

No. 9

NO. 9
WINTER ISSUE

Science

25¢

Fiction

QUARTERLY

3 NEW NOVELS

A
DOUBLE-ACTION
MAGAZINE

Science Fiction QUARTERLY

THE FAR DETOUR

By CAPT. ARTHUR
J. BURKS, U.S.M.C.

also
KELLER
ARNOLD

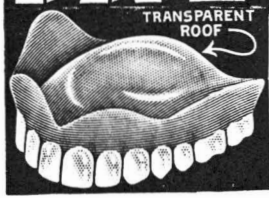
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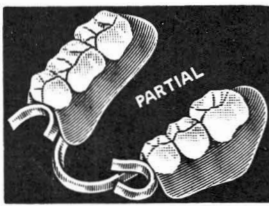
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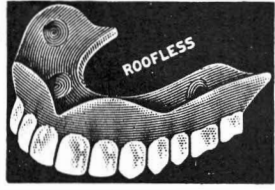
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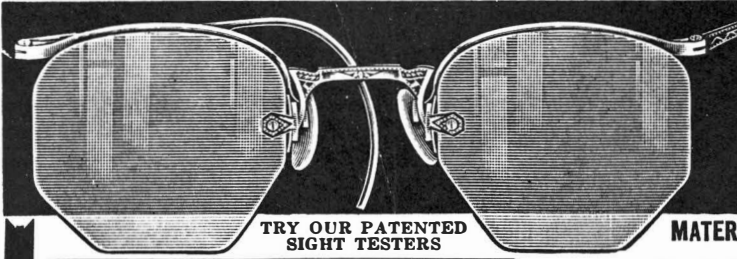
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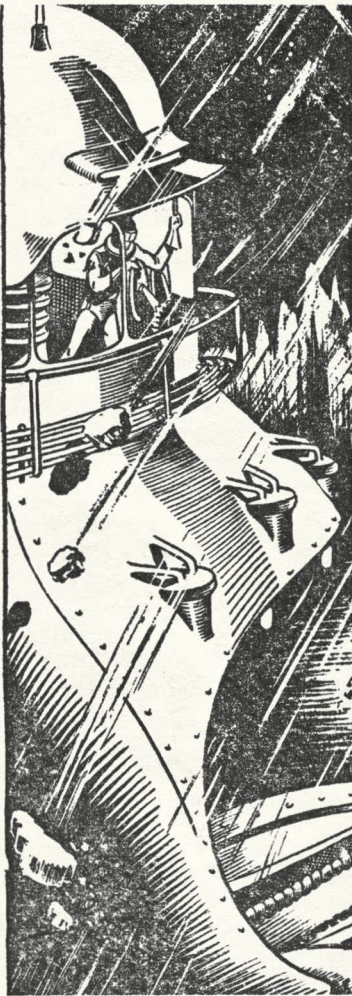
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Winter

Science Fiction QUARTERLY



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Robert W. Lowndes, Editor

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★ ★ ★ **THE** ★ ★ ★

FAR DETOUR

By
Capt. Arthur J. Burks, U. S. M. C.

There, in what seemed solid rock, Gregg Pettis saw the figures of a man and a woman beckoning him. But that shock was as nothing compared to his amazement when he found himself drawn through the bore of the undersea tunnel to the City of the Golden Gate and found—Atlantis!

A Powerful Science Fiction Novel



CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Dawn

WE WERE eight hundred miles out from New York and ten miles down, when the Giant Mole developed its weird eccentricity. The Giant Mole was an invention of Rogers McLeod, chief engineer of the sub-Atlantic Bore, built for this very purpose. There was just one other like it in the world; it was driving out from France to meet us. I had

been with the super-sandhogs for four months at the time and considered myself one of them—and proudly, too—though I was a graduate engineer and didn't do their sort of work. I had started as boss of twelve men, operating twelve of the huge drills by which the Bore was reinforced and had graduated to being in charge of three sub-engineers, each of whom supervised twelve men.

Eight hundred miles out, ten miles down! The dream of one man, who had believed in it so completely he had talked millionaires and govern-



*As the fantastic saurian charged,
Pettis seized a rock and*

Damon Knight

ments into helping him put it through. I have no words to express the feeling it gave me to be honored by getting a job with fifty-year-old Rogers McLeod. In those four months I had come to regard him as a father. He had grown to like me, though he wasn't one to show favoritism.

"Not many college graduates, wet behind the ears, get a break like this, Gregg Pettis," he told me grumpily when he took me on. "It's a chance to write your name in the book of immortals—if you live through it."

"I'll live through it," I said, drawing up to my six feet of brawny height and, I trusted, getting just the right shine of exaltation in my eyes. He had done amazing things. In just a decade after the last tunnel had been driven under the East River, New York, he had driven eight hundred miles of Sub-Atlantic Tunnel without the loss of a man, except through natural causes. Men had fallen sick on the job and died back in the city—of broken hearts, I often thought, because they couldn't stick with the Giant Mole.

What a piece of machinery that was! It actually fitted its name, as it growled and rumbled and burrowed through the tough strata of ten miles down. It was difficult to realize that ten miles of rock and water were over our heads, so certainly did that Mole go about its business.

The super-sandhogs worked inside the Mole. They looked like any other sandhogs; most of them had spent their lives tunneling under rivers. McLeod had taken his pick of the best: hard-working, hard-swearing, fearless men of the tubes. Not one of them but would at McLeod's command gone out in front of the Mole and allowed himself to be

macerated by the bitt. That's how they believed in their boss. That's how I believed in him, too. To Rogers McLeod nothing was impossible.

Therefore it isn't hard to understand how the boys felt when they knew he was troubled. The Giant Mole was suddenly traveling a faintly eccentric route—when the world knew that in order for the advancing crews to make contact in mid-ocean, there couldn't be so much as an error of a hairsbreadth. At this distance such an error, extended to the middle of the Atlantic, would have made us miss one another by an equivalent of the distance between New York City and Philadelphia.

"Toughen her up!" shouted McLeod. "Then we'll go back and stop, and see what's wrong up ahead!"

It was when he issued that command, after the Giant Mole had advanced her two-hundred foot length through the sub-strata of rock, that one saw the super-sandhogs justify their name. Out through the thick, hard wall of the tubular Giant Mole, through slots provided—much like torpedo tubes on warships, though much smaller—the crews jammed their drills, smashing them home with compressed air, exerting pressure beyond that ever used by man on any other work. One hundred and fifty feet the drills—segments added on as they bit into the solid rock—drove into the walls of the Bore, in every direction save ahead and behind.

ROGERS McLEOD had taken one leaf from the book of engineers who had completed the Grand Coulee Dam, and this was it. When our crews had fashioned a network of holes beyond the walls of the Bore—walls held in place by the body of

the Giant Mole itself—Xment, a cement ten times the hardness of the ordinary variety, was blasted into the holes, and under that terrific pressure “tamped” in so firmly that it oozed into interstices in the seemingly solid granite.

The usual practice, after this had been done, was to withdraw the boring and cementing apparatus, drive on the length of the Giant Mole, then send crews out behind it to do the job of shoring. When this happened, not only was Rogers McLeod a god, but so was each and every one of the naked-to-the-waist, sweating sandhogs. One never knew what might happen. Remember how a “boil” under the East River, hurled whole crews up to the surface, where some of them died of “bends” before they could be reached by rescue boats? Well, imagine what would happen if a “boil” developed ten miles down! None had, so far, but who could possibly tell? We might, at any moment, drive through into a “deep” and—but not even Rogers McLeod would say what would happen then. Perhaps the Giant Mole would be smashed with everybody in it. Maybe Mole and men would be hurled to the surface of the sea, there to explode into fragments like deep-sea fishes brought to the top. In any case, the Bore would be flooded—and who could even dream of pumping out the Atlantic Ocean?

Yes, we had plenty of things to worry about, when the Giant Mole began to develop that eccentric movement ahead. No telling what we were running into. And when we backed off, and flashed great lights ahead of us, we could tell little or nothing. Something was wrong, but what it was could not be told from within the Mole, and it was a settled rule

of McLeod’s that no man should go outside. We might be running into a volcano. The heat out there might be beyond human endurance, whatever the precautions we might take. Heaven knew it was sometimes unbearable within where every conceivable invention for the safety of human beings had been installed.

I’ll give just one hint of the power of the Mole. The material displaced by it was not carried back through the Bore to New York. It was forced in all directions, into the walls of the Bore itself—so that for ordinary purposes the very material displaced would have sufficiently shored the Bore. The Bore was a hundred feet in diameter, the floor of it flat, and wide enough for the passing of the cars that were to run on it when it was done.

Navigational instruments more nearly exact than those used on passenger-carrying airplanes had been developed for this one job. They were installed inside the Mole. The panel where they were read was the direct responsibility of McLeod himself. He wouldn’t allow anybody else to take over—though he did teach me about them.

The Mole was, of course, exactly the size and shape of the Bore. The idea was that this Mole and the one advancing to meet us should come into contact as exactly as though attracted magnetically.

And things were going wrong!

Would the seven years of record-breaking safety-margin be broken? Was something due to happen now that would cost lives, perhaps thwart the completion of the tunnel? McLeod hadn’t believed it possible. Oceanographers had checked the entire route before work began, given him minute information on formations be-

low the Atlantic's floor. There should be no slip-ups, he had left nothing to chance.

Yet something was plainly wrong.

WE finished our cementing job, backed the Mole its length, shut down all machinery except that which provided us with oxygen and light. Then McLeod called us all together.

"I don't know what's ahead," he said grimly. "The Atlantic may be in on us in a minute. I don't know of any place where it's ten miles deep, but our oceanographers may have missed a few holes in it. I simply don't know what's wrong! I've checked the Mole from stem to stern, and it's in perfect condition. Therefore what has to be wrong is outside somewhere, ahead. I'm going out to see what it is!"

We all raised a row at this. If there were danger, McLeod must not face it. If something happened to him there was no one to take his place. Sandhogs could be spared, but they didn't have geological knowledge necessary to the task. There were other assistant engineers, some of them college graduates like myself, some of them grizzled veterans. Any one of us might have done it.

McLeod asked for volunteers and my voice quivered, I can tell you, when I said:

"I'm an orphan and a bachelor. I'll take a chance."

"It's my job," said McLeod. "I can't ask anybody to do it."

He knew it was useless, for we insisted that he telephone his backers in New York for instructions, and they had answered:

"Risk all lives but your own, if it seems necessary. You are forbidden to take personal risk."

All of which added up to this: that even McLeod, for the first time, was afraid that death might lie ahead of the Giant Mole. A sub-sea volcano? None was indicated here, but that didn't prove there wasn't one. Our charts on this area indicated nothing harmful. We were even down under a sort of "dome," where the floor of the ocean bulged toward the surface. It should have been harder, sounder, than any formation we had struck.

But there was a touch of softness in it somewhere. . . .

"The Mole behaves," said McLeod, "as though some of the stuff ahead were honeycombed—which just isn't possible! It acts like a bit being screwed into a crooked hole."

And yet, when we looked ahead of the huge bit—composed of great masses of molybdenum—we could see nothing. Not even when we examined it through our special microscopes, which brought the facing to us almost as closely as the eye could have been pressed to it, could we see what was wrong.

The only thing left to do was go out. And I had volunteered.

THEY let me out through an aperture in the bottom of the bit, about twenty feet from the end. The first time this aperture had ever been opened for a man to pass through, since work had started on the Bore. McLeod had sworn it would never be used.

But it had to be used.

They togged me out as though I were being rocketted to some planet where atmospheric conditions, pressure and the like, were beyond the endurance of earthmen. They gave into my hand the special light which also had not yet been used in the

Bore. It was a light-novelty, that thing. It cast a circle of blue light against an object, and, when one were close behind the light—and the obstacle were within a foot of it—it was possible to see several feet into the mass—in this instance solid granite.

I had a strange feeling when I stepped out ahead of the Mole, the first man ever to set foot on this bit of stone. I was *sure* of that. After all, it was several miles below the bottom of the sea, I certainly had a right to think so.

The lights inside the Mole were turned off, so that I could make the fullest use of my X-Ray lamp for a thorough examination of the facing. McLeod told me that the formation which was causing the trouble reached no higher than I would be able to see with the light. I was to come back with a complete report.

All right, listen!

I walked up to the facing, turned on the Y-Ray light. I looked into the stone for a distance of perhaps six feet. . . .

And was quite convinced that I was insane! Deep within the stone I saw a man, and a woman! Some trick of reflection, of course. Or else my equipment was defective, and the atmosphere and pressure were playing peculiar tricks on my eyes. But I studied them more closely, and I could still see them. Moreover, they were moving, beckoning to me. The man smiled slightly.

I was being urged to walk into six feet of granite. It required all the force and drive and power of the Giant Mole to do that, actually.

Next instant, I knew it was a weird hallucination, for the apparitions were gone. I backed up, playing the light around a bit, studying the stratification, my heart hammering

with excitement. Here was something I'd never dare tell anyone, or my report on the formation would certainly not be acceptable. Great engineers didn't take the word of lunatics!

I moved up to the facing again, *and not until I had walked straight into it, did I realize that I had obeyed a summons!* I felt no contact with the granite, no impediment to my walking. At first I thought I must have been mistaken in the distance I had withdrawn from the facing.

But then I realized that the shape of the Bore had changed. Instead of being round, save for the bottom, it was now some forty feet in height, five feet across, and some seventy feet deep. Moreover, my Y-ray wasn't responsible for the blinding light—as of midday in the tropics—which suddenly bathed me.

I had walked into some fourth-dimensional pocket in the granite. I didn't wait for any explanation. I whirled and started back. But there was no way back. It was closed off, completely, by solid granite; I could see no Giant Mole anywhere.

By some strange circumstance I had been imprisoned in a vast vault, ten miles below the surface of the Atlantic. Had my friends been watching me they would have seemed to see me walk into the facing and disappear!

Invisible tentacles seemed to grasp all over my body, lift me through the air with breath-taking speed—into an area of even more blinding light.

I blinked my eyes, and saw again the man and the woman, and knew that they were real!

The tall man bowed to me slightly, said something in a language that had a vaguely familiar ring—but only because I had made a study of dead

languages in school! It was all of a minute before my mind grasped that the language was ancient Greek, and that what the man said was:

"Welcome to the City of the Golden Gate!"

CHAPTER II

Nothing Is Impossible

WHATEVER the "City of the Golden Gate" was, it was obvious that it had nothing to do with the Golden Gate known to all the world, out in California. That was over three thousand miles away, nearer to four thousand. And it wasn't below the surface of the ocean.

Nor did I see anything at first to justify calling this a "city." It was just a room, occupied by myself and two strangers, a man and a woman. The man towered above me. The woman was about five feet eight inches tall. The man was of majestic appearance, white, with black hair and blue eyes. He looked as if he could have squeezed me to a pulp with one hand. The woman had green eyes and red hair, and looked every inch a queen.

While we were trying to find a method of communication I looked that room over. That's all it was, a room. It was apparently covered, walls and ceiling, by some radioactive material which supplied the light and looked like frosted gold. It was oblong, from east to west. But the northwest and northeast corners—I was sure of my directions, strangely—had doors set in them, at odd angles. No matter what my disappearance might mean to McLeod and his super-sandhogs, I would find out what lay beyond those doors be-

fore I even thought of going back.

The south wall was not entirely covered by the frosted-gold material, I noted a bit later. It was covered by a painting, of two life-size people, a man and a woman. The briefest glance told me that the pictures, though none too good as likenesses, were those of the man and woman who had so strangely met me. But the man answered my unspoken question by saying slowly, so that I could understand:

"The forebears of Sitnalta and me, who saved from destruction the City of the Golden Gate!"

Sitnalta, I gathered, was the woman. And shortly thereafter she addressed the man as Naeco.

I decided I'd better start off by asking questions, if I could make myself understood. I said:

"How did I get here? How were you able to bring me?"

"We have known," said the man haltingly, "for four months that your group from Outside was approaching the foundations of our city. We have known that *for the first time in twelve thousand years* we were certain to be brought into contact with the peoples Beyond! So we made our plans. We would gain possession of one of you, at a given time, study you, and if you passed certain tests, we would welcome the contact. . . ."

"But if I did not pass?" I asked.

"I was not speaking of you personally, but of any one of your men," said Naeco. "If you do not pass the tests, then we shall make sure that no contact is ever made."

He said it quite calmly, but there was something in his eyes, something in the cold intonations of his voice, which gave me a hint of the truth. In some manner these two people could work all the havoc with

the Giant Mole that McLeod had feared when he had sent me out to look at the facing. Certainly people who could "kidnap" me as I had been kidnapped, could do what they wished with the Mole and everybody in it. McLeod and those super-sandhogs were at the mercy of this man and this woman. And what those two did about it, seemed to depend on me. "Tests" had been mentioned. But *what* tests? And why?

HOW far above my people am I?" I asked, choking.

Naeco tried in every conceivable way to indicate the distance, without success. But I somehow got the idea that in a matter of seconds I had been whisked up through two miles of rock formation. I dropped the question of distance to ask:

"How was it done?"

"Our scientists," said Naeco, while Sitnalta smiled slightly, "have done much experimenting with the substrata. Besides, we've known for a long time that you were coming, and a shaft was simply driven down to intercept your course! We controlled the shaft from our laboratory nearby. This room is part of the laboratory. We have since closed the shaft, until we have decided what to do about you and your people."

For four months they had known of our coming. How? I asked that, too, and Naeco, bored with the question, obviously, answered as he would a troublesome, question-asking child.

"We have scientific instruments for tracing disturbances of the earth. Your machine is becoming more and more a disturbing element!"

Listening devices! I could understand those. We had them for use in war, for testing depths in the ocean. Also we had the seismograph, for

testing earth tremors, and locating the center of disturbance. Remembering the vibration when all our drills were boring into the walls of the Tunnel, I could understand how it had been done. I rather doubted if our seismographs would have picked up the vibrations of the Giant Mole, tho'; these people had something!

"What of my people down there," I asked next, "while these tests you mention are going on?"

"They are being tested, too," said Naeco. "You have, to them, vanished without trace, without explanation. That fact will have a certain effect on your master and the rest of his men. If they have the courage, the belief in themselves, to go ahead with their work—there is nothing to stop them except us, when and if we decide to do so. But if terror causes them to give over working, then they lack what people must have if we are to associate with them."

I could, without difficulty, put myself in McLeod's place. Probably he hadn't even yet missed me. Waiting for me to come back, signal from outside the Mole, be taken in to make my report. He would grant me an hour, perhaps. Then, he would investigate. He would throw the great light from the Mole into the facing. And I would be gone. I could see his face, a mask of unbelief. I could hear the superstitious murmurs of the men—and sandhogs, even super-sandhogs, have their superstitions.

They would, finally, send someone else into the facing, and find nothing. Then...

But I knew McLeod. In spite of anything he would hammer away at his job...

"There is now no difference in the formation to effect the behavior of

your machine," said Naeco. "The shaft has been filled, is exactly as it was when there was no shaft at all."

McLeod would discover that, of course, and go right ahead. But he and his men would expect almost anything to happen. And down there, ten miles under, with a mysterious terror hanging over them, human beings might do anything. And they would think and feel plenty. McLeod, from this moment on, would have his hands full.

If there were some way I could contact him, warn him back, until I should have passed the "tests" hinted at; but then, if he had gone, *he* and his men would have failed to pass the tests which, I gathered, would have been just as bad as it would be if I failed. It wasn't just me they were going to test, but my people, through me. I had, by chance, been chosen a representative of my people. I didn't care for the honor. No telling what might be done to me.

I thought of hanging one on Naeco's chin, and then running out through one of those doors. But what good would it have done? Nothing in our science could have sunk that shaft, then filled it up again in the blinking of an eye, as these people of the City of the Golden Gate had done. They probably had other powers. But one thing I promised myself. I'd try my luck with this Naeco before I was finished, if for no other reason than what he was calmly planning to do to McLeod and the super-sandhogs.

That he could, calmly and easily, let the Atlantic into the Bore, I knew without being told. So, I'd better behave myself.

"All right, Naeco," I said. "You've got me. What's next?"

THE two conferred, across the oblong room from me, while I looked them over. I might as well describe them, though I've already told more than any normal person would believe.

The man wore a robe of emerald green, banded and embroidered with gold, over a tunic which looked like spun gold. When his robe was thrown back to give his arms free play, I noted that a "sun" of stones which looked to be diamonds, sapphires and rubies, was embroidered on his chest. A regal or priestly garment, I didn't know which.

The woman had the same sort of outfit, except that she wore a dress in place of a tunic, and carried a sphere, about eight inches in diameter, in her left hand, a sort of scepter in her right.

Both man and woman wore purple satin hose and sandals with up-tilted toes. The sandals shone as though they were afire. There seemed to be flecks of gold in them.

I must confess that I liked the looks of the woman, and I didn't like the man. Maybe I didn't like the man because I had a sneaking suspicion that he could whip me easily.

Now Naeco turned to me.

"My sister and I," he said, "have decided that you might as well begin. But first, tell us something about yourself. What your knowledge is, for example. And your name..."

"My name is Gregg Pettis," I began, repeating it until both had got it. "I am an engineer. I have a good grounding in ancient languages..."

From there I went on to tell about myself. Now and again Naeco interrupted to ask questions, which I answered reluctantly. Now and again Sitnalta asked something, and I an-

swered with enthusiasm. There was almost the crooning of the sea in her voice. That's it, her voice made me think of the whispering of a sea-shell, held to the ear. It was all very weird, and I was far from accepting, even yet, that all this I believed to be happening, actually was.

I wouldn't have been surprised—indeed, I'd have been relieved!—to regain consciousness inside the Giant Mole, see McLeod bending over me, hear him say,

"You sure gave us a fright, lad. You passed out and we had to bring you in. We almost didn't get you in time."

But then, it *had* happened. There was absolutely no chance of a mistake about that. And what now was Naeco saying?

"You are reasonably well informed, for not being one of our people, so we are of the opinion that you may be representative of your own. At least you'll have to do."

He didn't sound enthusiastic about me. But then I suppose I was just as strange to him as he was to me.

"I warn you," said Naeco, "that any attempt to resist us will mean your instant death—provided you escape death in your tests!"

Just what, in Heaven's name, were the tests going to be? Was I going to have to run some strange gauntlet, meet queer knights in the lists, fight duels, face wild animals in some undersea arena?

I was on the bottom of the sea, or below it, and I was quite comfortable in that I was neither too hot nor too cold, could breathe easily. There was an exhilaration in the atmosphere of this room that was pouring through my blood like good wine. And it wasn't just because of the woman, either. She was, I judged, somewhere

between twenty and twenty-four. The man was in his middle thirties, judged by standards I knew. I might be wrong, of course. Since they lived below the sea they must have mastered many problems. They might be a thousand years old, each of them, for all I knew, and if they had said as much, then and there, I'd have accepted it as being quite in keeping.

"I'll play your game," I told Naeco. "I didn't ask for this, and I don't seem to have any choice. But don't try to manhandle me!"

His lips twitched slightly in a hint of a smile, and it almost made me forget myself. Yes, he could handle me easily; he knew it, and knew that I knew it. He was simply amused at my cockiness.

What the woman thought of me I had no idea. I looked into the depths of those green eyes of hers several times and could get no slightest hint. Nor did she offer protest, or seem shocked, when Naeco threatened me with death if I weren't a good boy from now on. She was probably just as feral as her brother.

"Well," I said, "let's go, if you've asked all the questions you want to."

"There will be many questions," said Naeco, "but they can be asked as we progress in our examination of you. Naturally, we are interested in your civilization, if you have any. We're interested in the details of your burrowing machine, though it is, naturally, inferior to our mechanical instruments..."

I ASKED Naeco whether, if I failed, our people would get another chance, whether someone else might be "kidnapped" in the same manner for testing. He refused to answer directly.

"If you fail," he said, "you will be

beyond being interested in what we do afterwards!"

Were they *never* going to take me through one of those doors, into this City of the Golden Gate? I was tired of impossible mysteries. If I were going to be pushed around I wanted to get it over with. I was curious about whether I could measure up to what was expected of me—and resolved that this guy would never hear me cry "Uncle" no matter what.

One thing got me: the scepter that woman carried in her right hand. It had a golden ball on the end of it, which looked like a tiny sun. If these people were sun-worshippers, and behaved like other sun-worshippers I'd read about, they might offer me up as a sacrifice, taking my heart out and holding it in front of my glazing eyes while I could still see it. The Aztecs had done things like this.

But how, under the ocean, could they be sun-worshippers? They couldn't see the sun. But then, they couldn't exist under the ocean, either! It was time I found out about things.

Naeco and Sitnalta seemed to think so, too. He walked to one of those doors, with stately tread, opened it, stood aside for Sitnalta to go through ahead of him.

We exited from that room into a city gorgeous beyond anything I had ever seen. It was lighted by what seemed to be a vast system of pylons, each one topped by its own individual blazing sun. Each pylon was a huge replica of the scepter Sitnalta carried. Those orbs atop the pylons not only supplied light, but an even, temperate heat.

I gasped as the City of the Golden Gate smote me in the eye. I saw Naeco pleased for the first time, knew that he loved this city beyond even his love for his beautiful sister. He

stood aside, to the right, his sister to the left, and they did not forbid me to stand between them to catch my first glimpse.

"A marvel of beauty!" I whispered, wishing I had poetic words to describe what I saw. "Gorgeous as a dream. Fragile as mist in the morning. It is truly a fairyland. Fabled Atlantis could never have been so lovely!"

"Atlantis is no fable," said Naeco. "And it not only could have been as lovely, but was, *and is!*"

I whirled, staring at Naeco, then at Sitnalta.

Oh, I suppose I should have guessed before now, but I hadn't.

"*And is...*" Naeco had just said. Now he went on, "and you are the first from outside to look again upon her beauty, *after twelve thousand years!*"

My first glimpse of the City of the Golden Gate was...

My first glimpse of Atlantis!

CHAPTER III

Beauty Unbearable

HERE was the land of which poets had written for ages, of which bards had sung, about which many tales had been told. This was fabulous Atlantis, no longer a fable but truth. Here was the land of sun worshippers, wherein lived people whose civilization had been superior to ours twelve thousand years ago, when a vast continent between Central America and Europe had sunk beneath the waves; the land of which it had been written that "even in those days, men flew in machines of their own building," in which there was a system of lighting more advanced and mysterious

than electric light. Here was the land which had been the dwelling place of "men like gods," who had even come to regard themselves as gods...

So that, according to some tales, Diety had drowned most of it beneath the waves. Some even said that this land had been called En-Don at one time, which is to say, Eden.

And I had re-discovered it!

The desire to go out into the City of the Golden Gate was almost unbearable. I wanted to snatch off the equipment which I had worn into the facing, to give my body freedom, that I might travel fast and far through all the beauty which lay before me. I looked up, and saw what looked to be the dome of the sky. But before I could ask about it, Naeco said,

"A simple feat of engineering, Pet-tis. The forebears of Sitnalta and me worked it out. A matter of stresses and strains, properly distributed. What you see is the floor of the ocean, through the dome our forebears built to hold off the sea, when it was known five hundred years in advance that Atlantis must sink."

"But how could they have known just where, and in what shape the City of the Golden Gate would sink?" I asked, breathless with amazement.

"Do not the people of your world," said Naeco disdainfully, "know where faults in the earth lie? Can they not even do such a thing as predict earth tremors, and say exactly where they will occur?"

"Yes. Yes, of course."

"So can we. We have always been able to. We knew exactly how the land hereabouts would settle, how deeply, and what the nature and shape of the terrain would be when

it was done—and we erected the dome so that it would fit. It was flexible, of course, from the beginning, so that there should be no way by which the sea could enter at any place."

Breathless, I asked for no more at the moment. I tried my best to keep Naeco, already insufferably superior, from seeing my amazement. I was already thinking of the words wherewith to tell my world of this when I had passed all tests and been returned to my own land, down in the Bore—to travel thence to New York and give the story to the earth above the seas.

Now Naeco gave a signal to someone I did not see, and a strange thing happened. A huge ball that looked to be of glass, with facets like a diamond, brilliantly reflecting the light of the nearest "sun," rolled up to us from around a corner. It rolled in silence. I could look through to the interior, and see that it was fitted out for human occupancy. There were chairs, a half dozen of them, which swung easily with the rolling movement of the ball so that they were always upright, no matter how the ball rolled.

It came to a stop in front of us. I could see no slot through which it must be running. I could not figure out how it was controlled, except that Sitnalta made a slight movement with the "scepter" in her hand, as though she were drawing the ball to her. And when it stopped, a door fitting snugly into its side opened. Sitnalta stepped inside, followed by Naeco, then by myself. They seated themselves. Sitnalta signaled for me to sit near her. Naeco opened his mouth as though to protest, then closed it tightly when Sitnalta frowned slightly at him. I gathered instantly that she was the

stronger of the two, that her huge brother was subservient to her.

The ball began to roll. We were going into the heart of the City of the Golden Gate.

But I was mistaken about that, for suddenly the ball rose easily, silently, into the air. Then it was that I noticed a system of slender metal beams above our heads, inside the globe. They looked like chilled steel rods. I could not see how the ball was levitated, nor understand by what power it was propelled. I looked a question at Naeco.

"A cosmic force of which we are the masters," he said. "Those tall masts you see, scattered through the City of the Golden Gate. . . ." I hadn't seen them until he pointed one out, and I noted a slender needle-like shaft easily twice the height of the Empire State Building; there were many of them, scattered at varying intervals throughout the City, and all of them projecting above the highest building, "are our control towers. The power emanates from them, in waves. It passes through the tubing over our heads. The aero-sphere is thus borne aloft as though an invisible wire were passing through one of the tubes inside the sphere."

"I know," I said grimly. "In my country we call it riding the beam. We have control towers, too. . . ."

"And when I wish to change direction," said Naeco, as though what I said mattered not at all, "all I have to do is press one of these buttons. There is a button representing each of our control towers; when I press a certain button, we travel toward that control tower."

"Like a spider on his web," I said, "except that your web is invisible."

"I do not understand what you mean by spider." He didn't like to

admit that I knew anything he didn't, I could see that. But I had no wish to crow over the man. I was too happy in what I was seeing. For now, some six or seven hundred feet below us, I could see the mosaic of the City of the Golden Gate, unfolding. A city of straight, narrow streets, bordered by trees of which I hadn't the slightest knowledge. Between the streets and the buildings were sidewalks, between the sidewalks and the buildings, swards of what looked to be purple grass.

THERE were thousands of people on the streets. Some walked, some rode in odd conveyances behind strange-looking animals, some rode in spheres like this one. The spheres seemed capable of both land and air-travel.

I felt as though I were riding in some strange interplanetary conveyance, except that Naeco had made it seem simple. We were radio-controlled, though Naeco did not give the force a name. I suppose he felt I would not understand it!

There were squares, rectangles, circles, in the city below us. There were great commons. There were huge platforms which suggested gathering places for music, or speech-making. One of these platforms was shaped like a mighty star, and the top of it had a golden sheen in the light which shone over Atlantis.

I saw skyscrapers—had there been a sky!—as tall as any I knew at home. I saw buildings which must be temples, because nothing less than the gods should have any right to the use of them. The city seemed to lie on a great level expanse. . . .

"Only the City of the Golden Gate was considered valuable and important enough to save, when the conti-

ment sank," said Naeco. "After all, the great folk lived here, then as now. The common people lived outside the walls. We let the sea take them!"

I gasped in horror, though all this had happened ages ago.

"They did not matter," said Naeco. "They were not descended from the gods, as were the great-folk!"

Great-folk! The way he talked of drowning people, the way he assumed that only his own kind was worth saving from the sea!

"Just how many," I said calmly, "were drowned, do you suppose, when Atlantis went down?"

"I never suppose," he said. "I know. Our census-taking was precise. Sixty-three million, four hundred and seventy-two thousand six hundred and seventeen common people drowned in the sea which now covers the City of the Golden Gate!"

"And they could have been saved?"

"Had we believed them worth the effort, but how could they be? They had served their purpose. They had wrested ores from the ground for us. They had gathered their wealth together in the Cities, especially in this, the Capital City. Had they not been drowned it would have been necessary that we support them. Drowning was the simplest way out of what might have been a difficult situation."

"Did *they* know Atlantis was going under?" I asked.

"Why should we have warned them, and had them swarming into the Cities? No need to let them make trouble for us. They were so stupid they did not even realize why they were being used to construct a dome over the City of the Golden Gate."

I looked at Sitnalta. She did not seem to be much concerned about this wholesale, apparently unnecessary de-

struction of human life. But then it was an old story to her, a very old story. I drew a little away from her. I could not help it.

Now and again I looked up, trying to fathom the system by which the ocean was kept out of Atlantis. I could not solve the riddle. I hated to ask Naeco. I looked down, spotting those artificial suns scattered through the city—which I soon knew to be vaster than London and New York combined. The light was sunlight, I felt sure; but how was it trapped down here, miles beneath the ocean? I'd find out, if I could, without asking the snobbish brother of Sitnalta.

"Since I don't know anyplace here," I said, "I suppose it's foolish of me to ask where we're going?"

"We're going to the suburban palace of His Majesty, King Poseidon," said Naeco quietly. "His power is slight, but we must pay attention to him, as a matter of tradition. We must satisfy his curiosity, let him see you. He may even wish to go along when you are put through your tests..."

"Tests of what?" I demanded.

"Mentality. Courage. Resourcefulness."

And that's all he would tell me.

WE LEFT the city behind. Now and again we changed direction, as though we had switched to another line. We traveled in silence. I could not even hear the whisper of wind created by our own swift flight through the air above the sprawling land.

I straightened as we soared over what seemed to be a great stretch of badlands. The badlands of the Dakotas. The tumbled masses of rock in the ravines of the Rockies. The

tangle of forest in the deep tropics. All these things, together and separately, would not have given an adequate picture of the utter desolation in that vast area below. Sitnalta seemed a little uneasy, as though she were afraid that the Aero-Sphere would fall into that hellish jumble of brown and yellow rocks—or what looked to be rocks—of crags and gullies and ravines, of nightmarish forests, in which unbelievable things, some of them of huge size, moved swiftly about.

"What's that place below, Naeco?" I asked, trying to appear unconcerned, though an aura of horror seemed to float up from the place, and to enter the Aero-Sphere itself.

"The hunting preserve of His Majesty. Also an experimental breeding place, where we try to develop new and tasty meat-foods for our tables. It is rather difficult at times, because there are so few descendants of the common-people survivors of The Sinking, to attend the place. And attendants are constantly being careless, and being devoured."

"What sort of animals? They look pretty savage from here. I'm glad I'm not down there."

"You'll see the place much more closely, soon. No visitor could be allowed to depart without passing through the Preserve!"

"Passing through!" I ejaculated, then bit off short any other words I might have been tempted to say. This might be one of my tests. Naeco showing me the Preserve, to see whether the sight of it unnerved me. I knew he was carefully watching me, from the corner of one eye. Sitnalta looked straight to the front, seeming not even to breathe.

We finally circled away to the right, toward the north, and I could

see the Palace grounds of His Majesty, Poseidon. They were utterly unbelievable. They shone in such splendor in the light of "suns" erected at the four corners of a vast quadrangle, that I would not have been surprised to find out that every building was made up entirely of precious stones—probably diamonds, sapphires and rubies. I suppose I get the names of those stones from the "sun" designs on the front of Naeco's tunic, and Sitnalta's dress.

Those "suns!" I had to know what made them work. As an engineer I could see that it must have been a pretty problem to light Atlantis after it sank. I did not believe that sunlight could filter through four or five miles of ocean. That it could somehow he *pulled* through struck me as possible, but I hadn't the slightest idea how even to begin working out a plan. And here was one that actually worked.

I also noted another thing, in the flight from the City of the Golden Gate. People who passed any one of the suns, stopped and faced that sun for just a moment, touching head and breast with the right hand — as though it were a religious rite.

I shouldn't have asked, I know, but I did:

"Do your people still worship the sun?"

Naeco moved so slightly that I scarcely believed it. He was on his feet, had turned on me, and his hands were fast on my neck, his thumbs digging into my throat, before I could realize that I had somehow offended.

"How dare you?" he grated through set teeth. "How dare you so much as suggest that our people might ever *not* worship the Lord of the Universe?"

I couldn't answer him. I grabbed

at his wrists, trying to pull his hands free. My breath was shut off, and my eyes were blacking out. At the moment when I would have lost consciousness, Sitnalta touched her brother on the shoulder with that scepter. He released me at once, staggered back against the side of the Aero-Sphere as though it had been struck by some terrific force. I bore that in mind. The Scepter of Sitnalta had plenty of kick in it.

Naeco glared at his sister, his teeth showing in a snarl. He started to say something, but Sitnalta merely met his eyes, and his own lowered. She was the boss, no doubt about that. I knew that the scepter represented power. But what did the small sphere represent? I looked at it, after I noticed the effect of the scepter, and she answered, calmly, my unspoken question.

"It is the means by which I see wherever I wish to see," she said. "This is the Sphere of Complete Vision and Audition. Vision is complete, however, only throughout Atlantis—for what else is there to see that is important? Hearing, however, is of greater extent. Do you care to know, for instance, whether that great machine of yours has resumed work?"

I nodded, unable to speak. She held the sphere directly over my head. The back of her hand even touched my crown—which gave me a sensation as of an electric shock, so great was this woman's effect on me. What she did to adjust the sphere I do not know. Nor could I hear anything in it. And after a bit she removed it.

"Your machine does not yet move," she said.

"I trust your people have not lost their courage!" said Naeco ominously.

"If they have there is no point in keeping *you* alive!"

He looked back the way we had come, back over the Hunting Preserve, and I knew that his own words had suggested ways to him by which a despised Outsider could die. And I liked none of them.

NAECO turned back to the apparently simple controls of the Aero-Sphere. We began to descend. We touched the purple grass lightly, in front of what I took to be the principal palace. Men in garments only less ornate and gorgeous than those of Naeco and Sitnalta, came rushing from buildings to right and left, to draw up in two ranks, facing each other. Thus a lane of men, a kind of guard of honor, though I could see no arms of any kind, stretched from our Aero-Sphere to the door of the palace.

Naeco and Sitnalta got out as the door was opened by two of the fancy-dressed men, who bowed their heads on their breasts, as though they were more than anxious not to look at the faces of these two people—whoever these two might turn out to be.

Four other men were stretching a great runner, or carpet of crimson, from the door of our Aero-Sphere toward the door of the palace. But before I could put foot on that rich runner Naeco snapped at me:

"Don't put your alien feet on royal tapestry!"

