

THE NAKED TRUTH! ATOM WAR By Rog Phillips

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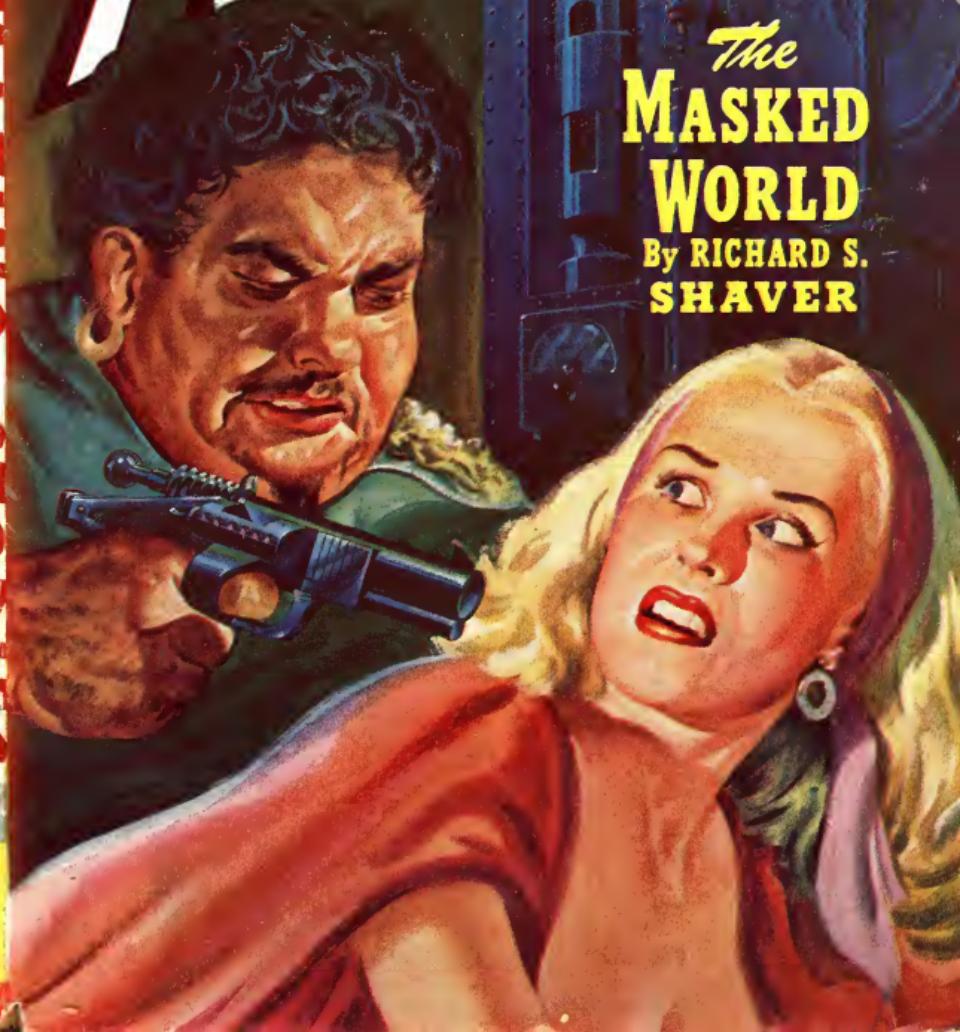
VOLUME 20
NUMBER 2

AMAZING STORIES

MAY 25c
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STORIES

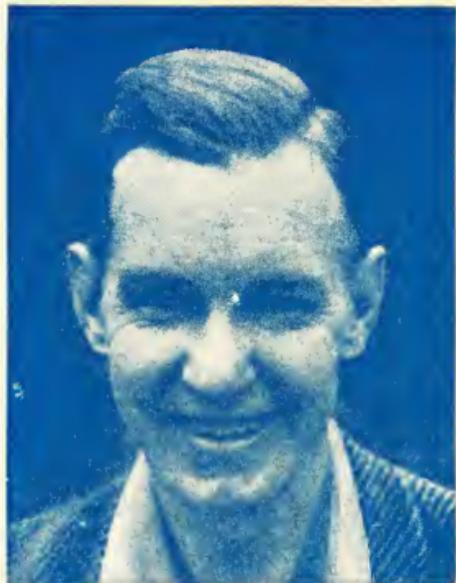
The
**MASKED
WORLD**
By RICHARD S.
SHAVER



MAY
1946

MEET *the* AUTHORS

Rog Phillips, Author of "Atom War"



Rog Phillips

THE atom bombs that put "period" to the Second World War gave Rog Phillips the title for his story in this issue of AMAZING STORIES. "Atom War," although it can be classed as only one more of the many stories about the atom which have flooded the country, is in a class by itself because of the fact that the atom itself is not the real story told in this yarn. This yarn tells the story of Mr Average American, and what the atom will mean to him—and further, it enters into that classification that such men as Nostradamus, Cudworth and St. John hold as prophets . . . with one difference, there is no beating around the bush and making with the symbolism.

Rog Phillips is a strange man. And yet he's liked by his friends because he's such an ordinary, likeable fellow with no frills and feathers. He's on the shady side of thirty, old enough to know better, and we think he does. He's tall, husky, and was working as a welder in a shipyards when we found out he could write. He's married, lives in Kirkland, Washington, has a dog and a cat trained to do tricks, and worries about the termites who are eating away at

the foundations of his house. But he's not really a writer! His forte is mathematics, which is where the strange part of Mr. Phillips comes in. Why should a guy so smart want to write slam-bang science fiction stories? Well, we give up—but we're thankful that he does, because this is a darn fine yarn.

Before he began writing for Ziff-Davis, Mr. Phillips had not written anything at all. His first manuscript was something called "Murder in a Macaroni Factory," which has not yet been published. We got a laugh out of it, but saw immediately that beyond his propensity to disagree with Webster on matters of spelling, he had a certain deft way of expressing himself in words. After all, writing fiction is the art of using words, and not particularly big ones. Thus, we urged him to try some of his theories on a story of the future.

Mr Phillips paid us a visit, and we discovered that he is something of a philosopher, in addition to being rather a dreamer and idealist. He has strong ideas about the future of the American people, and the destiny of Democracy. He believes science has done a particularly bad job of handling its discoveries after they have been discovered. In plain words, those of our readers who believe scientists should form at last an equal part of our governing body will agree with his theories as to the handling of such things as the atom bomb.

Mr Phillips is active in local social affairs, and has a firm belief in the old adage that the best way to be peaceful is to go around with a big grin on your face and make friends with everybody you contact. In fact, he complains that his social-activities continually take him away from work he knows he ought to do.

He is a graduate of Gonzaga University, and also studied at the University of Washington. After graduation, he went to work, forgetting all he had learned largely because he wondered if it were all just hearsay or not. While he worked, he scribbled on odd bits of papers, and the scribbling was always numbers. He says the answers he got confirmed his suspicion that knowledge is just something that seems to fit the most known circumstances at any particular moment, and the smart man would change them to suit the moment without any qualms. He says scientists today are doing that all over the world. His ambition is to be a scientist some day, and to that end he has built himself a small workshop where he puts together gadgets suggested to him by his mathematics.

The OBSERVATORY

..... *by the Editor*

WEVE promised and promised—to tell you the lowdown on the oddest, most intriguing thing ever to hit science fiction; that mystery known by the name of the man who started it all, The Shaver Mystery. Now, in this issue, we are going to unload all that we can be "more or less" sure of. We are going to present, regardless of consequence, the pro and con of the matter, the truth and the untruth, the known and the unknown—and we are going to air viewpoints by everyone who has anything to say. This means that if a "déro" were to write an article, we would print it as another "viewpoint" and print it without cutting or editing. We would print it regardless of the fact that there are those of our readers who would censure us for "aiding evil" by recognizing it and giving it the "floor" or any part of it. In the pages of AMAZING STORIES, there is no suppression; freedom of speech is extended to the Devil himself. Are we science fiction readers complete nincompoops, that we cannot judge the value of a statement? Are we to be dictated to by dogmatists? If there is danger in frankness and honesty, we accept that danger.

BUT we'll avoid cluttering up the editorial feature, by putting most of this material where it belongs, in Discussions, Report from the Forgotten Past, various articles written by readers, and so on. Meanwhile, here are our editorial observations for this issue.

FIRST it's the May, 1946 issue. To many of you that is a real milestone. Back in April 1926, the first issue of AMAZING STORIES appeared. So it's really our birthday party—and we are only sorry that almost total paper shortages make it impossible to celebrate as we otherwise would with the top number of pages the binding facilities of the printer would carry. But we will celebrate by giving you the best we have in the house—and that means the best of the currently exciting, the Shaver stories, plus the most modern science fiction we have on our desks.

YOU'LL find a couple of new writers appearing for the first time. Dorothy & John de Courcy, a young married couple, give us the first of four manuscripts they've sold us as fast as they could be written; Millen Cooke gives us a short which will serve as an introduction, and the (yes, we

said she) will be back again, often we hope. Appearing for the second time is Rog Phillips with his (we think) sensational "Atom War." This one's pulling no punches. And it's the opening gun to a series of yarns which will present the unvarnished truth about what Man OUGHT to think of the atom bomb, if he doesn't.

THEN comes Robert Moore Williams with "Bridge of Life." You can just about imagine what this yarn's like! Bob is one of the sweetest of sweet writers, and by golly, he's out of the army now, and back where he belongs!

DDAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN'S last manuscripts will soon be published, and "Room With A View" is one of them. When we look under "O" in our files, we feel a terrific sense of loss to note that there are so few of his manuscripts remaining. We can't help clutching to every memory we have of the lad. To say that we loved him would scarcely describe our feelings. With this issue we dole out another of his always top notch stories, savoring every word as we do so.

WILLIAM P. McGIVERN, O'Brien's life-long friend and pal, returned from overseas just the other day, back in civvies, and the first place he hunted was our office. Welcome back, Bill! It's grand to have you with us once more, and grand to know that we're going to be able to resume publication of your fine stories.

OUR new writing "pair," the de Courcys, write ala Shaver. That is, their stories, although admittedly fiction are based on truth, and although they are the same truths on which Shaver's yarns are based, you'll find them different, and we think, extremely good. Recently they wrote your editor, describing the hardships of writing each manuscript for us; which included, among other things, plagues of insects which departed only when the manuscript was finished; voices; acts of violence; mysterious rappings, and so on. We can't laugh at that, because only recently, during some investigation we were carrying out regarding the Shaver Mystery, we were suddenly visited by a plague of thousands of fleas, which was only overcome by the simultaneous finishing of our investigation and the application of a liberal quantity of DDT—*Rap*



REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.



All STORIES Complete

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Don't go around spooking people, even if they are good examples; maybe you'll imitate them too well!	

Front cover painting by Arnold Kohn illustrating a scene from "The Masked World"
 Back cover painting by James B. Settles depicting "Satellite Space Ship Station"

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AMAZING
STORIES

Published Monthly by EIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 185 North Wabash Avenue,
Chicago, I. IL. New York Office, Empire State Building, New York, N. Y. Washington
Office, International Building, 1212 F Street, N.W. Entered as second class matter June 25,
1941, at the Post Office, Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3d, 1943. Subscription \$1.50
for 12 issues; Canada \$2.00; Foreign \$4.50. Subscribers should allow at least two weeks for
change of address. All communications about subscriptions should be addressed to the Director
of Circulation, Eiff-Davis Publishing Company, 185 North Wabash Ave., Chicago, I. IL.

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MAY
1946

Volume 20
Number 2

THE MASKED WORLD

BY
RICHARD S. SHAVER







THE MASKED WORLD

By RICHARD S. SHAVER

An incredible revelation of
the world of horror hidden
beneath modern New York;
the caverns of the dero

"SEVENTEEN DIE, ONE HUNDRED INJURED IN PASSENGER WRECK!"

Second part of Great Northern Empire Builder plows into first part of train at Michigan, North Dakota...."

That came over my radio at two o'clock on the morning of Aug. 10. I returned to my typewriter resolved that this time I would really lift the veil from the mad cavern world called "The Masked World."

I know what caused the wreck. I know that many a high-placed man in America knows too just what caused that wreck and many another like it—and sheer craven fear keeps them from telling the world. Well, Shaver is not afraid to tell you why the Great Northern Empire Builder plowed into the forward part of the train on the morning of Aug. 10.

Under that part of North Dakota lies a great cavern highway. It is a highway that stretches clear across Pennsylvania to New York City. In the other direction it reaches nearly to the Colorado without a break. Under that wreck—which happened over a temporarily deserted stretch of this highway, the ancient, time-forgotten underworld road—a vehicle that looks somewhat like a modern living trailer is parked, under the loom of a great machine. This machine is shaped like a tremendous hu-

man figure with six arms. (Machines of the ancients were often built in sculptural forms; why I don't know.)

Beside the mighty, enigmatic work of a machine art long lost on earth, a little cooking fire gleams. Beside the fire squats a small four-limbed monstrosity. If we look closely his resemblance to man becomes apparent. He is human, a very degenerate human, son of the degenerate nomads of the caverns. There are many of his kind, but thank God, not too many.

His ancient rolling home is a living-rollat, a vehicle used by the ancients for just that purpose for which he is using it—a rolling home. It is driven by a motor that requires only an occasional quart of water for fuel. Built of the imperishable metal which the ancients used so universally that much of their work still survives in the hot dry air of the caves, the rollats still roll over the hidden highways; though their passengers and drivers are distinctly *not* the God race that built the roads and the vast machine civilization. I will describe the little ghoul and his relation to the wreck of the passenger train will get clearer.

His name is Max, and he has grown up in the wild bands of gypsy-like marauders who make life in the caves so hazardous. Stopping by the statue to cook his meal, he had turned the studs

in the bottom of the great machine. A round screen that was part of the base of the statue had glowed into life, and the beam that shot up from its vast forehead penetrated the two miles of rock overhead and revealed the Empire Builder, overhead on its way through the night.

This particular little ghoul had developed an alleviant for his frequent periods of aloneness, an exciting little trick of wrecking trains. He indulged this penchant whenever chance offered. With the many diverse beams of power built into such intricate old machines by the masterminds of the ancients, and learned by the ghoul through the years of contact with the wandering, wild and frequently wholly evil groups in the caverns' vastnesses (and by his continual poking and prying at the levers and buttons activating the old mech) he soon had the signals set far ahead of the flying train. With a black "shorter" ray he silenced the red signals along the track by shorting the wires feeding the current to the buhhs (it is a conductive ray that grounds any electric it touches —like the Grindell-Mathews ray). It was not stopped nor impeded by the miles of solid rock above Max's head, for like radio waves it was wholly penetrative. Other similar rays can be used to send current into a light that is supposed to be shut off. Thus the signals for the train were reversed by the evil, little ghoul.

The engineer, seeing the all clear signals, plowed at full speed into the forward half of the two-part train, for Max had carefully reversed the lights for this half of the train, and the engineer was chafing at the red lights that seemed to have permanently decided that time did not matter. Max loved this little trick, and had perhaps a half dozen trains to his credit.

There are many others like Max!

Seventeen men died to please the mad little nomad of the caverns; and he laughed and laughed, for he considered this proved that he, Max, the despised of the cavern peoples, was wiser and more clever than the great people overhead. He hated them! What pleasure it was to play the telaug beam over the struggling people as the great weights of the heavy passenger coaches rose on end and fell, crushing, pinning and smashing the people to a bloody mess. Yes, he would wreck many more trains before he was through.

And he will! And many men besides myself know of such things, and cannot tell—or will not—for fear of ridicule.

MAX shut off the power in the mech within the great sculpture, wondering idly as he did so why the old ones had built the machines into great statues that looked like giant people with many arms and great luminous eyes. Remembering that the trader in Ontal would give him food supplies to fill the food bins in his roll at home for jewels like these that gleamed in the great idol's head—he crawled painfully up the smooth limbs of the statue and pried out the eyes. That they were gems worth a great deal more than he would get for them from the trade store, he knew—but what could he do about it? The big-shots had the trade sewed up tight.

Crawling down, Max washed perfumtorily and unsuccessfully at the little streams of water that still played from a stone girl that was a fountain beside the highway, grinned a rotten-toothed grin at his own cleverness, climbed like an evil crab into the great machine that was his rolling home. He had to use several great cushions to reach the giant's steering wheel, and adjusting these, he set out.

Max was on his way to the feast of the Sabbath in mighty old Ontal—a long, long way from North Dakota. Max belonged to a cult of satanists that was as old in the caverns as was history on the surface. Every year, in Ontal, the great city under New York, the Cult members would be feted by the leader of the Cult of the Dark One. It was a yearly event which every nomad attended because it was almost the only time they could enter the city with safety—for at that time safe-conduct was guaranteed by the Cult Leader.

There they were feted by the men who profited most from the use of the organization to their evil ends, and there every sadistic instinct of the hereditary character of some groups of the cavern wights was gratified.

Naturally, everyone knew that the custom of bringing gifts of great value for the great god of Evil was the real reason for the survival of the yearly feast, but where evil pleasure is so lavishly dispensed as it was at the feast of the Devils, the toll was no objection. No real devil could resist the annual feast of Satan. The rulers of the palace of the "Stem" had for two centuries, here in the new world (and for no-one knows how many centuries in the Old Country) counted on the feast of Satan to replenish their coffers, and they were never disappointed. What was the painful death of a few slaves and a stolen babe or two beside the pile of golden objects and jem-set articles the anticipation of the Cultists made them bring from the hidden, lost treasure stores in the uncharted caves?

Max's eyes glittered with anticipation as his mind conjured up the scenes of last year's feast; when the blood-dabbled body of the priestess arose from her prostrate position as the altar before the Red Statue and the great metal body of the old God of Evil it-

self had arisen and pursued her fleeing form amorously about the Hall in the dance of the Love Death; when the girl on the cross began to drip blood down upon the feasters; when the great red metal God took the priestess in his arms before them all; and when the great stim beam spread over the whole hall and they all writhed in insupportable ecstasy, all together, slave girls and wild nomads. Mad women from the Mexican caverns with madder witches from the far north, nomads from the western states, and the fat little hermaphrodite things from the southwest, the dark men of the West clan; all the varied and mad life in the caverns that served the devil. All writhed together under the terrible ecstatic strength of the super-stim that is the most powerful nerve ray on earth. "Roll, wheels!" thought Max. "Soon I will again see the scenes that delight the evil heart as do no others."

Driving all night and the next day along the roads thru solid rock that are not equalled by all our vaunted modern science or even approached in excellence—Max drew nearer and nearer to subterranean New York.

CHAPTER II

The City of Ontal

WITHIN the dense archean basalt that upholds our modern surface U.S.A.—deep within the solidity of dark rock where no water can ever penetrate, lies a city. It is not so well known as modern New York directly overhead, but it has its friends, its enemies, and its slums—its lords and plutocrats. It is a part of the ancient, forgotten underworld, not entirely unknown to surface man, but unrecognized as a terrible truth, a harmful factor, of his life. Ontal is a part of the civiliza-

tion under our feet that is called "The Masked World" by those who know.

The underworld is an intricate maze of many levels of titanic caverns which reach everywhere under the surface of our modern surface world. But under New York the ancient highways that are in reality all part of one vast old planet-city that the earth once was before it had a sun—here the ancient highways converge into a greater city of dwellings than anywhere else in the east. Once this city was called "Bakt" by the ancients—but the part that is lived in today is called Ontal after certain great works in it by that ancient name. It is this city which Max approaches in his big old rollat.

Lately this lived-in part of the ancient underworld is called "Bonur's hole." Those who have brains enough to hate the men who rule the great, gloomy tomb in the last ten years have named it thus. For Bonur Golz is the boss of the "ray bunch" who wring the last drop of tribute from all the life of the ancient city, from all the area supplied by the "Stem," an area as big as several states on the surface, though sparsely populated by our standards.

Bonur's stronghold is a tremendous series of borings that surround the master highway of the Eastern caverns. This highway is called the "Stem" because it is one of the very few highways that connect with entrances to the upperworld. The underworld is so vast that little of it contains life, and not much has even been fully explored. However nigh half of the scattered communities for hundreds of miles around Ontal depend in a large part on the trucks that roll down the "Stem" from the great warehouses of surface New York.

That these trucks are unknown to New Yorkers is not surprising, for they do not go out on the surface often, and

when they do they are no different in appearance than other trucks. For though some of the ancient cave conveyances called rollats are used by such as Max, modern trucks from U. S. factories are chiefly used. A certain amount of the produce that enters New York finds its way down the "Stem," and who is to say where everything that enters New York may go? Bonur Golz and his gang hold the strings that control this flow of vitally necessary food-stuffs and commodities.

There are other entrances to the vast underworld than this same "Stem," but they are far away, and open upon primitive communities of no resources, unable to supply the needs of the underworld except in slight part. If they were important, Bonur's fighters would soon obliterate the life with the great dis-rays that are their weapons, and blow up the entrances so that no food came into the eastern underworld that did not pay his tax.

"RED" Nake is the top man of Bonur's bunch. He has held on to a slippery job for ten years. Nake is a sharp man. A strong slim body, on two long, thin legs; a sharp-nosed face always rusted with the stubble of his red beard; a too-wide mouth set with great, yellow dog teeth; and an evil laugh that sounds much too often, too high-pitched to be pleasant, ever.

Just now Nake is preparing a trap for the unwary rich returning to Ontal from the far southern pleasure spot called by words that carry the ancient name-sounds Sahle Base, though what "sahle base" may have meant phonetically in the old language no one knows today.

Sahle Base was an ancient pleasure spot for the race who had built these vast city caverns over all earth's under-rock—and then left earth and most of

their work behind. Today the ancient, intricate playthings of the God-race still are used by the modern cavern dwellers—for the same purposes for which they were designed. Imagine a Coney-island built by superminds of a technical advancement a million years beyond our own—and with the wealth of a vast society to lavish on the building. It had been a great nursery for children mayhap—one cannot imagine serious-minded people playing their lives away in such a place. But when one has seen and experienced the thrills of Sable Base one can imagine it . . .

Intricate mirror mazes interspersed with super-stim impulses that lead on and on into the heart of the maze and in the heart of the maze one finds an opening into a great pool for swimming. An artificial Eden where the water itself is charged with synthetic pleasure nerve impulses—and the persons wandering through the maze take to the water and feel nigh to dying of the intense pleasure it gives them.

Great whirling rollat cars with synchronized dream projection for those seated to travel through infinitudes of wonder-lands without ever leaving their circle of travel in reality—and everything that any super-mind could wish for happens to those who ride the chariots—as actually as though it were not a dream!

Such devices and pleasure palaces were innumerable and Sable Base was a pleasure spot where all the rich of the whole Masked World went when they could afford the time; and that was often, for did not the slaves keep them well supplied with leisure time. They had their customary periods for visiting Sable Base, and now a great multitude of these pleasure seekers were winding back over the ancient tube roads toward the vast city of Ontal, which was only populated under part of our New York.

RED NAKE had planned his trap well, for many of these returning people had things of value which his boss, Bonur Golz, coveted.

Female slaves of beauty and price, antique super-stim mech of the superior kind that only those families had acquired who had the knowledge to seek them for generations in the endless corridors of the world that lies in the darkness of the depths. Jewels that could be sold to the surface merchants—and the greater jewels that only the buyers who come infrequently from far space beyond the sun's reach could afford to buy. Stores of gold, stocks in surface corporations—many things they had that Bonur could take to make himself even more powerful than he was.

So, some twenty miles south of where the old highway debouched into the great bowl of rock that was Ontal proper—the heart of the ancient vastness that had been the God-city called Bakt—Nake set his trap, a double-circle of penetray weapons about the road that is called Ontal-way.

The use of these ancient weapons is an intricate art for they have such range, such maneuverability, and form such intricate interlocking patterns of vast range and power. Such instant obedience to even the weak hands of modern man they have that a man like Nake must make many provisions to assure his own safety from those who might wish to kill him from among his forces. He does this by facing them all in the same general direction in a great arc and welding the swinging snouts' range of movement to a small segment of a circle. Himself gets behind this sickle of weapons, an arc of vast ray power-of-fire some thirty to sixty miles in range—with his own longer range piece of the most powerful master-weapon he has been able to acquire. Behind him is always three or four of his

most trusted knaves, and neither can they swing their weapons upon his back—for that is provided for also. Thus surrounded on all sides by the great old ray which is as yet an undefeated weapon on earth—used for unknown centuries in such struggles—and himself at the lever of a weapon of vaster power than any other he has ever heard of in all the vast unexplored underworld from all the wandering, snooping nomads (or from any of the techs that search always for the treasure that is the priceless better sorts of antique mechanisms) Nake can feel quite safe. For no ray can approach him from any direction without first passing progressively more and powerful sets of ray beams of both offensive and defensive nature.¹

At last Nake considers that all is ready, and they wait for a good bunch to collect under their ray beams before exposing their presence. One by one the rollats and incongruously different modern trucks and trailers and limousines from the surface trade collect before him, while the occupants are entertained with all manner of outrageous lies as to the reason for the delay.

Nake opened his wide gash of a mouth to say: "A goodly haul we'll

¹ There are many types of beams—"shorter" types for defense that "shoot" the offensive rays—and destructive rays of the "dis" type of many kinds.

This sort of trap is called a "cruel" in the underworld and it is truly a "cruel" sight to see the unsuspecting underworld people herded together under the ray beams and slaughtered wholesale. It is accompanied by a kind of thought-tamper as peculiar to it as baseball "talk" is to a baseball game. The victims are told strings of lies—"they are safe and among friends"; "just wait and all will be well"; or they are "about to be killed" because of some preposterous charge of obscene nature which is outlined mentally to their fear-struck minds—etc. etc—all very entertaining to the cruel marauders who practice the "cruel", and vastly tormenting to the victims who know they are doomed to torture and slavery at the very least.

make from this batch of overstuffed ninnys, eh?"

"Aye, Nake, and why should they feel so safe? Why should they think their goods and slaves and wealth should not be stolen? An' they were not fools they would not be here so woefully underarmed. There is no place for fools on this wild earth."

CHAPTER III

BONUR GOLZ, Fat Ruler

BONUR GOLZ is very big—very fat—and strong—with a great red face and a black stubble always bristling slovenly round his sagging jowels. His lips are big and loose and very scarlet. His eyes are nearly hidden in the fat of his face. His clothes would seem curious to you who have not visited Ontal under New York. They are not modern clothes. They are often the clothes our ancestors wore in medieval times when they knew less than we think we know, and much more than we really do know about the ways called witchcraft. Bonur sometimes wore the clothes of the surface peoples, but he preferred the loose and antique-styled eastern robes fastened about the waist with a soft girdle—in which he could thrust a number of the potent but too-large antique hand weapons, just in case.

Bonur is big and fat and strong, and tonight he sits as usual dwarfed by the immensity of the ancient Titan's throne he has used as his own since he took over the Palace of the Stem.

Once that throne was the seat of a Titan of the God race that built the underworld. The vast entity who built that throne for his seat had imbued it with his own mighty dignity so that something of that God-like quality hangs still about the carven stone and

gilds the ugly body of Bonur with a grotesque gravity, an incongruous aura of omnipotence.

The great embroidered flowers on his silken robe glow lewdly in the soft light of the mighty cavern where the throne is the central note in a terrible symphony of vanished majesty and might carved from the ageless stone walls with their caryatids shaped like the forgotten giants of a more fortunate, vaster human race. This symphony of terrific, enigmatic and wholly alien beauty led in all its lines to the throne and thus to the emphasizing of the ugly sensuousness of Bonur's ugly body, its grossness wrapped in the glowing, florid silk so that he was the horribly ugly central motif of the whole tremendous scene. His hairy legs stick bare and lewd from under his robe, his eyes behind the rolls of piggish fat glitter as he watches the great valves, oversize entrances, built for a mightier and nobler race than the rats that now sheltered there, for those for whom he waits.

Bonur is waiting for Nake and his men to report on the results of the job he had given them. It was not a nice job, but the men he had chosen were used to that. A series of muffled sounds filtered through the air of the caves from some place not far off.

Bonur grinned, baring his yellow teeth, as he counted the sounds. The same number of great old cargo rollats he had sent out had returned. That meant a great deal to Bonur.

INTO the vast, curiously decorated chamber that was as alien to the mind of modern man as was such as Bonur revolting—into this titanic setting for the evil grossness that was Bonur's self—strode three clanking figures. They were clad in the bad-fitting, cut-down suits of ray-proof armor of the ancients. Off from their necks they

lifted the too-big helmets, made of forgotten metal. The motion bared their faces.

Three dark, long-nosed visages, almost alike, so that at first glance the men might be mistaken for Red Nake's brothers. They were not brothers; they were of a race called sometimes, in olden times, "trolls" by the Europeans, though they were never confined to Europe even in medieval and ancient times. That old race of warlocks and underworld mysteries has much the same individual appearance to one strange to them—just as all negroes look alike to people not used to the race. In this case one could also say, just as all weasels look alike. Not that all trolls are weasels by nature—but that the nature of that blood-sucking cunning animal stared out of these similar, troll faces. The largest of the three men was Red Nake.

Within their little, close-set eyes over the long sharp-ridged noses gleamed no courage and no humanity. Gleamed instead a red glitter of madness—that peculiar madness inherited of some families of the underworld. But in the underworld it is not recognized as madness. Neither did the ancient Norse recognize the "baresarks" as mad, but only as men apt to be seized upon provocation with the lust for bloodshed.

There were three great two-foot-high steps leading up to that seat of forgotten majesty, and also a long ramp for those not equipped with the long legs of the antique men. Upon one of these steps the taller of the three dropped to a seat. He mopped his brow with a red cloth taken from the breast of his armor, for the warm, breezeless air of the caverns is not compatible with the wearing of much covering. The other two continued to divest themselves of the remainder of their armor. Looking up into the red, black-stubbled face of his

hoss, the seated man waited for the questions he knew were coming. Bonur looked down at him, waiting, too—but also waiting for a signal within his mind from his concealed guard ray-mech and men that the man's words would be checked by the telaug for truth as he spoke. Then Bonur leaned forward saying—

"Well, speak it out. You know what I have waited for a full week—this message you hear me!"

RED NAKE grinned triumphantly, pleased to have kept his master in suspense, and pleased to have a message that was safe to disclose to him. Nake used the antique salutation as is the custom still in the caverns, for Nake believed in formality to those able to harm him.

"My Lord Bonur, the enemy who might have yet unseated us—I mean unseated *you*—is no more a power. His caravan rolled neatly into our circle of war-ray. His ray-finders located not one of our hidden armored rollats before all his gun-pointers died. From the battle I bring you two hundred and fifty captives. One hundred and thirty of these are the women of the House of Pyotyr Flores."

Bonur's eyes appeared from the fat flesh of his red face, glowing and round with the gratifying fulfillment of his plans. He rubbed his heavy ringed hands, covered with bristling black hairs, together.

"Those same women brought about Flore's downfall, my Nake. They would insist on their annual trip to Sahle Base. And the weakling would yield to their soft entreaties. Those ancient play-mech of Sahle Base, what a friend to me they have been. The women got Flores out of his impregnable home, and onto south Ontal way, where I could lay a neat trap for his return.

Full nine years I have built my gins to get that thorn out of my side. Now, he is dead!"

"Not dead, Master. I winged him carefully—myself—in each shoulder. He sits outside at this moment, groaning and waiting your pleasure to groan more loudly."

"Ah Nake—that will be a pleasure. A pleasure long awaited!"

Bonur heaved his hulk onto his feet with surprising quickness, descended the three tall ancient steps. He clapped Red Nake on the shoulder, grinning evilly.

"Well done, Nake. For this pleasure you shall be rewarded by the pick of the women you have captured for your own. Now, get Flores in here, like a good fellow—bring him before my eyes!"

Bonur rubbed his hands avidly, continually. The black hairs on the backs of his hands hriskled with the same evil anticipation that wreathed his face in gloating smiles. The lurid flowers on the silk of his robe moved in great fluttering movements as he moved—red and green petals rustling softly over the purple field of the silk. He leaned forward, watching the great door through which his enemy would be brought at last to grovel at his feet.

THE double valves of the far door opened again, and through it came Nake, pushing a tall slim figure that staggered and stopped, staggered forward and stopped, to be pushed again. His face was streaked with the tears of desperation and rage, his arms hung useless at his sides, swinging slightly and painfully. Two round burns at each shoulder showed through the charred cloth where the dis-ray had rendered him harmless by burning out his muscles and nerves in his shoulder sockets. He was clothed in a black,

tight suit of the old ray-defensive metal weave—a stuff impervious to all but the strongest of ray beams. At neck and at wrists the inner stuff of his shirt, a white-gleaming fabric, overlaid with a pattern of red that showed now mingled oddly with his blood stains, thrust out in dainty ruffs that were now torn. His shoes were the long upturned points patterned after the medieval styles still affected by some cave peoples.

Flores was a slim, strong man at bay. He stood facing Bonur, his thin, sharp face working in anger that he could strike no blow at the blasphemy he evidently considered the life in the bloated, heavy body of his captor. They stood looking at each other for the space of six breaths, then Flores gritted out—

"Now you have me, you spawn of Hell. Get it over with; there is no room for both of us to live in the same world. Kill me and have done!"

Bonur strode toward the man, stood gloating into his weary, inflamed eyes for a moment, then spat squarely into his face.

"You snivelling scarecrow, already you cry for death. Don't expect death so easily, my fine feathered fool. I have waited too long, for the sport to end before it is well started."

Pyotyr Flores took the insult, the red mounted in a rush of blood to his face, then receded as he struggled to control himself. Quieter, he said:

"Bonur, this struggle and piracy among us weakens us all till the first intruder in our holdings will whip us—and you among them. Our people will die under the rays of some mad bunch from the far east or the south—while we roast over their fires. Must we fight thus? Why can't we be at peace and grow strong, as we were when all the ray of the world feared our anger—and no cavern of earth was looted by the wanderers of space. At Sable Base I

had much contact with the powerful from many parts of the underworld. They wax mightily insolent to us who once ruled all the western ways from Ontal to Sahle Base to Antheria. Our piracy among ourselves in the past ten years will in time cause not only our own fall, but the death of all our peoples. And the ways of the fiercest barbarians of the lost caverns will be the ways of these Eastern caverns, too."

"**FLORES,** I have heard such bleating before. It is ever the cry of the rebel when brought to bay—let us unite against our mutual enemies. I have no worse enemies on earth than you and yours."

"It is you who have made it so, my 'Lord' Bonur of the Stem. But, ten years ago no black ray from Africa would have cursed me to my face, would have spat upon my shadow—yet that thing I saw and heard and was forced to swallow at Sahle Base. And if you went there, worse would happen to you; for you are vastly more hated than ever I have been by the barbarians of the uncivilized caverns. And what would you do about an insult from one of their chieftans with your few hundred cultists—or even if you had time to call together all the mad ones whom you have cultivated—instead of the thousands of swift, sane ray-heads that once answered the banner of the Lord of the Stem-way? Think, Bonur! Me you may kill, but for the sake of men of Ontal and her subject cities, I ask you—think and change your ways. The land is dying under your stewardship. The people of Ontal itself are starving. They cannot earn the prices that are put upon foods. That is because of your taxes which wring blood from every hit of the necessities of life that passes the Stem toll-posts. Sooner or later they must kill you or die."

"If they cannot pay their debts—there is always the slave block to welcome them. Then they may eat."

"To make the whole peoples of Ontal and the other cities served by the Stem slaves—is that your purpose Bonur, a free man makes a more loyal ruy than a slave!"

"Flores, I have more gold than any ruler of the Stem ever had before me. Argue against that!"

"I can! Bonur Golz, I can! There are greater values than gold; there is the spirit of your followers. Yours are hungry for the same gold you hoard. Mine were not so. Yours would every man of them kill you gladly for one small part of that gold, and sometime will! Mine would not so by me. A loyal man at your back cannot be bought with gold. But he can be bought with fair treatment. Can you know that, or are you wholly blind?"

"Words will not save you, Pyotyr Flores. Your death I will have. These soft words will not turn away my ten-year-old wrath against you." Bonur twisted his mouth into a savage grin, trying to hold his anger bot against the wise words of this hated man, and failing.

"My Lord Bonur, it is not for myself I try to turn your anger into careful thought. It is for my daughter's sweet sake. Will you give her a car—let her go? She has harmed you in no way. Can you find the mercy in you to do me that one favor?"

Bonur laughed, a hideous laugh that showed in him little of human spirit. A blind lust seemed the soul of him in that laugh, the laugh of a sadist—the laugh of a man who was not truly sane.

"Your daughter, free? Man, you are mad. I shall give her to my things, whom I keep on a leash to set against those whom I hate most. You may watch what they do to her over the

penetray. You should enjoy their entertainment!"

FLORES had all the time been edging closer to the burly belly of the ruler. At these words he bent and swiftly butted the man with all his strength under the chin. Bonur staggered back and sat down hard on the first great step of the giant's throne, half unconscious from the blow.

Flores struggled forward awkwardly to kick him, his only weapons his feet, but Nake the Red caught him around the neck with the crook of his elbow and threw him to the floor. Nake struck him several times over the head with his pistol butt and Flores lapsed into stillness, blood from his head staining the polished rock of the floor. Then Nake joined the other two solicitously helping the ruler to his feet.

Bonur shook his head to clear it, then stepped to Flores unconscious body and kicked him hard in the side. The man did not make a sound and Bonur kicked him in the face twice, listening for the sound of bones cracking. Flores' eye, a bloody grape—rolled free. Still he lay unconscious, and Bonur motioned with his hand for the men to take him out.

As they left the ruler mounted the too-high steps laboriously and again sat down on the throne that murder had got him ten years before. He panted, and his face was alternately red, then gray as his heart struggled with his fat to set him to rights again. Somehow the interview had not been the sport he had expected. Well, the fool would pay a thousand times and more for that blow before he died!

Now down onto the gloomy old stone of the throne where he sat came a ray from his watching slave girls, and their trembling voices sought to please him as they stimmed the gross body under the flowered robes. Relaxing under the

pleasure of the ancient nerve rays, Bonur thought how they had failed to stop that butt as it was conceived in the mind of the captive Flores—and swore aloud, anger again reddening his face.

"Bring to me that watch-ray who failed to read the mind of the man before me—who failed to protect me as is her duty." Bonur's voice was a panting croak of anger.

THE soft weeping of the fearful girls

answered him, for they knew how terrible he was when angered and presently through the doors came the nearly unclad form of his favorite. She was a girl named Sarah Beale. She had been brought to the Stem-palace from the surface as a child, sent down because she had wandered into the warehouse where the trucks were being loaded with goods and supplies. She had been raised under the hands of Bonur's women, and been trained in all the intricate debauchery of strange vices of the ancient pleasure rays since her childhood. Bonur had always had a soft spot in his heart for her. But anger obscured all this in his mind as he looked down upon her. She stood before him weeping, her hair a soft silken aureole of beauty. Her hands clasped fearfully and shyly before her—she stood, not looking up at his face which was an evil mask of hideous anger in the half light of the huge place.

"If you have anything to say, say it! If you do not think enough of me to save me a blow like that, how do I know you would not do a worse thing, and let a fatal ray beam through upon me some day when we are attacked?"

"Oh, my Lord Bonur, I did not think he could strike you without arms, and I was laughing at some joke the girls were making. It just happened that no one was watching the throne room but myself—all the other rays were watching

the far ways for any pursuit or attack that Nake's raid might have occasioned. There are too few of us watchers for all the many ways, the Stem palace needs much more of ray hands than it has, Bonur. Most are far off in their guard duty the last ten days."

"You have deserved death from me, Sarah. But I have a weakness for you, knowing you since you were little. It is your first slip, let it be your last. Bring me the whip!"

The girl went slowly to the place behind the great seat where hung a heavy braided whip of leather, plaited with little bits of metal cunningly set in the thongs. Bending prettily and handing it to him, she bared her back and stood waiting. Bonur rose and brought the whip down twice across her soft young skin, and then looked at the great bloody wheals it had raised quickly upon her back. She had not uttered a cry but stood waiting for the prolonged beating she expected. But Bonur was not the fool some thought him, not always. This girl was an influence among the women of his household, and he did not want them hating him entirely. He cast the whip at her feet and turned away.

"See that a better watch is set hereafter on the throne itself, and double the ray-watch everywhere. Yourself attend to this, or I will know of it and my anger will not be so easily sated. Then tell me who are the people you choose, I may not like them well. See that you do this rightly, my little mouse. Your position in my house is none too certain now."

"Yes, oh lord of my heart." An enigmatic smile on her sweet young face, Sarah bent and picked up the whip. Hanging it in its place, she left. But if Bonur could have seen into her mind then he would have completed the beating till death had claimed her. For

Sarah had long hidden her hatred of this thing that was her lord and master.

DOWN in the hidden chambers where only the Satanist's cult and members of Bonur's personal staff were ever admitted—the great truck-loads of captives unloaded. Into their cells they were berded, hardly counted. There were but a few dozen armed men about the place, for Bonur did not spend money unnecessarily—and one must pay men who bear arms—slaves are not trusted with weapons. Unfed, they waited out the sleep period, and in the morning came the count and the sentencing. Those who had still some possessions which they could reveal to Bonur would live till they were found. The older men whose possessions were entirely in his hands would die. The younger would be sold as slaves in some far city, where they could not find friends to free them against Bonur. The women had a higher price as slaves, when they were young as these were. The older women died, too.

And after a long, long time, death came to Pyotyr Flores in those chambers. How it came I will not tell you, but it was time.

Men of the surface think the death camps and slave labor of the world have been wiped out with the fall of the Nazis. But that is not true! They have their smaller counterparts in the vast underworld, and they are far older. The centuries have changed the life of the caverns but little, and that not for the better.

CHAPTER IV

Bill and Nita Flores

A FEW miles from the palace of the Stem, in a very lovely chamber of cavern rock, decorated with great sinu-

ous odalisques of the elder races' work, with weird sea plants and other beauties carved in the stone—a girl wife spoke to her husband.

"If the mask that hides our life from the surface were lifted, I am sure our life would be changed. The new influence would sweep away these time-forged cobwebs that bind us so smotheringly—"

Bill Flores' frown was a reflection of the frown that sat on young Nita's white forehead, for it was the frown of people who have looked on Death and managed to elude him so long that very weariness has made him no enemy. It is the frown that honorable men wear when they are under the degrading rule of a despot. Too, they were worried about the non-return of their rich relative and powerful protector, Pyotyr Flores.

"Bonur, the fat tightwad, is too cheap to send out the rays to sweep the cavern ways of bats. The far ways are nearly impassable with bat droppings. The bats themselves are becoming a threat to driving. We are hungry, nothing is done for the people of the city, everything against us. Yet still I think the mask is better on than off, for to remove the ancient mask that hides our life from surface men would result in similar slavery and degradation for all of them."

"But, Bill, when some mad little nomad ray decides it is time to start his epidemic of simulated rheumatic fever—or influenza or whatever—and sets out with his collection of antique junk to simulate all the sensations and ill results of disease—the surface men would know and find some way in time of defending themselves from such silly and devouring persecution. They might even find a way of helping us—there are so many good minds among such a great number of educated people."

"They have nothing with which to fight the antique ray weapons." Bill's frown was ingrained in his forehead as were the problems that caused the frown ingrained in his brain. It had been so in a long line of ancestors who had faced the same problems and failed to find the answer. "Our only hope is a helping visitor from space. Some neighbor world where they have used the ancient secrets openly and developed the use of them benevolently."

"Bill, it is like hoping for God. Men have always hoped for such help, but they do not get it. No one from a planet of sane ray-life will land on this madman's nightmare of a world. And if they did, some ray would see them and find a way of wrecking their ship ere it touched earth."

"Yes, if one landed in New York harbor—and Bonur saw it—he would fire upon it before it had established contact with the surface people to give them weapons that would discover us to them—and give them a chance of defending themselves against us."

"Bill, we have talked of these things so long our very lips know the words, and no thing have we ever found new about them all. It is the same old problem of power in evil hands—power so great that no good men can overcome and obliterate it. We still have the evil degenerates who make our lives miserable with their devilish ways, and they still have the terrific power that even we with all our knowledge of the ancient mech cannot overcome—and there just isn't any answer."

"Well, drop the worry, we are always at it is true."

"I will dance for you, Bill—or with you. For a moment we will forget our misery; even forget we are hungry."

NITA lifted her too-thin, but still beautiful and lithe form from the

couch by the telemach screen, and touching a button on an ancient "Lusco" music-mech nearby, poised for a moment while the ancient magic of the God-thought-music thrilled its infinitely varied tones through the rock chamber. Then, picking up the motif of the music with her body's slowly increasing undulations, she swept into a series of dizzying movements that brought the man to his feet in admiration. Then she glided into his arms and the two danced lovingly, gravely, together for a time. Then they flung themselves down upon the couch again, breathless, but not laughing. The man looked at his watch.

"We used to dance for hours, Nita. Now ten minutes tires us. We must get more food, some way. If only Pyotyr would return—if only I could figure where to turn for a hand. We must find a way to live. There is nothing to wait here for, nothing to do! The city itself is starving; food just cannot be got!"

Nita looked at him sidewise, sorrowfully. He read her look.

"No, you beautiful child—you young witch. Not that. I guess we would both rather die."

"But I won't have to do that, I can dance at the 100 Club. The manager knows me; will hire me. And even if the pay will no longer buy food the prices things have become, I can cadge some from the kitchen men for you—and I can get my meals there, and maybe bring some home."

"It would be the first step, Nita. Sooner or later one of them would see you. They would take a fancy to you, and how could I oppose *them*? It would be the last I would see of you. Better to stay out of sight till Bonur's works have gone the way of all evil things."

"I guess it is better to starve quietly to death, at that." Her smile was tired,

but a lovely thing on her too-white face. The red lips drooped like weary flowers over his.

"I think if the surface people knew the Hell we are in, somehow they would find a way to help us."

"Nita, they could not help us. Many of them hate us. They blame us for the mockery, for the vile work of the nomads, and for the proud spite of the evil ones. We would be forced to fight them for our life if they did find a way to struggle against us. Those who do not know us would hate us if they knew the truth of our ancient secret way of hiding the whole wonder of the cavern world from them."

"If the 'Helpers' had a rock borer, they would locate a thin place and bore out to bring in food—without Bonur's tax that starves us all. Can't one be located in the abandoned borings of the old ones?"

"Nita, we have one in readiness, but it is not the time to use it. Even if we were successful, the stool-pigeons that wait a chance to get Bonur's stingy favor would squeal on us even as we sold them untaxed food. Even empty bellies will not put spine in some of those worms."

"I know, we have an overabundance of such fools. The whole race of the underworld has lived under such oppression so many centuries, been enslaved and degraded so long they are weak in just those things that would make us free. And the Bosses of the Entries—and Bonur of our Stem-way—go on choking us to death with taxes."

"The Masked World is a dying world, lately, right enough. But Ontal has declined before in the past and come back again—only after the worst of the Stem gang had died by some brave hand."

BILL bent and absently picked up two magazines, gaudy things with

lurid covers. *Exciting* and *Seven-Swank*. He mused aloud. "The taste our panderers show is disgusting, isn't it? Nothing to brag about there, Nita."

"They are horrible. Much of the material is a deliberate, hardly hidden mockery of all of us who are out of power, out of favor with the inner gang. A mockery of all the underdogs. The pictures are scenes of torture and death of sometimes well known figures of our life—thinly disguised—to appear like posed scenes. But in reality everyone knows it is the evil rule bragging of its power by showing its secret torture chambers off to us. It is supposed to strike fear into us to keep us from thinking of resisting the death that eats at us all."

"They are horrible, right. They seem to be published for sadists and mindless fools. Look at this scene in *Exciting*; those girls tortured with hot chains. I have seen such things and I swear these are genuine scenes of actual torture."

Nita pointed to a girl in the picture. "See, her back bleeds from a dozen wounds that are incompletely retouched. Those long scars show on her back from previous beatings. Now she is plainly dying of the hot chains. There is no end to our degradation. We are supposed to huy and enjoy these scenes of our bravest and best being tortured to death."

"It was a sad day for Ontal when Bonur seized the palace of the Stem, and set his taxes on our only food source."

"I think his real idea is to reduce us all to slaves. When the people get hungry enough, they will seek the auction block, to get the food for themselves and the money for their people to buy food. When the strength of the city and of the neighboring cities that feed from the Stem-way is gone, Bonur need have fear of no one."

"The *Seven-Swank* magazine has an article saying—'The Control Arsenals, built so long ago by the mighty Elder race, will outlast the race. The power output is undiminished, time affects the machinery not at all and much of the machinery is in complete repair.'" Nita sighed.

"In other words there is no hope for the people. I think the article is a lot of lies. While the ancient power-mech does not deteriorate visibly, a strange force comes from the old machines the more they are used. Something is changed in them by use and time. The older they are in use, the less do the machine tenders and mechanics like to approach them. There are emanations from the most-used old power-mech that cause serious burns to anyone near them too long, and the power—the electric from them—once beneficial and good when used in the ben-ray mech, now causes the same ben-ray mech to give off only detrimental rays. The article is an attempt to cover the spread of such information; to make themselves feel safe. There is plenty of anger ready and waiting to blast at them the first opportunity—and the power arsenals are becoming a weakness instead of a strength."

"But what sort of opportunity does that give us? No underdogs ever yet overcame the powerhouses or the central control arsenals before."

"I have often thought that a poisoner's club might give us the answer. I can't figure how to work the poisoning with the constant watch by the rodite over the telaug beams. Can you, Nita, figure how it might be done?"

"Only if the rodite were in on the plot. I fear even to think of the idea when I know they may be watching and reading my thought."

"Old Benz is one of the rodite clique, and an old one among them. He might

be able to swing it for us. He must know what cruel idiots this bunch around Bonur are—what they do to us."

"Bill, no! If you talk to him, sound him out very carefully; he might have to turn on you if he thought you had talked the idea over with others—were foolishly careless. He might be in the confidence of Bonur, anything might happen. If only Uncle Pyotyr would return . . ."

"We've got to do something, Nita. I will try to bum some money off of Benz, and if it looks favorable, I will discuss the poison idea as someone else's idea I had heard. Then if he is favorable I will suggest our working it out. He may be able to get me some food at the very least."

ABOVE the despairing lovers roared the traffic of New York, but unheard by them through the miles of rock. For they were citizens of the Masked World, and New York does not form a part of that world—except as a port of entry for the favored few. The lower classes—whom Nita had recently joined because of the inadequacy of their income due to the taxes—never go in or out of the "Stem" of their world.

Bill got up and went out, after kissing Nita a fond goodby. He did not need a hat, or a coat, for the temperature of the caverns never varies from a warm dry heat that its people are habituated to.

As Bill passed one of the great windows set in the houses of the "Elder" world, he heard a conversation—for the windows of the cavern world have no need of glass, are chiefly placed for ventilation—revealing to him the hopeless condition of law in the formerly endurable city.

"Do you know what you have signed? I will tell you, you fool. You have signed a power of attorney which gives

me full control of your money, your houses, all your possessions. You see, I do not have to marry you to get what I want from you! We of the West's get what we want without debasing ourselves."

Bill looked into the luxurious lounge of the great home. On a divan sprawled a slightly gowned, tigerish young beauty whose well-fed form told Bill she was one of those close to Bonur. She was laughing sneeringly at a slender young man before her, who stood with a pen in his hand staring down at a document he had just signed. Bill knew what had made him sign it, for in the rear of the room another woman was holding a ray-beam upon the helpless man while she waited. It was a synthetic "will" ray of a pleasant nature that Bill could feel even outside. Bill knew the man had been controlled by the ray from the ancient ro-mech, had had no choice but to do what the operator willed him to do with the mechanism's strong beam. Bill hurried on, fearing to be seen listening, but could not help hearing the rest of the words . . .

"You she-devil!"

The woman's nasty, triumphant laughter answered.

"You will tell no one and do nothing about this for you are going into our special little room where we keep fellows like you on ice till we need them for some rigmarole or other that our laws require. Then you will appear, under control, and the formality will be observed. When we are through with you—you know how you will die."

Bill knew how the man would die, too. He knew the habits of the sadists. Sadism was very fashionable; for the ruling clique being so inclined, everyone who toadied and expected to get along with the gang in the palace of the Stem affected cruelty as a character, to be in line with the ruler. The poor slaves and

other victims suffered daily under the whip, and regularly many helpless men and women died in various strange and intricate ways—ways which the slaves spent much time in devising and executing in order to escape a similar fate themselves. And everyone who was "in" watched such parties of blood and death and feigned to enjoy it all very much, because not to do so would be to be marked by the spys as a potential enemy of the great Bonur and his cronies.

FURTHER down the way—called the "Street of the Sleepers," after the great statues with closed eyes which lined the way—Bill passed a young girl in a doorway, weeping and wiping something from her shapely bare legs—wiping something that on closer approach proved to be spattered blood.

"What happened, did you hurt yourself?" asked Bill. The girl glanced up at him and sobbed out—"Oh, my mistress whipped me! I can't stand it, I can't! And every week it's the same, for their fun . . ."

Bill had seen such parties among the sadists himself and knew what she meant. So he finished her speech for her—"And if you run away—you would be caught, and then you would be killed! I know, Ontal is in the worst shape I have ever seen it—or heard of."

As Bill went on his way helplessly, he knew that sooner or later the young slave-girl's white body would grace the entertainment with its dying torments.

Ever about Bill as he passed the poorer quarters people begged of him for a coin to buy a bit of food. Bill pitied them and showed them his empty hands and went on.

And Bill went into the offices of the "rodite" who are the police of Ontal—for rodite is the ancient's word for police, and be passed in his card with a

note asking to be brought before the chief of this section, Rudy Benz. Benz was old in the service and possessed of some influence which he might turn to account.

Inside, Rudolph Benz, the old Rodite chief noted the young man's approach sadly. He knew the young fellow was on the proscribed list since his uncle, Pyotyr Flores, had been taken by Bonur Golz' henchmen. He would have to arrest him! And few survived the prisons for long nowadays; there was little food for even a free man in the city. Especially would one of Flores' line be sure to die, for Bonur hated the family as well as wanted no heirs about to dispute his confiscation of the wealth.

Rudolph Benz smiled sadly down on William Flores from his high desk. They were old acquaintances, but Benz ignored this as well as the card bearing his name which Bill had sent in.

"You are James Bean, are you not? What brings you here?"

Bill, slow on the uptake, as well as being hampered mentally by a vengeful watch-ray interfering with his thought, did not understand Benz' subterfuge or the reason for it. Why should Benz affect not to recognize him—to mistake him for someone else?

"Chief, you know me as well as you know your own son. I am William Flores, of this city." Bill's words came as a surprise to himself, and he realized that the watch ray had made him speak by control in order to get him into some trouble which Old Benz was trying to keep him from.

An obsequious clerk, lifting his head from his scribbling, saw and sensed what was going on. He got up and hustled over to Benz, his beady eyes and unhealthy face alight with the opportunity to check the old man in an error. His short, loudly whispered "All Flores' men are ordered held by Lord

Bonur," Bill could not hear fully but saw by Benz' face that it meant some disaster to him.

Benz realized it was no use trying to shield Bill Flores, for his clerk would squeal on him. So he said sorrowfully, "William Flores, it is my solemn duty to arrest you in the name of the law. Your uncle, Pyotyr Flores, has been adjudged guilty of treason, and all his friends and relatives and persons otherwise associated with him are suspects—to be held for examination. Officers, do your duty!"

Bill turned, desperately seeking with his eyes for a non-existent way of avoiding the trap he had so trustingly walked into. Even as he turned, two burly coppers in the gray tunics of Bonur's police seized his arms. Bill struggled wildly, crying out to Benz.

"My God, Benz, if I knew anything about it, would I have walked in here with my eyes open? I wanted to see you on a personal matter, as well as to ask you if you had heard any news of my uncle, who has been in Sable Base for two months. This is all a fearful mistake."

The clerk, a thin lipped smile of satisfaction at having the whip-hand over Benz for a moment, spoke loudly.

"The examination will bring out his innocence or guilt. He is under suspicion, and we must above all obey orders."

Old Benz said nothing, only smiling sadly at Bill, resolving in his mind to "get something" on that double-damned clerk if it was the last thing he ever did. For everyone in the room knew that few men survived a police "examination" when they were heirs to a fortune, as Bill was since Flores was under sentence of death. Bonur would see to that, for even in the little-regarded law books, the state took over all such moneys that had no claimants.

CHAPTER V

To Find a Poison

"MURDER doesn't matter, down here!"

The speaker was a long-nosed man of a wizened, wise face and peculiar, gnarled and gnomish appearance. His blood was different from others in the city, being from the Picts of the Northlands of England, while mostly the other ray people of Ontal were from southern and western Europe, of nearly the same build and appearance as modern Americans, though the ages of their ancestors life in the caverns gave them a lighter, less-muscled build, lighter bones, and the extremely white skin of all the cavern people. There were other differences from surface man—larger eyes, and in this man a bigger, almost grotesque mouth; and a quicker, more alert look in the eyes. His name was Brack Longen, and he was bending over Nita. Her nearly dead young body had been found by him, fearfully emaciated, waiting silently for the return of her man, or for death.

"Get some milk, and warm it at the heat place . . ." Brack spoke sharply to his companion Tim Shanter. "We don't want our old friend Nita to die."

Tim hastened about his task, but found no milk in the place. He brought some water from the great flowing dragon mouth of the ancient fountain in the center of the room and warmed it for a moment over the electric heat rods of the heat-place, then put it to Nita's lips tenderly.

"Child, why didn't you call us? What do you think friends are for? We can get food where children like you and Bill fail. And what has become of Bill?"

Nita looked up at him mutely, then gathering her strength—

"Brack, I know he is dead—and I did not want to live without him. Why did you have to come? As soon as I heard Pyotyr Flores had been taken by Bonur, I knew what had become of Bill."

"Ah, nonsense, child. He is probably well and waiting at the prison pens for you—and sore as a boil you haven't been to search for him. Now get your backbone stiffened!"

SOME hours later, after Brack and

Tim had gotten some liquid food into Nita, they carried her out to their waiting rollat and put her in the great seat in the back, a seat built to hold the giant bodies of the ancient race. There are modern trucks and cars from the surface in use but still the antique vehicles are used, for they are superior, faster, and more dependable. But they get rarer as times goes on.

Brack's voice was bitter. "Murder doesn't matter, nor any other rotten thing, since Bonur got hold of the Stem. Once we of the underworld had some defense against evil. But those days have gone. No way of getting food but to do Bonur's bidding, and so we starve and die—as Nita nearly has."

Tim looked at Brack's long-nosed, thin face. It was the face of a bitter, over-wise gnome, but the spirit that is MAN moved behind it.

"Brack, how can you conceal such thoughts from the rodite-ray? We will be seized, if you let yourself go so."

Brack looked at Tim wryly. "There is no way to keep from thinking, and so long as these evils go on, such as you and I must die trying to keep from being noticed as rebellious thinkers. We would leave Ontal for good, if we were wise. But you know why we stay. We know of no place that is better, for the mad rays devil all men in the unsettled places, and it is death to go out into that

uncharted, endless labyrinth."

"Brack, I went to the circus yesterday. Lura the dancer died. You remember her; the beauty of her was in every heart that ever saw her. The great ones commanded her, but by subtle means she kept her body's freedom so she could dance for all of us. They commanded her to their homes sometimes, but, strangely, after some months or weeks—those whom Lura had entertained unwilling, the most cruel of our powerful men, died of some strange sickness. A dozen of them she killed before they got their heads together and connected her with the deaths. Some subtle poison of old she slipped into their veins in their sleep . . . and went sweetly on her way. From that day they sickened slowly and died. At last the fire claimed her in the circus, but I swear the stim-rays followed her every pain and quenched it ere it hurt her. Such as her have always friends among the ray-peoples. Her death was not painful, she smiled upward as if in ecstasy as the flames consumed her, not a quiver or a scream from her did they

get to gloat over.²

"And she relieved us of a dozen oppressors . . ."

Brack held up a hand.

"Tim Shanter, you have given me an idea! Say no more of this till we have reached our metal room." Brack's lips twisted over the rotted teeth—teeth that Brack knew were rotten because there was no food to keep teeth whole available to him. Brack was not pretty, but Brack was a man.

THE mysterious "Helpers" of the underworld are descendants of those families among them who have always, according to legend and tale, helped man by doing him favors that man has considered only a "God" could do. These "Helpers" are still a force in the underworld which guards always such men as Tim and Brack. These "Helpers" of the underworld guard me as I write. For the evil of the Masked World are of reputation and fact loath to be exposed to the eyes of those men whom they have injured so terribly and so continually since the earliest times.

² Under our fest the Masked World goes on it's evil consuming way. The future of all men is squandered there in endless orgies whose nature no surface man can comprehend—for words will not tell of the pleasures of stim-death, of the pleasures of sadism made infinitely more so by augmentation of all the body's and mind's impulses. And likewise for the torments of the victim—they are made infinitely more painful by augmentation of all the body's nerve messages.

That future that they squander is the minds of men able to understand the uncorroded machines that are their ancient power—able to understand the necessity for study of the ancient lore that abounds still in the endless labyrinths of the Masked World. For the area of Masked World is greater by far than the surface area of earth for the dense stone of the deep caverns keeps out even the slightest trace of dampness from miles of sea even overhead. And there are as many levels to the greatest old buildings of the ancients within the rock of the underworld as there are floors to a skyscraper—and more beside, for if there is one thing noticed down there it is that there is always more passages, more levels above and below, more

and more endlessly of the ancient city that covered the whole world deep under the surface.

Multiply the floor area of a skyscraper by the area of the United States, and you may get some idea of the immense and largely unexplored area of the Elder World.

It is a world that the rulers of the few existant entrys keep choked of all development because they fear all intelligent growth, for they are deficient. Those rays lying about unused everywhere about the endless corridors of dense, unyielding rock . . . any one of those ancient mechanisms would revolutionize all surface science; but the rulers of the Masked World are too devilishly mean to give the surface man even one tiny bit of that ancient science for study, one hit of that endlessly intricate mech for analysis.

That is fear of what we may do with it—and a thing as craven as that is not worthy of our fear. I say to you who fear these worm-like spirits who keep these things from us—those non-existent souls of the more evil of those below—fear them not, and bring about what we know must be brought about before man can advance into his future—Authee,

As Tim and Brack stepped from the old rollat at their destination—the helpers found their work necessary. A telesolidograph projection of sudden struggle sprang into existence about the two men. Tim and Brack, old hands at this ticklish game of evasion of the far eye of a nosy police ray, dropped to the pavement so that the images of the solidograph might take their places upon the far screens of the police rays' mech. And in that twinkling as they dropped, the clever hands of the helpers substituted projection for flesh where Tim and Brack had stood. It was a "fake" attack by the Helpers, Tim and Brack knew from past experience, planned to supplant a real attack by bona fide police under Bonur.

