

A NOVEL OF THE FUTURE COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE!

STARTLING STORIES

15¢

SUMMER
ISSUE

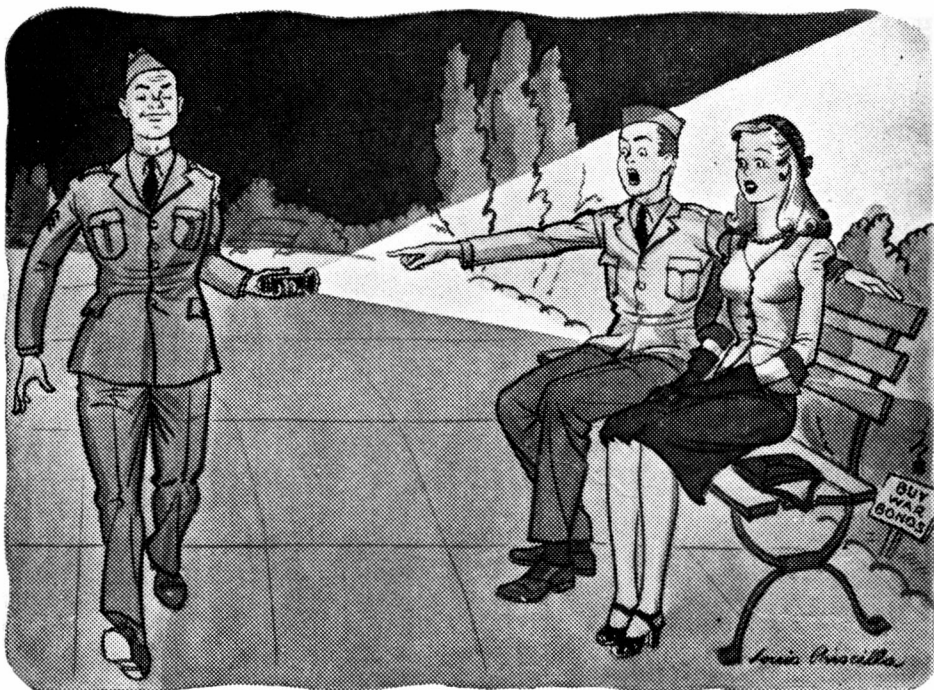
A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

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Strangers
ON THE
HEIGHTS
An Astounding
Complete Novel
By **MANLY WADE
WELLMAN**



LIGHTER MOMENTS with fresh Eveready Batteries



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A THOUGHT to keep in mind, next time your dealer is out of "Eveready" flashlight batteries: Nearly all we can make right now are being put to good use by either the armed forces or essential war industries.

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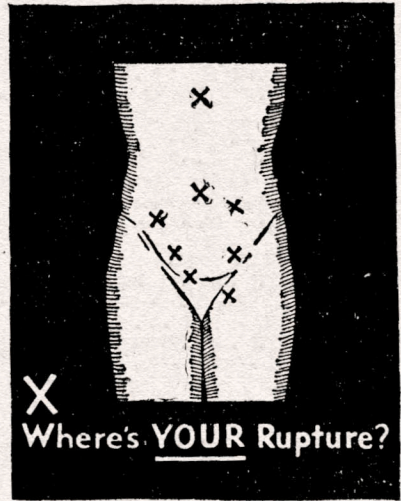
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do you **Worry** about **Rupture?**

Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear—if we can help you? Learn NOW about this perfected truss-invention for most forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire . . . you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy most of life's activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting fear of Rupture lessened in your thoughts! Literally *thousands* of Rupture sufferers have entered this *Kingdom of Paradise Regained*. Perhaps we can do as much for you. Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where other trusses have failed is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless *do not despair*. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.



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C. E. BROOKS,
Inventor

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City..... State.....

State whether for Man Woman or Child

STARTLING STORIES

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Vol. 11, No. 1

CONTENTS

Summer, 1944

A Complete Book-Length Scientifiiction Novel



STRANGERS ON THE HEIGHTS

By **MANLY WADE WELLMAN**

*Will Gardestang and Aides Use Com-
mando Tactics When Attacked by
Dread Demons and Devil-Worshippers
in the Unknown Realms of Psychic Ad-
venture That Lie Beyond the Borders
of Reality!* 11

Unusual Short Stories

GET YOUR EXTRA HERE!	William Morrison	60
<i>Henpecked Horace Perkin Travels to a Space-Warp</i>		
'WANDERER OF TIME'	Polton Cross	69
<i>Blake Carson Rips Open the Veil of the Future</i>		
THE SERUM RUBBER MAN	Ford Smith	83
<i>Meet the Crackpot Scientists, Jeremiah Doodle and Tobias Plast</i>		
BEYOND THE SINGING FLAME	Clark Ashton Smith	90
<i>A Hall of Fame Classic Reprinted by Popular Demand</i>		

Special Features

THE ETHER VIBRATES	Announcements and Letters	6
THRILLS IN SCIENCE	Oscar J. Friend	79
THIS STARTLING WAR	News from the Science Front	89
STRAIGHT TO THE BOTTOM	Westbrook Pegler	103
MEET THE AUTHOR	Manly Wade Wellman	109
REVIEW OF FAN PUBLICATIONS	Sergeant Saturn	111
Cover Painting by Earle K. Bergey—illustrating "Strangers on the Heights"		

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Companion magazines: Thrilling Wonder Stories, Captain Future, Popular Western, Thrilling Mystery, Thrilling Western, Thrilling Detective, Thrilling Adventures, Thrilling Love, The Phantom Detective, RAF Aces, Sky Fighters, Popular Detective, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Sports, Popular Sports Magazine, Range Riders Western, Texas Rangers, Everyday Astrology, G-Men Detective, Detective Novels Magazine, Black Book Detective, Popular Love, Masked Rider Western, Rio Kid Western, Air War, Exciting Detective, Exciting Western, West, Exciting Love, Army Navy Flying Stories, and Rodeo Romances.

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I will send you this FREE Lesson, "Getting Acquainted With Receiver Servicing," to show you how practical it is to train for Radio in spare time. It's a valuable lesson. Study it—keep it—use it—without obligation! Tells how "Superhet" Circuits work, gives hints on Receiver Servicing, Locating Defects, Repair of Loudspeaker, I. F. Transformer, Gang Tuning Condenser, etc. 31 illustrations. And with it I'll send my FREE 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." It describes many fascinating jobs Radio offers, explains how N.R.I. trains you at home for good pay in Radio!



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I Trained These Men



\$10 a Week in Spare Time
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Fixing Radios pays better now than for years. With new Radios out of production, fixing old sets, which were formerly traded in, adds greatly to the normal number of servicing jobs. Broadcasting stations, Aviation and Police Radio, and other Radio branches are scrambling for Operators and Technicians. Radio Manufacturers, now working on Government orders for Radio equipment, employ trained men. The Government, too, needs hundreds of competent civilian and enlisted Radio men and women. You may never see a time again when it will be so easy to get started in this fascinating field.

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The moment you enroll for my Course I start sending you **EXTRA MONEY JOB SHEETS** that show how to earn **EXTRA** money fixing Radios. Many make \$5, \$10 a week **EXTRA** in spare time while learning. I

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By the time you've built this Super-heterodyne and many other Radio circuits with the six big kits of Radio parts I send, you will have valuable experience.

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Mail me **FREE**, without obligation, your Sample Lesson and 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." (No Salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name Age.....

Address

City State..... 4FR



A Department Where Readers, Writers and Sergeant Saturn Get Together

BEFORE we lift the good ship STARBLING STORIES through the stratosphere on this present voyage there are a couple of little matters the old Sarge would like to mention.

This time — because there are so many ethergrams on spindles around the office until the room looks like a billing department in a freight depot—your senior astrogator has glanced through the mail before Snaggle-tooth started mixing metaphors. So, yeah, I do have a general idea of the beefs we are carrying this issue. And in my inimitable gentle manner I'll read you little ogres a curtain lecture.

This podium talk pertains to the cover. There has been a little yammering from the gas-room gang about the phrase "A Novel of the Future Complete in this Issue" across the top of the cover, accompanied by the complaint that the story itself "ain't no such."

Now, did you carefully reared and nurtured junior pee-lots actually think that this blurb has to mean a story laid in the thirtieth or fortieth century to be called a novel of the future? If so, you are in eclipse. Any story that deals with any tomorrow is a yarn of the future, and don't you wise monkeys try to scramble time in any other sort of omelet.

For example, Daniels' story THE GREAT EGO, was definitely a story of at least the day after tomorrow. Do any of you wiseheimers know of anybody today who can do the teleportation and transformation tricks that Rodney St. George did? Outside of a magic show, I mean.

Well, that makes the yarn about tomorrow, and just because the author didn't call the time as of 2946 and $\frac{3}{4}$ A.D., choosing instead to tie it firmly to times such as we know, doesn't make the yarn of today or yesterday. At the same time, there are novels now and then which are definitely placed in the distant future. So you hair-splitters take them as they come and don't go so technical on me, or I'll give you an extra watch at spatial course-charting.

The other point is the matter of artistic liberties taken to paint an unusual cover. Whenever you note, say, a human head on a giant snake, before you start yelling for the manager, remember that there is such a thing as symbolism. (All you have to do is to look at some of the fanzine mag drawings to comprehend this.)

In THE GREAT EGO the huge snake was

really the entity of that dastardly villain known in human form as Rodney St. George. But how could the artist depict such an abstract idea without taking certain liberties with the text? And this goes for most of the other covers for other stories, see? Of course, whenever you find a legitimate flaw or error of some magnitude, then is the time to squawk.

Now, before we get down to the business of finding out how you kiwis liked THE GREAT EGO, let me tell you what's on the manifest for next voyage.

The complete novel is a darb of a yarn by Leigh Brackett. It is laid altogether on Mars, and is very definitely laid in the future. Which should lay the bellyachers among you on the shelf.

No fooling, this complete novel, SHADOW OVER MARS, is the epic of a space waif who fights his way up from nothing to the heights in a stirring series of adventures which ought to hold you in your chairs as though under the acceleration of twenty gravities. But it won't crush you. There's an appeal and uplift to this story which will make you roam the stars.

Not since Marie Corelli have we had a woman writer who could unleash her imagination so vividly and set the pictures down in such strong, graphic style. You junior pee-lots first read SHADOW OVER MARS and then write the old Sarge your honest opinion.

The Hall of Fame Classic will be a little gem of yesteryear called THE DAY OF THE BEAST, by D. D. Sharp. Many of you will like it, some of you probably will not. File your complaints in the radio room on the third spindle from the left. Snaggle-tooth will chew his way through them, thereby perforating them with the mark of cancellation.

ETHERGRAMS

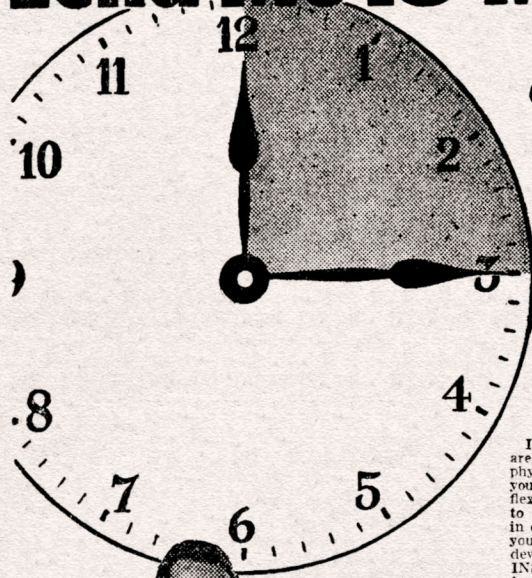
Here's one S.O.S. from the ether. Corporal Dirk Wylie, Co. B, MP Bn (ZI), County Hall, Charleston 26, S.C., would like to buy or borrow copies of TIME STREAM, by John Taine, and THE FINAL WAR, by Carl W. Spohr. Any pee-lot having any in-

(Continued on page 100)



Lend Me 15 Minutes A Day

*..and I'll prove
I can make you
a NEW MAN*



I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them.

I don't care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add **SOLID MUSCLE** to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system **INSIDE and OUTSIDE!** I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

wonders for other fellows, everywhere?

I WAS A 97-LB. WEAKLING

All the world knows I was ONCE a skinny, scrawny 97-pound weakling. And NOW it knows that I won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Against all comers! How did I do it? How do I work miracles in the bodies of other men in only 15 minutes a day? The answer is "Dynamic Tension," the amazing method I discovered and which changed me from a 97-pound weakling into the champion you see here!

In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that "Dynamic Tension" can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-shield of stomach muscle that laughs at punches—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you inside, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to LIVE!

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Are you ALL MAN—tough-muscled, on your toes every minute, with all the up-and-at-'em that can lick your weight in wildcats? Or do you need the help I can give you—the help that has already worked such

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Almost two million men have sent for and read my book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It tells you exactly what "Dynamic Tension" can do. And it's packed with pictures that SHOW you what it does. Results it has produced for other men. RESULTS I want to prove it can do for YOU! If you are satisfied to take a back seat and be pushed around by other fellows week-in, week-out, you don't want this book. But if you want to learn how you can actually become a NEW MAN, right in the privacy of your own home and in only 15 minutes a day, then man!—get the coupon into the mail to me as fast as your legs can get to the letterbox! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77F, 115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

Actual photo of the man who holds the title "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."



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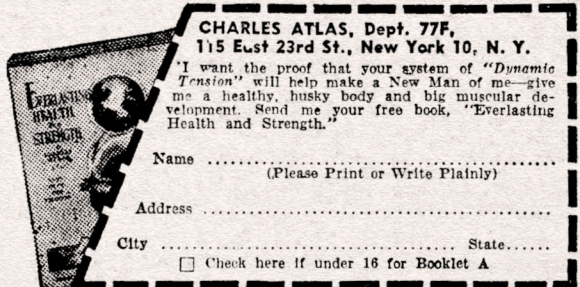
Name

(Please Print or Write Plainly)

Address

City State

Check here if under 16 for Booklet A





What good is a \$10.00 raise ... if it then costs you \$12.00 more to live?

SURE WE ALL want a raise . . . but raises today are bad medicine. And here's why... Suppose you do get a raise . . . and a lot of others get one, too. What happens? The cost of manufacturing goes up. Naturally your boss has to add this increase in cost to the price he asks the retailer. And the retailer, in turn, raises his price to the consumer . . . that's YOU.

So what good is a raise if your living costs go up even faster?

Of course, it's hard to give up the luxuries of life . . . and even harder to give up some of the necessities. But this is War! And when you think of the sacrifices our fighting men are making . . . many of them giving up their lives for us . . . no sacrifice we can make should be too great.

So . . . start doing these seven things now . . .

1. Buy only what you need. Take care of what you have.

2. Don't try to profit from the war. Don't ask more than you absolutely *must* for what you have to sell.

3. Pay no more than ceiling prices. Buy rationed goods only by exchanging stamps.

4. Pay taxes willingly.

5. Pay off your old debts—all of them.

6. If you haven't a savings account, start one.

If you have an account, put money in it—regularly. Put money in life insurance, too.

7. Buy and hold War Bonds. Don't stop at 10%. Remember—Hitler stops at nothing!

**Use it up . . . Wear it out.
Make it do . . . Or do without.**



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for less than 7¢ a day!



FOUND ACCORDION EASY

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"I didn't dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. . . . I had always heard it couldn't be done. You can imagine my surprise when after 3 or 4 weeks I found I could play real tunes. Now when I play people will hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time. Any person who takes your piano course and studies it cannot help but learn to play."

**H. C. S., California*

You, too, can learn to play your favorite instrument—quickly, easily—right in your own home!



BEST METHOD BY FAR

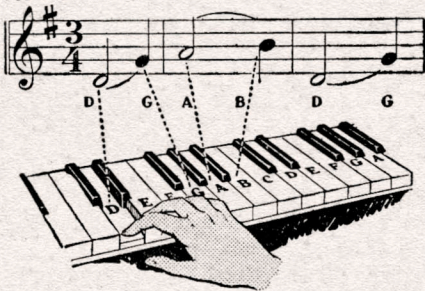
"Enclosed is my last examination sheet for my course in Tenor Banjo. This completes my course. I have taken lessons before under teachers, but my instructions with you were by far the best."

—A. O., Minn.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

SIMPLE AS A-B-C

Yet it's from the famous "Merry Widow" Waltz



From the above diagram you can see for yourself how easy it is to learn by this Print and Picture method. You simply look at the music and diagram and see which notes to strike. In a few minutes you find yourself playing the famous "Merry Widow Waltz."

YOU SAY you'd love to learn music but can't afford a private teacher? Then listen to this . . . You can now learn to play your favorite instrument—as thousands of others have—for **LESS THAN SEVEN CENTS A DAY!** And that small sum covers everything—including sheet music! It doesn't take long, either. You can learn to play quicker than you ever dreamed possible!

Learn to play by playing Real Tunes

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How is it possible? Well, you learn by a modern method that does away with humdrum scales and exercises. You spend your time playing interesting pieces from real notes. It's really FUN learning to play this modern way—it makes practicing a pastime instead of a bore. More than 750,000 pupils have enrolled for this amazing course.

A Sound Method

The secret of this method that has taught thousands to play is simple. It's based on the fact that the lessons not only tell you what to do, in the printed instructions. They actually show you—with large, clear pictures—what positions to take—every move to make. You read how to play a tune—you see how to play it—then you play it and hear how it goes. A teacher at your side couldn't make it more clear.

NOTICE

Please don't confuse the U. S. School of Music method with any system of teaching music "by ear" or by trick charts. Our method teaches you to play by actual notes—not by any trick or number system.

Print and Picture Sample — FREE

If you're really interested in learning music quickly and easily—and with little expense, send for our Free Booklet and Free Print and Picture Sample today. Don't wait. Fill in the coupon now—checking your favorite instrument. U. S. School of Music, 2946 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. Forty-sixth year. (Est. 1898.)

U. S. School of Music, 2946 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y.

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(Do you have Instrument?)

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Guitar	Plain Accordion	Ukulele	Harmony
Hawaiian Guitar	Saxophone	Clarinet	Mandolin
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Piccolo	Reed Organ	Flute	Control

Name (Please print)

Address

City State

NOTE! . . . If you are under 16 years of age parent must sign coupon.

Save 2¢ — Stick coupon on penny postcard.

The Mechanism of Mind



WHY YOU ARE AS YOU ARE—

and What You Can Do About It!

DID you ever stop to think *why* you do the things you do? Have you often—when alone—censored yourself for impulsive urges, for things said or done that did not truly represent *your real thoughts*, and which placed you at a disadvantage? Most persons are *creatures of sensation*—they react to instinctive, impelling influences which surge up within them and which they do not understand—*or know how to control*. Just as simple living things involuntarily withdraw from irritations, so likewise thousands of men and women are content to be motivated by their undirected thoughts which haphazardly rise up in their consciousness. *Today you must sell yourself* to others—bring forth your best abilities, manifest your personality, if you wish to hold a position,

make friends, or impress others with your capabilities. You must learn how to draw upon your latent talents and powers, not be bent like a reed in the wind. There are simple, natural laws and principles which—if you understand them—make all this possible.

For centuries the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization), a worldwide movement of men and women devoted to the study of life and its hidden processes, have shown thousands how to probe these mysteries of self. Renowned philosophers and scientists have been Rosicrucians—today men and women in every walk of life owe their confidence and ability to solve personal problems to the Rosicrucian private, *sensible* method of self-development. Send today for a copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life," which will be sent to you without obligation. It will tell you of the Rosicrucians *and what they can do for you*. Address: Scribe I.E.A.

THE ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC), SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U. S. A.



Amid the flames Gardestang paused as the creature laughed mockingly (CHAPTER XI)

STRANGERS ON THE HEIGHTS

By **MANLY WADE WELLMAN**

Will Gardestang and Aides Use Commando Tactics When Attacked by Dread Demons and Devil-Worshippers in the Unknown Realms of Psychic Adventure That Lie Beyond the Borders of Reality!

CHAPTER I

Old Soldiers at School

THE war was over, and Will Gardestang had not known what to do with himself. It wasn't pleasant to remember, for one thing—his training days as a bewildered private, overseas as corporal and acting sergeant, he and his Commando mates floundering ashore and into battle, and the deaths he had dealt to others, who would have killed him first had they been able. He hated to recall his best friend, dying in blank surprise, with quivering hands

trying to replace his shot-out lungs, how towns, once great, had been smashed to rubble-heaps, the waddling tanks, soaring planes, insufferable noise all around. Final victory had found him too weary and wounded for any feeling of triumph.

He had come again to little Revere College in the Midwest simply because it seemed easiest to do so. He'd once been a freshman there, and now, years older in body and centuries older in heart, he was a sophomore, signed for courses in literature, psychology, and education. And on a night in late fall he stood on the porch of his boarding house, trying to be courteous to visitors.

An Amazing Complete Book-Length Novel

"No," he said, slowly and heavily, "I haven't any criticism of Delta Lamda Psi. Not of your fraternity, or any other. But I'm not joining."

He put his hands in his pockets. Gardestang was too big and broad to be graceful, with black hair still cropped army fashion, and dark sunken eyes.

"I came here to study, and I've taken on a stiff course. I ought to be at my books now."

Millikan, the little rush captain of Delta Lamda Psi, drew up his narrow, well-tailored shoulders. Neither he nor his companion, Captain Baumgartner of the football team, were used to having their proffer of a pledge button rejected.

"Fraternities are for study help as well as other things," grunted Baumgartner. "You know, Gardestang, that we've got files at the house, with every worthwhile theme, test paper and report ever done by the brothers? Dip into those if you're after grades."

"Maybe you're thinking that Delta Lamda Psi is a new fraternity," put in Millikan. "Well, it's also the leader on the campus and the post-war world needs leaders—young men with their fresh viewpoint and energy."

"No doubt," said Gardestang. "I feel back-number myself."

LITTLE Millikan made a fluttery gesture of protest. "I didn't mean that," he said. "It's that we want you with us. There, I said it. You're our notion of an ideal Delta Lamda Psi man. You'll see what I mean, over at the house tonight."

"I won't be there," said Gardestang. "Fraternities are fine, for young lads. Teach polish and other things. But I don't fit in. I don't want to be rubber-stamped or paraded or initiated, and I do want to be let alone." He paused, and eyed his embarrassed visitors. "I seem to have made you a speech. Sorry. There's no reason why I should ever have to make you another."

"Amen to that," said Baumgartner shortly, and stepped off the porch. Millikan paused a moment.

"I'm sorry for you, Gardestang. You don't know what's really worthwhile in life."

"Who does?" demanded Gardestang, smiling, and watched the two of them go. Then he sat on the porch railing and drew out a pipe.

"Congratulations," said a soft voice from somewhere.

Gardestang sprang up, glaring and tense. A head lifted from shrubbery at the other

side of the porch railing. It was a dark head, shaggy with curls. He had a pleasant Latin smile and heavily lidded bright eyes.

"I was calling at the next house," went on the soft voice, that held a trace of accent. "Challoner is my name—Enrico Challoner, exchange student from Chile. From where I sat in the arbor, I heard intriguing bits of that conversation. Like a good soldier, I sneaked through the evergreens just to hear. I say again, congratulations."

"Same to you," replied Gardestang, somewhat coldly. "I mean, for creeping up so cleverly. Others have tried it, too."

Challoner rose. He was slender and graceful. "Yes. Adroit, those Germans. I was with de Gaulle," and he touched the ribbon he wore. "But, though it was not my business, your remarks interested me. Fraternities are all very well, but cannot suit the thinker whose mind has matured. Suppose I, as a rush committee of one, asked you down the street for a drink?"

"Drink?" repeated Gardestang. "I'll have a drink."

They walked together to the main street of the little town, and Challoner led the way to a single-story building of white-painted frame. It bore the sign Lamb's. The proprietor was a plump, gently smiling woman. Rico Challoner dropped a nickel in a juke box, which began to drone something exotic. "One of the rum punches I showed you how to make," he directed. "Gardestang?"

"Whisky sour," said Gardestang.

They took their drinks to a table in a corner. There sat a compact, middle-sized young man with maple-brown hair, a square jaw, and the appearance of an athlete.

"Mr. Gardestang," said Rico Challoner, "this is Tommy Gatchell. Studying pre-engineer things. He could have stayed in the Air Corps, where he was a first lieutenant."

"But I didn't want to," explained Tommy Gatchell for him. "I didn't even want to think about it. Sit down, Gardestang. Why did Rico bring you here?"

"Because," said the student from Chile, "he is the third exception to the rule, where we thought that we were the only two. A man pursued by fraternities, who wants to be let alone to study."

"Study what?" demanded Tommy Gatchell. His eyes turned thoughtfully to Gardestang. "We've met, haven't we?"

"I think so," nodded Gardestang thoughtfully. "Might it have been at Fort Benning? Gafsa? Was that the place?"

"You two introverts are seat-mates in some



Gardestang saw mists, an ocean and crystal shapes that moved amid the fog (CHAPTER X)

class or other," broke in Challoner, and smiled triumphantly, his black brows arching upward. "Don't ask me which—but your names begin with the same letters—G. A. R. and G. A. T."

"Psychology?" asked Tommy Gatchell. "Hmm. I think that's it."

"I think so," agreed Gardestang. "Sorry."

"We both came to be let alone and to study, didn't we?" smiled Tommy Gatchell.

"I bring up a question previously tabled," put in Challoner. "Study what?"

"That's hard to answer intelligently," said Gardestang. "Before the war I thought of being a lawyer. Now I have notions of writing something, though maybe that'll be the sideline to something else."

"You know I'm studying to be an engineer," added Tommy Gatchell.

FOR some reason this information seemed to excite the Chilean. He turned his bright eyes on Gatchell.

"I know you're studying nothing of the sort," demurred Challoner, in vehement tones. His slight accent became more apparent as he warmed up. "You said yourself that mechanics were too exact, and that life itself isn't. That life has too many blank spaces."

"You misquote me," replied Tommy Gatchell, almost as warmly. "I said nothing about blank spaces in life. I don't think there are any. I said that life is full of hidden places, not to be explained by logic. For instance, the mathematicians have carefully computed that you have something like a three percent advantage at dice by betting against the throw."

"The mathematicians don't shoot enough craps," Gardestang almost moaned, thinking of past gambling debacles. "How do they explain when someone gets hot and skins a whole army corps out of its G. I. underwear?"

"That's it. They don't explain. Too much chance and luck, if it is chance and luck." Tommy Gatchell looked toward the bar. "Mrs. Lamb! May I have another Scotch and water?"

"Chance and luck," repeated Challoner, dreamy now. "Coincidence. Or a well-laid plan by someone. Something we can't be sure of. People found religions on it, and not good religions. He lifted his glass, and part of it spilled. He swore softly in French or Spanish, and Gardestang thought that his face, just now so gay, appeared drawn. Perhaps the Chilean needed to be joked out

of a bad mood.

"What's wrong with logic?" he prompted.

"It's unstable. Consider the simple syllogism. Suppose we say that cows are larger than elephants, and cats larger than cows. Those are the premises. What is the conclusion?"

"That cats are larger than elephants."

"As logic, quite correct." Challoner had cheered up again. "But we've been to zoos, and we know that elephants are larger than cats. The conclusion rests on cast-iron consideration of premise, and if premises are faulty." Challoner spread eloquent hands. "You see? There is the basis for successful deception. Trick your victim into accepting logic for reason. So we prosper in sleight of hand, or military science, or—or promised profits of many kinds. Logic is too often a clever pitfall. I have as little to do with it as possible."

"Rico used to talk more about coincidences and luck and so on," said Tommy Gatchell. "We dug into various unexplained matters, even spells and hauntings and strange disasters. There was a man named Charles Fort who tried to explain them once, and he died."

"I know," nodded Gardestang. "He wrote 'Wild Talents,' 'Book of the Doomed.'"

"There's a coincidence itself," smiled Tommy Gatchell at Challoner. "We pick someone off the scholastic byway, and he turns out to have read Charles Fort."

"This isn't a chapter of the Fortean Society, is it?" asked Gardestang. "Because I won't belong. I turned down something with Greek letters about an hour ago because I didn't hold to what might turn out the mildest of tenets in its secret ritual. Fort was amusing, but he wanted you to believe that the world is motionless inside a solid sky-shell, with suns and stars and so on all hung around it. I'm not being a serious thinker in my time off, not even about strange cosmic propositions."

"Easy," said Tommy Gatchell. "We're not serious, either. We're seekers only. Might call our little drinking society that, eh, Rico? The Seekers? Anyway, Fort didn't demand that you swallow his theories. He never even called them theories. As you say, he died suddenly, while he was still digging up data on monsters, meteors, vanishments, weather freaks."

"Ambrose Bierce, studied such things," added Gardestang. "So did Edgar Allan Poe, and warned against such a study. Ditto a New Englander named Lovecraft. And they

all died or disappeared—suddenly and mysteriously. Every one. Maybe it's not so smart to follow his researches. I'd hate to have dodged all the bullets the Axis threw at me, and then wink out in some bizarre way."

"You are making fun, Gardestang," said Challoner suddenly, "but maybe you speak sense."

It had been some time since he spoke, and now his voice was tense, hoarse, worried. Both his companions stared at him.

"You've spilled most of that rum boiled dinner you like to drink," said Tommy Gatchell. "I'll get Mrs. Lamb to make you another." He faced toward Gardestang, and winked ever so slightly, to plead understanding for Challoner. "Say, Gardestang, something whispers that we'll get together more often. The Seekers Lofty Thought And Drinking Society may be said to have formed. What nickname might friends give you?"

"In the army they called me Duke," replied Gardestang, feeling very warm toward his new companions.

"All right. And I'm Tommy, and you may call this rum-soak Rico. Now listen, if you're a literary person, how about helping me in certain throes of composition? I'll trade you some tutoring in math or mechanical drawing or psychology. We'll go as soon as we have a last round of drinks."

CHAPTER II

The Tarots

DESPITE its convivial beginning, the so-called Seekers Society did not do much drinking. Each of its three members had plenty of studying to do, and both Gardestang and Tommy aspired to the school boxing team. That meant a training regime of considerable strictness. Rico, whose strange tense mood seemed not to return, allied them both unmercifully.

"In Chile, we learn intriguing effects with ladders and rapiers," he told them. "Fighting with such things is neater and much more conclusive. A pity that the duel is not allowed in North America."

"I've fought twenty or thirty duels in my time," Gardestang told him. "With pistols, machine guns, bayonets, knives, and once with an entrenching tool. Yes, and once I couldn't kill the other bird because I hadn't

time to draw a weapon. So I gave him knuckles. I hit first, hit hard, and kept hitting. When he'd had enough, I brought him in, and he turned out to be a German signal officer. My C. O. gave me a ten-day furlough, then and there."

"The Germans were poor boxers, generally speaking," said Tommy in reminiscent tones. "I had an opportunity to study them first hand, too. One of them crashed his plane near our field, and I was first to reach it. He tried to set fire to his crate, and I kept him from doing it, though he was as big as you, Duke, and almost half as ugly. I remember that he told the interpreter that decadent magic had been used against him."

"Magic," repeated Gardestang. "I remember that W. B. Seabrook and his friends used to stick pins into Hitler's image. And let me show you something that I ran onto, in outside reading for psychology."

From his notebook he drew a sheet of longhand script. "From a book by Joiré, who investigated psychical phenomena in France back early in the century. He experimented in hypnotism, and with one subject he found he could transmit a slight sensation of pain by thrusting a pin into a glass of water held by the subject. Later he went further, with a putty image on a plate, touched by the subject and then removed some distance. He'd prick the image on leg or arm, and the subject felt pinpricks in those parts. I wonder what he'd have had to tell the police if he'd stabbed that image in the heart?"

"I'm boxing in the welters at the dual meet with Southwestern," grinned Tommy. "They say that Southwestern welterweight, Ossowski, has a mean inside right. What say we mumble over his photograph and stick pins in it?"

"For heaven's sake, drop that talk!" implored Challoner, almost hysterical. "You don't know what you're tampering with!"

He headed for a class, and Gardestang and Tommy turned their steps toward the gymnasium.

"He has some kind of worry, and it makes him miserable," commented Tommy soberly.

"Has he always been nervous like that?" asked Gardestang. "How long have you known him?"

"Oh, we both started here in the summer session and took a shine to each other. After it finished, I had him visit my folks in Pennsylvania. He was charming company and coached my sister Mary in French. My mother says she never had a more consider-

ate guest in the house. But he was moody, and once I was downright panicky about him."

"Panicky?" repeated Gardestang. "You aren't a panicky type."

"This was a Sunday late in August. There was special music at church, and Mother wanted to go. We started out in a body—Mother, Mary, Rico, and me. But as we came near the church, he turned black-moody as could be. Almost staggered as we went up the steps. At the door he told me he did not dare go in. I stayed away with him, and he was genuinely sick. All he would say was that if he went to church he'd break a promise and be sorry."

"He must belong to some narrow sect," suggested Gardestang.

"I doubt it. Rico doesn't act like a bigot. Well, here we are. Get into your kit and let's rough around for a little. You'll be a better heavyweight for working with a fast light man, and I need something big to shoot at."

Christmas and New Year's came and went, and then spring came north early. Tommy made Revere College history, running the high hurdles. In late April, the Seekers had new experience of those qualities of coincidence that had previously baffled them.

Professor James Hinton, head of the psychology department, had once been associated with J. B. Rhine in making tests of extra sensory perception. With the permission of the President of Revere College, he began tests involving every student in school.

HIS first group, of fifty young men and women, included Challoner, Gardestang and Gatchell. They met in the college auditorium, and Professor Hinton, president on the rostrum, stood with blackboard, desk, pads of papers and pencils. He began his address with small preliminaries, facing the group with a small pack of cards held in one hand.

"These," and he held up the pack, "are specially designed tarot cards, twenty-five in number. Five symbols are included, five cards of each symbol." He held up cards in turn, for the class to see. "You perceive these symbols—a square, a triangle, a cross, a circle, a series of wavy lines." He began to shuffle the cards. "Method of operation, as carried out by my former colleague, Professor Rhine, is simple. The operator—myself—shuffles the cards well, holds them where they cannot be seen, and asks the

observers—you ladies and gentlemen—to name each card in turn. You may employ guesswork, inspiration, or what you think is an actual sense of the images. Suppose we start with a series of ten. Since there are five symbols, you have a likelihood of being right twice in the ten, or one-fifth of the time. Is it understood? Questions?"

Nobody spoke, though Rico, sitting beside Tommy Gatchell, squirmed in his chair.

"I shall name two assistants—Miss Larrimore to stand by my side and mark the name of each symbol as I turn it up, and Miss Went to collect the slips of paper on which you write your guesses. Head each slip with your name and figures from one to ten for your guesses. Understood? To be sure of our controls, spread out. There are enough seats so that you can take alternate places, with empty chairs between you."

The students obeyed. Gardestang caught a glimpse of Rico's face, pale and drawn. "Ready?" the professor said. "Begin. What's the first card I turn up?"

He held it so that only Miss Larrimore, beside him, could see. Gardestang wrote his first impression at once. Square.

"Second card," said Hinton. "What is it?"

Triangle, wrote Gardestang. Again Professor Hinton turned up a card, and again guesses were written, so on until ten had been turned up. "Gather the slips, Miss Went," said the professor. "Recess of ten minutes."

The students left their seats, chatting over cigarettes and pipes. Gardestang drifted, with Rico and Tommy, to a window recess.

"What's the matter, Rico?" asked Tommy, and Rico shook a mournful head.

"Perhaps I'm being idiotic. But, even if these cards are fascinating, they're—they're—dangerous."

Gardestang caught his elbow. "Buck up. What's on your mind?"

"Perhaps only the word tarot. This stuff is set down, in classic theology, as a sin of black magic."

Tommy tried to laugh. "I know. I've seen that in Father Summers' book on witchcraft. But things aren't evil, it's only their use. How about inventions like airplanes or rifles? Or look at a chemical compound like alcohol or iodine—a benefit or a poison, depending on what hands use it."

Rico spread his own hands and looked at them. Eyes and fingers trembled. "My own hands," he mumbled. "Are they good?"

"Seats, please," Professor Hinton called,

and the class returned to session. Professor Hinton had made a fourfold column on the blackboard:

Card	Challoner	Gardestang	Gatchell
1 Circle	Circle*	Square	Cross
2 Cross	Cross*	Triangle	Triangle
3 Waves	Triangle	Waves*	Waves*
4 Cross	Waves	Square	Square
5 Waves	Waves*	Circle	Circle
6 Circle	Square	Waves	Triangle
7 Square	Square*	Circle	Circle
8 Square	Waves	Waves	Waves
9 Square	Square*	Triangle	Cross
10 Circle	Circle*	Circle*	Circle*

"I've set down the series of cards as I turned them up," explained the professor. "Also three columns representing rather remarkable results among you observers."

He pointed to the second column. "Mr. Challoner had by far the highest score of right answers. Six out of ten—three hundred percent of probability. But quite as unusual are the next two columns, which must be considered together."

Again he pointed. "You see that I have starred only two correct answers in each column—exactly the probability number. But, though the other answers of Mr. Gardestang and Mr. Gatchell did not match the true symbols, they show extraordinary similarity. In seven cases—all but the first, sixth, and ninth—their answers were identical."

THE professor faced the class. "That is all for this group. I'm asking the three students whose results I have tabulated to remain."

Alone in the room with the three Seekers, Professor Hinton smiled less pedagogically.

"You're three of my favorite students. What I want to do is experiment further with the three of you."

"Please!" broke in Rico. "No, no!"

He hurried out. Professor Hinton looked after him with concern.

"Forget it for now, and check up on him."

They caught up with Rico outside on the campus.

"Let me alone," he said, quite gruff for him.

Tommy slid a broad hand under Rico's armpit, as if making an arrest.

"It's late in the year, and we've all got good marks," he said to Gardestang. "What if we all cut a class and had some beer at Lambs?"

Rico tried to pull away, but Gardestang took his other hand. "A brilliant idea, Tom-



Holding the talisman, Gardestang advanced upon the shaggy monster (CHAPTER XII)

my," he agreed. "Come on, Rico."

The Chilean sighed, and capitulated. "Very well. But not at Lamb's. You have neither one been at my lodgings, have you?"

"Come to think of it, never," said Tommy.

"It's not far. A room behind a furniture shop. And," his voice shook yet again, "I know you are both my friends. I will break a solemn promise, made long ago, and tell you—almost everything."

Rico's quarters were in an inaccessible part of town. The door opened into an alley, and was half hidden by a little picket fence. Inside, the fittings were almost luxurious. He had two rooms, a sort of study with sturdily-woven serapes on the walls, several photographs framed on a mantelpiece, two comfortable leather chairs, a table, a sofa. The smaller chamber held a cot-bed, a little electric grill, and shelves of books in several languages.

"Sit," Rico bade his friends, and poured wine out of a pottery bottle. Gardestang found the stuff strong and tingly, and sipped cautiously. Rico tossed off his own portion at a gulp, and poured another.

"There are more reasons than one why I am upset," he began. "For one, it is necessary that I go home. Perhaps before the end of school."

"Home?" repeated Tommy. "Chile?"

Rico nodded. "Santiago. My sister, Theolinda, has written. My uncle has died, and we are his heirs. I must help to settle the estate." His phraseology and accent were growing more Latin by the moment. "It may be awkward."

"What if I came along?" Tommy Gatchell asked.

Rico's eyes shone. "You mean it?"

His voice shook, and Tommy did mean it. "It so happens that I can pick up a few dollars and lots of vacation easily. Friends I know have bought and converted obsolescent bombers for civilian transport service. I can fly one south, to Peru or closer, with you for a passenger. From there it's a quick jump to Santiago or Valparaiso."

"If you would, Tommy! But this needn't be blind flying. I shall tell you both, as I promised."

Again he sipped. Then he spoke.

"I break an oath of silence because it was bad. Two negatives make an affirmative, eh? And here, at least, two wrongs make a right. Have you a cigarette, Duke? Thank you.

"My father, I may have said, was French,

and my mother was Chilean, of good family. Both died young, and my sister and I were reared by this uncle who has now died also. Theolinda—T, I call her—went to boarding school in New England. She is younger than I by several years. She is my chief hold on sanity. She and you good fellows."

"You don't make it sound too sad," interposed Gardestang, seeking to cheer Rico, but the Chilean held up a hand for silence.

"I went to military school in Santiago, my home city. A civilian instructor—some said he was an unfrocked priest—took an interest in me and some other younger cadets. He spoke and read to us. He told things that frightened and fascinated. At the time they seemed good. But today they make me feel ill."

RICO suddenly threw out a single word.

"Devil-worship!"

"Nonsense," began Gardestang, but this time it was Tommy who motioned for silence.

"Few words are best," said Rico. "I thought it interesting, and later sophisticated. I became one of a large group in Santiago who attended foul ceremonies. There were many reasons for this attendance. Some wanted to win women, others to get money, others sought excitement. They all seemed to have what they wanted." He put his hand to his face. "I hate to remember some things."

"Skip them, then," urged Tommy. "We want to hear, so as to help you. If you grew to dislike this devil-worship cult, why didn't you leave it?"

"Because of others who tried, and were punished." Rico had hold of himself now, spoke with more steadiness and strength. "I remember one man, a big muscular one, who struck down the leader of the group with his fist. Then he was frightened, and went to his hotel, where he locked the door and barred the windows. But the leader only thrust a picture of the man with a dagger. The next day the man was found dead. Heart disease, said the doctors. But it was murder in a locked room, the favorite familiar mystery of detective writers.

"I said I would have no more of the cult. The chiefs said there would be no turning away. I spoke of going to a lawyer. The lawyer died, by some sort of accident, before I reached his office. I chose another, in my mind only. He died, too. And one of the cult told me that my thoughts had been read, in a crystal ball or by strangely marked cards, not like those Professor Hinton had,

which were not Tarot cards. The cult used a devilish version of the Tarots. After that I had to be careful even of thinking."

He held out his hands to his friends. "You must realize that this sort of thing goes on full blast in Santiago, and in other places. Sometimes one hears of it, but that person is always dealt with. And always it seems sickness or accident. The police cannot be told. Even if they believed, they would be powerless."

"How did you get out of it, then?" Gardestang demanded.

"The war." Rico shrugged his shoulders. "I left Santiago, and in Brazil met French sympathizers who had known my father. I joined a unit of the Foreign Legion. I fought through some regrettable disasters, and later, with the Free French, through some almost equally terrible victories. Need I dwell on them, either?"

"You needn't," said Gardestang. "I fought, part of the time, with the British. I take it you came from the war to school."

"Yes. I negotiated the exchange scholarship without returning to Santiago. But now—I must return. And there is more than that."

Once again Rico fell silent, and would not speak without prompting.

"The cult again?" Tommy suggested, and Rico nodded. He rose, crossed to the window and stared out.

"One of them came as a messenger. He is here in town now. They know that I have inherited money. Up to the present they were content for me to be gone as long as I kept silent. But now I am reminded that I still belong to them. I and my possessions. They want the money I get from my uncle's estate."

Tommy made a harsh noise in his throat. "And the messenger is still here? Where?"

"In a boarding house down by the river, operated by a Mrs. Dymock."

Gardestang also got up. "I move that we go down there and interview him. All three of us. I don't care whether he can read my mind or not, all the way here. As to killing me or anyone else at a distance, it can't work every time. Not in my books, it can't."

"But it can!" protested Rico. "I have told you only the lesser half of my secret. The cult drew its power from spirits—I do not know what else to call them. Old gods of the Mountains, perhaps, who taught and helped them, and were given service—"

He broke off again. His two friends,

staring, saw Rico Challoner paw at his breast, gasp as if for air, then drop slowly to a knee. He slumped down on his face.

Gardestang turned him over. There was no mark anywhere. But Rico was dead!

CHAPTER III

The Messenger and the Monster

UNTIL the medical examiner arrived at the scene of Rico's death, the small-town police were harsh and threatening to Gatchell and Gardestang.

"Heart disease," the examiner diagnosed quickly. "You two young men were wise to call police at once. I'm removing this body to the county morgue for an autopsy, but there's no reason to hold you at present."

His assistants took Rico's body away. Tommy and Gardestang plodded off together. Without consultation they took a right turning, then a left, away from the campus and toward the river section.

"Professor Hinton was right," said Tommy after a while. "We can think of the same things."

"If you mean someone staying in a boarding house by the river, operated by a Mrs. Dymock, I'm with you."

"Go to the head of the class, Duke. And what else is in the back of my mind?"

"Something Rico said about the police. That 'they can't be told. Even if they believed, they would be powerless.'"

"On the nose again. Duke, Rico was my friend. He was clean strain, in spite of this miserable business he got mixed into as an innocent kid. If he died because of some rotten hokus-pokus, I'm not going to try too hard to understand it."

"Nor I," nodded Gardestang. "But I'll try my darndest to make someone else die."

They passed through the business district, into dingy streets of small, shabby homes. A goat waggled its whiskers from a yard. They crossed a railroad track, and beyond saw the creeping brown current of the river. A man in blue jeans came up from a little wharf.

"Mister," Tommy hailed him, "do you know a Mrs. Dymock, who keeps a boarding house?"

The man nodded, and pointed. "Down yonder on Exchange Street. Back of the house to the water. Third from the corner of Lewis Street."

"Thanks." The two walked on, purposefully and glum.

"Got any plans, Tommy?" asked Gardestang.

"A couple. How about you?"

"It just occurs that we could hardly be tried for homicide if no body was left for those eager cops to enthuse over. And just behind the boarding house will be a river to carry away evidence."

"Three times you've thought double harness with me. I wonder if anyone else is tuning in."

Gardestang shook his head. "Suppose we allow—and we do allow—that Rico was killed by remote control. That's because he had a mind that could be looked into from far off, by some means or other known to the cult. He admitted that, remember. And don't forget that he seemed to pick the card symbols accurately. But you and I—we aren't beamed to anyone except each other. A closed line, so to speak."