I swallowed the humiliation, because I knew instantly that if I didn't the menials would strike me dead in the batting of an eye. I walked just to the left of the unreeling runner, while Naeco and Sitnalta, side by side, Sitnalta on the right, led the way to the door of the palace.

The runner rolled up a flight of

nine steps, through a door, across a vast floor in a monster room like a cathedral, through a series of huge bronze, bolt-studded doors, into what I took to be an audience hall.

There an obese man sat on a throne, peering at us through eyes below which were, literally, pouches of fat.

"Who is this creature, Naeco, whom you bring to pay homage to Poseidon?"

The fat man's voice boomed like a vast drum. Naeco turned to me before answering Poseidon.

"Down on your knees, and touch your head to the floor in obeisance to His Majesty, Poseidon!"

"Are *you* going to?" I asked.

"Sitnalta and I are the chief scientists of Atlantis, and by tradition exempt from the obeisance!"

"Then, as far as I am concerned, I'll see the old boy in Hell before I'll bend the knee to him! And you can take that or leave it!"

The old boy on the throne didn't miss a word of my atrocious ancient Greek, which served me none too well when I wanted to be slangy and insulting. He glared at me for a moment, then roared with laughter. He made me think of Old King Cole. His belly wobbled like a great tub of jelly.

"At last, someone to refuse you obedience, Naeco," he said. "What are you going to do about it? Going to *make* him get down on his knees?"

This time I was expecting it, and I started the right-hander almost before Naeco made his move. I aimed smack at his button. And the blow went home, perfectly. Naeco, chief of Atlantis' scientists, descendant of the people's greatest hero and heroine, took a knockout punch, and went out cold at the feet of his king.

Poseidon roared.

"At last! A descendant of the Great Ones is abased before his sovereign! I've hoped to live to see the day. But young man, he'll have your heart for this—if I let him! And being of a mood to be amused, I may let him!"

I looked at Sitnalta—and the condemnation in her eyes was in itself a sentence of death.

CHAPTER IV

Poseidon

WELL, I figured I had cooked my own goose. That Naeco and his sister were powers in Atlantis was plain. That Naeco was an egotist who couldn't stand ridicule was also obvious. And fully two hundred men of the court of Poseidon—I gathered that all the kings of Atlantis were called Poseidon, a name that had been handed down from ages before The Sinking—had seen me knock Naeco cold. The king roared with laughter, but I knew there'd have to be a reckoning. When it came to a showdown—and Naeco would be sure to demand one—the old fat one would have to side with his chief scientist. Chief Scientist, to me, meant High Priest. I imagined that his status was something like that.

Naeco stirred. Sitnalta had moved up and taken her place on a "throne" only slightly less elevated above the rich mosaic floor of the palace, leaving the floor to Naeco and me. I supposed he'd have some sort of weapon, but what would they have in Atlantis? A ray gun to burn me to a cinder? Some crushing force that would simply disintegrate me, blow me throughout Atlantis? I had no way of knowing. But a man like

Naeco didn't have power without knowing many sorts of uses for it. I watched him as he stirred, sat up, dazedly, exactly like a fighter who hasn't quite got up before the full count, and is trying to figure out just what part of the roof fell on him. The courtiers of Poseidon were utterly silent. I looked around at their faces—all of them entirely too handsome—and knew that none of them liked Naeco, though they'd do whatever he told them. Those Courtiers were all over six feet tall, too. Any one of them would be a handful, even for a man who knew how to use his fists.

Naeco noticed the silence. Then he noticed me. His face went dead white with fury. He looked at Poseidon, and the king looked back at him. That the king was getting ready to burst out laughing again was plain, and I didn't want that to happen. I wanted a break; I'd lost my head, but that was no reason why I should also lose my life.

Naeco got to his feet, glared at me again, walked toward me, his legs somewhat rubbery, a fact which he could not understand. I wondered how many ages had passed since Atlantis had known anything about fisticuffs.

Naeco stood before me. I watched him warily. I watched his hands, waiting for an overt move, intending to crack him down again, if he gave me a chance, and wasn't too fast in bringing out some outlandish weapon.

Instead, he looked at my right hand.

"Let me see," he said.

I held up my hand, palm upward.

"What was the force you used?" he asked grimly.

The man actually didn't know what had hit him!

"It's a force that is my personal own," I told Naeco. "I can teach others in its use but I want to let you know, before you start making demands, that I will teach it to none who tries to compel me to do so!"

"What?" roared the King. "Not even Poseidon?"

"I'll be glad to instruct Your Majesty," I said instantly. "But this High Priest of yours has been in my hair ever since he yanked me into the City of the Golden Gate, and I'm getting sick of it!" It gave me a sort of amusement to confound these people with New York slang, badly wrenched into Greek.

"In your hair?" repeated Poseidon.

"He's been treating me as an inferior, and in my own country nobody treats me in such a fashion."

"You're an important man in your own country?" asked Poseidon, while Naeco turned my hand over and over, looking at it, and then ran his palms over my clothes, looking for some concealed weapon.

"In my country all men are created equal. Nobody bows down to anybody else, even kings. . . ."

"Barbarians!" said Naeco.

"Take it easy, Pal," I said to Naeco, "if you don't want the lights to go out again."

"Lights to go out?" he repeated. "Lights?"

"Yes, your own. You have lights inside you, you know. I have a trick by which I can put them out. It's painless, but effective. . . ."

Poseidon roared with laughter again. Uncertainly his courtiers joined in, which didn't help my situation with Naeco, nor with Sitnalta, in the least. Sitnalta might not have minded had I slugged the king or one of the courtiers, but I knew she regarded the humiliation of her brother as a personal matter, a blow

at her own prestige. She might like me, after her fashion, but not until Naeco had been restored to his egotistical stature. Naeco frowned at the ring of richly garbed courtiers—all of whom had “sun” designs on their tunics, though none as brilliant as those of Naeco and Sitnalta—and the courtiers fell silent, obviously afraid of his power.

POSEIDON saved the situation. “Pettis,” he said, giving an odd twist to the pronunciation of my name, “can you think of a single reason why I shouldn’t spill the ocean onto your people down under my kingdom, and give ourselves another twelve thousand years of seclusion from meddlesome barbarians?”

“No,” I said, “I can’t. I gather you can do it if you wish. But Naeco told me I would have to go through certain tests, and if I passed them *maybe* my people would get a break. And for myself I can’t think of anything I’d rather do than be the man who opened Atlantis to the outside world again.”

“What’s your world got to offer men like gods?”

I looked at the paunch of the king who spoke of himself as a “man like a god,” and tried not to let my disgust show in my face.

“Greater scientific marvels,” I said boldly, considering that I knew next to none of the marvels of Atlantis. “We have Aero-transportation that is three times as fast as yours. We can share it with you. We have beautiful cities. We have vehicles of all kinds in which to travel, on land and on sea. Not vehicles drawn by animals, either. Every man in my country, if he wants to, can own a vehicle that doesn’t have to be pulled by some animal. . . .”

“Is your land a country of kings?”

roared Poseidon. “Has it no gentry? No plebians?”

“In my country,” I said, suddenly feeling very proud, “a man can be a king if he wants to—for kings, gentry and plebians are born equal. They make themselves what they will. . . .”

“I don’t believe it!” roared Poseidon, while a murmur of disbelief ran around the great table, where the courtiers still sat in silence to listen to my halting, ancient Greek. “What else have you?”

“Food!” I said. “The food of many nations. Food that makes the food of Your Majesty, superb as it must be, taste like nothing. . . .”

“Many nations?” he repeated, disregarding the matter of food, to my surprise. “No one nation has conquered all the others?”

“No. My world has many nations, of which my own is the greatest. Each nation has its perfect cooks, its national dishes.”

“Tell me about some of them!”

I did, drawing largely upon my imagination. There were many high-toned dishes I had never tasted nor hoped to taste. I must have done a good job, for his lower jaw sagged, and his lips drooled. Food was plainly his weak spot. Naeco knew that I was playing on Poseidon’s weakness, but he half smiled, and I wondered wherein I was making a mistake. He shouldn’t be so pleased, the way I was getting around His Majesty. Sitnalta was merely watchful—and I was growing more and more afraid of her as the moments sped.

“What good would it do Atlantis,” roared Poseidon, “if your people could visit Atlantis when they wished?”

“Your people could also visit the nations of my world!” I said, reasonably enough, I thought.

“Why should any resident of the

City of the Golden Gate ever desire to go anywhere else? Naeco, get on with your tests of this man. He is impudent, presumptuous, and full of lies. Presumes to think we of Atlantis have the slightest curiosity about his lands or his people, or care to trade with them. And he lies where he intimates, nay, even insists, that food Outside can compare with the table of Poseidon of Atlantis! Take him away; let him sample the food and drink of the gods to his satisfaction, that he may know the futility of his lies."

I jumped to my feet.

"And if I pass these tests, Sire?" I asked.

"Then maybe I'll permit some of your people to visit Atlantis occasionally, if they come bearing proper tribute. Go ahead, Naeco."

There is no adequate way of describing the feast set before me after we left Poseidon. You may have read of the pomp and gluttany of Roman banquets. They are pale in comparison. I dined with Naeco, Sitnalta, and the nobles of Atlantis as no man has dined in our world for twelve thousand years.

HALF an hour after the banquet Naeco and I, the only occupants of the Aero-Sphere, were slipping down to another landing. Dead ahead was the border of the grim, desolate Hunting Preserve. As we landed and rolled up to that border, I noted that it was surrounded by a high wall.

Directly ahead of us was a huge gate.

"I'll give you all night to explore the Preserve," said Naeco, with a cold smile. "There'll be no reason for me to return tomorrow to see how you fare, but I'll do it anyway. This,

Pettis, is the first test. Nobody has ever come through it alive!"

I went through the great door which two attendants opened for me.

It closed behind me. I was unarmed.

I stared into the gathering gloom, toward the tumbled heart of the King's Hunting Preserve.

The place was a hideous nightmare, a-crawl with life Paracelsus might have imagined.

A creature of ghastly proportions saw me, and such a sound as I had never heard on earth, crashed against my eardrums. I couldn't believe it. Things like this had been extinct since long before man crawled out of the ooze and became a man. Its roaring bellow was enough to shrivel one with terror. It began to move toward me. I turned for a swift look at the door, the high wall.

There was no escape.

I had no weapon save my fists, feet, and wits. Death was closing in on me with the speed of an express train.

CHAPTER V

Waking Nightmare

HOW shall I describe that which no man of modern times has ever seen? Shall I say, as I believe, that the creature which charged upon me with its terrifying roaring, was that animal which has come down to us in myths as the dragon? Shall I say this, knowing that man has always regarded it as a creature of mythology? What else can I say, when the creature so nearly resembled that boggy of all good fairy-tales? It was somewhere between a giant saurian, its bluish body studded with gleaming

silver scales that looked like polished armor, and the dinosaur. It was larger than the one by far, smaller by far than the other.

Beyond it, as it came undulating like a train of cars on a curved mountain railroad, I could see a nightmarish area, a poisonous jungle of many colors; all colors of the rainbow, yet so mixed that the color was not beautiful but hideous, like the color of inexpressible fear.

Fear? I feared that oncoming creature as I had never feared the monsters of my childish nightmares, and I had feared those things so greatly that I had always buried my head under the covers, or yelled for my parents to come to the rescue. But I could not do that now. I had to face issues, not run from them.

How did other men tackle brutes like this "dragon" of the Preserve? They destroyed them from Aero-Spheres perhaps, or ambushed them in the company of many men. I could do none of these things. I was alone, with a wall at my back.

Was there any possibility of passing this, the first of the tests by which all my people and country would be judged? There must be *some* place else, Naeco would not have said he would return in the morning. Had any Atlanteans ever spent a night, unarmed, in this place of horrors? I imagined so, and resolved that if any one on the earth could do it, so could I. I *had* to, therefore I would.

But how? Not by doing what other men did; not by trying wildly to escape. Not by tackling it with puny weapons of hands and feet, which were as useless as matchsticks against a machine-gun. A flash came to me: I remembered the tale of how a pugnacious wire-haired

terrier had chased a lion, because the lion had never seen such a creature in his life, certainly nothing so small had ever dared to challenge his kingly might.

Would it work?

I had no time to think of anything else. I must try it, and I must not be afraid. I charged straight at the creature which was thundering down upon me. I flailed my arms and yelled at the brute. I did not duck aside nor dodge. Surely it had seen many human beings in this Hunting Preserve but none had ever attempted this. The element of surprise was my only weapon.

But the creature's small brain could not grasp this new thing—not at once, anyway. Would it realize in time before it had trampled me into a bloody pulp, in the strange soil of the Preserve?

I shouted at the thing as we approached each other. I yelled and ranted like a madman. I stopped as I ran, and caught up whatever my hands could grasp. Dirt. Rocks of some kind. And I hurled them with either hand, because my hands, too, were weapons. My fists were no good, because I could make no impression on the creature with them, even if he stood still and permitted. But had anybody ever tried to fling dirt in its face?

So I threw whatever came to hand, without knowing what it was. I saw milky, filmy dirt, scatter in the air before the creature, turning him almost into the mist of nightmare, before my eyes. I heard hard things I threw, crash against him, and rattle off.

But still he came on.

There was nothing to do now but carry out the plan which had flashed through my mind. If this creature were destined to destroy me, the

sooner it happened the less time I would have to drown myself in the horror of the knowledge.

So, when all my being cried out for me to turn, to jump aside, either side, and run like a scared coyote—though the creature could cover rods to the inches I could cover at my best speed—I did nothing of the sort. I continued to race to meet him, head-on. I continued to stoop, without taking my eyes off the animal, grabbing up anything and everything, and hurling it. I could now see its little piggish eyes, snaky eyes, rather. I could see the spray from its flaring nostrils as it snorted its fury—and knew that this was the “fire” of the “dragons.”

His shadow was over me now, so close were we to collision. Yet I had not turned aside. Had I done so there would have been a speedy end. I would, I resolved, continue on until he struck me—and the end came.

That time was on me now, together with the “dragon.”

I wanted to close my eyes, but I kept them open. And a strange, unbelievable thing happened. It was as though the creature had been a ship emerging from a fog, threatening collision with another ship, and trying to sheer off. The “dragon” pulled its head aside, and the head and long scaly neck went past me at a terrific speed. But back of the head and neck which had not touched me, bulged the right side of the monster, armed with scales, any one of which could cut me in two. And that side was as dangerous to me as the armor of a charging tank.

THEN I did jump aside, knowing that the creature could not turn so soon to see me. I felt the wind of the thing’s passing, so close that it spun me in my tracks, almost

knocking me over though I was not actually touched.

Past me raced the mountainous bulk of the creature. I pulled away from that bulk with all the strength I possessed, for to have been so much as touched by it would have meant death. I was like a man standing on the platform of a railroad station, entirely too close as an express train goes by, unable to pull away, while the suction threatens to pull him under. And then, the train is past, and he topples weakly to the track, behind the last car. But I must not do this, for the brute would turn again, and I would be defenseless. I must be standing when all of him had passed, challenging him again when he turned.

Then it was that I got a break.

The surprise had done something to a creature’s brain already too small to reason, to understand anything except the authority of mountainous might. And passing me, a thing which probably had never happened with any other victim in his life, he could not think fast enough to save himself from the huge wall beyond.

He crashed against it with unbelievable force. It was almost as though a bomb had exploded against that wall. I could hear it protest, for hundreds of feet in either direction from the point of impact. The head and neck of the creature doubled against the wall. The mighty bulk of it, behind, could not be halted or braked down in time. The animal seemed to telescope against the rock wall, his monster tail flying high, so that for a moment I thought he was going to somersault over the wall. That idiotic idea had a strange effect on me. If the creature somersaulted out of the Preserve, I’d

swear to that high-hat Naeco that I had thrown him over, by the tail!

But I quickly got over a desire to laugh, which I knew to be hysterical reaction from the horror that had not really passed, but had only just begun. No blow like that would more than stun the monster which had charged me.

I looked where the head curved away from the wall, as the bulk of the thing whirled to the left, and sprawled his whole length against it, a series of monstrous-taloned feet kicking, the whole snaky length writhing in pain. I saw the head turned so that the snaky eyes could see me. The breath of the creature hissed out, and the sound told me that this was truly a reptile.

Then I did the hardest thing I ever had done in my life. If I had not already accepted a challenge that anybody would have told me was hopeless, and come off fairly well, I would never have attempted this. But I had to make good on it before he could get back on his feet.

I rushed the head of the "dragon." It might be a reptile equipped with a poisonous breath, or fangs. But I remembered something I had read somewhere, that great reptiles are never poisonous; while this might not apply in this land of utter strangeness, it was all I had to go by.

I dashed to that animal, then, and kicked it squarely on its snout. I kicked desperately, furiously, knowing all the time that with a blow of its head it could pulverize me, that a slap from its neck would flatten me. Such reason as it possessed was here in the tiny skull. If I could keep it from what little thinking was possible for it to do I might still have a chance. I kicked it again and again, as the head darted this way and that. When it drew back from

me I followed it, before it could poise, and kicked it again.

The animal did not fling that head at me, simply because I did not give it a chance, anywhere along the line, to recover from its initial surprise. A simple thing, eh? It took courage or an utter brainlessness, to do it. But the fact that I lived through indicated that there was some justice in my assumption that a superior brain should triumph over an inferior brain, whatever the armament of the inferior brain.

Finally I did another foolhardy thing. I had kicked that head until greenish sap oozed from it in many places. I gathered that this sap was its blood, strange though the color was.

Then, I stepped back, and watched to see what the "dragon" would do.

WAS it the only one in the Preserve, I wondered as I watched? Would I have this to do over and over again, with each passing few minutes?

The "dragon" collected itself, like a reptile trying to draw its coils atop one another, and rose. It was still as powerful as it had ever been, except for just one thing: it had been beaten down by this small creature which now stood so far below its high ridge of apparently endless backbone.

The neck craned down at me; the nostrils snorted, but fearfully. The neck started to double, as though coiling to spring. And I rushed at the brute, screaming, swinging my arms. And it did the natural, automatic thing. It twisted that neck far to the side, pointing the head toward the interior of the Preserve, away from the wall against which even that neck had almost been broken.

I screamed again, and the "dragon" started to move away, gathering speed as it went. . . . until the riotous, poisonous jungle out of which it had charged had swallowed all of it except that ridge of serrated backbone.

I looked about me then, feeling plenty cocky. Atop that brute, had I been Tarzan, I could have ridden anywhere in the Preserve, without danger. I should have mounted the brute. He would never have known I was on his back, once I had passed beyond the compass of his tiny ears, his ophidian eyes.

But I couldn't have everything. Now, what should I do? I had to spend the night here. Should I be as quiet as possible, stay here against the wall, and hope that nothing would notice me until morning came? I would probably pass the test if I did, but somehow that did not suit me. It offended my sense of the proper balance of things. I had driven off the king of this weird jungle; should I be afraid to follow him into the depths of it?

I wouldn't do it. Maybe I had passed a test, and would be accepted more graciously when morning came, but had I passed the test completely in my own mind? Not if I stayed here, and could tell Naeco and Sitalta nothing of the Preserve, whenever they should care to ask me.

So, whistling to keep up my courage—not loud lest I attract yet stranger things to me—I followed the spoor of the "dragon" into the jungles.

It was not yet night—I refused yet to think what meant "night" here, and what "day," and how they were regulated—when I started into that desolation; a desolation vaster than any Poe could describe.

HOW shall I describe that jungle? All of us have seen toadstools, but have we seen them growing forty feet tall, topped by umbrellas with the spread of great banyans, those tops dripping gooey substances which entrapped anything that touched them? Trapped the creatures of many strange kinds which blundered into them, then folded down their great umbrellas like mouths opening outward, to take the trapped things into their maws? I saw such things—acres and acres of them, hideous purple, dappled by patches of pale green a foot in diameter, as though their purple were diseased by some unbelievable blight.

And all of us have seen kelp, offshore in our oceans. We have looked down into kelp-beds from boats, perhaps have felt the cold caress of it against our naked limbs while we swam. But have any of us ever seen green patches of it that were alive? Every piece a tenacle that eternally quested for a victim? Tentacles that, when fastened upon something too great for their strength, seemed to call silently to all other tentacles, so that they came to the rescue, and aided the one until the victim was enmeshed as a fly is enmeshed in the web of a spider?

And I saw a "dragon," larger than the one which had run away from me, trapped by those tentacles, held fast, while countless other tentacles whistled through the air like tremendous whips from all directions in the midst of the mass, to add their shaky coils to those already tight about the helpless "dragon."

Had I not seen that creature struggling in time, I might myself have blundered in and been lost.

And I would have walked under a monster toadstool, if the nauseous

odor of its dripping had not repelled me. It probably attracted other creatures.

I wandered on, setting a course that would take me straight across the Preserve, dreading the night in a way one could scarcely imagine.

I stood stockstill, when monster echinoderms with legs crawled slowly across my route of march. They did not notice me, but their spines, I felt sure, would have destroyed me in an instant. I saw great blob-things, moving so slowly that one had to watch them closely, like the hour hand of a watch, to be sure they moved at all.

Those blob-things looked like gray-white oysters larger than a thousand, than two or three thousand, of the oysters I knew, would be if all were joined together as one. And there was an odor from them which told me that this *was* at least an oyster descendant.

I saw things for which there were no names, nothing to which I could compare them, and gradually the truth began to dawn on me. Man had always known that there were creatures in the depths of the sea which man had never seen, might never see in ages to come. Creatures which thrive in the depths at ghastly pressure. Nightmare horror creatures, bearing their own lights. . .

"Great Scott," I told myself, "the Atlanteans have kept out the sea, but they have somehow managed to capture some of the creatures of the sea, and develop them here in their Hunting Preserve! Here are the things which man above hoped to see when he invented the bathosphere—only to find that even in this artificial shell, he could not go down far enough to see the monsters he felt sure the ocean hid."

And what of the night, which Naeco had mentioned? Night blacker than the depths of the sea, because this was below the sea, when I should see the creatures with the lights?

I HAVE no hope that anyone will believe that I saw those things, and escaped them, managed in some fashion to escape the sleeping horror things, like the dripping toadstools, night-blooming flowers that were eaters of everything that moved—into which I might have blundered while I fled blindly from something else.

I saw "suns," shining with lights only less brilliant than the "suns" in the streets I had not yet traversed, and the "suns" were moving. And by their own lights, after a bit, I could see that they were on tall, waving stalks. . . below which were bodies of utter horror.

I saw flying, lighted reptiles, which I knew must have descended from eels evolved on the floor of the sea—and they were beyond words to describe, because man, never having seen them, had not planned the words, or so much as given them names. I can only compare them to the things we know, or that have come down to us in legend.

I shall not say here how the night fell, and the day ended, except that it seemed to develop progressively, from east to west—proof that the light of those "suns" really came somehow from the light of the great Sun that the people of Atlantis worshipped. The light went out in the west first, just as shadows creep eastward from the bases of our mighty mountains when the sun goes down behind them.

But the explanation remained to be found, and during that night I had all

I could do to keep myself alive. Fear had left me, but horror had not.

I went straight through the Preserve that night, and came back just as "day" was "dawning," trying to be nonchalant as I awaited the coming of Naeco.

It seemed forever that I waited for him, my back against the wall, my tired eyes roving the jungles through which I had passed before the gate creaked protest, and I turned and walked calmly through.

I had shucked off, quite comfortably, the equipment I had worn into the Bore, and now wore only my rough work-clothes—black shirt, denim pants, shoes, socks, no hat.

Naeco looked at me strangely. Somehow I felt that he was less inimical to me.

"What ghastly, poisonous creatures you have in this place, Naeco?"

"I wouldn't say that, Pettis," he said, arching his brows. "You liked some of them well enough yesterday at the table of Poseidon!"

For just a moment, as I swayed with nausea, I wondered if his very words might not be a test, too. If so, I survived that one.

Naeco almost grinned as he watched me sway, and I felt, read my thoughts. Then he said, I suppose to help my appetite for breakfast,

"On the whole, you have done very well with the first *and simplest* of my tests!"

To cover the shock of his words I said: "You care to know about it? About last night, I mean?"

He yawned in my face. "If I hadn't known already, would I have come so early to the gate to release you?"

I didn't sock him, only because I was hungry as a wolf, and he was the key to my breakfast.

CHAPTER VI

Recapitulation and the Second Test

SITNALTA had not come with her brother. I had the feeling that she had lost interest in me, which might bode ill for my future here. I also fancied that she had sent Naeco to me, knowing he disliked me, not caring much what he did about it. But why should I, who had spent a night in the Hunting Preserve of Poseidon, be afraid of Naeco now?

As the Aero-Sphere rose into the morning air, rising high so that I could look back into the desolate area of the Hunting Preserve—which, I remembered, had been my first and *simplest* test—I noted that we were headed for that section, on the southeast corner of the City of the Golden Gate, where I had caught my first glimpse of Atlantis. Was I going to be allowed to contact Rogers McLeod, who must be worried beyond expressing, about me. I rather doubted it. I doubted everything now.

For one thing, how did it happen that I was seeing the City from above, for the second time, yet had not actually entered it at any point? I had seen it from above, which told me nothing of the lives of its inhabitants.

I put it bluntly to Naeco: "Am I ever going to see the City of the Golden Gate from its own streets and sidewalks?"

He looked at me strangely, his face a sort of blank, and offered no answer whatever. That it was somehow tied up with the strange tests—during which I was being studied as though I were a strange species of beetle, and Naeco were an entomologist—I began to feel sure. And Nae-

co, weirdly, was not going to talk about it.

"You may never see it closer than you see it now," he said suddenly. "It depends on many things, all of them connected with yourself."

The guinea pig again, and I did not understand it.

So this is how the matter stood. I had come to Atlantis by a means I did not yet understand; I had been told that the fate of everybody in the Bore—who couldn't have the slightest idea about what was happening to me, or realize that their fate was wrapped up in me—depended on my behavior. There were hundreds of men in the Bore, hundreds more pushing out from France.

And the commerce of two great continents depended hugely on the successful outcome of the work on the Bore. If I failed, then the Bore failed—and it might be ages before it would be tried again, when this could be repeated. What would the other tests be like, if the night in the Hunting Preserve were the simplest and easiest?

And what had this studious thwarting of a close view of the city to do with it? I began to feel tremendously queer, as though all of it were becoming dream-like, as though the atmosphere of Atlantis were now going to my head, so that there was no real focus to anything and all was seen through a strange mist. And yet, when I looked carefully, there below me was all the beauty of the ancient capital of Atlantis. There I could see the queer vehicles on the street, the thousands of people, the pylons of the blazing suns.

We swept over it, circling above it so that I could see more and more of it. We rose higher, too, so that I could see the dome more clearly, the

dome above which was the ocean. The ocean should have looked black yet it did not. It looked blue as the sky. Yet when the lights were on—why did not the extent of them make Atlantis visible from the surface of the Atlantic? I had an answer to that. The day of Atlantis coincided with the day above, and captains sailed the seas without seeing, because their own sun blinded them to the fire below.

Naeco was showing me, tantalizing me. I could not tell of what material the dome of the city was constructed. That it was of something substantial beyond any work of man, was obvious. And yet—men had bored under many rivers, and we ourselves had bored out from New York City; why should not an ancient civilization, warned five hundred years in advance, known how to save their capital? But how had they done it? And why was I being shown these wonders, without explanation?

Naeco smiled as though he read my thoughts, and the Aero-Sphere began to slide down an invisible "wire" to the spot before the laboratory where I had first entered it.

It touched the stones of the square before the laboratory—stones of many colors, so that the square was a mosaic of unusual beauty, and as clean as a spring wind. Naeco stepped out ahead of me. The door of the Aero-Sphere snapped shut. The ball rose into the air, untenanted, unguided, and soared away over the city—toward the palace of Poseidon.

I noted now that there was a design upon it—the design of the "sun" which emblazoned the tunic of Naeco, the dress of Sitnalta.

I GRINNED at Naeco. "I see that Sitnalta wants the car!"

"Car?" he repeated. "Oh, you are speaking of an ancient, out-moded contrivance, the car. Slang, I suppose, a way of speaking. Yes, Sitnalta, as you say, wants the car. She may join us later, in the laboratory."

We entered a room of the laboratory I had never seen before, and men and women came to meet Naeco. They did him much honor; there was much bowing and scraping, but I could not see in any faces that they cared very much for this brother of Sitnalta.

He spoke to whoever might care to hear.

"Something to eat, for the Outsider. In the Laboratory Annex."

He led the way into a room where there was a maze of instruments, the like of which I had never seen. Motors of some sort, with exterior drive-shafts, which moved without sound when Naeco touched certain buttons. He touched them idly, while waiting for food for me, and looked at me thoughtfully—and I guessed no move he made was made absently, without purpose. So I watched and tried to understand it.

He moved to one of those spheres which I believed was like the sphere carried by Sitnalta.

"Care to listen to your friends in the Bore?" he asked.

Surprised, I moved to the Sphere, looked into it. He had somehow adjusted it. I looked into it, as one looks into a fortune teller's crystal—and plainly I could see the Giant Mole at work. I could see the worry on the face of McLeod. I could see the growing uneasiness on the faces of his men, and knew that they were close to mutiny.

But...

The Giant Mole was moving forward, as it had moved before it had begun the eccentric movement in-

duced by Naeco and Sitnalta of Atlantis.

"There is a lesson here, Pettis," said Naeco calmly.

Without saying more at the moment, he tuned me in so that I could hear what went on in the Bore, and in the Giant Mole. I could hear the grumbling roar of the Mole, as it bored straight into granite that was solid again, below the tremendous weight of the sea. I could see the great bit revolving. I could see the detritus it gouged from the facing, forced under tremendous pressure into the sides of the Bore. Then I could see, when the Giant Mole stopped, the scores of long drills being worked into those sides, too, and filled with Xment, reinforcing the Bore itself.

Everything seemed to be routine, except the worry on the face of Rogers McLeod, and the growing fear of the men who served McLeod as though he had been a god—or always had so served him.

Abruptly I began to listen to individual men.

"Where in the world could that kid Pettis have disappeared to?" That was Shep Harmon, one of the oldest sandhogs, and one of the most reliable.

"There was no hole he could have dropped into," said another, Cline Montry, "and he couldn't have walked into the facing. But he had to go somewhere. If you were to ask me, I'd say that the Almighty never intended for man to bore under the ocean, and that if we don't cut it out we're all going to disappear, just as Pettis did!"

Unfortunate talk, that. Especially when it came from the older men. Such talk traveled like wild-fire, gathering momentum as it traveled. Far

faster, it would go, than the Giant Mole would go into the strata so far below the City of the Golden Gate.

I heard McLeod shout to an assistant, who seemed to have taken over my work. And Naeco tuned the sphere down so that I could hear, even above the racketing of the drills, what McLeod said to Hank Logan, my successor.

"Hank, it isn't that I'm not dumb-founded at what happened to Pettis. I am. There's no explanation for it, at least not in my experience. It's uncanny and the men are afraid, and talking. I can't hear them, but I know they are...."

YES, it *was* uncanny. The men were talking and I could hear them, but McLeod couldn't. And now he was talking with my successor, and the *men* could not hear. They were close enough to touch one another, with a little moving about, and yet they could not hear—while I, two miles above them, with solid rock in between, could hear everything. I could almost hear the sweat drop from the forehead onto the back of McLeod's hand, when he raised that hand to check something on his inevitable panel.

"Yes," said Hank Logan, "they're afraid, but they're real sandhogs. They'll come through all right."

"Real sandhogs, yes," said McLeod. "But this isn't sand. It's solid rock, miles below the ocean. They're beginning to think about that. They are wondering who'll be next, now that we've lost our first man. You see, Hank, if we'd been losing men right along it wouldn't be so bad. Or if they'd seen Pettis killed it would be all right, for that would be something seen and known. But it was all so mysterious. He was whisked

away, when there was no place to which to whisk him...."

"Interpret, Pettis," snapped Naeco.

I did so, as swiftly as I could, my Greek coming back rapidly because I had to use it so much. I hated to let Naeco know that trouble was developing in the Bore, but for all I knew he may have been listening in on our people for years, may have known English as well as I did. So, I interpreted, and told Naeco the truth. His smile was thin, cruel.

"It would be ironic, wouldn't it, Pettis," said Naeco, "if you passed all the tests and your friends failed? Their failure is just as important to us as yours."

"Look, Naeco," I replied, "can't I contact them somehow? I *know* I'm being tested, they don't. Let me let them know I'm all right...."

"They are many, to bolster the courage of one another," he said coldly. "You are but one. If you can come through, they should be able to! Here is your food—and the answer is no! You will contact them only after you have come through, if you do, and if they have gone about their business like men in the meantime."

So, we were all working toward the same end. But I knew it; McLeod and his men did not. It was as though one man alone had the secret of life and death, and were not permitted to impart it to a friend who sorely needed reassurance.

I dipped into the steaming food which came to me in a big bowl, with a spoon of silver in it. It was a kind of soup. I suspected it, as I suspected everything else in Atlantis, but I had made up my mind to one thing—I would not ask what it was until I had sated my hunger—for fear Naeco would tell me!

And all the time, as I ate, Naeco moved about among the machinery in this room—I could hear the purring of machinery in other, adjoining rooms—and I followed him, trying to make out what the gadgets were for and how they worked.

That Naeco was leading up to a test I was sure. That it would take me by surprise, like an unexpected exam in school, I was positive. That he didn't want me to pass it I was equally positive. But why did he bother? Why hadn't he and Sitnalta, if they were doubtful of the worth of McLeod's men, and the nation behind him, simply flood the Bore and destroy them all? It would be years before anybody could reach them at best.

There was still a vast mystery here.

Could it be possible that, after a hundred and twenty centuries, Atlantis secretly yearned for a sight of the true sun, for atmosphere that was not synthetic, for the ability to soar to other planets if they wished, instead of being prisoners under the dome that protected their city?

Were they so arrogant about the manner of their deliverance that they would not accept it at the hands of people whom they considered inferior? This might be it. For had Naeco not said that only the great-folk had been saved? If he believed this, and all Atlantis with him, he must regard—and they must regard—all those who had managed to escape, and to populate, down the centuries, the world which rose when Atlantis sank, as one with the people who hadn't even been considered important enough to warn that doom was upon them!

No wonder, if I had guessed rightly, he looked upon me with disdain.

I gave my empty bowl to an attendant. Then, taking a deep breath, I asked Naeco the ingredients of the soul-satisfying soup. He told me in detail, using words I didn't understand. Then he described the foods, and what I had eaten had been made up of choice portions of the following: "dragon" tail, those ghastly toadstools, the eye-columns of those night-marish monsters with the lights for eyes, "unicorn" hoof, spiced by select portions cut from those ghastly tentacles of kelp I had seen reach out to devour one of the monsters in the hunting Preserve!

A more horrible mess could not be visioned. Yet, when I managed to retain control of myself, and remember, I had never tasted anything better, anywhere! It didn't matter, I fancy, what a thing looked like *before*; it was the *taste* of it that did matter!

"Now," said Naeco, stopping before a star-shaped piece of something that looked like quartz—which I'll have to describe a bit more. I say it was star-shaped, which is true. But it was also a cone. Imagine a cone two feet in diameter, the large end of it cut into the shape of a star—and the cutting continued to the tip, to form a star no larger than the head of a pin, and you can understand about what that star-cone looked like.

I knew, looking into it, that it was a machine of some sort, of tremendous power.

"NOTICE the slot in the bench," said Naeco, indicating a slot which, I could see, would receive the star-cone, as a thread receives a screw. But at the bottom of the slot there was a second slot, of a different shape. It was a small rectangular

aperture, which flared away below the opening, to a stranger shape still—a shape that was a small replica of the tunnel into which I had stepped when I had walked into the facing!

I made a swift estimate, and felt that power of any kind, hurled outward and downward from this strange apparatus, would spread, after going two miles, until it attacked an area about the size of that into which I had blundered when the facing had “kidnapped” me. But I gave no sign, and Naeco said:

“This is the second test. *Tell me, Pettis, exactly how you were snatched from that great machine of yours, in the Bore! If you’re an engineer worthy of the name, you’ll have grasped the principle by this time!*”

The star-cone was in it, I knew, and the slot into which it obviously fitted. I forced my brain to superhuman effort, to figure it out. I had walked into the facing. It had closed behind me. Then I had been pulled up into the room of the picture, up into Atlantis, in the blinking of an eye—as though drawn by invisible power. That’s all I had to go on, and I had to have an answer, in a hurry—or I had failed in the second part of my test, and had lost my life, and the lives of my friends in the Bore.

I talked. I talked fast, with sweat dripping from my brow, and thinking, even as I started, that facing the “dragon” in the Preserve, and spending a night among the horrors of the Preserve, had indeed been the easiest part of the series of tests.

As I talked I stared into the eyes of Naeco, looking for signs that I was right or wrong.

“It’s simple enough,” I said, recalling, just as I used those words, how the Giant Mole turned even

granite into dust, and then turned it back into granite again, against the sides of the Bore. “Your star-cone—naturally I don’t know its name, as we don’t have exactly that sort of apparatus in my land—is charged with a cosmic force. In my country we have a name for that force: electricity. Another word, radio-activity,” I said this, hoping he would accept my statement for it, though I was none too sure of myself. “We have been able to split the atom with this force. Very well, you drop the star-cone in this slot, which guides the power in the cone, forcing it downward. You already have figured out by your precision instruments, right where the Giant Mole, which moves at a certain rate, will be at a given time.

“You set your force in motion. It is, in effect, a disintegrator. It blasts into the earth, into the rock, to the depth you desire. You know of our Y-ray, and how far we can see into granite with it. You blast a small tunnel ahead of the Bore. When the Giant Mole stops because my master has to investigate, you close the end of your crypt, so that the facing appears to be smooth. You do it all with this star-cone.”

His face told me nothing. He still listened, however, so hope began to rise in me. What I said sounded fantastic to me, but what had happened to me, and still was happening, was even more fantastic, so I kept right on talking.

“We did what you expected. I walked into the trap. You closed your crypt again, behind me. I was your prisoner. Then...then...”

I hesitated here, having no idea how I had been snatched up through two miles of rock into Atlantis. Then I plunged.

"To reintegrate the granite," I said, "you simply reversed the process. The granite on the bottom of your crypt began to build under my feet, lifting me with breath-taking speed, up to the level of Atlantis. When I stood in that first room, in Atlantis, there was nothing below me but the solid granite, as firmly in place as ever it had been. I might add," I said hastily, wondering if, here at the last, I had missed the boat somehow, "that it could have been done in another way. I myself could have been disintegrated by that power of yours, and reintegrated in your reception room—and there might have been no crypt at all. If it had been an invention of mine, that's how it would have worked."

