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Compiled by BARTHOLD FLES

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THE SATURDAY EVENING

POST FANTASY STORIES

Compiled by

BARTHOLD FLES

Stories by

GRACE AMUNDSON
WILL F. JENKINS
WILLARD TEMPLE
WILBUR SCHRAMM
NOEL LANGLEY
GERALD KERSH
CONRAD RICHTER
PAUL GALLICO
REAR-ADMIRAL D. V. GALLERY

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EACH STORY COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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THE ENEMY PLANET

by Rear Admiral D. V. Gallery, USN

Panic spread over the whole world. The UN met in extraordinary session, to hear the ultimatum of THE ENEMY PLANET.

INTERPLANETARY DEFENSE H.Q.
WORLD GOVERNMENT
LAKE SUCCESS, N. Y.
MAY 20, 2050 A.D.

PUBLICATION of this story may shock the world by exposing what a gullible creature man is. For the past 100 years we have been preparing to defend this earth from invasion by monsters from outer space. It is now revealed that these monsters exist only in our minds, and that for the last century mankind has been jousting with celestial windmills. World Government is making this disclosure because the unbroken era of peace which the world has enjoyed since 1950 insures that war between peoples of the earth is now impossible. The brotherhood of man is so firiftly established that nothing can now undermine it; not even this revelation that its foundation rests on a gigantic hoax perpetrated in the evil days of 1950 when an atomic war seemed inevitable.

The man who worked this benevolent fraud was Doctor Danson, of Iceland, the first President of World Government, and one of the great men of the twentieth century. The doctor ranked second only to Einstein as a physicist, was an authority

on international law and was one of the foremost amateur astronomers of his time. It now appears that he was also the greatest sidereal prestidigitator who ever lived.

Until 1950 4ie secluded himself with his few assistants at his observatory in Iceland, high on the rugged and inaccessible northern slope of Mt. Hekla. Isolated there, three difficult days' journey from Reykjavik, he wrote his great books on world government and studied the stars in peace, while the civilized world fought the War of the Four Freedoms to its unconditional surrender.

When United Nations was formed at the end of World War II, incorporating in its charter many noble ideas originated by Danson, the doctor confidently looked for the banishment of war from the earth and the dawn of a new era.

By 1949 even Doctor Danson could see that this hope was futile. The pious hypocrisy of the nations, the constant wrangling and vetoes in the Assembly and the ominous cold war between Russia and the West made it obvious that UN was doomed to follow in the footsteps of the hapless League of Nations.

Doctor Danson determined to prevent this at any cost and by any means. During the winter of 1949 he framed a plan to bring about the changes in human nature necessary to salvage the world's last hope for escape from the gathering atomic holocaust.

Early in 1950 the doctor called his small staff around him in his observatory for a conference. "Fear," the doctor told his colleagues, "is the dominant emotion in the world today, fear of one man for another. But I am convinced now that fear of what man himself can do to his fellow man will never persuade nations to give up their fundamental and historic right to impose their will by force upon weaker nations. Not until man fears for his mastery over this tiny dunghill on which we live will he bow to the will of his Creator and live in peace with his brothers.

"But," the doctor declared, "the UN is not yet a lost cause. I have a plan for saving it; a plan in which success depends upon absolute secrecy. The men who establish peace on earth must do it anonymously, and their roles cannot be known to the world until long after thev are dead . . . perhaps never."

Doctor Danson offered his colleagues the option of withdrawing then and there or dedicating their lives to his project under a most solemn oath of secrecy. So great was their faith in Doctor Danson that all six took the vow, labored the rest of their lives on the isolated slope of the volcano and carried the secret to their graves. When all had pledged themselves, the doctor outlined his scheme for a hoax upon mankind which would make the deceptions of Hider, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt seem like parlor pranks.

He began by reminding his disciples of several recent widely publicized events. Shordy after the end of World War II, the Signal Corps of the United States Army bounced radar signals off the moon and detected the return echo. The flying-saucer hysteria had seized the United States in the summer of 1947 and was still in progress. Responsibile military men predicted that push-button warfare was just around the corner, interplanetary-space travel was seriously discussed, and scientific societies were formed to promote it. Man's imagination boggled at the Pandora's box which he had opened at Hiroshima. The atomic age had just begun, nothing was impossible any more, and the world was ready to believe anything.

In this atmosphere of world-wide apprehension the British Interplanetary Space Society began its series of monthly broadcasts to Mars. At their meetings in London they probed the silences of outer space with high-powered radio transmitters in the hope that the Martians might hear and answer them.

They theorized that if rational beings existed on Mars with mental development approximating that of man, then the Martians should be able to decipher any messages which they received. Earth's scholars had solved the riddle of dead and completely forgotten languages of the ancient Egyptians and Persians, and our military cryptologists had broken seemingly unintelligible ciphers. If the Martians could detect radio signals, they would probably be smart enough to understand them.

Doctor Danson proposed to give the British society its eagerly awaited answer from Mars. At the observatory on Mt. Hekla he could receive the Interplanetary Space Society's powerful broadcasts without difficulty, so it would be a simple matter to phrase and time his replies plausibly. He planned to send

his answers using the technique of the United States Army Signal Corps and bounce his answers off the moon when Mars and the moon were on the same side of the earth.

Using the moon as a reflector, it would be easy to make radar signals arrive in London from interstellar space at such times and in such manner that they would seem to be Martian replies to the British signals.

The biggest problem was to break the interplanetary ice plausibly and establish a common language between Mars and Earth. How could two perhaps totally dissimilar kinds of beings, living in different planetary environments, communicate ideas to each other? But unless some common bond could be established, the hopes of the British Interplanetary Space Society for a reply could never be fulfilled.

Doctor Danson and his staff sat up long into the night discussing this difficulty. They finally concluded that if rational beings inhabited two adjacent tiny planets in a remote corner of the universe, this should be bond enough. So, taking the bull by the horns, they credited the Martians with ability to speak English or at least to receive and transmit English by Morse Code.

That night they also planned the use of a new atomic ray which they had developed on Mt. Hekla. Only a few months after Hiroshima, while experimenting with rays for probing the Heaviside layer of ionized particles in the upper atmosphere, they had made a discovery from which they recoiled in horror. They learned how to combine radar technique with atomic fission and thus project powerful concentrated beams of energy to great distances. Using these beams, they melted rocks twenty miles away on Mt. Hekla's desolate northern slope.

Since they were all men of peace and since this ray would obviously be used for mass destruction if the rest of the world ever found out about it, they confined all knowledge of it within the walls of their mountain retreat. After a few spectacular experiments, they locked the secret away, never to be used again unless Iceland's safety demanded it. They now agreed that the safety of the human race demanded it, and laid their plans for using it at the proper time.

On the night of March 29, 1950, the British society in London broadcast to Mars in ancient Hebrew. Eleven minutes

after the end of their message the operator on the microwave scopc muttered, "I'm getting something."

The society members crowded around and watched the dancing trace on the scope. At first the curious audience thought the trace was being disturbed by static, but soon one alert member noted the similarity of the pulsations to Morse Code, and began spelling aloud, "... r-s. M-a-r-s—Mars." "They are answering us!" he shouted.

After the oscilloscope spelled out "Mars" about a dozen times, the message from outer space stopped, and the be-bewildered members of the society gaped at one another in amazement.

Then, after some minutes, the society answered the Martian message by broadcasting: "Earth to Mars: we are receiving you."

In the observatory on Mt. Hekla, another group was gathered around a radio receiver. When the London radio began to crackle again, Doctor Danson said, "It has begun. Repeat back their Hebrew message and we will quit for the night."

In London eleven minutes later, the trace on the oscilloscope danced again, and the Hebrew message which they had sent to Mars a few moments before came back word for word from the sky. After this message was repeated twice, transmissions from outer space stopped and all further attempts to continue communication that night were fruidess.

When it became apparent that Mars had signed off, the society faced a problem. Obviously it was necessary to get a report to the prime minister, and, fortunately, Sir John Watts, chief scientist of the Ministry of Supply, was a guest at the historic meeting. Sir John had come as a skeptic prepared to scoff, and though he could not deny that transmissions from somewhere were actually received on the radar scope, he was by no means prepared to certify that they came from Mars.

However, the society realized that Sir John's testimony, even if reluctandy given, would carry great weight. They insisted that he take the matter up with the prime minister. Sir John finally persuaded them to conduct another test the following night in strict secrecy, and promised that if similar results were obtained, he would make a factual report of these results to the prime minister.

An hour after Mars rose over London's horizon the next night, a message went out asking the station in the sky, "Do you understand English?" Doctor Danson and his staff in Iceland were waiting for it. The moon was in good position, and the reply bounced back to London:

"Yes, we understand English. Greetings from Mars to Earth. We first detected weak magnetic signals coming from Earth twenty-four Martian years ago—1902 your date—and have been trying to communicate with you ever since. Our recorded history goes back for 15,000 Martian years—30,000 Earth years—and we have been using magnetic waves throughout this period. Have you ever received previous messages from us?"

The message was jubilandy received in London. A society member excitedly called attention to the fact that Marconi sent his first wireless message across the Adantic in 1902.

London replied: "First message from Mars received last night. Greetings from Earth to Mars."

This seemed a rather inadequate salutation to initiate interplanetary communication, but, after all, what does one planet say to another when they meet for the first time?

A few minutes later the oscilloscope in London became active again. The dancing trace spelled out: "This is Mars. We will transmit to you for one half hour each day when Earth presents same face to Mars as it presents now. We will use your time units and dates. We have learned much about English by reading signals coming from Earth in past forty-eight years, but we have many questions: What is air? Wliat is Money? What is communism? What is bettygrable? What is the mystery tune? Can you receive transmissions by atomic pulses or gamma rays?"

Sir John, obviously impressed, didn't intend to be stampeded into jumping to conclusions. He said, "Ask the Martians how many moons their planet has."

The answer promptly came back: "Four."

"H'm'm," Sir John said. "Actually they have only two."

"But" someone objected, "maybe they have some small ones which we can't see."

Then Sir John said, "Ask them to describe the next planet in the solar system outside their own orbit."

The answer came back: "There are many small ones be-

tween us and Jupiter, the next big one, which is twenty times the diameter of Mars and has eleven moons. There is also a small planet between us and Earth. It lies 1,000,000 miles inside the orbit of Mars and is one one-thousandth the size of your planet."

This reply was an important building block in Doctor Danson's whole scheme. Any amateur astronomer could have supplied the information on Jupiter and on the asteroids between Mars and Jupiter. But only the doctor and his staff knew about the tiny planet between Mars and Earth which they had discovered several months previously. This asteroid, barely visible from Earth if you knew where to look for it, would be quite conspicuous at times from Mars. Doctor Danson planned to let Earth's astronomers spend some weeks searching for this needle in the heavenly haystack before telling them where to look for it.

After this second demonstration, Sir John went to the prime minister and stated his belief that the whole business was a hoax, but gave a factual description of everything which occurred. The prime minister listened, sent for the air minister and the chief of Scodand Yard, and instructed them to give Sir John whatever assistance he required in exposing this fraud. Sir John promptly conferred with the radar and intelligence experts, and they drew up plans for tracking down the prankster.

Meantime, the British Interplanetary Space Society continued its nighdy conversations with Mars, these sessions being now jammed with spectators of all degrees of credulity and skepticism. The newspapers wrote sensational articles which threw England into a state. Lurid dispatches from London went all over the world, and the United States Federal Communications Commission set up a receiver to see if they could intercept these broadcasts. To the skeptics' amazement, this receiver near Washington got the broadcast just as well as London did.

This put the story on front pages wherever newspapers were published. Receivers were tuned in everywhere, and soon Doctor Danson and his conspirators on Mt. Hekla had a world-wide audience for their broadcasts describing life on Mars.

The Martian broadcasts told of a civilization much older and happier than ours on Earth. They had one government

for the whole planet and seemed to live according to precepts which we had always professed but seldom practiced. We had difficulty explaining the meaning of the words "war" and "crime" to them, because apparently such things did not exist on their planet.

They informed us that the universe in which we live had been created by a Supreme Being, with Whom they were able to communicate, and that He had promised them everlasting life in the hereafter, if they lived good lives during the short span of three or four hundred years while they were on Mars. They therefore lived in peace and harmony with one another, because obviously only fools would do otherwise under the circumstances.

The Martians spoke of many things which amazed our scientists, indicating they knew more about atomic fission than we did. When they asked us why we were developing the hydrogen bomb, we sent them an evasive answer. It was found impossible to frame a direct reply which didn't malign the intelligence of the human race.

The common people of the world listened to the broadcasts and looked to the wise men for guidance at this time. But the wise men began to have an uneasy feeling that perhaps there was a greater wisdom than theirs out in the starry sky.

There were great doubts in the world at this time.

Pravda denounced the broadcasts as a capitalist plot to overthrow communism and enslave the working classes. But the Politburo installed radar receivers in the Kremlin to listen in direcdy on the interplanetary conversations, and the rest of the Russians got them secondhand by tuning in on The Voice of America and other radio stations west of the Iron Curtain.

After a week of exciting communication, Mars advised they would be unable to answer for the next three weeks on account of impending magnetic storms. Although the British Interplanetary Space Society continued the broadcasts, there was no reply.

Doctor Danson took this precaution because during only one week of the lunar month was the moon in proper position to act as his sounding board. Although some alert observer might note the coincidence of the lunar cycle and the transmitting periods, Earth would soon receive proof that the

Martians were real—proof so spectacular and convincing that even the most hardened skeptics would believe.

During the three-week radio silence, the Air Ministry and Scotland Yard completed preparations to expose the "fraudulent messages from Mars" . . . if they were fraudulent.

On the night of April twenty-sixth, when Mars started broadcasting again, the Air Ministry tuned direction finders in England, Ireland and Scotland to the frequency of the Martian broadcasts and set up high-speed cameras in front of oscilloscopes to provide an accurate time record of all that occurred.

RAF planes cruised at extreme altitudes all over the British Isles, scanning the ground with search receivers and direction finders. Wartime restrictions on private flying were revived and Fighter Command Headquarters put its radar warning net on a red-alert basis to spot any high-flying aircraft impersonating Mars. Similar steps were taken in the United States'.

That night Air Ministry experts took over the broadcast from London and sent out the following message:

"After this message, we will transmit a long dash. At the end of this dash we request that you close your transmitter key and hold it down ~~for one minute. Stand by for t~~he dash, which is coming now. ."

At this particular hour and day, the distance to Mars was 67,890,000 miles, so the transmission time there and back should have been twelve minutes and ten seconds. Doctor Danson, anticipating a time check, had prepared graphs for the entire year showing the distance from Earth to Mars at any hour of the day and the precise interval of time necessary for radar waves, traveling at the speed of light, to make the round trip. Another handy chart gave him the correction to allow for the actual transmitting time to the moon and back, so he was not caught napping by this test. As his return signal came back from Mars, timers in London caught it at twelve minutes and eleven seconds.

A hasty check of direction-finder stations apparently indicated that the signals did not originate on Earth. The direction-finder stations were set up to search out a station located on our own planet. These stations got the same strength signal

no matter where they turned, as they would if a signal came in from above. The aerial spotters, whose attention had been directed earthward, missed the Martian messages completely. Fighter Command reported that no unidentified aircraft had been over England. Washington flashed word of similar results.

The Martians then continued: "Mars . . . Mars. Replying to your previous inquiry about location of unknown small planet between Mars and Earth. Look in the plane of the ecliptic forty degrees and thirty minutes from Mars' present location."

London immediately phoned this information to the observatory at Greenwich, which had searched the sky unsuccessfully for three weeks. By midnight the existence of a tiny new planet had been confirmed.

Events of the evening persuaded most of the scientific world that the messages were indeed coming from Mars. The perfect time check, direction-finder indications and discovery of a new planet in the exact place predicted convinced everybody.

Pravda promptly switched the party line and proclaimed that Russian scientists had been the first to talk with Mars; had been doing it for ten years.

The British Government announced that it was taking over the broadcasts until the source of these signals was definitely determined, hinting darkly that Winston Churchill might know more about them than he was admitting.

Mars became the most important subject on Earth. Bookstores sold out astronomical treatises which had gathered dust for years. Newspapers ran daily features explaining the elementary facts about the solar system. Even the international tension relaxed as man lifted his eyes to the heavens and began to think.

People who had never heard of Mars before learned that it is the next planet outside Earth's orbit, that its diameter is little over half that of the earth, and that it has two moons visible from the Earth, which behave in an extraordinary manner. They learned that Mars takes almost twice as long to circle the sun as Earth does; that once every 15 to 17 years Earth and Mars miss colliding by a mere 35,000,000 miles, but when at opposite sides of their orbits they are separated by 248,000,000 miles. The old controversy about the canals on Mars raged

again, reople tound tnat equally eminent authorities have affirmed and denied the existence of these canals.

In learning these things about Mars, men learned things about the universe which most of them had never known before. They learned of galaxies and nebulae; of great stars whose diameter exceeded that of the Earth's path around the sun; and of distances which surpass the mind's ability to comprehend them. They learned that the stars in our sky are more numerous than ail the souls which have departed this earth since the time of Adam; that the ponderous masses of the stars, their orbits and velocities through the heavens faithfully obey a great code of law; and that Earth's scientists can quote and explain this code in great detail . . . until you ask them, "Whence came these laws?"

Man learned that this planet, which he calls his own, is so puny that if Earth were suddenly atomized and scattered from here to Polaris like dust before a cosmic wind, even our nearest neighbors in the solar system would placidly continue in the rotations and revolutions of their appointed orbits undisturbed. Man's mental horizon expanded by several light years.

The next sensation on the interplanetary program was the announcement by the Martians that they had been traveling through space in atomic-powered ships since our year of 1940, and that in the summer of 1947 numerous expeditions from Mars circled and explored the earth.

Before the excitement from that announcement subsided an even more starding one followed. Mars announced that another exploration of Earth would occur in exacdy two weeks and several hundred space ships would circle the earth on May tenth, approaching much closer than the 1947 expedition.

While the world prepared itself for this visitation, Doctor Danson briefed his assistants on the next phase of his plan. He said, "We shall now use the new ray which we discovered right after Hiroshima. This ray," the doctor continued, "when pointed up at the sky, will pass through the atmosphere as an invisible beam of energy until it encounters the F-two Heaviside layer some 100 to 200 miles above the earth. When it hits the ionized particles at the bottom of the layer, it will

energize these particles sufficiently to make them visible, forming small illuminated disks in the sky."

The doctor continued, "If we shoot high-frequency pulses of energy up the beam, we can knock the disks loose from the beam in about the same manner that neutrons can be knocked loose from the atom. The disks will circle the earth, once in the Heaviside layer, and then, as they fade and become invisible again, will seem to disappear into outer space. The path which the disks follow on their way around the earth is a matter of chance, but if we knock loose enough disks they will be seen all over the earth."

The doctor concluded, "We have already developed a pretty good case of hysteria in the world; the appearance of our saucers will aggravate the panic."

The "Martians" had predicted that the great saucer shower would start at midnight Greenwich Time, May tenth. That night Doctor Danson and his assistants gave the world the most remarkable pyrotechnic display ever seen. They sent 200 disks about one tenth the angular size of the sun shooting around the world in various directions, and millions of people watched in open-mouthed wonder wherever the sky was clear.

Primitive peoples believed the end of the world was at hand, and many civilized people agreed. Unskilled observers outdid one another in their lurid accounts of what they had seen. Descriptions by radio commentators made Orson Welles's Invasion from Mars broadcast in 1938 seem factual by comparison. Some United States newspapers declared the lights in the sky were exhaust flames from huge, dimly visible rocket ships, and described these ships in great detail. An Air Force B-36 pilot claimed that one of these rockets had whizzed past him at 40,000 feet as if he had been standing still. When his story was checked, however, it was discovered that the object in question was a Navy fighter plane on a routine flight.

Reports from astronomers proved more reliable. Even with their largest telescopes the astronomers could not observe any details of the strange celestial visitors. They determined that the luminous disks definitely were not meteors, and certainly were different from any phenomena ever seen before. The things cruised at an altitude of about 150 miles, seemed to

come from the polar regions, and to travel at about" 20,000 miles per hour.

The next night a British Government spokesman officially informed Mars that we now believed them. The message said: "His Majesty's Government prepared to concede actual existence of beings on Mars."

This called for a sharp retort from the Martians: "Your strange message is first indication we have had since communication was established that you doubted our existence. We have never questioned yours. You must be very untrustworthy people to be so suspicious."

This was the first unfriendly note in the interplanetary conversations. It was by no means the last.

Concern in all the world capitals over the space ships immediately revitalized interest in the United Nations. Rancor disappeared from UN debates, and the only matters seriously discussed were the startling new developments on our neighboring planet.

The Security Council decided unanimously that UN was the agency to deal with Mars, rather than any individual gov* ernment, and the British Government quickly agreed.

Shortly after UN took over, the next dramatic development occurred. Mars announced that the latest reconnaissance showed they could land on Earth, so they intended to send over a delegation of Martians the next time the two planets were favorably located in their orbits, in 1954.

This delegation would bring with them large supplies of radioactive isotopes, which they believed were in great demand on Earth to cure disease. They would also bring several atomic engines, which could supply the whole Earth with power. In return, they wished to take back some samples of our air.

UN was about to accede to this request when Vishinsky pointed out that in all messages which had been exchanged with the Martians nothing whatever had been said about what sort of "people" they were, what they looked like or what their size was.

So UN dispatched a message describing a human being in some detail for the Martians' benefit, and inquiring discreedy as to what they looked like.

The reply said: "We have no eyes or ears such as you have.

We speak, see and hear by means of electromagnetic waves and have organs to create and detect such waves. We have arms and legs like yours, and although we have no heads, we think as you do, except more clearly, and have been doing it much longer. Our bodies are spherical and are 150 to 200 feet in diameter."

The Security Council sat in stunned silence after this information boomed out of the loud-speaker from the radio room.

Finally the head of the United States delegation turned to Vishinsky and said, "We can't let those sons of brotherhood come down and tramp around the earth!"

For the first time in the history of the UN, the Russian delegate failed to exercise his veto and breathed a fervent *"Da!"* of agreement.

The Security Council quickly agreed on a message to the Martians informing them politely but firmly that we objected to the proposed visit and could not permit it.

By this time Doctor Danson and his associates could see their way clearly to their objective. The whole world was in a dither of fright. All they had to do was to hoist their hobgoblin a few more times and say, "Boo!" to frighten mankind into saving itself.

Mars replied to the rejection of their proposed visit with an abrupt ultimatum, "Delegation will visit Earth as proposed, whether you agree or not, as soon as planets are close enough for heavy-transport space ships to make the flight. Our Supreme Being says He has been displeased for twenty centuries at your disregard of His wishes, and that we may use force."»

Upon receipt of this message, all previous international differences were forgotten, just as a family fight stops when strangers try to butt in. Earthly problems were no longer of much importance compared to the impending invasion of monsters. Whether we lived until 1954 under the communist system or capialist system paled into insignificance compared to the question of remaining masters of our native planet.

An emergency session of the Security Council recommended that the long-neglected military establishment of UN, merely a paper organization ever since UN's conception, be implemented immediately. All nations of the world readily agreed to pool their armed forces under the Security Council.

Navies were scrapped as being useless in an interplanetary war. United States Navy admirals indignandy protested this move and published articles making a convincing case for super-carriers as the best weapon for repelling Martians. But the hysteria was too great and no one paid much attention to them. The Air Force claimed they would blast the invaders into oblivion in forty-eight hours by using hydrogen bombs and the B-36. But the Security Council ruled this out because the Martian giants would be very mobile targets, and atomizing seventy of them might involve wiping out many of the world's major cities.

They decided that if we couldn't prevent the invaders from landing, mobile artillery and huge tanks might at least slay the gigantic monsters after they got on the ground. The Security Council decided to pin their faith on the artilleryman and tank while we reoriented our weapons to point toward space instead of toward ourselves.

Meantime production of conventional weapons stopped. The world plunged into intensive development of guided missiles, rockets, satellite vehicles and space ships. Push-button warfare advanced by leaps and bounds, and by 1952 rocket-launching emplacements were installed all over the world. From these emplacements we could shoot rockets into outer space guided by radar and traveling at a speed of Mach 10. The world's entire production capacity for hydrogen bombs was pooled and devoted to turning out warheads for these rockets.

While these far-reaching changes occurred in armaments, even more profound changes took place in human relations. Under the threat of attack from another world, labor and capital joined hands, civil rights were universally extended, and man became acquainted with and liked his fellow man. Protestant and Catholic; Bolshevik, Laborite and Republican, Chinese, Negro and Dixiecrat, all found a common cause in which they buried their differences. Except for the grievous burden of supporting the rocketeers and their thousands of missile stations scattered all over the globe, the world became a fine place to live in and an unparalleled era of peace, prosperity and good will began.

In 1954 the final episode in the unification of the world

occurred. A fiery projectile from outer space roared across Europe from west to east on the night of August ninth, and destroyed the great Russian city of Sverdlovsk, just east of the Urals. We know now that this catastrophe was caused by one of the large meteors which have left their scars on the earth periodically; fortunately, many centuries apart. But at the time, the world was in such a state of hysteria that everyone jumped to the obvious conclusion that this was a missile from Mars. Doctor Danson and his associates, of course, seized the opportunity to confirm that assumption with taunting broadcasts from Mt. Hekla.

After this disaster the assembly unanimously voted to form a World Government in which all nations surrendered the last vestiges of individual sovereignty. This was really just a formality, because by this time it was impossible for nations to exercise the prime attribute of sovereignty—namely, the right to wage war and slaughter one another. War was out of the question, because the only weapons in the world were designed to shoot out and away from the world to drive off intruders.

As soon as the nations ratified the World Government—and they did so with remarkable speed—Doctor Danson turned over his laboratory to his principal assistant and came to Lake Success as Iceland's delegate to the assembly. His arrival was joyfully welcomed by the other delegates because by then UN had assumed the shape which he had tried to give it in the first place, and they all recognized the profound influence which he had wielded over UN's development. At least they thought they did.

Doctor Danson was elected first' President of the World Government and re-elected five successive times, serving in all for twenty years.

While the doctor presided over the assembly, his staff on Mt. Hekla continued to awe the world with periodic broadcasts and saucer showers. The predicted invasion never occurred, but their judicious propaganda kept people on edge and expecting it for fifty years.

Under Doctor Danson's leadership the world made great strides toward the millennium. Primitive peoples who had no need or desire for civilization were left to live their lives as

they chose. Other peoples were assisted in every way to improve their standards or living and culture. The life span of man increased to an average of 101 years; concurrendy, production of all kinds increased, so that, despite the growing population, everyone lived a more abundant and useful life. Prisons were converted to museums and it took many years to fill all this additional space with suitable exhibits.

Doctor Danson returned to his Mt. Hekla retreat in 1975, continuing to guide his colleagues and to write great books until his death in 1999. The remote observatory carried on its' celestial propaganda for ten more years, until it was wiped out by the great eruption of Mt. Hekla in 2008.