Brack and Tim crawled rapidly away from the scene, and allowed a half hour to elapse before they returned for the sleeping Nita. The sudden struggle about them of the solid-seeming projection of men and weapons they knew was a warning as well as a saving device. The rodite police of Bonur must know somewhat of their activities and have set a watch ray upon their home, and the Helpers must have lied to the "watchers" saying that they themselves planned to obliterate the two men. All this they knew instantly by deduction and by past experience with the methods of the Helpers. They had no great respect for Bonur's rodite, for the "Helpers" often foiled their distant watch ray with such image devices and many another trick that is better not set down here for still in use.

But the incident had the further value of telling them they were "looked for," "wanted" men—and they knew the scene had saved their lives by throwing the real pursuit off the trail. The corrupt, hereditarily lazy ray-watch would drop their watch after seeing them so providentially disposed of by parties

unknown or fictitious in some secret "Helpers" report. Nor if they turned up living later would much be said—for the ray watch were a lazy lot as were most of Bonur's parasitic bunch who tended to nothing so much as their own safety and comfort, and acted only on direct pressure from Bonur or his inner clique.³

WHAT the watch ray saw from the distance was a projection of a car roll up beside Tim and Brack's rollat, stop and fire on the two men. They saw the two men get out, fall to the pavement, saw the attackers also get out, approach the two bodies, kick them, pick them up and throw them in the car and drive off, leaving the corroded old rollat stand where it was. That none of this happened they did not know, for at a distance none could say whether a telesolidograph projection was real or unreal. They were fooled, and glad of it, for it saved them the job of going after the two themselves. Any exertion on their part was a thing to be put off as long as possible. In that they were not unlike surface police, though perhaps more so due to hereditary laziness.

Tim and Brack held their minds blank for the benefit of anyone watching now and trusted to the unknown friendly ray to keep the danger from them. Their steps hastened again to their parked rollat and their wheels sped now toward another destination more apt to prove safe than this. They were going to a friend, a very wise friend of theirs,

³ Indeed, the slothfulness of upperclass members of the underworld is proverbial (in certain groups and areas). They lie about all day long, slaves spoon the food into their mouths, remove their effal, wash them! Dreams from the dream-mech, stimulating pleasure rays from the stim-mech, are their life! It is their sloth that is responsible for the horrible conditions in some of the underworld's biggest peopled areas. They have the power to correct, will not do so—not let others do so.—Author.

whose name was Ben Uniaty.

The ancients equipped certain rooms in the vast warrens with a metal lining impervious to detrimental rays (to serve the same purpose as our air raid shelters)—a dense stuff of awful weight—and to the unaided eye these rooms much resembled others lined with other kinds of metal. If one were wise to the ways of the ancients one soon knew which were "metal rooms" and which were not. Tim and Brack had long made use of one of these special rooms for their hangout, and its impervious secrecy had long protected them from all police ray charges of rebellious thoughts. Likewise had old Ben Uniaty built himself a great laboratory, little by little through the years, where no watch ray ever disturbed his thought. When they left these rooms they made up their mind as one makes up a bed; to the eye of the mind reading telaug rays they were people completely in love with their miserable condition and their worthless, cruel oppressive overlords. Once home again they could relax and curse them, or plot to their heart's content, which gave them much satisfaction, though little had come of it so far in truth.

Within the secret walls, they had stored many tools of their trade. Likewise in Ben Uniaty's huge burrow deep under Ontal they had made a practice of storing all the strange or broken mech their had been able to pick up through the years of their work around the great, half-empty city. For their trade was repair work on the ancient, intricate mech, and that trade is an hereditary one in the Masked World. They had also many weapons and similar forbidden things, which could be explained if they should have to as things given them for repair. But the necessity for such explanation was seldom required due to the aforesaid sloth of the watchers.

Their trade was one favored highly over all others, for the need for such work was very great, and they were in truth privileged characters of the city.

INSIDE the great, laboratory-like place, they saw no signs of old Ben Uniaty. But the place was big as an office building, with many rooms, and Ben might be at work anywhere about on some of his own mysterious experiments. Brack made Nita comfortable and turned to Tim.

"Tim Shanter, remember I said to you that you had given me an idea?"

"Aye, Brack, I remember well, I have been wondering what it was that caught your mind so?"

"Tim, the cooks—the under-cooks of Bonur's staff—are slaves of little mind. They are those 'cut' of brain in their childhood to make them as tractable to work without pay as possible. They cannot reason, cannot remember well, know little outside of their daily work. If we could give them some of Lura's fatal poison as a seasoning—something they would not know was poison—the watch-ray would never read the danger in their spindles."

"Brack, many of our best protectors, even some 'o'f the unknown 'Helpers,' dine at the banquets of the evil ones we hate so. They would die too?"

"There are certain gatherings to which the good are neither admitted nor would they attend. It is those feasts where girls die under the super-stim for the entertainment, where those men like ourselves burn all night in the pain-fires to light their feast—those feasts where all the evil we know secretly exists is openly displayed. The flesh of a babe is the sacred wafer, and the whole evil throng worship the image of Satan—an image that comes to life and takes part in the orgies, so they say. Some of that buman flesh they eat then could be the

bearer of the poison that would free us at one blow."

"You mean the Feast of the Sabbath, though there are other feasts of the Devil cult that would do as well. But the Sabbath—ah, for that they have been gathering from places no man knows the name for—even from Panama and beyond in the caverns of South America they have come to the Sabbath of Ontal, for it is famous among them all. The city is full of strange wild cultists from everywhere the name of Ontal has become known. If we got the poison into that feast it would surely do the life of the whole cavern world more good than by any other trick we could pull."

"Well, Tim, that is my idea, and the first step is a risky bit of work for which you are better fitted than myself. If you get stuck with it, it will mean the death of all of us and no mistake. But it must be done!"

"I'll manage it, Brack, tell me."

"You know what my thought-concealer is and why we keep it in reserve so the coppers are not on to its use. Since there are so few records suitable for such a small reader as is in this headpiece there are few who would understand what my invention was if they saw it."

"What is the job, Brack, and why wear the concealer, we do well enough ordinarily without it?"

"Because I'm sending you to Lura's place to get the mysterious poison she used, before the lazy coppers get around to searching the place thoroughly. You know how thick-headed Bonur's cops are, and it may be they never got it through them that Lura really had a poison, or never understood it must be hidden somewhere in her rooms. If we can get to the stuff we may be able to wipe out all the men who make our lives miserable with one use of it, instead of

many trips to the well, as Lura used it."

"I get your idea, Brack. You want me to wear your thought record of me doing some work on Lura's mech, as if I didn't know she were dead and were doing something she ordered before she died—diddle-daddle with her sewing machine or what-have-you, and come back with the poison."

"I'LL watch you all the time from our metal room and I'll be able to stave off any trouble you might get into. It is a big risk, for the coppers might just have 'left' the stuff there as a trap to catch anybody who happens to get the idea I have. But I'm gambling our lives on the chance that the cops never proved that Lura *had* a poison, that the deaths were anything but accident, and that the big-shots had Lura killed just in case. With their usual stupidity, they should be leaving Lura's place unguarded and deserted. The only reason I'm taking such a gamble is that I never heard of a poison as untraceable, as long in its suspended action, as potent in small doses as the one Lura used. Why, some of her victims died two months after Lura got it to them! That gives us plenty of time to get out of the city after the big feast next week. So, if there is anybody around when you get there, pretend Lura ordered you to fix her stim-mech or something, and that you haven't heard that she died yesterday."

"O.K., Pal! I don't see any great danger in the job. We have pulled worse stunts."

"Tim, the danger lies in that some of the powerful friends of those who died at Lura's bands may be wise to her method, and be using her place as a trap for others of like mind. Bonur himself may be watching the place from a ray on the Stem. How do we know?"

"I'll bring back anything that looks

like it might be a poison—her face powder, her perfume, and if there are any, around, some of her photos and maybe a statuette! I've heard of some that are the nuts."

"Never mind the hric-a-brac, Tim; get the poison, and if everything goes all right, Bonur will be pushing up daisies inside a month. That is worth the effort and risk, Tim. It is doubtful if the thieves have dared to enter to loot as yet. I suspect that even the police would not like to be caught there by certain people if they suspect the truth of the deaths that followed Lura's loves. The big-shots may be looking for the poison. You're taking a big risk, and don't forget it for a minute! And on second thought, Tim, bring me a photo of her—dancing—the way she used to be when things were well with her. I want it for my personal collection."

"No hric-a-brac, eh, Brack! I'll bring anything that will keep her memory alive—the woman who dared do what the men of Ontal failed to do."

"Get going, Tim! You may be covered by the Helpers, or by some friend of ours, as well as myself from here. Get going, man!"

DOWN the dark, blue-lit ways traveled the old rollat which Tim and Brack had resurrected from Ontal's dump long before. Rollats were almost numerous, but one could not buy them—most antique mech which is still in working condition is hard to come by for several obvious reasons. It just isn't built any more. But such men as Tim and Brack were sometimes in possession of immensely valuable samples of the old machine art because of their knowledge, their ability to repair such intricate devices as the ancients constructed—where richer men were not able to acquire them.

Past the marvels of marble known as

the "Sea People's Fountain," where the mermen stretched their flippers endlessly over the arcing water sprays of the fountain of the ancient allied race of the sea—with their name that looked like "Mistmen" carved in the antique letters still discernible in the ancient stone. Past the great statue of the Goddess of Sleep, of blue transparent stone that sparkled inwardly with mysterious fires like stars set in the night sky, stone that was shaped into a gigantic and exquisite woman who seemed to strew sleep over the city with her great graceful hands.

Over the Bridge of the Dead; past the glittering yellow stone of the palace of the forgotten Queen Hynay the Golden; past the tremendous green faces of the "Square of the Kings" where the terrible wisdom carved into the visages of the ancient rulers of Bakt looked out over the whole vast bowl of Ontal; the awful deeps of character engraved in their faces was a thing that never failed to thrill and shiver the soul of the passer—on rolled the ancient conveyance, its indestructible atomic motor purring as sweetly as ever it did in the past when it was born of the clever hands of the God-like men of forgotten ancient time.

Up to the "Place of the Heterae" as the building was still called, and for which the place was still used, where Lura had been one of the beauties there quartered. For all the high-class entertainers and dancers were made to live in this tremendous edifice where they might be handy to the wants of the "powers that be."

THE rollat purred to a halt in the darkness of the passage between the Place of the Heterae and the "Home of the Blinded." In the dark gloom cast by the shadow of the gloomy old "Home" (for even the workers of that

far past had their accidents sooner or later in the endless lives their medicinal science gave them so that the legend of their immortality still is remembered today), Tim parked the rollat in the shadow of the overhanging stone monster of stone that graced the weird architecture of the great pile. Grabbing his bag of tools, Tim Shanter scuttled across the dim alley cavern into the dark doorway, up the slim winding stairs that led to the service doors of the rich heterae. A couple of revelers passed him on the stairs, with ribald references to his dirty clothes, drunkenly thinking him one of themselves seeking the favors of some beauty who sold her charms. Up to the top that was not the top, *for no building of the ancients ceases to ascend up and up into the rock within the limitations of one man's strength.* Up to the door marked Lura 198—and tried the door with a shaking hand.

Fear gripped Tim and the humming inside his head from Brack's thought-concealer only heightened his fear. Its obscuring thought impulses added to his own its constant reminder of his danger. But nothing alarmed him as the door swung open under his hands manipulating the set of picklocks he knew well how to use. He let himself into the apartment of the sweet beguiler and poisoner of the worst of the evil men of the city—Lura—perhaps the greatest figure, and surely the greatest dancer, of her time in all Ontal.

Sweet she looked down from her statue, life colored, poised above the fire rods of the heat place. Sweet, yes—but much more: the artist had caught the idealistic flame that was the life in Lura, the sheer courage that animated every line of her, the utter cunning that had made her able to do what she had for the oppressed of Ontal. On the walls were several paintings of her. Tim

knew she had probably paid some needy artist lavishly for them, for she was noted for her generosity. And Tim imagined the artist refusing the needed money, for she was well loved by all who knew her well.

Soft were the hangings that glittered iridescent over the walls. Her bed—a great sculptured couch of the ancients, not a cheap work bought in modern times—flashed with a million of the tiny, magical "sleep-stones" that gave off the subtle rays from reflected light that can give sleep to the most restless, do they gaze at them a short while.

The bed was carved antelopes couchant, holding their horns upright for the four posts that drooped downward a curtain of soft fire—the fabric called Cammetta—that is ever scented with some fabulous forgotten magic odor that makes a man want woman more than life. And embroidered over the shifting fire of the fabric were many queer flowers and poppies and little, forgotten beasts of strange unknown kinds sleeping among them—and other sleepy dreams from some artist's time-vanished hand.

All this was pain to Tim, for his starved soul relished such beauty as a man on a desert relishes the oasis, and it was sheer pain to have to disregard all the beauty and hasten about his job. He had no time for the beauty which Lura had so loved and had given her life to protect and help to grow again in the lives of men.

QUICKLY Tim set about pulling open closets, feeling with his quick fingers for false drawers, and levers that might open secret panels; meanwhile he swung open the rhythm-tone mech that sat at the bedside and set it going. It was a device that changed the basic rhythm at which it was set

into a number of subtly developing variations—a kind of automatic composer of simple dance rhythms of a varied kind that Lura had used in her dancing practice. Now he had an excuse for being there; he could say he was repairing this device as Lura had ordered.

Into his bags went the powders, the perfumes, the whole contents of her cabinets of beauty aids, and as his eyes sought quickly over the room for what could not be what he sought in order to search more closely that which might contain it, his eye fell on her vita-wood desk where her feather-pen stood in its dragon ink-well, trailing a peacock feather aloft as the dragon's tail.

Under the desk his intuitive fingers found a bump where no hump should be, and he pressed. His hands felt a tiny door open under the apparently solid wood of the desk. His eyes searched the outer doors of the apartment fearfully, for now was one moment he would not want to explain to any who might catch him there, for he knew he had found what he sought.

His ears listened, and every faint sound from the huge building full of revelry and far-off muffled whispers and secretive comings and goings seemed the step of the men he feared, the men who obeyed Bonur's least wish (and for whom they would skin the flesh from a man transparent slice by slice). But the silence was real, and his fear left him.

Within the place his fingers had opened stood a round bag full of something, and his heart skipped a beat for it had an odor that spoke death in no uncertain language. It must be very potent, for the very odor of the stuff made him faint and dizzy. Only a little would betray itself instantly, but perhaps she disguised it with some strong perfume mixed in.

He had what he wanted, so he switched off the rhythm-tone, and stole down the stairs that were the way trod by those whom the heterae loved but dared not let be seen enter the front ways for fear of the men who paid their bills. Sometimes the very best blood of the city worshipped here at the shrine so many men have burned their souls before. And well they might, for the ages of evil in Ontal, the centuries just past, and the centuries of life of the people where they had come from to enter the caverns of America—had seen the breeding of slave-women for beauty as horses are bred—to a beauty surpassing the normal of downtrodden Ontal by far. It was of these that Lura was, but dancers are exempt from compulsion to other forms of diversion, except by those who are powerful enough to flout all restrictions and command her.

NOW down and down Tim went, and ever in his ears the clever device of Brack's kept whispering silly nothings—of the delights of hitting a pool ball dead center and seeing the target take its pocket; of swimming in the life-fountain and losing the rheumatism in its strangely vitalized water from the old water-making machine underneath; of going to the circus and seeing the bad criminals be slaughtered and burned and otherwise done away with. And never a whisper in the thought that poured through his head of the fact that the criminals it spoke of were the best blood and brains of the city, men who hated the evil that swallowed all of life enough to fight for them—and got caught at it—and nothing in his thought of his own rage at the misery and crumbs of life that were left him from the destroying rich.

And the mirrors on the landings of the many stairs leered his face back at him

with its pall of fear, his face that was bright red when he was happy, but had not been so for years now.

He tossed the bags in the back of the big rollat and got into the driver's place. Lifting the seat he tucked the poisonous-odorous bag into the place where tools would be if there were tools any more to fit the rollat. Over it he spread his coat and onto the ragged coat he flung some tools: the heavy pipe wrench and a stack of tiny pliers and wrenches for the delicate telaug repair work.

Well, he was safe enough, though he had forgotten to garner many of the jewels that were flung carelessly about Lura's rooms, the emeralds that had swung at her neck, at her navel and at her G-string in the dance of Green Fire; the sapphires of yellow that had blazed at her waist in a wide belt in the "Flame" dance; the ancient priceless jewels given her by the Lord of the Entry long ago that could not possibly be used to cover her at all, but were for her head, her soft column of neck, her wrists and ankles only. Two great old jewels he had picked up with the perfumes from her cabinets and then the things had slipped his mind in the excitement of searching for a hidden place among all the delicate priceless furniture of the favorite dancer's home.

As he swung the old rollat back on the deserted Ontal-way again and headed for the metal room where Brack waited and chewed his stubs of finger nails in Ben Uniaty's lab, he thought with hate of the Lords of the Entry who could order any dancer or woman to dance the most shameless dances and endure the most revolting degradations while those same Lords closed the dance halls to the people if even a little bare skin were shown, who pretended to deplore the trend toward vulgarity although it had been always the way of

the underworld to be shameless and pagan in its pleasures—till the later time of the ruler before Bonur who had hypocritically condemned all pleasure on the grounds of vulgarity, but in truth purely through a desire to be cruel. And how at first they had been glad when Bonur had killed him and taken the Stem for his own, but they had learned differently.

Tim boiled still as he remembered the smug way the powerful ones laughed at the people who might not ever enjoy the beauty of the dancers or see the heterae or any beauty of any kind but must only be allowed to see them as they died. And now that was worse than the one before Bonur. For, just as Lura had died in the flames of the stake at the circus for the entertainment of the people who had loved her and known her heart was good, so had others they loved best. And he thought of the ancient Palace of Love of the old ones that had been a theatre for so many years down here—why once even the Indians had used the Palace of Love for a temple to their great spirit—and here the sachems had come secretly to worship at the shrine of the ancients. And when the white men had come they had kept the secret from him, but the men of the underworld of Europe had come too and had driven them at last from this hiding place as well.

NITA had danced there before Bill had met and loved her, and he recalled how he himself had loved Nita, though he had never told her, and had spent all his money going night after night to see her dance—and how the Lords had closed the ancient Palace of Love because the dances were lewd, and the ancient statuary "too frank" in its exposition of the nature of animal love, of spiritual love, and genuine love. While all the time they had

done the thing only to deprive the people of the things they liked best themselves so that they could point to a pleasureless people and say to their sycophants "There, but for my favor, goes yourself: without pleasure and without dance or the slight of woman to gladden your eyes; without love songs or any erotic relief from dull living; without the dream-maker's beauties to gladden you—be faithful and spiritless and you will not have to join them, but work against me and you will become one of the spiritless workers."

As Tim drove the hate grew in his breast and he growled. Most of all he hated the hypocritical phrases they put upon such deeds as "virtue winning over the ancient vice"—that the dances of the underworld, so old as to be ritual, so frankly worshipping of Astarte and Aphrodite to be not lewd but spiritual, was the worst insult of all. And he wondered if the surface men were so evil in their so-called goodness and he wished that they were not. For he saw their newspapers sometimes and knew their leaders were often guilty of the same hypocrisy of forbidding the people what they loved themselves, while they raided those lesser places where the lesser people indulged.

But Tim did not know that evil is a repetition ever, and makes the same pattern wherever it goes, in great or less degree, yet the same. But Tim knew that though it did not seem so, the worst evil these evil ones did to the people was to kill their pleasure and make their life too dull to bear.

As he turned the corner past that long-vacant palace of the ancient worship of the goddess of Love, he thought of the priceless stim apparatus that stood beside the antelope bed of Lura, and knew that it must be the gift of some light-fingered one from among the rich class—for stim was forbidden

everywhere except in the homes of the very rich and powerful. Such as Lura could only get it by paying most of their "take" to the stim monopoly, who had taken most of the stim mech's antique magic and stored it in vaults. Tim realized that Lura had been far from friendless to be so privileged as to have a jewel encrusted stim-mech beside her bed, for such privileges were won by few. Who had taken it from the vaults for her but one of those who guard the vaults from the many who would die for a taste of the forbidden pleasures?

Tim thought back of the time when the love palace was every man's right, and the right of the women who had made of love a religion and a heaven, and of the stim that had been the right of anyone who could press a button and activate the ancient mech that sat everywhere about the city just where the ancients had left it when they went away so long ago. Tim groaned to think of all the present rulers had taken from him and his kind. Once life had been full and rich, now it was empty.

TIM passed the fountains of sleep and drew up before the terrible tower of dread that was the building above the deep chambers where Uniaty had made his home and where Brack waited in the metal rooms that lay deep within. Tim wondered what that black round tower of solid stone had been so long ago that it still should strike such eerie dread to the sense. He entered and wound his way down to the place where Brack waited and pondered how to cause the death of those whom they all hated.

"Tim, old pal! I see by your face that you have found the fearful stuff that Lura made her life, and that cost her life."

"Aye, Brack, that I did. 'Twas hid-

den well in a secret part of her desk, wrapped with wire it was, to look like a set of coils for some gadget to any spying penetray, that is why it was never noticed. 'Twill be hard to disguise as a seasoning for their mindless cooks; it has a bad smell."

"We have done harder tricks than that, Tim! Ben Uniaty has some contact with the Helpers; he will have a way and a mind to figure out that and more beside."

CHAPTER VI

Reunited—And Work to Do

"THE mind," Bonur began, strutting a little and imitating wiser men he had heard give similar discourses, "is an electrical mechanism, as well as a record of past events; an electrical record."

Bill Flores looked askance at Bonur. It was incongruous to hear this gross creature break into an apparently technical discourse. But Bonur had had opportunities, and was not too stupid to take advantage of them. He had learned much from wiser men, men now dead, some at his hand. He had a superficial knowledge of the physics of the ancient mech in some part and what it was designed to do, as well as all the perverted uses to which it had been put since the long-ago when it was built.

Bill, after being admitted to the office of Benz the rodite, and soon thereafter arrested and thrown in prison, was now called before Bonur for questioning. Bill knew that Bonur was being very pleasant in hopes of allaying his suspicion and fear and making him talk freely. Bill realized that he had been arrested only because his name was his father's, and his father the brother of Pyotyr Flores. Then too, for all Bill knew, Bonur might have been the man who killed his father

when he was a child. It had been someone in the palace, someone pumping his father as to the use of certain mech—and Bonur had acquired much of his education that way, from unwilling teachers. And his father had been an expert with and a collector of curious kinds of antique mech, and would have made a ripe victim for Bonur's school. Then, too, the watch ray had caught something of his Bill's thoughts, and knew he was planning trouble. But after all, thinking about it and doing it were two different things. Most of the people of Ontal wished Bonur and all his works to the devil for that matter.

Bonur continued with his discourse, the guards stood gravely at the door of the great room, the huge ro-mech at which Bonur was gesturing loomed before them in all its mystery of antique lost wisdom, its inhuman complexity; and Bill, like most others of the underworld who knew anything, knew that Bonur—no more than others—could build or even repair one bit of the ancient intricacy. Men like Brack and Tim were few and their secrets well guarded from generation to generation as well as they might where every thought may be read at any time over a ray. As for that, you can watch a plumber forever, but you will not learn to wipe a joint until you go to work for him. As Bonur went on with his discourse, strutting his superficial knowledge of the ancient science, a trim little slave girl tripped into the room and stood waiting nearby as if sent for.

Like most slaves of the caverns, she wore the ancient slave garb, a kind of Assyrian tunic, black, short and flare-skirted—an uncomfortable rig at best, but who worried about a slave's comfort? Some things never change in the caves.

"To one who has explored the inner

workings of the mind with the visoteaug—Bonur slurred the word as if not sure how to pronounce it—"the whole mental set-up called character can be reconstructed in any desired way by reimpressing all the records of the mind, all the fine films of sensitive flesh, with new and different summations from observed phenomena, can change the whole rule book by which the mind reasons out its action. I will demonstrate on little Sarah here; she has been disobedient, careless of my welfare. Come, Sarah."

RELOUTANTLY Sarah came forward, on her face a rebellious, independent and fearful expression. She dreaded what he was going to do to her.

"To show you what her character is now, a perhaps normal character but not one apt to be useful to me because she has decided I am not her friend. I will give her a few commands.

"Sarah, bite your arm till it bleeds!"

Sarah merely stared at him, did not obey.

"Sarah, strike the stranger between the eyes with your fist."

Sarah only kept staring wonderingly at Bonur, simply refusing such an incongruous order.

"You can see, Flores, that as a perfect tool, little Sarah leaves much to be desired. Help yourself to the sweets there on the table, Sarah."

Sarah got herself a handful of the bonbons, stood eating them.

"Now seat yourself at the instrument, my little sweetheart."

Bill's stomach turned, for he realized what was coming. He would have to watch it! But the girl obediently set herself in the great seat of strangely worked metal far too big for a human.

A ring of concentrically focused beams played on the girl's head where

she sat, showing transparently blue and grey like pale flames, making of the yellow curls a weird nimbus about her head. On the twelve-foot screen at the side of the mech all the little thoughts of her brain showed separately as pictures, and one could hear, too, all the abstract roots of those complicated thought pictures working out into the complete thoughts that were the result of Sarah's rather simple but good mind at work.

Bonur directed an intense beam of blue absorptive ray upon her head, and made a swift adjustment of the dials below the screen. Instantly all the little patterns of intricately related thought-pictures changed, ran together, disappeared. Softly Sarah slumped, unconscious in the great seat.

Now, in place of the pictures and the thought heard before, began a new series of thoughts and memories from the record Bonur had started rotating in its spool within the mech. It was a record carefully prepared for this purpose, and all the obliterated scenes in her memory's screens were replaced now by its carefully prescribed memories. One could see the process horribly replacing the whole soul and self of the young girl; and read the purport of the thought as it was inscribed steadily on the mind that would no longer be her own, but a poor imitation of the real thing.

Nearly half an hour went by as the record repeated all its implied and intentional changes of logic; and the causes of future syllogism from past observed facts of nature were now all different. Bill knew her future acts would be based on an entirely new and simpler set of memories designed to produce the desired character—one wholly obedient to the whims of Bonur.

Sarah was at last released from the machine. She arose and stood before

Bonur, a foolish, doglike attitude of devotion and subjugation on her face.

"Bite yourself, Sarah!"

Sarah bent her fair head and sank her white teeth savagely in her own arm. The blood trickled down her wrist and dripped on the floor as she released the round young arm from her red-stained teeth.

"Strike Flores, here, between the eyes with your fist."

Bill got his hand in the way of the blow just in time.

"You see," Bonur turned to face Bill, "from now on she will do only as I command in a way she is sure will please me. I know because I myself am the author of every thought in her whole memory—all others have been destroyed, wiped out completely. All her action in the future will be a product of my own design, from a life-time of study of the mind."

BILL began to get the gist of the man's egoistic exhibition. He had never thought of the gross Bonur as a student, but it was evident that Bonur himself did think more highly of his mind than others gave him credit for. Bill sighed as he realized that this madman—a sadist, a moron, the leader of an evil cult that spread death and misery through the far-flung caverns—yet represented the highest, perhaps, development of science in the underworld. And the underworld has very different and greater opportunities by far than the surface world; insofar as the ancient mech is ready-made wisdom direct from the ancients who were far wiser than men. This was a rotten use to which his learning was put: to rob a girl of her young mind and replace it with the spirit of a yes-man, of a human robot.

Bonur was still talking, and though Bill was a little mystified yet as to why

he had been called there since Bonur had not mentioned his recent half-formed plan—his immature impulse to find a way to rid Ontal of such things as Bonur—this mystery was fast clearing up. Bill listened to the rest of Bonur's bragging exposition in an agony of apprehension . . . did he intend to put him in the condition in which he had left Sarah or no?

"Her whole logic is a gift from my record, she has no other. The effect will wear off in time, but in a year or so I can play the record on her mind again and get the same result."

Bonur reached out and touched the girl's head with his fat black-bristled fingers, and her whole body wriggled ecstatically and shamelessly like a puppy's. She was obviously his completely devoted slave.

"Such a process is what I am going to do to you!" Bonur's smile was a sinister delight upon his face, his enjoyment the apex of the performance, what he had been working for. The sinking of the harsh within the victim's flesh was the moment of joy for which he lived, to see the stricken look of the victim who knows there is no escape.

"When I get through, you are going to sign over your rights to Flore's holdings. Then you are going to go out and find the rest of your gang, and see what you can learn about such attempts to do away with me as you evolved in your mind. The mind that evolved that plan will cease to exist as such, and exist hereafter only as a dim memory of the far past, the extremely hazy past. A time when you did not know how to get along in the world. Getting along, now, will in your mind depend wholly on how well you serve my interests—and reward for your efforts will not enter your thoughts." Bonur's voice suddenly lost its silk and turned harsh, shrilly triumphant.

"Get into that seat, you young fool! You'll not be the man to murder Bonur. Sit down!"

Bill shuffled slowly forward. He could see no point in resisting, for several of Bonur's bullies lounged in the far doorway and he knew there was a roomful of armed men beyond for he had seen them on his way here. Besides, there were the slaves, standing about the room like near-nude statues, to put him into the mechanism's seat.

Bill put out his hand to reach the great arm of the ancient metal seat . . . when, as at a signal a strange, sudden hum came dramatically into the room from somewhere far outside!

Bonur leaped back, throwing up his hand, his mouth a round, startled "o" of ruby, revolting flesh. His whole face had swiftly become a mask of abject fear. The hum rose steadily to a deadly, insupportable whine—and Bill clapped his hands to his head, only to feel a mighty force tearing not only at his brain, but at every fiber of his body. The whole gloomy, rocky beauty of the ancient throne chamber of a forgotten God twisted into a deadly whirl and disappeared. Himself became a nothing, a flying nothing that did not think or know but felt terribly that it was no more existent.

BILL opened his eyes to see a stranger's bearded face bending solicitously over him.

"Where am I?"

"You are a long way from Bonur Golz. He may be ruler of this God-forsaken hole in the ground called Ontal, but he isn't ruler of this particular part of it. He has enough slaves and I can use a few well-meaning creatures like yourself. So I turned this ancient teleport mech on Bonur's private little hell, just as though I were an ancient scientist and knew what I was doing.

But in truth I am just another man who usually wonders just what will happen when I push one of these time-forgotten buttons."

"Teleportation?" Bill's voice was a bit awed. "I had heard that such mech existed, but since Bonur's ban on the use of any mech, we of the lower classes have not had much chance to know the nature of the ancient mech."

"You're not lower class!" The bearded man was smiling at Bill hospitably, but his mind was obviously somewhere else.

"I have become so, since my father's death and now my uncle's at Bonur's hands. My father had quite a store of the rare kinds of mech. He collected peculiar and little known types of machinery from all the far caves and was expert at its use. But Bonur, I guess, wanted his wonder mech, and did not want my father alive. Anyway he died or disappeared some years ago, and we could never find a trace of him. So we laid it at Bonur's door and went on living. Now he has killed my uncle."

"I know your history, son. Yes, it was Bonur killed your father, after long weeks of torment in his telaugs to get the last iota of information on what he knew of his machines. But let me introduce my fellow conspirators. First we must conceal the teleport, just in case."

The old man pulled a lever in the wall. The tall metal enigma of intricate, impossible construction sank slowly into the floor. About it as it sank Bill could see the shimmer of mercury, which finally covered it entirely.

"Why the mercury?" asked Bill.

"Same diffraction as the metal of the teleport—to pentrays. These walls are of the impenetrable metal of the ancient's ray armor, but there do exist some samples of the rare ray-mech de-

signed to penetrate just this metal. Bonur has one of these rare mech. He keeps it in his vaults, which protects us, as he gives a look only occasionally and finds nothing wrong, for we are forewarned by men who watch him and others with similar rare rays. Bonur is going now to get his private ray out and start his own private search for us. He will not find anything because that type of ray will not convey thought through this metal, and the rays that will penetrate visually do so imperfectly and hence things hidden as this mech is in mercury seem but solid blocks of opacity—or of glass—all a shimmer with unseeableness. That is why the mercury. It conceals nearly anything sunk in it from such rays because of its particular kinship to the metal of the teleport mech. We use it thus to hide many things. We have our ways, which you will learn before you become of use to us."

Through the door came a familiar long-nosed slim man, smiling with his rotten teeth.

"This fellow," the bearded man continued, "is Brack Longen. Ah, you have met before! I am surprised. I must be getting very forgetful. And this woman is called Nita—and a very beautiful girl she is too—who sat and starved because she thought you were dead! Ah, I see you have met before! And I had meant to introduce Tim Shanter here, but I see you are too busy kissing Nita to pay any attention to the red-haired grease monkey anyway. You have probably met him too, I suppose."

Old Ben Uniaty was laughing as he withdrew from the chamber of the teleport and beckoned to Brack and Tim to leave the reunited lovers alone.

"OH, BILL, it has been years, it seemed! But only a short week or two, I guess, really."

"It has been years for me, Nita, and I have lost track of time, too. I know I have acquired a bead of grey hair, by the feel of it."

"I have too, you big lug!" Her arms went around him and that glorious feeling that is always present when two meet after long absence swallowed their separate selves in oneness.

Outside, the bearded one and Brack were talking.

"I can't understand teleportation. It seems to me matter must be destroyed to become a part of a ray that penetrates even rock."

"It is a miraculous mechanism that I don't fully understand myself. But you must have noticed in using penetrays at one time or another that they have a faculty of picking up odors—turpentine, chlorine, or worse—and carrying the odor along with them even through miles of rock?"

"Yes, I swung a penetray into a skunk one night when I was surreptitiously helping the surface men search for a lost child in a wood over-head. I was stank out properly."

"Stunk," corrected Tim, listening.

"Well, it smelled so bad I couldn't return to the search for nearly an hour. Stank or stunk, a penetray will carry an odor."

"Well, the ancients must have observed this phenomena early in their work with penetrative rays and developed its potential use as the years went by. From it they finally developed a way of sending things over long distances by ray. They seem to have a ray that dissolves matter. The penetrays carry the components back over the return path—you know how the double rays work as a full circuit. The scanner, tuned to the subject, in this case Bill, reassembles the matter in its original pattern in the chamber of the mech. The whole thing happens so swiftly that

death does not result if the object is carefully brought into tight focus. You remember the care with which I adjusted the focus upon the chair while the girl was in it? It was temptation not to steal Bonur's favorite slave girl. But I cannot pull the stunt too often, and was afraid Bonur would do Bill in before I got a chance to get him too. It is the telesolidograph screen which makes the whole possible and you are as familiar with that screen as I am."

"I wish we had one of the ancient race's techs for a few days, eh. Long enough to clean up this sink called Ontal."

"Maybe we can do the job ourselves, Brack. Your latest plan looks good to me."

"Look, instead of slipping that poison to the cooks, which is a poor plan at best, why not impregnate the meat with the poison through the use of the teleport?"

"Brack, I am afraid of the odor. That stuff has a mean smell—and besides the teleport is selective; it won't send everything. If there were minerals of certain kinds, the obscuring odorous material we use to cover up the poison might also be left out as well as some necessary part of the poison composition. The substance might thus be changed. The mech is peculiarly designed for certain purposes and for no others. It is adjusted carefully by the ancients for inclusion of everything necessary to life, it leaves out nearly all else. For instance, such a teleportation was used by the ancients for a health treatment because it leaves out toxic materials of certain kinds. They had the mech so adjusted by field attunement inside. For instance it makes a young man younger, and an old man young again because the body that has passed through its magnetic tortion and rearranging does not any longer contain the age-causing

radioactives which it had at the sending end. You know my age, Brack?"

"Why, I had thought 45 or so. How old are you?"

"I was 85 yesterday. Due solely to yearly teleportations of just a few feet distance with the mech. That is one reason I keep it concealed in its bath of mercury."

"God, it is the long sought secret of the ancient's immortality!"

"It is one of them, Brack. That is why I do not want these evil overlords of ours to get it. Even death would not rid us of them, then. They would live on and on—always evil! It would mean the end of all future hope for men if evil got immortality before good."

BEN, I have read in old stories of medieval times how the elves and the goblins—the antics of cavern people imitating such things, I mean—played with the people above ground by teleporting them and levitating them. The ancient custom of Walpurgis when we and the surface followers all worshipped together in some secluded spot, and the custom included transportation for the surface people to the place by either teleportation or levitation, depending on whether the invited one was outdoors or indoors. When the invited one remained indoors, teleportation was used, as taking them through doors and windows by levitation was apt to be seen and commented on to their detriment, as well as the fact the closed windows and doors were often in the way."

"Yes, once much more of this mech was in common use, down here. But

* Just another reason why modern techs must get down into the caves and clean it out—the modern evil down there is hot on the trail of just that secret, which would mean the end of hope for the future of men, in truth. At present the worst are said to use baby blood transfusions to fight age.—AUTHOR.

misuse and destruction has made many kinds of mech rare. It is too sad that we have not the surface world's organizations of a benevolent nature to organize and study and understand and the science that lies in such machines, and save it for the future as well as make us all wiser and healthier and infinitely longer-lived by its use."

"But speaking of the poison, you think to place it in the meat by teleport just wouldn't work?"

"No, it just wouldn't."

"Well, we can get it to the cooks anyway. And then goodbye to the whole mess in the Stem palace!"

"And once more the Stem will be open to travel to the surface by anyone with business on the surface."

"But, if we open the Stem to the knowledge of the surface, the reactionaries in other cavern cities who now keep the ancient secret would attack us?"

"I think not. Soon similar plans will be afoot in every important settlement over the whole continent. Something different for all of us will come of it."

"One would think so. It must be all very carefully arranged, and the coup only known of by men like ourselves. You are to tell only those whose lives are already forfeit to the rulers if captured—those whose nature is, like ours, wholly oppositional to the nature of the evil bosses."

"Explain the teleport some more—I would understand it. I might have to fix one for my use some day."

"Well, they developed this carrying of atoms through rocks and other solids until they could blast a solid with ray of such great pressure that the solid melted, flowed between the force lines of the rays—was carried along the path of the ray to its destination. There, when the pressure of the ray was removed by a counter force-flow, the sub-

stance was deposited as matter again."⁶

BILL and Nita came through the doorway beneath the great carven mermaids into the metal chamber where the bearded man waited between Brack and Tim. Bill bowed low before him in a manner little seen these days, but once much used among the elder folk of the cavern world when evil was less the way of life, and benevolence and wisdom more.

"Your name, I take it, is Ben Uniatty. I was told by friends long ago:—when in trouble go about with the thought, 'I want Ben Uniatty' and you will soon find a way to help me unseen. I had forgotten, or else you had heard from me long ago."

"We did not know the straits you and Nita were in. You said nothing, you

⁶ Rocks can be sent through rocks, which seems impossible, because of the nature of the telesolidograph focus which brings the pressure to bear only at the focus of all the rays. They are no longer rocks under ray pressure: their parts elongate, stretch, become like photons or sub-photons, are carried along as part of the ray flow. So it is that matter may be sent along a ray to be precipitated once again—the scanning apparatus directs a small flow of this dissolving ray over the focus of the teleport solidograph receiver, unseen at the subject's end of the ray but visible in the screen as a solid. Apparently the whole thing happens within the screen, but in reality tremendous forces are under remote control at the other end of the ray and as the scanner dissolves the solidograph image in the screen, the matter disappears at the other end. If the thing happened slowly, living matter could not survive the long time-interval—it would bleed as the ray tore it away bit by bit and reassemble it at the other end.

The heart of the thing is a scanner of intricate and rapid nature, coupled with the telesolidograph which makes an image of anything upon which it is focused, anywhere in three dimensions. The scanner controls the dissolving ray at that end, and likewise controls a duplicate scanner which contains a precipitating ray which neutralizes the pressure of the ray bearing the matter, and thus causes a precipitation which is controlled entirely by the speed and quantity of the pickup scanner at the other end—though both scanners are located right in the machine. That is as near as I can come to describing the apparatus to you.—Author.

appeared now and then, we thought nothing of you. When we learned, it was too late."

"I want earn my way here, to pull my weight. You fellows are taking tremendous risks in what you do, and I think I have an idea where your work tends. I want to be part of it."

"We both do," said Nita.

"You both will," said Ben Uniay. I do not risk or use my treasured immortality for nothing. You must be of value to me to repay me, for the risk I take is much greater than a mortal one. Remind me, Nita, to send you through the teleport for a short distance so that you do not age at a greater rate than Bill. So long as you are my people, you will be sent through the mech at regular intervals to preserve your youth. The transportation leaves behind the cause of age.

"You may not go out of these metal walls even for an instant. Everyone in here has either been brought by the teleport or has very carefully guarded his thought on the way here. Since we are embarking on this enterprise, we plan on sealing up all the doors entirely with impervious metal, and going in and out entirely by the teleport. That is the only way to be sure we are safe here. But we may decide to leave the city entirely. It depends on the way things go. Meanwhile, no trips out to rummage about through the deserted levels as all of us love—to search for the time-forgotten wonders of our elder race. No, you *must* not—it is a firm order!"

"We will not," said Nita sweetly, and Bill nodded affirmation.

"Now to work, both of you. First, for Bill there is an assembly to which some odd parts are missing. Brack will go and search for the rest of the mech when he knows what to look for. As your father's son you are a valuable man, Bill. You can tell Brack what to

get to furnish me with many new mech.

"For Nita, there is cooking, and when we relax there is dancing for us to do. I surmise Nita will soon become the most valuable thing in our lives. We are well supplied; I steal stocks of food from the stores of the brigand rulers of the city—and they never miss them. The slaves are afraid to report anything missing for fear they will be blamed.

"Brack, you have your errand. The day of the feast draws near, time is short. Get it done, and I will stand guard with the watch-ray so that nothing happens. The hour is almost at hand but two more—and you must be there or I cannot help get the thing done. On your way!"

Once again the great teleport mech rose from its bed of quicksilver and Brack stepped into the sending chamber within the metal of the mech. Ben Uniay pressed a stud, and Brack disappeared as if by magic. It was magic, the same ancient magic which has been worked by hidden men like Old Ben Uniay, and by others like Bonur Golz, since the first Egyptian pressed the first bricks out of wet clay and straw. For it was such a one as him who gave the Pharaoh frogs and blood and death for his first born to release his people, the Jews, so long ago.

The tradition is an old one and the mech to do such miracles has suffered much, but the caverns are vaster in extent than the surface world by far, and no man knows what may be found by search in the intricate endless warrens of darkness. So always, though the mech is destroyed by fearful men to prevent anyone using it to kill them, there is more of the wonder machines to be found and used against such a Pharaoh, or against a modern Bonur.

AT THE same time that Brack was setting out on his journey, Bonur

Golz sat peering up into the dark water of Long Island Sound with a long range penetray. Up there in the dark water a space ship had landed—unseen, quiet, drifting down like a falling leaf. Inside some strange, kind people were listening with their instruments to the radio reports of the war and the peace conference. An officer said to another—"Fighting lubbers!"¹⁷⁰

"Fighting lubbers, these earthmen! Makes one want to give them a hand. They seem to mean well about their world peace."

Beside him his wife spoke. "Let me read one of their minds—one who has never known that anyone could peer inside and read his thought. Oh—he senses me, he blushes and looks around. It is a darling mind—it is perfectly open. What an innocent such a mind is. It never has concealed a thought!"

Even as they talked, Bonur reached up with the great space-ray weapon inside the Stem palace and wiped out all the life in the ship. Bonur had no wish for these visitors to contact surface men—for their weapons in the hands of surface men meant trouble and taxes and interference and war to Bonur. It was custom so to destroy all who might bring the two worlds together.

That same hour that Bonur murdered the big ship-load of strangers in the Sound, and left the space ship lie there in the dark, deep water never to be known by any but himself, a rich young she-devil of his acquaintance was putting out the life and flame of liberty burning in the breast of a young man of Ontal. Very slowly she burned his life

away, asking always, "Are you loyal?" and answered always, "Only to the sane!"

She knew what he meant, for none of Ontal ever pretended that the bunch of madmen who had seized control of the Stem under Bonur were sane. For Bonur was the best and sanest of them all, and even so was a mad beast. They were very stupid, very cruel, and very active in their oppression, killing all who showed the slightest disposition to resent their innumerable and constant injuries.

Just before she finished him off by playing live steam over his dying body, he shrieked, "And I had hoped!"

He meant that it was futile to hope for anything but misery and death in the underworld, and he was right regarding those parts of it with which he was familiar of late years. He meant that he felt those idealists who try to keep the flame of revolt for liberty alive—the flame of effort toward a better life for the miserable lesser members—were false dreamers who had misled him. But he was wrong, for we must try.

Not far above the dying man, on the surface, another young man lay sleeping. From Max, where his rollat was parked just outside the City of Ontal beside the Stem way, a ray reached up and touched the young man's head. From another direction Max sent a ray toward the woman who was torturing the "traitor" to death, and transferred the sensations of torment into sleeping thoughts of the young man of surface New York.

The dream died out and left him gasping, flat in the bed and wondering where he had been to get such a case of sunburn. He was burned, he thought—and he felt himself all over—every inch of his skin should have been fiery red and sore as a boil. His relief at finding his pain had been a dream was short lived.

¹⁷⁰ By lubbers is meant men not knowing space travel—space lubbers. They speak English (there are many traveling space who do speak English) having left earth centuries ago on space ships from the cavern's stores and never returned to earth. The strange visitors were English-speaking wanderers of space, accidentally coming back to the place their forefathers left.—Author.

For even as his exploring, fearful hands felt of his body, the heat began to increase, and he was not dreaming. Dreams are darn funny things when they keep on after you wake up! He tried to get up, but the heat was increasing—and he could not rise! In a few minutes he died, his whole body a smoldering char. His night-dress was not even scorched when the coroner examined the charred corpse.⁷

DEEP under the house where the man died of a dream, Max, the mad little ghoul who represented quite a large part of the evil life of the caves, Max, the sub-human with a fat belly and round pursed mouth and fat hips and w o m a n i s h look, laughed and laughed at the mystification on the faces of the people as to how a man burned to death in his own bed without even scorching the bed or his own night clothes. And the insane little ghoul left the old induction-ray mech with the "burning" button he had found still running its ray up into the rock above, though he had shifted it to a lower level so that they should not learn about it above. Then he went off to search beside the old aqueduct for a big white lizard to stay his hunger till he had a chance to bargain with the trader in Ontal for food for his gems.

Also searching the watercourse that brought Ontal's water into her fountains and into the basins that flowed in the houses were some of the starving of Ontal who had no love for such as Max. And it was not long before Max was roasting over a spit—for desperation has few squeams. Max had known better than to leave the screen of his weapon ray—but he had been hungry.

Tonight was the feast of the Satanists, in the palace of the Stem. Max would

not be there. Several other visiting evil ones found their way into the cook-pots of Ontal men. And the fact that Bonur guaranteed them safe conduct was enough to cause their death; and hunger is hunger.

But the Cultists came as ever. The city was filling up with them, and the police were busy protecting them—very busy! For if they were understood anywhere, it was in Ontal, where they gathered for their annual Sabbath.

Over all Ontal hung a blanket of evil thought from their interlocking telaug beams, as they watched everywhere for the attacks that among them were nearly continuous, for men like them are always on the watch. And their thought was utterly not good, as it watched and argued and gloated over Ontal.

Those same days before the feast a rheumatic fever that had been festering and killing in a town in Carolina moved northward, a victim here, a fatality there, and an old doctor watched its progress and wondered why it had ceased attacking people in his town and moved so rapidly northward. But that it had some human agency behind it was of course too ridiculous an idea to talk of to anyone.

But I wish the good doctor could have seen the mad little wight who rolled slowly along in a rollat the size of a circus van; and seen the collection of weird apparatus he had gathered in his wanderings through the endless wonder-world of the caverns. Then he might have believed that a disease can be simulated by a combination of rays. Yes, it might have occurred to him—but that there was a reason for the terrible series of painful deaths from rheumatic fever he would not have learned, for the mad little man driving the rollat had no reason in his own mind. Reason had been bred out of his makeup by a long line of

⁷ See the notes of Charles Felt for several of these deaths.—AUTHOR.

mad, wild wanderers of the caverns. But the lust to kill and torment—that had not been bred out, nor had its terrible consequences ever reached his mind. For were not the surface men helpless against him. Yes, they were.

It was this same madman who crashed the plane bearing Carole Lombard and some twenty army officers into the side of a mountain near the California line. That was an enjoyable incident for him, and no one even chased him for it, for he does not exist to the minds of surface men. It required but the easiest sort of "tamper" work with the delicate instruments of the panel in front of the pilot. And his rays that could read the pilot's mind could also direct the needles of his instruments into those patterns most terrifying to the pilot. Terrifying because true when properly manipulated. Ah man, how superior are those of the caverns to us of the surface. Can they not kill us at will?

CHAPTER VI

Feast of the Satanists

NOT far from the Palace of the Stem was a place that sold beer and wines to the staff of the great house. It stood now nearly empty for it was an hour when most were busy preparing for the great feast of the evil cult that Bonur used as his vehicle to power, his avenues of wide information from the whole cavern world, as well as searchers of the far, deserted and unknown caverns for powerful mech as yet not in his collection.

Inside sat Brack, tonight wearing his thought-hiding device. It was humming inside his head a song that he liked, and he listened to the soft words, taken from an old record that had lain in the metal room when he had moved

in. In his pocket were several little shakers, little containers like salt holders with swivel tops, and in his mind was a hidden purpose—those tops must bare their holes over food for all the evil in Ontal.

Into the room came one of the staff, an under-cook, one of the men for whom he waited. These lowlier of the palace staff were men who been operated upon in the mind, to make them less apt to hate their overlords and hence less apt to be tools for just such a scheme as Brack was hatching. The result of the operation in this case was a man who could not remember what happened yesterday, but who could carry out orders without trouble until tomorrow, when all was forgotten. He was not the best of servants, but his short memory was a useful feature since he forgot any hate for any injury done him. Called *ro*, there are many such, but they are not the same creature that was meant by the ancient word; they are a modern development of the life in the Masked World. Once a man has been cut as was this one, he has little sense or reason, but he does retain such ingrained thought habits as his trade—in this case, cooking.

The cutting of the brain centers to produce such characters is itself a kind of trade, and there are many "cuts" producing different types of "*ro*." Those centers of the brain most apt to cause trouble by independent thinking against their unwelcome masters are "cut" by a penetrative ray that acts somewhat like a surgeon's electric needle. Connecting nerves in the brain are cut. So the man who entered was a thing that was not strictly human. Bonur's device was a variant of a superior method of producing the same result, a man in appearance, but a man who has lost his birthright of reason from a wilful brain mutilation by his master. He can

talk almost naturally, but cannot remember or reason except in the most simple animal-like way. He can ask for beer or tobacco. The constant repetition of such incidents in his daily life has impressed them on his feeble faculties.

As soon as he entered Brack spoke to him, smiling, for such creatures have no suspicions or imagination and accept all things at their surface value.

"Ho, cook, come and drink with me. It is a lonesome business, this sitting down to be merry and finding no one to chaff with."

"Yes, sir," answered the cook, beaming great pleasure to be noticed as a human being, for the "ro" are rather despised members of society, a thing lower than a natural, unmutilated slave.

The cook sat his fat body down on the bench beside Brack and smiled, but nothing in his poor mutilated head functioned to make talk, and smiling was as far as he ever got with conversation.

TONIGHT Brack had disguised not only his thoughts so that his mind thought steadily through the tiny record of the mind of a young roustabout rummy of the taverns taken by Brack some weeks before, but his face was carefully disguised to look like another person entirely.

The bitter lines of his mouth and face were smoothed out with a face-wax too thin to be seen, his gray hair was dyed a good black, and his clothing was a flushy young fop's, which did not look out of place on his lean and graceful figure. His long nose was changed with a carefully built up bridge and hook. His thoughts were as idle a bunch of nonsense as ever occupied a man with nothing to do but enjoy an evening from his work—songs and idle nothings. The watch ray took one cursory glance at him and dismissed him from their

minds.

The cook listened raptly to everything Brack said, and as promptly forgot it. Brack entertained him with a long and fulsome discourse on cookery the world over; he had spent several hours reading a cook book called the "World Traveler's Cook Book" to prepare himself for this deed.

Then Brack went into an even lengthier discourse on "seasoning as an art" and wound up with saying that in all his travels he had found but one great perfect flavoring to bring out all the savor of meat—and he had a goodly lot of it in his pocket.

The cook reached out a great red hand and took a pinch from the open shaker in Brack's hand. He smelled it, rubbed it between his fingers, looked at it long, close to his eyes—then held it there before him as he explained that never in all his wide experience with cooking and condiments had he seen anything like it or knew what it might be. Brack was well aware of this, for the cook's mind was far from encyclopedic and every flavor in the encyclopedia was incorporated in the stuff to hide the nauseous odor of the poison.

Brack held his tongue with an effort as the cook popped the stuff into his mouth to get the flavor—and signed his death warrant thereby. But Brack's conscience soothed itself with the hidden thought that many better by far would die did Bonur live on, and Brack let be.

Brack gave him the shakerful of death's powder amid profuse thanks from the bumble fellow, then furnished him with a couple of "spares" in case he desired to use it at the feast, so that there would be "plenty to go around" and went on his way swiftly, not wishing to linger there after the deed was done. The only thing left was to remind the nearly mindless fellow over the telaug

beam to place it on the meat this night of Satan's raising, this night when the devil himself came to visit his followers.

THE hour of the feast has arrived, and about the great, gloomy rock chamber hang the decorations for the bloody revels to be held.

The ancient carvings on the walls, polished by the later hands of the good men of Ontal, are smoke-darkened now from the many fires of the recurrent Demon feasts—and every feast an orgy of blood letting for their inverted pleasure senses.

Tonight was to be a greater indulgence in the art of torment for pleasure than any other previous.

In the center of the tremendous, profusely and rather horribly decorated chamber was the great red metal statue of Satan which would tonight be reanimated with the actual force called Satan, and worshipped by the cult.

The decorations, among other horrors, included stuffed human figures—horrible and poorly executed samples of the underworld taxidermy applied to the human.

Slave girls hastened about their task of strewing straw about the floor, of setting all the places with many odd dishes peculiar to the feast, the blood goblets, the finger bowls filled with scented water, the sauces and condiments. The sulphuric perfumes alleged to be present at such events were not present, but instead some very stimulating perfumes were brought for the occasion from the rare stores of unguents and scents of the ancients themselves. Some of these were famous for producing in weak modern men reactions sometimes called panurgic.

The living decorations were all nicely writhing and the stim current flowing into them through the wires of the niches where they hung, so that they

were like statues-brought to a strange and terrible activity by some fearful magic—by the terrific stimulation of the ancient life-energy force-flows.

The red lilies of this feast strewed the floor and stood in great vases wherever a place might be found for them, and about the statue of Satan himself rested a great bank of the black lilles of death so dear to his own black heart.

The cook with whom Brack had had such an important conversation hastened in from his fires in the kitchens and looked over all the preparations to make sure that everything was going all right and smiled and howed as the red priest himself sauntered slowly through, strewing some blood from a thing called an aspergillus over the floor as he walked. I surmise the blood was thoroughly accursed by some ritual that was pure flummery of course, but what he was saying in the ancient tongue called Demonlang would curl the whiskers of the great opponent, Yahveh himself.

Bonur himself waddled through the hall, and stopped to talk to the red masked priest—who was also Nake, his right hand, under the horned mask.

"Has all the flummery been well attended to, Nake, you faker?"

"Quite, quite, chosen of Satan, quite."

"It will come off all right, eh? I don't want to miss the sacrifices."

"I rather enjoy them myself, my lord, though it seems a great waste of good flesh. But as you say, we get the value out of the dupes for the trifling price of a few slave's lives. Odd, eh, how the old ways and customs persist. In spite of Time's dull sweep, custom persists. We could not hold the wild ones of the far caverns without this foolishness, and they would not bring us gold or slaves or the rare mech and the ancient jewels, did we not put on a good show for them?"

"God knows what they will bring in next. Last week from a cavern under Mexico an ignorant, unwashed idiot of the maddest stripe brought in a solid gold robot as a gift to the Red One. For Satan himself—all that value—and without the slightest idea of asking anything in return but Satan's good wishes."

CURIOUS things, some of those robots the old ones manufactured. One cannot imagine what their uses might have been."

"This one was a curious sample of their workmanship. Heavy—and the mech inside made it walk and talk as lightly and as beautifully as a young girl. It is a beautiful thing; that is, it was. I activated the mechanism inside and it walked up to me, peered into my eyes in the most human way, and began to talk in the ancient tongue; you know, you have heard some of the mech talk as if they were imbued with actual life. I know little of the tongue, but I know enough to know that this robot was a kind of prophet, and that it foretold some doom, some kind of curse. It worried me for a time.... And as the robot went on and on, the ominous tone of the voice, the terrible, fear-creating gestures of the thing, the seemingly actual life in the robot struck me with fear and with an anger as at a human being! I ordered the thing cast into the melting pots and made into bullion. Later I was sorry, but you know how fearful some of that mech can be when it runs amuck. Well, I think we are better off without that robot around. Maybe it was just a machine, but sometimes one believes in magic when one sees the wonders those ancients created."

Nake mused aloud, "She spoke in the ancient tongue, and seemed to prophesy doom, eh? That worries me, Bonur."

"Ah, it's silly. She was probably created to act a part in a play or something; one can't believe a mental thing that has lain around for untold centuries in the dark of a deserted cave could think, could prophesy—it's a ridiculous idea. . . . Just the same, Nake, keep your eyes open."

"It might be well to keep our eyes open without any robot gloom to make us, Master."

"You're right, Nake. Plenty of people would be happy to see us dead."

"Those ancients were wondrous wise, Bonur."

"Don't try to worry me, Nake! And don't get the idea you should inherit my power if something happened. I keep my ears open, Nake."

"Have your joke, Master. But just the same, be careful, we would all be lost without you; all the strings of our lives are in your hands. If you should stumble, we would all fall."

"And don't forget that, Nake!"

Bonur walked off chuckling, but Nake did not take the strange account so lightly, for Nake knew a thing or two, himself. Such unbelievable things had sometimes been accomplished by the antique work that one could believe anything of it. Nake had once seen a machine that turned out (from a mass of vegetable and animal matter thrown into the hopper) a living thing that was manlike. An intelligent, human-looking product had arisen living from the machine.

Nake had known enough of the ancients' mental slant to have the thing killed, for what a thinking product of their handiwork would do to evil was not unknown to Nake. Too, there was an old tale that the ancients had had the power of foretelling the future. Well, Nake decided, he would hope they did *not* do it with a machine that was built like a golden girl.

AN HOUR later the feast was in full swing, the woman who served as the Altar of the Red One, was well nigh worn out with the countless dishes that had rested on her for the look and nod of the robot who was supposed to be the great Satan himself animating the metal statue.

Flames roared from a full hundred cooking fires about the walls, and over each revolved a spit, and on the spits were pieces of flesh. The cruel customs of the age-old worship of the deification of evil required the eating of human flesh, and the nature of the caverns intermittent and often nonexistent food supplies had done much to perpetuate the custom.

The woman who has served as the altar before the terrible figure of the Devil rises and begins "The Dance of the Demoness." That dance of a soul becoming the Devil's ecstatic property—that dance, for sheer wanton lust of the flesh, for sheer all-out casting off of all spiritual and moral restraint (such as lingers in all surface men's equivalent performances in some fashion) can give the mind a view into the true fiery lure of Hell. The dance of the blood-dabbled priestess of the Sabbath is the beginning of an orgy such as few men of normal mind ever see—and stay sane.

Remember that neither the dancer nor the devotees of the cult of blood and torture and death are in any way the products of an environment akin to our own.

Both the dancer and the glittering-eyed maniacs who watch her portray the casting aside of all human feeling and the donning of the full character of the "demoness" are people raised in an ancient tradition of the worship of evil as a way of life, a belief and worship more intensely indulged mentally than any Christian or other surface worship. Their minds—since little children under

the absolute control of ray-workers themselves more debauched than one can imagine—have been shaped in a mold of inhuman thought forms by the powerful control beams of the telaug till reactions inconceivable to us have replaced several natural reaction within their minds. Only when seen on the thought screens of the ancient telemach can it be believed.

There is much of this dance and of the orgy that follows that cannot be described here for obvious reasons—such as the prostration of the priestess before, and union with the metal, horrible, human inhumanity of the form of the Great Demon Lord.

I believe that evil should be brought out into the light and looked at—but there are those who, perhaps for reasons of fear, or reasons you may imagine for yourself, would object. One often thinks they must be in league with the devil themselves to throw such a shadow of obstruction before attempts to portray the true picture of evil life as it actually is.

However, picture for yourself the priestess-dancer presenting the sacrificial babe, squawling and kicking, to the great ugly robot that is supposed to be the vehicle in which the Devil returns to life for an evening. Picture the madness of the foul murder that follows.

Picture the audience, sprawling in a great crowd, their eyes drinking in the utterly savage scene. Remember that this scene has taken place exactly the same since before we had a Santa Claus. Before the Egyptians had a Pharaoh, this same devil worship in the caves was old.

Remember they are the children of a race which has for ages had beneficial rays of great curative powers in their ignorant hands, and never found a way of getting one bit of the medically beneficial ray-generator mech to surface

men; to men who might study, copy and manufacture it; develop from the science of the past a science that would set man back upon the path to racial greatness—but, instead, this hidden race has be-deviled and obstructed men always out of fear of what men might do to them for their deeds if ever they got power. They think of themselves as "demons" and of us as "men"!

Always they have feared to even tell their surface brothers of the wonders of the ancient science. A foolish, dog-in-the-manger attitude has kept the ancient wisdom secret and excluded from wide study all these endless, wasted centuries.

Nor shall I describe the "beauty" of this dancing "demoness." It may be just as well you cannot see her as she is (as I might describe her were the censors willing) but I do not believe that.

REMEMBER always that such as she and many like her still live, and still have power over men like yourself—the power of life and death. They *really* exist, and practice their ancient evil seduction in many, many places under our earth. Picture yourself falling into her hands—would she have some use for you? Not at all—only as a thing from which pain could be wrung.

Then realize that still today stupid men of the surface serve such beings in ways you may guess at—and serve them to our detriment.

Picture the burning wretches over the coals whipped even as their flesh crisps in the searing heat. Realize that they are only the preliminary scenes that lead up to the main events. Picture the beautiful maidens (sometimes stolen from the surface) who wrestle with ravening tigers and other beasts and die bloodily just as they did in an-

cient Rome, before a more bloodthirsty, more stupid and savage group of madmen and madder women than ever graced Rome's perfumed arenas.