HOW did he take my wild, desperate explanation? First, he asked a question:

"You saw my sister and me through what you call the facing, remember? How did we get down there, when it was ourselves who operated the star-cone?"

I had forgotten about that entirely. What should I say? I had no explanation. But I had to say something:

"You did it with mirrors!" I said, hoping he wouldn't understand that strictly New Yorkese expression, but that it would puzzle him until I could think up a reasonable explanation.

He grinned, to my amazement.

"Very good," he said. "Quite good, in fact. We *did* do it with mirrors, throwing our reflections into the crypt, as you call it, and against the end of the crypt nearest your facing!"

Luck? Of course it was luck! I could have racked my brains for a week, and would never have thought

of mirrors. I simply said mirrors, and it was right. But how about the rest of the "test"? Had I given the right answer, or any parts of the answer? I did not know.

"I'll take you now," said Naeco, much more pleasantly than he had hitherto spoken to me, "to that section of the laboratory where our light is controlled, and synchronized with day and night above the sea! If you can answer the riddle of our light, you will have passed the third test with success. Already," I thought he said this last grudgingly, "you have advanced into our science to matters which are only within the knowledge of Sitnalta and me, and those whom we train as our assistants!"

"I suppose," I said, "that one of your tests will be to quizz me on why the sky doesn't fall!"

"Why the sky doesn't fall?"

"Yes, and why it is blue. In short, why the bottom of the ocean isn't black—and why it doesn't come into Atlantis and smash it flat!"

"You are quite correct, Pettis," said Naeco. "But that is something for the future. Meanwhile, to the source of our holy suns!"

I paused, as he headed for another room, to study the Vision-Audition Sphere. I tuned in, as I remembered Naeco had, on the Giant Mole.

The Mole was still grumbling and growling on its way! Destruction had not been visited upon it. *I had passed this part of the grim series of tests!*

But there was trouble in the Giant Mole, for I saw McLeod and Logan, with sections of drill in their hands, fight off an attack by a number of the super-sandhogs—fight it off fiercely, as though the fight were to the death. I saw the attackers

knocked down as though their brains had been splattered out by the pieces of drill.

And I could not make contact! All I could do was hurry on behind Naeco, and hope that I could satisfy him before McLeod's men had brought doom upon themselves in their fear of the unknown.

We entered a room which almost took my breath away, and there Sitnalta awaited us. Naeco said something to her I did not hear—*and she smiled at me, with approval!* But there was a shadow in that smile, as if she were secretly afraid. Was it that my success would be disastrous to her and to Naeco? No—she would not have smiled in that case. . .

But, remembering those grand men whom McLeod was being forced to hammer down, or by whom in the end he might be hammered down, I was too filled with trouble to feel elated.

As my success increased, doom came closer and closer to my friends in the Giant Mole.

CHAPTER VII

The Source of the Suns

HERE in this vast room I now entered with Naeco and Sitnalta, was something before which Naeco humbled himself. Here Sitnalta laid aside her Sphere of Vision and Audition, and her Scepter of Power, to indicate that in no manner whatever did she challenge the solemnity suggested.

How shall one describe the room? I could call it a sun-trap, with all that that might suggest to those who love the sun and glory in its brightest rays, and be close enough to the truth. I could call it the heart of

the sun—a beneficent heart, which did not sear and burn, but bathed and made pure—and that would be right, too. I could call it a machine, erected by inspiration from the Source of All Things; inspiration given only to the very few, as it must have been given to the generations of Naeco and Sitnalta.

I could call it many things, and be right. I could explain it all the days of my life, and be wrong. For who can truly explain the sun?

It was a vast room of tremendous power. The power whispered, in the midst of a solemn silence, as the gods might whisper to men—if there really were gods, and men who could hear.

The room was perhaps a hundred feet square, and a hundred feet in height, and the roof of it seemed to how did the sun reach through the roof itself reached away for the life-giving rays of the eternal sun. There were concave "shields" upon the wall, set closely together, and each of them glowed with blazing light.

"There are as many shields as there are 'suns' in the City of the Golden Gate!" said Naeco. His face was exalted, and he talked like a man in a trance. So *this* was the reason why the capital of Atlantis was called the City of the Golden Gate! And here was the gate, through which the sun, adored by the people of Atlantis, bathed its worshippers! Here was the gate between the sun and its devotees. But how did the sun reach through the gate, through the miles of ocean, the tons upon tons of water, through the impenetrable darkness? The only answer I could find to this was that in all likelihood the sun reached through, in some manner unknown to man, even to the core of the earth

itself. Surely the creatures on the very floor of the deepest ocean, must live by the light of the sun! From this premise to the idea that the Atlanteans could trap the sun, up through the ocean, it was not difficult for the mind to grasp.

"Whatever your faith, O man of the Outside," said Naeco, sounding like a high priest intoning an ancient ritual, "forget it here in the Temple of the Source of all Life! Purge your heart of all those things which have limited the fields of endeavor of mankind. This is the Temple, and those who enter it must worship!"

I did not pretend to understand exactly what he said. I did understand that whatever my own feelings might be, however casually I accepted the light of the sun as belonging to myself, the sun was this man's god, and this woman's, and the god of all the people of Atlantis.

Perhaps it did not conflict greatly with whatever I believed—or what as a youth I had been taught to believe—for who so worshipped the work of the Maker, worshipped also the Maker thereof.

I felt humble. I felt exalted, carried out of myself. Here was something which a buried people had worshipped for twelve thousand years of their interment, and untold ages before that—during ages when "there had been giants in the earth," and "men had dominion over all things," and "men were truly like gods."

Could I hope to understand the purely mechanical or scientific workings of this room of the shields, which were in turn the "spark-plugs" of the "suns" that lighted Atlantis? I *must* understand, and must myself supply the explanation for them. This I was sure of for this would be another in the series of tests.

So, with a feeling of veneration in me which must have come from my own far-distant past—when for all I knew there had been ancestors of mine in Atlantis, to whom all this had been the breath of physical and spiritual life—I studied the room of shields, even as I tried to find a scientific explanation for them.

NAECO and Sitnalta seemed to have forgotten me. They strode forward together, holding hands like two children, toward the largest shield of all, which dominated the vast room. It was a shield perhaps fifty feet in diameter, and it faced the entire room from the far end of it. It rested upon a dais of porphyry, polished until it shone—and the color of the shield was a rich and brilliant, *shining* gold. If one could vision pure spirit—the light which no man sees or understands—then that which somehow miraculously animated the greatest shield of them all was pure spirit. To be bathed in its light was to give oneself without fear to the kiss and caress of the sun itself.

Naeco and Sitnalta, their faces exalted, as must have been the faces of the ancients when they thought they talked face to face with their gods, stood before the central shield. They stood for a moment, their faces lifted with pride, their faces illuminated by the light.

Then, still holding hands, they dropped to their knees upon the beautiful floor—which was covered by that same frosted gold I had seen in the room to which I had been "kidnapped"—and before the light that bathed them their garments, which had looked so regal, gorgeous and lovely to me, were as tawdry things; in themselves, that is, for

with the light on them they shone as with pure spirit of their own.

Naeco began to speak, and I knew I was listening to words of great faith, from the lips of a man of ancient tradition, speaking with and to one whom, no matter what he might do in his world outside, however he might deal with his fellows, was here in the Presence—in which he believed from the depths of a soul he *knew* to be immortal.

“Great beyond Greatness, Source of All Light and Life!” said Naeco, while Sitnalta joined in with responses, in a voice so rich with feeling that the very sound of it clogged my throat, as though already I were close to tears.

“Protector and Preserver of Life in the land of the Elect!” she said.

“Lord of the Universe! Creator of all Things!” said Naeco, his voice rising to a power of expression and feeling I would never have believed possible in a man so evidently cold to all feeling.

“Father of Waters and of Lands!” said Sitnalta. “Birthplace of Stars and Planets!”

“Oh, that to Which we Owe our All!” they both said together.

And continued together.

“May the Rays of Thy Beneficence shine down upon us, Thy Children, and the wardens of Thy Children in the ancient City of the Golden Gate, which is Thy Gate. Guide us in our judgments, as Thou hast ever guided our people in the past. If it by Thy will that this Ambassador from Outside, this Representative of another people which may be akin to ours, this Gregg Pettis of America, shall be acceptable in the Shining Eyes of our Life-Source, help us to ask only that which should be asked, and whether he believe or not, guide his

brain in thought, his tongue in answering our questions. If it be not Thy Will that he succeed, then Let Thine Anger take its course, that he may be disposed of in accordance with the Will which, centuries on centuries, we have regarded as Absolute, Unchanging, Never to Be Questioned.”

A far cry from the Hunting Preserve!

A far cry from the comparatively simple matter of disintegration and reintegration by which I had been snatched from the Great Bore, that these worshippers of the sun might look me over.

The brother and sister, kneeling there, with their faces lifted to the central, commanding shield, looking on that shield which I could no more face squarely than any man can look straight into the orb of the sun for more than a split second, seemed to be listening—as prophets are said to listen to the still voices of their Masters.

To what were they listening? For an answer to their plea to their god, the Sun?

They went on, then, still together, and somehow it came to me that this was not the first time, by many, that Outsiders had managed to visit Atlantis, or that persons of Atlantis had visited the land Outside. For their plea sounded old as time, as though every day for ages they had said it before the shield which was a symbol of the sun they worshipped.

“Oh Light of all Lights throughout the world, if this be the time for which we have waited, all these hundred and twenty centuries, guide our work that we be not mistaken, and help this outlander that he be right, that it may not be necessary again to destroy the unfit, and merit again a

long wait in darkness, beyond the reach of Thy Light. Thy symbol has become a great and holy thing to us, through all the centuries. But it yet remains a symbol, and Thine Own Light has been too long hidden from us. Whisper to Thy children through all that is to come, that we may know that this is the true time, and that the seemingly eternal wait is ended at last!"

Again they listened. Then they rose and moved backward from the central shield, and I did not realize, until they had turned to look at me, that I myself had dropped to my knees before a manifestation of power which I could not begin to understand. Nor did I rise when they noticed that I knelt—until Sitnalta bade me.

THAT both were pleased that I had honored that which they always honored, I could see in both their shining faces. I could not have explained had I tried, with all the words at my command.

"You come in a spirit of worship, Gregg Pettis," said Naeco at last. "And that is good. Are you afraid now to accept the third test? In doing this you must know that you will approach the Great Symbol, kneel as we knelt, where none has ever knelt save our own, and lived—if they were not the proper ones so to bow down!"

"Tell me what is wanted of me, Naeco and Sitnalta," I said softly, "and I shall try the best I know, for I am beginning to understand what it must have meant to you, all these centuries, that you have not been able actually to see that which is your god."

"And yours, Pettis, whatever you may believe!" said Naeco.

I waited, saying nothing. I had always been confused as to what I believed or disbelieved about superhuman things, and now I was more so than ever. One thing I did believe in, however—the power of human thought. For had not human thought, guiding human hands, builded our great cities, spanned our rivers with beautiful and mighty bridges, covered our oceans with luxury liners, sent our planes soaring even into the stratosphere? Had not human thought destroyed them, also?

What then, must be the power of the human thought which, within the narrow confines of this city below the inexplicable—as yet—dome above Atlantis, had never given over its worship of the sun? If that sun had had no power of its own—and even I knew that the existence of Earth itself depended on it—surely the power of thought of millions of people, for thousands of years, must have given it power beyond one human mind to estimate.

I had stood in many a holy place in my time, and felt the tears and prayers of those who had been there before me, bathing me gently. I had walked softly through great cathedrals which cannon balls and bombs had grievously wounded, and understood that nothing made of man could ever really destroy the spirit of such places. Yet not one of them, however old it had been, so much as approached the age of this Place of the Sun Symbols—nor was so bathed in the hopes and fears, the laughter and the tears, of mankind.

Here men and women for untold ages had bared their secret hearts to their Source of All Things. And I could not call it pagan, and feel it as I did. I could not deny it, when

I could hear the whispering of the beneficent rays.

"I come in humility," I heard myself saying to Naeco and Sitnalta, "and if I ever hoped for anything in my life, even for immortality, I hope now to be proved the one for whom you seem to have been waiting so very long."

And I walked past them, straight to the spot where they had knelt. I knew that what I should have to say would reach their ears, for the Symbol was also a sounding board, and I had heard even their slightest whispers when they, before me, had knelt to worship at the shrine of their Bright Source of Life.

I would blank my mind, I thought, and hope for the best. Since thought was in all this—and I believed in telepathy because I had often seen it work—my own thought must in some fashion respond to its need. I would simply wait and "listen," as it seemed to me that Naeco and Sitnalta had listened. And all the thoughts of the worshipful ages would surely make *some* impression upon my mind, and I would put that impression into words. Of course it sounds mystical, supernatural. But, if that be true, then all inspiration is supernatural—and great bridges, beautiful cathedrals, statues that were almost alive, had never existed first in the brain of genius. They waited for the Divine Afflatus, those who built for beauty, and I could try it myself. In any case I know nothing else to do, because my finite mind, the mind which college had trained to guide the career of an ambitious engineer, could grasp no explanation for what I had seen here—for the manner by which the people of Atlantis had "trapped the sun."

"I AM minded," I began, almost with a voice not my own, after I had knelt before that monster shield, "of attempts made by people in my own country, people whom many scientists regarded as lacking in intelligence, to make use of the rays of the sun. There have been many men who believed in that power. There have been men who have invented simple engines, simple devices, the only motive power of which were the rays of the sun..."

Odd that I should remember that a man had invented a washing machine, another man had invented simple toys, another had invented a motor—all of which operated solely by the rays of the sun, at this all-important moment. Yet memory did come to me, as though by telepathy from someone in that great room with me, and with that memory a sort of stumbling explanation.

"People of Atlantis," I went on, "being possessed of great scientific gifts, as this drowned city so plainly proves, even afar back, beyond the time when my own people began to think and feel, must also have known that the sun was a source of direct power; that its rays were something that must have been intended for use. That these symbols, as you call them, are part of the great use they made of those rays, I am now quite sure..."

I paused, took a deep breath, and reached into my subconscious for that message, the rest of it, which must be coming to me from somewhere—perhaps even from passages in erudite books which I did not consciously remember; perhaps from courses I had taken, in logic, perhaps from my background, perhaps from long talks with Rogers McCleod—perhaps from out the Infinite, whence

the incomprehensible mind, perhaps, receives that with which men are sometimes wont to startle the world.

"I see somewhere above," I went on, "a contact with the Outer world. It is hidden away, on an island, I should say. An island that is shown on none of the charts of which my people know. Maybe it is even a floating island, that the people of Atlantis can move or submerge when its discovery seems imminent. Here, on this island, is another Symbol, the true Sun-Ray Trap, carefully hidden from all of that Upper World, except only the sun itself. I cannot see how the secret has been kept through so many centuries, but it must be so. That Sun-Ray Trap, catching the rays of that sun you worship, transmits them—though at the moment I do not see exactly how—to this Symbol in Atlantis, whence it is distributed, exactly as we above distribute electricity, gas and water, to all branch stations or individuals—in this case, the "Suns" which, by day, light the streets and the buildings of Atlantis! But how is it done?"

Again I must take a jump into a bit of science I had never delved into before, because I had never regarded it as scientific—though I knew very well it might have been in possession of the ancients.

"By some power possessed by the chosen Children of the Sun," I went on, "Space and Time, between the Symbol on that secret island, and the Symbol to which I now kneel as one of you—*have been collapsed like an accordion. The base of that far Symbol, and this Symbol, are in exact contact, so that, in actuality, though the human mind, because of its limitations, cannot see it, the sun shines directly through that far Symbol, not only into the other Symbols on*

the walls of this room, but the 'Suns' of Atlantis!"

What were the implications of what I had just said? Was I right or wrong?

Was it possible that, long before Einstein, Atlantians had not only known of the curvature of time, back upon itself, and of the curvature of space, but had mastered their knowledge of it until they could bend the one at will, and collapse the other, though the depths of an ocean lie between?

I could think of no other explanation. Certainly there was nothing in the books I knew, nor in anything I had gathered from the brains of learned men.

"And so," I said calmly, and utterly unafraid, fantastic as my explanation might have sounded, "Atlantis has sunlight by day, even as we above have it. And this is the reason. There is a secret island—a conquest of time and of space, by mechanical means—and Atlantis is saved from eternal night. And if light makes the deep-sea blue above, why should it not also make it blue below? And is not the ocean black both above and below, when there is no sun?"

Feeling a great peace within me, certain that whatever the true explanation might be, this that I had said would strike a responsive cord in the hearts of Næco and Sitnalta—so that they would overlook any little errors I had made—*such as my failure to explain how they had taken command of time and space!*—I rose, backed away from the Symbol, and turned when well away, to look into the faces of Næco and Sitnalta—seeking the answer to whether I had done well or ill.

"The name of the island," said Næco softly, "is Poseidon, after our

ancient dynasty of kings. It is the only spot of true Atlantis that remains above the surface of the sea. And it has been carefully hidden away. Ships that approach it are abandoned. Debris of the seven seas gather about it, to help us keep our secret. The floating barriers of seaweed are our allies, too, making the way to Poseidon impossible for even the most determined. . . ."

"Sargasso Sea!" I said, startled. "Nobody has ever solved the secret of it, nor investigated it throughout!"

"Sargasso Sea?" repeated Naeco, puzzled. "I have just said, the Island of Poseidon!"

"They are the same thing," I said, "I am positive of it. Sargasso Sea, hundreds of miles south of here. But then, what are hundreds of miles, to people who have the power which is yours?"

"The Power of Our Father, the Sun," said Naeco devoutly. "I am pleased beyond words, Pettis, that you have progressed so far. But the most difficult test of all—save one, the last—lies still ahead of you. If you fail in that. . . ."

"Failure," I said, "seems to indicate destruction for me. For the first time I am curious as to what will be done with me if I fail."

"I can tell you this much," said Naeco, with a glance at Sitnalta, "*that your heart will be offered to the Sun as a sacrifice. And if, having come so far, you still fail in the testing, Sitnalta, Priestess of the Sun, will offer your heart herself, as atonement for you and for us!*"

"Atonement for you?"

Naeco glanced swiftly at his sister. For an instant she stood there unmoving, then a sad smile crossed her face.

"Tell him," she said.

"Yes, for us, Gregg Pettis. Your destiny is now irretrievably interwoven with ours, now that you have come so far. If you fail, then, after you have been sacrificed, we shall be outcasts."

"You, too, sacrificed."

Sitnalta shook her head. "An outcast is not worthy of so honorable a death. We shall be driven into the Preserve, stripped of our weapons, our names taken from us, and the very memory of us stricken from all records."

Naeco clasped my shoulder. "You have thought me an enemy, Gregg Pettis. Perhaps, at first, I was little impressed with you—we are a proud people.

"But Sitnalta and I are, in a sense, rebels, Pettis. We have dared what none have dared since the Sinking—to burst the bonds of tradition which have kept our land stagnant for thousands of years, and seek new frontiers."

"You mean," I asked, "you want to bring Atlantis to the surface again?"

He shook his head. "Not physically. But to stimulate our people again to that incessant progress, along every possible line of thought and endeavor that alone can keep a race alive."

I faced him squarely. "Then tell me, Naeco: how do these ideals of yours tie in with the 'common' people, whom your ancestors thought unworthy of saving from disaster, and whom you consider fit only for terror and eventual destruction in the Hunting Preserve?"

For an instant anger flashed in his face, then puzzlement replaced it.

"Do you mean, Man from Outside, that everyone in your land is on a common level?"

"So far as their simple rights as

human beings go," I answered. "So far as their actual position in society—that depends upon what abilities they have, and how well they are able to turn them to advantage."

"That is the ideal of your people?" said Sitnalta. "But tell me, Pettis, doesn't the actual practice fall somewhat short of the theory?"

I thought of the prolonged and bitter wars, less than a decade past, when every man, woman and child of our people who held the democratic ideal sacred had been forced to devote his entire being to its defense—against the onslaught of despotism, thinly concealed as a "new order." I thought of the still-remaining traces of that despotism in our new world, united as it was for progress and peace.

"No," I said softly, "actual practice often falls short of the ideal."

"Even so with us," she replied. "We do not possess the ideals of your people, Pettis. Perhaps by prolonged contact with your kind, if it be shown that the pursuit of this 'democratic ideal' has produced a people we can admire, it will be different—surely our pride would not permit us to ignore anything which brought an inferior people up to nearly our own level of achievement."

There was a faint smile on Sitnalta's face as she said this and I thought to myself that these people would be all right with such a sense of humor.

"Then, these sacrifices to the Sun-god—?"

"More political than truly religious in your case," said Sitnalta. "The nobles hate Naeco and me for what we have already done, and they would hate us more if they knew our true plans for progress. We are tired of

being Earthbound, Pettis—we want the stars.

"Tradition decrees that if you, or any other outsider, can pass the tests, then you are worthy of contact with us—if you fail, then you are sacrificed. But in this case, the nobles will demand our sacrifice, too, claiming that your failure is a sign from the Sun-god that we are unworthy. They will force Poseidon to consent and thus insure themselves of who knows how many more decades of contented decadence?"

"Yes, Pettis, if you fail, our last official act will be to sacrifice you to the Sun-god."

I remembered a picture I had seen, long ago, of a victim lying on an altar, on an Aztec *teocalli*, while a feathered Indian priest held up to the blazing sun the heart he had just slashed from the body of the sacrifice! I remembered the expression on the still-living face of the victim—and remembered now that it had shocked me to the soles of my feet.

I didn't believe then than any such thing could really happen.

But I said to Naeco and Sitnalta:

"Let us hurry, please, to the rest of the test—for I am anxious for my people in the Giant Mole! And for you!"

CHAPTER VIII

City of the Dome

TO MY surprise I was taken out of the laboratory, though I had scarcely seen any of it into the Aero-Sphere again. Sitnalta and Naeco both went with me. Were we going back to jolly, fat, King Cole-Poseidon? Back to the Hunting Preserve? For a careful

tour of the city which had so far been forbidden me? I really knew next to nothing of Atlantis. I could but wait and see.

"Focus your attention on what lies above you, Pettis," said Naeco, "if you would make a chance for yourself to see, in detail, all that lies below, for this is your next test."

How much time had transpired? I had no idea.

The Aero-Sphere rose swiftly, much further above the city than it had at any time previously. And within a few minutes it came to rest . . . *on the roof of Atlantis!* That's a statement to be taken literally. Remember that no matter how the Sphere rolled when it was not in the air, the seats of its passengers remained upright. It was so now.

It began to move slowly along on the underside of the dome of the City of the Golden Gate.

I forgot Naeco then, and Sitalta, as I stared at the underside of that impossible dome, which covered a vast and glorious city. Here was something to challenge an engineer—particularly one who could calmly accept the possibility of a Sub-Atlantic Bore, as I had, long ago.

I glued my eyes to that dome, and now the beams through which power was transmitted to keep the Aero-Sphere in motion were below me, so that nothing should interfere with my vision. I could see the cubes which, fitted one into the other, made up the dome, as pieces of stone make up the arch of a bridge.

I was looking at the greatest single arch ever made by human beings—and thinking from the beginning that the might of whatever gods they had served must have gone into their brains when they had conceived it, into the hands of the millions now dead, even to their descendants, who

had erected it. Frantic thoughts went through my mind:

"If the human body sustains a weight of almost a ton per square inch, from the atmosphere alone, at sea-level, up where I live, what must it sustain down here, below the ocean?"

I could estimate the answer, and miss it by millions of tons.

"Deep-sea fish, born to stand the pressure, explode when drawn to the surface. But still, they do live on the floor of the sea. And if evolution is correct, man has been evolved from fishes. Therefore it isn't inconceivable that he can be evolved back to where he can withstand even that pressure."

Just words, meaning nothing, but messages which raged through my brain as I sought for the explanation.

"The pressure without a dome must be equalled by the pressure within, or the dome will collapse!"

Therefore, the Atlanteans must be, regardless of the dome, living under as much pressure as if the sea itself had been bearing down upon their bodies. This could not be, I was sure, for I hadn't had twelve thousand years in which to become accustomed to such pressure. Nor had twelve thousand years, or twelve million, been enough to accustom the people of Atlantis. Therefore, somehow, they had found a way to nullify that unbelievable pressure. I must find the answer, somehow, somewhere.

It was back in the laboratory, of course.

Atmosphere for Atlantis? Could they get enough from the oxygen in the waters of the seas? Probably, since I now accepted that they could trap and distribute the light and power of the sun. That would be found in the laboratory, too. Pure water—well, that was simple. Ves-

sels of our own, delayed at sea until their fresh water gave out, distilled fresh water from the sea. Atlanteans would do that, as simple as ABC.

It was the dome, and the "stresses and strains" of which Naeco had hinted, that I must advise myself. Were there domes within domes? Other domes above this one, with cushions of power in between, distributing the terrific pressure?

MAYBE Atlantis wasn't as far down as I had supposed. Charts showed a vast tableland under the sea out here somewhere, across which the Atlantic cable had been carefully laid, long ago. Was that tableland the dome of Atlantis? If it was, there still had to be an explanation of why it not only withstood all that pressure, but had done so every single instant of twelve thousand years. For if so much as a trickle of water had come through anywhere, ever, Atlantis would have been again inundated.

I was getting nowhere in my thoughts, though I was going places in the Aero-Sphere with Naeco and Sitnalta.

We rolled high into the top of the dome, greater by far than the vaulted dome of the greatest cathedral. We rolled down the sides, and along them, up and down, and roundabout. And always brother and sister sat silent, and I could feel their eyes upon me, watching my face, almost praying that I solve the problem that had been set me.

But as time passed I found myself further and further from a solution. Maybe I was trying too hard. Maybe I was, as the golf-players say, "pressing." For nothing came, and I began to despair of success. Here was a job of building that not all the

engineers of recorded history could have accomplished, yet I was being asked to explain it. And just to say "cosmic forces," which I was tempted to do, was not enough. To say "cosmic Forces" was like saying "a supernatural power," explaining nothing that a finite mind could grasp.

It had to be simple, for when and if I went home I'd have to be able to explain it to my own people—who were, mostly, a hard-headed lot, all of them, figuratively, from Missouri.

But what, exactly, was the answer? Could I ask questions? I dared to ask just one:

"How thick is the dome, Naeco?"

"You must make an estimate of that," he said, sternly. "Not exactly, for you probably have no such precision instruments as ours. But that is your problem, and you must come close to the answer. I will only say that it is thinner than it looks to be, or than you would suppose."

"One more question, if questions are permitted."

"They are permitted, though I may not be allowed to answer some of them."

"Is there more than one dome? Is this the inner of many domes?"

"There is," said Naeco, "but one dome!"

My problem must be plain. I, who could never have visioned such a thing as this, must nevertheless explain it. I had only this as something to go on: It had been done, for I could see it, here above me.

I racked my brains for the answer, and none came. The Aero-Sphere moved more and more slowly, as though Naeco and Sitnalta, pulling for me with all their hearts, souls and bodies, were giving me every hint they dared.

Now, as desperation rose in me, I

stood up, so that my eyes could be as close to the dome as possible.

It was there that I remembered something, an instrument of my own which had not been taken from me: the tiny, Y-Ray lamp. I took it from the hip pocket of my jeans, and looked at Naeco.

"I am permitted to use it?"

"It is part of you," he said. "At least it is part of the world you come from, therefore its use is permitted."

I turned the Y-Ray on that dome. I could see into the material, which looked like glass, but could be nothing of the sort, for glass would never have held such weight. By the Y-Ray I could look six feet into the stuff.

I hoped with all my heart that it would show me the ocean, but it did not. The dome was more than six feet in thickness! That, at least, was something to know, but never enough. I adjusted the Y-Ray light finer than it had ever been used before—until, dimly as through a mist, I could see ten feet into the dome—and still could not see the waters of the sea.

But I could. . . .no, I was mistaken, I could not see the sea.

BUT I had seen a shadow move across the light, certainly. How deeply would a shadow penetrate the material of the dome? As though in answer to my question, the Aero-Sphere passed over one of the "suns" of Atlantis, and the shadows of Naeco, Sitnalta and myself, were cast against the dome. Luck had played into my hands again, for with the Y-Ray light I could see to what depth the shadow went—and it was within the reach of the Y-Ray! Therefore, the shadow from beyond, of some deep-sea mammal perhaps, a mere hint of shadow, must have been projected at least as far into the top

of the dome, as our shadows were projected into it from below.

And its shadow was projected because of its own light, perhaps those lights on stalks that seemed to be the eyes of so many sub-sea creatures.

Now, at least partially, I had the thickness of the dome. More than ten feet, and less than twenty.

I set on nineteen feet, and hoped that it would be nearly right. Nineteen feet of some material native to Atlantis of old, by which to keep back the waters of the sea!

I didn't have to be exact, to the millionth of an inch. I rather felt that they would not ask so much of me.

Something else I had seen, with my Y-Ray. Those cubes which made up the dome, were equipped with something! Running all through them, in all directions, were what looked to be "faults," or "stars," like the "stars" in star-sapphires. That they must have meaning, because they were within the cubes of which the dome was constructed, was plain.

But what in Heaven's name could the meaning be? I tried to make my brain—which I had always believed to be well educated—give me the answer, but none came. I tried to recall whole passages in engineering books and manuals, about stresses and strains, and could find nothing that fitted my needs.

Was I going to fail this test? Had I not the brain to give an answer to a puzzle, when all the details of it were laid out before my eyes?

I noticed, too, that the cubes were all fitted together in a special way—and that the "stars" or "faults" in each, projected through and into the others.

I felt that here, somehow, was the

key. Not one of those cubes, dropped in mid-ocean from a ship, would have been flattened out by the pressure when it reached the bottom.

In a brown study, sure that I had seen all that I needed to see, if only I could find the answer, I sat down, and knew that the Aero-Sphere was being flown down and away from the dome.

I did not think of the city, nor look down at it. I was seeking an answer that must be found within my own head. I had all the parts of the puzzle, now I must put them together to make a sensible whole.

The Aero-Sphere came to rest in front of the laboratory.

Naeco and Sitnalta stepped out. I knew they were standing just outside, waiting—while I waited desperately for some answer to the riddle, and furiously coned in memory all that I had ever read that would bear upon the subject.

I gave it up. My brain was tired. It had to rest. Maybe they would give me time. I'd have to plead for it, knowing that my success was just as important to them as to me.

And the instant I blanked my mind, this is what flashed through it:

"Archimedes boasted that he could make a scales by which he would guarantee to weigh the world, if someone would find a place whereon he could set the scales!"

He could have done it, too, I'm sure. But what had scales to do with the dome over the City of the Golden Gate? Archimedes had not been able to lift the world—or himself—by his own bootstraps, as the people of Atlantis seemed to have done. Nobody had ever found a place for him to set his scales; his bluff had never been called.

But the Atlanteans, faced with a

problem just as difficult, that of balancing the ocean, had succeeded in doing just that.

It was no answer, really, but since that much had come, maybe more would follow.

I STEPPED out of the Aero-Sphere, and followed Naeco and Sitnalta into the laboratory. They were, without being asked, giving me plenty of time.

They took me through the grim part of the laboratory wherein creatures of the deep were captured, to be taken to the Hunting Preserve and developed into food.

They took me to the vast room where food in pellet form, for the use of all people, was made.

And to another room where oxygen from the sea was procured that Atlantis might live.

They showed me the treasury, where gold filtered from sea-water, down the aeons, had been minted into coins for the exchange of the City of the Golden Gate, and I was in a brown study all the time.

And when they had shown me all, and I had absorbed little of it, because I was absorbed in my riddle, Naeco turned on me. His face, and that of Sitnalta, was very white. He was afraid, plainly, that I would fail—and, strangely, the fact that they were both afraid, gave me fresh courage, so that I could not permit myself to fail.

"The dome," I said, "is just under twenty feet in thickness. The cubes of which it is constructed are also just under twenty feet in thickness, outside surface to inside surface."

They did not contradict me. They would have, had I been too far wrong. I saw hope growing in their eyes. So

far, so good. Though what I had said was a simple matter.

"Each cube would of itself support the weight of the sea, if it were lying on the floor of the ocean," I said, "without changing shape or thickness under pressure. Therefore each cube was compressed to its ultimate limit before it went into the dome."

This they did not deny, either.

"Each cube," I went on, "is reinforced with something metallic, the nature of which I do not know, nor the name, just as we, down in the Giant Mole, reinforce the walls of the Great Bore with Xment. However, in this case, reinforcing was done after the cubes were in place, so that the reinforcing elements 'nail' the cubes together. And the cubes are so placed that each one is a 'key' to the whole structure, like the keystone of a bridge-arch, or the keystone of a mountain. Therefore, when all are in place, and the dome is completed—the dome itself can no more be smashed or caused to 'give,' than one of the cubes can—for the cubes, in advance, each and every one of them, was pre-compressed to its ultimate limit!"

Well, there it was. I had crossed the Rubicon and must stand or fall on what I had said.

And this is what happened. Naeco rushed at me. His face was one big smile, like a harvest moon. He slapped me on the back until I thought all my teeth would jump out. He pummeled me. He grabbed my hand and shook it—and I wondered how many other of our customs went back so far!

Nor was that all.

Sitnalta herself came to me, flung her arms about me, and pressed upon my lips the warmest kiss I had ever expected to receive from anybody. I

shall remember it, always. A new day had dawned in old Atlantis.

So, the handshake, the kiss, the embrace, were pretty old.

And now, what next?

I didn't have long to wait, for Naeco said: "You might as well get the rest of it over with. The last and hardest test of all comes now."

"While I'm so tired?" I asked, then remembered that time was the essence of the contract, at least as far as my friends in the Giant Mole were concerned.

"You could be at the peak of vim and vigor," said Naeco, "and this would still be your greatest ordeal. You are now about to be given the key to the City of the Golden Gate!"

Shades of a million mayors—was there *nothing* new under the sun?

And why should it be such an ordeal, to see at last the city which I had only glimpsed from above?

CHAPTER IX

The Holder of the Key

EVEN in the olden times the great ones who ruled must have had their jests, enjoying them immensely. For Naeco, I saw, and Sitnalta, were little concerned, and much amused, about this last test they mentioned. I felt, frankly, that I was being kidded somewhat. Especially when Sitnalta gave me a duplicate of her Vision-Audition Sphere, and said that it was tuned into constant contact with her—as though it were a telephone or a radio set.

But I took it, and all three of us went out to the curb where I had first entered the Aero-Sphere. The Aero-Sphere of these two came rolling up, as before, and they stepped into it.

But I was bidden to remain on the curb, to my amazement and befuddlement. I had not long to wait before I found out, however, for right behind the Aero-Sphere came a vehicle that looked exactly like it, with one important difference—only half of it was in use, and that the bottom half! And the thing had soft wheels of some sort, and the seats were swung in the body of the lower half of the sphere. The top half was missing, thus making the “car” an open one.

Sitnalta’s voice came to me through the Vision-Audition Sphere, and there was laughter in it:

“Your triumphal chariot, Gregg Pettis! You are now about to make a journey through the City of the Golden Gate!”

I waited a moment longer, then stepped into the car. And again through the Sphere I heard the voice of Sitnalta, saying:

“Oh, people of the City of the Golden Gate, hear now the voice of Sitnalta, sister of the Chief of Scientists! An outlander, after all these centuries, has successfully passed the tests—and is now accepted as Ambassador from Outside to His Majesty Poseidon, King of Atlantis! See that all honor be done him! Hail to his name, which is Gregg Pettis! Gregg Pettis. Gregg Pettis. Say it over again—Gregg Pettis!—until you know it and can shout it!”

Startled, I looked away toward the streets of the city, and saw it begin to fill with people, hundreds and thousands of them. Before I could make up my mind what was really going to happen, the sidewalks were packed with Atlanteans, and I knew that all along the streets there would be others, on the way to the palace of Poseidon.

Then I looked down in dismay at

my black shirt, none too clean, at my blue denim jeans, faded and also none too clean, and wished that I could crawl into the Great Bore and lose myself.

“Sitnalta!” I yelled at the Sphere. “I can’t show myself in clothes like these!”

She laughed gleefully.

“Having nothing fit to wear is the sole prerogative of women, Gregg Pettis,” she said. “You’ll have to do with what you’ve got. There is method in our madness, though. It must be logical that if we can get our people to accept even a *horrible example* like yourself, they will most certainly accept even the least of your countrymen!”

Yes, they had a sense of humor, and I had to take it.

Yes, when I had thought Naeco a cold man and that *all* his people disliked him, I had been entirely wrong. Certain nobles did hate him—for good reason; but not for the reason I had originally thought.

THE Aero-Sphere of Naeco and Sitnalta rose to about twenty feet into the air, and Sitnalta spoke again:

“We have no desire to share your glory,” she said. “We leave the triumphal car entirely to you.”

The Aero-Sphere began to move away, maintaining that twenty-foot altitude, and with the successive “suns” of Atlantis shining on it it was beautiful.

My own “car” began to crawl along, behind and below, away from the laboratory, toward one of the streets of Atlantis. I could see the street opening for me as if it had been a mouth to devour me. And my courage ebbed away to zero. If ever a bum had been honored, I was that

bum! I couldn't have looked worse, or been more conspicuous.

We came to the first of the people, and but for their clothes I might have thought myself Lindbergh, receiving the plaudits of New York, after flying the Atlantic—*after receiving the key of the city from the Mayor.*

There was no ticker tape, but the people looked as though they would have thrown it if they had had any.

Men dressed in tights, green, which made me think of Robin Hood, because of their straightness and their height, waved at me and shouted, their lips split with grins of delight!

"Gregg Pettis! Gregg Pettis!"

And then, after I had acknowledged their shouts, they added:

"Who makes your clothes?"

I might have known it would come to that, but I had started something I could not escape. These people,

them together in one—and you have the streets of Atlantis. Take the grass, and tint it purple, along the sidewalks of such cities as go in for beautification, and place it between the sidewalks and the buildings, and you have a bit more of that amazing city.

Take the most beautiful cathedrals you have ever seen, actually or in pictures, and scatter them in one city—and use them as places of business, and you have the commercial section of the City of the Golden Gate.

Take all the skyscrapers you have ever seen, and only the highest ones, and the most beautiful, tint them with the glory of the sun and the rainbow—and multiply them by hundreds, and you have the towering structures which are Atlantis.