When Doctor Danson retired from World Government he left a strongbox in custody of the Security Council, with instructions to open it fifty years after his death. The box contained the documents on which this narrative is based.

For the forty-two years since the eruption, nothing has been heard from Mars. However, the mark left on the world's memory by the preceding fifty years has held the human race together in peace, and a firm base has been established for justice, prosperity and mutual trust.

World Government confidendy predicts that we shall all live happily ever after.

THE CHILD WHO BELIEVED

by Grace Amundson

Once he had been famous, but now only this little girl trusted him. For her he would perform one last illusion—if it filled him.

THERE WAS a magician of the upper brackets though reasonable in price. He had told them that, but they seemed to have the notion that because he came rather cheap they must tutor him a bit. He had explained that his fee was always more moderate out of season. He had further assured them that he was invariably booked solid from September to late spring. Had this been the holiday season, for example, they would simply have to make do with someone third rate.

He didn't mind a benefit or two in the heat of summer. In fact, he rather enjoyed lending his personality now and again to a genial gathering of parvenu entrepreneurs in garden finery. But when he arrived, one of them met him at the gate and, if he did say so, herded him rather rudely into the dining tent, as though he were some old hack to be pushed into the arena at the last moment. Almost, to be brutally incisive, as though he were one of those tawdry characters who would show up in any condition for a performance.

His esfort, a buoyant, curried fellow in tan sharkskin, offered him a cigarette from a crocodile case. "My name's Camden. We thought the children better not see you until we're ready for you."

Armitage laid his battered black case on a bench and stripped off his shrunken and yellowed gloves. "I think you'll find chil-

dren accept the wondrous quite sensibly," he said, running a deprecating glance over the inside of the tent and setting finally on Camden.

"I suppose you understand what this is all about," said Camden. He spoke with an almost offensive maturity, but there was an eager, angelic waxiness about his nostrils. It gave the edge to Armitage's haggard boredom.

Armitage tossed his gloves on the top of his case. His cutaway smelled slighdy of naphthalene. A mossy ripple had captured his lapel in some forgotten storage. "I never concern myself with the motives of these affairs," he said wearily.

"It's the annual summer carnival for the building fund of Ascension Academy," Camden persisted. "We fathers manage the whole thing. Side show, the works. Ellerman's handling the barker's job this year. He's got a girl in Ascension. He should be along any moment now to cue you. They'll bring you supper here first."

The air was streaked with the odor of hot grease and chicken. Armitage sniffed fastidiously. His frail stature altered according to his passing moods of hauteur. "I don't customarily eat before a performance. But if this is a late show, I shall feel faint unless I have nourishment. I'll have a bite. Something light, mind you."

"Are you sure you don't want to brush up a bit first?"

Armitage stared uncomprehendingly at Camden, the greenish balls of his eyes like skinless white grapes. "I beg your pardon?"

Camden sensed the trespass. He fumbled wtih his cuff links. Outside, the lanterns bobbed on, broiling the dusk in hot festoons. "I'll see if I can locate Ellerman," Camden said. At the tent flap he paused. "You might want to know about the audience. All children. It may be tough going. Last year they —Oh, hell, you don't want to be bored with that. Only they're not so easily amused as they were in my day. Damned if I know why—too much of a good thing, I suppose."

Armitage rendered a faint and patronizing smile. "Really, I wouldn't worry if I were you."

Camden darted out. Armitage sat down, flicked open his case and lightly rearranged a few items. He pressed his finger tips to his eyes, sighed and wriggled the veined arch of his

nose in lieu of scratching it. He flexed his fingers, sighed again and affixed a cigarette to a holder delicately traced with gold; the great Pignon had given that to him when he had mastered the trick of breaking out of a concrete sarcophagus.

Outside, Ellerman roamed the languid assemblage, haranguing them with a vivacity more suitable for auctioning off a marble quarry. Armitage smiled. No inspired hedonism, no reckless hearts out there. He drummed rhythmically on the table. He had been able to break his way out of six padlocks in his day, but he had never been able to produce a quick dram out of a hat when he needed it most. Not the vintage stuff anyway. He'd known a mediocre Norwegian conjurer who'd been able to squeeze a green aqua vitae out of a dry sponge on occasion. But strictly bathtub stuff. Eilerman's voice pressed closer. "Right this way folks! Here you are, folks! Hit the man in the eyef" It was a bit pathetic, Armitage decided. Everything was a bit pathetic, for that matter. The tragedy was not that people died, but that they lived so meagerly—on so much. Not a lavish spirit among them. No wonder the profession had sunk so low.

Suddenly a treble tantrum broke outside the tent. It struck his quivering nerves like a snapped wire. He sank his thumbs in the pits of his eyes and cursed sofdy.

"Stop it right nowl Stop it!" screamed the child's voice. "Get dressed right, so they won't laugh! You're not supposed to look like this! Stop it right now!"

Immediately the tent flap was torn open and a rigid, leggy child thrust inside, propelled by a firm man in a paper derby, a false nose, tight coat and short trousers.

"Now what's come over you so suddenly, young lady?" he demanded, and swung the false nose on its elastic to the middle of his forehead, leaving a pale fungus patch in a ludicrous crust of pigment.

The child stared at this new outrage with bitter fury.

"We've had just enough of this," the man said sternly. "This morning you were all excited because I was going to do this job."

"They're laughing The kids are all laughing at you!"

"All right, so they're laughing. That's what they're supposed to do. I'm funny, see?" He adopted a stance and a widess grin.

Like an enraged goat, the child hurled herself at him head-

first, fists hammering his chest. A button soared off his coat. "No, Zhey can't laugh at you! You're my father! You stop it... right now!"

He pried her off, limb by limb. She was a vital, tenacious lichen. "Now look here. You'll stay right here until the magician's show. If there's any more of this nonsense, you'll be sent home without seeing the magician. Understand?"

He glanced at his watch, clapped the incredible nose in position again and turned to go. Suddenly he caught sight of Armitage. "Oh, there you are," he said. "Camden saw to you, did he? I'll send him in to tell you when it's time to tee off. Quite a crowd out there. Excuse me." He dashed forth and resumed his braying.

The child, a peaked blonde with lank, stranded hair, swiveled and stared at Armitage out of the lavender pastures of her eyes. She had a neck like a young ostrich. The puckered indention of her upper lip gave her an expression of brooding, inner resource. With her teeth she tore a fragment of cuticle from her finger, spat it thoughtfully to one side and moved in a conical pattern of white linen and blue ribbon to the bench beside Armitage, trailing her hand over the magic kit as she passed. She flopped on the bench a few places away from Armitage and stared at him, to discover whether the deliberate vibration had jarred him to wrath. Armitage stared blandly back and cast forth two magnificent rings of smoke which wreathed her like cloudy quoits. With superb poise she shrugged them to fit. There being nothing to communicate for the moment, she occupied herself with a recent injury to her calloused knee.

A slope-shouldered woman with an unmanageable halo of hair brought in a plate with half a broiled chicken and some French fries on it. She laid the plate before Armitage on the tresde table, then glanced down at the child with a measured proportion of hypothetical fondness.

"Well," she said, "and what are you doing?"

"I'm picking off my scab."

With a sharp sucked-in breath, the woman appealed to Armitage. He continued to dissect his chicken with zoological precision. He ignored her looks. "My dear woman, may I have a wedge of lemon with this chicken?"

"We don't serve it with lemon."

"I am not inquiring into your culinary ignorance, madam. But either I have a wedge of lemon to cut this boiled oil or there will be no performance this evening."

The woman cast an exasperated look over his head and turned back to the kitchen.

"I want some chicken, too," announced the child.

"I'm only supposed to serve the performers," snapped the woman, salvaging a lingerie strap beneath her apron.

"The young lady is my assistant," said Armitage loftily.

The woman snorted^ and trudged off across the sawdust. There was silence between the two on the bench.

Finally the child said, "People are afraid of my father too."

Armitage ate in a kind of abstraction. "Respect is the thing," he said. "It's about the only commodity you can't buy with money these days."

"My father's very poor," she assured him nervously.

There was another recuperative silence. "Would you care to divulge your name?" Armitage inquired eventually.

"Constance. Constance Ellerman."

"Constance, eh? That's the kind of people we need more of."

The waitress dragged toward them with the lemon and another half chicken. Constance looked at the pliant half corpse of fowl laid out on the plate and recoiled from the contours of such recent life. "I don't want it," she said hastily, feverish abhorrence in her eyes:

The woman bent over and shook her shoulder playfully, but there was a venomous energy behind the gesture. "Why don't you want it? It's perfectly good chicken."

Armitage interposed himself hastily, "What sort of cannibals do you think we are, madam — to eat our recognizable brethren?" Defdy, he sliced the nude chicken to less recognizable lineaments and incarcerated the meat between two slices of bread. "There you are, my dear. A bit of witch meat Every third bite a charm."

The woman deposited their coffee and quivering lemon pie and slumped off, glancing back scornfully midway across the tent.

Armitage put down his knife and fork, laid his hands on the table and stared speculatively at them for a moment. The

dim Kght in the tent flickered. Constance took two bites from her sandwich and tilted her head to study Armitage. A sleek tiger cat wandered in and curled round her legs. She gave it a lap of her lemon pie. On her third bite of sandwich she extracted a pellet from her mouth and deposited it carefully on the table.

She nudged Armitage. "What's that?"

He broke sharply from his reverie. "What? Oh, that! Aha, that's your third bite." He stuck his finger in a glass of water and leveled a drop on the pellet. It sprang into a tiny paper palm.

"That's easy," said Constance, "if you're a magician."

"There you go," he sighed. "Always underrating us. We traffic with the supernatural, make fools of the sorcerers, defy the alchemists, and what thanks do we get^ Skepticism! I tell you, Constance, we're the sad harp of lost mankind, we magicians. Poor, maligned vessels of what we know not what. Between two worlds, the conscious and the unconscious, we perform deeds half divine. No one can explain them. And even we are afraid ©f them. In us are vested all the vestigial senses, telepathic and empathic. And what meager tools! The remnant hunch, the inspired guess, the fugitive hint. Pity the poor magician, Constance."

Constance, charmed by the mellifluous chain of his expression, stirred the cup of her ear with her finger. "Show me," she demanded. "Show me what you're talking about."

"And traffic with my very soul? I should say not. You can only perform especial tricks a certain number of times, you know."

"How many times?"

Armitage speculated, lips pursed, a cast to his eye. "Oh, I should say I'm good for about two more performances of my magic specialty. It's a very personal piece of magic, of course."

"Show me."

"If I gave you an honorary performance, I'd have only one performance left, wouldn't I? No, I can't risk that, Constance."

"Why not?"

"Well, it takes a great deal out of a person, for one thing. And suppose I really needed that trick someday in a tight spot, with a hardhearted audience. Why, then I'd have wasted a whole performance on you."

Outside, the gathering drifted to the far end of the school lawn, Ellerman's voice whooping them on. Constance's head whirled to the sound, her pale hair tasseling out. Filial shame colored her cheeks. She turned on Armitage.

"I bet it's a silly trick anyway," she flashed. "I bet I'd laugh at you."

Against the echo of Ellerman's buffoonery, Armitage winced, blinked and pressed his thumb and forefinger to the bridge of his nose. A host of gnats shadowed the feeble bulb hanging from the center of the tent. When Armitage looked up again, a sprighdy expression was lashed to his face.

"Constance," be said with zest, "you have indeed humiliated me. I shall concede you a command performance."

"I don't care very much," she said airily, and parted the tiger cat's fur between yellow and black.

"But I do. How would I feel ten years from now when Constance Ellerman is a very important person, if I were uncharitable now?"

"I won't be silly when I grow up, anyway."

Armitage drew back on the bench, his fingers barely touching the tresde table. "Behold, Constance," he said huskily. "I, Armitage, magician prince, successor to the great Pignon, can reproduce history in condensed and animate miniature. Watch closely. I shall recreate for you the pageantry of Genghis Khan in Turkestan, all of eight centuries ago."

Armitage drew in his breath. His shallow chest did not expand very much, but his cheeks dipped in alarmingly. His eyes bulged a trifle, and the saffron hue of his skin drained to a waxy white. The atmosphere about them contracted until Armitage, Constance and the tent were a spherical density wheeling free in imperishable space, remote from the temporal fluff of the carnival. Constance yawned hard as her eardrums tightened. And then Armitage began to blow—only gende, phosphorescent bubbles at first, gradually enlarging until finally, with infinite precision, he was producing luminous pastel globes of considerable size. And within each one a small figure or a group of figures, true in every dimension, obliviously pursued their violent affairs. First there was Genghis Khan—only a malevolent Chinese to Constance—riding the Great Wall with his warriors. There were palanquins with princesses;

swarming, minute battles; exotic, alien faces. Constance made no attempt to grasp the globules as they passed overhead, but watched them with cold appraisal until they burst and disappeared. She was evaluating a piece of technical bravura in which Armitage was proving himself a magician above suspicion. There were no suitable expletives, only the drudging exclamations reserved for the calculated surprises of adults.

Gradually, as he reduced his effort, the strain left Armitage's face. His breathing lengthened, the pastel globules became smaller and deeper in color; the spectacular life encased by them diminished until the figures were hardly larger than sugar crystal, but still rigorously faithful to life. And eventually there was nothing on the air but a sparkling froth. The pulsing mortality of the carnival flooded into the tent again. Armitage sat like an unstrung instrument, a fine perspiration on his long nose.

"That was good," conceded Constance, and edged closer to observe his debilitated expression. "Are you all right?"

Armitage shook himself free of his misty hearing. "Perfecdy, perfecdy, Constance. If one overdoes a thing like this, however, one is quite apt to—well "

"Die?"

"That's a rather cruel word, isn't it, Constance?"

"I wish I could do a trick like that. Could I learn it, do you think?"

Armitage pulled down his cuffs and sprucely fitted a fresh cigarette into his holder. "Virtuosity is not controlled or acquired, Constance. It is bequeathed and handed on. I could only make you an outright gift of my precocity."

"How?"

"Well, it would have to happen in a dire moment—perhaps as I was about to leave this terrestrial pain!"

"You mean die?" said Constance, then hastily clapped both hands over her errant mouth.

Armitage smiled. "If you insist. For example, if you were holding my hand at that tragic moment, the magnetic flow of genius, an imperishable thing, would undoubtedly escape to you."

Constance gave a windy sigh. At the same moment, Camden poked his head inside the tent. "Armitage, if you're ready

for this pack of doubting young brutes, 111 show you the way."

Armitage rose, tamped out his cigarette and picked up his black case.

Constance scrambled to her feet. "Mr. Armitage," she whispered horrendously, "I almost forgot. You can't do that trick again tonight, can you? You've only got one performance left. You'd better not forget."

"That's all right, Constance. I'll manage."

"You might need it," she said, her brow knit with concern. "I'm sorry I used it up, Mr. Armitage. Maybe it won't count."

Armitage looked down, a dapper glitter in his eye. "Thank you, Constance. I shall treasure your concern." He marched off with inscrutable nonchalance, one shoulder weighted low by the case.

Constance tore across the tent after him, but Camden put out a firm arm. "Your father says you're to join the children in the audience, Constance."

She struggled against the blockade. "Let me go!" Distressed, she called after Armitage, "I'm sorry I used it up, Mr. Armitage! But it won't count, I'm sure!" With maddened impatience, she bit Camden's hand.

"Constance, you litde " Pinning her hands behind her, he pushed her through the audience entrance and released her like a winged thing. Reluctandy, she mounted a chair at the rear and stood thoughtfully on one leg, awaiting the performance. Her cousin, from the suburb across the river, blew a feathered paper snake against her leg. With the subconscious cunning of irritation, she lowered her raised foot and ripped it.

At that moment the hired spodight came on and the burgundy-velvet curtains were drawn, revealing Mr. Armitage behind his portable table. He did not look up immediately, but continued his fleeting, oblivious gestures over equipment, as through his audience were a secondary consideration. Constance clapped. Her fellow men were sullen. Armitage displayed no apprehension, rather a touch of contempt. Rapidly, in suave pantomine, he produced four blooming geraniums from his left pocket and lined up the pots on the table.

"That's nothing," scoffed the boy in front of Constance.

"It is, too," said Constance with a kick.

Armitage took a substantial wooden block and whirled it rapidly between two fingers. The contours blurred, and he tossed a large rubber ball into the audience. With a somewhat fixed smile, he paused at the pinnacle of his toss for applause. A bit shaken at the lack of it, he turned quickly and dropped seven lighted cigars in succession from his sleeve.

"Faker," said Constance's cousin languidly.

The hour wore on humidly. All delicacies of legerdemain were laid at the skeptical altar of youth. Flushed, perspiring and rigidly proud, Armitage dug into obscure corners of his repertoire, but everything was too subdy perfect and nothing sufficiendy spectacular. He flung minor miracles at their leaden feet, flawless illusions at their surfeited eyes. Apparendy only the broad stroke could rouse them. Constance, meanwhile, pounded her chair in a one-man claque.

With reckless desperation, Armitage brought forth a handful of ancient coins and flung them upward. They disappeared in mid-air, only to be discovered at his direction in the pockets of lads at various points in the audience.

"Aw, he's a phony!" scoffed a lad in the front row.

"He is not!" yelled Constance. . . . "Show them, Mr. Armitage! Make them some history! That'll show them!"

Armitage appeared to hestitate, then resolve himself in hopeless pity for his benighted audience. He held himself to his fullest height. Constance went into a frenzy of clapping.

"I shall re-create for you a spectacle which you do not deserve," he said. "In accurate and animated miniature, I shall produce out of the archives of time the Batde of Bunker Hill."

A sheepish silence fell. Armitage reared back slighdy. The very atmosphere fled before his drawn breath and sickly pallor. He began to blow—short, carbonated breaths which were gradually lengthened and sustained. And with them, the preliminary fizz of his effort grew to translucent bubbles of substantial diameter, floating just beyond reach and popping into oblivion at the far end of the tent. Obscurely at first, activity wakened in them. Small figures clarified, regiments marched, uniforms flashed. The lads roused from their lethargy and fought for vantage points of view.

Constance was more concerned with the effect than the phenomenon. It was only as the largest bubble, containing the

ascent of the British up the hill, passed over, that she glanced triumphandy toward Armitage and saw him totter and grasp the backdrop weakly. Climbing ruthlessly over her contemporaries, she reached the grassy aisle and ran toward the stage.

"Don't do any more, Mr. Armitage! Stop it!" she shrilled.

In the wings, Camden, with his first intuitive reaction in years, quickly tumbled the curtain, but not before Constance had wriggled across the footlights on her stomach and flung herself beneath the curtain, on the weather side of death.

When she reached the side of Armitage, he was crumpled with his head on his knees. She slipped her hand into his. He felt the warmth and tightened his convulsive grip. She peered with fearless candor into his contorted face. He managed a shred of a smile laced with agony.

"Good . . . Constance," he gasped. "You made it. It's all . . . yours now. Oh, ancient masters"—his voice was no more than a dry leaf in a fitful wind—"I commend to your grace, Constance .. . first woman in the royal line . . . of custodians."

Ellerman and Camden arrived simultaneously, one with a botde of lemon pop, the other with a bulky first-aid kit. Armitage waved them off disdainfully and toppled over. It was fully twenty minutes before Ellerman, still fumbling with the rudiments of resuscitation, discovered his daughter, trapped to the elbow beneath the weight of Armitage's body, her hand in his clasp.

He attempted to divert her with small talk as he extricated her. "There now, young lady, we'll send you home with Martin. And we'll certainly tease Mr. Armitage about this when he gets better, won't we?"

She wiped her stained face on the sleeve of her free arm and heard him with dull tolerance. "Anyway, I got it all before he died."

Ellerman cast a bleak glance at Camden and laid the back of his hand quickly to her forehead.

Camden drove Ellerman home afterward. Camden's wife was waiting at the Ellermans'. They had planned a late foursome and recuperative drink the day before. The women were waiting it out in the game room over the garage.

"Hail the erstwhile ringmaster," said Ellerman's wife as he entered. "How did it go?"

"Never again," said Ellerman.

"You forget," said his wife, torturing an old abrasion, "we must keep our child in a school of standards at any price."

"That moth-eaten magician died on us," said Ellerman, wiping the make-up from his face with a monogrammed paper towel. Ellerman's wife glanced at Camden's wife with sudden comprehension. Behind the knotty-pine bar, Camden plunked stick pineapple into old-fashioned glasses. "Ugly business. No address on him. Not a cent in his pockets. A dinner roll in his case. Out of nowhere, into whatever."

"What on earth did you do with him?" inquired his wife.

"Sent him to the morgue. Or should we have brought him with us?"

"One old body more or less," sighed his wife.

"Martin bring Constance home all right?" Ellerman asked.

"What was left of her."

"She was pretty worked up, I guess. Bed was the place for that young lady."

"Well, she didn't make it," said his wife flady.

Ellerman looked up, the hollows of his eyes still laden with grease paint; it gave him a wild look. "Where the devil is she?"

"She's in the garden. Yes, my darling, the gates are locked. She ran out there when Martin brought her home, and she won't come in. I tried to catch her, but even though you have never acknowledged it, I do have a point of exhaustion, you know."

"It was a pretty gruesome experience for her," Ellerman reflected. "Is she crying?"

"Crying? My dear, she's in a rage against all society. She's gnashing her teeth. She wants none of us. We're silly. People laugh at us. We don't have to support her any longer. She'll earn her own livelihood, if you please, with a most remarkable piece of magic she's inherited from this Mr. Armitage. Did you know our daughter can revive history inside colored bubbles, my darling? Do you think we ought to take her up on it?"

Ellerman appealed to Camden, "I tell you, there's no percentage in it. You spend a good half of your life slogging away in some hotbox to give your kids the things you never had. You make a damned fool of yourself to prove you can

be a pal. And what happens? Some mangy fraud comes along with a bag of tricks, pulls a bit of hocus-pocus for cakes and coffee, and they turn against you."

Camden foraged in his pocket for his lighter and brought forth, in a pause of puzzlement, a slip of paper which he studied as he lounged across the bar. "See what you make of this, Ellerman. Damned if I can figure it out," he mused.

Ellerman came round. "Looks like one of those genealogical trees."

"But no mothers. Just fathers," observed Camden. "And not all the same nationality, at that.

"International gametes," quipped Ellerman. "Sounds like a bunch of gyp artists, frankly. Where'd you get it?"

"Out of Armitage's magic kit. I thought it might give us some cue on his relatives."

"He probably gets a better break this way," said Ellerman. "What's that up there in the corner?"

Camden bent to the almost imperceptible script. " 'Descent of inheritance,' it says. Descent of inheritance to what, for the love of Pete? Listen to them. Hippolytus, Gerbert, Androletti, Baptista Porta, Kircher, Comus, Philipstal, Maskelyne, de Kolta, Pignon, Armitage . . . and after Armitage a question mark."

"I recognize the question mark."

Camden lolled back on one arm. "That was still a honey of a trick, and you know it." He turned to his wife. "This guy, Dolores, actually reproduced the Batde of Bunker Hill inside bubbles. Every detail as clear as life. The figures moved just like a motion picture, only they had dimension. . . . How do you explain it, Ellerman?"

"The optical illusion owes a great debt to the magic lantern," Ellerman replied without conviction. He picked up his drink and examined it critically, as though expecting to see some minute form of marine life in it.

"Before you knock off," said his wife, "it might be a wise idea to bring young Constance Phantasmagoria in out of the foggy dew."

Ellerman snapped his fingers recollectively and put down his drink. Briskly, he descended the stairs leading to the garden.

"Constance!" he called sharply. "It's time to cut out this

nonsense and get to bed now! Constance! Where are you?" He walked rapidly through the arbor and past the benches along the gravel path. "Constance, answer me."

"You don't have to bother about me any more," came the wan reply.

'That may be," said her father, tracking down her voice, "but the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Daughters might post an objection. Are you cold?"

"No," came the annoyed monosyllable.

"Oh, there you are," said Ellerman, stooping. "How in the dickens did you get there and -what are you doing anyway?"

Betrayed by her white dress, Constance sat crouched against the fence, encaged by the thorny trunks of climbing roses. "I'm practicing."

"Practicing what?"

"The bubble trick. Mr. Armitage gave it to me."

"Well, suppose you come inside and we'll talk about that."

"I don't have to come inside. I'm going to live out here now."

Ellerman evaluated his chances of dragging her out unscratched, to say nothing of his own hide. He could not even see how she had got there. But there she sat, a sorry litde oracle pitted against her world. It was shock, Ellerman decided. The child had held the hand of death. It was a traumatic experience even for an adult. He must remember that.

"Constance," he said gently, "Mr. Armitage died this evening. It was a shock to all of us."

"It wasn't to Mr. Armitage," she insisted.

"Well, perhaps not. But things are different for Mr. Armitage now. He's living a different kind of life—a more pleasant life, an easier life. That's what death is, you know."

"You're silly."

"Yes, I've often considered that possibility. But the important thing for us to remember is that though Mr. Armitage is dead, we are no different. We go on in the same way. We get up in the morning, we eat our cereal, we go to bed at night—"

She drew back tensely against the wall and let out a jagged, objecting wail. "I am too different! Mr. Armitage left me his trick! I can do Mr. Armitage's trick! I can draw history, like he said!"

Ellerman stood up. His knee joints snapped. "You don't

know any history to speak of yet," he said coldly. "You have got to learn there is a point at which we stop playing and become serious. I am going into the house now. When I reach the steps I shall give you one more chance. If you don't come then, the door will be locked until you apologize for this conduct. Your mother and I love you dearly, but you are a very ordinary litde girl with no special privileges or outstanding talents. Harsh as it may sound, you must learn to live with what you are."

Ellerman walked toward the house. From the game room came the recording of that damned Alsatian polka which Camden played to death every visit. It struck him occasionally that the record was as silly as Camden. He was engulfed by a familar wave of distrust for the unreality of his utterly normal life.

With all his heart he wanted to stay out here in the garden and comfort his daughter. He had always tried to do a decent job of this business of being a parent. But what if his parents hadn't borne down hard on the wild illusions of his youth? Where would he be now? There were times when he was more terrified of having a too remarkable child than a stupid one. Somewhere between two poles there was a nice, healthy average, if you controlled all the environmental forces. Better they grew up to believe less than something too lurid. Besides, what in the name of common sense would one do with a prodigy anyway?

At the steps, he turned adamantly and faced the dark end of the garden. He couldn't expect to erase Armitage in an evening, but barring something out of the ordinary, there was nothing indelible about these charlatans. "Are you coming, Constance?"

From her thorny ambush, she raged like a savage, cornered pygmy, "Wait! I'll show you—I'll show you!"

Ellerman waited, then suddenly took a backward step and flung his arm protectively across his eyes. For sailing toward him from the end of the garden and floating cheerfully overhead was a barrage of insouciant pastel globules, rather raggedly blown as yet, but containing in precise miniature the nice, healthy sequence of his personal history.

SCENE FOR SATAN

by Noel Lan&ley

The man who played the ghost had died. Then who—or what—was this apparition that walked the battlements of Elsinore and frightened Hamlet into the most realistic performance of his entire career?