"Comforting, if true. I don't mind you reading most of my thoughts, Duke, because you won't stick pins in my picture or anything. Look! That big green box of a house must be Dymock's."

It was. The landlady was out, but a grimy-faced maid told them readily that a stranger was boarding there.

"A foreigner," she amplified. "Spanish or Indian or something. You know him?"

"Very well," said Tommy. "We're blacksmiths, come to fix his wagon." They brushed past her and started up the stairs to which she pointed.

On the second floor was a long, narrow hall, with windows on one side, doors on the other. The first of these, well ajar, revealed a bathroom. Tommy knocked at the second. A blondined female head poked out.

"Sorry," said Tommy. "We're from the immigration authorities, looking for a foreigner."

"Yes, that Indian," said the blondined woman. "He's in the last room, clear at the back."

"Thanks," said Tommy, and they walked down the hall.

"Door will be locked," whispered Gardestang as they came to it. He motioned Tommy out of the way, turned his back to the door and drew one knee upward. Backward he drove his heel, like a kicking horse, hard against the lock just beneath the knob.

Torn from its slot, the lock sprang, and the door flew inward. Tommy moved in

quickly, hands loosely clenched close to his side. Turning back quickly, Gardestang followed close behind.

The room was square, with windows showing the river beyond. There was a bed, with a dresser beyond, a table, one chair. On the dingy carpet knelt a plump, swarthy man, packing a big label-matted suitcase. He rose and faced them blankly.

GARDESTANG shoved the broken door shut behind him. "We're from Rico Challoner," he said.

The plump man looked more blank still, then a little ripple of panic crossed his round face. Gardestang noted this, and felt triumphantly sure of his prey.

"Oh, yes, Rico is dead," Gardestang continued. "My, but strange things happen, don't they, in the circles where you move? So a dead man sends trusted friends to finish his business affairs."

The plump man made a dash for the door. Tommy put out a quick hand, catching and squeezing a pudding shoulder.

"Not so fast," he said. "Unfinished business, for Rico Challoner. You speak English, don't you? Hablo usted Ingles?"

"No, no," quavered the plump one. "Por Dios, senores!"

"He lies," pronounced Gardestang. "He understands everything we say. Isn't that so, Fatty? If you don't start talking, we'll converse by signs." He doubled a fist, half cocked it.

Submissively the man sat down on the bed.

"I suggest," he mumbled, "that Rico Challoner—my friend, too—has died by natural causes of the heart."

"That's a confession right there," broke in Tommy. "What do you know about his heart disease? We just came from there, after talking to the police."

"Police!" The plump one seemed to clutch at the word. "Si, yes. Take me to the police. I am ready."

Again he got up. Gardestang gave him the heel of a hand in the chest, setting him abruptly down again. "We take you nowhere. We will talk to you. Consider us as police of a sort, arresting you. You will then be tried, by us."

"And undoubtedly executed." That was Tommy, over by the bureau. "Look here, Duke."

He had picked up a sheet of white paper, no whiter than his own face had become. He held it out.

The plump man gave vent to a sort of whimpering cry, and jumped up, snatching at it. Tommy fended him off with his free hand, and the plump man drew from under his coat a long, straight knife, with a blade as narrow as a screw-driver. Gardestang made a heavy but swift leap, caught the man by collar and knife wrist, and threw him roughly to the floor over his lifted leg. A moment later Gardestang had stamped on the hand that held the knife. When the fingers opened, he kicked the knife into a corner. His victim struggled up, and Gardestang uppercut him savagely. Down fell the plump body in a quivering, moaning heap.

"Look here," said Tommy again. He held out the paper.

It was a sketch of Rico, an excellent likeness, in red and black ink. Gardestang, gazing, judged that it had been traced from a photograph and then elaborated. Rico was depicted at full length, standing jauntily with a hand on some sort of pedestal or bracket. His face smiled faintly, his eyes looked straight out of the picture. A narrow gash-like hole pierced the paper, at the chest.

Tommy stooped and retrieved the knife. He held it close to the sheet.

"Stabbed with a knife," he announced. "Remember what Rico said about the man who socked a leader of the cult? They stabbed a picture, and the man died of heart disease."

Gardestang looked at a row of strange characters at the top of the sheet, letters of some language he did not know. He folded the picture and stowed it in his pocket. Then he stirred the fallen man with his toe.

"Get up," he commanded. "Up, or I'll pull you around by the hair. Now, what about all this?"

The plump man backed against the wall.

"I know nothing," he said quaveringly. "Kill me."

"What's your name?"

"I do not answer," said the man again.

"Here's his name on the suitcase tag," contributed Tommy. "Francisco Fereo. You're in a bad spot, Francisco."

Francisco Fereo licked his fat lips. "I suggest," he said, "that you are yourselves in—how to say?—a bad spot. Others will be coming as I call them."

"Others?" echoed Gardestang. "More than one of you, are there? Come on, Tommy, let's all three go for a walk."

Tommy had been pocketing other papers from Francisco Fereo's suitcase.

"Come on, then," he agreed.

The three walked out silently. The maid stared, but said nothing, nor did Francisco Fereo speak for the moment. As they strolled, three abreast, toward a vacant slope of river bank, he actually smiled.

"You cannot hide me from my friends," he said. "They will follow. They know the mind."

"Our minds give away no secrets," Tommy told him. "If they had, you would be prepared for our coming."

"I speak not of your minds. My mind calls. Now."

TOMMY led the way to a clump of brushy willows, near the water's edge. There he spoke coldly to Francisco Fereo.

"We know a lot of what has happened here, and what has happened in Santiago. Rico died before he could explain everything. We want a full story from you."

Fereo shook his head silently.

"Speak," said Gardestang, and struck the silent face with his fist.

"Kill me," bade Fereo.

"No, but we'll half kill you," promised

[Turn page]

SEEING-BELIEVING

THIRST-RELIEVING

What happens when you look at the circles and move your head from side to side?



ANSWER: The circles spin like a wheel.



Tommy, and threw his own fist. Fereo staggered and put a hand to his face. Blood showed.

"You are putting yourselves into danger," he assured them. "I will be avenged."

"Don't worry about us," Gardstang interrupted. "You murdered our friend. You think that some unknown strength or knowledge is going to protect you. Will it protect you from this?"

Again he struck. Fereo moaned.

"This much I shall say," he mumbled through his bruised lips. "I warn you of the Viejos Dios—the Old Gods—"

That was as far as he got. His hands pawed at the front of his shirt. He began to collapse. Tommy caught him and eased him to the ground.

"Dead," Tommy told Gardstang. "And did you notice his words?"

"I did. He mentioned Old Gods. Just like Rico—before Rico died."

Tommy looked toward the water. "Get him into that. I don't want to be cluttered up in any more heart-failure cases. Grab hold of the other side. Duke, I'm still taking that job flying the plane to Peru."

"And then on to Chile?"

Tommy nodded. "Something tells me we're into something. And I hate to dodge it by backing out."

"You offered to take Rico as a passenger," reminded Gardstang. "How about me going with you? We'll both dig into whatever it is that kills before you can talk out of turn."

"I was just waiting for you to suggest it," said Tommy. "Come on. Into the river with this specimen."

CHAPTER IV

War on Shadows

A BIG passenger plane was disgorging its load of people and luggage at the airport of Los Cerrillos. Buses and taxis waited to haul passengers to their destinations in Santiago. Two young men, last to leave the plane, turned from a uniformed driver who reached for their bags.

"We want refreshments," said Gardstang. "We will leave in a few moments. Poco tiempo. Sabe?"

"Perfectly, sir," replied the driver. "Shall I put the bags in my cab? You can buy sandwiches and drinks at the counter in the

administration building."

But Tommy Gatchell and Gardstang moved, instead, to a small shacklike refreshment stand, less crowded and presided over by the most bored of men. They ordered something at random from the Spanish menu, and it turned out to be good sea food. With it went American beer.

"Wasn't Rico's sister to meet us?" asked Tommy between mouthfuls. "Theolinda, isn't that her name?"

Gardstang frowned. "I cabled that we would come, but that we would call on her at her home. I wanted her to take no chances of walking into trouble before we showed up. We're being watched closely, you know."

"I do know," agreed Tommy. "You're a smart guy, Duke. But all during the trip you've been digging into books and making notes. What about?"

Gardstang brought out a wad of scribbled paper. "We start with Charles Fort, our original inspiration. I brought along two of his works, 'Lo!' and 'Wild Talents.' Listen here—this is from 'Lo!', page one seventy-two. 'There may be occult things, beings and events, and also there may be something of the nature of an occult police force, which operates to divert human suspicions.' He backs that up with all sorts of strange things, whose plausible explanations he attempts to make ridiculous. Again, he writes about appearances and disappearances, very mysterious, which he explains by 'teleportation'—supernormal moving of matter from one point in space to another."

"All of this by far-fetched, ill-supported examples from country papers," pointed out Tommy Gatchell.

"Not all. In 'Wild Talents' he wrote of funny things that had happened to him. It was his last book."

Gatchell sipped beer. "Do you suppose that this particular occult traffic—that can be used to read men's minds and kill them—breaks down resistance at the end? I remember Professor Hinton saying, in a lecture, that the extra-sensory perception crowd thinks all people can cultivate and strengthen their power to read thoughts and symbols at a distance."

"If you're right, at least we're pretty new and resistant so far," reminded Gardstang. "Let's keep it that way. We're on each other's thought-beam, and that's all. If we're going to have trouble with anyone, they'll have to kill us with honest guns and knives."

"Es verdad, señor."

Gardestang spun quickly. The cab driver was in the doorway.

"What's true?" demanded Gardestang. "What are you driving at?"

"I said, it is ready. The cab, your baggage stowed. Where do you wish to go?"

Gardestang glanced at Tommy.

"Take us to the Avenida de la Delicias—the main drag," directed Tommy. "I have a due bill on the Hotel Braganza."

The ride to Santiago was refreshing and zestful. Though the ride by air liner had shown more grandeur of distant mountain scenery, the two young men saw plenty of beauty close at hand. Santiago had lovely plazas, a grand cathedral, and many modern-built buildings. The Avenida de las Delicias was a huge thoroughfare, with a parklike promenade in its center. Almost every crossing disclosed a monument or statue. Gardestang drank in the color of Chile's capital city with all a tourist's fervor, but suddenly sat bolt upright.

"Why's he turning off?" he demanded.

"To get to the hotel," suggested Gatchell.

"But I spotted the sign—Braganza—two blocks away from here. Hi, driver! You're going the wrong way."

"I am going the right way," said the driver over his shoulder.

As is frequently the case, unsavory side streets came close to the main business district in Santiago. The cab was already traversing one of these. Even as Gardestang leaned forward to expostulate, it turned into a narrower way still, an alley between the blank rear walls of old brick and stucco buildings. The driver put on the brakes, and turned with a mousy grin.

"We have waited long for you to come," he said.

GARDESTANG put out a hand to seize the driver's arm, but found himself looking into a pistol muzzle. The door of the car was yanked open. "Get out," said a voice in English.

The two Americans got out. Three men besides the driver were standing in the alley. Two of them ranged themselves behind the third, each with his hand inside his coat, as if upon a weapon. The third, as big as Gardestang but softer, made a little gesture of mocking welcome.

"This is like a family reunion," he said. "Americans of my age, coming all the way down here in pursuit of strange knowledge! I did the same thing years ago. It served

the additional purpose of avoiding the draft. I learned so much of interest that I'm desolated to say you won't learn anything."

"Who are you?" asked Tommy Gatchell in a gentle, unpleasant voice.

"Oh, pardon me. My name is Eaker, Val Eaker. And I'm perhaps the greatest potential thorn in your flesh. Yet, to avoid mess, I give you a chance to withdraw from what you came to seek. I give you more—your fare back to America."

"Which means we're on the right track, and you're afraid." Gardestang shuffled about an inch closer to the man who called himself Eaker. Gardestang's shoulders were hunched, his arms a little bent at the elbows. Eaker saw all these things, and moved back. His two companions came up, one on each side of him.

"If there is any violence, be assured that we will be the ones to perform it," Eaker warned the Americans. "Aren't you satisfied? You killed my friend who was involved in the tragic death of Rico Challoner. Poor Fereo! So untimely was his end."

"We killed nobody. He dropped dead while telling us something."

"Which you were forcing him to tell. I consider your guilt well demonstrated. What do you say, gentlemen? Have I your promises that you'll go back to the States? Or must my companions require you to step through this back doorway, into a most interesting room that has no windows and very little light?"

"You'd accept our promises?" said Tommy, and Eaker bowed.

"Implicitly. Because I'd swear you with oaths you dare not break. And, anyway, you could do little harm with what knowledge you now have. Come, shall I give you ten seconds to consent?"

He held out a hand, rather delicate for one so fleshy.

Gardestang caught him by the wrist and whipped him close with a single effort of the muscles. Eaker gasped, struggled briefly, then subsided as Gardestang swung him around and jammed something hard into his back.

"Put those weapons away!" Gardestang snarled at the other two, from under whose coats had come pistols. "If either of you makes a false move, I'll shoot this man loose from his spinal column!"

The two may or may not have understood English. Eaker was swiftly and hysterically supplementing Gardestang's words with a Spanish translation. The two men dropped

the weapons back into their pockets, and moved back as if impelled by one thought. Gardestang had his first good glimpse of them. They were scrubby but dangerous-looking, and none too bright of expression. "Tell them to leave you here," ordered Gardestang.

"Leave me—alone?" faltered Eaker.

"Oh, I'll let you go later. Order them away, and the driver, too."

Eaker spoke rapidly to his companions. They moved to a dull-painted doorway and inside. The driver followed.

"Get at the wheel, Tommy," said Gardestang. "Eaker, back into the rear seat with me. Tommy, drive us out into the open."

In silence the car brought them out upon a street, then to a fairly busy corner.

"Quick, Tommy!" said Gardestang. "Get out and flag that taxi. So. Now, Eaker, help transfer our bags. That's a sensible fellow. And now, goodbye. Better make the goodby permanent."

Eaker watched them getting in. "I have erred, and shall suffer," he pronounced dulcetly. "Next time I shall know better how to deal with you."

GRIMLY Gardestang paused with a foot on the running board of the taxi.

"Take a good look at me, Eaker," he challenged. "I'm a sort of a jinx. Better remember that in the future and pass me up. I'll bring you nothing but hard luck."

"Later you'll wish you were dead," promised Eaker.

He got into another taxicab and was driven away. Gardestang and Tommy gave the name, Hotel Braganza, to their new driver, and rolled off toward the Avenida de las Delicias.

"Duke, it was a good thing you had that gun, or we'd be in a jam now, said Tommy softly. "But you'd better get rid of it. How did you sneak it through the customs?"

"I didn't have a gun. I dug this into his back."

Gardestang showed a stubby-stemmed pipe.

"You see, they can't read our minds yet," said Gardestang. "Which means, they can't kill us by magic, or thought transference, or mental suggestion, or whatever their method is. The war's begun—war on shadows—and I wonder if the shadows aren't going to get hurt in a most unshadowy manner."

At the Hotel Braganza their room was ready. There was also a message and a

telephone number to call, left by Senorita Theolinda Challoner.

Santiago de Chile has always been a gay and free capital. The women of all classes enjoy more freedom and education than in almost any other Latin American country. The North American influence is felt throughout a lively world of entertainment, and the theaters and cafes are elaborate and pleasant. The salon of the Hotel Braganza is not one of the richest, but it is one of the liveliest.

On that particular night when Tommy and Gardestang sat at table with Theolinda Challoner, an orchestra with green coats played wildly and then mournfully, the hybrid rhythms of deep South American dance music. Someone sang, first in Spanish and then in English, for there was a fair sprinkling of tourists from the United States. The food, brought by a slender waiter in broided jacket, was French-cooked, and skillfully prepared.

Theolinda Challoner gazed at her two hosts with deep blue eyes that had nevertheless that liquid expressiveness found generally in eyes of darkest color. Her face had a rosy flush, and her unswept brown hair gleamed lustrously. She was tall for a Chilean girl, and proportioned in a way that bespoke vigor but not heaviness. Where Rico had been all dark Spanish, Theolinda had the complexion and figure of a Northern race, though her delicately rounded chin, curved lips, and lovely eyes were Latin enough. Gardestang remembered that her father had been a Frenchman, perhaps a Norman or Picard.

"You have come all the way here for the sake of my brother, your friend," she was saying as she toyed with a slim-shafted wine glass. "You think that the reason for his death can be found here. Yet I can add so little to what is known."

"Perhaps we need only a little," Tommy told her gently, and she gave him a brief smile as of gratitude.

"Rico was older than I by three years. It is a proper difference in age between brother and sister who are going to be good comrades. He was always thoughtful and studious. He was not like me. I would rather ride or climb or dance than sink myself too deeply in books, while he was forever reading histories and accounts of warfare. Thinking he had a bent for an army career, my father sent him to military school. I knew that he was troubled by being there, though he did not tell me about

it. Until you spoke tonight I did not know what influences worked on him there."

"He never mentioned diabolism?" Gardestang prompted her.

She shook her taffy head. "No. That is, not exactly. Once we spoke of prayer, and he said suddenly and earnestly, 'Prayers are evil when they are made selfishly. Pray only to be made good and brave and honest. No worship is worthy if it is followed only for earthly profit.' Again, he read many strange books, both in Spanish and English, on subjects banned by the Church. One such he received by mail. It was called 'The Mysteries and Secrets of Magic,' by C. J. Thompson."

"I've seen that book among Rico's things," said Tommy Gatchel. "I was interested enough to read it myself. It was published in England, by the Bodley Head."

THEOLINDA nodded. "Rico was happy when he obtained it," she explained. "He'd been all drawn and weary-seeming before, but now he acted as if on the verge of triumph. He took the book to his room, and he was gone for hours. But he came out, again depressed and sad. I asked if he were ill, but he only said that he had tried something and it had failed. Later I went to his room, and on the table I found a basin of water, with wet clay spread beside it, marked with strange characters. And the Thompson book was open beside it."

"Do you remember what it told about?" asked Gardestang quickly.

"Very well. I read it, and copied part of it. There seemed to be some sort of spell or curse having to do with evil spirits and powers. I wondered if Rico had tried magic, or counter-magic of some sort. But I did not bring myself to ask him, and then he left suddenly. For the war."

"Spell or curse?" repeated Gardestang. "It was actually that?"

"I copied it down at the time. Knowing you would ask about such things, I brought along the paper."

From her bag she produced a worn, folded sheet, and spread it on the table. She began to read, slowly and tremulously:

"O thou cursed and foul witch, and thou spirit of witchcraft and sorcery, assistant to this hellish and diabolical creature which doth hale, pull, terrify and torment the body or carcase of—"

"That's enough," said Tommy Gatchell suddenly. He put a hand toward the shallow vase of flowers in the center of the table.

They watched, while his hands carefully parted the thick cluster of white and red flowers there. Among them nested something round and metallic.

"Dictaphone," said Tommy.

"It doesn't work," protested Gardestang, lifting it out to show that there were no wires attached. Then he turned it over in his big hands, frowning. "But maybe it does. Look, it has special attachments. Maybe there's some kind of remote control. When did we reserve this table, Tommy? And who is now listening in on us?"

Tommy turned around. His eyes, angry and hard, took on a strange baleful light of recognition. Gardestang, too, looked and saw the pudgy form and doughy face of Eaker three tables away.

Eaker's head almost ducked. Plainly he had been watching them intently. With him were three other men, and two of these ignored Tommy and Gardestang ostentatiously. The third man, in the uniform of an officer of the Chilean army, did not drop his gaze. He was gaunt, tough-bodied, with a shallow jaw and high, raw cheekbones. One slender hand caressed a waxed moustache.

"The army man's talking out of the side of his mouth," Tommy said in an undertone. "Look at Eaker drinking it in, and pretending not to hear."

The orchestra suddenly blared into swift-timed, gay dance music. And the officer got up and walked toward them.

Gardestang got up, too, and Tommy. Both of their bodies were instinctively tense, ready. But the man spoke to neither of them. He bowed almost fulsomely toward Theolinda Challoner.

"Is it permitted that I ask the gracious senorita for the favor of a dance?" he purred in Spanish.

She ignored him. Gardestang replied for her.

"It is not permitted, senor."

The fellow faced toward him. His eyes were fighter's eyes, like those of Tommy Gatchell, but not clear or steady.

"The senorita has a duenna, I see."

"Hold it, Duke," put in Tommy quickly. "My Spanish is better than yours." He turned to the officer.

"I don't think you know the senorita," Tommy said. "She would not know a bogus officer. When next you impersonate a military man, see that your insignia of rank and branch are on your tunic, right side up."

The man turned on Tommy. They were

much the same height, and both were drawn taut for action. The gay mustache quivered a little.

"The Yanqui must mean to insult me," said the officer with trembling lips.

"I am desolated, if you have the slighted doubt about that in your mind," answered Tommy. Then he hit the Chilean.

Tommy's fists landed six or eight times, so fast that not even Gardestang's eye, trained for boxing, could follow. In the midst of that fusillade of knuckles, the man went down heavily to hands and knees. There were cries of alarm and protest from all over the room, the music played louder, and Eaker and the others were pushing forward. Gardestang moved to set himself in their way.

"Stay out of it, or I'll give you all a belt apiece," he warned.

THE head waiter and the manager were both on the scene, quieting guests. In the middle of this, Tommy Gatchell helped Theolinda into her wrap. Gardestang and he took their places on either side of her, and the three walked out. In the vestibule the man Tommy had struck caught up with them. From one nostril blood trickled.

"This is not the United States, where any low brawl is permitted," he snarled furiously. "The Yanqui knows criminal tricks with the fist, yes. In Chile we fight like gentlemen. The duel is still practised. If you," and he thrust his battered face at Tommy, "are not afraid, I shall see you later. You are challenged."

"I am acting for Captain Montero," added Eaker, coming up behind.

Tommy spoke to neither of them, but to Gardestang. "Take charge, Duke. I'll fight this faking hyena, just as if he were a gentleman. You've probably never been a second in a duel, but you ought to pick it up quickly."

"If I can help."

The words were soft, good-humored, and in English. They were spoken by a slender middle-aged man, white-haired and smiling. He was supple and elegant to the seeming, all but his left arm, which was woodenly stiff and terminating in a gloved hand—artificial. Despite the Chilean tailoring of his garments, he was no Chilean.

"I'm Dr. Parr, ex-lieutenant, United States Navy," he introduced himself. "You're Americans, and perhaps I can be of service, even represent this youngster."

"No, thanks," said Gardestang at once.

He was in no mood to trust strangers. "I'll act for my friend."

"As you say," nodded Dr. Parr, and withdrew, all smiles.

Gardestang looked into Eaker's wide, mocking eyes.

"You know that we're here at this hotel. Look me up tomorrow morning."

"Good. Nine o'clock, shall we say? You and I can have coffee, and then we can talk, yes?"

"I wouldn't drink coffee with you, Eaker. But I'll talk fight with you, and if you'd like to make it a double duel, I'll arrange that, too."

Outside they went. Theolinda Challoner's car came around, with a heavy-set, solemn driver who appeared to be an Indian.

"Worried, Tommy?" asked Gardestang, and Tommy laughed with honest joy.

"Why should I worry? We've got them in a corner. They can't kill us with magic or super-science or whatever's their long suit. They have to fall back on regular weapons. And that, Duke, my son, is where people like us shine like morning stars."

CHAPTER V

Field of Honor

IN THE way to Theolinda's home on the edge of Santiago, where she was living with two spinster friends of her dead mother, both Tommy and Gardestang did their best to make the coming passage of arms seem like a gay sporting event. But at her door, she drew Gardestang aside.

"Duke—they call you that, yes?—Duke, your friend is in danger. From what you tell me, these unsavory people who now challenge you were involved in Rico's death."

"We'll be involved in their deaths," Gardestang told her heavily. "And there'll be no more trouble."

"But things are not as simple as that. Duelling laws are winked at, but death brings about investigations. Even if you triumph, you may have trouble. I am sending my car back with you, and also my driver. Please let me do this. He is an Indian—one of the old Araucanian stock, a tribe which has held the Andean heights and was never conquered. Lautoro!"

The driver came out of his seat and stood before her, a solemn, squat figure of such

deep chest and broad shoulder that he looked like a giant hammered down. His face was as brown as an old saddle, wide and flat and set with beady black eyes.

"Lautoro, these senores are my friends and protectors. Tomorrow they will fight certain other senores. Go with them, be ready to help in case things are not fair. You understand?"

"Si," muttered the Indian deeply. He turned to Gardestang and Gatchell, studying each of them with stern care. Then he returned to his seat.

"I feel better. Lautoro was faithful to my mother, to Rico, and now to me. Also, he is brave and wise, though not talkative. Go with God, my friend."

At the Hotel Braganza, they found quarters for Lautoro, who thanked them as gravely as an ambassador. Then they went to their own room, where Tommy slept soundly and serenely, while Gardestang pondered the morrow's possibilities. In the morning a telephone message from the desk told Gardestang that Eaker waited in the lounge below.

Gardestang met his enemy, who was all smiles and irony.

"My friend, Captain Montero, feels that he already has waited too long for the business in hand. I suggest that we meet in a quiet little picnic park south of the city, a place called Roca Negra—Black Rock. Sinister, eh? Swords, of course."

Gardestang shook his head. "I don't think so, Eaker. Pistols."

"You forget that it was your friend who provoked the encounter by knocking the captain down. We have choice of weapons."

"I remember quite well," rejoined Gardestang. "Also I remember reading that the challenged party can choose weapons. Pistols, I said."

Eaker spread his hands in acceptance. "I can lay my hands on a fine pair of duelling pistols."

"No, thanks. No ringer guns in this. Let's go buy a pair."

They walked along the street to a big store with a firearms department. After some discussion and a slight disagreement they took two American-made pistols, of derringer model, each with two barrels, one above the other. The weapons would fire .41 cartridges and had hair triggers.

"I shall take charge of them," said Eaker, but again Gardestang shook his head.

"No, Eaker. I wouldn't trust you. But I'll take them, because you can trust me."

"I think I can," smiled Eaker. "Then at five o'clock tomorrow morning, at the park of el Roca Negra. Goodby, Mr. Gardestang."

He smiled once more, nastily, as they parted.

Theolinda Challoner telephoned that morning. Gardestang returned while Tommy Gatchell lay in bed with a breakfast tray and the phone, chatting cheerfully. He passed the instrument across to his friend.

"To you the lady, Duke," he said. "To me, provisions." And he buried his nose in a coffee cup.

"Duke!" came the voice of Theolinda. "Is everything all right?"

"It will be, I promise you," said Gardestang grimly. "And you?"

"The house was ransacked last night. The prowler came into my very room. I must have been drugged, or he must have been very quiet. The spell I had copied was missing from my handbag."

Gardestang's expression did not change at this news.

"WE CAN regain it from Rico's book, which is being shipped here," he reminded her. "If they took a thing like that, it's significant. They have magic, or something that comes under that heading. Well, we can use counter-magic."

She thanked him for his comfort, and the conversation ended. Tommy eyed him quizzically from the bed.

"Romance or something, Duke?"

"She's a grand aristocratic specimen," said Gardestang soberly.

"Well, don't moon over her. Tell me about the scrap, where and how."

"Pistols, at a quiet little nook called El Parque del Roca Negra." Gardestang produced the weapons. "Don't touch, Tommy. I wouldn't trust Eaker with them, and he thinks I'm a fool because he can trust me. I'm willing to keep it that way."

"Short-barreled," commented Tommy, eyeing the guns. "I wonder if they'll carry the full duelling distance."

At Tommy's insistence, they did a bit of sight-seeing that day. Once, among the rich statuary in the waterside court of the Palace of Fine Arts, Gardestang thought that he saw a stranger eyeing them intently—and perhaps not a stranger, after all, but one of Eaker's unsavory companions. Plainly they were being observed constantly. Dinner at the Braganza was pleasant and care-free. The only concession to the duel was that, by mutual consent, they drank no wine

or spirits. Afterward, they went up to their rooms.

At the door squatted a figure, broad and silent as a brass idol—Lautoro.

"What is it?" demanded Gardestang.

For answer, the Indian held up something flat white and festooned with red—a bone, carved and beribboned.

"It was laid at your threshold," said Lautoro deeply. "A charm of evil. Had one of you trod upon it, the magic would have been fatal. There will be no danger tonight. I shall sleep inside, across the doorway."

"You don't need to," Gardestang assured him.

"The senorita bade me to take care of you, to see fair play. I shall do so."

"Good," approved Tommy, and the heavy hulk of the Araucanian lay on a quilt before the door all night. He had a sense of time, and woke the two Americans at four o'clock.

The drive was quiet, even pleasant. They found the park of the Black Rock to be a withdrawn, gloomy spot with streams and a great boulder of basalt. Captain Montero and Eaker were already awaiting them, with a third person who stood half-concealed among shrubbery.

"Good morning," said Eaker as if welcoming them to breakfast. "Here betimes, eh? All the sooner to be through with the business. Permit me to introduce the surgeon I've brought in case of—well, emergency." He beckoned to the man in the bushes. "An American like yourselves and me. Dr. Parr."

The slender, white-haired man with the artificial arm was coming forward, bowing and smiling. Gardestang glared.

"You in this, too?" he challenged.

"Honored to be," the doctor assured him, unabashed. "As you know, I was on the scene the night before last. After you left, I offered my services to Mr. Eaker."

"Step aside with me," commanded Gardestang. They walked apart from Tommy and Eaker. "I don't know your game, sir, but I'll be plain. If you're on the side of these swine, and try anything unorthodox, I'll certainly kill you."

"Why shouldn't you?" smiled Dr. Parr, and strolled back to Eaker.

Twenty paces were quickly measure on a grassy level. The pistols were produced, loaded, and Captain Montero given first choice. In a moment the two opponents faced each other. Montero wore a long black coat that buttoned to the throat, Tommy wore a tweed jacket and light sweater vest. Eaker stood at a point mid-

way between them and well back from the line of fire. His left hand he thrust into a jacket pocket, his right lifted a handkerchief.

"Attention, gentlemen," he said clearly. "I shall count one, two, three, and drop this handkerchief. You shall each fire a shot, and when both have fired, honor is considered satisfied. Question? No? Then make ready."

Gardestang, standing opposite, saw Dr. Parr step close to Eaker's side. The doctor's sound right arm slid through Eaker's left, in a gesture that was friendly, almost affectionate. Gardestang stared, gritted his teeth.

"One," counted Eaker. "Two. Three!"

THE handkerchief fell. Captain Montero fired at once. Gardestang had shifted his eyes to Tommy, and thought he saw a lock of his friend's hair stir with the wind of the passing bullet. Tommy smiled ever so slightly, lifted his own pistol, and fired in turn. Montero cursed in agony and dropped the still smoking weapon. His wringing hand was scarlet with blood.

At once Dr. Parr disengaged his arm from Eaker's and started forward.

"Ttt!" he clicked his tongue in professional concern. "Finger broken. Come here, sir. Wait until I get my case open, I'll bandage it."

"Come away from him, Montero!" called Eaker savagely. "He's—he's an enemy!"

Hustling forward, Eaker led his wounded companion toward their car. Dr. Parr smiled again at Gardestang, and then at Tommy.

"I'll have to beg a ride back to town with you," he said. "In return I'll buy a drink, if it's not too early, or coffee if it is. And maybe I'll tell an enlightening story."

"Enlightening story, sir?" repeated Tommy.

Parr's perpetual smile grew wider. "I've been trying for years to get close to them. As they hounded you, I hounded them, and well for you I did. I kept them from killing you."

"I felt the bullet close to my cheek," said Tommy. "What are you driving at, Doctor?"

The three walked toward the car where Lautoro waited with bright questioning eyes.

"I know enough about you to know why you're enemies of Eaker and his precious crowd," elaborated Dr. Parr. "And I also know their methods. Pistols aren't exactly their line."

"Pictures are more their line," put in

Gardestang, still unsure of this insistent new friend. "Pictures, with funny inscriptions, and holes punched."

"Exactly. You observed how I took Eaker by the arm. My own arm, the one that's left, is rather unusually strong. That's what medicos call compensation development. I wanted to know why he was fumbling in his jacket pocket. So I put my own hand in and took away this, just as he tried to put a sharp blade into it!"

He held it out as he spoke, a crumpled bit of paper on which Tommy was sketched at full length. Along the edge were such strange characters as had been on the pierced portrait of poor Rico.

"Well, am I acceptable as your friend?" asked Dr. Parr. "Come on, have your man drive to my house. I'll tell you some things, and show you others."

CHAPTER VI

The Riddle of the Cult

PARR lived in a fashion to delight any comfort-loving man. In an outlying section of Santiago he had taken three rooms on the second floor of a white stone house, with a balcony and a private staircase. The apartment was furnished with the gatherings of many voyages—leather-cushioned chairs, solid old tables and desks, hangings of Chinese silk, Indian tapestry, a Navajo rug, and maps on which the doctor's sole remaining hand had traced in ink his various sea journeys. On every shelf lay pipes and tobacco-pouches, and one wall of the sitting room was solidly filled to the ceiling with tier above tier of books in at least four languages.

The party was met at the door by a servant of indeterminate oriental origin, to whom Dr. Parr spoke in something that was not Spanish. Immediately a coffee pot was brought, and from it came the strongest, blackest coffee Duke Gardestang and Tommy Gatchell had ever drunk, even in the Sahara. Lautoro squatted, Indian fashion, on the balcony outside, and sipped his own cupful, while Dr. Parr faced his new friends across the coffee table.

"I promised you revelations," he began. "And I'll make them short. What you've blundered into is too serious for you to spend much time lolling and lagging."

"If you please, Doctor, we didn't blunder

into it," protested Tommy. "That bunch we're up against killed a friend of ours."

"I know all that, or most of it. I also know that they're out to kill you. Will this be their second try, or their third? Look for another shortly, perhaps before you leave here.

"The beginning of my story shall be shortest of all. I was educated for medicine at Tulane, and graduated just in time to get a commission as a naval surgeon in the first World War. After that, I stayed with the Navy, nine years in all, until a little explosion at sea left me like this."

He rapped his artificial arm with the knuckles of his right hand. "After that, I was put out with a pension, and not much chance to get ahead as a physician and surgeon. Of all the places I'd seen, Chile appealed, for low prices and pleasant climate and friendly people. I came down here, in Nineteen Twenty-seven, and here I've lived since. They tell me I missed a lot of strange years up in the States, a depression, New Deal, the second war. But things have been lively here, too.

"I stumbled across your friends in the cult, accidentally. You see, I was a friend of a French emigre, by the name of Henri Challoner."

"Rico's father!" said Tommy and Gardestang, in the same breath, and Dr. Parr nodded his gray head.

"The same. Rico was going to a military school, and seemed to be suffering from nervous exhaustion. His father brought him to my office one Easter vacation, to see if I could help. And I couldn't. Because, after talking to the lad, I found he was neck-deep in some strange and dangerous cult."

With his artificial arm he waved at the shelf of books. "Look there, and you'll find what I'm talking about. I went into psychology of the abnormal and the occult in school, and there was plenty to interest the psych-minded. The authorities thought it was all imagination and hysteria, and once I thought the same. But I got reading in the subject, after talking to many Chileans who took as serious facts such things as witchcraft, diabolic possession, and magic. On that top shelf you'll find three big books, all printed in England, translated by priests. There's 'Malleus Maleficarum, Compendium Maleficarum,' and Nicholas Remy's 'Demonalitia.' Step over there, one of you, and bring the Compendium."

Tommy Gatchell rose to comply.

"I'm afraid I was baffled by the vague conversation I had with Rico," went on Dr. Parr. "He was trying, poor kid, to keep the ugly secrets he was pledged not to tell. After that, his father died, and his mother. Meanwhile, my reading was showing me a few things. And my ramblings and spyings showed me more. You have the book, Mr. Gatchell?" He took it. "Let's see—Chapter Twelve. Here it is, telling how devil-worshippers have organizations and set meeting-days and rituals. Not pretty reading, but it happens to be basically true. I've seen it."

A CHILL ran down the spine of both Americans.

"Seen devil worship?" echoed Gardestang. "Here?"

"Here, and at Valparaiso, and in a village toward the mountains." He gestured vaguely eastward. "It's a place called Serrano, on the lower slope of Mount Cachacamool. And I don't think that anyone lives there who isn't a believer. But I'm ahead of my story. I picked up a name from Rico, of a teacher at his school. I had leisure to check up, and found that the teacher had friends in the slums of Santiago, with whom he met about twice a month. One night I got on top of a building—hard to do when you're shy an arm—and watched through a skylight. I go right along with Guazzo, who wrote the Compendium. That worship is ugly, but it has power."

"What was it like?" asked Tommy.

"A group of twelve men and women, who sacrificed to something that wasn't man or woman."

"A beast?" suggested Gardestang.

Again the gray haired man shook his head.

"No. Not a beast, either. In Guazzo's book here, it's called a devil."

"Oh, nonsense!" exploded Tommy. "What did the thing look like?"

"It was indistinct, sitting on a kind of throne in the firelight. But I knew it held itself upright after a fashion, had legs and arms—at least, upper limbs with which it could get a grasp. It had a long muzzle, with fangs. Its eyes glittered. And it was covered with thick, rank hair."

"Somebody dressed up," pronounced Tommy. But his coffee cup trembled in his hand.

"I'm afraid not, son. I've been an outdoor man, and I know the difference between hairy clothing and hairy hide. It was grotesque enough, but it wasn't a dis-

guise. It was a devil."

"Part man, part beast," summed up Gardestang. "It sounds like a werewolf."

"It might have been just that," nodded Dr. Parr. "Don't stare and goggle. I've got another book here." This time he rose to get it, a great ledger-like volume pasted full of notes and clippings. "This is my own collection, of strange news items."

"Like Charles Fort's?" asked Gardestang.

"A little, but not so indiscriminate. After all, Fort wasn't quite sure what he was after, and I was." The doctor's finger ran along a page. "Here we are—United Press dispatch, dated Los Angeles, March 20, 1932."

The clipping read:

Strange stories of werewolf-like animals which range through Yunnan province in China, robbing graves and defying capture, were recounted today by the Rev. Harold Young, missionary, in an interview with the *Illustrated Daily News*. The Reverend Young said the animals, shaggy like a wolf, run in packs and are known to the natives as *taws*. They are immune to bullets and knives, the missionary said, and described an encounter with one.

"The first thing I saw were the eyes, which seemed phosphorescent," he said. "They gave off a greenish light. They came charging at us, their arms swinging wide. When erect they are about five feet tall. One rushed against me and hurled me several feet.

"I recovered my balance and leveled a twelve-gauge shotgun. It was loaded with slugs that would kill any living thing at close range. It was an easy shot, and I know I didn't miss. I closed in but there was nothing there. The beast seemed to recede like something in a nightmare."

One of the animals bit him on the leg, leaving prints as from human teeth, the missionary asserted.

Dr. Parr closed his scrap book. "I've kept that little item because what the Reverend Young calls a *taw* sounds exactly like the thing they worshiped that night, and like things I later saw," he said. "And so will you." He mused a little, "Yunnan Province—I've known men who've been there. It's on the edge of Tibet, plenty of mountains, like Chile."

"Back up a bit, Doctor," urged Gardestang. "You saw the thing again?"

"Several times. I saw it today, well back among the trees at the duel. I didn't want to spoil your day, so I didn't point it out. But it was there, and probably it did something to cure Captain Montero's wounded hand, after they refused to let me touch it."

"It can heal, then?" prompted Tommy.

"It can do lots of things. The gifts it offers keep its worshipers going. For in-

stance, it teaches them how to make gold. There you are, goggling again. Shifting of element-properties to change common metals into gold is called within possibility by chemists. This little group of diabolists can do it, for I've watched and listened, through the window of a fourth-class hotel. Hard to hang to that ledge, it was. And there are other inventions and advances."

Gardestang suddenly threw out his hand in impulsive agreement.

"By heaven, sir, you're right. Remember, Tommy, that unwired dictaphone?"

"Those are common. If I'm to be known as their enemy, they'll try to plant such things in my place, to say nothing of bombs and booby traps of various kinds. As a matter of fact, gentlemen, I've stolen one of their receivers—stole it from Mr. Eaker himself. Want to see it?"

Parr opened a drawer in a sideboard and took it out, a flat round object of gray metal, the size of a dinner plate and fitted with a diaphragm behind a protection of netting. Dr. Parr stooped and cocked an ear.

"Nothing doing now. I can't be sure where this thing picks up voices, but from time to time I can get them. I've heard discussions and arguments. Lately I heard about you two and the plan to egg you

into a duel. That's why I was at the Braganza, and horned in."

"The thing must be a miracle of radio," said Tommy thoughtfully. "Why not take it apart and look inside?"

"I have," replied Dr. Parr. "And there's nothing inside."

"Nothing?"

"A sort of fuzzy product, something I don't understand. And I won't take it to experts, because I'd have to answer difficult questions about where I got it."

"Let me look inside," said Gardestang eagerly, but Dr. Parr lifted his hand.

"Hark! We're about to hear something."

And indeed the muffled murmur of several voices beat up from the strange instrument.

CHAPTER VII

Commandos Against the Devils

VOICES sounded, in a confusion which blocked each other out for a moment. Then one dominated, a voice flat and dull and expressionless, speaking in Spanish:

[Turn page]

**I put the hex on scrubby shaves
With Thin Gillette, the blade that saves!
In record time my face feels swell
And looks right in the pink as well!**



*Precision-made to fit your
Gillette Razor exactly*



4 for 10c

Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

"Failure again. We do not have room for failures."

"Please listen!" That was plainly Eaker, humble and frightened. "These are men like none we have encountered yet. They know our powers, or something of our powers. And we cannot pierce their defenses."

"There is little time to make excuses," said the flat voice. "I speak now to all who have the receivers. These enemies, whose names are Gatchell and Gardestang, must die. If they do not die at once, then you failures shall die. My words are finished."

No more was said by the voices from the disc. Dr. Parr looked at his two guests.

"No set hours for these little programs, gentlemen. Only once in a while do I hear something, when they switch on their speaker to contact all hands. I deduce by this time that you're going to be badly treated in the near future. I'm on the list, too."

Tommy Gatchell smiled above his pipe. "You're kind, Doctor, and probably are being helpful. But I can't get the thought out of my mind that, if Eaker and his associates were really smart, they'd go about planting a trouble guy on us just as you've been planted."

"How so?" the doctor smiled back plainly intrigued.

"Look at it. You fail to get our confidence last night. And so, at the duel, you appear to befriend us by snitching Eaker's little sketch of me."

"He tried to knife it," reminded Dr. Parr.

"We're immune to that. Anyway, the gesture reassures us, we come along with you, drink your coffee, which might be poisoned—"

"And Dr. Parr immunized against the poison," put in Gardestang. The doctor nodded.

"I'll finish it. The receiver which I said I stole would be my bona fide equipment as a member of Eaker's little circle. And my research and findings only my natural knowledge as a cultist. That's logic, young man. Well, why do you trust me?"

"Because logic isn't reason," said Tommy. "It's only the vehicle of reason. We trust you, doctor, because you're acting absolutely naturally, not putting on an act. Meanwhile, what way will their attack come?"

At that moment Lautoro, rose from his place by the door, to confront someone who had rushed up the stair from the street.

"What do you want?" he challenged.

"The young senores, the two who visit

here," came the breathless voice of a woman.

Both Gardestang and Tommy turned quickly. They saw, beyond the broad figure of Lautoro, a slender form in white, an oval face of golden tint, framed in black wings of hair. Two wide imploring eyes of jetty black searched the face of Tommy.

"Please!" she called to him. "You know Senorita Challoner! She is in danger!"

"Danger!" echoed Tommy.

"Danger?" burst from Gardestang's lips. They both started toward her.

"Yes. She heard that there had been disaster in a duel, disaster to one of you, and left her house hurriedly. The man who brought the news lied. I am her friend, I came along. Near here, a group of men seized her. I got away."

"Eaker's little gang of scavengers are ready to play rough again," said Gardestang to Tommy. He turned to the girl. "Where are they now?"

"They hold her in a house not far off." The young woman made a vague gesture. She was pretty and modishly dressed. "I escaped for they only wanted Theolinda. And I came here."

She put the back of one hand to her forehead and staggered a little. Tommy quickly caught her in his arms.

"Steady," he said. "Here, rest on the sofa. Duke, it seems to me that we'd better go into action, quick. They may not have expected us to hear so quickly, and a surprise attack is always good, in war or out."

"Wait," said Dr. Parr, and moved to where Tommy was bending over the girl. "Senorita," he said, "how did you know these two young senores were with me?"

She stared. "Why—why—"

"And how did these co-called captors of Miss Challoner bring her so conveniently close?" he pursued grimly. "Is it perhaps a clever story, to lure my young friends into a trap?"

"Protect me, senor," she sobbed to Tommy, and snuggled into his arms.

DOCTOR PARR moved quickly. His artificial arm shot out, and Gardestang heard the sudden chock of metal against bone, then the sharp cry of pain that the girl emitted. A moment later Tommy had taken a backward step away from her. Parr was kicking something shiny across the carpet. Gardestang stooped and picked it up, a stout, straight-bladed dagger.

The girl whimpered and tried to run, but Lautoro was again filling the door with

his broad body. Tommy came up beside her.

"You tried to knife me," he accused.

She was caught, but plucky. "Must I explain why, my friend? I cannot escape from you. So I shall be silent."

"Is this some doing of a man named Eaker?" persisted Tommy. She smiled and shook her head. She exhibited a drop of blood on a knuckle.

"The gray-haired senor, he strikes hard and with a hand of iron," she observed.

"Literally so," agreed Dr. Parr, lifting his own gloved fingers of metal. "If this hadn't been artificial, I might have cut myself disarming her. Not gallant, but necessary."

"Thank you, Doctor," said Tommy. "That settles the question of whether you're to be trusted or not. As for you," and he turned back to the girl, "tell us your name."