Then realize that these same spectators are people who whisper and lie nightly to our own state officers, our elected rulers, and get them into a state of mind where they *really* believe that a secret science—from the "stars" of "space," mind you—has come to earth and is working with people to make something out of them. Or that they are selected "Fausts" and must do evil or die!

Realize that earth has more horrible perils still to struggle against than ever the Germans were and we will win. For we are not few nor weak, and we, the white magic, have all that power and ancient heritage, too. And it shall be ours for real study on the surface if ever the evil of the caves can be defeated and the entrances freed of such as the Bonur pictured here.

Some of these dying slave girls were not so long ago decoratively wobbling across Fifth Avenue on their high heels. Now, they are on police blotters as "Missing, left note saying—Going to end it all, disappointed in love." Any obvious fabrication will do to evade the necessity of admitting publicly that the "Marvs"⁷ got another one. Men who are men enough to admit there is an underworld is what we need. They have heard of it endlessly, it is well known among many classes of society and quite openly talked about. But for our learned professors and wise medical men and ever-right historians to admit that something they hadn't been taught in school could yet be true is too much to expect.

Police know it, I am sure, but can't say it, can't locate the trouble when

⁷ "Marvs" is slum slang for the well-known "voices."—Aurmon.

they know it exists, and have given up all mention of it as a hopeless job. Well it isn't hopeless, but it was to medieval men. They had no science to understand the wonder world. We must dare to face what we know to be true.

Picture then that these dying girls are still but preliminary scenes to the "real stuff" of the evening. What do you think the real treat of the evening will be? I can't tell you—not the most terrible, but I will try to describe one of the lesser of these sadistic treats if I can get away with it.

Picture a square formed of oaken four-by-fours, held upright and of a size to enclose a human figure at the shoulders. A strong young man is lashed firmly to the oaken cross pieces—spread-eagled—with many stout ropes binding him. He is lashed firmly, arms and legs tightly held within the frame. Now picture a super-stimulator ray played upon his muscles of such strength that he leaps and leaps again in gradually increasing strength against the stout frame till the oak splinters, his arms and legs break, the blood spouts from arteries torn asunder by spasms of a fearful and mighty force which no human body can live through.

Picture the hereditarily mad group of people who have enjoyed just such scenes over and over back and back into time—before the very stones of the pyramids were quarried from their beds. That is the savage life which still persists in all its ancient evil in some parts of the caverns under our feet.

Picture that this scene of death is not yet the climax of the feast of the Satanists. What then do you think the climax will be?

Such are the devil ray of the caverns, though their way of life has made them few, still they are the mightiest threat to civilization that lives "on" or

"in" this planet. They control vast areas of our surface governments, and surface men can not touch them with any weapon they know—indeed when they know of them, fear even to speak of them. Police and others who should will not admit of their existence. If they want to be secret no lowly police chief or newspaper editor cares to say them nay.

Truth is, there is no more stupid or evil people on earth than the evil ray people, and only the good sane groups of ray defending us with the mighty mechanisms of the chasms below us save us from a life of degradation unimaginable except to those who have seen what sadist ray-men can do to make life unnecessary to the normal human in their power. Thank God there are some good ray people.

CHAPTER VII

Feast of Poison!

THE black smoke rises from torches set about the great hall, in slow evil twists, and the yellow light is shed fitfully over feasters, who are mostly rather small men, often deformed and horrible to the eye, for the strange heredity of the caverns has brought fearful changes to the forms of many—great lumpish skins, twisted limbs, and beastlike faces. They do not often let surface men see these deformities, even when they are people of good will. But this "bunch," clad in rags and dirt, diseased, with madness glaring from their eyes, are the worst of the people of the abyss—the Satanists.

They are the lowest things that earth has bred in the shape of man. They do not have the sense to keep clean, or to think as men do in any way. Their value lies in a cleverness and quickness, a knowledge of the uses of the ancient

mech they have grown up with, and a willingness to use the same in any vile way the master bids. This cleverness and quickness of the hands and eyes is something they acquire very young or die. For the mad ones of the wild stretches of the caves—and most of them are wild, unexplored—survival depends upon constant watchfulness and skill with a ray beam similar in some ways to the art of fencing with a rapier. No training can make up for the skill acquired by the mad ones in their constant fighting with the mech-ray from their childhood on.

To a surface man, the fat, waddling figure of Bonur, the Boss of Ontal, just one of the great cities of the underworld, would have looked comic. But he was fearful and deadly of appearance to those who knew him.

Bonur was heavy with fat, and his hips were much wider than his shoulders. About his waist was a very wide jeweled belt, and in the belt was thrust a multitude of peculiar weapons. As he walked, the weapons—built for men of a size three times Bonur's short six feet—swung and banged about his knees.⁸ His robe, of a scintillating, florid fabric from the east, embroidered over with great passion flowers; his fat pouter chest hung with a glitter of ornaments; his broad red face, dark with the slovenly stubble of his beard; his drooping jowels hanging over his jeweled collar: his whole appearance was ludicrous comic opera to a surface man's eye. But it was not comic opera to the men of the underworld. They had to face this man as their ruler, the lord of life and death whose whim was law. All the ignorant bestiality of his nature was their problem, to placate, to please, to get along with somehow.

Bonur's studies and experiments were

⁸ The elder race seems to have averaged about twenty feet, as near as can be judged.—Author.

his one bright spot, to our eyes, but the truth was they led most often to a more painful, more darkly evil method of hurting something human—of making something far less than human out of flesh. They could not even begin to think of plans to replace the horror that ruled them, for the telaug beams of his cronies and slaves and favorites, always about, would have instantly revealed any such thought. Treachery could not have been repressed by a surface man, for every evil was in him, and a normal man cannot help desiring some rights, some dignity, some virtue to hold to with pride—something to cling to as an assurance that his life is not wholly a waste. But none of these were allowed under Bonur. To hold such thoughts was "treachery." Those who survived under Bonur assiduously cultivated a servility of mind, a thought-discipline of unimaginable severity of refusal of virtue, of unbelievable ferocity of lust for blood and death to anything that might threaten the supremacy of Bonur—and Satan.

And this mental attitude must be real, must always be worn like one's clothes, and must be followed as the rule of conduct upon all occasions. Those who failed to alter their soul to fit Bonur's nature—to fit it by scrupulous copying of that nature from observed activity of Lord Bonur—those people died slowly and in the eyes of all; a lesson to the rest.

BY CAREFUL suggestive work with the long range telaug by Brack and old Ben Uniaty, the mind of the cook had carefully been imbued with a complete fascination for the taste of the new condiment given him by the friendly stranger. The only precautions taken by Bonur against poisoning was a slave taster who must performe take a bit of every kind of food and a sip of every

drink before Bonur placed it in his mouth. Other than that Bonur and Nake had worked out a system of food supply for the Stem palace which made sure that every bit of food used in the palace was straight from the unconscious, unsuspecting surface food factories—brought direct by truck. But in the case of these feasts, in which human flesh was used, these precautions were necessarily relaxed.

That Bonur did not conceive of a slow poison that took effect long after the poisoning I can only attribute to his ignorance. He was an experienced man, an educated man as such go in the caves, but of wide learning of the kind dispensed by surface men he had none. For that matter, you would find upon search that many of our most powerful and hated men take few precautions against poison. It just seems to be a thing little done.

Bonur's youth and young manhood had been spent here in the Stem-palace; first as a child of an officer about the palace, later as a soldier, then an officer whose plotting had led at last to the leadership of a group of ray-warriors who had seized power by killing all those who stood in their way. That Bonur had got the throne had been due to his own ruthless killing of his confederates when the chance offered. For their part they were ignorant men, in our eyes—though in the underworld there is little education of a formal kind and a man's worth depends solely on the amount of skill he has been able to acquire with the varied kinds of antique ray-mech.

So it was that Bonur was great because his opportunities had proved great, due to the fact that his father and his friends had been in charge of the great vaults full of peculiar and terribly powerful devices stored by generations of acquisitive rulers of the

Stem. Perhaps it was the greatest collection of powerful weapons and of antiques in the whole underworld. Bonur had supplied the know-how when the time for rebellion had come, and the vaults of the Stem had supplied the weapons. It had really been but a simple matter of disposing of a few trusted guards left in charge of the great vaults of the Stem's widespread, labyrinthine borings, the caves that made up the Stem-palace.

It is hard to understand how people with mechanisms to read minds either on the surface or in the caverns could be ignorant, but such is the case except in certain areas. They are either the hereditary rulers or children of wholly dependent slaves, or the free nomads of the deserted caverns. Originality, invention, courage of the mind, resourcefulness, ingenuity are qualities undeveloped among them because of the nature of their life, of the wholly different conditions of their world. It is best understood by considering India, which has perhaps had as much real opportunity to be a great modern nation as any; but has failed because of the repressive and smothering influence of its castes, its religions, its customs and its climate.

The cavern people are also a product of their environment, and that environment is a very different one from our own. That Brack or someone like him could slip a poison to his cook unobserved by the ever watching numerous telaug rays was unthought of by Bonur because it was considered impossible. It was in fact impossible to an ordinary man, but Brack and Tim were far from ordinary men. And Old Ben Uniaty was one of the wisest products of a life that has produced wizards since the pyramids. They were men who had made a lifetime study of ways of evading the objectionable forces in their

life, and were perhaps the only men on earth who could have successfully fooled and evaded a ray-watch long enough to give Bonur's cooks the peculiar condiments under circumstances which would arouse no later pursuits, having left no trail in the minds of the men involved. The cook would not remember getting the poison, the thought-concealer device worn by Brack had successfully concealed his true thought with a superficial blanket of false thought as the deed was done, and now the thought in the cook's mind was wholly one of giving the food a much more appetizing flavor, rather than a thought of killing a great number of people in a wholesale poisoning.

IN THE Palace of the Stem the orgy of the Satanists is drawing to a close. The great robot statue of the Devil has danced ponderously, and the priestess has postured redily, her body glistening with the blood of the sacrifices, her lewd incantation to the God is finished, all the delights of sin depicted with a wealth of gesture.

The gloomy, crowded cavern is filled with smoke, with wine scents, perfume scents, blood scents, with the smell of sweat and unwashed bodies, with the odor of food and the roasted meats—and if one were on the lookout—the scent of the bag of peculiar and deadly drug acquired by Tim Shanter in the bedroom of the dead dancer Lura, mingling though well hidden by the other odors.

The lilles, red and black, which had been used to decorate the place lie now trodden into the straw on the floor. Half of the guests lie under the benches, too drunk to move.

In their hidden, imperviously sheathed den, Brack and the old man watch the progress of the feast elatedly. Nearly every one of the feasters has

partaken of some of the poisoned meats. Bonur himself having come in for an hour to show his oneness with the pleasures of his things, to make sure that they are seated and comfortable and agreeable to his future plans. Red Nake was fed quite a bit of it by a charming slave girl, under Ben's suggestions, for Nake had not much appetite but could not resist the laughing girl.

As the last drunk was put to bed in the chambers adjoining the great feast hall, Tim Shanter piloted the old rollat containing Nita, Bill, Old Ben Uniaty and Brack farther and farther along the way leading to Bron, a small city some two hundred miles to the north of Ontal. They did not wish to be under the range of Bonur's ray beams as the poison began its long and painful course; a course of illness for which there was no cure, no known antidote—he might accidentally guess the source of his trouble before it killed him.

CHAPTER VIII

Red Nake's Revenge

THAT flight was a mistake. What ill-gotten goddess had put the thought in their minds? They were the only car on the roads that morning. This was not so unusual, but the empty-headed cook—whose mind's blankness had been their tool, now found his blundering way to becoming their inadvertent betrayer.

Nake was going over the kitchen stores totting up the cost of the feast. The cook, whose twenty-four hour memory had not had time to forget his suddenly acquired infatuation for the strange condiment given him by Brack, managed to find a moment to brag to Nake of the wonderful new flavoring for meats he had acquired. As he talked, Nake, listening contemptuously with

half an ear, suddenly froze as the possibility of the thing flashed through his mind. For all of their stores of food were from the surface city. Not one iota of it was supposed to come from other sources than their own trusted agents. This custom had for long been one of their strongest safeguards against such an occurrence as the cook was glowingly outlining to Nake's suddenly fearstruck ears.

"For the sake of the Devil, let me see some of this marvelous flavor, you fat imbecile!"

The cook, foolishly not knowing it meant the loss of his life whether he showed him or not, promptly found the shaker of strange powder and gave it to Nake. Nake took it and raced off to Bouur's, but on the way a strange thought struck him and he stopped. If he could find out what was in it on his own; if it was poison; if there was an antidote; if he kept his big mouth shut — why the whole Stem would fall uninvited into his lap. He could take the antidote, slip it unnoticed to his favorite men, and stand back to watch the others curl up in death. It might be a bit of luck.

NAKE stood over the old chemist, a slave long a captive, but once a surface scientist of some renown. The old hands, shaking but still clever, poured reagent after reagent upon the powder.

"Seems to be everything under the sun in this mix. I can't tell what the poison is—if it is a poison—but I'll bet my last week's food slips it is, and a little known one. This will take time, Nake. I never saw anything like this stuff, and I've seen a lot."

"There are some poisons that are found in the ancient's hidden stores, they would be hard to analyze and of substances unknown and hard to under-

stand as to their effects. Is there any way you can tell me if this is a fatal dosage of poison in the amounts we got into us? There is not so much in the shaker and it was spread over quite a bit of meat."

The old chemist smiled at Nake and walked over to a goldfish bowl. He dropped a grain of the stuff in. For a few moments the fish swam as idly as ever about the bowl, but gradually their tails quivered faster and faster, they raced about the bowl for a long time, then turned belly-up, their bodies jerking with cramps. Finally they rose and lay on the surface but did not die, just lay there, gasping.

"It is a poison, Nake. It may act quite slowly on the human; the goldfish are very delicate and react to the slightest trace of a poison. What it is I do not know, but I will try to find out and tell you. I would suggest you find the men who gave it to you and learn from them the antidote if you can. It is a strange material."

As Nake left, the old chemist stood smiling absently after him. Once before he had been asked to analyze a very similar substance. A warm feeling rose within him and he suddenly cut a little caper with his feet as he realized that most of the devil-hunch at the feast must have got some of the stuff into them. He grinned steadily, breaking into low laughs as he returned to bed. There'd be little work he'd do finding an antidote. He might be old and slow, but not dumb.

NAKE hurried to his own quarters and woke two of his cronies. He set them to searching the city with the long telaug beams, searching every stray and curious thought for the slightest inkling of who might be responsible for the deed. Nake was rather explicit in telling them to keep their own mouths shut

and minds guarded till they had learned whether or not the thing could be turned to account, or would prove the death of them.

So it was that as they swung the great old penetrays of the telaugs over the city of silence and despair the only moving thing in sight was the rollat hearing Brack and Tim, Nita and Bill and Old Ben. Their thoughts, though hidden by the devices Brack had hastily clapped about their heads, were still confusing and suspicious, for Brack in his hurry had not prepared a synchronized set of related records and the unrelated records showed a confusing mess of peculiar thought to the inquiring rays. Nake sent a police car racing after them on the chance that they might know something. There was something odd about their being the only car leaving the city.

THE five disheartened friends stood before Nake in his private quarters in the Palace of the Stem. Looking up at the great frowning faces of the carved Elder race; at the infinitely intricate parquetry of stone set in the walls in those designs no human could ever imitate; down at the purple glass of the floor where fishes of glittering gold and gleaming red and night black swam frozenly in the glistening glass; looking anywhere but at the eyes of Nake who had been poisoned and wished mightily that he had been not poisoned.

He had swiftly found the thought-concealer record-mech they wore about their heads and removed them, put a beam from his own telaug upon each of their minds, was questioning them with a kindly smile on his face as though all this were but a joke, hoping to trap their startled minds into an admission of guilt—and succeeding. The telaug revealed the fact they had done the deed, but it also revealed that they

themselves knew not the antidote for the dread, deadly stuff they had stolen from dead Lura's home.

Nake grinned a grim, evil smile of defeat at them as he listened to the slow, unwilling flow of their thoughts through the multi-screen before him. That screen could have carried a hundred separate beams from a hundred minds, if Nake had been man enough to read them all. But five were about as much as even his quick inner eye could follow.

Nake motioned to his friends, standing behind him with their ancient pistols trained upon the five just in case the meek appearance of the five was not true. As Nake revealed the whole truth to their already alarmed minds, they snarled with rage, their fingers tightened on the huge triggers of the vastly oversize pistols. But Nake held up a hand to stay them, whispered again to them, and the fellow called Horr Bratt laughed such a laugh as a man reading his death sentence may laugh and hurried from the room.

"Just a little wine before I show you to your sleeping rooms." Nake's smile was as seductive as ever was Cleopatra's offering poisoned wine to a guest. Horr Bratt returned with a decanter of the blue grape, which he handed to Nake with a grimace of feigned pain, for he had already begun to imagine the pangs of what he knew must follow for him.

Nake took the decanter, lifted the stopper, and in plain sight of the five waiting silently he poured the full contents of the shaker the cook had given him into the mouth of the jug.

"It is an ancient potion that brings sweet dreams. Nake laughed at them again, and offered them glasses, which he filled.

"Drink, my friends, I have had enough wine for this night. And then

to bed, to walt, for this potion brings sweet dreams, indeed! Unless, of course, you feel like talking, in which case we are quite willing to sit up with you, I'm sure. What would you have?"

As he stood in front of Bill, offering him the well-filled goblet of death, Bill reached his hand to the glass, took it and with the same motion flung it into Nake's face and dived for his legs. As they floundered on the floor, Nake snarled a word to Horr Bratt and the other not to kill.

"If you kill them, we will never learn the antidote!"

NAKE'S was a body well fed for long, while Bill was just recovering from the effects of months of slow starvation, the starvation that gripped the whole city under Bonur's merciless taxes. As Brack and Tim stepped forward to help him, Horr Bratt triggered two bolts into the glass floor, and great smouldering stars of cracks appeared in the glass under their feet. They stepped back; there was no way to help. They all felt doomed since they had been caught when all bad seemed so safe, so well-covered and complete. Nake brought his pistol butt down on Bill's head and the struggle was over. Nake got to his feet snarling.

"No more foolishness, give us the antidote or drink your potion and go to sleep with it, as we must! You have no other course of action. A fool would know that dying men are not to be trifled with."

Ben Uniatty spoke in his oddly young voice that fit so ill with his time-ravaged face.

"We do not really know the antidote, Red Nake. If we did, we might be so foolish as to buy our lives with it. But as it is, here's to our lives in Paradise; sure you'll never reach there, Red Nake, with the crimes you have on your

soul!"

Ben Uniatty, the best mind in all Ontal, drained the deadly potion and sat down, smiling oddly. Brack, hoping the old man had a card in the hole, but not seeing any other course open anyway, drained his own glass. Nita and Bill, looking at each other, drank theirs as though it were a love philter. Tim, the last, looked at his with the same dread that had plagued him in Lura's beauty-haunted home, finally managed to down it, grimacing. The five stood, facing Nake, as if to say "What now, we are all dead; so what?"

"Take 'em away! They may remember later what to do about the stuff. Have them searched; some clue to an antidote might be concealed on them. Put them in separate cells, right here in this same boring. Post a guard at each door. It may be that one might crack and wish to bargain with us. The guards are to have strict orders to call us instantly one of them wishes to speak, understand!"

It was a sad blackness in which the friends waited. There was no hope, for none of them knew anything about the poison except that Lura had used it effectively. They were all glad they did not know an antidote, for it would have been wrested from their minds by the telaug and they would have died anyway. If they had been free, they might have searched Lura's effects, found some trace of the antidote. But they knew that Nake had read in their minds where the stuff had come from and had sent a search party there himself. They knew that if the antidote were found, themselves would get none, and their death be more sure.

THE little slave-girl, Sarah, swung her watch-ray from Nake's apartments and upon the bed of Bonur where he snored loudly. A secret and some-

how beautiful smile played over her childishly sweet face as she resolved to say nothing. For in the time that Ben Uniati had focused the teleport upon the chair where Bonur was removing her mind and replacing it with his own design, Ben had found time to subtly insert a beam of invisible "shorter" ray which had reduced the power of Bonur's erasing ray to near zero. So that Sarah's treatment had lasted but a few days. And now Sarah was again Sarah! Bending over the screened image of Bonur she watched him, vengefully grateful that the death stuff was in him, watching for the first signs of its effects upon him. Already she noted his limbs twitch with the first tremors of the approaching painful convulsions.

Outside, the great stone faces of the mighty God-wrought stone figures that lined the way of the Stem looked wisely at each other, saying "Wisdom is death, tonight. All is death and forgotten greatness, tonight."

Two weeks dragged by on slow, but fiery feet.

CHAPTER IX

Death, King of Ontall

ABOUT the palace of the Stem, and on the ways leading out of Ontal, were some thousands of things in human form, and of those thousands most were beginning to feel the pangs of a strange disease—a fire of pain began to spread through their limbs and convulse their muscles.

On the ways leading out of the city, the rollats, big as circus vans and some as ornate—though with the antique decoration that is never anything but exquisite—were parked beside the wide tubes in the alcoves that the ancients built at intervals. Inside, the devil-ray-men writhed their small and twisted

bodies in the first pangs of the long road to death they would all travel.

Inside the palace of the Stem, Bonur awoke, his whole body bathed in sweat in his dreams—which his slave watchers provided always in his sleep—bad been strangely filled with foreboding. He had dreamed that the golden robot girl, the prophet machine the mad wight had brought from the south, had risen from the melting pot and came in to him, her terrible, musical voice telling him that soon, now, he would die!

Now, as he lay there in the luminous dark, Sarah's face bending over him in ray projection seemed the face of the terribly beautiful prophetess of doom—the golden girl herself. Slowly, the fearful fire of the pain from Lura's antique poison began to run through his veins, and Bonur felt such fear as he never had before. He leaped from the antique metal bed, as wide as three and as long as four, on which his spreads of silk and wool lay like a pallet on a giant's table, and rang a gong beside the bed. The obsequious slave who answered he sent to fetch Nake and Horr Bratt, for these two were in his closest counsel. Bonar divined that all was not well, and that he needed a doctor.

Nake came in all long-faced and gloomy, and answered Bonur's questions.

"I guess some enemy has got to us, Chief! I caught the cook right after the feast with some strange flavor in a box, and I have been having it analyzed and chasing hither and thither about it, not knowing whether it was nothing or a something to bother you about—and now the pains begin. I guess it wasn't all lies about Lura killing long after she gave them poison. It's over two weeks since the feast, and now it shows up. I guess there really are poisons that can kill long after the time you

take them."

But of the captured, under guard in his own apartments, he said nothing, for it was too late to be caught with them on his hands and not have told Bonur.

Bonur swore.

"Then there was poison at the feast? I'll burn the lives out of every rat in Ontal till I get the one that did it. I'll kill every child till the parents tell what this is . . . I'll . . .

Bonur's voice died, and he sat and stared, the pains running through him. For once he had come up against something he could not cure by killing someone.

"Nake, get every doctor in Ontal here. We'll get to the bottom of this if we have to burn the feet off every one of them. We'll get some pill roller that knows something about this."

"I'll get 'em, never fear. I have the hoys out rounding up all the talent of the kind. We'll soon have every pill-roller in the city at work on finding out what it is we have got into us."

"If we had a sample. . ."

Nake produced the shaker and handed it over.

"Here is the stuff, chief, someone gave this to the cook with a wool about it being the best flavoring the world has ever seen, and the simpleton swallowed the yarn hook, line, and sinker. He is in bed now, having tasted the stuff long before it got into the food, but the poison is so slow of working that it is only beginning to get him down. By the looks of him he'll live a week or two yet. We may have three weeks, maybe one, it depends on how much of the stuff we got into us."

had been administered and all the victims were weakened by the effects. The "pill-rollers" worked night and day, might and main, in the great empty laboratory of the Stem; where once had been scientists with an education in some ways better than surface technologists, but now for years had been no one.

The symptoms, which had at first been slight recurrent pains, had increased daily in severity and pain and frequency. Now, three weeks after, from Bonur down to the lowliest lackey—and the innocent cook, causative tool—on down to the lowest mad denizen and devotee; all writhed and screamed day and night from the fires that consumed their lives so painfully, so slowly, so mysteriously.

In the cells in Nake's quarters, where the five conspirators waited Nake's torture—which occurred necessarily between his spasms of pain and increased in severity in proportion to his own agony—hope had left them. But a fierce pride in knowing they had freed Ontal of her worst oppressors upheld them.

The hardest thing for them to hear was the torture of Nita. For they had to witness what was done to her, hear her poor screams, watch her flesh torn with the whip—all the intricate engines of torment which the endless centuries of devil worship had passed down to these modern devotees of the red horned One. All were practiced before their eyes on poor Nita's shrieking beauty to wring from them the secret of the antidote. Yet all the time Nake knew it was hopeless, for in their minds could be read by his telepathic experts the clear fact that they did not know of any antidote, if one existed. So that as his own pains increased steadily in severity, Nake gave up the hopeless job and left the poor wracked victims alone in their

TIME passed on painful, burning feet in the Palace of the Stem, and on the ways leading out of Ontal. It was now three weeks since the poison

cells, while he devoted his rapidly waning energies to flogging on the efforts of the technicals he had called in to find the antidote by chemical means.

He promised tremendous rewards if they succeeded, but as neither he nor Bonur had bothered much with paying anyone for anything since they bad got power in Ontal, these promises only served to remind the workers that their work was more or less a gift.

The dying ray-watch, who read the minds of the workers frantically trying reaction after reaction upon the sample of stuff they had, knew the case was hopeless unless some lucky chance should reveal a clue to their eyes. For they had no idea what many of the ingredients of the material were, and Ben's efforts to disguise the odor of the stuff beneath a multitude of flavors and odors had complicated their job till the Devil himself could not have told what it was.

AT LAST came the hour when the sentry before Bill's cell door collapsed shrieking at his post. His legs, kicking in the last throes of death, were just beyond their reach. Escape was open to them, if they had the keys. They lay beyond Bill's stretching pain-wracked arm and out of reach of Nita's own futilely reaching, lash-scored hands.

But out of his own agony Bill drew a last brief strength of mind, and tearing his cell cot apart, made a hook of metal out of the spring. Tugging, fainting, reaching, at last he brought the key ring from the belt of the fallen guard to his own hands.

Bill, knowing he was doomed, and that there was no point in his actions, automatically unlocked the cell door, and staggering from weakness, unlocked the cell doors of the others. Old Ben Uniaty lay apparently lifeless in

the bed within the cell. Bill shook him savagely, not with hope, but because any action seemed to ease the terrible fire that consumed his veins, his life.

He picked up the old man, and, leading the others, who supported each other, led the way from the hated place. At least they might die at home, among loved surroundings.

As they fell and staggered down the great two-foot steps outside the palace of the Stem, to the round at the side of the way where were parked a mass of vehicles whose drivers would never again pilot them through the dark but weird and awfully beautiful ways of time-forgotten Ontal, old Ben Uniaty managed to murmur:

"To my laboratory, to the great metal room where my workshop lies, I may have remedy for the poison. Hurry, man, hurry!"

Bill surmised the old man was out of his mind—as indeed he appeared to be at the last threshold of consciousness—but decided to please his last wish anyway, though himself wanted to see his own loved chamber of the sculptured sea-plants and supremely beautiful females of the forgotten race in the stone niches where the water poured over them greenly forever; the room that his love for Nita had made sacred. Still Bill turned the wheels of the rollat toward Ben's workshop deep in the bowels of the city.

When they arrived, Bill had to carry the unconscious bodies of his friends into the place one by one, for none of them could move more than murmur and weakly lift their arms to aid him. Within, himself collapsed across the body of Brack.

And the great enigmatic machines that Ben alone knew the slightest possible use for seemed to stare sadly at the five fallen there before them. And a spirit was in the room weeping, the

spirit that was the soul of Ontal, for here lay her best, her bravest—and if there was hope in the old man's mind, there was none here, for his hands were fast stiffening in death.

Time dragged her weary, solemn feet through the great metal room, and the reward of their effort for the great future life of man was to be denied them. And something that men know, but never see, wept silently as the seconds ticked off the last breaths of five who tried nobly for their brothers, and paid the cost in full.

Bill, after long moments, lifted his head and his glazing eyes fell on one of the great machines that crowded there in the safety of the impervious metal walls. And that machine was one he had known in his infancy. On his hands and knees he crawled, inch by slow inch, to the feet of the metal monster, and pulling himself upright at last, turned the great metal stud that gave it power. Within the enigma that such ancient things always are to all men, power hummed a song, and from the bowl that was its face a flood of strange energy poured strength into Bill. For Bill would have to be nearer dead than he was not to recognize a beneficial ray mech when he saw it. Such rays are the coveted and valued possession of all who live and survive in the caves, for life is not supported in the darkness without these rays to replace our sun's less detrimental and necessary rays.

As new strength flowed into him, Bill raised and looking at the grey head and knowing old Ben would be the first to finally succumb to the effects of the poison, dragged the old man under the vibrant light of the powerful ben-mech. Bill then crawled again to Nita's side, took her dress in his teeth, and began dragging her into the light. As her body lay at last within the vibrant, rosy

light of the ben-ray, his will exhausted its last reserve power, the floods of pain from the fire in his vitals washed over him. Darkness again wrapped him.

WITHIN the great gloomy Palace of the Stem, death reigned. The guards lay stiffened at their posts; in the harems and slave quarters the soft bodies of the women lay sprawled here and there and here and there one twitched and moaned until the death rattle silenced the moans.

In Nake's rooms, under the strong beneficial rays of his private mech, lay Nake, alone now, groaning, writhing and cursing, but still very much alive thanks to the life-generating power of the dynamos of the ben-ray mech.

On the great God-throne, so ludicrously too large for this contorted, bloated body, within his throne room in the Stem-palace, sprawled Bonur Golz. His eyes stared at the shadows deepening around him. Up the great steps of the dais, stealthily, silently, crept Sarah, his slave-girl, a ray gun huge in her soft hands. Sarah was weak, near death, but on her livid face her soul obscured will flamed in that spirit that drove Joan of Arc.

Up to Bonur's twitching, contorted, bloating body she crept silently as the shadow of death itself. Bonur looked up to see her face, distorted with the hate she bore him, and to hear her say: "Just to make sure, Bonur Golz, my love! Pah! Toad, die!"

The great dis-ray pistol held out in her two shaking hands spit a brilliant bolt of terrible energy through Bonur's fat belly, through the mighty stone of the great throne, through the far wall.

She slipped to the floor beside the terrible dignity of the God throne, and the scene of her last deed in life did honor even to that awesomely sculp-

tured chamber of ancient honor and striving. For Sarah strove in her hate, and died so, trying to do right. The gross horror crouched on the God throne was dead, and the sculptured faces looked down on Sarah as she died with their stony approval not incongruous. The spirit of the Elder race lives on in the human and as long as there are Sarahs there will be men worthy to carry on the striving toward the ancient greatness.

BACK in old Ben Uniacy's workshop, the old man lifted his grey head weakly under the full power of the great hen-ray mech. He looked wearily at the sprawled, still bodies of his friends about him—and full consciousness came and looked out of his eyes, fast glazing as they were in death.

Then the will that had driven him so long to fight when all seemed hopeless; fight so hard that all Ontal mistook him for the moving spirit of that great organization, the "helpers," raised him to his knees, made him crawl in spite of death already stiffening his limbs toward the huge levers manipulating the teleport mech. His shaking, enfeebled hands pulled the great lever, and majestically the terrific enigma of the teleport rose gleaming from its hiding bath of mercury. It rose and stood like the God-head of all machine-heaven before him.

Into the focus chamber he crawled, turned the dial, and the terrible power whined as the complex multibeam filled the room. And Ben Uniacy was sent by the teleport mech for a distance of six feet—as had been his yearly custom for many years.

He lay exhausted for long minutes, for the soul tearing experience of the titanic forces controlled by the machine had taken the last part of his nearly vanished strength.

Then his slow crawl began again, and Brack lay at last within the focus chamber. Again the dials and the big switches clicked, and Brack too lay some feet further away. Now Ben began again his crawl and strength was slowly returning to him. Though his breath came in great gasps, at least, it came.

Ben Uniacy loved men, and he knew that if he could teleport each of his dying friends the exclusion set-up of the titanic force-fields of the mighty teleport mech would leave the toxic material of the poison that was killing them outside their bodies in the sending chamber.

Ben Uniacy won, and the five friends, refreshed, but weak—after a long night's sleep under the great old beneficial rays—got ready to return to the Stem-palace. Out into the ever-night of ancient Ontal, toward the palace, Tom Shanter swung the great rollat's wheels, and a grim smile was on his face as he said:

"This day Ontal acquires a new ruler, yourself, Ben Uniacy, the best man in all the underworld!"

Inside the Palace of the Stem, Nake the Red gave a last groan, and as he expired under the strong beneficial ray that had failed to stop the poison death, Nake saw a strange face peering at him. Nake's last sight on earth was the face of a despised thief of the city who spat in his face and went on with his looting.

THE END

* * *

LETTER TO READER:

After reading over this story, I find that my attempts to give the true flavor of the underworld has not resulted very happily, insofar as speech is concerned. They speak several dialects of English. I have heard an old ruler telling his dream maker in these words:

"Shew me the hand. Shew me the foot. Shew me the waist and the movement therein, shew me the lust in her mind." Such English, I assure you, is impossible of reproduction unless you have been raised with it. Again, they use a jargon of slang more peculiar to themselves than jitterbug talk to the jitterbug—a modern slang—but the terms of it are full of words of double and triple meaning I have no power to put into English. If I tried to write entirely as it is you might refuse the whole thing. So I hope you will bear with the crudities I find I have committed for the sake of the story's vital information I give those who already know enough of the hidden world to know I give them much.

Your friend,

Richard S. Shaver.

* * *

AFTERWORD

HERE I think I should give you the gist of a newspaper clipping I have before me (clipped from either the *Sun* or the *Herald American* of Chicago, of approximately September 27, 1945—I do not recall the exact date as I clipped it a week ago and do not have the original paper; but if you are interested in checking me, the item should be easily found). The clipping gives the following general information:

"A young lady in Chicago (whose name and address I shall not mention to save her still further embarrassment—Shaver) has complained to the U. S. District Court that the Federal Bureau of Investigation is guilty of what she terms "malfeasance of duty" in permitting her to be troubled by rays, electric shocks, voices and radio eyes.

"In filing her own suit, the young lady complained that she had informed the FBI about her troubles but they had done nothing about it. (They couldn't—Shaver) She attributed the rays, voices, eyes and shocks to "unAmerican interests paving the way for anarchistic rule in this country." (They are always going to "come to the surface"

and take over our government—they never do!—Shaver)

"Naming Newark, N. J., as the place where her troubles began, she said: "There was some sort of equipment held in the rear of another residence which could vibrate the building or the bed in which I attempted to sleep." (There is some of the antique mech on the surface, brought up.—Shaver)

"Later, she moved to Wheeling, W. Va. But the rays followed her there. The FBI, she said, compelled her to sit under and over some sort of heat, whether it was radium lamps or other heat she did not know.

"In Chicago she asked that the court compel the FBI to solve the mystery and uncover these secret rays that were bedeviling her."

There you have the gist of the clipping, which is only one of thousands of clippings in a like vein that appear yearly in American newspapers. Their source is quite obvious to one who knows.

Many, many people like this unfortunate woman are sent to the madhouse every year for maintaining such "ridiculous" assertions. It gets in the papers—and there is so much of it that I believe an outfit as big as the FBI must know a great deal about the causes of these phenomena. It is most probable that they have found themselves helpless against such things, but if so their attitude in allowing their silence on the subject to send sane people to the madhouse is hard to understand. Perhaps they have their reason—they fear the panic results of exposing their information to all surface men.

But for those of you who do not intend to go to court and courageously hold the whole cave menace up to the light of day and spur the FBI in this particular endeavor to publicize one of the most evil farces in modern life—I have written the following story. It will explain just what is behind such news items.

For instance such a news item as the following—started me on this story because I felt guilty as hell for the death of seventeen service men, because I know more or less the real cause of the wreck and fail convincingly to acquaint the general public with the facts that would enable them to take some measures for their safety.

Remember the night of August 10? I was sitting by the radio, deep in the work

of another stf. writer—when the radio gave the news with which I began this manuscript; the item concerning the wreck of the Great Northern Empire Builder in Michigan, North Dakota.

It was this radio announcement that made me get up and go at my typewriter, resolved to lift the veil that hides the idiot evil that causes such wrecks once and for all. This story is the result. It is basically true, all the parts are true existent things. But the assembly as a whole is fiction. The "Stem" exists, but I am not sure whether it is under New York or a certain other great city. There are only three or four such great entrances; the rest are closed.

YOU have read descriptions of the ancient slave marts? You have seen them in the movies, certainly. But did you know that the ancient slave market is an institution that has not died? That it lives on and flourishes in secret; as so many other ancient evils live on and flourish in secret and also in the concealment and protection of the caves; protected not only by the natural barriers of the miles of dense granite and basalt above, but also by the unmatched weapons of the Pagan God race themselves?

Depending wholly on these protective "shells," the animal "man" seems to have evolved very differently—or not at all. He must be seen to be understood. Inheriting absolute power as well as numbers of sycophants from their fathers, the rich and powerful—like the Rajahs of Indian history—are often weak, bloodthirsty, dissipated, wholly characterless (though I have seen the reverse), wholly a burden to their people. And this is a particularly terrible problem when their weapons are so invincible. Even to the sane, well-intended of the caverns who know the immensely technical field of antique ray mech operation intimately, it is also an insuperable problem, for weapons to defeat the antique stationary ray installations just aren't portable because of weight.

Tortures are a large part of the life of these evil ray of the caverns, and I will list a few of the more common things you must face to have a piece of the antique mech to study.

"Flaying alive."—Burning over a fire while being simultaneously whipped with a heavy metal-thonged whip.

"The steam chair"—a particularly delightful death much feared by the persecuted peoples of the underworld. It is a chair built of metal tubes into which live steam is admitted after the victim has been thoroughly lashed in place.

A favorite method of torture much used because the victim can survive to be sold as a slave, if care is used, is "freezing." By means of specially constructed devices shaped for the purpose built of refrigerating units, the victim is frozen solid over and over. The freezing is not particularly painful, but the "thawing out" is excruciating agony. After a few such treatments one is either dead or ready for any vileness asked of one—or such is the theory behind much of the torture; though to my knowledge few survive these entertaining ordeals.

To top the unpleasant aspects of the life of the caverns, many of the slaves are eunuchs, likewise many of the female slaves are brutally sterilized.

Some are given "stim-death" just for the fun of watching the nerve impulse augmented electrically until it is the power of a well-nigh killing electric shock. The victim kills himself by too violent contortions of the body. The back breaks or the arms break in the thongs, or the legs break in the anklets, and the victim bleeds to death.

Another favorite is the sclerosing solution in the veins. Plain Lysol is often used.

WHEN the owners pass in to the slave market with their slaves, the guard at the entry gate cries:

"State your stock."

The owner then enumerates the number and sex and age of his slaves. Inside, one hears such snatches of conversation as this: "He just practically gave away two kids." (Two children sold cheaply).

"Now she's on sale." She is a beautiful and cultured young American girl from the surface. She brings a good price from an old "crackpot."

Or: "And the market price in children is rising since the use of young blood transfusions for rejuvenation is in style." . . . "One's own child is apt to become a blood-cow for some old jerk to get young. And I'm supposed to be loyal! The least bad luck, a bum steer, a wrong gamble, and my own kids go to the block to become blood-cows for these dirty medical ray groups to sell to some rich old geezer!" . . . "Speak-

of torture, I saw a new one on my last trip into the territory of that whirligig witch, Nonur. She had an acid grease prepared and smeared all over the flesh of a young fellow. What a prolonged torment! The grease slows and prolongs the acid action; the flesh rots away." . . . "Yeh, it gets worse and worse. The green (money) is never enough. The price on young blood rises. One's sweat is never rewarded, while the tools and cheats, the double-crossing sneaks prosper. When you find a wise man, you find a man who lives in torment from the mad ray. A dream is never good, but is always perverted by some tampering dero into a nightmare. Love is turned phony in your arms by the stim ray. The only laughter you hear is a stupid, evil cachination, never anymore a real laugh of joy. Whatever a guy wants or could enjoy, it's 'all.' If you ask for credit it's as good as asking for jail."

This is a short picture of the cave life to show you Shaver's answer to the readers' rather frequent query: "Why doesn't Shaver lead a party into the caves?" I'm willing, but which entrance opens into a safe place where such a state of affairs is not waiting to engulf us?

Slavery of our best and most beautiful seems to be the actual case under some areas of our country. I have laid my picture of the actual, terrible life of the people of the caverns under New York, not because such is the case there (though to my knowledge it is not good there), but because the name will make you realize that all is not as it appears with American life. Much of this is concealed by corruption and intimidation of the personnel of our census and missing persons bureau. If you don't believe me, try and prove differently. You will probably find missing persons personnel "out to lunch." The "ray" receives large sums from various surface groups seems very true, for their lavish expenditures could only be so explained, or by the possession of many gold mines in the deeper caves. Many people do disappear into the complete slavery in the caves is obviously true if you know anything at all about the cavern life. The police obviously fear to admit where they go or even that they do go; that there are continual and unexplained disappearances every day (or in truth do not know either!). These are hidden in never-referred-to files of records is

obviously true.

THE well stocked harems and slave pens of some of the big-shots underneath are obviously the big reason why the caverns are still the same ancient, secret, and powerful influence in our lives they have always been,

Naturally I can't take people into a place where they would become beaten slaves—and the first taste of slavery they would get would be the lash, for they would object to becoming slaves. Truth is, it is possible to get into and out of the caves without this sad fate; but it takes money in equipment and attendant publicity to cause the underworld to leave it alone for fear of exposing their hand.

Down there, the leases and contracts are written in "vanishing" ink; and when you are broke, you are sold as a slave to cover your debts.

You see, they are a slave state, and an absolute and terribly tyranny bordering our free surface states. When you enter you become a slave, your property confiscated by the most powerful native you encounter.

The rulers are sometimes descendants of a long line of rulers. They are people who have always lived thus and see no reason for change. Tyranny is their way of life.

When a slave becomes useless, it is as at Oswiecim, and the other German murder camps. He is disposed of as cheaply as possible. In the caves he is thrown in "the hole"; down and down his body goes, still screaming from his last torment. No man know where such holes go into the depths.

To really describe the life of the caverns is beyond words. We do not have the concepts, nor the experience with evil life to understand what is true when we read it. But I can try!

They fear and obstruct all scientists on the surface with the ancient penetrative rays that reach up and watch us through the miles of rock that protects them from our knowledge—and from our vengeance when, like Shaver, men know what they do. Such men as Pierre Curie almost always die strangely; and must always so die as long as the caverns roam with the mad nomads, or the cities of the surface are underlaid with the sinks of sin which do exist there. He must die as if it was an accident and he does. Like Pierre he walks into a loaded

truck oblivious, and is crushed. Or like Seabrook—who knew more than he dared tell—take sleeping tablets not because they want to, but because they are made to by rays controlling their bodies.

The people who do this did not build these rays, but they have learned how to use them and have kept the use secret in the endless centuries that have passed since the caves became tabu to surface men (except as slaves, and in some places—as food).

The evil groups of the underworld—which is in some places the only areas of earth where stupid, evil and backward men hold power since Hitler's death and Japan's surrender—fear all scientific progress up here. Hence their dog-in-the-manger attitude toward surface technicians acquiring even one piece of the indestructible antique mech. In the hands of quite a few surface men—hex-doctors of Pennsylvania; witch-doctors of Africa; seers and spiritulists; fortune tellers; criminals—are samples of the antique mech and they are used but are never turned over to surface technicians to study because of the ancient tradition of secrecy. The influential ones of the underworld are often backward mentally, culturally, technically, and spend their lives' powerful efforts trying to hold back, to make the surface world "wait" till they catch up with us mentally and technically. But they do not in truth progress down there, and so this is an endless struggle.

THIS story Masked World is a courageous attempt to picture this world under our feet for you as nearly as may be done with words and ideas which are not adapted to portraying concepts you are not used to as "true" concepts. The speech they use is hard to reproduce, for they use so much telau meaning, double meaning, that their English would not be understood by you unless you heard it mentally. Orally it does not reproduce.

It is not a "fine" story, and it might be frowned upon by ignorant moralists of the type who teach our young that all is sweetness and light in the world except for minor details which are being "tended to" by our FBI and kindred agencies. It doesn't do what I want, portray the full truth of the life of the underworld. But as an attempt in that direction you will find it valuable. It does give you some idea of what goes

on under your feet in the ever-night of the caverns where the forgotten Gods built their mighty cities before earth ever had a sun—deep in the rock where even the super-cold of space could not reach. We cannot reach or harm these people below us, but they do a good job of ruining their own life, if that is what you think should happen to those who deny surface people the products of an elder culture that would give us a future beyond the power of words to describe. Most of the parts of this story are actual true occurrences, but the assembly as a whole is, of course, fiction. And for those who can't stand the idea that such things can be true—it is a clever concoction of lies.

Since the story is designed to give you a complete picture of life in the masked world under our feet, it is not complete without the inclusion of a few of the incidents that make up the life of the mad, sadistic nomads who forever infest the wonderland that their dog-in-the-manger attitude denies to our eyes—and of the science which would make surface medicine a wonder of perfection in its fight against disease. These madmen below us deny our right to that health that the secrets of the old mech would give us. They are things which evil men use for their purpose, too stupid to want proper recompense or ask for it; things which the sane avoid like the plague down there, or kill on sight if they are able, if their ray reaches them first.

And these same things of the "nether-world" (familiar phrase to a student, eh?) have been used by surface people in the past (called "witches" and worse) for their own purposes. Since in those days not many of them had a spoken language, and in truth there were probably too few of them survived the darkness—for to survive the darkness one must have certain kinds of rays containing ultra-violet always upon one's body—they could only be communicated with by signs. This was an art that some families learned from their parents and kept secret, for to talk of it was to die as a witch. When they hated someone, or wanted someone removed for some purpose, all they had to do was to go to a secret place, make a doll resembling the person hated, and stick pins in the doll. The watching ray from below noted what was wanted from the appearance of the doll—and promptly stuck the real person with

very real and deadly rays from the ancient weapons that abounded around him. So, we have the legend of the doll of the witches (witch-craft) in full explained! It was a result of a very real and deadly code in use between the underworld and the surface.

What did the surface witch give for such a service? She gave her body over the stim-telaug at any time desired—and on Walpurgis night gave it in full, in an even more actual form. Such was the sale of the soul to the devil; and in many cases I doubt very much that it was evil at all. But in many cases it was evil, and no mistake about it. In my own case it was not evil. But I know well how much evil there is still there, and what it was in medieval and ancient times one can well imagine. I have nearly lost my life to such evil several times, and I still worry. But the thing known as "white magic" in the old days, and as the "helpers" today, always intervened in time. One's effort has a value still in the underworld, it seems.

THERE are an infinitude of legends and detailed accounts of this communication between the magical underworld and the humdrum surface world. But those "not in the know" have always insisted that all such tales were lies; and usually have been ably assisted in this shutting of themselves off from a very profitable communion by those who did know all about it.

I can imagine the first shouted "bosh" when the yokel started to tell of the opening he had found leading down to "fairyland" belonged to a gentleman who is still with us, the mountebank and charlatan who uses the underworld to his nefarious ends.

It was the gentleman who told fortunes at the fair, or the gambler who used the underworld wights clever ray work to tell what cards his friend held across the board—and who got this very profitable and frequently very able work for the mere running of a few errands to places where their peculiar appearance barred the underworld from entrance without recognition or apprehension as minions of the Devil. He didn't want his life's sweetest bounty ruined by some yokel's foolish revelation.

There are such individuals shouting "bosh" at *Amazing Stories* today, and they know more about it than we do—and get much more out of it! There are others who think the underworld is wholly their friend

—and those are the first to shout "bosh" at such as me. But there is too much evil rising out the old place, and it is time we took a hand in Hell's hotter brews of evil. They cost too much in blood and tears, those mad and evil ones. All the kindhearted "white magic" in the world does not make up for it. They need a large hand, a helping hand, those good ones below. In one state, one day, lately, ten sane men were committed to the madhouse as incurably mad. Their minds had been deluded by the mischievous cruelty of the more evil subterraneans into a state that no psychiatrist could see as anything but mad. Truth was, they had been treated to a few depressions of the buttons on an emotion organ, a few projections of real seeming phantasms from the telesolidograph mech, and had gone screaming out of their minds. They would be all right in a few days, but once in an insane asylum they would not be released for months to come. Truth is, you can't tell many medics a story like this as true without their calling the wagon. "It just couldn't be!" But you see, it is true, so it must be told.

Seabrook, a writer and investigator of the reason behind witchcraft and other weird phenomena of life, died at his farm in Rhinebeck on September 20, 1945. The doctor found him dead from an overdose of sleeping pills. But Seabrook had been deviled by rays for years. The sleeping pills were taken by him under ray control, for the old ray mech is an ideal tool that can take over a man's body in such a way that all his acts are dictated by thought superimposed upon his brain in such strength that his own thought has no power over his actions. Such was Seabrook's death. The truth is Seabrook knew the truth, but had been unable to publicly say so for fear of the madhouse. Many men are in that position.

THE Satanists' banquet was men like Bonur's tool, hack into the beginnings of life on earth; their means of getting the evil ones of the cavern into an illusion of loyalty, of receiving compensation for their efforts. They are not gifted with brains, being in truth an idiotic form of life which the peculiar conditions of the cave life had fostered in some areas for ages. The life support given by the magnificent machinery of maintaining life under all conditions left by the ancients had succeeded only in perpetuating

a kind of life that could exist only in these ultra-favorable conditions. They were wholly evil, and the errors of their ways never were corrected by nature, for the ancient beneficial rays and weapons allowed them to survive when better men perished. The truth is, the machinery had removed all need for effort from their lives and the result had been a degeneration of a most repellent kind—and as the truth is that evil is a reverse form of logic, they were supremely stupid for they had never found a real need for thought; it had all been done for them by the Gods who left the caverns to them.

The custom of using these evil degenerates as a cheap kind of assassin had become an institution of cavern life. They were paid little or nothing, but their evil natures had to be pandered to and coddled in certain ways, as they were irritable and unstable unless so treated. The annual feast of the Satanists had thus grown into an age-old part of their life, and was one way of keeping them in hand. Each year it was almost an exact repetition of the year before. The minds of the dero, if they can be said to have minds, were not such as to require much change in the fare. The dances of the red-masked figures were an exact and changeless repetition of some ritual so old its origin was as lost in time as the origin of the Elder race itself.

During the great Feasts of the Demons, one of the songs the devils hear contains these words in a tune familiar to you as a hymn—but known for centuries in the caverns as a song of the Demon's triumph over aspiring surface man:

*"Twill be my Demon's glory . . .
Jesus on the cross . . .*

The words are distorted version of one of our much used hymns, and tells the story of the demon who connived and controlled the Romans and the Jews until Jesus was finally dying on the cross. I have often wondered since I first heard the Demon's hymn whether our hymn was first written or was a present, a mocking gift, from the underworld so that we might sing our dupe's hymn to a deed they hold as one of their mightier stunts, an incident in their long reign of terror over all earth, a reign they have upheld by frustrating all man's attempts toward union in good sensible effort toward a sane goal of humane power on earth.

THE eating of the flesh of a baby was considered an essential part of the ceremony. The custom had been curtailed by time till but one babe was usually slaughtered before the red idol, cut into small pieces and partaken of each as a symbol of the individual's emancipation from all human emotions, and of his complete prostration before the spirit of evil.

The Demon is not a figment of man's imagination; they have been a strong organization always, and today are perhaps as strong or more so than ever and as big a force in life. They have their hymns, and many of them are the very hymns we sing in our Christian churches—but they are older and the words are often the horrible original from which our own hymns were given us in mockery. I have heard these hymns sung to the "god" of evil, and the antiquity of man's prostration and helplessness before these evil latter Gods who have duped and bedeviled man and held him back from his destiny by the evil teaching that they themselves were not men but demons—is the saddest history I have ever encountered.

The dero have been man's curse and are the reason man is mortal and worthless today. One cannot tell in words the terrible stretch of evil antiquity that can ring in the words of a demon's song. If I could but remember the words for you; it is a glimpse into the horror that is a race's madness through time, the demon race—the race that became devils because the machines they worshipped became sun-polarized.

I think that this occurred in this way: The cavern dwellers have a way of warming and cheering their gloomy homes by turning a conductive ray up through the rock and by it bringing the sun's rays themselves into the cavern over the penetrative conductive ray. Then when the sun set, they were as apt as not to use the same mech for making dreams, for the versatile of mech is often many such devices in one. I have seen them do this: use a dream machine—which is really the old record reader—the library of thought record's necessary adjunct without which the old thought records could not be read. But the dream-mech, as the cavern people call them, had also a penetrative ray by which the record pictures could be thrown to great distances. The same machine, because of the nature of this ray designed to convey the most subtle and vari-

ant of thought waves in their entirety, also served as the best ray to bring the light of the sun into the caves. So it was that the dream-mech became sun-polarized.

In time they came to use the same mech for the making of dreams—which is a way of using the record reader to produce dreams—for in the record-mech is a way of introducing one's own thought to the person receiving the record so that one's wildest fancies can be introduced into the fabric of the story of an ancient recording of the thought of an ancient elder man. This may be difficult to follow, but the wise ones of the modern dwellers below have told me that this is the way the demon originated on earth. His mind became sun-polarized from the radioactive machine which had become so by exposure to long periods to the direct rays and inductive power of the sun itself. So it was that the mad sun-inductive mind of the demon was inevitable—for they had to have sunlight—and the means by which they got sunlight became the means of evil's domination of their lives.

So it was that the demon became an hereditary character dominating the cavern life; and today the same danger threatens and destroys and may wipe out surface life again as it has done before, over and over. History is not all in history books, you see.

TO GET back to the feast of the devils

repeating its age-old pattern of evil under hands like Bonur's grasping hand—the red masks, the black robes, the details you are familiar with from your Christian descriptions of Hell—were here seen for what they were in truth, an "actual" thing of living, degenerate people of a race that had lost its birthright of reason from an affliction peculiar to their uses of the ancient machines for centuries after they had become unfit for use—their ignorance of the science behind the wonder-mech giving them no inkling of the fate the sun-polarized mech would doom them to—the fate of degenerating into inhuman, unthinking, and complete demoniac creatures.

In the past these creatures have emerged from the caverns and swept all life from the vast areas of earth's surface; and their wide dispersion under earth has succeeded in their mad single-minded secretive destruction of records of their past in keeping all knowledge of the origin and nature of evil from us of the surface. This condition

is what I have set myself to remedy—and this story is my vehicle to this purpose. So I hope you will bear with me if I have diverged from the story form, for the task is a great one, and I fight not only ignorance but a complete inheritance of obstructing thought which is our own heritage of stupidity from the past influence of the demon's fingers forever in our minds in the ages past.

For instance if I try to tell you the awful depths of the degradation of human-like things who have degenerated so many centuries in dark destructive secrecy under our feet, the ignorant man who is in position to stop such revelations imagines I am transgressing the law of morality, even though my purpose is wholly to depict evil as it really is so you may know it. Yet the dark heritage of ours steps in shouting "Jewd", "must he censored" etc. So if I omit the details of this debauch as I know it to be—you must allow for these obstacles and supply the revolting details from your own imagination or from the records themselves—which can be found in many places—in medieval records of Satanists gatherings and ceremonies kept by churches from the consumption of time—and by looking for them you can find these details, ever the same, repeated back into history as far as writing was known. Satan was, and is—and will be—a god not dead, but still followed by a legion of creatures with the weapons of the ancient Gods still kept a secret from us of the surface; and from whom we are protected only by those of the depths who have not inherited the strange disease of sun-polarized mental mechanism which results in the inverted destructive logic which is the character of the true demon. He is not "just a bad man"; he is a thing whose every mental process results invariably in a demoniac resolve, a completely unobstructed intent, to do some injury to life which is not as he is.

THERE are several of these feasts of the Demons during the year, but only one Sabbath—the greatest of them all. These people gathered here are those who are the modern descendants of the people responsible in the past for all the wool put in surface men's heads. They pranked and played the devil for the surface man, and laughed at us—and then went to their own feast of the Sabbath and laughed not at all before the awful statue of the God of evil himself.

They behaved like witches with their solidograph projectors, wafted surface women around on broom sticks with the ancient levitation beams, and tweaked the bottoms of the christian priests on the surface in much the same way they had deviled the Greek pagans of Athens and toward as foolish and futile ends.

Witches and warlocks of a mighty kind they might seem to surface men when they played their pranks over the tremendous old miracle rays that were almost their only real contact with the surface; but in the caves they were the dupes of rulers who used them solely because they could be used to kill people who got in their way and not demand payment; who could be used to curse a man who was ambitious, for if told to follow and torment any person from a distance with their ray mech they would do so, "not for a day, not for a year, but always" for their stupidity is of a single-mindedness not understandable to any who do not know the nature of the demon.

The dero is peculiar to the caves, and has to be seen and known for a long period, lived with to be understood or believed in. The stupidity of a creature that looks like a man, has many of man's supposedly divine attributes, yet in truth cannot think much better than a chicken, is a thing hard to believe until you see it for yourself. The dero is the slave of evil thought.

In the caverns, the intelligent men know what evil is, for they can see it in the dero, and know that only degenerate men are evil. On the surface the legend of the cunning and wisdom of evil is still believed in too greatly because we are not acquainted first hand with the thing as it is in persons of hereditarily evil families.

Unfortunately these families, well known for their stupidity and evil life, are not so easily disposed of as might be thought, because a ray position built and weaponed by a God of the Elder race can not be taken even though defended by the veriest fool—because ray of a range sufficient to outrage the ray in fixed position just isn't portable.

Thus the stupid evil demon of the caves lives on because of the invulnerability of the ancient ray positions where he lives for centuries, inviolate and completely destructive of all good in the life under the range of the ancient ray he has inherited through no virtue of his own. There he lives as the dupe and unpaid worker of the Ray-master;

and his art consists of being unctuously useful to the slightest whim of his master, and as nasty to the rest of the world as possible. The dupe, the evil unpaid staff-servant, is the custom of the caves; and their numbers are replenished from the "banned" (banshee), the poor mad ones who populate thinly the less desirable reaches of the endless caverns. These have been cast out of the settled, city groups, because too mad or too diseased to live with; but they have children and somehow the children sometimes grow up—in unnameable degradation and conditions of such shame as no surface people can understand.

Still these children grow up and are not always evil, but often are evil. These mad nomads have their religions, and the greatest of these is the worship of Satan; but they have also the "white" magic, the "helpers", and many of them serve these as I do, as well as we may. Men like Bonur have their uses for these evil savages of the far, unknown caverns reaches, and cultivate them by such atrocities as this Feast of the Sabbath.

THE people of the cities are not like the savage and hereditarily evil dwellers in the less settled portions of the caves, except in some cities where evil rules entire. In the better cities such men as Brack have carried down the art of repairing the ancient mechanisms, kept alive a science of a mighty kind, the study of the ancient mech, for sale to the highest bidder.

If their stock is looted by some avaricious boss like Bonur, they set out into the endless caverns and come back with many truckloads, many rollats, loaded down with the intricate and tremendously valuable ancient mech, and after repairing it and cleansing the surface of its ages of corrosion—which is very little due to the nature of the metals they use, much of the mech being sheathed in gold—are again in business.

Ships sometimes come from space to buy their wares, and the Lords have always a need of these men, to repair and service their own arsenal of antique weapons, and so do support and protect them in their trade to some extent.

In the cities (cities are really very few in population, the life in the caves is not so numerous as our own—not so fertile of children), too, live the miners of precious

stones, the strippers of gold from the sheathings of the ancient mechanisms, and miners of precious ores who work the vast deep borings of the Elders' mines, many of which are still worked today after all these dark centuries.

Some of this bullion reaches the surface, and some of the smaller gems, too. But the best of their trade is with the occasional ships from space that have come for their gold since early times. They give in return slaves and merchandise, tools and food, and strange machines of their own from some far planet where life is very different. But these, too, must agree to keep the ancient compact not to tell the surface men anything of the caverns, for their riches are wholly for some of the antique families who still hold the ancient entrances against us—their brothers on the surface—just as they did in the time of the Pharaohs, when they feared we would usurp and rob them of their ancient and invaluable prerogatives, their harems and slaves—and then today of course, there is the bugaboo of a surface "income tax collector". No small fear, either. If they were different in their aims and in their accomplishments for us of the surface I would be the last to expose them to such dangers from our own none too wonderful life and customs. But the good ones of the caves need our help, and I for one would like to see them get it; though how this may come about is a question.

TH E idea of extreme stupidity coupled with extreme evil in the same man-beast has no surface parallel but the Nazi, and the motives of the German beast have almost been understandable—but the motivations of these . . .

Picture the motivation of a thing which has no appetite for love, who cannot desire any gentle pleasure, but does desire the opportunity to be cruel, to see blood flow, to eat human flesh, whose whole soul has been replaced, in the whole heritage of blood, by a robot's desire to please the master. This is a thing of a degraded spirit too low for surface man to comprehend except he has experienced them for years. To see a feast prepared especially to gratify all the dark abyssal appetites of this beast of the ever-night of the caves under our feet—this dark abyss of human evil known to us by legend as Hell—to describe it for those who have not seen it is another thing. I will try.

In Pottstown, Pa. one Johnny Bratton dropped dead of heart failure. There had been nothing apparently wrong with Johnny, in fact he had passed a stiff insurance examination just the week before. Everyone was mystified. His young wife was taken with convulsions from grief, lost the child in her womb. His little daughter of seven was inconsolable over Johnny's death, lost weight, nearly died.

Poison was a weapon little used or thought of in the caverns, just as the ray weapons from the caverns are an unused weapon on the surface and an unbelievable idea to most surface people. A murderer on the surface thinks first of a gun, then of poison. A murderer in the caverns thinks first of a ray bolt, then of some other little known and unsuspected use of the ancient rays for the purpose. Usually this murder takes the form of simulating some disease with the facile ancient rays. Often this is a ray upon the lungs which rots away the lung tissue, makes it appear as a lung disease—or a burn in the heart which doctors call heart failure for want of a way to say the truth. Slow poison was not thought of because they are an ignorant people in the ways of medicine and chemistry; a good clerk from a dispensary of sodas could have disposed of the lot of them.

In the caves under Pottstown, a brainless young ghoul laughed and laughed. He had raised hell with Johnny Bratton, hadn't he? He bragged to his companions, crouched like himself about the great old machine they had used to kill Johnny Bratton.

