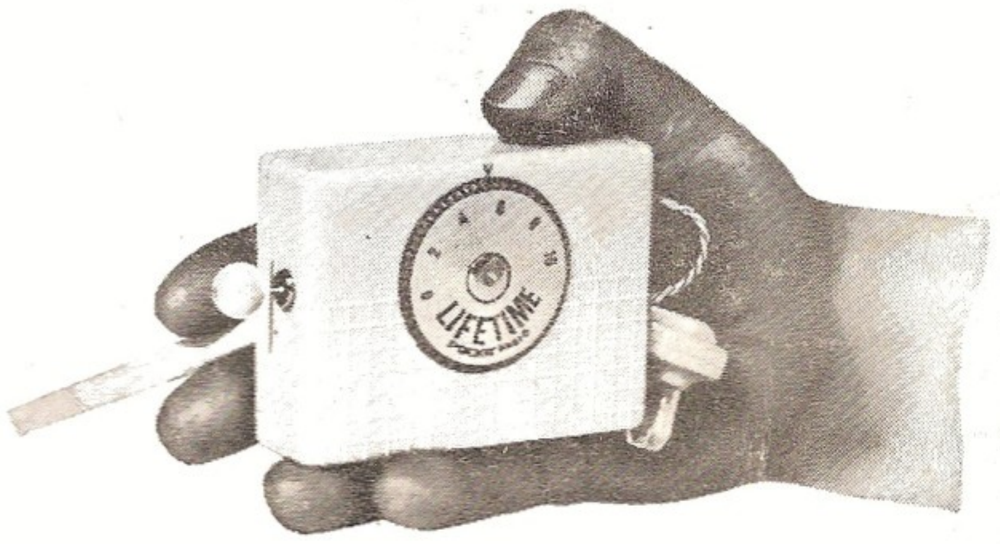
OPERATES A LIFETIME and NEVER RUNS DOWN!

LISTEN ANYTIME ANYWHERE!

Now you can tune in on radio programs without anyone else knowing that you are listening to music, sports, news, weather, etc. Order your **Lifetime Pocket Radio** now before the major sporting events this Spring deplete our limited supplies. **A FANTASTIC IMPORTED VALUE! NOW AVAILABLE WHILE THE SUPPLY LASTS, AT THE UNBELIEVABLY LOW PRICE OF JUST $4.95!** And remember, there's absolutely nothing to go out of order. The **Lifetime Pocket Radio** is **not a toy**, but a precision instrument constructed and designed for your own personal use.

Here's What You Get When You Order:

- Complete (ready to play) **Lifetime Pocket Radio** in attractive case, with calibrated tuning dial. Nothing to pay the postman when he delivers your radio.
- **COMPLETE WITH ANTENNA . . . FURNISHED AT NO EXTRA COST TO YOU**
- Hearing Aid type speaker. Featherweight. Excellent clarity and fidelity. Inconspicuous . . . lets you listen in bed without disturbing others. Almost invisible. Order Now $4.95.



LISTEN TO YOUR FAVORITE PROGRAMS!

No matter where you are you can enjoy your favorite programs without bothering anyone else. Take the **Lifetime Pocket Radio** with you wherever you go . . . it only weighs 2 ounces and it's so convenient to carry around with you that you'll wonder how you ever got along without it. No maintenance costs whatever . . . nothing to wear out . . . nothing to replace . . . nothing additional to buy now or at any time. Why not rush your order today. Simply send the coupon below with your remittance and your **Lifetime Pocket Radio** will be shipped to you at once. You will be delighted beyond your wildest expectations.

Here's How You Can Get The Complete *Lifetime Pocket Radio* for just $4.95! Yes just $4.95 is all you pay. No Hidden Costs. Nothing to Pay Later. Nothing To Assemble. Your *Lifetime Pocket Radio* is ready to play the moment you remove it from the shipping carton!

MAIL NO RISK COUPON TODAY!

LIFETIME POCKET RADIO — Dept. 1103-SAT-4
45 West 45th Street, New York 36, N. Y.

Please send me Lifetime Pocket Radio for only $4.95 on Money-Back Guarantee.

☐ I enclose $4.95 Cash, Check or Money Order.
Send postage prepaid...I save 90¢ postage by sending $4.95 with order.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ Zone_____ State_____