Again she shook her head. Lautoro made a deep growling sound in his chest, and moved ponderously toward her.

She whimpered again, and tried to retreat. Tommy barred her way in that direction, and she suddenly doubled around Lautoro and gained the outside threshold. But then she fell across it, and lay still. Will reached her first, lifted her and carried her in.

"She's dead," said Dr. Parr at once. "Lay her down on the sofa." He bent above her. "Heart disease, a doctor would say, but we know better."

"We have seen such cases of heart disease before," finished Gardestang for him. "And somebody with a mechanical voice just said, over that stolen receiver of yours, that those who failed would die. This little lady was the first. Poor thing!"

"Three strikes against them so far," commented Tommy. He found an Indian blanket and stretched it over the still form. "What will you do, Doctor?"

Dr. Parr was already taking action. He summoned his oriental servant.

"Seek the police," he commanded. "Say that a young woman came to me for medical treatment, and died suddenly in my office. I shall be gone when they come, but I shall return and be at their disposal for questions or reports."

The servant departed, and Dr. Parr faced the two young men.

"I said I'd be gone, you heard. Let's all be gone. Just now they know where we are. What's the best defense against attack?"

"Counter-attack!" cried Gardestang. He picked up the knife that had been intended

for Tommy. "Are we armed?"

Dr. Parr went to a stand, pulled open a drawer, and produced a beautifully kept .38 revolver.

"And I have this," contributed Tommy, drawing from his jacket pocket the double-barreled pistol he had used in the duel. "I brought it along, you see, I wasn't quite as trusting as you thought, Dr. Parr. I didn't really take my hand off of that gun until the girl came in."

"But you trusted her," chided Dr. Parr. His eyes came back to Gardestang. "You asked if we were armed, and that's our reply. What next?"

"Tommy and I know where, or approximately where, this crowd has headquarters," said Gardestang. "No more than a few steps from our hotel. What's wrong with a little journey there?"

Tommy grinned. "Nothing's wrong. I'm for it. But if they're ready, we'll use our Commando training."

"They're really wide open," broke in Gardestang. "They're too used to dealing with people through mental channels. And they can't get to us, nor to Dr. Parr as I figure, or they'd have known of him and settled him long ago. That makes three capable personalities, all old fighting blades, to slide into their holy of holies. And what's keeping us?"

Tommy spoke to Dr. Parr. "You and I are both ex-officers, sir. Duke Gardestang here was only a sergeant, but I move that we defer to his greater training and aptitude. You see, I was an aviator, you were a naval doctor, but Duke was on many Commando raids with the British. And this is Commando stuff, all over again." He turned his steely eyes back to Gardestang. "Carry on, Duke. You're unanimously elected to lead the raid. Shall I salute?"

"You'll need all your hands and feet for what we're heading into," said Gardestang. "Bring those guns, gentlemen, and Lautoro will drive us into the district, then speed away back to his own place. On the way, I'll explain a few plans and signals to you."

CHAPTER VIII

The Hushed Hallways

BETWEEN brick and stucco buildings the alley lay deserted in the lazy hour after lunch. Along it moved three men.

One walked rapidly in the middle of the roadway, a big, broad, alert young man in a tropical hat and with his coat buttoned. His right hand was thrust inside it as if on a weapon. To the rear of him some six paces, close to the side of the alley at the right, came an older, lean man, equally vigilant, cautious and swift. His right hand was in his coat pocket. The left hand was stiffly curved inside a glove. Further back, and skirting the left side of the alley, came a third man, also young and with eyes like triangles. His right hand, too, grasped a hidden weapon.

All of them kept a careful lookout.

Gardestang, in the lead, spied a certain doorway. He remembered the first meeting with Val Eaker in front of the doorway, and the words that Eaker had spoken of where that passage led. "A most interesting room that has no windows and very little light." Yes, not far this side of the door was a window, its pane completely covered with black tarry paint, and its frame nailed fast.

Gardestang snapped the fingers of his free hand, and his two companions came up on either side of him. Gardestang pointed to the window, then spread the skirt of his coat against one of the panes. Dr. Parr, drawing from his pocket the .38 revolver, smashed hard against the cloth-covered glass. It broke inward without too much noise. Another blow almost cleared the frame.

Now, a certain amount of risk was necessary. Since the window was nailed and obscured, it probably had no observer beyond, but if it did there would be trouble. Gardestang took no time to think further. He dived through, head first, rolling over on the floor inside as he had been taught to do in his Commando training. He crouched, his hand holding the knife they had captured from the girl. For a second he screwed his eyes tight shut, then opened them. He could see a little, enough to make out a bare, dusty room, and a half-open door that gave onto a corridor that had some faint wash of light. No sound or motion anywhere. He snapped his fingers again.

In came Tommy, lithe and cautious, then Dr. Parr. The three waited another moment, and Gardestang moved forward, noiseless for all his bulk. He kept his big body at a crouch, knife close against his chest, free hand outward. Behind him Tommy and the doctor waited with drawn guns to cover his advance. Gardestang reached the doorway, peered cautiously out. To the right,

at a far distance, came the hint of light. The other way was all darkness.

He beckoned Tommy forward to take post at the threshold, and moved along the dark way. He approached an open arch to the left, and paused there for a moment. His eyes, sharpening constantly in the gloom, made out a door with light-cracks around it, the entrance that gave on the alley.

There was a chair, and someone—a guard, lolled in it. Gardestang dropped without a sound to a prone position and adroitly slid himself across the field of vision. He found the end of the hall, and a door. Gingerly he tried it, and found it locked. Back he crawled, past the guard, to the place where his friends waited. Again he silently beckoned, and the three of them picked their way toward the lighted distance.

Two open doors they passed on the journey. One gave off a musty smell of old clothes and sweat, and a noise of several persons breathing regularly and deeply—plainly a sleeping room of some sort. Another doorway revealed a tenantless room beyond. Gardestang entered, groped, and dared to strike a match. It was a sort of study, and on a desk lay many sheets written in the strange characters that he had twice seen, once on the picture of Rico, once on the picture of Tommy. He had no time to speculate about them now. Turning, he motioned for his friends to join him, and went on.

A blue light was coming from an angle in the corridor. Scouting around it, Gardestang found a glass-paned door. This he approached on hands and knees. Tommy and Dr. Parr lay flat on the dusty floor at the bend.

Slowly, cautiously, Gardestang lifted himself and peered through the lower edge of the pane. Inside, other corridors branched here, and one of them was lighted. At the beginning of this lighted corridor, well in view in the blueness, stood three figures, one of them Val Eakers. A second was vaguely familiar, perhaps one of the two ugly men who had accompanied Eaker at the first interview. The third was not a man at all.

WHAT had Dr. Parr said about werewolves and grotesque devils? What had he read about the things that came down from Himalayan fastnesses to plague Chinese peasants, the things called taws that were proof against steel and shot? Gardestang wished he remembered in de-

tail, for this was one such.

It reached about to Eaker's armpit, though it might have stood taller had it been clean-limbed and erect. Gardestang saw its sharp-projecting muzzle, the white of fangs as its mouth moved, up-thrusting ears, and green glow in its eyes. Although shaggy with gray or black hair, the awkward arms clutched at the mantle around, which covered the shoulders. One arm gesticulated, and the extremity, though matted and masked with hair, was more like a hand than a paw. To Gardestang's mind came a fleeting memory of Egyptian myths about Anubis and other animal-headed gods, of the semi-beast sculptures of ancient Assyria, of the many legends of brutes that stood up and talked.

This one was talking, and Eaker gave ear respectfully, almost humbly. Finally the thing turned and headed off along the lighted corridor. Eaker followed, a pace in the rear, like an inferior. The other man stayed where he was, like a sentry.

Once again Gardestang snapped his fingers. As Tommy and Dr. Parr came forward, he himself rose to his full height. The sentry's back was toward him, the beast-figure and Eaker had passed out of sight along the hall. Gardestang thrust the door open, gained a position behind the man with two strides, and struck with the knife.

His task was to kill, before the sentry could turn and resist him, see him, or even know what struck him. Commando tactics teach one to do that. The knife was sharp and heavily made, and Gardestang's driving arm was strong—strong enough to strike and sever the spinal cord. The man fell forward, and Gardestang's other hand caught him, easing him down without noise to the floor. A moment later Tommy Gatchell and Parr had joined him.

Gardestang carefully breathed out, and was able to whisper without any carrying hiss.

"I saw Eaker and one of that werewolf group you talked about, Dr. Parr," he said. "They headed together up the corridor. From what I surmise, Eaker isn't the head here. It's the wolf creature."

"One of many," Parr whispered back "Now what?"

"Continue the raid," said Gardestang, and once more led off.

They stole along the corridor, in which the blue light grew stronger. Coming to another angle, they paused and Gardestang peered around just in time to see Eaker and

his strange companion emerge from a doorway with glassed panels, and go together into what seemed a large courtyard beyond. As the door opened, there came forth a rhythmic mutter of machinery.

The three put their heads close together, for a little council. The motor-noise allowed them to raise their voices a little.

"Machines, eh?" said Tommy. "We might have known that they'd have something. That special radio equipment must need a power source we know nothing about."

"And it ties into this mind-reading and mind-controlling activity," suggested Dr. Parr. "After all, diabolists have always made claims to great scientific knowledge. They've found, or say they've found, ways to make gold out of lead, and to prolong life, and even raise the dead."

"They've left their engine room," said Gardestang. "Come on, let's go in."

"And if anyone else is in there?" prompted Tommy.

"Deal with him at once. I have a feeling that if we can crack up their machines, we've gone far toward smashing this outfit. Ready? Come on."

He moved past the bend of the corridor, pushed open the door, and walked into the blue-lighted room. His two friends, pistols drawn and lifted, were at his heels.

They stood, and stared—and stared.

The room was spacious, high-ceilinged, square, spotlessly clean. It rang and quivered and leaped with the sound and shiver of mighty mechanism.

But the space confined by its four walls, floor and ceiling was empty.

And as they stood there, gazing, strange things were happening to Theolinda Chaloner. From the moment Gardestang had left her, hours previous to the duel, she had felt neglected as never before. She was not used to neglect.

IT WAS not that Gardestang and Tommy Gatchell thought little of her—it would be hard to know the sister of Rico and not be attracted—but that they took it for granted she would know everything was all right. It never entered Tommy Gatchell's head the girl was uncertain regarding the outcome of the duel or that she might be unduly worried. Had not other things intervened, he would have sent a messenger to her home at once. As it was, the girl sat in her garden and watched the mounting sun with troubled, wondering eyes.

The duel—how had it turned out? Who

had won, and what of the winner? She wished to talk to someone, but there were only servants. The matter needed secrecy, she knew. Like many another woman, she bewailed in her heart the fact that she had the dread duty of waiting while men fought. Then a man came toward her, from the gateway that led to the front street.

"Senorita!" he said diffidently. "Permit me. I am from the civic hospital. Two young men are hurt there, and have been asking for you."

"Americans?" she demanded, rising quickly.

He bowed. "Yes. Both hurt. There was a duel, and later a violent encounter between seconds of both sides. The police are being called. One of the Americans is dying and begged that you be brought. He says there is a message of utmost importance for you to hear."

Theolinda started for the house. The man moved to her side. He was a gaunt, courteous person, but his authoritative gesture made her pause.

"I came in your car, driven by a servant called Latoro. Look, he waits. We can go through the garden gate."

The girl looked. In the open gateway stood a broad man she took to be Latoro. Even as she looked, he moved back into the street.

"Latoro, yes," she agreed. "I'll go."

At the curb outside was parked a big sedan, also recognizable. The driver already sat at the wheel, and the engine purred. Her companion held the rear door open for her, and she got in. Then she sat down suddenly, staring around her.

"My car," she stammered. "Here, inside, the cushions are different. I never had these accessories. It has been changed."

"Pardon, Senorita Challoner." That was the gaunt man, getting in and closing the door. "You are deceived. The car is changed, not inside, but outside. And it is not your car, only a similar one, with false license plates and other alterations to its exterior to trick you. Please, no scenes. These doors are locked, and I hope I do not have to struggle with you."

"Latoro!" she cried. The driver glanced back once. His figure was that of her Indian servant, but his grinning face she had never seen before. He started the car away from the curb.

"The driver, too, is only superficially like your own," breathed her companion. "Cigarette, senorita? Permit me to introduce

myself—Blas Cervara, a name not unknown to august officials in police and counter-espionage bureaus. But I intend neither crime nor treason where you are concerned. I serve only as escort to one who is zealous to make your acquaintance."

Theolinda glared at him. Her hand struck the cigarette case from his fingers, and she moved to the farthest corner of the seat. Blas Cervara chuckled, picked up his fallen case, and lighted a cigarette for himself.

"That is better," he said in a voice of good-humored approval. "You are disposed to be reasonable. We shall get along famously yet."

"The Americans," she forced herself to say. "What hospital?"

"Oh, that!" He flourished the thought away with the hand that held his cigarette. "They are, I am sorry to admit, quite well and victorious. The young man called Gatchell impaired the shooting hand of poor Montero. We made the story of their plight to help trap you. Perhaps it was cruel. But it was the best we could do at the moment."

"If they are free and unhurt, they will come after me," Theolinda Challoner promised grimly. "You are not yet aware of what type of men they are."

"We are beginning to find out," nodded Blas Cervara. "We have found out enough to make me agree with you. Yes, they will come after you. We are now preparing for their reception."

SHE looked at him sidelong. "I have changed my mind," she said suddenly. "A cigarette, please."

Again he extended the case, and she took one. "A light," she requested, and he offered the glowing end of his own cigarette. Igniting the one she had taken, she suddenly puffed smoke full into his smiling eyes. Blinded and off guard, he bowed his head. She snatched the metal case and struck at him with its edge. Blood sprang from his brow, and she struck again. He groped for her, but she cut the back of his hand with the sharp edge of the case.

The driver growled in his throat, and drove the car quickly to the curb. There he put on the brakes, and with two swift darting motions of his hands, drew the curtains. Then, rising to his knees on his seat, he seized Theolinda's shoulders and held her powerless.

Cervara wiped his bloody face with a silk handkerchief from his pocket. After that

he used it to bind her hands, which were clamped in the grip of the driver. Defeated, she sank back in her corner. The car began to move again.

"I honor you for your effort, *senorita*," said Cervara. "The story of it will please my superiors. But you shall get no other chance."

The remainder of the journey passed in silence.

They came to an alley near the Hotel Braganza, and there the car rolled into a garage. The driver emerged and closed the door behind them. Then he and Cervara helped Theolinda out, leaving her hands still bound. They went through a rear door, down a long passage, and into a lighted room beyond.

Eaker sat there at a desk, studying what appeared to be a large loose-leaf notebook or ledger. He set it down, marking his place with a finger, and looked at Cervara.

"Blood on you?" he smiled. "We appear to do plenty of bleeding. Why did you tie *Senorita Challoner*?"

"We had to. She attacked me."

"Then release her at once, and go wash your face."

Cervara and the driver departed. Eaker faced the girl.

"I've long hoped to meet you," he said, with a great show of cordiality. "I knew your brother well."

"Why am I here?" she demanded.

"To help me, and to be helped." Eaker looked at her earnestly. "Haven't you any wishes, *senorita*?"

"I wish to leave here at once."

"Oh, that will follow. But first, can't I help you to a real ambition? Your family was wealthy once. Wouldn't you like to regain some money?"

"I suppose you can change dirt into gold," she mocked.

He nodded, quite seriously. "I can, and I can change gold into dirt. Or do you prefer position, power? South American women are beginning to show that interest. I can place you in a high post."

"As a figurehead for your organization?" she challenged. "I am interested in nothing but freedom from your quarters and your company."

"That has a harsh ring, but I can add other inducements. Isn't there a rather interesting pair of Americans in your mind? A young ex-flyer named Gatchell, and a bigger one who is called Gardestang, Duke Gardestang? You betray yourself, *senorita*. You

are interested in them, particularly Gardestang."

"They are friends," she said, softly.

"And, I venture to predict, Gardestang may become more than a friend. Or such is your hope. Don't be shy, *senorita*. I'm used to talking sensibly and honestly."

Her eyes flashed fire at him. "Sensibly!" she echoed. "Honestly! Will you sit and deny that you have killed my brother, that you have tried to kill these other two men, and all in the devil's own worship?"

He shook his head slowly. "I could not deny those things, if I were to be sensible and honest. But let me make you an assurance. I want your help to turn these young Americans from their idiotic enmity towards me. Such help from you will be a favor to them. It will preserve their lives for them, and happiness for you. Because—you haven't denied it—you do turn in your heart toward Gardestang. Just as he turns to you. Don't doubt me. I'm a trained observer in love, as in all else."

"You're insolent!" she cried.

"That, too," he admitted airily. "Now, let me continue. Your friends have visited me here and I have them in a trap."

"Another lie," she accused.

The girl started forward, but something barred her, as if a wall extended between them. Her uplifted hands felt an unyielding surface which she could not see.

"Oh, I'm protected," he assured her. "But will you turn to the right? I'm going to show you that I'm speaking the truth about your friends."

He pressed a button. As she glanced in the direction he indicated, something lighted on the wall, like a small motion picture screen.

Theolinda was familiar with successful television, but here was a clearer image than any she had seen.

It was the image of three men. The nearest of these was Gardestang!

CHAPTER IX

The Machine That Wasn't There

GARDESTANG, Gatchell and Dr. Parr stood silent in the room that hummed and vibrated. Tommy Gatchell made a little gesture toward the center of the room.

"It's there," he muttered. "We can't see it, but it's yonder. What's it for?"

Gardestang shook his head heavily. "You're the mechanic, Tommy. I'm not." He carefully slid a foot forward, advanced a step. His mind recalled all he had heard of invisibility.

What made it invisible? Speed too fast for the eye to follow, as with an airplane propeller. Complete transparency. Absence of color. Warping of light rays. Illusion. Distance. He took another step.

The hum seemed no louder, but he sensed the vibration almost within himself. He put out a hand, carefully, questioningly—and jumped back with a muffled exclamation.

His left hand had sought the touch of the unseen thing, and had succeeded. His longest finger, the middle finger of his left hand, spurting blood. The extreme tip of it had been shaved away, little more than skin deep, but as neatly as though by a surgical knife. He shook blood drops to the floor, and held up the wound for his friends to see.

Dr. Parr caught his wrist and stared. "Let it bleed," he advised under his breath. "Any chance of poison or infection will be lessened. Have you any guess about where we are?"

"My only guess," said Gardestang, in the semi-whisper they had mutually adopted, "is that this cult run by Val Eaker has something to worship—something with power and wisdom."

"None of that, Duke," said Tommy at once. "We're not here to pay compliments to the other side."

"He's paying no compliments," reminded Dr. Parr. "He's estimating the situation. And maybe I can finish for him. The things this gang has—that radio receiver, the mind-transferals, the killing by pictures—must be drawn from some power source. There," he waved his artificial hand at the humming center of the room, "you have it."

At that moment doors opened and men came in, all around them.

Fighting desperately to the death, against many men and upon the tenth of a second's warning, had been taught to Gardestang by experts. It had been a reflex with him for years of army service. Now he put the captured knife deep in the first man to reach him, felt the hilt spin out of his hand as the point locked fast in a bone, and gave the falling body a shove so that it would temporarily block another charging form.

That earned moment gave him time to whirl, catch the wrist of an extended knife hand and pull another enemy toward him.

He struck with the heel of his own hand, not the knuckles. The solid driving buffet snapped back a chin. As his adversary sprawled, he gained possession of another knife, larger and heavier, to replace the one he had lost. At the same time pistols banged at his elbow. Tommy and Parr were into the fight.

"Steady, Duke," Tommy cautioned him, and fired over his shoulder. Another of the opposition fell, the fourth in little more than as many breaths. The others shrank back, nonplussed, though they still numbered a dozen to the three raiders. Parr laughed.

"I told you they were feeble specimens," he gibed. "What are we waiting for? Let's take them!"

The enemy were ranging themselves knowingly across the room. They had a baleful bulwark, Gardestang knew—the invisible mechanism.

But Parr moved forward. His artificial arm pawed ahead of him. It suddenly became a focus of wild vibration, the air of the chamber was rent with a tortured scream of metal. Something thickened into visibility as water-vapor thickens in lowering temperature. A smoky suggestion of un-rhythmic rods, levers, wheels, and belts.

"I've jimmied it!" Parr was crying, and sprang back. He waved his metal hand. Three of its gloved metal fingers had been shorn away. "Look, it's stopping. Already it's slowed to where we can see it."

The men opposite were jabbering and yelling in dismay. A new one came in from somewhere. Merino, his pistol hand a great clump of bandages. But his other hand held a squirt-device. From this came vapor, that billowed murkily. Gardestang recognized, from bygone chemical-warfare schools, the color and scent of that vapor.

But only for a moment. He was falling, and had no senses with which to hear or feel the impact of his body on the floor.

LATER he wakened in a deeper, dimmer room of the strange rookery. His opening eyes showed him the face of Eaker, gray and murderous, stooping above him. Gardestang swore an army oath, and tried to get up and hit that face. He could not. His arms and legs were tightly bound, and his first move seemed to translate itself into a grip on his throat. He subsided on stone flagging.

"Easy, easy," cautioned Eaker. "You see, we drew up your knees and fastened them to a draw-noose around your neck. If you

struggle, you'll choke yourself. That's better. We want you alive."

"Why?" growled Gardestang. "I wouldn't want you alive."

"Because you can't profit from me," said Eaker.

"Profit?" repeated Gardestang.

Someone else pushed into range of his vision—Theolinda, as pale as Eaker, but worried instead of grim.

"Duke!" she quavered. "You are all right?"

Two men caught her and pulled her back.

"Yes, we have your pretty friend," Eaker said. "Baited her here with her fear for you. And she was with me when our television disclosed you had invaded our stronghold. Surprised? We found those corpses you left on your trail. It wasn't many minutes until we closed in." He spoke to a lieutenant. "Are the Others coming?"

"I asked," replied his companion. "I tapped at their door, and when there was no answer, I dared speak. One replied that they would come when they were ready. Something was said to your disadvantage, and it was commanded that you be ready with explanations."

"Explanations!" groaned Eaker, dropping his manner of superior scorn. "They ought to be satisfied when I turn over these prisoners."

Parr spoke up, cheerful and mocking, from somewhere on the floor near Gardestang.

"I sabotaged your power plant, I believe. This old iron fin of mine was as good as any monkey wrench ever thrown. I was taking a chance on being shocked to shreds, but the only shock seems to be to you. How does it feel to lose that gadget, Eaker?"

"Shut up," Eaker told him, more sadly than roughly. "You haven't the slightest conception of what you have done. You wrecked a device that foreran all scientific power-mechanics, wrecked the only one, as far as I know, that was permitted to humanity."

"I don't consider that humanity's hard pushed without it." That was Tommy Gatchell, from beyond Parr, and his voice held the same tone of amused mockery as the old naval doctor's. "From what I gather, you paid plenty for it, Eaker. Not that your soul would command a high price on any healthy market, but it's all you had to trade to demons, isn't it? Or am I out of the fairy-tale groove?"

"Prop them higher," Eaker bade his men, and they obeyed.

Gardestang found himself in sitting position, back to a wall, his knees drawn up. Ropes encircled his body from shoulders to ankles. In addition, a noose held his neck tightly and its end was looped around his knees. He could not straighten his legs without strangling himself.

Gardestang's first glance was for Theolinda. She stood beside a door of heavy planking, guarded by Merino and one other armed man. Her eyes met his, and she dared smile a little, as if trying to hearten him. He smiled back, warmly and gratefully.

"You've got us," he said to Eaker. "What are you going to do now?"

"Nothing. You'll be out of my hands. The Others will dispose of you."

Parr, next to Gardestang, made a noise with his lips and tongue that, to say the least, was vulgar in a seasoned gentleman and scholar. From beyond him, Tommy chuckled.

"You say 'Others' with a capital O," he remarked to Eaker. "Who are they?"

"The givers of power, the holders of hearts," intoned one of Eaker's men, as if reciting from a ritual committed to memory.

"Fear is their servant," added another. "You will learn, you who would not be warned."

"I doubt if your minds will grasp it," Eaker amplified. "But the Others have minds and powers beyond the grasp of even myself and my associates, who have studied and followed and worshipped—yes, worshipped." He spoke defiantly, as if to justify himself to his prisoners. "They have been here since the beginnings. Perhaps since before the beginnings. Up on the mountains they have waited until the Earth is fit to receive their rule. They vouchsafed some little tokens of power and aid to the old Indians. And the earliest Europeans included some who had the wit to comprehend the value, if not the full implication, of following their way."

"You mean, you go up the mountains to form alliances with them?" demanded Gardestang.

"Up the mountains!" repeated one of the listeners, in horror that suggested a sacrilege.

"Alliances!" was Eaker's echo, similarly aghast. "No, no alliances. We aren't worthy of that. We only serve and follow, a long way behind. Even so, we are ahead of you. And they deign to descend to us, be with us as no other spirits or gods have

ever deigned. You will see."

He broke off. There had been a dull knocking at the plank door.

"Let them in," breathed Eaker. "No, wait. I'll do that myself."

He turned to the door and opened it.

Beast-figures stood there, the same sort that Gardestang had seen briefly. One moved slowly forward. His eyes were the green, self-luminous eyes of a night-prowling eater of meat.

CHAPTER X

The Others

LATER Gardestang was to remember that the eyes were intent, fierce, foul—but empty. They fixed on his, and the light came green and cold in them, but he had a sense of nothing behind the light. He was powerless to show any defense except to return the stare, as levelly and as fearlessly as possible.

The first eyes to waver were the green eyes. The head, with its long sharp muzzle, turned toward Eaker. The muzzle opened, slowly and somehow creakily, like a door on rusty hinges. Gardestang saw a dark maw, fringed about with teeth as white as little bits of china. A voice came from the open mouth, in the dull, flat, expressionlessness that Gardestang had heard on the strange speaker-device at Dr. Parr's.

"You said that you had something to please us."

Eaker made a gesture toward the captives, and his over-manicured hand trembled.

"These," he ventured, and his voice was timid and slow, as if he wondered whether he dared speak. "They are the men who have opposed us and you. We deliver them, bound and helpless."

"That much is good." The creaky jaw did not seem to move, but the words of flat Spanish were clear. "What then? The machine?"

Eaker bowed his head, as if steadying his chin on his plump throat. "It does not run. They broke it."

From under the loose robe of the beast-thing stole a paw, at the end of an upper limb that was like an arm and also like the fore leg of a dark, hairy beast. The paw cuffed Eaker's head with a heavy wooden clunk. Eaker staggered and whimpered. Gardestang thought he saw tears in Eaker's

frightened eyes. The other men of Eaker's following also shrank and grew pallid.

"You permitted that," accused the flat voice. "The loss of all that value. Done in a second by enemies suffered to enter so close to the heart of your enterprise."

"We caught the enemies," Eaker answered, but a gesture of the paw silenced him.

"Three men. Three human bodies. There are many millions of men, but only the one machine. What will you do without it? Where," and the flat voice grew louder, "will your weapons get their deadly strength? How can your servants know your will and make reports from afar? We can hear of no excuses or prayers."

At the word "prayers," Eaker sank to his knees.

"Yet the machinery can be repaired," he muttered humbly. "Do it this once. Your wisdom and skill are sufficient."

Another wooden stroke of the paw felled Eaker to the floor. The rest of the worshippers shrank back. The beast-thing spoke to them.

"Is that woman the sister of the man who died in the north? Hold her elsewhere. She may yet serve a purpose."

Gardestang watched Theolinda being marched out by another door. The beast-thing gestured and the bruised Eaker regained his feet. Humbly he led his followers from the room. When the last of the cultists were gone, more of the strange wolflike creatures moved in, slowly and clumsily, as though they had trouble walking upright. Close they came, closer. One stood directly over Gardestang, a misshapen hulk not as large as an ordinary man. Gardestang caught, or fancied he caught, an oily, musky odor. Watching the slow, unsure bending of the grotesque body, he wondered if it had any strength. Then he felt his stalwart form lightly lifted. The creature was doing it with one hairy paw, as if he weighed no more than a turnip.

"No you don't!" Gardestang snarled, filled with revulsion at the touch of those spongy-feeling members that might be fingers or talons. He flexed his muscles to struggle, and the other paw of the creature took hold of the rope that ran from his knees to his neck. A slight twitch shut off his breath.

"Lie still," the flat voice bade him unnecessarily, and he felt himself carried nimbly out of the room, along a dark corridor, into a place cool and dry. The hold on the rope relaxed, but he could neither breathe nor see. Something descended upon his

face, slid over his head.

Later, when Gardestang had an opportunity to examine this curious device, he was amazed at its strange construction and material. The outer part consisted of an invisible globe which tightened automatically around the neck, thus confining the life-giving gasses within. Only by the sense of touch could this outside envelope be detected. The inner part was in the shape of a metal hood, crystal goggles to protect the eyes and ear phones which enabled him to hear. The entire contrivance was light and skillfully constructed.

"Breathe," his captor bade him. "Oxygen. If you rebel or make trouble, I will take it away. This compartment is almost airless and pressureless, not suitable to support life of your kind."

GARDESTANG'S mind tried to sort out the things he was hearing. "What are you talking about?" he managed to say.

"Facts that will be new and surprising to you. We Others are not like you human beings."

"I can understand that," growled Gardestang. "But you're like animals I know—cats playing with mice. You've got us. Why prolong the agony? I'm not going to be entertaining. Better kill me and get it over with."

As he spoke, he reflected on how often in the past he had thought he had not another day, or hour, or sometimes not even another instant, to live. Since a certain calamity-packed struggle on a tiny fortified island in the Mediterranean, he had always reckoned that he was living on borrowed time. Probably he was lucky to have existed this long, even if he was dying in a manner strange beyond conception. The flat voice patiently replied.

"That is what your own kind would call unjust, arbitrary, ill-conceived," it said. "Believe me, man, I have better things to do with my time and energy than cause you agony or observe your endurance or lack of it. You have challenged us."

"It was you who challenged me," broke in Gardestang, "and I accepted the challenge."

"You have challenged us," went on the flat, patient flow of words, "and you have been troublesome and irritating. That you now live and hear my words depends on a hope that you may be of use and comfort—no, those are human words and human thoughts. I don't want to use you, or com-

fort myself with you. I want only that you should divert energy and change your viewpoint."

"I'll save you the trouble of explaining," said Gardestang suddenly. "You're disgusted with Val Eaker and those sad little fools who follow him. You have no use for failure. You said so. I heard you, never mind how. You want me and my friends to replace him. Don't deny it."

"Why should I deny it? You speak the exact truth. How can you understand and interpret so well when I cannot reach your inner thoughts?"

"Reach my thoughts!" sneered Gardestang. "That you can never do."

"But I can. Your body is helpless. A certain operation on your nervous tissue, and I can do more than read your thoughts. I can direct them, make you do as I think fit. I can even kill you by manipulation of your nervous reaction."

"I've seen it done," Gardestang told him, "but it won't happen to me. Before you would begin such an operation, I'd simply straighten out my knees and strangle myself. You'd have only my carcass. Big enough to be awkward, even in Santiago."

"Perhaps your carcass would not need to be disposed of. Did I not speak of operation of bodies, like machines, by remote control? Some bodies, from which life has apparently departed still move. You have heard of the vampire?"

Gardestang had always hated that word, and the thoughts it brought up. He spat, and wished he hadn't, for the oxygen helmet was confining.

"The walking dead?" he inquired, using the cliché with all possible disdain and disgust. "A body crawling out of the grave at night to suck blood and frighten children? Is your science responsible for such things?"

"My science approximates them. And imitations, by my human scholars, bring about such inferior, creaky makeshifts as the zombies, which work so clumsily in West Indian plantations. How would you like to be one of those, Gardestang?"

Gardestang would not have liked to be one, but he felt that he had a proper answer to give. "I feel sure that you can do what you say, or near to it. But I'd be dead then. And dead men don't care."

"They do not?" The flat voice made the words slow and rather wistful. "Gardestang, you choose to ignore life after death. The human soul."

Gardestang started so violently that he

almost choked himself again. But this time he had no answer to make. The interrogator went on to amplify his ideas.

"Because there is a soul. There are many souls. Myriads. You humans who own them do not know about them. Your bodies are too evident. But we, we can work and think more delicately. We can operate in soul stuff. Try to understand, Gardestang. I think that you might be able to, though no human that ever I knew has been able."

"You are making sport," Gardestang said after a moment.

"Am I?" said the voice, seeming to grow more distant and thin. "Am I? You are one of the stubborn souls who must be shown."

THE voice grew thinner. So did the air. Gardestang struggled as much as he dared in those choking bonds.

"You're cutting off my breath!" he gurgled.

"A little. Only a little. As you become unconscious of your body, you will be aware of other things. I can show you what is in my own consciousness, what I know to be facts. Look now. Comprehend."

And the darkness was gone, and normal feeling. Gardestang was no longer aware of the cutting coils of rope, or the pressure on his face of the oxygen mask. But he could see, or feel, or sense somehow, a new environment.

He knew that there were clouds and mists, and that he could float among them as if in the deeps of an ocean. Light from somewhere, perhaps from a hidden sun, or two suns, which made prismatic plays of radiance in the mist. And things moved, shapes that were clear as crystal in the fogginess. They were changing shapes. Sometimes they elongated and wriggled, like fish or snakes. Sometimes they sent out streamers or arms, to perform some sort of studied action. Their most frequent form was spherical, and Gardestang was able to reflect that the bubble is most apt to approximate point of rest for liquid or solid. As spheres they could hold a hovering position. Gardestang wondered what they were.

"My kind," he was told, and he knew that this was the owner of the flat voice. "Because you have demanded to know, and because I am willing to let you know, you may understand. We are like this in the place where we inhabit normally. It is more difficult for us on your world, but because we must, we submit to it." Garde-

stang felt he could not understand now. He wondered again, what the shape-changers did as their life behavior.

"You might call this a city," he was being informed, and the scene changed, as if his own position and viewpoint were shifted.

Here the mist contained a fabric of tunnels and corridors and interwoven, lacy strands of clearness. The city of the Others must be unthinkable vast, but it floated in the atmosphere without effort or support. Gardestang could not make out the walls or confines of these tunnels, but they pierced the fog in all directions, turning and curving and fusing into each other. The whole arrangement was roughly spherical, with windings, forkings, spider-web tracteries.

Along the ways moved the shape-changers, sometimes creeping like amoebas, sometimes sailing or flying, like leaves that have learned to ride the storm. Sometimes they lingered, in pairs or groups, at the chambers that occurred at crossings or fusings of the passages. Deep within the city, Gardestang had some conception of bigger compartments, with a great complex stir of motion, perhaps machines.

"You cannot understand what the city is made of," his informant told him. "It is made of power. Nothing else. You on this world need solid things to make walls or floors or parts of an engine. We use forces. Some few such things you have become acquainted with—our communications, our power-broadcast. I do not know how best to illustrate the principle."

"Perhaps like a strong wind that carries away heavy objects," ventured Gardestang. "Or like the rays of light, which can make things shift position or change chemical action."

"Crude similes, very crude, but good. I see you do have the wit and will to comprehend a little. Better comprehension will follow."

The strange vision was darkened. Gardestang was back on the floor, with the oxygen mask on his face and the bonds on his body.

The voice, flat as ever, spoke. "Don't be too mystified. I gave you only some mental impressions in an effort to help you. It has been the first time I have been able to enter your mind."

"I won't allow it again!" blazed Gardestang. "I'll die first. I'm not going on your slave list. If I feel you cutting my oxygen again, I'll straighten out and beat you to it."

"Too bad," the Other said, not mourning very deeply. "I had hopes of you, if hope

is the word to use. Lie still and think. Think it over well."

Silence. Something else was trying to creep into Gardestang's mind. He fought it savagely for a moment, then welcomed it. The voice of Tommy—no, the thought of Tommy—Tommy, who made the same guesses as he on card-symbols, who sometimes spoke the same things that were in his mind, who now communicated with him:

"Hold out, Duke," Tommy was trying to tell him. "I'm just about able to help."

CHAPTER XI

Offer Declined

MAKING the sternest of efforts, by refraining from starting or otherwise showing that he was aware of anything save the words and presence of the Other, Gardestang concealed what was happening. He replied to Tommy Gatchell by mental means.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

And back came a second message, driving into his mind.

"Almost. I fought, got stunned. Ditto Doc Parr. I'm outside, under guard of Eakin's stooges. They don't know I'm awake. But I am. I can see you from where I'm lying."

"Have you made a decision, as I commanded?" the flat-voiced Other was persisting.

"Give me time," begged Gardestang. "You've thrown so many brand-new contentions at me, and now you insist that I value them, add them up, and come to a conclusion."

"That is good," approved the Other. "You are at least considering. You are able, you are willing, to understand. We make progress, you and I."

Silence again. Relaxing as much as he dared, Gardestang exerted his mind.

"If you can see me, Tommy, where am I?"

"Hard to explain," came back at once. "They have a glassed-in room. You're in it with them. Something over your head."

Another part of Gardestang's mind pondered and rationalized. His captor had said that the compartment was "almost airless and pressureless." The Others, then, needed such a condition for natural life. And his face was covered by an oxygen mask of invisible glasslike substance.

Tommy, outside somewhere under inade-

quate guard, could see.

"One of those werewolves stands beside you." More thoughts were being sent to him. "He talks to you. I can see his mouth moving. But the rest have—" Tommy ceased sending for a moment, then—"the rest have taken their bodies off."

"Taken their bodies off!"

In his amazement, Gardestang had spoken aloud.

"Ah," said his companion smoothly, "your conceptions are beginning to clarify. You understand something else about us."

"They float around," Tommy was telling him. "Float like jellyfish."

"Like jellyfish!" Again Gardestang was speaking aloud, excitedly. "Yes, I saw them in that vision! And the body of the wolf-thing is only a sort of garment or armor or disguise!"

"It is all three," informed the voice of the Other. "Did you think that we could not adapt ourselves? In this world, where solid substance seems to be preferred for activity or power, would we be failures for the lack of a way to procure and assume solid substance? Gardestang, knowledge is trickling through to you. As you say, we are able to wear mechanized coverings, for armor and clothing and disguise. The design is grotesque to you. Our earliest artificers were not well informed about how creatures of your world look and behave. But we have kept the appearance, because it creates awe and respect among your people."

"Werewolves," muttered Gardestang.

"Yes. And demons and dragons and monsters. Doesn't it seem simple now? And are we not being patient with you? But your time is nearly elapsed. Speak, and speak favorably, Gardestang. Else you will be blotted out, and perhaps others will fulfill the task of human colleagues for us."

"Hang on, Duke," Tommy urged him. "Only a few moments more."

Gardestang cleared his throat. "You tell me to speak favorably," he said. "But if I did speak favorably, does that mean you'd immediately accept and trust me? Without fear of my rebelling?"

"Without fear of your rebelling. Yes. Because we would at once condition you so that your mind would be ours. Perhaps some delicate nerve surgery could do the trick. Remember, even if you refuse and die, we can do many things with the body from which your life will have departed. But we prefer you alive."

"And would I be a slave, to be kicked and abused, like Eaker?"

"No. You are not a lump of Eaker's sort. Already you understand more than he ever dared. You will understand still more perfectly, with our teaching and conditioning. As for Eaker, since you scorn and hate him, you may have the satisfaction of destroying. I grant you that. I comprehend, though I do not share, your human passions for revenge and conquest."

"In heaven's name, what are you trying to do on this world?" Gardestang demanded.

ABOVE him the hairy being spoke deliberately.

"We seek to know about it, to alter it, to develop the spirit-stuff and soul-stuff so far neglected, that we ourselves may thrive."

"Isn't that conquest?" Gardestang flung out. "Isn't that exploitation, and rule, and slavery, and all the things you say you have no taste for?"

"You are still short of comprehension. Such things do not enter our plan. A miner digs ore that metal may be produced for physical profit. An astronomer scans the stars with his telescope that knowledge be gathered to satisfy active minds. In each case a certain natural condition is disturbed, for the ore does not intend to be dug, nor does the star intend that its mystery be solved."

"Lie low, Duke," Tommy was thinking somewhere. "I'm going to get you out of there."

"You speak without the slightest sympathy for my world." Gardestang was speaking aloud again, trying to hold the attention of his captor. "Yet you say that you and I shall understand each other, be allies."

"Yes, to an extent. And you shall not come under our plans for this world, but be an associate and to some degree a sharer in—"

CRASH!

Whatever Tommy had planned was happening.

There was a fanning rush of warm, stuffy air around Gardestang's prone bound body. There was also a loud yelling and commotion not far away, a shot and another. Then a second crash. The flat voice of Gardestang's informer, broken off by the noise, now emitted a sort of braying cry, and next moment the din of struggle was everywhere.

Gardestang knew suddenly what to do. Perhaps his subconscious mind had known for some time. He tossed his head twice and

three times. The oxygen helmet slipped partially away. He thrust his face down toward his knees, and set his teeth into the cord that ran from them to his neck.

A heavy object like a metal-shod hoof spurned him—the hoof of the Other. He rolled over and away. His frantic teeth drove through the strand. His ankles and arms were still bound, but he could straighten himself. With an effort he squirmed to his feet, back to a wall, and at a glance took in what was happening.

He was in a spacious chamber, sealed at one end with glass panes. Two of these were shattered, and the air that had come into the lair of the Others had wrought disaster among them. Here and there lay jellylike mounds, quivering a little, but shapeless and senseless—creatures destroyed by the atmosphere they could not abide. Beyond the broken glass partition a fight was going on. Tommy Gatchell and Dr. Parr were winning it. Gardestang saw the old navy man's iron hand strike down a struggling figure. Tommy pistol-whipped another. Several forms lay on the floor. One of the survivors ran. In a corner someone crouched, with a slender girl held before him as a shield. Eaker—with Theolinda!

"I am still alive," said a flat voice he recognized.

The beast-form slid toward him. Its talonlike upper extremities groped toward him.

"I kept on my body so that I could communicate with you by speech," said the beast. "And the atmosphere has not come to me yet. But you must die."

Gardestang, bound and unable to set himself for offense or defense, did the only thing he could think of. He launched his big body into a diving ball, whipping himself sidewise in midair, as a footballer blocks or spikes on the field. His flank struck below the waist of the shaggy monster, struck as against solid wood. Down they both fell, and he heard his enemy clang beneath him. Quickly he rolled away again, floundered toward the glass.

"You cannot," the flat voice said. But Gardestang could. He got to his feet once more, and thrust himself against the glass. A jagged point plowed the skin of his forearm, but he felt his bonds give, and his arms were free.

As the Other came in he struck hard with both fists, and grunted with pain. It was like striking against a metal bulkhead. And

then he heard another crash. Parr was breaking more glass with his artificial hand. He pushed a pistol through the new hole and fired.

"You missed," taunted the Other, but spun like a top and darted off somewhere.

GARDESTANG lost balance, and fell heavily outward through the glass-work. Hands swiftly cast off the bonds on his legs.

"Fight's over, Duke," Tommy was saying. "We got four of them out here. How many of those Others bit the dust? Or can you tell?"

And Theolinda was also beside him, helping him to his feet.

"Eaker?" yelled Gardestang. "Where is he?"

Parr jerked his head toward the corner.

"He was hiding behind the lady. Hiding, that is, from Tommy, who had an empty pistol. So I picked up a loaded one and shot a piece out of his head. Eaker's dead. Let's get away from here."

"Yes, let's," agreed Tommy, "but which way is out?"

When out of immediate danger, they held a little council. Tommy quickly told his end of the story.

"As I telegraphed you—or telephated you—we fought until they knocked us out. Apparently the Others left us to revive under the charge of Eaker and his men, while they took you into that greenhouse arrangement yonder."

"They can't exist in ordinary atmosphere," Gardestang told him.

"I gathered that from your thought-pattern, Duke. Aren't we the top-flight mind reading act? But I'm getting ahead of myself. When I woke up, lying on my side, I had sense enough not to stir or make a sound. I only opened my eyes, and found that I was looking into—that."

He gestured toward a corner. On a little pedestal rested a globe of icy-clear crystal. Gardestang stepped close to look.

"A fortune-teller's gadget!" he exclaimed.

"Why not?" demanded Parr. "They use such—or did use such—in Eaker's crowd. Eaker's crowd is thinned out just now and their leader's gone."

"I fixed my eyes on it," resumed Tommy. "And, almost inside the first moment, I knew where you were. I sensed that you lay behind the glass front yonder. I slewed an eye, and saw that it was perfectly true. Then I understood. We're on the same

mental wave-length. We can talk to each other with our minds."

"You picked up the conversation?"

"Your side of it, and some of what the Other said, because it was impressed in your mind. The globe, phoney or not, helped. And when I got something of what the score was, the rest worked out like a movie. I squirmed one hand free, then the other. The nearest of Eaker's men had a gun sticking out of his hip pocket. I made a jump and a grab, and then fired my first shot to smash the glass. For those Others, it was like letting the water out of an aquarium of fish."

"ONE got away," said Gardestang.

Parr uttered a brief contemptuous laugh.

"And did he get!" he grunted. "I'd been getting free, too. My iron fist has its advantages. You can't cut the cords into its flesh because it hasn't any flesh. When Tommy began blasting, I rolled to a gun one of them dropped and did likewise. Eaker and his merry men weren't worth a good sneeze in anything like a fair fight. We took over."

"And Theolinda had been brought in by Eaker, which made it all cozy," finished Tommy.

"Cozy!" repeated Gardestang. He smiled at the girl. She smiled back. Cozy was the word, he decided, in the midst of danger and mystery.

"I can tell you this much about the enemy," he took up the discussion. "Whatever they are, they're different. They have values and wishes, but not our values and wishes. Our meat and our air is their poison. By the same token, they can poison us in a hundred rotten ways. I don't know if that Other who ran was the last of them, but if he is we'd better eliminate him."

"Look!" said Theolinda suddenly.