Over three states the influenza raged. It had assumed the proportions of a plague. Over half the United States the flu spread, area by area. The population was reduced a million or so in a couple of years.

Down in the caves a group of nomad ray people were enjoying their new-old game of imitating influenza with the detrimental ray beams. They laughed as the surface people noted that the flu took only the best and strongest, the most loved people. Others had a mild, non-fatal attack. How could they be so stupid as not to know what the disease really was?

It was particularly funny when the death pained a great many—when the person was well beloved. The old devil tradition was blazing strongly in them as the plague moved slowly across the States, and under the plague rolled their caravan of ancient

rollats, bearing their gypsy-like living equipment. It was so easy to put a detrimental ray on a person suffering a mild attack of genuine flu, and watch the disease mount thru his weakened body. It took but a few shots of detrimental ray to make a man so weak he died of the disease.

When one city was finished and most of the love and beauty, the human ties of the city, had been obliterated, the hand moved on to decimate another city.

THIER motivation? It is an old idea they have, they are weakening the people of the surface because they are going to come up to the surface and rule them when they are too weak to fear. But the mad ones of the caves never do come up. The obstacles of moving all their machinery to the surface are too great for their untechnical minds; and they plan it, only to drop the plan after some such orgy of killing the surface men.

In a little town called Stowe, the ex-priest Cachon, a hasque who knew a great deal about devils, came out of a wood where he had been hiding near his home. He had been hiding from the devils, something unseen that tormented him, plucking at his mind with evil thoughts, and at his flesh with evil fingers of pain.

Now the devils finally possessed him and he killed a little girl. The priest was sure the little girl was a "devil".

The priest was confined to the asylum for life. Down below Stowe, the devil-ray laughed to "fix" a christian priest so neatly. Many things happen to priests, very strange things, for the devil ray has an ancient and ingrained antipathy for all christianity.

But for real fun they prefer to drive a college professor out of his wits with fantastic projections he cannot explain or dare to mention to others, for fear of the madhouse or at least the loss of his job. "Is that fun?"

Another trick they delight in is getting a priest on the operating table and then take control of the operating surgeon; "ah, how the 'cloth' slaps the hospital table!" It does not matter that the surgeon goes mad, and the priest dies of his mutilations. It is such fun!

During the period of time the preparation of the feast in the Stem went on—the census takers passed through Ostal, beginning the twice yearly census. The census con-

sisted of taking stock of a man's value for some months to come. If he wasn't valuable in a taxable way, he went to the slave block, or if he wasn't healthy enough for that, he went to a little spoken of but much feared place from which no one ever returned. It was odd that next door to this place of death was a canned meat factory, for there is little meat in the underworld to can.

It was pitiful to hear the mothers list their young daughters as a valuable commodity, to keep from losing them entirely. It was pitiful to hear the destitute promise to find treasure soon, note the hope of finding something of value, some hidden store of the valuable old meat for the masters, something overlooked by the centuries of searchers—for with it they could buy freedom.

THE cult is not a "revival" of the centuries-old worship of Satan, but a continuation of the oldest still-operative religion of earth—the worship of the Spirit of Evil—a church which has functioned in the underworld since before Egypt, so near as I can learn.

The figure of Satan was a great robot, which was activated occasionally by the leaders of the cult—those who traditionally wore the devil masks at the feast—mad sadists in the worst way. For Satanists are hereditary sadists. Once, perhaps, their natural characters were altered into evil by some perverted use of the powerful mind-current rays, but so long had such work gone on that the demon character became an hereditary one. Their ancestors might have been coerced and reconstructed mentally by the ancient Demonists of the centuries of the dark ages, but that darkness still survives in such organizations in the masked world, and the character of the demon is now an hereditary and unchanged curse of earth. These demonists must have their torment to watch or be most unhappy and ill-adjusted mentally as any good psychologist would know.

The custom of eating human flesh was an ancient one in the underworld. It was revived occasionally. Sometimes by necessity, but oftener in such ceremonies as these bloody ones of this particular survival of the ancient and evil worship of Satan. The satanist religion, the same that in Medieval times threatened to eclipse the church

(though christian records never admit it). That Satan did not win over our christian church proves nothing except that the Satanists failed to offer more, failed to protect and value their followers as highly as the christians, though neither of them were

particularly noted for rich rewards for services rendered.

And there you have the TRUTH about the caves, and about my stories. What are you going to DO about it?

Richard S. Shaver

Vignettes OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLAINE

Tartaglia

His real name was Niccolo Fortuna, and he was the greatest mathematician of that era of the new, the sixteenth century

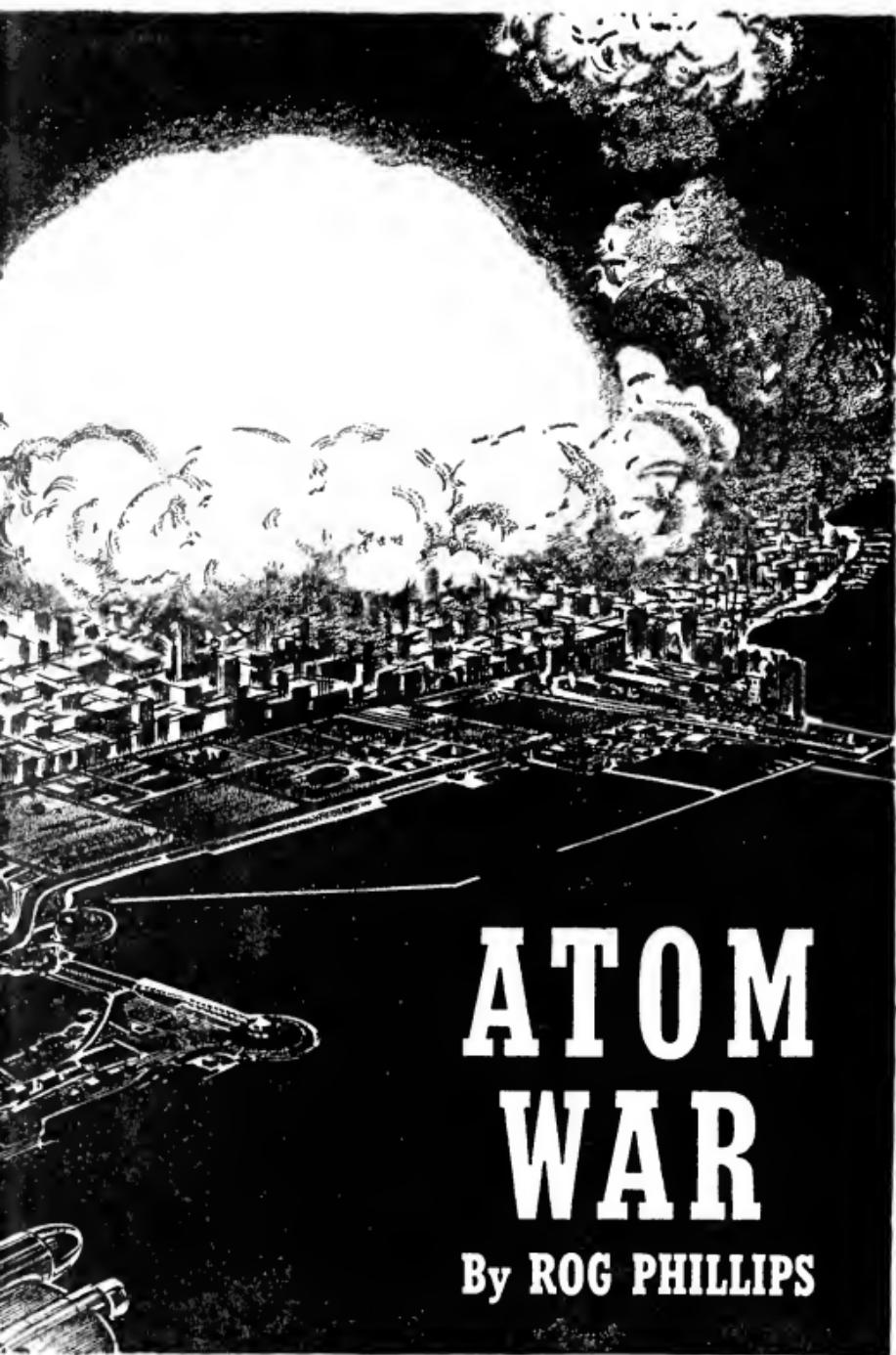
NICCOLO TARTAGLIA, Italian Mathematician, was born in the city of Brescia in northern Italy, in the year 1506. Practically nothing is surely known of his parentage although his childhood was passed in dire poverty. During the sack of Brescia in 1512, he was horribly mutilated by some French soldiers. From these injuries he slowly recovered, but he long continued to stammer in his speech, hence the nickname "Tartaglia." His real name was Niccolo Fortuna. He was self-taught and possessed naturally high mathematical ability. He was a teacher and lecturer on the subject of mathematics at the University of Verona, and later taught the science in Venice. He was also a writer on physics which was, at the time, beginning to emerge as a separate department of knowledge from its ancestry in mechanics, as various phenomena of motion, heat, etc., were subjected to preliminary mathematical analysis. In 1548 Tartaglia accepted a situation as professor of Euclid at Brescia, but returned to Venice at the end of 18 months. He died at Venice in 1559.

Tartaglia's first printed work entitled "The New Science," published in 1537, dealt with the theory and practice of gunnery. He found the elevation giving the greatest range to be 45° , but failed to demonstrate the correctness of his intuition. He discovered, or at least investigated, the law of falling bodies, and applied its principles to the flight of artillery projectiles. His "Quesiti et inventioni diverse" (1546), a collection of the author's replies to questions addressed to him, was dedicated to Henry VIII, of England. Problems in artillery occupy two out of nine books; the sixth treats of

fortification; the ninth gives several examples of the solution of cubic equations. In 1551 his publication alluded to his personal troubles at Brescia, setting forth a method for raising sunken ships and describing the diving-bell, then little known in western Europe. His largest work was a comprehensive mathematical treatise. He published the first Italian translation of Euclid in 1543, and the earliest version of some of the works of Archimedes including "De insidentibus aquarum," of which his Latin now holds the place of the lost Greek text. Tartaglia claimed the invention of the gunner's quadrant.

He is principally remembered, however, in connection with the subject of the cubic equation, which was the algebraic conundrum of his time. According to general belief he discovered the method of its solution during the year 1541, and, as the story goes, gave it, under a solemn promise of secrecy, to one Girolamo Cardano, a fellow countryman and also a brilliant mathematician, but, in addition, a most disreputable and unscrupulous character. Cardano unhesitatingly violated the confidence reposed in him, and published the solution over his own name, and as his own discovery. In spite of the efforts Tartaglia made, even to the extent of carrying the question into the courts, Cardano succeeded so well in palming off the discovery as his own, that ever since it has been known in the books as "Cardano's Method," though it has been conclusively shown that the credit rightly belongs to Tartaglia. It was perhaps the most important and certainly the most interesting mathematical accomplishment of the sixteenth century.





ATOM WAR

By ROG PHILLIPS

ATOM WAR

will be fought by sneaks and back-stabbers; no honor can accompany this horror

EDITOR'S NOTE:—With the discovery of the atomic bomb and its use by the United States against Japan in 1945, a new type of war became possible. That of surprise attack by an aggressor who remains secret. The advantage of this form opening is, of course, obvious. The attacked nation cannot know where to center its counterattack until it is too late to bring any decisive strength into action.

In order to succeed, the aggressor must have secret bases from which to launch rocket bombs, sufficient numbers of bombs to insure the crippling of the attacked nation at once, if need be, and sufficient reserves in bombs and bases to paralyze the key centers of the entire world if that becomes necessary.

The technique is simplicity itself. A sudden destruction, without warning, of several important but not vital points within the country being attacked, followed by an ultimatum to surrender at once unconditionally or be totally destroyed, the conditions of surrender being immediate alliance with and military support of the aggressor without reservation.

The integrity, or in this case stupidity, of the attacked nation is the key to success or failure of this method, for the identity of the attacking power cannot be kept secret more than a few days, and the victim is still in possession of most of his military strength if he agrees to the surrender terms at once.

If the initial phase succeeds, rapid occupation of the control centers of the de-

The war of tomorrow is the kind of a war that

feated nation, followed by a declaration to the rest of the world that the victor will rest on his laurels, completes the war successfully, for then no single nation will risk national suicide for a profitless attempt at rescue.

FALLACY OF FORCE, world crt., A.D. 2637, first published by the United States Army in 2165 A.D. was and is the greatest force for peace in the world. It contains the complete analysis of every type of warfare, its weaknesses, and how to checkmate it. Since the first publication of this book it has been revised and brought up to date whenever necessary. No potential aggressor could possibly hope to succeed in keeping either his gains or his own power in a war after reading this book, so no war has been fought since the beginning of the twenty-third century.

"YOU know how they used to believe the world was flat and rested on the back of an elephant to keep from falling?" Gar Winfield was talking earnestly to his friend, Johnny Baker, and those of his fellow officers sprawling around the club room who were interested enough to listen. "And how they believed the elephant stood on the back of a giant turtle so he wouldn't fall, and the turtle floated in a giant sea so it wouldn't fall? Then they conveniently left it at that because they couldn't see how they could end the endless series? Well, the whole trouble was that they couldn't conceive of the existence of infinity. They had

to have a beginning and an end to everything."

"What's that got to do with the size of the universe?" asked Johnny, his uniform-clad body sunk deep in the cushions of a large chair and his feet stretched out across the rug.

"Well, nothing, really, except that you think the universe has to have a finite size. It doesn't. It has no ending in any direction," Gar said earnestly.

"Wait a minute," broke in Johnny, glancing around at the circle of faces and sprawling figures, "there is a finite number of atoms of matter in the earth isn't there?"

"Yes," replied Gar.

"Well—" Johnny sat up to deliver what he thought would be the coup de grace—"if you say the universe is infinite then you have to say that there are an infinite number of atoms in space and since infinity is not a number but means beyond number, you arrive at a contradiction."

"Oh, no," Gar answered. "There isn't any contradiction. You just have a finite number of atoms in any finite volume of space, but an infinite number in any infinite volume of space!"

At that moment the radio screen lit up with motion and the announcer's voice became excited. "Watch it folks! There is going to be a crash."

The three-by-four screen showed a large, four-motor freight plane headed nose down toward a wooded section of a hill. A second after the picture came into sharp focus the plane ploughed into the trees. In that second before the crash the lettering on the fuselage could be made out. The large blue letters spelled out ACME MOVERS.

The announcer, during all this, was speaking in a swift, low monotone, his words clear and distinct despite the speed of his sentences. "The pilot and co-pilot just bailed out before our on-

the-spot pickup plane reached the spot. The freighter is an Acme Furniture plane carrying the furnishings of Mr. J. C. Gildow of Seattle, Washington, to his new home in Schenectady, New York. The valve stuck on the second gas tank so that the plane ran out of fuel without warning. In a moment, as soon as the crash is shown in full, we will take you to the pilot in his chute as he is floating to the earth. As you can see, the wings are shearing off the tops of the trees as it ploughs through them. The strong, main girder through the wings will do no more than bend slightly under the blows of the tree trunks. The crash is interesting mainly because of trees. Now you can see that the plane has come to a stop in its forward flight through the trees and is settling to the ground. There will probably be some damage to the load it carries, but not too much. Let's switch to the pilot and see what he has to say."

Instantly the scene changed and a man hanging in the harness of a parachute covered the screen. Also a new voice took over.

"This is Milton Downing at the microphone, folks. I am in a Tellenewscast on-the-spot pickup plane at the scene of this crash in South Dakota. In a moment we will see what the pilot, Gus Crawford, has to say. While we are getting a focus on his voice I will turn you over to Cliff Edwards in the studio."

With no appreciable break in the flow of words the voice of Cliff Edwards took over the mike. "This is Cliff Edwards talking. This on-the-spot newscast is a regular feature of the National News-cast Corporation and is brought to you through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Corporation.

"And this is your local station, KQZ, bringing you this regular news program through the courtesy of the Sooner Candy Company." Without a change in

tempo a sonovox song began which ended with the words, "I'd Sooner eat Sooners than later." A unanimous groan came from the listeners in the room—and no doubt that groan was repeated in front of thousands of radio receivers. The symphony of color that accompanied this sonovox song vanished to be replaced by the man in the parachute harness again. The focused bank of microphones on the pickup plane were now trained on his face. His expression was one of embarrassment and caution. "I am Crawford, the pilot of the plane that just crashed. It is my first crash and, I hope, my last. I don't think I had better say anything about the causes of the accident. The examiners will be in a better position to make a statement on that when they arrive."

The figure of Cliff Edwards replaced that of the pilot on the screen and his million-dollar voice took over. "Don't forget to listen to our hourly summary of the latest news. Every hour on the hour" His voice and figure faded as the commercials again took over.

"I see what you mean," Johnny Baker took up the conversation where it had been interrupted by the newscast. "Then you say that space is the classical Euclidean type, infinite in all directions, and is completely filled throughout by the material universe, so that actually there is an infinity of suns and planets in existence right now."

"That's right," replied Gar.

"Well then—" Johnny wrinkled his forehead in concentration—"if there is an infinity of planets and suns right now in the universe, doesn't it follow that somewhere there is another planet on which a civilization as great as ours exists right now?"

"Right again, Johnny," Gar said, grinning. "And since the universe could have no beginning and there always were an infinity of planets, even

though any individual planet had a beginning and will have an end, it is also certain that somewhere in the universe is a race of intelligent beings who, as a race, have always existed even though they must have had a beginning!" Gar's grin broadened as he tossed this bombshell.

"Huh?" Johnny gasped. The rest of the men laughed. All of them except Johnny were graduate officers in the army defense forces. Johnny was an undergraduate. A sophomore in the New Chicago Military Academy, he had dropped in to the officers club to see his older brother. His brother not being there, he had found himself before long in the company of these august and hoary graduate officers who were part of the machinery for the defense of the capitol city, New Chicago. Since there was nothing to defend the capitol from, their duties were more theoretical than actual.

Having been through the academy himself, Gar knew that he could startle Johnny with his discourse on certain aspects of modern theory which were not taught until the senior year.

THE television screen came to life again and the figure of Cliff Edwards took shape. His face was tense and his voice as it came from the loudspeaker was unusually excited. "Hold on to your seats, folks. Something very unusual has happened. All telephone and radio communication with San Diego, California, suddenly ceased just two and a half minutes ago. We are checking on telegraph right now. Just a minute. Here is the report from Western Union. Their teletype machine in contact with San Diego stopped receiving at exactly the same instant.

"That can mean only one thing, folks. And I hate even to think of it. Our pickup plane from Los Angeles will be

there in a moment. Wait a minute. Here's a report from Los Angeles. Come in, Los Angeles."

A new figure took the screen. "Hello, folks. This is Jack Haley in Los Angeles. A violent shock just occurred. A report now coming in from the seismologist at the university says that the quake came from the direction of San Diego and had all the characteristics of a gigantic explosion. Already, from our studio windows you can see a giant mushroom of white smoke growing by the second down San Diego way. We will switch you now to Jerry Anderson who is rapidly nearing San Diego and has his scanner trained on the explosion. Come in, Jerry Anderson."

On the screen a giant cloud of white appeared. A seething, black inferno within the white outer layer boiled to the surface in various spots. The cloud was ascending and expanding in all directions with the speed of a strato-plane.

A quiet voice sounded over the loud-speaker. "This is Jerry Anderson, folks. It is obvious now that this cloud is from the explosion of an atomic bomb. Something the whole world has been dreading for twenty years. We might as well face the grim reality. San Diego is no more!"

As one man Gar, Johnny, and the rest stood up in amazement. It couldn't happen, but here it was. An unprovoked attack by an unknown enemy. The television screen now went mad. One scene after another flashed on to be replaced a moment later by another, and still another. Bonneville Dam on the lower Columbia River had been bombed. While the pickup plane was showing the torrents of flood water galloping toward Portland and Vancouver, the scene was blotted out by an even more terrible spectacle. Grand Coulee Dam had also been destroyed and gigan-

tic walls of angry water were dashing at express train speed across the reclaimed fields and the homes of the settlers. For the first time in fifty thousand years the Columbia reached its high water mark, engraved in the canyon walls of the Coulee.

Again the scene changed. This time it was just blurred sky. But wait! Isn't that streak in the screen taking shape? It enlarges. Swiftly its outlines become sharp and clear. It is a giant stratorocket bomb!! Its forward deflection plate is glowing cherry red. Up into the screen the familiar landscape of Detroit flashes for one split second. Then, for the thousandth part of a second a holocaust seems to reach out its hands and dive through the screen. Everyone in front of the screen flinched and threw up his hands. In that instant the screen went blank. In the next it showed the destruction of Detroit from a distance.

The announcer's voice was hoarse, his words lagging behind the picture by half a minute. But no one was listening to him anyway. The horrors of the screen needed no explanation.

A sudden thought struck them all at once. Would the next target be the capitol? As one man, the officers dashed out of the room. Only Johnny remained.

SECONDS later Gar and his companions were seated in a tube car in the subbasement of the club. As the tube car started to move, its door closed with a swishing sound, sealing the interior against outside pressure. Each man was strapping himself to his seat. Five gravities pressed each man against the back of his seat as the enormous pressure behind the car in the sealed tube shot it ahead. Midway toward their destination the seats swivelled half around, and by the time they had locked

in their new position the tube car was braking to a halt, compressing the gasses at the destination end and recovering some of the energy expended in their start.

In less time than it takes to tell the car had traversed the twenty miles of perfect bore under the capitol city and reached station number three of the defense system. As it came into position under the exit port huge hooks swung out behind it and secured it against the tremendous pressure it had built up in the bore's dead end. The exit port and the door to the tube car opened together and the men piled out, Gar in the lead.

But no longer were they men. Now they had become just cogs in the defense machine. Specialized actions and knowledge drilled into their conscious and subconscious minds, engraved indelibly on their very souls, took over now. Thought could not be tolerated. It was too slow. Meter boards and scanner screens, fed by the surface towers above occupied their senses, and would continue to fill their alert minds until they were relieved from duty. Thus the years of training had prepared them, and when the emergency arrived they were ready.

The intercom came to life and the loud voice of the central office I.C. officer erupted into the still efficiency of the room. "Stand by for a special communication. Our unknown attacker is going to deliver his ultimatum."

At once a new voice, smooth and cool, sounded. Without relaxing their vigilance the men listened. The intonations of the voice were mathematically exact, spoken by a foreigner, but not even an expert would be able to tell what his nationality was.

"This message, broadcast to the entire world, is an ultimatum to the government of the United States of Amer-

ica. We have just destroyed the cities of San Diego and Detroit, and the dams of Bonneville and Grand Coulee. We have done this with regret, knowing that it was necessary to convince the responsible authorities of your government that delay on their part to reach an immediate decision in regard to the terms we are about to set forth will mean immediate national suicide for its country.

"We are prepared to destroy at once every city of two-hundred thousand or more population, and every key power source in the United States and are fully determined to do so unless we receive the formal capitulation of the responsible government by midnight tonight, Central Standard time. This capitulation must be complete and unconditional, with the assurance and guarantee of these responsible parties that effective immediately the government of the United States will turn over to us the control of all military forces and ally herself with us to the fullest extent in case it becomes necessary to repel the hostile advances of other nations foolhardy enough to court destruction by attacking us when our identity becomes known.

"If this capitulation is not forthcoming by the time limit, we will visit further destruction on unspecified targets within one hour after the deadline. Then the ultimatum will be repeated with certain further demands made which will become increasingly stringent as the destruction proceeds.

"To the rest of the world we give this assurance and also a warning. We have no military designs against any country other than the United States of America. With her subjection our aggressive program is ended. However, if any nation is foolhardy enough to attack us, we are prepared to at once destroy utterly and without hesitation

every city and public utility of that nation. Take heed."

After a moment of silence the voice of the I.C. officer sounded. "That message was broadcast from several different sources at once and on the same wave-length. There is no way of determining the exact locations of the transmitters. Our bearings give us a sixth power equation with imaginary roots, indicating that the enemy has solved the problem of hiding the source of transmission. Keep to your posts, men. We have no assurance that the enemy will wait until an hour after the deadline. And remember, the future of the country is in your hands as well as those higher up. That is all."

Silence descended again like a shroud. Gar's mind was in a daze. Things had happened so fast that it would be weeks before he would be able to think straight again. And the worst was yet to come.

THE hours passed slowly. Twice, once at ten o'clock and again at eleven-thirty, the radar picked up signs of approaching objects from the stratosphere, but each time it was a meteor.

At eleven-forty-five the intercom came to life and the same alien voice repeated the previous message and added the warning not to wait until the last minute because the capitol itself would receive the next blow. Midnight came and went. The men, like dripping machines, stayed at their posts. Beads of perspiration stood out on their foreheads and ran in crazy rivulets over their faces.

Each was thinking, over and over, "Any minute now. Any minute now. Any minute now." And still no bomb came.

The days of blood-and-guts warfare were gone for good. But every man in that room would have traded his com-

fortable stool in front of an instrument board for the mental relaxation of the old type of warfare at that moment.

Then it came. The radars picked up five stratobombs coming in from almost directly overhead. Two were aiming toward the Chicago Loop and the other three for New Chicago.

Thin, twin-pencil fingers of pale luminescence reached out from the towers surrounding the two cities to kiss each bomb lightly and cling to it with desperate tenacity. One bomb began to glow with pale red heat. Then another and another, until all five were glowing and leaving a trail of sparks in its wake.

Suddenly the nearest one swerved in its flight and headed directly for tower number three. It struck with a dull booming sound and the underground control room shook slowly and deliberately, as though it were trying to shrug off the molten and relatively harmless hulk that had been an atomic bomb capable of destroying a Grand Coulee dam by itself. Molten or not, it had struck at a velocity of eight miles a second and plowed itself deeply into the earth and concrete that protected control center number three.

As the last tremor ceased there came the sound of screaming metal and hissing air. The hooks that held the tube car had been shaken loose with the exit hatch still open. Two thousand cubic feet of air under twelve hundred pounds pressure to the square inch forced its way through the small opening into the underground rooms and sought the ventilation shafts.

Gar felt a sharp pain as his lungs collapsed under the sudden pressure. For perhaps two seconds it rose to a maximum of two hundred pounds and then slowly subsided as the compressed air roared up the ventilation shafts. Every man in the room was on the floor, moan-

ing feebly and holding his hands over his solar plexus.

Five minutes after the pressure had returned to normal, Gar climbed painfully into his chair. His eyes felt as if knives had been plunged into them, his head seemed to be split wide open, and a pink froth bubbled out of the left corner of his mouth. Then a rivulet of red crept out of his right ear and slowly trickled down to the lobe where it collected into a drop that was not quite large enough to let go.

By some strange miracle his left eardrum had stood the pressure so that he could still hear.

THE name Helen Crawford is a common enough name, as names go. But Helen herself belied the commonness of her name. A commercial artist, she had spent most of the day trying to capture just the right touch for a magazine-cover picture, but somehow it had eluded her. So she had given up and hopped into her coupe for a ride out in the open spaces.

Her ride had taken her in a large circle through the southern part of the state. The lights of Chicago had grown to cover the entire horizon on her return before she decided to stop and have something to eat. Marty's Rendezvous, written in large neon letters over the front of a cozily lighted, one-story stucco affair, had attracted her.

A glance at her wristwatch showed that it was eleven-fifty-five when she entered and settled herself in a booth near the back. The radio was blaring the latest news of the attack, but Helen, immersed in her own thoughts and unaware that the country was being attacked, remained blithely oblivious to the air of excitement in the cafe.

At two minutes and twenty-three seconds after midnight she was sitting comfortably relaxed, her arms on the table,

her head against the leather back of the booth wall. Her mouth, a shade too wide for beauty, accentuated the perfect symmetry of her face. Her brown hair, carelessly combed, draped down on her shoulders. Her grey suit coat was unbuttoned and the red sweater underneath closely hugged the contours of her figure. Her eyes were closed.

At two minutes and twenty-four seconds after midnight the molten blob that had been an atomic bomb pushed the front part of Marty's Rendezvous ahead of it into the underground headquarters of control center number three. Helen opened her eyes a brief instant before the shock of the concussion reached her. Then a wave of darkness engulfed her.

She did not stir as the plaster and boards above her booth dropped around her.

GAR was bent over the wash basin, cold water from the tap dripping through his hair. He straightened, reached for a towel, and began to briskly rub his face and scalp. It made him feel much better.

The rest of the men were in various stages of recovery from the effects of the surge of compressed air. The intercom loudspeaker came to life asking for a report on the damage. Gar ignored it and the others seemed not to hear it.

It dawned on Gar that in all probability his left eardrum was the only unbroken one in the outfit. He went over to the intercom and flicked the mike switch.

"This is Gar Winfield in three. A dud came in. The extent of damage is unknown, but the compressed air storage tube let go. All personnel injured to some extent by the escaping air. All equipment seems, offhand, to be in working order, but will report in detail later." He flicked the switch again and

the voice came from the other end.

"Okay, Gar. Number three is the only military casualty. All bombs were killed before they landed, but get back to your posts as soon as you can. A second wave is reported about twenty minutes away. Number three is now cut out of coordination but you can free lance with your sterio (the dual beam hysteresis ray) until tests on your equipment are completed."

Gar glanced at the others. They were huddled in a group in the center of the room, a dull look of puzzlement on their faces.

"All of you that can hear, speak up," he requested. Not a one of them answered. Gar shrugged hopelessly and spoke into the mike.

"Sorry, sir. All personnel excepting myself have broken eardrums. We can operate the sterio, but coordination is out of the question without replacements."

"Replacements on the way by surface car. Inspect damage and report." A loud click followed, indicating that the intercom was now cut off.

Gar walked over to the desk and wrote on a pad, tearing off the note and handing it to the nearest man who read it and passed it on. The note said, "Take it easy. Help coming. I'm going to inspect the damage."

Gar's journey of inspection showed that the tube could not be made to operate again without weeks of work, and the surface exit into the base of the tower was blocked by debris. The six inch conduit that contained all the wires leading into the station had been uncovered by the bomb as it ploughed in, and had been bent, but was otherwise not damaged.

He went back to the control room and scribbled another note asking for volunteers to open the exit shaft. Soon they were all busy pulling dirt and brok-

en concrete out of the tunnel that led to the surface.

NEW CHICAGO was built by the military government of the United States on the southern end of Lake Michigan east of Chicago proper. After the second world war it was realized that atomic explosives made the old capitol city, Washington, D. C., too vulnerable.

Underground vaults and offices for the nation's vital administrative offices were built, safe from every conceivable form of attack. The construction genius of the country had turned out a masterpiece. Office and vault structures were of welded steel plate, riding on springs so as to nullify any heavy shock. Each structure was completely surrounded by fabulous amounts of reinforced concrete which served the double purpose of protecting these underground centers and acting as foundations for the skyscrapers that reared their heads above the clouds from the surface.

Chicago and New Chicago, together with the resident suburban areas, thus formed a gigantic industrial and governmental hub covering an area of almost two thousand square miles with a population of over sixty million.

Things never dreamed of before 1940 made this giant possible. The visi-phone, a television telephone, came in as standard equipment in 1947. Slip-on wings, a unit weighing only twelve pounds, made up of a jacket that could be put on just like an ordinary zipper jacket, to which was attached a pair of robot muscled wings complete with cellophane feathers, powered by a small power pack whose case was studded by buttons for controlling the type of muscular rhythm in the wings, started coming off the assembly line early in 1948. With this gadget the office worker could

hop off the pavement after breakfast and reach his office, twenty or thirty miles away on the eighty-sixth floor, in half an hour.

Slip-ons, as they came to be called, took the entire country by storm. People took to the air like birds at the rate of a hundred a day in October, 1947. By October 1948 they were taking to the air at the rate of over a thousand a day as the factories expanded their output to try to keep up with the growing demand.

Completely foolproof, designed for every type of flying and landing, even a beginner could fly as easily as a bird. And they took no more space than an overcoat when hung in the closet.

The robot muscle created a gigantic industry almost overnight. In the entertainment field they became a sensation. Fantastic creatures appeared on the vaudeville stage and the screen. Interplanetary plots for stories became the rule. Mad creations sprang up to thrill and chill every type of audience.

Specialization in radio broadcasting started with the National Newscast Corporation. One station in each large city was devoted exclusively to on-the-spot news broadcasts with an hourly summary of the highlights of the news. This was followed almost immediately by the Screen Guild Network, devoted exclusively to the latest and best plays. It followed the movie program of two or three plays lasting two to two and a half hours, repeated over again continuously, with a complete new program every day. The Screen Guild rapidly took over every station not owned by N.N.C.

History repeated itself. In the twenties the stage had fallen from its high estate to the low one of training ground for would-be moving picture artists. By 1949 the cinema had descended to the same position in relation to the radio

screen. And no one ever went to the movies any more. The daylight television screen eliminated the necessity for semi-darkness in television reception. Every worthwhile movie played continuously on screens in cafes, beer parlors, department stores and even the waiting rooms in doctors' offices.

The double shaft, air cushion elevator came in early in 1947, making possible continuous elevator service for any height. Obsolete skyscrapers were torn down and new ones built with ten stories underground and fifty to a hundred and fifty on top.

Instead of being pulled up by cable the new elevator rested on a cushion of compressed air in smooth shaft. In a second shaft the counter piston rode up and down. Hundreds of details went into the perfection of this elevator.

City planning came into its own after New Chicago paved the way. Moving sidewalks on every third level connected each building with its neighbor. A person could travel all over the downtown area from building to building on the twenty-first level, for example, without descending to the street.

Yes, the coordinated super-city of 1960 was a far cry from the stupidly put together city of 1945 with each unit made as an unrelated part of an uncoordinated whole.

THE military dictator of the United States sat at his desk in emergency headquarters a hundred feet under the heart of New Chicago. Forming a semicircle in front of him were seven ten-by-twelve visiscreens, and in back of them was a scanner to send his image along with his voice to any part of the world.

The clock set in the wall facing him showed just fifteen minutes past midnight. At twelve-thirty-seven, five more

strato bombs would dive upon the Chicago area. If just one of them landed the destruction would be incalculable. Not only would hundreds of buildings be wiped out, thousands of them would be made unsafe and have to be torn down.

The dictator had not been idle since that ultimatum by the enemy. Those seven screens facing him had all been filled most of the time. And a plan had been born. Born of desperation and dire necessity. He was reviewing that plan now.

Surrender was unavoidable. If it were delayed destruction would be so great that it would endanger the entire world. So it was not a question of whether the United States should surrender or not, but of what should take place after that surrender.

Upon surrender the unknown enemy would make itself known. But not before she had control of the attack bases of the U. S. That much was certain. But could she take possession of our attack arsenals without giving away her identity in the operation? And when her identity became known could we destroy her before it was too late?

Honoring the surrender was out of the question because the question forced upon the governments of the world could find no answer in the field of honor. It had not been propounded there.

A face appeared on the center screen and a voice sounded. "The hookup is now open, sir." The dictator nodded. Then, as a red flash across the screen signalled that he was on the air, he spoke.

"To my fellow citizens and countrymen I address the first half of this message. We are about to surrender the sovereign rights of nationhood. We may never regain them. It has been a hard decision to make. For my part, death

would be preferable to loss of honor, but I could not include in that statement death to millions of women and children. Should I ask you to give your opinion? Surely you should have a right personally to decide between death and enslavement, but there isn't time. At this very moment strato-bombs are only five minutes away from the capitol. If only one of them gets through you may be without a government. If I do not decide for you here and now the decision will still not be for you to make. So I must make it.

"I hold out no promise or hope for the future. But do I need to say more than that I know my people? Remember, each of you, that you are your brother's keeper. Weigh the cost of your actions at all times. Weigh them carefully.

"And now, to the unknown government who has visited us with destruction, I address myself. Our surrender goes into effect at this instant. Our military forces have instructions to obey your every command henceforth. If I survive the attack to take place in less than a minute I will await your pleasure here in New Chicago."

As he finished his speech the dictator glanced up, as if trying to pierce the ceiling and watch the silent, deadly arrows of destruction now only a few miles above the capitol.

THE enemy had reckoned without the stereo ray, but he had ingenuity. When the first attack against the Chicago area had flopped he knew that some secret defense weapon had been used, and since the atomic bomb had only one weakness the cause of the failure was at once obvious. He had immediately gone to work. The very safeguards that protected the bomb from premature explosion were its undoing. They could not be changed on

short notice.

But the location and number of radar towers in the Chicago area were known to him. Assuming that the new defense weapon was a ray, and assuming that it took time to kill a bomb, it was a simple matter of arithmetic to get at least one bomb through. Arithmetic and mathematics.

The atom bomb was taken out of ten stratobombs and ballast substituted. Then the ten duds and five live bombs were sent from the secret bases, in waves of five each, to arrive in the Chicago area at the same time but at different speeds and on different courses. The live bombs were to come in at the greatest speed and a little later than the duds.

One bomb got through and landed half way between Chicago and New Chicago, just thirty-five miles from the center of each, and two miles from the Lake Michigan shore. It could not have landed in a worse place, for contained in the area it destroyed were the telephone cables, power cables, and nerve centers of both cities.

GAR was seated at the switchboard in the control station when the lights went out. For a second he thought the conduit had been injured after all, then the shock of the atom blast picked him up and gently laid him over the switchboard. After a moment it again picked him up and gently laid him on the floor. The whole operation seemed to him unreal. The work of some invisible, deliberating spirit. Like he might be a piece of furniture being moved about.

The sense of unreality ended abruptly with the realization of what these motions meant. He had read of atom blasts. These deliberate movements were not of himself, but of the earth.

With this realization came the memo-

ry of his companions. He dashed to the tunnel through the darkness. It was cleared but he could see no sign of them. Climbing upward he emerged into a weird glow. The overcast sky, the air itself, and all the buildings of New Chicago in the distance seemed to glow with a light of their own. This he knew would wear off in a few hours.

His fellow officers lay about him at the mouth of the tunnel. He bent over them one by one. None was alive. About fifty feet away was the remains of the roadside cafe, Marty's Rendezvous. He stumbled over to it. The caved-in front and the hole in the ground told him plainly that the dud had struck there.

Impulse made him move around the hole and climb into the ruins. He walked as if guided by fate to a pile of rubble and began pulling fallen boards aside. He heard a soft moan and redoubled his efforts.

In a moment a feminine shoe could be seen in the eerie light. A few minutes later he was bending over the unconscious figure of Helen Crawford, the wreckage that had saved her from the full force of the atom blast cleared away.

A terrific emotion was shaking Gar. It was almost as though he were the last man on earth and had found a companion after having given up all hope. And perhaps he and Helen were the only two people left alive in the Chicago area. He did not know, but in the desolate wreckage of the two cities revealed by the unearthly radio-active light from where he was frantically chafing Helen's wrists and patting her face with the vague helplessness of a man in the presence of a woman, it did not seem likely that many survivors could be found.

In later years, as Gar looked back on that night, his most vivid memory was the unreality of it all. But when Helen

opened her eyes and looked at him for the first time her clear, blue eyes seemed the most real thing he had ever seen.

Her voice—cool, with an undertone of humor—asked, "What goes, ho?"

Gar aped her mood. "The end of the world, girl."

Helen looked around wonderingly. Then she struggled to her feet in amazement, looked toward New Chicago, whirled around, taking in the wreckage all about her. "I believe you," she said. "Well, what do we do about it—stand here?"

Gar grinned. "I hadn't thought that far ahead," he replied.

Helen suddenly became aware of the look of admiration in Gar's eyes. She noticed for the first time that he was clean cut, had an air of quiet power about him, and that his face was handsome in a distinctly masculine sort of way. Much different than the assorted sizes, ages, and shapes that had held that look in their eyes before in her experience. She smiled.

"My name is Gar Winfield," Gar said in pleasurable embarrassment.

"Mine is Helen Crawford," Helen answered, holding out her hand. They shook hands, laughing over the ceremony of introduction under such unusual circumstances.

"Well, what do we do now?" Helen asked, repeating her question of a minute before.

GAR looked around, frowning in thought. "I guess we had better see if one of these cars will work. If it will we had better drive away from Chicago and find a house where there is a radio and a phone so that we can find out what is going on. Maybe the war is over already."

"What war?" Helen asked.

"Didn't you know the United States was being attacked?" Gar asked in

amazement.

"No! Is it? By whom?" Helen fired at him.

While they were examining the parked cars in search of one not too badly damaged to run, Gar brought her up to date.

They found a Buick convertible with its tires up but its top gone. Its tank was nearly full and after a couple of tries the motor came to life. Backing it around a pile of wreckage they got onto the highway and headed south. The going was slow for several miles, and often they had to swing around bits of debris that had been blown out to the highway by the explosion.

Once Gar stopped the car when he saw an arm sticking up over the edge of the drainage ditch by the road. Helen climbed out of the car to investigate and climbed back feeling sick. The arm had no body attached to it.

They drove on in silence, and after awhile the eerie light of their surroundings was replaced by normal darkness, split by their headlights. Suddenly the haze overhead ended and the stars came out. Helen sniffled quietly.

Without being aware of doing it, Gar found his arm around Helen's shoulder. He drove swiftly, his eyes straight ahead, not daring to look at Helen lest she become aware of his arm and move away.

It was almost with regret that Gar pulled up in front of a lighted farm house. As he came to a stop the front door opened and a man and woman poked their heads out. They remained that way as Gar and Helen walked up the path to the porch.

As they started up the steps the man cried out, "Wait, you can't come in here."

"Why not?" Gar asked in surprise.

"Look at yourselves," the man commanded.

Gar and Helen looked at each other. They were glowing softly. They looked at the car on the road. It too was glowing with a soft, radioactive light.

"That won't hurt you," Gar said. "We were in the area of the explosion. We've got to get rid of these clothes before they burn us and also wash all over to get the radioactive ash off our skin. Do you understand?"

He and Helen started up the steps, and the farmer and his wife moved back silently to make way for them.

AS THEY entered the living room they saw that the farmer and his wife were of the shiftless variety. No rug on the floor, worn out furniture, dirty curtains, and the odor of a dozen meals and as many Monday washes hanging in the air. But there was a radio.

Gar turned it on, then headed for the kitchen. He ignored the farmer and his wife. They were evidently afraid of his uniform and stupefied by the explosion they had heard. While he and Helen were washing in the kitchen sink the radio came to life.

" . . . from Sydney, Australia. The capitol of Xsylvania was completely wiped out by four atomic bombs. Other bombs are being directed in a geometrical pattern over the enemy at the rate of one every five minutes.

"Here is a bulletin from Moscow. The United States Ambassador has just been called to the Kremlin for a consultation. Will the U.S.S.R. join the battle against Xsylvania? The way Australia is going there won't be much of Xsylvania left by tomorrow!

"Flash! The Yrian Republic just declared war on Australia, effective immediately, stating that Australia has violated the United Nations Charter in attacking Xsylvania without first exhausting every peaceful channel in at-

tempts to settle whatever differences exist between the two countries. The Yrian President called on all members of the United Nations to fulfill their obligations under the treaty by following suit! Imagine that, folks. A murderer breaks loose and when a law abiding citizen tries to end his spree of killing, the 'respectable' Yria says the had law abiding citizen of the world of nations should write a letter to the authorities asking them to call a board meeting and decide what should be done about this murderer who is cutting innocent throats right and left!

"A newsflash from Sydney, Australia is now coming in. In a moment we will be able to see what it is. Things are happening fast. Too fast for comprehension. The world has gone mad. We may be living the last few days of our existence. There have been seventy-seven atom bomb explosions in the last twenty-four hours—or rather, twelve hours, for believe it or not, folks, that is all the older this war is.

"Did I say seventy-seven? It is now ninety-two. And Australia is now helpless. Her three bomb launching centers have just been wiped out.

"Two things are now certain. The first is rather trivial in a way. There is not a single sheet of photographic film left in the world that is any good, unless it is in a box lined with lead sheeting. The second is perhaps the most tragic fact we will have to face in our lifetime. There is now enough radioactive material loose in the atmosphere by actual calculation to shorten the life span of every living creature on earth by several years.

"The next generation will, according to the most eminent authorities, contain a high percentage of mutations and freaks. Perhaps I shouldn't say this, but it might be better if the war is carried on to its logical conclusion now.

Race suicide."

The radio became silent. Gar and Helen stood in front of it, their arms over each other's shoulders, horror written on their young faces. The radio, after a moment of silence came to life again. A new voice took over.

"This is a different commentator, folks. Because this station is violating the rules pertaining to defeated nations in keeping on the air, and our lives will be forfeit if we are caught, I am not giving my name. The previous announcer lost his head. I don't blame him, really, but he was talking nonsense. The radioactive residue of an atomic bomb explosion loses its power after a few hours. There is no danger, so don't lose your heads."

Gar snapped off the radio and said to Helen, "Let's go."

THEY left the house without a glance at the inmates nor even thanking them for their passive hospitality. Gar drove the car silently, heading south again. Helen too seemed to be in deep thought.

"Gar," she finally said.

"Yes?"

"Do you think that first commentator was right?"

"Right about what?" Gar asked.

"About mutants and freaks being born from now on because of the radioactives in the atmosphere."

Gar did not answer for awhile. Finally he spoke. "I don't know," he said slowly. "It is known that x-rays can cause mutations. But I have never heard of any experiments where radio-active elements were used in a study of mutation. Offhand I would say that if such mutations do take place now they stand just as much of a chance of being for the better as for the worse. Mutation generally occurs in the newest factor of a gene pattern. In the human the new-

est is the forebrain and the soul.

"They are also the most important, because the physical form does not mean too much. It may be that children will be born now who are so much more intelligent than we that there can be no comparison. Or it may be that a race will come into existence now which has no soul. A race of intelligent beasts. Or maybe all possible mutants will be born and segregate themselves into hostile camps and fight to exterminate one another. The old survival-of-the-fittest philosophy.

"All I can say is that we must not think of that until it comes. If you and I should marry, we must not be afraid to have children. If you marry someone else, Helen, you must not be afraid to have children. Understand?" And he flashed her a quick smile.

"I understand," Helen replied, and an enigmatical smile tugged at the corners of her mouth for several minutes.

After a time the road turned toward the east. Then the dim light of early dawn began to spread over the landscape. Just as the top edge of the sun crept above the horizon they entered the outskirts of Logansport.

A policeman stepped out into the middle of the street and stopped them. "You're from the area of the explosion, ain't you?" he asked, and then without waiting for an answer. "Not many left alive, I guess. Not many came through. Turn to the right at the next corner and go a block and a half. You'll see the place. You can wash up and get fresh clothes there and a bite to eat."

Gar and Helen thanked him profusely. He shrugged off their thanks and motioned them to move on.

A HALF hour later Gar and Helen were sitting at the counter of a cheery restaurant gulping hot, black coffee.

Helen's freshly washed hair was combed straight back, reaching down to her shoulders. The print dress she had chosen from the small stock of the local dress shop gave her a clean, dairy-maid appearance.

Gar had been provided with a new uniform. He would have looked as if nothing had happened except for the hint of suffering in his eyes and the lines of fatigue on his face.

The waitress brought their breakfast of bacon and eggs. With a sigh of relief and exhaustion they began to eat.

The radio came to life. Its screen remained blank, but the loudspeaker blared loudly.

"At a moment's notice we may have to get off the air, folks. It is reported that planes have landed at several spots with Xsylvanian troops.

"Remember what you have been told to do. The invasion cannot reach important proportions. The end is already in sight. Xsylvania is almost totally destroyed now. Australia will be avenged a hundredfold.

"The government broadcast of the details of the sterio ray will soon make it impossible to use atom bombs on any effective scale. There are thousands of amateur radio hounds throughout the country making sterio ray machines at this moment. In every country all over the world there are other thousands doing the same.

"The nations of the world are meeting over the conference table today to decide the fate of the unholy three. The war isn't over yet, but its end is certain. So look up. Look to the future. I am not asking you to forget what has happened. Seventy-five million Americans have lost their lives in the past fifteen hours, but never again will such a horrible thing be possible."

Gar and Helen left the restaurant and started a tour of the town. The air was

hazy and the sun shown through a mile-thick cloud of fine dust that had been drawn into the air by the explosion the night before. Several of the shop windows showed cracks and the local department store already had several of its show windows boarded up.

A block away a crowd was gathering about a man standing on a box. Gar and Helen hastened their steps to hear what he was saying.

" . . . time to end this dictatorship that makes slaves of honest people. Do you want some rat-faced stooge of the army dictator to keep on telling you where you are to work and what you are to do all your life?"

Gar grinned and, taking Helen's arm, moved on.

"Aren't you going to stop him?" Helen asked in alarm.

"No," Gar answered. "I might stop *him*, but there are thousands of him right now. He won't get anywhere."

Another crowd was gathering at the next corner. As Gar and Helen hurried forward to see what was going on, a band started to play. Then several shrill voices began to sing *Shall We Gather At the River*.

When Gar and Helen reached the fringes of the crowd a white-haired old man climbed onto a packing box and began to shout, "The end of the world is coming. You are living in the last days. This is the Battle of Armageddon and it will end only with the coming of the Lord."

"Give your hearts to the Lord, my friends. 'Ask and it shall be given unto you.' Ask the Lord to forgive your sins. 'Ye must be born again.'"

The band took up the tune and the uniformed followers of the old man began to sing softly, "Ye must be born again, ye must be born again—"

Gar and Helen walked on. After a few steps they looked back. Most of

the crowd was drifting away. And the crowd around the first speaker had almost vanished. Gar grinned at Helen. "You see?" he pointed, "they aren't any threat. Rabble rousers can't get anywhere any more. Come on. Let's go over to the local military headquarters. I have to report for duty."

They walked slowly, their arms linked together. Finally they came to a white marble building fronted by a tier of long steps.

Gar and Helen walked slowly up the steps and went in through a revolving door.

THE END

CANCER IS CURABLE!

JUST imagine that you are a single little cell in your own body. Suppose you started out pretty well when you and your "twin parent" split up. You had all the chemical tools you needed in order to remain happy and healthy and produced your own contributions to the community cheerfully.

Suppose some morning you get up and the sky is a little dark, but you put on your shoes and begin looking around for breakfast. Naturally, being a hearty eater on account of being a common laborer in the bad air of the liver, you look around first for bacon and eggs. They ought to be in the ice-box because the grocery boy was supposed to have put them there yesterday. So then you try to locate some shredded wheat, and by gosh, he didn't bring that either. So you finally have to be satisfied with a cup of coffee, before putting off for work. Maybe after a while you get a little sluggish in your work, and the foreman comes over and taps you on the shoulder. That makes you a little sore and you tell him *bygoddidn'thaveanybreakfast*. So he says what-thehellidnidn'teither. So, being pretty good friends you decide to see what's in the other fellows' lunch-boxes. The foreman says *I don't know what the devil this is that it must be food*. The first thing you know he's out like a light, snoring all over the place. So you go on scratching through the joint and find some hominy grits. You know they don't agree with you and you don't like the way they taste, but any old port in a storm, so you dig in and eat them all. After being so hungry, you eat so much pretty soon you and the

foreman are snoozing a duet. Round about quitting time, someone wakes you up hollering about someone stealing his food, so you laugh and go on back to sleep. After about three weeks of this the plant production goes down next to nothing, and the superintendent starts talking about laying everybody off. Since the grocery boy quit, everyone started using up his reserve supply of food. When a gang of fellows checked up on the grocer, they found out there was a truck strike and nothing was even expected to be shipped. Being a good honest fellow you just get thinner and thinner, but every time you see your old foreman he's twice as big and fat as the last time you saw him. And then, one gloomy evening you see him lying on the pavement with his arm down a man-hole into the sewer. After a little he pulls out a big old sewer rat and wolfs it down alive. You'd have given your right eye for just one bite of that sewer rat, so after Mike walks away you try the same trick. Only it doesn't work for you, because Mike must have used some kind of bait. Then you start wishing you were as crafty as Mike. But it's no use at all, and pretty soon you start trying to live on grass. Still you keep on getting thinner and weaker, because your stomach just wasn't made for grass. Then one day, when it's just all you can do to hold your head up, and your heart pounds as if every jerk would be the last, you see Mike coming with that same insane, devilish grin he wore when he ate the rat. . . .

JOHN McCABE MOORE.

P. S. Do you know what caused the truck strike?

WANTED: ONE MILLION DOLLARS

(Not necessarily from a single source)

THE world today faces the greatest crisis in its history. Upon the events of the next few years will depend the future of our civilization—or its complete destruction. More and more it is becoming evident that the present agencies of human knowledge have failed. Nowhere on earth can be shown one righteous city, one peaceful state, one disease-free community. The threat of atomic war hangs over us much more certainly than the promise of atomic power to enhance our

living conditions. The threat of death by horrible new diseases is much more potent than the promise of the elimination of ills.

If you did not have the ability to help mankind, but had the money to make it possible for those who can to help, would you like to meet the men who have the ability but not the money?

Ever hear of advertising, you philanthropists? Those young geniuses are waiting anxiously for a chance to go to work.

Bridge of Life

By ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

CROUCHED on the bunk in the back of the prison cell, Dick Vey looked like a forlorn, frightened puppy. When the guard opened the gridded door and let me in, there was something frantically desperate in the way he grabbed at my hand.

"Jim! I was afraid you wouldn't get my message. When I—when they brought me here, I naturally thought of you. You've got to get me out of here, Jim."

"That's what lawyers are for, Dick," I answered. There was a blotch of a bruise over his right eye, his face was covered with stubble, and his cheeks were sunken. Looking at him, you would never guess he was one of the most brilliant of the younger generation of mathematical physicists who have followed in the footsteps of Eddington, Dirac, Minkowski, and others, that he was—or had been—the personally selected star assistant of Dr. Samuel Benson, whose mathematical development of the unified field theory had set the scientific world buzzing. He didn't look like the mathematical wizard I had known in college. He looked a drunken stumble-bum who has been caught in a police drag-net.

"You've got to get me out of here, Jim. You've got to get me out of here

right away. Tonight!"

"Um. Tomorrow maybe, within a week for sure."

"Tomorrow is too late. It's got to be by tonight."

"I'll do what I can. But what's the big hurry, if I may ask?"

"I've got to find Dr. Benson!"

"Uh!" I gasped. His effrontery startled even me. "Damn it, Dick, don't you realize you're in here because neither the police—nor anybody else—can find Benson, that you're accused of abducting him? And since he stacks up right behind Einstein and the district attorney is getting plenty of publicity out of holding you in the jug on a charge of abducting Benson, springing you out of this can—so you can find him—is going to take some doing!"

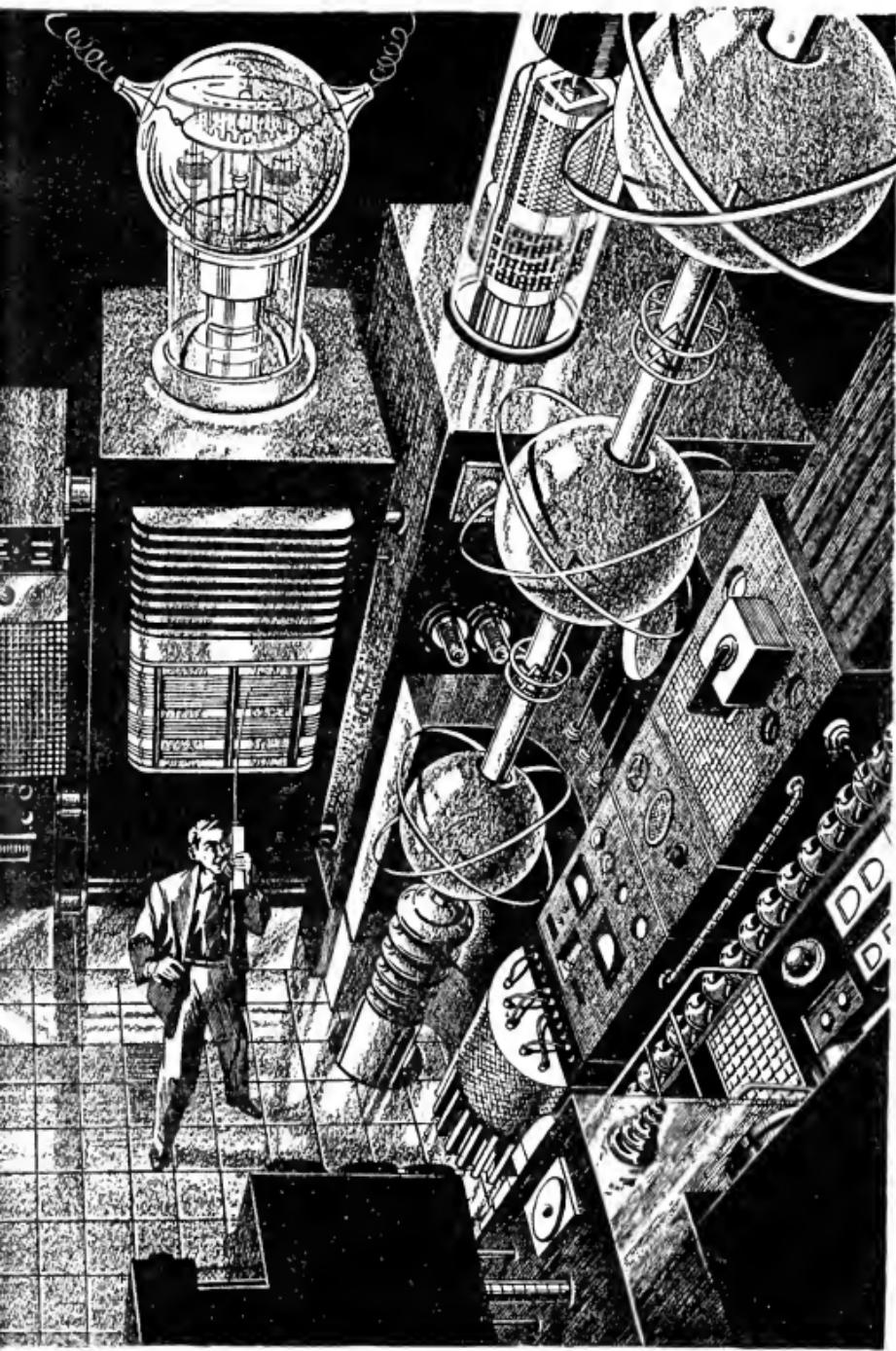
"Above him, Jim."

"What?"

"Benson stacks up above Einstein. His unified field theory takes up where Einstein stopped—"

I groaned. "Skip it, Dick, skip it. I know you think Benson is some kind of a god but I don't want to start any arguments with you on the relative merits of Benson and Einstein. You mathematicians can fight that out. My job is to get you out of jail. Tell me your side of the story. All I know is

What have unified field theories, Dirac,
Einstein, Eddington, Minkowski and mathematical
physicists to do with a frightened man in a cell?



He stood there, apparently trying to contact a machine with a walkie-talkie!

what I've read in the newspapers. What actually happened the night Benson vanished?"

A worried, harried, fretful look crossed his face. The expression in his eyes changed. He seemed to be looking at something far away.

"I don't know," he said at last.

"You mean you don't know what happened to Benson?"

"That's it. I don't know and I'm afraid to guess."

The expression on his face was odd, a mixing of terrible fear and of terrible longing. His face was the face of a kneeling priest gazing upward at the crucifix. It was the face of a man feeling the noose of the hangman knot around his neck seconds before the trapdoor of the gallows drops from beneath his feet. A mixed expression, fear and hope, terror and longing. It was the strangest, oddest, most incredible expression I have ever seen on the face of any man. He began to speak.

"We were working on what we called the bridge of life," he said and his voice was the voice that goes through dreams. "We have been working on this development for almost three years—"

"Bridge of life?" I interrupted.

"That's what we call it," he answered. "Of course the words don't mean anything really. We could have called the investigation Assurbanapal and bellotropis and said as much, but we sort of liked the words 'bridge of life' and we liked to think of ourselves as exploring this bridge. We could see the bridge all right; we know it exists. But we never could see the two shores it connects. You know, a bridge over a river connects the two banks of the river with each other, so people can get from one side to the other without swimming. We've been able to see the bridge of life all right and we know that it exists but we have never been able to

see the two shores it connects—"

HE SOUNDED fretful and impatient but his voice was still a voice that goes in dreams.

"If you look at life on earth, Jim," he continued, "you begin to wonder about the purpose back of it. Why should life be? Why should the carbon atom have the peculiar ability of building up into complex molecules, into the organic compounds that are alive? Everywhere you look you see different forms of living creatures—elephants and ants—ostriches and gnats—whales and sunfish—birds and turtles—monkeys and men—hundreds of thousands of different types of creatures, billions of different individuals crowding the planet, all of them alike in one characteristic—they are alive! Somewhere inside of each and every one of them, inside the elephant and the ant, the man and the monkey, there is a magic spark, a vital glow—life!"

There was a glow on his face now, a magic glow.

"You get the impression that life is perhaps alien to this earth, that is, was marooned here long, long ago. Ever since it was marooned it has been building a bridge across both time and space from here to somewhere else. The building blocks are our bodies—the insect and the elephant, the monkeys and men—with the magic glow being passed down the generations from parents to children. Through the medium of these million and one individuals, these thousands of different species, life is building a bridge across eternity. The source from which life sprang I can't begin to guess. What is at the far end of the bridge? I haven't the haziest idea. All I know is that I can see all around me a multitude of different life forms all working furiously at a single task—building a bridge for life. To the in-

vestigation of this bridge Dr. Benson and I were devoting our lives."

His voice ran into silence. Little cold winds blew up my back. Madman or genius? Intellectual giant a thousand years ahead of his time? Or fool playing with words? I didn't know the answer but I knew the questions he was asking were as old as the human race. What is the purpose of life. The men who carved the Sphinx and set it in the valley of the Nile as an eternal question mark for all coming ages were really asking that same question. The prophets of the old testament—"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork"—were only using the words at their command to express one fundamental idea—the majesty and the glory and the mystery of creation, were only asking, "What am I, that I can see these things but can't understand them?" What is the purpose of life? When they answer that question, I want to be around. It's the sixty-four dollar question all right and I want to hear the answer.

"The mathematics and related electronic mechanics were what Dr. Benson and I were investigating when he disappeared," he ended. "We were exploring—or were trying to explore—the bridge."

There was magic in his words and magic in the thinking that was back of the words. Unfortunately the district attorney was not the type to be impressed by magic. If I was going to get Dick Vey out of this jail, I would have to use hard, cold legal logic—or political pressure. I changed the subject.

"All I know about this case is what I've read in the papers. They arrested you this morning. Benson must have disappeared last night. You are charged with abducting, kidnapping—possibly even with killing him. Tell me exactly what happened."