Then, the widest streets, with two-way traffic—except that none were on them but myself—monarch of all

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mind you, were not people from another planet, but people exactly like people I had seen by the thousands in New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago. They were jolly men, and the saucily-dressed women who hung on their arms had just as much fun as their husbands and sweethearts did.

I was being tested again. If I could take it, I would be taken to their hearts, something that to me became vastly desirable—and became more and more so as the City of the Golden Gate grew on me. How to describe it. Take the widest streets of all the cities you know, and lump

I surveyed—and the City of the Golden Gate will begin to grow into a reality for two.

Take Boston Commons and make it truly beautiful, like a spring morning, and you have the parks and the squares and the commons of Atlantis.

Take the great triumphal arches of Europe and throw them across the streets, and you have an even clearer picture.

Take the Colossus of Rhodes, and multiply it by many, and you will have the statues of the great ones of Atlantis.

Fill the canyons of your greatest city with countless Aero-Spheres,

which cannot collide with one another, no matter how fast they travel, because each repels all others, and you can imagine what beauty their traffic adds to your city—and you will know still more about Atlantis.

And then, tune in on what the people shouted to me as, slowly—and Naeco and Sitnalta traveled slowly, that I should miss nothing of it all!—the Aero-Sphere led the way for me through the city:

“ARE you the handsomest man in your country?”

A girl who looked to be about nineteen shouted that at me, and I would have shouted back at her, except that I was already so lacking in dignity—what with my black shirt and my jeans—that I didn’t care. There should be nothing rowdy about this.

“Gregg Pettis! Gregg Pettis!”

I confess I liked to hear my name shouted. I felt as though I had conquered a foreign foe for these people, and that by so doing I had become one of them.

“What do you wear on your head, Gregg Pettis, wherever you come from?”

There it was. Just like other people, except that they spoke ancient Greek and didn’t have much respect in the main for “personages.” Not that, in that impossible get-up of mine, I looked anything but what I was a thirty-second assistant to the boss of a gang of super-sandhogs.

“Stand up, Gregg Pettis, and let us get a good look at you!”

I did it, too, much as I hated to. They were not making fun of me, I realized but having fun *with* me. They were happy to have me, and when I knew that, I felt like bursting with song—which doubtless would have been the last straw.

The Aero-Sphere traveled slowly, more slowly.

The crowds on either hand became more joyous, more riotous. Sitnalta, entering into the spirit of the crowd, was telling them about me, as though I had been a piece of the landscape, and she a barker in a sight-seeing bus.

“If you’re not close enough to see,” she said, “his hair is brown and his eyes are blue. He is six feet tall, and thinks well of himself!”

I let it go on until I could stand no more. Humor, I realized, was almost the music of Atlantis, and this was the way I entered into the city—as though behind a band.

Ribbons of stuff like paper began to drift down from the high windows too, and again I asked myself:

“Is there anything new under the sun? In how many ages has Lindbergh flown the ocean? And in how many lives has he been received like this?”

Not, understand, that I compared myself with Lindbergh, but only that

"With God

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my reception was as great as that which had been accorded him.

I spoke into the Vision-Audition Sphere.

“Just wait, Sitnalta,” I said.

“Wait? For what, Gregg Pettis?”

“Until I get you on Fifth Avenue, the first time! My people will show you what a reception is *really* like!”

I should have been listening instead of talking too much, for after that the reception sort of got out of hand. Ahead of me was a gauntlet I was becoming afraid of, behind me was a shambles. For the people whom I passed fell in behind me, and followed after, shouting my name. And when I was in the midst of the city, this was what they added to my name:

“*Deliverer! Gregg Pettis, Deliverer of Atlantis!*” So there were those who realized how much my success meant!

AFTER awhile, when the din of it began to get on my nerves, I spoke to Sitnalta.

“Can’t we speed up a bit, or can’t I take this car off and fly it? I don’t rate all this, and it’s abashing me!”

Her laughter was a delight to hear; I apologized immediately, so that they could have their fun. After all, they had waited centuries for this, and I was only, really, the symbol of their deliverance.

Later though, I thought of Rogers McLeod, in the Giant Mole, and that I must get back to him as soon as possible, and said as much to Sitnalta.

“Has he no means of communication in the Giant Mole?” she asked.

“Yes. He has a telephone.”

She understood the word, because of its derivation—and at once she told me how to “tune in” the Vision-Audition Sphere. Eagerly, my hands

trembling, I spoke the number of his telephone into the Sphere—and to my ears came the voice of Rogers McLeod.

"Boss," I said, "don't be scared. This is Gregg Pettis, and *what* I've got to tell you! I'm no ghost, but just as I was when I was snatched. Don't ask for explanations, simply take my word that I'm all right, and I will be with you soon!"

He exploded, and I tuned him out, lest what he said offend the ears of Sitnalta, who might or might not have tuned in on him at the same time.

And so the parade continued; until finally, how much later I had no way of knowing, it ended before the doors of the palace of Poseidon.

This time I walked on the runner of state, in all my black-shirt, blue-jeans glory, right into the presence of Poseidon—who roared with laughter as he saw me, and said:

"Welcome, Ambassador Gregg Pettis, to this court! Now, what would you suggest we do about relations between Atlantis and the barbaric place you came from?"

"First," I said, "let's have something to eat and drink. Before we do, however, I'd like to ask a promise from you."

"Anything you want within reason, is yours," said Poseidon.

"Good. Send me back to the Giant Mole, to my boss. From there I'll go back to my people to report Atlantis re-discovered. But I must have proof; therefore I ask for two ambassadors."

I looked grimly at Naeco and Sitnalta.

"Send back with me, Sire," I said, "Sitnalta and Naeco, dressed in their most ornate robes of state."

"But why?"

"I want Fifth Avenue to get a load of them!" I said.

And with both Naeco and Sitnalta glaring at me, we all went in to dinner—and I very carefully refrained from asking what the *piece de resistance* was!

THERE isn't much more to tell. Naeco and Sitnalta went back into the Giant Mole with me, after we'd stopped it again, and returned as I had left, except that now there were two more of us.

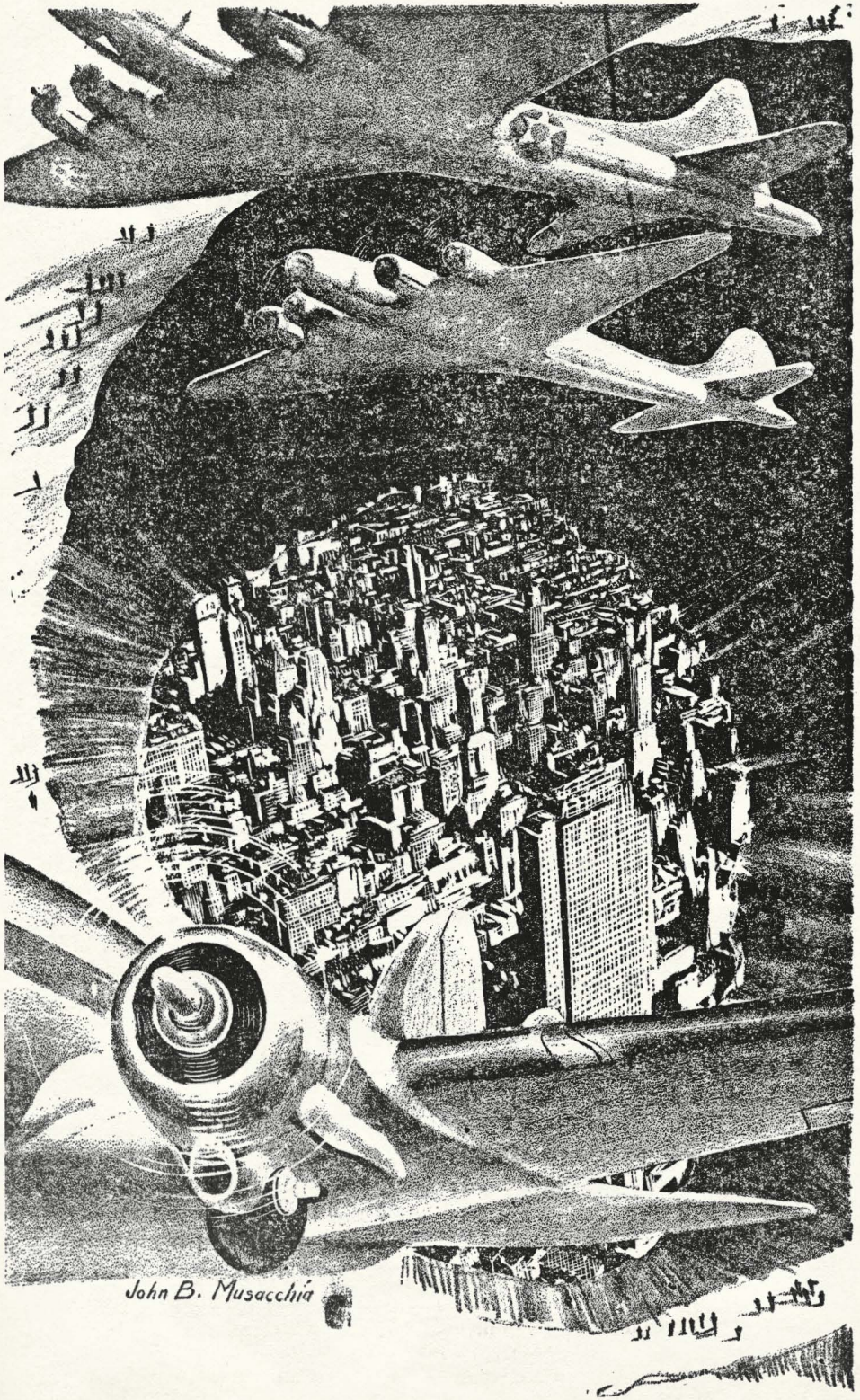
We explained everything, and McLeod and the super-sandhogs accepted the whole thing as calmly as the world accepted radio, airplanes and fire-engines.

I took those two to Washington, then to New York—and what a reception they got! And the conferences with our scientists—it won't be long now before the first flight to the moon is attempted.

They were the best possible salesmen of Atlantis. And that's why, now that the Great Bore is finished, there is a "wide place in the road" under Atlantis, at exactly the place where I was first "kidnapped," and that at this wide place the Bore cuts two ways around a vast column of seemingly solid rock.

Only the rock isn't solid, but is filled with banks of elevators—and all tickets to Europe from the United States, and vice versa, provide for stop-overs at Atlantis, at no extra cost! Folk of Atlantis are entitled to travel outward from Atlantis, at no cost to themselves. But, being good tradesmen, we Americans and Europeans, we charge them double when they want to go home!

THE END



John B. Musacchia

corners of the four-sided ebony Holy of Holies. The four sides of this altar represented the four cosmic, elemental forces: earth, air, fire and water. The perpetual flame which burned in the center represented the immortality of the soul, according to the doctrine of the Mayan Religion. In the theology of this most ancient creed there was no "sin," but rather, the theory of harmonies and discords, which made the principles of right and wrong relative to the individual, and therefore, not absolute. Life was continued, they believed, through reincarnation and the transmigration of souls. There was no credit given to the theory of inherited memories, instead they held that was displaced by the inherited egos.

This church was a small one in the basement of a brown-stone fronted house which made one think of an unwashed, tattered one-time tittian beauty, but inside all was clean and sparkling with its rare icons and rich draperies. Twenty-second Street, near Borough Hall, was filled with many bizarre and contradictory peoples, houses, and shops, but nothing quite like this church existed anywhere else in the whole United States for contrast; extremest poverty outside and lavish disregard for luxury inside.

The congregation knelt in reverential awe, near-fanatical worship on their faces, as they watched the High Pontiff at his sacred duties and partook, even vicariously, of his fervored devotion. As he turned to face them, holding aloft the Perpetual light of Salvation and Reincarnation, a sigh, more like a soft caress, left the lips of the thirty-five worshipers as from one impassioned soul.

A deep sense of gratification filled the soul of Dr. Elwood Langly. These

faithful few would help him carry the message forward until its truth conquered all unbelief; until indeed, the entire world knew of his consecrated mission to bring the gospel of peace to suffering mankind, knew how, almost before Time, it had been ordained that it should be he who would attend the rebirth of this, the Mayan Religion. His mystical brown eyes were alight as he viewed his little flock, for this was but their fifth gathering. If, in so short a time, he had gained even this number who would be faithful, surely more would soon see the light and unite in aiding to spread the truth, the message of harmony.

Later in his rooms after the services were closed and he had received the adulations of his tiny flock he reviewed his induction into and his consecration to, this age-old faith.

HE HAD been born in Boston of wealthy parents who worshipped in the Greek Orthodox faith and who had consecrated him to priesthood from the date of his birth. He had, in fact, been ordained and served as priest in his own parish for three years, and though his parents were happy in their son his maternal grandmother was not. She had always said she would mold his future when the time came.

On his twenty-first birthday she called him to her and after being sure they were safely alone in her bedroom she pledged him to secrecy and told him a strange and wonderful tale. She related:

"Forty-nine thousand, five hundred and thirty years ago the Mayan faith flourished in Yucatan. However at the tragic death of the Crown Prince the country was thoroughly disrupted and the ruling family lost control of

all Yucatan. Prince Cay was King and the reigning King was always divinely appointed and held the office of High Pontiff of the Mayan Religion on Earth by right of succession. Prince Cay had two sons, Prince Coy and Prince Cihn. On the wedding day of Prince Coy, the elder son, the younger Prince Cihn became jealous and killed the Crown Prince Coy, fled with the Princess who had been chosen for his brother's bride. Civil war ensued and the dynasty of the house of Cay fell; the Mayan worship of the four elements fell into discard.

"The old High Pontiff, in his despair, prayed for a message from the All-good and it was revealed to him that he should secretly bury the heart of his murdered son in a golden casket. In some future age this heart-filled casket would be discovered and taken to a far-away seaport, and on the day the traveler should disembark, a male child would be born; that child would have within him the transmigrated soul of the High Pontiff and would revive the true worship on this earth.

"It was on the day you were born, Elwood, that Jean Le Sartaine, a celebrated archeologist, arrived in Boston. As though in a trance he walked from the steamer at Commercial Wharf, up Washington Street to Boylston, thence to Newberry Street where your mother lay waiting your birth. He presented himself and demanded to see her, but I explained the circumstances so he gave me a gold box, explaining he had found it in a Mayan Temple in Yucatan. That night the complete revelation came to me and always I have been guided in the collection of all literature regarding the Mayan worship.

"Here is the key to the small trunk under my bed. In that you will find

the gold casket and all that I have learned of this old faith through which you will become the leader of the greatest religion on earth. You are now the High Pontiff, by right of transmigrated descent from the ancient Prince Cay. As you learn more and more of this heritage visions will come to you, directing all you do and giving you new powers. Fifty thousand years ago these Mayans had peculiar and remarkable forces of nature under their control. These powers will be yours; use them wisely; be pure, spiritual, true. But always remember that once your ancestors lost their supremacy by weakly dealing with a traitor. Never show any signs of weakness. When you rule, be firm. Remember that all gods have either died or have been banished through their inability to crush their enemies. Keep all I have told you secret; continue as you are until you receive the sign emmanuel. Promise!"

And he had promised, partly because he believed her and partly because the mysticism appealed to him. It was wonderfully awful to go about as any other man and yet know inside yourself that any moment you might receive a celestial sign which would make you the most important man on earth; one in whose hands lay the power to either create a wonderfully beautiful world wherein all was peace and harmony or utterly destroy the whole of civilization; that you had the power to make all men friends or annihilate all who dared interfere with you or your plans.

That night the old grandmother closed her eyes for the last time, content in the knowledge that she had discharged her responsibility fully.

FOR the next six years Elwood Langly studied the contents of his grandmother's trunk and therein he found rich, rare facts and knowledge, and he grew to love this faith which stressed the harmony of mankind and the earth elements. He quickly realized that beneath the seeming magic there lay the solid foundations of a science in many respects incredibly advanced to the man of our day. All this time he continued his services as priest in the Greek Orthodox church, but he became more and more convinced that he could only fulfill his destiny by forming a church of his own wherein he might teach the doctrine of the Mayan theology which had passed out of existence fifty thousand years before he was born. Now he would lead the world back to that marvelous, gentle faith. This was a small beginning but it would thrive and grow with tender nurturing.

But the world did not seem to want a religion of peace and harmony. For several years past there had been an increasing tendency toward hate, conquest and domination; hate and suppression of races and minorities; gluttonous greed for other lands, "breathing room" and "the right to expand" the marauders called their depredations. As those peoples who desired peace were conquered and suppressed, denied their own rights to live and breathe in the lands they had tilled and made into homes; there was an ever-increasing hatred for those international hoodlums that plundered, murdered, betrayed, and held no thing holy.

AMERICA had long been struggling within herself as to the right thing to do to preserve her own integrity, individuality and the

right to live and worship as had been her wont. Now it was obvious that she must arm herself for protection and to that end she had called her young and gallant men to stand beside her come woe come weal.

Elwood Langly believing first in the honor of right had debated within himself at great length just how best to serve his consecrated obligation to mankind and yet allow the lead of his country in upholding all ideals of freedom and the sanctity of the right.

Now, two years after his first service as High Pontiff, with a following of over two hundred, Elwood Langly had reached a decision. Calling his assistant and secretary, Peter Simpceon, he announced his determination to appoint him as temporary priest, charging him strictly to carry the work forward; to hold firm to his faith, drawing all others to the beatific belief of the Mayan religion.

"Something must be done about it," he told Simpceon. "If there is no other way disclosed to me to bring universal peace than the now accepted one of using greater force to crush force, then will I lend my strength to that crushing, unless and until, I receive some indisputable sign to the contrary. I cannot but remember what my Grandmother told me: *'Never show any weakness. When you rule, be firm.'*

"You can hardly be called a real ruler yet, can you?" asked Simpceon.

"Why not? Am I not the High Pontiff of the Mayan Church on Earth?"

"Certainly. But so is the Pope head of the Catholic Church and yet history relates how, on occasions, he has been driven from Rome; some were murdered, if history is correct. However I do believe in harmony and

I will willingly follow your teachings, though there are some things I cannot understand."

"But these other religious rulers did not have the power I have," the High Pontiff explained.

"Just how are you going to use that power? If you have it and it is as omnipotent as you claim, why don't you use it for the betterment of the tormented on earth? Why allow this carnage in Europe and China to continue?"

"I will stop it," Langly vowed. "I will stop it—and at its source in the places of the so-called mighty. I will destroy the cesspool city—and I shall be led thereto."

Peter Simpceon was greatly disturbed by his Pontiff's vehemence.

"Don't think that sort of thing," he advised. "You cannot destroy a city nor a race of peoples. They are permanent fixtures in this world! If you attempted it you would cause yourself great anguish of soul, you would become embittered by your unavoidable failure."

"But I *can* do it. No city is immortal. Where is Tyre? Sodom is no more, nor is her sister in corruption, Gomorrah. Ninevah is gone!"

"Surely the High Pontiff of the Church of harmony would not kill several million people?" persisted the newly appointed priest.

NO. I ONLY want to destroy the city from which the power emanates. The city is nothing without inhabitants and I want to make it a city of empty dwellings. And when the people feel fear and desperation, hunger and distraction, then these unholy ones in power will alter their ways—or die. Suppose I put fear into their hearts? What if they found they would either have to

withdraw from their rulers or die? That if they did not leave their city they never could do so and would perish?"

"You are talking idly. Do you know these races think their rulers are divinely appointed, even as we believe yourself to be the reincarnation of the High Pontiff Cay?"

"But I am not talking idly. I shall build a wall around the city; and when that is finished it will be a city of desolation, isolated from the rest of the world and its ruler, Emperor, or government will be discredited. Or if they persist in remaining inside the ever-growing wall they will die—thus will I save the world."

"Tell me, how are you going to make this wall grow?"

"By my powers of gravitation. I can lift this wall up out of the ground. At present the crust of the earth is held in place by various physical forces. I can set them at naught. I know how to set in motion natural forces, little or not at all known to present-day scientists—with these forces I can lift this earth-casing wherever I want to. In the Pacific Ocean the floor is at times several miles under the surface of the water. Now and then an island slowly rises to the surface of the water; now and then an island slowly submerges. A wrinkle on the floor of the ocean and the topography of this little earth is altered; a wide trough between waves, and some of this earth is no longer visible. Sometimes these changes are gradual; sometimes they are accompanied by terrific explosions. These upheavals are but natural phenomena, like the sun, tides, and phases of the moon. They can be explained. But what if the ability to control the movements of the earth's surface were within the

power of man? What would you say if I told you that I could duplicate the sudden disappearance of the great land of Atlantis to sink?"

Elwood Langly was so intense in his arguments with his debator that he rose and hurriedly secured paper and pencil from his desk and, writing a name of a city on that paper, drew a circle around it saying:

"Now! This circle is the land surrounding this city. Suppose it should suddenly, though at first unobtrusively, begin to rise up, up, *up!!!* till the city were ringed by a mountain range, terrifically high. Inside, like the hole of a doughnut, would rest the city which is the center of all the mass of pollution which is infecting and decimating the world. Would the people stay there? No, they would desert it. I would not harm a single person, myself; I would not, of myself, cause a single death—if anyone died it would be because they chose not to reform and leave their evil ways. But eventually it would be a city of death, inhabited by bats; beasts of prey would stalk its streets and owls hoot from its lofty towers. You do not doubt that I *am* the High Pontiff of the Mayan Religion? You *do* believe I have the power?"

Now the voice of the secretary-priest was most conciliatory. "Surely, I believe you are the High Pontiff. But as to the power—I do not know."

"Wait and see!" shouted Elwood Langly, High Pontiff.

AND because he believed these things so strongly, and could not at the moment discover any other way than that devised by his government, nor receiving any sign portent to direct his efforts into other channels, he united himself to the armed forces of America and after a pe-

riod of training and preparation, found himself, with his unit, on an island in the mid-Pacific which it was most vital to defend and hold at all costs.

But the garrison was small in comparison to the enemy; communications had been cut and the blasting and the gunning almost beyond conception of the arch-fiend himself. The tropic heat was suffocating, the jungle thick and entangling. Often for days they struggled through almost insuperable difficulties and, conquering those, found themselves faced with new seemingly unsolvable situations. At last there was no more ammunition, no water, no reinforcements; the wounded suffering excruciatingly and the enemy like a swarm of midges in the spring, everywhere, stinging, biting, shooting, killing barbarously, and then—bloody, anguished, starved, humiliated, the defenders became captives. They were herded into transports and taken—none knew where—into a large Oriental city—that was all they were sure of.

Each man was sad, but undaunted in courage and the conviction and determination to win out, somehow, and again take their place on the side of right in this sorely distressed world.

Although they were prisoners they were not hampered in bodily movement as in other countries to which their temporary conquerors were allied, though they were most strictly supervised.

NOW in memory, Elwood Langly, captive, remembered his assistant's disbelief in his Pontiff's boasted supernatural powers. He thought he could hear a hollow, cynical laugh, then the mocking voice was silent and for a long time the High Pontiff lay

on a makeshift cot staring at the moon that was visible through cracks in the bamboo shelter in which he was confined. At last he slept and when he awoke he realized the portent which told him what to do and how to proceed.

He knew that these islands were of volcanic construction, in the main. In fact he and his comrades had seen the snowy crest of the sacred Fuji-san therefore he knew they were in or near Tokio. He recalled reading the paper by a learned scientist on "The effect of isostasy on geological thought," in which he had declared his belief that the earth was not a rigid, strong, unchanging mass, but was constantly yielding to the change of the load at the surface. This man had said we should have earthquakes and volcanoes as long as we had sunshine and rain, that through these mediums, the natural phenomena, was the only way of retaining the shape of the globe and preventing an ultimate disaster "which would wipe life off the world as quickly and easily as a mother wipes her child's nose."

So—watching, Elwood Langly learned to tell exactly to the moment when his guard would pass his enclosure; when they changed guards; which were most alert and those who were either indifferent or were so sure that no escape was possible that they relaxed their vigilance. To his amazement he found that many spoke English more or less fluently and nearly all knew some words of the English language. He began, tentatively, to talk to one of the guards and, pretending to be at variance with his country's avowed ideas, he made the Jap believe he had been forced into the army against his will and thus opened the way to ques-

tions about "your most glorious country." Always keeping the conversation in terms of generalities he learned much about the surrounding territory. As a natural thing Langly asked about the many shrines he had heard were to be found in Japan and found that the people, like himself, believed in reincarnation and predestination. They were deeply grounded in fatalism.

AFTER a time the guard did not bother to check whether or not this strange American was in his hut; that was just what Langly had hoped for.

One night, as soon as he was convinced that all was right, he crept out of his enclosure and crawling on his belly he inched his way to the far end of the high wire fence where he knew the guard must sooner or later come. There he lay in wait, and as the guard approached he grabbed his knees and at the same time butted his head into the pit of the Jap's stomach, thereby knocking the breath out of him. Then he gagged the man and tied his head inside the blouse of his uniform. When he was sure the guard was properly immobilized he rose and with his hands on the fence repeated phrases in a strange tongue. These he continued in a low sing-song chant for about five minutes until, without scratch or harm, he found himself on the outer side of the enclosure.

Throwing himself on the ground he lay quietly for a few moments to see if his escape had been discovered. Hearing no alarm he began his creeping movement through the swampy morass in which he found himself. Continuing thus for what seemed an eternity he finally reached fairly solid

ground then ran like one possessed. As the sun rose he came to a deep-rooted banyan tree and into the maze of roots he crawled, exhausted, and slept.

At evening the lights of the city showed that he was within a few miles of the outskirts and he began to synchronize his plans and the possibility of their achievement as shown him in his dream. He was terribly hungry but he subordinated his desire for food to the urgency of beginning his campaign. From the top of the banyan tree he got a fair idea of the topography and general outline of the city from the lights. Descending, he began his furtive journey, all the while repeating a certain formula in the ancient Mayan language. He soon found he could not follow a real circle with any degree of accuracy, as he must, at all costs avoid lighted highways, manufacturing areas, wire enclosed building-sections or encampments of soldiers and habitations. Then, too, there were many indentations; rivers and canals to be crossed. Several times it took him hours either to skirt these or swim the water barriers, but always, except for brief naps, he repeated his Mayan charm chant.

At the end of the week he found himself near the banyan tree from which he had started on his journey from the city. He realized that it would not take him so long to make the circle the next time, nor would it cost so much in effort and strength. He had a fair knowledge of the danger points to be strictly avoided. When he had gone around six times he was familiar with every circumferential point of the journey. He knew that the seventh trip would

bring results but that twenty trips would give speedy perfection.

However he waited for the end of the seventh circumnavigation of the city with the eagerness of a mother longing for the birth of her first-born. He decided, however, to wait and rest for the full twenty-four hours before beginning to walk the remaining thirty-three rounds. This would afford greater strength to continue and would decide his personal fate or the end of the city.

CHAPTER II

IN THE following years scientists showed, to their own satisfaction, that the startling happenings around Tokio were solely the result of natural phenomena. They did not allow the fact that such peculiar occurrences had never been seen either before or since, by civilized man to alter their belief in the workings of the law of nature. When the unusual conduct of Elwood Langly was brought to their attention they said it was merely coincidence and that nowhere could be shown the sequence of cause and effect. Naturally the High Pontiff was sure of it.

Finally civilian travel was suspended as the train service was so drastically curtailed that there was scarcely enough for the military; even the best possible service was not sufficient to meet the needs of the army and the feeding of a great city.

Troubles were multiplied by the bursting of water and sewage pipes which had been forced upward. The streets ran with pollution and drinking water was almost unobtainable. Gasoline flowed through broken underground drums and storage tanks until there was great fear lest a

spark set off an inferno in these flimsy houses. The cement streets rose in jagged heaps. Wherever a house stood on the risen portion of ground it was raised with the land but if it stood straddle these rising sections it was either pushed aside by the earth-mound or ruined. At the evening of the eighth day the twenty-four hour rise amounted to three feet, a total of ten feet since the inception of the catastrophe.

Even before the real gravity of the affair was realized the newspaper editors held a conference and agreed to ignore the unusual development; the radio stations were forbidden to mention it under penalty of death to the announcer who disregarded the order of silence. This decree was issued by the Emperor himself. The people were at a loss to understand it, for though they suffered many earthquakes and tidal waves before, this was different; there had been no tremors. Yet, since they were accustomed to not asking questions they continued living their meager, inconvenient lives. Millions of them had never been more than a mile from the place of their birth; since there was no public clamor to excite them they took it for granted that it was just some local disturbance.

IT WAS the government and city officials who were really worrying, but these also decided to follow the policy of silence. Yet there was an almost hysterical uneasiness on the stock market. There was an inexplicable desire to sell, sell, sell. Not only stocks and bonds were offered but realty. Barons and officials were as eager to sell their vast and beautiful estates as were the minor business men ready to dispose of their holdings. All were offered at ridicu-

lous prices and for a short period everything offered found ready, though surprised, buyers. Soon the market was glutted with all manner of commodities and real-holdings passed the saturation point.

On the ninth day another three foot rise in the level of the peculiar wall made a total height of thirteen feet. In some parts of the circle it now began to assume the proportions of a relatively formidable wall, though of course it was still under water in the bay and in some rivers. The canals were all but useless. The entire military, social, and economic life of not only the city but the whole country was dislocated, travel restricted, and increasingly scarcity of commodities prevailed due to transport disruption.

The Emperor called a conference with his ministers but they could offer no satisfactory explanation or suggestion for relief. Then every great scientist, notable civil engineer, learned geologist and economist was called to these conferences, for it was realized, even then, when the wall was less than twenty feet high, that the problem was national in scope. In fact, the whole conduct of the war and the possible continuation of the conquest, demanded the combined intellectual and financial forces of the nation in solving this mysterious earth elevation and its potential threat. There was a united opinion that this silent upheaval must stop, at almost any moment they hoped, even as it began, without prelude. But even when it did so, they understood that vast changes in the national life were inevitable because of this phenomena.

"There are nearly seven million people within the immediate influence of this wall; about five million of

them within the enclosure. Most of them must be cared for as children for they have, in the main, never lived, or in fact even visited, anywhere else. They are entirely dependent upon the national government for protection of all kinds. True they live in the city but their food comes from without the bounds of the city and we must also, in turn, ship their manufactured products to the outside, otherwise there can be none such for rural districts and the army. Every day these people spend several millions of dollars for food, rent and clothing. Their food costs ten times the total sum spent for heat, light and fuel combined. Every week we must use nineteen thousand freight cars to supply the various needs of this city. Even before this unhappy event there was great suffering among the poor of our nation. Now it means famine and death for millions if this uprising of the earth is not retarded. The economic situation is very bad. All statistics were furnished me by Baron Yamayamkako, chief statistician for the government." Thus spoke the Emperor.

"After many consultations and much thought I have arrived at the conclusion that the government must place every available resource at work, irrespective of the height eventually reached by this wall, digging and blasting roads through it wide enough to enable us to send in sufficient truck loads of provisions. There is no lack of foods of such quality and quantity we have lately become used to. Thus we must make, and keep open, wide gateways through this wall. We must also provide for the movements of our troops. They of course come first in all our considerations. The civilian populace, could of course, leave the city and

we would then move our manufacturies to some other open city."

"What do you mean—leave the city?" demanded one of the economic barons.

"I mean this," continued the Emperor. "Suppose the wall continues to grow higher? Even faster than we can dig the new roadways? Can you imagine what would happen if we waited too long? What if all these millions of people were encircled by a ring of mountains, insurmountable? They would die. Anarchy would ensue. Only the strongest and most ruthless would survive. We should delay no longer."

"But the wall is but little more than twenty feet high now, it surely cannot go higher."

"I KNOW," replied the Emperor, "and I hope you are right. If it does stop then the tunnels can be bored and additional tracks laid. New channels can be dredged in the river and harbor. A street can be laid on the top of the wall and in a year's time all will be normal again. *All this provided the wall does not go any higher.* But I am told by my geologists that they do not understand this peculiar disturbance any more than the rest of us; that this wall is rising steadily, without pause since it first began, it travels faster and faster each day of its elevation and there is absolutely no way to determine when it will stop. Though we hope and pray to our gods, I think it wise to anticipate and prepare for its continued ascent. At least we will have done our utmost to overcome this monstrosity of nature. I think we should move the people into the country or one of our conquered islands."

"It would take the entire military

resources of this nation to force these people to leave their homes," Baron Shinso spoke bitterly.

As he finished speaking a messenger was admitted to the conference chamber with a confidential telegram for the Emperor. As he read it the face of the Son of Heaven grew taut and lowering. Without speaking he handed the message to his geologist, who at a nod from His Majesty read it aloud:

"The wall is now at the height of thirty-one feet and is rising at an estimated rate of eight feet a day. Its elevation is almost visible." This was signed by the Emperor's own chief investigator.

"That is impossible!" "It cannot be true!" was shouted from all sides. There was obvious panic in their voices.

The geologist sat silent until the tumult had abated somewhat, then he spoke, calmly and with authority.

"Of course it is impossible. It's impossible, or at least that is what we say when attempting to explain our reactions to anything we cannot understand. There are many peculiar features about this wall. For example it is only one hundred feet wide at the top; the inner side is perpendicular to the old low level, but the outer sides slope. Suppose it maintained that peculiarity? What if it continued going straight up for thousands of feet? Why the inner face of that wall would be smooth and straight and there would be but a sword's edge for a top, with the outer side sloping gradually to the low level. Certainly it is a very peculiar condition. But it is the only way it could have grown without crushing the city. For that we should be grateful.

"Personally I know of nothing like

it except some of the large volcanoes which are hollow cratered. Another strange feature of this wall is that it seems to be in a perfect circle. Of course as you walk around it, as I did when it was only ten feet in height, you will find many jags. These are most appreciated when one charts it on a large scale map, as I did. But my first impression was that it was a perfect circle and as it continues to rise that circle is more apparent.

"Now nothing is perfect in nature. If it was an entirely natural phenomena it wouldn't be that way. Look at it thus: suppose we say it is the result of an upheaval in the earth's crust, yet there was no upheaval or tremor felt. Our seismographs have not moved. It has been so gradual that not even those who lived directly on the circumference of the circle knew what was happening until their houses toppled over. I cannot understand it, I am frank to admit.

"Your Highness, I propose we adjourn with this thought in mind: I believe the city of Tokio is doomed though we may be able to save most of the people."

"Do you think we have offended our gods and they are thus evidencing their wrath?" the Emperor questioned.

"I do not know."

THE next day the Emperor had the Minister of War order two divisions of the Island Defence into active duty in and around the immediate vicinity of Tokio. Huge cantonments were built and the government either rented, or took possession by right of emergency, all unoccupied houses outside the encircling wall, the Diet appropriated several billion dollars for these prepara-

tions for the evacuation of the city.

By this time every man, woman and child in Tokio knew something both remarkable and important was occurring though the newspapers and the radio continued either silent or restrained in comment, displaying undue optimism in their prognostications, yet admitting an emergent situation which the government was trying to handle swiftly to the national advantage. Every effort was made to prevent anything even closely resembling panic, but there was an inevitable air of fear all through the city and the markets were entirely disrupted.

A migration had begun at the first real alarming rise of the wall. Of course it had been a very small, restricted group made up of those who had sufficient money to leave their homes and those with enough intelligence to understand the danger of delay plus the initiative to go to other cities and there re-establish themselves. Only a few of these latter sought aid from the government; as a whole this primary migration from the doomed city was independent of either governmental suggestion or aid. When it was decided later to tabulate such migration it was estimated that there had been about three-hundred-thousand in this semi-evacuation, during the time the wall was at a comparatively low level. Many of this group had sold their homes and furnishings at a loss, yet for cash enough to enable them to rehabilitate themselves in new and safer homes, without too much economic dislocation.

The government was not deeply concerned about this class of emigrant. They were like the proverbial cat who, no matter how thrown into the air, was able to land on her feet

and begin running. Their worry was the other millions who had neither the desire nor ability to move of their own accord, it was for this group that the Defence Gaurds had been called.

The army engineers assumed responsibility of keeping the traffic arteries open through the constantly rising wall. These were men who had woven a tradition around their prowess in conquering seemingly impossible natural deterrents. These men had built impregnable forts in heretofore considered inaccessible places, deepened, widened, and fortified hidden coral harbors, built solid roads over marshlands and through almost impenetrable jungles. To them, then, this new task seemed but a very minor obstacle easily overcome.

However they soon realized that if these millions of people, most of whom were both illiterate and poor to begin with, and therefore could not understand the situation, were to be cared for without panic the two greatest problems, in sustaining life and maintaining the city must be solved: the water supply and the disposal of sewage. These factors already had become acute: for the water supply was nearing the vanishing point and sewage from broken drains was already thick in the streets; several hundred cases of typhus and dysentery had appeared in the more congested areas of the constricted city. Though this condition resembled those following earthquakes, to which they had become somewhat accustomed, the people could not understand the present trouble for there had been no quake, no visible sign they could recognize.

The average inhabitant of Tokio

knew not where his water came from nor how the waste matter was disposed of and now this latter had become a most serious, even dangerous, problem. Emergency water pipes were run over the top of the wall into the reservoirs; large pumps were installed to free the city from the accumulated waste, were throwing streams of foulness over the wall into Yokohama Bay. But the constant rising of the wall made the emergency pipes of today useless tomorrow. It was this ceaseless rise of the earthen wall which slowly undermined the courage of every man, no matter how capable or determined he was.

IT TOOK a week for the army engineers to assemble their full forces and machinery. During the week they dug and blasted three roads through the wall at different places, each road being one-hundred feet wide. Even before the roads were partially complete they were thirty feet above the level at which they had been begun. Immediately three new roads were laid out with dirt ramps connecting them with the original beginnings. Thus by constant alterations they were able to keep communications open between the outside world and the doomed city thereby keeping the death rate lower than it would have been had there been no ingress of supplies.

But now a greater problem faced these redoubtable men. For endless centuries the Sumida river had flowed through this region, forming a vast delta as it emptied into Yokohama Bay. Now the wall had risen across the river bed and cut across the canals so that the water overflowed as if from a spillway. Then as the wall continued to grow higher

it formed a dam and the water, released from restraining banks, surged over the plains of Musashi and many parts of the city close to the water's edge. Here the suffering was most acute. It did indeed resemble the city of ancient times with the moat around its outer wall, a moat filled with troubled, surging, muddy water. This flooding of the stubborn districts drove other millions from their homes and greatly increased the difficulties of those seeking to care for the great, swarming, frightened multitude in the city proper.