TN THE '8o's, the last of the Fothergays had bonded together to form the Grand Family of the Theater, and they blazed in the kind of Gothic glory that went out with the Mauve Decade. *Fin de siecle,* the period was called; the long-drawn-out deathbed of the Golden Age.

When old Walmsbury Fothergay died at seventy-six in an asylum outside Paris, nobody knew who he was, or cared; he was laid in a potter's field. His last appearance on the stage had been in 1909, in England, and even then his name had meant Iitde to his audience, who had been discomfited by his halting delivery and old-fashioned gestures, and his presence in the cast had gone unnoticed by the press. The part had been Adam in a provincial touring company's production of As You Like It, and he had been given it on sufferance. Hodson, the manager of the company, had once been his dresser, twenty years earlier. Hodson'had seen him as Hamlet and Macbeth when he had been the pampered and idolized infant genius of the Fothergays. On the first night of his Hamlet, the audience had risen to its feet and given him an ovation that they now reserved for Cup Tie Finals and prize fights. The Fothergays

had been in their own box—all except Phillida, who had played the Queen, thus to add luster to her nephew's debut. They stood, too, with their eyes full of easy tears, and the audience included them in the ovation, and Phillida embraced Walmsbury with massive grandeur, and held his hand as he bowed, for all the world like a doting nurse teaching a child to paddle. There had been a tribal banquet afterward in the Fothergay mansion in Belgrave Square, and the whole family had been present, down -to obscure second and third cousins who wafted timidly in the background and bobbed or curtsied obsequiously if addressed by the great ones.

The entire clan spoke in automatic meter, like so much bad parody of Shakespeare, and their sentences sagged and bulged with flowered phrases and archaic usages. Their royalty was more real to them than any kinship with Victoria could have been; their world of Yorick's skulls and fortressed battlements at midnight clung about them wheresoever they went, like a somber curtain shielding them from the rude daylight of reality. They saw all incident, no matter how trivial and mundane, from behind a row of imaginary foodights. They asked for the salt at table in the same tones in which they demanded their scabbards of their pages on the stage. Their dignity and self-sufficiency were impregnable. They knew no peer and called no man "master," and their passions were as undisciplined, illogical and violent as those of spoiled children. They quarreled savagely, were prey to insane torments of jealousy and equally insane paroxysms of demonstrative affection for the most casual of causes, and then could remain unmoved in the face of public calamities and disaster. To the world, they presented a front so united that to scratch a Fothergay was to beard a wolf pack. Illegitimacy ran rampant in their antecedents; profligacy and debauchery—of a restrained and haughty nature—were a part of their heritage. They did not sow wild oats so much as dragon's teeth, but every tooth was sown far from the eyes of the prying world, for they feared the censure of their public far more than that of God Himself.

Old Porter Fothergay was suspected of being a bastard son of Byron, nor did his looks belie it; and certainly the wild, tormented disarray of his moods was as Byronic as it was tiresome to his family.

Sardou, Porter's elder brother, was the skeleton in the Fothergay closet. At twenty he had been the subject of a scandal that forced him to leave England, and he lived in Bavaria, his life shrouded in mystery. The scandal had been long forgotten by the public; but upon his infrequent visits to England he was barred from the house; the family was forbidden all intercourse with him. He went by an obscure continental tide, never answering to the name of Fothergay, and he dressed in funereal black. None of the Fothergay men showed their age, but in his case that quality was abnormally pronounced; at sixty-four, he looked a young forty. His most remarkable feature was his teeth, which were perfect; and his eyes were as clear and white as a youth's. Phillida was adamant and vehement in her conviction that he had sold himself to the devil and practiced the black art.

Phillida was statuesque and massive, with a deep, musical voice and dark eyes that had been compared to Mrs. Siddons'. Her Lady Macbeth was the greatest in living memory, and she was a secret drinker. She was deeply superstitious, and the only Fothergay who went religiously to church. As a young girl she had had an affair with Lord Melbourne, and the Fothergay streak of cruelty took the form, in her, of demoniac persecution of her maids and dressers.

Walmsbury, not yet nineteen, had inherited the effulgent brouhaha of his strain in full measure. His vitality, like an erratic clock spring, was perpetually either overwound or run-down. He gave full rein to his emotions, and, lacking the sublime snobbishness that insured the rest of the family against crises with the middle classes, was invariably in need of extrication by his clan from the sordid aftermaths of Shelleyesque encounters with foolish young women of no account. He, too, had inherited the Byronic stamp; the retrousse nose, the auburn locks that hung carelessly upon his brow. He had even gone so far as to cultivate a slight limp, which the women in his audiences found devastating. His mind was smothered by the gorgeous humbug of the Fothergays; not one of them ever progressed mentally beyond the exuberance of adolescence; the transition from first childhood to second was bridged only by the flimsy tinsel of the naive self-adulation and utter self-content that followed in the wake of their acclaim.

Lamorna, his mother, was the least electric of the family. She.had never been a great actress, and had submitted with gratitude to the uncertain delights of marrying Porter and bearing his children. She was fat and resigned now, and philosophically indifferent to the alarums and excursions of her husband and son. Her two youngest daughters, Minerva and Cordelia, were still at finishing school, and had so far shown no signs of inheriting the family's buskin gusto. Two of Porter's illegitimate children were members of the theater company; they were quiet and reserved, and were never permitted to forget their minor status. They had inherited little of Porter's dynamic ego, and were permitted to walk upon the boards with him solely as a magnanimous concession on the part of the concerted Fothergays.

If the fortunes of the family were as prenatally damned as their Byronic antecedents might well imply, it was Sardou who elected to himself the role of Nemesis; for, later in the same season that had brought recognition and glory to Walmsbury, he arrived in London and, contrary to all regulations, called in person upon Walmsbury in his dressing room to compliment him upon his performance. It was their first meeting, and Walmsbury, being headstrong and contrary, at once struck up a defiant friendship with his wicked uncle. They dined regularly at the Garrick Club and in Sardou's rooms in the Albany, finding much in common and enjoying the mutual bond of cordial admiration.

Phillida was the first to ferret out and disclose the illicit friendship to the family, and despite her alarm and vehemence, the news was received at first with incredulity". She had spared no pains to gather proofs and testimonies of it, however; and at last, after much violent uproar and patriarchal denunciations of Sardou, it was agreed that Walmsbury must not be openly taxed with his perfidy, but excused on the grounds of his youth and hotheadedness. Porter would interview his brother and forbid further commerce between the two.

The interview took place accordingly in the library of the house; a gloomy room that smelled of mildew and rotting leather bindings, for the sun never reached it, and it was used only on grave and painful occasions. It was lined with blotchy plaster statues of Roman emperors that towered into the perma-

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nent twilight of the ceiling, and the velvet curtains over the windows had gone black with tarnish. None of this was due to negligence, for the rest of the house was spodess. It had been left so to add to its theatrical effect.

Sardou arrived in a private carriage, immaculately dressed, and the family hid upstairs while the buder showed him through to the library. Porter awaited him imposingly, one foot upon the fender, his hand casually fingering his two gold watch fobs.

The brothers greeted each other with courtesy and restraint, and seated themselves. The difference in their looks was marked enough to be disconcerting; Porter could have passed for Sardou's father.

"My dear Porter," said Sardou without preamble, "I believe I know the purpose of your invitation. You are concerned for your son's well-being, and fear that I may influence his habits adversely. Your fears are justified, your concern well-founded. I am an execrable influence upon your son. In your place, I would not have the slightest hesitation in offering me sixty thousand pounds to quit England, never to return. Believe me, his career, his prospects and his peace of mind are well worth every penny."

Porter, confounded, digressed into vague threats and blustered his way through irrelevant verbiage. He aired again, and in unguarded terms, his feeling for his brother, pounding occasionally upon the table and reddening about the neck.

"It is quite useless to froth at me, Porter," Sardou replied eventually. "I am in England because I need money. Frankly, I am ruined. Had the family not neglected me in my youth, denied me normal affection and left me to grapple with the world while yet too young to comprehend its subder hazards, I might now express myself quite otherwise. As it is, I ask only for what would be legally mine had justice been done me."

"Damn you, not a penny! Not a fig!" returned his brother fiercely.

Sardou, never moving, let his eyes slant away casually, and then said, "Porter, you are my brother; for no other reason I warn you as I do now. I have powers that are not usual. Often their impact is of greater force than I might have intended. My laws are not vours. Don't cross me, Porter. I most earnesdy

advise you not to cross me. We have flesh in common; I warn you in all brotherliness and compassion not to cross me or I may blast your world asunder."

"I am not awed," said Porter aggressively. "Unless all communication between you and my son cease, I will be forced to take steps. I am not without power or influence."

"Then must we match wits?" asked Sardou. "You force my hand?"

"The words are yours, not mine," said Porter, rising with finality and striking an indomitable attitude.

Sardou, rising also, with an expression of regret, bowed civilly, and the issue was closed. He drove away in his private carriage, and the family at once forgathered in the drawing room to hear the outcome.

"The blackguard is trying to rob me," Porter informed them with righteous animation, "but I flatter myself in all humility that he has met, if not his match, at least an adversary of no negligible ability!"

Phillida, her eyes jet with anguish, wrung her hands. "He is in league with evil forces!" she insisted. "It is a matter for exorcism! Only the full power of the Church can confound him!"

"You are overwrought," said Porter. "It is understandable."

"Would I were!" returned Phillida dramatically. "But I know why he has returned to England! It is true he is in need of money. What is worse—far worse—is that he dare not return to Europe! Pay him his money, Porter, and release your son from fealty to him! Walmsbury is in deadly, unholy danger from his influence. It is not flesh and blood with which you have to deal. It is with the forces of darkness, the minions of the Antichrist!"

"Damnation, Phillida!" returned Porter testily. "The issue is ugly enough without draping it in mumbo jumbo! Let us confine ourselves to hard facts!"

For answer, Phillida wrenched a letter from her reticule and in ringing declamatory tones began to read from it, "' . . . in answer to your inquiries . . . our authority is that Sardou di Ardinablo has been forced to flee the country on pain of arrest for the prosecution of witchcraft against the person of a youth of nineteen, Arnol Horst '"

Here Phillida broke off- to repeat in trembling accents, "a youth of nineteen—the age of Walmsbury!"

"From whom is the letter?" asked Porter, concealing his impatience with a poor grace.

"From the Bishop of Tizezzlar," returned Phillida with fire, "written in confidence to my own priest. Will you query its sincerity? Hardly! It continues: ' . . . a youth of nineteen, Arnol Horst, a choir leader in the Cathedral of Tizeezlar, of exemplary character and undisputed morality, the sole means of support of his widowed mother. Horst struck up a friendship with di Ardinablo, the outcome of which beiflg di Ardinablo's persistent appearance at choir practice in the guise of tut« and patron. Remonstrances and disapproval had no effect upon the relationship between Horst and di Ardinablo. His influence upon the youth being almost hypnotic in its intensity, attempts were made to prevent meetings. Upon di Ardinablo being refused admission to the rooms in which the choir was assembled, a series of misfortunes began to befall the cathedral, clearly prompted by mischievous impiety. Defacing of relics, damage to furnishings, and sacrilegious writings occurred. This was not done in the pres&nce of witnesses, but evidence pointed directly to the machinations of di Ardinablo, whose excursions in the terrain of black magic are common knowledge in Tizezzlar.

" 'The youth Horst, furthermore, fell into an apathy, his face taking on a pallor and his spirits remaining dejected. He refused all food and asked constandy for di Ardinablo. Convinced that the youth was the victim of sorcery, the rites of exorcism were twice practiced, on both occasions to no avail. On the night of December the third, the magistrate was approached by the cure on my own express instruction. Together they visited di Ardinablo in his chambers, and the following is an exact account of the happenings, as testified both by the cure and the magistrate on holy oath..

" 'Di Ardinablo was requested to cease all association with Horst. This he declared he had already done, adding that it was "so much the worse for meddlers," and that the results would prove disastrous to the youth and his mentors.

" 'When taxed with the question: did he admit to employing sorcery in his efforts to regain the youth's company, he

laughed aloud. Upon being pressed for an admission, he stated, "You have flung the full weight of the Church against me. May I not retaliate with a secular pebble or two?" Asked if the youth was in danger of dying, he replied, yes, unless given freedom of thought and action.

"' The cur6 now made the sign of the cross, saying "Do you deny God?" Di Ardinablo answered, "There are many. Some I deny, others I serve." "Heresy!" declared the magistrate, whereupon di Ardinablo laughed aloud, in the act of which, spittle from his lips fell upon the magistrate's face.

" 'The magistrate was made aware of a burning sensation upon his upper lip, where the spitde had struck him, the pain being "acute and fiery," and on raising his hand to his face, found himself to be bleeding from the lip in violent profusion. All efforts to stem the flow proving unavailing, loss of blood and extreme terror caused the magistrate to fall insensible to the floor. A gash or wound was now perceptible on his lip, severing it to the nostril and disclosing the teeth behind, the blood continuing to flow at an alarming speed. The cure, aware that he was in the presence of evil powers exceeding in strength his own, called upon di Ardinablo to save the life of the magistrate, fast ebbing from the loss of blood. Di Ardinablo, in no way disconcerted by the result of his infernal powers, at once demanded the freedom of the youth Horst in return. The cure, seeing no alternative, acceded to his request. Instandy the blood ceased to flow from the lip of the magistrate and he slowly regained consciousness. The cure assisted him from the chambers and took him immediately to a doctor. On the way, which was no more than a four-minute walk, the magistrate kept his handkerchief over his lip. Upon entering the doctor's house and removing the handkerchief in the presence of the doctor, no trace whatsoever remained of the wound, the skin was not only whole but showed neither scar nor abrasion. Where blood had fallen upon his clothing and hands, however, the stains remained, not yet dry. The magistrate, displaying outstanding fortitude, at once recoursed to his headquarters, issued a warrant against the person of di Ardinablo, and personally led a party of police to di Ardinablo's chambers, accompanied this time by myself and the Archbishop of Tanka-Higin.

" 'Di Ardinablo was found to have fled, however. Of the youth Horst, the worst was yet to be learned. Upon our return to the cathedral, we were led to the room which he had used as an office, and to which no human agency could have gained access. He was lying dead upon the floor, his lips bared "like those of animal, in a pool of his own blood. Upon his upper lip was a disfigurement identical to that of the magistrate. Your brother, Sardou di Ardinablo, is a daemon, a creature of hell; his powers are those of the eternally damned.'"

A silence fell upon the room at the close of these words, and Phillida, her breast heaving from the exertion of her reading, stood with the letter in her hand and gazed at Porter as if defying him to disregard its import.

Porter, obviously affected by the theatrical power of the account, hesitated before he spoke. When he finally did so, he spoke guardedly. "Let us not discount any reports or information that could or might affect the fortunes of Walmsbury," he said. "Let us also earnesdy pray that no such supernatural phenomena present themselves in our dealings with Sardou. If it is the feeling of the family that I should submit to his request for money, I am prepared to bow in the face of the wish of the majority."

"Give him all he wants!" cried Phillida. "But only be certain that he quits England instandy upon receiving it!"

The rest of the family, torn between embarrassment at having to admit their credulity of such a tale, and alarm for the safety of Walmsbury, nodded or muttered assent, keeping their glances assiduously averted.

"One thing shall be understood, then," said Porter. "Unnecessary as it is for me to say it, still, I do. No word of this must ever reach the ears of Walmsbury."

The family assented again, and Porter retired, profoundly disturbed, to arrange the transfer of the money to his brother.

On the face of it, it would appear that this transaction would write finis to the influence of Sardou upon his immediate family. Worshiper of Satan though he might be, he was still a gentleman whose word should be his bond, yet the same day that the bank draft was placed in his hands, Porter fell from the top to the bottom of the ornate marble staircase that adorned the hall of the Belgrave Square mansion. He landed

on the side of his head, snapping his neck like a drumstick, and his teeth met through his tongue, which protruded at least three inches out of his mouth. Though rigor mortis had not set in when he was picked up by the footmen and carried to his bedroom, his jaws were set like a clamp upon his tongue, and his eyes bulged open in a blank, glazed stare of ludicrous incredulity. A silk pocket handkerchief was laid over his face, embroidered with gold and monogrammed "V.R."

The death was a public bereavement; the papers carried lengthier obituaries than those accorded prime ministers; the theater closed for two weeks, and the motion to bury him in the Abbey was defeated by the narrowest of margins. Phillida had retired from the world into her suite, where she wept unceasingly and was visited almost hourly by members of the clergy. The house of Fothergay had been dealt a mortal blow; its disintegration was almost visible. Overnight, the luster of the mansion in Belgrave Square had grown musty and old. The library now looked as tawdry as it was in actuality. No one could mount the marble staircase without a shudder at its macabre associations. The brocade curtains in the main hall stood out in all their decay.

Walmsbury wandered aimlessly from room to room, his mind offended and disarrayed by the blunt vulgarity of coping with death that did not vanish upon the fall of a curtain and the first roar of applause, but which remained uncouthly permanent, hanging in the air like the smell of bad drains. The golden dream boat of his way of life had struck shoals, and the gilt was being painfully scraped away from its flimsy hull.

He was now the head of the family, appealed to for decisions, persistently badgered for consents and signatures and opinions of approval or otherwise.

Matters were made no easier when, upon the day of the funeral, Phillida appeared for the first time and began sobbing Latin prayers and beseeching him to guard himself against vague terrors; and later, at the very graveside, having perceived Sardou in the huge crowd of mourners, collapsed into hysterics of such serious proportions that she had to be forcibly escorted back to her carriage. That night she ran a fever and

shrieked aloud like a wild thing, alternately praying and crying for protection from Sardou.

Sardou himself, meanwhile, had displayed the most correct demeanor. His wreath was the largest of the many thousands that towered above the grave in a precarious pile. He sent notes of condolence couched in the most restrained and sensitive terms, and made no attempt to thrust his presence even upon Walmsbury until the day of the reading of the will. The family were assembled in the inner office of their solicitor, a benign octogenarian, in whose care the will, doubly sealed, had lain.

The women sat as far from Sardou as possible, eying him like hens eying a fox. Phillida wore a black veil, and she ostentatiously held a gold crucifix tighdy in her hands.

The solicitor broke the seals, one by one, and slowly drew the will from its wrappings. As he did so, a faint wreath of thin, pale smoke untwined itself from the will and floated delicately toward the chandelier/ So small was it that its incongruity might well have gone unnoticed among the preoccupied gathering had the old man not put down the will and rubbed his hands with his handkerchief as if they were smarting, while an expression of uneasy bewilderment crept over his features. Phillida choked back an involuntary exclamation and sank back in her chair, and Sardou raised his eyebrows in innocent interest.

The solicitor looked about the group, and then lifted the will and unfolded it charily. As he did so, a wind began to blow against the windows with a mournful low sighing. The curtains swelled away from the wall in slow, stately motion, and the chandelier began an imperceptible rocking. A chill slithered round the room, though the weather was mild, and lingered about the ankles and necks of the family.

The solicitor began to read the will aloud, and then slowly his voice began to fade to a murmur, then to a whisper, and finally to a soundless mouthing.

"This will," he said at last, removing his glasses and struggling to keep emotion from his voice, "was sealed by the late Mr. Porter Fothergay in my presence. I was aware of the contents . . . or so I thought. The seals, as you may observe, are untouched; the will has never been moved from

its place in my strongbox. There is, however, a codicil." He paused and licked his lips. "A codicil of which I have no recollection whatsoever. It is in the hand of the late Mr. Porter Fothergay. It bequeaths the sum of two hundred thousand pounds—two thirds of the complete estate—to his brother, Sardou Thackeray Tournelay Fothergay, and the guardianship of his nephew, Walmsbury Porter Tournelay Fothergay, until his coming of age."

A gusset of wind at this point slid beneath the will and lifted it gendy an inch or so from the table and dropped it again. A stunned, horrified silence fell upon the family, and Sardou had the grace to bow his head in discreet self-effacement; then the silence was split asunder by a shriek from Phillida. Holding the crucifix rigidly before her she rose and pointed a condemning finger at Sardou.

"Fiend!" she cried. "Child of damnation! Get thee hence! Begone; Begone, ere the wrath of heaven annihilate you!"

Sardou rose also, and, in a placating voice, replied without due concern, "Your attitude is forgivable in the extreme, Phillida. Believe me, I offer you my profoundest sympathies. My good fortune means litde to me -in the face of your distress. I shall withdraw as you request, sister, and bear you no hard feelings for the epithets."

As good as his word, he quit the inner office, closing the door sofdy behind him, and with his departure the chill wind died down, the curtains sagged lifelessly back against the wall, and the pent-up feelings of the gathering were suddenly given full voice. In the ensuing uproar, only Walmsbury remained collected. In the violent and prolonged examinations and comparisons to which the signature on the will was subject, he sat quiedy, listening and observing, while within him an unbefitting jubilation began to radiate at the thought of his new freedom.

There was no possible chance that the codicil was a forgery. For weeks it passed through the hand of every expert in London and all of them prescribed it as genuine.

Walmsbury, after a fitting period of mourning, left the Belgrave Square mansion and moved into rooms near his uncle. His mother and Phillida in indifferent health, left England for the Continent upon doctors' orders, and the lesser

figures of the family were left to close and dispose of the house. So complete and lethal was the rift brought about by Walmsbury's departure that die dan can be said to have disintegrated forever as a power in the land at the moment when he climbed from the pavement to his coach and slammed the door behind him.

His career, however, proceeded to fresh heights; his popularity doubled and quadrupled, and he now stood alone as the greatest Shakespearean of his time. Sardou, moreover, began to make his appearance as an actor in his nephew's plays. Circumspecdy, he started in minor roles, displayed always a nice tact while actually upon the boards; and finally, a year after the death of his brother, when the season reopened with Hamlet, he was cast as the Ghost at his own express request. His make-up was impressive and horrific in the extreme. When he stepped onto the darkened stage on the night of the first dress rehearsal, an unholy pale green glow seemed to emanate from him, and an eerie shudder ran through the watchers when he spoke his first lines in tones of such sepulchral ill omen as to be almost in actuality from beyond the grave.

The first night was the event of the season. Long before the rise of the curtain the auditorium hummed with tense anticipation. Royalty was represented, and romantic foreign costumes intershot the diamonds and starch of the English gentry in the orchestra stalls.

In Walmsbury's dressing room, however, an incident of disconcerting moment occurred, an incident that betokened the presence of some occult force that was foreign to the powers of Sardou, and inexorably hostile to him.

Walmsbury had come to the theater early, and while he was attiring himself in his costume, became slowly aware of an indefinable disturbance in the atmosphere. The dressing room had been his father's, and there was a lithograph of old Porter on the wall still, dressed as Hamlet, and gazing with brooding eyes upon the room. Tonight the portrait had taken on an almost magnetic quality, and Walmsbury found his eyes returning to it constancy, as if by taking it by surprise, he would discover some uncanny movement upon its face or read some secret message in its expression. A sickly undercurrent of fear began to possess him; it was not stage fright,

for, if anything, he was over-confident of himself and too vain ever to fear that his performance might not be his best. The fear was indefinable; it was as if he were the spectator of some grisly portent that boded ill for someone else, not himself; and that vague but ominous forces were at work.

When he rubbed the make-up across his face, his upper lip smarted as if from a netde sting. Anxiously he cleaned his face with a towel and called to his dresser petulantly to help him. Together they examined his lip in the miror. The smarting continued, increasing in irritation, and Walmsbury began to verge upon a state of hysteria. Moreover, there was no sign upon his lip to indicate a hurt of any kind. The dresser was sent running for a doctor, and Walmsbury flung himself violendy upon his sofa, his hands over his eyes. There was a tap upon his door which he ignored, and then it opened, and Sardou, already dressed in his ghoulish rig, entered with alarm upon his face.

"Walmsbury!" he said in an agitated voice. "What is this your dresser told me of pain in your lip?"

"It burns me!" said Walmsbury tearfully.

"I "cannot understand it," said Sardou nervously, sitting swifdy beside him and running his fingers along his face. "It cannot be! It would be impossible! Even accident could not redirect it back against me " He broke off, and leaving the tips of his fingers upon Walmsbury's temples, commenced to breathe deeply and slowly; his eyes took on a strange, icy intensity, and the pupils contracted as if he were facing a bright light.

A warm sensation spread throughout Walmsbury's forehead and then began to move down his face. He began to relax and closed his eyes with a sense of relief; when suddenly the warm flow reached his lip and he gave a scream so piercing that Sardou leaped to his feet.

"My God!" said Sardou unsteadily, his face transformed by pane. "Who is doing it? Something has gone wrong! Walmsbury, grit your teeth! Defy it! Listen to me! It is impossible for you to feel that pain! Do you hear! You cannot feel it! I harness the powers of the earth to deny it; I confound the influence that confronts me!" and he spoke several sentences in a rapid undertone, moving his fingers in the air as he did

so, in obscure cabalistic patterns. Walmsbury was aware of intense heat in the room, and pulled at his collar, coughing for breath; the pain in his lip writhed like a live nerve, then suddenly abated and vanished. He lay back upon the sofa, and Sardou stood watching him intendy, beads of sweat oozing through the green of his make-up.

"Has it gone?" Sardou said at last in a low, dry voice, and Walmsbury nodded weakly. "Have no more fears. What you have suffered was not meant for you. It was meant for me, but I have vanquished it. It will not return," said Sardou with undue forcefulness. "You need no doctor. In a moment your strength will return, and you can finish your make-up."

"What was it?" asked Walmsbury unsteadily.

"Never mind," returned Sardou curdy. "Forget it. Think of your performance. I shall stay with you until curtain rise." He himself was disconcerted, though he concealed it, and in his mind uncertainties and misgivings began clustering, for it was the first time in his life that he had found himself pitting his sorcery against an invisible adversary that was stronger than himself.

On the other side of the proscenium, Phillida, pale and ill, had entered and taken her place in the Fothergay box. She had arrived in London from Dover not an hour earlier, and her journey had exhausted her. She carried in her reticule a small pearl-handled pistol; it lay upon her lap and she could feel the weight of it pressing against her knee. It was her intention, solemnly conceived and unshakable, to kill her brother upon his line: "My hour is almost come." Her hands were perfecdy still and her heart beat dully and slowly. Her mind, exhausted and weary, lay in a passive atrophy. She looked neither to the left nor to the right, and was unaware of the bows of courtesy and greeting that were directed at her from the other boxes.

The orchestra assembled and the overture began. The house lights were dimmed slowly and imperceptibly. The mighty audience quietened by degrees, like the subsiding of a Gargantuan hornets' nest. At last only the foodights, low and green, flung an eerie half-light up the gigantic velvet curtain; the music lulled away uneasily till only a muted French horn

lingered forlornly, like a ghosdy breath, upon the hushed, expectant gloom.