On the floor rose a little tendril of smoke, and in its heart bloomed a tongue of flame. Parr stamped on it with his foot.

"How did—" the doctor began, then stared. "Another! Look at it! More!"

Half a dozen little spurts of fire crept into view along the planking, as if evoked by a burning glass. Parr and Tommy fell back from it one way, Gardestang and Theolinda the other. The flames brightened, grew, slid together into a clump—a sheet, dividing them.

Gardestang's shoe clinked against something. It was a big revolver, dropped by

one of the dead cult members. Nearby lay the hat he had worn into the house. He caught up the revolver and put on the hat to protect his head from the heat.

"Fight those flames," he called. "I don't know where they come from, but I know what's starting them. And I'll take care of it."

"Careful," warned Theolinda. But Gardestang had turned and dodged back through the hole he had shattered in the glass. Smoke puffed in after him. The oxygen mask he also carried along.

On the far side he saw an opening, from which a door or panel had swung back. His enemy had fled that way. He ran for it, and through it. A patter of feet sounded at his elbow. He glanced around. Theolinda!

"Go back!" he ordered.

For answer, she pointed. Fire followed them. Already it filled the opening through which they had come into one of the corridors. He turned toward the corridor. It was dim and stuffy, and from its depths came a quavering hoot.

"I am sorry if my artificial voice mechanism is not adequate," said the flat voice he had already heard too often, "but I was trying to approximate what you call laughter."

Gardestang saw the humpy, hairy shape backing away before him. He fired with his revolver.

"Don't," warned the Other. "If you kill me, you can do nothing to escape the fire."

Gardestang pressed the trigger again. The beast-shape dodged around an angle of the corridor, and Gardestang and the girl moved quickly in pursuit. They found a wider space, almost a room. Behind them came the fire.

It seemed to Gardestang that the far wall was glowing, as if phosphorescent or radiant. Against it the Other, in his repellent armor-costume, was silhouetted like a gargoyle thing in a cheap horror picture.

"Will you listen to reason?" it asked him, more impatiently than otherwise.

"Your reason and mine are too far apart," said Gardestang. He dropped the oxygen helmet and clutched the revolver. "But just now you said, 'If you kill me.' That means that I can." Once again he aimed the pistol.

"Yet if I live, if that bullet does not perforate my armor, I can save you from burning. Think, Gardestang. If not for yourself, for the woman."

Gardestang paused. His pistol-muzzle dropped.

Again the harsh laugh echoed.

"I wish you joy with her. With her and the fire. It was easy to start by a concentration of energy rays. Goodby, Gardestang."

As Gardestang lifted his weapon, the deformed figure stepped backward. It reached the shimmery surface, and vanished in it, as an actor making a curtain speech slides between the folds of a backdrop.

The flames leaped and danced. They gyrated and tossed out long glowing tendrils, like the gesturing arms of a frenzied crowd. They crept nearer, licking hungrily at the ancient wood of floor and walls.

Gardestang swung around. "Keep behind me," he told Theolinda. Then he raised his voice.

"Tommy! Tommy!" he called.

"Here," came the response, as if from a muffled distance. "We found water and are fighting the fire. Come here."

"Can't!" yelled Gardestang, and then no more. The heat was oppressive, the fire came nearer. He did not want to breathe it in. He backed up a step.

"Theolinda, I'll try to smash through the wall where it's still unburnt," he muttered. "Game to follow me?"

She did not speak, and he glanced around. She was not in the passage.

There was no room for her to be there. They had shrunk away from the flames toward the shimmer-sheet. His last retreating step had forced her toward it. And the shimmer-sheet worked and rippled, like waters when something has dropped into their depths.

She has gone into that strange glistening surface.

He forgot the fire and faced the shimmer-sheet. Snatching up the oxygen helmet, he leaped right into and through the shimmer-sheet.

CHAPTER XII

The Houses of the Dead

WHAT Gardestang felt he could not later describe clearly even to himself. He underwent many strange sensations—cold, pain, dizziness, faintness and pain. He experienced a mingling of all these

as he pierced the shimmer-sheet.

When he recovered from the first shock, he became aware that someone or something was holding him on his feet. Under foot was substance, insecure but solid. And it felt cold, also, too cold for his light garments. He looked, and saw a great ledge, wider than a wide street and several hundred paces long. At one side rose a wall of natural rock, to heights that defied the cloudless blue sky. On the other side, a precipice fell abruptly into a valley of awesome depths, where groves and fields and towns shrank almost smaller than the power of his vision. On the ledge itself stood buildings of cut stone with no visible mortaring. They suggested the cliff-dwellings of New Mexico and Arizona, and in some degree the skillful stonework fabrications of the pre-Pizarro Incas. He judged that they were old, deserted. But no. Inside the nearest doorway moved some kind of furtive shape.

"Steady, Duke." That was Theolinda's voice. It was she who stood beside him, holding his arm to keep him from slipping upon the rubble where he had landed. She was pale, her eyes were wide and bright, but she did not tremble or shrink. Rico Challoner's sister now was proving herself to be the pluckiest woman Gardestang had ever known, before, during, or since the war.

"Steady," she repeated. "And don't ask me how we got here. All I know is that we came scores of miles in a single step, through that shiny curtain."

He nodded, watching the shape inside the dark doorway of the building near them, on the cliff. The shape slunk out of sight.

"I can give you the beginning of an explanation," he said, seeking to match Theolinda's own nervy assurance. "The Others speak this much truth—they know and use all sorts of powers beyond ordinary human comprehension. They must understand and use more dimensions than three. That shimmer-sheet spanned space for us some how. Let us step back."

He looked around. There was no shimmer-sheet.

"I've tried to find it already," she informed him. "Perhaps the way back is by some other means. As for this place, I judge it's the old mountain village of Serrano."

"Serrano?" he echoed. "I've heard of the place. Dr. Parr spoke of Serrano. He said that the Others were worshipped here."

"The legends speak of devil-worship," nodded Theolinda. "We know now that it

comes to the same thing. Legends, I say, because nobody has ever been here since ancient days. The Indians, the Araucanians, who are Lautoro's people, had a fort here. The Spaniards could never find the secret way up. It was whispered that demons kept the defenders safe. Now we know that the whisper was true."

"Serrano," said Gardestang again. "Parr told me it was on the slope of Mount Cachacamool."

"Cachacamool?" she answered. "Yes. And we seem to be high. Yet Serrano is, relatively speaking, on the lower heights. Cachacamool? There's a question as to whether it is not the tallest peak in the Americas. Computations differ. Perhaps the Others have baffled the scientists somehow. And the great mountaineers of the world say that this is a height unscalable, that Everest in Asia is easy by comparison."

Gardestang felt like shivering, but shrugged his shoulders instead. He chose to go on discussing the situation in the same detached fashion.

"However we got here, we're safer than in Eaker's burning rabbit-hutch. And there must be some way of getting back again."

"Watch out!" gasped Theolinda.

The figure was back at the door of the nearby building, in plain view this time.

Gardestang scanned the figure with trained eyes, as he had looked at other objects in the past when reconnoitering. He saw a body as frail and dry and gaunt as basket-work, on which hung tattered, dust-crumbling draperies. The head, weakly upheld by a neck like a withered twig, was skull-like and frowsy with matted black hair. Withered lips hung slackly away from teeth as white and dull as squash seeds. The creature moved into the open.

THEOLINDA gasped softly, and started to speak, but no words came. Her courage, which had sustained her through so much, was almost exhausted. Gardestang heard her mutter a prayer to a saint—good Saint Michael, the overthrower of fiends. He felt at his hip. The big pistol was there. He drew it.

"Who are you?" he challenged in Spanish, and raised the weapon.

The loose lips twitched and smacked soundlessly. From under the swaddling of sand-colored draperies a scrawny hand crept. The feet, wrapped in bits of ancient cloth or leather, propeled the shape toward them.

"Stop there!" commanded Gardestang,

pointing his weapon. The thing hesitated and blinked. Gardestang could see its eyes, with no focus or light to them, like snails dead in their shells. The creature took another stiff, clumsy stride forward.

"Do not shoot," Theolinda was begging beside him. "Ay de mi! The poor thing has no mind."

Theolinda spoke the truth. It had no mind, perhaps no life. It had the appearance of a big, foul marionette, upheld by a force and operated by an intelligence outside itself. What had the Other said to him when he lay captive in that airless room?

"Some bodies from which life has apparently departed still move."

And another word had been spoken. Vampires. Those pariahs even among lost souls, feared and loathed by all people since time's dawn, the Other had spoken of them as an easy fabrication of his kind's science. Vampires were creatures who dealt dreadful wounds and disasters, whose touch was a curse, against which ordinary valor and weapons meant nothing. Theolinda was thinking those thoughts, or similar ones.

"Do not shoot," pleaded the girl. "Lead is of no avail against it."

"No?" gritted Gardestang. "Let's see just how much good lead a vampire can carry."

He leveled the pistol and fired two shots, the last two in the chambers.

The bullets were big and the charges strong. The withered body jerked and staggered under their impact. Gardestang thought it would fall, but it did not. It closed in. He saw, in the dry dun-colored brow beneath the matted black hair, the smooth round hole made by one of his shots. Both the thin hands were extended toward him, quivering, hungrily.

"Begone!"

Theolinda moved to Gardestang's side. Drawing herself up, she stepped ahead of him. He tried to catch her and pull her back, but she shoved his arm away. Her right hand was at her throat, where something hung on a chain. It was a small silver crucifix. Wrenching it from the chain, she held it up.

"The old legend," Gardestang groaned at her. "Dracula and all that. It won't work."

But the dried, dead thing had stopped abruptly, rocking on its flat-planted feet. The withered hands lifted slowly, and tremulously, as if to hide its face. The dull eyes veiled themselves behind parchment lids. It turned away its head.

"Begone, in the name of all holy saints,"

Theolinda commanded it. The creature cowered back. Then it turned and tottered away toward the hut from which it had come. Gardestang emitted a low whistle.

"Now I believe everything," he muttered, to himself more than to Theolinda. "Not only vampires and walking dead, but exorcism! The mere presence of a holy object protects us."

"How did you learn to do that?" broke in the flat voice he hated.

The Other had stolen from some building, and in the light of day Gardestang had a clearer view of it than he relished.

He wondered now why he had ever thought it a living creature. The hairy thatch that covered it was blatantly artificial in texture and dye, the joints of arm and leg creakily mechanical, the teeth in the open jaws as clumsily fashioned and set as if it were the work of a bungling taxidermist. Only the eyes, flashing green and baleful, had any brightness in them. And they were empty. A thought began to form in Gardestang's mind. It was interrupted by Theolinda.

"Begone!" she said again, the cross lifted in her hand.

THE ugly head gave vent to a grunt of refusal.

"That will frighten these poor puppets, for once they were living men and the instinct of fear still clings to their dim brains," the Other told her. "But I do not fear. I know fear only by study of your kind, it is not experienced by mine. Crossed lines may fence me off, their point of intersection is a danger." It paused, the false jaws wide apart in a simulated grin. "You are wise for human beings, you two. You gather knowledge of the weakness of my people. But not sufficient knowledge."

"I know that air is bad for you," replied Gardestang. "And now the cross. Give it to me, Theolinda."

Obediently she passed it to him. He received it, standing just a pace behind her. Next instant she had wilted down to the rock, moaning as if in exhausted agony. Gardestang stooped above her, lowering the hand that held the cross.

"Thank you," said the Other.

He had a sensation of blinding greenness, and was felled to his knees beside Theolinda. It was as if powerful electricity penetrated and churned every fiber and nerve of his body. Gasping, he tried to struggle up. He could not.

"Thank you, I say, for taking the crossed lines away," he heard the flat voice say. "First you exposed the girl by drawing the device back of her. Then yourself, by lowering it. Now my eyes can shed light on you, destroying you both."

Crossed lines. The cross. The blessed symbol on which Theolinda pinned her faith of victory and security was, to the Other, a mere mathematical diagram, but, somehow, that diagram was poison and danger to it. Crossed lines! Two of them, each extending to infinity in opposite directions, joining midway at right angles, their juncture symbolized by this holy silver jewel. His hand, throbbing to the marrow of its bones, still clung to the cross. Somehow he lifted it, though it weighed tons, lifted it before himself and Theolinda.

At once he could stand. Shaken and dazed, yet he could stand. The eyes of the Other gleamed green, but they could not drown him in their rays.

"Crossed lines!" growled Gardestang. "I'll cross-line you!"

He moved forward, lightly and gingerly, like a boxer advancing to attack. The Other lifted its ugly clumsy-pointed arms.

"Stay back," it cried. The cry was a plea, not a warning.

On and on advanced Gardestang. Back and back gave the Other. Its determination seemed to ebb. It turned and ran.

He had the good sense not to pursue too closely. He paused at the door of the hut where the dead shape had lurked, and just in time, for the withered thing was crouched within, ready to jump at him. It floundered out. He threw forth a hand in defense, the hand with the cross. The dried body fell at his feet, like a scarecrow let loose from its support.

"I told you that it was dead," said Theolinda in his ear. She had kept pace with him, and now gazed fearfully at the slack bundle of bones and skin. "See, you touched its face. The mark of the cross is there, as though burnt into it!"

The Other had gained a point against the upward face of rock. Pits or notches were chiselled there, and it began to climb.

"I am not trapped," it flung over its shoulder. "You think I am forced to stay and face your weapon. No! I can yet balk you, even while contending with the Others above!"

Scrambling upward like a monkey, it gained a veiny crack, and swarmed out of sight to the great slopes above.

Gardestang faced Theolinda. Her face was paler than before, and she swayed wearily toward him. He caught her in one arm and held her close, the other hand still fending toward the Other with the cross it held.

Some person cleared his throat behind him.

"Always look around before you hug a girl, Duke," Tommy was rallying him. "Did you think the Doc and I were going to stay away forever?"

CHAPTER XIII

The Mountain Unscalable

JUST as Gardestang and Theolinda had come out of nowhere to that lofty shelf, so had Gatchell and Dr. Parr arrived. The tip of Dr. Parr's nose was sooty and his shoes appeared crusted with ashes. Tommy had quite a bruise on the angle of his jaw and a cut over one eye, while his right sleeve was torn from cuff to elbow. With them, quite clean and calm, was Lautoro, his dark gaze grateful as he found Theolinda.

They told their story quickly.

Tommy and Parr had gained open air just as fire-fighting apparatus came clanging through the streets of Santiago and into the unsavory alley where Eaker's den had its outer doors. There had been no chance of saving that tinder-timbered rookery, and it had taken hard work and much water to protect adjoining buildings. Providentially, the dead bodies in the burning rooms were too damaged to show any bullet or knife wounds, else Tommy and Parr might have had questions to answer. As it was, they found Lautoro at the edge of the watching crowd. He was anxious about them and the Senorita Theolinda. The three, dogging the heels of firemen, came to the room of the shimmer-sheet, where the flames had been drowned. And they had come through.

"I'd picked up your thoughts, so knew all about the shimmer-sheet," Tommy explained to Gardestang. "After you went into it, I couldn't tune you in any more. For a moment I thought you were dead, you and Theolinda. But since the Other had gone through without turning one of his artificial hairs, I knew it would be safe for me."

"Don't be guided by things like that, Tommy," Gardestang warned him. "It

worked all right this time, but they can handle plenty of things that we can't. On the other hand, they can be driven off by things that bother us."

He told about the crucifix, which he had given back to Theolinda.

"The cross is an old symbol of truth and strength," put in Dr. Parr. "Not only in Christianity, either. The Egyptians had it. Also the Aztecs made and worshipped crosses, as did the Mayas."

"And my people, the Araucanians," supplied Lautoro, gazing about him. "Here, on Serrano, demons have held out for many lifetimes. Had the Spaniards come against them with crosses rather than swords and cannon, they would have cleansed the mountains."

"And crossed lines drive back the Others," said Tommy.

"The crossed lines, and the spiritual meaning of them," amplified Parr. "Remember how solid they find spiritual stuff. I'll venture that all the crosses in the world won't help unless you believe."

"I believe," said Gardestang, and Theolinda smiled at him.

They walked into the hut-door where lay the still, musty figure. Dr. Parr remarked professionally that the body must have been dead for many months. Gardestang noticed, as he had not noticed before, that it had begun to rot blackly. Even the unemotional Lautoro goggled.

"One of the lost souls I have heard tell of," he muttered, crossing himself.

"Are there any more?" asked Tommy, and faced toward the huts beyond.

Gardestang put a hand on his arm. "Careful. I wouldn't poke around without protection."

Theolinda held out the crucifix, but Tommy shook his head.

"Thanks, I can manage. Look here."

He took a silver pencil from his pocket, and unscrewed it into two lengths. "Anybody got a string or cord?" he asked, and then supplied himself by raveling off some thread from his torn sleeve. He lashed the smaller length of silver across the greater, and held it up.

"Crossed lines," he announced. "And faith or spirit or determination to go with it. I'll guarantee that. Come on, Duke. Let's prowl the place."

"You others stick here," advised Gardestang. "Theolinda's cross will protect you."

"And mine," added Lautoro, drawing from under his shirt his own crucifix.

"We'll keep our eyes peeled," promised Dr. Parr.

GARDESTANG and Tommy paced off along the shelf, side by side. Tommy carried the makeshift cross in his left hand, his revolver in his right. Gardestang, who knew how futile a revolver could be, went empty-handed and more gingerly than he cared to admit.

The second hut looked like the first from without, anciently and solidly made of unmortared stones. It had once had a door of some sort, basketwork or slabs, but this had fallen away to rotten fragments. Tommy unhesitatingly stuck his head inside.

"Got a light, Duke?" he called, and Gardestang passed him a match. He struck it. "Mmmm. Another corpse."

Gardestang, too, peered into an interior that was windowless and dim and empty. It had a hard floor of rock and dirt, and reminded Gardestang of the inside of an old, disused silo. Against one wall of stones huddled a mummy-like form that seemed to have collapsed while sitting, its bony face down on slightly updrawn knees. Its skin was as dry and sere as old corn husks.

"Not dead," pronounced Gardestang at once. "It's only out of action, waiting for the will of the Other. Touch it with your cross, Tommy. That's it. See the mark on its cheek where you touched it. Like a brand. Any doubt now that it's dead?"

There was none. They left hurriedly, and explored the other huts without so much aplomb. Five or six of them proved to have quiet, dry bodies within. Tommy touched each with the cross. Finally they returned to where their companions waited.

"We scuppered them all," announced Tommy. "Rotten, isn't it? In more ways than one. I mean, a corpse being made to trot around and haunt a little pocket on a mountain-side. I swear that one or two of them looked peaceful and grateful after I'd laid the cross on their faces."

"Servants of the demons," said Lautoro. "They sold themselves, for power to hold this place against all enemies. Who does not know that, when one sells himself to evil, he must sell also his hope of rest after death?" And he signed the cross upon his broad chest.

"As to that," said Dr. Parr, "I'm not demonologist enough to make a confident answer. But if they didn't rest, how do you account for those?"

And he nodded toward a row of rubbly

mounds against the rocky wall of the shelf, each as long as a human body.

"Graves, I'd say," he went on. "Old ones. And undisturbed. Probably the bodies that went into them are still there."

"As the stories go, only the chiefs of these people had traffic with demons," said Theolinda.

The Indian nodded. "Es verdad. It is true. Only the chiefs. Those who sleep in their graves, the followers and servants, could die naturally when their time was come. But the chiefs," and he gazed at the crumpled mass at the nearest hut-door, "lived on, as we have seen. One by one, as they came to the day appointed for death, they became demons themselves."

Tommy whistled long and thoughtfully. "I've just been thinking. How must it have been to the last living person on this ledge—I mean the last one naturally alive—with all his old fellow-chiefs still walking and pretending to be alive with him?"

"Don't," begged Theolinda. Nothing more was said on the subject.

Lautoro had gathered some ancient fragments of the rotten doors to the huts, and made a fire. The three sat down on some boulders. Gardestang reflected that he was a trifle hungry. Tommy, sitting beside him, squinted sidelong.

"Have a bit of chocolate bar?" he suggested, and reached into his pocket.

"Still reading my mind," grinned Gardestang. "Give it to Theolinda. We can't tune in on her, but she must be famished."

Tommy held out the bar to the girl. She made an effort at polite refusal, then ate the offering with eager gratitude. Dr. Parr scratched his chin with the flawed tips of his artificial fingers.

"It comes to this," he summed up, like a lawyer marshaling evidence. "The headquarters of that cult run by Eaker, where we thought the main nest of the trouble would be found and wrecked, was really only a vestibule. It led to this place—another vestibule. Because the Other, Duke says, climbed up out of sight. What's beyond?"

FOR a moment Gardestang stared at the point where the enemy had mounted upward. "I'm going to find out," he said.

"Cachacamool is a mountain unscalable," reminded Theolinda softly. But Gardestang shook his head.

"Not from this point, apparently. The Other could climb, and so shall I."

"And so shall I," echoed Tommy.

"You can't," Gardestang objected. "There must be airlessness, or something near airlessness, up there for that Other to make its lair in. And I'm the only one with this gadget."

He held up the oxygen helmet, which still hung to his neck.

"I'll draw straws with you for it," suggested Tommy, his bold eyes almost hungry for adventure.

"You'll do nothing of the sort. Possession is nine points in law, even up here on this cliff. The rest of you had better wait here for me. Wait a little while, and study a way to get back down. I'm going up."

Parr nodded agreement. "We'll wait. There's some rubbish around here, enough to make us a fire. And we can shelter in one of these huts, one that doesn't have a vampire in it. See you later, son."

Lautoro grunted, and began to crawl out of his coat.

"Wear this," he urged. "It is heavier than yours, and cold lurks above. And my boots. They will be large, but stout and warm."

"Wear this, too," said Theolinda.

She held out the crucifix. The broken chain she had knotted together again. Her hands trembled, her eyes pleaded.

Gardestang demurred. "It is for your protection."

"But Lautoro wears a crucifix, and Tommy has made one. That should be enough for us. Come, take it."

She threw the loop of the chain over his head and around his neck. Her hands dropped to his shoulders. He bent swiftly and kissed her, and her lips were warm for all the chill in the air around them.

"God and the angels guard you," she whispered, so softly that he had to strain his ears to hear.

Tommy was offering his pistol, butt foremost. "It's smaller than that old mutton-leg you're carrying, but it's fully loaded," he pointed out, and Gardestang made the exchange.

Parr grinned and put his hand to his hip-pocket. "Since everybody's giving you going-away presents, I'll follow the precedent." He brought out a little flask. "Brandy, not more than a few ounces. But isn't that standard equipment for mountain-climbing?"

"I doubt if I'll meet any Saint Bernard dogs up yonder," said Gardestang. "Thank you, sir."

Dressed in Lautoro's coat and boots, he

shook hands all around. Then he strode to the upward row of notches and began to climb. It was precarious business, and he did not dare look down until he had reached the higher crack in the rock, which he could scale like a sweep in a chimney. Then, when he glanced backward, the ledge and those upon it were hidden from sight. But in his mind was the face of Theolinda, clear as though she had come with him.

"Good luck!" That was Tommy's thought, coming to him.

He scrambled up to the slope, steep but negotiable. Above him was Mount Cachacamo, height piled upon height, and at its top the very sky itself.

CHAPTER XIV

The Climb and the Combat

FOR the first few yards it was like scrambling up the pitch of a roof to Gardestang. The next half mile seemed like negotiating a down-sloping sheet of ice, for the rock became steeper and glassy-smooth. Gardestang's first upward squirming on this new stretch was almost fatal, for he lost hold and slipped back. He had a brief vision of a downward slide, a fall, and a bone-crushing impact on the shelf far below, in full view of his friends. Then his clutching hand found a projecting knob, which held.

He started upward again, this time with more calculating determination.

Into the waistband of his trousers was stuck the stout-bladed knife he had captured in his fight with the cult members. Apparently the Other had been scornful of human weapons for Gardestang had been allowed to keep it. He drew the weapon and clamped it in his teeth. Then he dragged himself up the smoothness again for a little way and lay flat while he gouged a pit in the rock, which was not too hard for carving. This gave him a hand-hold and then a point of purchase for his toe while he dug another at body's length above.

Beyond that, he was able to take advantage of a slight unevenness, a sort of wrinkle that angled up and would give him frictional anchor for some yards. Reaching the highest point, he dug more pits with his knife and gained a new fault in the smooth face. And so on and on, until his every muscle ached and his lungs panted for the thin air.

At length he reached a ledge, not wider than his body but long and mounting upward. There he lay at full length, wheezing and gazing up at the sun which hung almost at zenith. After a moment he brought out Dr. Parr's brandy flask and took a sip, then rose to his feet.

"Gardestang," the flat voice hailed him from somewhere above. "Do you honestly think that you can drive me upward forever? Do you think it is not cheaper to kill you than to face the Others above?"

The Others above! This strange being had spoken that phrase before, and had spoken then of "contending" with them. But that had been on the ledge of Serrano, a good distance downward. Now it threatened to kill him, rather than face the "Others above"—its own kind and yet, seemingly, enemies.

"I mean what I say, Gardestang," continued the creature. "Listen to me. Be a rational being. You have shown strength, wisdom, courage. I might admire you, if I were of a race that knew how to admire. You and I could make a most wholesome alliance. So far you have rejected it. Now, I say freely, return in peace and safety to your own kind. I will torment you no more."

Gardestang was able to speak by now. "You're a renegade," he said, with his first good breath. "You have come down from the heights where your race lives, and have mingled and meddled with affairs below. You and your fellow-renegades, who perished down there in Santiago because they came up against better fighters than they."

"It was a piece of fortune," grumbled the Other.

"Fortune favors the brave," Gardestang told him. "That's a human proverb. If you don't understand fear, you don't understand bravery. Among the worst specimens of humanity you have seemed terrible and powerful, but you yourself don't dare face your own people above."

All this was more than half guesswork, but the long moments of silence that followed his charge convinced him that it was true. He had a new sense of confidence and determination.

"So far," he cried, "I've been victorious. I've refused to be frightened back, and I've penetrated into your territory. And I've made you run. No, I won't accept any terms from you. Since I've chased you this far, I'll chase you the rest of the way. That's fair enough warning."

"One word more, Gardestang," came the

hasty response. "Up to now you have been in your own natural habitat, and I have labored under disadvantages. Up here, where the air thins, I will thrive and you grow faint. Be warned. Go back."

"If you were sure of victory, you'd give me no such a chance," Gardestang laughed in turn. "You'd destroy me without compunction. Well, I warn you in turn, be ready for battle!"

And he started up the narrow ledge.

There was a noise above, like the sudden roll of angry thunder. A boulder came rolling down, larger than a washtub and swifter than a runaway horse. Gardestang quickly gauged its speed. As it bore down, he leaped high up the steep inner face that bounded the ledge. Digging his fingers into a crack, he clung there, just out of the path of the boulder as it bounded away beyond and beneath him. He hoped it would not crush anyone as it caromed down the lower slopes of the mountain, and he dropped back to the runway he had quitted.

"Now I know where you are," he shouted, and went up at a swift trot.

At a point above him, the ledge became a little ravine between two high masses of rock. Gardestang charged full at this dimmed opening, then on impulse veered to one side.

His impulse was a good one. Another boulder hove into sight and came whirling past. As it thundered along the ledge, Gardestang scrambled up one of the rock-masses. From its top he could see the hairy crooked shape of the Other, still poised and tense after hurling potential death upon him.

"Stone-age warfare," Gardestang mocked, and threw himself down, as often he had hurled his big, brawny body upon ambushed enemies in commando actions. He struck with the knife.

But this was no unsuspecting German lump, no undersized Japanese. Gardestang fell full upon its hunched shoulders and rebounded from them as from the rock itself. His knife struck and snapped off, whether on the thing's back or on a stone, Gardestang was never to know. Before he could gather his legs under him and rise, the Other had pivoted and rushed.

"Said I not that I was armored?" it screamed at him.

STILL prone at the bottom of the little ravine, Gardestang shot out both his legs. He hooked a toe behind a hairy heel as it came in reach and drove his other foot, heavy in Lautoro's boot, at the knee-

joint. If it could not be damaged, it could be overbalanced. Down it slammed, with a clang like a falling stove. Gardestang whipped his own body upon it, darting both hands for the throat. His thumbs, schooled for such business, probed for the carotid arteries.

But the neck, as his fingers quested through the bristly thatch, was as round and unyielding as a length of four inch sewer pipe. Gardestang's attack had been only habitual, and he shifted his hands to seize the wrists of the talon-like paws that flashed up at him. He drove his knee into the point where a stomach-pit should be, and there, too, was no yielding. In his grip the wrists moved and flopped. Under the false hide they seemed to telescope and turn as if on sleeve joints. And they were too strong for him. Despite all the effort he poured into his own arms and hands, they shoved upward and closer to his own throat, his unarmored throat that could be choked, torn, damaged.

But at the moment of touching, the Other voiced a wild whimper and snatched its claws back. Gardestang's neckband had come open, and into view had fallen Theolinda's crucifix on its knotted chain.

"Crossed lines!" The flat voice seemed actually to stammer. By a sudden surging effort, the misshapen form bucked Gardestang clear. They were both up at the same moment, glaring into each other's eyes.

Now Gardestang saw two globes of glass, and within them was not life but a strange glowing liquid—the seat of those rays that could strike down and destroy. He dodged back and away from a sudden rush, and drew Tommy's pistol. He fired full into one of the globes.

"No use!" snarled the Other. "I do not need them to see you!"

It sidled away, as if to attack from a point where it did not have to face the cross. Gardestang pistol-whipped it, hard enough to knock down a mule. It only swayed, and clutched him in its arms from the side. The embrace made his ribs creak and buckle. The great jaws opened, as if to crunch his shoulder.

Gardestang drove his hand, pistol and all, into the yawning crater of the mouth, and fired twice.

The Other let go and sprang back. It sagged for a moment against a projecting rock, seemed to recover, and ran into the darkness behind the gully.

Gardestang tore after it, and found himself

blinking at the mouth of a cave, bare and stuffy. He was alone. "Where are you?" he yelled, almost hysterically. "Don't tell me that you've found out all about human fear and how to feel it!"

No answer.

Then he could see where it had gone. A shimmer-sheet, a small one, no more in dimensions than the transom of a window, glittered in a remote corner.

Gardestang walked toward it. His free hand caught Theolinda's cross. Remembering tales of knights against devils, and remembering Theolinda's, too, he lifted and kissed it. Then he lowered his head and dived through the shimmer-sheet.

For a moment he was choking as he struggled, groped, fought aimlessly with his hands for air. Then remembering, he snatched for the oxygen helmet, found it still slung to his neck, and pulled it over his head.

It was an invisible globe-shaped device, with an oblong object like a cake of soap that evidently generated oxygen. Gardestang had little time to study it, and had classified it as another wonderful manufacture of the Others or of their human cultists under direction. He was able to breathe as soon as it was upon his head.

HE WAS still on the mountain, surely on Cachacamool, tallest of Western peaks, for around him in the blue distance, were many other peaks, all far lower than the point where he now stood. As for the valleys, they were sunk into depths as into misty waters, and he could make out nothing.

He had landed on his feet at the mouth of a shallow pit, lined with metals of various kinds.

He scrambled forth, and saw that around him were sharp-angled boulders and faces of rock, curving away to help make the mighty brow of the mountain. Not far above was the summit itself. Gardestang knew how deceiving a height can be when you aspire to it, yet he judged that he could climb to the apex of that cone. It had been a volcano once, he thought, and its ancient crater was full of whiteness, probably the snow of millenia.

For the rest, he was bitterly cold, and would have been cold in triple fur. Sunlight helped a little as he emerged into it. He stamped, beat his arms across his chest, and breathed deeply of the oxygen gendered within his helmet.

"Gardestang," the flat voice addressed him, from no further away than a whisper could

carry.

He gazed in that direction, and there was the Other, squatting beast-like on a little chunk of rock, behind and beneath a larger boulder.

"Duck low, duck low, Gardestang," it bade him. "They have no eyes, but they have what you would define as awareness. Stay behind and beneath rocks, or from the height they will know that we are here, and destroy us both."

"You mean, Others like yourself?"

"No. Others not like myself."

Gardestang shook his head inside its helmet. All this was to him as a dream. He felt exalted, and danger seemed nothing.

"I prefer to stay in the sun," he said. "It's warm, and my flesh needs warmth. What are you plotting against me?"

The jaws of the abhorrent vulpine mask opened, and a sigh made itself heard, a sigh that might have been uttered by a weary and resigned human being.

"You have led me to so much understanding of humanity, Gardestang, but you cannot understand me. I have no guile or deceit, except of the clumsiest. If my human tools below learned but little of science from me, and were inept at that, so was I far inferior to them in misdirection. I was able to out-think them only because their minds were open to me, as yours has not been. Think back, Gardestang. Have I once been able to conceal my decisions or viewpoints from you?"

It was speaking truth, Gardestang decided. All through the contest he had been able to weigh and read the thing's motives. It had prattled its plans away, like a child. And now it hid behind a rock and seemed to whimper. Not much of the ruthless, calculating experimenter with humanity now remained.

"You still wear your armor," he said.

"Yes. That last assault of yours pierced a weak inner part. I had to flee up here, quickly. I wear the thing only that I may communicate with you."

"And perhaps fight me," finished Gardestang for it.

"And perhaps fight you." The wolf-head wagged rather sadly. "But a fight now would be on other terms than those that obtained a moment ago. To puncture my armor would not destroy me, up here where the air is thin and endurable. But to puncture yours—that bag that brings oxygen to your lungs—would be fatal to you. Do not forget that."

Gardestang peered up toward the summit, and could see nothing.

"What if the things you fear are not there?" he demanded. "If they do exist, they are invisible. I don't fear invisible things."

"You lie. All men fear the things they cannot see or define. That has been a source of my power, and the power of my associates as we ventured among men."

"I don't fear them," repeated Gardestang. "Show me a definite danger, and I'll recognize and respect it. But concerning suspicions and legends, they're for the sorry little worms you dealt with. Eaker and men like him."

"All men fear us," insisted the Other. "From the dim beginnings of the human race they have feared."

THE American made a gesture of scorn. "Men have put away those fears, and called them superstitions. Only a small part of civilized humanity puts any faith in you or what you can do. Your worshippers are despised and laughed at. There's a word we have for them. Crackpot."

"Crackpot," repeated the Other. "The men I knew never used that word."

"Because they hated it. They were mocked with it too often."

"The truth was known by Eaker," said the Other, lolling against its protecting boulder. "It was known by many secret cults of worship and wisdom and power. Those whom you call civilized, wise and influential, they were wrong to disregard us. For the knowledge of us is truth."

"I wonder if it is," said Gardestang.

The long jaws opened, and shut again. The Other fell into one of its abashed silences.

"Yes, I wonder if it is," Gardestang repeated. "If you aren't a sort of illusion, cooked up and made plausible by many distorted minds believing in you, what can you be?"

"If I'm not real," broke in the Other, "why do I make myself so plain to you?"

"Because I have you in mind. But I shall put you out of my mind. I shall destroy you."

"You can't," protested the Other.

"I can, and you know it."

Gardestang put his hand to his throat and caught hold of the cross. He twitched the chain from his neck. He moved forward.

The creature rose to its feet. It retreated into the open. He followed. A quick jump

would bring him within arm's reach, he could jam his hand and the cross it held inside that sagging mouth, touch what was inside. But the Other lifted a paw, and in that paw was a round, jagged stone the size of a baseball.

Gardestang ducked, not quite quickly enough. The stone hurtled, and rang against his helmeted head like the great clang of a bell. He went down. His head jangled and threw off mighty waves and ripples of pain, that must be swelling out through all the world, like waves of light or sound. But Gardestang clung to his wits, by the sheer refusal to let them go. He got up.

The ugly deformed thing was upon him in a rush, its metal-hard arms around him. He struck at it with his hand, and the hand was empty.

"Dropped it, you dropped it," came huskily between the fangs. "And you—I'll kill you now."

Green light from one glass-globe eye poured upon him in sickening intensity. The two strained, tugged, grappled, and went down, Gardestang underneath. The beast-thing's body lay upon him as heavy as a collapsed house. He caught its wrists and fought them back from his face. As before, he was forced to realize that they were stronger than his own grip. Inch by inch they forced closer to him, closer.

"If I wrench that helmet off," grunted the Other, "you'll die. And I'll go back down, without you to stop me. If I beat you, I can beat your friends. And among mankind are those who will serve me and worship me."

Gardestang did not speak or struggle. All the strength he could summon was concentrated to keep the talons from him. He glared upward through the lenses of his helmet.

The green ray was off. Blotches overhead. A smear on the glass, a dazzled blurring of his eyes, a cloud in heaven?

No.

Overhead moved a thing like a puff of smoke, but smoke confined and ordered. It shifted shape, but with consciousness and intent. Such things Gardestang had seen, in a vision.

"I'll kill you," the Other promised yet again, and suddenly glanced upward, too.

It snatched its wrists from him and leaped away. It said nothing, made no effort. It drew itself up, inside that abhorrent hairy rind.

The air above was full of shape-changers.

From one came a pale, clear ray of light, thin as a pencil.

The Other in the beast-armor tried to run then, but it had not the time.

The ray drove right through it. From a shape-changer in an opposition position sprang another ray. They met and crossed inside the thing, crossed at right angles for a single moment. Crossed lines. The single moment was enough.

The semblance of the beast-thing dropped limp and empty as a flayed skin. Whatever had made it swell and move was gone.

Then the shape-changers drew down around Gardestang like huge hovering pigeons.

CHAPTER XV

The Pact

NOW Gardestang's first effort was to find and lift up the crucifix given him by Theolinda. But the cloud beings spoke softly.

"We have no reason to beware of that," they said to Gardestang.

He could hear them, could feel their message, could receive it in his mind as he had received Tommy's thoughts. In all, it was a plain impact upon his personality. He was aware of what they told, and now they were revealing more!

"None of us has erred. Crossed lines cannot destroy us."

"They cannot destroy me, either," said Gardestang stoutly, though he felt too weak to rise.

"Because you, too, have not erred against the commandments of your kind. You are a true specimen of what you should be. But the one we destroyed was not true to his race. He was disobedient, rebellious, ambitious. He was not of substance, but substance was his study and occupation. He went against right rules. Crossed lines, therefore, destroyed him."

A cross against evil, thought Gardestang. Truth in the most ancient belief.

"What things are you?" he asked. "How do you live on this mountaintop?"

"Where else to live on your world, whose lower levels are poisoned with oxygen?"

"My world," repeated Gardestang. "You would have me think that you yourselves do not belong here."

"Some day we may belong here. We did

belong elsewhere."

"Another planet?" He started up from the ground. "Which planet?"

"We come from—"

"Mars? Jupiter? Tell me!"

"From— We come from— Your mind cannot receive the answer."

Gardestang gazed at the peak above.

"How do you live?" he asked again. "I see no shelters."

"We need no shelters of substance, for we are not of substance."

"What about machines?" pursued Gardestang. "The one you killed had many strange machines in the lands below, that had power to serve or hurt beyond anything we knew."

"Forbidden. We have long turned from such things. The making and using of them will cause evil and the going against nature. We leave machines to your sort, for you are of substance. We are concerned with spirit things."

"Do you mean," said Gardestang, "that the Others I met and fought below were all renegades and rebels? They said as much. But in what way? If you come here from somewhere else, what do you do on my world?"

Long silence among the shape-changers that hovered around him. He was reminded of the beast-thing Other and its abashments. He had time to reflect that these were of a higher order than his enemy, who could not read his mind.

"We seek to know," at last came the answer.

"Know what? The size and construction and nature of this world? The doings of its people? What?"

"To know the cause. But again you cannot understand." A pause. "Perhaps you will learn later, for we wish more communication with you. Never before has one of this world's creatures come to us."

"You have come to them," reminded Gardestang.

"No. Not the true ones of us. Renegades debased themselves and forgot their true quest in the pursuit of ancient falsities— power, possessions, conquest."

"Am I going against my nature in coming to you?" asked Gardestang.

"No, for you remain true to your nature. And this is your world, even this mountain top. You have rights here, but we do not have right down there."

"What is the true quest you speak of?"

"It is— You see? You cannot comprehend."

"No," and Gardestang shook his head dolefully in his helmet, to denote agreement.

"Now tell us the nature of your own world," came the plea.

GARDESTANG drew a deep breath. "Where to begin? Shall I tell of cities, machines, transportations, governments?"

"None of those. The spirits of your world. Are there others of spirit like yourself?"

"Very many," said Gardestang. "Wiser and stronger and better. Far down this mountain wait four who are like me. And countless numbers in other places."

"Yet there are many more with small, deceitful, evil souls. Why?"

body, which my kind considers all, and in the soul, which your kind considers beyond price. It happened that I came away fearing nothing, and hoping only to find things that would be worth my attention."

"And you found them?"

"Two. One is this meeting with you. Like you, I wish to know. But you might not understand what, either. The other was a meeting with a woman of my own race, whose courage and wish to know are as great as mine, and greater."

To think of Theolinda made him warm again.

"Bring her," insisted the shape-changers. "Bring her. We shall learn from you both."

"This Is Lance Cross, of Xanadu, Mars, Calling Professor Pericles Oliphant—"



THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE bewildered Professor Pericles. He knew that the Ninth Diktor of First City had decreed death for Lance Cross—that even now the Stapo was out hunting for the rebel. Well, the Professor, in his own quiet way, was a bit of a rebel too—and you'll be amazed at what happens when he dares to meet Lance Cross in *STAR OF TREASURE*, a fantastic novel of spatial adventure by Charles W. Harbaugh.

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"Because creatures of my race differ, one from another. We have renegades and rebels as you do."

"What has been the greatest happening to souls on this world?" rose a new query.

"I cannot tell," Gardestang replied. "But the greatest happening to my own soul came as a result of a war."

"War? War?"

"A struggle between many creatures divided into two sides. Machines and dangerous chemical compounds and bodily strength and wits are turned against each other."

"Why?" came the instant demand. "Why?"

"Because a few of my race wanted power over all. I find it hard to explain, as you find it hard to explain to me your own nature and impulse. But as to the war, I was one of those who fought in it. Many were killed, and many others were damaged, both in the

"Learn what?"

"Learn— There! You see? Once again we cannot explain. But in time to come it may be made understandable to you."

Gardestang faced down the mountain. "After this, I cannot go away or forget what happened. I shall come to you again."

"With the woman, the woman?"

"Yes, if she wishes to come, and she will wish it. But now I must return. My body must have physical comforts and supplies for a long stay. Then I shall build a camp on this mountain and confer with you long, if you remain here."

"We have always remained here. But in the future, who can say? First we must find out— But it is useless, now, to try and tell you. Later perhaps."

Gardestang nodded. He felt weary and, in a way, lonely.

"The way up was easy. The way down

will be a long one."

"No, no. There is a way that the renegades made. Come."

He went, with the shape-changers soaring all around him, on a climb upward. They urged him toward what seemed a cave. But, as he drew near, he saw that it was curtained with a shimmer-sheet.

"Through that. And you will return?"

"I promise."

"Then soon. We have so much to learn. And you are the first of this world to reject the renegades and seek us."

"Pay attention to me, you Others," said Gardestang. "I know, and you know, that I do not understand you well. But, because of you, I understand men better. I shall return."

He stepped through the shimmer-sheet—staggered and reeled—and it was the hand of Tommy Gatchell who caught him and held him steady, back on the ledge of Serrano.

"Out of the thin air, eh?" Dr. Parr was greeting him. "Another shimmer-sheet somewhere above?"

"Another shimmer-sheet," said Gardestang. "And victory. And plenty to tell you, if I can find the words. Theolinda. Where is she?"

He pulled off his helmet. Theolinda was there, her pale face all turned to smiles.

"We've found the way down, or Lautoro did," Tommy told him. "A tunnel behind one of the huts, with carved stone steps, leading down to the country below. Goodby to Serrano."

"No, not goodby," Gardestang said.

"Coming back?" asked Dr. Parr.

"I'm going to build an observatory here. I've got studying to do on Cachacamool."

"Glad to hear you're staying," smiled Parr. "So is this young lady, I judge. Tell us about it on the stairs going down."

CHAPTER XVI

Afterword

SUCH basic things as time and space and what they mean to the Others, men have no way of knowing as yet. It is established that the Others came from another world, and that to them this world has been as utterly strange as theirs would be to us. Upon their landing-place they have made

a definite impact, commencing in ages too long past for us to reckon.

That impact came when they cast outlaws out of their ranks, outlaws who have scrambled and smutted the minds and lives of men ever since. Why they originally came and why they stayed, on this planet, so full of obstacles to creatures of their sort, will take long to comprehend.

When we know, it will be a great step toward knowledge and sympathy between our kind and theirs.

The most that can be done is to suggest.

It seems that they have always had curiosity, the curiosity that builds into a sublime possession of the soul, even with us. They wanted to know, perhaps for no reason but knowledge itself. Mankind in selected cases experiences that urge. A Galileo rakes the unknown abysses of the universe with his telescope, a Picard dares the stratosphere, a Beebe invades ocean's floor, a Gardestang addresses himself to darkling mysteries that seem to peep from another plane where the very facts of existence are diametrically opposite to our experience.

It is probable that the Others who dwell on the dry, rarefied peaks of the Andes represent a selfless scholarly group from wherever they called home, that they came to find out what went on at the bottom of vast valleys full of poisonous oxygen, and that they were baffled and dismayed, and all the more determined for that.

The best of them sought no profits or powers. If they had wanted those, they would have taken possession of the Earth long ago. The few of their devices which were made manifest to humanity bespoke science enough for such a course. They never tried to invade or exploit.

The cult of depraved worshippers and experimenters which came to proper disaster in Chile was not really of their making, not even of the making of the renegades. It might be compared to a synthesis of vicious elements in the Others and in humanity. The cult did not understand. Its failure to understand has been as complete as that of mankind in general, and far more pitiful.