At the end of two months the wall was five hundred feet high with a top at various levels, even as the circle had been of different levels when Elwood Langly, High Pontiff, had first walked and swam around it. The army engineers would not admit defeat and in all fairness one must admit they did a most remarkable job, but also, truthfully, they did fail. Other governmental departments were occupied with the removal of families to new homes. As rapidly as an individual family could be persuaded or forced to leave Tokio they were removed either southward to Yokohama or north to Nikko. The Red Cross was especially active in their efforts to care for the refugees but it was a discouraging and thankless task.

Another two months' elapse, during which this terror grew, found all commerce practically at a standstill. Finance cannot thrive where everyone wants to sell and none wishes to buy, where there are no commodities and trinkets or non-utile things are only a handicap. Despite all this many people resisted all efforts to induce them to move for they had in their hearts the irrepressible hope that the day would see the complete

cessation of this inexplicable growing wall. Finally, when each morrow found their hope in vain, they became panic-stricken, gathered their valuables and cherished possessions together into baskets, bags, carts, jinrikshas and fled. Some believing that the structural steel and cement buildings would not deteriorate, that eventually things would return to normal, left their homes and business blocks and buildings, planning to return and resume life in their accustomed manner when the day should come that these all-powerful men should have conquered the fantastic wall.

The eighth day following the initial encirclement of the city the High Pontiff emerged from his hideaway in the banyan roots and as he progressed was delighted to find that the railroads seemed to have had difficulty during the day because of a peculiar elevation of the tracks. Everywhere on the rail-transport lines there was a huge tie-up extending for miles. The track maintenance crews were all busy lowering the roadbed to relieve the congestion. He smiled grimly. He felt sure that never again would the phrase "business as usual" be used in this city, at least not truthfully.

True it was that the elevation had been about only a foot and extended for a distance of perhaps one-hundred feet. If the trains had been going slowly nothing much would have happened. But the confusion resulting in the minds of the engineers and traffic managers was terrific. Langly also found that in every instance the streets and roads intersecting the circle were also raised. Satisfied he continued his way around the city back to his banyan tree where he felt entirely safe.

During the next week the elevation

had risen seven feet, which was very serious as far as the city and the movement of troops was concerned as well as provender of all kinds. The mental impact on the populace and the government was as pronounced, perhaps, as if it had been seven-hundred feet instead of seven. The Emperor issued edicts; the army generals rushed here and there trying to get their troops moving; the Barons fussed and fumed and prayed to their gods, offering sacrifices; some few even performed hara-kiri—to no avail. For this was a weird, inexplicable upheaval of the land. The laborers were the only ones who benefited and these for only a short time; their services were soon requisitioned by the government as a national emergency and there was not so much as an extra bowl of rice for them.

The Emperor kept in close touch with developments through condensed reports which were brought to him twice daily, giving him a concise picture of the entire calamity. From the very first he had not fully shared the optimism of his advisors and constantly urged preparations be hurried for the complete evacuation of the city. This insistence later proved to have been responsible for the saving of many lives.

One day while the engineers were atop the wall making surveys and calculations they discovered a man wandering around aimlessly, muttering in what seemed hallucinatory conversation. He was tattered and badly scratched, emaciated and unspeakably dirty. After much questioning they were amazed to learn that he was the escaped American soldier for whom such an extensive search had been made, and for whose escape the guard paid with his life and several

high-ranking officers in the army were demoted.

CHAPTER III

NOW one of the engineers who had been educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and both understood and spoke English heard this tatterdemalion tell the weirdest tale of being the one who had caused this wall to grow by the exercise of super-scientific power he had derived from the study of forgotten Mayan sciences. He also claimed to be the High Pontiff of the Mayan Religion on Earth, which would ensure the right directing of this knowledge. To the engineer all of this was just so much chattering of a hunger-crazed man, but as he repeated this story to his companions they all agreed, fantastic as it seemed, that it might really be the answer to their problem as to the cause of this ever-growing wall. They all believed, even as did Langly, in the reincarnation of the spirit and the transmigration of the soul, of being divinely appointed to some task on earth and the absolute impossibility of avoiding the performance of that task.

This man, Elwood Langly, told them he had no desire to cause the death of a single person but he did want, and intend, that the discord in the world should cease; that he had received the sign emmanuel that if this city was made uninhabitable there would be no more war on earth, ever. As he finished this explanation he fell forward in a coma and a few days later died without further elucidation. When all this was repeated to the Emperor he was incredulous and declared he believed it a concoction of their own minds to save them-

selves from admitting defeat and suffering the penalty therefore. However, he made many secret visits to his private shrines and offered many prayers and made great sacrifices in the hope that this wall might either stop growing or sink again into the earth.

As though the very earth mourned the death of the High Pontiff the wall rose one-hundred feet during the twenty-four-hour period following the burial of Elwood Langly. The next day and the next each added another hundred feet to the already imposing total height of the wall which was now seven-hundred feet. This sudden and impressive rise put the fear of the supernatural, even of life itself, into the hearts of all remaining in the city, especially the engineers and the government.

The Emperor retired to his private chamber where he made devout and fear-stricken representations to the Sun God Creator. And now began what all in authority had feared. The people of Tokio had, with one mind, suddenly realized their danger and decided to flee this damned city surrounded by a growing wall. Five million people with one thought—flight or death by civic strangulation and individual starvation, or the plagues brought in by the government in its effort to restrain this wall and to find counter-measures by which the city could be saved. These had left their homes each morning and returned to their families at night with some little food doled out to them by either the Red Cross or some governmental agency. Now they decided to take their families with them and flee for their lives.

THIS second migration from the city was the greatest in all his-

tory. The first one had been very quiet and orderly and there had been somewhat of a constant migration almost completely composed of the members of the upper and middle classes and the highly intelligent. Now the migration was mostly of the ignorant, the laboring class, the perpetually poor, the superstitious and those who knew nothing of the world other than that within the narrow confines of their own immediate neighborhood. All these had been living most primitive lives, constantly menaced by a danger they could not understand and fearful of going into some other section of the country. All these people were easily thrown into panic when they did realize their utter desolation in this encircled city. They had remained as long as they could as individuals, but when they left it was not as single persons, families or communities—but as a mob of frantic millions.

Entire streets emptied within a few hours. Often without any guidance they ran in a terrific stampede until they came to the wall and then, like caged animals, ran up and down in its shadow until they happened to come to one of the openings the army engineers still tried to maintain. Through this they plunged, pushing, crowding, screaming, not knowing whither bound, unable to even think of their future, anxious for only one thing—escape. All sorts of conveyances were used to transport their belongings, many without carts or other carryalls totted huge bundles on their bending backs. Families became separated. The Red Cross and other social workers were unable to handle this fear-maddened throng, insensible to all save one thing—the speedy departure from this now doomed city that had once been their home.

There had been some semblance of order the first twenty-four hours of this hegira during which eight-hundred-thousand people were fed, classified, and the aged and decrepit given transportation. But the next day over a million stormed up to and through the openings and the well-trained agencies were powerless; many of the workers broke under the strain of long and arduous hours. A mob of frantic people will not pause for classification or aught else. Their one thought is *on! on! on!*

Other migrations have taken place in the past ages. DeQuincy made much of the flight of a Tartar tribe but at most that flight was made by less than two million people. How many did Attila the Hun bring with him? How many of the Jews passed out of Egypt through the Red Sea? No one will ever know, but it is certain that never in the history of the world did nearly five million people try to leave one city within two days. The number of those who received help in any form was pitifully small. Many, far too many, wandered on, frightened by the country, made desolate by the loss of all tangible assets and frequently separated from their families or friends, buying what they could, stealing, robbing and plundering when either the lack of funds prevented purchasing or when preceding hords had depleted stocks of the merchants.

This migration ceased as suddenly as it had begun. At the end of the third day there were only about three thousand people remaining in the city where once millions had trodden upon one another in their hurried lives. These thousands were made up of various and contradictory groups. The governmental group was by far the largest for they were determined not

to forsake their capitol city and sacred shrines. However, there were a number of professional thieves, who realized that the abandonment of the city meant tremendous plunder for them, without restraint. Their main difficulty was in dividing the city into satisfactorily and equally profitable sections. But even these gangsters gradually left as soon as their booty was sufficient to guarantee a fair degree of wealth. Constant patrolling and the threat of instant death upon discovery or proof of the act of theft of the possession of stolen goods did not deter them from their rape of the city.

Tokio was no longer the bejeweled, electrical lady of the night; no longer the Paris of the Orient, beautiful, languid, and enticing. No amusement places were open, though the shrines were still served by the priests. The city itself was not injured. With the exception of a few houses, comparatively speaking, which had stood on the rim of the rising circle or immediately adjacent thereto, not a building inside the circle was damaged, not a street torn up nor a window broken. And yet the city had died—because none dared to live there longer thus giving life to the metropolis.

WHEN the wall finally reached the height of twelve hundred feet the Emperor issued an edict ordering everyone out of the city; even the government itself was to be moved. Now willy nilly the last thousand must leave; that was all that could be located. The majority of the Ministers were now convinced that even their super-optimism as to the recession or stoppage of the wall was ill-founded and that it was dangerous to remain. In fact, even as

the edict had been issued the wall suddenly shot upward, faster and faster, and had it not been for the commandeering of huge planes and gliders the few remaining hundreds could not have been evacuated at all.

The Emperor stood and watched these planes make their last trips; waited until the Minister of War had assured him that the task was complete. Then he called his cabinet around him, telling his secretary he would call if he was needed but otherwise not to enter the conference room. Dressed in his ceremonial robes, the Emperor sat in his audience throne as he addressed his Ministers.

“Gentlemen. The first phase of this phenomena is completed; the city is evacuated. But the story of this growing wall is known throughout the world; how one man, claiming to be the High Pontiff of the Mayan Religion and of having been divinely appointed to bring about the destruction of this city and government, created this wall, is known in the four corners of the globe despite all our efforts to suppress the news and keep our soldiers and allies from knowledge of this fantastic and weirdly horrible catastrophe. Thousands of our heretofore valiant men, hearing, have believed. Not only that, but they have visual proof of it and have seen our feeble efforts to restrain the growing wall which has encircled us so effectually. While we were so occupied with our efforts to maintain our transport arteries and life itself, enemy planes flew over and took pictures which they have broadcast by television and the news agencies. It has been impossible to prevent or counter it with claims of propaganda.

“Our soldiers are weary of the

years of deprivation and terrible slaughter they have both inflicted and endured. They have begun to whisper that if it is true that the only way to have eternal, perpetual peace is through the destruction of this city and the government (which they have been unable to see and of which they have heard from refugees) then indeed they believe they should cooperate with this divinely mysterious powerful man and lay down their arms. Hundreds of thousands have begun to do this by surrender. Many of our hard-won territories are no longer under our power; our former allies no longer support us. We have never faced defeat willingly. Our power over these hordes of men is now gone; they laugh at us for they think they have proof that there is some power greater than our own; they have begun to doubt that the Sun God is smiling upon us.

"Therefore, gentlemen, there is but one thing for us to do to maintain our honor. If we cannot live according to tradition, all-powerful, we can die honorably, according to tradition. At each of your places you notice a gold casket. Open them and abide by the time-revered custom they will reveal."

SLOWLY the caskets were opened though all knew even as the Emperor spoke what symbol would be discovered. Each one contained the jewel-handled stubby hara-kiri dagger. For some moments there was a tense silence which was broken by the Emperor's question: "Well, who shall be first?"

The Prince, his only son, rose slowly and mechanically moved to the foot of his father's throne where he knelt and prepared for the expiatory act. He paused, looking at his father to

see if there was a single expression which would signify that he was not included in this sacred ritual, but his father stared straight before him without seeing. An involuntary groan followed the plunging of the knife which was driven deep and drawn hard across the soft tissues of the abdomen. One by one the other officers followed the Crown Prince, moving like robots to their position before the Emperor who sat as if graven. As the last of his ministers fell face forward he rose, and stepping down from the dais on which his throne stood he drew from his rich ceremonial robes his own dagger, but paused to look at the tortured face of his son.

"It is better so, my son and prince. Now I join you, more closely than ever we were in life."

So saying the last of the Sun God's direct descendants pulled open his royal robe and with one stroke laid open his bowels which tumbled out in a most unroyal fashion.

An airplane droned overhead and finally landed in the courtyard of the palace. An army engineer stepped from the plane, and, as he entered the palace portals met an ashen-faced secretary of the Emperor.

He had waited in the outer room for hours, then, with an inner compulsion he could not resist, had peered through a half-opened door of the audience-conference room where all the government officers lay in the grotesque postures of the dead in a welter of bloody entrails.

Full of awe and fear these two gathered the bodies of the dignitaries and placed them reverently in the plane, flying their holy burden to Yokohama for burial. When the news of this mass hara-kiri was spread among the populace there was a reversal of

policy and within a few months thereafter all armies had been withdrawn from the subjugated countries and the nations of all the world prepared to repair the ravages of war and build for universal and perpetual peace. A democratic form of government was established in Japan last of the aggressor nations, and there was no further attempts to dominate peaceful peoples.

All this was not accomplished in a twinkling, or by the use of the words abracadabra, but the peoples of the world were war-weary and hate-sick; therefore they applied themselves honestly to the solution of all matters which would make for disunity and discord. Peace and unity were the watchwords now.

CHAPTER IV

MEANWHILE, however, the wall continued to rise and as it rose more and more of the lands around its outer rim were disturbed, broken and thrust into the air. The upper three-thousand feet remained steep, but below that the smaller mountains and foothills were formed. The entire topography of the region changed. All of Yokohama Bay was blocked off at the upper end near the former delta of the Sumida river and the whole of the Mushsahi plains were inundated and uninhabitable. But what changes were taking place within the city were a matter of indifference to the whole nation—for Tokio was a city of ill omen and to be avoided.

Despite all efforts of the new government other cities strove for greatness and a great rivalry developed between Yokohama, Kobe, Nagasaki, Kito and Osaka. All tried to excel

one another and take the place of the fallen Queen of the Orient. In no way had the people seemed to profit by their tragic lesson but re-congregated in the cities rather than live in either the country or smaller communities. A new speed, restlessness, desire to spend and go seemed to be the aim of most of the people as a definite proof of freedom and liberty. They were so used to repression and restriction that this new shackless life made for overenthusiasm. They did not know how to use their freedom. But back of it all was the very real, though unacknowledged and many times unknown, fear that sometime another city would be blotted out and with it all opportunity to taste the luscious things life now offered them. So much better to live fast; spend freely; laugh happily and enjoy to the utmost, than to conserve and then, by some quirk of unpredictable fate, be pauperized again before they had really begun to live fully.

Tokio was apparently forgotten—a dead city full of death. But the wall continued to rise, though more slowly. Scientists from all over the world were interested and tried to keep accurate account of its elevation. Some few hardy mountaineers attempted to climb it, but at every point of the encirclement the last three thousand feet were unscalable. It was terrifically steep and every known method of mountain climbing proved equally fruitless. Then, one day, the wall paused, trembled slightly and came to a stop. Its final height was three miles and a few hundred feet.

There had been two orderly changes of Presidents of the New Republic of Japan and now a third man had just taken office as Chief Executive. He was by choice and profes-

sion, a civil engineer, but by force of circumstances and Fate, a politician. He was a strict believer in efficiency and economy in all things. For years, as a private citizen and engineer he had pondered the problem presented by the isolated, deserted city. He knew that inside that great wall were some of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Rare works of art which were lost to the present generation were there and once millions had lived in those homes, now empty, in comparative comfort. This city was reputed the most modern of its time and furnished with the most modern equipment and the greatest number of conveniences known in Japan at that time. He did not doubt that to a great extent everything was still in fairly good order and that it needed only the intelligence of man and his genius to resume functioning perfectly.

IT SEEMED to him that since it was the apparent desire of the majority of the people to live in cities and with millions needing homes, here was a place ready for occupancy, which should be made use of. He felt that the problems involved were simple enough. Three factors only were necessary: ways of entering and leaving the city; some device for water supplies and finally the disposal of sewage. That was all.

He recalled the great tunnels of the earth; some of which he had helped build as a young man. All others he had complete data on. Therefore he could see no logical reason why this great earth wall should not be tunneled, in as many places as was necessary to supply transport arteries both rail and vehicular. Now that it had been so long stationary, no longer rising, whatever work was

done would be permanent. Just because the city must be entered through tunnels should be no deterrent to people living there, especially if rentals were low and there was a sufficiency of work. New York had overcome many such seeming objections.

In the consideration of this plan two variants occurred to him. One was a tube beginning many miles from the city and running at a level that would reach, while it pierced the wall, the equal of the level of the city streets. The other plan was to build adequate automobile and railroads up an easy grade to the point where the wall began its last three thousand feet of almost perpendicular ascent. While at the crest the wall was only one hundred feet wide, at three thousand feet below the top the estimated width was a mile and a quarter. This could easily be bored through but on the other side toward the city would be a sheer drop of over ten thousand feet. That abrupt drop made the plan of the upper tunnel impossible from a practical, commercial standpoint. Hence the only thing to do was plan on the lower tunnel. This appeared to be but a matter of construction.

The geological formation around Tokio was well known to the President. He asked his congress to appoint a committee to investigate and report the probable cost. This they did. The report advised one major tunnel and at least four others in a series to accommodate all the outlying areas. They believed these would provide transportation and all other needs for a community of about five million persons. A special message was sent by the President to his congress and a preliminary appropriation of eight hundred million dollars was

made and the engineers instructed to begin work at once.

For two years everything went along according to prearranged plans. Finally only a mile and a half remained to be blasted and cleared. Then they were stopped completely—they could go no further.

The great wall had gone up from the depths of the earth. Why it had started, how it had grown and why it had so suddenly stopped are questions still unanswered by the great scientists. But that portion of it which was at sea-level, the level of the tunnel, had come up from a distance of over three miles below the level of the city. This fact had been overlooked, underestimated and ignored by the engineers in making their initial survey. They had thought it merely a question of boring a hole through the mountain-wall for some miles. They had not cared what kind of rock was in that wall. At Hagerman Pass, California, in 1893 a tunnel 9,393 feet long had been bored through solid gray granite in three years and twenty days. That was only one of the brilliant feats of engineering during those early days. Now with greatly advanced methods of excavation and tunneling there seemed no unusual situation to face.

Suddenly, however, they were made to realize that thus far it had all been as child's play, like digging in a sand pile with a toy shovel. For now they had come to the base of the great wall. The scale of hardness starts at 1. Talc. It goes upward by degrees, 3, Calcite; 6, Orthoclase; 8, Topaz; 9, Sapphire; 10, Diamond. Up to this time nothing had been known harder than a diamond, but now an addition to the scale of hardness deepened the mystery of the growing

wall, another unanswerable question.

The great wall was composed of a new substance that could not even be scratched with a diamond drill. It seemed to be a glass-like metal, extremely radioactive. In the dark tunnel its face glowed so brilliantly that no other light was needed. Its smooth surface could be felt but all other examinations were impossible for there were no fragments to subject to any tests. It was not affected by Oxy-hydrogen flames. It could not be bored to introduce high explosives for effective use in blasting. All that seemingly could be done was to curse it, though that did not solve the problem, and this the tired, distraught experts did fluently.

ALL the years since Elwood Langly had told him of his plans to raise a wall around the offending city of Tokio Peter Simpeon had devoted himself to the duties imposed upon him as the substitute for the High Pontiff, and the church had grown since that memorable night. In the meantime when the news finally reached the outside world he had been greatly interested in the progress of this growing wall but not once did he mention what he knew, or rather, had been told of its probable cause. Then following the change in the form of government of Japan after the cessation of hostilities, he had continued to hold his peace. Now the world was following, with bated breath, the results of the tunneling experiment, wondering just what would be discovered both during the actual boring processes and what would be found inside the city when once again people would walk its deserted streets.

Now that the failure to complete the tunnel and its reasons were be-

come public property Peter Simpceon decided on a trip to Yokohama. Here he gained audience with the President and for the first time told his story of the High Pontiff. The President listened patiently and in respectful silence to a tale, that after the lapse of years, must have sounded like the senile dreamings of an aged paranoid.

"I have this to say, Mr. Simpceon," he said as the story was finished. "I am, first and last, a scientist. I believe in the workings of natural laws. Nothing inexplicable can happen; science will finally unravel the mystery of the growing wall and then you will see that your High Pontiff had nothing to do with it. I am sorry, but I cannot accept your story. It is not scientific."

"I expected you to feel that way," answered Peter Simpceon, "but I see things differently. I believe in the old things of this world. If I read a story of a man's conduct three thousand years ago I am apt to give it credit. When I heard that your engineers had discovered a metal that a diamond would not cut I at once thought they might, perhaps, use the worm *Schanir* which Solomon used to cut the stones of his temples, but I did not want to be considered insane, so I waited until I saw you. I believe in the Piper of Hamelin and St. George and the Dragon and the seven sleepers of Ephesus—and I believe firmly in the High Pontiff. He said he was going to build a wall around a city like a doughnut—and he did—at least the wall came into being at the time he was here. Your people tell the same story—as it came from the lips of a starving man they found atop the wall. I am now an old man and I have been active all my life.

Suppose I remove that wall for you? How much is it worth?"

"I guess the country could afford a billion dollars."

To humor him, to be rid of him, the President did so, and then the foolish old fellow left the Presidential Mansion. Immediately Peter Simpceon sought the council of the geologist, Harding, whom he had brought with him from America.

"We have discussed this great wall many times, Mr. Harding, but I have never explained my interest in it to you. Now I would like to tell you a story. Please listen carefully, for it is true." And for the second time he repeated the saga of the growing wall, finishing with: "And it happened *exactly* as the High Pontiff said."

"He had nothing to do with it!" Harding exclaimed stubbornly.

"Oh! Of course not. But what is it like on the tip-top of that wall? Is it cold? Lots of snow? Could a lot of men walk around it? When would be the best time? Summer? Winter? If mountaineers got up there could there be food brought up and left? Little huts for sleeping built? Pikes Peak is 14,147 feet high and many people go there. How about it? Do you think a man could walk around it?"

"Simpceon," said the geologist, "if I did not know you so well I should be inclined to believe you insane. Just after we came here I went over that wall crest in a plane and took pictures. It is very cold—all the time and though it is warmer in summer, I believe, there is always snow. It is about one hundred feet wide and very level. I presume a plane could land, though I doubt if one ever did. If that proves true then of course you could land, food could be stored and

huts built as you suggested. I do not see why a man could not walk around it if he had skill, nerve and desire. I will show you the pictures.”

Within the hour Simpceon telephoned America's most famous mountain climber and skier who had done such heroic work in Alaska in the late war. He was to fly at once to Japan and bring with him three of the most daring stunt fliers—salary—anything asked. He gave a list of supplies he wished them to bring and having done this—waited impatiently for their arrival.

IT WAS early in the year. At first Simpceon decided to begin his adventure that summer but the Alaskan trooper told him they were less afraid of the cold winter than of the danger of snow-slides in summer. So April was finally decided upon for the experiment. All during March trial landings were made atop the wall. Long runways made in the snow, then men and supplies were landed. Small huts were built at intervals of five miles and between these tracks made in the snow. Guide ropes were strung at dangerous points. The first day of April, by prearrangement, a caterpillar tractor was lowered from the plane onto the flat space of the wall's top and there assembled. This was used to level down the snow, packing it hard.

During all this time the Japanese public, as well as the outer world, were kept in ignorance of the true activities atop this wall. It is a remarkable testimony to the efficiency and honesty of the organization Peter Simpceon built that not one single word was given out to the American press in advance. The region around Tokio was so isolated and the top of the wall so high that the landing of

all this equipment and twelve teams of Alaskan huskies were not even noticed.

On the fifteenth of April, the mountaineers separated and took up permanent stations at the various huts around the circle. The dog teams were also placed in permanent quarters. A peculiar light automobile with traction sleds instead of wheels was tuned up for action. The tractor was sent around the circle for a final smoothing and then, for the first time, Peter Simpceon stepped from a plane; held a final conference with the heads of the various departments, was tucked into a dog sled and well covered with heavy furs, rode away.

From the starting point he went *west*.

As he went he muttered to himself. The first circumnavigation of the wall was purposely slow. At every five miles he was met by another Alaskan trooper; dog teams had to be changed; weak spots in the roadway reinforced, dangerous spots gone over very slowly and carefully. In some places the gale nearly blew them off the narrow slippery roadway. But so perfect had been the arrangements that the friend of the High Pontiff was back at the starting point in seven hours. He entered the main hut and wrote the date in a small black book which he carried in his pocket.

During the night it snowed and though the morning was clear much of the pathway had been obliterated. The tractor soon pounded down the snow clearing the way for Simpceon and his dog sled. This trip was hazardous in the extreme for all along the way it was a bitter and constant fight against the drifts. Again they had headed westward and again as the day before he continued to mut-

ter constantly, not stopping even while he was being released from deep drifts. It was long after dark when Simpceon again entered the hut and made his entry in the little book. There were seven consecutive days like this and on the eighth day a holiday was declared. During that day there were slight jars, faint tremors, felt. The Alaskans thought it must be the settling and movement of the snow and ice, but Simpceon hoped it might be something else.

The ninth day he began his round of thirty-three complete revolutions of the wall. Some of these trips he made in the dogsled, others he drove the specially built car and on one trip he went in the tractor. Then he was able to write the figure thirty-nine on top of the note book. The entire force pled with him to abandon the wall top for there was a perceptible and almost constant jarring of the wall. At times they had, for a few moments, the peculiar, sickish feeling that comes when dropping suddenly in an elevator; the days were growing warm and the snow was melting rapidly.

Simpceon ate a very light breakfast and then outside the hut, conferred hastily with his assistants. They began one of the most remarkable feats of pedestrianism ever undertaken by a man of his age; for it seemed it was his purpose to walk that wall, completely, in twenty-four hours.

He started to walk westward, muttering to himself.

FOR some hours he walked by himself, later he allowed one of the ex-troopers to walk beside him and still later a man supported him on either side. More and more frequently he stopped to rest and take hot liquids. Once he allowed himself an

hour's sleep. At the end of twenty-three hours and fifty-one minutes he staggered into the main hut and, throwing himself on a bunk, slept. When he woke he made plans for the immediate evacuation of the wall. A fleet of planes performed this task so swiftly that by night not a living person or animal remained on that bleak windy wall rim. Back in Yokohama Simpceon paid his men and again pledged them to utmost secrecy. He took the fastest plane back to America and at once lost himself in a quiet spot on the southern coast of California. He was very tired and needed rest. He followed the daily papers closely and to his mild surprise and great inner satisfaction an item told of the famous growing wall's slow recession.

It is proof of the man's greatness, his patience and ability to bide his time, that he did not immediately telephone the President of Japan. Instead he waited a full year, for by that time the wall had shrunk back into the earth its entire previous height. Of course the topography of the surrounding territory remained altered by the great upheaval for the foothills remained and the rivers and canals had formed new channel beds but the wonderful metropolis where millions of people had laughed and sung, loved, cried and died was now free, accessible. The only things demanding serious consideration was the construction of new reservoirs for water supplies, new systems for drainage.

People flocked to the new Tokio. It was no longer a city of death; it was now more beautiful than ever. There was some difficulty with identification of ownership of property, but this was freed, as far as possible, from unnecessary technicalities.

There was work for all, pay for all, and now that the entire world was relieved from the fear of war and devastation and all bitterness forgotten, everyone did all in their power to help the once proud and lovely city rehabilitate herself and once again assume her place among the wonder cities of the world.

THEN and only then did Peter Simpceon make an appointment with the Japanese President. When he was announced he simply walked in and laid the written promise to pay one billion dollars on the President's desk. As the President recognized the script he was startled.

"Surely, Mr. Simpceon, you are not in earnest? I cannot but admit that the great wall sank, even as it rose, without plausible explanation, but you, as an individual had nothing to do with it—(and then as an after-thought he added) any more than that religious fanatic had to do with its rising in the first place."

"I do not want the money, Mr. President," replied the aged man, in a simple and dignified manner. "I have sufficient money. Had I done this for financial reward I would have come to you at once, sought notoriety. But I did not. However, I do want recognition; I want to be believed in. Listen to this: The High Pontiff, after he saw that the wall was actually rising, became frightened. He had liberated a power which he felt was too stupendous to be kept secret. He was a lonely man and he knew if ever he was discovered as the instigator of this phenomena, regardless of his desire to dissolve discord and international hate, he would be torn to bits. But he knew he could trust me and somehow he mailed a letter to me. How, I

do not know, for early in the war he had been taken prisoner and brought to this country—nor do I know how he escaped from his captors, but that doesn't matter now.

"In this letter he told me what he had done and what he intended to do. He realized that the world was not then ripe for his ideas of universal peace. However, through some freak of fate, if you will, that letter did not reach me until the month I first came to see you. I do not know where it had been with its information all these years, but the writer, the High Pontiff was long since dead. He told me he was going to encircle the city of Tokio seven times and then rest a day. Resuming his ambulations he would continue until he had circumnavigated it thirty-three times more, once every twenty-four hours. He said it did not matter in what manner the circling was done, either afoot or in some mechanical transport vehicle, but that he *must always go to the east saying a certain powerful incantation.*

"The most important thing was to *walk the last circumnavigation within the twenty-four hours without once ceasing to murmur the incantation for more than an hour at a time.* I guess it was fatigue and nervous strain of the last day that killed him in his semi-starved state, as the story current here would indicate he was. However, in his letter to me, written on the eighth, or resting day, he claimed that the wall was rising appreciably and he felt that it was his strict adherence to this ritual which was causing it to rise; his vital force was drawing it up out of the ground.

"Now he began to feel that someday in the unknown future, the work might be undone, after his dream of harmony was firmly established as a

fact, and he told me just how to do it if it was ever provident to do so. He said *walk westward for forty days repeating the incantation backward*. So after I had talked with you and you gave me this billion-dollar piece of paper, I went up to that mountain wall and because I had made perfect preparations, I made those forty trips around that circle, though the last trip afoot nearly killed me. I had a crew of over sixty men and a lot of dog teams. It cost over a half-million dollars but it was worth it to prove to myself and the world that the High Pontiff was right; that he was divinely inspired and predestined to be the bringer of peace on earth, as he claimed."

THE President was too astonished to speak. Finally, not looking at Simpceon directly, he murmured:

"Just a coincidence—like the—first time—when it—went—up. It just happened—to drop while—er—you were—there."

Peter Simpceon rose, and hat in hand, spoke.

"Mr. President, you know you do not believe what you are saying. It might have been a coincidence if it had happened only once; but when I did it, following strictly the directions of that good, dead man, firm in my faith in him, it worked out just as he said it would, then it passes from the range of coincidence and becomes *positive cause and effect*. I shall now give the entire story to the press of the world. Some already believe as I do, in the Mayan Religion on Earth and when this is read, many more will unite with us who have been faithful to the High Pontiff."

The President sprang to his feet and rushed forward to seize the old

man's shoulders. He was in an agony of doubt.

"Don't go," he pleaded, "not in anger. What you tell me shatters a life time of scientific preparation and work based on what I was sure were incontrovertible facts. But I cannot let myself commit the follies of politicians in the past. This thing happened and there is a reason for its happening. You claim to know why and how—regardless of how fantastic your explanation is, I must see to it that this explanation is investigated thoroughly and competently.

"Tell me! You must tell me! What was it the High Pontiff said when he went eastward? What were the words you said when you went westward? *And where and what are the sources of Langly's science?*"

Peter Simpceon shook his head.

"No. You keep the billion dollars for the nation, and I will keep the secret of the High Pontiff, who trusted me above all other men. Perhaps a new world is growing up around me, but I cannot be sure, and it is better to wait than to let the world know too soon.

"I am a religious man, Mr. President; you are not. Yet I can see we both believe in this in our own ways—and I think we agree that no harm will come to the world through waiting."

The old man turned away, then paused at the door.

"The true leader of the Mayan Faith on Earth gave me a secret that I hope will die with me. I'm afraid it's too dangerous a power to give to the scientific world—though it may be discovered eventually.

"So let those who will laugh at what the world may know now. But *it did happen—he did bring peace through the growing wall!*"

We Urge You Not to Believe a Word of This Story

B O M B

By Millard
Verne Gordon

THE Doerfel Mountains are located at the very rim of the visible half of the moon. Sometimes they are out of sight; sometimes they swing back into view as the satellite wobbles in its path. They are high, gaunt, and jagged—huge peaks jutting up from the cold, grey horizon against the black of the sky. And behind the Doerfels lies the blind spot of Earth's heavens. No one has ever seen what lies beyond that range . . .

It was toward the Doerfels, oddly enough, that Terrestrials calculated the comet of 1943 would go. At first, when it had been discovered out around the orbit of Jupiter, heading toward the sun, there was considerable uproar, for it seemed as if its path would intersect directly with that of Earth. For awhile astronomers talked excitedly and secretly amongst themselves, afraid of creating panic. Then their common sense asserted itself; they knew that the panic they'd feared was anything but likely. The world was already as panicky as it could be, what with all five continents engaged in a titanic war, the bombardment of cities and the destruction of nations a routine occurrence. So the news got out and made page nine along with the tail end of the daily casualty lists; no one gave it a stir, save for a few fanatics who didn't matter in the first place.

But it wasn't until after the comet had passed the orbit of Mars that the astronomers were able to breathe a bit easier. They had calculated, by some chicanery of international maneuvering with triangulations from three parts of the world mutually at war, that the comet would not hit the Earth; it would come close, however, to the moon. It would, in fact, graze the moon right about where the Doerfels are located.

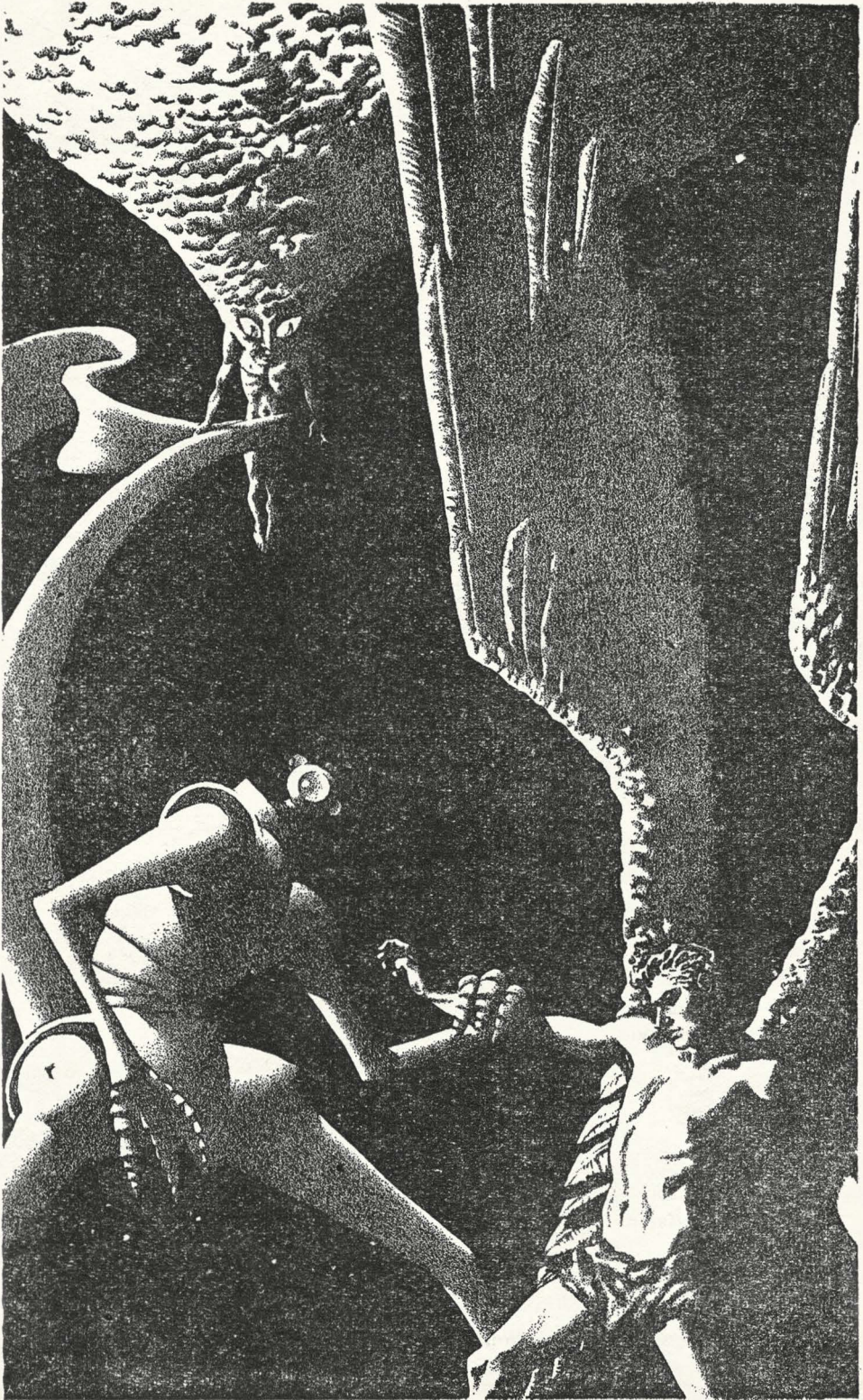
This was highly interesting, the astronomers thought. It might be that

part of the comet's tail would be lost, and would remain to give the moon a tenuous atmosphere again for a brief while. Then they made a really startling discovery: the comet was actually ablaze! It was a ball of fire, a blazing torch, a fragment of some exploded sun or nova-star still burning. This didn't make the situation dangerous, they thought, but it did heighten interest: no such comet had been heretofore recorded. Its fiery tail would probably burn the topmost peaks of the Lunar mountains as it passed.

Still there was no concern, until another interesting, also previously unrecorded phenomenon was noted. A new formation coming into sight just behind the Doerfels! At first they thought it was another peak that hadn't been noticed before, but after a while they realized that it was growing. A sort of peak, a long white cylindrical mass towering above the mountains and overshadowing them. A curious twisted appearance seemed to mark its surface consistency. The base was lost in mystery behind the Doerfels; the strange formation extended a bit farther, curved around somewhat, and stuck out from the side of the Lunar sphere quite distinctly.

The astronomers now observed that the end of the strange protuberance would be in the path of the comet—it would undoubtedly be set afire by its passage.

It was not until the comet had almost arrived that an astronomer in Arizona suddenly realized that the strange mass had all the appearance of a giant, cotton-impregnated fuse, which could not fail to be touched off by the approaching mass of flame. But there was nothing he could do about it, so he stayed at his job and calculated ephemerae, chuckling quietly and somewhat madly to himself.