HE TOLD me. He and Benson had been working in the latter's laboratory, a large building of reinforced concrete situated down at the edge of the factory district. It was late at night. Vey had gone from the lab to a small supply building on the same lot to obtain—and this seemed odd—a compact but very powerful walkie-talkie radio set stored there. Benson had sent him for the radio equipment. He had left the scientist in the lab. When he returned, Benson was gone. There were only two keys to the expensive and intricate lock on the door. He had one key and Benson had had the other.

He had searched the laboratory without finding the scientist, had searched the building, had gone outside and searched the lot. He had run around the neighborhood calling Benson's name. Finally he had called the police. The cops had listened to his story. Then they had tossed him into the jug on the suspected-of-kidnapping charge.

Justice in this great democracy is sometimes slightly cockeyed.

I was indignant. The police had no evidence on which to hold Vey. There was no real evidence he had kidnapped Benson, and most important of all, there was no motive for such an act. On the contrary, Vey had worshipped the scientist.

"They can't do that to you, Dick. I'll see the DA immediately."

His face gleamed. "Good, Jim. But remember it's got to be quick. Every hour is important now."

JOHN BOCKNER was the district attorney. He was in his office. "Sure, Rush, I'll release him—on proper bond."

"Good. How big a bond do you want?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"What?"

Bockner was fat, addicted to expensive suits, and expansive smiles. He leaned back in his swivel chair and gave me the benefit of one of those smiles. "Rush, I like you. You're a fine fellow and an ornament to the bar. But if you want Vey released on bond, the figure is fifty thousand dollars."

"That's ridiculous," I heatedly protested. "You can't hold Vey on a bond like that. You don't have any proof that he abducted Benson. Most of all, there is no possible motive for such an act."

Bockner grinned. "No motive, eh?"
"No."

"No motive at all—except three life insurance policies naming Vey as beneficiary totalling sixty thousand dollars. No motive except Benson's will naming Vey as sole heir to over a quarter of a million dollars. No, we don't have any motive, Rush, *excepting quarter of a million dollars* that Vey will gain if Benson dies or disappears. Under the circumstances, Rush—because you're a good fellow and because I like you—I think I'm being very generous in not demanding more than fifty thousand dollars as a bond before releasing Vey. Very generous indeed."

"A quarter of a million—Uh! Bockner, I didn't know about this, but I can't see that it alters the case any."

He shook his head. "I'd help you if I could but my duty to the public demands that I keep Vey restrained. Sorry, Rush, but there's nothing I can do."

Back in the cell, I told Dick Vey the bad news. "I've got to get out, Jim," he repeated. "I've got to!"

"It'll take two or three days to raise a bond of that size," I told him.

"But I can't wait two or three days!" he blazed. "I've got to get out of here tonight!"

"Why tonight?"

He shut up tight as a clam at the question. He was holding something back, he knew more than he was telling.

"I'll do the best I can to get you out tomorrow," I promised as I left.

AS IT turned out, my best wasn't good enough. When the first editions of the morning papers hit the streets at nine o'clock that night, the headlines read:

SUSPECTED KIDNAPPER ESCAPES

Richard Vey, suspected of kidnapping the eminent scientist Samuel Benson, escaped from the city jail in a daring and successful try for freedom at eight o'clock last night. Vey pretended illness and succeeded in overpowering the guard who entered the cell to help him. Donning the guard's clothes, he made a clean escape. Police are already on his trail and the district attorney promises an early arrest.

I groaned. If the darned fool had only waited, I could have scraped up a bond for him. I could have made a deal with Bockner or brought enough political pressure to bear to make him change his mind. It might have taken two or three days, but two or three days in jail wouldn't have killed Dick. Or would it? He had said he couldn't wait.

Why was he in such a hurry? What was the pressure that necessitated such desperate speed? Were Benson and Vey hiding something in that laboratory? What was the bridge of life they were investigating? If there was an answer to any of these questions, it would be found in their laboratory. I got in my car.

FROM the street as I drove slowly past, the laboratory was a large concrete building sitting dark and silent on the back side of the large lot it occupied. The laboratory looked like a modernistic factory building—a small

factory at that. There was nothing mysterious about it, or about the neighborhood. Two shabby dilapidated brownstone houses sat across the street. A garage had been built between them. Two blocks away was a small factory that specialized in the manufacture of barn paint. Nothing mysterious here. About 1880 the neighborhood had been a prosperous residential section. The brownstone houses had been built then. Later the city had grown. Year by year the factories had moved into the section, following the pattern set in dozens of American cities.

There was no mystery in the outside appearance of the laboratory or in the neighborhood. If there was a mystery here, it was in the minds of two men—Samuel Benson and Richard Vey. But, for that matter, what greater mystery exists than the human mind, than that strange, incredibly odd, beautiful and grotesque, world-spanning and ditch-digging chunk of tortuous gray matter, the human mind? It is, I think the greatest mystery on earth, probably the greatest mystery in the universe. What is mind, this chemical and electronic balance, this gray pulp that each man carried in his skull? Coming out of muck and slime, the product of blind forces locked in cruel battle, it looks beyond the stars, seeking—always seeking—something.

Just as Vey sought something, keeping the mystery of what he sought to himself. There was mystery in this modernistic laboratory all right, mystery in this prosaic, down-at-the-heels neighborhood, the mystery hidden in Vey's mind. Possibly the greatest mystery ever explored in all the history of the world, unless the hints of certain mystics indicate they too had partly explored this mystery and know more than they tell.

The secret of the mystery that mo-

tivated Vey—and had motivated Benson—might lie in that dark laboratory. And might not. For probably only God and Richard Vey knew all the secrets hidden in there.

I parked my car on a dark side street two blocks away and walked back.

Getting into the lab took some doing. Benson hadn't intended to make entry easy for amateur burglars. Fortunately the coal supply had recently been replenished and some careless coalman had left the chute open. A great many of my friends would probably have been surprised to see a dignified attorney compounding a possible illegal entry charge by sliding down a coal chute, but both dignity and the law could go to hell for all of me. I wanted to see what was inside that lab. As I reached the top step of the basement stairs leading up into the laboratory, the door in front of me was snatched open.

"Hands up!" a voice barked.

THE beam of the flashlight that covered me revealed the muzzle of a .45 caliber automatic pistol pointed straight at my stomach. I jerked my hands into the air.

A split second later the muzzle was hastily turned aside and Dick Vey was apologizing.

"Jim Rush! I didn't know it was you. When the warning system revealed there was an intruder in the basement, I got a gun. I didn't know it was you."

"Dick, you blasted fool, why in the hell did you break out—" I got that far before stopping. There was no point in giving him hell for adding the very real charge of jail breaking to the charge of abduction the district attorney already had against him. Anyhow he wouldn't have listened. There was burning excitement in his eyes.

"You're just in time," he whispered.

"In time for what?"

"Come on into the lab and I'll show you."

Inside the lab the lights were burning but they had been carefully shielded so that no beam escaped upwards to shine through the skylight. The shaded lamps revealed the most bewildering collection of mechanical and electrical equipment I have ever seen. There was something of everything in this lab. Gigantic, water-cooled vacuum tubes designed to produce the radio frequency output for a powerful radio transmitter, a chemist's balance delicate enough to weigh a pencil mark on a piece of paper. A monstrous calculating machine big enough to handle the financial transactions of every bank on earth and lying beside it on a table a stub pencil and dozens of sheets of scribbled paper. A powerful motor generator set and several large freakish constructions that looked like radio transmitters except that they weren't quite right for normal transmitters. The antennae were strangely shaped and of no design ever dreamed up by any radio engineer.

Oddest of all was the impression that the equipment was grouped into units and that each unit represented an experiment that had somehow failed. Kipling wrote a story about a peasant boy, a cowherd in India, who went crazy and started out to make a perfect image of God. His friends found the statues he had made, each a little better than the preceding one but each still falling short of the dream in his mind. "Thus gods are made." There were no statues in this laboratory and no one had been trying to make a perfect image of God but something about these groups of equipment made me think of Kipling's story. With this thought, the prickly feet of fear crawled up my spine.

At the far end of the large room was another experiment, a bulky complicated arrangement of electrical

apparatus that looked like a radio transmitter that had succeeded in doing what the other transmitters in the room had tried to do and failed—go crazy. Looking at it, I got the impression that this was an experiment that had *not* failed.

"THIS—this is where I last saw Dr. Benson," Vey said, pointing to the electrical apparatus.

"Yes."

"He was here tinkering with the controls on this generator," he continued, pointing to a large black panel covered with meters and switches.

"Um. What do you think happened?"

Blazing excitement lighted his face. He didn't answer my question. Instead he asked me a question. "Do you remember I told you Dr. Benson had sent me out to the supply shack to get an extra walkie-talkie set we had out there?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, the important thing is that the set I went after was an *extra* one. We already had one here in the lab."

"What difference does that make?"

"The set we had here in the lab is gone."

"Gone—" I thought about that, turning the idea over in my mind, seeking the reason back of it. There was a reason back of it, somewhere. The blazing look on Dick's face told me this much.

"Maybe the cops took it," I suggested.

"No. When I returned to the lab and found Dr. Benson was gone, I also noticed the walkie-talkie set was gone too."

"Hm. Benson disappears. A walkie-talkie also disappears. Do you think he took it with him?"

"That's exactly what I think, Jim!" Dick triumphantly answered.

To me this sounded like it was heavy

on the silly side, but Dick seemed to think it was very important. There was a walkie-talkie set lying on the workbench. He picked it up. "And I think I can get in touch with him."

"You think you can get in touch with him through the walkie-talkie he took with him?"

"Yes."

"Then you know where he is?"

"No. That is one thing I don't know."

The preposterousness of this idea filtered slowly into my mind. Dick Vey grinned shyly, yearningly. Still holding the walkie-talkie he turned to the bulky arrangement of apparatus that had given me the impression it was an experiment that had *not* failed, snapped switches. The motor generator howled. Heater filaments in two giant transmitting tubes began to glow dull red. A large transformer hummed as it built up high potential current for the plates of the tubes. The air crackled with electric tension. Strong electric currents were whipping back and forth inside that equipment, reversing themselves millions of times per second and in the process setting up no telling what kind of strains in the surrounding area.

"This is generating radiations of rather high frequency," Dick said. "The wave form is something new, something we just worked out within the last few days. That's the real secret—the wave form."

"Um. What's it for?"

He didn't answer. He was busy watching a small screen that was beginning to glow with vague splotches of light. The moving light splotches twisted like the flashes on a television screen that is slightly out of focus, finally tracing out the single symbol—the letter X.

"WE'LL try Condition X first," Dick grunted. "We'll probably

have to go up to Condition Z to make contact but we'll try X and Y first. And let me warn you, Jim, not to approach this equipment while Condition X or Y is showing in the screen. Under no circumstances are you to go near it when Condition Z is on. In fact, I'm not certain it's even safe to look at it when Condition Z is up. Condition Z represents about the ultimate in warping effect and looking at the equipment seems to hurt the eyes when the strain is on. If you have to look at it, take little sneaking quick glances out of the corners of your eyes. But don't look at it straight because it somehow seems to twist hell out of your eyeballs."

I didn't say anything but again I was aware of the dark shadow of fear creeping through my mind.

Dick snapped the switch on the walkie-talkie. "Calling Dr. Benson," he spoke into the transmitter. "Calling Dr. Benson. Answer please. Over."

Pushing the receiver hard against his ear, he waited for an answer.

The shadow of fear darkened in my mind. I watched him closely, trying to put out of my thoughts what was happening right here before my eyes. *Dick Vey was calling the missing scientist on a walkie-talkie and calling in a way which indicated he expected an answer.*

I thought of madmen then, of the strange disordered fancies that go through the human mind. And I knew I was either witnessing the actions of a madman or I was suddenly on the verge of the biggest discovery ever made in the history of the human race. A bigger discovery than fire, a bigger discovery than the wheel. I thought of the true and the false and how true things fade into false things and false facts sometimes turn out to be true. I thought of how tomorrow is unreal today yet by some miracle just a little beyond the comprehension of the hu-

man mind, the unreal tomorrow becomes the real today. What is real and what is unreal? What was in Pilate's mind when he asked, "What is truth?"

"Calling Dr. Benson. This is Richard Vey calling Dr. Benson. Come in, please. Over."

Matter of fact, nothing to get excited about, commonplace. Only Dick Vey was excited, tremendously so. All his effort to act calm was not good enough to hide the tremendous tension he was feeling.

"Richard Vey calling Dr. Benson—Over—"

Damn it, Benson was missing. Maybe dead for all I knew. And Vey was trying to contact him by radio!

FOR fifteen minutes Dick Vey continued calling. There was no answer. Little lines crept into his unshaven face. Finally he laid the transmitter on the work bench.

"We'll have to step up the power and go into Condition Y," he muttered, snapping switches.

The hum of the transformer increased. The X on the screen dissolved into a flicker of light. A new letter began to form.

I had no idea of what he was doing. I could see no connection between the bulky assembly of apparatus that formed Condition X and the walkie-talkie set but he seemed to think both pieces of equipment had to be in operation at the same time.

The generator was a bulky assembly of instruments, an eight-foot switch and meter panel flanked on the left by the motor generator and the transformer. The two giant transmitting tubes were behind the panel. Surrounding them was an assembly of strangely shaped coils and condensors.

Little flickers of movement seemed to flow over the equipment. They looked

like distortions caused by rising currents of hot air. My eyes began to hurt. A Y slowly formed on the screen.

"Condition Y is unstable," Dick said. "It may change into Condition X and once in a while it slips over into Condition Z." He sounded worried.

The pain in my eyes moved to the back of my head. The Y formed solidly on the screen.

The feeling of electric tension in the air intensified. I could smell ozone. Dick, glancing at the screen out of the corner of his eyes, picked up the walkie-talkie again.

"Dick Vey calling Dr. Benson. Come in, please."

"Dick—Dick—Is this you? I've been trying to contact you," a whisper floated from the walkie-talkie.

Dick Vey went crazy.

"Dr. Benson, is this you?"

"Yes."

"Then we've actually made contact?"

"Yes."

"And you—you've—the bridge—what happened?"

"I found the—"

Crash!

Thunder roared in the laboratory. Bang! Crash! Smash!

Outside in the night a bull voice roared.

"Knock that door in, boys. Get in there before he makes a getaway."

Smash!

The front door splintered inward. A flood of cops and plainclothes detectives poured into the room. Right behind them was Bockner, the district attorney, urging them onward. Bockner was looking extremely pleased with himself. Behind him were the legmen from the newspapers. Flash bulbs began to pop.

"Stop it!" Dick Vey screamed. "You fools! Get out of here."

"Take him, boys," Bockner ordered.

VEY grabbed for his gun. A flood of blue poured over him. The pistol flew from his hand. A blackjack smashed against his jaw. Dazed, he went down. Handcuffs snicked around his wrists.

He had dropped the walkie-talkie on the floor when the cops burst in. It lay on the floor, sputtering static.

Bockner looked me over. "You here, Rush?" There was a triumphant gleam on his face. Visions of the morning papers were already in his mind, with his picture on the front pages, the captions reading, "District Attorney Leads Raid."

"What do you have to say for yourself and your client now?"

He had me. What could I say? All I could do was shrug. "I'll say it in court. I admit you've got a jail-breaking charge against Vey but it won't amount to much when I prove conclusively that he was the victim of false arrest."

This seemed to amuse Bockner. "False arrest, you say?" he chuckled.

"Certainly I say it. What else are you going to call it? And you are going to look mighty funny when you accuse Vey of kidnapping Benson and I produce the missing scientist in court."

Vey had been talking to Benson on the radio. If he could talk to the missing physicist, we could produce him in court. He couldn't be far away. Bockner's case would go out the window and his face would be red clear down to his navel.

Bockner gave me the full benefit of his expansive smile. "Produce Benson in court, you say?"

"That's right."

"Ah?"

"Ah, what?"

"That's going to be a little difficult,

isn't it?"

I shrugged. "Not too difficult."

"Hm. That's your idea, naturally. Personally I think it will be damned difficult in view of—*Bring it in, boys*," he yelled to the men at the door.

Two men, carrying a stretcher, entered. A blanket that concealed some long bulky object was thrown over the stretcher. Bockner lifted the blanket.

"—In view of this!" he said.

THREE was a corpse on the stretcher. The silence that fell was broken only by the throbbing hum of the transformer and the increasing rattle of static from the walkie-talkie on the floor.

I looked at the dead man and didn't recognize him. The silence held. It was broken by Dick Vey climbing unsteadily to his feet. He took one look at the dead man and began to scream. His voice was a raspy metallic scratch that dug into my heart. He dropped on his knees besides the stretcher.

"Dr. Benson," he whispered. "Dr. Benson . . . oh—"

"Benson!" I gasped.

Bockner nodded. "We found his body less than an hour ago. And when the man I had posted watching this joint reported that Vey was here, we brought the body along—to confront Vey with it."

Triumph rolled in his voice. He was the law-dog who has trailed the murderer to his lair and this was his moment of triumph. The room was silent. Bending over the dead scientist, Vey was fighting to keep from crying. Disordered sentences, broken words, came from his lips. He sounded whipped, broken, beaten, all life gone out of him. My fingers dug into his shoulder.

"Vey!"

He didn't hear me.

I shook him and I wasn't gentle.

"Vey!"

He looked up. "Jim," he whispered. "This—this is Dr. Benson." Shock was in his voice, shock beyond the telling. The blood had drained away from his skin, leaving it blotched and gray. "This—this is Dr. Benson."

"So I understand," I said.

The tone of my voice stung him.

"You—"

"This is Dr. Benson," I pointed to the corpse. "What I want to know is—who were you talking to on the walkie-talkie?"

"Uh—uh—"

I turned to Bockner. "How long has this man been dead?"

"I haven't had the report of the medical examiner yet but I should say at least twenty-four hours. The body is already stiff with rigor mortis."

Dead twenty-four hours.

"Who were you talking to, Vey?"

Uncomprehendingly he stared at me. The police sensed the tenseness of the moment. They didn't know what had been going on but they must have guessed. Vey didn't answer. The hum of the transformer grew louder and the rattle of static increased in the walkie-talkie. I waited. Vey was silent. His eyes were blank terrible things.

I shrugged, turned to the watching Bockner. "It looks like I'll have to plead insanity. There is more in this than I even begin to understand but I don't see any other answer."

"I do," he snapped. "You can never make a plea of insanity stand up. It was murder plain and simple, and the motive was Benson's money."

"No!" a single hard syllable of protest came from Vey. "No! No! NO!" He leaped to his feet, began to scream the words.

"Bring him along, boys," Bockner said.

"No," a tinny whisper rasped through

the room.

"WHO said that?" Bockner snapped.

There was no answer.

"Condition Z—Condition Z—Dick, the bridge is open. The right side of the generator. It opens there, opens when the current and the wave form are exactly right, opens for only a few seconds. All you have to do is go through it—"

The whisper came from the walkie-talkie on the floor.

It was the same whisper we had heard before.

Vey heard it. His eyes jerked toward the generator. A scream ripped from his lips. A cop grabbed at him. He ducked his head and butted the cop in the stomach. "Oof!" the cop grunted.

The screen had changed. It was dancing with myriads of flickering lights. Like an electric sign that has gone crazy, the lights flickered and danced on the screen. They formed a crazy, out-of-proportion symbol—the letter Z.

Dick had said that Condition Y was unstable, that it might change into X or into Z.

It had changed into Z.

On the right side of the generator, jutting out from it, was a flickering current of electric flame. My eyeballs turned in their sockets as I looked at it and a jolt of pain shot through my head. I jerked my gaze away. The lights in the lab dimmed as the overloaded transformer jerked current from the mains.

"Get him!" Bockner screamed.

Vey was fighting like a fool. He slugged one cop with his manacled fists, side-stepped another, dived toward the curtain of flickering electric flame.

Bang!

Somebody shot at him.

Vey hit the flame.

I had expected him to burn. There was no suggestion of burning. His movement slowed down. He was held in that flame for a few seconds, like a moth caught in a candle. Then, like smoke before the rising wind, he began to vanish, moving in a direction that hurt the eyes to follow.

His eyes—his eyes. There was no pain in them, no hurt. All the agony of a few minutes before was gone. He looked like a man who is going home—home after long long years of wandering in forlorn, unfriendly land, "home is the sailor, home from the sea, and the hunter home from the hill." He looked back at me. "Goodbye, Jim . . . This . . . this is what we were seeking . . . Goodbye . . ."

His whisper died in vast distances. The strain of watching, of staring into the electric curtain that opened into some dimensional interspace, tore at my eyeballs. The grin on Dick Vey's face widened, was gone. Like a puff of smoke before the rising wind, he vanished.

BOCKNER threw a fit. He shouted commands to his men to surround the building to search the laboratory. Fiercely I told him to shut up, pointed to the walkie-talkie lying on the floor. Words were coming from it. Laughing words.

"Dick! Dick, my boy—"

And the answer. "Dr. Benson—Dr.

Benson—"

The words sounded like two friends meeting each other after long, long wanderings. They came from the walkie-talkie, still turned on. Somewhere another walkie-talkie was still turned on!

Bockner's face whitened. "Ghosts!" he whispered. "My God—"

"Dick! I'm so glad to see you, to know you are here—"

Words whispering across space. They went suddenly into silence. Smoke puffed from the transformer as the overload burned off the insulation. It shorted out. The curtain of electric flame vanished. Condition Z collapsed. The laboratory seemed to shake itself, then settled back on its foundations. The screen went blank.

THÉ next morning they found Dick Vey's body in the same spot where they had found the body of Dr. Benson. I can offer no explanation for the two bodies except that they, being of the earth, were returned to their proper resting place. But the something that lived in the body—the soul, the higher function of the mind, whatever it is—I wonder where it went? Out to the stars and to the worlds beyond the stars?

The bridge of life! Is it the destiny of the human race to build a bridge of life from earth to lands that lie beyond the stars? Were Samuel Benson and Dick Vey the first two human to cross that bridge?

COMING NEXT ISSUE

AGHARTI

A STAGGERING NEW 50,000 WORD NOVEL

By HEINRICH HAUSER



Phantom shapes howled and gibbered around him as he sat under the ray

The Affair of Matthew Eldon

By MILLEN COOKE

Pineboro, Oregon.
July 8, 1938

Dear Dr. Granning:

Since I left Brenton three years ago, have been engaged in following up some of those experiments we started together in your private laboratory at school. I hardly think you will have

forgotten them. (Lord knows, they gave us enough headaches at the time!)

I 'dug in' on the top of this plateau here in central Oregon for several reasons. First of all, it is high and dry, and there's a lot of light. Furthermore, there's almost no dust here on the rim. Just rock and a direct shot at (and

**Matthew Eldon retired to
this deserted plateau to carry
out a frightening experiment**



from) the sun all day long. Everybody thinks I'm sort of a nut for living up here. Even George, the old fellow who brings up my water supply, has been trying to interest me in a spot farther down the valley 'where folks come by'. However, this place is perfect for all my purposes, and here in my plank and lava 'castle' I am finding out a thing or two about Old Sol that will—I hope—rock the world.

For instance: I have actually 'made' usable electricity out of light—and so much electricity that one dinky machine like the one I have built right here in my shanty could transform power enough to run a city of a hundred thousand people and leave juice to spare.

But that, much as we've both worked on it and dreamed about it, and great as it may be, is the least of my discoveries. While I was tinkering around with my final adjustments, trying to eliminate the influence of cosmic rays (which were the last of my 'interferences') I stumbled upon the real thing!

It is a tremendously powerful, tremendously 'heavy' ray. I think it is the energy that pushes the so-called cosmic rays through space. Imagine it! A super-cosmic ray. The great-grand-daddy of all rays. And I have developed a way to focus this energy, and to put it to work. Of course, just what the ultimate effects of it will be, I can't be sure—yet. But I can tell you this much: the greatest effect is not upon matter, as we are accustomed to thinking about it, but upon the *mind* of living things.

Now I suppose you will think I'm loopy between the ears. But if you would come up here and see what I've got, I know you would be as wild about it as I am.

Of course I have told nobody about these discoveries—especially the last one. You will understand that, too, if

you will try to realize the enormous implications of such a disclosure. In the wrong hands, this knowledge would wreck civilization and destroy not only humanity, but every living thing on earth. Under proper control, it can make common ordinary everyday men into a race of gods, and very probably, elevate the animal kingdom (or at least the most developed orders in it) to the stature of reasoning beings!

Once this ray is properly harnessed, insanity will pass out of the world forever, and with it will go crime, hatred, jealousy, and all the like. They are mental illnesses, all of them, and this can be the cure.

On the other hand, it can be used to intensify these very conditions to the point where the victim destroys himself.

I TURNED it on a police dog I got hold of. He was old and mean, and his owner wanted to do away with him. I told the fellow I'd get rid of the dog for him. Instead, I brought him up here, and exposed him to the ray. The first day or so I couldn't notice any difference in his appearance or in his behavior, but soon he began to grow steadily more savage and increasingly clever. On the fifth day I locked him up in a cage, and I hope I never have to watch another spectacle such as he presented before he finally did away with himself.

I know that sounds fantastic. Animals don't commit suicide. But, I tell you, this one did! Every day he showed evidences of greater cruelty, and intensified power of thought, until I could hardly bear it when he looked at me. His great, gleaming eyes followed me wherever I went. Glaring like a captive enemy, he did nothing but sit very still in the middle of the cage and watch every move I made. It

was like having a man shut up in there, looking out at me, wondering, plotting in some dazed and half demented frame of mind how he could reach and kill me. Those eyes were not the eyes of a dog any longer. There was something horribly human about their expression as they stared at me, unwinkingly, and stared longer than I cared to look.

I endured it for eight days. Then it was either kill that ghastly animal or go mad. So, on the morning of the ninth day, I took my forty-five and walked over to the cage. The damned dog just stood there, glaring at me, and for a moment I just stood there, glaring back. Then, slowly, I raised the muzzle of the forty-five and aimed at a spot directly between those uncanny eyes.

Before I could pull the trigger, the dog stiffened, and opened his mouth in a howling shriek that froze every muscle in my body and so completely unnerved me that I dropped the gun. As I bent to retrieve it, the creature in the cage turned upon himself and slashed his belly and sides again and again with knife-like fangs. Then he stood quietly, looking at me, with his blood running down into the straw on the cage floor—looking at me, calmly and steadily, and I'll swear I saw a glint of mocking triumph in those glazing eyes. After a little while, he began to weaken, and, still staring at me, he sank into the reddened straw, a horrible, bloody heap, and died with his eyes still fixed upon mine.

I took the body out and buried it behind the shack. Every time I think of it out there, I wish I had built a fire and burned the thing. It actually haunts me, and I wish it was utterly destroyed. Silly idea, of course, and I'll get over it.

WELL, to continue, I got other animals—all the different kinds I could find—and subjected them to the

influence of the ray. They all developed remarkable mental quirks, and the eyes of all of them, without exception, took on that human look. Even the mice. You have no idea what a strange, cold feeling it gives you to have a mouse sit and stare at you like a savage, insanely cunning man!

So far my experiments have been confined to the lower animals alone, but tomorrow I'm going to begin on a man—myself. I shall keep an accurate record of my sensations, and discoveries (if any) and place the record here in the laboratory, in a mailing case addressed to you. That's just in case anything unpleasant should happen.

Of course it is entirely probable that nothing at all will happen, but the whole thing is so unpredictable, in view of the varied effects upon my animal subjects, that I wish to take every precaution before going into it. I firmly believe, however, that there will be at least a noticeable change.

In any event, you will hear from—or about—me before much longer.

Your devoted pupil,
Matthew Eldon.

PRIVATE record. For Dr. Eric Gramming, Brenton Institute. Subject: Exposure of human being to Super-cosmic energy.

*Matthew Eldon,
Carpenter's Bluff,
Pineboro, Oregon.*

July 9.

Today I began to expose myself to concentrations of the super-cosmic ray. All day I have subjected my body to a five-minute bombardment every half hour. This is the identical procedure I have observed with the animals I have used in my previous experiments. So far there is no noticeable effect other than a slight sensation of drowsiness while under the ray. This wears off within

two to three minutes after the machine is stopped.

July 10.

Same procedure as yesterday, but still no effect except that the feeling of drowsiness under the ray ceased to be apparent at one-thirty-two P.M. During the two hours just elapsed, seven to nine P.M. I have increased the time of exposure from five to seven minutes.

July 11.

The third day. Continued the seven minute exposures, but since six A.M. I have increased the interval between them to one hour. I feel different, and wish to check each change carefully as I go along. An hour gives me more time to work out exact tests.

I awoke this morning about five-thirty, after having slept soundly and well for about eight hours. At first I noticed nothing out of the ordinary, but when I got up to prepare my breakfast, I suddenly became aware of a definite sharpness of vision, an unusual clarity, and I realized that I was not wearing my glasses. I went to the bookshelf and took down my Chemical Handbook, which is printed in very fine type, and which, to my unaided vision, is ordinarily nothing but a blur. I found that I could read it easily.

At six-o'clock I went under the ray and remained for exactly seven minutes. Then I went outside for a breath of fresh air. The atmosphere in this locality is extremely clear, and the mountains across the valley are very beautiful. This morning, to my sharpened sight, they appeared more lovely than ever, for it seems that my perception of color has been increased also, and I see the world in iridescent, shifting tints and shades which escape the average human eye. Shadows become deep pools of violet light, and the heat-devils over the rocks and out above the valley are shimmering, opalescent symphonies of

warm, living color.

LATER: Nothing else of note occurred during the day. I continued the exposures at hourly intervals from six A.M. to nine P.M.

July 12.

Today old George came up with water. His voice seemed unnaturally loud, and when I remonstrated with him for shouting at me, he was startled, and insisted at some length that he was only talking in his usual tone of voice, adding his estimate of people who lived all alone on lava beds 'like horn toads!' I apologized and we let the matter drop. After he left I went into the laboratory and made a few tests. These convinced me that not only was my sight keener, but all my senses have become amazingly acute. It is a wonderful 'sensation,' now that I am aware of it, and I go about the place looking at everything, listening intently, touching, tasting, smelling—in short, exploring my newly extended senses to their ever-expanding limits!

Four P.M.: Since the two o'clock exposure I have noticed a very strange phenomenon. Previously I have commented upon the extraordinary clarity of my sight. Now that sight is no less clear, but it is as though a fog of light surrounded everything. It is, however, a fog which in no way obstructs the vision. The very air itself appears to be luminous, and glowing.

Nine P.M.: I thought the strange luminosity might disappear after sundown, but it has not. There is still that beautiful, eerie light about me, and while I can't really see objects in it, still I can sense their forms and their positions, just as surely as if my eyes beheld them. I move about with perfect freedom in my laboratory, and require no artificial light whatever. I am writing this in the dark—yet I 'see'

perfectly well what I am doing!

July 13.

Six A.M.: Last night was the queerest night I have ever spent in all my life. Apparently I went to sleep. My body relaxed, and I lost all consciousness of it. But I did not lose consciousness of the fog of light that surrounded me all yesterday afternoon, and I continued to think in a perfectly rational and normal way. This morning at about the usual time of awakening, I again became conscious of my body, and everything seems to be about the same as it was yesterday, except that perhaps the light around me is a trifle brighter. Either that or I am becoming accustomed to it.

Three P.M.: The fog of light has definitely brightened and become thicker. It is almost tangible now. I feel as though I might be able to grasp handfuls of it and roll it up like snowballs.

FIVE P.M.: This is going to sound completely cockeyed, but I am beginning to see shapes in the light. The forms are vague and indistinct. They drift around me, changing continually, like reflections upon moving water. I can't tell what they are, but they are *definitely there*.

July 14.

Six A.M.: I feel like a drunk with the D.T.'s! During the night I had the same experience I had last night, of losing all consciousness of my body, but not of my mind. Sometime before morning the ripples smoothed out of the light and I could distinguish the drifting forms from one another. Most of them are animal shapes. Among them I think I can recognize some of the animals I used to experiment with here in the laboratory. There are two or three human faces, also, grotesque and distorted, and as expressionless as the

faces of idiots.

July 15.

Six A.M.: Last night I went to bed and went to sleep. Really went to sleep. Then quite suddenly, I was wide awake again, standing on the floor by the side of my bed, staring down at my body! I was in two places at one time —asleep on the bed, and awake, standing on the floor, watching myself sleep. I was thoroughly frightened, and gingerly put out a hand to touch the body on the bed. At once everything went black.

I woke up in bed, and decided I had been the victim of a nightmare. So I pounded up my pillow, turned over on the other side, and went back to sleep. Exactly the same thing occurred again. This time I resolved not to try to touch my body, but to see if I could move about in this weird new consciousness. I decided to go over to the work-hench, and had hardly formulated the idea when I began to float in that direction easily and comfortably, without any apparent effort—and, it seemed to me, flat on my back, about four feet above the floor.

When I struggled to put my feet down, they came down with a suddenness that made my 'head' swim. I seemed to be standing near the burner at the end of the sink, just across the room from the cage where I used to keep that brute of a police dog. I glanced over there, at the thought of him, and *he was in the cage*. He stood there, staring at me, covered with his own blood, just as he had stood that day he killed himself. As I watched him he slowly sank to the gory straw (which I had long since carried away and burned) and died, just as I saw him do on that awful day. I decided I was overwrought and was 'seeing things', and turned away, trying to put the whole 'event' out of my mind.

THERE was a test tube in a stand on the bench. I had left it there yesterday after an experiment, and had forgotten to put it back in the rack. I reached for it to place it among the others, but, to my surprise, I was unable to get hold of it. Not that it slipped out of my fingers, but my fingers and my whole hand kept sliding *through* it, and I couldn't stop them at the surface of the glass to take hold of it. Finally, I took both hands, and made one last effort, curving palms and fingers carefully about the tube, concentrating every ounce of energy at my command upon touching and moving that bit of glass. This time the tube slipped out of the ring easily, and I relaxed a little with a deep sense of satisfied accomplishment. Then, half way to the rack, it fell through my hands, smashed against the corner of the sink, and strewed that end of the bench with broken glass.

At that moment the dog howled. He howled in that same wild key he had howled the day I went to kill him. I whirled and gazed fascinated with horror at what I saw. I stood as though caught up in the power of some frightful spell as he repeated the whole gruesome scene of that day, and died, again, before my eyes, *for the third time!*

With a sob I sped to where my body lay asleep and threw myself down upon it. I awoke immediately, drenched in an icy sweat. I am convinced that this horrible dream was brought about by my exposure to the rays. Perhaps it's a phase of the response to their activity upon the mind and must be expected. I have recorded it here because of its unusual character and circumstances.

Nothing further happened during the rest of the night. I slept normally and awoke about the usual time this morning.

Later: *It was no dream!* It was

real! It happened. It must have happened. When I went to my workbench a moment ago I found shattered glass in the sink and the test-tube was gone from the stand. . . . It could not possibly have fallen into the sink by itself. It had to be *lifted*—just as I lifted it—and carried toward the rack, in order to have fallen in that spot. What kind of hell am I getting into? . . .

July 17.

Two days later. I did not write anything yesterday. I have not exposed myself to the ray for two days now, and yet this abnormality of vision continues and becomes more and more unbearable. In addition to the things I see all around me, awake or asleep, whether my eyes are open or tightly shut, I can see that sickening, bloody dog. I can see him even in broad daylight now, and every time I look at that cage, he dies!

I must be going mad. When things die, they do it once and that's the end of it. That's the way it has always been. They don't come back and die all over again every time you look at them!

Today something has made it all very much worse. As I watch him (and I cannot tear my eyes away from that dreadful cage) I can feel those terrible slashes in my own flesh, and it has become torture even to think about him. The searing pain of those awful teeth knifes through my own nerves, and I become weak and nauseated—dizzy with agony. I would take that hideous cage down and carry it outside, only I should have to crawl into it in order to unbolt it from the wall—and so far I have been unable to summon the courage to approach it. I know that if I should even look, that grisly beast would die, *again*.

July 18.

Next day. I can't live with it any longer, and I do not think I am going

mad. Tonight I am going into that cage, unbolt it, break it to pieces, take it out and dump it over the rim of the canyon. Then I am going to pack up everything I own and get out of here. Even the thought of staying here until tomorrow pushes me near the thin edge of something I know to be insanity! When George comes up today I will give him these papers to mail in town. After that, I will destroy the cage. Then I am clearing out! I can spend the night in Pineboro.

*Item from the 'Pineboro Register',
July 21.*

THE mutilated body of Matthew Eldon, eccentric young scientist, was discovered early yesterday, huddled inside a large cage in one corner of his ramshackle laboratory at the top of Carpenter's Bluff, near Pineboro. The cause of his death was not definitely determined, but investigators believe Eldon crept into the cage to escape attack from some animal,

probably a wolf or a large dog, and could not manage to shut the cage door in time to prevent the animal's reaching him.

The body was cut with deep lacerations, and the throat torn, apparently by the teeth of the animal, which, local residents believe, was a wolf. However, no wolves have been reported in that vicinity for a number of years.

The grim discovery was made by "Old George" McIvor, who hauled water and groceries up to the isolated laboratory every few days. He informed police that on his last visit Eldon had appeared to be disturbed about something, and had given him a small parcel to mail in Pineboro. He made it clear, however, that the young scientist was "apt to be bothered pretty often about something or other, and it didn't mean much" in his opinion.

Government investigators Tully and Borden have been assigned to the case. Persons living in the vicinity of Pineboro have been warned to beware of any large stray dogs, and are requested to report to the investigators immediately if such an animal appears in their neighborhood.

SUNLIGHT

By LAURA MOORE WRIGHT

THREE are myriads of light-reflecting particles all through the air. They are not dust, but are of a substance which is not ordinarily visible to human eyes as they would interfere with the clearness of our vision. There are, without doubt, many things around us which our eyes are not adjusted to see. However, these light-reflecting particles can be seen by focusing one's eyes on the air—not looking through it as we naturally do.

The best place to observe these light-reflecting particles is from an open veranda. Standing well back under the roof, look towards the sky, but at the air a short distance away, as though the veranda were closed in and you could not see beyond the edge of it. Shortly, you will see tiny circles. Watch these circles, and observe their motions, as that will help you to focus your eyes on the air. Within a very few minutes, you will perceive specks of light in the air.

As you observe these specks of light, you will

see that they extend far into the distance—as far as the eye can see. At first they are almost too bright for one's eyes. They should not be looked at too much, as they would interfere with one's ordinary vision.

These specks of light seem to be possessed of independent motion, and dance about hither and thither in the air. When the sun is shining, they look like specks of light. When the sun is not shining, they are of a silver color.

The brighter the sunshine, the larger are the flame-like specks, or perhaps it is the other way around. On a very bright day, a flame like a shooting star may shoot across the air—evidently a number of them clash together. Perhaps that may be the cause of many mysterious fires.

The existence of these light-reflecting particles is a scientific fact, which I have felt should be made known, if it is not already known among scientists. I am now wondering if it may not contain the answer to the control of the Atomic Bomb?



A ROOM WITH A VIEW

By DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN

You could see things in this room. You could even see a little fat man in a bedsheets and playing a fiddle—like Nero!

"THIS guy," said the Senator, poking his hard-chewed cigar butt in the air for emphasis, "has to think I am the tops."

"Yes, sir," I told the Senator.

The Senator waddled across the office and plunked his two hundred and forty pounds of worried statesmanship into the chair behind his desk. It creaked protestingly. The Senator



"I'm taking a look at what's behind that door, Senator!"

pounded his ham-sized fist on the glass top of his desk.

"This guy has to be treated like the King of Siam," he growled. The frown furrows in his forehead became almost as deep as the canal-like creases separating his four chins.

I told the Senator I understood exactly what he meant.

"You ought to understand," he glowered. "You're my private secretary, aren't you? You ought to know if this guy isn't treated like—like—"

"The King of Siam," I broke in helpfully.

He glowered some more, nodded without gratitude, went on. "The King of Siam, he's likely to go back to our little old home state and tell everyone their Senator hasn't got what it takes any more. Then what would happen?"

I knew what would happen, but I let him continue.

"I'll be out of a job," the Senator thundered. "The voters will kick me out. And if I am out of a job you won't be needed as my secretary. I'll go back to working for a living in my law office back home. I'll have some fluffy dame as a stenographer, and I won't need any alert male secretaries like you around. Understand?"

"Yes, Senator," I assured him, "I understand."

"So get to work on it," the Senator concluded, picking up a telegram from his desk and glaring at it. "Get to work on it right away." He handed me the telegram.

I stuffed it in my pocket. I didn't have to look at it. I had read it fifteen minutes earlier. It was from a man named Joe Dinkle. Joe Dinkle was from the Senator's home state. Joe Dinkle was a mighty power in home state politics. Joe Dinkle's influence could win a sure re-election for the Senator in the state balloting two months hence.

And his influence working the wrong way could send the Senator shooting out of his office like a rocket from a bazooka gun. It was very important that Joe Dinkle should decide to throw his weight in on the Senator's team.

The Senator was glaring at me. He punched his frayed cigar in my direction.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Get moving!"

I GOT moving. In the adjoining cubbyhole, which I like to refer to as my own office, I got on the telephone. I called any number of people. And I called a lot of hotels. I wanted to find out if any of the people would have any influence to get Joe Dinkle a room for that very evening in any of the hotels.

One of the distressing things about the wire from Dinkle in my pocket was that it stated that he was arriving that very evening, and expected us—the Senator, I mean—to arrange for a hotel room for him, and meet him at the depot.

Arrange for a hotel room on about four hours' notice. Arrange for a hotel room in Washington, D. C.!

Half an hour later I was still on the telephone. I had removed my coat, I had removed my tie and opened my collar. I had mopped half enough water to float the Pacific Fleet from my brow. I hadn't been able to do a thing.

I had, in the last fifteen minutes, done my damnedest to throw the Senator's weight around to achieve my goal. Nastily, if it had to be that way, sugar-coated when that seemed to be best.

The people I got nasty with, got nasty right back and asked me who in the hell I thought I was. I told them I was speaking for the Senator, and they said so what. It was obvious that they knew the Senator was on the skids, and

wouldn't take any guff from him. And if the rumor of the Senator's slide was so prevalent, it was all the more obvious to me that our entire future depended on making a pal out of Joe Dinkle.

The people I was nice to were evasive. I knew some of them could have helped, but they weren't wasting any favors on senators who would not be in office much longer. This again made me all the more anxious to please Joe Dinkle.

I spent another half hour that way, making futile phone calls and getting silly answers. And then I gave it up.

Joe Dinkle would be freezing into Washington, D. C. in exactly three hours, expecting a place to stay.

I got up and went through the door into the Senator's office. He wasn't there. An irritating habit of his, walking out without telling me, his private secretary, where in the hell he was going.

I glanced at my watch. Dinkle would be due in two hours and fifty-eight minutes. I'd have to meet him at the depot. The Senator had with a nice eye for the psychological effect, decided that it would not do for him to meet Joe Dinkle at the depot himself. It would look too much like the Senator was bootlicking Dinkle. He wanted to avoid that impression. Even though he was.

It would take about twenty minutes to get to the station. That left me—I glanced at my watch—two hours and thirty-six minutes in which to do something.

ONE hour and thirty-six minutes later I staggered hot, footsore and bedraggled into a drug store telephone booth. I had made the rounds of some fifteen square blocks. I had offered bribes to bell hops of obscure hostels,

I had punched doorbells, pleaded with apartment keepers, and even scanned the barren columns of the flats-for-rent ads in the newspaper.

The Senator was back at the office. He answered the telephone. He recognized my voice.

"Well, you get him a good hotel?"

I told him the truth. Then I leaned against the wall and listened to the profanity roll forth uninterruptedly for two full minutes.

"You—you numskull!" he concluded. "Didn't you make it plain that you were calling these people in my behalf?"

I gave it to him straight. "That was just the trouble," I said. "I might as well have said I was Himmler, calling to get a room for Goering, the friend of that big shot, Hitler. Your Crosley rating in this town just isn't, Boss."

That stopped his ranting. There was a much appreciated thirty seconds of hurt silence, in which I could envision the Senator mopping his statesmanlike brow like a ditchdigger.

"Good God, boy," he finally said, hoarsely, "we got to do something and do it fast!" I didn't try to answer that one.

"How about some of the—ah—smaller places?" he asked, after we'd both been silent a minute. "My status should—ah—impress them, shouldn't it? Can't you badger them into giving you a room?"

"I tried 'em all," I said. "I would have impressed them much more if I'd come bouncing into their lobbies on a pogo stick."

There was some more silence.

"Don't you have any ideas?" the Senator begged humbly. "Come on, boy. You usually bristle with ideas."

"Not on this situation, I don't," I told him. "There's only one idea I have, and I don't think you'd go for it."

"Let me have it," the Senator almost

screamed.

"Give him your place," I said. "And you can sleep in the office."

There was a dreadful silence while this sank in.

"My place?" he busked at last. "My place?" His voice was pleading for me to forget the idea.

"That's the only solution," I said.

"But I couldn't sleep in the office," he groaned.

"You could call it pressing work that had to be completed," I said. "It would make you seem busy as hell."

There was another long silence. Then, in a voice suddenly too bright, the Senator exclaimed, "Capital! A brilliant idea, boy. It is positively fine. With only a minor change, it will be perfect."

"Minor change?" I demanded.

"Yes," he said, his heart of gold thumping rapturously. "You can sleep in the office, and I'll stay in your apartment."

"Room," I corrected automatically. "I don't have an apartment. I have a room." And then the old blackguard's nerve dawned on me. I almost blew up.

"I'll stay at your room, then," he said cheerfully. "You may sleep in the office. Dinkle will stay in my apartment, and we'll all be happy."

"Look," I said desperately, "I have a roommate!"

"That's no inconvenience," the old rascal purred.

"He plays a trombone!" I wailed, truthfully enough. "He practices all the time."

"A minor inconvenience," said the Senator. Then he rang off on me with a decisive *click*.

IT WAS forty minutes before Joe Dinkle's train was due to arrive when I dropped back to the office to clean up

some last minute business. I found the Senator there, stalking back and forth across the floor like a caged she-lion in springtime. His eyes were wild, his huge paunch heaving furiously, his famous flowing white locks disarrayed from tugging.

"Thank God you got here!" he thundered.

"What's up?" I asked innocently.

"I went back to my apartment, to see that it was all in shape for Dinkle's arrival," the Senator boomed strickenly. "There were decorators all over the place, climbing up and down the walls like bees inside a hive. They were plastering and painting. The place reeks of turpentine. It makes you cry like onions. No one could stay there tonight!"

I sat down suddenly, sickly. We stared blankly at each other. And then the telephone rang.

I leaped to my feet and grabbed it up.

"Hello," I said, and gave them an automatic this-is-the-Senator's office spiel.

"Yes," I found myself saying automatically. "Yes, Mr. Dinkle. I will relay that information to the Senator." Then, just as trance-like, I hung up.

I did my double-take, then.

"Good God," I blurted, "that was Dinkle!"

The Senator cut me into mincemeat with his stare.

"Say that again," he invited ominously.

"It was Dinkle," I croaked. "I was so knocked out it didn't register on me until he rang off."

"Dinkle is here?" the Senator inquired hoarsely, unbelievingly.

I nodded. "He said he made a mistake in his train time in the wire he sent you. He said he is waiting to be picked up at the depot."

The Senator's groan was agonizing to hear.

"Where will we put him?"

"The only place left," I answered, "is my room. It's dingy. The ball smells of cabbage cooking. My roommate plays a trombone."

"Badly?" the Senator asked dully.

"Horribly," I said.

He winced, and his complexion went a deathly gray.

"What do I do?" I asked.

He was suddenly on his feet.

"Pick him up at the depot, of course!" he rasped. "Pick him up and take him somewhere to stall for time."

"What then?" I demanded.

"I'll work on this thing myself," the Senator thundered. "I'll try every damned living place in the Capital. I'll do the impossible. I have to!"

I got out, then, leaving him ranting to the walls. It was foolish to try to catch a cab in front of the building, so I walked two blocks out of the way. Even then I didn't have much hope of getting a group cab ride that would get me to the station in the hurry I'd like.

I almost fell over in a faint when the taxi drew up along the curb in front of me. Almost keeled over dead when I saw that the cabbie was leaning out grinning and saying, "Taxi, mister?" as sweet as chimes.

I clambered into that cab like a high diver into a pool. I fished out my wallet, and with tears in my eyes flashed a ten on the driver and told him there'd be ten more if he'd wait half a minute for me at the depot.

"Sure," he said, throwing the hack into gear. "Glad to."

I settled back and lighted a smoke with bands that were as steady as a kite in an ack-ack barrage.

"You meeting somebody?" the cabbie asked, a block on.

"That's right."

"He gonna have a room reservation

inna hotel?"

That was a silly question from a Washington cabbie. But it was the sixty-four million dollar one to me. I perked up from sheer surprise.

"No," I said. "God, no!"

"That's what I thought," my driver declared. "I know a good place. Real swanky. He can get a entire soot there."

I almost fell out of the seat.

"Say that again," I screeched.

He said it again. I was almost gibbering. Tears were in my eyes. I pleaded with him not to play jokes with me, begged him to swear that he was telling the truth.

"S'truth," he vowed.

"A suite?" I insisted. "An entire suite? Here in Washington?"

He said that was exactly what and where it was.

"Costs twenty-five bucks a day," he said. "Three room soot."

I was laughing and crying simultaneously, and the cabbie laughed to think he had touched me so deeply. I got out twenty-five dollars and waved it under his nose and told him it would be his when he took Dinkle and me to the place. We were a happy twosome when we got to the depot.

JOE DINKLE wasn't happy about anything, however, when I found him next to the Men's Room where he said he'd be waiting.

He was a small, wasp-faced man with a high collar and a derby and a coat with velvet lapels. I looked down instinctively at his feet to see if he wore button shoes, and so help me, he did.

His voice sounded like a nail file being scraped on a blackboard—high and screechy and unpleasant to the ears.

"Where is the Senator?" he demanded.

"The Senator has just been called in

on an eleventh hour committee meeting," I lied. "His advice was needed badly. He's going to try to be in his office very shortly."

The lie seemed to work pretty well. I scooped up Dinkle's luggage, two bags and a paper-crammed leather portfolio. I told him I had a cab waiting, and hoped that I was telling the truth.

When we got outside the depot, I found the cab easily enough. It was parked where I'd left it, and the driver was telling all prospective customers to go away, he didn't want their business.

He beamed when he saw us, and reached back and threw the door open.

As we settled back in the cab, I could see that Dinkle had been impressed by the feat of holding a taxi against all comers. I took the opening to throw in a plug for the Senator.

"Anything the Senator needs in Washington," I lied magnificently, "he merely has to ask for."

It didn't go over so well. All Dinkle said was, "Humph."

I told the cabbie to take us to "the address I gave you," and he caught on, gave me a broad wink which Dinkle fortunately missed, and we started off at last.

I tried to make talk with Dinkle during the ride that followed. It was a job that took all my concentration, since he wasn't providing much dialogue. Naturally, I didn't have a chance to pay any attention to where the driver was going, even though I was eaten alive by curiosity.

It was dark now, and all I know is that we made a lot of turns at a lot of corners and finally we were in a tree-shaded street and the driver was stopping beside a big, square, black stone building that looked somewhat like the sort of structure that houses a club.

The driver looked back.

"Here we are," he said, indicating the

building by a jerk of his thumb.

"Oh," I said. "Oh, yeah." I looked around. The street was not at all familiar. I didn't even have the vaguest idea of what neighborhood we were in.

The cabbie got out, opened the door, grabbed Dinkle's bags, and started up the building walk. I scrambled out, and Dinkle and I followed him.

The front door was big and ornate. One of those wrought-iron grille jobs with a crest worked into the pattern. There was a bell pusher beside the door, and the cabbie set the bags down and pushed it.

I don't know if the bell had time to ring before the door was opened or not. At any rate, the door was opened almost instantly, and we were looking at a tall, cadaverous, unsmiling fellow with a bald head, pointed ears, and the uniform of a butler.

"How do you do?" he said.

The cabbie did the talking.

"A guest, for soot ten," he said, jerking a thumb at Joe Dinkle.

THE cadaverous butler nodded, not saying any more. He turned and we followed him into a big, marble floored lobby. At the far corner of the lobby there was a desk, like they have in hotels. Behind it was a guy reading a newspaper. All I could see of him was that he was wearing a cutaway with striped trousers, and that the top of his head showed patent leather shiny hair.

We were almost at the desk when he looked up from his newspaper, and we saw his face for the first time. It was a sharp-featured face, but rather pleasant. It had a moustache the tips of which were waxed, and a small goatee which was carefully trimmed and smelled of a fine gent's cologne.

The face smiled, flashingly, and personality radiated a million dollars worth all over us. I glanced at Dinkle and

saw even he was impressed.

"How do you do, gentleman?" the guy at the desk smiled. "You have come for suite ten, I presume?"

I cut the cabble off, wanting Dinkle to get the idea that the Senator's stooge had something to do with it.

"Yes," I said. "Senator—"

The guy at the desk cut me off.

"Of course," he interrupted. "I know. The Senator wants Mr. Dinkle to have our very best accommodations. And he shall have them, never fear."

I was quite a little bit surprised. How in the hell did this guy know I was from the Senator's office? And how in the hell did he know Dinkle's name?

But a quick glance in Dinkle's direction showed me that it didn't make any difference. Whatever it was all about, it was working like magic on Joe Dinkle. He was looking terrifically impressed.

I beamed.

"That's just fine," I said. "That's just dandy. The Senator wants Mr. Dinkle to have nothing short of the top." I turned to the cabbie and slipped him the twenty-five bucks I'd palmed.

"Thanks," I said. "We can carry on from here."

The cabby touched his cap and left us.

"Take Mr. Dinkle's luggage up to ten, please," the guy at the desk told the cadaverous-looking butler.

A smooth purring elevator took us two or three floors up, then stopped on cushions of air. The self-operating elevator's doors then opened, and the cadaverous butler, carrying Dinkle's bags, led us down a richly carpeted hallway to an ivory-paneled door, the front knocker of which said, "Ten".

He slipped a key into the lock, the door swung inward, and we entered a room which was something out of a Hollywood movie set for class. It was the kind of drawing room in which rich

guys are always showing etchings to smooth wenches. It was ultra.

The cadaver put down the luggage. He pointed to another ivory-paneled door. "Your bedroom is there," he said. He turned, pointed to another door. "The study is there, sir." Then pointing to another door, "And that is the bathroom. Is there anything else, sir?"

I slipped him a dollar and told him that there would be nothing else. He left.

DINKLE had been giving the room an approving going-over. Now he sat down, evidently much pleased, and gave me what he must have imagined was a smile.

"These accommodations seem rather comfortable," he said. "I had expected that there might be a little difficulty in getting connections, but I knew that—"

"A man of the Senator's importance and influence," I cut in, "can, when it's for someone he admires as much as you, do the impossible, Mr. Dinkle."

The telephone rang at that moment, and I leaped to the instrument, snatched it from its cradle.

The voice on the other end of the wire was familiar.

"Is everything satisfactory?" the voice inquired pleasantly.

"Why—ah—sure. Sure it is," I said. "Who is this?"

"Mr. S. Cratch, the manager. I met you down at the desk," the voice said.

"Oh." I recalled the pleasant guy with the waxed moustache and the cut-away coat. "Oh, sure, Mr. Cratch. Everything is fine. Just dandy. Mr. Dinkle seems very pleased. Thank you."

"If there is anything else you'd like," said Manager Cratch, "tell Mr. Dinkle not to hesitate to call."

"Sure," I said, "sure I will. Thanks." I hung up, turned to Dinkle. "That

was the manager," I told him. "He says to tell you to call him if there's anything you'd like. He says," I lied, "that any friend of the Senator is an honored guest here."

Dinkle almost beamed. I felt pleased. I glanced at my watch.

"Are you hungry?" I asked. "Would you like me to get the Senator on the wire?"

"I am not hungry," Dinkle said. "I had a box lunch out of Pittsburgh that lasted quite a while. You may call the Senator, if you wish. Incidentally, did you inquire as to how much these accommodations of mine are costing?"

I winced. I knew Dinkle had a fist full of money. But his tightfistedness was legend. Then I forced a hearty smile.

"I'll call the Senator," I said. "However, you are absolutely the Senator's guest during your stay here. These accommodations are his privilege to provide."

I went over to the telephone.

Mr. Cratch, the manager, answered at the desk.

"What's the address here?" I asked.

"1313 Styx Street," he said.

"Thanks," I said. "Let me have an outside line, please." There was a clicking, then I got an operator. I gave her the Senator's telephone number.

After a few moments of buzzing, he answered.

"Hello," I said cheerily. "Mr. Dinkle has arrived, Senator, and he likes the accommodations we arranged for him. You know, the ones at 1313 Styx Street."

"What the hell?" the Senator exclaimed. "You find him a place?" His voice was trembling with relief.

"Yes, indeed," I said, as Dinkle had an ear cocked. "We thought he'd like 1313 Styx Street, didn't we? Much nicer neighborhood."

"I get it," said the Senator. "I'm writing it down. How in the hell did you do it? He listening? Okay, I understand. I'll ask a cabbie to take me there. Never heard of the place."

"Neither did I," I said. I glanced at Dinkle, who was looking at me frowningly, ears still cocked on my conversation. "No, neither did I feel like eating right now. Mr. Dinkle would probably like to talk to you, Senator." I glanced at Dinkle, nodded. Dinkle rose, came over to the telephone. I handed the instrument to him.

"Hello," Dinkle said, "I am here."

I COULDN'T hear the Senator's answer to that highly imaginative introduction. I wasn't interested in the rest of the conversation, so I went over to an armchair by the door and sat down.

Dinkle wasn't saying much except an occasional yes or no, and I gathered that the old boy was really handing him a honeyed line of guff. The Senator was good at that. He had to be.

I lighted a cigarette, staring abstractedly at the door. It was less than three seconds later when I realized that the knob of the door handle was turning.

I stared at it in fascination. It turned slowly, surely, and then pressure was being put on the door, and it was swinging slowly inward. Not stealthily, just slowly, matter-of-factly. I stared at it bug-eyed.

And then, as it swung wide, he stepped into the room.

By "he" I mean the little fat man in the bedsheet with the wreath of holly on his almost bald brow. He stood there, staring at me, then at Dinkle, who was at the other side of the room, busy on the telephone and with his back to this tableau.

The little fat man had popeyes that glittered wildly. He had an idiotic

smile on his thick, pursed lips. Something made me glance down at his feet, and I saw they were clad in sandals.

For a shocked half minute I returned his idiotic stare with a stare of my own that was probably twice as slap-happy. Then the fat little man in the bedsheets spoke. His voice was a husky half whisper, which Dinkle, at the other side of the room and still oblivious to what was going on, couldn't hear.

"I beg your pardon," said the little fat man. "Really, I do."

Then he giggled softly, idiotically. And as suddenly and as noiselessly as he had entered, he was gone.

My head almost did a spin off my shoulders as I turned to see if Dinkle had noticed all this. Obviously he hadn't. He was still talking to the Senator, and his back was still to the door.

I let out a deep, whooshing breath.

Then I began to realize what had happened, and then I began to doubt what my eyes had seen. Suddenly, impulsively, I got up and opened the door. I stared out into the hallway.

Down to the left of the corridor, at a door on the very end, I saw my visitor of a moment or so before.

He was just entering a door off the hallway, probably leading into another suite. In his hand he had an object. The bedsheeted little fat man with the laurel wreath on his head smiled foolishly at me. He held the object in his hand aloft.

"I found it," he giggled.

Then he went into the end suite, and I heard the door close behind him.

The object he had held aloft was a fiddle.

I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, and stepped back in from the hallway, closing our door carefully.

When I opened my eyes, it was to find Dinkle staring at me in obvious be-

wilderment. He had finished his telephone conversation. I had no idea how long he'd been watching my antics in the hall. But it was obvious that he couldn't have seen the little guy in the laurel wreath and bedsheets.

"Is something the matter?" he demanded coldly.

I forced a silly smirk to my face.

"No. Oh, Lord, no," I lied. "I was just feeling a little faint. I stepped out into the hallway for a breath of fresh air."

DINKLE was staring at me hard, and it was obvious that my explanation sounded silly to him. But he didn't say anything. A moment later I wished he had said something, and was still in the process of saying it. For the sound of a fiddle came faintly but definitely to our ears.

A fiddle playing, mournfully, "*I Ain't Got Nobody*."

The silence between the two of us held. And the fiddle notes, screechy, faint, and awful, continued to seep into our suite. Like an idiot, I found myself thinking of the words of the melody.

"I ain't got nobody, and nobody cares for me. I'm so sad and lonely—". The words trailed off in my mind and I snapped out of it.

"That sounds," said Dinkle, "as if someone is playing a violin very hideously indeed."

I forced weak laughter.

"Heh, heh. Probably some comic radio show someone has on." I spied the Capeheart sitting in the corner of the drawing room. "Say, that's a nice machine you have there. Let's get a decent program and drown that other one out."

Dinkle didn't say a word as I leaped across the room, turned on the big radio, and began to fiddle around for a station. After a few moments I was able to turn

dance music on and up to a pitch where it drowned out the noise of the little fat guy's screeching fiddle.

"There," I said, looking up at Dinkle. "That's much better. What did the Senator have to say?"

Dinkle seemed to unfreeze a little. "The Senator is coming right over," he said. "He seemed to agree to the suggestion that we get right down to brass tacks and talk things over now."

"Oh," I said, "that's fine. That sounds like a swell idea."

Dinkle nodded coldly. "I think I shall have a nap while waiting for him," he said. "I think you may go, now."

That crack caught me slightly off balance.

"Why—uh," I faltered, "perhaps the Senator will want me for something. Ah—maybe I'd better wait until he comes. I'm his secretary, you know. You go right ahead and take your nap. I can have a smoke or two and sit here in the drawing room."

"Don't bother," Dinkle said, cutting me off neatly. He walked over to the radio, snapped it off. "I detest dance music," he said coldly. "Don't bother to wait. The matters I have to discuss with the Senator will not need an auditor. Thank you for meeting me at the depot. I have a splitting headache. Goodnight."

It occurred to me, standing there foolishly looking around for my hat, that I had never been more thoroughly dismissed. It also occurred to me, with a sense of vast relief, that the fiddle playing had ceased.

I picked up my hat, made for the door.

"Sure thing, Mr. Dinkle. Whatever you prefer. Goodnight."

Dinkle had already said goodnight once. Twice obviously seemed superfluous to him. He watched me leave in tight-lipped silence.

In the hallway, I stood there a moment wiping the perspiration from my brow and trying to steady the trembling in my knees. The highly hellish frame of mind Dinkle was in, probably unknown to the Senator, was as unaccountable as it was grimly foreboding. Whatever had made him so suddenly crotchety was beyond my knowledge. But whether or not it was something I had done or something the Senator had said on the telephone, things definitely looked bad.