But if full understanding is still remote, the foundation is being laid. On Tommy Gatchell's last journey to Chile—he is an airline executive today—Gardestang and Theolinda came down from their observatory-home on the ledge of Serrano. Dr. Parr joined them, and the four took dinner

together at the Hotel Braganza.

"This much we can prepare to accept," announced Gardestang over the coffee. "They don't want to kill us, or rule us, or rob us, or even change us. They do want to know about us, and it's touching to see them try. Our thought-transference exercises are progressing. We've gone through work with those tarots that poor Rico hated so, and now we're on geometric and algebraic symbols. And we know that we can trust each other, even before we're sure what we both want."

"Did it ever occur to you that they want to help us?" offered Tommy.

"Did it ever occur," rejoined Dr. Parr,

"that they may want us to help them?"

"Both ideas have occurred to me," said Gardestang. "Would you be ready for an adventure with them, if they got the idea across? Go to another world, perhaps another time or dimension or wherever they come from?"

"Like a shot," Tommy almost cried, his fearless eyes blazing with the old joyous light of battle. "And you, Duke? Would Theolinda let you?"

Theolinda laughed.

"Let him go? Why not? I'd be coming along, wouldn't I?"

The efforts at mutual understanding are continuing.



A miner on Mars rises to spectacular heights of power on the red planet while the universe hums with amazing intrigue that will astonish you

IN

SHADOW OVER MARS

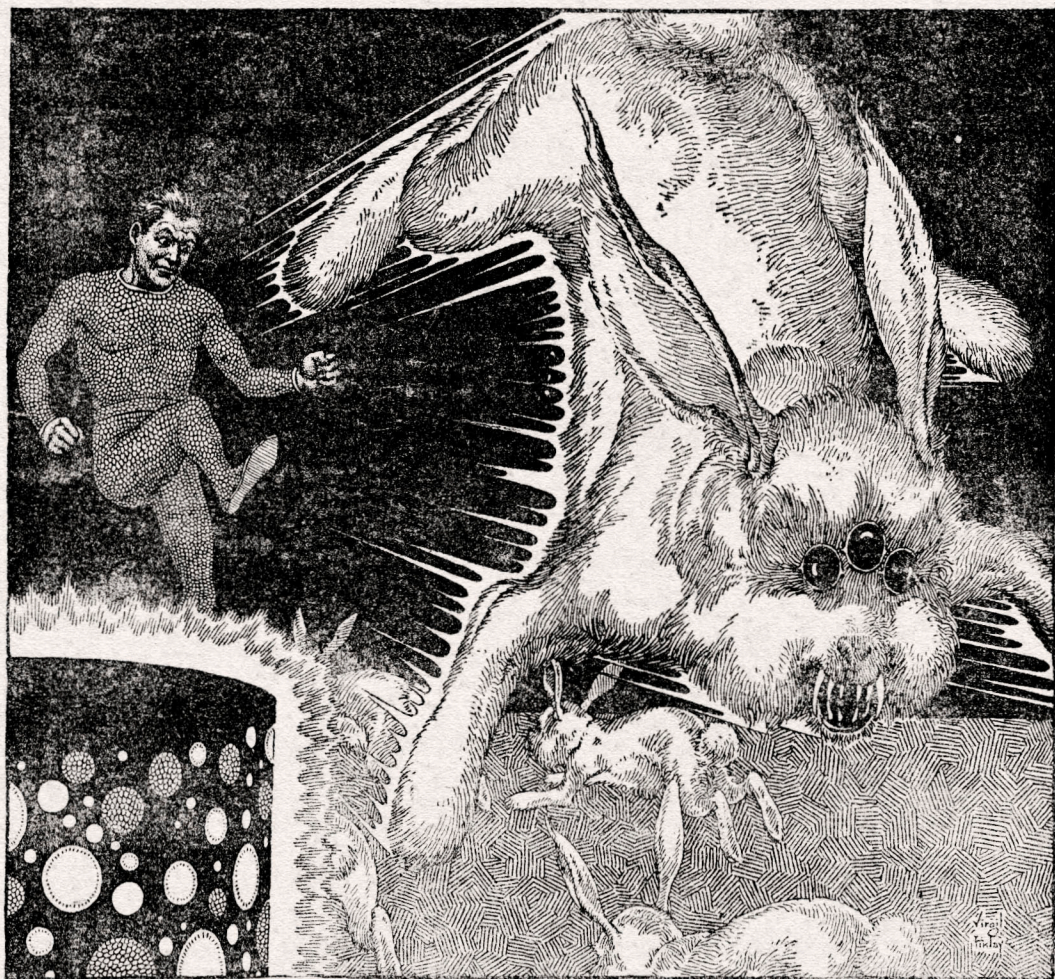
By LEIGH BRACKETT

NEXT ISSUE'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL OF THE FUTURE

**YOU CAN'T
HURT MY
FEELINGS!**

**I KNOW IT
- I USE
STAR BLADES!**





Perkin's toe caught the beast in the side and sent it sailing like a football

Get Your Extra Here!

By **WILLIAM MORRISON**

Henpecked Horace Perkin Travels to a Space-Warp, Confronting Venomous Monsters, Future Scientists and a Dangerous Villain!

WITHOUT the slightest suspicion that this day was to be in any respect different from any other day of his monotonous life, Horace Perkin thrust a shivering arm through the doorway. He gripped the morning paper in a shaking hand, and snatched it inside. From the kitchen he could hear the shrill voice of his wife, Mary Lou.

"Horace!"

"Yes, dear."

"Give Junior his orange juice."

"Yes, dear."

Horace Perkin had wanted to take a look at the scores of last night's basketball games, but neither his wife nor the wailing Junior were in a mood to brook delay. He threw the newspaper hastily on a bureau, and proceeded to give Junior his vitamin C. Then Jane, the most recent addition to the family, began to squall, and he attended to her. In the bathroom, Alfred was carefully

pretending to clean his face with a mono-molecular film of water, in preparation for school.

Horace Perkin applied several handfuls of water, developed a lather by means of a previously disregarded cake of soap, and rubbed hard. Moments later, Alfred's face was sullen, but clean.

On the way from the bathroom, Perkin found himself with five seconds to spare. Hastily snatching up the paper once more, he prepared to turn to the basketball scores.

But one headline held his eyes—held them, and paralyzed him. His arm trembled as he stared in disbelief. He repeated the words to himself, then looked at them again. They had not changed. The headline read:

**ROCKET LINER COMPLETES
FIRST ROUND TRIP FROM MARS!**

Next came the date—

He felt faint. For the date was June 17, 2135.

If Horace Perkin had found time to think, he would have decided that the whole thing was nothing but a hoax. Actually, he had hardly a second to himself. Junior's nose had to be wiped, Jane had to attend to once more, and Alfred's schoolbooks to be found.

Then Perkin hastily devoured his breakfast, and was off to work. He took the paper with him, and left behind an angry wife, who repeated bitterly that man's work lasts from sun to sun, but woman's work is never done.

He would have read the paper during the subway ride, but the train was too crowded to permit him to open it wide and turn the pages. So he stole a glance at the headline once more. Again they announced the arrival of the rocket liner from Mars.

He folded the paper, put it carefully away in the pocket of his topcoat, and left it there all during his stay at the office. On the train home, he had an opportunity to read it, but the headlines, as he admitted to himself, were different from all the other headlines,

and he had no desire to attract attention. He left the paper severely alone.

After dinner, however, his wife betook herself with several dozens of socks and a darning needle into her favorite corner. Then he had his chance. He spread the paper wide.

If some one had played a hoax, it was certainly an elaborate one. There were forty-eight pages, each filled with news of the world of June, 2135. Much of it was incomprehensible to him. It told about places and things and people of whom he had never heard. He was pleased however, to find a sports page, a page of comic strips, and a page of advice to the lovelorn. Human nature, it was evident, had not been entirely transformed by the passage of almost two centuries. And on page 17, he discovered to his joy, a column by John V. Durn, M.D., giving the replies to medical questions asked by various readers.

"Here I sit and slave," grieved Mary Lou, "day after day. It's work, work, work, day in and day out, with never a moment's relaxation to myself. And you neglect me."

"But, darling," said Perkin timidly, "you do play bridge almost every afternoon!"

"So you begrudge me that." Mary Lou almost wept. "It's the sole thing which keeps me from going crazy. Here you come home, and bury your head in the paper, and never give me the least bit of attention."

An excellent idea, thought Perkin, especially as he knew by heart what was coming next. He began to study Dr. Durn's column. Unfortunately, there was nothing about lumbago, from which Horace Perkin himself suffered, nor about rheumatism, the complaint of his father, nor even about the dishpan hands that worried Mary Lou. But there was, he found, something highly interesting about common colds.

"The great medical problem of the Twentieth Century, the common respiratory infection known as the cold, and also as grip, yielded early in the year 2022 to an incredibly simple remedy which I herewith recommend to my

readers. Take a few grams of sodium chloride, and several hundred cc. of cow's milk—"

"Imagine that," thought Horace Perkin. "What science won't think of next!"

His reflections were cut short by a curt remark from Mary Lou.

"Horace, time to go to bed. That is, if you expect to get up early tomorrow morning."

"Yes, my dear," replied Perkin. He took one last lingering glance at the remarkable newspaper. Then he hid it among the tubes of the radio set, where his wife would never find it, before obeying like the well-trained husband he was.

It seemed like too much to expect, but the next morning found another forty-eight page newspaper in front of his door. This time the headline ran:

MARS COLONY TO RECEIVE AUTONOMY

The date was June 18, 2135. He still did not know those basketball scores, but he had learned plenty of other things.

FOR the rest of that week, Perkin lived in a constant daze. He no longer believed that any one was perpetrating a hoax. On the other hand, he could think of no new theory to take the old one's place. His mind assumed a condition of what might best be called suspended animation.

On Friday, he learned, Alfred had a cold. Suspecting a first that his heir might have developed a case of sniffles for no other reason than to avoid school, Horace Perkin sent him off with the stern admonition to make sure he was on time for his classes or he'd get he knew what.

But that evening he returned to find Alfred already in bed. Thus he knew that Alfred's misery was authentic. The youngster hated bed, and could be induced to go to sleep each evening only by the firmest persuasion.

"Poor dear," said Mary Lou. "And you didn't believe him."

"I've caught him faking before."

"He isn't faking this time. And you know, Horace, that every time he has a cold, it lasts for weeks. He doesn't get over it in a day or two, as some children do."

Perkin nodded. And then an idea came to him. As he put on his hat and coat, his wife looked up in surprise.

"Where do you think you're going, Horace Perkin?"

"To the druggist, for some medicine." And before Mary Lou could reply, he was out of the house.

At the druggist's, Horace Perkin spoke firmly. "I want a few grams of sodium chloride."

There was a newly fledged clerk behind the counter, and he looked both suspicious and haughty.

"Trying to kid me, bud?"

"Why, no."

"Sodium chloride is ordinary table salt."

"I didn't know," apologized Perkin. "How much would a few grams be?"

"About as much as you can get on a teaspoon, more or less."

"And how much is several hundred cc. of milk?"

"About a cup," replied the clerk, proud of his knowledge.

Perkin hastened home, and sought the newspaper which gave the cold remedy of the future. It was the work of but a few moments to prepare the mixture recommended by Dr. John V. Durn, and the work of a few moments more to convince his wife that she would not be interested in what he was doing.

Alfred was drowsy, and offered little opposition to his father pouring the liquid down his throat. And now, decided Perkin, he would see how reliable this newspaper of the future was.

He went to bed himself shortly after. And as he was drifting off to sleep, another idea struck him. He reached out and fumbled drowsily with his alarm clock. In the morning, he would solve this problem once and for all.

Sleep easily overtook him.

The alarm clock buzzed noisily, and Perkin stretched out an angry hand. Still half asleep, he was angry at the

alarm for having gone off almost an hour before its usual time. But as he was settling back for that additional rest, he suddenly remembered. He hopped out of bed, and pulled on his trousers.

A few seconds later, his feet thrust into a pair of shabby old slippers, he hastened toward the door. He had meant to watch that paper being delivered and learn why it was being brought to his doorstep. He hoped he was not too late.

But he was. The newsboy had come and gone, and as Perkin picked up the *Morning Sentinel*, he was conscious of a pang of disappointment. No newspaper of the future was this. Just an ordinary late edition, with its usual quota of murders, robberies, divorces and marriages. Somebody, decided Perkin, must have suspected what he was going to do.

HE HAD just arrived at this decision when everything went, as he described it later, purple in front of him. He felt himself falling, falling—always in the same place. And then, before he could make up his mind whether he was afraid or not, the purple gave way to the ordinary light of day.

Perkin was standing on two feet again, like an ordinary human being, although from the way the stranger was looking at him, you might have thought he was some kind of bug. Nearby was a squat cylinder covered with multi-colored lenses.

The stranger was tall and bronzed, but with an absent look upon his face that did not fit his athletic appearance. He was dressed in soft clothes that changed color as he moved, stretching like rubber as he lifted an arm. But they hung as smoothly as the finest sequined cloth otherwise. In plain words this fellow looked to Perkin like a nut, and Perkin began to feel resentful at being stared at. He was also angered at having been kidnapped and brought to this strange place.

"What's the big idea, bud?" he demanded, with a toughness he hoped

would not be challenged. "What kind of monkey business are you tryin' to pull off around here?"

"I beg your pardon?" said the man.

Horace Perkin noted, to his amazement, that the man's speech seemed to combine the accent of Oxford with the slow drawl of the West, the nasal twang of New England, and the soft slurred cadences of the South.

"What are you doing in my laboratory?"

"Look, bud, I was standin' on my own doorstep, pickin' up my newspaper." He shook the *Morning Sentinel* in front of the man's nose. "Then you began to pull funny stunts. I ain't going stand for it, see?"

The man was staring at the newspaper. His eye must have caught one of the headlines, for suddenly his face cleared.

"Of, of course," he exclaimed. "Follow me, please. And by the way, my name is not, as you suppose, 'bud.' I am Professor Helder."

"Pleased to meetcha, Professor," announced Perkin, and followed meekly.

There was a reception committee of half a dozen men apparently waiting for Professor Helder. They stared at Horace Perkin. Again he felt like a bug. He began to feel more and more resentful.

One of them, a sallow man with a pinched face, even put a sort of iridescent monocle to his eye, the better to examine him.

"Ah, what is this, Professor Helder?" he asked.

"You see before you, gentlemen, a specimen of humanity from the Twentieth Century," came the pompous answer.

There was a murmur as of interest, but not too great surprise. The pinched man, whose name was Murdock, spoke again.

"Some connection with those newspapers, I suppose?"

"You suppose rightly, Murdock. I do not know how, but in some manner the space-warp apparatus which we were using several months ago has been set in operation once more. I suspect the

janitor of tampering with it. Quite accidentally, I imagine, the time-gears have been set in motion. Hence the daily disappearance of our own newspaper, and the appearance of the primitive sheet, the *Morning Sentinel*."

Horace Perkin did not understand all this. But he did get the general drift of what the man was saying. He suddenly felt faint. So those newspapers had come from the Twenty-second Century after all. And he had made a little trip.

Helder went on. "Of course we know, that under ordinary conditions, it is impossible to travel from the present to the past. The continuity of past space-time leaves no room for the insertion of any body from the future. Only when a multi-dimensional vacuum is created in the past can it be filled from time to come—as in the case of those newspapers. But it is possible to travel to the future from the past. We have known that fact theoretically for some time. This man's presence here is indisputable proof."

HORACE PERKIN interrupted. "Look. I don't get what you're saying, and I don't give a cuss what it is. I want to get back to Mary Lou and the family."

"My good fellow, what you demand is impossible. The past is definitely gone. It may as well be forgotten.

"You don't understand," said Perkin. "I got a wife and three kids. Who's gonna take care of them if I ain't there?"

Professor Helder smiled, as if humoring an idiot. "There's no need for anyone to take care of them. Of course, from the point of view of space-time, they continue to exist, and always will. But from the point of view of time alone, they have been dead for more than a century. I can assure you, my dear fellow, that all their problems have long since been solved."

"They're dead?" repeated Horace Perkin, wide-eyed. And then a stubborn look came into his eyes, as if he had been arguing with Mary Lou. "I don't believe it. I was with them,

wasn't I? I'm here alive, ain't I? Well, if I could get here, I could get back."

"You can't," answered Helder. His eyes grew clouded with worry. "I wish I was sure of what happened to that space-warp machine. Yesterday the janitor denied he had touched it."

"Professor Helder," interrupted Murdock. "Don't you think we had better secure some decent clothes for this individual?"

"Of course. See that he's taken care of, Murdock."

Perkin hardly heard them. His brow was furrowed as his clothes were taken away and new ones given him, like the ones all the other men wore. He had to get back home. No matter what the others said, he had to get back.

After they had clothed him, they introduced Perkin to some of their food. He was surprised to find it very much like the food of the Twentieth Century. There was even fish, with bones in it that stuck in his throat. The only difference was that there were more vitamins. He felt a vague sense of disappointment.

His disappointment, however, was nothing compared to that of the learned men who examined him later in the day. Professor Helder had a low opinion of Horace Perkin's intelligence. But even he did not realize how little his unexpected guest knew.

"What were your personal impressions of Professor Einstein?" demanded one savant.

"Him? I never knew the guy."

The questioner seemed taken aback.

"But he was the one man of scientific eminence that the Twentieth Century produced."

"So what? I don't know any science. And before you come across with some more hot ones about what happened when I met President Roosevelt, or Churchill, or Stalin, let me tell you something, bud. The Twentieth Century was a big place. All I knew about these guys was what I read about them in the newspapers. You can read about 'em if you want to just like I did. If you don't like it—utsnay to you."

Perkin had never used slang or pig-latin either at home or at his office. Here, however, in this super-refined atmosphere, he felt he had to be vulgar or burst. He did not burst.

After a few more futile questions, they left him alone. Perkin found himself a derelict in the Twenty-second Century.

For a time he enjoyed his isolation. It took him a few days to realize that he was in a giant laboratory and research institute, and that like everyone else inside the huge institution, he was entitled to free food and clothing. No one questioned him any longer. No one told him what to do. This research institute of the future was a magnificent place, but because of his ignorance of science, most of its wonders were thrown away on him. He saw everything without understanding the smallest part of it.

THROUGH it all, however, one thought ran persistently through his mind. "I've gotta get back," he said to himself.

He wondered how the office was getting along without him, and what Mary Lou was doing, and whether Alfred had ever learned to wash behind his ears.

But no matter where he looked, there seemed to be no way of making that trip into Time.

Then one day he found himself again in Professor Helder's laboratory.

Professor Helder did not notice him. In fact, both Helder and his assistant, Murdock, seemed too excited to notice anything but the half-dozen large rabbit-like animals which crouched near a squat cylinder which was equipped with multi-colored lenses. Perkin remembered that cylinder subconsciously. It was the space-warp machine that had brought him into this century.

He would have thought the animals were genuine rabbits, had it not been for their teeth. Instead of the harmless broad-surfaced grass-grinding molars, these beasts had sharp, slender needle-like spikes. All the same, thought Horace Perkin, they were rather cute.

But neither Professor Helder nor Murdock seemed to think so. They were shrinking back toward the doorway where Perkin stood. Suddenly, one of the rabbit-like beasts threw himself after them. It ran, not in long leaps, as a genuine rabbit would have done, but with tiny rapid steps like an oversize mouse. Professor Helder barely threw himself aside, as the beast crashed into an obstruction.

"Scared of a rabbit," said Perkin contemptuously. He picked up the stunned animal, and fondly patted its head. "Nice bunny, nice bunny. Don't be afraid of the man. He won't hurt you."

The animal looked up at him glassily, and Perkin was shocked to discover that it was doing its looking with three remarkably bright eyes, the third one being between and above the others, almost covered by the fur. This third eye added a somewhat sinister touch to the little beast, and did what the spike-like teeth had not. It startled Horace Perkin.

He dropped the animal to the floor. As he did so, the other rabbits rushed at him.

By this time Professor Helder and Murdock had slipped out of the room. Left alone with the weird creatures, Perkin began to grow angry. What kind of place was this, when even the rabbits hated everybody?

The first beast reached him. Perkin swung his foot and his toe caught the animal in the side and sent it sailing like a football. It knocked over the others like so many ninepins. In a second, though, they were up again. But now they came at him one by one, and Perkin could handle them in fine style.

His foot thumped again and again, sending them spinning back against the wall. One got past his guard and ran up his leg, but he batted it to the floor with the back of his hand. It made a futile attempt to bite him as it fell. Just to take no chances, he kicked this animal a couple of extra times for good luck.

The whole set-to had taken less than a minute. Perkin stared at the defeated

rabbits, and began to feel ashamed of himself.

At that moment, the door opened, and Professor Helder cautiously poked his head in. He caught sight of the stunned creatures on the floor, and turned to some one behind him. A pair of men marched in, carrying cages. Behind them, fearfully, came Murdock.

The men with the cages transferred the rabbits to them with great caution, and then marched out again. Murdock sighed with relief, and turned toward Professor Helder.

"Clearly a case where ignorance is bliss," he commented.

HELDER nodded. "My dear sir," he said to Perkin. "Do you realize what those animals are?"

"They look like rabbits to me."

"They're Martian venom-beasts. One scratch of their teeth, and you would have been a dead man. Each animal alone is capable of destroying a thousand men."

He glanced at Horace Perkin impressively. But the dignity of his manner was nothing compared to the dignity of Perkin's slow faint.

When he revived, the two scientists were deep in a worried discussion.

"I tell you, Murdock," said Professor Helder, "matters are getting serious. This could have been no accident. Some one deliberately set that space-warp machine so he could reach Mars."

Horace Perkin sat up.

"What's that?" he demanded. "What's Mars got to do with this?"

"I should like to know the answer myself. Those animals were never brought here aboard ship. They came directly through space. I don't understand why."

"You mean that machine brought them, like it brought me."

"Exactly. And that isn't the only mystery. Just as objects have been appearing here from unexpected parts of time and space, other objects have been disappearing. I don't understand this at all."

"Maybe there's a crook around."

"A crook? You mean a thief? Impossible. The criminal mind is an anachronism. Crime has been abolished."

"Says you." Perkin's voice was skeptical. "All the same, that ain't what I wanted to talk to you about. I meant to ask you a question, Professor. Using that machine, could you send those animals back where they came from?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then why can't you send me back where I came from?"

"Time-travel, as I have already explained to you," began the professor impatiently, "is in a different category from space-travel. There is no emptiness in past space-time, therefore any attempt to squeeze in—if I may be allowed to use the term—a body from the future, can lead only to catastrophe."

"Well, where I came from ought to be empty all right, all right! One minute I was standing on my front stoop, picking up the morning papers. The next minute I was here, listening to you sound off. Who took my place? Tell me that."

"By Jove, I see what you mean. Of course no one else did. Why, I had assumed that something else was substituted. In that case it might be possible to send you back!"

He threw open the top of the space-warp machine. "Come here, Murdock. Help me adjust this thing."

For a few moments the two of them fiddled around with the different dials and switches, breaking old connections and making new ones. Horace Perkin felt rather proud of himself. He did not know anything about science, but he had seen something the professor had overlooked. That put him at the head of the class.

He did not want to puzzle Mary Lou by coming home in strange clothes. She would be sure to ask too many questions. So he looked around for the locker where they had put his original garments, and slipped into them. When he returned to the space-warp machine, Murdock and Professor Helder had stopped working. The professor was staring at a slip of paper another as-

sistant had brought him.

"All these things missing? Good heavens, it's incredible. Half a dozen grams of radium alone would be impossible to replace. I don't see who could have taken them."

"That crook been here again?" Perkin was greatly interested.

"I tell you, we have no crime in the Twenty-second Century."

"You gotta believe your own eyes, professor. I figure it this way. The guy who lifted these things figured he wouldn't last long. So he starts looking around for a place to make a getaway."

PROFESSOR HELDER shook his head. "Assuming there is such a thing as crime in existence, a criminal would be discovered wherever he went."

"Not if he hustled into the Twentieth Century—he'd be lost in the shuffle." Perkin's voice was triumphant. "So what happened to the space-warp machine wasn't no accident. This crook thinks he'll throw himself back a couple of centuries, where nobody can pin anything on him. What does he do? He makes experiments with them newspapers, and they work all right. Then, just by accident, he leaves the machine on while he goes to see about something else, and I come poppin' into the picture."

Helder stared at Perkin. "It sounds reasonable."

"He's all set to send himself back in time," Perkin was warming to his subject. "He hears you talk about how dangerous it is. What happens? He loses his nerve, and tries to get to Mars, or some other planet. But that don't look so good either. So he don't know what to do."

"On the contrary, my dear fellow." It was Murdock who spoke unexpectedly. "He knows exactly what to do."

"Murdock!" Professor Helder stared as if he could not believe his eyes. "Then it was you who stole those articles?"

"Sure, professor, it had to be somebody who knew how to handle that

machine," remarked Perkin. "No janitor could have done it."

There was a thin metal rod in Murdock's hands, which he pointed at the others.

"This Twentieth Century bumpkin has deduced exactly what happened," he admitted.

"Shucks, it was easy," said Perkin. "I know all about crooks from reading the papers every day. I even meet some now and then. They ain't rare, like Professor Einstein."

Murdock had discarded his pedagogic manner like a useless garment. There was a scowl on his brow now, and a sneer on his lips.

"There's plenty of other things this stupid fool doesn't know," he snarled. "Dr. Helder, I'm going to force you to send me into the Twentieth Century in his place. Here I may be an anachronism, but I fancy I will feel right at home back there."

He stepped upon a small platform in front of the space-warp machine. "Pull the switch, Professor, or else—"

It was with that Twentieth Century threat ringing in his ears that Perkin acted. He plunged at Murdock, who was pointing the metal rod at him. Murdock looked as if he could not believe his eyes when Perkin leaped forward.

Murdock was a big man, and Perkin was not. But Horace Perkin was fighting for Mary Lou and his three kids.

He hit Murdock in the jaw, kicked him in the stomach, and then pulled the metal rod out of his weakened hand and popped him over the head with it. Murdock fell to the floor.

Professor Helder swallowed hard. "It's unbelievable," he gasped. "That annihilator gun could have blasted you out of existence in the fraction of a second. You had no idea that the safety catch was stuck. And yet you tackled Murdock as boldly as if life meant nothing whatever to you."

Perkin felt weak again. But he had no time to lose in fainting now.

"I've been up against really tough opposition," he said. "I've been up against Mary Lou. And now, Profes-

sor, let's not waste any more time. You can turn Murdock over to your cops if you want. But I gotta get home. So if you'll throw that switch I'd be much obliged."

Perkin stepped on the platform from which he had just thrown Murdock. The professor's hand moved toward the switch. Then everything went purple again, and—

Perkin was on his own doorstep once more. Everything seemed about the same as usual, except that he had no newspaper.

He moved back into the house. Inside he could hear Mary Lou getting up. He dragged his feet along slowly, trying to decide whether the thoughts that were racing around in his mind had anything to do with reality or were only a dream.

Could it be he had actually made a trip into the Twenty-Second Century? And come back? He had no proof. Of course, the morning newspaper was gone. But the explanation for that might be simple. The boy might have failed to deliver it. Or perhaps some one picked it up and forgot to put it back.

MARY LOU'S voice broke against his ears, shrill and angry. "Horace, where are you?"

"Coming, my love." Queer, he thought, how he hadn't been afraid of those venom-beasts, or that annihilator gun. Yet here he was scared to death of Mary Lou. The only thing needed was to tell her where she got off, and he'd be a free man in his own home. And that's what he was going to do, by Jupiter! If he could face those venom-beasts—

But had really faced them? Suddenly he remembered something. He went over to the radio and thrust his hand in among the tubes.

He drew it out again slowly, a blank look on his face. The newspapers of the Twenty-Second Century were gone.

"Mary Lou." His voice rose in agony. "Did you take those papers I left in the radio."

"I threw them out. I'm not going to have the house cluttered up with junk, Horace."

So there was really no proof. Had it all been only a dream, after all?

He tried to reason things out. He had spent some time in the Twenty-Second Century, but had not aged a bit. The vitamins must have kept him looking the same age. His clothes had not been worn enough to show any signs of wear and tear. And he had come back at exactly the same moment when he had departed. So no one had noticed his absence.

He shook his head slowly, trying to clear his thoughts. And at that moment he heard Mary Lou's voice again, shrill and angry as usual. "Alfred, you go right back to bed."

"What for, Mom? I ain't got no more cold. I'm all right now."

Alfred's voice was clear. The nasal tones had vanished. His cold was gone. Yet on previous occasions he always had been sick for a week.

A miracle! Alfred had been cured by a cold remedy yet to be invented. Suddenly Perkin's last doubt had vanished. All uncertainty had disappeared. He knew. Those future newspapers, the space-warp machine, Professor Helder, Murdock, the venom beasts—they were all true. He scowled to himself for a moment. Then his brow cleared. Remained one thing to be done—

He hummed gaily to himself. Mary Lou's voice rose again. "Horace, stop that noise."

Perkin calmly went on humming. Poor girl, he almost felt sorry for her. What a surprise she was going to get!

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*Coming Next Issue: THE DAY OF THE BEAST, a Hall of Fame Classic
of a Perilous Scientific Experiment, by D. D. SHARP—
Plus Other Stories and Features!*



The wind howled dismally out of the desolate waste and stabbed him through and through

WANDERER OF TIME

By **POLTON CROSS**

Blake Carson Rips Open the Veil of the Future—and What He Sees Therein Thrusts Him into a Bitter Quest for Vengeance!

PROFESSOR HARDWICK once delivered a learned lecture to a group of earnest students.

"Time does not exist in actual fact," Professor Hardwick had said. "It is simply the term science applies to a condition of space which it does not fully comprehend. We know that there has been a Past, and can prove it: we also know that there is a Future, but we cannot prove it. Therein lies the need for the term 'Time,' in order that

an insurmountable difficulty may become resolved into common understanding."

This excerpt from his paper—a pedantic observation without doubt—had prompted Blake Carson, spare-time dabbler in physics, to think further. Much further. He had heard Hardwick make that statement five years ago. Now Hardwick was dead, but every observation he had ever made, every treatise he had written, had been absorbed to the

full by the young physicist. Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty he had plowed through the deeper works of Einstein, Eddington, and Jeans to boot.

"Time," Blake Carson observed, to his little laboratory, when the five years had gone by, "definitely does not exist! It is a concept engendered by the limitations of a physical body. And a physical body, according to Eddington and Jeans, is the outward manifestation of thought itself. Change the thought and you change the body in like proportion. You believe you know the past. So adjust your mind to the situation and there is no reason why you shouldn't know the future."

Two years later he added an amendment.

"Time is a circle, in which thought itself and all its creations go in an everlasting cycle, repeating the process without end. Therefore, if we have in a remote past done the same things we are doing now, it is logical to assume that some hangover of memory may be left behind—a hangover from the past which, from the present standpoint, will be in the future, so far back is it in the time circle.

"The medium for thought is the brain. Therefore, any hangover must be in the brain. Find that, and you have the key to future time. All you will actually do will be to awake a memory of the remote past."

FROM this conception there sprouted in Blake Carson's laboratory a complicated mass of apparatus contrived from hard earned savings and erected in spare time. Again and again he built and rebuilt, tested and experimented, finally got assistance from two other young men with ideas similar to his own. They did not fully understand his theory but his enthusiasm certainly impressed them.

At last he had things exactly as he wanted them, summoned his two friends one Saturday evening and waved a hand to his apparatus.

Dick Glenbury was shock-haired, ruddy faced, and blue-eyed—a man of

impulses, honesty, and dependable concentration. Hart Cranshaw was the exact opposite—sallow-skinned, always unruffled, black haired. A brilliant physicist, confirmed cynic, with only his great intelligence to save him from being a complete boor.

"Boys, I have it," Blake Carson declared with enthusiasm, gray eyes gleaming. "You know my theory regarding the hangover. This"—he motioned to the apparatus—"is the Probe."

"You don't mean you intend to use all this stuff on your brain to probe for the right spot, do you?" Dick Glenbury demanded.

"That is the idea, yes."

"When you've done this, what then?" Cranshaw asked, sticking to the practical side, as usual.

"Tell you better when I know something," Carson grinned. "Right now I want you to follow out instructions."

He seated himself in the chair immediately under the wilderness of odd looking lenses, lamps, and tubes. Following directions Glenbury busied himself with the switchboard. One projector gave forth a violet ray which enveloped Blake Carson's head completely.

Opposite him, so he could see it clearly, a squared and numbered screen came into life and gave a perfect silhouette, X-ray wise, of his skull. It differed only from X-ray in that the convolutions of the brain were clearly shown with more vividness than any other part.

"There," Carson gasped abruptly. "Look in Section Nine, Square Five. There's a black oval mark—a blind spot. No registration at all. That is a hangover."

He pressed a switch on the chair arm. "Taking a photograph," he explained. Then giving the order to cut off the entire apparatus, he got to his feet. Within a few minutes the self-developing tank produced a finished print. He handed it round in obvious delight.

"So what?" Cranshaw growled, his sallow face mystified. "Now you have got a blind spot what good does it do you? All this is way outside the

physics I ever learned. You still can't see the future." This last was added with some impatience.

"But I shall." Carson's voice was tense. "You notice that that blind spot is exactly where we might expect it to be? In the subconscious area. To get a clear knowledge of what the spot contains there is only one method to use."

"Yeah," Glenbury said grimly. "A surgeon should link up the blank portion with the active portion of your brain by means of a nerve. And would that be a ticklish business."

"I don't need a surgeon," Carson said. "Why a real nerve? A nerve is only a fleshly means of carrying minute electrical sensation. A small electric device can do it just as well. In other words an external mechanical nerve."

HE turned aside and brought forth an object not unlike a stethoscope. At both ends were suction caps and small dry batteries. Between the caps was a length of strong cable.

"A brain gives off minute electric charges—anybody knows that," Carson resumed. "This mechanical device can accomplish the thing through the skull bone. Thereby the blind spot and normal brain area would be linked. At least that's how I figure it."

"Well, all right," Dick Glenbury said, with an uneasy glance at Hart Cranshaw. "To me it sounds like a novel way of committing suicide."

"Like suffocating in your own waste," Cranshaw agreed.

"If you weren't so fact-bound you'd see my point," Blake snorted. "Anyway, I'm going to try it."

Again he switched on his brain-reading equipment, studied the screen and the photograph for a moment, then he clamped one end of the artificial nerve device onto his skull. The other suction cup he moved indecisively about his head, positioning it by watching it on the screen. Time and again he fished round the blind spot, finally pressed the cap home.

A sensation of crawling sickness passed through him as though his body

were being slowly turned inside out. His laboratory, the tense faces of Glenbury and Cranshaw misted mysteriously and were gone. Images as though reflected from disturbed water rippled through his brain.

An inchoate mass of impressions slammed suddenly into his consciousness. There were scurrying people superimposed on ragged cliffs, against which plunged foaming seas. From the cliffs there seemed to sprout the towers of an unknown, remote, incomparably beautiful city catching the light of an unseen sun.

Machines—people—mists. A thundering, grinding pain. . . .

He opened his eyes suddenly to find himself sprawled on the laboratory floor with brandy scorching his throat.

"Of all the darned, tomfool experiments," Dick Glenbury exploded. "You went out like a light after the first few minutes."

"I told you it was no use," Cranshaw snorted. "The laws of physics are against this kind of thing. Time is locked up—"

"No, Hart, it isn't." Carson stirred on the floor and rubbed his aching head. "Definitely it isn't," he insisted.

Getting to his feet he stared before him dreamily.

"I saw the future!" he whispered. "It wasn't anything clear—but it must have been the future. There was a city such as we have never imagined. Everything was cross sectioned, like a montage. The reason for that was my own inaccuracy with the artificial nerve. Next time I'll do better."

"Next time," Cranshaw echoed. "You're going on with this risk? It might even kill you before you're through."

"Perhaps," Carson admitted, in a quiet voice. He shrugged. "Pioneers have often paid dearly for their discoveries. But I have a key. I'm going on, boys, until it swings wide open."

For months afterwards Blake Carson became absorbed in his experiments. He gave up his ordinary work, lived on what savings he had and went tooth and nail after his discovery.

At first he was elated by the precision and accuracy with which he could achieve results. Then as days passed both Hart Cranshaw and Dick Glenbury noticed that an odd change had come over him, for he seemed morose, afraid of letting some statement or other escape him.

"What is it, Blake?" Dick Glenbury insisted one evening, when he had arrived for the latest report on progress. "You're different. Something is on your mind. You can surely tell me, your best friend."

AS Blake Carson smiled, Glenbury suddenly noticed how tired he looked.

"Which doesn't include Hart, eh?" Carson asked.

"I didn't mean that exactly. But he is a bit cold blooded when it comes to truths. What's wrong?"

"I have discovered when I am to die," Blake Carson said soberly.

"So what? We all die sometime." Dick Glenbury stopped uneasily. There was a strange look on Blake Carson's worn face.

"Yes, we all die sometime, of course, but I shall go one month hence. On April fourteenth. And I shall die in the electric chair for first degree murder."

Dick Glenbury stared, appalled. "What! You, a murderer? Why, it's utterly—say, that artificial nerves has gone cockeyed."

"I'm afraid not, Dick," answered Carson. "I realize now, that death ends this particular phase of existence on this plane. The views of the future which I have seen refer to some other plane ways beyond this, the plane where successive deaths would ultimately carry me. With death, all association with things here is broken."

"I still don't believe murder is ahead of you," Dick Glenbury said.

"None the less I shall die as a convicted murderer," Carson went on, his voice harsh. "The man who gets me into this approaching mess and who will have the perfect alibi is—Hart Cranshaw."

"Hart? You mean he is going to commit a murder deliberately and blame you for it?"

"Without doubt. We know already that he is interested now in this invention of mine; we know too that he realizes he has a blind spot in his brain, just as everybody else has. Hart, cold blooded and calculating, sees the value of this invention to gain power and control for himself. Stock markets, gambling speculations, history before it appears. He could even rule the world. He will steal the secret from me and rid himself of the only two men in the world who know of his villainy."

"The only two men?" repeated Glenbury. "You mean I, also, will be slain?"

"Yes." Blake Carson's voice had a far away sound.

"But this can't happen," Glenbury shouted huskily. "I'm not going to—to be murdered just to further the aims of Hart Cranshaw. Like blazes I am. You forget, Blake—forewarned is forearmed. We can defeat this." His voice became eager. "Now that we know about it, we can take steps to block him."

"No," Carson interrupted. "I've had many weeks to think this over, Dick—weeks that have nearly driven me mad as I realized the truth. The law of time is inexorable. It must happen! Don't you even yet realise that all I have seen is only an infinitely remote memory from a past time, over which moments we are passing again? All this has happened before. You will be murdered as surely as I knew you would come here tonight, and I shall die convicted of that murder."

Dick Glenbury's face had gone the color of putty. "When does it happen?"

"At exactly nine minutes after eleven tonight—here." Carson paused and gripped Glenbury's shoulders tightly. "Stars above, Dick, can't you realise how all this hurts me, how frightful it is for me to have to tell it all to you. It's only because I know you're a hundred percent that I spoke at all."

"Yes—I know." Glenbury sank weakly into a chair. For a moment or two his mind wandered. Next he found that his

frozen gaze was fixed on the electric clock. It was exactly forty minutes past ten.

"At ten to eleven—in ten minutes, that is—Hart will come here," Carson resumed. "His first words will be—'Sorry I'm late, boys, but I got held up at an Extraordinary Board Meeting.' An argument will follow, then murder. Everything is clear up to the moment of my death. After that Hart is extinguished from my future. The vision of life continuing in a plane different from this one is something I have pondered pretty deeply."

DICK GLENBURY did not speak, but Carson went on, musing aloud.

"Suppose," Carson said, "I were to try an experiment with time? Suppose, because I possess knowledge no man has ever had so far—I were able to upset the order of the Circle. Suppose, I came back, after I have been electrocuted, to confront Hart with your murder and my wrongful execution?"

"How," Glenbury's mind was too lethargic to take things in.

"I've already told you that the body obeys the mind. Normally, at my death, I shall recreate my body in a plane removed from this one. But suppose my thoughts upon the moment of death are entirely concentrated on returning to this plane at a date one week after execution? That would be April twenty-first. I believe I might thereby return to confront Hart."

"Do you know you can do this?"

"No; but it seems logical to assume that I can. Since the future, after death, is on another plane, I cannot tell whether my plan would work or not. As I have told you, Hart ceases to be in my future time from the moment I die, unless I can change the course of Time and thereby do something unique. I guess I—"

Carson broke off as the door opened suddenly and Hart Cranshaw came in. He threw down his hat casually.

"Sorry I'm late, boys, but I got held up at an Extraordinary Board Meeting—" He broke off. "What's wrong, Dick?

Feeling faint?"

Dick Glenbury did not answer. He was staring at the clock. It was exactly ten minutes to eleven.

"He's okay," Blake Carson said quietly, turning. "Just had a bit of a shock, that's all. I've been taking a look into the future, Hart, and I've discovered plenty that isn't exactly agreeable."

"Oh?" Hart Cranshaw looked thoughtful for a moment, then went on, "Matter of fact, Blake, it strikes me that I've been none too cordial towards you considering the brilliance of the thing you have achieved. I'd like to know plenty more about this invention if you'd tell me."

"Yes, so you can steal it!" Dick Glenbury shouted suddenly, leaping to his feet. "That's your intention. The future has shown that to Blake already. And you'll try and kill me in the doing. But you're not going to. By heavens, no! So Time can't be cheated, Blake? We'll see about that."

He raced for the door, but he did not reach it. Hart Cranshaw caught him by the arm and swung him back.

"What the devil are you raving about?" he snapped. "Do you mean to say I intend to murder you?"

"That is why you came here, Hart," Carson declared quietly. "Time doesn't lie, and all your bluster and pretended innocence makes not the least difference to your real intentions. You figure to do plenty with this invention of mine."

"All right, supposing I do?" Hart Cranshaw snapped, suddenly whipping an automatic from his pocket. "What are you going to do about it?"

Blake Carson shrugged. "Only what immutable law makes me do!"

"To blazes with this!" Dick Glenbury shouted suddenly. "I'm not standing here obeying immutable laws—not when my life's in danger. Hart, drop that gun!"

Hart Cranshaw only grinned frozenly. In desperation Glenbury dived for him, caught his foot in a snaking cable on the floor and collided with the physicist. Whether it was accident or design Blake Carson could not be sure at the

moment, but the automatic certainly exploded.

HART CRANSHAW stood in momentary silence as Dick Glenbury slid gently to the floor and lay still. Blake Carson's eyes shifted to the clock—eleven-nine!

At length Hart Cranshaw seemed to recover himself. He held his automatic more firmly.

"Okay, Blake, you know the future, so you may as well know the rest—"

"I do," Blake Carson interrupted him. "You are going to pin this thing on me. You shot Dick deliberately."

"Not deliberately: it was an accident. It just happened to come sooner than I'd figured, that's all. With both of you out of the way what is to prevent me becoming even the master of the whole world with this gadget of yours? Nothing!" Hart Cranshaw gave a grim smile. "I planned it all out, Blake. For tonight I have a cast iron alibi. It will be your task to prove yourself innocent of Dick Glenbury's murder."

"I won't succeed: I know that already."

Hart Cranshaw eyed him queerly. "Considering what I have done—and what I am going to do—you're taking it mightly calmly."

"Why not? Knowledge of the future makes one know what is inescapable—for both of us." Blake Carson spoke the last words significantly.

"I've checked on my future already and I know darn well I'm in for a good time. Hart Cranshaw retorted. He pondered for a moment then motioned with his gun. "I'm taking no chances on you wrecking this machinery, Blake. I'd shoot you first and alibi myself out of it afterwards, only I don't want things to get too complicated. Grab the 'phone and call the police. Confess to them what you have done."

With resigned calm Blake Carson obeyed. When he was through Hart Cranshaw nodded complacently.

"Good. Before the police arrive I'll be gone, leaving you this gun to explain away. Since I have kept my gloves on

it puts me in the clear for fingerprints even though there won't be any of yours about. Just the same only you and Dick have been here together tonight. I have been elsewhere. I can prove it."

Blake Carson smiled grimly. "Then later you will pose as my sympathetic friend, will offer to look after my work while I am in custody, and save yourself by good lawyers and your cast-iron alibi. That's clever, Hart. But remember, to everything there is an appointed time!"

"Right now," Hart Cranshaw answered in his conceited assured tones, "the future looks quite rosy so far as I am concerned . . ."

Inevitably the law enacted every incident Blake Carson had already foreseen. Once in the hands of the police, cross-examined relentlessly, he saw all his chances of escape vanish. Carson was convicted of first degree murder, and the Court pronounced the death sentence. The trial had proceeded in record time, as the murder was considered flagrant, and newspapers denounced Carson bitterly. To the horror of Carson's lawyer, he refused to take an appeal or resort to the usual methods of delay. Carson's attitude was fatalistic, and he could not be moved in his seeming determination to die.

In his cell Blake spent most of his time between sentence and execution brooding over the facts he had gleaned from his experiments. In the death house in prison he was certainly a model prisoner, quiet, preoccupied, just a little grim. His whole being was as a matter of fact built up into one fierce, unwavering concentration—the date of April twenty-first. Upon his mastery of elemental forces at the point of death depended his one chance of changing the law of time and confronting Hart Cranshaw with the impossible, a return from death.

Not a word of his intentions escaped him. He was unbowed on the last morning, listened to the prison chaplain's brief words of solace in stony silence, then walked the short length of dim corridor, between guards, to the fatal chamber. He sat down in the death chair

with the calm of a man about to preside over a meeting.

THE buckles on the straps clinked a little, disturbing him.

He hardly realised what was going on in the somber, dimly lighted place. If his mental concentration concerning April twenty-first had been strong before, now it had become fanatical. Rigid, perspiration streaming down his face with the urgency of his thoughts, he waited. . . .