WINGS



ACROSS TIME

A COMPELLING FANTASY NOVEL

Across the veil of five thousand years he was taken, to aid the beautiful winged people of tomorrow in their struggle against the super-evolved heads.

By Frank Edward Arnold

CHAPTER I

WELL, you can't deny it now! The evidence is there for everyone to see with their own two eyes, just as I did. I admit that at first I couldn't believe it myself, but the truth of it seemed forced upon me after the spell of Jimmy Langley's oratory had passed.

You'll have to go quickly if you want to see, though. In fact, I hope you do, because then there's a chance you'll believe it. But if Jimmy's mysterious friends move as fast as he hopes, he won't be in this world much longer—and that's a mysterious statement that needs qualifying.

Do you remember the Langley disappearance case? No, I thought you wouldn't. I'm not surprised—things happen so quickly nowadays that even old news-hawks like me can't remember them. But this affair stuck in my memory because Jimmy was a particular pal of mine and I was genuinely upset at his loss—not to say baffled, as I was in the crowd that saw him fly into the air and disappear!

At Bakewell college, where he was studying for his degree, Langley was said to be one of the most promising young chemists of the day. He wasn't too popular with the powers-that-be, however, as he was a comical chap, always talking and full of jokes, and he was too fond of his sport. As everyone knows, the venerable institution is famed more for domelike skulls

Illustration by Hannes Bok

than for stalwart physiques. The Dons firmly believe that the muscular athlete is of necessity a mental cripple, and nothing that a man like Langley can demonstrate to the contrary will alter that conviction. Nevertheless, they admitted grudgingly that he was an exception.

He was brilliant, and a born athlete. A short, squatty fellow with swelling, rippling muscles, with his white teeth and dark curly hair he had the appearance of some Italian acrobat or strong man from an old-time music hall. Despite his short legs he could sprint or run a distance with the best of them. He could put the shot, throw a discus or javelin, jump, pole vault and all the rest of it.

Most of all he loved antagonistics—fencing, wrestling, ju-jitsu—and how he loved a fight! I know, for I've traded more punches with Jimmy Langley than any man, and what punches they were!

Anyhow, on this particular day two years ago the College was holding its annual sports meeting and I got the job of reporting it. Jimmy was rather worried at the time owing to the recent and unaccountable disappearance of his fiancée, a charming girl called Mary Parkes. She was known to suffer from amnesia and his anxiety was understandable. However, on this day he tried to throw off his worry for a while as it was his last term at college and he was keen to set up some records that would be remembered.

He made a grand show. Worry or not, he was right on top of his form and he swept the board. Hundred yards, quarter-mile, three-mile, long jump, high jump—it was at the pole jump that it happened.

He was tackling thirteen feet,

which is a tidy height for any man. We all saw this happen—me, the judges, the Dons in the grandstand and the crowd of five thousand. Amid the most deafening cheers Jimmy took the air.

I was at just the right angle to see his whirling, kicking body outlined against the sky—and then he'd gone!

Just like that! Just like the boy in the Indian rope trick! He went into the air and disappeared.

The yell that went up was indescribable. For fully five minutes people didn't realize what had happened. How would you feel if a man disappeared in midair right before your eyes? You would be amazed, baffled, as we all were. When you actually grasped the incredible fact you'd swear it wasn't true, that it must have been a trick of the sun. That is what the Governors of Bakewell said, and they stuck to it, hushing up the story as soon as the excitement had died down. They told me to write a garbled version of it for my paper, and as no one would bear me witness to the truth I had to. Officially it was over and forgotten in a night, which was helped by Jimmy's lack of close relatives to make embarrassing inquiries.

But people who had seen it talked, especially his many old friends. The facts were beyond explanation; we just accepted them; and apart from memory, Jimmy Langley, that brilliant young man, disappeared from our lives as if he had never been.

That was two years ago. And now I have the honor to report that Jimmy Langley is back and literally he is larger than life—which I will explain later.

THE other day I came home dog-tired and sat down to yawn

over the latest murder case, when a messenger-boy knocked at the door and gave me a note. Judge my excitement at seeing the writing and signature of the missing Jimmy.

"Dear Frank," (it read) "I'm back again in the world of the 1940's and I need advice badly. Can you come round quickly? I'll be waiting. All the best. Jimmy."

Brief and uninformative—but Jimmy is back! Without stopping to think I gave the boy a quarter and legged it for the address he gave, a little boarding-house round the corner. I was asked to be quiet, as Mr. Langley was unwell and in bed.

I tiptoed into the bedroom and sure enough there he was in bed, head propped up against a pillow as it emerged from voluminous masses of blankets. He looked quite well, with skin clear and eyes bright, and he grinned as I came in.

"Frank, you old so-and-so," he laughed. "What a pal you are to come round at this time of night. It's sure good to see your ugly old mug again."

I acknowledged and returned the compliment, rumpling his hair gently in lieu of handshake. He told me to draw up a chair and open some beer bottles, and after the usual questions about each other's welfare he came to the point.

"I suppose," he remarked casually, "That you and the others have been wondering what has happened to me all this time?"

"Laddie," said I, "you've a gift for understatement. 'Wonder' is scarcely the word, and if you don't want me to burst from sheer unsatisfied curiosity you'll tell me the whole dreadful story."

His cheerful eyes clouded a little.

"It is a bit dreadful," he said, rather wistfully. "But you want to

know; and you won't believe it. But I'll tell you, and warn you in advance that it's a long, long story."

"Say on!" said I, mock-heroic. And he did.

CHAPTER II

JUST what happened at that famous pole vault (said Jimmy) I never knew until long after. But as I sailed over the bar there was a deafening crash that sounded right inside my head and the whole world blew up in a blaze of coruscating light and color. A whirlwind of strange pattern and color played before my eyes. I had instantaneous glimpses of weird buildings and places, one of which I could have sworn was a gigantic laboratory, then everything went black as Tartarus.

There followed a long period of unconsciousness, and then a series of dream-like events that passed with lightning rapidity. I vaguely recollect a pair of enormous eyes regarding me with an utter lack of expression, another deep blackness and then a flash of moving forms, with the sensation of actual physical movement and finally the familiar but ever-terrifying dream of falling in freezing-cold space; then again, unconsciousness.

I awoke. All my senses, that is, sprang into life again while my eyes remained closed. I felt fresh and normal and my mind was clear. Voices buzzed in my ears, men's voices arguing and even quarrelling. I concentrated and listened to them.

"Brecon, you fool, will you never realize the danger of thwarting the Heads too often? Only a month ago Sarconis destroyed three cities of Maine because Clansmen rescued

their friends from his laboratory. Now you would bring him raging into Northland. For other Clansmen this foolhardy expedition might be understandable, but not for the sake of a savage who should have been dead for centuries."

"It is you who are foolish, Harding," replied the other voice with some contempt. "You are growing old and out of touch with the young Clansmen's opinions. This creature is no savage but a man like ourselves, and the Code of the Clans declares expressly that no man shall be a victim of the Heads and their damnable experiments, whatever it cost us to resist them. I fear for your authority, Harding, if you defy the anger of the Clansmen when they are growing more than ever impatient with the attempted tyrannies of the Heads."

"And I fear for the very lives of the Clansmen, if this sort of folly continues," shouted the other, and I heard a stamping of feet as somebody strode out of the door. The other man followed, the pair of them still arguing.

A surprising conversation. I lay and pondered it for a while, trying to work it out. Heads, Clansmen, Code of the Clans—what a riddle! What sort of a hospital is this, I wondered, for I suppose it is a hospital since I seem to be in bed somewhere. What sort of men were those doctors, if they were doctors? Had I been carried to the field-hospital at some civil war? I didn't remember any civil war. Suddenly there was a flutter of enormous wings nearby and I wondered horribly if I were on a battlefield, with vultures swooping over me.

I opened my eyes, frightened in my weak state. I was not on a battlefield but in a brilliantly-lit room of soft

colors, and it was not a vulture that I heard but a woman.

She was standing, of all places, on the sill of an arched window, outlined against the streaming gold of the morning sun. A beautiful woman. A magnificent woman.

HERS was the figure and features of a classic goddess of antiquity, displayed and emphasized superbly by a close-fitting tunic that covered her from head to foot, making of her a radiant vision of white. I wish I could tell you that this was a lovely romance between the man from the past and the superwoman of the future, but you know how devoted I am to Mary; and you could not imagine romance between a dwarf like myself (Jimmy stands five feet and a bit. F.J.A.) and a woman more than seven feet tall.

That's what she stood, every inch of it, and that was not all. She had WINGS! Yes, wings! Vast white pinions that rose from the ankles along the whole length of the body, growing broader as they rose till they reached a span of twelve feet at least at the shoulders. Such was the imposing presence of this super-being that for a moment I could do no more than stare. Then I said the vulgar, the obvious.

"Good Lord! An angel!" was my first undignified gasp.

She laughed at my amazement, sweet, rippling laughter that was nonetheless a trifle hysterical. I looked closer. There was a hectic flush upon the lovely features and her eyes glittered with an unnatural excitement. A faint flutter of those great wings brought her to my side, where she towered like a goddess.

"Are you recovered, my friend?" she murmured in a voice of music. "Brecon and I had almost despaired

of your life. Who are you, and where do you come from? And from what year?"

I sat up, feeling energetic, but hastily drew back the bedclothes to cover my complete nakedness.

"My name is Langley, and friends call me Jimmy," I replied, with as much dignity as I could.

"The last I remember," I went on, "is that I was trying a pole vault at the sports meeting at Bakewell College. I must have slipped as I touched the ground and knocked my head. But this seems a very strange sort of hospital" (for the furniture in this room was of peculiar shape and material, in fact the very walls of the place were of strange construction) "and, if you'll forgive me saying so, you seem to be an unusual sort of nurse—unusually nice, that is," and I began to splutter.

"You are a long way from Bakewell College, whatever that was, and a long time too. When we found you, you were lying in the laboratory of Sarconis, unconscious after being drawn through some five thousand years of time. Langley, you may never see your own world again."

I stared at her amazed, wondering if I was in the hands of a madwoman. But her eyes were grave and steady.

"Five thousand years of time?" I muttered. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"It is the truth," she said. "Sarconis is a scientist of today who has conquered time. It is a force, he says, which can transmit matter just as much as radio. He has built a machine to prove it and from the inexhaustible depths of the past he has drawn specimens of men from many ages. You are the first we have rescued from him and you have been identified as a man of the year A. D. 1942. Is that right?"

"It is," I replied, bewildered. "But all this is too much for me to believe. Five thousand years through time. . . ."

"You will believe it when you see how the world has changed," she said, with assurance.

"Already you are amazed at the, to you, strange appearance of myself, yet I am only one Clanswoman of the Northland, and we are thousands in number."

Before I could speak again a panel door in the wall flicked noiselessly aside to reveal the figure of a man. Tall as the woman was, this fellow stood a full foot taller, a giant of a man with magnificent muscular development, though his limbs were rather slender compared to his mighty torso. He too was winged.

"Hullo, there!" he cried with a friendly smile, and came into the room. "How is our friend progressing, Laura?"

"He is well, but puzzled at his strange surroundings. We can understand his bewilderment, Brecon, and we must try to help him after the ordeal he has suffered."

"Of course!" The big man was soothing. I liked the pair of them. Though their appearance was freakish it was agreeable, and they were kind and friendly. I told Brecon of myself and what I recollected of the accident which began the alleged time-journey, and he nodded gravely.

"It is all true. The transmission of matter across time is quite a recognized possibility among the Heads. You are in a new world, Langley, a world thousands of years after your own. If you can move perhaps you will come over to the window and see."

WITH the beautiful Laura gazing at me I did not care to

cross the room clad in nothing but fresh air. So with a swift and very neat movement I twirled a sheet about me, jumped out of the bed and went with them to the window. I realized suddenly why the room seemed peculiar—the walls were of milky, opaque glass, and in them the window was just a broad panel.

The view from it was something I shall never forget.

We stood on a tiny ledge in a beehing precipice that rose nearly one thousand feet from the green-carpeted earth below. Around us lay tall and shapely white towers of wonderful design, decorated bizarrely by huge tropical plants that snaked up the walls nearly to the full height of the towers. Below, waving trees were thick on the flanks of broad avenues leading from tower to tower. The whole city lay in brilliant sunshine at the foot of a range of hills, with a rich world spreading away endlessly before it. A city the like of which mediaeval Europe, the ancient East or modern America had never seen.

But it was not the city alone which aroused my most profound amazement. It was the inhabitants.

Winged men and women, like my two friends! Hordes of them!

A race of giants, with shapely limbs, superb torsos, majestic heads, whirling, sweeping and diving upon great white wings! They dived from the windows of neighboring towers, swooping to earth like gulls to the sea. They hovered, poised without motion in mid-air. They drifted lazily by in great circling columns. They drifted apart, circling, spinning and diving alone in the air.

The sun reflected color prismatically from a thousand vivid tunics, as if men and women had been turned to a race of gigantic butterflies, to cast off the chains of gravity and seek

their true dominion in the clouds. As I gazed enthralled at this vision of a world the truth of my position imposed itself upon me with inescapable force—I was in a new world, a different world, a world that to my limited mind seemed fantastic, yet was just as real and matter-of-fact as my old world of bank clerks and bowler hats.

"It's true!" I said at last. "It's unbelievable, but it's true. This is no world that I have ever known."

The eyes of my friends glittered excitedly and I heard their breath coming faster.

"Fly with us, Langley!" cried Brecon, tensely. "Take our hands and fly with us."

Not thinking, I took the proffered hands. With inarticulate cries of joy they sprang through the window and rose fast, taking me with them. I found myself suspended like a trapezist high above the earth amid roaring currents of air that whipped the breath from my lungs and set the ridiculous white sheet flapping around me. For the moment I felt foolish and frightened, but the warm grip of their hands reassured me.

Their wings beat faster. I saw their eyes blazing, their bodies beginning to glow as if from terrific internal heat. I could feel that heat in waves flowing over me. It was frightening somehow, yet reassuring. It implied colossal physical energy, easily capable of supporting my light weight in these crushing air currents. I felt my own temperature rising and with it my breathing became deeper and more regular, my head cleared and grew lighter. A sort of mild intoxication possessed me. It had completely seized my two companions.

As we sailed swiftly over towers and spires, now and again soaring into the blue and golden vault over-

head, I surmised that natural, bird-like flight had strange effects upon human beings, an effect of wildness and abandon that was perhaps appropriate, for the air is a heady wine that lightens the spirit. I wondered how my friends' great bodies could be carried on wings.

Even such mighty pinions as they had seemed inadequate to support their huge frames. For that matter, how did they come to have wings at all? What incredible changes had the world seen in those five thousand years to cause so radical a divergence in evolution? What had caused it? What could have happened? The magnificent scenes around and beneath me dissolved to nothing as my mind grappled with a maze of conundrums.

Soon I had to suggest tactfully that my arms were growing weak under the prolonged strain and obligingly the two turned and began a long glide to earth. We passed through wheeling circles of flying men, missing some of them by dangerous margins, past the glistening white walls of towers where the air was saturated by the perfume of those climbing plants, straight in a broad-angle line for the pine-clad shores of a lake that lay just outside the city below the hills, a great blue eye in a floor of green. Upon its banks Brecon and Laura glided to a stop, hovering, and dropped gently to earth. My first flight was over.

"That was wonderful!" I said "Thank you, Brecon, and you, Laura. I have never had such an experience in my life, in fact, I have never seen so many wonderful things before in such a short space of time. I can believe the evidence of my eyes but it is past understanding. Can't you explain a little to me—how it is that men have wings?"

They both smiled. Their feverish excitement was dying down.

"I will tell you of the Evolution, Langley," said Laura, and we made ourselves comfortable on the rich grass while she spoke.

CHAPTER III

I CANNOT hope to recapture the lyrical story-telling manner in which Laura told me the story of the Evolution. My own crude prose must suffice for the explanation.

The Evolution was a somewhat vague historical occasion like the Roman Empire or Christianity or the Renaissance had been in our recollection. No one knew quite when or how it started, but it was believed to have been toward the close of the great Mechanical Revolution, which began in our time.

Transport and communication reached their zenith, and it was found that machines could travel no faster, nor could speech and vision be transmitted any better. Disease was non-existent. The arts were exhausted. The planet was too small and space was still beyond reach, so that Man grew prematurely old and tired for want of a fresh intellectual exercise. Till a supreme genius saw the way out—Evolution!

Of course! Investigate it, accelerate it, evolve new races, new species, new supermen. The possibilities were endless, for through evolution Man might attain the end which scientists, artists, heroes, priests had sought for centuries—near-Divinity! It set the world afire.

The original genius is forgotten, but it was Delmaroy who analyzed light rays far beyond the ultra-violet and found at the uttermost end of the spectrum the black ray of evolution. His first crude experiments pro-

duced intelligent lizards, walking trees and other horrors which were destroyed immediately. But Delmaroy's son evolved the first Superman, a physical giant of great beauty and brain power.

He died quickly, however, as the tremendous speed of his metabolic processes was too much for his faculties. Later supermen were stable, and after some years of experiment a new race of giants strode the earth. Here controversy arose.

An opposing school of thought declared that evolution of the body was a mistake. It was the brain which made Man the superior of animals, therefore evolution should be concentrated on the brain. They pointed jeeringly to "the great, beast-like bodies" of the Supermen, with their love of nature and aesthetics, and boasted that they would soon be stamped out by super-brains equipped with super-machines.

The Supermen were indignant. For the first time in centuries a war broke out, but as warfare was a lost art it was not very effective. It only succeeded in driving the two camps apart with the Supermen still in possession of most of the earth while the others sought to evolve their super-brains in secret.

The Supermen continued to evolve their bodies. Physical strength reached an incredible degree. Muscles, tendons and ligaments attained new degrees of tensile strength and contractive power, so that men approached in proportion the colossal strength of the ant, which can lift and carry many times its own weight.

This strength developed in turn a tremendous internal energy and emotional power, and this again was a stimulant to their mental power. Just as great artists of the past had worked under pressure of great emo-

tion, so the Supermen worked on their own employments with unflagging zest. They became geniuses as well as giants.

Soon their very senses were evolved and speeded up.

BY instantaneous concentration of their immense energy upon sight, for instance, their eyes became microscopes or telescopes at will. Similarly, with hearing they detected the minutest vibrations at great distances, and combined with ultra-vibrations of the vocal cords they established a chain of communication—veritable human radio—around the earth. By touch, taste and smell alone chemists could sift and analyze the most complex elements.

This, combined with their incredible speed, strength and endurance which permitted them to walk or run distances at speeds unknown to the fastest birds or flying insects, made the Supermen independent of machines for their progress. Their highly-evolved bodies were more precise and efficient, more powerful and lasting, than any machine. The world became their plaything.

They did not realize at first that natural flight, the last great achievement still to be attained, would prove to be a near-catastrophe. An aesthetic as well as scientific race, they were too fascinated by the pure perfection of bird-flight as contrasted with the stiff movement of their own relatively clumsy aircraft to perceive the disadvantages it would entail.

Winged men were developed, with great lung-power and high blood-pressure. Their muscular and tendonal fibers were still further strengthened and made correspondingly lighter, so that a giant such as Brecon, for instance, who stood eight feet tall, weighed no more than about

ten stone. From their shoulders an extremely slender new arm, or enlarged finger, extended out and from it fell the vast white membranes, paper-thin, strong as steel.

The wings grew out from new tendons that ran from the shoulders down the spine, almost touching, along the hips and down the legs to the ankles, so that the whole muscle-power of the body was brought into play. Wings had come, and the Supermen conquered the air.

They found the disadvantages too late. Muscular flight required a high rate of oxidation in the body and a much-heightened nervous power unknown so far even to the Supermen. In flight they reached a state of ecstasy more devastating than any intoxicants, which unbalanced their mental processes and ruined their concentration. Men became birds in mind as well as in body. They were gay, devil-may-care and utterly fearless, yet they were febrile and inconsequent. Progress was maintained only by prolonged periods on the ground, and even then it went on only by jerky degrees.

It was then that the Heads appeared.

In the secrecy of their laboratories the cult of the Superbrain had evolved their ideals—a race of men with giant crania too heavy to be supported on their atrophied bodies without the aid of machinery. The enormous brains within were perfect mental machines, efficient, emotionless, concentrating solely upon scientific pursuits and crushing whatever obstacles arose with an utter, inhuman ruthlessness.

They concentrated upon the mechanical sciences. They investigated the atom and released a degree of atomic power. They discovered that gravity was caused by an adhesion

of atomic particles and by reversing this adhesion they constructed gravity-nullifiers which lifted immense aircraft.

WITH beams that disrupted that adhesion and caused the particles to fly apart they created a deadly annihilating ray. Here the creators of the Heads, as these Superbrains were known, saw their opportunity to avenge themselves upon the Supermen. They urged the Heads to come out into the open with their invincible weapons, destroy the Supermen and claim the earth for themselves.

They did. They took the Supermen by surprise and with destructive rays and powerful machines they wreaked appalling havoc, killing the Supermen in thousands. The valiant winged men were too stunned and shocked by the sudden carnage to offer effective resistance. They saw their fighting comrades fling themselves with desperate gallantry into storms of destruction and realized the value of wisdom. They retreated wholesale.

The race of Heads was small and they were solitary beings. They settled themselves individually in scattered spots over their conquered territory, built themselves machine-cities to serve them and settled down to uninterrupted research. Being unemotional they had none of the vindictive desire of their creators to exterminate the Supermen, and when those luckless creators became a nuisance to the Heads with their constant pleas to continue the war they were calmly and unemotionally destroyed.

Between their cities the machines of the Heads carried on for them a traffic in specimens and materials for research by means of gravity-nullifying airships, with perfected

radio and television to keep them within communication with each other.

There was one Head in America, Sarconis, the one who was responsible for my being in this strange world. There were one or two in Britain, France, and Germany and others scattered about the five continents, bound to their machine-cities with no desire to move from them. In the territories between, the Supermen gathered together in tribes, or Clans, and built cities of their own unmolested by the now placid Heads.

They were vengeful, smarting with their defeats in the recent war, hating the Heads whom they regarded as loathsome abortions. They made determined efforts to recover their mental balance, so disturbed by the coming of flight. They redoubled the the power of their super-senses until eyes and ears could receive radio-waves, and they listened-in to the conversations of the Heads undetected, thus forestalling many a plan of action.

For the Heads regarded the Supermen as cattle fit for no more than biological experiment. When they wanted specimens they sent out machines, metal robots, to capture them and only by constant vigilance did the Supermen succeed in escaping. It says much for the spirit and determination of such scatter-brained people that they were able to concentrate long enough to devise methods of escape and rescue.

After many brave but rash men had been killed in attempting to snatch their captured friends from the machine-cities a clever chemist managed to compose a chemical solution which, when it was charged with certain electric currents, rendered materials invisible. The invisibility

garments were crude and unreliable, but they were a great help and with them so many rescues were effected that the Heads were forced to look elsewhere for subjects.

With the help of the mathematician Lethric, a Head who lived in North Africa, Sarconis had constructed a time-machine on the principle that time was a transmitting force, as Brecon had told me. This too was a crude affair and dangerous as well, but Sarconis managed to draw some specimens from the inexhaustible depths of the past; a few primitive ape-men, some mediaeval Europeans and a twentieth-century American—myself. The Supermen had tapped his radio conversations with Lethric and learned about these time experiments.

Loyal to the sworn Code of the Clans which bound all Supermen to save men from the Heads at any cost, Laura and Brecon had taken invisibility units, raided the laboratory of Sarconis and snatched my unconscious body before the photo-electric eyes of a myriad of his machines, bringing me back to their home city in New York, one of the four areas of America where the winged men had their quarters, the other three (these are rough approximations, you understand) being Maine, Texas and California. There were scattered cities of Supermen in all these areas while Sarconis lay brooding in his grim city of machines in what had been London.

That, in brief, was the amazing history that lay between my own times and the present world, the matters of fact that caused me to be literally dredged from one period to another by a super-being who regarded me as a mere biological specimen.

IT WAS a long story as Laura told it. It lasted the whole afternoon and into the evening and we stopped now and again for nourishment—some of the queer, sweetish glucose and white liquid on which the Supermen lived solely.

These were probably highly evolved forms of milk and honey, for they passed directly into the bloodstream without any digestive process intervening.

Laura's musical voice died down into silence. It was evening. Shadows lay softly over the unruffled surface of the lake and the sun was setting in a blaze of pale gold at the back of the hills.

I don't know what to think or say of all this," I said at last, breaking the gentle silence. "But since I am in an alien world it's pleasing to know I am in the hands of friends. How I can repay you for risking your lives as you did to save me I don't know, but I'll do my utmost."

Brecon smiled.

"Become a Clansman—one of us!" he said. "Work and fight with us and convince our obstructive old leader, Harding, that you were worth the effort. You have a stable temperament that should be invaluable to us."

I nodded, and silence fell again. In the dome of peacock-green overhead the forms of winged men whirled elusively in the half-light, black and batlike. I gazed round in dreamy wonder into the soft, whispering hush that breathed over the world and vowed to myself that, since I was bound irrevocably to these winged men, I would prove myself worthy of their friendship.

Lightheaded and inconsequent they might be, but they were fine and noble and to them I owed my life. Cut off though I was from the

familiar life that I knew, I could still find happiness amid these people—if I could find it in me to forget about Mary, whom I should never see again.

CHAPTER IV

THEY bore me home in the deepening twilight and in the surrounding comfort I sank into a dreamless sleep, far different from that nightmare-ridden period of unconsciousness in which I had glimpsed the eyes of Sarconis and the chaos of whirling machines as Laura and Brecon rushed me from the laboratory.

We were up and out early the next morning and were soon plunging into the cool depths of the lake as the sun rose. I felt very small and out of place amongst these giants, who rose from the water on beating wings to dive back again from frightening heights with wings folded, but being a strong swimmer myself and finding such gaiety and friendliness on either side I could not help but enjoy myself.

Laura and Brecon, with typical inconsequence, had forgotten all about me and gone off flying. Having bathed and eaten I felt ready for adventure of some sort, and in the hopes of finding it I decided to explore the city.

From the heights of the tower the trees flanking the avenues had seemed to be mere shrubs, but seen at eye-level they proved to be veritable forests, tall, thick and luxuriant, from which the white and shapely towers rose at half-mile intervals. These must have been built in the days before wings and lightheadedness, I thought, and despite their fresh appearance they must be at least one hundred years old. I was

to find, however, that the winged men were still capable of heavy constructive work, if only at short intervals at a time.

I found men working just outside the town, on the eastern boundary leading out into the weald. They were building a tower.

There were no trucks or tractors here to haul heavy material, no derricks to lift the giant girders to the height of nearly six hundred feet which the half-built tower reached. The power was supplied by MEN—and it was greater than any amount of horsepower ever seen in our own world.

Men with folded wings strode upright with masses of metal, probably weighing tons, balanced easily across their shoulders. No more than two or three men hauled these masses with great chains to the heights of the tower on wingpower alone. Great girders, giant masses of precast material, enormous loads of metal all carried and manipulated like hods of bricks! That casual demonstration of inconceivable physical strength did more than anything to prove to me the significance of the Evolution, and I realized now what was meant when I was told that men were now as strong in proportion as the ants who carry as much as seventy times their own weight—a thing that in our time scientists had pronounced impossible. But they had no idea of the possibilities of evolution.

For a long time I watched this fascinating work, oddly like a street bystander of our own times watching the workmen mending a road—but what man before me had ever seen such workmen as these?

I left them at last and wandered around a forest-flanked road that led in a circular detour around and out

of the city. I followed its course under the shade of great oaks until I came to the final bend where it led out in an arrow-straight line across the weald. I stood awhile, contemplating lazily the gentle contours of the land and the hundreds of shades of green.

I had not been there five minutes in peaceful thought before the phenomenon occurred.

THE man must have been miles away, but in the clear air I saw him distinctly. You will say at once that I am lying if I tell you how fast he was moving, but I assure you that I have seen cars on the race-track that did not equal his speed. It was absolutely inhuman. He enlarged rapidly and as I stood staring he flashed past me, the wind in his wake almost knocking me down.

“Well!” I gasped, steadying myself. Another demonstration of the power of the Supermen, I thought. Since they can travel on land at such speed there is no wonder that they need no machines. But I had little time for thinking, as three more were approaching and almost as fast, travelling in line-abreast and smoothly, as if on wheels. In seconds they were in front of me and without sign of slackening they pulled up dead; and I shouted aloud in amazement. They were not men—they were machines, mechanical men, robots!

They stood there motionless, big ugly things like overgrown pillar-boxes on wheels; seven feet tall; great goggling head-lamps glaring in my direction. I could have sworn the things were studying me. Suddenly, as I stood staring, a long metal tentacle with a pair of steel claws on the end slithered out from the side

of the nearest and attempted to seize me.

I dodged it just in time, turned and dashed into the forest. Running for life I heard the robots crashing through the undergrowth behind me, and I blessed the thickness of it which obstructed the robots as much as it did me.

The forest here led back to a spur of the hills and I found a path branching off up a steep bluff which formed a precipice overlooking the first path. It was rocky, and I hauled myself with difficulty to the top, some fifty feet above the footpath but still overshadowed by trees. There was a natural phenomenon here, a large rock balanced delicately on the edge of the cliff. I lay down beside it and peered below, where I saw that the robots had stopped, after threshing around in the woods, and stood still as if in conference.

I didn't hesitate. The things had attacked me and the chance here was too great to be missed. The rock was heavy but it was balanced like a seesaw. With a few backbreaking heaves that took all my strength, which is not inconsiderable, I hurled the great mass over the cliff to hear it land with an earth-shaking crash on the ground. I looked over, but there was no sign of the robots. They must have been crushed to absolute nothingness.

Immediately I was apprehensive. If these machines came from Sarconis, as they evidently did, their destruction might bring terrible reprisals. I had acted without thinking, in sheer panic. But as I stood irresolute in the thunderous voice of Brecon sounded overhead and he swept suddenly to my side like a great albatross swooping.

"Three Mecanicals!" he cried, awe

and admiration in his voice. "Langley, my friend, you have destroyed them with a single blow. I never thought such a thing was possible!"

He sprang lightly from the cliff to land beside the rock, to toss it aside as if it were a pebble.

Underneath it was a flattened tangle of metal, glowing weirdly from radio-active minerals. Brecon regarded it for a minute and then sprang back to the cliff top.

"I was flying nearby when I saw it happen," he said, and his body was ablaze with excitement so that I had to back away from him. "The Mecanicals were after my friend Purquell. He told me that he was on a rescue expedition, so I suppose his invisibility unit failed him and he had to run, for if he had flown he would have been rayed to nothingness."

"But that is nothing," he went on. "Langley, these Mecanicals have never been destroyed before, but at one blow you have destroyed a legend of invincibility that has lasted since the great war with the Heads."

He gripped my hand in delight and I returned the grip warmly. So I had not been long in the world of Supermen before proving some worth! At that moment there was a flutter of wings and another man joined us.

"Purquell!" cried Brecon with pleased surprise. "Well, it is good to see you still alive even if your mission has failed. Do you see what our friend Langley has done?"

FOLLOWING Brecon's gaze Purquell looked over the cliff.

"He has smashed Mecanicals!" he cried, with the same awe that had been in Brecon's voice. "Brecon, this means—"

"It means that in our blind folly

we have sought the wrong weapons! We laboured over atoms and annihilating rays in vain, while all the time we only needed to use our natural strength to crush these machines like insects. Why, we have only to arm ourselves with simple weapons to smash the Heads themselves."

"Pure strength, man, and heavy missiles! That is all we need, and we shall sweep them from the earth. I shall call a council at once and have the ironworkers making weapons for us within the week."

"Don't forget the invisibility units," warned Purquell. "They are still unreliable. Mine failed me at the very gates of the machine-city and I was forced to run. I thought at first of taking refuge in a city of Essex but thought it better not to bring trouble upon them. I came straight home. I fear Sarconis will be sending his globes here soon to demand the return of Langley and reparation for his smashed Mercanicals."

"We shall give them a warm welcome," said Brecon belligerently. They went on to talk enthusiastically of a campaign against the Heads, forgetting about me entirely. Idly I fell to wondering about Purquell's amazing statement—that he had run from the machine-city, which lay on the site of London, all the way up here to the city in Northland, which was ancient Northumberland! In our time the suggestion of such a thing would have been outrageous. In this world of Supermen it is commonplace.

"We shall have the new army equipped before two weeks are out," I heard Brecon saying. "Their precision and sense of discipline are extraordinary, Purquell. They fly in

formation with absolute rigidity—no excitement, no ecstasy, no hysteria. That is what hatred of the Heads accomplishes."

"Do you think Harding will approve when he hears of this?" asked Purquell dubiously. "He is a man of peaceful outlook, and might try to forbid this revival of the military sciences."

"He will do so at his own risk!" replied Brecon grimly. "Harding is a great man and I respect him, but I told him myself that he is losing his grip with the younger people. I have not made researches into old military records for nothing, and my new army will not be disbanded without a struggle."

"Excellent! And if we work fast we may send an expedition which may succeed where mine failed! This twentieth-century woman has been in the hands of Sarconis now longer than most of his captives."

"Yes. I wonder if Langley knows her. Why, here he is!" and Brecon turned to me with pleased surprise, oblivious of the fact that I had been there listening to them all the time.

"Langley, before you arrived Sarconis had captured a woman of your own time through his machine. We learnt that he meant to carry out biological experiments with male and female specimens of the twentieth century. She is small and wingless and has two names like yourself—one is Mary, the other I have forgotten—"

"**P**ARKES," affirmed Purquell. "Her full name is Mary Parkes, though it is improbable that you know her. There must have been many millions of men and women in the twentieth century."

"Mary Parkes—" I cried, almost

stunned at the news. For a moment I could not speak. Mary here—alive, in this world of monstrosities! Brought here by the scientific wizardry of this weird being Sarconis, and now perhaps she would be sacrificed to some appalling experiment of his—I took a grip on myself.

“Yes, I knew Mary Parkes,” I told them. “She was to have been my wife.”

“All the more reason for our working fast!” declared the sympathetic Brecon. “Never fear, Langley, she shall be saved for you—”

“I want to work with you,” I broke in, eagerly. “You cannot imagine what she means to me, and the thought of her being in the laboratory of Sarconis is too terrible to dwell upon. I can’t stand idle while she is still there.”

“You can set your mind at rest,” said Purquell. “Sarconis needs a male specimen for his latest experiment, a male from the same century as the female. Since his time machine has had an accident, so I hear from observers, he must wait until the machine is adjusted or he has recovered your own body. In either case we have time to work in.”

“Then let’s start at once.”

I could scarcely wait an instant. The news of Mary had been so sudden and so suddenly unexpected that my mind was in a whirl of emotion, the one tangible element of which was the fact that she was in danger and depended upon me.

Brecon and Purquell hurried back to the city, carrying me suspended between them. I noticed that as they flew there was a new tenseness in their fine features, the tension of men trying to hold powerful emotion in check, springing from the determina-

tion of the winged men to keep their mercurial natures under control. In the center of the city were four towers standing in a square, down the middle of each of which were broad shafts. We dropped down into one of these and I found that they led to vast underground caverns, deep below the city. In the distance I could hear the roar of machinery.

CHAPTER V

THE great underground workshops of the winged men were something I did not suspect existed, though, having seen them at work upon their city, I should have known that somewhere there must have been foundries and factories to supply them with materials. They were far underground and proof against ray attacks from the flying machines of the Heads.

They worked here in regular shifts. Away from their natural element, the air, they were capable of concentration for a long time but the sense of oppression in such surroundings, even these clean and spacious caverns, became insupportable after a time and the workers had to come to the surface again to stretch their wings, absorb the sunlight and breath in the purer air of the upper altitudes. Nevertheless, they worked here with energy and intensity.

I toured these foundries with Brecon and saw the manufacture of girders, steel plate and building material of all kinds. These steelworks were one of the few elements in the lives of the birdmen where machinery was still required.

In a certain workshop in which he had part-control Brecon held a conference with the foremen and workmen and told them of the new scheme

of armament which he planned for his shock-battalions. The men were amazed and excited by the story of my smashing the robots, or Mechanicals, and I was showered with admiration, much to my embarrassment. He left them enthusiastically at work on something in the nature of beating ploughshares into swords, and went on to the distant laboratories of the chemists, far from the noise of the foundries.

Here they were working on the invisibility units, striving to perfect these unreliable weapons. The chemists were concentrating their whole bodily energy upon their faculties of sight, smell and touch, and such was the heat radiating from them that I found it impossible to approach. I kept at a comfortable distance while Brecon told them of his plans. Being a chemist myself I should have liked very much to work with these men, but the lack of instruments and the unfamiliar chemicals with which they worked was too big a handicap. In time, however, I managed to get a little work with them in tabulating and classifying materials, which gave me the satisfying feeling that I was with these men in the common struggle—the destruction of the Heads and, for me in particular, the recovery of Mary.

The raid came barely two days after the destruction of the Mechanicals.

It was during a session of recreation above ground. We had come up after a long spell of work and were enjoying a swim in the lake. I sat by the bank drying in the sun and listened to the loud, noisy, excitable chatter of the winged people, admiring them yet irritated by the inconsequential ways they had when not hard at work. Even Laura, a de-

lightful companion when serious, chatted and laughed with an abandon almost hysteric in excitement and inanity. I smiled indulgently at her sallies, trying at last to ignore them politely, and in between I watched admiringly the antics of flyers at play high overhead.

Suddenly a girl sprang up and pointed across the weald to the distant horizon, and screamed to the laughing crowds.

Instantly they were silent, alert. Swimmers plunged for the shore and flyers hurtled to earth in almost vertical dives. I strained my eyes trying to follow their gaze, forgetting that their sight could pick up objects at distances far greater than I could. But the object travelled fast. Within seconds of the warning I sighted it, watching it seem to expand rather than approach until it was poised still above the center of the lake.

SO this was an emissary of Sarconis. It was a sphere of some deep green material, roughly one hundred feet in diameter, encompassed by a golden belt and capped by red bosses, top and bottom. It was evidently one of those wonderful gravity-nullifiers of the Heads, propelled by atomic power and bearing radio and vision units for communication at a distance. A weird, uncanny thing, its deep colors glowing malignantly in the soft blue of the sky, it sent a faint shudder through me as I sensed the sheer evil that emanated from it.

The crowds were silent now, and tense, but it was the tenseness of concentration, not of fear. I whispered to Laura.

"The globe is speaking to Harding," she told me. "In the name of Sarconis it demands your return to

the laboratory, under pain of instant annihilation of this city and its people.”