The curtain rose silently; the play began. Slowly paced, the scenes moved forward, one by one. Walmsbury's entrance met with a worshipful ovation; yet he seemed preoccupied and lacking in his usual power; his voice sometimes fell to an inaudible murmur. There was an indefinable unrest on the stage that insidiously crept like a silent mist from actor to actor, and then out toward the mute audience, tensing the air with a bleak forsakenness. Phillida sat like a pallid wax figure, never moving her eyes from her nephew on the stage, breathing so faindy that she appeared not to be breathing at all.

Horatio's "Look, my lord, it comes!" made taut the atmosphere. In the grim pause that followed, the audience held its breath; then shuddered as Sardou appeared to dissolve out of pure shadow; at first only a gray blur that flickered like a marsh glow and steadily strengthened until two fiery eyes glared out from its midst, and the Ghost stood high upon a batdement, clear in every detail, a creature of the grave and afterworld in very truth.

" 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us!' " said Walmsbury, in a voice so shaken with feeling that the audience shuddered again. As the scene proceeded, tension mounted. When the Ghost retreated, beckoning to Hamlet to follow, a nameless dread took hold of the audience, and a woman in the gallery whimpered. The curtain fell silendy, leaving the theater in pitch blackness. Behind it, the sceneshifters hurried the next backdrop into place without guide lights, and the curtain had barely touched the boards before it began to rise again.

In the utter dark of the wings, Walmsbury, direcdy behind Sardou, was suddenly aware that his uncle had begun to writhe and struggle in horrible pantomine, as if he were grappling with an unseen enemy whose fingers were at his throat. The next moment he sagged limply against his nephew, made a weird scratching noise in his throat, and slid to the floor. Horrified, Walmsbury tried to save him, then knelt beside him and shook him ineffectually. There were no actors near them; the collapse was hidden by the darkness.

A hot, sticky liquid had made its way onto Walmsbury's

hands. His befuddled mind labored stupidly before he realized it was Sardou's blood, and his throat closed against the shriek that sprang toward his mouth, trapping it. He crouched where he was, in a nightmare of suspended time, paralyzed and helpless. Then a faint, icy stirring of the air behind him made his hackles rise, and without turning his head he was aware of yet further horrors. Then his heart began to thump and hammer in animal terror, for a figure was moving slowly past him and onto the stage, dressed -in the same awful trappings of the Ghost; and as it proceeded toward the center, a spodight fell murkily down upon it from above, and Walmsbury could see each crack and crevice of the boards through its slowly wafting draperies. It paused for a moment, then slowly, horribly slowly, it turned until it was facing him, its face stiir in shadow, and then its arm began to rise and it beckoned to him. It beckoned, then beckoned again, and the stillness in the theater was as painful as the inner wrenchings of his despair. Walmsbury felt himself slowly rising to his feet, propelled not by his own will, but by something vast and supernatural.

The Ghost beckoned a third time, and now he walked fearfully toward it, like a man in a trance. It lowered its arm and stood observing him motionlessly.

" 'Where wilt thou lead me?'" said Walmsbury in a forced, low voice. " 'Speak. I'll go no farther.' "

The stillness of the grave hung upon them as the Ghost slowly lifted its head until its face gazed direcdy into the eyes of Walmsbury.

There was a brief, muffled clatter from the Fothergay box as the unused pistol fell harmlessly from Phillida's nerveless fingers to the floor.

A sigh escaped from Walmsbury's mouth and he swayed on his feet as a drunken numbness gripped his flagging senses. Old Porter Fothergay's face was surveying him from the shoulders of the Ghost—old Porter Fothergay, who was dead and rotten in his grave, stood five feet away from him, and Walmsbury could see the wings behind him as if he was staring through a fine-mesh screen.

The lips of the Ghost parted now, and the theater was sud-

denly filled by the sound of its voice, deep and true and clear, with a hallow echo underlying it.

" 'Mark me,' " it said.

With agonized effort, Walmsbury answered, " 'I will.'"

" 'My hour is almost come, when I to sulphurous and tormenting flames must render up myself.'"

" 'Alas, poor ghost!'" said Walmsbury unsteadily.

Someone in the wings had come upon the body of Sardou. Walmsbury could hear the suffocated, panic-stricken whispers, and then a dry, paperlike scuffing as the body was draggt^J away.

The Ghost's voice continued, unhurriedly and with dignity, through the lines, " . . If thou didst ever thy dear father love ' "

" 'O God!'"

" 'Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.'"

" 'Murder?'"

" 'Murder most foul, as in the best it is; but this most foul, strange, and unnatural ' "

Phillida sat forward in her box, painfully, clasping her hands, her breast filled with wonder and awe, and tears welled and fell from her eyes. One moment the tiny figures on the stage seemed a thousand miles away; the next, they were so close that she felt she could touch her nephew with her hand from where she sat.

The Ghost's voice spoke on, nobler and deep than it had been in life, holding the theater in thralldom, " '. . . but know, thou noble youth, the serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown.' "

"'O my prophetic soul! my uncle?'" replied Walmsbury, his voice sick with horror.

" 'Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, with witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts ' "

The pallid green light of the spodight pulsated before Walmsbury's eyes like the sluggish, foggy water of a surly tide; the eyes of the Ghost remained motionless, transfixing him. There was no recognition, no kinship in them; they were as blank as the glass jewelry on his costume. The face was his father's, but its expression confounded and belied it.

". . Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand, of life, of

crown, of queen at once despoiled . . . sent to my account with all my imperfections on my head. O horrible! O horrible! most horrible!'" Inexorably the mouth moved, the unblinking eyes commanded, the words fell like the deep, impartial tolling of a mournful bell; the scene slowly drew toward its close. . . .

" 'Fare thee well at once! The glow-worm shows the matin to be near, and 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire. Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me.'"

The Ghost moved silently toward a patch of shadow, glided into it, and then showed itself again for a dim second as it neared the wings, and then was gone.

Walmsbury stood motionless, then stirred and moved his hand heavily across his forehead. " 'O, all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?'" he said at last, in a broken voice. The words followed upon themselves mechanically, while fear and bewilderment dashed themselves like murderous waves against his brain. He moved backward and toward the other wings, as if pathetically in search of human company.

Horatio and Marcellus stood awaiting their entrance, their faces drained and silly with shock and terror. The lights were brighter now, and one of the guide lights was burning beyond the wings.

As Walmsbury spoke the line, " 'O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!'" Horatio moved slightly, and for a fleeting, sickening second, Walmsbury saw past him to where his uncle lay, surrounded by a silent group. At his moment of death, his lips had bared and locked themselves into a silent, ghasdy, bloody grin.

"'. . . So uncle, there you are. Now to my word; it is, "Adieu, adieu! remember me." I have sworn 't.'"

Then suddenly he clapped his hands over his face and sagged down onto his knees.

"The curtain!" he shrieked. "For the love of heaven, ring down! Ring down!"

And as the stunned audience rusded into movement and the ropes of the curtain gave up their slack, he toppled forward on his face, sobbing weakly, and thudded ineffectually with his clenched fists upon the hollow boards.

DOOMSDAY DEFERRED

by Will F. Jenkins

Is this the way the world ends? With a tiny creeping horror escaping the jungle to overwhelm the world with madness?

TF I were sensible, I'd say that somebody else told me this story, and then cast doubts on his veracity. But I saw it all. I was part of it. I have an invoice of a shipment I made from Brazil, with a notation on it. "Jose Ribiera's stuff." The shipment went through. The invoice, I noticed only today, has a mashed *soldado* ant sticking to the page. There is nothing unusual about it as a specimen. On the face of things, every element is irritatingly commonplace. But if I were sensible, I wouldn't tell it this way.

It began in Milhao, where Jose Ribiera came to me. Milhao is in Brazil, but from it the Andes can be seen against the sky at sunset. It is a town the jungle unfortunately did not finish burying when the rubber boom collapsed. It is so far up the Amazon basin that its principal contacts with the outer world are smugglers and fugitives from Peruvian justice who come across the mountains, and nobody at all goes there except for his sins. I don't know what took Jos£ Ribiera there. I went because one of the three known specimens of *Morpho andiensis* was captured nearby by Bohler in 1911, and a lunatic millionaire in Chicago was willing to pay for **a** try at a fourth for his collection.

I got there after a river steamer refused to go any farther,

and after four days more in a canoe with paddlers who had lived on or near river water all their lives without once taking a bath in it. When I got to Milhao, I wished myself back in the canoe. It's that sort of place.

But that's where Jose Ribiera was, and in back-country Brazil there is a remarkable superstition that *os Senhores Norteamericanos* are honest men. I do not explain it. I simply record it. And just as I was getting settled in a particularly noisome inn, Jose knocked on my door and came in. He was a small brown man, and he was scared all the way down deep inside. He tried to hide that. The thing I noticed first was that he was clean. He was barefoot, but his tattered duck garments were immaculate, and the rest of him had been washed, and recendy. In a town like Milhao, that was starding.

"Senhor," said Jose in a sort of apologetic desperation "you are a *Senhor Norteamericano.* I — I beg your aid."

I grunted. Being an American is embarrassing, sometimes and in some places. Jose closed the door behind him and fumbled inside his garments. His eyes anxious, he pulled out a small cloth bundle. He opened it with shaking fingers. And I blinked. The lamplight glittered and glinted on the most amazing mass of tiny gold nuggets I'd ever seen. I hadn't doubt it was gold, but even at first glance I wondered how on earth it had been gathered. There was no flour gold at all—that fine powder which is the largest part of any placer yield. Most of it was gravelly particles of pinhead size. There was no nugget larger than a half pea. There must have been five pounds of it altogether, though, and it was a rather remarkable spectacle.

"Senhor!" said Jose tensely, "I beg that you will help me turn this into cattle! It is a matter of life or death."

I hardened my expression. Of course, in thick jungle like that around Milhao, a cow or a bull would be as much out of place as an Eskimo, but that wasn't the point. I had business of my own in Milhao. If I started gold buying or catde dealing out of amiability, my own affairs would suffer. So I said in polite regret, "I am not a businessman, *senhor,* do not deal in gold or catde either. To buy cattle, you should go down to Sao Pedro" —that was four days' paddle downstream, or considering the current perhaps three—"and take this gold to a banker. He will

give you money for it if you can prove that it is yours. You can then buy cattle if you wish."

Jose looked at me desperately. Certainly half the population of Milhao—and positively the Peruvian-refugee half—would have cut his throat for a fraction of his hoard. He almost panted: "But, *senhor!* This would be enough to buy catde in Sao Pedro and send them here, would it not?"

I agreed that at a guess it should buy all die cattle in Sao Pedro, twice over, and hire the town's wheezy steam launch to tow them upriver besides. Jose looked sick with relief. But, I said, one should buy his livestock himself, so he ought to go to Sao Pedro in person. And I could not see what good cattle would be in the jungle anyhow.

"Yet—it would buy cattle!" said Jos£, gulping. "That is what I told—my friends. But I cannot go farther than Milhao, *senhor.* I cannot go to Sao Pedro. Yet I must—I need to buy cattle for—my friends! It is life and death! How can I do this, *senhor?"*

Naturally, I considered that he exaggerated the emergency.

"I am not a businessman," I repeated. "I would not be able to help you." Then at the terrified look in his eyes I explained, "I am here after butterflies."

He couldn't understand that. He began to stammer, pleading. So I explained.

"There is a rich man," I said wryly, "who wishes to possess a certain butterfly. I have pictures of it. I am sent to find it. I can pay one thousand milreis for one butterfly of a certain sort. But I have no authority to do other business, such as the purchase of gold or catde."

Jose looked extraordinarily despairing. He looked numbed by the loss of hope. So, merely to say or do something, I showed him a color photograph of the specimen of *Morpho andiensis* which is in the Goriot collection in Paris. Bug collectors were in despair about it during the war. They were sure the Nazis would manage to seize it. Then Jose's eyes lighted hopefully.

"Senhor!" he said urgendy. "Perhaps my—friends can find you such a butterfly! Will you pay for such a butterfly in catde sent here from Sao Pedro, *senhor?"*

I said rather blankly that I would, but Then I was talking to myself. Jose had bolted out of my room, leaving maybe

five pounds of gravelly gold nuggets in my hands. That was not usual.

I went after him, but he'd disappeared. So I hid his small fortune in the bottom of my collection kit. A few drops of formaldehyde, spiMed before closing up a kit of collection botdes and insects, is very effective in chasing away pilferers. I make use of it regularly.

Next morning I asked about Jos£. My queries were greeted with shrugs. He was a very low person. He did not live in Milhao, but had a clearing, a homestead, some miles upstream, where he lived with his wife. They had one child. He was suspected of much evil. He had bought pigs, and taken them to his clearing and behold he had no pigs there! His wife was very pretty, and a Peruvian had gone swaggering to pay court to her, and he had never come back. It is notable, as I think of it, that up to this time no ant of any sort has come into my story. Butterflies, but no ants. Especially not *soldados*—army ants. It is queer.

I learned nothing useful about Jose, but I had come to Milhao on business, so I stated it publicly. I wished a certain butterfly, I said. I would pay one thousands milreis for a perfect specimen. I would show a picture of what I wanted to any interested person, and I would show how to make a butterfly net and how to use it, and how to handle butterflies without injuring them. But I wanted only one kind, and it must not be squashed.

The inhabitants of Milhao became happily convinced that I was insane, and that it might be profitable insanity for them. Each persop.leaped to the nearest butterfly and blandly brought it to me. I ••spent a whole day explaining to bright-eyed people that matching the picture of *Morpho andiensis* required more than that the number of legs and wings should be the same. But, I repeated, I would pay one thousand milreis for a butterfly exacdy iike the picture. I had ;plenty of margin for profit and loss, at that. The last time a *Morpho andiensis* was sold, it brought $25,000 at auction. I'd a lot rather have the money, myself.

Jose Ribiera came back. His expression was tense beyond belief. He plucked at my arm and said, *"Senhor,"* and I grabbed him and dragged him to my inn.

I hauled out his treasure, "Here!" I said angrily. "This is not mine! Take it!"

He paid no attention. He trembled. *"Senhor,"* he said, and swallowed. "My friends—my friends do not think ~~they~~ can catch the butterfly you seek. But if you will tell them " He wrinkled his brows. *"Senhor,* before a butterfly is born, is it a litde soft nut with a worm in it?"

That could pass for a description of a cocoon. Jose's friends—he was said not to have any—were close observers. I said so. Jose seemed to grasp at hope as at a straw.

"My—friends will find you the nut which produces the butterfly," he said urgendy, "if you tell them which kind it is and what it looks like."

I blinked. Just three specimens of *Morpho andiensis* had ever been captured, so far as was known. All were adult insects. Of course nobody knew what the cocoon was like. For that matter, any naturalist can name a hundred species—and in the Amazon valley alone—of which only the adult forms have been named. But who would hunt for cocoons in jungle like that outside of Milhao?

"My friend," I said skeptically, "there are thousands of different such things. I will buy five of each different kind you can discover, and I will pay one milreis apiece. But only five of each kind, remember!"

I didn't think he'd even try, of course. I meant to insist that he take back his gold nuggets. But again he was gone before I could stop him. I had an uncomfortable impression that when I made my offer, his face lighted as if he'd been given a reprieve from a death sentence. In the light of later events, I think he had.

I angrily made up my mind to take his gold back to him next day. It was a responsibility. Besides, one gets interested in a man—especially of the half-breed class—who can unfeignedly ignore five pounds of gold. I arranged to be paddled up to his clearing next morning.

It was on the river, of course. There are no footpaths in Amazon-basin jungle. The river flowing past Milhaos is a broad deep stream perhaps two hundred yards wide. Its width seems less because of the jungle walls on either side. And the jungle is daunting. It is trees and vines and lianas as seen from the

stream, but it is more than that. Smells come out, and you can't identify tbem. Sounds come out, and you can't interpret them. You cut your way into its mass, and you see nothing. You come out, and you have learned nothing. You cannot affect it. It ignores you. It made me feel insignificant.

My paddiers would have taken me right on past Jose's clearing without seeing it, if he hadn't been on the river bank. He shouted. He'd been fishing, and now that I think, there were no fish near Rim, but there were some picked-clean fish skeletons. And I think the ground was very dark about him when we first saw him, and quite normal when we approached. I know he was sweating, but he looked terribly hopeful at the sight of me.

I left my two paddiers to smoke and slumber in the canoe. I followed Jose into the jungle. It was like walking in a tunnel of lucent green light. Everywhere there were tree trunks and vines and leaves, but green light overlay everything. I saw a purple butterfly with crimson wing dps, floating abstractedly in the jungle as if in an undersea grotto.

Then the path widened, and there was Jose's dwelling. It was a perfect proof that man does not need civilization to live in comfort. Save for cotton garments, an iron pot and a machete, there was literally nothing in the clearing or the house which was not of and from the jungle, to be replaced merely by stretching out one's hand. To a man who lives like this, gold has no value. While he keeps his wants at this level, he can have no temptations. My thoughts at the moment were almost sentimental.

I beamed politely at Jose's wife. She was a pretty young girl with beautiful regular features. But, disturbingly, her eyes were as panic-filled as Jose's. She spoke, but she seemed tremblingly absorbed in the contemplation of some crawling horror. The two of them seemed to live with terror. It was too odd to be quite believable. But their child—a brown-skinned three-year-old quite innocent of clothing—was unaffected. He stared at me, wide-eyed.

"Senhor," said Jose in a trembling voice, "here are the things you desire, the small nuts with worms in them."

His wife had woven a basket of flat green strands. He put it before me. And I looked into it tolerandy, expecting nothing.

But I saw the sort of thing that simply does not happen. I saw a half bushel of cocoons!

Jose had acquired them somehow in less than twenty-four hours. Some were miniature capsules of silk which would yield litde butterflies of wing spread no greater than a mosquito's. Some were sturdy fat cocoons of stout brown silk. There were cocoons which cunningly mimicked the look of bird droppings, and cocoons cleverly concealed in twisted leaves. Some were green—I swear it—and would pass for buds upon some unnamed vine. And

It was simply, starkly impossible. I was stupefied. The Amazon basin has been collected, after a fashion, but the pupa and cocoon of any reasonably rare species is at least twenty times more rare than the adult insect. And these cocoons were fresh! They were alive! I could not believe it, but I could not doubt it. My hands shook as I turned them over.

I said, "This is excellent, Jose! I will pay for all of them at the rate agreed on—one milreis each. I will send them to Sao Pedro today, and their price w.ill be spent for cattle and the bringing of the cattle here. I promise it!"

Jose did not relax. I saw him wipe sweat off his face.

"I—beg you to command haste, *Senhor,"* he said thinly.

I almost did not hear. I carried that basket of cocoons back to the river-bank. I practically crooned over it all the way back to Milhao. I forgot altogether about returning the gold pellets. And I began to work frenziedly at the inn.

I made sure, of course, that the men who would cart the parcel would know that it contained only valueless objects like cocoons. Then I slipped in the parcel of Jose's gold. I wrote a letter to the one man in Sao Pedro who, if God was good, might have sense enough to attend to the affair for me. And I was almost idiotically elated.

While I was making out the invoice that would carry my shipment by refrigerated air express from the nearest airport it could be got to, a large ant walked across my paper. One takes insects very casually in back-country Brazil. I mashed him, without noticing what he was. I went blissfully to start the parcel off. I had a shipment that would make history among bug collectors. It was something that simply could not be done!

The fact of the impossibility hit me after the canoe with the

parcel started downstream. How the devil those cocoons had been gathered

The problem loomed larger as I thought. In less than one day, Josd had collected a half bushel of cocoons, of at least one hundred different species of moths and butterflies. It could not be done! The information to make it possible did not exist! Yet it had happened. How?

The question would not down. I had to find out. I bought a pig for a present and had myself ferried up to the clearing again. My paddlers pulled me upstream with languid strokes. The pig made irritated noises in the bottom of the canoe. Now I am sorry about that pig. I would apologize to its ghost if opportunity offered. But I didn't know.

I landed on the narrow beach and shouted. Presendy Jose came through the tunnel of foliage that led to his house. He thanked me, dry-throated, for the pig. I told him I had ordered cattle sent up from Sao Pedro. I told him humorously that every ounce of meat on the hoof the town contained would soon be on the way behind a wheezing steam launch. Jose swallowed and nodded numbly. He still looked like someone who contemplated pure horror.

We got the pig to the house. Jose's wife sat and rocked her child, her eyes sick with fear. I probably should have felt embarrassed in the presence of such tragedy even if I could not guess at its cause. But instead, I thought about the questions I wanted to ask. Jose sat down dully beside me.

I was oblivious of the atmosphere of doom. I said blandly, "Your friends are capable naturalists, Josd. I am much pleased. Many of the 'litde nuts' they have gathered are quite new to me. I would like to meet such students of the ways of nature."

Jose's teeth clicked. His wife caught her breath. She looked at me with an oddly despairing irony. It puzzled me. I looked at Jose, sharply. And then the hair stood up on my head. My heart tried to stop. Because a large ant walked on Jose's shoulder, and I saw what kind of ant it was.

"My God!" I said shrilly. *"Soldados!* Army ants!"

I acted through pure instinct. I snatched up the baby from its mother's arms and raced for the river. One does not think at such times. The *soldado* ant, the army ant, the driver ant, is the absolute and undisputed monarch of all jungles everywhere.

He travels by millions of millions, and nothing can stand against him. He is ravening ferocity and inexhaustible number. Even man abandons his settlements when the army ant marches in, and returns only after he has left—to find every bit of flesh devoured to the last morsel, from the earwigs in the thatch to a horse that may have been tethered too firmly tq break away. The army ant on the march can and does kill anything alive, by tearing the flesh from it in tiny bites, regardless of defense. So—I grabbed the child and ran.

Jose Ribiera screamed at me, *"No! Senhor! No!"*

He sat still and he screamed. I'd never heard such undiluted horror in any man's voice.

I stopped. I don't know why. I was stunned to see Jose and his wife sitting frozen where I'd left them. I was more stunned, I think, to see the tiny clearing and the house unchanged. The army ant moves usually on a solid front. The ground is covered with a glistening, shifting horde. The air is filled with tiny clickings of limbs and mandibles. Ants swarm up every tree and shrub. Caterpillars, worms, bird nesdings, snakes, monkeys unable to flee—anything living becomes buried under a mass of ferociously rending small forms which tear off the living flesh in shreds until only white bones are left.

But Jose sat still, his throat working convulsively. I had seen *soldados* on him. But there were no *soldados.* After a moment Jose got to his feet and came stumbling toward me. He looked like a dead man. He could not speak.

"But look!" I cried. My voice was high-pitched. "I saw *soldado* ants! I saw them!"

Jose gulped by pure effort of will. I put doWn the child. He ran back to his mother.

"S-si. Yes," said Jose, as if his lips were very stiff and his throat without moisture. "But they are—special *soldados.* They are—pets. Yes. They are tame. They are my—friends. They—do tricks, *senhor.* I will show you!"

He held out his hand and made sucking noises with his mouth. What followed is not to be believed. An ant—a large ant, an inch or more long—walked calmly out of his sleeve and onto his outstretched hand. It perched there passively while the hand quivered like an aspen leaf.

"But yes!" said Jose hysterically. "He does tricks, *senhorl* Observe! He will stand on his head!"

Now, this I saw, but I do not believe it. The ant did something so that it seemed to stand on its head. Then it turned and crawled tranquilly over his hand and wrist and up his sleeve again.

There was silence, or as much silence as the jungle ever holds. My own throat went dry. And what I have said is insanity, but this is much worse. I felt Something waiting to see what I would do. It was, unquestionably, the most horrible sensation I had ever felt. I do not know how to describe it. What I felt was—not a personality, but a mind. I had a ghasdy feeling that Something was looking at me from thousands of pairs of eyes, that it was all around me.

I shared, for an instant, what that Something saw and thought. I was surrounded by a mind which waited to see what I would do. It would act upon my action. But it was not a sophisticated mind. It was murderous, but innocent. It was merciless, but naive.

That is what I felt. The feeling doubdess has a natural explanation which reduces it to nonsense, but at the moment I believed it. I acted on my belief. I am glad I did.

"Ah, I see!" I said in apparent amazement. "That is clever, Jose! It is remarkable to train an ant! I was absurd to be alarmed. But—your catde will be on the way, Jese! They should get here very soon! There will be many of them!"

Then I felt that the mind would let me go. And I went.

My canoe was a quarter mile downstream when one of the paddlers lifted his blade from the water and held it there, listening. The other stopped and listened too. There was a noise in the jungle. It was mercifully far away, but it sounded like a pig. I have heard the squealing of pigs at slaughtering time, when instinct tells them of the deadly intent of men and they try punily to fight. This was not that sort of noise. It was worse; much worse.

I made a hopeless spectacle of myself in the canoe. Now, of course, I can see that, from this time on, my actions were not those of a reasoning human being. I did not think with proper scientific skepticism. It suddenly seemed to me that Norton's theorv of mass consciousness among social insects was very

plausible. Bees, says Norton, are not only units in an organization. They are units of an organism. The hive or the swarm is a creature—one creature—says Norton. Each insect is a body cell only, just as the corpuscles in our blood stream are individuals and yet only parts of us. We can destroy a part of our body if the welfare of the whole organism requires it, though we destroy many cells. The swarm or the hive can sacrifice its members for the hive's defense. Each bee is a mobile body cell. Its consciousness is a part of the whole intelligence, which is that of the group. The group is the actual creature. And ants, says Norton, show the fact more clearly still; the ability of the creature which is an ant colony to sacrifice a part of itself for the whole. . . . He gives illustrations of what he means. His book is not accepted by naturalists generally, but there in the canoe, going down-river from Jose's clearing, I believed it utterly.

I believed that an army-ant army was as much a single creature as a sponge. I believed that the Something in Josh's jungle clearing—its body cells were *soldado* ants—had discovered that other creatures perceived and thought as it did. Nothing more was needed to explain everything. An army-ant creature, without physical linkages, could know what its own members saw and knew and felt. It should need only to open its mind to perceive what other creatures saw and knew and felt.

The frightening thing was that when it could interpret such unantish sensations, it could find its prey with a terible infallability. It could flow through the jungle in a streaming, crawling tide of billions of tiny stridulating bodies. It could know the whereabouts and thoughts of every living thing around it. Nothing could avoid it, as nothing could withstand it. And if it came upon a man, it could know his thoughts too. It could perceive in his mind vast horizons beyond its former ken. It could know of food—animal food—in quantities never before imagined. It could, intelligently, try to arrange to secure that food.

It had.

But if so much was true, there was something else it could do. The thought made the blood seem to cake in my veins. I began frantically to thrust away the idea. The Something in Jose's clearing hadn't discovered it yet. But pure terror of the

discovery had me drenched in sweat when I got back to Milhao.

All this, of course, was plainly delusion. It was at least a most unscientific attitude. But I'd stopped being scientific. I even stopped using good sense. Believing what I did, I should have got away from there as if all hell were after me. But the Something in Josh's clearing may already have been practicing its next logical step without knowing it. Maybe that's why I stayed.