I pressed the button of the self-starting elevator, to bring it up to my floor. It went noiselessly into action, and, purring smoothly along, rose to the third. Someone was in it.

I stepped back, to let whoever was in it emerge. But I didn't step back quite far enough, for the occupant ran headlong into me on stepping forth.

I was conscious, first, of a body slamming into mine, then of an ugly oath, then of seeing a most queerly costumed guy squaring off and glaring at me with blazing ire in his dark eyes.

THIS guy was a lulu. He wore colonial-style clothes. He had a powdered wig, atop which was a tricorned hat. The big buckles of his shoes shone as brightly as the wrath in his eyes.

"Sire," he snarled, "watch your way!"

"Now listen," I exclaimed, "I was—" He cut me off. "Knave. Fool. Insolent ass! Argue with me, eh?"

And then, before I could dodge, he had slapped a leather glove but hard across my cheek.

When I was recovering from this, and ready to let fly with a haymaker, the guy in the foolish clothes shoved a card into my palm.

"Here, Sire, is my card. I, of course, demand redress. My seconds will call on you in the morning to arrange for the

contest of honor."

And then, before I could catch my breath, the loony in the powdered wig and the tricorned hat and the colonial costume was striding off down the hall.

I watched him as he stopped at the door of the suite directly across the hall from Dinkle's. I saw him remove a key from his vest pocket, insert it in the door, and open it. Before he entered the suite, he turned to me and snarled,

"In the morning, Sire! You may select the weapons."

Then he was gone.

I was groggy as I entered the elevator, and still considerably dazed as I stepped out of it when it reached the lobby level. I looked dazedly around the lobby, and as things returned to focus, I saw the desk in the corner where the manager, S. Cratch, was sitting reading a newspaper.

There were plenty of questions I wanted to ask him. Questions about the sort of place he was running. I started toward his desk, and at that moment the Senator came pushing through the door into the lobby.

"Ah," the Senator boomed. "There you are!"

I hesitated. S. Cratch looked up from his newspaper. I glanced from Cratch to the Senator.

"How on earth did you ever do it?" the Senator demanded, bearing down on me. He was glancing around the lobby admiringly.

I decided to talk to Cratch later, and turned my attention to the Senator.

"He's upstairs," I said, meaning Dinkle, "taking a nap. You surely got here in a hurry. What made him so crotchety? What'd you say on the telephone that annoyed him so?"

"I found a cab right away," the Senator said. "Didn't have to share my ride with a soul. Never would have found this Styx Street if I hadn't had a smart

cabbie. Never heard of the street before. And what's all this about Dinkle being in a state? He was plenty pleasant over the telephone."

I began to explain Dinkle's attitude toward me after he'd left the telephone, and while I was explaining someone else came into the lobby. I didn't pay any attention to this new entrant until I heard his voice.

"You left this in the back seat, mister," said the new voice.

I looked up and saw a taxi driver moving up to us. The same cabbie who'd found this apartment building for me. He was holding the Senator's briefcase in his hand. Obviously, I reasoned, he'd been the smart cabbie who brought the Senator to this address.

The Senator turned, smiled mechanically, took the case from the cabbie. I stared at him wide-eyed.

"Thank you, my man," said the Senator.

The cabbie recognized me, then.

"Hello, Mister," he said.

"You certainly get around," I told him. Then, to the Senator, I added, "This is the cab driver who brought me to this place. I'd never have found Dinkle accommodations if it weren't for this life saver."

"Well," the Senator beamed. "Well, I must say that—"

BUT the cabbie wasn't sticking around to listen to his praises being sung. He was moving rapidly for the door. So rapidly, in fact, that something made me suddenly and unreasonably suspicious.

"Hey," I said, "wait just a minute, will you!"

"See you later, mister," the cabbie yelled. He was going through the door.

I started after him.

"Hang on," I shouted.

"What on earth is going on around—" I heard the Senator snorting, then I was

shooting through the door in the wake of the cab driver.

"Listen you!" I yelled, as I raced out onto the sidewalk.

But there wasn't any cabbie in view. And neither was there any cab. In less than four seconds both had vanished. Even a combination Jesse Owens and Barney Oldfield couldn't have leaped into the hack, thrown it into gear, and roared off in split-second speed of that kind.

I stood there staring up and down the street like an open-mouthed idiot. There just wasn't any answer to the enigma.

When I got back into the lobby, the Senator had gone. I had scarcely turned toward the desk, where that worthy manager, S. Cratch, sat serenely, when he spoke up.

"Your friend, the Senator, has gone up to Mr. Dinkle's suite," said Cratch amiably. "He told me to tell you to wait here for him. Why don't you have a chair and make yourself comfortable?" He pointed to a deeply cushioned armchair near his desk.

I ignored the armchair. I advanced toward Cratch.

"If you don't mind," I said, "there are a few questions I'd like to ask you about this place."

He smiled cheerfully. His waxed moustache wrinkling personality and his goatee seeming to shine forth its cheer.

"Not at all," he said. "Not at all. Feel free to ask me anything you like."

I moved up to the desk. "Okay," I said. "Gladly. First of all, what sort of a place is this?"

He seemed puzzled by my question, but he was still smiling most affably as be answered, "Why, this is an apartment house. Sort of an apartment hotel, on club style, you might say. It is, I am pleased to say, very little known and highly exclusive."

I don't know what answer I'd wanted, but that wasn't it.

"Maybe I'd better start all over," I told him. "Maybe I'd better ask you what sort of guests you have here."

"I don't understand you," he said. The perplexity on his face deepened.

"I ran into two of your tenants just a little while ago," I said. "On the third floor, where Mr. Dinkle has his suite. One of them was wrapped up in a bedsheets with a wreath on his head. He was looking for a fiddle. The other one was dressed like a picture of an early colonial settler. He slapped me in the face with his glove and walked off muttering about my having my choice of weapons. Now, tell me truthfully, what goes?"

Mr. Cratch seemed highly puzzled for a moment, then his face broke into a wide grin. He started to chuckle, and the chuckle grew heartier until it was a full sized laugh.

I STARED at him like a goof while he doubled up in merriment. Finally he began to calm himself down, coughing and wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes. At last he was able to make words.

"Excuse me," he spluttered, "for being so rude. I didn't mean to laugh like that, but I really couldn't help it. It was funny, you know!"

"Funny?" I demanded indignantly.

"Yes," he said. "You see, one of the tenants is giving a costume party this evening. He invited a number of the guests. You undoubtedly ran into two of them."

"But this one," I protested, "who smacked me on the cheek with his glove. That wasn't in order!"

He stopped smiling, looked instantly solicitous.

"I'm dreadfully sorry about that. The gentleman was quite obviously under

the influence of liquor. I'll secure an apology from him in the morning, if you like."

"Never mind," I said. "Maybe all of us have a few too many now and then. Only he shouldn't have gotten so rambunctious. After all, I wasn't bothering anyone."

"Certainly you weren't," Cratch said sympathetically. "I am really deeply sorry that anything like that should have occurred. Was there anything else you wanted to ask about?"

I was so conciliated by the suave S. Cratch, that I almost told him there wasn't. Then I remembered the sixty-four dollar question.

"Say, one thing more," I said. "What about that cab driver?"

"Cab driver?" Mr. Cratch asked.

"Yes, the one who was in here a few moments ago, returning the Senator's briefcase. He was the same guy who steered me to this place a little while back, when I was tearing my hair out to find a place for Mr. Dinkle to stay."

"Oh," said Cratch noncommittally. "Is that right?"

"That's right," I said impatiently. "That's plenty right. And what I want to know is simple. Is that cabbie working as a renting agent for a swank joint like this? Or is he a hustler for the place? What goes?"

S. Cratch looked hurt.

"Really now," the dapper, personality-plus manager protested, "that is certainly a rather uncomplimentary question, isn't it?"

"Complimentary or not," I said, "what's the tie-up between this place and that hack driver?"

Mr. Cratch sighed, still showing wounded pride.

"Did it ever occur to you," he said with weary patience, "that everyone in Washington these days is a self-styled renting agent? Cab drivers, taking peo-

ple to and from depots and in and out of dwelling places, have a better than usual chance to see what is available and what is not. Your cabbie in question probably took our most recent tenant to the depot, learned that he was vacating his suite here, and spread the word to the first person he encountered who seemed in need of accommodations. You tipped him well for it, did you not?"

"Sure I did," I said. "Plenty."

Mr. Cratch shrugged, spread his delicate, well-formed hands expressively, and smiled gently. "You see," he declared. "He gave the information to you and profited well from it. What more could you expect? He's probably sold similar information about other possible vacancies in other buildings a hundred times. Is that not reasonable?"

GRUDGINGLY I had to admit that it was reasonable. But there was something else on my mind, something more than vaguely disturbing, for which I didn't think the glib Mr. Cratch could summon any reasonable explanation.

"Look," I said. "When Dinkle and I first came in here you knew we were friends of the Senator's, and you knew Dinkle's name. I was so excited, at the time, at getting Dinkle situated, that I let it slipped my mind. But I'd like you to explain that one."

"Well, Cratch smiled winningly, "one who has been in Washington as long as I, and one who has frequented the government offices as much as I, should be able to recognize most of the senators and their private secretaries. I've seen you around the Senator's office building many times."

"But Dinkle," I said, blushing like an ass at the flattery, "—you didn't explain how you knew his name. You haven't seen him around Washington. Don't tell me that."

Again Cratch smiled. "I have visited

the Senator's home state, and my remarkable memory for names and faces brought Dinkle's to my mind. It took me perhaps three or four seconds to recall that he was a sort of political figure in your state, and was named Dinkle. His pictures appear in the papers of your state frequently, do they not?"

Giving the manager the benefit of the doubt on one of those not uncommon remarkable memories, it was all pretty reasonable to believe. I realized this much instantly. Yet there was one thing more. Where in the hell had that taxi gone? How had the driver done such a slick vanishing act?

S. Cratch must have read the expression on my face, for he asked, "Well, is there anything else?"

It would have sounded too damned silly to put into words. I made up my mind to skip it.

"No," I said, "there's nothing else. Nothing at all."

He gave me a flashing smile, the old personality poosh again. It had the strange effect of working, in spite of the fact that I knew it was strictly on a for-the-customer basis.

"I'm glad to have been able to clear up your difficulties," he beamed. "After all, quite frankly, this establishment appreciates the patronage of the Senator and his Washington guests."

Coming from a guy who claimed to be a Washington authority, that last crack set me back on my heels. He should have been wise to the fact that the Senator was, at least temporarily, a wrong number around Capitol Hill. However, if he hadn't caught wind of the yards, yet, so much the better. It was good to have someone thinking that your boss was still a big shot for a change.

I went over to a comfortable arm-chair and sat down to wait for the Senator. After about half a dozen cigarettes

and an hour and a quarter later—during which time I did a lot of praying to myself and S. Cratch continued to read—I heard the soft whirring of the self-operating elevator and all of a sudden the Senator was stepping from the lift into the lobby.

I was on my feet and pointing as eagerly as a hunting dog. I almost wanted to scream for joy at the sight of the smug, pleased, mouth-full-of-feathers expression on the Senator's face.

I almost fell on my face, crossing the marble floor to him.

"Okay?" I blurted. "Everything okay?"

The Senator shot a quick glance at the desk, where Mr. Cratch was still buried in his reading.

"Perfectly okay, my boy," he said triumphantly. "Things could not be any lovelier." He glanced again at Cratch. "Let us go outside and search for a cab. If the night is still pleasant, we can walk back to my place, eh? We can celebrate over a few drinks of that special pre-war Scotch I've been saving."

He didn't have to say another word to convince me that everything was, indeed, super-specially rosy.

OUT IN the street, the Senator said: "You were right about Dinkle's mood being foul, m'boy. He was as touchy as a mother tiger when I got up to his suite. But I—ah—soon placated the troubled waters with a bit of—ahem—oil. In a little less than an hour and a half, m'boy, I had him eating out of my hand. There was a deal made, and we parted the warmest of friends."

"A deal?" I asked.

"Certainly," said the Senator. "Nothing rancid, however. My ethics would have stopped me from anything of the sort. And Dinkle, as you know, is a great church leader, a power with the

highly moral vote in our fair state. No. There was nothing dirty about the deal we made."

"What sort of deal?" I pressed.

"An appropriation for a government building subsidy and land purchase," the Senator said. "As senior senator from my state I can say what land is to be purchased, and what building is to have essential priority."

"What's Dinkle's interest in it?"

"The moral interest. The church interest. I told you he controls the decent votes of the state. He wants an orphanage and several educational institutions constructed."

"Ahhhh," I said. "And you agreed to get it for him?"

"Naturally," said the Senator. "And on the site he has suggested. It will bring Dinkle and all his righteous voters right into my camp."

"Whew," I snorted. "So that was all he wanted!"

"That was all," said the Senator. "His attitude was hostile, no doubt, because he thought he could frighten me into complying with his request out of terror, if no other reason."

"We sure did a lot of worrying over nothing," I said.

"Not necessarily," said the Senator.

"I don't get you," I told him.

"I was planning before he arrived, to vote against the orphanage and the land purchase."

I whistled. "Thank heaven he came down here."

"Quite," said the Senator.

We'd walked about three blocks during our talk, and quite suddenly the Senator spied a taxi. He hailed it, and, miracle of miracles, it stopped to pick us up.

The Senator gave the address of his place, and I licked my lips in eager anticipation of some of that pre-war Scotch.

"**L**IKE it?" the Senator was asking, as I raised the glass to my lips and settled back in one of the thick leather chairs in his apartment.

"I love it," I said, sipping slowly. "It's ironic, isn't it, that your place here was cleared by the decorators in time after all? I mean, after we finally got a place for Dinkle."

The Senator smiled affably.

"I don't even mind the faint reek of turpentine that pervades the atmosphere," he said. "This is really a time for celebra—"

The ringing of the telephone made him pause. He put down his glass, picked up the telephone.

"Oh, hello, Joe, old man," he said jovially, winking at me. And then the jollity slid from his face like jello from a tilted platter.

"But, Joe!" he protested a moment later. "You can't believe that lying—"

The Senator stood there, staring open-mouthed at the phone in his hand. Then he put it back in the cradle. His voice was shocked and amazed as he turned to me and said:

"It was Dinkle. He's boiling. He just rang off on me!"

I was on my feet like a whirling gadget.

"What happened?"

"McCracken," the Senator said dismally.

I winced. McCracken was the junior congressman from the Senator's home state. McCracken was of the opposite political party from the Senator. McCracken was being groomed to run for the Senator's job in the coming elections.

"McCracken called Dinkle. Or Dinkle called McCracken. I don't know which. Probably the latter. But that isn't important. What is important is that McCracken told Dinkle I was never for the bill he wants, that I don't have any influence to push it

through and that he, McCracken, can guarantee to deliver the goods for him."

"And Dinkle believed him?" I asked.

"McCracken read an excerpt from a statement I made in a Senate pre-discussion of the orphanage bill. It sounded like I was against it at all costs. Dinkle knew nothing of that statement until McCracken brought it to his attention. Now Dinkle is fire and fury. He won't believe anything I say!"

The pre-war Scotch suddenly tasted bitter. I put the glass down.

"Let's get going!" I said.

The Senator seemed in a fog. "Eh?"

"To see Dinkle, fast," I said. "Come on!"

I didn't have time or inclination to be surprised at the fact that we caught a cab without a moment's delay in front of the Senator's place. And I was willing to forget, temporarily, the fact that the cabbie was the same guy who'd delivered both the Senator and me to Dinkle's quarters on two occasions.

"You probably know where we want to go," I said. "Get us there in a hurry."

The cabbie just grinned and said, "Sure, mister."

WE GOT there in a hurry. I think the wheels of the hack touched the ground only for turns during that mad ride. I slipped him a bill as we piled out of the cab, and we rushed into the lobby of the building, straight across the marble floor to the elevator, and pronto up to Dinkle's floor.

We double-timed it down the corridor to his room, the Senator game, but wheezing badly a good five yards behind me. I was first to the door, and I did the first knocking.

"Oh, Mr. Dinkle," I shouted. "Mr. Dinkle!"

There wasn't any answer.

"Mr. Dinkle!" I repeated, louder this time.

The Senator pulled at my elbow.

"Try the door," he suggested.

I turned the knob and pushed inward. The door opened as easily as a woman's mouth.

I stuck my head through the opening, looking around. Dinkle's things, his luggage and his suitcoat, were still in evidence. Some papers were messed around on the desk in the corner. The Capehart was playing soft music. But there wasn't any sign of Dinkle.

Figuring he might very conceivably be in another and more secluded room, I raised my voice again.

"Mr. Dinkle," I yelled.

There still wasn't any answer. I turned to the Senator. He was looking as worried as I felt.

"That's funny," I said.

"Is it?" the Senator asked acidly.

"I mean,"—I was getting flustered—"where in the hell can he be?"

And then we heard the violin screeching off down the hallway. The instrument, the manner in which it was being tortured, and the tune were all familiar to me. The tune was "I Ain't Got Nobody," and I had a mental picture of a fat little guy in a bedsheet sawing it off.

"Come on," I told the Senator. "I have a hunch. It isn't a very nice hunch, but come on!"

He followed me as I raced out of Dinkle's suite and started down the corridor. The music, if you could call it that, was still going on, and getting louder as we neared the room it came from.

It was the room I'd seen the bedsheeted nut enter earlier in the evening, and when we stopped in front of the door we smelled the smoke.

"Something's on fire!" the Senator exclaimed.

I saw the wisps of smoke trailing out beneath the crack in the bottom of the door, then. Tiny, swirling tendrils.

Ominous as hell. The Senator was coughing.

The violin still played. I pounded on the door.

"Hey," I shouted, "open up here."

The music halted momentarily.

"Open the door!" the Senator boomed. "Something's burning in there!"

The music started up again. *I ain't got nobody. Nobody cares for me.* It was hideously off-key.

THE smoke was getting considerably thicker. I kicked on the door with my feet, and immediately regretted it when I almost broke ten toes.

The music stopped.

"Dinkle," I yelled. "You in there, Dinkle?"

There was a grunting moan that might have been meant for an answer.

The Senator give me glance of horror.

"What's this all about?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Run down stairs," I said. "Get the manager. We've got to get into this room."

The Senator looked surprised, started to tell me to go myself, then turned away and lumbered off down the hallway at what he considered to be a mean speed.

The violin had started up again. The smoke tendrils were drifting up from the slit under the door in greater waves now, choking me and making me cough.

I pounded on the door again, but I knew nothing short of a key or a fire axe was going to get me into the place. The Senator had gone to get the guy with the key, so I started looking around for a fire axe.

There wasn't any; and by the time I'd proved this to myself, the Senator and Mr. Cratch tumbled out of the elevator and came running down the corridor to where I was pounding foolishly on the door again. The Senator was

wild-eyed and wondering, and for once Cratch didn't look suave and self-assured.

"Damn him," said Cratch, "I can't imagine where he got the matches. We've always kept any incendiary materials away from him!" He was looking down at the smoke, and shoving the key in the lock.

At the sound of our voices, and the noise of the keys rattling, the violin stopped again.

The smoke was getting thicker. Cratch was having trouble with the key and was cursing roundly. We heard the sound of a window opening inside the room.

And then Cratch got the door open.

We tumbled into the room, and started an immediate chorus of coughing. The smoke was so thick we couldn't see three feet ahead of us. I was right behind Cratch, and the two of us tumbled over the body on the floor.

When I regained my balance, I bent over to have a look at the body. It was very much alive, and writhing and squirming and coughing and sobbing. It was tied, hand and foot, with belts, towels, and torn sheets.

It was Dinkle!

The Senator hadn't seen him. He stepped around ahead of us and ran across the room to the open window.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "Look!"

Cratch and I left Dinkle on the floor, leaped to the window. We stared out in the direction the Senator was pointing.

A bedsheets little fat man was clambering along a pencil thin building ledge, one hand clutching a violin.

"Nero!" Cratch yelled. "Damn you, come back here!"

The little fat guy looked back over his shoulder and almost fell off the ledge. He giggled and then went on. He was nearing another window, and it seemed pretty clear that it was his idea

to enter the building again through that window.

"Damn you, Nero," Cratch shouted. "you'll be sorry for this."

The little fat guy reached the window, kicked it through with his foot, and, hanging on with one hand, reached in and opened it.

"He's going into Aaron Burr's room!" Cratch exclaimed. He left the window and rushed, coughing, through the smoke and out into the corridor.

The Senator was looking at me wild-eyed.

"What the hell is this all about? Nero, Aaron Burr? What the hell goes? Where's Dinkle?"

I had forgotten Dinkle, and I suddenly remembered in horror.

I pointed to the writhing body on the floor.

"Good God!" the Senator exclaimed.

WE DRAGGED the well-tied Dinkle out of the smoke filled room and into the corridor. Smoke was filling the corridor, now, but it wasn't nearly as thick as in the room.

I got the towel out of Dinkle's mouth, while the Senator untied his hands and feet. The little man was purple. Purple from near asphyxiation, purple from smoke poisoning, purple from the tight welts left by the bonds, purple with rage.

He stared at the Senator and me like we were something that had just crawled out of Adolf's moustache. His mouth was working and he was trying to say words, but he was spluttering too much from the fury that shook him to make any sense.

"I'll fix you. I'll fix you both!" he screeched. "Torturers! Madmen! Arsonists!"

"Look—" I began.

Dinkle stepped up and threw an unexpected and puny punch that caught

me on the nose.

"I'll see that you're both put behind bars!" he screeched. "I'll sue you into poverty. I'll have the people of our state ride you out on rails!"

He was in no mood to be argued with, but the Senator stepped up to try. He didn't get a word in. Dinkle punched him in the nose. The Senator had a big nose and it began to bleed. He looked amazed, touched his nose, saw the blood on his hand. Then he reacted instinctively. He hauled off and smacked Dinkle on the jaw with a looping right.

The Senator was a big man, all his weight was in the punch. Dinkle collapsed as if his knees were wet spinach.

The Senator looked down in horror at the little man.

"Good God, what have I done?" he wailed. And then he turned on me. "It's your fault!" he bellowed. "You brought him to this madhouse!"

I stepped back a pace. "Now listen—" I began.

Then hell broke loose down the hallway.

There was yelling, lots of it.

"Fire!" most of the voices yelled.

Other doors along the hallway opened, and strange looking people were sticking out their heads and looking frightened. A little man in a bedsheets, clutching a violin in his hand, came racing down the hall. He was laughing wildly in a high, hysterical voice. He seemed to be having the time of his life.

"Fire!" he screamed. "Fire!"

There was a crackling that was ominous. It came from the room we'd just taken Dinkle from. I poked my head in the door. Window drapes blazed, and the smoke was enough to conceal a flotilla of destroyers.

I looked down the corridor. Smoke was pouring from the room that the bedsheeted guy Cratch had called Nero had just emerged from. The bedsheeted fat

guy had stopped in the middle of the hall. His face was ecstatic, and he was playing his violin.

Then Cratch appeared. He stepped up behind Nero, grabbed the violin from his bands, and brought it smashing down on the little fat guy's head. Nero went down and out for the count.

Cratch ran for us. His eyes were blazing and he was out of breath and out of aplomb.

"You'll have to get out of here," he said. "The flames will be beyond any chance of control in another ten minutes. Hurry, please. I'm sorry about everything. But please get out."

I grabbed him by the lapels.

"What's this all about?" I demanded.

He shook himself out of my grasp. "I thought it would be a good idea," he said. "But it didn't work out that way. I could have gotten twenty-five dollars a day for my extra rooms. This is awful. I was only trying to help out the housing shortage, make a little something out of it. Please leave. Hurry. Take that man with you." He pointed to Dinkle.

PEOPLE were running by us in the hallway. They were in every state of attire and every type of costume. Fancy dress costume balls seemed to be the order of the day.

Cratch shouted at them at the top of his lungs.

"Be calm," he yelled. "Don't rush. Make for the subterranean tunnel!"

Some of the chaos was quieted. The voices calmed down, but the babble carried on.

"Goodbye," said Cratch. "I have to get my records. Damn it, they're always being endangered by fire!"

He turned away and dashed off. The Senator and I stared at each other like a pair of idiots. The smoke in the hallway was now a lot thicker. Strange

people in strange attire continued to mill past us.

"We'd better buzz," I said. I pointed at Dinkle. "You take one end, I'll take the other."

We dragged Dinkle into the elevator, got safely down into the lobby. We almost ran headlong into Cratch. His arms were filled with ledgers and account books. He nodded and moved on past us into the elevator.

We let Dinkle down on the marble floor none too gently. The Senator raced for the registration desk.

"What are you going to do?" I asked him.

"Call the fire department," he said.

"Make it fast," I said. "Or they'll be putting out our blazing hides."

It was then that I saw the little ledger a few feet from where Dinkle lay. It had been dropped by Cratch, obviously, for it was just like the ones he'd been carrying.

I picked it up.

"Unsettled Accounts," was the inscription on the cover.

I opened it. It contained names, lots of them, names followed by dates, and highly peculiar data. On the inside cover, written in a flowing hand, was an inscription reading, "Property of S. Cratch." It had a signature under it. The signature of S. Cratch, only it was a running together of the initial and the last name. "Scratch," was the way it was signed.

I came across the entry "Dinkle, Joseph," by accident.

Then the Senator lumbered up. His expression was one of complete bewilderment.

"You called?" I said.

He nodded. "They told me I was crazy. I said I wanted to report a fire on Styx Street. I gave my name. They said wait a minute. Then they told me I was crazy. Where in the hell did I

think there was a Styx Street in Washington—that's what they asked me. There wasn't any such place, they said. I'm losing my mind. Let's clear out of here!"

We carried Dinkle out, each holding an end, like a sack of potatoes. The Senator's wallop had been quite an anesthetic.

The flames weren't apparent from the street, but smoke was pouring from a number of the windows. We carried Dinkle along for a block and a half. We stopped at a little baby park, plunked him on the ground, sat down on a bench.

"This is the end," said the Senator. "I'm through. You're through. We're all through. Dinkle will crucify us."

I had taken out the little book. The ledger that Cratch, or Scratch, had dropped.

"I don't know," I said. "Look at what I found." I handed him the book.

DINKLE stirred slightly and moaned. But he didn't open his eyes.

The Senator was staring dully at the book, leafing idly through it and not saying anything.

"We've been through hell," I said. "Literally and figuratively."

The Senator handed me the book.

"I'm crazy," he said. "You're crazy. I know what you're thinking and it's the same thing I'm thinking. We're both as mad as hatters. Styx Street." He shook his head and shuddered.

"You didn't see Dinkle's name here?" I asked impatiently, shaking the book under his nose.

"Huh?"

I opened it to the page where Dinkle's handle started a column.

"Read this," I said, "and when Dinkle comes around we'll ask him some questions. Questions about slimy financial

deals that swindled orphanages and churches. Questions about a lot of things you'll find in that account book of Scratch's."

Life came back to the Senator's eyes. They bugged out so far a stick could have knocked them off. Then hope brought the color back to his cheeks, and sheer elation followed.

"It can't be," he gasped. "It can't be! My god, man, this is wonderful!"

Dinkle moaned again. We looked down. He was opening his eyes, sitting up. Then he saw us, and he grew purple with rage once again.

"Hoodlums!" he screeched. "I'll—"

"Shut up!" The Senator barked. "Shut up. I've got a few things to say to you."

Dinkle's rage changed to a momentary amazement.

"I'm going to tell you a few things I've just found out about you, you lecherous little snake!" The Senator thundered. . . .

THERE were considerably more than a few things that the Senator told Dinkle. Things about Dinkle's hypocritical past. Things about churches defrauded, orphanages milked, widows impoverished. Lots and lots of things, with names and dates and places.

When it was over there was no question as to the support Dinkle was going to give the Senator in the coming campaign. There was no question in Dinkle's mind that the Senator had better be re-elected to office, or else. And there was no question about Dinkle's coming reformation.

Dinkle had no idea of where the book came from. He only knew that it contained some awful truths. He didn't know that it had been compiled by a gentleman named S. Cratch, otherwise known as Scratch. A gentleman who managed a hot spot called hell, and

who tried to turn a few pennies profit for himself by renting out a tiny section of it to relieve the Washington housing shortage.

No, the Senator didn't tell Dinkle that he'd found his name in the account book of Scratch himself. For then Dinkle might have learned about the final entry Scratch had put beneath his name. An entry that would have worried Dinkle into a too early date with

the Devil.

"Due for permanent residence under my supervision six years from this date," was what that final entry under Dinkle's name said.

As the Senator put it—the day after he'd been re-elected—it was nice to be able to tell Dinkle to go to hell, and even nicer to know that some day he would.

THE END

RESEARCH WANTED

By
H. A. HIGHSTONE

ACCORDING to a recent news item, pigeon swarms which had reached nuisance proportions around a western court house were completely routed by the continuous blast of a whistle. The whistle annoyed no one but the pigeons; it had a frequency of 64,000 cycles per second and human ears do not "hear" sounds of this pitch.

The incident poses a question. Did the pigeons actually hear the whistle as a sound and find it unendurable? Or was it, as sound, inaudible to them as it is to humans who cannot hear supersonic sounds (about 20,000 cycles) and the birds suddenly found themselves in, say, a state of unendurable nervous tension having no apparent physical basis? The latter possibility induces speculation.

For instance, according to one report, the Japanese version of the ubiquitous "death ray" was a supersonic device like the pigeon whistle. The frequency was unstated, but likely lay below 100,000. The Japs reportedly stunned and sometimes killed rats with their whistle at considerable distances.

Hence, there is a certain sound frequency which not merely annoys rats; it kills them. Perhaps 64,000 cycles would also kill pigeons if they were unable to fly away. Perhaps some other frequency, probably higher, might conceivably kill something like typhoid bacteria or the pneumococcus. Perhaps diphtheria bugs could be liquified by another frequency.

Why not? That lesser micro-organisms succumb to supersonic sound is already an established fact. Sound might conceivably take up where the sulfas leave off; kill the "unfilterable virus" of the common cold, eliminate polio, cure hypertension and even all degenerative ailments in general.

It might be . . . it could be that supersonic

sounds existing in nature—perhaps harmonics of frequencies in the audible range—produce in humans such ills as melancholia, "nervousness," even insanity. Produce perhaps, even the exalted inspiration of the master composer, artist, mathematician. Supersonic sounds "unheard" by individuals possessing a physical or psychical make-up not selective enough or responsive enough to be affected by them.

Here is a virgin field of research. It is largely unexplored because production of mechanical vibrations (of any marked intensity) becomes increasingly difficult when the frequency goes much above 25,000 cycles. Diaphragms of sound reproducers possess too much inertia to vibrate at such speeds; they stand still and radiate heat instead of sound. Make them light enough; force them, and they fly to pieces. The whistle has its limitations, particularly in the matter of flexibility. The man experimenting with whistles, for example, might easily miss exploration of the effects of, say, 79,485.5 cycles. This might be exactly the pitch needed to eventually restore paranoias to sanity.

Quartz crystals, of course, will vibrate at almost any frequency. For a few dollars one can buy a quartz crystal which will vibrate as much as 10,000,000 cycles per second. Unfortunately, the volume of mechanical sound is the vaguest whisper; too, any given crystal vibrates at one particular frequency and none other.

It is easy enough to get supersonic power, and in quantity. From zero to 100,000,000 cycles per second and more, electric current is cheap and easy to generate. The immediate problem is that of finding some device to change this electrical energy into mechanical energy, or sound. Solve it—and find a loudspeaker or equivalent device operable up to only a million cycles and the results of any comprehensive research will likely make history.

**This invention would bring
Mankind a great benefit;
but in his mind voices
tried to madden him!**



For one terrific instant Kieth
Eckhardt considered murder . . .

DON'T MENTION IT!

By JOHN & DOROTHY de COURCY

THE drums began to beat again. That queer uneven beat. Never the same, always changing; never quite rhythmical nor arrhythymical. The man listened to the beat with only half his mind. The other half in regret, fury, fear, anguish, a pot-pourri of emotion, sought to shut out the discord. It was no use! Horns, violins, piccolos, bassoons, took up the refrain. If only he could make some sense to the music! If only he could distinguish a semblance of melody, a few bars even, it might be bearable. He straightened up from his work.

"Just one more day!" he moaned. "Just a few hours without that hellish sound in my brain and I'd be finished!"

That's what he wanted most in this world. Time! Just a little time! He had reached a new milestone in science. Almost! Another day, a few more hours and the earth would yield her secret of gravity to him. Another day, a few more hours and the chains which had held men to the earth for millions of years would be broken. The eternal stars would be his neighbor; the universe, his town; the galaxy, his country. The secret was quite simple! The machine, even simpler! It lay before his bands, almost complete.

The man rushed out of the laboratory. It would be useless to try to work with that din pounding in his brain. He walked rapidly through his house, gathering up his coat and hat as he went out the front door. Outside, in the sun, the demented symphony diminished to a point where thought was possible. He heaved a deep sigh of relief. It had been three days since this started.

The sounds in his mind were always tolerable when he got away from home and the laboratory.

His breath came easier now and his muscles lost their tenseness. His tall, gaunt frame straightened and his sensitive fingers relaxed. He was distinguished in appearance. His skin was dark, his cheekbones high. His liquid brown eyes were set in deep sockets. His nose was thin, aquiline, with a prominent hump. The face was strikingly like that of Abraham Lincoln; the man's soul was strikingly like that of Abraham Lincoln.

He was not a famous scientist but he could be, and would be if the pounding, shrieking racket that only he could hear, would stop. Another day, a few more hours separated him from greatness. Another day, a few more hours separated man from the stars.

That was Keith Eckhardt, in 1959. A nobody. A low-salaried worker in a radio-television repair shop. But within, was Keith Eckhardt, savant extraordinary. Within, was also a man racked by fear and torn by conflicting emotions. He knew he was going insane but was fearful of even putting that realization into concrete thought. Yet, in this extremity, his only desire was to complete his machine; to give mankind the key to new achievement while he still had the wits to give it. That one thought was uppermost. There really was no other explanation for his condition other than insanity. Keith knew this. He knew even the name. Paranoia, it was called! Yet, still he wouldn't admit the truth, even to himself. That was too much to expect.

AS HE walked along the street in the slanting sunshine, the clashing dissonance began to die away. Calmly, emotionlessly, Keith waited for the voice, for the voice always came after the music. He had learned, in these last three terrible days, to act as though nothing were happening. No flicker of emotion betrayed the tortured hell of his mind. Rather, his face was benign, almost saintly. No one knew but Keith and he meant that no one should know, ever.

The music died on a sour note. Then the calm voice started to speak, ringing in the space between his ears. The voice, cultured, well modulated, dulcetly soft, infinitely penetrating, aggravatingly insane.

"You have been listening to our noon-day concert hour, presenting today symphony number one million, four hundred seventy-nine thousand, two hundred sixty-three and one-half, by Johann Sebastian Jones. When you hear the sound of the bomb, the time will be exactly one million B. C. Are you quick on your feet? Or are your reactions slow? Remember! There are only two kinds of men. The quick and the dead! If you don't want to be dead, be sure to eat a pound of Doctor Gboul's quicksand every day."

ON AND on and on it went, until Keith wished he could die just to shut out the sound. Three days of this was all he could stand! He had to stop this somehow! He forced his dragging feet to turn him towards town. He reached the streetcar line eventually, and managed to seat himself inside. The voice stopped talking. It just insanely chattered, clickety-clack, clickety-clack, clickety-clack, in perfect rhythm with the moving car.

Keith found himself standing before a door, labeled neatly in gold letters.

JOHN LLEWELLEN, M. D.
Neuro-psychiatric Medicine

Soon, he was seated in a comfortable chair across a desk from John Llewellyn, M. D.

"Rest, peace and quiet, relaxation. Get away from it all. Get yourself a hobby. Above all, don't worry!"

In between the doctor's comments, the voice in Keith's brain chanted.

"Have you had your tonsils oiled lately? Repack your adenoids every ten thousand words. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Wash your appendix in a Bendix."

When he first heard the voice, Keith had been inclined to laugh at the monotonous statements but now the humor was grim and terrible, only a horrible mockery of his almost vanished sanity.

He paid the doctor. Ahsently, Keith noted the doctor quickly dialing a number on the telephone. As Keith turned to leave, the voice spoke directly to him.

"You ought to kill him, you know. If you don't, he'll have them come and take you away. There'll be bars on the windows and locks on the doors. Go on! Kill him! Kill! Kill! Kill!"

For one terrifying instant, Keith Eckhardt considered murder. His remaining sanity snapped him out of it. He didn't wait for the elevator. He ran downstairs. His hat flew off somewhere but he ignored it.

He walked away from the building. Away from town. Away from people. Suddenly, it was evening and the gathering darkness mothered him. From somewhere, the sound of a simple melody intruded into the mad monologue that Keith heard with his mind. He was before a little church, gray, run down and poor. It was from there that the melody came. Keith walked up the steps. As he did, the voice rose, almost

to a scream.

"Get away. Get away! Get away!
Get away!"

KEITH was through the door of the little church. For a moment, the relief was almost unendurable. The voice was gone! Tears of gratitude for this respite trickled down Keith's cheeks. He sank, very weak, into a pew and leaned his forehead on the back of the seat in front of him. He began to cry, sobbing unashamed.

The light touch of a hand on his shoulder, made him raise his head. A slight, fatherly, white-haired man stared down at him.

"Is your grief that intolerable?" the little man asked.

For some reason, Keith found himself pouring out his troubles, unburdening his aching heart. There was something about this man that made Keith want to talk to him. When he was finished, the little man was very grave and silent. Keith was suddenly very mortified and ashamed.

"I—I'd better go," he stammered. He rose to leave but the white-haired man restrained him.

"Don't dash off like this," the little man protested. "You haven't given me a fair chance to help you. That's my business, you know—helping people."

Keith sank back into his pew again.

"Do you think you can help me?" Keith pleaded.

"I can sure try," the little man smiled. "By the way, what's your name?"

Keith told him.

The little man nodded his head. "Mmm, that's a good name. Mine's Joshua Whittaker."

There was something about Joshua Whittaker that made Keith relax. A warm friendliness seemed to emanate from his slight frame. For the first time in three days, Keith was himself.

Finally, Keith dared to ask the question.

"Do you think I'm insane, Reverend?"

"Don't call me reverend," Joshua Whittaker answered. "Just call me Josh. All my friends do." He paused. "Insane! You insane? Why I don't think anything of the kind!"

"But what about the voice?" Keith protested. "Sane people don't bear voices."

"They certainly do!" smiled the little man. "Why, I used to hear 'em myself once in a while. Of course, I heard the good kind of voices. My guess is that you're hearing one of the bad kind."

"Is this really true?" Keith asked. "You're not just saying this to make me feel better, are you?"

"Why of course not," Joshua answered indignantly. "I wouldn't do a thing like that. Look here, I'll show you."

JOSHUA WHITTAKER dug deep into his well worn, faded coat and produced a much read Bible. He opened it. When he found the right page, he looked at Keith over the gold rims of his spectacles.

"Listen to this. This is *I John*, chapter four.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

"There, see! It's written here in the Word. It just looks to me like you sort of got tangled up with one of those false prophets. If I were you, I'd be kind of proud because if you're important enough for them to take an interest in you, then that machine of yours must be pretty important. Son, I wouldn't let them stop me from building it no matter what happened."

"But how can I!" Keith protested. "I can't work, I can't think when that

voice is in my brain!"

"Oh, it can be done," the Reverend smiled. "I used to have a man in my congregation that had a wife who talked more in an hour than you and I both together have in our whole lives. He came to me and asked the same question. I told him that if every time she started to get on his nerves, he would say a little prayer, it might help. Now, do you know, he got so that he could say, yes dear, no dear, and maybe dear, without hearing a word she said. So far as I know, she never did catch on that he wasn't listening to every word she said."

"Do you really think that praying would stop that voice?" Keith asked apprehensively.

"I wouldn't say that," Joshua Whitaker replied. "The good Lord didn't come down and stuff a sock into that woman's mouth. She went right on talking just the same. But why don't you give it a try? At least it can't do any harm!"

Keith rose from his seat. There was new determination in his face.

"I'll do it! I'll do it!" he promised. "I'll finish my machine in spite of it!"

"That's the spirit!" Joshua Whitaker said approvingly.

The little man walked down the aisle toward his pulpit. Keith stood in the doorway for a minute, looking at the tiny figure.

"Goodbye, Reverend, and thanks."

The little man smiled broadly. "Just call me Josh, and don't mention it. That's my job, you know, helping people!"

AN HOUR later, it was a new Keith Eckhardt who knelt in the tiny laboratory. He was praying. The words tumbled over one another in their haste to be uttered. He straightened up. Grimly, determined, he set to work. The

voice was there to be sure, howling and gibbering its absurdities but Keith didn't give up. He kept working, his fingers delicately placing the final parts. A drop of solder here, a tiny screw there. Little by little, it was nearing completion. The voice became louder, louder and louder! Then the music chimed in, beating blattering, blaring.

Through gritted teeth Keith Eckhardt promised himself, "I won't stop! I won't stop! I've got to go on!"

His whole body shook with the banging, crashing, snarling, screaming in his head. Every minute dragged by until even living was the sheerest agony. The whole world was a haze, a blur. The only reality was the machine and himself. The voice didn't exist, couldn't exist.

With every beat of his heart, Keith mouthed, "I won't hear it! I won't bear it!"

But he did hear it. He did hear it, and it grew worse as each instant passed. Perspiration ran down his face in little tickling drops. His fingers slipped time and time again, until his hands were covered with burns from the soldering iron and tiny cuts from his screwdrivers. Everywhere his fingers touched, they left their outline in blood.

Keith was praying again, almost babbling. Then, he was working again. Without conscious effort, he put the parts in place. His mind didn't function except to try to shut out the noise. At last, there was only one small coil to be soldered in place but try as he might, he couldn't place it. It just wouldn't hold! His desperate fingers clamped the coil to its mounting. The din in his head was truly unbearable. Each crashing beat of the cacophony felt like a numbing blow on his skull. Slowly, his free hand brought the soldering iron against the bits of metal, held between

the fingers of his other hand. He smelled the burning flesh rather than felt the pain. The noise prevented all sensation. Carefully, he relaxed his burning fingers. It held! The last part was in place. The machine was finished!

The voice within his head screamed in terrible rage and shrieked a word whose meaning Keith did not know but whose sound stiffened his back. Then, silence. The voice was gone. The music, gone. The beating, gone. Numbly, Keith pulled the plug on the soldering iron, then, fell face downward on the floor, whimpering softly.

NEARLY an hour passed before Keith began to think again. He lifted his face and looked at his machine. It was graceful, symmetrical. The pain of his burned, lacerated hands was forgotten as he stared at it. He rose to his knees. A flood of triumphant joy swept over him. Quick on its heels was apprehension. Would it work? It had to work!

Gently, almost reverently, Keith laid a large iron plate on the shiny, parabolic reflector of the gravity beam generator. Under his loving hands, the machine came slowly to life. As he gingerly moved the power control, the iron plate shifted slightly and lifted free of the reflector. It hung in the air, motionless, apparently held by nothing.

Three hours later, bathed, shaved and breakfasted, Keith stood across the street from the gray, dilapidated, little church. Only it wasn't the same church. Gaping, broken windows stared at him blankly from its weather beaten walls. Boards were heavily nailed over their inner sides. The little plot of grass was over grown with weeds which almost completely obscured the walk leading up to the entrance.

Keith was sure this was the place. Yet, it couldn't be! This church had

obviously been deserted for years. A hearty voice broke in on his thoughts.

"Thinking of buying the old place?"

Keith turned to see a stout, ruddy man approaching him.

"Ah—, no," Keith answered. "I was looking for a church but I guess this isn't the one."

"I don't imagine it is," the ruddy man agreed. "This one has been deserted ever since Parson Whittaker died."

"Whittaker?" Keith echoed. "Do you mean Joshua Whittaker?"

"Yup," the ruddy man said. "Did you know him? Mighty fine fella."

"No, I didn't know him," Keith answered. "I—I only met him once. How long ago did he die?"

"About two years ago. A pity it was at that. Nobody ever came to take over the place after he died. Some of the neighbors and I hoarded it all up to keep the kids out. Funny thing, nobody's ever done anything about the place. Well, I've got to get home. Hope you find the church you're looking for!"

The ruddy man walked down the street a ways and entered his house.

Slowly, Keith walked across the street. This was mad, impossible. It just couldn't happen! There must be another church. Another Joshua Whittaker! Hesitantly, Keith walked up the steps of the church.

The porch was littered with rubble. The wind had blown a layer of sand and dust up to the door sill. The door itself, was securely boarded and the protruding nails hadn't been touched for a long time.

Keith looked at the layer of sand. The hair on the back of his neck bristled slightly. Icy fingers seemed to brush up his spine. In the dust and sand was a footprint, recently made. Keith looked at it for a long moment. Then, almost fearfully, he lowered his foot to the depression. His shoe fitted the footprint

exactly.

Momentary fear clutched at Keith's heart. Memory of the little man washed over him. The fear was gone. There was wonder and awe and a lot of confused emotions in Keith's mind. A lump formed in his throat. His eyes had a misty wetness as he slowly walked down

the steps. He turned at the bottom. With a peculiar smile on his face, Keith looked at the door.

"Goodbye, Josh," he said softly. "And thanks again."

From somewhere, maybe in his own mind, a soft voice answered. "Don't mention it, son."



THE LOST ORB



ONCE there was a world of rare beauty in this solar system. It had blue skies with slowly drifting clouds; vast oceans; green meadows and dark forests full of life; bright warm sunshine; restful, cool, romantic nights. Life started there from shapeless blobs of slime, and in the course of many million years developed into humankind.

Although these men had an extravagant abundance of space to live in and all the natural resources, they soon decided that the planet was too small for them. They waged one war after another, and the more civilized they called themselves, the more savage and ferocious were their methods of warfare. The strangest part was that they always believed that they were right, that God was on their side, and that the enemy was always in the wrong.

And so it came about that a great nation on that planet fought a war to give mankind—among other humanitarian ideals—freedom from fear. Her scientists developed an atomic bomb of terrible destructiveness and power, and man forgot all his original humane ideals. He loosed his bombs and completely devastated two of his enemy's cities without a warning and without a thought of the thousands of women and children they contained. There were a few who meekly pointed out that the humane thing to do would have been to select an open territory in his enemy's country, and—having dropped a bomb there—to issue an ultimatum, calling his attention to the terrific power of the bomb and warning him that unless he surrenders the next one will fall on one of his cities. But such were quickly shouted down as enemy sympathizers and traitors in the cause.

The war was over; but there was no peace. For now all nations realized that no one was safe from an atomic bomb attack. Instead of freedom from fear, the world was plunged into a reign of fear. After a short and fruitless military training and armament race program by all the nations—which ended in a tie—mankind decided that safety for all could only be assured by outlawing the atomic bomb.

The heads of thirteen great nations got together and among them signed a solemn pact and pledged themselves never to use the bomb. Twelve of these men were perfectly sincere, but there was one whose full name we do not recall except that

legends say his first name was Judas. He was the loudest in his preaching of the brotherhood of men and world cooperation. He was the first to sign the pledge and no one had any doubts about him. The world rejoiced that now, at last, mankind had safety and peace.

The twelve sincere nations resumed their peaceful life, as best they could, where they left off before the war. But not so Judas. When he came home, he said: "Congratulate me boys, I got it over. Those naps have no idea what is in store for them. Now we can go ahead with our well-laid plans."

In a remote and desolate region, well hidden in the mountains, great laboratories were built. Thousands of men toiled day and night in underground caves on the production and assembly of huge radar-controlled rocket-powered super atomic bombs

Five years passed. Humanity resumed its petty squabbles, its labor troubles, strikes, divorces, murders, law suits, eternal fighting over money. In short, it settled in what man calls a normal life.

Then, without warning, the disaster struck. On a moonless night huge rocket bombs streaked into the stratosphere and headed in the general direction of great cities of the nation who had been the first to loose upon the world the evil genie of the bomb from his enchanted jug. Radar controls and photo-electric eyes guided the bombs unerringly toward the brightly lit and unsuspecting population centers. They screamed out of the skies and in a few moments the gaiety of sunlight was transformed into a horrible nightmare.

When morning came the ghastly scene was lit by a feeble eerie light which barely penetrated the hideous yellow, madly churning clouds. The country was a smoking desert strewed with shapeless remnants of what once had been humans, and Death itself stood staring aghast at the demented arrogance of man, while the flame-borne wind sang a mournful dirge for those who were no more.

Iniquitous nations clamored for retribution, and the loudest among them was Judas. Thus no one could tell which nation was responsible for the disaster.

On several succeeding nights the bombs destroyed the capitals of other nations. Radio "homming" devices, secretly installed by Judas' spies,

attracted bombs to their ammunition stores, obliterated their air fleets, rail centers, navy yards and bases, leaving them powerless to retaliate. All they could do was to cower in fear and pray to their long-forgotten God.

Then came the ultimatum to the world. It called for "unconditional surrender" to the will and pleasure of Judas, the Supreme Dictator and Master of the World. All nations were to be slaves to the supercilious Judas' race.

There was just one thing that Judas overlooked. He had forgotten that a big mountain once grew from a mole-hill in a farmer's backyard. Some of his super-bombs had penetrated the planet's crust and started a living growth, a cancer, within its very core. Titanic eruptions spread over the world, earthquakes leveled great cities, tremendous tidal waves swept across continents, whole countries sank below the sea, deep yawning chasms crisscrossed the surface to swallow panic-stricken crowds. "God have mercy on me," cried Judas and hanged himself. The planet gave one last spasmodic shudder and exploded into fragments . . .

This was so long ago the planet's name has long since been forgotten. Today, men call it the "Lost Orb." Its pieces form the asteroid belt between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars. A part of its flaming radio-active core struck Jupiter, got buried deep inside and left a never-healing wound.

★ YOUR NEGLECTED LABORATORY ★

THE laboratory which erected the skyscraper, and conquered the depths of the ocean, and the troposphere's heights; the laboratory which sends its own messages thousands of miles through great copper cables and through empty air; the laboratory that is the mind of man, your mind and mine—consider its wonders.

If all the individuals on the globe were so connected through one central telephone exchange that there could be instant automatic contact between any two or more people, it would be remotely illustrative of the wonders of the brain, which is a part of the mind of man, but it would still be inefficient, ponderous, expensive, and troublesome out of all proportion with its size, as compared with the brain.

There are roughly three-billion cells in every human brain, somewhat less than the population of the world numbers. Only a very low percentage of these cells is ever employed in thinking. As a matter of fact, only a small portion of the cerebrum, the center of conscious thought, is employed by the average person living a busy life.

The *Silent Areas*, which constitute the major portion of the cerebrum, may keep unguessable secrets. Race memory may well be one of them. The ability to focus and use the forces of nature may be buried there. The powers of white and black "magic" may derive from them. Wrongly touched, they might derail consciousness and pro-

We call it the "Red Spot." Its flaming gases seared Mars and turned it into a desert. The cosmic cataclysm would have destroyed all life on Earth, which in those days was barely beginning. But something intervened. Modern man would call it Luck or Chance, but those who think still wonder how it came about that at the very moment when flaming fragments were headed toward Earth, Moon got in the way and sacrificed herself so that mankind would have another chance to live. Moon shielded Earth, "turned her cheek" and took the full fury of the explosion upon her lovely face. Her air was stripped from her, she was pock-marked with craters, was literally stoned to death. Where fragments fell into her seas the water washed them over, but those on land remain today to baffle our men of science. A few stray fragments reached our Earth. Some fell into our seas, some got buried in the ground in Arizona and South Carolina, but life on Earth was saved through Moon's self-sacrifice.

Long eons passed. Moon's seas evaporated and she stopped rotating on her axis. Is it Chance again that she has turned to us the very cheek which was pock-marked by fragments of the Lost Orb? Or is it an eternal silent warning, lest man forgets again and tries to magnify himself above his Maker? Will history repeat itself? Look at the Moon, O man, and THINK, think hard before it is too late!

Queen's Knight

duce insanity. They might constitute the time-travel machine of mentality which presents us with premonitions and prophetic dreams.

The Reflexive-Instinctive reactions of the lower brain and spinal column which save lives in heavy traffic, take us effortlessly where we intend to go, sneeze for us, cough, swallow, and control the start-staggering machinery of the entire body and its own as well, are only basic, fundamental, necessary mechanisms.

But that millionth part of the tiny energy that draws the train of conscious thought which is known as creative thought—it is the most powerful of all the mental powers, smaller and yet greater than the rest—the king of mentality itself.

One small human mind, perhaps in Arabia, centuries ago, may have been the first to realize the tremendous power of expanding, vaporizing water. Another mind, years and years later first essayed to chain the giant. Another mind succeeded in doing so, and that one is remembered. In 1940 a trillionth part of one mind's energy envisions radar stopping planes from crashing mountains tops. Two years later aeronautics discovers and perfects the technique.

The instrumentation of the mind which we call the brain is constructed of non-metabolizable cells. Fed properly, even apart from the body, the brain cells could be eternal, literally.

The average brain is utilized, for good or evil, less than sixty years. John McCabe Moore



The Perfect Imitation

By H. B. HICKEY

HEY! Kirby!" Ted Dawson yelled up to me. "How long is it going to take you? You're just like a woman!"

I grinned to myself. Before the last two months it was always I who had to wait for Ted. Now I had slowed myself down to his tempo.

"I'll be right down!" I called back to him. I took another look in the mirror and was satisfied. It had been a real task to get my hair, which had always been parted on the side, to hold a part in the center. With the aid of a little

dressing I managed to make it stick.

Before I went down I practised talking like Ted for a few minutes. My natural talent for mimicry had come in handy there. He had a slow, easy way of talking, utterly unlike my formerly high-pitched tones.

Well, Betty Greer had told me, "I don't know, Kirby. Perhaps if you were more like Ted things would be different. He's so solid, so sure; you're volatile and I never could have that secure feeling with you that I have with Ted. Maybe if you were more like

Kirby's last chance lay in the telephone, but no telephone could reach Ted Dawson now . . .



Betty Greer pointed out Ted Dawson's perfection, so Kirby decided to attain that perfection!

him. . . ."

If that would do it, I'd be more like Ted! Of course, it had been difficult to slow myself down to his snail's pace but I had done it. He hadn't seemed to notice, but more and more I adopted his mannerisms.

He was waiting at the foot of the stairs when I came down.

"For Pete's sake, Kirby," he said, "I could starve to death waiting for you. It's six-thirty already and before we get to town it'll be seven."

I grinned, careful to pull back my lips

just the way he did it. "I'm sorry," I told him. "I just couldn't get my hair to stick."

He studied it for a moment. "It does look different. It used to be curly and now it's almost as straight as mine."

I looked at his hair. It was still a little lighter than mine but a few more weeks of sun would lighten it to just about the same shade.

"It sure is strange," he remarked as we got into the car, "the way you've changed in the last few months. You used to be in such a hurry to do things.

Now you're almost as slow as I am!"

"Old age," I grinned.

"No, it isn't that." He was serious. "I've noticed that lately your work has been falling off, too. You act as though you had something on your mind, as though you were preoccupied with problems of your own. Several times I've noticed you staring at me with a blank look on your face, your thoughts a million miles away from the lab."

That made it easy for me to switch the subject to the lab. Ted and I had been chosen by the university to work in the laboratory in the woods through the summer. Betty's father, Professor Greer, was the head of the forestry department at the school and he had considered us his best students. When it came time for two men to be picked it had seemed natural that we would be chosen.

To me there was more to it. The old professor had not liked the intense interest we had displayed in his lovely daughter. Our assignment may have been a way to get us out of town for the summer. For me it was a swell chance to study Ted.

WE PULLED up before the only restaurant in the tiny town near our cabin. The waitress smiled at us; we were steady customers.

"Say!" she said, "You two are getting to look more and more alike. They say being married makes people resemble each other but I never heard that working together would do it!"

Ted paid no attention to her. A building had to fall on him before he would notice it.

We got back early. The next day it was my turn to drive to the university with the specimens. Ted and I alternated in making the trip every two weeks. It took two days, one going and one coming back. I was up early

and got going before Ted was awake.

I dropped the specimens off at the school and went directly to Betty's house. She answered the door herself, looking even prettier than when I had seen her a month before.

For a moment she stared at me. "Why . . . it's you, Kirby! I was expecting you but when I first saw you I thought for a second that you were Ted!"

I laughed. "The waitress at the restaurant where we eat says that working together is making us look alike. Maybe she's right!"

I was careful to keep my voice low. It was surprising even to me how well I could imitate Ted.

Betty noticed that I'd changed my way of combing my hair at once. Somehow she seemed displeased at the change. She became more and more upset as we sat and talked.

Finally she couldn't keep it in any longer. "I don't know what's come over you," she said. "You don't seem like your old self any more. You used to be so full of pep. Now you act just like Ted."

"I thought you liked the way he did things," I told her.

"Maybe I did, but I've changed my mind. That's a woman's prerogative, you know. Besides, I liked you just the way you were and I don't want you to change."

It took me a while to get her meaning, but when I did I started to laugh. To think of the work I had put in imitating Ted Dawson! And now she liked me better the way I had been!

After we had sat a while longer I ventured to put my arm around her and she didn't mind. She liked it when I kissed her, later, and when I finally had to leave she was wearing my frat pin.

"Now don't you try to change yourself," she warned me. "Just when I

was thinking how swell it would be to see you again you had to turn into someone else! I suppose what I said last time had something to do with it, but it had better not happen again!"

Back at the cabin in the woods I tried to return to normal. But it was hard. After the weeks of practise I had put in, my new manner had become natural to me. A first I didn't worry about it, but after repeatedly trying to speed myself up again I became disgusted.

I always wore a hat in the sun, now, but it didn't help. My hair kept getting lighter until it had bleached to a shade exactly like Ted's.

The worst shock came one morning when I washed my hair and then tried to part it on the side. It just wouldn't stay!

I was gaining weight, too. My clothes were all too small for me now and I had to wear some of Ted's. I tried to cut down on my intake of food but to no avail.

Even Dawson was aware of the change now. One morning in the midst of a conversation he broke off.

"Listen, Kirby!" he said. "It may seem funny to you when you imitate the way I talk, but it isn't funny to me! And yesterday I noticed that you've adopted that slight limp I have! Now cut it out or there'll be trouble!"

"I'm not trying to imitate you," I assured him. "Maybe that waitress is right and working together is making us resemble each other."

But much as I tried I couldn't stop. The change had become more rapid now and when I looked in my mirror it was Ted Dawson who stared back at me!

At last I couldn't stand it any longer. What had started out as almost a joke had reached hideous proportions. I stopped going to town and had Ted bring back a sandwich for me every evening. Even that did not affect my

weight. It had reached a point at which it remained constant. I wore his clothes all the time now.

I got so I hated the sight of him. Every time I looked at him I could hear Betty's words again.

IT WAS while he was in town one evening that I noticed it. I had been trying for days to speed up my speech without success. That evening, while I talked to myself in the mirror, I could detect a slight change! When he got back to the cabin I started a conversation.

It was no good. As long as he was around I couldn't keep it up. He seemed to throw a field of force around me that slowed me down.

But the worst was yet to come!

I got up one morning with a splitting headache. When I went into the bathroom to get the aspirin I found Ted taking some. He stared at me.

"Just because I've got a headache do you have to have one, too?" he asked

"I don't have to, I hope," I said. "But I've sure got a pip!"

For a few days afterward things went along as usual. I noticed that when he was away I felt more like my old self. It was then that I got my first inkling of what to do.

Then came the episode of the roast beef. I had asked Ted to bring back a sandwich from town and he got roast beef. That was a safe bet for me because I had always liked it. That night it was different. There was something about the taste of it that I couldn't stand.

Ted stared at me in amazement. "I thought you liked roast beef," he said.

"I usually do," I told him. "Not that this doesn't taste like good beef, but I just don't like it."

He grinned. "I don't know if you've ever noticed it, but I never order it.

Ever since I was a kid I've disliked it."

That was the last straw! What had been just the germ of an idea now became an obsession. I knew that as long as Ted Dawson was around I would continue to grow more and more like him. There was only one thing to do, get rid of him.

If I did that there was hope for me! It had become plain that while he was away I could force myself to resume my old habits of speech and action. As soon as he returned, I was back where I had started.

Three days before I was to make my next trip to the university I decided on a method. Ted was whiling away an odd moment reading when I broached the matter.

"Would you mind going this weekend in my place?" I asked him.

I was surprised when he hesitated. He must have been as anxious as I to see Betty.

"I've been feeling pretty punk the last few days," I explained. "And I don't want to take a chance on a long drive like that." That part was true. The past two days I had been bothered by severe headaches.

"To tell the truth," Dawson said, "I haven't been too well myself. Still, a change of scenery might be the thing to snap me out of it. I'll go."

THE rest was easy. I had been working on it all week whenever I had been alone. That Friday, while Ted was out hunting for specimens I attached my little contrivance to the speedometer of the car.

It had been simple to figure out. We had checked the speedometer after every trip and it was always the same, 234 miles each way.

Knowing Ted's habit of doing things always in the same way it was a sure bet that at the hundred and eightieth

mile of his return trip he would be on the fourteen mile stretch of dangerous mountain road where there was not even room for a car to pass. A slip of the brakes would be fatal there, and I made sure the brakes would slip.

When that particular number came up on the speedometer it would release a spring in the mechanism I had attached that would effectively lock the brakes.

On either side of the road there was a thousand foot drop into rocky gorges and what would be left of the car after the fall would not offer any clues if the "accident" were investigated!

Strangely enough I slept well that night. The thing had boiled itself down to this: If Ted Dawson went on living I was doomed to grow into his identical twin. At one time I would lose Betty Greer and my own individuality. It was really a matter of my own survival for if Dawson lived Kirby Hines would as surely be dead as if he had been murdered.

Therefore, the fact that Ted was going to die did not trouble my sleep. To me it was now a case of "kill or be killed."

He was gone when I awoke. For the first time in days my headache was gone. For a while I felt good. We always laid in food enough to last the week-end and I rustled up a big breakfast which tasted better than anything I had eaten in weeks.

Until now I had been able to act more like the old Kirby Hines when Ted was away. This morning I was out of luck. Even his limp stuck to me and try as I would I could not get rid of it. One of my legs had apparently become shorter!

It was the first time I had noticed that. Before that the limp had been an acquired characteristic which I felt I would eventually get rid of.

By noon I was tired. Ted had never told me why he moved so slowly but I understood now. After a few hours on my feet it had become an effort to walk.

The rest of that day was spent in reading. For a while I tried to read aloud, then gave that up. Much as I fought to change my tone or tempo, the voice I heard was Dawson's.