“Then I shall go back at once!” I cried, horrified at such a thought. But Laura seized my arm.

“No-one in this city would hear of it. Don’t fear for us—think of your friend Mary, who would suffer terribly if you were returned.”

That sobered me. Of all lives to be saved, Mary’s first.

I looked over to the center of the group where the elderly leader, Harding, was temporizing with the globe in tones of a pitch too high for me to hear. The Code of the Clans evidently was too strong in his mind for him to wan to return me willingly to the hands of Sarconis, savage though he thought me, and my heart warmed to his gallantry. On my behalf he and the entire Clan were risking their existence.

Suddenly a ripple of emotion shuddered over the crowd, and simultaneously the glow of the sphere deepened angrily. Is it a deadlock, I wondered? Tensely I watched Harding, whose features and gesture were studies in deep emotion. His wings fluttered, and still pleading eloquently he rose into the air in the direction of the globe; and then hell broke loose!

A pale ray of light, violet in hue, flowed from the base of the sphere and caught the flying man full in its glare. Before the horrified eyes of his subjects the leader’s great body flared into light and vanished, and the ray, spreading and flowing downwards towards us, struck into the heart of the crowd, dissolving hundreds.

Instantly there was pandemonium, and a great cry of rage and hate went up from the Supermen. But amid the

roar of wings and the whirl of flashing bodies I saw Laura throw back her head and in my mind I felt strange vibrations that must have been a warning that she broadcast on supersonic vocal waves to the panicking crowds. Promptly discipline overcame panic. They dropped to earth and the landscape became a chaos of streaking forms. I had an instantaneous glimpse of the Supermen running with unbelievable speed towards the city, then a great hand jerked me away.

In the shelter of a new, half-built tower Brecon stopped and set me down. My mind was a whirlpool of horror and confusion. He was calm—even his breath was normal despite the sudden terrific burst of energy. Not a soul was now visible; they had plunged into the great central shafts of the towers to the deep rayproof caverns underground.

But Brecon was concerned with the globe, which I saw was now over the city and wreaking havoc with a calm and methodical calculation that lost nothing of vindictive fury in its effect. The burning, wrecking ray slashed its way across and tower after tower keeled over and toppled in ruin.

“This is ghastly!” I muttered to Brecon.

“Langley,” he cried, his fine eyes ablaze, “You have smashed Mecanicals and destroyed a legend. Now I will try my strength.”

I WONDERED what he meant. Overhead the globe was stationary, raying the city, and seeing what a perfect target it presented I had a desperate if foolish wish for an old-time anti-aircraft gun, which would have smashed the thing in an instant.

But wishes were cut short by another tragedy.

Over the crash of falling metal and masonry I heard another sound, a beautiful sound tremendous in volume—a peal of magnificent voices echoing in song. It grew louder, louder, and then a glorious sight presented itself.

From over the nearby hills at the back of the city came a huge column of flying men, hundreds deep, white wings shining, brilliantly-clad bodies reflecting a thousand fires from the sun like a myriad giant dragonflies, beautiful features transfigured by song. I caught my breath at such a sight.

They were people of a neighboring clan paying us a friendly visit, but to me no angels of any primitive mythology were more than a shadow of this living reality. Nor were the corresponding devils more malignant than the globe which paused in its orgy of destruction to regard the oncoming column.

Yes, it regarded them, for the thing was actuated by a mechanical semi-intelligence as well as by the remote control of Sarconis. It remained still, making no motion until the whole vast flock was over the half-ruined city; and before the ruins were sighted by any of them, it acted.

The ray flashed out, broader, and deeper in glow than before, and I shuddered with horror. Hundreds of them, in rank after rank, were obliterated in a carnival of wholesale murder. Nearly beside myself with rage I shook my fists at that devilish thing in the sky as the tragedy went on, until my near-mania was brought to a sudden calm by the cool, commanding voice of Brecon.

“Courage, Langley! This is the end.”

I turned. Brecon was poised like a javelin-thrower—but his javelin! Not for nothing had he come to the half-built tower. Balanced in his broad right hand was a huge metal girder, fully fifty feet long, of unguessable weight, and as I tried to realize his purpose he actually hurled it!

Straight as an arrow that great projectile flew, propelled by the hand of one of the strongest men even of this super-race; and it smashed irresistibly through the walls of the globe like a heavy knife through an overripe melon, splitting it in half and carrying the remnants in its course till they fell with shattering impact on the hillside beyond the city.

Awed, numbed, frightened almost, by this display of titanic power, I followed Brecon into the city where he made for the nearest undamaged tower, the exulting cries of the surviving flyers overhead ringing in my dazed ears. My heroic companion was triumphant.

“We shall have a fleet of globes over our heads within the hour, but no matter,” he cried. “This will fire the shock battalions with enthusiasm. With this destruction still fresh in their minds I will have Purquell speed the production of the new weapons. We must get survivors under cover at once.”

He raised his head and issued a broadcast warning to the flyers who still soared confusedly over the wreckage of the city, chattering and speculating. With the death of Harding Brecon became the accepted leader of the Clan, without formalities of any sort. This appeared to be the natural procedure of the birdmen. The strongest character took over leadership and no-one disputed it with him, since the understanding be-

tween individuals and the community was perfect.

With absolute unanimity the whirling groups sorted themselves out and plunged down the shafts of the towers to the shelters, while Brecon called for volunteers to come up and help with the work of clearing away the wreckage and putting the city in order again. Observers were kept on a nonstop vigil to look for invading globes. I was little use here. I had not the strength to lift or hurl the great masses of rubble as they did nor the keenness of vision to make an efficient sentinel. I went below to work with the chemists with the invisibility units.

HOURS passed and lengthened into a day.

Still there was no sign that the threatened invasion of globes was coming. Brecon was jubilant. I was disappointed to see that he showed little or no grief for the appalling loss of life in the recent raid, nor for that matter did anyone else. There was a curious lack of feeling about the birdmen in that respect. Life to them was so joyous, so ecstatic that the idea of death simply did not affect them. It happened. There was no escaping it in the end and no point in grieving over it. They were not fatalistic but fearless to the point of callousness.

I saw the weapons being forged in the steelworks. I found that Brecon had ordered the making of hundreds of great steel shafts, big as our telephone poles, that might have been battering rams or gigantic lances. They were powerful looking weapons, but compared to the deadly ray that I had seen in action they seemed pitifully inadequate, even after Brecon's spectacular feat. I asked him

why they did not manufacture guns and shells.

"Guns? Shells? What are these things?" he demanded.

Of course! The warfare of our time had been forgotten for centuries and the knowledge of its weapons with it. So I explained to him the principle of propulsion by expanding gases, made by the chemicals that his men used, and I told him of the aerial bombardments of our own time. He was excited.

"As soon as this raid is over we will commence to make these bombs!" he declared. "First we shall destroy Sarconis as we are, then with these weapons of yours we shall sweep the Heads from the Earth!"

Two days passed, two days of furious activity with the urgent fear of a second raid. Still nothing had happened. On the morning of the third day Brecon came to me in the laboratory, eyes alight.

"Are you ready, Langley?" he cried. "The army is about to fly and I want you to come with us."

I dropped all work at once and followed him. He led me to another cavern some distance away and we stood on a balcony some fifty feet above the floor of it. The place was vast, silent and empty. Brecon extended his arm in a vague gesture of indication.

"Behold the new army—my army!" he cried, histrionically.

I stared at him, astonished.

"Your army?" I queried. "But the place is empty, man!"

He chuckled. The birdmen's sense of humour bobbed up at the most incongruous moments. He shouted a command—and then I really was astonished!

One moment—a vast empty space! The next—file on file, rank on rank,

solid endless blocks of winged supermen stood to attention on the floor of the cavern, great wings folded, bodies as erect as Guardsmen, every noble face a grim mask—a huge army materialized as if by magic out of the empty air. No wonder Brecon laughed gaily at my amazement. But there was no laughing at the purposefulness of the winged army. From them arose a vertible forest of the mighty steel shafts I had seen forged, grasped in their hands as if they were lances. The Supermen looked as vengeful as hawks—and far more formidable.

“How on earth—” I gasped.

“The invisibility units!” replied Brecon. “They have been perfected, and now they operate at the touch of a switch. The whole army has been equipped with them.”

HE turned with a sweeping, theatrical motion to the edge of the balcony and began issuing commands, inaudible to me owing to the pitch of his voice. I smiled a little. Brecon, though a fine man, was conscious of the fact that he was a great leader and he was determined to act the part. He harangued his men magnificently.

Line by line the army rose, one after the other, and soared up to the roof of the cavern over our heads into a well-shaft of a tower above. It was a wonderful, inspiring sight. Brecon watched them smiling, with hands on hips. When at length the last of the army had left he turned to me.

“And now, Langley, to find your friend Mary.”

I needed no encouragement. I went to a nearby locker at his bidding and brought out two close-fitting white tunics, one an enormous thing

built for Brecon’s great body, the other one clearly meant to fit my more slender frame. We climbed into them and Brecon showed me the switch on the belt which operated the current rendering suit and wearer invisible. Then he swung me like a sack over his gigantic shoulder, and we were off.

Up through the tower-shaft we shot like rockets, the wind whistling in my ears and almost throwing me from my insecure perch, to soar out into the wide open ocean of the sky and sun. Far below I made out the wreck of the globe on the hillside, just above the beautiful city it had lain in ruins. Half of those wonderful towers still lay shattered on the ground.

Gazing at that pitiful spectacle I felt a fresh surge of hate against the devilish creature responsible for this vandalism.

Ahead, the winged army were a majestic sight, drawn out in vast formations across the vivid white clouds like squadrons of bombers. They flew with the directness and precision of the machines they were setting out to fight—purposeful and, paradoxically, emotionless. In formation and under discipline the intoxicating effect of flight was rigorously suppressed, but in battle the winged men would prove unleashed cataracts of fighting fury.

Flight was rapid. The machine-city was a considerable distance away and the Northland Clan were determined upon a lightning raid. I hauled myself forcibly into a more secure and comfortable position across Brecon’s enormous shoulders and clung like a limpet to his great neck. I doubt if he even noticed the pressure of my hold, though it would have throttled an ordinary man. Settled, I watched

the fleeting procession of oceans of cloud, marvelling at its beauty, and reflecting with joy that a few hours would see me with Mary.

Suddenly I detected a current of vibration in Brecon's throat, and I sensed that he was issuing orders to the army. What the orders were, of course, I did not know, but with the instantaneity of a light switched out the whole vast army of the sky—vanished! Just as in the cavern they appeared so amazingly, so now they disappeared from sight to leave the great ocean of the air empty. But not for long.

Globes appeared. Hundreds of them.

They came in broad line-abreast formation, fast and formidable, heading for the City of the Clan, a terrifying sight. I watched tensely, nervous yet somehow exultant. Those great arrogant machines above looked lordly, almighty, seeming to offer a silent challenge to the elements to dispute their dominion over the air.

And I realized with a strange and gripping fascination that those lords of the air were actually surrounded on all sides by a vast and vengeful horde!

Brecon, of course, had sighted them long before, and the mass disappearance was the first move in his strategy. The gravity-defying armada was the victim of the most open, most daring and yet most astonishing simple ambush ever laid. Then the skies rained destruction.

With appalling crashes globes flew apart, struck by invisible weapons propelled with terrible, unerring power. Wreckage flew in every direction, whole machines were hurled shattered to the earth. In the first minutes of that massacre, if it can be so-called, countless numbers of

that mighty fleet were smashed beyond hope of repair or recovery, and survivors were flung into the wildest confusion. But as the guiding intelligence of the Fleet surmised and appreciated the situation order was restored rapidly from chaos. The surviving machines, who owed their survival to sheer weight of numbers, reformed in a huge wheeling circle.

That circle was a sitting target, but the guiding intelligence had accurately summed up his enemy. While globes were still falling the circle flung up an enormous protective umbrella of concentrated violet rays.

I NEVER saw the end of that battle.

Hundreds of flying men must have been annihilated before the invisible army evaded the ray's arc, to launch the attack savagely from other angles. Yet their ferocity was undiminished. Globes hurtled from the skies in ruin.

But while I watched in awe as the struggling globes attempted vainly to corner their elusive enemies I felt myself being borne away. I looked down and I had a moment of nausea at the illusion of being suspended in yawning, empty space. I pulled myself round hastily. The operation of invisibility units in midair, I thought, had frightening results. It was a relief to feel the powerful surge of Brecon's great muscles as we hurtled at speed for the south. At terrific speed, for Brecon no longer had to slow his pace for the more heavily loaded army. I asked him why he was leaving the battle and depriving the army of its leader.

"Laura commands them in my place," he replied. "Before long every machine in the city will leave to engage us, and that is our oppor-

tunity to enter it and abscond with Mary."

So! My giant friend was a strategist as well as a courageous fighter, and his proud wife Laura was worthy to take his place.

It was not long after we left the battle that I sighted the machine city, home of that weird, incredible being who brought me into this world in the first place; and with a queer thrill I recognized the contours of the landscape in which had once lain London. It was the same shallow, saucer-like plain surrounded by low hills, but the sprawling, ugly city had long since vanished.

Instead there was but a single block, possibly a mile square by a thousand feet high, of a glistening black material, standing on what was once the City square-mile.

The place was a grim fortress of metal, evil and forbidding. Great arches reaching from ground-level to half the building's height were the only entry. From the south I saw formations of cylindrical airships approaching, and even as we drew near a stream of globes poured out from the center of the machine-city's roof, heading in our direction, evidently on the way to battle.

On the ground an immensely long file of robots, or Mecanicals, were streaming from an archway down a long silver ribbon of road in the same direction. The horde of machine-life, for it was almost life, had the appearance of an overturned anthep, or possibly a beehive upset.

Brecon hovered, safely out of the path of the machines until the last of them was out of sight. Some of the airships had landed within the city's confines, others had followed the fleet of globes, but now the city had a deserted appearance. In that dreary plain, exuding an evil intel-

ligence of its own, it squatted like a watchful beast of prey, its limbs the mechanical army that had just departed, its brain the malignant being within.

Brecon circled the whole city twice before he made at last for a low archway on the western flank. It took us into a long hall, in apparent daylight but with nothing within save a few scurrying Mecanicals. We passed silently down this hall, a hundred feet above the machines, passing several tunnel-openings that led into brightly-lit galleries. Down these we saw more Mecanicals and a myriad of tiny flying globes, no more than a foot in diameter, that flashed from place to place. Brecon came eventually to the end of the hall and turned off into a tunnel, high up from the floor of the hall, leading into the bowels of the city.

BRECON set me down here and I was glad to leave my perch on his shoulder to stretch my limbs. I asked him what our next move was to be.

"We must find the room at the junction of the southern and western wings of the city, where Mary is confined. She will be in the Specimens Department with other matters that require the personal investigation of Sarconis."

My blood raced at the thought of her nearness, banishing the cold fear of her terrible fate impending. Now! I thought. I looked round for Brecon.

"Where are you?" I called.

"Hush! The walls are vast ears and eyes are everywhere."

But he appeared at my side long enough to let me reach up and take his arm. Then he vanished again, and like two vengeful phantoms we

strode down the long corridors and galleries of the machine-city.

I paid little or no attention to the marvels of mechanism that we passed, for I was now inured to the wonders of the world of super-evolution, and in any case my thoughts were filled with Mary. I was dimly aware of curious machines passing in various directions, of strange little gravity-nullifying globes and cylinders passing through the air on unguessable missions. In one corridor we found the wall was of glass, transparent, with a dark liquid flowing behind, and I was momentarily touched with horror when Brecon told me that it was an artificial bloodstream, through which the Head drew his vitality.

At the arched crossways of four avenues we halted. Brecon told me to wait while he investigated.

That moment or two was a nerve-racking ordeal, waiting there alone and invisible with my sole companion gone, when God-knows-what horror might spring out at any instant to devour me. I heard at last a welcome flutter of wings and he tapped my shoulder. He must have located me by the exposure of the eyes.

"I have found her!" he cried excitedly. "Down this corridor to the right. Quickly!"

We raced down the corridor, exultant. My heart pounded, my mind was too obsessed to see what we passed or what moved around us. At the end was a metal doorway and here Brecon pulled me up.

"In here. Look round to see if we are observed."

I did so. The place was empty, not a machine, cylinder, globe or mechanism or any sort in sight. I whispered that the coast was clear. The next instant we were in the room.

It was a large, white-walled place, like the laboratory of some hospital. I looked round eagerly and saw—

Mary! My God! Mary!

You remember her, don't you? She was small, dark, elfin in appearance and delicate. That was the Mary we all knew; and now, after ages of agonizing loss, after a leap across time, after running the gauntlet of a thousand unearthly dangers to find Mary I had come at last, face to face, with—

A seven-foot giantess, of cold, imperial majesty! Features without shadow of emotion, eyes distant, stony, unearthly. A creature of another age, another earth.

"Mary!" I whispered.

CHAPTER VI

THE shock was numbing. All the dangers and fantastic horrors I had encountered in this lunatic world were nothing compared to this appalling metamorphosis. How long I stood there immobile, unspeaking, I do not know, but Brecon, to whom Mary looked quite normal, called me to attention.

"You are strangely undemonstrative, but perhaps it was the custom of your world," he said, and there was a chuckle in his voice. "Well, time is passing and we must hurry if we are to take Mary away with us."

"Who is that?" cried the giantess sharply, at the sound of his voice. There was a click, and Brecon materialized. Miserably I followed suit.

"Mary," I almost sobbed. "Do you know me? Do you recognize me?"

Without surprise or emotion she regarded the two strangers who had materialized out of the air. I watched her eagerly. For the moment she showed no sign of recognition, then,

like the sun dispersing heavy clouds, joy flooded that impassive face and the glorious beauty of the Mary I had loved was before me.

"Jimmy!" she cried, in a happy, laughing voice. She rushed forward to seize my hand and I had to restrain a natural but now preposterous impulse to take her in my arms. We gazed raptly into each others eyes. She suddenly looked pained, surprised.

"What has happened to you, Jimmy? You have changed, terribly, since I saw you last. Or perhaps I am still dreaming. So many dreadful things have happened to me in these last days that I wonder if the explosion affected my mind."

I tried to tell her something of the incredible thing that had happened to us both, but Brecon interrupted me a second time.

"Machines are approaching! We must hurry."

Promptly everything was forgotten but the urgent need for escape. The terrible change in Mary could be explained and perhaps put right later, but first we must get her away.

"How are we to get her out?" I asked Brecon.

For the first time since I had known him he looked dismayed; he was bewildered; he looked about him wildly, and burst into a fit of mild anger.

"Forgive me, Langley, for my foolishness!" he said, bitterly. "I am no better than the lightheaded men I am trying to lead. I have forgotten to bring the invisibility unit that was for Mary."

Here was a fine state of affairs. I felt like cursing the featherheaded creature, but the thought of his and his people's valour and the sacrifices they had cheerfully made for our sakes restrained me. But the situa-

tion was desperate. At any minute the door might burst open under a horde of machines and all three of us would be overwhelmed.

"There is only one solution," said a sweet and familiar voice, a feminine voice, in our startled ears. There was a click, and—

"Laura!" we both cried.

"What has happened?" demanded Brecon urgently. "Where is the army, Laura, and why have you left them? Why are you here?"

"I am here because you are here, and you are in danger!" she said, fine eyes aflame. "When I left the army under command of Purquell they were destroying the globes in hundreds. But where your life was risked, Brecon, I had to be, too."

Despite the obsession of my own feelings I could not help but sense the tremendous devotion between these two super-beings. But Laura was concerned with immediate practicalities.

"We came here to rescue Mary. She must take my invisibility unit and go with you while I remain in her place. Quickly now, before we are caught."

Hastily she stripped off the invisibility unit and began to help Mary get into it. Mary took all this impassively, as if an escape from duress were an everyday affair. But I was uneasy. I wanted to take Mary away—desperately—but I had no right to let Laura sacrifice herself for our sakes.

"Laura," I said, "this is a wonderful thing you are offering to do, but I can't allow you to stay behind here while I escape in safety. I want to—"

"Unless we hurry none of us will escape," she said impatiently. Mary had the unit on, drawn as high as

the waist, when the interruption occurred.

WITHOUT warning the door slid aside, to reveal great ranks of Mecanicals blocking our only path of escape. Grim, implacable things, they looked ready and able to tear us to pieces. I caught my breath, unnerved, but my birdmen friends faced the horde without a sign of fear. A small metal cylinder floated through the air to a point on a level with Brecon eyes.

"In the name of Sarconis, you are under detention," said the thing, in a cold, metallic voice. It was evidently a mobile speaking unit, a gravity-nullifying vessel carrying broadcast apparatus. I regarded it apprehensively, wondering if the next move would be a concerted rush of the Mecanicals. Then I shouted.

"Laura! Brecon! Leave us behind and fly for it! I will stay here with Mary and Sarconis may develop me like her, but you escape while you can. Hurry now! I can face anything, now I have found her. Don't think of us. Get away!"

"I shall come back with an army!" roared Brecon.

With one sweep of his mighty arm he smashed the cylinder to the floor. Like lightning the foremost Mecanical shot forward, to be bowled over by the birdman's great shoulder. Then he and Laura took the air and streaked over the thronging machines beyond their reach, scattering the flying globes and cylinders in all directions. I cheered as I saw them vanish in the distance.

"The ray-screen!" cried Mary "They will be annihilated!"

I rushed to the broad window on the further wall. It looked out on to the plain outside the machine-city, for this room was by the outer

wall of the building. I watched the sky eagerly, and sure enough the heroic couple appeared, flashing upward at ever-increasing speed. I cheered again, but not for long. A horde of Mecanicals poured out on to the long white road and from one of them a thin pencil of violet light stabbed into the sky, seeking vainly to strike the elusive dots now almost out of sight. Then another phenomenon appeared.

The horizon about the city became a pale blaze of violet, bathing the low hills in the soft color, setting up a curtain from the earth to the clouds. I groaned—it was a vast screen of violet rays, evidently designed to be an impregnable barrier around the machine-city. Laura and Brecon were trapped.

There was no defeating the indomitable pair, however. They turned over in midflight and swooped to earth.

I saw them approach each other in a broad, wheeling semi-circle. They met, and locked in embrace they wheeled again and hurtled straight at the deadly screen. There was a faint flare of light, and they vanished.

I staggered away from the window, scarcely able to think. Two strange, superhuman beings whom I had come to look upon as friends, with whom I had shared the dangers of battle, who had willingly risked their lives to save us—now they had given their lives, had flung themselves to death without a moment's hesitation. Wiped from existence in a flash! I think I wept.

Mary's hand, a huge but still beautiful hand, on my shoulder, pulled me together again. We were surrounded now by the Mecanicals and fresh groups of flying cylinders dotted the air. The nearest turned

in our direction and the metallic voice order us to follow.

We went. Resistance was useless and in any case my idea in staying behind was in the hope that Sarconis, who presumably was responsible for the physical change in Mary, would develop my own body to the same extent and so make me compatible with her in thought and feeling again. Despite her joy at our reunion, despite the fact that she was moulded on the same heroic lines as the supermen, and should therefore have shared their high emotion, her happiness seemed to be struggling through a veil of coldness that must have been implanted by the mind of the emotionless Head.

The cylinder conducted us down long passages lined with mysterious tubes, through which dark liquids circulated. We passed by halls where great dynamos hummed and vibrated, rooms filled with dials, thermometers and all manner of instruments.

The heat increased. I sensed that we were descending, into the heart of the complicated apparatus that kept this weird being alive, into the web of some fantastic spider.

WE came upon it suddenly. It was in a vast, domed chamber lit from invisible sources. In the center of the chamber lay a huge transparent sphere, at the base of which myriads of long, tentacular tubes spread out into the corridors, bearing the dark, sinister liquids; and in the sphere—Ye Gods! Sarconis!

It was just recognizably human; but only just. It had no more than the remnants of a body supported by mechanical contrivances which again supported a vast cranium, six feet across. The thing was almost

pure brain, a mind factory, and utterly terrible; yet in a way, fascinating, hypnotic. Set in the mass of the cranium were two great eyes that I remembered as the brooding orbs I had seen in that time-defying trance.

"So my specimen, obtained with so much labour, is returned. I could have studied you through the vision globes, but for a change I desired firsthand contact. I will admit you are interesting, with your complex, primitive emotions which afford such a different field of study now that the higher intellectual pursuits are proving so difficult. Return to your cell, creature, and I will investigate you later."

My first interview with Sarconic was over, and I had said not a word. This, perhaps, was hardly surprising since the Head regarded me as a scientist regards a microbe. I left that infernal chamber with my mind a blank, with no remembrance of his words or of anything Mary might have said or done.

The last I remember was the sensation of falling into a deep, drugged yet soothing sleep.

When I awoke Mary was bending over me. I felt refreshed and vigorous—yet, vigorous, tingling and more virile than I had ever been before. I gazed straight into Mary's eyes and I saw, not the cold, distant eyes of the Titaness but the knowing, sympathetic eyes of a woman whose feeling and thought was in harmony with my own. Feeling and thought, however, that was somehow far richer and deeper than we had ever known before. I could sense it in those eyes, that were so dark and lustrous and filled with a wonderful tenderness. Both of us had been changed, as if we had in some miraculous manner aged a thousand

years in rich emotional experience overnight.

"Mary," I murmured. "We have changed—changed."

"Yes, we have changed. Stand up, Jimmy, and see."

Wondering, I obeyed. I stood erect and stretched my limbs, to see that she, giantess though she was, now scarcely reached my shoulder. I gazed down from my height over the expanse of chest and huge, muscular limbs, felt the surge of red blood like electricity coursing through the giant new body that I possessed. I stretched those immense limbs in an ecstasy of energy.

Not only was my outward appearance changed; my senses were subtly more powerful and penetrating. Previously imperceptible detail stood out in my surroundings; a thousand tiny currents of air flowed across my body, when before I would have noticed nothing. Strange yet faintly familiar scents entered the nostrils. The air vibrated with perpetual, delicate sound, almost music, a hundred whispers of air and vibrations of distant voices.

With a strange joy I realized that through some wonderful experiment of Sarconis I was now identical with the Supermen.

"One more change you have not perceived," said Mary.

Yes, she was somehow—bigger; and with a sudden muscular movement she extended great white wings. I became conscious at once of another strange feeling, a faint feeling of weight; and I too stretched enormous new wings.

"Wings!" I cried. "Mary—we are like the bird-people."

"Yes, and Sarconis has given us leave to fly outside if we stay over the city. Come on, Jimmy, let's go flying!"

I laughed gaily. Such cheerful, casual words were a sure sign that the experiment had transformed Mary into her old self again. We took hands. We stretched our wings.

It was easy, instinctive. I felt stupendous energy coursing through me, and as the wings beat faster and blood pounded heavily through my veins a wave of giddiness, of lightheadedness overtook me with almost intoxicating power. I knew what that meant, but a new irresponsibility was on me. We whirled through the corridors, up a great well-shaft and out into daylight.

If I had felt ecstasy before in the confines of our room, now in the open I felt it a thousandfold. I could not attempt to control it. With complete abandon we rocketed into the sky, straight for the blazing heart of the midday sun, earth-free, wheeling, soaring and utterly rapturous.

CHAPTER VII

WE WERE captives, indefinitely, but within its limits it was an agreeable captivity. For every day that followed we were allowed into the open, and though the ever-present threat of the ray-screen forbade any attempt to escape we were given the freedom of a great area of the sky in which to enjoy the wonder of flight.

Is there anything on earth to parallel that indescribable sensation? I doubt it. To my dying day I shall never forget those glorious hours spent with Mary in the air, thousands of feet from the earth.

I soared and plunged amid a whirlpool of light and color; amid a thousand air-currents, rippling over every muscle or tearing and batter-

ing at my whole body as if the winds themselves would hurl me from the sky; amid a thousand varying degrees of temperature, from white-heat to intense cold; with a thousand currents of air whispering, rustling, roaring and screaming in my ears, and above all, with the mounting rapture of red blood, super-oxylized, pouring through my veins like a fiery Niagara and driving the body to superhuman ecstasy.

In such a state of mind the old fears and hates and repressions fell away like dead leaves. The fear of death, of torment, of captivity became meaningless, non-existent. Towards Sarconis I felt nothing but a mild benevolence. With Mary I could have faced the whole of the old world of petty human greeds and passions with joyous defiance.

Yet with it there were lapses. Of what had happened before my captivity I had only the vaguest recollection.

The wonders of the birdmen's world were forgotten, the old world and life at Oxbridge were a vanished dream. There was only a vague, subconscious feeling, persisting from the old life, that my thought and speech grew inconsequent and illogical. In soberer moments I realized that I was succumbing to the devastating effects of flight thrust suddenly upon me, before I had time to get accustomed to it as the bird-race had already done.

That weird being, Sarconis, was worried by no such feelings. Every day his vision globes were on duty on the roof of the city, less for the purpose of guarding us than to permit him to watch our evolutions. He did so with a curious, almost timid envy, the first glimmerings of emotion that his inhuman nature had hitherto repressed. His cylinders

would follow us in flight and he would talk, and we had an insight into that amazing mind.

"I am beginning to believe that mobility is essential for a full and productive existence. Our makers thought that pure brain was the only thing necessary for progress, but now I find their error. Knowledge is limited. My mind flings itself vainly against fresh problems, blunted by ages of the same struggle, and it fails. I have not recourse to change and recreation, as you have. There are times when I wish I had a mere animal body such as your own."

In an exultant fashion I pitied the creature. Chained to that glass globe for eons of existence he would know nothing of the mighty currents of force and the wonders of experience that beings such as the Supermen knew. He was pure brain—he had no emotion, no feelings to drive him or refresh his tired mind.

When on the ground and capable of serious thought I spoke about him sometimes to Mary, for she had been with him longer than I had and had conversed with him frequently.

"He is a strange being, Jimmy, stranger even than he seems to be to us. His mind has no outlet for its energy except its work, and when that fails him he has nothing. He is a mass of twisted and repressed emotions, instead of being the emotionless intellect that his makers planned. I think all the Heads are like that—they are going mad one by one."

Of course. When specialization was carried to such mad extremes, mania was the only logical ending. I wondered why he had carried out no further experiments upon us.

"It is strange, Jimmy. Now that I have been here so long I believe

he is unwilling to lose me, or either of us for that matter."

HOW long we remained captives I never knew. It might have been days or years. I was careless of the passage of time, only living for those overpowering moments of life in the air. I had forgotten the birdmen and their world completely. Till one day in midflight I was suddenly jerked from blind joy to startled awareness by a thunderous explosion.

Amazed, I halted and hovered on quivering wings, gazing down just in time to see a column of smoke and flame rising from the northeast corner of the city. The blast flung me off balance for an instant, but I recovered and battled the tormented winds with a fierce gaiety, the meantime wondering what was happening below.

"Langley!" cried a voice. "You are flying! Where is Mary?"

"Who is that?" I shouted, to the apparently empty air.

"It is I, Purquell. I have the army overhead with the Clans of Essex, and we are bombarding the city with the explosive weapons that you described to Brecon. Quickly, find Mary while we are still occupied with the other side of the city, and escape with us."

For a moment Purquell appeared

beside me. We gripped hands in hasty greeting.

"Make haste!" he urged, as the thunder below reached a new pitch of violence. "We shall destroy the whole city."

He vanished again, and turning over I streaked to earth in an almost vertical dive, smashing my way through the raging air-currents by sheer velocity. Nearly half the city was now in ruins, and it would be no more than a matter of minutes before Sarconis himself would be obliterated in the merciless, methodical bombardment.

I swooped below the roof-level and made for a high arched window on the same level as our rooms, where I knew Mary would be resting. She was probably disturbed by the uproar and might have left to investigate. Speed was vital.

In the corridors the machine-city was in indescribable chaos. Little globes and cylinders flew wildly in every direction, voices from the cylinders shrieking gibberish, smashing into each other in mid-flight. Mechanicals, gone mad, raced up and down, pausing only to assault each other or strike at the whirling globes with blind, idiotic fury. Others hammered at the glass walls in the tunnels, and streams of vital liquids for the sustenance of Sarconis went flowing down the galleries.

IT WAS A SUMMONS FROM ANOTHER WORLD

He was nobody here on Earth—merely a schoolteacher—but when he answered the strange call he became

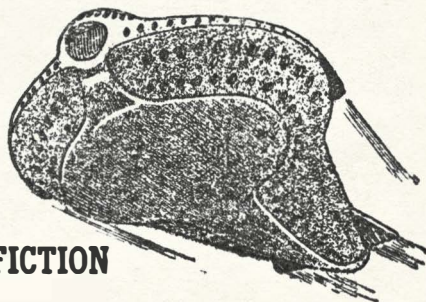
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The city was a scene of nightmare, a carnival of reckless destruction, and I whirled through it exulting at the death of the Supermen's traditional enemy.

Mary was in our quarters, resting as I expected. She was mildly curious about the distant approaching uproar, but quite calm and unflustered. Excitedly I told her that the rescuing army was overhead, waiting for us while they destroyed the enemy, and her eyes shone. In the chaos outside our escape would be unnoticed. Claspng hands we dashed into the corridors.

WE were late. At the end of the gallery the first explosion occurred in this quarter and our path was blocked by mountains of debris. Explosions continued. To attempt an exit here was certain death. Taking to our wings we flew at top speed for the further corner of the city, over the heads of whirling Mecanicals, smashing through swarms of globes. If anything the chaos grew worse, and Mecanicals, sensing our presence, thrashed upward with steel tentacles. One of them caught Mary about the neck, jerking her to the ground, and at her cry I dropped to the ground to release her.

I seized the tentacle and tore it apart, felling the Mecanical with a blow. But the delay was fatal. The gallery was alive with Mecanicals, clawing with arms and tentacles. There was a door to the right of us. I smashed through it—to find a room filled with clear, glittering, humming machinery—

"Jimmy!" screamed Mary. "The time-room! Don't—"

Too late! The force of the charge carried me right into the room, into

the center where an aura of violet light glowed. I fell right into that hellish glow—the world went dark—

Jimmy Langley fell silent. He sighed and his eyes closed. He was clearly exhausted by the strain of telling his long story. I pushed his chin back gently and forced a little spirit down his throat. He choked a little and opened his eyes.

"That's better!" he gasped. He shifted to make himself more comfortable, and went on.

"Well, there is very little more to tell you. When I came conscious again I found myself on the sportsfield at Oxbridge. It was dark and the place was empty.

"I won't bore you with the rest of it—how I made my way to London and fixed myself up in this house, but that was only yesterday. I don't know what is going to happen to me just yet. I'm absolutely unfitted for this world, Frank. I want to get back to the world of the Supermen, where Mary is."

"I can believe it," I said. "But how can you do it? You haven't a time-machine of your own, Sarconis is killed in the bombardment and his machine probably destroyed too."

"That is what I am wondering about—whether Mary escaped in time to warn the army not to destroy the time-machine. In any case, they would be bound to send a demand to Lethric that he build another one, under threat of destruction, so that they could fetch me back into their world. I have a feeling, Frank, a feeling that I can't describe to you because you are thousands of years behind our time, that they are building this machine—and in a short while I shall be gone from this world again, this time for ever."

I nodded sympathetically.

"We shall miss you, Jim. But you have a world of your own to live in and Mary is waiting for you, so I hope they get you soon. But what shall I tell everybody? This adventure of yours is news—terrific news."

"But would they believe it? And after all, do you believe it yourself?"

"Jimmy," said I gravely. "You told me this yourself, and I believe every word you say. But nobody else will."

"You are right," he murmured. "Nobody will believe it."

"I tell you what, though," I went on, warning. "I'll write it out in manuscript form and send it to the Editor of Science Fiction Quarterly. How would that be?"

"A good idea. A pity to take fact and call it fiction, though."

"Yes, but there's no choice. Unless—Jimmy have you any proof of this adventure? Convincing proof?"

"Why, of course!" he cried, surprised and delighted. "It shows my inconsequential mind. Would this do for proof?"

And with a sudden swift movement he flung off the encumbering bedclothes and stood up.

I confess that during his narrative I had not really believed it. I doubted, not his sincerity, but his sense of reality. I had not really taken in his account of the Evolution. But all doubt vanished now. Here was proof—numbing in its force!

Jimmy Langley, short, squatty, stubby Jimmy Langley, towered over me a giant more than eight feet tall, and from his mighty back there spread like the sails of a windjammer a pair of vast white wings!

THE END



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Walter R. Preston

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The exiles of the 21st Century had only the moon for haven against the tyranny of Rangkor, and even here there could be no security, unless . . .

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IT WAS 2044 A. D.

Far beyond the Earth's stratosphere the space fleet of Rangkor, the rediscoverer of 20th century despotism, was beating a "victorious retreat" from a demoralized enemy.

"Our one hundred ships can't reconquer the whole world even if we did make them run. We would soon be out of ammunition and helpless. Besides we have other worries right now."

Dave Wallace had brought his fighter to the big transport, in which the rebels sought to make the moon trip, and berthed it in the rear lock. He was now co-pilot of the transport.

Pierce came up just then with a worried look. "That battle ruined our calculations. We'll never make it," he wailed.

Wallace jumped for the televisor. "Step it up to full speed, boys. Spread out a bit and give her all she's got." He turned to Pierce. "It's pretty serious if we don't get there on time, isn't it?"

"It's pretty near the end of us," said the scientist quietly.

Wallace was accosted by a bright young miss who was breathlessly taking in everything, too excited to be scared.

"What's all the excitement?" she asked him brightly.

"We are behind schedule and must make up time."

"Why must we rush?" She pointed out of the port. "Just look at that beautiful view. I have never seen a sight so enchanting."

It was an unbelievably glorious sight as, free from

Illustration by Walter Marconette



earth's horizon, constellation after constellation came into view and Earth, a great disk encompassed by fleecy clouds, faded in the rear. It was like a heavenly ocean. The myriads of stars were ships rushing about on some celestial business and

winking encouragement to the fleet.

"I cannot see the Moon ahead!" she gasped in a worried tone. "Are we going in the right direction?"

"She travels faster than we do. We had to have a head start."

"What will it be like up there?"

"A long, hot day of half a month, and a frigid night the same length."

Rita Blake wanted to know more. Wallace proceeded to give complete descriptions of anything and everything that came to mind until he was interrupted.

"Come on, Wallace!" blared the communicator overhead. "This is no vacation. We need you in here!"

Rita retired to her stateroom in a hurry and Wallace turned his steps to the pilot's cabin.

IT WAS three days later before they sighted Luna coming from behind the earth on her appointed journey, a very small orb in the far distance.

"Look! She's way over there. We are going in the wrong direction." Rita argued positively with David for they now spent all of their free time together.