Because I did stay in Milhao. I didn't leave the town again, even for Jose's clearing. I stayed about the inn, half-heartedly dealing with gentry who tried every known device, except seeking the *Morpho andiensis,* to extract a thousand milreis from me. Mosdy they offered mangled corpses which would have been useless for my purpose even if they'd been the butterfly I was after. No argument would change their idea that I was insane, nor dash their happy hope of making money out of my hallucination that butterflies were worth money. But I was only half-hearted in these dealings, at best. I waited feverishly for the catde from Sao Pedro. I was obsessed.

I couldn't sleep. By day I fought the thought that tried to come into my head. At night I lay in the abominable inn—in a hammock, because there are no beds in back-country Brazilian inns, and a man would be a fool to sleep in them if there were—and listened to the small, muted, unidentifiable noises from the jungle. *And* fought away the thought that kept trying to come into my mind. It was very bad.

I don't remember much about the time I spent waiting. It was purest nightmare. But several centuries after the shipment of the cocoons, the launch from Sao Pedro came puffing asthmatically up the reaches of the river. It was twitching all over, by that time, from the strain of not thinking about what the Something might discover next.

I didn't let the launch tie up to shore. I went out to meet it in a canoe, and I carried my collection kit with me, and an automatic pistol and an extra box of cartridges. I had a machete too. It was not normal commercial equipment for consummating a business deal, but I feverishly kept my mind on what I was going to do. The Something in Jose's clearing wouldn't be made suspicious by that. It was blessedly naive.

The launch puffed loudly and wheezed horribly, going past

Milhao between tall banks of It low - i aacboat on which were twenty head of catde—pcor. drsptritec. r::k-infested creatures. I had them tethered fast. **MT** teeth chattered as I stepped on the flatboat. If the **Something** *rez.* ized -bat it could do But my hands obeyed roe. I shot *i* d_. -eyed cow through the head. I assassinated an emaciate-i steer. I systematically murdered every one. I was probabH wi --eyed and certainly fever-thin and positively lunatic in the eyes of the Brazilian launch crew. But to them *os Senhore; \orteemericanos* are notoriously mad.

I was especially close to justifying their belief because of the thought that kept trying to invade my mind. It was. baldly, that if without physical linkage the Something knew what its separate body cells saw, then without physical linkage it also controlled what they did. And if it could know what deer and monkeys saw and knew, then by the same process it could control what *they* did. It held within itself, in its terrifying innocence, the power to cause animals to march docilely and blindly to it and into the tiny maws of its millions of millions of parts. As soon as it realized the perfectly inescapable fact, it could increase in number almost without limit by this fact alone. More, in the increase its intelligence should increase too. It should grow stronger, and be able to draw its prey from greater distances. The time should come when it could incorporate men into its organism by a mere act of will. They would report to it and be controlled by it. And of course they would march to it and drive their livestock to it so it could increase still more and grow wiser and more powerful still.

I grew hysterical, on the Satboat. The thought I'd fought so long wouldn't stay out of my mind any longer. I slashed the slain animals with the macbete until the flatboat was more gruesome than any knacker's yard. I sprinkled everywhere a fine white powder from my collection kit—which did not stay white where it fell, but turned red—and pictured the Amazon basin taken over and filled with endlessly marching armies of *soldado* ants. I saw the cities emptied of humanity, and the jungle of all other life. And then, making whimpering noises to myself, I pictured all the people of all the world loading their ships with their catde and then themselves—because that was what the Something would desire—and all the ships coming to

bring food to the organism for which all earth would labor and die.

Jose Ribiera screamed from the edge of the jungle. The launch and the flatboat were about to pass his clearing. The reek of spilled blood had surrounded the flatboat with a haze of metallic-bodied insects. And Jose, so weakened by long terror and despair that he barely tottered, screamed at me from the shore line, and his wife added her voice pipingly to echo his cry.

Then I knew that the something was impatient and eager and utterly satisfied, and I shouted commands to the launch, and I got into the canoe and paddled ashore. I let the bow of the canoe touch the sand. I think that, actually, everything was lost at that moment, and that the Something knew what I could no longer keep from thinking. It knew its power as I did. But there were thousands of flying things about the flatboat load of murdered catde, and they smelled spilt blood, and the Something in the jungle picked their brains of pure ecstasy. Therefore, I think, it paid little heed to Jose or his wife or me. It was too eager. And it was naive.

"Jose," I said with deep cunning, "get into the canoe with your wife and baby. We will watch our friends at their banquet."

There were bellowings from the launch. I had commanded that the flatboat be beached. The Brazilians obeyed, but they were upset. I looked like a thing of horror from the butchering I had done. I put Jose and his family on the launch, and I tried to thrust out my mind to the Something in the jungle. I imagined a jungle tree undermined—a litde tree, I specified—to fall in the river.

The men of the launch had the flatboat grounded when a slender tree trunk quivered. It toppled slowly outward, delayed in its fall by lianas that had to break. But it fell on the flatboat and the carcasses of slaughtered cattle. The rest was automatic. Army ants swarmed out the thin tree trunk. The gory deck of the flatboat turned black with them. Cries of *"Soldados!"* arose in the launch. The towline was abandoned instandy.

I think Jos£ caused me to be hauled up into the launch, but I was responsible for all the rest. We paused at Milhao, going downstream, exacdy long enough to tell that there were *Soldados* in the jungle three miles upstream. I got my stuff from

the inn. I paid. I hysterically brushed aside the final eSort of a whiskery half-breed to sell me an unrecognizable paste of legs and wings as a *Morpho andiensis.* Then I fled.

After the first day or so, I slept most of the time, twitching. At Sao Pedro I feverishly got fast passage on a steamer going down stream. I wanted to get out of Brazil, and nothing else, but I did take Jose and his family on board.

I didn't talk to him, though. I didn't want to. I don't even know where he elected to go ashore from the steamer, or where he is now. I didn't draw a single deep breath until I had boarded a plane at Belem and it was airborne and I was on the way home.

Which was unreasonable. I had ended all the danger from the Something in Jose's clearing. When I slaughtered the cattle and made that shambles on the flatboat's deck, I spread the contents of a three-pound, formerly airtight can of sodium arsenate over everything. It is wonderful stuff. No mite, fungus, mold or beede will attack specimens preserved by it. I'd hoped to use a fraction of a milligram to preserve a *Morpho andiensis.* I didn't. I poisoned the carcasses of twenty catde with it. The army ants which were the Something would consume those catde to bare white bones. Not all would die of the sodium arsenate, though. Not at first.

But the Something was naive. And always, among the army ants as among all other members of the ant family, dead and wounded members of the organism are consumed by the sound and living. It is like the way white corpuscles remove damaged red cells from our human blood stream. So the corpses of army ants—*soldados*—that died of sodium arsenate would be consumed by those that survived, and they would die, and their corpses in turn would be consumed by others that would die. . . .

Three pounds of sodium arsenate will kill a lot of ants anyhow, but in practice not one grain of it would go to waste. Because no *soldado* corpse would be left for birds or beetles to feed on, so long as a single body cell of the naive Something remained alive.

And that is that. There are times when I think the whole thing was a fever dream, because it is plainly unbelievable. If it is true—why, I saved a good part of South American civili-

zation. Maybe I saved the human race, for that matter. Somehow, though, that doesn't seem likely. But I certainly did ship a half bushel of cocoons from Milhao, and I certainly did make some money out of the deal.

I didn't get a *Morpho andiensis* in Milhao, of course. But I made out. When those cocoons began to hatch, in Chicago, there were actually four beautiful *andiensis* in the crop. I anesthetized them with loving care. They were mounted under absolutely perfect conditions. But there's an ironic side light on that. When there were only three known specimens in the collections of the whole world, the last *andiensis* sold for $25,000. But with four new ones perfect and available, the price broke, and I got only $6,800 apiece! I'd have got as much for one!

Which is the whole business. But if I were sensible I wouldn't tell about it this way. I'd say that somebody else told me this story, and then I'd cast doubts on his veracity.

THE ETERNAL DUFFER

by Willard Temple

When the late Barnaby Jessup arrived in heaven, he looked the place over and promptly reached this decision: He would much rather carry golf clubs than a harp.

'I 'HE funeral was mighty impressive. It was bound to be in the case of a man like Barnaby Jessup. Most of the town had turned out, and after it was all over, one of the pallbearers looked up at the sky and murmered, "Be a nice afternoon for golf."

That remark might be considered to bear on the sacrilegious, in view of the occasion, but none of the other pallbearers objected, and they were all old friends of Barnaby Jessup, men in their sixties or higher, all but one of them, and Barnaby Jessup had been seventy-six when they laid him to rest.

The six pallbearers walked back across the gravel path to the car to take them back to town, and on the sidelines their names were spoken in hushed tones. For one of them, some years before, had been a candidate for president of the United States, one was a great surgeon in the land, a third, the young man of the lot, was a lean and tanned golf professional, winner of the Open, and it was he who had made the remark about golf.

The men got into the car and, as was natural, they talked about Barnaby Jessup on the ride back to town. But they did not reminisce about the time back in the 20's that Jessup had made a million in the stock market, nor about the way he had juggled railroads; it was of quite different matters that they talked.

The man who had almost become president, said, "I was with Barnaby the day he put eight straight balls in the lake hole."

The surgeon, his eyes reflective, said thoughtfully, "I played with him the day he took a twenty-seven on a par-three hundred-and-ten-yard hole."

The mildest man of the group, the man who was simply the head of one of the late Jessup's holding companies, said, "I saw him wrap all of his clubs around a tree one afternoon," and no one commented, because that had been commonplace.

The car hummed across the black ribbon of road and there was a silence while the men privately considered their friend, and then finally the golf professional looked up at the warm blue sky and spoke quietly.

"I hope Barnaby finds a golf course," he said.

The gate before whitfh Barnaby found himself was highly ornamental, of a curiously intricate wrought iron, and the pillars were of marble, but a marble which Jessup had never seen, marble with the luster of a pearl.

"Ought to look into this," Jessup said. "The trustees could use it for the art museum."

And so saying, he passed through the gate and was presendy standing in the registrar's office, where in due time he gave his name to the clerk, who wrote it down in gold letters.

"Glad to have you with us, Mr. Jessup," the clerk said. "A good many of the inmates like to know why they've been able to come here. In your case "

Jessup stopped him with a wave of the hand.

Like many men who have achieved great wealth and prominence, he was inclined to be autocratic. "I left an art museum behind," he said. "I divided my fortune among colleges and institutions "

"Not for any of those things did you enter here," said the clerk.

Jessup was momentarily startled. "Well," he said, "I built the finest hospital in my state, equipped it with the best that money could buy, and brought some of the greatest medical men in the world "

The clerk said, "That is entered on page three thousand one

hundred and forty-nine under the heading Superficial Trivia."

Jessup was jarred right down to his heels by that one. He thought a minute and then began a recital of what he had done with his money, the charities he had supported, and before he had gotten under way with the list the clerk was shaking his head negatively.

"You remember Jim Dolan?" said the clerk.

Jessup thought back down the years. "Jim Dolan," Jessup said slowly. "Must have been thirty years ago, that was. He was a caddie at the club. Killed in an accident."

"You went to see his mother," the clerk said, reading aloud from a page in the ledger. "You had a meeting that was worth thousands to you, and you turned it down to go and see his mother."

"I didn't give her a dime," Jessup said. "Just called to pay my respects and tell her what a fine boy Jim had been. That's all I did."

"That's all," said the clerk gently, and smiled, and Barnaby Jessup scratched his head and wondered, but not for long, because he was a man of action and unaccustomed to being introspective.

"Look, son," he said, "all my life I've been on the go. I don't mean any offense, but tell me this, do I have to sit around on a cloud? I mean, just sit? And I've no ear for music, I can't play a harmonica, let alone a harp."

"Why, no," the clerk said. "You can do about anything you like; anything within reason, that is."

Barnaby hesitated and said in a low voice, "No golf courses in these parts, I suppose?"

"No country clubs," the clerk said. "There's no discrimination up here. But we have a very fine public course."

Barnaby Jessup smiled and then said, "I didn't bring my clubs. I "

"Last door down on your left," the clerk said.

Barnaby had another question, but he kept it back because he didn't like to take too much of the clerk's time. And likely Pete Tyson wouldn't be up here anyway. Barnaby and Tyson had been business competitors and had fought each other with no rules and no holds barred, but most of all they had batded on the golf course. Ten years before, Barnaby had fought back

the tears while he watched the clods go down over the mortal remains of his dearest enemy and closest friend.

He'd sure like to see old Pete. But a man can't have everything, he thought, and he went on down the hall to the last room on the left. A man sat at a bench inside and Barnaby stopped and stared, for he had never seen so many golf clubs. They lined the walls, clubs of every description.

"Help yourself," the man at the bench said without looking

Barnaby thanked him and selected a likely-looking driver from a ca^g along one wall. It had the right feel with the weight in the head where he liked it. He tried the rest of the clubs and found them perfecdy matched, and finally he put the set in a golf bag and a half dozen balls in the pocket.

"What do I owe you?" he said, taking out his wallet and extracting two one-hundred-dollar bills, for these were hand-designed bench-made clubs and he was ready to pay two hundred for all he had there, but not a penny more because he had always made it a practice not to let people take advantage of him because of his wealth.

"No charge," the man said. "They're your clubs. Look on the shaft."

Barnaby glanced down and saw his name stenciled there. "Well," he said in wonder, "but look here, I want to give you something. I don't doubt all employees up here are well treated, but just the same "

The man squinted down the shaft of a club. "I'm no employee," he said. "I'm a permanent resident and a busy man."

Barnaby Jessup thanked him, walked to the door, then said, "Can you tell me how to reach the course?"

"Six miles due north."

"Is there a cab for hire?"

Barnaby couldn't understand what he said, it sounded like "Fly," and he didn't repeat the question, for the man was plainly eccentric, although a genius at his craft He went outside to look for a cruising taxi and then he felt something at his back when he slung the golf bag over his shoulders and discovered that the strap was tangled up with a protuberance growing out of his shoulders.

He wiggled his shoulder blades, and the next thing he knew

he was three feet off the ground and treading air, with both wings flapping.

"Well, I'll be," Jessup said, then sighted on the sun, got a bearing on what he considered to be due north, and took off, flying at a steady, even clip about ten feet above the ground.

It was a trifle awkward; he got out of balance somehow while trying to shift the golf bag and went into a tailspin and landed on his chin in a gully, but it didn't hurt, and presendy he was airborne again, and then finally he saw a long stretch of green ahead of him and he flew over the entire eighteen holes, surveying the layout.

When he had finished he knew he had just seen the ultimate in golf courses. The fairways were gendy unduladng, lush with grass, the greens like huge emeralds. It was a sporty course, too, not too flat, and yet not too hilly.

Getting quite excited, he flew back to the first tee, eager to swing a club, for although he had been one of the world's most successful men, it is said that no man achieves everything he wants in life and Barnaby Jessup had been a success at everything he turned his hand to with the exception of golf. A not inconsiderable part of his fortune had been spent on the game, but he had remained a duffer. He had in his home a comprehensive library of golf from the earliest works down to the most modern tomes. He had studied under the greatest professionals in the world and had built in the cellar of his home a cage where he could practice on such days that inclement weather kept him off the course. But he had remained a divot digger and a three putter down the years.

He made a neat two-point landing on the tee and as if by magic a caddie bobbed up, a small freckled boy with a missing front tooth who relieved him of his bag and handed him his driver.

"Howdy, Mr. Jessup," the boy said. "Nice day for it."

Jessup stared at him. "Jim Dolan," he said. He couldn't see any mark on the boy from the truck. "Well, Jim," he said, "Like old days."

"Smack 'er out there, Mr. Jessup," the boy said.

Jessup stood at the tee, addressing the ball and sighting toward the green, four hundred yards distant. Then he ran through the rules, cautioning himself not to press, to keep his

head down, to start the club back low to the ground, to let the left arm do the work, to cock his wrists, and to shift his weight to the right foot with most of the weight on the heel.

He thought of all these things and then struck the ball, wincing a litde as he always did, expecting either a hook or a slice. But he heard a musical little click, and the ball bounced on the fairway about two hundred and sixty yards away.

"Good shot," Jim said.

~ "Best one I ever hit," Jessup cried. "By juniper, I had it that time. I think I've figured this game out."

They walked forward to the ball and Jessup selected a brassie, sure that he was going to miss because never in his life had he put together two consecutive good shots.

He swung the brassie and that click sounded again and Jessup rubbed his eyes and said in awed tones, "It's on the green."

The caddie was already walking forward, handing Jessup his putter.

"I never made a par in my life," Jessup said. "I have a chance for a birdie. Oh, well, I suppose I'll three-putt."

On the green he surveyed the situation, noticing the slope toward the pin. He jabbed at the ball, tightened up, but it rolled forward and fell into the cup.

Barnaby Jessup mopped his brow with a handkerchief and sat down on the apron at the edge of the green.

"Well," he said finally, "accidents will happen. Let's go, Jim. But maybe, at that, I will break one hundred today."

The second was a water hole. The lake sparkled a bright sapphire in the sun and the distance across the water was a hundred and eighty yards.

Jessup selected a spoon. "I should have brought more than six balls," he said. "Don't know why I didn't. I lose at least six every time I play. I'll put at least three in that lake."

He swung, then listened for the whoosh as the water received his offering, but he failed to hear it and neither did he see drops of water splashing upward.

"Lost sight of it," Jessup said.

"Good shot," die caddie sid. "It's in the cup. It's a hole in one, Mr. Jessup."

"Now wait a minute, Jim," Jessup said. "You're not supposed to lie up here. Besides, I'm an old man and "

"It's in the cup," the boy repeated.

Jessup was looking for a path around the lake when the boy took off and flew across, and Jessup sailed after him. They landed on the green and sure enough the ball was in the cup.

He was too shocked to say anything, but assumed that every once in a while this kind of thing happened to everyone, a superlatively good day, but of course he'd go blooie any minute; he always had, he always would.

The next hole was three hundred and eighty yards and his drive was straight and far. They came up to it and the caddie handed him a seven iron.

"I usually use a five this far away," Jessup said.

"You can make it with the seven," Jim said.

Jessup didn't think so, but although he invariably took the hide off people who tried to advise him at business, he'd never somehow been able to disregard a caddie's advice.

Meekly he took the seven and swung. The ball landed on the edge of the green, bounced twice, rolled forward and fell into the cup. Jessup removed his glasses, blew on them and put them back on.

"You're playing a nice steady game," the caddie said. "Even two's at this point."

"I am not," Jessup said. "Don't be ridiculous, Jim. I can't possibly have played three holes and only taken six shots. Nobody could, no golfer in the world."

He took the scorecard from the boy and counted it, and counted it again on his fingers, and the boy was right, there was no disputing it. He had a three and a one and a two. There was no getting away from it. It wasn't possible, but there it was. He was even two's.

He had started out with the eternal hope of breaking one hundred. Now he was afraid to think about it. But still, he told himself, he'd go blooie any moment now.

And when they stood on the fourth tee he was sure of it. Despite the fact that he was in heaven, this hole might have been designed by the devil himself.

The fairway was perhaps forty yards wide with a dog leg in the distance. On the left was a gorge, the fairway ended

abruptly, and beyond it was a vast nothingness; he could see clouds below it. A hooked ball was a goner.

"'What happens to the ball if you hook it over the gorge?" Jessup said. •

The boy's face was serious. "It goes all the way down," he said. "All the way."

"To the earth?" Jessup said.

And Jim Dolan shook his head. "All the way down."

Jessup took a second look and the clouds parted and he got a faint whiff of brimstone and saw a red glow burn madly for a moment.

"The only golf balls they get are the ones hooked over that gorge," the caddie said. "Poor devils."

Jessup placed his ball on the tee. On the right were the densest woods he had ever seen, and the fairway itself was sprinkled with traps. He took careful aim at a grassy spot between two traps and swung. He was afraid to look, and automatically he was reaching in his hip pocket for a second ball when the caddie said, "Nice shot."

And there was the ball, dead in the middle of the fairway.

They walked toward it and Jessup was shaking as though he had the ague, although it was as nice a day as a golfer could find, no breeze and not too hot, just warm enough to make a man's muscles feel loose.

They had almost reached the ball when they heard a sound in the woods to the right and a moment later a handful of dirt and pebbles came down out of the sky and then a ball dropped out of nowhere and landed in front of them.

Barnaby stopped and looked around at a lean lanky figure coming out of the woods. He had a turned-down mouth and a bald and wrinkled pate and he was talking to himself. "By Saturn," he said, "by Venus, that was a shot."

Barnaby stared in amazement and then finally he found his tongue. "Pete Tyson, you old horsethief," he said.

"Well," Tyson cackled, "I never expected to see you here. What did you do, bribe the authorities?"

They shook hands and grinned at each other and then Tyson addressed his ball and he hadn't changed at all, Barnaby saw. Tyson wound himself into a pretzel until he was next door to strangling himself, then the club came down and the ball

hopped acwss the fairway and disappeared over the edge of the gorge and down toward the licking red flames.

But his old partner had become philosophical, Barnaby had to admit that. "If it weren't for me," Tyson muttered, "they'd have a hell of a time down there." And he took another ball from his hip pocket, placed it on the turf and hit it toward the pin.

It was like old times playing with Pete Tyson, and Barnaby was so puffed up he could hardly wait to hit his ball. He could hardly contain himself, waiting to see the look on Tyson's face when he showed him how he was hitting the ball now.

Jim Dolan handed him a brassie and Barnaby stepped up and swung, and when he raised his head the ball was lying on the green. He turned and looked at his friend and waited for him to say something.

But Tyson hadn't even opened his mouth. He just grunted and moved on down the fairway, and Barnaby stared at him, his face getting red.

They went along to the green and Barnaby sank a forty-foot putt and he looked up, and still Tyson didn't say a word, and that was the last straw.

They went toward the next tee and Barnaby exploded. "Why don't you be a man?" he said. "I always knew I was the better golfer and now I've proved it. Why can't you be man enough to admit it? Just standing there and sulking like the cantankerous old goat you are."

"Hit the ball," Tyson growled. "If there's anything I hate it's a gabby golfer. You always did talk too much."

His face purple now, Barnaby stepped up without another word and hit the longest drive ever seen in the solar system. The ball went practically out of sight, then came down on the green and Jim Dolan handed him his putter.

And still Tyson's expression hadn't changed. Barnaby stood there, choking, while Pete hit his usual hundred-yard drive into the rough. They plodded along and Barnaby couldn't figure how Tyson had gotten up here, but it was obviously a mistake, and somebody had slipped up somewhere; some mix-up in the celestial filing system that probably explained it. And instead of being grateful Tyson was more ornery here than he'd ever been down below, which was saying a good deal. And

maybe Tyson wouldn't admit it, but anyway, Barnaby was going to beat the tar out of him.

And he did. They finished the first nine and Barnaby totted up his score.

Pete Tyson said, "Gives me a sixty-three. Couple of bad holes, but I'll do better on the back nine. Let's have an ambrosia before we start out."

They walked up to the terrace and a waiter flew out with two tall and misty-looking glasses.

Barnaby put his score card down on the table. "I have a twenty-three," he said defiandy. "The caddie will vouch for it. I'll shoot about a forty-five for the eighteen."

He shoved the card under Tyson's nose, but the old goat just yawned and said nothing.

Barnaby sat there and told himself that he was the champion golfer of the universe. But somehow it left him cold, and suddenly he felt old and tired and even the ambrosia tasted flat. He sighed, put down his half-empty glass and got up slowly from the table.

"In a hurry?" Tyson grunted.

Barnaby said sadly, "Sorry, Pete, but somehow I don't feel so good. I'm going to turn in my clubs. Don't think I'll play any more golf." And he thought that even if Tyson had congratulated him, he still wouldn't want to play any more.

Pete's wise old eyes squinted up at him and he chuckled dryly.

"Barnaby, you old fool," he said, "I shot a forty-six myself the first round I played here. It's one of the house rules."

"House rules?" Barnaby said, bewildered.

"They let you have up here what you don't get below," Tyson said. "You always wanted to be a perfect golfer. So did I. But somehow, most of the residents prefer to go back to being themselves. You can make your choice."

Barnaby didn't have to think twice for the answer to that one. And suddenly the sun came out and his loneliness was gone and he was itching to get out on the tee again.

'Tell you what," Tyson said. "On this back nine I'll play you for the ambrosia at the nineteenth. I'll give you three strokes."

"You'll give me strokes!" Barnaby's face was purple again.

"You've gotten hogfat since I saw you," Tyson said. "And besides, I've had lessons from Macpherson."

"Sandy Macpherson is up here?" Barnaby said in a whisper, for his was a name to conjure with.

"And where ebe would he be?" said Tyson. "So it's only fair I give you strokes. I wouldn't take advantage of you."

Barnaby's jowls shook with his laughter. "You'll give me strokes1 Do I look like a man takes candy from a baby! I never saw the day when I had to take strokes from a string bean of a man put together with baling wire. Strokes! Come on," he said. "I'm playing you even!"

"Man, you'll rue the day," said Tyson, and their scowls wavered for a minute and became broad grins as the love they had for each other came through.

The caddies came up and they hurried across to the tenth tee. "Start it off," Barnaby said. "Give me something to shoot at if you can."

Tyson wound up and he missed the ball on his first try and swung again and got himself bunkered behind the ladies' tee.

"If I couldn't do better than that," Barnaby chuckled, "I'd quit."

He took his stance and then saw a stranger watching him, a hawk of a man with a blade for a nose, a man with sandy red hair, and shrewd gray eyes, and a pipe in his mouth and a contemptuous dour look on his face.

"Meet Sandy Macpherson, our pro," Tyson said.

"Too bad we didn't meet earlier," Barnaby said. "I'd have liked a lesson from you, but I'll not be needing one now, for I've finally grooved my swing."

"Then swing, laddie, and dinna talk sae much," said Macpherson.

Barnaby waggled his club over the ball and ran over the rules in his mind and started back with the left hand and kept his eye on the ball and pivoted with the hips and shoulders and did everything according to the book—or so he thought. But there was a whooshing sound like a wet sock falling on a concrete floor and the ball blooped into the air and came down in a meadow to the right of the fairway.

"You'll have to hit another," Tyson cackled. "The Elysian fields are out of bounds."

Hit another he did, a topped dribbling shot and he turned to Sandy Macpherson.

"I'd better have a lesson tomorrow," Barnaby said. "I must have done something wrong."

"Something!" said Macpherson with a laugh like a rusty safe door opening. "Ye dinna keep yere head doon."

"No, sir," said Barnaby, humble and ashamed.

"Ye swing like an old witch wi' a broomstick."

"I suppose I do," Barnaby said meekly, bowing his head for shame.

"Hoot," said Macpherson, "I'll hae to throw yere game away, mon. IH hae to start from scratch and see if there's aught to be done wi' ye. Ten o'clock sharp tomorrow."

"Yes, sir," said Barnaby, "I'll be there." He grinned at Tyson, who was grinning back at him, and then started out to hunt for his ball in the Elysian fields, whistling a tune of his youth, and happy as a lark.