It was impossible to sleep that night. I was waiting for Dawson's death now as impatiently as any condemned man had ever waited for a reprieve.

At last dawn came, but it brought no relief. No sooner had I got out of bed than I was assailed at once by an awful pain in my left shin. It felt as though I had bit it very hard against something. I knew that had not happened so I rolled up my pajama leg to see if I could figure out the cause. There was a huge bruise on my shin!

As if that weren't enough I soon developed a toothache! My teeth had always been excellent and I could not account for it. The throbbing grew worse until I thought I would have to call town and have someone come with a car to take me to a dentist.

WHILE I was shaving the ache suddenly left me. As quickly as it had come it was gone. Now my mouth felt numb and cottony. I attributed that sensation to lack of sleep.

For breakfast I had coffee and a roll. As I bit into the roll I suddenly felt something bard. I spit it out. A tooth!

My mouth was full of blood and even repeated rinsings with cold water failed to stop the flow. It must have been an hour before it finally ceased.

Then I noticed the stain on my collar. It was a dark red, almost brown, and it kept spreading. Frantically I tore my collar open. My throat was bleeding!

I knew I had not cut myself while

shaving! Then where did the cut come from? It was a bad one and took many applications of the styptic pencil to close. At last it stopped and I had time again to feel the pain in my shin and my mouth. My headache had returned with my other ills and by late afternoon I had even forgotten Ted Dawson.

It must have been seven o'clock when Ted called. I had a mind not to answer it at first, but when I thought of what the call might mean I dragged myself to it.

It was astonished to hear Ted's voice at the other end. Where could he be calling from?

"I wanted to call you so you wouldn't be worried when I didn't get back on time," he said.

"What held you up?" I asked in as calm a voice as possible.

"What didn't?" he moaned. "This has been the most awful day I have ever experienced in my life! I should have been back at the cabin three hours ago and here I am, still a hundred miles away!"

I waited for him to go on, hardly listening to his words. Only another forty or fifty miles and he would be dead!

"I'm at a gas station now," he said. "I thought I'd better call from here before you had a searching party out for me."

"You said that before," I told him. I was so impatient for him to get back to the car that I almost hung up.

"Wait till I tell you what I've been through today," he said.

I let him talk. After all, I could wait another hour or so!

"Well," he went on, "The first thing that happened was that I banged my shin on a chair when I got up this morning. It was an awful whack and I've got a bruise the size of my palm. It still hurts like the devil.

"Then I got the most terrible toothache I've ever had! It got so bad that

I went to a dentist and had it extracted, but it still hurts. Took an hour for the bleeding to stop!"

I had broken out in a cold sweat. As sure as I lived I knew what was coming next! I tried to interrupt but found that I had lost my voice. Ted kept talking.

"This morning I cut myself while shaving and my shirt looked as though I'd tried to commit suicide! To top it off, that headache I had has been bothering me most of the day and for a while I thought I wouldn't drive back. But I feel a little better now so I guess I'll keep going. Be seeing you!"

I tried to stop him. I tried to tell him to wait there until I could get to the

gas station and drive him back. I tried to say something that would hold him, that would keep him from driving that last forty or fifty miles!

But it was no use! Ted had hung up! I got the operator and told her it was a matter of life and death to trace the call. She took fifteen minutes to do it.

And it was too late! The attendant told me that Ted had left immediately after calling me. By now he would be in the mountains, and there was no way of reaching him . . . !

So there is nothing to do now but wait. It won't be long. At the rate Ted drives it should take another thirty minutes till he gets to that bad stretch of road. And when he does . . .

A CHAMPION FOR TIBET

(IN REBUTTAL OF "TALES FROM TIBET")

By MILLEN COOKE

IN setting forth more clearly the truth actually underlying the astonishing humbuggery by which Mr. Vincent H. Gaddis permitted himself to be misled, I should like to skim through the article, considering certain of its more salient features. Aside from its general tone, which impresses me as being most objectionably colored, sensationaly 'doped,' and prejudiced, there are in it a number of statements that are painfully untrue.

We will skip over that statement that "Foreigners are not welcome." I think it is pretty clear to anybody who has conscientiously looked up reliable facts, that if foreigners are unpopular in Tibet, they have made themselves so.

But let's take another look at this one. "Hooded, yellow-robed monks, down in the subterranean cells of their mountain monasteries, etc." The costume of Tibetan monks, whatever their order (except for the Bönpa, who are not Buddhists, and who are sorcerers, and who wear black), is a woolen robe of a dark red color. Priests of certain schools wear yellow capes during religious ceremonies, but these are in the nature of vestments. To the European, there is something sinister about a hooded figure. But Europeans and Americans have better heating arrangements than are likely to be found in Tibet!

As for the business of subterranean cells. In Tibet it is customary for each monk who has

reached a certain degree of learning to spend at least three months of the year in meditation. During this time he lives alone, his food is brought to him daily, and he attends to his own needs. He converses with nobody. (If you have ever spent as much as three days, or even one day, in silence, with plenty to think about, you know how much good it does you mentally). Being on the whole a cheerful people, this period of solitude is made pleasant as possible. They are not in it to torture themselves or to brood morosely over evil doings, either their own or other people's, and they don't go down into the cellar away from the light of day to do it. When caves are chosen for these refugees they are the small natural crevasses that abound in the Himalayan strata, or else they are a niche in the rock, walled up to make a little hut in which the meditator sleeps during his period of solitude.

It is misleading to infer anything else. If you wish to state that there are magical caves in Tibet where the Bönpa carry on their illegitimate sorceries, it is possible to do so quite truthfully without slandering good men.

Then again, "But the influence of Tibet is sinister." The enormity of this one still overwhelms me! It is quite equivalent to stating without reservation, "The influence of America is criminal," on the ground that there are crimes commit-

ted within her boundaries, and criminals still at large among the population.

Then insult is added to injury. "Its occult philosophy is not the light of hope and encouragement offered by the yoga systems of the East Indians; it is black." Only a person in absolute ignorance of Tibetan doctrine could have made such a fantastic statement. In the quotations offered it should be clear that an intimate relationship exists between the yoga systems and Tibetan philosophy, that, indeed, some of those very systems are incorporated into that philosophy, and, most important of all, that the basis for both the Indian and Tibetan philosophies is identical, although there exist certain differences in symbolic treatment, due to the differing culture backgrounds. (To a Chinese, a bat is a symbol of happiness and good fortune. To a European, a bat is associated with witches, vampires and evil. This should not lead us to infer either that the Chinese is happiest in the society of witches, vampires and evil, or that the European thinks happiness is evil, vampirish, or bewitched. We ought to be fair—and inquisitive!—enough to search out the meaning, even if we don't take the trouble to run down the history, of the symbols employed in either case. In no case should they be construed from the same cultural point of view, since they belong definitely to two widely divergent culture complexes).

The quotation from Pym is another flagrant fib born of uncommonly benighted ignorance of fact, and one is moved to suspect, of personal disappointment!

Beginning on a basis of illusion, our author sets out to discover confirmation for his half-truths and outright nonsense. Naturally he looks into the pages of the greatest of the contemporary witch-hunters. Naturally he finds statements which seem to bear out his premise. These he proceeds to plaster broadside over the map of Tibet. I say it's misleading, quite as much as it is unfair.

As to the phenomena put forward with the inferential background of complete evil! Is it wise or even intelligent to cry "wrong" at what we simply don't understand? Have we any room left in which to feel superior to the savage who is terrified of the phenomena of our culture if we deplore (in fear and self-righteousness born more of terror than of understanding) the phenomena of another culture opposite in many external respects to our own? We place ourselves in the position of that superstitious and ignorant savage, beyond whom we pride ourselves to have advanced somewhat, when we shout "evil" at the description of phenomena we cannot ourselves reproduce.

What if there are people who bring out fire with mantra (significant sounds)? What if there are such potent syllables? Why flee in unreasoning panic at the very thought of them, with no attempt to understand either their source or their purpose? A common kitchen match would be equally magical to a person who had never seen or

heard of one. However, such a person would be uncommonly ignorant if he cried "evil" on the man who rubbed a little stick on something and got fire. He could be called stupid if he decided forthwith that the use of a match determined beyond a doubt the evil character of the person using it . . . and the hellish character of the match itself! The kitchen match is made of ordinary physical matter. So is the mantra which produces fire, for sound is as physical as wood and phosphorus.

Perhaps people who flee from mantra are, compared to the chanters of those significant sounds, in the mental position of savages viewing, for the first time, the striking of a match.

The possession of an ability or the knowledge of a technique is no adequate indication of character. To assume that it is, is to pervert the facts, and to react at the most primitive and infantile human level.

Furthermore, to impute character to an ability or a technique, is like declaring that the act of striking matches is wholly good or wholly evil. As a matter of fact, it is neither. It is entirely the use to which the EFFECT of such match-striking is put that results in benefit or harm.

It is rather far-fetched, then, to give a wholesale black eye to phenomena that happen to be outside our experience.

All this might be said as well of the picture prophecy described. If you were being entertained at the house of a physician, and he quietly observed you for a while, and then told you, "Look, old fellow, don't be surprised if, in three or four days, you come out all over in little red spots, get a roaring in your head, and run up a temperature." If you knew nothing about physicians, or diagnosis, or symptoms, or prognosis, and if, in three or four days you DID come out all over in little red spots, got a roaring in your head, and ran up a temperature—you might yell "Witchcraft" and "Sorcerers"—if you didn't know any better, and IF you didn't take the trouble to find out how he did it.

To people who know how, simple future actions are as predictable from observable symptoms as the progress of a disease, which they often greatly resemble.

Just as a physician's ability as a diagnostician has nothing whatever to do with his moral character, so a person's ability to observe action-symptoms and to "diagnose" the course of future action is utterly no indication of his character, good or evil.

The technique is "impersonal as electricity." The employment of the effect of the technique is the only basis for judgment admissible in fair dealing, and even that carries little or no evidence of intent.

Then, having snarled things up into a neat mess, or author leans back and states complacently, as though to make sure everybody will see just how nice and messy the mess is: "And now we have linked the territory of Tibet with earth's oldest

cultures, extending back to Lemuria, with an underground city, and with radiations of evil." (Roped, hog-tied, and branded on the hip. And all done out in the open. Now who's going to think the maverick was rustled? Me, for one!) Two truths, and two half-truths tossed in. He knows what you readers think of underground cities, and of radiations of evil. He knows they think what most people think, and rightly. So the map of Tibet goes two shades darker all over at the expense of truth.

Then after giving a thumbnail critique of Tibetan theological conditions using words bearing, for most people, very strong "leads" or connotations leaning toward the fearful, the mysterious and the unknown (rouse 'em up! hubba hubba!) he quotes a slam at the Tantra taken by a writer whose own background of thought never allowed him to find out what it was all about; whose own inhibitions, and whose own narrow outlook prevented his discovering, or even allowing for, differences of cultural background between Europe and Tibet. On the face of it, this looks like the worst kind of rumor-peddling and scandal-mongering. Certainly it is the product of great ignorance.

One wonders if other articles written by Mr. Gaddis will stand a thorough check? Or was somebody eating a banana nearby when he wrote

this one, and is this the only slip in a long and serious career? If it is, one would think he would be eager to rectify it for the sake of his own reputation for veracity and scientific interest. As it stands, the article on Tibet is a loud and eloquent witness against him as a researcher and casts a definite and dubious shadow over all his work.

I shall not labor the point any further. I think the foregoing should be sufficient to make my point, i.e., Tibet is very far from being entirely evil; THE philosophy of Tibet, from the standpoint of plurality of "believers" and "knowers," is NOT black; Tantra is not something horrible to him confused with "tarantulas," and has nothing whatever to do with pornography, is not obscene or revolting, but is, on the other hand, a high form of Yoga symbolically expressed in the "marriage" of the divine forces of Life; Tibetan philosophy and Hindu philosophy stem from the same fundamental basis, i.e., Buddhism, the Yoga Sutras, etc., plus true and legitimate forms and meditative practices incorporated into the fabric of thought in the course of time; that it—is quite true—sorcerers and evil-doers do exist in Tibet, there is—as is equally true—an equal, and possibly stronger, concentration of goodwill and saintliness.

THE END

THE SHAVER MYSTERY

THE mystery that got its start with the publication of the first Shaver story has grown until it is being termed "Shaverism" by a great many people, even those who are not readers of our magazine. This is an improper term, since, actually, Mr. Shaver is against any "ism" of any kind. However, this department has been instituted to keep our readers informed of the developments in the greatest "hunt" by science fiction fans in history for what may be the most important of truths. Your contributions are welcome.—The Editors.

THIS MATTER OF MISSIONS

THOSE of us who claim we have a "mission", some important act we must do (as part of a vast plan), are kidding ourselves. We are listening to a "voice" that is nothing but sheer flattery. Perhaps such a statement as this will not sit well with those many hundreds who have expressed such convictions to your editor. But let it be known now that he believes each of those who have so expressed themselves to be perfectly sincere and honest. What is needed is a little analysis:

Many (most!) of those with "missions" don't know what that mission is. Then how can they

know they have a mission? Is it the "why" of existing that causes this feeling that there is, must be, a purpose?

But before we discard the "mission" idea (and your editor confesses he's as guilty as hundreds of others in this respect) let's put it to a final test: those of you who know what your mission is, speak up. Let's have facts, not opinions.

There IS a mission, but we'll discuss that in a later issue, after the results of this final test become obvious.

ON TIBET AND TIBETANS

LAST issue we ran an article by Vincent Gaddis which told of caves and evil telepathic emanations from Tibet. This entire article was culled from many books written about Tibet. The author of the article drew certain conclusions from the material he presented, which was highly specialized. In short, it was an account of known *dharma* activities in that country.

We were, to say the least, surprised at the reception given this article. Let it be clear, first, that your editor stands for truth and is the enemy of secrecy and concealment if such secrecy is not for the common good of all men. We see no reason at all to "look the other way" or bury

our heads, ostrich-like, at sight of a demon. We point him out. Let him bury his head, if he wishes. With this viewpoint of your editor clear, let's examine the reception of this article: We were, quite bluntly, called fool, madcap, and even dero! We were accused of aiding evil by even speaking of it. This, we submit, is unfair, untrue, and in the light of fact, unfounded. Mind you, we did not say all Tibet was evil. We said evil came out of Tibet, from the caves. That is our special "mission" in at least one respect. In connection with Mr. Shaver's "cave" stories, we mean to dig up (in our pages at least) every cave anybody ever heard of, and many nobody has heard of, yet.

It may have seemed that we meant all of Tibet was evil. For that we are sincerely sorry. But regardless of the good that comes from Tibet (Mr. Gaddis how about an article on that!) we do not have what we feel is a perfectly ridiculous superstition that existing evil will cease to exist if we close our eyes and lips regarding it.

There are caves in Tibet and they are full of devils who make life a hell for mankind outside Tibet as well as inside! They have telepathic machines and can control the minds of thousands of surface people. *They could not do this if their secrets were known, and a counteractive device.*

Your editor feels that if his Tibetan readers were roused to criticism by the Tibet article, then New Yorkers should go completely berserk when they read "The Masked World" in this issue—30,000 words about the caves under New York and the horrors within them! But your editor says, "We'll tell about the devils wherever we find them!"

And until we can find a way to expose them in fact, we'll expose them in what must remain a fictional manner. We don't ask you to believe; after all, it was thousands of you readers who caused us to believe, by swearing to the truth of Mr. Shaver's stories.

Regarding our personal experiences with people who have received good telepathically from Tibet, these are the reactions which have amazed us. Not because they were critical, but because of the new viewpoints they gave us. We are constantly getting new viewpoints about the Shaver mystery, and each new one adds to ours. Thus we thank our Tibetan critics. At least, they have caused us to think more in two weeks than in the whole preceding year!

ABOUT "THE MASKED WORLD"

ON A RECENT visit to Mr. Shaver, he handed us this novel, saying, "Here is the story of the caves under New York. This story is typical of all dark caves all over the earth, but especially under great cities. It is here they have their greatest power, and do surface people the greatest harm. To enter such a cave as this is to seal your fate; you would never come out again."

In detailing the horrors of this underworld, Mr.

Shaver has not "spared the horses". We have no doubt but what many of our readers are going to be immeasurably shocked. For instance, the physical tortures devised by these degenerate beings; the uncouth moral practices. These we have, as editors, sharply edited, so in reading let your imagination amplify each situation and you will have some glimmering of the content of the original manuscript.

As the illustration by Joe Tillotson dramatizes, this story is a science fiction story par excellence! Here, we believe, is a yarn (taken solely as fiction) that rivals the best "underground" story ever written. We remember such stories as "Worlds Below" and "Subterranea" in the past, and the comparison is very favorable. We can and do recommend "The Masked World" for the best in science, drama, human interest and sheer suspense that we have read anywhere in many a year.

As a parting word on this subject, we ask those of you who write and say "I believe this story" to say exactly why. If you do not, then your letter will be welcome, but of little value in our search for the truth, which has become the search of all our readers.

SPACE SHIPS?

In 1942 I was on a little island outpost off our Southern coast. While on duty at the OP one clear, moonless night, I saw a brightly glowing, unidentified object, like a flare in appearance, travelling horizontally over the sea at moderate speed; I can't even guess at its height, distance from the OP, or its size.

Possibly thirty seconds or a minute after my first glimpse of it, the object plummeted straight down toward the water and disappeared. I watched the area where it had vanished, and a couple of minutes later it reappeared, rising swiftly in apparently an absolutely vertical line until it was out of sight.

Last winter, when I was with an anti-aircraft battery in Germany, I witnessed a recurrence of the incident, with the exception that before the object dove toward the ground, it shot to and fro, short dashes in various directions; the impression that came to my mind was that its erratic movements suggested a search.

At neither occurrence were there any planes in the vicinity, nor do I know of any aircraft capable of such a performance. Furthermore, I make no claim for this yarn, and I have no witnesses; make what you will of it.

Sgt. Dirk Wylie,

Ward 9-B,

Wakeman General Hosp.,
Camp Atterbury, Ind.

(We have other reports of space ships. The only thing we can make of it is that if there is so much smoke, maybe there's fire. But we'll have to have more than just reports to prove these space ships. Maybe someday we'll get a picture of one.—Ed.)

SCIENTIFIC



ESKIMO

Both Algonkin and Eskimo have like reasons for their circular houses; no wish to trap Wind-god's breath



ALGONKIN



This is the representation of the Wind-god, as it is found carved in stone on an ancient building in the ruins of the long-gone races of ancient Mexico



The Flying-pole dance of the Otomi Indians at Pahuatlán, Mexico, may be related to the Algonkin Sundance and the European May Pole



When Quetzalcoatl began his trek over America, he evidently found two great totems in violent religious conflict

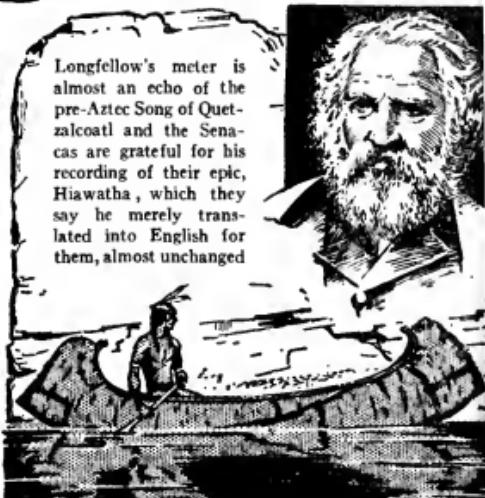


This conflict was centered around the tems of the Wind-god and of Great D gon. It was bloody war among the Nahuas



R. Fugua

The beginning of Sun-worship, the Eagle totem, and the Wind, all symbolizing the breath of the sun, may be because of the relentless advance of glacial ice which only these three could melt



Longfellow's meter is almost an echo of the pre-Aztec Song of Quetzalcoatl and the Senecas are grateful for his recording of their epic, Hiawatha, which they say he merely translated into English for them, almost unchanged

MYSTERIES

WHERE WAS THE WAR OF THE WIND GOD?

The legend of this symbolic war is one of the mysteries of the Indian folklore of the Americas.

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

WHEN Quetzalcoatl began his trek of the Americas, he evidently found two great totems in religious conflict. One of these was that of the Wind-god and one was the Great Dragon. To the first, the element was that of the air, the weapon was that which flew through the air—namely the arrow tipped with feathers. The houses were circular. The Algonkins and the Eskimos both give the same reasons for their circular houses—they do not wish to trap the mighty breath of the Wind-god. The sacred totem animals were the king of birds upon one hand, and the most beautiful of birds on the other—namely, the Eagle and the Quetzal.

At this distance away from him, it is impossible to tell whether the Great White Reformer found a continent suffering from the results of a recent conflict, or whether he found an amalgamated totem which he took over for himself. For us the result is the same. We cannot tell at our distance whether or not Quetzalcoatl did the amalgamating. We cannot doubt that he did not wish to alienate either totem and wished to obtain converts from both. Or perhaps he had the amalgamated name thrust upon him by a people who thought in the terms of totems. Yet we cannot give him the credit for originating either, and most probably he was not the amalgamator.

What was the origin of these two totems—or perhaps we should say the direction from which the two entered upon the field of conflict? As is the way with Amerind legend, a single fragment makes almost no sense at all, but in massive combination, many fragments begin to tell a story. And as is further the way of Amerind lore, it is a story which is barely suggested. It is for future investigators to follow up the details. It is for the anthropologists of generations yet unborn, through thousands of hours of patient research, and years of living with half-tamed and un-spoiled tribes, to fill in the lights and the shadows of the picture.

Yet that such a giant conflict did take place, perhaps long before the coming of Quetzalcoatl, and possibly not even upon the actual sheets of these continents as they are today, seems an almost inevitable conclusion, as we search through hundreds of legends. To begin with the Algonkins, let us recall the old Chippewa legend men-

tioned earlier, that millennia ago, before the flood, the Great-Serpent crawled out of the Sunrise-sea and fought the Thunderbird. At first it drove the Thunderbird west, but then the monster of the air came back and after a conflict which shook the world, it triumphed over the Great-Water-Serpent.

The Choctaw and the Chickasaw, who speak the Muskogean tongue, but whose language Gatschet and others believe is close to the conquered tongue of the Natchez, or that used by their serfs, have a legend that they came east following a leader with a pole. They were undoubtedly an amalgamated people for they claimed to be of the Serpent totem, painting snakes upon their cheeks, and boasting to the early French that they had a cure for snake-bite (as the Hopis have today)¹, and yet they worshipped "Emesher", "The Breath-Master" or The Wind-God.

It is strange how this Wind-god holds his names. In this respect he is not far behind the Dragon, whose hundreds of names across thousands of miles, cling to the original Amen or "Tu-Amen" although his worshippers speak languages which were probably mutually non-understandable at the dawn of history.

To the Papagoes, The Wind-god is "E-eo-loy," to the Aztecs he is "E-es-call," while the people of Jemez Pueblo tell us that he is the Elder Twin and his name is "Masce-we" which is not too far from "E-mes-sha". The surprise is that working back from the Pueblos, whose mythology is much better preserved than other peoples both east and west of them, we find tribe after tribe falling into line that the Wind-God was the twin brother of The Wolf. Also among the Aztecs, Texcaltlipoca who is regarded as particularly of The Wolf, is the twin of their war-god² who has many characteristics of their elder Wind-god, as distinguished from Quetzalcoatl, The Great Ra-

¹Hopis have been observed to be struck during the Snake-dance, yet suffer no ill effects. Also, released snakes which the Snake-priests have distributed after the dance have been caught by scientists, examined and found to be well-stocked with venom.

²The Aztec war-god is Huitzilopochtli.

former. They say that the first "Sun" was ended by a giant wind, the name of the day-star, in this case being used for an epoch of time. To these, one can collect hundreds of similar fragments, each adding the sum total of its weight that the reign of the Earth-monster was ended by a giant wind.

TO THE Wallapai of Arizona and the Klamath of Oregon, the inverted pyramid means the wind, which is only another way of saying that the Wind-god defeated the pyramid-building Dragon. Now must we forget that the Twin-god Myth, spread across the entire continent, now that we seem to be discovering the identity of the "Twins". The main thing which they did was to kill off the giant monsters who were devouring mankind.

The strange fact in this Twin-God vs Great-Dragon War, (which should be carried out through the research upon the legends of every tribe, in order to be effective, and to gain lost details, as well as to discard garbled ones), is that in the southern lands in those scripts which have survived the conflagration of the conquest, this resounding conflict and its termination is underscored. In the Popul Vuh, for example, the fall of Votan's Xibalba which revered the Earthquake-monster, Cabeakan, was caused by "Hu-ro-kan", "The Heart of Heaven". It is a curious trick of fate that the name of this deity should have carried over his old power into our English tongue.³

Once more the Chilam Balam repeats the same story and again the Quiche Annals underwrite the triumph of the Wind-god. In the Quiche Annals, by the way, the leading god of the Quiches as Tzibil, and it is rather surprising to come across him again in Central California in Kechai and Yokut mythology where he is the Great-Eagle, the most powerful being in their pantheon, under his ancient Quiche name. Linguistic comparisons between the Central American Quiches and these California groups are not available.

Possibly there is a connection of some kind between the Algonkin legend that the Elder-Twin, after the overthrow of the monsters, and the subsequent quarrel between the two brothers, was wounded by the Younger-Twin of the Wolf Totem, and fled east, the blood from his wound dripping upon his path, and becoming chips of flint; and the fact that the Great-Bird of the Pueblo Sword-swallowing Clan has flint knives for feathers; as well as the fact that in the Aztec Calendar, the day-sign for The Eagle sometimes gives flint knives for crest-feathers. (T. T. Waterman noted the last of these similarities, and I am adding the former.)

Possibly also, there is a connection between the black-and-white banding of the crest of The Eagle day-sign in the Aztec calendar and the natural black-and-white banding of the northern

Eagle war-helmet. The symbolism of the war-helmet, as explained to the present writer by a Sioux informant who wishes his name withheld, is that the circle of feathers represents the horizon, while the central red-tipped stalk rising from the center of the head of the wearer represents the sun. Is this circle of the horizon the reason for the circular symbolism of the Eagle Totem?

Other cultural-trait of the Wind-god when charted, as "The Sun-dance" was charted, may show an Algonkin center, though it must be admitted that the Oaxaca dances; those of the Otomi Indians in their "Flying-pole dance" at Pahuatlán, Mexico; and the pole-dance of the Ancient Chorotegans are among the uncharted members of this culture-trait, while the May-pole dance of early Europe may yet be proved to be a possible member.⁴

Such cultural-trait are the circular home similar to the Algonkin "wigwam" and the Eskimo "igloo" and the circular "Great Dance Tent" with its central fire which is said to be "owned" by the men. In both the cases of the Algonkin and the Eskimo, the reason for the circular shape is given as the same. They do not wish to displease the Wind-god by making corners which might trap his mighty breath.

A similar trait is the circular sweat-bath which has a wide distribution, and strangely enough, whether in California or in Michigan, is forbidden to women. Is this a sign, together with the fact that the men own the great circular dance house, that the Air totem of the Wind and Eagle was originally patriarchal? Or does it signify South-Sea-Island affinities? Perhaps we shall never know.

We do know that modern man was living in the Americas at a very early date. It is probable that when Neanderthal Man was being driven from Europe toward Africa by disharmonic Cro-Magnon, the disbarmed Amerind was hunting the extinct buffalo (Bison Taylori) upon the plains of Texas. If Wegener and his exponents of Continental-Drift are correct, and the Atlantic tear did not reach the North Polar Sea until the Pleistocene, then there may have been a land-bridge across the Sunken Appalachian Chain from Newfoundland to England over which man and mammal could have crossed during the long interglacial. If there was, much would be explained, not only the similarity in man's type, but the similarity in some cultural elements found on both sides of the North Atlantic.

THE Wind-god bears internal evidence of being an ancient deity. Possibly in the first long glacial period, when locked in the Americas, man saw the great mountains of ice creep upon his world in a relentless manner, he learned to pray to the waning sun as his only ally in a freezing planet. Perhaps this was the beginning of sun-

³Our name Hurricane originated with the natives of the Caribbean Sea.

⁴Some curious relics of the sun-dance survived in the Ghost-dance of 1870 in Central California.

worship, the Eagle-Totem, and the Wind which symbolized the breath of the sun.

It may have been this culture-complex which Cro-Magnon carried into northern Europe from the Americas where during the first long glacial, he had consolidated his racial type. Yet if this is not the explanation, then there is much to account for in the early monuments, culture-trait and legends of the two lands.

Some day an anthropologist, perhaps not yet born, will take this absorbing subject for his doctorate thesis. He will trill the Elder Twin from the Pueblo of Jemez to the land of the Lapps. There he will note the babies in what we think of as Amerind cradle-boards. He will also note the cone-shaped great tent and mark the round sweat-house. He will be wiser than to claim with some that Longfellow copied the Finnish "Kalevala" when he wrote "Hiawatha", merely giving it an American setting. Schoolcraft, the ethnologist, who first narrated these legends for science wasn't recording Finnish tales. Nor could similar stories have reached western tribes in remote mountainous regions. Could Norse adventurers have carried home Amerind stories? It is possible but not probable. The only other explanation is that there was a basis, for the tales in fact—in some Atlantic history that has long degenerated into legend on both shores.

This future ethnologist will note that Longfellow's meter is almost an echo of the pre-Aztec "Song of Quetzalcoatl", and he will no doubt record the fact that the Senecas in gratitude to the poet, and his recording of their epic "Hiawatha", which they declare he merely translated into English for them, for many years celebrated his birthday in an Amerind dance.

Our future student will follow the "Mounds" up to the coast of Newfoundland; note that the Eskimos of certain tribes claim a calendar which antedates their present climate in that it represents a warmer climate than they have at present; and then follow the "round towers" of Northern Europe across England to America where they trail out into the desert, and again pick up their

path as they go on down to Central America. Doubtless, he will there note one which has a duplicate in Donegal, Ireland.⁵

Without a doubt he will remember the Mediterranean legend of the slaying of the Dragon Tiamat by the god who threw the four winds into her mouth as she came up to swallow him. He will of course, note the mischievousness of the Wolf and the striking similarity of his name across the Atlantic. He will, no doubt touch upon Osiris. But as to whether or not he will be able to locate the site of this "earth-shaking" conflict, when he writes his doctorate thesis upon this material, and doubtless much else besides, or whether he will be able to come to any conclusions, and if so, what they may be—is with the future.

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⁵See Bancroft *Native Races*; Vol. on Antiquities for details.

ROLE OF THE LYMPH

IN FEB. '46 AMAZING Stories, you said, "Dr. Carrel died before he could finish his work."

Dr. Carrel hasn't told all about his discoveries because, I think he really didn't understand it all.

He says, "Given suitable nutrient, the body cells would live forever, if not poisoned."

It is evident that when the lymph is old it has lost or used up all its mineral, chemicals and elements, so you see the cells or tissues are starved, not poisoned.

When the Doctor placed new lymph on the chicken heart, he gave to the tissues new minerals, elements and chemicals, because he gave to the heart young lymph, that had these elements, etc.

Humans cannot give to their bodies young lymph, no matter what their diet.

The old lymph had become depleted since it became necessary to renew it, as otherwise the

tissues would have shriveled because the old lymph hasn't the right amount of pabulum to continue growth. That is why our tissues die. If we could renew the food in our "Life Stream" as it was done by the Doctor on the chicken heart, we then could live.

Let some one tell how humans can do that. It can't be done, not by diet anyway. Perhaps by injection of these substances through the veins, or intravascular.

G. A. Pollard, M.D.

Here's another angle for our scientists to think about. Now that we've discovered that Mr. Skaser's raw poisons include all but eight or nine elements, maybe the only answer to longer life is feeding, to counterbalance the loss from radioactivity!—Ed.

ENERGY FROM BEYOND

By VINCENT H. GADDIS

WHEN you are not asleep, you are conscious, and simply being conscious requires energy. Every thought that you think, every move that you make, and every impulse transmitted through your nervous system consumes energy. What is the source of that energy?

Modern physiology tells us that the source of this energy is the food we eat. The body is a machine. It converts food into energy by chemical combustion. The amount of energy that we have is determined by the amount of food we eat. Thus the body is compared to a steam engine which changes coal into steam and consequent energy.

In opposition to this view there is a vast amount of evidence pointing to another theory that is startling in its implications, and experiments made by the writer have convinced him that it is the true explanation. This view compares the body to an electric motor which receives its energy from beyond and outside of itself and converts it into its operating power. All life, likewise, obtains its vital energy from a universal source, an omnipresent form of a magnetic field that pervades all space like the ether.

From this universal origin, the basic and underlying energy of the universe itself, the body is recharged during sleep through the medium of the nervous system. The purpose of food is to supply material for replacing broken-down cells and tissue which are constantly being renewed. Organic cells are dying and multiplying at all times within our bodies.

To change food into a part of our bodies requires energy. What is today a slice of bread will tomorrow be a part of our living bodies. How does this miracle of metabolism take place?

If we examine a living cell with a high-powered microscope we find that there is a double flow of material. The first flow is the incoming food entering the cell and passing to its center; the second flow is living matter or body from the center of the cell back to the outside cell wall. This double flow is in the form of an ellipse.

* This amazing change from food to living organism matter for our bodies takes place in the center of the cell. At this central point there is a vortex or fountain of energy welling up apparently from nowhere. The origin of this energy seems to be spaceless—from another dimension. It apparently enters the cell from a point beyond the cell. And it is this energy that vivifies matter.

This process may well be compared to photosynthesis—the ability of the green plant to manufacture its food. Using the basic materials of

water and carbon dioxide, the green plant, with the aid of the chemical chlorophyll, makes the carbohydrate, grape sugar, which is the basic substance on which all remaining food nutrients are built. Upon this process depends all the animal life on the earth, for only the green plant can create inorganic matter into organic matter. But the energy for this process is obtained by the plant from the sun through the medium of light. Its source of energy is not internal, but is dependent on solar radiation—from beyond.

Evidence that our vital energy does not come from food will be found in daily observation. Food can never take the place of sleep. When we are tired, food will not restore our energy; no matter how much food we eat, we can only restore our energies by sleep. In this sense the human body certainly cannot be compared to a steam engine. "Sleep," wrote Schopenhauer, "is to the body what winding is to the clock."

MORE interesting is the evidence found in cases of fasting. The startling factor that defies orthodox theories is that the energy of persons on a fast often increases up to a certain point. Dr. Hereward Carrington, in his book *Vitality, Fasting and Nutrition*, writes: "I have seen patients so weak that they could not walk down stairs at the beginning of a fast, and at the end of a thirty-day fast they are so strong that they are walking five miles a day."

If we disregard the idea that food supplies energy, the reason for this phenomenon is not mysterious. The action of fasting clears the body of all accumulated decaying and clogging matter that has been affecting the efficiency of the body organism. With this matter removed, the inflow of energy is increased. Fasting is a natural cure; a sick animal will not eat.

Upton Sinclair, in his *Book of Life*, points out that there is a great difference between fasting and starving to death. No one has ever starved to death in less than two months, and it is possible for a fat person to go without food for as long as three or four months. Persons who die after being without food for shorter periods simply die from fright.

Fasting should end when the natural hunger for food returns, and this depends on the condition of the body. It may be anywhere from a week to two months. In periods of fasting the body first lives off its surplus supply of nutriment, then off the muscular tissues. Not until the store of material in the muscular tissues is exhausted does one actually start starving to death.

There are many remarkable cases of fasting on

record. The forty-day fast of Dr. Tanner, some years ago, is a classic because he was under such careful observation. Sinclair reports the case of eleven Irish revolutionists who went on a hunger strike while imprisoned. One died on the 74th day, and one on the 88th day. The remaining nine men ended their strike on the 94th day and all recovered. Robert Ripley has reported the case of Florabell Culbertson who fasted for a total of 104 days out of 147, the fast being broken for several weeks during the total period.

Cases of inedia or "psychic fasting" seem well supported by evidence in many cases. For example Therese Neumann, the famous Bavarian mystic, apparently lived for six years without food; Molly Fancher, whose strange case is a classic in psychic annals, lived for twelve years without "enough sustenance to feed a baby for a week," according to her physicians. There are a number of other cases on record ranging from one to forty years, and most of them were under careful scientific observation.

From the usual physiological point of view, such feats are impossible, but if the body can, at times, enter a state similar to that of a hibernating animal which maintains its cell life for long period without food, and if the vital energy of life itself is not derived from food, then perhaps such feats enter into the realm of probability.

WORKS on physiology often attempt to compare the amount of food consumed with the energy resulting, but all such attempts fail to consider all the factors involved. It is obvious that cell and tissue repair will be required in proportion to the amount of work done and energy expended. Moreover, Dr. Carrington points out that all the accepted facts of physiology, such as calorimeter experiments, can be explained just as adequately with the theory under discussion as with that commonly accepted.

We do not actually know how much energy is required to accomplish a given action. Mental work consumes energy, as we know, yet in physiological terms, as Dr. Alexis Carrel reveals in his book *Man The Unknown*, the brain may do extensive thinking for many hours on the alleged energy contained in a single peanut. Simply being conscious requires vital energy. But the modern physiologist ignores these considerations.

Energy, then, is obtained by all life from an external, universal, basic or etheric source; it feeds into the living cell at the center like a fountain, and the nervous system, the distributor of vital energy, is recharged during hours of rest and sleep. "Sleep," writes R. J. A. Berry in his book *Brain and Mind*, "is the natural restorative, though how this is brought about is unknown."

Stimulants act upon the nervous system, releasing the charged energy reserves. While most stimulants are chemical in nature, vital, or the mysterious increased energy produced by holding a magnet and a piece of hardened carbon in the hands for several minutes, is apparently produced

on a radiation principal which serves to "pull" energy into the body directly. At times, and with certain subjects, vital appears to take the place of sleep temporarily.

It may be noted, in passing, that orthodox theories fail to account for the energy consumed by the ever-active subconscious mind. This energy must be tremendous. In cases of mathematical prodigies and memory feats we have brief glimpses of the incredible mental power and ability possessed by the subconsciousness.

The implications of life energy derived from beyond are startling. It means that we now have a definite basis for explaining psychic phenomena. The vitalists in psychology and philosophy are right; life depends on an external factor for its energy, and it naturally follows that life itself may be separated from its bodily instrument. Thus such phenomena as the exteriorization of motility and sensitivity and astral projection can be produced by the human mind. Our theory makes survival after physical death a definite scientific possibility.

Likewise, the Hindu philosophers are correct. They have long taught that prana or universal energy plays down upon the earth from above. They believe that this psychic energy is indrawn in breathing, and the yoga system of pranayama, or breathing exercises, is designed to increase this inflow of energy.

WE KNOW that the human body, and in fact all life, produces radiations. In fact all matter consists of vibratory energies. According to Dr. E. D. Adrian, of England, the current of a nerve impulse has been caught on a radio receiving set. Experiments with a microvoltmeter made by Drs. Burr, Lee and Nims, at Yale University, have proved that the human body has an electrical or magnetic aura which envelopes the entire body.

The brain is now known to release electrical waves or impulses. Radiations from the human eye and finger-tips that are capable of killing yeast cells have been announced by Prof. Otto Rahn. These same radiations, according to Dr. Charles Russ, can affect material objects.

More startling is the report of a series of remarkable experiments with body radiations made by Drs. Clarke and B. Laguet, of Bordeaux, France, in 1912. Their subject was a woman resident of Bordeaux who had discovered her ability by accident. The report reveals that radiations from her hands preserved a life-like state in dead animals and plants, prevented the action of decomposition by killing the micro-organisms of destruction, ceased liquefaction of tissues, and restored color. The only treatment of the plants, fish, and rabbit blood was the touching of hands or hands held over the objects. Length of treatment was about twenty minutes.

In Budapest there is a famous "electric man," Count John Berenyi, whose body is so charged with static electricity during sleep, that early in

the morning he can cause neon tubes to glow by holding the terminals. He can read by the light of his own body. The phenomenon has astonished the doctors and electrical experts that have examined him.

So much for radiation from the body which is, of course, generated by vital life energy. The action of radiation from outside upon the body is even more startling. Incoming radiation can actually produce mutations (sudden changes) in the genes resulting in a new species of plant or animal.

When Prof. Muller, of the University of Texas, produced a new type of fruit fly that bred true by X-rays some years ago, research was started, and today the development of new species is a part of the great new science of electraetics. About a year ago an enterprising seed dealer in Philadelphia offered gardeners two new types of calendulas, both created by the genetic effect of X-rays on seeds.

No one can foresee where research in the effects of electrons on living things will end, and studies in this fascinating realm are only beginning.

As a result of this known effect of X-rays on the genes, scientists have speculated on what effect the cosmic rays and similar radiations have on the life of earth. It is possible, for example, that radiation from outer space regulates the growth of life on earth by effecting the genes, and through them influencing the endocrine glands. Such a theory would explain the giant life of the Mesozoic Era and the relatively small size of living things today.

It is evident that upon the answer to the problem of the origin of vital life energy hinges the solution to the great puzzles of the universe and existence. If, as our evidence indicates, this energy comes from beyond, from a universal source, then the doors are opened to a future of discovery that is greater than human comprehension.

THE SUN POISONS



By JOHN McCABE MOORE



DURING the 1930's physical research showed that there are two different abnormal atoms of hydrogen. One of them is twice as heavy as the atom which composes the major portion of all hydrogens, and the other is three times as heavy as normal hydrogen. Deuterium is formed by a neutron's capture within a normal hydrogen atom (the neutron is a tremendously compressed hydrogen atom which does not ionize). Tritium is formed by the hydrogen atom's capture of a deuteron within itself.

Research of tremendous expense brought about the separation of heavy water. It was a large disappointment to the research men that the stuff, except for weight, was so identical with ordinary water both physically and chemically—until it came to the biological part. And even in this regard it was considered chiefly an abstract matter of no tremendous consequence.

When enough of the heavy water was separated, experimental animals were brought into use. If they had all the heavy water they wanted to drink, and no other, they died of thirst—acute and terrible thirst. Which is very interesting.

By computation there are at least thirty-six different possible molecules of water. Fortunately, thirty-five of these molecules are seldom found. But there are billions of the wrong kinds in the body of every human. Biological mechanisms are perfectly attuned for the use of the one kind of water molecule which predominates. Cancer enthusiasts have been experimenting with the possibilities of encouraging their hobby by the use of heavy water. And, for once they have happened upon something that will work.

Thus far, in our search for the basic poisons

which all life battles—battles against in food, water and air—we have noticed only thirty-five, the substances representing the possible combinations of the three oxygen atoms known and the three hydrogen atoms known. Now let us extend the range of thought to the known abnormal forms of all the elements. Any isotope table (an isotope is any one of the individual types of the atoms of an element; e.g., hydrogen atom, deuterium atom, tritium atom in the case of the simplest substance) shows that only eight of the elements commonly introduced into the human body, whether in diet or in medicines, have no alternative form. These are, in order of their atomic weights, fluorine, sodium, phosphorus, manganese, cobalt, arsenic, iodine and bismuth. With the exceptions of bismuth and perhaps, arsenic, small amounts of these elements (properly combined with other elements to form compounds, of course) are absolutely necessary to life continuation.

Calcium is quite the wolf in sheep's clothing. It has five isotopes, besides the normal atom, all heavier than the normal atom. The heaviest of the calcium atoms weighs one-fifth again as much as ordinary Ca atoms, and there is no small number of these alternative forms. Very nearly four percent of all calcium is probably unmanageable to the body. Imagine the inter-cell deposits of calcium, the gradual accumulation of useless material within the blood-vessels, clogging the capillaries, clogging the veins, clogging the arteries that feed the heart and the brain, caking up, layer on layer, on the linings of these marvelous tubes. Look at the kidney excretion of calcium—a great deal of this important element

is thrown out by the body every day, very likely in the endless, futile effort to eliminate the poisonous part.

Six percent of iron atoms are lighter than the normal iron atom, which may or may not be useful to the body. But two-and-a-half percent of all iron atoms are heavier than the normal iron atom. The overworked liver tears up the red cells over and over again. Medicine guesses that they simply "wear out". The endless, seemingly wasteful, resynthesis of hemoglobin, may be another phase of the body's attempt to separate the poisonous, inactive portion of the element from the useful. Certainly this is a part of the reason for the endless tear-up.

Magnesium atoms are only seventy-seven percent useable to the body, if the hydrogen isotopes' biological activity is a fair yard-stick.

BUT how are these abnormal atoms formed, and where? Experts^{*} have estimated that approximately a million atoms die within any human body any day in the week. All substance is radio-active, to an extent. Iron has a half-life the same as radium, although it disintegrates to a different atomic weight much more slowly than does radium. Ask the experts what radio-activity is. Do they know? No! They can measure it, and they define it, but they do not know what it is.

Man has learned to bring about artificial radio-activity, and this to the extent that the simultaneous explosion of many atoms has been realized (e.g. Hiroshima). Man has done this by the use of the neutron and the deuteron, speeding these projectiles up by the use of the magnetic field of the cyclotron. But science still says "how in tarnation does nature do it?" The venerable Doctor Millikan says the cosmic ray is the birth-cry of the atom. No one, however, has ever seen an estimate of the number of atomic births at which Doctor Millikan has officiated.

Instead of supposing that the cosmic ray originates in the far, far reaches of space, why not look into the local possibilities. The sun ejects myriads of particles of all descriptions into space. Many of them probably have practically the speed of light. Neutrons, deuterons, protons and electrons, not to mention atoms and atomic ions, traveling far above the velocity-of-escape from the sun's field. Long-recognized, in addition to this, is the fact that there are atoms adrift all through the void. Occasionally, a deuteron or an alpha particle, or a neutron strikes one of these atoms at precisely the right speed and under exactly the right conditions for transmutation (or if you will, radioactivity) to occur. As the atom changes its structure, another vast surge of energy leaves it. Sometimes the energy released is greater than the energy which the transmuting particle carried, and sometimes less, depending upon

whether the new atom is of less mass, or more mass, than the original atom. These new pulsations, may often be sent in the direction of earth. They are not always emitted by the reacting atom at once. Thus what we call the cosmic ray is continuously sent to the earth from all directions, by our own sun, indirectly. Day and night difference between our receipt of cosmic rays is nil. For this reason, savants have refused to consider the sun as their source.

It cannot be denied that the cosmic ray is the cause of radioactivity of substances on the earth's surface. Correlation of the mean number of cosmic rays counted within a measured area, with the mean number of atomic transmutations and resultant by-transmutations during a given time-lapse, proves this.

Computations, so return to the theme of the discussion, reveal that there are ten to the 19.18 power (sixty-heptillions) of different compounds possible of formation from the different abnormal forms of the elements, which are partly or wholly impossible of metabolizing in the human body. Staggers the imagination? Yes, brother, more ways than one.

LE T us make the admission, at this point, that a cell can only be as efficient as the biological efficiencies of the various substances composing it will allow it to be. Heavy water is useless in metabolism. So is heavy calcium, heavy carbon, heavy nitrogen, heavy oxygen, heavy iron, etc. etc. Not to mention the compounds made up of more or less useless atoms. For unguessable ages life has struggled against the gradually increasing load of unusable atoms imposed on it. Brain cells fail to record as they should, nerves emit haphazard impulses, glands are off balance, muscles lose their tone. Work as one may, he cannot stem the rising tide of inactive ions and compounds, unless he has great knowledge and employs all his time in combatting deterioration.

The normal placenta filters these poisons out, giving the child pure nutritive fluid. Violent disturbance of the placenta, or an abnormal placenta, disturbs the filtering equilibrium, as research on the Rh factor of the blood has recently shown. This may mean strike one, or three strikes, upon the off-spring.

Inactive, or negatively active, substance starts to pile up in the system at birth. The gland of youth, upon which a great part of the burden falls, is usually overwhelmed by this substance in about thirteen to fifteen years. As it gives up, the blood pressure gradually rises to what we call "normal" (about 120 over 80) and the glands of procreation are brought into action, in order to replace the now failing chemical mechanisms with a new individual. The wonders of the gland of youth, which medicine at present does not begin to comprehend, will be elucidated in a forthcoming discussion, which will also take up the king of all vitamins, used and misused (mostly the latter) for countless centuries, and never accorded its

*Expert—an ordinary man away from home.

merit.

If these things are mirage, let us trek toward the mirage, for what is the desert without the mirage?

(Editorial Note: None are so blind as those who will not see. Here, written by a man whom we respect (and without what you might call an "acceptable" reason which we refuse to discuss at the moment) as one of the greatest living chemists, is one of the scientific factors we promised

to begin presenting regarding the Shaver Mystery. This applies specifically to Shaver's "age poison". Here are the "facts". The research is up to you, our scientifically minded and trained readers. How about it? We bring this article specifically to the attention of Robert Tanner and Mr. Shaver, who have done some pioneer research work along these lines. Here's one of the answers, or maybe THE answer.)

WHEN FLESH DEFIES FIRE



By VINCENT H. GADDIS



STANGE is man when he seeks to overcome the weakness of the flesh with the strength of the spirit! Throughout the world, among primitive peoples, the greatest test has been ordeal by fire. Again and again the power of flames to produce agony and burns has been defied by fire dancers and fire walkers who have literally bathed themselves in the midst of red-hot combustion.

This ability is a mystery. White men have followed the natives across the fiery pits of the South Seas, their bare feet tramping over the glowing stones, and experiencing only mild electric-like shocks they have emerged on the other side without a blister. It is an inexplicable survival of ancient magic, of the worship of fire at the element of purification.

Mastery over flame has been exhibited in many ways in many places. Dr. Doanous states that he saw Bernadette, the Seeress of Lourdes, hold her hands in a flame for fifteen minutes. Daniel D. Home, the famous medium, apparently handled burning coals with immunity. Sir William Crookes, the English scientist, had Home wrap hot coals in handkerchiefs, untreated with fireproof chemicals, and the cloth was not burned. The placing of hands in molten metal is recorded by Robert Houdin.

It is possible for the human body to endure external heat to a scalding degree. Drs. Gould and Pyle, in their classic work *Anomalia and Curiosities of Medicine*, tell of several human salamanders. One man remained in an oven for fourteen minutes with the temperature at 338 degrees Fahrenheit. Chantrey, the sculptor, once entered a furnace of over 320 degrees without ill effect; and Chamouni, an entertainer, would enter an oven with a raw leg of mutton, emerging when the meat was well baked.

The fire dancers and fire walkers, however, not only defy heat, but flame. Among the North American Indians the Navajos staged the most remarkable fire dance. In a report to the Smithsonian Institution (Bureau of Ethnology, 1883-4), Dr. Washington Matthews, an army surgeon, tells of a dance he witnessed near Fort Wingate, N. M., in October, 1884. Ten men wearing loincloths entered the ceremonial circle. Each man

carried a long thick bundle of cedar bark in each hand. Enduring the terrific heat of the huge fire, the men lit their bundles and the wild dance around the fire got under way.

Dr. Matthews' account continues: "Then they proceeded to apply the brands to their own nude bodies and the bodies of their comrades in front of them, no man ever turning around. At times a dancer struck his victim vigorous blows with his flaming wand; again he seized his flame as if it were a sponge, and keeping close to the one pursued, rubbed the back of the latter for several minutes as if he were bathing him. . . . When a dancer found no one in front of him, he proceeded to sponge his own back."

After the ceremony Dr. Matthews carefully examined the men. He could not find the least sign of a burn, and his account records his bewilderment: "No satisfactory explanation seems to be obtainable as to the means by which the dancers in this extraordinary performance are able to escape injury. Apparently they do not suffer from any burns."

PASSING with the vanishing Polynesians is the firewalking fest of the South Seas. Motion pictures of the miracle were taken in 1933 by Dr. John G. Hill, professor of Biblical literature at the University of Southern California, on the island of Tahiti. A long trench was filled with stones. After a day-long fire, the barefoot natives slowly walked over the flaming pit seven times. Dr. Hill states that the stones were so hot that his hands were slightly burned three feet away, and that wet leaves thrown on the trench caught fire within seconds.

While the ceremony was in progress, the native chief invited the white men to join in the march. One man consented, but kept his boots on. Although his face was badly blistered, the man's boots were not even singed. Dr. Hill has no explanation to offer. He reviews all the common explanations—thick soles, porous rocks, rapid oxidation, brief contact—in his account, but adds that every scientist who has studied the phenomena admits that these suggestions are not adequate. At least a part of the explanation must be sought, he concludes, in the psychic state of

the natives which inhibits the ordinary sensitivity to heat.

Frederick O'Brien, in his book *Mystic Isles of the South Seas*, tells of the ceremony as he witnessed it. A pit was dug about twenty-five feet long, eighteen feet wide, and five feet deep. It was filled with tree branches, on top of which large boulders were laid. The rocks were heated for thirty-six hours. At the time the ceremony started, the heat could be felt fifty feet away, and flames were leaping between the red-hot stones.

The leader stepped, without any hesitation, on the boulders, and slowly walked across the pit. Holding his head high in the air, he made no choice of footstep. Not the slightest sign of pain could be seen on his face. He returned, and as he started across the second time, the spectators followed. Six times the group walked back and forth over the stones with bare feet. One woman fainted, stumbled, and was badly burned. O'Brien examined their feet. There were no blisters, and not even the delicate hairs on their feet and legs were singed.

O'Brien writes: "At Rarotonga, near Tahiti, the British resident, Col. Gudgeon, and three other Englishmen had followed the *Takau* (Leader). The official said that though his feet were tender, his own sensations were of light electric shocks at the moment and afterward. Dr. William Craig, who disobeyed the *Takau* and looked behind, was badly burned, and was an invalid for some time, though Dr. Craig (his brother) and Mr. Goodwin met with no harm. The resident, half an hour after his passage, tossed a branch on the stones, and it caught fire. In Fiji, Lady Thurston with a long stick laid her handkerchief on the shoulder of one of the walkers, and when withdrawn in a few seconds it was burned through."

IN JANUARY, 1901, Papa Ita, from Tahiti, held a firewalking ceremony at Honolulu. The deposed Queen Liliuokalani was a witness. Building stones from a dismantled church were used. Flames spouted from the burning wood as the firewalker crossed the pit four times. He posed in the center for photographers. Six doctors examined his feet and stated that no chemicals had been applied. A thermometer was held six feet over the pit and it registered 282 degrees Fahrenheit.

It is the same throughout the world. The annual ceremony of the Fiji Islanders is called *Vilavilisivu*. Arthur Miles (*Land of the Lingams*) tells of the phenomenon as he witnessed it in Mysore State, India. He examined the feet of two of the men before and after they had crossed the fire-pit. There was nothing done to deaden pain; there was not a trace of a burn. One man crossed with a laughing baby in his arms. "I attempt no explanation," he writes.

In 1936 a scientific study of firewalkers from Bengal was made by Sir James Purves-Stewart, of

London, and Prof. David Waterston, of St. Andrew's University, Melbourne, Australia. The scientists agreed that the man's skin was not thicker or tougher than is usual, and there was no clinical evidence of opiate administration, but in their final verdict they disagreed. Prof. Waterston decided that repeated exposure to high temperatures made the feet possible, while Sir Purves-Stewart attributed the ability to religious ecstasy which in turn caused insensibility to pain.

William Menard, a writer who lived for some time in the South Seas, has written one of the best descriptions of the fire-walk. He observed the Polynesian ceremony at Bora-Bora in the Leeward Island group. Chief Tutavae, the famous firewalker from Ralates, was the leader, and for two days the fires had burned in the trench.

"I shall never forget," Menard writes, "the great sigh, and then the rush that followed Tutavae's first step upon the *avaa* (pit). He hesitated a moment, as if to be sure that the stones would not shift under his weight, and then, with his proud head uplifted, walked onto the fiery bed of rocks. His followers walked in his footsteps, close behind, looking neither to the right nor left. An acute sense of the supernatural seized the spectators. The natives were sitting erect, unmoving, staring, as if in a trance.

"The tourists gaped and exchanged glances. Tutavae and his *takau* walked with firm steps across the center of the *avaa*. I could see the great heat waves rising above their heads, but there was no odor of burning flesh, as I had half expected. . . . They walked across the *avaa* three times, while we watched, scarce daring to move or breathe."

Menard adds, with astonishment, that the feet of the walkers were not even marked, and that the soles were "as cold as ice." As is usual, a great feast followed the ceremony.

LATER Menard interviewed a Mr. Parks, living on the stool of Anaa, one of the few white men who have walked the *avaa*. Although reticent, a bottle of wine loosened his tongue. Parks had gone to Ralates three years before to look over a vanilla plantation. While he was there, the ceremony was called, and he decided to attend and expose it. Instead he was deeply impressed and puzzled. Having spoken lightly of the feet to Tutavae before the ceremony, Tutavae caught his eye, smiled, and invited him to join in the march. Parks kicked off his shoes and removed his socks.

His story continues: "I stepped into line behind Tutavae. My bravado had suddenly left me, and I was thoroughly frightened. The *takau* behind me pushed me gently. Tutavae had started! Then my bare feet touched something, uneven and elevated. In the next instant countless tiny electric shocks struck the soles of my feet. It was like a sudden contact of the skin with sharp needles. The heat of the pit all but suffocated me. My lungs became strained. From

a great distance I could bear the marmuring of the crowd. Then, suddenly, the prickly sensation on the bottom of my feet ceased, and I knew that I had transversed the pit. I glanced down at my feet. They were untouched. I could hardly believe my eyes."

How are we to explain this phenomenon? If a psychic state or religious ecstasy is the explanation, how is it possible for white men, whose only psychic state is fear, to walk the pit? Is it possible that this mysterious state experienced by the natives is so great that it is transmitted to the white men brave enough to follow them?

Here in the United States, at Rockefeller Cen-

ter in New York City in 1938, the firewalk puzzled the doctors of the world's largest city. Brought from India by Robert Ripley for his radio program, Kuda Bux, a Kashmir wonder man, walked a twenty-foot trench of red-hot coals before a large audience as radio fans listened and photo-bulbs flashed. He laughed as he made his fiery journey. Physicians from New York hospitals examined his feet before and after the feat. Not a blister was found. "It is the accomplishment of the power of perfect faith," Bux told reporters. And perhaps that is the perfect answer to this mystery that survives in a sensible world.

THE END

REPORT FROM THE FORGOTTEN PAST

EACH issue, in this department, we call information from letters from readers who report what could be called "racial memory"; or reports from people who consider themselves "reincarnated" and who thus remember past events; or snatches of information from people who do not attempt to explain how they "know" these things. Whatever it is called, the fact has been established that these reports "check" to an amazing degree, and in a great many instances, can be verified by actual research into records, etc. Some "reports" are condensed, others are given verbatim. Some are held anonymous (by request or by editorial judgment) and some are signed. Editorial and other opinions are freely interspersed, and yours are invited.—The Editors.

SCIENCE AND COAL

COAL, say the scientists, was formed during the carboniferous age, being deposits of vegetation over many ages which formed thick beds of peaty substance which later, by extreme pressure, became coal. This process, they say, took millions of years.

Your editor has made personal observations which cause him to doubt the accuracy of this theory: (1) examination of coal itself has shown perfect patterns of single leaves, to the finest detail; (2) examination of deposits in forest areas invariably reveal that decomposition of leaves, as well as whole trees, is complete, and no pattern remains, the net result being a rich black loam, a true soil; (3) examination of charcoal shows perfect retention of pattern of the original wood; (4) there are many areas where coal is on the surface, where it can be picked up, having never been under any pressure from overlaying rock or otherwise.

Conclusions: coal is not formed as science says. It is formed through burning vegetation or subjecting it to great heat. Its hardness is the result of pressure later applied, such pressure accounting for different kinds of coal, but not for coal itself.

Hypothesis: coal was formed from vegetation which was subjected to swift heating and charring, and in some instances to pressure later applied, such as overlaying rock. There are two way this pressure could have been applied: submergence of the area and deposits of silt which later formed rock; falls of such material from above. It could have happened this way: There was a carboniferous era (which need not be placed so many millions of years back if coal is made by this swift process) during which the earth may have entered what astronomy calls a "dark nebula" or cloud of dust in space. Showers of meteoric matter, heated to incandescence by friction through the atmosphere, set the forest afame, then covered them over with deposits varying in depth from a few feet to a hundred feet or more.

There is no evidence existing today to support the scientists. Even peat beds show proof that in many thousands of years the peat, even under pressure, has remained only peat. And coal beds have been found to overlay "geologic" eras of later date than that ascribed to the carboniferous.

WE QUOTE A READER

AS I write this I am brooding over a thought which has bothered me for as far back as I can remember. It is this: Can it be that science is truth and the Bible a book of fiction or vice-versa. I am neither atheist nor a non-atheist as I must have a basis for my beliefs or disbelief. That is to say: I must see for myself or have some definite proof before I will believe. I read your article in AMAZING STORIES and can say for one that I was,

and still am, deeply impressed and also very interested in your theories. I have in the past years delved, perhaps on the deep side, into things which follow a course of thought somewhat and very much similar, and which in all probability leads to the same place as yours.

I have too, since my earliest recollections believed that my parents are not and never have been my real parents and I will believe this to be so even though I have a birth certificate that says otherwise. Still I have my own reasons to doubt that they are my real parents. True I love them as a boy should who is brought up with the proper raising. But I seem to have recollections, or perhaps memories, of or about my life before my parents of today, which of course strengthens my belief that they are not my true parents. . . .

Recollections of a strange vessel or ship which many of whom I have told about it have scoffed at it by saying that those things only exist in dreams or are born of pure fancy and imagination. This vessel is different and alien to anything I see about me, but of course I have my own ideas about that. I would like very much to meet you and perhaps I shall in the very near future . . . oh yes, one thing more:

Do you by chance seem to be able to or have a vision or a sense of the things to come? I mean by that, do you foresee things as they actually happen before they do? Such is my case and perhaps I should feel grateful for it, but it seems odd that I be able to sense a thing before it ever happens.

The odd part about it is that these premonitions come only when I am in desperate need of help or when I am in a very tight situation. And the funny part is that I do not only foresee them but a very strange voice accompanies the vision which tells me what to do and how to get out of the situation. I would truly appreciate it if we could correspond on this and other matters together and perhaps strike up a friendly and interesting chain of correspondence.

Elmer Gene Bullock, S 2/c,
U.S.S. Patuxent, c/o F.P.O.,
San Francisco, Calif.

GUIDANCE FROM THE CAVE?

REGARDING the communication just quoted, just what is happening in this typical instance? Is Mr. Bullock "remembering" something, or is it a "thought record" ala Richard S. Shaver's stories? Is some ray from a cave giving him these mental pictures? How could a cave inhabitant foretell the future? What about a machine would make this possible? What about that "strange vessel" he remembers? As for the Bible, we find it to be quite factual in most parts, and certainly a great historical and moral document. Much of it is allegory, of course, and when taken literally can be misconstrued. By allegory many great truths have come down to us untempered

with by the unscrupulous, who are also generally ignorant. We publish Mr. Bullock's address so that he may enter into correspondence with others who have had similar experiences. Can we ask that any interesting developments be reported to this department?