He felt it then—the thrilling, binding, racking current as it nipped his vitals, then spread and spread into an infinite snapping anguish in which the world and the universe was a brief blazing hell of dissolution. . . .

Then things were quiet — oddly quiet. . . .

He felt as though he were drifting in a sea without substance—floating alone. His concentration was superseded now by a dawning wonder, indeed a striving to come to grips with the weird situation in which he found himself.

He had died—his body had—he was convinced of that. But now, to break these iron bands of paralysis, that was the need!

He essayed a sudden effort and with it everything seemed to come abruptly into focus. He felt himself snap out of the void of in-between into normal—or at least mundane—surroundings. He stirred slowly. He was still alone, lying on his back on a somber, chilly plain of reddish dust. It occasioned him passing surprise that he was still dressed in the thin cotton shirt and pants of a prisoner.

A biting chill in the air went suddenly to his marrow. He shuddered as he got to his feet and looked down at himself.

“Of course. I held my clothes in thought as much as my body, so they were bound to be recreated also. . . .”

Baffled, he stared about him. Overhead the sky was violet blue and pow-

dered with endless hosts of stars. To the right was a frowning ridge of higher ground. And everywhere, red soil. Time—an infinitely long span—had passed.

With a half cry he turned and ran breathlessly towards the ridge, scrambled up the rubbly slope quickly. At the top he paused, appalled.

A red sun, swollen to unheard-of size, was bisected by the far distant jagged horizon—a sun to whose edge the stars themselves seemed to reach. He was old now, unguessably old, his incandescent fires burned out.

“Millions of years, quintillions, of years,” Blake Carson whispered, sitting down with a thump on an upturned rock and staring out over the drear, somber vastness. “In heavens name, what have I done? What have I done?”

He stared in front of him, forced himself by superhuman effort to think calmly. He had planned for one week beyond death. Instead he had landed here, at the virtual end of Earth’s existence, where age was stamped on everything. It was in the scarcely moving sun which spoke of Earth’s near-standstill from tidal drag. It was in the red soil, the ferrous oxide of extreme senility, the rusting of the metallic deposits in the ground itself. It was in the thin air which had turned the atmospheric heights violet-blue and made breathing a sheer agony.

And there was something else too apart from all this which Blake Carson had only just begun to realise. He could no longer see the future.

“I cheated the normal course of after-death,” he mused. “I did not move to neighboring plane there to resume a continuation of life, and neither did I move to April twenty-one as I should have done. It can only mean that at the last minute there was an unpredictable error. It is possible that the electricity from the chair upset my brain planning and shifted the focus of my thoughts so that I was hurled ahead, not one week—but to here. And with that mishap I also lost the power to visualize the future. Had I died by any other way but electricity there might not have been that mistake.”

HE shuddered again as a thin, ice-charged wind howled dismally out of the desolate waste and stabbed him through and through. Stung into movements, once more, he got up. Protecting his face from the brief, slashing hurricane he moved further along the ridge and gazed out over the landscape from a different vantage. And from here there was a new view. Ruins, apparently.

He began to run to keep himself warm, until the thin air flogged his lung to bursting point. At a jog trot he moved on towards the mighty, hardly moving sun, stopped at last within the shadow of a vast, eroded hall.

It was red like everything else. Within it were the ponderous remains of dust-smothered machinery, colossi of power long disused and forgotten. He stared at them, unable to fathom their smallest meaning. His gaze traveled further—to the crumbled ruins of mighty edifices of rusting metal in the rear. Terrace upon terrace, to the violet sky. Here it seemed was a rusting monument to Man's vanished greatness, with the inexplicable and massive engines as the secret of his power . . .

And Man himself? Gone to other worlds? Dead in the red dust? Blake Carson shook himself fiercely at the inescapable conviction of total loneliness. Only the stars, the sun, and the wind—that awful wind, moaning now softly through the ruins, sweeping the distant corner of the horizon into a mighty cloud that blacked out the brazen glitter of the northern stars.

Blake Carson turned at last. At the far end of the ruins his eye had caught a faint gleam of reflection from the crimson sun. It shone like a diamond. Baffled, he turned and hurried towards it, found the distance was deceptive and that it was nearly two miles off. The nearer he came the more the brightness resolved itself into one of six massively thick glass domes some six feet in diameter.

In all there were eight of them dotted about a little plateau which had been scraped mainly free of rubble and stone. It resembled the floor of a crater with

frowning walls of rock all round it. Mystified, Carson moved to the nearest dome and peered through.

In that moment he forgot the melancholy wind and his sense of desperate loneliness—for below was life! Teeming life! Not human life, admittedly, but at least something that moved. It took him a little while to adjust himself to the amazing thing he had discovered.

Perhaps two hundred feet below the dome, brightly lighted, was a city in miniature. It reminded him of a model city of the future he had once seen at an exposition. There were terraces, pedestrian tracks, towers, even aircraft. It was all there on an infinitely minute scale, and probably spread far under the earth out of his line of vision.

But the teeming hordes were—ants. Myriads of them. Not rushing about with the apparent aimlessness of his own time, but moving with a definable, ordered purpose. Ants in a dying world? Ants with their own city?

"Of course," he whispered, and his breath froze the glass. "Of course. The law of evolution—man to ant, and ant to bacteria. Science has always visualized that. This I could never have known about for the future I saw was not on this plane . . ."

And Hart Cranshaw? The scheme of vengeance? It seemed a remote plan now. Down here was company—intelligent ants who, whatever they might think of him, would perhaps at least talk to him, help him . . .

Suddenly he beat his fists mightily on the glass, shouted hoarsely.

There was no immediate effect. He beat again, this time frenziedly, and the scurrying hordes below suddenly paused in their movement as though uncertain. Then they started to scatter madly like bits of dust blown by the wind.

"Open up!" he shouted. "Open up. I'm freezing."

He was not quite sure what happened then, but it seemed to him that he went a little mad. He had a confused, blurred notion of running to each dome in turn and battering his fists against its smooth, implacable surface.

WIND, an endless wind, had turned his blood to ice. At last he sank down on an outjutting rock at the plateau edge, buried his head in his hands and shivered. An overpowering desire to go to sleep was upon him, but presently it passed as he became aware of new thoughts surging through his brain, mighty thoughts that were not his own.

He saw, in queer kaleidoscopic fashion, the ascent of man to supreme heights: he saw too man's gradual realization that he was upon a doomed world. He saw the thinning of the multitudes and the survival of the fittest—the slow, inexorable work of Nature as she adapted life to suit her latest need.

Like a panorama of the ages, hurdling great vistas of time, Blake Carson saw the human body change into that of the termite, of which the termite of his own time was but the progenitor, the experimental form, as it were. The termites, invested with more than human intelligence, had formed these underground cities themselves, cities replete with every scientific need and requiring but little of the dying Earth so small were they. Only underground was there safety from the dying atmosphere.

Yes, Nature had been clever in her organization and would be even cleverer when it came to the last mutation into bacteria. Indestructible bacteria which could live in space, float to other worlds, to begin anew. The eternal cycle.

Carson looked up suddenly, puzzled as to why he should know all these things. At what he beheld he sprang to his feet, only to sit down again as he found his legs were numbed with cold.

There was a small army of ants quite close to him, like a black mat on the smooth red of the ground. Thought transference! That was how he had known. The truth had been forced into his mind deliberately. He realised it clearly now for there came a bombardment of mental questions, but from such a multitude of minds that they failed to make any sense.

"Shelter," he cried. "Food and warmth—that is what I want. I have come out of Time—a wanderer—and it

was an accident that brought me here. You will regard me as an ancient type, therefore I am surely useful to you. If I stay out here the cold will soon kill me."

"You created your own accident, Blake Carson," came one clear wave of thought. "Had you died as the Time-law proclaimed you would have passed on to the next stage of existence, the stage apart from this one. You chose instead to try and defeat Time in order that you might enact vengeance. We, who understand Time, Space, and Life, see what your intentions were.

"You cannot have help now. It is the law of the cosmos that you must live and die by its dictates. And death such as you will experience this time will not be the normal transition from this plane to another but transition to a plane we cannot even visualise. You have forever warped the cosmic line of Time you were intended to pursue. You can never correct that warp."

Blake Carson stared, wishing he could shift his icebound limbs. He was dying even now, realised it clearly, but interest kept his mentality still alert.

"Is this hospitality?" he whispered. "Is this the scientific benevolence of an advanced age? How can you be so pitiless when you know why I sought revenge?"

"We know why, certainly, but it is trivial compared to your infinite transgression in trying to twist scientific law to your own ends. Offense against science is unforgivable, no matter what the motive. You are a throwback, Blake Carson—an outsider! Especially so to us. You never found Hart Cranshaw, the man you wanted. You never will."

Blake Carson's eyes narrowed suddenly. He noticed that as the thoughts reached him the body of ants had receded quite a distance, evidently giving up interest in him and returning to their domain. But the power of the thoughts reaching him did not diminish.

ABRUPTLY he saw the reason for it. One termite, larger than the others, was alone on the red soil. Carson gazed at it with smoldering eyes, the

innermost thoughts of the tiny thing probing his brain.

"I understand," he whispered. "Yes, I understand! Your thoughts are being bared to me. You are Hart Cranshaw. You are the Hart Cranshaw of this age. You gained your end. You stole my invention—yes, became the master of science, the lord of the Earth, just as you had planned. You found that there was a way to keep on the normal plane after each death, a way entirely successful if death did not come by electrocution. That was what shattered my plan—the electric chair.

"But you went on and on, dying and being born again with a different and yet identical body. An eternal man, mastering more and more each time!" Carson's voice had risen to a shriek. Then he calmed. "Until at last Nature changed you into an ant, made you the master of even the termite community. How little did I guess that my discovery would hand you the world. But if I have broken cosmic law, Hart Cranshaw, so have you. You have cheated your normal time action, time and again, with numberless deaths. You have stayed on this plane when you should have moved on to others. Both of us are transgressors. For you, as for me, death this time will mean the unknown."

A power that was something other than himself gave Blake Carson strength at that moment. Life surged back into his leaden limbs and he staggered to his feet.

"We have come together again, Hart, after all these quintillions of years.

Remember what I said long ago? To everything there is an appointed time? Now I know why you don't want to save me."

He broke off as with sudden and fantastic speed the lone termite sped back towards the mass of his departing colleagues. Once among them, as Carson well knew, there would be no means of identification.

With this realisation he forced himself into action and leaped. The movement was the last he could essay. He dropped on his face, and his hand closed round the scurrying insect. It escaped. He watched it run over the back of his hand—then frantically across his palm as he opened his fingers gently.

He had no idea how long he lay watching it—but at last it ran to the tip of his thumb. His first finger closed on his thumb suddenly—and crushed.

He found himself gazing at a black smear on thumb and finger.

He could move his hand no further. Paralysis had gripped his limbs completely. There was a deepening, crushing pain in his heart. Vision grew dim. He felt himself slipping—

But with the transition to Beyond he began to realise something else. He had not cheated Time! Neither had Hart Cranshaw! They had done all this before somewhere—would do it again—endlessly, so long as Time itself should exist. Death—transition—rebirth—evolution—back again to the age of the amoeba—upwards to man—the laboratory—the electric chair. . . .

Eternal. Immutable!

Can't Keep Grandma In Her Chair

She's as Lively as a Youngster—Now her Backache is better

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up

nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(Adv.)

Thrills in SCIENCE

Thumbnail Sketches of Great Men and Achievements

By OSCAR J. FRIEND

THE MAN WITH TELESCOPIC EYES

The Story of Tycho Brahe, Pioneer of Astronomy

IT WAS just last year—May, 1943—that the entire civilized world commemorated the passing away four hundred years previous of Nicholas Copernicus, the man who reversed the direction astronomy had been following from ancient times. We have dealt with Copernicus and his "Revolutions of Heavenly Bodies" some time ago in this series.

Now let us step forward three years from the date of Copernicus' death and consider the arrival—by birth—in Knudstrup, Swedish Scania, at that time a Danish province, of a man who spurned the revolutionary discoveries of the "mad Copernicus," and who leaned toward the erroneous Ptolemaic theory, yet upon whose work modern astronomy is firmly based.

Tycho Brahe was born in 1546, the oldest boy in a family of ten. Oddly enough he was reared, not by his parents, but by a childless uncle, the brother of his lawyer father, and a wealthy man. At thirteen, Tycho entered the University of Copenhagen, a typical sort of boy you would expect as reared by a doting uncle. He evinced little interest in school or a legal career and took life as it came in a harum-scarum way.

Then, on August 21, 1560, he woke up. His awakening was caused by an eclipse of the sun which was visible in Copenhagen. Eclipses were not unknown by this time. All enlightened people knew what they were and how they came about—when they happened. But what started this fourteen-year-old Scandinavian lad to thinking was the fact that the eclipse had been predicted with absolute accuracy.

This made such a deep impression on the boy that he firmly resolved right then that he would learn enough about mathematics and astronomy to make such accurate predictions.

Unfortunately, he secured Ptolemy's works on astronomy instead of the more accurate and comparatively recent works of Copernicus. Thus, Ptolemy steered him wrong in theory at this impressionable age, but Ptolemy at least riveted Tycho's interest on the sky.

While Tycho never could quite reconcile himself to Copernicus' theories—and you must remember that he was forced to study

the heavens without a telescope and with only crude homemade instruments—he early found discrepancies in the actual positions of the planets and those positions set down in all the books he could find on the subject.

This was intolerable and maddening to the methodical youth, so he began to make observations with all the accuracy at his command and to keep notes on his own findings.

As he grew older and learned more, he was able to make and procure better tools, but



TYCHO BRAHE

he never had an opportunity to look at the heavens through a lens. Bear this in mind. Tycho Brahe had to rely on his naked eyes for all his observations.

This was no real drawback, because this young Dane had a fine pair of optics, and he knew how to use them. When he was nineteen he went to the University of Rostock, where he leaped into a position of undesirable fame. Recalling the eclipse which had started him on his astronomical career, when an eclipse of the moon was due, Tycho turned prophet. He proclaimed publicly that this eclipse of the moon foretold the death of the sultan of Turkey.

Just why he did this, we do not know. But Tycho Brahe always did the unexpected thing, and he loved to startle people.

The trouble with this little cosmic joke was that in due time came the news of the sultan's death.

Instantly Tycho leaped into prominence as a prophet, probably surprising him as much as anyone else. He became a popular hero, a man of destiny.

And then came the later word, placing the death of the sultan prior to the eclipse, whereupon the new prophet's fame turned into cheap notoriety and ridicule. Having what we nowadays call color and stage presence, Tycho Brahe turned to alchemy and astrology.

He might have fallen deep into these by-paths and traps and wasted his life if the stars had not again interfered. This time, one evening in November, 1572, Tycho was watching the sky with his usual painstaking accurate gaze when he discovered a brand-new star in Cassiopeia.

Doubting his own judgment, Tycho watched this phenomenon for night after night, and called on his coachman for corroboration. Receiving it, he watched the new star wax brighter and brighter until it rivaled the planet Jupiter in brilliance. Then it waned, gradually fading and disappearing.

But it had this bearing; it drew Tycho Brahe firmly back to his first love. Thenceforth the great Dane studied the night skies and made elaborate observations, taking copious notes.

Tycho Brahe was blessed with a fine pair of eyes and a sheer genius for painstaking accuracy. Most of his work was the correction of hundreds of errors that had been part of the star tables for hundreds and hundreds of years. And his observations were so thorough that to this day his work is still the admiration of scientists.

At the time of his death in October, 1601, he had accurately charted the positions and observable movements of seven hundred and seventy-odd stars. He had made navigation a science of accuracy and safety for seafaring men, he had fathered modern astronomy by setting the proper method of astronomical work. A man without conjectural imagination, he left theory to others while he laid down the fundamental facts and placed the solid foundation upon which Isaac Newton and John Kepler were to build their marvelous scientific structures.

Tycho's greatest work, "Astronomiae Instauratae Progymnasmata," was edited by John Kepler after his death and was published in two volumes in Prague in 1602-03, but the complete publication of his observations had to wait until Kepler could arrange for it years later.

Tycho Brahe, the man with the methodical mind and telescopic eyes, with accuracy for his fetish, had compiled astronomical records so nearly exact that the most delicate modern instruments used by scientists yield little margin of correction. Astonishing as it seems, Tycho Brahe was the first modern astronomer.

MATHEMATICIAN OF THE SKIES

Johann Kepler, the Lawmaker of the Heavens

WE HAVE just taken a brief peek into the life of the man who viewed the heavens with telescopic eyes, who recorded observable facts and data with an accurate mind, but who did not bring forth any deductible or new theory. We have said that Tycho Brahe laid the foundation upon which other men reared magnificent structures.

On December 27, 1571, there was born prematurely at Weil, Wurttemberg, a boy baby to the Kepler family. To this child they gave the name Johann.

Johann, handicapped with a bad start in life, went on to make his progress the hard way. When he was four years old he survived a siege of smallpox which left him with crippled hands and eyesight permanently injured. But he lived. Nothing, it seemed, could kill him.

And nature did compensate for many things she had done to him. For to John Kepler she gave a brain that far transcended his earthly ills. John Kepler grew to be the mathematical giant of the astronomical world of his day.

He could not spend night after night studying the heavens. He couldn't even see well enough to study the stars with the naked eyes. But he could read the works of other men, and best of all he could think. When, after finishing his university course at Maulbronn, he was offered the job as professor of astronomy at Gratz, he reluctantly took the

post. Astronomy was not his forte. Mathematics was his love.

Nevertheless, as methodical in his own way as Tycho Brahe had been in his, Kepler started studying his subject. The subject fascinated him.

Here was magnificent scope indeed for his mathematical genius. You must remember that when Kepler started studying astronomy seriously a great many things we accept as common knowledge today had not even been thought about.

For instance, men knew there were five planets at least and that they somehow revolved about the sun, but nobody knew their orbits, their rates of speed, or why they speeded up or went into retrograde motion.

Kepler set out to understand and explain this perplexing business. With his mathematics he theoretically projected the five regular solids into the celestial sphere and tried to fit the movements of the five known planets to these geometrical figures. Every one seemed to work except the planet Mars to which he had ascribed the dodecahedron. No matter what he did, he couldn't make Mars fit. He simply could not exactly chart Mars' orbit around the sun.

Which is why he approached his wife one day and said abruptly:

"Madam, we are going to Prague."

"And why, may I ask?" demanded Frau Kepler in astonishment.

"Because Tycho Brahe is there."

"But you don't know him. Tycho Brahe has never set eyes on you."

"I know that," admitted Kepler doggedly, "but I must see his figures on Mars."

And that was that. Already Brahe's reputation for accuracy had made him a famous man. And to him at Prague on the eve of the seventeenth century John Kepler went. He became the great man's assistant.

This, for the astronomical world, was the most happy alliance in mankind's history of the stars; Brahe, the telescopic eye, and Kepler, the mathematical brain. Each man beau-



JOHANN KEPLER

tifully complemented the other. Brahe supplied the accurate data, and Kepler's monumental brain proceeded to build foolproof theories from it.

Tycho Brahe's sudden death in 1601 dissolved that partnership, but Brahe left to his physically frail friend and assistant all of his notes on the movements of heavenly bodies. All that he asked was that Kepler arrange them in proper order and give them to the world. This Kepler solemnly promised to do, and in 1602-03 the first edition of Tycho Brahe's greatest work was published at Prague.

But this was not a sufficient monument to the master astronomer. Kepler resolved to publish a complete and accurate edition of Brahe's works. First he had to correlate and arrange all of Tycho's notes and data. Then

he had to raise money for publication, while one thing after another arose to intervene. Meanwhile the Kepler family had to eat.

Thus, it was twenty-six years before John Kepler could keep his full promise to Tycho Brahe, but he did so in 1627 when he finally managed to arrange to have Tycho's complete tables—called the Rudolphine Tables—printed at Ulm. During the interim Kepler managed to add data of enough stars to make the tables cover one thousand and five stars.

But we started to consider Kepler's pursuit of the orbit of Mars. He got the figures of Tycho to work with, but he still could not figure out the eccentricities of the planet's motions. He tried a circle, as the most perfect form. When this didn't work, he flattened it out to make an oval. He simply couldn't make Mars come closer than eight minutes to its actual period of rotation.

This was crazy, because he knew that Brahe was never eight minutes wrong in an observation. Therefore, the error had to be his, Kepler's—not Brahe's.

He wrote reams of figures, and never got the right answer. Until the night he sat back exhausted and merely stared miserably at the hundreds of figures of his work. Suddenly he was struck by the similarity of two sets of figures—1.00429 and .00429. To us that means nothing, but to Kepler it made sense. One was the greatest optical inequality of Mars; the other was half the distance between an ellipse and a circle.

Interpreted in the light of Tycho Brahe's data, Kepler finally figured out that planets move in ellipses with the sun in one focus. He went beyond this. By cold mathematics he proved that the straight line joining a planet to the sun sweeps out equal areas in any two equal intervals of time.

To these two great and clarifying laws he finally added a third—that the squares of the periodic times of the planets are proportioned to the cubes of the mean distances from the sun.

Although John Kepler did other great things, wrote many fine treatises on astronomy, even improving Galileo's telescope by figuring out that two convex lenses should be used so there could be a real image where measuring wires could be used for reference, he is known chiefly for establishing those three great laws of astronomical truth. On the accurate foundation laid by Tycho Brahe he erected an edifice of mathematical fact which has given him the title "Law-maker of the Heavens."

There remained but for Isaac Newton to explain the laws of gravity, and the day of modern astronomy based on absolute facts would have dawned.

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

A Spider's Web Inspires a Great Engineering Feat

HIS name was Tom, and he was born to a staymaker's wife in the village of Thetford, England, on January 29, 1737. The number, 37, might be said to have had some mystical effect on this boy's life, for the first thirty-seven years of it didn't take him very far along the road to fame and immortality.

By the time he was thirty-seven years old, Tom had been kicked out of Excise twice, had pretty well made a failure of commercial business, and had separated from his wife. Rather a sorry beginning for a man who had shown no particularly outstanding talent in life beyond a certain flair for writing.

But there was one significant occurrence.

In the thirty-seventh year David Williams, principal of a boys' school at Chelsea, introduced Tom to Benjamin Franklin. This proved to be the turning point in the life of Tom Paine.

Armed shortly thereafter with letters of introduction from Franklin, Tom turned his face westward and sought a new beginning in the new world. He sailed for America, this thwarted man of medium height, prominent nose and brilliant dark eyes.

Of his ups and downs and the course of his literary career every schoolboy in America should be well aware and thoroughly informed. For Tom Paine was the real father of the American Revolution. For while Ben Franklin remained at the Court of St. James, working for peace, he had inadvertently sent to America a firebrand whose writings were to focus and crystallize the thoughts and ideas of the colonists on the conception of a new republic with full rights for all men.

"The Crisis," "The Age of Reason," "The Rights of Man" are but a few of the fiery works that flew from Tom Paine's pen like sparks from an emery wheel to set the fire of freedom and independence alight in the Americas.

But this account deals not with the man of political and literary fame; it deals with that little-known schoolboy in Thetford who lay in the meadow grass, who crouched in the corner of the barn, who peered wide-eyed at the rosebush in the early morn.

What was young Tom Paine doing? Of all things, he was studying a spider's web. The be-dewed spider web under the rosebush, beaded with condensation moisture and looking like a delicate centerpiece of rare old lace, had taken his eyes because of its symmetrical beauty. The spider webs in the barn and in the meadow had taken his eye because of their receptive strength in spite of their frailty.

More than once he had noted the size of insects trapped in the delicate webs and had marveled, not at the way the sticky, silken strands clung to the victim, but how sturdily the structure of the web withstood the frantic struggles for release.

Each abutment, every diagonal strand, each arch seemed designed to put forth the most in structural strength with the least weight or waste material.

"Boy, what are you staring at?" his puzzled father often asked him.

"Just a spider web," Tom would answer, and the stayermaker would snort in fatherly disgust.

But that spider web followed young Tom Paine through his boyhood and across the broad Atlantic Ocean. It followed him through his youth when he gazed upon the British prisons and the many "wrongs" of man.

It followed him when he cast his eyes upon the great and massive stone structures that men built in England, in France, in America. It lived in the back of his head when he met the learned Dr. Franklin. It was with him every time he crossed the great London Bridge.

But the conscious thought of a bridge was not in his head, all the time he was living and growing wiser and preparing himself to build the greatest kind of a bridge for man-

kind to trod upon as they passed across from the shores of tyranny and oppression to the headlands of freedom.

Until that day in the 1780s when he stood on the bank of a little Connecticut stream and watched some workmen laboriously rebuilding a heavy stone pier of a highway bridge which had fallen into disrepair. And that day the great idea came to him.



TOM PAINE

"Why not build a bridge of iron?" he asked the foreman of the working crew.

This man stared at the great man in amazement. It was all well enough for the fiery Thomas Paine to write literary papers about the rights of men, but why should he poke fun at honest laboring men in the hot sun.

"And where, Master Paine," the foreman finally asked, "would you get solid blocks of iron to waste in building bridges when stone is so much easily and cheaply procured?"

Thomas Paine narrowed his suddenly sparkling eyes and glanced from the foreman to the bridge pier and back again. "From spider webs," he answered cryptically, and set off for his home at a fast pace.

The result of this incident was a violent departure from the style of bridge building which had been standard for centuries. Tom Paine drew up the plans for a bridge of iron beams and braces that was radical in design. Instead of solid beams and blocks he used geometrical figures for skeletal structure.

In 1787 Thomas Paine sailed for Europe, taking with him the model of his iron bridge. His chief desire was to repeat his American success with words of flame that would set the Old World free. He did not class himself as a great inventor and probably did not realize how far-reaching his iron bridge plans were. He stirred up a hornet's nest in England with his "Rights of Man," causing William Pitt to admit privately that he was right before he was prevailed upon by prudent friends to leave the country.

But he stayed long enough to receive a patent for his new bridge from the British Government. In 1788 the British Government granted Thomas Paine Patent No. 1667 on the structure of an iron bridge. In his specifications, Paine definitely explained that

(Concluded on page 110)

THE SERUM RUBBER MAN

By FORD SMITH

*Those Two Crackpot Scientists,
Jeremiah Doodle and Tobias
Plast, Bounce into Our Midst!*

BEING general manager for, and general nursemaid to, a pair of absent-minded scientists like Jeremiah Doodle and Tobias Plast is no boy's job, take it from me. There are times when I am definitely positive the laboratory at Highboy Park, New Jersey, is really a maniac asylum—with me the inmate!

For instance, there was the odor assailing my nostrils that Monday morning as I inserted my key in the outer door of the main lab building. It washed all thoughts of lovely spring weather and Lydia out of my mind. It smelled like a stew of old rubber boots in a sulphide gravy. The stench grew stronger as I climbed to my second-floor office.

I started the ventilator fans immediately, but before I could begin a tour of apprehensive investigation, the door to the chemical lab opened and the two elderly men came running into the office, bringing a fresh wave of abomination with them.

"Is that you, Harry?" exclaimed the foremost, wiping at the mist on his thick, horn-rimmed glasses. "Ah, so it is. My boy, we've done it at last!"

"So I smell," I answered a bit tartly. "You've set fire to the equipment again."

"Not at all, Jordan, not at all," beamed the second character. "Your Uncle Jeremiah and I have finally perfected that new rubber serum formula."

"What are you two crackpots doing



Dugan had bounced, unhurt, nearly twenty feet up in the air.

here?" I demanded angrily. "I personally took both of you home Saturday afternoon and left you safely in the bosom of your respective and respectable families. What—"

"Now, Harry," interrupted Jeremiah Doodle. "Just because you are our manager and my only sister's child doesn't entitle you to scold us like this."

Perhaps meantime, I'd better introduce the two high wizards of Highboy Park right here. Reading from left to right, the short and fat little gent with the thick glasses, bald head and spade beard is Dr. Jeremiah Doodle, my uncle. Don't blame me. The tall and lean individual with the high cranium and general air of detached befuddlement is Professor Tobias Plast, the uncle of my fiancée, Lydia Browning.

Both rich, both research scientists, lifelong friends and equally eccentric, they are at once the delight and bane of my existence. In the hands of the worldly minded they are babes. In the laboratory they are geniuses. Unpredictable wizards, anyway.

"But what are you doing here? What have you *done*?" I demanded.

"We had to come back yesterday morning to continue our work, Harry," Uncle Jeremiah explained apologetically. "You see, in view of the rubber crisis, we have been working with the lowly milkweed."

"Yes, I know," I said unfeelingly. "You milked the milkweed, and what did you get? *Sap!*"

UNCLE JEREMIAH DOODLE raised his hands in holy horror.

"You shouldn't use slang, Jordan," reproved Tobias Plast. "I constantly have to admonish Lydia. You young people! But go on, Jeremiah, tell him what we did."

"Ah, yes," said Uncle Jeremiah, nodding sagely. "We have done far more than we expected, Harry. Instead of proceeding along the lines of discovering how to extract and make rubber, we—ah—inadvertently got switched over into an amazingly interesting line of research. You remember that baby

squirrel one of the lab workers found on the grounds last week? Show him the squirrel, Tobias."

Professor Plast fished in one of his baggy pockets and drew forth what appeared to be the tiny gray rodent. He started to hold it forth and dropped it. Instead of scampering away, the thing bounced like a rubber ball, and the professor lunged forward and caught it in midair. It squeaked and struggled as he held it out.

"You see, Nippy—we call the squirrel Nippy—was scampering around the laboratory table where we were working the other day—Thursday, I think it was—we have the date and hour in our notes—and it fell into a beaker of one of our experiments," explained the professor. "We fished him out at once and dried him off. But the result is—as you see. Outwardly, Nippy has turned into a substance akin to rubber."

I examined the little squirrel more critically. It was true. Although quite alive and animate, the little rodent's skin and fur had taken on a rubbery consistency. It was like poking at a tennis ball.

"I still don't believe it," I said flatly.

"Neither did we," agreed Uncle Jeremiah sagely. "That is, not at first."

"No," said Tobias in his absentminded way. "So we began a series of new experiments with Nippy."

"The result of which is that we have perfected what we call the Doodleplast Rubber Serum," added Uncle Jeremiah proudly. "It works on all living, animate objects. By a careful system of hypodermic injection which we have worked out, we can turn the skin and muscles and sinews of any living thing into a substance that is remarkably like rubber—without injury to bodily functions or impairment in any way. Don't you see what a marvelous step we have taken in the solution of our national rubber problem?"

"No," I said flatly, "I don't."

"That's why we had to work yesterday and last night," added Professor Plast. "We've been making a supply of the serum."

"You are exasperatingly short-sighted at times, Harry," declared Uncle Jeremiah. "With the use of the new Doodleplast serum the world won't need rubber any longer. Horses can be innoculated with the serum and do the work of ten horses because they will be tireless, resistant to wear and tear. Soldiers can be treated, and they can march and fight for days on end. All motorized vehicles will be—"

"If you're trying to tell me you can shoot this dope of yours into a flock of cats and dogs and harness them to the axles of cars and trucks in lieu of rubber tires, I think you're crazy."

"Why not?" asked Professor Plast mildly. "They would be tireless."

"So would the trucks," I rejoined acidly. "How would you coordinate any sort of animals—to make them work in unison like four rubber tires, I mean—if the serum would work?"

"The serum *does* work," stated the professor, abstractedly dropping the squirrel again and pointing at the little animal bouncing a couple of times before it could control itself. It finally scampers away in long, rubbery leaps, to my amazement and its own.

"Maybe Harry has something there, Tobias," admitted Uncle Jeremiah thoughtfully. "Perhaps we will run into difficulties in gearing four animals to behave like tires. But it is such a pity. There would be a hundred per cent saving in gasoline, too."

"Fiddlesticks!" snorted Plast. "Don't they hitch Alaskan huskies in the Yukon?"

"Not as wheels," I reminded him. "Only a couple of dizzy birds like you two could dream up one like that."

"Ah, yes," admitted the professor mildly, scratching his high dome. "I believe that was your—ah—suggestion, Jordan."

I choked and reddened. Arguing with these two was like riding a merry-go-round.

I opened my mouth then to suggest that they go home and have breakfast and get some sleep, but Uncle Jeremiah wasn't through.

THERE was more coming. I could hardly wait.

"There still remains the successful business of inoculating our fighting men," Uncle began brightening. "Doodleplast rubber serum will make them invincible fighters. And the effect lasts at least ten days without fresh inoculation. All we do is—"

"All you have to do is find somebody crazy enough to submit to a test of your serum," I said. "And that will prove practically impossible."

"Oh, no," Uncle Jeremiah went on, smiling beatifically as he polished his glasses. "We already have a subject."

"What?"

"In the laboratory," he added, nodding toward the room from which the exhaust-fans had practically sucked all the foul air—I hoped so, anyway.

My heart seemed to clog my throat as I envisioned all sorts of horrible calamities. "Do you two maniacs mean to say you've captured a human being and shot some of this untried and unproven serum into him?"

"Not exactly," Uncle Jeremiah hastened to soothe me. "Don't get alarmed, Harry. Mr. Dugan was quite willing to undergo the experiment, in view of a substantial cash settlement."

"Not to mention the unlawful activity at which we surprised him," added the professor.

"Who is this Dugan?" I demanded quickly. "Did you get him to sign a release? Oh, my lord, what a mess!"

"It's quite all right, my boy," assured Uncle Jeremiah. "You see, we caught Mr. Dugan—Butch, I think is his Christian name—inadvertently trying to burglarize the laboratory. He didn't expect to find a couple of elderly scientists working here Sunday night. After he came to, and we explained things—"

"After he came to?" I grated out.

"Tobias had to hit him over the head with a retort," said Uncle Jeremiah, glancing at me a bit apprehensively. "He was threatening me with a revolver."

"That was not the retort courteous," I answered, making a bum out of the Bard of Avon.

I couldn't stand any more. "Let's see this Butch Dugan," I continued. "Show me."

Obediently, they led the way into their chemical lab. On a cleared space on the central table lay the body of a man in an ordinary dark blue business suit. I advanced and took one look at his face. He lay perfectly still, inert, and his skin was a pasty gray color—like an uncooked pretzel.

Hastily I grabbed at his wrist. I could detect no pulse and it was like grasping a piece of rubber hose.

"Good lord!" I groaned. "Maybe you've killed this man. How much of that stuff did you shoot into him?"

Professor Plast rubbed his chin reflectively. "Calculated on the weight and energy units of Nippy, we gave Mr. Dugan about half the serum required for an adult human. We estimate that it will hold him five days if it takes full effect."

"If it takes effect?" I almost shouted. "Look at him! He looks like a doormat for an undertaking establishment. I've got to think fast to get you two out of this mess."

"He is all right, Harry," insisted Uncle Jeremiah. "It's the traumatic shock, that's all. Mr. Dugan will regain consciousness within the next—ah—ten minutes."

MAYBE it was my shouting. Anyway, the unconscious man on the table drew a sobbing breath and stirred.

"Get some ammonia," I ordered instantly. "That isn't incompatible with that goo you cooked up, is it?"

"No, no, certainly not," said Uncle Jeremiah, complying with my order. "I told you that the bodily functions are unchanged in any way save for the temporary change in surface conditions."

I administered a teaspoonful of the stimulant and held the bottle under Dugan's nose. He gagged and spluttered quite normally, opened his eyes, and struggled to sit up.

Mr. Dugan's words were a quotation from the classics, to wit:

"Who gimme dat mickey?" he choked

out indignantly as soon as he could speak.

"Take it easy, chum," I soothed him, helping him to sit up. "You feel all right now?"

"Sure, I do. I—" He broke off and felt of his gray lips. Then he rapidly patted his face and rubbed his gray hands over his arms and body. "Hey! No feelin'. Am I paralyzed? I feel like a plate full of spaghetti. What did them two crackpots do to me?"

"Everything is all right—I hope," I assured him quickly. "Now, before we go any further in this experiment. Mr. Dugan, if you will just accompany me into my office where I will make out a contract for you to sign—"

"I ain't signin' nothin', see," inter-upted Dugan promptly. "These two geezers promised me five century notes for takin' their dope, and I want me money—in cash—now."

"You shall have it as soon as I open the safe, Dugan," I promised. "But this is a scientific experiment, and it is customary and legal to make contracts in such cases. I shall draw up a contract at once between you and Doodleplast, Incorporated, and then I'll pay you."

"Now," objected Dugan stubbornly, still pinching and poking at himself. "I ain't signin' nothin' till I see me doctor and me mouthpiece."

I cocked my fist desperately. "You sign, or I'll turn you over to the police for breaking into Highboy Park illegally."

Dugan scowled and made a grab for me. So I let him have it, smack on the chin. The result surprised us both. My fist rebounded as though I had struck a rubber punching bag. It was exactly the sort of feeling you get when you experimentally kick a rubber tire, only I had so much steam in by blow that the rebound staggered me.

Dugan flew backward head over heels from the table, landed in a sprawled position on the floor, bounced three feet in the air, and then scrambled madly—getting to his feet like a man mounted on a pair of live springs. The expression on his face was ludicrous, but I had

no time to enjoy it. Dugan's signature on a release contract was worth plenty of money to us right now.

So I started around the table to grab him.

He let out a howl and began to run. He bounced high at the first step, floated sideward against a bench of equipment to smash some small odds and ends and overturn the little vat of rubber serum. He caromed off just as Uncle Jeremiah and Professor Plast gave vent to cries of dismay.

Landing on the floor again, Dugan made a despairing leap toward the windowed wall. Again he miscalculated the resiliency of his new-found mode of locomotion, and he crashed through the nearest window. Clutching helplessly at the frame, he dropped out of sight just as I made a futile dive to grab him.

There was a concrete areaway below, and I groaned as I visioned the twenty-foot drop. I heard the thud as Dugan hit, and I was just staring gingerly out through the shattered window glass when Dugan sailed back into view. He had bounced, unhurt, nearly twenty feet up into the air, but too far away for me to get a hand on him. As I watched helplessly he hit the ground farther away and then went bouncing and leaping in erratic fashion across the grounds toward the ten-foot stone wall which surrounded Highboy Park.

Mike Harrigan, the gate guard, rushed over to intercept Dugan and froze in incredulous astonishment as the serum rubber man bounded over his head and neatly cleared the wall.

Uncle Jeremiah set up a plaint. "He destroyed all of our serum, Tobias. All our work has gone for naught."

"Never mind that," I said. "Is there an antidote for that stuff?"

"We don't know," admitted the professor absently, surveying the extent of the damage. "We haven't considered the need for one."

"Well, start considering," I snapped. "And work out something quick. That crook has escaped, and do you realize that he can sue Doodleplast for everything we've got, not to mention a good

chance of collecting?"

"What are you going to do, Harry?" asked Uncle Jeremiah.

"I'm going right back into my office and concoct an ironclad contract for Butch Dugan. Then I'll go out, hunt him down and make him sign it if I have to use a vulcanizing machine to threaten him with. You two rubber geniuses get to work on that antidote."

EYES that stared behind thick glasses stared amazedly at me.

"Why?" asked Uncle Jeremiah mildly. "The effect of the serum will wear off in four or five days, and Mr. Dugan will be just as he was before, which is nothing to brag about."

"If he doesn't get us or himself into a lot of trouble before then," I growled. "You get to work while I do the same."

Two hours later I had completed drawing up and typing an agreement that would hold water in any court. I had already dispatched Mike Harrigan to trail Butch Dugan and kept him in sight, reporting back by telephone.

Now I grabbed my hat, stuffed the agreement in my pocket, and was ready to head for Jersey City where Mike had last reported bouncing from. I paused in the doorway of the chemical laboratory. The two wizards were bent intently over a table and up to their ears in retorts and crucibles. I smiled a bit fondly although grimly.

"Found anything yet?" I asked.

Both of them looked up in absent-minded fashion.

"Ah—yes," said Uncle Jeremiah. "An amazing thing, Harry. We—ah—got accidentally switched from the antidote serum to a fusion of silicon and milkweed sap that will make noiseless hardware to take the place of metal. You see, Nippy was—"

"Confound it!" I roared. "I want that antidote so I can save—"

The violent ringing of the telephone on my desk interrupted me. I rushed over and grabbed the instrument.

"Mr. Jordan?" asked an agitated bass voice. "This is the Jersey City Police Department. We have a peculiar case

here—a petty crook by the name of Butch Dugan. We've got him in a cell, and he is bouncing around the walls like a golf ball and shouting a lot of gibberish about you people there at Highboy Park. Your man Harrigan is here and asked me to call you."

"Thank you, Sergeant," I said weakly. "How—why—what did Dugan do that caused you to pick him up?"

THE desk sergeant told me, and I choked.

"Okay," I finally articulated. "I'll be right down to straighten the matter out."

I put down the transceiver and walked thoughtfully back to the chemical laboratory doorway. I had to shout to get the attention of Uncle Jeremiah and the professor. They turned slightly annoyed faces toward me.

"I give up," I admitted manfully. "You've got something big in that rubber serum idea. Better get busy and make a fresh batch of it while I go down and bail Butch out of jail."

"Make up a fresh batch?" repeated

Uncle Jeremiah helplessly. "How can we? Mr. Dugan upset the last batch on our notes and obliterated them."

"And we don't remember just how we made the serum," added Professor Plast sadly. "However, this new idea of fused silicon will be of greater benefit to humanity as it will dispense with all metal fittings and—"

"What? You've lost that formula?" I was aghast.

"Mr. Dugan lost it for us," said Uncle Jeremiah, pointing sadly to the mess on the floor. Then he brightened. "Did you say he was in jail, Harry?"

"That is excellent," observed Professor Plast thoughtfully. "He struck me as being an irresponsible sort of chap."

"You struck him, Tobias," corrected Uncle Jeremiah mildly. "Why did the police arrest Mr. Dugan, Harry?"

"For trying to pass a rubber check," I answered. "I've got to spring him before they send him up for a stretch, or he'll bounce a law suit right into our laps. Don't set the laboratory on fire before I get back."

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This STARTLING WAR

News and Notes from the
Science Front



GILDING THE OCEAN TO "MARK THE SPOT"
—Pale gold-bronze patches floating on the surface of the sea may soon mark the spot where an enemy submarine was last seen so that searching destroyers will know where to drop their depth bombs or bombing planes lay their deadly eggs.

This is only one possible use of a marking bomb of pressed paper-pulp containing bronze powder, fluorescing compounds or other materials conspicuous on water on which a patent was recently granted to Lieutenant Commander Pliny G. Holt of Philadelphia.

The idea is for "look-see" planes to drop these marking bombs on water or other unsubstantial surfaces like snow or thin ice. Thus heavier air or surface following will be able to get into action more quickly and effectively. The spots can also be used as bombing practice targets.

SOUND-EFFECTS MACHINE TO GIVE AXIS
JITTERS—Early in the Pacific war, the Japs used to set off firecrackers to dupe Allied troops into believing machine-guns were opening up against them. The same principle, but with embellishments added, has been developed into a handy, light machine by inventors Alfred Groth and H. J. Hanauer to draw enemy artillery fire at the wrong targets. It not only makes plenty of noise, but also fakes cannon flashes and explosions visually.

GLIDER TORPEDO CARRIES OWN WEIGHT—
A gyroscope-controlled glider torpedo is the invention of H. A. Gurney of Encino, California. Once launched, automatic controls hold the winged missile on a true line against its target. A feature of the projectile is its suspension beneath the carrying plane in such a manner that its wings provide necessary lift during flight. This, according to Gurney, will enable light, fast planes to carry heavy explosive missiles into action.

COMPRESSED AIR COOLS MACHINE-GUN—
Hubert Scott-Paine and R. W. Jaggard, both Englishmen, have invented a new method of cooling machine-guns with compressed air instead of the conventional liquid and atmospheric cooling methods now in use.

Escape of air in the flask in which it is provided at a pressure of 300 pounds per square inch or over is controlled by a valve governed by the barrel's temperature. The weapon weighs much less than a water-jacketed Browning and does not require the

frequent changes of barrel of the conventional air-cooled gun.

SPINS WHEELS TO PREVENT PLANE SPINS—
Ingenious use of the gyroscopic principle to prevent planes from going into dangerous flat spins is proposed by J. D. Wilhoit of Chicago and N. F. Huber of Louisville.

Anyone who has played with a toy gyroscope knows how hard it is to push the spinning wheel from its original position. The two inventors convert their plane's landing wheels into gyroscopes by use of motors to rotate them in the reverse of their usual direction. This, they claim, tends to get this spin-threatened plane out of danger.

BARGAIN-BASEMENT BOMB—Cheapness and ease of manufacture are among the virtues of an anti-personnel bomb developed by John Nahirney of Detroit. His missile consists simply of a cylindrical casing with pointed nose and the needed steadying fins near the tail.

Within is a cylindrical container for the explosive, carrying a detonating fuse in its nose. The annular space between the casing and container is filled with bits of scrap or metal slugs.

TWO-BOAT TRANSPORT FOR BULLDOZERS—
Andrew J. Higgins, famous New Orleans builder of landing barges, has developed a new method of getting heavy machinery such as bulldozers, big tanks and heavy cannon into action faster. Lashing two stoutly built pontoon units, connected by a platform under-slung on a U-shaped framework between them, he utilizes the forward part, which can be elevated at will, as an auxiliary bow to keep waves out of the way while at sea. When the double craft is beached, this part can be lowered to form a landing ramp.

PENICILLIN INCREASES VITAL WAR WEAPON—
Penicillin, doubled and redoubled, is America's bid for a quick win against infection and disease among our fighting men. So rapidly did production facilities expand in 1943 that two-fifths of all the penicillin turned out last year was produced in December alone.

Quantities of the magic drug for civilian use will still be highly limited, however. The U. S. Department of Agriculture warns against attempts to "produce penicillin in the kitchen." Molds thus cultured are usually worthless and may even be dangerous through growth of "wild" contaminating organisms.

BEYOND THE SINGING FLAME

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

In a Flight to the Inner Dimension, Philip Hastane, Interspace Explorer, Discovers the Fountain of Cosmic Energy!