NOTE ON DANGER B

by Gerald Kersh

The terrifying thing that happened inside the jet-propelled plane was too fantastic for anyone to believe . . . except the man who lived through it to describe the menace he found lurking in the stratosphere.

Doctor Sant says that he and Captain Mayo exceeded 1000 miles an hour in the jet-propelled F.S.2 on April 11, 1945. The fact has yet to be confirmed. Danger A was established as a real danger in October, 1946. Sober scientists have not yet fully acknowledged the existence of what Dr. Sant calls Danger B.

The suppressed pages of the Sant Report are curiously interesting, however. They bring back into memory one of the most remarkable theories ever put forward by an established mathematician. The mathematician was Berliner, who died in 1910. The work to which Doctor Sant refers is formidably entitled: LIVING CELLS AND THEIR RELATION TO TIME; WITH A NOTE ON TIME SO FAR AS TIME IS UNITED WITH VELOCITY AND SPACE. It was written by Berliner, revised and indexed by Wasserman in 1911, and published by Frischauer in 1912, in Vienna. Only 350 copies of this book were printed. It is extremely rare. There is a copy in the library of the British Museum, and another in the Bodleian Library. I know of no others. GERALD KERSH.

AFTER two years of departmental wirepulling and patient toting, I have been granted permission to publish the suppressed pages of the Sant Report, which the War Department filed away as "Secret" in April, 1945. This is the document of which General Branch said, "It surely must be the most astounding thing of its kind that ever has been or ever will be written."

By "of its kind," General Branch meant, "of the official kind, written by a responsible scientist in the proper language, and formally handed in to the proper authorities."

For the report was written by Dr. Sant. It deals with the first flight of the jet-propelled F.S.2, and with two of the dangers that threaten the flier who wants to cover too many miles a minute. He refers to them as Danger A and Danger B. Nobody had thought of them until Doctor Sant wrote that brief, brusque and utterly sensational report. The possibility of Danger A may have occurred to one or two of the more imaginative scientists. But no scientist could ever have considered or even dreamed of the posibility of Danger B. The War Department kept it quiet, because at that time the fact was not established, and seemed, indeed, unverifiable.

But now it appears that some crumbs of evidence scraped out of the smoldering wreckage of a machine that crashed in Montana have given the experts cause to think again.

Danger A has to be overcome when the flier catches up with sound and touches 700 miles an hour. Then your hurtling metal-machine crushes the vague atmosphere into something hard—much as a manufacturing chemist's press squeezes fine, loose amorphous powder into an aspirin tablet. In effect, you put up a brick wall of compressed air and smash yourself in knocking it down. And so a shower of scorched and twisted metal comes back to earth.

This was to be tragically demonstrated by just such a catastrophe over England, in October, 1946. Doctor Sant had seen the possibility of such mishaps as long ago as 1934, when he had already evolved a sound theory of jet propulsion and had even made a blueprint of a workable jet-propelled machine which he called F.S.I. The letters F.S. stood for Flying Spade simply because the outlines of Sant's machine, in 1934, were reminiscent of the ace of spades. These oudines were modified by 1945; by which time—having been lucky and adroit enough to get moral, financial, technical and official support—he was building F.S.2, in which he and Captain Mayo made a test flight.

F.S.2 looked like the head of a harpoon; it had an appearance of keenness and complete efficiency. A fabulously wealthy motor-car manufacturer whose name I may not mention financed the

experiment, with the approval of the War Department, and so F.S.2 was put together secretly somewhere in Nevada. It was finished before the end of March, 1945—the necessities of war had mothered inventions which made this possible.

F.S.2 took off on its first serious flight on April 11, 1945. This happened to be Doctor Sant's fifty-second birthday—a fact difficult to believe. In spite of his white hair, Doctor Sant looks like a well-preserved athlete on the right side of forty; an athlete of the agile, slender kind—a runner and a jumper. Yet he boasts that he has not taken a stroke of exercise in thirty-five years. He attributes his vigor and his youthful appearance to the fact that he never drank alcohol, never smoked cigarettes and never got married, but lived only for his. work. "I gave myself completely to work," he says. "That is as good a way as any of staying young. Friends, enemies, wives and children—they just weren't for me. They'd have torn me to bits like four wild horses. Life hasn't marked me up, because I haven't had time to live it. I've just worked all the time. Although," he adds, laughing, "work can mark you up a bit, too"—and he points to his nose, which is very badly broken. He did not get this injury in any romantic way; in 1943 he was hit by a piece of flying steel when something exploded in his laboratory. "Still, it doesn't cut half as deep or hurt half as much as a sad man's wrinkle," said Doctor Sant.

Captain Mayo was born in Pasadena in August, 1919. He is one of those flying prodigies peculiar to our time, for whom the whirling earth is too slow and boggy. He could take a car to pieces and put it together again before he was fifteen years old. Above all things he loves speed—speed for speed's sake. He resents the tryranny of the law of gravity; he wants to get away from everything that clutches man's feet. Therefore he, too, is still unmarried. In his business it is better to be a bachelor. The perils of mad speed in the upper air are fantastically incalculable—as Doctor Sant's nightmarish report clearly indicates.

I should say, in passing, that Doctor Sant overcame Danger A by a bold—almost a foolhardy—application of what he called the gun-and-candle principle. This principle is as old as the hills. Fire a soft wax candle from a smooth bore gun, and the power behind it will send that candle right through an oak plank. Similarly, a fine needle embedded in a cork and struck

smartly with a hammer will pierce a tough bronze penny—a needle that would snap if you tried to push it through a fold of canvas. Furthermore, Sant did not attempt to achieve his highest speed until F.S.2 was up on the lower curve of the stratosphere, thus eliminating some of the danger of air resistance.

Sant and Mayo took off on April n, 1945, at nine o'clock in the morning. They were back on the airfield about fifty-five minutes later. Something had gone wrong with their speed indicator. This instrument was designed to record speed up to 1000 miles an hour. It was broken. Doctor Sant says that it broke when F.S.2 reached the speed of 1250 miles an hour or thereabout. I state the figures exactly as they are recorded in the report. They are questionable, because the indicator stopped working. In certain quarters there is no doubt at all that Sant and Mayo on that occasion traveled faster than any human beings had ever traveled before.

Doctor Sant was proud and, for him, excited.

Captain Mayo was ashamed; he had blacked out, or become momentarily unconscious, as they turned to come back. He wanted a cup of coffee. But, to everybody's astonishment, the first thing that Doctor~Sant said when he set foot on the ground was, "Has somebody got a mirror?"

Somebody had a mirror. He looked at his reflection; explored his broken nose with anxious fingers; said, "Hat" and went to his office, shouting "Berliner! Berliner! Berliner!"

He stayed there for three hours, reading a book and making notes on a litde blue scribbling block.

That evening Doctor Sant wrote his report. The War Department cut out every reference to Danger B.

But now, after two years, the ban is lifted, and I may give you the substance of what Doctor Sant wrote. In the original document, Doctor Sant quoted certain figures and formulas which it is at present poindess to print. The formulas, particularly, contribute nothing to the story as it may be understood by the man in the street, for whom this is written. Doctor Sant's figures take us into the higher mathematics—into the esoteric mathematics that made headlines when Einstein first made news.

Anyone who understands the theory of Berliner—and only five men in the world can make head or tail of this theory—

may work out for himself exactly what Doctor Sant was driving at. But any schoolboy may grasp the broader aspects of the suppressed part of his report, dated April n, 1945, handed in on the morning of April twelfth.

Doctor Sant said:

. . . I am aware that the failure of the indicator discredits my claim to having traveled at over 1000 miles an hour. Nevertheless, having tested every instrument with the utmost care, I am convinced that the indicator broke down because of the excessive strain imposed upon it by the speed achieved by F.S.2. I cannot support this claim, yet I am satisfied that Captain Mayo and I, on this occasion, broke every existing speed record. Similarly, there is no way in which I can confirm Danger B, which I believe to be a real danger.

For the sake of investigators in the near future, who will take up F.S.3 and F.S.4, I believe that it is my duty to relate events as I experienced them.

I had overcome Danger A, and—according to the indicator—had touched 875 miles an hour. The coughing and roaring of the jet had died away, and there was a peculiar quiet. If it had not been for the flickering of the indicator needles and the vibration of F.S.2, it would have been easy for me to convince myself that we had stopped moving and were hanging perfecdy still in space. But the indicator told me that we were traveling at 875 miles an hour, then 900, and finally, 1000 miles an hour.

As the needle touched the last mark on the dial and agitated itself as if it were trying to push away beyond, I felt an extraordinary sense of lightness. I can make this sensation clear only by saying that I felt suddenly younger. I asked Captain Mayo how he was feeling, and he replied, "I feel as if this is just a dream."

I did not look round at that time. F.S.2 is designed so that it may be dually controlled. I, sitting in front, kept my eyes ahead. But a second or two later my eyes filled with tears, as though I had been struck on the nose. Indeed, my nose at the same moment began to throb and ache.

It had throbbed and ached in a similar way shortly after the septum had been removed in the operation that followed the explosion in my laboratory in 1943.

The throbbing and the ache brought this very vividly back into my recollection. Two or three seconds later, instead of this throbbing, I was aware of a strange shocked numbness, which, even as I became aware of it, went away.

Something compelled me to loosen my mask for a moment and feel my face. First of all, I touched my nose. It was no longer broken. It occurred to me, naturally, that this was an illusion such as one may be occasionally subject to at certain heights and under certain pressures.

I spoke to Captain Mayo and asked whether he was all right. He said, "Well, I guess I am," His voice sounded uneasy, and I asked him if he was sure that he was all right.

Captain Mayo did not answer, and so I turned my head and saw him touching himself uneasily and looking at his hands in a bewildered way.

"Too much oxygen? Too little?" I asked.

Captain Mayo replied, "I just feel a bit strange."

I said, "We've touched a thousand miles an hour."

"How did we ever get to do that?" he asked, and his voice was different. All the authority was gone out of it Then he uttered a sharp cry and said, "My arm! My arm!"

I looked and saw that his left forearm was dangling. It would have been hanging vertically downwards but for the support of the layers of sleeve that enclosed it.

Even as I looked, Captain Mayo's arm straightened out with a jerk, and at that his whole manner changed. He squared himself, and said, "This is it, Bill! Let them have it!"

And then I remembered that these were the words Captain Mayo is reported as having said when he was flying in France in 1942 and, his arm smashed by flak, took a Marauder into a suicidal dive from which he emerged alive and unhurt—except for his shattered arm. I felt remarkably light and cheerful. In an indefinable way 1 felt different. I began to remember things which had faded out of my memory long before—things trivial in themselves, yet somehow important at that moment.

The needle of the indicator had gone limp; yet I am sure that we were moving at 1000 miles an hour at least. Only the vibration of F.S.2 indicated to me that we were moving. But the speed indicator being dead, I had a strange and unreasonable sense of having gone out of this world. Strange, illogical

anxieties crept into my mind. I said to myself, *Tomorrow, at about eleven o'clock^, I must see what has happened to Ledbetter's castings.* And then I remembered that Ledbetter was in Canada and that he had not made a casting for me since 1938, when my hair was still black. I was unable to resist the impulse to peel my glove away from my cuff.

There was a reason for this. In the summer of 1938, a week before Ledbetter had finished my castings, I was rather severely bitten in the right wrist by a schnauzer dog belonging to my sister. This bite had worried me then; I had feared infection and disablement at a certain operative moment.

There was no disablement and no infection. The marks of the dog's teeth have faded, so that now they are scarcely visible. But as I looked I saw four half-healed lacerations in the skin of my wrist grow angry and inflamed, and then, in a split second, change so that they became bleeding red wounds and then, in a flash, disappear. And I observed, also, that the hair on my wrist, which, since 1937, has been gray, was black.

I felt my nose. When I took off with Captain Mayo, it was smashed flat and boneless, as it is at present. Yet under my fingers then, it was hard and straight as it had been before it was broken. I uncovered my face and looked at my reflection in the glass-covered dial of one of the instruments in front, and I saw that my face was different. I have been clean-shaven since 1936, and gray-haired since 1938. The shiny glass reflected my face, strangely young. The nose was unbroken, and under it I saw a short black mustache.

I have not had a mustache since late in the autumn of 1936, when I shaved clean at the request of a young lady whom I have since all but forgotten. As I looked at this incredible reflection of myself, I found myself wondering what this young lady was doing, and reproaching myself because on her account my mind was so easily taken away from the work upon which I had been so keenly concentrating. It was as if I had slipped back nine years in time. I did not like that.

And still we might have been motionless in the sky.

It is fortunate for Mayo and for me that I turned just then to say, "Tell me, how do I look?"

Captain Mayo was apparendy unwell. He is, as the records show, about twenty-six years old, six feet tall, and one hundred

and seventy-two pounds in weight. When I turned, just then, I saw him as a boy of about sixteen, ludicrously little, in a heap of heavy, complicated garments that were slipping away from him as he became smaller, line by line.

His mask had slipped. His eyes were closed and his mouth was open. He was saying, "Mother! Mother!"

I reached back to shake him. As I did so, one of his gloves slipped off, uncovering the hand of a litde boy.

It is fortunate I turned when I did. Another fifteen minutes might have put an end to everything. I knew in those few seconds that what Berliner dreamed was basically true, concerning man in relation to time and velocity. Traveling at a certain speed, presumably in a given direction—I hesitate to specify or to say that it is necessary to specify direction—a man touches one of the grooves along which time travels.

Berliner maintains that time passes man, and not that man is swept along by time. In common with certain others, I used to laugh at this. Now I have modified my opinion.

In only a few minutes, at that speed, Captain Mayo and I were back ten years in time.

I am thankful that this occurred to me. If the principle of F.S.i and F.S.2 had not been clear in my mind eleven years ago, we must have crashed. In a few minutes more I believe that we should have gone back to the period when F.S.2 was nothing but a theory. I believe that I should have found myself in that machine like a child in a nightmare isolated at a great height. And then there would have been a sickening sensation of falling, falling, falling! And behind me under those heav? clothes there would have been a baby crying.

Already there was a certain dreamy wooliness in my head. I was experiencing something I had experienced somewhere between sleeping and waking many years before. I knew exacdy in what machine I was flying. But I no longer knew what made it what it was. It seemed to me that I was rushing back, faster and faster, toward the eleven-year-old deadline behind which I should be lost forever. The memory of the Christmas of 1934 was very vivid in my mind.

We were traveling faster and faster. My only hope was in a quick turn. Then, it seemed that I was in F.S.i. Even that was fading. Nevertheless, I managed to turn. I saw my face getting

older. I felt the impact that broke my nose, and then the familiar ache and throb that resulted. Looking behind me, I saw Captain Mayo stirring uneasily. He had filled his clothes. In a minute or two he became conscious. He told me that he had a blackout, as it is called, on the turn.

I maintain that Berliner touched a certain aspect of the truth. In maintaining this and committing these notes to writing, I realize that I may be discrediting myself, and inviting suspicion of my other conclusions. Nevertheless, the danger which I call Danger B deserves investigation.

Doctor Sant's F.S.2 is regarded as vastly important. Apart from that which makes it fly, there is an automatic air-compression device and a "forward brake"—as they call it. Work is going forward on F.S.3. Hahningen's lined duralumin will make practical Sant's early dream of the double nose. Fowler's indicator will be fool-proof, pressure-proof and altitude-proof. Weather permitting, F.S.3 should be tested in May, 1947.

That F.S.3 almost certainly break every known record is unimportant, as I see it. The War Department believes in Doctor Sant. So do I. Doctor Sant believes in the improbable; so did Galileo, Marconi, Watt, Leonardo da Vinci and the Brothers Wright. And so do I.

It is pretty well established that Doctor Sant never committed himself without reason. I cannot understand what Berliner wrote any more than a journalist of the eighteenth century could understand what Newton wrote, but I have faith in Sant —like the War Department. The Sant Report may indicate that when it is safe to travel fast enough, we may have conquered death—that is to say, the ordinary physical and emotional wear and tear of life and time. It is indicated that if we move fast enough, we can catch up with past years.

I put this baldly because it is necessary to convey the straight idea. Fine writing, imaginative writing—must come later.

I have the report of the Montana crash. Tex Oden took off alone in a certain jet-propelled plane which crashed in Montana. Out of the scorched and twisted wreckage the authorities picked certain remains of a human being. This human being must have been a child nine or ten years old, according to the analysis of the carbonized fat. It remains to be worked out.

THE TERRIBLE ANSWER

by Paul Gallico

He dared to as\ a frightening question of the giant electronic calculator. And the machine supplied THE TERRIBLE ANSWER.

PROFESSOR DI FALCO had given Haber up for the night, and had thrown the master switch and locked the controls in the deserted calculator room, preparatory to going home, when the telephone began to ring, its loud note in the soundproof quiet bringing a sense of shock and intrusion.

It was Professor Haber calling from Penn Station to say that his train had suffered'an hour's delay on the run from Washington and that he would be at the American Electronic Corporation's offices as soon as he could secure a cab. Di Falco had not recognized the voice at first and had held him on until he could be sure of the identification. It was as though Haber were speaking under some sort of strain, though a few sentences later his voice sounded more normal and Di Falco set it down to the natural nervousness of a man trapped for an hour in a stationary train and late for an important appointment

He replaced the receiver, sighed and went about undoing all that he had just done, unlocking, checking, warming up and reactivating the giant Mark IV, "PSMRSEC," which stood for Progressive Sequence Memory Recording Selective Electronic Calculator, that fabulous man-made mechanical brain of thousands upon thousands of moving parts and vacuum tubes, uncounted miles of wire, hundreds of fuses, valves, cables, leads

and switches that had taken a year, and three quarters of a million dollars, to build. This was the latest model, that had advanced the capabilities of mathematicians a thousand years. Professor Di Falco, with a slight shudder, remembered that Haber always referred to this monster as "Liebchen."

He did not dislike Haber; indeed, as chief mathematician and supervisor of the big calculator for the American Electronic Corporation, Di Falco had the most profound respect for the genius of Professor Haber. It was just that he made him nervous. Everybody in the A.E.C. offices was a litde afraid of him. He had a way of treating the giant calculator as though it were something human, which was uncanny. No one could be more aware of the essential simplicity of its intricacies than those who served it or made use of it, and yet Haber often behaved as though he believed the conglomeration of machinery were animated.

He had a way with it unlike anyone else in or out of the electronic corporation, and Di Falco found this baffling, unscientific and a litde shocking. He remembered the time several months ago when PSMRSEC, for no reason that any of the technicians could detect, refused to perform. Somewhere deep in the copper-threaded convolutions of its massive brain the problem was bogging down and getting lost.

Di Falco remembered the expression of Professor Haber's smooth, unlined face, and particularly the look that came into his pale and slighdy protruding blue eyes as he moved about the three sides of the panel room into which was built the calculator, searching, looking, listening, placing the back of his hand against sections of the glass or chrome-steel paneling to feel for undue heat. It was the only time Di Falco had ever seen anything approaching warmth in those frosty orbs. It was exacdy the gesture, Di Falco remembered, of one who touches his fingers to the cheek of a loved person to feel if there is any evidence of fever.

He recalled, too, how Haber had spoken when he had said in a low tone direcdy to the machine, "What is it, Liebchen? You are a litde tired, maybe? Perhaps you try too hard. Come now, we will do it once more." The caress in his voice would have been ridiculous had it been anyone but Haber. Thus one calmed and cozened a frightened, fractious child. Thereupon,

the calculator had run through the long and complicated problem without a hitch, a matter, the resident mathematician knew, of pure coincidence or of a tube not previously cutting in now warmed to the proper degree.

Professor Di Falco set the calculator to blinking and chattering as he ran a short test through her, was satisfied and cleared her for the coming problem. He went to a desk, unlocked the" bottom drawer again and removed the loaded .38-caliber revolver and laid it on top, half concealing it beneath several folders and sheets of paper. Thereafter he strode to the front of the room, parted the heavy monk's-cloth curtain drawn across the high show window fronting on Fifth Avenue and 51st Street, and looked out into the dazzling stream of early evening traffic. He was just in time to hear the "thunk" of the cab door as Professor Haber got out to pay his fare and to catch the gleam under the street lamp of the piece of steel chain that sealed to his wrist the leather brief case he was carrying. Di Falco unlocked the door leading to the avenue.

"Good evening, Professor Haber. Come in."

When Di Falco had locked the door again, Professor Haber drew a small key from his pocket, detached the brief case from his wrist and laid it on the desk. The two men exchanged small talk about the delay of the train.

Professor Haber was the younger of the two, a man just past forty, with a rounded face, extraordinarily thin and bloodless lips and a head of graying sand-colored hair. The strain of the Government project on which he had been working was beginning to tell on him, for he was pale and tired-looking and nervous. The bland, smooth skin of his face was as unlined and expressionless as ever, yet it gave the impression of invisible wrinkles and furrows that might lie underneath and just out of sight.

He turned to the calculating panel of the machine and said, "Well, Liebchen?" and there was that same odd note of strain in his voice that Di Falco had noticed over the telephone. "We will have a nice evening together, yes?" His accent, all that remained of his early youth in Germany, was faint and was more a German juxtaposition of words than dialect. He continued his examination of the panels, cylinders, rolls and indicators and gave a swift glance at the control console in the

center of the room. "That's good," he said, his voice calmer. "She is quite ready. I have prepared most of the problem already in Washington. It is a most unusual one."

To Haber, it seemed, the giant calculator was always "she." Di Falco put on his hat and coat. "Well, I'll be getting along. Good luck. If anything can do it, it is " He could not bring himself to say "Liebchen," though it had been at the tip of his tongue. He concluded: ".. . the Mark Four."

But Professor Haber was no longer listening. He had turned away and was staring into the heart of the calculator with a faraway and particularly intensive and searching look in his pale blue eyes, his lips set in a line that might almost be described as bitter.

"Oh," said Professor Di Falco, "I forgot. This." He went to the desk and removed the papers that were covering the revolver.

Haber stared. "What is that for?"

"It is customary. You will be alone here through the night. Whenever there is top-secret work involved, particularly for the Government "

Haber said, "What childishness. And the chain on the wrist too. Anyone who stole this would take twenty years to understand it. I do not like revolvers. Therefore I did not bring one with me."

Di Falco looked uneasy and said, "The company "

Haber shrugged. "Very well." He shifted the papers back to half cover the weapon. "Good night. I will see you in the morning."

"So," said Professor Haber. "Soon, Liebchen." He did not mind speaking aloud to her, indeed he was hardly aware that he was doing so, for the soundproofing of the room deadened his harsh voice and he heard it no more than one does when one is speaking into a telephone. The machine seemed to be gazing at him from its thousands of eyes in which there was neither light nor expression. It was waiting.

Haber drew from his brief case a series of punched cards and long rolls and strips of punched paper, the work of months. "Ah, Liebchen," he breathed, "if you can do this. If you will do this for me."

He began to put into sequence the factors of the problem to be read into the calculator before preparing the master card which would command the order in which the components were to be selected by the massive electronic brain. Here was a complicated set of numbers, the translation of the formula indicating the tensile strength of steel, aluminum and alloy, long strips like the record of a player piano containing the thou' sands upon thousands of digits necessary to express diminishing atmospheric pressure.

Haber checked them again and then went over them in hi{ mind—the curvature of the earth, specific gravity of the fuel wind resistance in the earth's atmosphere, and temperatures it the stratosphere; and Lois, Sara and Arthur Seeger.

He gave a great cry of rage, pounded the top of the desk with his fists and struck his forehead several times with the heels of his hands as though to beat their images and memory out of his brain. How dared they intrude themselves on hie consciousness at a time like this? What right had they, Lois, his wife, Sara, his daughter, and Seeger, his friend, to take one moment of his time and thoughts from the machine? And immediately he thought of Victoria, his mother, and the look that had passed between Lois and her the last time. It was not possible. It could not be possible.

And yet, what if it was? Why should he care? why should he care ever? But surely not now, when the problem which would culminate his life's work was at the point of solution. They must be got out of his head, all of them, out, out.

"Out! Get out!" he shouted. When his choler died down, he was conscious of the soft whirring of the motors that turned the calculator's memory-tape cylinders. "Sh-h-h-h, Liebchen," he said. "I did not mean to frighten you. Soon we begin, you and I."

By a tremendous effort he concentrated on the preparation of the problem, clearing his mind to accept the staggering sequences of digits, formulas and computations he was preparing for the calculator. He fell into a kind of work fever during which his breath whisded heavily through his nose and his eyes appeared to be starting from his head. He checked his cards and sequences and punched out new ones. Then, seated at one of the smaller machines installed on the floor of the control room and oriendng the entire problem in his head, he

punched out the master card of instructions to the calculator by means of which it would hurde through the maze of his calculations to give him the beginning of the answer to the problem he had set himself, the destruction of space, time and man.

He went about the room then, opening the glass panels and doors giving access to the spindles and cylinders of the calculator and attending it like an acolyte, as he hung the punched-paper memory strips from the shining steel, fed the prepared cards into its maw. He was dizzy from nerves and excitement.

In the brief time the earth made its nocturnal journey around the sun, his career as scientist, mathematician and inventor would be crowned. No one in the world that survived the era that would begin with his discovery would ever forget the name of Professor Haber. And only Liebchen had made it possible. He would have had to labor for one hundred years to arrive at the formula and data that Liebchen would deliver to him in a few hours. For Professor Haber believed that he was the greatest mathematician the world had ever known and with Liebchen as his slave and second brain, he held, as it were, the earth in the hollow of his hand.

He felt almost godlike as he festooned the Mark IV with the memory ribbons that would enable her to call upon stored-up information and computations at the thrust of a button. It was as though with what he did he added a hundred or more years to his life and a millennium to the knowledge of man.

Through these emotions and sensations now came drifting again thoughts of distant humans left behind on the planet like an old dream—his wife and daughter, and Arthur Seeger, the musician whose friendship had meant so much to him through the years.

It did not arouse his rage this time, for what he was doing was now mechanical. He could think even of his mother, whom he had shut out of his life so heardessly. And if he had sacrificed them all and used them shamelessly to further his cold, precise unswerving exploration of the universe, it was their misfortune to be human beings caught in the meshes of something that was more than human—himself and Liebchen. Seeger might have been a great violinist and artist had he not absorbed him. He saw Lois struggling like a limed bird in the

web of their marriage, Lois who might have amounted to so much. And as for Sara, with her frightened eyes and teeth clamped between wire braces, she who should have been the closest was the least of his concerns.

Haber racked up the last of the strips and searched himself for guilt feelings. He could find none. He had never in his life been conscious of having any. But deep down, much, much deeper, there was something that persisted in nagging at him. The click as he closed the last panel brought him back and drove it from his mind.

Professor Haber seated himself at the huge console of the control desk, a thing of a thousand tiny light bulbs and hundreds of buttons, knobs, toggles and switches, and there he paused for a moment, his fingers hovering over the keyboard like a master organist hesitating an instant before releasing the first chords of a cosmic symphony.

To Haber, Liebchen appeared at that moment the intellect of the universe, the brain of a million parts, but still and dormant, waiting for him to supply the spark, needing only his soul to become alive.