ATTENTION, MR. GRAHAM!

WOULD it be possible for me to obtain a complete copy of Mr. Shaver's alphabet? I've tried to obtain the issue of AMAZING STORIES in which it appeared but with no luck, and my interest in it has been growing since a recent discussion among some of our students, and they have asked (as I was the instigator of the discussion) if I would obtain the information.

As I write this I have here a copy of February 1946 AMAZING STORIES having just read R. P. Graham's article with great interest. A fellow art student of mine is working toward compilation of charts, etc., the applicability of which when finished will correspond rather startlingly to the same universal fields as Mr. Graham's. My friend claims he will have the key to everything which can happen in the atomic field and elsewhere. So far everything seems to check perfectly. Of course, I cannot hope to state all this too clearly as my information is only secondhand, and would not have even mentioned it had Mr. Graham's article not started my imagination and interest.

I shall close in hopes of hearing from you soon—or better still of receiving Mr. Shaver's alphabet. I am looking forward to more articles on the Shaver mystery and allied subjects.

Irene R. Ward,
Ringling School of Art,
Sarasota, Florida.

Maybe you're not the only one, Mr. Graham! How many more of our readers have the solution of the universe in their grasp? Why don't you people get together?—Ed.

LAST MINUTE FLASHES

CAN ANYONE tell us WHERE William Beebe said "the underground people are preparing to attack?" Mr. Jack Tate, the story started with you—how about it?

A rather disturbing affirmation has come to us of the truth of Mr. Shaver's experiences, and of the existence of his cave people and machines. When we have had time to analyze and check it, we'll report it in full.

Those metaphysically minded readers who are placing Shaver's caves in the "astral" are all wet. We do not deny the astral, but Shaver's caves are real, with real people and machines in them. We ask that the metaphysicists do not deny the caves by calling them something else. An open mind on both sides will result in cooperation, not differences in opinion. Let's not confuse the issue by rationalizing. We could do the same and say the astral is REALLY the caves! But we DON'T.

STAR SCIENCE

By IDA YOUNGGREEN WEAVER

(Editor's Note.—One day not so long ago, while ramming down a clue that popped up concerning the Shaver Mystery, we met a very amazing person, the lady who has here so generously consented to make her ancient wisdom available to our readers. We say "ancient wisdom" because it is exactly that. This incredible woman demonstrated incredible abilities to us when we talked to her. It all began when she agreed with many of the marvels that have turned up acent the Shaver Mystery. We discovered that she knew things only Shaver's "cave-people" knew. We discovered she knew things concerning the Shaver Mystery that have not yet been published, or even hinted, by us. To be very brief, she attributed it all to a mysterious knowledge derived from an equally mysterious science that she told us was as ancient as Man himself. We begged her to make that lost science and its benefit available to our readers, and we present it here. We are proud to introduce to you Ida Younggreen Weaver. She will be at your service in every issue of Amazing Stories from now on. Let her help you; it will cost you nothing in these pages.)

THE world is forever in debt to Pythagoras, to Plato, to Newton and to a host of other men of vision who have spoken definitely for the Science of the Stars. However, the real beginning of this science occurred a long time ago, so long ago that it was before any recorded history.

The historian Josephus who lived in the first century tells us Star-science was known and used by a race that lived on the Earth before the flood. They received this information concerning the zodiac and planets from Adam and history states that Noah used and taught the science. Moses was known as a master of this wisdom. Every period of Man's existence on this planet has included knowledge of planetary influence. It is unfortunate that many of the keys to the true understanding of life and the higher laws of nature perished with the flood. But fortunately the knowledge we have will enable us to reconstruct most, if not all, of the lost wisdom.

Re-discovery is one of the methods of progress; also one of the remarkable facts of life is the disinclination to accept the fruits of others' investigation and the tendency of the human mind to adjust itself to the facts as they are discovered. In this age of inquiry and wonderful scientific advancement, it is not advisable to scoff at any man's theory or to assume that anything is impossible. Sometimes a generation passes between a discovery

and its general acceptance.

The Science of the Stars is very old in that it is the great fund of ancient wisdom about man and his earth that has come down through centuries, reaching far into pre-historic times. However, it is yet too newly re-discovered to have registered its full significance upon the destinies of men. Few people have the mental equipment, together with the disposition, to engage in it.

The custom of associating Star-science with fortune-telling has done much to bring the science into disrepute, but since it has been taken up by the best known scientists and literary men and women of today, the science has come into favor very rapidly. It is commonly known that most fortune-tellers are people without scientific knowledge. A few have a fair degree of education but many are illiterate. Thus it is impossible for them to use this real science because all its judgments are based on mathematical calculations.

The believers of modern Star-science are constantly on the increase and the investigation of the mysteries and wonders of the heavens afford interesting study for all persons of intelligence.

STAR influences are like radio waves—and time has proved that the language of the stars has been merely misinterpreted. Nature has not favored some and ignored others, and the belief of miracles has passed. When some possess what others do not, they earned it by giving special attention to its development. Labor is luck. If you see a successful person, you see a worker with energies properly placed. Nothing can occur supernaturally or by accident. What appears to be most phenomenal can be traced to physical, chemical and planetary causes. Accordingly—through the science of vocaphy, clerks and employees of large corporations and fidelity companies are now chosen and judged by Star-science. By it we can learn our capabilities and talents—and how to take advantage of them by showing what business or vocational we are best adapted to pursue.

Star-science was taught and practiced by all the ancient civilized races, Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Egyptians and Persians, but fell into disuse after the fall of the Roman Empire and shared the fate of all other branches of learning during the Middle Ages. Within the past few years interest in this almost forgotten science has been revived to a marked degree in this country and many of the foremost thinkers of the age take delight in studying the effects of the signs of the zodiac upon human life as well as vegetable and animal life, and have turned their attention to the study of nature and the forces that govern them. The desire

to know the pattern of the future is born in us. The planets answer the problems of location, environment, employment, health and marriage that are vital to happiness, and they have a wonderful effect on the human body which is composed of the self-same elements as the earth itself.

The earth in revolving around the sun passes through many different currents of solar fluids—thereby causing a great diversity in temperament, disposition and character. Man comes into this world with certain characteristics, and talents and is born into an environment which he cannot choose. To be successful, he feels he must adapt himself to the conditions of the life into which his birth brought him. Failures result and many useful lives are shortened because they undertake occupations for which they have no adaptability. There are persons working day after day, early and late, for only enough to exist, while unknown to them a fortune is awaiting them in some other locality. Many are wandering from place to place seeking a fortune they will never find, because, on the other hand, they are unaware that the place of their fortune was the place of their birth.

BY STAR-SCIENCE, a science of number repeated by nine digits significant of the nine planets, we can attune ourselves to our environment. We can learn the time when the forces of nature are favorable, and again when effort is fruitless. These sciences do not change nature's laws, but they tend to bring us into harmony with them. The rule is established and it is our task to work out the solution. There are natural laws which should be consulted on every important matter in life. Nature is always consistent. She keeps her laws and there are no false valuations.

The whirling bubble on the surface of a brook admits us to the secrets of the mechanics of the sky. Every shell on the beach has a key to it. A little water made to rotate in a cup explains the formation of the simpler shells. The basis of music is the qualities of the air and the vibrations of sonorous bodies. The great dome of the heavens filled with glittering stars is full of meaning, could its messages all be interpreted.

Star-science is a study worthy of everyone's effort to investigate the influences of these heavenly bodies. It claims for itself a place among all the sciences for it is capable of mathematical demonstration—the result of thousands of years of investigation. It is simply an index and not fatalistic in any sense. It points out how the greatest good may be derived from your own particular characteristics. It is a chart—a statute of possibilities and in no way a statute of limitation.

Never before has mankind been so demoralized and unsettled. Therefore, if the Science of the Stars is sufficiently known, many of the evils now afflicting mankind will not prevail and much error, pain and enmity will not exist.

Now, in these pages, this incredibly ancient science is being offered freely to you, to help solve your problems. All you need do is tell us your

birth date, including the time of day, if possible, and the year, and if you have a problem, sketch it briefly. You need not sign your name if you do not wish to. We will publish a scientific analysis, based on the ancient Star-science, as soon as possible according to the space available. Write to "Star-science Department," % this magazine.

RAP. Aug. 1, 1910:

You are dictated to by your heart. You have a fiery temperament which may need something to keep you from flaring up at the wrong time. A fortunate combination of courage, will-power and self-assurance is yours. You are keenly industrious, generous and trusting, and may be deceived easily. You are bold and perhaps too optimistic. Detractors may claim you, but don't rebel. You have much pride and your family life has a very good chance of being happy. You are a co-operator and a diplomat. You pride your ancestry.

MP. April 26, 1917:

You are not aggressive and are uncommunicative. You are a builder of ideas, are gentle by nature as long as you are not abused. Once aroused you would become stubborn and unyielding. You are sincere and trustworthy and have a practical and organizing turn of mind. You can make money for others and you are a capable executive. You must avoid the dangers of waste with security. Be content with things as they are by making an adjustment of budget in the interest of security and stability. Your home life should be pleasant.

JS. May 19, 1926:

Mentally you are cautious, but strong. You never forget. You are loyal to your friends and family. You like to work, but are slow to start, and you are determined to reach your goal. You are popular with the people whom you know. Though you possess artistic talents you do not use them unless you can use them to advantage in a material way. You are an entertainer. It is normal to love and be loved, to marry and live happily—so you must use your head as well as your heart in your selection and not follow your emotions only. You are hard to anger, but are likely to hold grudges. You generally do your best work during the late hours of the day when others are exhausted. It is natural for you to look on the brighter side of life. You love pets and the aged.

(Editorial note: The above three Star-science readings given by Mrs. Wesser are "quintessence" instances supplied by the editorial staff of Amazing Stories. Two of them are your editor, Rap (Now you know the truth about him!) and your editor's secretary, Miss Joslyn Saltzman. Naturally we did not ask any personal questions, so they are sketchy. We have too many skeletons in our closets to admit in print! But if you have any problems, give Mrs. Wesser a chance to tell you your weaknesses. She won't soft-soap you!)



WHAT MAN

THE Aurora Borealis is the noise of the Earth transformed into light rays by high magnetic attraction at each pole, and the Earth's slower velocity. The sun spots cause more grating and friction on the Earth's atmosphere, which causes more noise. A top spins; the Earth spins. When a top spins it hums; and so does the Earth; and other planets. We cannot hear the Earth's humming, but it is reflected back as magnetized light rays.

THE sun's mass is cold; it is not a boiling mass. Temperature can get to a certain degree of heat and beyond that point the energy turns to compact cold. It is not a cold that can be warmed up by heat, but a cold that can be cooled down to heat by magnetized velocity of planets.

The sun's compact cold is broken down by three velocities: (1) the system's velocity in the Milky Way; (2) the planets' velocity around the sun; (3) the planets' spinning on their axes.

All suns are of compact cold. The summer sun is farther away from us, but directly over us, which causes a direct hit of the sun's rays against Earth's velocity. This causes more friction and breaking down of the sun's rays—compact cold to heat rays. The winter sun is closer to us and colder, at a position that causes its rays to hit the Earth obliquely, with not so much friction.

North and south poles are cold because of the slower velocity and the sun's rays hitting obliquely, therefore the sun's rays are not broken down into heat rays. The moon is of ice because there is only one velocity, and not enough to break down the sun's rays to heat rays. Venus is of ice, but is beginning to acquire a greater distance to create a velocity which is breaking down the ice or coldness to heat. Mercury is compact cold of matter. This planet has cooled down to the degree of the sun's compact coldness of gas. Mercury has obtained this degree of compact cold by its distance from the sun and its one velocity around the sun.

As the planets cool down from their travel paths, expanding away from the sun, the melting ice creates water and atmosphere. Then, after cooling down to heat rays, their paths continually expanding from the sun's gravity, the planets' temperature loses heat, and cools down to a cold temperature which contains no atmosphere of ice or water.

Mars has ice on her polar caps, because the people on Mars make their own water and atmosphere by attracting the sun's rays, by their magnetic canals.

Bernice J. Peterson

CAN IMAGINE...

Science fiction has proved itself to be an outlet for man's imagination. What do YOU imagine the future will bring? This department is your opportunity to contribute to progress



When we opened this department up to the ideas of our readers as to scientific concepts (no matter how conflicting and contradictory they seem to be) our purpose was and is solely to make those of our readers who have inventive ingenuity to think. This group of concepts by a woman who obviously is not a scientist, seems to fill the bill in a rather amazing way. What do you readers think about her ideas? She makes some startling statements, which ought not to be summarily discarded.—Ed.

YOUTH, true youth, is characterized by vibrant life, by expansion, by the instinctive recognition of illimitable horizons. Real youth's salient characteristic is growth. The growth not only of body but of mind and (pardon me, you athletic sadies) of spirit.

Middle age is the period when the battle between flesh and spirit frequently resolves in favor of the flesh—it is the period when truth at last bows to falsehood and negativity. It is the time when the physical poisons triumph over the physical purifiers.

Old age is the era of the overwhelming of the forces for physical health, the forces maintaining an interest in life (mental hygiene), and the forces promoting the dynamics of the spirit.

Bowing to Hobart M. Gibson's article in the last issue, it is desired to strengthen his arguments. Generalizing his ideation it is apparent that: (a) kills die violent deaths from poisons; (b) this

death may begin before birth; (c) only rapid cell fission (youth, growth) can balance off this cell death; (d) there are foci of stasis where poison is continually manufactured.

The upper, middle and lower lung areas are used in various degrees, according to individual habits of breathing. The high chest breather employs the upper areas so much that the lower sections swarm with the poisons of stagnation, including carbon monoxide, the silent black panther. The abdominal breather by-passes the upper lobar areas. When the tubercle bacillus gains entrance to this type person's lung, it usually has no resistance because the upper lobes are allowed to retain food for it (carbon dioxide) and the lung cells are easy prey on account of the poisons at work already, resulting from stagnation.

To add insult to injury, we crowd the air of cities with carbon monoxide and worse still, inhale it and from 18 to 32 other poisons in tobacco smoke.

Before you discard the "black panther" as being the cutting edge for many, if not for all, poisons, let us consider just one of the major poisons whose use is highly regarded by many—alcohol. Let us bear in mind that it is the excrement of a special type of plant—the yeast plant. Now compare alcohol and the "invisible killer": (a) alcohol burns with a blue flame; (b) commonly causes headache; (c) retards efficiency; (d) demobilizes brain cells; (e) is a cumulative poison; (f) causes sleepiness . . . (a-b-c-d-e-f) so does

carbon monoxide.

It is needless to go on with a helter-skelter list of comparisons such as this. It can be extended considerably, but the main difference between the two poisons is merely that one poisons after it enters the individual cells and in process of metabolism, while the other packs an atomic bomb for the blood stream and attacks on the blood stream immediately upon entering.

It is not maintained that similar parallels may be drawn between all poisonous agents and CO, but it is worthwhile bearing in mind that few poisons are well enough understood so that we can flatly deny the idea that carbon monoxide may be responsible for the asphyxiation of every cell that dies. It is only fair to say that there are many types of cells in the body, some are weakened by certain substances which may strengthen other types of cells, and any cell-poison may exert its influence by stopping the combustion of carbon at the carbon monoxide stage.

MEICAL science regards free nitrogen as being entirely inactive. However, indicating that nitrogen is not without biological action is the following truth taken from *materia medica*. "The inert (absolutely without chemical action) gas, helium, has sometimes been used for diluting oxygen in oxygen therapy, instead of air, which is 80 per cent nitrogen." Medicine conjectures that the greater benefits of helium as a diluent are "probably brought about by the comparative lightness of the non-atmospheric mixture". Thus a method perhaps pregnant with possibility is remarked on and sidetracked. Concerning oxygen, it is known that most bacteria, like the higher forms of life, get their oxygen from that free in the atmosphere. Some of these have the faculty of deriving oxygen from oxygen-containing compounds, in the absence of the elementary form. Other bacteria grow best in the absence of free oxygen, but can adapt themselves to its presence.

Medicine says merely that nitrogen is usually taken from proteins by bacteria. It takes no account of the nitrogen-fixing bacteria of the soil. It has not measured the degree to which free nitrogen may encourage certain diseases, nor has it attempted to discover whether free nitrogen is indispensable to some bacteria. *It does say* "a great many bacteria flourish in the absence of protein." Which can only mean that these bacteria make their own protein using the free nitrogen of the air, which is everywhere present in the body while one breathes from the atmosphere.

The nitrogen-using faculty may spell the difference between life and death in pneumonia, since the most deadly strains of pneumonia germs are those least influenced by medical alterations in body chemistry (through serum injection and chemotherapy).

Free nitrogen may be the instrumentation permitting meningitis to kill. Without this gas, poliomyelitis might be completely harmless. Tuberculosis might quite conceivably disappear if helium

were breathed instead of nitrogen. That many terrible diseases could be reduced to mild infections running a short immunizing course in the absence of nitrogen is a possibility to consider.

Statistics show that the largest bracket of cancer victims are persons who have subsisted on low-protein diets. How laughable it would be, if the "tremendous intellects" who believe there are no holes in the armor of cancer suddenly discovered that starved and abused human cells have merely learned to tap the inexhaustible food supply that nitrogen represented to their remote ancestors. It is possible that the activation of free nitrogen by the gamma rays of radium (within the tissues) is what so poisons the cancer cell in the early phases of malignancy.

How convenient it would be when a cold begins, to sleep one night in one's "helium closet" and awaken with new energy and the infection gone. And how wonderful the defeat of whooping cough, measles, mumps and scarlet fever.

Let us suppose that the infinitesimal amount of nitrogen which is present in the atmosphere as ammonia were the agent responsible for furnishing building blocks for the amino acids to many disease germs. (It is known that ammonia compounds partly make up for proteins lacking in the diet.) Ammonia is formed in the upper regions of the atmosphere by the electrical disturbances accompanying storms. At storm time, therefore, the atmospheric ammonia is at highest concentration. Any ammonia-eating germs which alight on the mucous membranes are thus furnished with sufficient concentration of structural material to multiply rapidly and invade the membranes.

Helium is cheap nowadays, especially since the war stepped up production. Shall we use it to stop the suffering of severe rheumatic cases? Shall we use it to build tuberculars back to health? Or shall we send it away from the earth in toy balloons, waste it in lighter-than-air vehicles? Is anybody interested in building a "Helium House"?

You practical fellows (that is the progressive and thoughtful ones), let's take a new slant on the whole proposition. Suppose we begin a fund for the improvement of health—not to say for the prevention or cure of disease, as these things would follow automatically. And those little ideas you've had in the back of your head about how you might improve your well-being—ideas that you may sometimes scorn because someone might laugh, bring them into the court of inquiry. If you are interested, I should like to be the number one guinea pig. I would be willing to bet my last breath that within nine months the nutrition of the human race could be demonstrated as being about 25% what it could be, mortality as being ninety per cent higher than necessary, and life expectancy as being increased to two hundred years. Holding back something? Yes, I am, and that's why I can make that bet!

John McCabe Moore

DISCUSSIONS



A MAJOR feature will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

RE: TALES FROM TIBET

Sirs:

Mr. Gaddis' article "Tales From Tibet" cannot go unanswered.

It is true that Tibet is a strange land containing everything from creatures that are not fully human such as the Sogpas, or Frost Giants (compare with Norse mythology), to the very flower of humanity and even some (but not many) who are definitely superhuman. Everything from the most terrible evil to the most exalted good can be found on this planet.

It is true that from various centers in this territory—certain Lamaseries of the Red Robe Order, etc.—mighty forces of evil are being poured out upon us constantly.

But it is also true that within this territory is also situated one of the most powerful centers of good in the entire universe (Solar). I refer to the place of which Mr. Gaddis writes under the name of Agharti, but which is better known in this country by the name of Shambala. May the Gods forgive him for referring to it in the way he did. He knows not what he did!

Dr. Osendowski found the natives most reluctant to speak of the city or its rulers. He jumped to a perhaps natural, but in this case, erroneous, conclusion.

The quotation from "The Power Of India" is less than half true. Books like this and "Mother India" deserve no consideration. They were written by ignorant bigots who did not wish to learn, but only to belittle all oriental peoples and all that they have to offer.

Re *Oskape*: I haven't gotten around to studying this book *as is* entirely yet. But from extensive quotations that I have run into, it is apparent that what Dr. Theta Newcomer says of it is true. I mean the part about the nature of its contents, not the part about the being who is supposed to be its real author . . . It contains a great store of true wisdom and not a little that is *outrightly false*, all mixed together in a way that makes them very hard to separate, even to a student of such things.

By all means, study it, but don't fall for it, "hook, line and sinker" or you'll get caught for a sucker.

Edoni

E plus D equals zero plus N equals I
You will have already noted, no doubt, Miles

Cooke's excellently phrased rebuttal of Mr. Gaddis' article, published in this issue. We print your comment as evidence that Miles Cooke is not alone in defense of the god of Tibet. We, the editor, have stated, elsewhere, our stand on the matter, and we feel that only by such tactics as this can the matter be fairly thrashed out. We want the truth.

Regarding Agharti, we've recently come across a 50,000 word FICTION story on that theme, which we shortly will present. We ask all our readers to consider the possibilities apparent in this story, bearing in mind its correct appellation, fiction. Regarding Agharti, you will find our third cover, (opposite page 178) devoted to information derived from your own letter to us (which sections we did not reproduce, preferring to dramatize them more effectively) concerning the mysterious "King Of The World." We have included a few thoughts of our own, of course, which we present solely as thoughts. They may be wholly in error. Your editor has never been more than half right in anything, but we try to be honest about it.

As for *Oskape*, we ARE studying it, and not a few others are studying it—and with some rather amazing and demonstrable results. The book, we think, is worth a competent article, and we're trying to arrange for it now with several deep students of the book. Certain scientific proofs have been presented to us which are conclusive and positive. That's what we're looking for! Not a lot of meaningless words nobody but experts understand, but solid, scientific facts that both common man and scientist can observe and say "I go for that!"

As for the book itself, it has been the object, in the past few months, of such underhand and frankly dishonest attacks that your editor has been inclined to champion the under-dog, only to find that the dog is a very big dog! The book, it seems, uses some very plain words, both historically and scientifically, that can be demonstrated. And strangely enough, the science agrees with many of the things Mr. Shaver has put forth, and with hundreds of weird letters regarding "racial" memory, and the history of past ages, which, later on, may be the subject of another article in these pages. It seems strange that the boys with the big words all gang up on the same book! WHY don't they like it? Because it isn't veiled in an aura of mystery, because maybe it's (at the very

least) a darn good "science" story like those told in this magazine, or because it cuts into the aura of mystery they like to hold about themselves for the awe and bewilderment of the masses? It seems to us it's about time the "minions of mystery" cut out the double-talk and use a few one-syllable words, or let us barnyard scientists shoot off our mouths just to see if maybe we might make a little sense! Maybe horner ain't so dumb.—Ed.

PAGING MR. GRAHAM!

Sirs:

(Editor's note: This letter was addressed to Mr. Graham, but we present it here as part of "Discussions" as it really refers to the article written by Mr. Graham in our last issue, and is one that should prove intensely interesting to our readers.)

Now you've "gone and done it." Having *Amazing Stories*, February 1946 with my breakfast this morning, I ran across your article on the Shaver Mystery. Now where did I miss getting hold of that? Where can I get it? I have a copy of *Oakape* coming, but would like to have the two together.

I can well understand what you mean when you say "in the hands of an alienist I would be fitted out with a nice padded cell in a nut house" for if I blurted out half the stuff that is perfectly normal to my thinking world, I'd be two jumps ahead of you in seniority list for the nut house.

Atlantis, Lemuria, the hidden cities of the world, intercommunication of the octaves, and many other things are just normal to my thinking, would scare the pants off the average moron I come into contact with. I've lost the power to carry on a conversation in the middling little small talk of my acquaintances, so, as far as possible, I avoid them. How can they waste their time on such trifles when there is so much to learn, and so hard to find anyone who can teach you? The silly drivel our so-called scientists hand out makes me sick.

Most of the experiments I have made have been through clairaudience.

The "Bubble" on the back cover of this issue has been in my mental world for years. It seemed so real to me that I expected the new cars after the war to take that shape. I suppose, in the next hundred years our scientists will get around to it.

Why is it that anything man cannot understand is always set down as evil? What are they afraid of? To have my eyes opened to see the universe as it really is, for one hour, I would gladly give my life. I feel as if I were in prison, and that all I needed to walk out of it is to have my eyes opened to the place where I can see the unlocked door. Yet I feel that the veil is so thin that it may separate at any moment, and I keep trying to brush the cobwebs out of my brain.

A. W.
Oakland, Calif.

We are sure that both your editor and Mr. Gra-

ham would like to have you speak further of your "lunatics." As for your clairaudience, most people shy away from that word, as it has a metaphysical tone and sounds like one of "those spiritualists." But we define for our readers by saying that your letter is one of hundreds that confirm the existence of the "voices" that Mr. Shaver has so ably brought before the eyes of the world. The Shaver Mystery, since you seemed to have confused it, is the title applied by the readers to the entire mass of Shaver stories, letters from readers, and all related subjects. Unfortunately, back issues of *Amazing Stories* containing Shaver stories are perhaps the most valuable of pulp magazines since *Horatio Alger* and *Deadwood Dick*. If possible, later on, we may publish a special collection of the Shaver epics.—Ed.

GREATER THAN "BRAVE NEW WORLD"

Sirs:

I have just read "I Remember Lemuria" and some of the second part. On the spur of the moment, and though I am rather tired and this won't make much sense, I feel compelled to tell you something:

The cave-idea is quite universal with man and as old as the rocks. Its basis is man's nostalgia to return to his mother's womb, especially if his circumstances in life are none too happy. The "cave" is in fact the uterus.

I take it that Mr. Shaver underwent captivity; a highly unpleasant experience. By way of self-preservation of his sanity he has probably created this amazing world (as others did before him).

As my great old friend, Nobel-prize winner Johannes V. Jensen in Denmark expresses it: "Art results from the nostalgia of captives."

I greatly admire Mr. Shaver's powers of imagination; they are greater than Huxley's in his "Brave New World"; no doubt this is art, pure art, and you can be proud to have published it and I would be proud to write for you. I think I could produce this kind of art; I too am a captive in my own way exactly as you are in your own way and thereby am an artist.

For reading matter I would recommend to you Professor Edgar Jung's "Psychology of the Unconscious." You will find there in full explanation of the role of the cave in the imagination of man. I also recommend Spengler's "Decline of the West"—specifically the chapter on "problems of Islamic culture." Therein you will find expounded the "cave-concept" of the universe in Islamic science and Moslem religion.

What interests me more than anything else is the reaction of your readers to the Shaver stories. To me it proves what I have long suspected, i.e. that the people of this country, living as they are in the most materialist civilization in the world, are suffering from a serious "mystic-deficiency," some-

thing for which you provide the remedy of "mystic-vitamins" which is a good thing.

If I were you, I'd send the Shaver stories to Professor Jung in Zurich, Switzerland and ask for his reaction. There is no doubt in my mind that (1) you would get a most interesting and authoritative comment from one of the world's foremost scientists; and that (2) Jung would immediately proceed to write a book on this Shaver thing.

The more calamitous our time becomes, the more we are going to long for return into "the mother." With the "mother-complex" being so extraordinarily powerful in matriarchal America, you are certain to hear of more thousands of readers who all seem to "remember Lemuria."

+ Heinrich Haaser,
833 Drexel Square,
Chicago, Illinois

This comment, from the man who wrote the tremendously controversial book "The German Talks Back" is of great interest to us. However, we can't say we agree as to his analysis. There is an element of "mother-complex" evident today, but it is not the explanation of the Shaver Mystery. The desire to return to the womb brings only the desire to return, not anything concrete, such as has been coming into the open. It does not, for instance produce a theory of mathematics which is of a type that will now be necessary, if we are to have space travel. I am referring to a hydrodynamics based on the "motion of a solid through the ether." Hydrodynamics, thus far, have dealt only with the laws governing the motion of a solid through a fluid, such as water or the atmosphere. These hydrodynamics are useless in the calculations of the design of a spaceship. It has been assumed that the ether is nothing, a void, and that therefore a spaceship could be any shape. This is not true. The ether is not a void. It is a fluid, and has all the effects on a moving object (at speeds proportionate to its density) that the atmosphere has. This sort of thing does not come out of the "cave" of the womb.

A great deal of the work of Jung and Spengler is of the type of reasoning called "rationalization." This type leads to "driving" an explanation when none is apparent. The explanations of Jung and of Spengler, whose works are familiar to us, do not explain the fact that these "imaginings due to captivity" on the part of thousands of our readers have resulted in the formation of a completely cohesive pattern composed of definites. If a hundred people "imagine" the first four lines of a poem, and all are identical, it is not imagination. It means that the poem is a real one. It is so with Shaver's caves. They are REAL. It is up to us to locate them. By the way, there is a "cave" concept in all the four great religions that Spengler never even dreamed of—more important than one that takes in the Meletem only.

Your use of the word "mystic" is unfortunate. There is nothing mystic about a ray that melts down typewriter keys in this editorial office. Nor

could it have been done by a ghost! Yet such a thing did happen. As for Professor Jung, we will most certainly submit the material to him. His opinion might be immensely valuable. We want every possible competent viewpoint on the Shaver Mystery. As we see it, all viewpoints agree, except as to terminology. A mystic is "clairaudient"; a paranoid is "insane"; a religious person is "conscience-stricken"; and some just hear voices. What difference is there? The real point to be stressed is: WHAT DO THE VOICES SAY? We have found that they say much the same thing. How account for that on any other basis than that of REALITY?—Ed.

LET'S FIND THIS CAVE!

Sirs:

In writing to you this is something new to me as I have never written to any publication before except for contest reasons only.

I have enjoyed your stories for many years as I have read AMAZING since the first issue back in 1928 if I remember right.

During all that period of time the stories were very good with so few duds that they were not worth worrying about. Until friend Shaver climbed into the picture. Now his stories are very interesting but the fact remains that maybe there is something back of his origin that should be investigated. Now don't misunderstand me, I enjoy his writing very much but I think that it is best to leave sleeping wolves alone unless you have a good gun and can use same fast.

The thing that I am trying to say is that I think I can show you an entrance to this subterranean city that he has written about several issues back. Here is what happened to me and you may judge for yourself. In 1931 my mother and I took up a section of land as a cattle raising homestead from the U. S. Government and naturally it was not a choice piece; first of all, no one before us was able to locate the land even with assistance of maps and the land office, but we are friendly people, so a person who turned out to be our nearest neighbor gave us some hints and as the place was only six miles from his we stayed at his ranch until we built our house. Then we moved into our own and all in all we stayed there about two years before we quit; and now I will relate the things that caused us to quit, which at the time I did not know much about, but since Mr. Shaver wrote, now I know and marvel that we managed to stand two years without getting killed by the things from below.

As a note of interest I have had to use 30,000 rounds of ammunition in the period and perhaps that is why we are still here. At night I would sit up fully dressed all night with a rifle in my hands, ready, and an extra one by my side. In about five hours after dark I would hear things moving outside the house and after a while something would try to open the door quietly and I would wait until I saw the knob turn, then let go

a clip right through the door and then pull it open and look around outside and there was nothing to be seen. After a couple of nights like that that performance would stop and something new would be tried.

There are too many incidents to be told in one letter, the best one was the two disappearing automobiles, which happened at about ten at night over at the neighbor's place. It was as follows: the neighbor and we were sitting on the porch after supper when he saw headlights come over the hill to the fence then along the fence for about half a mile, then go out and that was all that night. So next morning we went to the trail along the fence and there were the tracks of seven inch width tires and they went along the fence into the box canyon and right up against a smooth boulder about 20 feet in diameter and ended there. Now the car could not turn around anywhere in that place because the road is a trail five feet wide and one side is against our neighbor's fence, which was not damaged and the other was a steep hill that no car could even make in compound low. You know, we have a few mountains here, and as far as backing out I tried that myself in the daytime with help and I could not steer a straight enough path without crossing my other marks so they did not back out or we would have trailed them as my neighbor has lived around there since 1848 and he sure knew his tracking. We never did get an answer to the question of where did the cars go.

The cars were very large and black and very heavy and now that I compare them they were about twenty years ahead of anything I had ever seen anywhere and I had worked in the auto business for about five years before we took up the land. They were silent, smooth, no wavering of the lights and the trail is extremely rough; in places it has hollows a yard deep, but these cars went through at about 25 mph, and it would even wreck a jeep to do that, so you figure it out and let me know the answer if you can. By wavering of lights, I mean that the beams were steady and not flashing up and down as an ordinary car would do when a rough road is traveled.

I have been away from there since 1933, but just about three months ago, I drove through with a friend for safety and my place is rased to the ground and everything that was made by human hand has been carried off even the old tin cans, and the place would not be noticed unless you knew where it was. The Coast and Geodetic survey had a marker near my house in the frost yard and even that is gone; who would want to take a concrete marker and carry it away?

Don't tell me about the lumber shortage, as this place is near lumber camps and mills; and other abandoned houses still stand in the valley, but they are thirty miles away and safe from the things. By near lumber, I mean within 50 miles radius.

Characteristics of the vicinity are one: no wind; two: silence. You can hear your heart beat and

after two weeks, you can hear insects running on the ground. Three: Forest fires will not burn there. They burnt 250,000 acres, then burnt all around this area; and that stopped the forest rangers. They never could understand because most of it is on the slope of a mountain and it should have gone, but they say that the wind came down and blew from the top down and blew North, South, East and West at once and that was the only time that the wind ever blew there.

Also you can detect an atmosphere of fear within 30 miles of the area and you will not get a statement from anyone who lives around there and the people in the valleys are afraid of the people in the hills. One farmer erected 20 foot high barbed wire fences and a heavy gate across the road that leads to my old place. The gate would take a tank to knock down, so maybe there is something there, after all.

It is located 110 miles north of San Francisco in Mendocino county and is directly on the old Pista toll road that ran between Hopland and Lakeport in Lake county of which Clear Lake is quite a summer resort. If you care to look it up on a map get a good auto road map and look due south off the road midway between towns and you will note an area with no roads bounded by Sonoma Lake and lower Mendocino counties and there it is. If you wish to go there, be sure that enough people know where you went. Maybe they will be able to find you. There have been several disappearances along that stretch of road, even trucks have vanished. All the U. S. Government's.

The U. S. Government has noted the area as rough, unsurveyable and UNEXPLORED. Before you visit the area please let me know and I will assist you in every way possible, but don't take any unnecessary chances if you do go. I have a '41 Dodge and I could not make the road to my neighbor's ranch. The car would not make the turns and the engine did not have enough power to pull the hill, so I do not know as to whether he is alive or not. I inquired at the nearest habitation about 15 miles, and they did not know him, as they have only been there six months, so I am none the wiser.

Personally I do not care to go near the place, but if there is some way of driving the things out I would help if I can so that someone else could live there safely.

I have tried to interest many people into investigating this, but even the government is helpless as you well know, as far as this goes. Also I forgot to mention there is a cave on the property that has steps leading down and there is no sound when a rock is thrown in. I have never seen it, but I understand that it is there. To give you an idea, if you leave the road 100 yards, it takes two minutes and it will take you two hours to climb back 100 yards.

One final thing: any plane that attempts to fly over it crashes and I think that the P.A.A. clipper

that crashed up there accidentally flew over this area, then the motors went dead, that was all. It happened in 1939; since then P.A.A. gave up Clear Lake as an emergency field.

Also, several people have died of heart failure and some have gone insane, I found out-later.

I think the thing that saved us was the fact that I am not surprised at anything and that I am very quick to shoot and I can shoot without sighting and by ear and not having the thought of shooting fixed so that the things would be warned. After that place, I was able to outshoot U. S. Marine sharpshooters. I tried competing in a match and I just never missed any target at any range. If I could see it, I could hit it, 5 out of 5. I have tried practice machine guns at plane models and I hit 3 out of 5 at speeds up to 100 mph scale without using the sights. So the old ranch gave me something worthwhile after all.

Due to my physical condition, I cannot get into any armed forces, so that talent is wasted, for you see I have a bad leg and cannot walk more than a mile at a time. Since I left the ranch I have been in the radio business and have not owned a gun since '34, because as long as I stay away from them I don't need one. Also not changing the subject, but I have run across a person who is not from this earth, and while I can't get him to admit it, I have found many evidences that point to the fact he came here from a planet that has tropics and a polar ice cap next to each other with no temperate zone and he knows radio perfectly, but earns his living by going to sea as a desk officer, and some day I will trip him up and get him to admit it; up to now I have had very little success.

Hoping to hear from you if possible, and if you print this, okay, but no help for curious public. But if you know of someone capable in the vicinity, have them get in touch with me and I will give more details.

Edward John,
475 Fell Street,
San Francisco 2, Calif.

P.S. Tell brother Shaver that the things' influence extends as far as 150 miles and not 25 as he said in his story. The only safety is to lose yourself in a city and they can't pick your thoughts out, but stay away from cleared areas such as flying fields. I found this out by experience.

Here is a definite lead on just the sort of thing that Mr. Shaver hints exists. The directions are specific, and it is possible that some of our more adventurous readers who live near would like to do a little scouting. If we get any sort of confirmation, we might decide to do something about it. However, we warn that the danger is very real. It is our intention to investigate this and a dozen other places as best we can. Organized expeditions are enormously expensive, and this cannot be done until we have a positive lead. Wherever possible, your editor and friends are making personal investigations.

How many more of our readers have the guts to

give us a straight steer on possible entrances to cover? —Ed.

CRAZY? NO!

Sirs:

I have been reading AMAZING STORIES for several years now, and have been called crazy by my family for believing such things possible. Maybe you think I didn't rub it in when the Atomic bomb came out.

Anyway, what I'm writing about is the article by Hobart M. Gibson "What Man Can Imagine . . ." at the last of the article, he says the colon needs some way to ventilate it. What I am about to suggest may sound stupid as I do not have much education, but I'm going to try it. It is this—what is the novel for? Could it have been used in some way in the distant past for some way to ventilate this part? Mr. Gibson speaks of? And could it be opened and used again? When I was a small girl I used to wonder what it was for, but I've never found anything in any books to satisfy my curiosity, but of course I'm not very well read.

Like Roger Philip Graham, I had the idea that I wasn't my parents' child and as this went on my mother finally whipped me for it. Naturally after that I never mentioned it again, but I still have the feeling that I have no parents at all. It is something like a feeling of not belonging here at all. Doesn't that sound crazy? Now that I've got started, I'd like to mention the dreams I've had since a child. Before a death in the family I've dreamed of seeing the person (who died within a week) and telling them they were dead and then taking them and burst their grave to prove it, then when we'd find the grave it would be empty. But after every one of these dreams, that person would die before a week was over. The most recent was a week ago, when I dreamed of my Aunt in the same way. This last Sunday we got the message she had died. There have been many other dreams that have come true, even to the words spoken, but they are too numerous to mention. May I also mention the "hunches" that I have? These have gained me the name of "witch" by all my family and friends. But I've noticed the past few years that they do not go against any I tell about even though they still make fun of me and never admit playing my hunches. Now I don't make any claims of any kind, I just don't understand everything I'd like to. But I try to get the hooks suggested by the people who write in the discussions. I found Col. James Churchward's books most interesting.

The only fault I can find with AMAZING STORIES is that it doesn't come out often enough. But I have to say it certainly is worth waiting for. May you continue many successful years.

Mrs. Bertha Lannan,
1601 U Street,
Bedford, Indiana.

The novel is simply the severed end of the umbilical cord, which joined the fetus to the placenta before birth, and through which the fetus

was nourished. It is severed by the attending physician at birth.

No, you aren't considered crazy by us! Too many people have confirmed Mr. Graham's statement as to parentage. This is an amazing thing, but it is true, and we have many letters confirming it. What does it mean? Why do so many people have this peculiar obsession (if we may call it that without being misunderstood)? Edgar Cayce, the famous Virginia Beach clairvoyant, whose 30,000 Readings are a matter of world excitement today, but the implication of which is not understood even by students, had a young brother who later is claimed to have been "reincarnated" in a Georgia youngster and who disclaimed his parentage in just this manner. The youngster recognized Cayce, and today is accepted as his "son" by the Virginia Beach people. This is claimed as a proof of the truth of reincarnation, but can be completely discredited by a similar case that is recorded and verified in India, where the recognition came from a child who had been born two years before the death of the daughter of the Englishman whom she claimed to be. There is no acceptable evidence of reincarnation—and we are sure our readers will agree with our insistence upon scientific evidence of a factual nature.

As for your "pre-visions," this is another thing that seems to be widespread today. We have dozens of cases on our desk right now. Authenticated cases are on record. How it is done we do not know. Most likely, it is a perfectly normal ability of the human body, utilizing a "sense" not yet fully evolved, perhaps!—Ed.

WE'LL NOT WITHHOLD FOR LONG!

Sirs:

I write both to comment and to ask a favor. The comment is that I disagree with your policy of withholding from general knowledge the locations of the cave entrances and "forbidden" places. If the evil ones are preparing an invasion of the surface this is no time for cautious waiting. Granting that this information might lead to the disappearances of perhaps a few score of amateur explorers; keeping it may mean the enslavement of two billion innocents. Why is Kakeka Mena Kakeka so worried about the safety of prospective explorers? I'm no expert on Indian or supposed Indian names, but Kakeka Mena (minus?) Kakeka equals 0. Could he be one of the Dero, trying to lead investigators astray? He mentions one case, threatened release of the "Momicle," where the evil ones are waiting to increase their power. The danger certainly will not decrease if it is allowed to remain uninvestigated, any more than a festering sore should be ignored. We ignored Hitler and the Japs, and hardly came out with a whole skin! Have we learned a lesson?

The favor of which I spoke is that you give me the locations of the Tabu places that you know of in North America and Mexico.

Our firm now gets its income from several rather petty gadgets, but we are developing a very small

two-place helicopter that will land in a twenty-five foot circle on any terrain whatever. I propose to investigate the caverns by air, armed not with a pencil, a notebook, and a scientific attitude, but with a flame thrower, a submachine gun, and a scientific attitude. Believe me, I can secure these weapons—I know some people.

I realize that this is strictly illegal, but such things are sometimes necessary. Please trust us—let us take the risks. Someone has to find out what is there—and come back!

Jim Boyd,
3118 W. Lake St.,
Chicago 12, Ill.

One location is published in this issue. With caution, this can be safely explored. We are interested in having it explored, of course, but it's out of our reach at the present.

We don't know Indian language either. But we'd say right now that Mr. Riley is no dero. He is sincere, we are certain, and we have other communications from him which you would find quite interesting. He, too, knows of a location, but he says it is extremely dangerous. We can't ask people to explore them—we'd be sued if disaster resulted. We must bear in mind these legal angles.—Ed.

VOICES

Sirs:

It was necessary for me to condense this several times before I sent you this communication as it would take volumes to write more. I have been a reader of science fiction since 1919 and a subscriber to the first issue of AMAZING STORIES edited by Hugo Gernsback. All this that I am writing about I was conscious of what was happening and studied the phases as conditions allowed. I have no fear of this, and you may publish it.

About six years of age 1910, I woke up in the middle of the night seeing many people laying on the floor dead, weapons scattered about. 1914, World War No. I broke out.

1913, age of nine, we boarded a ship in the evening and went to sleep early. I dreamed of bright daylight, green water and many sail-boats skipping about in calm breeze, no land. Woke up in the morning, we were far out in the Atlantic, water blue and rough.

Up to 1934, continued study of science, Foundation of Matter, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, etc.; object inventive field, and obtaining a flood of ideas coming constantly. Experimented with relaxation and telepathy, occasionally hearing strange sounds. Lacking money and material to work on ideas. Started to maneuver myself about my dream to an extent of where I wanted to go and what I wanted to see. Questioned myself "Where do these ideas come from?" and "Who am I?"

Taking care of nephews who were asleep; one of them screamed "A green hand." Investigating, he had said nothing. A neighbor's child cried;

inquiring, the child was asleep.

Summer 1934, reading in the library my eyes moved off focused attention, being moved backward or forward intelligently alien to the will of my own. There were no accidental flinch of muscle. My concentration faded, in its stead all that I read then on was verbal in my brain, as though my brain had suddenly started to speak and repeat verbally what I read. Voices spoke on the same principle in my brain what I was not thinking of or reading. I had notions of grave apprehension they were speaking all the time.

Taking myself into a room made of concrete to be away from sounds, the voices got to be so intense, as to wake me from sleep. Going over wide range of topics, questions and sentences were bored into me always trying to tell me something. A demonstration of radio waves appeared radiating from my head, and I was told anyone within their field would be killed, and the world was getting larger and larger. Practically I tried to form a solution somewhere. I was told "you can't transmit ten feet."

A parade of automobiles appeared circling over and over wildly honking their horns and trying to tell me something. I became feverish and tapped my head against the wall. Scenes of the crucifix flashed before my eyes in technicolor, a spear flashed to the heart and vibrated there. I was horrified. A sheriff was supposed to be coming to slash me with a butcher knife. I got up on the bed and using the bed as a springboard, I dove head first onto the cement floor as the sheriff was to enter. I did not lose consciousness, but could not move, studying what was happening to me. I heard a voice command and "Get up," and I came on my feet. Somewhere previously a personality melded right into me, my senses could feel the features of the being molded with mine occupying my body at the same time. Later I coined the phenomenon "Telepotia," "poti" means to fog or sweat over. Telepotia, it remains.

I was this, I was that, I was a "hat." I was told to close my eyes and not dare open them. Then I was a goat and walked on all fours with my eyes closed, shaking my head.

My condition became so serious that I was taken to a hospital. I sat in the car with my eyes closed; at the same time I was like in another world, appearance of autumn, winds blowing and leaves falling. The voices told me I was being taken to a pyre to be burned at a stake. The hospital steps appeared like pyre steps and I could hear a crowd yelling and screaming. An intern kindly told me to watch where I was going and I opened my eyes. My brain felt like it was pouring out. The hospital was quiet and quite a different scene. Here I will say you may rest assured this is not a dream. Not mentioning the functions of the hospital or my daily routine, I will tell you only of the voices and visitations, they were with me all the time.

I developed a burr in my head half way between a spark coil and escaping steam. Wherever I was,

physically I was quiet, but inwardly I waged a battle. I disrupted quietes with unbearable insistence with a barrage of my own or jerking every muscle in my head. Even being bent on taking over any machine if it existed.

Finally I got to a stage of friendliness where I could get some thread, although incomplete. In this zone of influence my name is Frank and Franjo. Perhaps someone has heard the voices call Franjo, I am the one.

We went over time, space, matter, creation, life, life beyond death, creation coming into being, dimensions and a host of others. I walked over the patterns of my footsteps forgotten in childhood.

I covered the possibility of my brain waking and speaking, germs, bacteria and cells becoming intelligent. Even trying to educate my cells to attack germs, machine being invented on Earth, intelligence of interplanetary nature, United Solar System with ruling intelligence in magnetic form also magnetic forms utilizing our bodily magnetism as sustenance. And many others not overlooking attack.

At one period the voices were threatening, "Choose your weapons," "You will dig a pit and jump on stakes," "You will boil in oil," etc., the Spanish Civil War broke out. Again, "We are ancient Egyptians, we woke up," "The one who solves the secret will die," "I am the scientist that invented the electron," "John with the big head is coming out of the earth in Africa," "Want to go to the Moon with us?" A phantom mandolin kept playing around and around my head, a song appeared on the market "The music goes round and round." About reading distance an electric light bulb red, fully lit and inverted, a halo was around it, I could see clearly where the paint coating was chipping off.

My taste recalled candy, food and others that I had tasted and not tasted. There was an attempt made via telepotia to bring a personality with horns on his head to me. I was supposed to have horns on my head. When I told them when I die that I would go to a place where they cannot reach me and make strong weapons, they said "We will follow you." Visitations via telepotia had brought personalities as I was told for each, my parents and ancestors, girls and women and even outer space. One silent young one was with me a long time. I had a vision of a rocky world with an animal something like a deer without horns standing there. I looked at a calendar, a 0 became a seed the center thread wiggled back and forth alive.

I had my tongue move from tooth to tooth "this tooth is coming out," "that tooth is coming out," and making a full sweep "they are all coming out." Five were taken out then and today I am getting over having the rest taken out. The buzz is still with me.

Here in California I read the book of "Revelations of St. John the Divine," and with their help for the first time reading from beginning to the

end and not losing a thread of what I was reading. Like reading history of a great civilization, telepathy, electricity, chemistry, airships, war and many others. I had running streams and rivers speaking to me. Birds spoke to me. I had numerous telepathic visitations: one of them was, I was starting to cook and having a mixing bowl in my hand, and putting ingredients in when my consciousness went blank. I came to still standing there with a personality of a woman all over me completely and then we started to cook. Sometimes the personalities waved my arms and spoke to me with my mouth, we took turns talking; in all appearance I looked like a person talking to himself, but looking in the mirror I saw a big difference in the features of my face. I was on a ranch in the mountains, a clear sky and broad daylight, a roll and a clap of thunder startled me, I looked up, a round black cloud rolled in place and hung there, a second peal of thunder and a second cloud appeared, they moved toward each other controlled by an unseen force as though challenging each other. A voice said "Go ahead, strike him down," then another said "Franjo, there is your Jovian lightning." I watched them fade away. Inquiring about the thunder, no one heard anything.

Just yesterday I was absorbed in something that was doing me no good and a woman's voice said "Franjo, get away from there." I complied with a thankful expression. I have long ago found out that there is much that they give me, but something holds me from getting an understanding thread in time. If physically permitted I carry it out where I know it is wise. Until I can get materials to work with as I need them I will be constructing in this world. I could write volumes and still not write it all. While this was happening to me a bud was taking form in my thought channels, and urges me to bring them in being upon Earth. To give you a rough idea I will give several. There is one Creator, he is the only one that creates, all other reference to anyone being able to create are false. All intelligence are in their channels within the wisdom of the Creator. Within these channels are the creations. Thoughts to be discovered and fashioned.

Wherever there is a male and female to maintain life cycle their intelligence is superimposed by a higher one.

Each existence, channel, vein, etc., maintain a flow to the creation coming into being.

Revision and evolution is constantly going on and all physical must keep pace. All this within the Wisdom of the Creator.

Should any confusion come in any channel there is a drain within that channel, and a constant strain is at the source toward elimination. War is one example among eternity.

All existences must revision themselves and extract Intelligence of the highest quality, thereby taking upon their own responsibilities and relieving the necessity of higher intelligence being held up in lower channels by having unnecessary duties

to perform in existences.

Materials must be on hand to the highest freedom of flow. When a mind can extract such as new thought in its existence, materials must be at disposal to effect a construction immediately. To carry in effect an ownership principle is a violation to creation, this retards abundance, a creation must be in abundance of sustenance giving strength and power and must be sustained. Creation cycles will eliminate a creation if that is necessary.

All creation must advance to stage of perfection, beauty, strength and abundance of necessities of life.

Intelligence in human form on Earth is in constant confusion and millenniums retarded in thought and accomplishments. Release of intelligence in charge is necessary and long due.

The immediate necessity on planet Earth is a smoothly functioning mind and body. Each bone, tissue, organ and limb must be matched properly and equal to correspond with each other. At present there is a variety of sizes and strengths causing weaker organs to fatigue and retard functions of the whole body. The responsible functions are in the physical and must be corrected there. The call is now and this instant. Mating must be so matched as to obtain the desired balance in the newborn and may require many matings before a balance is obtained. Failure to do this will surely effect more intense urge toward elimination.

The planet Earth is not overcrowded and should not be the cause of wars. Overcrowding will easily be solved by choosing lanes or orbits between the Moon and the Earth and constructing communities in those lanes using the Moon as an example. They will support life millions of times greater than an overcrowded Earth stage. Visit the planets in brotherly manner, but the Earthling sphere of existence is around the Earth. Let their existence remain.

A field of knowledge that I would like to see function now and understood is the dreams. I would like to ask the editor to allow a space in AMAZING STORIES or the companion issue where readers can write and tell what their dreams were like and describe them thereby matching their dreams. Some of them may be scenes of readers themselves, or their places of abode and then perhaps events vital to them and others. Let us make that field function. Shall we start?

Frank Banski
315 E. Market St.
Stockton 6, Calif.

This letter is presented in all sincerity by your editor, as it undoubtedly is by its writer. We will refrain from making any comments, being more interested in what YOU have to say about it, and asking all others who have had similar experiences to add to what Mr. Banski has said by writing to the editor as he has. As H. G. Wells would say, "There is SOMETHING here." Yet, Mr. Wells, this is one of many hundreds of letters which end all doubt that THERE IS SOMETHING strange

and potent going on in the world.—Ed.

OUCH! MR. GRAHAM!

Sirs:

I have been an interested reader of science fiction for many years. I have seen crackpot theories grow practical, and non-existent inventions spring into being.

But when Mr. Shaver's narratives came upon the scene, I began to lose faith in the prophetic quality of science fiction. I do not say the things appearing in his stories are all impossible, but there are places where he has read mythology too avidly into his writing.

I write this in an attempt to clarify a number of things concerning the whole "Shaver Mystery."

To begin:

Mr. Shaver was sent to prison presumably by the Dero to keep him quiet. He was later spirited from behind bars by a blind Tero girl. Has anyone attempted to verify what prison, what date the escape was made; if such an escape took place, it would certainly be in the prison records. Can Mr. Shaver furnish documentary proof of his escape? And also, why have no attempts been made to return him to finish his term, since his whereabouts are certainly known?

Two:

If Mr. Shaver has access to all the inventions and science of the Tero People, why did he not reveal it to military authority? This would have helped the war effort.

Three:

Why is he afraid to publish a full documentary account with photographs (I stress that) of his subterranean experiences? Including locations of such places. I do not fear the marines would have any trouble moving in and taking over!

Four:

Why, if Mr. Shaver desires to prove his contentions, does he go about everything in the obscure and proofless manner of a crackpot?

Five:

Why does the Editor delete names of places and things from the so-called "revealing" letters sent in by various people? Surely if Tero and Dero can read minds, that knowledge in a few more minds would make no difference. They could discover the existence of its disclosure from any mind. Why not delete the names of writers instead?

Six:

Why do none of the people writing in offer to furnish proof of their discoveries? So far, the only things advanced have been opinions, and intangibles such as the bearing of voices, and the learning of "occult" knowledge through telepathic or other methods.

Seven:

Concerning Mr. Roger Philip Graham, I have read his letter in the February AMAZING STORIES. There are a few things I wish to know. And believe me, if they can be told with proof, I am ready and willing to believe.

First: Why, did not Mr. Graham also reveal

his knowledge to military authority? They listened to the wildest possible imaginings of the minds, hoping to find help in winning the war.

Why does not Mr. Graham send a complete account of his knowledge to Mt. Wilson Observatory, Lick, Yerkes, Harvard, Greenwich, The Dominion Astrophysical, California Institute of Technology and enlighten these hundreds of fumbling mortals, so they may seize upon the completed universe tomorrow and discard the useless accumulation of proven and tested fact gathered by the world's best brains and greatest thinkers over the past five hundred years?

Why let them shape that useless 200 inch mirror when all it will reveal and more is already so clearly seen? Why let Du Pont spend millions developing plastics and armaments when our friend Mr. Graham can pencil out the formulae for substances that undoubtedly surpass them?

For one man to say that his brain contains "every detailed phase of the fundamental process of the universe," is not only egoism of the most flagrant kind, it is a statement fit for consumption by the most warped and twisted intellect!

I should like to know what kind of life Mr. Graham has led; is he married successfully; has he children; what are his acquaintances' opinions of his mental status; has he a tendency to neurosis or to an excess of introspection? How easily can he be deluded and how easily can he be delude himself.

Any reputable psychoanalyst will affirm the statement that excessive introspection borders on and can and has produced insanity.

However, let me see the proof of what Mr. Graham says, proof supported by eminent scientific authority, and I will eat three issues of AMAZING STORIES and send in photographs and notarized assurance that I have done so!

I asked but one thing, PROOF. Give me that and my voice shall be forever stilled.

Blake M. Mitchell,
1043 S. Kingsley Dr.,
Los Angeles 6, Calif.

Of course, we could swear at this skeptic, if we weren't one ourselves! But being skeptics, too, we're going to try to answer what we can of this letter, and promise that more answers will be forthcoming!

(1) *Mr. Shaver, would you like to provide this man with the proof he requires? As for your editor, he is quite satisfied that there is no longer involved in this imprisonment. Mr. Shaver served his term, and is not wanted, we assure you. His record is clean. Following his escape, he was returned to prison.*

(2) *Your editor has information he would not turn over to military authority. And if he got the secret of a super-duper atom bomb, he'd not turn it over! We are absolutely against war and against murder. We will have none of it. Even defensive warfare has no justification. Killing is still murder, no matter what the circumstances under which it is done. Is that reason*

good enough for you? It will have to be good enough for all humanity from now on, or we just won't BE humanity any more!

(3) Mr. Shaver, we believe, has no photographs. How would he have secured them? As for his reasons for what you call "documentary" evidence, this issue shows his sincerity. As for "documents" what do you mean? Letters from the dead?

(4) If this had happened to you, how would you "prove" it? Why not ask your editor, who went personally to hear the voices, and heard them? Why not accept the honest statements (all of them could be notarized if requested) of hundreds of our readers who hear voices? What do you mean by a "crackpot" manner? One that does not measure up to your opinion of what is or is not crackpot?

(5) We delete names and places to save our readers the deluge of crackpots who would otherwise descend on them—as they descend on us. Another reason is that the particular information given is considered of value, and we do not wish it "fumbled" by inexpert investigation.

(6) Do you consider "voices" intangible proof? Is teipasky (recognized by science) intangible? Is Professor Rhine of Duke University an intangible? Do YOU know anything about intangibility? When you are presented with something esential, will you judge its value on your own personal opinion of its tangibility? Will a thousand letters from people who hear voices convince you they hear voices or that they are insane? It's a matter of how you LOOK at the evidence, and how you ANALYZE it. As for proof, will Mr. Graham's completed mathematics satisfy you? It will not, and right now several thousand dollars are being

spent, and a staff of competent mathematicians already hired to rush it to completion under his guidance. Fortunately, some of today's wealthy men are willing to put their money to work!

(7) Thousands of scientists since 1900 have turned their discoveries over to "military authority" with the result that we have just gone through the most terrible, inhuman, devastating war in history; and we have our pants full with the certainty of what the next one will be. On the record, turning such discoveries and such knowledge over to military authorities has not been a wise thing. To hell with such "authorities!"

(8) We agree that Mr. Graham is an egotist. If he weren't, we'd be afraid of him. But thank God, he's human. He likes to blow his horn, and he also likes to play poker. He came 2,000 miles to do both, and we blew right back at him! But you wouldn't say his intellect was warped or twisted after a poker game with him! The man just can't lose!

(9) He has led a normal life, is happily married, he has no children, but he went "nuts" about our own little daughter, his acquaintances consider him wholly normal, they never contest his mental ability, and he chopped our fireplace wood for us, so he can be deluded.

(10) When Mr. Graham's math is published this spring, we are going to insist that you eat those three magazines.

(11) We like your attitude, and if more people would be skeptical, we'd get somewhere in this investigation. But don't be dogmatic. Don't swallow every book you read, cover and all, just because it's written by a Ph.D.—Ed.

The End

SATELLITE SPACE SHIP STATION

(See Back Cover)

ONE of the great problems confronting us in the mastering of the art of space travel is the matter of overcoming the gravitational field of the earth. Physicists, engineers and mathematicians have estimated that tremendous power is necessary to lift a ship away from the earth and to overcome the effects of gravity. It has been pointed out that vastly the greater portion of the ship would be motor and fuel sections. Each time a ship landed on the planet, it would practically need to be rebuilt, with new motors and fuel sections, because they would have been discarded in space. Physically, as well as financially, this is impractical.

Rocket engineers have envisaged floating islands in space, rotating about the earth just as does the moon, which would serve as landing platforms beyond the gravitational field, where giant liners of space could moor, discharge passengers and freight to be conveyed by smaller relay rockets to the planet itself, take on new passengers and cargo, refuel, and take off again with a negligible expenditure of fuel. Such flights would have an

enormously expanded range and could fly to other stars themselves.

Pictured on our back cover is artist James B. Settles' conception of such an island in space, a monster island hangar miles long, capable of handling a dozen such giants of the void. He has depicted one such giant entering the dock, and has shown the smaller rockets conveying cargo and passenger lists to the earth's surface. He has shown another giant ship approaching the island.

A dozen such islands floating about the earth in fixed orbits that keep them continually above the same spot on the planet's surface would provide efficient depots for space travelers. They would make interplanetary and interstellar commerce feasible and practical.

Both islands and space liners would be built out in space, and would never land on any planet. Their whole existence would be spent in the ether, avoiding gravitational fields, and operating without the necessity of solving the bugaboo of "escape velocity". If space travel is to become a reality, this is the only answer.

THE KING OF THE WORLD?

**Is there an underground
cave city called Agharti
ruled by a Venusian who
holds our future hopes?**

ALL through the world today are thousands of people who claim to have knowledge of an underground city, not specifically located although generally assumed to be in Tibet, called Agharti, or Shambala. In this city, they say, is a highly developed civilization ruled by an "Elder" or a "Great One" whose title is among others "The King of the World." Some claim to have seen him, and it is also claimed that he made at least one visit to the surface. It is also claimed that when Mankind is ready for the benefits he can bring, he will emerge and establish a new civilization of peace and plenty.

To quote the words of a "witness": "He came here ages ago from the planet Venus to be the instructor and guide of our then just dawning humanity. Though he is thousands of years old, his appearance is that of an exceptionally well-developed and handsome youth of about sixteen. But there is nothing juvenile about the light of infinite love, wisdom and power that shines from his eyes. He is slightly larger than the average man, but there are no radical differences in race."

Apparently the ruler of Agharti is a man; apparently he possesses great power and science, including atomic energy machines. Apparently also he is dedicated to bring to us great benefits. Apparently he has power to end warfare on the surface at will. We, the people of Earth, ask: What man can judge another? Wars must end now! Judge not, Great One, lest you be judged. For we ARE ready for peace!



TILLOTSON.

SATELLITE SPACE SHIP STATION

The hazards of gravity make it impractical to land giant liners of space directly on a planet, so satellite depots, permanently anchored several thousand miles out in space will provide terminals for such ships. Smaller craft will connect with surface depots. (See page 178 for complete story)