CHAPTER I

Journey Into Space

WHEN I, Philip Hastane, gave to the world the journal of my friend Giles Angarth, I was still doubtful as to whether the incidents related therein were fiction or verity. The trans-dimensional adventures of Angarth and Felix Ebbouly, the City of the Flame with its strange residents and pilgrims, the immolation of Ebbouly, and the hinted return of the narrator himself for a like purpose after making the last entry in his diary, were very much the sort of thing that Angarth might have imagined in one of the fantastic novels for which he had become so justly famous.

Add to this the seemingly impossible and incredible nature of the whole tale, and my hesitancy in accepting it as veridical will easily be understood.

However, on the other hand, there was the unsolved and eternally recalcitrant enigma offered by the disappearance of the two men. Both were well known, the one as a writer, the other as an artist; both were in flourishing circumstances, with no serious cares or troubles. Their vanishment, all things considered, was difficult to explain on the ground of any motive less unusual or extraordinary than the one assigned in the journal.

At first, as I have hinted in my foreword to the published diary, I thought that the whole affair might well have been devised as a somewhat elaborate practical joke. But this theory became less and less tenable as weeks and months went by and linked themselves slowly into a year, without the reappearance of the presumptive jokers.

Now, at last, I can testify to the truth of all that Angarth wrote—and more. For I too have been in Ydmos, the City of Singing Flame, and have known also the supernal glories and raptures of the Inner Dimension.

And of these I must tell, however falteringly and stumblingly, with mere human words, before the vision fades. For these are things which neither I nor any other shall behold or experience again. Ydmos itself is now a riven ruin, and the temple of the Flame has been blasted to its foundations in the basic rock, and the fountain of singing fire has been stricken at its source. The Inner Dimension has perished like a broken bubble, in the great war that was made upon Ydmos by the rulers of the Outer Lands. . . .

After editing and publishing Angarth's journal, I was unable to forget the peculiar and tantalizing problems it had raised. The vague but infinitely suggestive vistas opened by the tale were such as to haunt my imagi-

nation recurrently with a hint of half-revealed or hidden mysteries. I was troubled by the possibility of some great mystic meaning behind it all—some cosmic actuality of which the narrator had perceived merely the external veils and fringes.

As time went on, I found myself pondering it perpetually. And more and more I was possessed by an overwhelming wonder, and a sense of something which no mere fiction weaver would have been likely to invent.

IN THE early summer of 1941, after finishing a new novel of interplanetary adventure, I felt able for the first time to take the necessary leisure for the execution of a project that had often occurred to me. Putting all my affairs in order, and knitting all the loose ends of my literary labors and personal correspondence in case I should not return, I left Auburn ostensibly for a week's vacation. I went to Summit with the idea of in-

EDITOR'S NOTE



SOME stories are forgotten almost as soon as they are printed. Others stand the test of time.

Because "Beyond the Singing Flame," by Clark Ashton Smith, has stood this test, it has been nominated for SCIENTIFUNCTION'S HALL OF FAME and is reprinted here.

In each issue we will honor one of the most outstanding fantasy classics of all time as selected by our readers.

We hope in this way to bring a new permanence to the science fiction gems of yesterday and to perform a real service to the science fiction devotees of today and tomorrow.

Nominate your own favorite! Send a letter or postcard to The Editor, STARTLING STORIES, 10 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y. All suggestions are more than welcome!



Gigantic mothlike figures were transporting me over the city

vestigating closely the milieu in which Angarth and Ebbonly had disappeared from human ken.

With strange emotions, I visited the forsaken cabin south of Crater Ridge that had been occupied by Angarth, and saw the rough, home-made table of pine boards upon which my friend had written his journal and had left the sealed package containing it to be forwarded to me after his departure.

There was a weird and brooding loneliness about the place, as if the non-human infinitudes had already claimed it for their own. The unlocked door had sagged inward from the pressure of high-piled winter snows, and

fir needles had sifted across the sill to strew the unswept floor. Somehow, I know not why, the bizarre narrative became more real and more credible to me, as if an occult intimation of all that had happened to its author still lingered around the cabin.

This mysterious intimation grew stronger when I came to visit Crater Ridge itself, and to search amid its miles of pseudo-volcanic rubble for the two boulders so explicitly described by Angarth as having a likeness to the pedestals of ruined columns.

Many of my readers, no doubt, will remember his description of the Ridge. There is no need to enlarge upon it with reiterative

detail, other than that which bears upon my own adventures.

Following the northward path which Angarth must have taken from his cabin, and trying to retrace his wanderings on the long, barren hill, I combed it thoroughly from end to end and from side to side, since he had not specified the location of the boulders. After two mornings spent in this manner without result, I was almost ready to abandon the quest and dismiss the queer, soapy, greenish-gray column-ends as one of Angarth's most provocative and deceptive fictions.

It must have been the formless, haunting intuition of which I have spoken that made me renew the search on a third morning. This time, after crossing and recrossing the hill-top for an hour or more, and weaving tortuously to and fro among the cicada-haunted wild currant bushes and sunflowers on the dusty slopes, I came at last to an open, circular, rock-surrounded space that was totally unfamiliar. I had somehow missed it in all my previous roamings.

It was the place of which Angarth had told. And I saw with an inexpressible thrill the two rounded, worn-looking boulders that were situated in the center of the ring.

I believe that I trembled a little with excitement as I went forward to inspect the curious stones. Bending over, but not daring to enter the bare, pebbly space between them, I touched one of them with my hand, and received a sensation of preternatural smoothness, together with a coolness that was inexplicable, considering that the boulders and the soil about them must have lain unshaded from the sultry August sun for many hours.

From that moment, I became fully persuaded that Angarth's account was no mere fable. Just why I should have felt so certain of this, I am powerless to say. But it seemed to me that I stood on the threshold of an ultra-mundane mystery, on the brink of uncharted gulfs.

I looked about at the familiar Sierran valleys and mountains, wondering that they still preserved their wonted outlines, and were still unchanged by the contiguity of alien worlds, were still untouched by the luminous glories of arcanic dimensions.

Being convinced that I had indeed found the gateway between the worlds, I was prompted to strange reflections. What, and where, was this other sphere to which my friend had obtained entrance? Was it near at hand, like a secret room in the structure of space? Or was it, in reality, millions or trillions of light-years away by the reckoning of astronomic distance, in a planet of some ulterior galaxy?

After all, we know little or nothing of the actual nature of space. Perhaps, in some way that we cannot imagine, the infinite is doubled upon itself in places, with dimensional folds and tucks, and short-cuts whereby the distance to Algenib or Aldebaran is merely a step. Perhaps, also there is more than one infinity. The spectral "flaw" into which Angarth had fallen might well be a sort of super-dimension, abridging the cosmic intervals and connecting universe with

universe.

However, because of this certitude that I had found the inter-spheric portals, and could follow Angarth and Ebbony if I so desired, I hesitated before trying the experiment. I was mindful of the mystic danger and irrefragable lure that had overcome the others. I was consumed by imaginative curiosity, by an avid, well-nigh feverish longing to behold the wonders of this exotic realm; but I did not purpose to become a victim to the opiate power and fascination of the Singing Flame.

I stood for a long time, eyeing the old boulders and the barren, pebble-littered spot that gave admission to the unknown. At length I went away, deciding to defer my venture till the following morn. Visualizing the weird doom to which the others had gone so voluntarily and even gladly, I must confess that I was afraid. On the other hand, I was drawn by the fateful allurements that leads an explorer into far places—and perhaps by something more than this.

I SLEPT badly that night, with nerves and brain excited by formless, glowing premonitions, by intimations of half-conceived perils and splendors and vastnesses. Early the next morning, while the sun was still hanging above the Nevada Mountains, I returned to Crater Ridge.

I carried a strong hunting-knife and a Colt revolver, and wore a filled cartridge-belt, and also a knapsack containing sandwiches and a thermos bottle of coffee. Before starting, I had stuffed my ears tightly with cotton soaked in a new anesthetic fluid, mild but efficacious, which would serve to deafen me completely for many hours. In this way, I felt that I should be immune to the demoralizing music of the fiery fountain.

I peered about on the rugged landscape with its weird and far-flung vistas, wondering if I should ever see it again. Then, resolutely, but with the eerie thrilling and shrinking of one who throws himself from a high cliff into some bottomless chasm, I stepped forward into the space between the grayish-green boulders.

My sensations, generally speaking, were similar to those described by Angarth in his diary. Blackness and illimitable emptiness seemed to wrap me round in a dizzy swirl as of rushing wind or milling water, and I went down and down in a spiral descent whose duration I have never been able to estimate. Intolerably stifled, and without even the power to grasp for breath, in the chill, airless vacuum that froze my very muscles and marrow, I felt that I should lose consciousness in another moment, and descend into the greater gulf of death or oblivion.

Something seemed to arrest my fall, and I became aware that I was standing still, though I was troubled for some time by a queer doubt as to whether my position was vertical, horizontal, or upside-down in relation to the solid substance that my feet had encountered.

Then the blackness lifted slowly like a dissolving cloud, and I saw the slope of violet grass, the rows of irregular monoliths running downward from where I stood, and the gray-green columns near at hand. Beyond was

the titan, perpendicular city of red stone that was dominant above the high and multi-colored vegetation of the plain.

It was all very much as Angarth had depicted it. But somehow, even then, I became aware of differences that were not immediately or clearly definable, of scenic details and atmospheric elements for which his accounts had not prepared me. And, at the moment, I was too thoroughly disequibrated and overpowered by the vision of it all even to speculate concerning the character of these differences.

As I gazed at the city with its crowding tiers of battlements and its multitude of over-loomng spires, I felt the invisible threads of a secret attraction, was seized by an imperative longing to know the mysteries hidden behind the massive walls and the myriad buildings. Then, a moment later, my gaze was drawn to the remote, opposite horizon of the plain, as if by some conflicting impulse whose nature and origin were undiscoverable.

It must have been because I had formed so clear and definite a picture of the scene from my friend's narrative that I was surprised and even a little disturbed as if by something wrong or irrelevant, when I saw in the far distance the shining towers of what seemed to be another city—a city of which Angarth had not spoken. The towers rose in serried lines, reaching for many miles in a curious arclike formation. They were sharply defined against a blackish mass of cloud that had reared behind them and was spreading out on the luminous, amber sky in sullen webs and sinister, crawling filaments.

Subtle disquietude and repulsion seemed to emanate from the far-off, glittering spires, even as attraction emanated from those of the nearer city. I saw them quiver and pulse with an evil light, like living and moving things, through what I assumed some refractive trick of the atmosphere. Then for an instant, the black cloud behind them glowed with dull, angry crimson throughout its whole mass, and even its questing webs and tendrils were turned into lurid threads of fire.

The crimson faded, leaving the cloud inert and lumphish as before. But from many of the vanward towers, lines of red and violet flame had leaped like outthrust lances at the bosom of the plain beneath them. They were held thus for at least a minute, moving slowly across a wide area, before they vanished.

In the spaces between the towers, I now perceived a multitude of gleaming, restless particles, like armies of militant atoms, and wondered if perchance they were living beings. If the idea had not appeared so fantastical, I could have sworn even then that the far city had already changed its position and was advancing toward the other on the plain.

Apart from the fulguration of the cloud, and the flames that had sprung from the towers, and the quiverings which I deemed a refractive phenomenon, the whole landscape before and about me was unnaturally still. On the strange amber air of the Tyrian-tinted grasses, on the proud, opulent foliage of the unknown trees, there lay the dead calm that precedes the stupendous turmoil of typhoonic storm or seismic cataclysm.

The brooding sky was permeated with intuitions of cosmic menace, was weighed down by a dim, elemental despair.

CHAPTER II

Into the Flame

ALARMED by this ominous atmosphere, I looked behind me at the two pillars which, according to Angarth, were the gateway of return to the human world. For an instant, I was tempted to go back. Then I turned once more to the nearby city, and the feelings I have just mentioned were lost in an oversurging awesomeness and wonder.

I felt the thrill of a deep, supernal exaltation before the magnitude of the mighty buildings. A compelling sorcery was laid upon me by the very lines of their construction, by the harmonies of a solemn architectural music. I forgot my impulse to return to Crater Ridge, and started down the slope toward the city.

Soon the boughs of the purple and yellow forest arched above me like the altitudes of Titan-built aisles, with leaves that fretted the rich heaven in gorgeous arabesques. Beyond them, ever and anon, I caught glimpses of the piled ramparts of my destination; but looking back, in the direction of that other city on the horizon, I found that its fulgurating towers were now lost to view.

I saw, however, that the masses of the great somber cloud were rising steadily on the sky, and once again they flared to a swart, malignant red, as if with some unearthly form of sheet-lightning. And though I could hear nothing with my deadened ears, the ground beneath me trembled with long vibrations as of thunder. There was a queer quality in the vibrations, one that seemed to tear my nerves and set my teeth on edge with its throbbing, lancinating discord, painful as broken glass or the torment of a tightened rack.

Like Angarth before me, I came to the paved cyclopean highway. Following it, in the stillness after the unheard peals of thunder, I felt another and subtler vibration, which I knew to be that of the Singing Flame in the temple at the city's core. It seemed to soothe and exalt and bear me on, to erase with soft caresses the ache that still lingered in my nerves from the torturing pulsations of the thunder.

I met no one on the road, and was not passed by any of the trans-dimensional pilgrims, such as had overtaken Angarth. And when the accumulated ramparts loomed above the highest trees, and I came forth from the wood in their very shadow, I saw that the great gate of the city was closed, leaving no crevice through which a pygmy like myself might obtain entrance.

Feeling a profound and peculiar discomfiture, such as one would experience in a dream that had gone wrong, I stared at the grim, unrelenting blankness of the gate. It seemed to be wrought from one enormous

sheet of somber and lusterless metal. Then I peered upward at the sheerness of the wall, which rose above me like an alpine cliff, and saw that the battlements were seemingly deserted.

Was the city forsaken by its people, by the guardians of the Flame? Was it no longer open to the pilgrims who came from outlying lands to worship the Flame, and to immolate themselves? With curious reluctance, after lingering there for many minutes in a sort of stupor, I turned away to retrace my steps.

In the interim of my journey, the black cloud had drawn immeasurably nearer, and was now blotting half the heaven with two portentous winglike formations. It was a sinister and terrible sight and it lightened again with that ominous wrathful flaming, with a detonation that beat upon my deaf ears like waves of disintegrative force, and seemed to lacerate the inmost fibers of my body.

I hesitated, fearing that the storm would burst upon me before I could reach the inter-dimensional portals. I saw that I should be exposed to an elemental disturbance of unfamiliar character and supreme violence.

Then, in mid-air, before the imminent, ever-rising cloud, I perceived two flying creatures, whom I can compare only to gigantic moths. With bright, luminous wings, upon the ebon forefront of the storm, they approached me in level but precipitate flight. They would have crashed headlong against the shut gate, if they had not checked themselves with sudden and easy poise.

With hardly a flutter, they descended and paused on the ground beside me, supporting themselves on queer, delicate legs that branched at the knee-joints in floating antennae and waving tentacles. Their wings were sumptuously mottle webs of pearl and madder and opal and orange, and their heads were circled by a series of convex and concave eyes, and were fringed with coiling, hornlike organs from whose hollow ends there hung aerial filaments.

I was more than startled, more than amazed by their aspect, but somehow, by an obscure telepathy, I felt assured that their intentions toward me were friendly. I knew that they wished to enter the city, and knew also that they understood my predicament.

Nevertheless, I was not prepared for what happened. With movements of utmost celerity and grace, one of the giant mothlike beings stationed himself at my right hand, and the other at my left. Then, before I could even suspect their intention, they enfolded my limbs and body with their long tentacles, wrapping me round and round as if with powerful ropes. Carrying me between them as if my weight were a mere trifle, they rose in air and soared at the mighty ramparts!

In that swift and effortless ascent, the wall seemed to flow downward beside and beneath us like a wave of molten stone. Dizzily I watched the falling away of the mammoth blocks in endless recession. Then we were level with the broad ramparts, were flying across the unguarded parapets and over a canyonlike space toward the immense rectangular buildings and numberless square

towers.

We had hardly crossed the walls, when a weird and flickering glow was cast on the edifices before us by another lightening of the great cloud. The mothlike beings paid no apparent heed, and flew steadily on into the city with their strange faces toward an unseen goal. But, turning my head to peer backward at the storm, I beheld an astounding and appalling spectacle.

BYOND the city ramparts, as if wrought by black magic or the toil of genii, another city had reared, and its high towers were moving swiftly forward beneath the rufescent dome of the burning cloud! A second glance, and I perceived that the towers were identical with those I had beheld afar on the plain. In the interim of my passage through the woods, they had traveled over an expanse of many miles by means of some unknown motive power, and had closed in on the city of the Flame.

Looking more closely, to determine the manner of their locomotion, I saw that they were not mounted on wheels, but on short, massy legs like jointed columns of metal, that gave them the stride of ungainly colossi. There were six or more of these legs to each tower, and near the tops of the towers were rows of huge eyelike openings, from which issued the bolts of red and violet flame I have mentioned before.

The many-colored forest had been burned away by these flames in a league-wide swath of devastation, even to the walls, and there was nothing but a stretch of black, vaporing desert between the mobile towers and the city. Then, even as I gazed, the long, leaping beams began to assail the craggy ramparts, and the topmost parapets were melting like lava beneath them.

It was a scene of utmost terror and grandeur but, a moment later, it was blotted from my vision by the buildings among which we had now plunged.

The great lepidopterous creatures who bore me went on with the speed of eyrie-questing eagles. In the course of that flight, I was hardly capable of conscious thought or volition. I lived only in the breathless and giddy freedom of aerial movement, of dreamlike levitation above the labyrinthine maze of stone immensitudes and marvels.

Also, I was without conscious cognizance of much that I beheld in that stupendous Babel of architectural imageries. Only afterward, in the more tranquil light of recollection, could I give coherent form and meaning to many of my impressions. My senses were stunned by the vastness and strangeness of it all.

I realized but dimly the cataclysmic ruin that was being loosed upon the city behind us, and the doom from which we were fleeing. I knew that war was being made with unearthly weapons and engineeries, by inimical powers that I could not imagine, for a purpose beyond my conception. But to me, it all had the elemental confusion and vague, impersonal horror of some cosmic catastrophe.

We flew deeper and deeper into the city.

Broad platform roofs and terracelike tiers of balconies flowed away beneath us, and the pavements raced like darkling streams at some enormous depth. Severe cubical spires and square monoliths were all about and above us. On some of the roofs we saw the dark, Atlantean people of the city, moving slowly and statuesquely, or standing in attitudes of cryptic resignation and despair, with their faces toward the flaming cloud. All were weaponless, and I saw no engineerings anywhere, such as might be used for purposes of military defense.

Swiftly as we flew, the climbing cloud was swifter, and the darkness of its intermittently glowing dome had overarched the town, its spidery filaments had meshed the further heavens and would soon attach themselves to the opposite horizon. The buildings darkened and lightened with the recurrent fulguration, and I felt in all my tissues the painful pulsing of the thunderous vibrations.

Dully and vaguely, I realized that the winged beings who carried me between them were pilgrims to the temple of the Flame. More and more I became aware of an influence that must have been that of the starry music emanating from the temple's heart. There were soft, soothing vibrations in the air that seemed to absorb and nullify the tearing discords of the unheard thunder. I felt that we were entering a zone of mystic refuge, of sidereal and celestial security, and my troubled senses were both lulled and exalted.

The gorgeous wings of the giant lepidopters began to slant downward. Before and beneath us, at some distance, I perceived a mammoth pile which I knew at once for the temple of the Flame. Down, still down we went, in the awesome space of the surrounding square. Then I was borne in through the lofty ever-open entrance, and along the high hall with its thousand columns.

It was like some corridor in a Karnak of titan worlds. Pregnant with strange balsams, the dim, mysterious dusk enfolded us. We seemed to be entering realms of pre-mundane antiquity and transtellar immensity, to be following a pillared cavern that led to the core of some ultimate star.

It seemed that we were the last and only pilgrims; and also that the temple was deserted by its guardians. For we met no one in the whole extent of that column-crowded gloom. After awhile, the dusk began to lighten, and we plunged into a widening beam of radiance, and then into the vast central chamber in which soared the fountain of green fire.

I remember only the impression of shadowy, flickering space, of a vault that was lost in the azure of infinity, of colossal and Memnonian statues that looked down from Himalaya like altitudes. And, above all, the dazzling jet of flame that inspired from a pit in the pavement and rose in air like the visible rapture of gods.

But all this I saw and knew for an instant only. Then I realized that the beings who bore me were flying straight toward the flame on level wings, without the slightest pause or flutter of hesitation!

THERE was no room for fear, no time for alarm, in the dazed and chaotic turmoil of my sensations. I was stupefied by all that I had experienced. Moreover, the druglike spell of the Flame was upon me, even though I could not hear its fatal singing. I believe that I struggled a little, by some sort of mechanical muscular revulsion, against the tentacular arms that were wound about me. But the lepidopters gave no heed, and it was plain that they were conscious of nothing but the mounting fire and its seductive music.

I remember, however, that there was no sensation of actual heat, such as might have been expected, when we neared the soaring column. Instead, I felt the most ineffable thrilling in all my fibers, as if I were being permeated by waves of celestial energy and demiurgic ecstasy. Then we entered the Flame.

Like Angarth before me, I had taken it for granted that the fate of all those who flung themselves in the Flame was an instant though blissful destruction. I expected to undergo a briefly flaring dissolution, followed by the nothingness of utter annihilation. The thing which really happened was beyond the boldest reach of speculative thought, and to give even the meagerest idea of my sensations would beggar the resources of language.

The Flame enfolded us like a green curtain, blotting from view the great chamber. Then it seemed to me that I was caught and carried to supercelestial heights in an upward-rushing cataract of quintessential force and deific rapture and all-illuminating light. It seemed that I, and also my companions, had achieved a godlike union with the Flame; that every atom of our bodies had undergone a transcendental expansion, was winged with ethereal lightness; that we no longer existed, except as divine, indivisible entity, soaring beyond the trammels of matter, beyond the limits of time and space, to attain undreamable shores.

Unspeakable was the joy, and infinite was the freedom of that ascent, in which we seemed to overpass the zenith of the highest star. Then, as if we had risen with the Flame to its culmination, had reached its very apex, we emerged and came to a pause.

My senses were faint with exaltation, my eyes were blind with the glory of the fire. The world on which I now gazed was a vast arabesque of unfamiliar forms, and bewildering hues from another spectrum than the one to which our eyes are habituated. It swirled before my dizzy eyes like a labyrinth of gigantic jewels, with interweaving rays and tangled lusters. Only by slow degrees was I able to establish order and distinguish detail in the surging riot of my perceptions.

All about me were endless avenues of super-prismatic opal and jacinth, arches and pillars of ultra-violet gems, of transcendent sapphire, of unearthly ruby and amethyst; all suffused with a multi-tinted splendor. I appeared to be treading on jewels; and above me was a jeweled sky.

Presently, with recovered equilibrium, with eyes adjusted to a new range of cognition,

I began to perceive the actual features of the landscape. With the two mothlike beings still beside me, I was standing on a million-flowered grass, among trees of a paradisaical vegetation, with fruit, foliage, blossoms and trunks whose very forms were beyond the conception of tri-dimensional life. The grace of their drooping boughs, of their fretted fronds, was inexpressible in terms of earthly line and contour. They seemed to be wrought of pure, ethereal substance, half-translucent to the empyrean light, which accounted for the gemlike impression I had first received.

I breathed a nectar-laden air. The ground beneath me was ineffably soft and resilient, as if it were composed of some higher form of matter than ours. My physical sensations were those of the utmost buoyancy and well-being, with no trace of fatigue or nervousness, such as might have been looked for after the unparalleled and marvelous events in which I had played a part.

I felt no sense of mental dislocation or confusion. Apart from my ability to recognize unknown colors and non-Euclidean forms, I began to experience a queer alteration and extension of tactility, through which it seemed that I was able to touch remote objects.

CHAPTER III

The Inner Dimension

THE radiant sky was filled with many-colored suns, like those that might shine on a world of some multiple solar system. But strangely, as I gazed, their glory became softer and dimmer, and the brilliant luster of the trees and grass was gradually subdued, as if by encroaching twilight.

I was beyond surprise, in the boundless marvel and mystery of it all. Nothing, perhaps, would have seemed incredible. But if anything could have amazed me or defied belief, it was the human face—the face of my vanished friend, Giles Angarth—which now emerged from among the waning jewels of the forest, followed by that of another man whom I recognized from photographs as Felix Ebbony.

They came out from beneath the gorgeous boughs and paused before me. Both were clad in lustrous fabrics, finer than Oriental silk, and of no earthly cut or pattern. Their look was both joyous and meditative, and their faces had taken on a hint of the same translucency that characterized the ethereal fruits and blossoms.

"We have been looking for you," said Angarth. "It occurred to me that after reading my journal, you might be tempted to try the same experiments, if only to make sure whether the account was truth or fiction. This is Felix Ebbony, whom I believe you have never met."

It surprised me when I found that I could hear his voice with perfect ease and clearness. I wondered why the effect of the drug-

soaked cotton should have died out so soon in my auditory nerves. Yet such details were trivial, in the face of the astounding fact that I had found Angarth and Ebbony; that they, as well as I, had survived the unearthly rapture of the Flame.

"Where are we?" I asked, after acknowledging his introduction. "I confess that I am totally at a loss to comprehend what has happened."

"We are now in what is called the Inner Dimension," explained Angarth. "It is a higher sphere of space and energy and matter than the one into which we were precipitated from Crater Ridge. The only entrance is through the Singing Flame in the city of Ydmos. The Inner Dimension is born of the fiery fountain, and sustained by it, and those who fling themselves into the Flame are lifted thereby to this superior plane of vibration. For them, the outer worlds no longer exist. The nature of the Flame itself is not known, except that it is a fountain of pure energy, springing from the central rock beneath Ydmos, and passing beyond mortal ken by virtue of its own ardency."

He paused, and seemed to be peering attentively at the winged entities who still lingered at my side. Then he continued:

"I haven't been here long enough to learn very much, myself, but I have found out a few things. And Ebbony and I have established a sort of telepathic communication with the other beings who have passed through the Flame. Many of them have no spoken language, no organs of speech. Their very methods of thought are basically different from ours, because of their divergent lines of sense-development, and the varying conditions of the worlds from which they come. But we are able to communicate a few images.

"The persons who came with you are trying to tell me something," he went on. "You and they, it seems, are the last pilgrims who will enter Ydmos and attain the Inner Dimension. War is being made on the Flame and its guardians by the rulers of the Outer Lands, because so many of their people have obeyed the lure of the singing fountain and have vanished into the higher sphere. Even now their armies have closed in upon Ydmos, and are blasting the city's ramparts with the force-bolts of their moving towers."

I told him what I had seen, comprehending now much that had been obscure heretofore. He listened gravely, then said:

"It has long been feared that such war would be made sooner or later. There are many legends in the Outer Lands, concerning the Flame and the fate of those who succumb to its attraction, but the truth is not known, or is guessed only by a few. Many believe, as I did, that the end is destruction. By some who suspect its existence, the Inner Dimension is hated, as a thing that lures idle dreamers away from worldly reality. It is regarded as a lethal and pernicious chimera, or a mere poetic dream, or a sort of opium paradise.

"There are a thousand things to tell you, regarding the inner sphere, and the laws

and conditions of being to which we are now subject, after the revibration of all our component atoms and electrons in the Flame. But at present there is no time to speak further, since it is highly probable that we are all in grave danger. The very existence of the Inner Dimension, as well as our own, is threatened by the inimical forces that are destroying Ydmos.

"There are some who say that the Flame is impregnable, that its pure essence will defy the blasting of all inferior beams, and its source remain impenetrable to the lightnings of the Outer Lords. But most are fearful of disaster, and expect the failure of the fountain itself when Ydmos is driven to the central rock.

"Because of this imminent peril, we must not tarry longer. There is a way which affords egress from the inner sphere to another and remoter cosmos in a second infinity—a cosmos unconceived by mundane astronomers, or by the astronomers of the worlds about Ydmos. The majority of the pilgrims, after a term of sojourn here, have gone on to the worlds of this other universe. Ebonly and I have waited only for your coming before following them. We must make haste, and delay no more, or doom will overtake us."

EVEN as he spoke, the two mothlike entities, seeming to resign me to the care of my human friends, arose on the jeweltinted air and sailed in long, level flight above the paradisaal perspectives whose remoter avenues were lost in glory. Angarth and Ebonly had now stationed themselves beside me. One took me by the left arm, and the other by the right.

"Try to imagine that you are flying," said Angarth. "In this sphere, levitation and flight are possible through will-power, and you will soon acquire the ability. We shall support and guide you, however, till you have grown accustomed to the new conditions, and are independent of such help."

I obeyed his injunction, and formed a mental image of myself in the act of flying. I was amazed by the clearness and verisimilitude of the thought-picture, and still more by the fact that the picture was becoming an actuality! With little sense of effort, but with exactly the same feeling that characterizes a levitational dream, the three of us were soaring from the jeweled ground, were slanting easily and swiftly upward through the glowing air.

Any effort to describe the experience would be foredoomed to futility; since it seemed that a whole range of new senses had been opened up in me, together with corresponding thought-symbols for which there are no words in human speech. I was no longer Philip Hastane, but a larger and stronger and freer entity, differing as much from my former self as the personality developed beneath the influence of hashish or kava would differ.

The dominant feeling was one of immense joy and liberation, coupled with a sense of imperative haste, of the need to escape into other realms where the joy would endure

eternal and unthreatened. My visual perceptions, as we flew above the burning, lucent woods, were marked by intense aesthetic pleasure.

It was as far above the normal delight afforded by agreeable imagery as the forms and colors of this world were beyond the cognition of normal eyes. Every changing image was a source of veritable ecstasy. The ecstasy mounted as the whole landscape began to brighten again and returned to the flashing, scintillating glory it had worn when I first beheld it.

We soared at a lofty elevation, looking down on numberless miles of labyrinthine forest, on long luxurious meadows, on voluptuously folded hills, on palatial buildings, and waters that were clear as the pristine lakes and rivers of Eden. It all seemed to quiver and pulsate like one living, effulgent, ethereal entity, and waves of radiant rapture passed from sun to sun in the splendor-crowded heaven.

As we went on, I noticed again, after an interval, that partial dimming of the light, that somnolent, dreamy saddening of the colors, to be followed by another period of ecstatic brightening. The slow, tidal rhythm of this process appeared to correspond to the rising and falling of the Flame, as Angarth had described it in his journal, and I suspected immediately that there was some connection.

No sooner had I formulated this thought, when I became aware that Angarth was speaking. And yet I am not sure whether he spoke, or whether his worded thought was perceptible to me through another sense than that of physical audition.

At any rate, I was cognizant of his comment:

"You are right. The waning and waxing of the fountain and its music is perceived in the Inner Dimension as a clouding and lightening of all visual images."

Our flight began to swiften, and I realized that my companions were employing all their psychic energies in an effort to redouble our speed.

The lands below us blurred to a cataract of streaming color, a sea of flowing luminosity. We seemed to be hurtling onward like stars through the fiery air.

The ecstasy of that endless soaring, the anxiety of that precipitate flight from an unknown doom, are incommunicable. But I shall never forget them, and never forget the state of ineffable communion and understanding that existed between the three of us. The memory of it all is housed in the deepest and most abiding cells of my brain.

Others were flying beside and above and beneath us now, in the fluctuant glory; pilgrims of hidden worlds and occult dimensions, proceeding as we ourselves toward that other cosmos of which the Inner Sphere was the ante-chamber.

These beings were strange and outré beyond belief in their corporeal forms and attributes. Yet I took no thought of their strangeness, but felt toward them the same conviction of fraternity that I felt toward Angarth and Ebonly.

CHAPTER IV

Beyond the Flame

NOW, as we still went on, it appeared to me that my two companions were telling me many things; were communicating, by what means I am not sure, much that they had learned in their new existence. With a grave urgency, as if perhaps the time for imparting this information might well be brief, ideas were expressed and conveyed which I could never have understood amid terrestrial circumstances. Things that were inconceivable in terms of the five senses, or in abstract symbols of philosophic or mathematic thought, were made plain to me as the letters of the alphabet.

Certain of these data, however, are roughly conveyable or suggestible in language. I was told of the gradual process of initiation into the life of the new dimension, of the powers gained by the neophyte during his term of adaptation; of the various recondite aesthetic joys experienced through a mingling and multiplying of all the perceptions; of the control acquired over natural forces and over matter itself. Raiment could be woven and buildings reared solely through an act of volition.

I learned also of the laws that would control our passage to the further cosmos, and the fact that such passage was difficult and dangerous for anyone who had not lived a certain length of time in the Inner Dimension. Likewise, I was told that no one could return to our present plane from the higher cosmos, even as no one could go backward through the Flame into Ydmos.

Angarth and Ebonly had dwelt long enough in the Inner Dimension (they said) to be eligible for entrance to the worlds beyond. They thought that I, too, could escape through their assistance, even though I had not yet developed the faculty of spatial equilibrium necessary to sustain those who dared the interspheric path and its dreadful subjacent gulfs alone.

There were boundless, unforeseeable realms, planet on planet, universe on universe, to which we might attain, and among whose prodigies and marvels we could dwell or wander indefinitely. In these worlds, our brains would be attuned to the comprehension or apprehension of vaster and higher scientific laws, and states of entity beyond those of our present dimensional milieu.

I have no idea of the duration of our flight. Like everything else, my sense of time was completely altered and transfigured. Relatively speaking, we may have gone on for hours, but it seemed to me that we had crossed an area of that supernal terrain for whose transit many years or centuries might well have been required.

Even before we came within sight of it, a clear pictorial image of our destination had arisen in my mind, doubtless through some sort of thought-transference. I seemed to envision a stupendous mountain range, with alp

on celestial alp, higher than the summer cumuli of earth. Above them all was the horn of an ultra-violet peak whose head was enfolded in a spiral cloud, touched with the sense of invisible chromatic overtones, that seemed to come down upon it from skies beyond the zenith. I knew that the way to the outer cosmos was hidden in the high cloud.

On, on, we soared, and at length the mountain range appeared on the far horizon and I saw the paramount peak of ultra-violet with its dazzling crown of cumulus. Nearer still we came, till the strange volutes of cloud were almost above us, towering to the heavens and vanishing among the varicolored suns. We saw the gleaming forms of pilgrims who preceded us, as they entered the swirling folds.

At this moment, the sky and the landscape had flamed again to their culminating brilliance. They burned with a thousand hues and lusters, so that the sudden, unlooked-for eclipse which now occurred was all the more complete and terrible.

Before I was conscious of anything amiss, I seemed to hear a despairing cry from my friends, who must have felt the oncoming calamity through a subtler sense than any of which I was yet capable.

Then, beyond the high and luminescent alp of our destination, I saw the mounting of a wall of darkness, dreadful and instant and positive and palpable, that rose everywhere and toppled like some Atlantean wave upon the irised suns and the fiery-colored vistas of the Inner Dimension.

We hung irresolute in the shadowed air, powerless and hopeless before the impending catastrophe, and saw that the darkness had surrounded the entire world and was rushing upon us from all sides. It ate the heavens, it blotted the outer suns, and the vast perspectives over which we had flown appeared to shrink and shrivel like a blackened paper. We seemed to wait alone for one terrible instant, in a center of dwindling light, on which the cyclonic forces of night and destruction were impinging with torrential rapidity.

The center shrank to a mere point—and then the darkness was upon us like an overwhelming maelstrom—like the falling and crashing of cyclopean walls. I seemed to go down with the wreck of shattered worlds in a roaring sea of vortical space and force, to descend into some intrastellar pit, some ultimate limbo to which the shards of forgotten suns and systems are flung. Then, after a measureless interval, there came the sensation of violent impact, as if I had fallen among these shards, at the bottom of the universal night.

I STRUGGLED back to consciousness with slow, prodigious effort, as if I were crushed beneath some irremovable weight, beneath the lightless and inert débris of galaxies. It seemed to require the labors of a titan to lift my lids, and my body and limbs were heavy as if they had been turned to some denser element than human flesh or had been subjected to the gravitation of a grosser planet than the Earth.

My mental processes were numbed and

painful and confused to the last degree, but at length I realized that I was lying on a riven and tilted pavement, among gigantic blocks of fallen stone. Above me, the light of a livid heaven came down among overturned and jagged walls that no longer supported their colossal dome. Close beside me, I saw a fuming pit, from which a ragged rift extended through the door, like the chasm wrought by an earthquake.

I could not recognize my surroundings for a time; but at last, with a toilsome groping of thought, I understand that I was lying in the ruined temple of Ydmos. The pit whose gray and acrid vapors rose beside me was that from which the fountain of singing flame had issued.

It was a scene of stupendous havoc and devastation. The wrath that had been visited upon Ydmos had left no wall nor pylon of the temple standing. I stared at the blighted heavens from an architectural ruin in which the remains of On and Angkor would have been mere rubble heaps.

With herculean effort, I turned my head away from the smoking pit, whose thin, sluggish fumes curled upward in fantasmal coils where the green ardor of the Flame had soared and sung. Not until then did I perceive my companions. Angarth, still insensible, was lying near at hand. Just beyond him I saw the pale, contorted face of Ebbonly, whose lower limbs and body were pinned down by the rough and broken pediment of a fallen pillar.

Striving as in some eternal nightmare to throw off the leaden-clinging weight of my inertia, and able to bestir myself only with the most painful slowness and laboriousness, I got somehow to my feet and went over to Ebbonly. Angarth, I saw at a glance, was uninjured, and would presently regain consciousness, but Ebbonly, crushed by the monolithic mass of stone, was dying swiftly. Even with the help of a dozen men, I could not have released him from his imprisonment, nor could I have done anything to palliate his agony.

He tried to smile, with gallant and piteous courage, as I stooped above him.

"It's no use—I'm going in a moment," he whispered. Good-by, Hastane—and tell Angarth good-by for me, too."

His tortured lips relaxed, his eyelids dropped, and his head fell back on the temple pavement. With an unreal, dreamlike horror, almost without emotion, I saw that he was dead.

The exhaustion that still beset me was too profound to permit of thought or feeling. It was like the first reaction that follows the awakening from a drug debauch. My nerves were like burnt-out wires, my muscles were dead and unresponsive as clay, my brain was ashen and gutted as if a great fire had burned within it and had gone out.

Somehow, after an interval of whose length my memory is uncertain, I managed to revive Angarth, and he sat up dully and dazedly. When I told him that Ebbonly was dead, my words appeared to make no impression upon him. I wondered for awhile if he had understood. Finally, rousing himself a little with

evident difficulty, he peered at the body of our friend, and seemed to realize in some measure the horror of the situation. But I think he would have remained there for hours, or perhaps for all time, in his utter despair and lassitude, if I had not taken the initiative.

"Come," I said, with an attempt at firmness. "We must get out of this."

"Where to?" he queried, dully. "The Flame has failed at its source and the Inner Dimension is no more. I wish I were dead, like Ebbonly. I might as well be, judging from the way I fell."

"We must find our way back to Crater Ridge," I said. "Surely we can do it, if the inter-dimensional portals have not been destroyed."

Angarth did not seem to hear me, but he followed obediently when I took him by the arm and began to seek an exit from the temple's heart among the roofless halls and overturned columns.

My recollections of our return are dim and confused, and are full of the tediousness of some interminable delirium. I remember looking back at Ebbonly, lying white and still beneath the massive pillar that would serve as an eternal monument. And I recall the mountainous ruins of the city, in which it seemed that we were the only living beings.

It was a wilderness of chaotic stone, of fused, obsidianlike blocks, where streams of molten lava still ran in the mighty chasms, or poured like torrents adown unfathomable pits that had opened in the ground. And I remember seeing amid the wreckage the charred bodies of those dark colossi who were the people of Ydmos and the warders of the Flame.

LIKE pygmies lost in some shattered forest of the giants, we stumbled onward, strangling in mephitic and metallic vapors, reeling with weariness, dizzy with the heat that emanated everywhere to surge upon us in buffeting waves. The way was blocked by overthrown buildings, by toppled towers and battlements, over which we climbed precariously and toilsomely. Often we were compelled to divagate from our direct course by enormous rifts that seemed to cleave the foundations of the world.

The moving towers of the wrathful Outer Lords had withdrawn, their armies had disappeared on the plain beyond Ydmos, when we staggered over the riven and shapeless and scoriac crags that had formed the city's ramparts.

Before us there was nothing but desolation—a fire-blackened and vapor-vaulted expanse in which no tree or blade of grass remained.

Across this waste we found our way to the slope of violet grass above the plain, which had lain beyond the path of the invaders' bolts. There the guiding monoliths, reared by a people of whom we were never to learn even the name, still looked down on the fuming desert and the mounded wreck of Ydmos. And there, at length, we came once more to the grayish-green columns that were the gateway between the worlds.

THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 6)

formation on these two stories, Corporal Wylie will be grateful if you will get in touch with him.

Now, Snaggle-tooth, gnaw your way into the first section of communiques.

First we have a complete broadside from Art R. Sehnert of Memphis, Tenn., who simply blows **STARTLING STORIES** apart and doesn't even sweep up the pieces. He goes on to say that he has taken the trouble to write a number of letters in this vein, and the old Sarge has evidently seen fit to "give them the waste basket cure."

That, Kiwi Sehnert, is the most unkind accusation you could make. If nothing else can be said (from your viewpoint) for **STARTLING STORIES**, nobody can successfully say that we cull favorites and refuse to print derogatory flashes in this inferno department.

This diatribe of yours is the very first the old Sarge has seen, and, as there is no point to it but a complaint about everything having an obnoxious odor, there is no point to printing it.

Try again sometime when your pen hasn't been dipped in straight acid. Really, there are some very nice people in Memphis. You should get around more and meet some of them.

LOYAL SPACE HOPPER

By Charles Huggins

Dear Sarge: How about pushing aside that 101% Proof Xeno long enough to plough through my scratching. I have just finished the latest issue of **STARTLING STORIES** and frankly I was amazed. By looking at your cover I expected a mess of baby talk. Try and make them more sensible looking. I have been reading science-fiction mags for years, and this was the best yet. Keep the good work up. Well, knock the neck off a jug of Xeno and let's get down to the analysis of the winter issue.

"The Great Ego"—26 lumps of sugar. A good story very well written; let's have more by Daniels.

"Canal"—9 lumps of sugar. Extra nicely done, slightly on the supernatural but extremely interesting.

"The Point of View"—75¾ bags of salty salt. If paper is as scarce as it is claimed, this should be eliminated, of course.

"The Bard of Ceres"—20 lumps of sugar. This was a welcome bit of humor which broke the reading up into mystery and humor.

As a closing remark I think the other fans would agree with me that this fine mag should be put out more often or at least each issue a little larger. I for one wouldn't mind the extra price.—520 Tate Street, Greensboro, N. C.

Well, Kiwi Huggins, the old Sarge might agree with you personally and privately, but did you ever hear of paper-rationing? After the war, we'll see what we can do about a lot of things. Sorry you didn't like **THE POINT OF VIEW**. It really is the point of view, you know. We printed this yarn by Stanley Weinbaum for the sake of the many Weinbaum fans. And no matter how you look at it, no three people in the world are going to agree on a complete list of which stories are worthy of reprint and which are not.

WISDOM BREAKS—SOMETHING

By Jack Townsend

Dear Xeno-sponge: At last wisdom breaks its long silence to make its debut in the miserable Ether Vibrates. If you can disengage your proboscis

from the jug for a moment I will permit you to bask in the sunshine of my sage-like qualities.

When I absorbed "The Great Ego" with one powerful brain wave, I was astonished. I liked it and the ego (mine) cried for more in a small voice. Congrats to Norman A. It was a swell job.

But the cover—uk-gag! It looks like something Loon Lump Oliver would laud. Wotta face! No kiddin', though, it bears the marks of a real artist, but the idea is terrible, awful, etc. The girl looks as though she is afraid to wrinkle her forehead; and the reptilian repulser—whew! Just take the same girl, wrap her in cellophane and slap her against an ebon space scene and, hot tamale, wooden that be nice.

"The Point of View" was but slightly a bit of all right. But maybe that's because I like Stan G., anyway. Why don't you dig back in your musty old tomes and drag out more Weinbaum, huh? OK, don't then. Drink your old Xeno and see if I care.

Jacobi dood it pretty heap good in "Canal." He was just one teeny trifle vague in about seventy-nine places though. Whydja hafta end it here?

"Bard of Ceres"—nice filler. Could be better though. It was a slight variation from the old theme, lonely men on asteroid capture big bad pirate who drops in for tea. It was better though than "Spawn of the Further Dark." Hope you don't mind endearing expressions, but this reader plenty affected by modern day murder of the written word. After reading this bit of refuse I held the mag gingerly away from me with thumb and forefinger and gazed most un-raptly at the (as I said before) cover and reached for the Xeno. Drink it? No. It is a remarkable paint remover and so after dissolving the surrealist nightmare on the front and ripping many pages out of the interior, I found I had a readable mag.

At about this time C. Oliver, the Ego, should scuttle into your office and perch on the chandelier, muttering hissing syllables about what a great story was "Spawn of F. D." between clenched fangs and flaccid lips. Bask in the sunshine of his inane praise, oh Printer of Gory-Stories, because he is the only one.

And raise not the Xeno jug at me, either. It's not that I don't like C.O.; argh, no, he's just a child.

Well, thanks for reading, old fop—er—cop and I'll be seein' ya in your next Xeno dream.—Eow 604, Wilson, N. C.

Your comments, Pee-lot Townsend, directed at Kiwi Chad Oliver become strictly a personal brawl between the two of you and the old Sarge is not going to be responsible. As far as what you say about the cover of the Spring issue, I refer you to the opening remarks of this department. Otherwise, you can now jump back into the box and I will fasten the catch.

NEVER BEFORE, BUT—?