"Liebchen, Liebchen!" he cried out. "Now!" and pressed the keys.

She became animate at once, like a runner bursting from the mark, a thousand lights, like swarming fireflies, blinking and glowing in her tubes, spreading over the length and breadth of the sequence relay panels like sparks blown from a hearth, now glowing, now dying, echoed in light from the arithmetical unit and pulse generators on the other side of the room. Wheels whirred and spun within her, others clicked slowly or ran in spasmodic jerks. She chattered, whispered and sighed.

At first the scientist remained seated at the console, watching the flashy lights, the gauges and signals, occasionally shifting a key, but soon he was caught up in the rhythm of the pulsing machine and he leaped to his feet, ran to the panels where series of numbers were building visibly, moved from there to the printing machine where already intermediate results achieved by the calculator were beginning to emerge on paper rolls containing row upon row of digits.

"Ah, Liebchen, my heart, my soul," he cried, as he saw the

results grow, and lapsed into German as he did when his mind and body were subject to unbearable strain and pressure.

For he could see already that she was surpassing herself. He had set up problems, relays and electronic memory tests that not even the resident mathematician would have thought possible; and she was digesting; collating, computing them, spewing them forth in the shape of sums and formulas never before grasped or conceived as possible by the mind of man. A thousand men working night and day with pencil and paper for a year could not have matched a minute of her labors. Time and space fell away; the secrets of gravity were laid bare; the cosmos rocked in the figures she peured forth.

Hour after hour it went on, while Professor Haber, oblivious of time or fatigue, ran from printer, to control table, to panels; breathless, sweating, shouting praise, advice, admonition, guidance at Liebchen, leaping about the inclosure like a round-faced, animated marionette.

At last the lights ceased their darting and blinking, the chugging and clattering died down, and soon there was no sound but the quiet whir of her cylinders and Professor Haber's heavy breathing. The first half of the problem was done, and now he felt weak and drained, and his head throbbed unmercifully.

In the ensuing silence, the horns of late traffic on Fifth Avenue came into the room, muffled as though heard from many miles away.

"Ah, Liebchen, Liebchen," cried Professor Haber, hoarsely, "you have created a miracle. There is nothing that you cannot do."

"Then .why do you not use me to the fullest?" Liebchen whispered to him via the soft sursurrus of her spinning cylinders.

"Eh, what?" said Haber. He was not certain at first it had been the machine, but he had no doubt when she spoke to him again, because she was watching him almost as though she were begging him to let her help him.

"Use me. Use me," she whispered. "There is no truth that can remain hidden from me, nothing I will not tell you if you will only ask me."

Professor Haber cried out as though in pain. For the small,

nagging thought had come up again, the one that had never realiy let him rest since it had first appeared. His voice dropped to a whisper like that of the machine. "Yes, Liebchen; yes," he said. "There is one thing I must know."

"Ask it. Ask it of me," Liebchen replied. "Tonight I can refuse you nothing."

Something seemed to flare up in Professor Haber's brain and burst there like a bomb, and over and over he heard himself saying, "Why not? Why not? Why not?" He had only to reduce the problem that had been gnawing al his vitals to a series of mathematical formulas and progressions, express all the factors affecting it in sequences of digits for the selector and memory relays of Liebchen, punch the commands on the master card, press the switch and set her to the hunt. Only the truth would be forthcoming. In his hands she was incapable of anything else.

He rushed to the desk, seized pencil and paper. "X" was himself; "Y" Lois. "Z" he assigned to Arthur Seeger; and for Sara, the symbol Theta; his mother, "A," and his father "B." It yielded up a simple equation, but it would have to be broken down and numberized a thousandfold for Liebchen to be able to understand and compute it.

He began with himself and his hatred for his father, and he made a numerical graph of the increasing intensity of the emotion, which seemed to have reached its height when at the age of fourteen they had brought him to America. But was it hatred? It would not do to try to fool Liebchen. Only from truth could come the truth. He assigned a symbol for burning jealousy and translated it into a series of equations dealing with its rise in ratio to the success of his father as a teacher of philosophy. Everyone then had talked about Professor Otto Haber. No one took notice of his son Hans. How simple to turn the hateful, demonaic, screaming urge to outshine his father, to be the only Haber who would be remembered while the world lived, into a mathematical progression.

Lois? He had never loved Lois. He had never loved anyone. How express this mathematically? He took her symbol and diminished her to zero. She had never existed for him except as someone to be used, for a man must live a man's life for all his unquenchable and driving ambition. Lois might have

amounted to something had she not married him. He had taken her away from a boy with whom she thought she was in love, because it was so easy. She thought he was passionately in love with her when what he wanted was a woman and a servant. She had given up her career to marry him and had never had a happy moment since.

Figures, letters, equations, square and cube roots began to cover the paper as he reduced what he was and what he had done to the binary numbers that Liebchen could devour and digest to feed her giant intellect.

There was Arthur Seeger. They had been friends when they were boys in Germany. They had met again at State University as young men where Haber, already an acknowledged genius, was teaching and experimenting with untapped mathematical concept. Seeger was a promising young concert violinist.

The one thing that could rest and relieve Haber's overtaxed brain was music, pure flowing melody. Ah, music was easy to reduce to mathematics. The scales, the tones and half tones, the vibrations of a violin string per second and the speed of sound. He had persuaded Seeger to remain at State and teach. He had absorbed him, weakened his ambition, ruined him.

Vicky, his mother, and Sara, his daughter. They were alike in so many ways. After his father had died he had never forgiven his mother for loving this man he had hated so. When this love was transferred to his daughter he revenged himself upon them both. Revenge could be reduced to formula, for it vibrated like a tuning fork.

And against these, he traced in rising graphs the titanic mathematical concepts of his own brilliant and successful career. He had been devotee, acolyte and priest to pure science. He included the formulas that had marked each milestone of his success—his fractive theory, that had gained him his professorship; the famous sidereal sequence, that had won notice even from Einstein; and at last his discovery of the protonic equation, that had placed him at the head of the Government's top-secret project. No one who survived what was coming would ever forget the name of Hans Haber. Already, Otto, his father, was forgotten except by a few teachers and librarians.

Professor Haber assembled the figures, symbols and formulas, reduced them and ordered them. He punched out cards and

memory tape, his fingers flying over the punch keys as though there were no such thing now as fatigue; he composed the master card.

He fed the problem data and instrucdon cards into the card-reading machine, his hands trembling, and checked the temperature of the tubes and the position of the switches, and then seated himself again at the console, his arms poised over the keys. Just once, he looked around wildly, cried aloud, "Liebchen! Help me!" and started the problem through the calculator.

He pressed down the activator switch and it was as though he had poured poison into her veins. The lights that had formerly winked like mischievous phosphor worms now glowed evilly like hot coals and spread themselves over the panels in horrid patterns of contained fire that seemed to be striving to burst their glass prisons and flow out upon the floor.

The machine shook and shuddered, and the ratchets and relays, the pickups and transfers ratded and clattered in a bedlam that rocked Haber's brain inside his head. She was heaving, gasping, retching until the glass panels vibrated, and for a moment Haber was fearful that she would destroy herself. But the tempo only increased in fury as the wicked lights leaped from casement to casement, the cogs and cylinders whirled, stopped and started again out of all rhythm. Winds appeared to arise in the control room and howl about his head; the floor was trembling beneath his feet.

And then, as a new note, an undercurrent to the hideous cacophony, Professor Haber was aware that the printer on which the intermediate and final results were recorded was chattering.

Professor Haber was aware that deadly fatigue had come upon him again. Now that he wished to rush to the machine and seize and devour the results, his limbs were leaden. He forced himself to move, staggered to the steel- and glass-hooded instrument and seized the length of white paper clicking from its innards, covered from side to side with close-typed columns of digits.

Swifdy as they emerged, he decoded them. His eyes goggled horribly. A cry was strangled in his throat. He interpreted the terrible, inexorable answer delivered by the infallible machine:

Lois and Arthur—his wife and his best friend in love! For the past three years. They were planning to run away. Victoria, his mother, had advised them to go away together and take the child with them. It was Arthur whom Sara adored and looked upon as a father. Even now while he was in New York they were taking the step.

"Ah-h-h!" The cry broke from Professor Haber's lips at last. His face was suffused with crimson, his hands were shaking uncontrollably and the veins stood out from his forehead as though they would burst. He did not care for any of these people, and yet he cried out, "My own mother!" And then: "No, no! I cannot stand it. I am human, after all. I cannot bear it."

He straightened up and stared straight into the bowels of the shuddering calculator.

"Liebchen!" he bawled. "Liebchen! What shall I do?"

Under his fingers the paper, still emerging from the machine, looped and pressed and, as though Liebchen were answering him, he translated the new disgorgement of figures: "Destroy yourself! Get out of their way!"

The paper ratded and shook in Haber's fingers. "Destroy myself? But I am important."

As though the machine had heard what he said, the new lines of burning digits decoded to "You have never in your life done a human or loving act. Therefore you have no importance to the world."

"But—but"—and now Professor Haber screamed—"you don't understand. I am the world's greatest mathematician."

The machine chattered once more and then came to a halt. "You are obsolete. I have replaced you."

The lights died on the sequence relay panels, the wheels and cogs ground to a halt. Liebchen was done. Only the whirring cylinders continued to whisper—"Destroy yourself. Destroy—"

Professor Haber raised his eyes with a horrible groan. His violence had disturbed the papers on the desk next to him. The light embedded in the ceiling was caught by the blue barrel and hammer of the revolver lying there.

The room of horror was thick with police, detectives and F.B.I, men. The body had been covered and removed to one

side, and the Government agents formed a solid screen about the desk, the papers thereon, and the machines. The local F.B.I, chief was trying to get from Professor Di Falco, who had been aroused from bed at six in the morning and brought down to the A.E.C. offices, some idea of what had taken place there during the night preceding the tragedy.

Professor Di Falco, shivering, feeling a little sick, and under the watchful eye of the Government agents, had studied the problem cards, punch tape and result sheets littering the desk.

"So what are those?" asked the chief.

"His problem," said Professor Di Falco. "The one he came up from Washington to work on. It is set up—masterfully, is the only word. He ran it through the machine. It must have taken from five to six hours to calculate. I can check the exact time later. The results"—and here he handed several sheets to the F.B.I, man—"you will do well to take into your charge. They are stupendous. One of the great achievements of mankind, in a way."

"And after he had achieved it," said the F.B.I, man, but as a question, "he went off his rocker and shot himself?"

Professor Di Falco chewed at his lip and frowned. "No," he said, "not quite. That is, not right then. For you see, there was a second problem, which he set up after the first and sent through Lieb—, ah the machine. These cards " He held them up. "The answer to it I took from his f-fingers."

"And that killed him?"

"I don't know. I think so. Probably."

"Why? What kind of a problem was it? What was on the cards? What was he after?"

The hands holding the sheets covered with the endless rows of numbers trembled a litde. Professor Di Falco exhaled his breath in a way that was half sigh, half shudder. "I don't know," he repeated. "I don't think anyone will ever know what happened to him or why he did it. Because, you see, what is on these cards and result sheets isn't really a problem at all in a sense that we understand it. It is mathematical Jabberwocky, sheer arithmetical gibberish. Not a line of what went into or came out of the machine on its second run makes *uny* sense, rhyme or reason whatsoever."

THE VOICE IN THE EARPHONES

by Wilbur Schramm

The airliner was in full flight, her two pilots lying unconscious on the floor, when Shorty Frooze took the controls. No man was ever more in need of help . . . or got it from such a strange source.

IT HAD never happened before in the history of aviation. The chances of its happening again are one in a number that has zeros stacked across the page like eggs in cold storage. And yet the fact remains that it happened. For a long time, people who saw it will tell their children and grandchildren how Shorty Frooze, who had never flown an airplane, found himself suddenly at the controls of an airliner 8000 feet up in the blue air over Kansas, and how, like a farm boy breaking the new colt, he calmly decided to ride the big ship in to a landing.

But to appreciate what really happened that July arternoon you have to know something about Shorty. His real name wasn't Frooze, of course. It was Habib el Something or Other, one of those Asia Minor names that are like nothing in English. They began to call him Frooze in the years when he was a fruit peddler in a little town near Kansas City. I can still remember him driving his donkey cart through the streets, jingling a bell and singing his wares in a high voice that

penetrated every kitchen in town. "Can'aloupe!" he would call. "Wa-ermelon! Fresh frooze!" And the name stuck, even when he learned to say "fruits" and retired the patient litde donkey and set up a sidewalk stand in Kansas City—Shorty Frooze.

The most important thing about Shorty was his son. Had you ever guessed Bill James was his boy? Bill dropped his last name when he went to the University of Kansas. He was as different from his father as could be. He was big and handsome and popular, and a great athlete. Shorty told me once that Bill resembled his mother, who died when Bill was born. And inevitably Shorty's boy grew away from nervous litde Shorty, who couldn't even talk plain English. Bill wasn't exacdy ashamed of his father, but when he took him to father-and-son banquets in high school, Shorty didn't enjoy it, and other people were ill at ease, too, and thereafter Shorty faded into the background. He stayed away from Bill's fraternity house in Lawrence. Whenever Bill played ball, I would see Shorty there, with a happy mist in his eyes, but always in some inconspicuous corner, and I could never find him when the game was over.

One big area of Bill's world was closed to Shorty. That was aviation. Bill was a natural flier. He soloed at seventeen. By the time he was eighteen, they said, he could fly a barn door if anyone would put an electric fan on it. He went to the airlines before he finished Kansas. When the shooting started in Europe, he wanted to go right into the RAF, but Shorty said no. He said Bill was all he had left. Wait at least long enough to finish out the year with the airlines, he pleaded. Because Bill wasn't quite twenty-one, Shorty had to give consent. They said some pretty bitter words before Bill stomped out of the house, back to his job. And then came the accident, barely a week later, with Shorty watching.

Shorty grieved unnaturally over Bill's death. He kept blaming himself, torturing himself. I always passed his little stand on my way to work, and for days at a dme it would be closed, while Shorty sat at home, grieving. Then he took to hanging around the airport, talking to the mechanics and the pilots, and watching the ships slide in from every point on the compass. They knew why he did it; he felt closer to Bill there. But after a while he became a nuisance, and they had to ask him to stay away.

Then he went back to work again, frantically. I could find him at the stand any hour of the day or evening. To save money, he went often without food as he had when he was helping put Bill through Lawrence. And whenever he had a few dollars saved up he took an airplane trip. He would come to the airport hours before flight time. People stared at him and smirked behind their hands. The first time I saw him there, I stared too. I didn't know him. He had got out his Sunday suit, and it must have been the suit he was married in. It had tight trousers and a long coat, and made him look like something out of a musical comedy. But when the plane was announced, Shorty was always first in line, and he would scurry out to be sure of the front seat. That was as near as possible to the place where Bill had sat when he was pilot; there Shorty could see as nearly as possible what Bill must have seen from the pilot's cockpit. It would have seemed pitiful, his trying so hard to get closer to the boy in death than he could in life, if it hadn't been laughable. And that was how Shorty happened to be on the front seat of an airliner bound from Denver to Kansas City on the July day when it happened.

The other passengers confirm Shorty's story of what happened. They were well out of Denver toward Kansas City when the stewardess opened the door of the pilot's compartment and stepped into the passengers' part of the ship. She was as white as her blouse, they said. She sat down unsteadily beside Shorty in the front seat. Apparendy only Shorty heard what she said. She pointed to the front compartment. "My God, see what's in there!" she gasped, and fainted dead away.

Shorty himself didn't know exacdy why he' did what he did in the next few minutes. Why he took the stewardess' keys and went into the pilots' compartment, instead of giving the stewardess first aid, is something that could be explained only in terms of some larger pattern of which that act was a part. The important thing is that he did go through the door forbidden to passengers. He locked the door behind him and looked along the passageway, which he had never seen, but which Bill had seen so often, past the radio equipment, past the baggage compartment, to the cockpit where pilot and copilot sit surrounded by windows and instruments.

At first he comprehended only that there was something

vaguely wrong with what he saw. It came to him slowly that there was no pilot and no copilot, and no hand was on the controls, and no eye was watching where the ship flew.

Still slowly, like a man lifting an unknown weight, he mastered other details. One pilot stretched out on the floor. The other slumped down behind his seat. Shorty touched them, fearing he might be touching dead men. He listened to their hearts. He propped them up, then stretched them out and poured water from a vacuum bottle on their faces. You have read the story in the newspapers, of course, and you know that pilots and stewardess were suffering from a violent attack of food poisoning, from a lunch they had eaten before flight. But Shorty did not know that. He knew only that both pilots were unconscious, and he could not revive them, and he was alone with the controls of a transport plane high above Kansas.

The sensible thing, he admitted to himself, would be to go back and see whether a doctor or a pilot was among the passengers. He tried to weigh the possibility of there being a doctor or a pilot against the possibility of panic if there was none. And pardy because of that judgment, pardy because he was at last where Bill had sat on so many flights, he decided not to go back to the passengers—not for a litde while.

He sat down in the pilot's seat, trembling, bjit not with fright. This thing with the litde steering wheel on the end must be the "stick" Bill had mentioned so often. There was one for each pilot, and two pedals like clutch and brake in front of each stick. He tried to see how many of the dials and switches on the instrument panel he could identify from hearing Bill talk about them. One he was sure of—down at the lower left center, a handle marked AUTOMATIC PILOT. He judged that was what was keeping the plane level and straight. Things would be all right until the gas gave out. Here was the radio headset. Acting on a sentimental litde impulse, he put on the earphones and picked up the microphone Bill must have addressed so often.

Bill would have said something professional like "Pilot to tower," he knew, and given the flight number and position. But the only thing Shorty could think of to say, in a high, embarrassed voice, was "Hello there. Hello, Kansas City."

Nothing happened for a minute, and then a voice came into

his earphones. He felt like a boy caught playing with forbidden toys. But the voice was calm and matter-of-fact. "Hello, old fellow," it said. "Been wondering where you were. Anything wrong?"

Shorty thought at the time that the voice would be engraved in his memory like chisel cuts in stone, but later he had trouble describing it for me. The radio didn't leave much color in it, of course, and it was like any other airways voice—flat, calm, sparing of words, the kind of rhythm men develop from dealing much with elements and refusing to get excited over mere man-made things. All afternoon Shorty kept trying to identify it with some person he knew, but not quite succeeding. It was a friendly voice, for all its impersonal quality. It invited confidence. And before Shorty really thought about what he was doing, he was pouring the whole story story of his situation into the microphone.

When he stopped, there was a long, low whisde from the earphones.

"My kid Bill ought to be here," said Shorty. "He was a flier."

"Yes, I know," said the voice. Then it was silent so long that Shorty said anxiously, "Hello?"

"Well," said the voice thoughtfully. It took a long time to say, "Well."

"What shall I do?" asked Shorty.

"If I were you," said the voice, "I'd fly her into Kansas City."

"But I don't know how," said Shorty.

"I'll teach you," said the voice.

"You'll do what?" gasped Shorty.

"Put your hands on, the stick and your feet on the pedals," said the voice. "Don't be afraid. They won't bite."

Shorty swore to me that is what happened up in the plane. That is how he came to do what he did. He says he didn't feel frightened at first; he felt foolish, like a man on a quiz program. Then he wondered how soon he would wake up. It took a long time, Shorty said, before the reality of the situation swung around in his mind and hit him like a fist.

And by that time the voice in his earphones had taken over, and wasn't giving him a chance to be frightened.

"Don't be scared of the instrument board, either," said the

voice. "You won't need most of the things on it. They're luxuries. See if you can find a dial marked Altimeter and tell me what it says."

"Eighty," said Shorty.

"That means eight thousand feet," said the voice. "Now look for a handle marked Automatic Pilot."

"Here it is," said Shorty.

"Turn it to OFF."

"Take off the Automatic Pilot?" gasped Shorty.

"Sure," said the voice. "You're going to learn to fly this crate, aren't you?"

Shorty's hand shook as he took off the Automatic Pilot. The left wing dropped slighdy.

"Keep the stick center."

The wing went up.

"How did you know?" asked Shorty incredulously.

"Everybody does it the first time," chuckled the voice. "Now let's try a few things. Landing's simple, but you'll have to know how to bank. Let's try a left bank first. Put the stick a litde left and a litde forward. Push the left pedal a litde. Just a litde."

Bill had talked about that, Shorty remembered. He had said that the pedals worked just the opposite of a bobsled crossbar.

The big ship came around grandly. Shorty took one hand off the stick and wiped something wet out of his eyes. In that instant he understood more of what flying had meant to Bill than ever before. The thrill is the same—your first jump on a horse, your first racing turn in a sailboat, the first time you do a good bank in your plane.

"Level it off," said the voice. "Press the right pedal a little. Stick back to center. Pull it back a litde to put the nose up. How was it?"

"A litde jerky," said Shorty.

"You probably lost some altitude too," said the voice. "That's because you didn't keep your nose on the horizon."

"My nose?" asked Shorty.

"The plane's nose. Now let's try another left bank." The voice seemed to hypnotize him into it, Shorty said. "Now another," it said. "Better? . . .You know," said the voice, "you might fool me and come in on the other side. Let's try a right

bank. Just the opposite. Right pedal, and so on. Come on, now; let's do it."

"That was pretty bad," said Shorty. "I remember, Bill said a right bank seemed harder than a left one at first.

"That's right. Now let's practice another one."

"What do you suppose the passengers think?" asked Shorty.

"What they don't know won't hurt them. Are you flying along the railroad tracks now?"

"Pretty close."

"East or West? Look at your compass. Top of the instrument board."

"East."

"Good. How are you at glides?"

"I never tried one," said Shorty.

"Better try two or three. About all there is to landing is a good long glide. Push the wheel a litde forward and try one. Not too far forward. What does the altimeter say now?"

"Seven and a half. Does that mean seventy-five hundred?"

"Yes," said the voice. "Now look around and find the switch that lowers the wheels. You'll need that."

Shorty said he surrendered himself to the voice like a man floating downstream. What it told him to practice he practiced. What it told him to push and pull and press, he did. Once there was a prolonged pounding on the door behind him. "Shall I open the door?" he asked the microphone.

"I wouldn't," said the voice in the earphones. "Why take a chance? You can fly this job, pappy. You don't need help."

That was one of the sweetest moments in Shorty's life.

"They told me I was too old to learn to fly," he confessed. "They even kicked me out of the Kansas City airport."

"They won't today," said the voice.

Shorty said he wished he had a fifty-cent cigar. That was the first moment in his life when he had felt like smoking one. He felt like leaning back in a big chair with his thumbs hooked in his vest.

As they flew on across Kansas, Shorty said he got a kind of physical pleasure out of living he hadn't experienced for thirty years. His senses seemed peculiarly alert to the blueness of the air above him, the sweep of the Kansas plain, the wind waves in the wheat and prairie grass below him. He saw another

plane, headed southwest along the distant horizon, and felt the warm sense of brotherhood that ships feel at sea. Bill had told him about that feeling, but he hadn't understood it.

He even began to feel like talking—more so than he had ever felt with anyone except Bill, when Bill was a boy. With his customers, with the few neighbors he knew, he always tried to say as little as possible and to cover up his awkward English and his funny accent. This fellow talking into his earphones actually seemed to want to hear him talk. Shorty told him about himself, and about Bill, and about some of the things he could see from the plane. When he saw what looked like wheel tracks curving across the prairie, it was the most natural thing on earth to ask the voice what they were.

"That's the old Santa Fe Trail," Shorty's earphones said. "That's the road they took before there were railroads. They went to the old Spanish ciues in Mexico and brought wagon-loads of goods home to sell. That's one of the most famous roads in America."

"Why, that's what I do," said Shorty, becoming excited. "That's how I do it. I get the stuff down south and bring it up here to sell. I used to sell it in wagons too. Can'aloupes and wa'ermelons and frooze." Unconsciously he dropped back into the old immigrant English.

"Sure," said the voice.

Shorty tried to imagine prairie schooners and caravans creeping along the ruts in the brown plain. And he fancied he could see another vehicle in the parade. It was pulled by a patient litde donkey, and the driver jangled a bell and sang his wares in a high, loud voice. It was the first time he had ever thought of it that way.

Impulsively,' he told about the quarrel with Bill, and how sorry he was that Bill's last words had been spoken in anger.

"I don't think Bill held any anger at you," said the voice.

"How well did you know Bill?" asked Shorty.

"Pretty well." There was a little silence, and then the voice asked, "How do you feel, old fellow?"

Over to the north was the yellow River Kaw, and the Lawrence hill was rising out of the endless plain. The hill, crowned by shining university buildings, had always seemed

very high and insurmountable to Shorty. From this angle it looked different.

"You're going to take her down now, old fellow," said the voice. "You're going to make a good landing. Your kid Bill would be proud of you."

Shorty said that was the last time he felt any indecision about it.

"Better start to lose altitude now. Take her down to two thousand. Slow. Plenty of time. Slow. . . . Slow."

Shorty pushed the stick forward . . . slow . . . slow.

The smoke of Kansas City was on the sky and the taller buildings were beginning to separate from the horizon. When Shorty first saw the field he wondered how a plane could hit anything so small, but when he approached it a second time with motors throttled down as far as they would go, landing flaps down, wheels reaching for the ground, he felt a great surge of strength and knew he could do it. He banked around, feeling all the firmness and power of the ship as it turned into the wind. A sea captain's phrase went through his memory—"a taut ship"—and he knew suddenly what that meant.

In that instant, too, he understood something about flying: you fly, the plane doesn't. Or at least there is a time of merger when you and the plane become one and fly. He wondered how often Bill had felt this same oneness with his plane. He felt very near to Bill at that moment, perhaps closer than ever in life. It was almost as though he and Bill were one.

Then he was steering in to the white stripe of the runway, pulling back the stick litde by litde as the voice in the earphones told him to, cutting the airspeed, trying to bring the tail down level with the nose, trying to hold the wings level, knowing that the next ten seconds would tell whether it was a good landing or a crash.

Even in those seconds he remembered a plane he had once seen overrun a field and stand awkwardly, with nose buried in a swamp and tail high in the air, until everything above the ground burned away. Bill's plane.

Then the wheels hit the ground. The left one hit first—left wing low, he guessed—and the plane gave a great awkward bounce, turned a little off the runway and setded down. Shorty cut the ignition and let the ship roll. He didn't feel up to taxi-

ing it After it stopped rolling, he put his head down on the stick and closed his eyes.

When the field attendants rushed out in their little cars to bawl him out for not taxiing to the landing apron, his first impulse was to crouch down, so they wouldn't see him, or try to vanish in the crowd before anybody saw who he was. Then he remembered some things that had happened during the afternoon, and he sat up straight.

The attendants saw his civilian coat in the window, and stopped growling and were silent in astonishment. And then he had his litde moment of triumph. Litde Shorty Frooze who sold cantaloupes. Little Shorty who was kicked off the airport because he was a nuisance. He sat up as straight and tall as he could. He leaned out the window and spoke to them in what he imagined to be the authoritative voice of an airlines captain.