By William Vietinghoff

Dear Sarge: You won't recognize the name: I have never written before. Ever since I finished reading the spring **STARTLING STORIES** I've been thinking wonderful thoughts about it, but I'm no mental telepathist so I am writing this letter. I had a million things I wanted to say, but when I read the ethergrams I found they had already been said. (Damn!) This leaves me nothing to do but criticize the stories.

"The Great Ego": (sigh!) It's been ages since I've read a long novel that wasn't cluttered up with space-ships, death-rays, and trips to other planets. I'm tired of stories about some brave brave rocketeer which drag on and on, telling how he, single-handed, saves Earth from Mars' secret weapon. But this story was different. "The Great Ego" gets 4 gasps for a change of plot. Pardon me while I read the next story.

"Canal": It starts out fine. I was anxious to see if Blanchard would ever catch up with Kramer. But the ending left me cold. I had the feeling that the author put Kramer in a mess and couldn't get him out so he blames it on a space warp and another dimension. This story rates one grunt.

Now your Hall of Fame story, "The Point of View": Technical but interesting. Plenty of room for thought here. This one rates two Hims.

Before I go any further, Sarge, in case this letter seems to have a juvenile air about it, don't worry. I'm only 15, but I'll improve.

"Spawn of the Further Dark": I liked this story because the Lizards had a human streak in them. I'm glad our hero didn't have to bump 'em off. While I'm on the subject, why do inhabitants of other planets have to have such unpronounceable names like Sib Nighth? I guess it's fate. This story rates one glub.

"The Bard of Ceres": Too short. I found it very humorous though. Those Cereans were really obliging little souls. Standing on their heads and all that. I liked the expressions on their faces in the illustration.

Tsk! Tsk! I shouldn't have gone this far without mentioning the cover. It's-er-nice. I somehow get the impression that Mr. Bergey was thinking of you, Sarge, when he painted the face on the monster. I think I'd better shut up now. Many thanks for the wonderful reading.—*General Delivery, Terrell Wells, Texas.*

Pee-lot Vietinghoff, you are now a full member of the crew of junior astrogators. What you say and think henceforth in this department is now your own fight. The old Sarge will hold your ethergrams while you boys fight things out. And don't get so fresh with the senior astrogator, or I'll haunt your dreams at night.

SCATTERING THE PIECES

By Ken Krueger

Dear Sarge: Well, now it's my turn to pick S.S. apart and scatter the pieces to the four winds. I shall now be original. I'll start on the cover. I liked it. Yes, you're right, I am queer. But somehow that girl fascinated me. A good lookin' gal. That's for me. But what the heck was that thing wrapped around the gadget supposed to be? I don't remember reading anything about him. Was he the hero? Could be.

Next I shall begin on the story. The only story worth beginning on. I mean Norman A. Daniels' "The Great Ego." It was the best novel of the year 1944. That is natural as it is also the only novel so far of the year. Keep printing stories like that and I'll begin to like your mag.

The second best story in the issue was Weinbaum's, but there's no use going into it. Everybody read it, so why bother? Come to think of it, what am I writing this letter for?

The rest you can take and rate for yourself. Not bad, but not good.

Now for the best part of the mag. The illustrations. Finlay! That's my boy. But tell me, was the picture of Pamela used before? It looked very familiar. Tell you what I'm going to do. I'll list the illustrations by page numbers so that anyone who wants to know what I'm talking about has to look them up. Fun, ha?

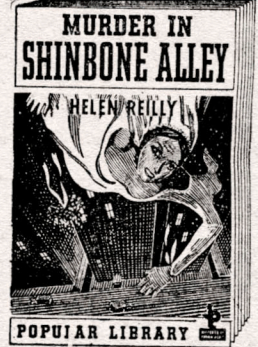
No. 1, the Finlay on Page 15. No. 2, the Finlay on Page 11. No. 3, the Finlay on Page 21. No. 4, The Finlay on Page 78. No. 5, the Whosis on Page 100. The other two ain't no good. But the cover still was.

Last but not least, I voice a plea to any reader who can read. Will you please send me a list of any fantasy books or magazines that you have? I'll answer any letter I get. That goes for you, too, Sarge. If you really did come from the year 2450 A.D., as Ray Karden claims, you should have quite a collection. I need the May 1986 issue of T.W.S. to complete my collection. The lead story is "Xeno from Saturn" by that master of the weird and SF story, Mr. Ray Cummings. Ha, ha, you missed me with that egg. By the way, just one more question. Does anyone read these things?—123 Edna Pl., Buffalo 8, N. Y.

Read what, Kiwi Krueger? Our stories, or your letters? Anyway, the reply to both is—yes. If you had asked me, instead, why—that I could not have answered. (And you may interpret this blunt subtlety any way you like.) Pamela never appeared in print before, except in an advertisement for "The Great Ego," which is where you may have seen her. And you can get lists of fantasy mags and books from many of the fanzines. Maybe you'll hear from fans; they write to me with facile ease. [Turn page]

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SS 6

STARTING THE YEAR RIGHT

By Charles Broadwell

Well, I've finally gone and done it. I went to night school and learned to write, just so I could drop you a letter, my first to any mag.

This being my first letter, the subject is the mag in general. I like your mag. I won't use a lot of adjectives, your mag is simply, but truly good. I especially like your long novels, Hall of Fame classics and The Ether Vibrates.

At this point I would like to make a few suggestions, with the hope of helping you improve your already fine mag.

But first let me second the motion of a few of my fellow fans.

1. Cut out the "war corn" and propoganda. I've seen a lot of fine science fiction mags ruined by trying to mix propoganda and science fiction. It can ruin fine authors, too. (Ross Rocklynnne, take notice.)

2. You, Sergeant, will use a little less of that fake space lingo. Or I'll speak to the president about having Xeno rationed.

3. Print some novel-length classics, say, "The Strange Death of Sergeant Saturn" or how they used the old space dog for fuel.

And now for my suggestions:

1. Forget about trimmed edges. What do those vacuum-headed space boots want, a cloth-bound edition of Esquire?

2. "This Startling War" and the war bond ad wouldn't be missed. Don't get me wrong on the war bond ad. I'm as interested in seeing the war won as the next guy. But I feel that in a mag of this type it's just so much wasted space which could be utilized to lengthen the novel.

3. Get Finlay to do covers. It would add still more class to your mag.

4. Tell that would-be Jack Benny, Chad Oliver, that his letters are about as interesting as a sunrise on Mercury. Be a good boy, Chad, and forget to write next issue, huh?

You can wake up now, my ringed planet name-sake. Come over the art and stories.

The cover: Hum—I'm just wondering how many gallons of wood alcohol Bergey drank before he proceeded to paint that nightmare that adorns the cover of SS. Bergey's a good artist when he wants to be. But tell him to paint with his eyes open next time.

Aside from all the supposed-to-be-funny-talk in the preceding paragraph, Bergey is a fine artist, and a valuable asset to the mag. But tell him to choose his cover subjects more carefully.

I'm glad to see some Finlay work on the inside; needless to say, it was welcome as always.

The stories: You're certainly starting the year off right. Back-slapping in order for Daniels. "The Great Ego" was a smooth-moving yarn that left me with that can-die-in-happiness feeling. And of the best of its kind I've ever read.

The Hall of Fame Classic was amusing but seriously thought-provoking. There was a lot of philosophical truth in that yarn. I have always believed that everyone sees the world and life differently, in a spiritual rather than material sense, of course.

The short stories left me with a dull, indifferent feeling. You can drop your shorts, they'll never be missed.

(Don't hit me, I'll never do it again.)

Well, that's about all this trip, but I would like to say one more thing. Don't pay too much attention to the babbling of us jr. astrogators. We all like your mag even though we do gripe. And, I believe, I express what is felt in the heart of every jr. astrogator here when I say: you're a great guy, Sarge; happy spacing to you.—216 N. Beaudry, Los Angeles 12, Calif.

Thanks, Pee-lot Broadwell, for what you say about the old space dog. You must meet my wife sometime and sell her a bill of goods. About your other comments, you know, if the senior commander would just give the old Sarge a free rein, between you kiwis and me, we could botch up the old craft STARTLING STORIES in good shape, no?

Let's get on with the ethergrams, Snaggle-tooth; I'm running low on Xeno.

THE GOOD OLD DAZE

By Sgt. Jerry A. Mace

Now that the Spring issue of S.S. is a dead soldier let us bathe our hands and intestines with a

cleansing draught of Xeno and hold a post-mortem over the quivering remains.

If you'll just have Snaggle-tooth postpone his whittling and hand me that scalpel.

Now, with a deft twist of the wrist we hack off the cover and examine its peculiarities. The most notable being a large, blue-green reptile bearing a leering countenance startlingly reminiscent of a certain character known as Wart-ears. Next we find a smaller green snake seemingly suspended in mid-air directly in front of a luscious pair of limbs. The whole is highly colorful and dramatic and, of course, inaccurate. Nowhere in the story is there any reference to the snake having a humanoid cranium nor does the hue of either match the author's black snakes. Ah, but those legs, all is forgiven, Bergey.

Now for the stories.

"The Great Ego" was poorly handled and lacked the appeal of "A God Named Kroo" though it was readable in part. I was especially disappointed in the situation where, after overpowering St. George in his office, Downing practically begged for a strait-jacket by announcing to all and sundry his capture of the fiend who had turned him into a kitten. A thing which no reasonably intelligent person would believe and which any man of our hero's character would have realized—the author there struck a great false note. I was both pleased and surprised with the ending since I had not considered the possibility of St. George being tricked into changing to a snake and the consequences of such an act. The whole thing would seem to indicate that with just a little more thought and planning Daniels could do big things.

As for the shorts, "The Point of View" was naturally in a class by itself what with being a Weinbaum, and rates No. 1 spot this issue. I wish some kind publisher would give us the complete works of Weinbaum or at least an omnibus of his better stories. No doubt such a project would go over big.

For the rest "Canal" was the only one worthy of mention and grabs off third place on the scoreboard.

In the departments, "The Ether Vibrates" seems rather anemic these days and lacking the spirit and snap displayed of old. Most of the fans seem content to sit back and toss occasional bouquets at one another with only a mild growl now and then at the authors. I miss the reek of Xeno fumes and the clamor for authors' and artists' blood punctuated by the cracking of skulls as the old Sarge wields a space spanner to keep the rookies in line. Even our old friend Ebey was mild this trip and seemed concerned mainly with a blurb for his fanzine.

Ah me, civilization has its price, softness and routine! There is little left for an old space rat but to quaff his Xeno and dream of more glorious times.—Camp Shelby, Miss.

You speak so adequately for yourself, Pee-lot Mace, that the old Sarge has little to add. You know by now what to do in response to your comments on the Spring cover, and I don't mean those famous three little words, either.

Next case.

HOORAY AND ALSO HIC!

By G. Dallas

Hello! Greetings! Salutations! Bunk!

I have just read my first issue of "Startling Stories," and will send you my report immediately.

1—"The Great Ego" was the best by far. Pics by Finlay were excellent. Cover by Bergey was marvelous. It seemed like a colored photograph. Only trouble is, on the cover it said a novel of the future. Well, it wasn't.

2—"Spawn of the Further Dark" was second. Excellent comedy.

3—"Bard of Ceres" and "Point of View" tie for third.

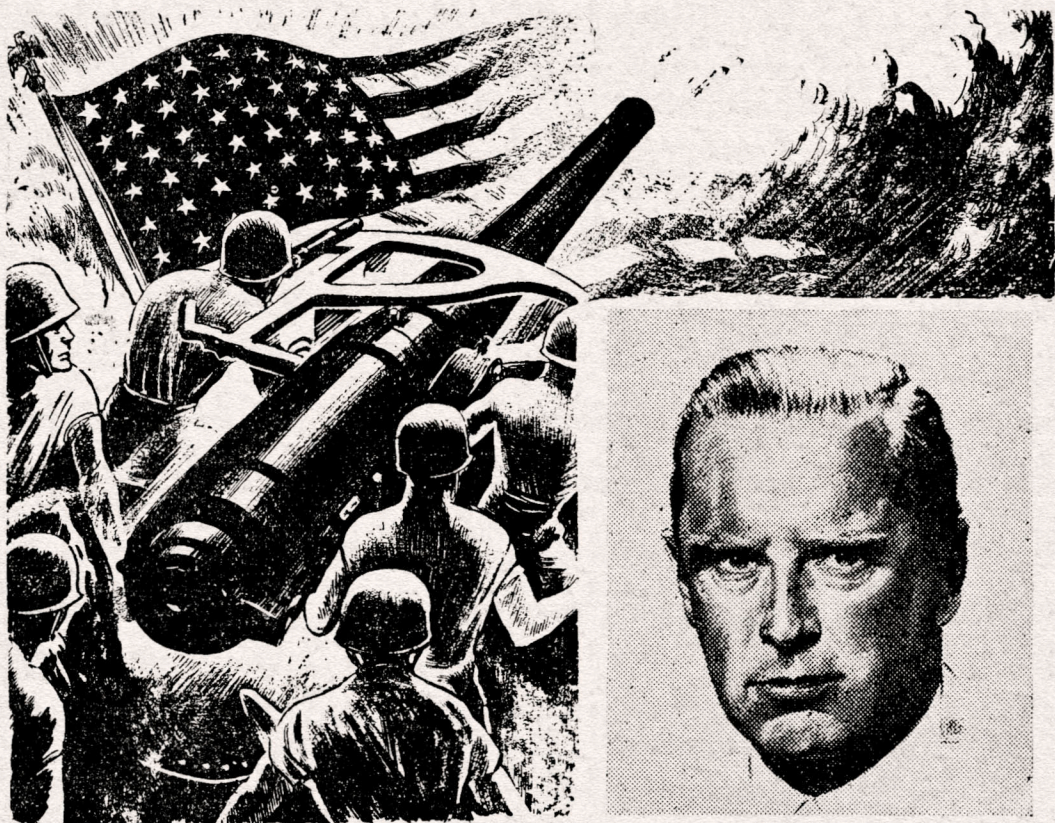
4—"Canal" was a flop. How did Blanchard escape all the traps? What happened to Kramer when he passed the Space-Flaw? I hope there is a sequel to explain it all!

Best picture in the book was the cover by Bergey. The one on page 15 by Finlay was second. On page 100, "Spawn of the Further Dark" was third. The others were no good.

You could have left out "Thrills in Science," "Startling War" and "Your Contribution to Victory" and made a longer story.

When is the next issue of Captain Future coming out, anyway?—6615 Lawnview Ave., Cleveland 3, Ohio.

(Continued on page 104)



WESTBROOK PEGLER

Straight to the Bottom

By WESTBROOK PEGLER

World-Famous Newspaper Columnist

IT CAN'T be true that the American people have to be talked into buying War Bonds. The people don't quibble about interest rates or question the security of the investment but most of us have never regarded ourselves as important investors and never study investment as financiers do. We are savers, but ordinarily we save in pig banks and savings accounts or through insurance. It is hard to realize that old Sam could make use of as little as \$18.75 when a tank costs X-thousands and, for years, we have been reading of appropriations of millions.

The late Jack Curley, the promoter of wrestling exhibitions, some of which were mockeries, but better than the grimmer endeavors of the great hairy, sweaty bodies in his employ, told a sad story of the end of an imported performer known as the Terrible Turk.

The Terrible Turk had made a great for-

tune wrestling in the United States and converted it into gold coin and started home.

But, at sea, the ship caught fire and burned and the Turk was safe in a lifeboat which was about to lower away, when temptation overcame him. He ran back to his stateroom, strapped on his money belt and staggered again to his lifeboat station to discover the boat already in the water and drawing away.

Mr. Curley's Terrible Turk climbed the rail, leaped for the boat, missed it by yards and sank like an anvil.

This unhappy experience seems appropriate to the day's lesson. If Hitler and Tojo win this war all of us go straight to the bottom where the money can't buy anything.

The common idea is that these bonds back the soldiers. That is true, but it is truer and more to the point, that the fighting men are backing up the bonds, staking their lives to protect these investments.

THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 102)

In short, Kiwi Dallas, you approve of our Spring voyage. Only . . . and off we go again! The Spring issue of **CAPTAIN FUTURE** is on the newsstands right now. Surely you've snagged a ride by this time. And I hope Author Jacobi explains things to you pee-lots. Personally, I don't know how Blanchard did anything in that canal; I was polishing the rings of Saturn about that time. Yeah, with Xeno, and I do mean those bubbly, iridescent and evanescent rings which emanate from the point of the nose.

STARTLING IS EXCITING

By Joseph Hassid

I have read the last issue of SS. I tip my hat to you. The cover is a masterpiece. Can that guy Bergey draw! Not to mention Virgil Finlay. Good work, keep it up. That's the stuff we like. I enjoyed "The Great Ego" from the first word to the last. A great writer Daniels. Want to see more of him if possible. Ah, but alas! There are always two sides to a story.

I was so content up till now, that I decided to finish the book today. I don't know whether I read too much today. Because I didn't find one part of the story "Canal" exciting. Every paragraph was boring. Especially the outline of the story. I decided I must complain about Jacobi. So I'm writing to you.

"The Point of View" was fair. "Thrills in Science" were excellent. I enjoyed it very much. Even though I studied many of them before. The rest of the book was exciting also. I learned many new facts in "This Startling War."

Keep up the good work and let's see more of Daniels and Finlay.—1425 Macombs Rd., Bronx 52, New York.

The old Sarge is beginning to think that most of you kiwis liked **THE GREAT EGO** better than medium. We'll have to ask Author Daniels to fry another egg on the other side.

Now all you juniors wrap yourselves back snugly in your chains, for here comes a gal pee-lot, and the old Sarge wants to hear what she has to say.

NIGHTMARE COVER

By Virginia Lelake

I have been reading your magazine for over a year but this is the first time I've written to you.

I enjoy Science-Fiction immensely and am quite fascinated by some of your stories.

There is one thing, however, that annoys me most exceedingly. That is the cover illustrations. They are terrible; especially the cover of the Spring issue. It was something dreamed in a nightmare. I think a more "scientific" cover would be more appropriate than that hideous green snake. (And anyhow they were black in the story.)

Since I have had training in chemistry and physics I would enjoy more stories of this type.

On the whole, however, I like your magazine and its companion, **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**. Since I have been unable to purchase any copies of **CAPTAIN FUTURE**, I cannot make any comments about it.

It is indeed regrettable that publication of your magazine has been curtailed; but perhaps after Victory we shall be enabled to read many science magazines.

Keep up the good work, and please may we have a respite from green snakes?—16 1/2 Kirk Ave., Pittsburgh 10, Pa.

As all you space monkeys know, the old Sarge rarely speaks sharply to any of his gal junior astrogators, so I'm not going to do it this time. But, listen, Kiwi Virginia, a respite means, any way you want to interpret it, a temporary intermission or an interval of

rest. And since when have we had a St. Patrick's holiday series of covers from which you must have a respite? For further observations on the cover, see the opening paragraphs of this department.

But don't feel reprimanded, honey chile; here comes another gal pee-lot with a gripe about the self-same cover—and with a lot less justification than you have.

SHORT AND SWEET

By Frann Miescher

The Spring SS can be summed up shortly and sweetly—super!

Illustration, excellent.

Stories, excellent.

Articles, excellent.

Ether Vibrates, excellent.

Despite the Sarge. I guess maybe you're okay in person—just daffy in print—maybe.

And I don't object to beautiful women—draw them in gee-strings and stars in the tropics, but honest now—shouldn't they be furnished at least a fur muff in sub-arctic temperatures?—2347 Spring, Paso Robles, Calif.

Let's take another look at the Spring cover of **STARTLING STORIES**. Gee-strings and stars in the tropics . . . fur muffs in sub-arctic temperatures. Ah, yes, that blazing scene does indicate the need of furs, doesn't it? Reminds the old Sarge of a sunset on Pluto—and I do mean the Pluto of Roman mythology. Just who is a wee bit daft in print, my dear?

MOTORDROME BUZZINGS

By Motorcycle Joe

Here I go taking my life in your hands for the first time. I wonder if it is worth the risk?

Anyway, to get to the point fast, I just finished the Spring Issue of **STARTLING STORIES** last night and thought I had better drop you a few lines to tell you that I really enjoyed "The Great Ego" in this issue. Though I had the solution to the end worked out far ahead of the story. (Genius, eh, wot?)

I didn't care too much for the rest of the mag, but "The Great Ego" and Virgil Finlay's usual superb illustrations made it worth the price and over.

I may also add that I do like the "Review of Fan Publications" a lot.

I have never seen any of these as yet tho, so am sending for a few of them today to see "what's kookin'." I am in the printing and publishing business myself (since 1935) and may be interested in starting one of my own if I like 'em. We'll see.

Glad to see "Beyond the Singing Flame" spotted for next issue, too. I read the "Singing Flame" story years ago when I first got hold of a stack of old SF mags, and I can still remember it was exceptionally good. Give us more like it, please.

Well, the proper thing for me to do before signing off, I guess, would be to say something bright about the Xeno jug. But that stuff is so much out of date here in "Little Egypt" that we keep a jugful in the local museum as a relic along with the first atomic Space Drive units ever made.

Eye now, and maybe we'll meet again someplace in one of the outer Galaxies.—Springfield, Mass.

Waxing fresh with your superior officer, eh? Trying to cast aspersions on the potency of Xeno, are you? And just what do you tough space birds in Springfield drink, that you think Xeno is too mild for more than a museum relic, Pee-lot Joe? Or maybe you're taking the old Sarge for a fast ride around the drome?

Never mind; you are assigned to the gas rocket gang, where you can work off some of that super-steam.

DANIELS IS GOOD

By Austin Hamel

Dear Sarge: I had anticipated another beautiful cover for the Spring issue of SS, and look at what I got! The infernal-eternal triangle of BEM-hero-and-heroine (in distress as usual) with a bright yallar background, while smeared all over the lower right-hand corner was the blurb for "The Great Ego." And standing triumphantly on top, in big red letters (so everybody can see) are the words **STARTLING STORIES**. Ugh!

And what, may I ask, was a humanoid head doing on the Bem? When St. George turned serpent he turned *all* serpent. To get a better idea of what I mean, see Finlay's swell depiction of the scene on Page 15.

I was glad to see you using Finlay, but your magazine first grows conscious of him when he enters the Army. Oh, well, I'll wait for the next issue to see this new artist of yours, a cross between Paul and Finlay. Wow! It sounds like Lawrence. Now there's an artist you *should* get. I would like to see a cover by Lawrence or Bok gayly decorating your mag.

In finishing "The Great Ego," I felt a satisfaction that one feels when he reads a story that he expects to be good, and that is good. "The Great Ego" was the type of story I like to read in your mag once in a while. It was as good as, if not better than, his other fine yarn, "Speak of the Devil."

"The Point of View," got me sore. Now don't jump to conclusions; a story like that gets me sore because it goes too quick. I was so sorry that it was over, that I read it again. It's always like that when I read a Weinbaum yarn.

The two shorts were O.K. I was so surprised that Long wrote a story that I enjoyed, that I take back what I said about him in TWS, Winter, '44. That is, until he starts on another hacky spree.

The Shakespeare part of "The Bard of Ceres," reminded me of a Sergeant Saturn joke.

To Tom Pace who wants to know who has heard of Carl Claudy: Yes, kiwi, I've heard of him, and also read a few of his swell books. That's a good idea you have there.

How about you fans going back to the old pastime of rating the ten best or Golden Dozen stories once more? I once spent many a pleasant hour comparing my list with those of other fans, and I would also like to see how today's stories stack up against those of '39 and '40.

Hoping for trimmed edges and a bi-monthly after the war, and less covers like that of the Spring issue, I remain yours for bigger and better science and fantasy.—2090 East Tremont Ave., Bronx 62, N. Y.

[Turn page]

NEXT ISSUE'S HEADLINERS

SHADOW OVER MARS

An Amazing
Complete Novel

By LEIGH BRACKETT

THE DAY OF THE BEAST

A Hall of Fame Classic

By D. D. SHARP

PLUS MANY OTHER STORIES AND
FEATURES



*You may be sitting pretty
now... but...*

AFTER WAR, WHAT?

You are probably sitting pretty now. Almost anyone can get a fair job with good money.

But when peace comes, when millions of men come out of the army and navy, when industry converts back—where will you be? There will be keen competition between companies and readjustments of many jobs. Will you be one whom industry labels "Must Keep"—even lists for promotion?

You can be by thorough preparation now. And you can prepare in spare time, without a moment's interruption of your present job, and at low cost. Thousands are doing it—are raising themselves above the crowd.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Law: LL.B. Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business English | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenotypy |

Name.....Age.....

Position.....

Address.....

Dear Kiwi Hamel, in reply to your above letter, please see opening philosophy in this present department.

Grab another communicue spindle, Snaggle-tooth. No use telling this pee-lot that we have been using Finlay drawings off and on for years. If he doesn't know it by himself, he's—by himself.

SPRING STARTLING SEEMS SAD

By Chad Oliver

Dear Sarge: The Spring cover seems to do everything but stand up and demand immediate attention. It shall get same. Boogeyman Bergey, after a number of remarkably sane paintings, reverted to his former mad self and came up with what is easily the worst cover ever to frighten young readers away from STARTLING STORIES. That's something of an accomplishment, too—there have been a number of lalapaloozers. Let's look at the ingredients. We find: one green reptile with a face like a Hollywood version of a city editor; a poor gal all tied up and registering horror commendably, replete with that ancient device known among the elite as Gaps-In-Ye-Olde-Costume; a futile looking hero struggling in a bonfire; and, lastly, a frantic concoction of violently lurid colors. With those ingredients one might logically expect a very crummy bit of alleged artwork. Bergey came through nicely in that respect.

Stanley G. Weinbaum, ever-brilliant, saved the issue with "The Point of View," the Hall of Fame selection. This is one of Weinbaum's finest stories—high praise in itself. Naturally enough, it places first by a considerable margin.

"The Great Ego" was a fairly entertaining story with one good character—Rodney St. George. That about sums up Daniels' second novel for SS. Not too bad, not too good. Extremely mediocre, so to speak.

Jacobi's "Canal" was fair filler stuff, and "The Bard of Ceres" is not bad enough to draw comment. But the remaining short—ah, there we have something!

Long's "Spawn of the Further Dark" must have been a crude satire. No story could possibly be as utterly stupid as this epic without an ulterior motive. Along with the worst cover SS has ever sported, we now get the worst story to go along

with it. There is a paper shortage. There were eleven pages there that would never have been missed. Quite the contrary.

Cheer up tho, Sarge. The Wellman novel next trip looks really good. All mags slump once in a while. And who knows—one man's poison—

If anyone else but Finlay had illustrated "The Great Ego" I'd say that it was a good job. But I've seen Finlay's brilliant work too often to accept the pix in this issue as true Finlay art. Ah, well—such is the price of fame. (The portrait of St. George was good, however, and the drawing on Page 21 is good enough to get by.)

The best pic of the issue was Finlay's for Jacobi's "Canal." That looks a bit more like the real King of the Fantasy Artists.

When some migrating sun from Outer Space blunders into Earth, our beloved planet will have reached the exact spot I have now come to in this missive—the end. See you next ish—with a bit more complimentary report, I sincerely hope.—3956 *Ledgewood, Cincinnati, O.*

You may now crawl back into the nut-and-bolt bin, Kiwi Oliver. It seems from the tone of your communicue that what you like about STARTLING STORIES is looking ahead toward the next voyage; the current one rarely pleases.

Well, if a junior astrogator can get so much pleasure from looking forward, that's swell. No use calling your attention to the nice parts and scenes of the present voyage. You just drop out of the astrogation squad and shine the brasswork. You remind the old Sarge of the inverted whiffenpoof. You don't care where you are; you just want to see where you're going.

Never mind, pee-lot, the old senior astrogator isn't sore; it's just the reverberation of the anvil chorus in the aggregate which makes me shake this pound of powdered aspirin over my head.

I might say here that there are lots and lots of ethergrams still dangling from the spindles—dozens of heart-warming complaints from pee-lots like Ray Karden, Kent Bone, Guy Trucano, Jr.—and many others, some of whom have never written in before.

I'd like mighty well to print reams of such letters (and the old space dog doesn't mind letting you little beasts rip the quivering carcass to pieces, either) but when there's nothing particularly sharp about your gnawings, there really is no use of going on like this. How about a few of you expert sharpshooters sniping at me with some clever ammunition? You want pep and punch in this department, you say. Okay, let's supply it with full-grown wit—not the half-grown boy variety. If you get what I mean. Sure, I'm needling you.

You birds are supposed to write something smart in your ethergrams if you want to make the senior astrogator smart (and there are two connotations to this). Lay off the sheer insults, straight acrimony and juvenile patter, and shoot some first-class dope right across the plate to burst in the old Sarge's face.

Before we cut the rockets and coast along on momentum, let's have a stern rocket blast from that crusty chap on Baker Avenue.

OF THIS AND THAT

By Joe Kennedy

Dear Sarge: I open this letter with a gripe. Yeah, I know it's a Punk way to start, but this has always bothered me, sooo-o-o—might as well get it over with. Why does that blurb on the cover have to read: "A Novel of the Future. . ."? Most of the novels have no connection with the future whatsoever.

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Getting on to more pleasant things, it is my JOYOUS duty to state that the illustrations this issue were actually good! Geeeee! Lookit all the Finlays! Where's it coming from? (Suggestion: It would be wise to stretch out the Finlay pix remaining in your files as long as possible. There won't be any new ones for the duration.) All other interiors were passably fair. The Finlays, by the way, were terrific.

Cover: OUCH!!!!!!

Lettuce see what has been going on in the way of fiction, if you peas, tho nobody will carrot all and will turnip their noses at my opinion.

1. *The Point of View* by Weinbaum is an easy candidate for first. Wow! A well-known C. A. Smith story for next issue! The Hall of Fame is starting the new year right. How 'bout longer H.O.F. yarns? One or two shorts could be omitted and no harm would be done. If Patzer's *Ship from Nouchere* hadn't been among them booklets youse wuz sellin' so recently, I'd nominate it for the Hall of Fame. I have yet to read a S-F tale that can hold a candle to it.

2. *Spawn of the Further Dark*. Not that this was anything exceptional, but 'twas so very neatly handled that I can't help giving it second. Frank is improving lately.

3. *The Great Ego*. Oh, how cute! You named it after me! While I usually enjoy your novels, this one was an exception. 'Twasn't hack, but so uninterestingly (gorsh! a six-syllable word!) handled that it doesn't deserve any higher'n third. The all-in-a-day's-work sort of thing, if ya know wot I mean. The character of Rodney St. George was convincing, but the others—!!!!!!

Suggest you get a novel from Leigh Brackett. She can write. Also C. L. Moore, Anthony Boucher, and—if possible—Eando Binder. By all means, get Bolling Branham to write some more for your mags. His *Lotos Eaters* was the best story TWS printed all last year. Maybe even another novel by Cummings would not be amiss. An interplanetary one. Anybody know where Ray's been lately? I haven't seen a new yarn by him in a good many months.

4. *Canal*. Typical Jacobi stuff, but quite good, of its type.

5. *Bard of Ceres*. Okay. The alien race was amusing. Wish Farrell would write something besides these short-short things. I'd like to see what he can really do.

Fanzine reviews: Methinks the "humor" could be replaced by helpful comments to the 'zine publishers and fuller descriptions of their mags.

Letter section:

Still one of the best, though the Old Space Dog ain't so peppery as he used to be. Can it be that
[Turn page]

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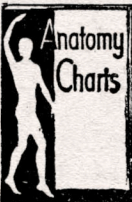
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the present Sgt. Saturn is a different fellow from the one of a year ago? Hmhmhmhm.

Good ethergrams were supplied by Ebey, Oliver, Maddox, Cpl. Benham, Jimmy Gray, and several others. The best part of my last letter was cut, but I don't blame you. I thought Tom Pace had the outstanding letter of the issue. Don't ask me why; I just liked it. Yep, Tommy, I've heard of Carl H. Claudy. He wrote some terrific STFantasyarns for the old *American Boy* before it went bankrupt, not to mention a swell series of books now out of print. By and by Claudy turned to comics, but I haven't heard of him since. Yessir, Bok would be a natural for S.S. also Dolgov, Lawrence, Clyne, Magrarian, and Krupa. Is the art editor listening?

That list of favorite fans gets me thinking. Someday somebody should write a book about the various letter hacks and their respective styles. Only trouble is that nobody would buy the book except the letter hacks.—S; Baker Ave., Dover, N. J.

See what I mean, Junior? Without dashes, question marks, exclamation points and a few phoneticized gurgles, Pee-lot Joe would be as speechless as a tongue-tied man at a church circle. But never mind, Kiwi Joe, you sprinkled some interesting chatter here and there throughout your communique. The old Sarge will leave most of it for the rest of you junior astrogators to kick around until dark.

We beat you to the draw on Leigh Brackett, didn't we? Her *SHADOW OVER MARS* is coming up next issue. As for the others, we do the best we can to get stories from favorite authors, but there's a war going on, and many of our writers and artists are working type-writers (both kinds) and painting camouflage for Uncle Sam nowadays.

This concludes the class for this voyage. Take over the dog watch, kiwis; the old Sarge has to knock the neck off a fresh Xeno bottle. Happy spacings to you little ogres.

—SERGEANT SATURN.

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Manly Wade Wellman Probes the Unknown

LONG ere this most of you scientificion fans have learned facts about this issue's novelist. But for the benefit of those who have never heard any of the interesting highlights in the career of Manly Wade Wellman, author of STRANGERS ON THE HEIGHTS, here is a thumbnail biography. Manly Wade Wellman was born in the jungly interior of Portuguese West Africa,



MANLY WADE WELLMAN

long enough ago to make him too old for present service in Army, Navy or Marine Corps. His parents were native Americans on a medical assignment to a mission station, and he came to America to go to school, in a number of cities north, south, east and west.

Growing up, he tried briefly such professions as farm-handing, soldiering, bouncing in a dance hall, bookselling, newspaper reporting and editing. Finally he got to be six feet two, very heavily built in proportion, and a writer of science fiction.

He lives in Westwood, New Jersey, with his wife, son, and cat, and considers it worth while to pass on these remarks anent the writing of STRANGERS ON THE HEIGHTS:

The theory of supernormal influences on human thoughts and fortunes is not new, and others before me have pointed out that those who study such things—Poe, Bierce, Fort, Lovecraft—are apt to die suddenly and mysteriously. I didn't die writing this story, but once or twice it had me looking over my shoulder.

During the time I worked on it, I had three bizarre accidents, one of them keeping me from the typewriter for two weeks; one escape from death, and a narrow one, when a car turned over with

[Turn page]

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me; two losses of important chunks of the manuscript; and many irritating delays, obstacles and bafflements, too numerous to mention.

If there was definite danger, perhaps I averted it by summoning good spirits of my own. I mean the characters, several of them based on my friends—a fellow writer who is now in the service; a grizzled old warrior and traveler who, as Dr. Parr, gets profusely quoted verbatim; and a very brave and true gentleman who has died in this war, died the sort of death an American soldier is ready and proud to die. Blessings on all these people!

The story may have its shortcomings, and an equivocal ending; but I think it's the last of this type I'll tackle. Again and again during the writing I had the sense of a sinister voice saying: "Lay off if you know what's good for you!"

So I'm laying off. I know what's good for me.—
Manly Wade Wellman.

THRILLS IN SCIENCE

(Concluded from page 82)

the construction of his super-strong arch came from the figure of a spider's circular web, the theory of increasing the strength of matter by dividing and combining it, thereby causing it to act over a larger space than it would occupy in a solid state.

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REVIEW OF THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN PUBLICATIONS

By
SERGEANT SATURN

GATHER around the chart table, my little space chickadees, and don't grab. Wait until the old Sarge passes out the assignments. This voyage we have quite an assortment of this and that for the delectation of all you little ogres.

Before we roll up our sleeves, tilt the Xenon jug and get down to the business of



briefing the present cargo of fanzines, your senior astrogator has a couple of comments to make. Probably you pee-lots will call them announcements.

First, I want to thank Connor and Robinson for their FANEWSCARD WEEKLY. This weekly postal, while not qualifying as a fanzine for review, certainly keeps us posted on bits of news. All you kiwis who are interested in what goes on with fellow fans will enjoy it. The address is 6636 S. Sacramento, Chicago 29, Ill.

Next we have a notice from Francis T. Laney, publisher of THE ACOLYTE, that he has, with all equipment, moved to Los Angeles where he has taken a war job in an airplane plant, and THE ACOLYTE must be temporarily suspended. However, you can look for No. 6 shortly.

We hear from the publishers of MIDGE that it is going to increase its price and change its form. New subscription price—30 for 65c henceforth.

And last, but not least—if you get what I mean—I want to thank the gang at Shangi-La for the artwork contributed by the Gargantua Grapefruit Growers of Southern California. The old Sarge is crazy about grapefruit, no foolin'.

And now to the regular vivisection.

ARCANA, 256 26th Ave., San Francisco 21, Calif. Editor, Harry Honig. Tri-annual. 10c per copy, 3 issues for 25c.

Nice job of 26 pages. Good mimeograph work on white in varying colors of type—green, blue, red and black. Several good drawings and neat, well-balanced contents page with everything from cover to verse included and listed. The old Sarge was smitten with the cover. Flat-headed nude dodging ionized snowflakes while her bath sponge explodes in upper left-hand corner. The lines of the nude on page 15 aren't bad, either. This girl does the grave-yard scene from Hamlet with a dozen Yoricks. Count 'em for yourself. Good job, Editor Honig.

BEOWULF, 9 Bogert Place, Westwood, N. J. Editor, Gerry de la Ree, Jr. First

[Turn page]



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Eight standard yellow pages between baby-blue covers. Nice contents page—fiction, articles, departments. No artwork. Aw, heck! But a neat little number, Editor Ree.

CENTAURI, 515 Ocean Ave., Pismo Beach, Calif. Editor, Andy Anderson. Quarterly. 10c per copy, three for 25c.

Thirty-two pages, illustrations on front and back covers, neat contents page, nice headings. Standard size and nice thick grayish-white art paper. A good job, but I'll spend my spare time on the next voyage puzzling out the significance of the artwork and I'll write you a letter about it. The dough-head on page 13 looks interesting. Well, yeast is yeast as the brewers always say. Let's blast on.

CLUSTER, 409 12th Street, Cloquet, Minn. Editor, Ray Karden. Quarterly. 10c per copy.

Twenty-four pages of standard white with purple inking that fades from deep purple to delicate mauve here and there, according to how the printer's devil inked his machine. Otherwise, nice. No artwork save for a "Henry" type of cartoon on the back cover and a sort of triangular Paris Garter on the front with a new plastic grip. The material seems quite good—what the old Sarge had time to spell out. I go for pitchers myself.

DIABLERIE, 1299 California Street, San Francisco 9, Calif. Editor, Bill Watson. Tri-annual. 5c per copy.

Twenty pages of black type on white. Hand-lettered heading in color. Nice contents page with good assortment of fare on menu. Arty profession touch in black-and-white drawing on page 10. Very neat. Includes a rum piece by E. Hoffmann Price, and by "rum" I mean a substitute for Xeno. Good job, Editor Watson, so never mind the needle.

FANTASY FICTION FIELD, 6401 24th Ave., Brooklyn, New York. Editor, Julius Unger. Newsweekly. 5c per copy, 6 for 25c.

This little number is a very nice perennial. It has been reviewed many times here. Let it suffice that this is one of the best fanzines of its type ever seen by the old Sarge. I have about ten issues here before me, and the material and subjects covered are amazing. The latest number includes a full-page black-and-white drawing with intricate detail reminiscent of Virgil Finlay. A mustache-less Hitler is in chains before a weird canopied or draped mason-work doorway—while an attenuated lizard goes back to the juggling business with tapers. I don't understand it, but I like it. Carry on, Editor Unger.

MARS, 5015 Shaw Avenue, St. Louis 10, Mo. Editor, Van H. Splawn. Apparently a quarterly. Changing title next issue to **THE FANTAZINE**. 5c per copy, 6 for 25c.

Twenty-two white pages sandwiched in between cerise and yellow covers. Modernistic artwork and headings in line drawings and with two or three colors. Good contents page—looks as though the reading matter is good. Too bad the old space dog can't read! Wow! Take a look at the double-spread illustration on pages 10-11. Fiery flying females. Like a shot of Xeno. And note the bare babe on the title page. Tossing quilts with some of Captain Future's proton gun rings. I'll play you one more game.

NUZ FRUM HOME, 1443 4th Ave., South; Fargo, N. Dakota. Editor, Walter Dunkelberger. Monthly. Price, a letter of acknowledgment per issue.

This is not strictly a scientifanzine, but it is a good little number full of fun, quips and newsy chatter. Some jokes and a few cartoons. Originated principally for boys in the Armed Service, and a darned nice stunt, if you ask the old Sarge. Good luck, Editor Dunkelberger—and the fans should at least send postage.

PARADOX, 3 Lewis Street, Westfield, Mass. Editor, Frank Wilimczyk, Jr. Quarterly. 3 issues for 25c.

Twenty pages of good thick pulp between yellow covers. Good contents page and neat line-drawn headings in colors. The text matter seems good. Cover design—a member of the labor party kicks over the Empire State Building, and somebody—presumably the Little Flower—deluges him with doughnuts from Nedick's and Chock Full 'O Nuts. Back cover—a pair of spaghetti wanderers find a meatball in the noodle forest. A good issue, Editor Wilimczyk.

SATURNALIA.

The last issue, so why bother? We'll wait for the new fanzine FEUD which takes this one's place. Good luck to the new Vulcan publication!

STAPLECON.

This seems to be a special explosion on the part of Corporal Ackerman. Somebody else will have to figure out the phonetics and stuff while the old Sarge knocks off another quart quaff of Xeno. The alphabetical title is Ackerman's. You can get an explanation for it on page 15 of the January issue of VOM—to which we now gravitate.

VOM, Box 6475 Metro Station, Los Angeles 14, Calif. Published by Snafucius Publications. 15c per copy, seven for \$1. Issued the first of every so often.

And honest to goodness, Judge, that's all I know about this saddle-girth cuttin'. The old Sarge always did have to falter his way through VOM. Twelve foolscap white pages between montage photograph front cover and a VOM Maiden powdering herself with stardust on the inside back cover. I think the stardust comes from a nova, with a couple of Christmas stars bringing up the rearguard. Probably they're ushers in the cosmic movie, I dunno. Included in the issue is a reproduction of a drawing by Wallace Smith, through courtesy of Ronald Clyne. This fanzine is always good, and one of the most costly in the field. But I'll be danged if I can keep up with it.

THE VULCAN, Route 1, Ripley, Tenn. Editor, Lionel Innman. Approximately bi-monthly. 10c per copy, three for 25c.

Twenty-six pages (including the yellow front cover) of standard white paper with purple ink. Contents page set in type. Looks quite snazzy. Has drawn headings and a couple of full-page drawings, and seems to be a member of a combine of fanzines, the inner set-up of which the old Sarge knows nothing. You birds figure this stuff out for yourselves. I say this fanzine is okay.

Now I'm a bit dizzy, and if you don't mind, I'll toddle off to my bunk. Somebody else'll have to take the dog-watch. Wart-ears, wheel in a fresh case of Xeno and adjust the siphon tube.

Wake me up after we pass Pluto's orbit on the swing back for Earth. I want to grab for the merry-go-round ring when we coast by Saturn. And if any other of you little ogres have any fanzines you want reviewed next issue, be sure to get 'em in early.

Remember, I like pretty pictures!

—SERGEANT SATURN.



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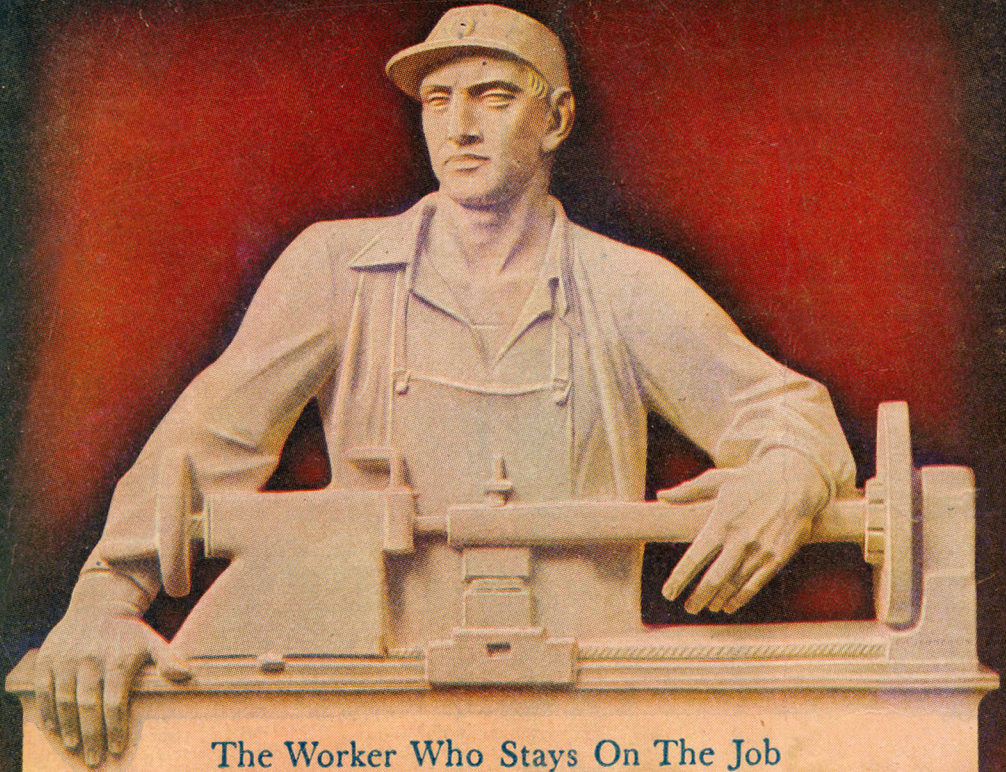
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