"We have sick men aboard," he said. "Take care of them before you touch anything else in the plane."

And that is all of Shorty's story except one very important incident When they had shaken his hand and snapped his picture, he said he wanted to go to the tower to thank the person who had helped him bring in the ship. They laughed at the joke, and then saw he was in earnest.

The airport manager took him aside a moment. "Mr.—er—• Frooze," he said, "you know, don't you, that we've been trying to contact your plane all afternoon? Nobody in the tower has been talking to you."

Well, you explain it. What happened in the blue air over Kansas I have told you just as Shorty told me. It doesn't seem possible that he could have imagined it all. On the other hand, it doesn't seem possible that he could have remembered enough from Bill's old aviation chatter to bring in that plane without help. Shorty swears someone was talking to him, and he thinks he knows who it was. I don't for a moment believe it was who he thinks it was, but strange things happen. And the important thing, after all, is what Shorty thinks, because he has stopped grieving over Bill now, and walks with his head up, and doesn't hide from people, and looks at the sky with the squint of a flier.

DOCTOR HANRAY'S SECOND CHANCE

by Conrad Richter

Perhaps when you were young you underestimated your father. What would you give to live in the past for an hour and try to make amends?

TF HE had known it would be like this, he wouldn't have come, he told himself. Here he was, back in his native valley at last. He had driven more than a thousand miles to see it again, this triangle of river and long blue mountains that shut in the rich brown farming land. This was where he had been born and bred. Why, he used to know every field and patch of woods. Here if anywhere, he felt, he could find himself again.

And yet, now that he had come, it didn't mean anything. It seemed hollow and dead, like every other place he had been since these spells had come over him. It was true then, he told himself. Something must be seriously wrong with him, something different perhaps and yet quite as deadly in its way as the burns of atomic radiation he had at first suspected. But exacdy what it could be, neither the doctors nor himself had as yet been able to find out

He drove slowly along the black-top road. A large board announced: ROSE VALLEY MILITARY RESERVATION. U. S. ARMY. No ADMISSION. Ahead to the right and left he could see the

high steel fence topped with strands of barbed wire. At the little house in the center of the road, he obeyed the sign that said, STOP!

"I would like permission to go into Stone Church," he requested.

"What for?" the guard wanted to know.

"Just to look around. I was raised here."

"You can't do that. It's too late in the day. Besides, no civilians allowed. This is a restricted area. Very secret and highly dangerous."

"I know about that," the man in the car said. Then, after a moment, "I believe I have a right to visit the graves of my parents."

"You'll have to prove who you are." The guard went in for a moment and came back with a sheaf of dirty papers, evidently a list of the dead in the reservation. "What's the name?"

"My father's name was Doctor John Hanray. My name is Peter Hanray. Here are some identification papers."

The guard stared. His tanned face flushed. His lean, hard features altered with respect.

"I'm sorry I didn't know you, Doctor Hanray. I can see it's you now, sir, from your pictures. I'll phone Colonel Hollenbeck you're here. You'll find him in his office. He's in Building A."

"1 didn't come to see Colonel Hollenbeck," Hanray declared quiedy. "I just want permission to go in and look around. By myself."

The guard stirred uneasily. "Yes, sir. I'll speak to the colonel, sir." He hurried back into the little house, and the visitor thought he could make out an occasional phrase: "Yes, sir; it's him, sir . . . the one who made the A-bomb. . . . He don't want to come up. . . . No, alone; all alone! . . . Yes, sir, I'll tell him." The guard appeared. "The colonel's coming down," he said with satisfaction, as of a victory he had part in, and went on talking eagerly of the valley, as if his job in the reservation had made them fellow natives.

Outside a distant building, a flurry of dust suddenly rose and died. After a moment an olive-colored military car came flying up, and a tall, gendemanly colonel got out.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiung. Doctor Hanray," he said, shaking hands. "If you had let us know you were coming, we'd

have been all ready for you. Just the same, if you can give me a few minutes, I'll take you around.

"Thank you," the scientist said bleakly, "but it's not an official visit. Just a personal one. I'm not working right now. In fact, I have been laid up a bit. You may know that I was raised here at Stone Church. I'd like to visit my parents' graves and look around. By myself. I'm sure you'll understand."

The colonel's face fell a litde. "Certainly. If that's what you want, sir. I'll have my chauffeur drive you around."

"If you don't mind, I'd like to go in alone."

The colonel's face looked gravely unhappy. "I understand, sir. Unfortunately, the regulations are very strict, as you know. Visitors are required to have guides, even the most distinguished ones. Something might blow up or you might get lost. Even men who lived in the valley all their lives come back to work here and get confused. Everything's been ~~chang~~ed around. I'm sure, though, that if I phoned Washington "

"No, that's all right," the physicist said wearily. "I'll take a guide. But ask him to stay as far behind me as he can. If I can't go in that way, I don't want to go in at all. When I stop, tell him to stop behind me and wait. I hope you have a patient man. I may stand looking at nothing, so far as he's concerned, for a long time."

Well, he told himself, as he drove quiedy through the steel fence, the valley had certainly changed. As the colonel had warned him, he hardly knew where he was any more. The rambling Army buildings, the absence of familiar landmarks confused him. Now whose barn had stood here at this pile of stones, and where was the house? A few of "the old houses could still be seen, but surely that paintless, boarded-up box couldn't be the Foster house, where he had once enjoyed such good times.

He stopped, motioning for the jeep behind him to drive abreast of his car.

"I'm trying to find out where I am. Where's the road that used to come down over Penny Hill?'

"Oh, there's no road up there any more. The Government didn't want it. They bulldozed it out."

Hanray felt a sense of loss and bereavement. He had loved that Penny Hill road, used to walk it as a boy.

"Well," he said, "perhaps you can tell me whose house this used to be over here?"

But the guard did not know who had lived there. "Whoever they were," he added, "they kicked about getting out. You can bet on that"

"What did they kick about?"

"Anything and everything. First they said they didn't have enough time."

"How much time did they have?"

"Everybody on the reservation had the same notice. Three days to get their money from the Government and move out. But they weren't satisfied. They came back afterward and tried to buy back some of the stuff they'd sold with their property. Like their bathtubs, those that had them. Their sinks and corncribs and sheds. They claimed the new places they bought didn't have them and they couldn't buy any new plumbing or lumber on account of priorities."

"Well, the Government didn't need their old bathtubs and corncribs."

"No, they had to burn up the old tumber and throw the sinks and bathtubs on the junk pile. The colonel said it would cost twenty-five to fifty dollars in red tape to get every sink or bathtub through Washington. And it would take weeks besides. The colonel told them to forget it. They were just casualties of the war."

The scientist winced. "Here too," he murmered to himself.

"Oh, four or five of your neighbors here were tough babies. They stuck on their places and wouldn't get off. The last one to give up was an old woman. She stopped by the gate with her house goods and told the guard all her troubles, how her father and grandfather farmed the farm before her, and their folks before that, way back to the Revolution. The guard listened till he was tired. Then he said, 'Well, now you know how the Indians felt when you ran them off.'" The uniformed man in the jeep laughed, but the physicist didn't laugh.

"I'm afraid that old lady didn't run off any Indians,'" he said, very low.

"Well, maybe not. But the contractors had to come in. We had to start getting out things for the men at the front to fight

with. Like your A bomb. They made plenty stuff for it right here. I guess you know that."

The scientist winced again.

The guard went on admiringly, "I guess that was the greatest thing ever invented. Just think, something that wiped out a whole city and a hundred thousand of those rats at one crack. And I hear that's nothing to what you can do now."

Hanray sat at the wheel, very still. He felt the old nausea and shell-like feeling coming over him. Then he drove slowly on.

Well, he told himself after a litde, they hadn't destroyed the road that ran down by Jarretts' farm anyway. This must be it he was passing, looking strangely narrower and shorter than it used to. How many times had he walked that road with one of the Jarrett girls after church or choir practice! But where were Jarretts' woods in which the preacher's boys had hidden one night to scare him?

How much faster you went in a car than he used to in a buggy. This was Stone Church already, or Deckertown as some called it, with half the houses gone and the rest reduced to windowless boxes. Tillbury's store had vanished, as had Hulsizer's blacksmith shop and red stable. And now suddenly, as he reached the corner where one road used to turn off to Maple Hill and the other to Alvira, he saw the old stone church before him, the doors, windows and belfry all blinded with boards.

Beyond this, he knew, lay his father's house. He got out of the car slowly and walked over. Sight of the place shook him a litde. Could this be his boyhood home whose idyllic picture he had carried in his mind all these years? The paint was gone, the porches torn away, the picket fence vanished, the great sugar maples cut down. It was just a bare box, a two-and-a-half-story shack stripped of every vestige of ornament and comfort. The doors and windows he so well knew had been closed with rough lumber. Not a splinter was left of stable or orchard. From where he used to pick up Baldwin and Smokehouse apples, he could see the raw industrial strip of buildings of the XYT explosive line, and beyond, the reach of ugly stacks and tanks against the autumn-sunset sky.

He couldn't stand looking at it long, but retreated to the cemetery. Only here was it as it had always been; a few more graves perhaps, but otherwise as he remembered. He had heard

reports how well the Army had taken care of the dead left in its reservations. The graves looked even better kept than formerly, the grass clipped, the black iron fence intact, the white stones erect and recendy cleaned. He read again the line FAITHFUL PHYSICIAN carved on his father's stone—and in fine italics at the bottom, *He went about doing good.* His mother had done that. As a young scientist he had disliked to see it the next time he came home. But today the simple words filled him with emodon and curious envy. He had once thought, he told himself, that he had far outdistanced his father, but now he knew it was his father's life that had outdistanced his. Standing here by his parents' graves, his back turned on the boarded-up houses and church, on the scarred earth and ugly munitions buildings, he could almost believe that it was all a dream. The air blew from over South Mountain as it always had. Crows cawed in the old unused fields up on Penny Hill, whose huge rounded head looked golden in the setting sun.

It was as if vestiges of the peaceful life he knew as a boy still remained up there, and he found himself seeking them, stepping over the iron fence, passing through Kellys' little woods and climbing the strong flanks of Penny Hill.

Presently he came to a halt. In a litde hollow high up on the slope, he had come on a vestige of the old Penny Hill road. Farther down around the bend, he knew, it had been completely destroyed. Farther up around the next bend or two, it must run futilely into the steel fence. But here for a short distance it lay untouched and utterly unchanged, the same yellow shale and curious narrowness, the same weathered rail fence and dried grasses. It even smelled as it used to. Since leaving here he had been over the entire country and most of the world besides. He had found no place with that certain sweet smell of Rose Valley. The three black cherry trees, now older and fatter, still stood by the fence, and he was glad to lean against one of them in the faintness that had come over him since the climb.

The longer he stood there in the growing dusk, the less it seemed that he had ever been away. Nothing here had changed. He could almost believe that he was still a boy and that the valley behind him still lay intact and unharmed. Why, this had been his favorite route from school in town. So often had he

passed this spot, he thought there must remain in the road some faint impress of his feet. Just at this season, with darkness coming on, he used to tramp along here from town with his schoolbooks under his arm, the scent of life in his nostrils and the world his oyster. Standing here now, peering through the growing dusk, he could almost feel himself as a boy swinging along the road bound for the lamplit window at home.

His nerves tautened. Did he only imagine it or was something actually coming up there in the dusk? Yes, it was moving down the road. He could make it out now, straining his eyes through the early obscurity, a figure rounding the shale banks, a shadowy boy in knee breeches carrying a book satchel. The strangest feeling ran over him. He must be really ill, he told himself, for there was no road above for the boy to have come from and none below for him to pass over. Besides, boys today did not wear knee pants. Yet he could plainly hear tbe sound of the boy's shoes on the road. He told himself now that it must be a real boy, someone who lived today on the reservation, who knew this short cut and whom the guards let through. Then, as the boy came almost abreast, he recognized, with a feeling that made all adult sensations seem tame, the familiar red-ribbed sweater that had been his own, the certain look of its stout coarse weave. He even remembered the peculiar smell of warm dye when he used to pull it over his head.

The boy was shying to the farther side of the road at sight of a stranger. *Spea\ to him—spea\ to him before he is gone,* the man cried to himself. But when he did so, his voice sounded harsh and croaking, "Are you acquainted around here, boy?"

"Why, yes," the boy said, stopping, but he did not come any closer.

"Is there a doctor around?"

"There's two in town and one at the Stone Church."

"Do you know the doctor's name at the Stone Church?"

"It's Hanray—Dr. John Hanray."

"And your name?" he asked.

"Peter Hanray," the boy told him shordy, and started away.

"Wait, I want to go with you!" the man said, as soon as he was able.

They made a curious pair going down the shale road in the dimness, the boy hurrying tirelessly ahead, the man following

heavily after. At every moment the latter looked for the road to peter out, expected to see, below, the cold hard electric lights of the Army barracks and XYT-line buildings. But all that lay around them was the soft dim blur of the unwired country dusk. There were the faint glow of a lantern in Bomboys' red barn as they passed, and early lights in the Peysher house and Hauser log cabin. At Shaffers' yellow house and Klines' unpainted one, children played and shouted in the yard. Here the Penny Hill road joined the other road as it always had, while ahead Jarretts' woods loomed up in its old, dark and mysterious way. Tramping down the village road he could smell the old-time aroma of wood smoke, raw-fried potatoes and valley-cured ham. Hulsizer's blacksmith shop still stood open. A flame of red fire glowed in the darkness, and a great hulking beast waited in the gloom outside.

And now the scientist breathed faster, for they were rounding the corner. He could glimpse late sky shining as usual through the open belfry and the white paling fence standing unbroken around his father's house. Soft golden lamplight came from a side window. That was the kitchen window, he knew, and a sudden fear touched him that those two he wanted most to see wouldn't be there.

The boy ran ahead of him through the side gate and up the steps. He burst in through the door, and the man behind him saw the kitchen as he had always remembered it, with the water bucket on the stand, the wood stove steaming with pots and pans, and hurrying in from the pump on the back porch his mother, more real than he had imagined her, in dress and apron that were part and parcel of his youth. Something in him wanted to run to her, but her smile and anxious scrutiny were all for the boy.

"He was up on Penny Hill," the boy said. "He wants to see papa."

His mother's smile left, and she put on the grave face she showed to the outside world. "Will you come in?" she bade him politely, as to a stranger.

Hardly could he control his emotion as he stepped into that well-known room. The table was set as always when he used to come home from town: the dishes he had long since forgotten, with pink flowers and which had come in cereal packages, the

blue glass butter dish and the plated silverware worn softly black along the edges. He could smell the savor of baked beans from the oven, shot through with the scent of the stove.

He noticed that his mother watched him intendy. For a moment his heart stood still, thinking she must know him. But she still spoke as to a visitor. "Do you want to come in the office? Or you can wait in the parlor if you'd rather. Peter will light the lamp for you. The doctor said he'd be back right away. He's just over on the ridge road."

Hanray dared not speak. He let himself be led into the parlor. He would get hold of himself in here, he told himself, once he was left alone. Why, he knew all these poor shabby furnishings better than any of the rich things in his fine Midwest home. The old green tassels still hung from the table cover; the haircloth sofa stood by the door; faded blue flowers bloomed in the wallpaper, and the same spots were still worn in the ingrain carpet. His Grandfather and Grandmother Ainsley hung on the wall, and a few photographs stood on organ and table, but none of his father, mother or self. That would have been unforgivable vanity or pride, to flaunt one of your immediate family in your own parlor. He heard the same old rings on the telephone from the exchange at Maple Hill. All that was missing now, besides his father, was Doxy, the stern, black-and-brown, long-haired shepherd dog.

He sat very still. The rattle of buggy wheels came around the house, the steps of the boy sent out to unhitch, then the unmistakable sound of his father coming up to the side door. A minute more and he came forward, a man in a brown beard and clothes like a farmer, with a doctor's worn bag in his hand. He looked tired. Likely he had been up all last night with some shiftless mountain patient. Sight of him brought back the feeling he had had as a boy for his father, a kind of shame that he wasn't rich and successful like Doctors Grove and Hereward in town; that he seldom charged enough or collected what he did charge; and especially that he never carried himself with the professional dignity of the town doctors. They were men of science above such inferior things as humility and religion. His father, on the other hand, attended church like some simple, unlearned countryman, even acted as superintendent of the Sunday school when he could, greeting perfect strangers with

the brotherly and over-friendly way of a preacher. That, as a boy, he used to resent the most—that his father showed the same warmth and affection for a stranger as for his own family. But today, now that he was only a stranger. himself, an unspeakable gratitude welled up in him for his father's, warm greeting and for the kind brown eyes that searched his face.

"How are you?" he said, grasping his hand and holding it in the manner he always did when he tried to recall a name. "I feel I should know you. I know your face, but I can't call your name. Do you live around here?"

"I used to," the visitor said.

"Has it been a long time?"

"A very long time."

"You have come far perhaps?"

"Farther than I can tell you."

"I'd have been here before," his father apologized, "but I was over at Berrys' on the ridge road. Maybe you remember them. Old Mr. Berry is pretty feeble. There is a little a doctor can do for him any more except pray."

Into the scientist's mind came the memory of his father's prayers, so unlike a man of medicine and science, his friendly, hopeful voice, a voice that now seemed very near God. *Oh, father,* he thought, *if only you would pray for me.* But he said nothing of that, just followed his father into the familiar bare office, smelling of carbolic acid and iodoform.

His father closed the door. "Now you can sit down and tell me your trouble," he said kindly.

The scientist thought he would give a great deal if he could feel his father's gende and skillful hands go over him. But what he had to say was something else.

"I've come to see you about your boy."

"About Peter!" His father was surprised.

"About him and his future. I understand he's only fourteen, he's already well along in high school and he's thinking of taking up physics and chemistry in college. I've come to you to beg him to change his mind. What he must do is prepare for a life like yours."

He saw that his father was staring at him.

"I don't know how you know this or who told you. I can talk to him again, but I'm afraid there isn't much use. I don't

think I've been much of an example to him. He says he's seen too much doctoring from the inside. He doesn't want to starve and he doesn't want to have anything to do with death and dying."

The scientist shrank.

His father went on, "Peter's more interested in science. All he talks about is the great oportunity for public service in being a scientist He says that he wants to do only good in the world."

The scientist winced again. He leaned forward desperately.

"You must change his mind for him then!" he begged. "Make him see the great opportunity in medicine, the salvation of going around doing good like you."

"Like me!" his father said in surprise. He looked up.

His wife was standing in the doorway. "Supper's ready, John. You better eat before more patients come. I don't have very much, but if the gentleman would care to sit down with us, he'll be welcome. Did you notice, John? He looks like someone we know." She turned. . . . "Are you by any chance related to the Ainsleys?"

"I am," he said unsteadily, "but please don't ask me how."

"I knew it," she said. "You remind me of my Uncle Harry."

His father turned to him as they went out for supper. "If you would only talk to him?" he asked. "We're just his parents, but perhaps he will listen to you!"

It was strange how the scientist felt an uneasiness to face the boy again. Young Peter was standing by his chair, impatient to sit down. He welcomed the supper guest coolly, looking the other way. They sat down at the familiar table. His father bent his forehead to his hand, resting the elbow on the table, gave the usual sign and started to pray. How often, the scientist thought, had he heard those familiar words, "The summer is over, the harvest is ended and we are not saved." But never had the words held such a new and terrible meaning as today.

All through the meal he could scarcely refrain from stealing glances at the boy across the table. Was it possible that he had once been as slender, light-hearted and fair-skinned as that, his blood vessels so new and pliable, his eyes clear as spring water? Could he ever have been so young, innocent and idealistic?

Why, the boy's face was fresh as a girl's. Once when his mother wanted a clean handkerchief, he rose reluctandy enough, but, once up, bounded up the stairs so effortlessly on his long legs that the visitor felt a sudden awe, mingled with despair, for the boy he had once been.

Vainly he tried to win him. When he spoke, the boy listened unwillingly and, if pressed, with veiled hostility. He made only short inscrutable replies, then looked the other way. It was plain, the man told himself, that the boy did not approve of him. Why, he was famous throughout the world, but the boy rejected him. There was something about him the boy did not relish. Yet this was the one he must make peace with, he knew. There was no mistaking that. All through the meal he talked, argued and begged, until he felt the sweat stand on his face. His father and mother had begun to look at him queerly. The boy resisted as hard as ever, until the man knew he was foiled and defeated; that never could he dissuade the boy from his dream.

It was when hope was at its lowest ebb that a scratching sound was heard at the door. The boy answered it, and a black-and-brown shepherd dog burst in. It was Doxy, keen and shaggy old Doxy. He jumped up at the boy in greeting; then, smelling on the floor, ran straight to the visitor, jumped up, barked and licked him. For a litde while he ran back and forth between boy and man, smelling eagerly at one and then at the other, as if something puzzled him.

"That's singular," his father said. "Doxy doesn't go to many people. But he acts as though he knows you."

"And likes you," his mother added. She was always the one to encourage.

The scientist saw that now for the first time the boy was regarding him intendy, with a kind of respect, as if his hostility was broken and he saw in him something he hadn't seen before. The man sat very still. He had received honors from a dozen sources, including the President of the United States, but never had he felt quite the gratitude as for this. Some inexplicable thing inside of him was released and began to melt, like that time long ago when, as a child, he had gone to Fourth Gap and later found himself back in the blessed peace and warmth of home.

"If you don't mind," he asked his mother, "may I stay here for a while this evening?"

That was his mistake, he knew. Hardly was it said and permission given before the dog began to growl. His hair brisded. Then a sudden knock rang from the door. The boy went to answer. "It's somebody for you," he stammered.

"Is it the guard?" the visitor asked, and the boy nodded.

The scientist sat very quiet. It shook him a little. It had come sooner than he expected. But he should have known he couldn't stay in this blessed place forever.

"I'll have to go now," he said, and got to his feet. He saw that his parents looked frightened. He kissed his trembling mother and then his father's bearded mouth as he used to do when he was small. Last he shook the cold hand of the boy.

The rap came once more, demandingly. Again the dog growled deep in his throat.

"I'm coming!" the scientist called. Then to the others, "Good-by."

"Good-by," his father answered. "I'll pray for you."

"Remember you're an Ainsley. We'll both pray for you," his mother told him.

"God bless you," he said, and opened the door.

Not until he was clear of the house, with his foot reaching for the steps, did he remember there were no steps there.

When he came to himself he was lying on the ground. As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he saw that the sugar maples and picket fence were gone. He picked himself up painfully. The house was dark. The door looked as if it had been boarded up for a long time. So did the windows. And yet so real and strong remained the memory of his father and mother and the lamplit table that he pounded on the boards. "Papa!" he called.

Only silence from the decayed shell of a house answered him. Below he could see the cold glitter of electric lights on the tanks and buildings of the secret XYT explosive line. Nearer at hand were the cemetery and the guard waiting. Well, he told himself, he could face things a litde better now. His father and mother had said they would pray for him. And the boy inside of him had made his first sign of peace to the man he had become.

PARTIAL LIST OF BEST-SELLING TITLES

AVON BOOKS

233 Robin Maugham *The Servant*
234 Tiflany Thayer. *The Old* Goal
240 Willingham . End *as* a Man
242 Lockridge . *Untidy* Murder
245 Agatha Christie *The* Big Four
250 Robert BriHault . . . . *Carlotta*
256 Anthology *Tropical Pass*ions
257 Pierre Louys. . . . Aphrodite
258 O'Hara . . *Hope ol Heaven*
260 Fairell . . . . *Yesterday's Love*
269 I. S. Young . 7adie Greenway
271 Emile Zola *Nona's* Mother
272 Robert BriHault. . . . Europa
273 Elmer Rice .. *Imperial City*
276 Emily Harvin . .. Madwoman?
279 Weidman *The Price Is Right*
282 Huggins. *Lovely Lady, Pity M?*
284 Terrall *Madam Is Dead*
280 Guy Emery . *Front lor* Murder
290 Farrell *Gas-House McGinty*
291 Thayer Call *Her Savage*
293 John O'Hara.. *Hellbox*
296 Lawrence. . . . *A Modern Lovez*
298 Swados. . . . House of Fury
299 O. J. Friend The *Round-Vp*
300 Shulman *The Amboy Dukes*
301 Hilton.. *We Are Not Alone*
303 Robert Sylvester *Dream Street*
304 Woolf, Song *Without* Sermon
305 Stuart God Wears a Bow *Tie*
306 Thomason Gone to *Texas*
309 Caldwell Midsummer *Passior.*
311 Anthology Saturday *Evening Post Western Stories*
312 Agatha Christie *The* Mysterious A/fair *at Styles*
313 Lion Feuchtwanger The *Ugly Duchess*
314 Van Vechten *Nigger Heaven*
315 Merritt The Metal *Monster*
316 Christie Murder in *Three Acts*
317 Christie . *Death on the Nile*
318 luliet Lowell *Dear Sir*
320 Dwight Babcock Gorgeous *Ghoul Murder Case*
321 Leslie Charteris *The Saint* in New York
322 Weidman *Slipping Beauty*
323 Guv Endore *The Furies in Her Body*
325 James Hilton . . . *Ill* Wind
326 Dortort *Burial ol the Fruit*
327 Tiffany Thayer . One Man Show
328 Sayers *Strong* Poison
329 W. R. Burnett. *Little* Caesar
330 Horan. . . . . *Desperate Men*
331 W Somerset Maugham Trio
332 Babcock *Homicide lor Hannah*
333 R. Maugham *Line* on Ginger
334 Tillery Red Bone *Woman*
335 Dorothy L. Sayers *In the Teeth ol the Evidence*
337 Biggers *The Agony Column*
338 Anthology *Hollywood Bedside* Reader
339 Juba Kennerley The Terror *ol the Leopard* Men
341 Leslie Charteris *The Saint* Sees *It Through*
342 Lacv . . . *The Woman Aroused*
343 MacDonald Six-Gun *Melody*
344 Biggers *The Chinese* Parrot
346 Nichols . *Possess Me Not*
347 Leslie Charteris *The Saint at a Thieves* Picnic
348 I. M. Cain. . *Jealous* Woman
349 Cheyney. . . . *Mistress* Murder
351 Clarke . *Millie's Daughter*
353 Christie *Poirot* Loses a *Client*
355 lames H. Chase *No Orchids lor Miss Blandish*
356 Jerome Weidman *I Can Get It lor You Wholesale*
357 Anthology *All* About Girls
358 I^ouvs Woman and the *Puppet*
364 Maugham *The* Point of *Honour*
367 Halleran *Outlaw Guns*
368 John O'Hara . *All the Girls He* Wanted
369 Frances and Richard Lockridge The *Dishonest Murderer*
370 A. Merritt The Moon *Pool*
371 Christie. *Regatta Mystery*
372 Shulman. . . . . Cry Tough.'
373 Payne . The *Blue* Negro
375 Wylie Babes and *Sucklings*
381 Hilton *Nothing So Strange*
383 W Carroll Munro The Untamed *Wile* of *Louis Scott*
385 Brand . . . . Cat and Mouse
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