"No, that is her regular path. We will meet her somewhere out there," Wallace pointed directly ahead into space.

"If we miss her we will have to chase her, won't we? That would be fun, chasing the moon."

"We had better not miss her," said Wallace apprehensively.

They altered their course a little to make up for the time lost in battle and a gloomy tension settled over the entire fleet. Only the creak and groan of the framework and the high pitched roar of the rockets disturbed the silence. Each day the tension mounted.

"We're going to make it!" jubilantly shouted Pierce on the sixth day.

Luckily the gravitational pull of the moon had helped them and they reached her just as she was passing. A controlled pandemonium broke out through all the fleet.

After scouting and signalling steadily for ten hours they located the advance party in a small crater-let and landed peacefully on the moon.

A few chosen officers donned the heavy metal space suits and left the ship to go into conference with Sinclair, the man in charge of the advance party on the moon.

"You don't need those suits here," he told them with a smile. "We have sealed over this whole crater with Pierce's glassite and created a synthetic atmosphere. We have also started work on Ring Plain Hansen, a large plain ringed by high mountains, near here. We tried to signal you to come ahead some time ago but couldn't get through to you."

The locks of all the ships were opened and everyone bounded out onto the surface. Bounded was the right word for it was impossible to do anything else despite the weights in their suits because of the light gravity, until one got used to it. And before that happened nearly everyone was a mass of bruises. The lack of gravity did not affect mass; they didn't come down as fast, but hit hard nonetheless.

After a short celebration a conference was called to discuss ways and means of constructing and protecting their new home.

"We are going to need materials for ammunition and metals for more ships," declared Wallace. "You get the new colony ready as quickly as you can, while I go over to Crater Tyco to have a look at this mysterious metal you have been speaking about. If we can't make a go of it on the surface and have to live in caves we will need a lot of it."

Wallace had been speaking to

Pierce, he now turned to an older man of military bearing.

"Captain Hawes, I can think of no one more fitted to take charge of military operations so I'll leave that to you. I hope we will have no trouble but we must be watchful. When Rangkor or his underlings come up here they're going to find us ready for him. He will probably try raiding us as soon as he can build some more ships. Despotism cannot survive without constant warfare to waste the strength of its people."

WALLACE selected the T-1, their biggest transport, carefully chose his chew, entered the ship and set off to investigate the cracks in the moon's surface.

He had included Rita Blake in his party; he always felt happier when she was around.

Speeding along over the surface of the Moon they headed for the famed Tyco. Over the Appenine Mountains and past the Sea of Vapors, always looking for the mysterious rays.

"I had no idea the moon was so large," said Rita to Wallace as they were searching the landscape below.

"Yes, its quite a planet. Its about 8000 miles around the moon."

"I don't understand calling these seas, when they're drier than Salt Lake Desert, either," she complained.

"They were Seas before the moon lost her water," Wallace patiently explained.

"What is that down there, a river?" she broke in suddenly.

"No, but it's what we are looking for," said Wallace as he brought the ship down closer to the surface.

Below them an enormous canyon extended for miles and miles. At the bottom of this appeared to be flowing water that gleamed and sparkled

in the sunlight. Closer examination proved that it was not water but something that gave off a light of its own.

He followed this canyon for miles and finally great Tyco loomed up over the short moon horizon. The ship landed and parties were quickly organized to explore these great lighted canyons.

Returning from an exploring trip in their space suits Wallace had lingered behind his companions. He was deeply engrossed in one of the luminous rock formations and didn't notice the others were gone from sight. He decided he would catch up with them by a short cut. When he came to a small fissure he took a short run to make the jump across but just as he leaped his foot slipped. He gripped frantically at the other edge but couldn't hold on and started falling. Bumping here and clutching wherever he could, he managed to break the fall somewhat but couldn't stop himself. After what seemed an interminable period, in a dazed and confused condition, he struck something brittle which crashed under him. He fell to the floor of a great cavern and lost consciousness vaguely remembering that something was tugging at him.

WHEN he came to, he found that he had been placed in an enclosure with high walls around it. His consciousness was hastened when he realized that he was strangling for lack of air. He knew his air valves were clogged and looked wildly for water to wash them out. Near by he found water in a small pan.

Quickly he washed out the air valves and rose to try out his legs, it was then he heard tiny exclamations and noticed that a barred gate

stood between him and several small people who were looking at him in wonder. He went towards the gate to speak to them then realized that he couldn't while still in the metal suit, although their voices came to him very faintly in the thin lunar atmosphere. Now he noticed that his feet had been hobbled just as he used to hobble horses on the western plains years ago.

At the gate these strange little people, some two feet in height, were still watching him but drew back as he approached. In the dim light of the cavern he saw that three of these who appeared to be scholars, had brought a number of books and were comparing him to pictures and chattering to themselves.

While this was going on others came along, evidently in authority and with a definite purpose. They came to the bars and held some object through. Wallace was curious and naturally reached for it. As he touched it one of them quickly snapped a metal band, to which was attached a chain, around his wrist. A dozen or more grabbed hold of the chain and started pulling his arm through the bars. Inadvertently reaching through with the other hand to ease the strain on his arm, another wristband was clamped on and now they had both arms pinioned.

Wallace's temper, generally very even, began to go and with a mighty surge he hauled them off the ground, but they hung on and several more came to help. Having him pinned against the bars, some little fellow advanced into the cell with evident tepridation, removed the hobbles and placed two more of the metal clamps on his feet.

He was really alarmed now, wondering if they intended to peg him

out and then cut him up for steaks; he went to work in earnest. He got one leg loose with a kick that sent the nearest little fellow sailing out through the gate to land over at the far wall. Two more followed by the same route but still more took their places and the corner became a heaving mass of the strange little beings.

Wallace could not last against such numbers and was eventually spread-eagled out on the ground like Gulliver of old with a hundred or more little people holding the chains tight from four angles.

Back on the surface, preparations started apace and everybody was put to work. Thompson, a geologist, had left camp to search for additional minerals. One hour later he came rushing into camp with the grotesque 30-foot hops made possible by the lesser gravity of the Moon.

"I saw the S-14, the transport that was shot down as we left the earth, over in the next gorge," he panted. "I thought our friends had gotten through after we left and started to signal to them but the ship fired on me and took off right away."

"That means trouble for us," sighed Pierce. "Rangkor's men must have repaired her and made a test flight up here; we're not free of those monsters."

They went into the building to break this bad news but found engineers, chemists and workmen eagerly grouped around a sample of yellowish, powdery soil, so they postponed the bad news.

"What's so wonderful about that yellow stuff?" asked one of the workmen.

"It may mean our salvation if we can find enough of it," they told him. "This powder liberates oxygen upon

contact with water. We can build up an atmosphere with it."

Without delay ships were fitted out and sent to spot where the soil had been found.

RING BLAIN HANSEN was what the name implied—a level plain thirty miles across, surrounded by a huge ring of majestic moon mountains. These mountains rose in sheer cliffs to heights of over ten thousand feet, scintillating in the bright sunlight colors reflected from the many minerals untouched for countless ages. Like a monstrous jeweled crown that had been thrown there and forgotten.

They settled to the surface on a soil that greatly resembled the sample they had been examining, scrambled into their space suits, piled out through the lock and went bounding and dancing over the moon plain.

Pierce and Thompson were loath to dampen this party so they called just a necessary few to break the bad news.

"Take the K-7, Thompson, and trace that ship," ordered Captain Hawes, designating the fastest fighter in the fleet. "Follow them to their base and see what they're up to."

"We might as well all go back and fight to the last man," said Thompson gloomily.

"Perhaps not. The ship we lost was only a transport and had no new atomic guns."

"If I am not too forward, boys," said Captain Hawes with heavy sarcasm, "I also have a plan, if you'll just let me use it and keep quiet. I'm in charge here till Wallace gets back."

This stopped the discussion, all were instructed to keep the matter secret.

Ralston, a tall, heavy-set man, had taken charge of the drilling operations on the plain. He had formerly been an experienced and efficient petroleum engineer on the earth. Under his direction, derrick engines and bits went into place and were in operation with the astonishing speed of the skilled worker.

"Why did you choose this location?" Ralston asked Pierce during a shift that they were off duty.

"Because it is a likely place to find water, the soil is just right and the whole plain can be sealed over easy."

Just then the engines began to race and Ralston rushed away to locate the trouble.

It was not trouble but good fortune for at a depth of 500 feet the ground was no longer hard and they could work with a faster bitt.

"We have pierced the outer crust already at 500 feet," said Ralston when he returned a few minutes later.

"Five hundred feet is just about the depth it would harden from the Ice Age to the present, according to my theory."

"What bearing has the Ice Age to the Moon?" Ralston asked.

"Years ago, about 1870 earth time, a man named Howell believed that the Moon was not a Child of Earth or Sun but an *Invading Satellite*. He believed that before the Ice Age the earth was on an even axis and traveled a circular orbit with no moon. The world was semi-tropical and had no seasons. A former Garden of Eden. This is substantiated by the fact that Mastodon and tropical flora and fossils even in Northern Alaska where we were exiled.

"Then came this *Invading Satellite*, the moon—which passed so close it was halted by earth's gravity; the

force of its attraction tipped earth's axis and caused huge tidal waves to sweep the land. These waves froze and caused the Ice Age. The earth has ever since travelled an elliptical orbit which is largely responsible for the four seasons."

HOURS upon hours passed and the drilling continued. The bitt had sunk to a depth of one mile when they hit water.

Water, under terrific pressure, shot up to a great height.

"Either I am crazy or the heat has got me," growled Ralston.

"Why so?" Pierce asked him.

"We have a column of water shooting up from the surface and it is not falling back to moon again. Why not?" he asked confusedly.

Pierce looked him over dubiously and decided he would check before calling the Doctor.

He checked and so did everybody else. The water was spouting up but the water *was not* falling back. It was staying up there and forming clouds. They took a short trip back to the original colony for supplies and returned. The well was still spouting and clouds were growing larger at a height of about five thousand feet just as they did on the earth. The whole plain was covered and it was somewhat cooler.

Clouds formed and reached the saturation point, but no rain fell.

The scouting ship had failed to return. The news of the hostile visitor had leaked out somehow, and dejection gripped everyone.

Thompson finally returned and added his report to the general gloom.

"I followed the S-14 back to earth and berthed my ship in the woods while I took a look around.

"They are swarming all over our former camp and have searched our shops to the last corner for data. I contacted one of our friends and he says the story of our escape is all over the continent. If we aren't wiped out, revolution will spread. They are building frantically and say they are going to make an example of us.

"They are building a hundred ships similar to the S-14 and expect to start as soon as they are finished."

"Did you see what armament they expect to use?" asked Hawes.

"They expect to use their mid-air shock bombs for the ships and the usual ground bombs for the colony. They brought down one of our ships that way and are satisfied it will work. They haven't found the secret of the atom gun."

"Then we'll find caves for all our ships back off the plain, if you can't find 'em, then we'll dig 'em."

Thompson bounced up in protest. "Ain't we going to fight them? I'm sick of running away. We have better guns; we'll wipe 'em out."

The whole throng rose to their feet yelling assent.

Captain Hawes jumped to his feet and stood there going from red to purple and then back to icy calm again, all the while shaking his finger at Thompson. They quieted down.

"Will you all please fight your battles in your ships and not in the hall here," he said with assumed politeness.

"What's the sense of all these mud huts?" complained Thompson. "For two months all we've done is build mud huts, mud houses and mud barns. Paper roofs, tin roofs and cloth roofs—we can't live in these!"

The whole plain was dotted with

what appeared to be buildings. It looked strange to see this apparent city peopled by iron men hopping about building house after house in frenzied earnestness. In the center the still greater water spout was rising and the whole plain was covered with clouds—but there had been no rain.

They could pipe off enough water for their own use and enough for the mud houses—but the spout was still uncontrollable.

“We have got to get that water for another use,” said Pierce.

Just then the warning alarms they had installed went off; a crashing roar was heard and down through the clouds dove the long expected attacking force of Rangkor’s ships.

IN the limitless cavern Wallace was held down by these strange little people whose strategy had chained him helpless.

“Poisoned darts for me now,” he thought, as three of them advanced with some instruments and a tray on which was some white paste.

They started busily tapping his space suit here and there and finally one of them spotted vapor from the exhaust valve of his suit caused by his labored breathing. This was of great interest to them and immediately caused a conference. After much argument they began applying oils and ointments and then they bandaged it as if it were a wound, though they seemed to know better than to plug it.

Wallace realized that they took him to be some strange wild animal and could more easily understand their actions. He had, at one time, seen attendants rope and throw a tiger in a zoo, in much the same manner, to treat him for a bad tooth.

After this treatment he felt the chains loosen so he rose and tried to make conciliatory gestures but these were misinterpreted. He was ringed about by spears and prodded back into the enclosure.

The throng soon drifted away and being dead tired he slept for a while. When he awoke he noticed the cutest little doll just outside the gate gazing at him. A little less than two feet tall she had the very white color of those long away from the sunlight. She had great big saucer eyes and long black hair. Just the tiniest bit of a nose that seemed more for decoration than use. She wore a full length robe of intricate design and had on jeweled sandals.

Advancing slowly to the bars he stooped down to get a better look at her. She let out a mouselike squeak but stood her ground and after a moment began to speak with what seemed to be soothing and coaxing words. Very cautiously she put her hand through the bars holding something in it and Wallace suddenly knew that he was ravenously hungry. Placing it in an intake valve of the suit he tasted it. It was rather flat but seemed wonderful to a man 48 hours without food. Eager for more he went to one of the pans that had been placed in there before. He started to stuff more in but was stopped by a sharp chatter at the door. It was evidently not food from her actions and her name would just as evidently have to be Doll.

Losing all caution Doll came in through the gate with another plate full. He started eagerly over towards her and the food. Thinking herself about to be attacked by this strange monster she let out one shriek surprisingly loud for her size and fainted.

Wallace managed to sprinkle some water over her. Leaning over her he was terrified to see that she was not breathing. He had taken a liking to this little woman and was desolated for fear he had frightened her to death. He seized a pan and beat frantically on the bars to summon aid until he happened to turn around and see her sitting up staring wonderingly. . . . He stopped banging the pan and very cautiously, this time, headed for the food; but by this time she had lost her fear of him.

He was trying to stuff some food through his valve and making a bad job of it when he saw she was up close and giggling at him. Next she came still closer and stuffed in a handful herself. During this operation he got a closer look at her and saw that indeed she did not breathe at all. Her pert little nose was only there for decoration. Every once in a while she took a bit of powder and ate it and seemed puzzled that he did not use it.

Then he guessed the answer to the riddle. These little people were *oxygen eaters*. The white powder they ate was an oxide. They might be the remnant of the original moon people and evolution had taught them to eat oxygen instead of breathing it. He found out later that they could go as long as 100 hours without it, but a longer period was certain death.

DOLL was having a grand time. She sat on his shoulder and peered in his helmet window uttering shrieks of laughter when he made a face at her. Solemnly she examined the exhaust valve and was truly frightened when he blew a little air on her. When he lifted her up to test her weight she shivered once

and squeaked but really seemed thrilled.

Finally it got too much for her. Like most girls she must show off this new and awesome conquest of hers. Seizing one of the chains that were still on his arm she opened the gate and started leading him towards a village in the distance.

They went down a well-worn roadway in the largest cavern Wallace had ever known. High overhead was one of the huge cracks they had been investigating. These great fissures were filled with this white luminous substance which seemed to be brighter down here than on the surface. From this they got most of their light. Great piles of this material were stacked at intervals along the roadway. Passing one of these he noticed men at work. Three blocks had grown dim and they were straining to load them onto a cart. Wallace decided to lighten their labors so he came up and piled all three blocks on the cart.

At sight of this apparition coming upon them so suddenly, the little men dropped their tools and fled in terror. Two of them, braver than the rest, threw rocks at him and tried to rescue Doll and were non-plussed when she seized a long rod and started to use it on them. This was straightened out and the party continued on its way.

Coming up over a small rise they were suddenly in the center of the small village. All local operations stopped immediately and there was a general exodus in all directions. The local police stood their ground and threw hundreds of lances. These glanced harmlessly off his metal suit but placed Doll in great danger until he thought to lift her high above his head.

These little people apparently could not remain angry or frightened very long for the bombardment was soon over and they drifted back into town.

When Wallace found time to look around over the heads of the throng he saw a veritable toyland. Little houses of rock and metal were everywhere. Luminous metals of all colors were used. Wealth seemed to be measured by this standard for the homes of the more prosperous had metals of many colors while those in the poorer section had plain stone with a box or container for a luminous block in the front yard. It was like standing in the middle of toyland or perhaps, some gigantic firefly convention.

He was looking for a possible exit when he noticed a group talking to Doll, first pointing to him and then to a far distant cluster of lights. She listened, nodded her head dubiously and apprehensively looked up at him. They all disappeared to return shortly with what they seemed to consider a huge cart, pulled by ten men.

Wallace was way ahead of them this time.

"So I'm to be a horse, am I?" he thought. "Well, its a good way to explore this cave peaceably."

Wallace submitted to the harness with amusement. When Doll climbed in the cart with six others he graciously started off at a leisurely pace towards the lights she had shown him, intent on his surroundings.

One of the little fellows, more officious than the rest, was not satisfied with the pace. He grabbed the reins and brought out a long whip.

Wallace felt the lash on his metal suit. He was not hurt but decided not to let that sort of thing go by.

"You can't do that to me, I'm a

horse of a different color"—then they were off.

HE called upon all his sprinting ability and set out for a record down the road. He hugged the inside on the first turn, the cart hugged the outside and the passengers hugged the cart. They all made it, then taking advantage of the light gravity he stepped it up to 35 an hour and made the next turn on two wheels. Doll hung on and shrieked; the men looked badly scared. Emerging from a cloud of dust he managed one more notch and not knowing the laws of this Lunar locality passed some carts on the right and some on the left leaving the workmen gesticulating wildly at them.

This pace was unheard of locally and soon Doll was making entreatings, demanding and coaxing noises that he stop; so stop he did. He had enjoyed playing horse here in the weird half-light and felt better for the exercise. She got out and ceremoniously broke the whip in front of him then got back in and took the reins herself.

"I'm a one-woman horse," he said in his helmet and resumed the reasonable pace as before.

The luminous blocks were everywhere. First he would pass a large house of yellow, red and white blocks, then he would come to a small house with a single light block in front. After a few more miles they came to the distant light-cluster and entered a well-guarded side cave. The guards were much excited over this metal monster but Doll soon convinced them that he was all right.

The party donned additional garments. They fastened smoked glass across the window of his helmet and put on colored goggles themselves.

Then putting a large heated stone in the middle of the cart they opened a large stone door and started toward the surface.

They were on a wide and well-worn road that stretched away and up interminably. It was a steep climb but after he had surreptitiously removed the dark glass from his helmet it was easy for him and they were soon at the top. The reason for the extra clothing and dark glasses became apparent.

Here on this side of the moon it was twilight. Even Wallace's well insulated suit was chilly. He wondered how these people could stand such extremes of heat and cold and the partial vacuum. Then he reflected that if deep sea fish could stand the pressure of a thousand fathoms why couldn't these people go to the other extreme.

As a horse Wallace was not expected to load the cart so while they were engaged he started to look around. They were back in one of the lighted canyons of Tyco similar to the one into which he had fallen. The little people were after some of the luminous rock or metallic ore they used for lighting their beautiful little toy villages and countrysides.

He then noticed that they had just finished loading one large lump in what was, to them, strong light. They looked half blinded and seemed to be nearly frozen, so he fell to work with them. Using his strong earth muscles he started piling on lumps in grand style. Soon the cart was full, but it was quite sturdy so Wallace decided to make it a real load and built up on the sides despite their expostulations.

At the top of the long descent the little people attached long chains to the rear of the cart and pulled back-

wards while chattering worriedly. Wallace rigged an old fashioned wheeldrag by locking the rear wheels with a chain. They thoughtfully watched this operation and seemed to come to the conclusion that their horse was a thinking person for this time they made no objections. The descent, that they seemed to fear so much, was accomplished with ease and the trip down uneventful.

The heavily laden cart was barely able to negotiate the door at the foot of the roadway. The guards stared goggle-eyed at the size of the load, examining the new brake and shaking their heads. The party unloaded three large chunks and the head-shaking turned to smiles. An extraordinary trip for them, it seemed. The heavily laden cart continued on towards the village and except for frightened coaxings whenever Wallace started to run the trip was accomplished in perfect harmony.

He was now treated with great honor. The little people vied for the honor of escorting him to all corners of the 100-mile cavern. They were an intelligent people; only their care-free nature prevented them from being truly progressive. Everybody seemed happy-go-lucky in this Lunarland and would stop work on the slightest provocation.

Doll's High Speed Lunar Delivery of the Source of Light collected enough money for her to become one of the wealthy class but she would only accept half. Wallace, therefore, with the aid of much sign language, indicated that his half should go for a complete history of the Moon People to be given to him on his return; his own supply of chemicals for air was running low. He would have to get back to the ship for replacements. Only after he had solemnly

promised to return would they show him the way. In one last triumphal parade Wallace's guides took him to a hidden door and he headed for the surface to search for his ship.

WANDERING along hopelessly after many periods of search for Wallace in the cold moon night, Rita Blake caught a glow of reflected earthshine on a distant piece of metal. Her interest aroused, she hurried over and her long vigil was ended.

Wallace had overestimated the life of his chemicals and was helpless on the cold moon landscape about ten miles from the ship. He was receiving just enough oxygen to keep him alive when Rita saw him in the distance.

She realized the trouble and immediately connected her air hose to his. This revived him somewhat but he was unable to walk. She must get him to the ship at once. She gave a hopeless tug at the form on the ground and to her surprise it moved some distance. In this light gravity she would have to be the slight heroine rescuing the strong hero. A reversal of form but necessary so she lifted him to her shoulder and started towards the ship. She made good time at first but the constant strain was exhausting; finally, as she was tugging furiously to drag him along, a party of men from the ship saw them and made short work of the rest of the trip, carrying both of them into the ship.

Wallace was just beginning to tell them about the Little People when he noticed the expression on the Televisor operator's face.

"What's going on?" he demanded.

"There's an attack on back at the

camp. They got here sooner than we expected."

"Come on! Let's get going," yelled Wallace jumping from the cot. "Why didn't you leave sooner?"

"We just now got the news," they told him as the big transport lurched off the ground.

BACK at the camp the attack was on in full force. The value of the false buildings they had labored so long to build became more evident as it progressed.

Down dived the first wave of Rangkor's ships to the center of the supposed city, releasing full cargoes of bombs. Up they zoomed in their time-honored custom. Craters appeared, mud blocks and tin roofs flew high in the air. A few defending ships chased them and fired just enough to keep things going. The colony sat back safely in the caves and laughed.

Rangkor's gray ships dived down in a second wave. More mud houses flew apart and the fighters chased the enemy until they disappeared into the clouds again.

"How long can they keep this up?" visored Captain Hawes to Thompson who was watching the attackers in his ship above the clouds. "Our Town won't last much longer," he added after the fifth attack.

"They're wise now and hopping mad," Thompson visored back. "They must have listened in on our wave. They've spotted me and—" he broke off and his visor went dead.

"After them, boys," Hawes ordered his ships, "and make it good this time! They must have gotten Thompson."

The Colony's blue fighter ships roared out from their caves and sped

like lightning to battle in and above the man-made clouds.

One blue ship spotted an enemy, swerved and opened fire at point-blank range. The gray ship of Rangkor's forces staggered, heeled over and burst in a blinding flash. It started to rain in that vicinity. The victorious pilot continued up into the clouds to rejoin the others. Instantly, he was in whirling fighting mass of ships, friend and foe alike. The mid-air shock bombs of the enemy burst above and below. It began to rain wherever the bombs burst. Ships crashed into each other in the opaque clouds and exploded. Whenever this happened it started to rain.

"Shoot up above the clouds, boys," visored Hawes who always got friendly during the fighting. "We're hitting each other as well as the enemy."

The defending ships shot up to the sunlight above.

Rangkor's gray ships picked up the message and followed immediately after them.

They were met by a withering burst of fire from the atomic guns above them. They dived back into the clouds and sulked.

"Call Wallace back at once," Hawes ordered his visor operator. "Then send twenty ships below the clouds to prevent the enemy from landing. Do it in code this time."

The operator got busy and soon the twenty ships dipped down out of sight.

"We got 'em bottled up now!" Hawes said jovially as he slapped the operator on the back.

"You want to surrender?" he visored Rangkor in a friendly tone.

The answer was unprintable but definite.

"All right, stay there till you starve," he replied, still friendly.

"Wallace has already arrived, sir," interrupted the visor operator.

"Thank God," said Hawes. "Maybe he can get us out of this mess."

WALLACE had been informed of the battle on the way in. He didn't relish the idea of taking the big transport down through the enemy-infested cloudbank but he must land his valuable cargo at any cost.

Leaving Hawes and the watchful ships in charge above, he nosed the great ship over and sank down through the opaque mist. It seemed like descending through a vast sea of nothingness. He proceeded cautiously and thought he was going to make it—till he sank right onto the glistening back of one of Rangkor's long gray ships.

The gray shape galvanized to life and zoomed up over him. Wallace knew what was coming and prayed for luck. He swerved the unwieldy transport frantically and gave the rockets full blast. There was a rending crash and the rear of the transport burst into flames. The ship was badly damaged by the bomb but not entirely out of control. He plunged down to a rough landing with only a few injured.

They all scrambled out of the ship into a downpour of rain that lasted about five minutes. Just long enough to put out the fire on the ship. The wounded were hastily removed to the protection of the caves.

"S'funny," said a workman to Wallace as they were repairing the transport, "every time a bomb bursts up there it rains a few minutes."

Wallace looked at him and then looked up at the heavy clouds that

darkened the whole plain. Then he visored Captain Hawes in code for the next half hour.

The blue ships of the colonists circled above the clouds like eagles watching for prey. Occasionally one of Rangkor's ships rose with suicidal recklessness and attempted to break through but just as certainly it rained down in bits to the wreckstrewn plain below. In the huge cloudbank, though, the enemy's numbers made him king.

"Denham, you're a good mechanic," said Wallace in the protecting cave. "Round up a crew, empty every transport and put in a robot control. I know they aren't perfect but they'll do. Tune 'em to my fighter ship as master control. Take all the men you need only get going and rush them through fast."

The transports were all emptied and the robot controls hurriedly installed. Then they were moved out onto the plain.

"I hope it works," said Wallace with crossed fingers.

He entered his favorite fighter and sat down to the new controls, tentatively pressed the release and slowly moved along the plain. The transports all followed obediently.

He waved his space-suit arm out of port and yelled:

"All OK. Now everybody clear off this plain and stay off!"

With this admonition he shoved his stick to full speed ahead and climbed up towards the clouds. All but two of the transports lumbered after him. Those two seemed to hang back as if afraid.

Wallace cruised peacefully into the thick clouds but got action soon enough. Once again a long gray

shape loomed above but this time Wallace dived out of sight in the fog and left Rangkor's ship momentarily puzzled. Then the first robot-driven transport drifted along, through the thick mist. Rangkor's ship forgot all about Wallace and his little fighter and took after the transport.

"Here is big game," thought the commander of the enemy ship so he went to work on the transport and visored his brother ships to come. Then another robot controlled transport drifted in through the fog and soon a milling mass of gray ships were fighting for chances at the targets. The din was terrific and even the opaque cloud bank was filled with blinding flashes. The air seemed to quiver with explosions. No sooner would one empty transport be torn to bits than another would come along. Wallace's little fighter was buffeted about like a leaf from the explosions and the air was filled with debris. In spite of all his manoeuvres Wallace's ship was hit by a whole section of exploded transport and fell spinning out of control to the plain.

MOTHER Nature now took a hand. Angry at the continued disturbance in her cloud bank she released the swirling vapors in a cloudburst unparalleled in history. Torrents of rain fell to the sodium peroxide beds on the plain. The hissing reaction sent up steaming clouds of oxygen, searing hot, and driving all before it. Through this driving eddying mass darted fighting gray and blue shapes. Friend and foe alike were tossed about and with every explosion the intensity of the storm grew.

Down on the plain nature's reaction began to overshadow the battle in the

clouds. Great chunks of nitride exploded from overheating sending a shower of water to new areas setting up a new reaction till the whole plain became a maelstrom of green and white explosions in the midst of the continued downpour.

Up above the sky began to grow brighter. The hidden gray ships of the enemy were losing their protecting clouds. They were also losing their courage. With the increasing atmosphere from the reaction on the plain came increasing sound. The din grew to terrific proportions. After an unsuccessful attempt to break through the blue ships still circling above and not daring to face what they thought to be an impenetrable barrage from the plain below Rangkor's fleet visored Captain Hawes his unconditional surrender.

The sky continued to get lighter and the sun broke through the few remaining clouds. The rain stopped and puddles, rivulets and even small ponds formed on the floor of the plain.

The huge fountain of water spouted up undiminished into the now present atmosphere for a thousand feet or more, scintillating with all the colors of the rainbow, spreading out like an enormous flower at the top and falling back in a cascade of raindrops that sparkled like diamonds. From the center of the geyser a mist drifted upward catching and reflecting the glory of the setting sun, combining with the growing earth-light that became more visible as the sun waned. The half-month long moon day was closing.

Wallace, in a semi-coma, kept raving about little people, sparkling houses and light piles.

"You can have my share, Doll," he raved.

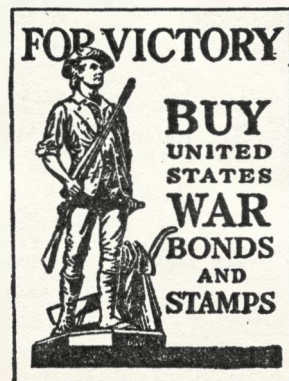
"Who is this Doll person?" snapped Rita, shaking him.

The shaking brought him out of his stupor and his natural quick wit brought him out of a precarious situation.

"You are my Doll," he said hopefully and tried one arm around her. He encountered no resistance so he used the other arm to good advantage. Then carefully told of the Little People.

"The plain has been sealed over and cleared," said Rita. "I only hope it was not a dream, Wallace, for they have some method of raising food and would perhaps show us. We could trade with them in the future. You lived for days on this food. It can be no worse than the tiresome concentrated food pills we have. We must see them as soon as we have things in order here."

NOTE: Professor E. A. Höwell, in his book on the Moon stated that he believes that the atmosphere on the Moon went into the surface after she lost her water. Possibly forming compounds on the surface such as Sodium Peroxide which if sprinkled with water will react with a hissing sound and release oxygen. If by some unknown means it should rain on the moon an atmosphere-making reaction might actually occur.



HELL IN THE VILLAGE

Wherein the FBI tangles with occultists in picturesque Greenwich Village, while on the trail of a dangerous Nazi agent.



Who knows what hideous things Von Junzt and his black-magic crazed followers have been up to?

By Hugh Raymond



FARNSWORTH of the FBI banged his fist on the desk of the managing editor of the New York Telegraph and snorted. The desk shivered and jumped.

"We'll get 'im!" he roared and clamped down hard on the cigar he was smoking.



"We'll get 'im as sure as I'm a foot high!"

Harrington, editor of the Telegraph inclined his head toward Jimmy Collins, his star reporter, whose feet were sticking almost in his face as they rested comfortably on the desk and smiled.

"Well," he said, whimsically, "he *is* a foot high."

"Humph!" the FBI agent folded his arms and sat back in his chair, while Collins picked a glass from a tray in front of Harrington and looked into its winy depths reflectively.

"It is all very simple," he breathed, took a long drink of wine and knocked the ashes from his pipe. He shot a glance of derision at the FBI man. "You're a sucker, Farny, a sucker for the cleverest Nazi in the country. Wouldn't he love to see you now, red-faced, snorting like a bull and mad as a porcupine. Pipe down. You're talking too loudly."

Farnsworth drained his own glass, regained a little normal color and took his feet off Harrington's desk.

"You two are *so* helpful," he grated, standing up. Abruptly he ruffled a stack of back issues of the Telegraph laying on a folding extension of the telephone board. "May 23rd," he began softly, and held up one of the issues, "Von Junzt Escapes! FBI Chief Demoted!" he paused, his voice taking on a raspy edge, threw the sheet to the floor and picked another one from the pile, "June 10th, FBI Shaken Up. President Alarmed As Nazi Spy Von Junzt Carries Out Daring Sabotage After Escape!" he dropped the sheet, ran his hands nervously through his hair and bit his cigar in two. "And after that! Bombings in San Francisco, explosions in airplane plants up and down the California coast. Two important operatories slain in Denver. On August 7th he blows up a munitions plant in Illinois, killing six hundred. *How!*"

Harrington blew on his hands, lifted his eyes toward the FBI man and grunted.

"We blasted you plenty, rolled you over the coals and singed the seat of your pants for four months. He's *still* at large. Bah! You babies in Washington are so weak-minded a child could steal your false teeth out of your mouth while you were asleep. Von Junzt vanishes! You spent the greater part of 1942 looking for the scoundrel and

he's not twenty-four hours in your hands when you do snap on the handcuffs and he's gone!"

"Sixth Columnist!" murmured Collins.

"Nuts!" cried Harrington. He abruptly put his own feet on his desk, folding his hands primly on his lap. "I'm fed up with this big boy's blatherings."

Farnsworth grumbled a little and then sat down.

"All right, all right, but I said we'll get him again and we will. I don't know how the slimy insect got away the last time. We had him behind steel bars, I tell you, locked up so securely a cockroach couldn't have got to him. Those special cells we've got in Washington are no sardine cans. They're Norwegian steel, welded and an inch thick. Remember that the door hadn't been forced. And there was no window. If he got out at all he must have walked through the door, locked or not."

"*Dissolved* through it, as it were, like mist," jeered Collins. He wiped some sweat from his brow and tilted his fedora further back on his head. "This case calls for Cotton Mather and some castor oil. *Not* the FBI."

Farnsworth lit a fresh cigar, refilled his wine glass and looked darkly around Harrington's little cubicle of an office.

"For all I know it may be witchcraft. I'm willing to entertain *any* theory. If I don't get my nippers on that hard skin within thirty days, they'll have the skin off my back in Washington. Mrs Farnsworth is *not* going to *like* that."

Collins threw a match at Harrington who was groping helplessly through his tattered vest. He lifted his hands in a gesture.

"I will admit you boys haven't had a snap job of it. Every time I think of Von Junzt a cold chill crawls down my back. The devil! Six major jobs of sabotage and not a clew as to how it was done, just signed cards in the mail. His signature, of course? You've checked."

"To a 'T,'" sighed Farnsworth.

The phone rang. Harrington put down his pipe, brushed his glass out of the way and hitched the phone receiver to his left ear. He listened a while and then let a sharp breath escape.

"Blast!" he said explosively and cursed fluently for five seconds.

Collins raised his eyes sleepily.

FARNSWORTH leaned over the desk, a look of impending doom on his moustached face.

The editor replaced the receiver, leaned back and braced him visibly.

"You're not going to like this," he began, looking at the FBI agent. "You're not going to like it at all. Our San Francisco Bureau just phoned. The Vulture airplane works were blown up this afternoon at one o'clock, an hour and a half ago. Twenty minutes after the land promontory on which it had rested had sunk beneath the Pacific. Von Junzt phoned the FBI headquarters in Washington and confessed he'd done it. Said there was more coming!" He paused and snapped over his inter-office phone button. "Gimme the press-room and send up a rewrite man!"

Farnsworth's face was purple. His cigar, sticking out of his mouth like a long pole trembled visibly. Then he sat down and collapsed in his chair. Collins looked at him pityingly. The reporter turned his head toward Harrington who was busily barking orders over the phone.

The editor finished what he was doing, poured himself a full glass of wine and drained it before saying anything. Then he shot a rapid glance at Farnsworth and grunted.

"You'll be heading out to Santa Fresna by midnight if I know your boss, Courtneigh. And you, Jimmy," he continued turning his attention to the reporter still lazing in his chair, "will go with him. We might as well get some use out of this government bloodhound. Farnsworth, you've been practically living at this office in your spare time for the last month. I'm not charging you rent, but I want you to see to it that Jimmy gets on the spot. He's going to write an eye-witness account and he'd better make it good."

Collins nodded sourly. "There will be the usual bonus, I suppose?" he inquired delicately, picking at his nose, while the FBI agent went through the mechanical motions of getting Washington on Harrington's wire.

"If you make this read like something written by a four-year-old child you're fired. Anything otherwise will get you a thousand-dollar bonus and a week's vacation without pay. Well?" he demanded as Farnsworth put the receiver back on its hook and stood up slowly.

"Bull's-eye, Sherlock," he groaned. "It's

the nine o'clock plane out of La Guardia airport. I could've taken a Navy plane from Floyd Bennett, but Courtneigh said no."

"Good," barked Harrington. "I'll book Jimmy on the same plane. Now get the hell out of here. I've enjoyed the chat, but I'm a working man which is more than I can say for either of you. Listen!" he cried as Collins shambled to his feet and joined the FBI man at the door. "If you take a drink between here and Frisco, I'll can you, shoot you and dock your widow the thousand-dollar bonus. Scram!"

Collins finished the rest of the bottle he'd filched from the tray on Harrington's desk on the way down in the elevator. He handed the empty to the girl operator as she slid the door open on the first floor and winked at her. She flushed and went a duller red as he patted her on the behind.

"There are times, Tommy," he remarked to Farnsworth, reflectively, "when I actually enjoy life."

The FBI man's face lengthened. "Which is more than I can say for myself. Von Junzt gets away and you clean up a neat bankroll in four months writing feature stories without sweating a pint. I make a salary a microbe would starve on and sweat blood. Every now and again they pin a medal on me and hand me some soothing syrup. Well, I can always pawn the medals after the war for cigarette money. Wonder how much I'll get for a Congressional?" he asked sadly, making an oblique reference to a medal presented to him several years before on the completion of a job which preserved the peace of the world for a year or so.

Collins put his foot outside the building entrance and immediately collided with a huge, fur-clad figure on its way in.

"Chimmy! Farny!" the bail of fur stepped back, stood arms akimbo and regarded the forlorn pair quissically.

"Oh, hello, Professor," they said in unison, swung him around nonchalantly and began walking down Fifth Avenue, arm in arm.

The fur ball, a Professor Heinrich Pfeugel had come to America in 1936 after making the bad mistake of writing the word "human" after the printed query "Race" on the questionnaire put in front of him by a member of the Gestapo. One of the world's leading anthropologists and experts on ballistics, they threw him out.

He left a magnificently equipped laboratory in Leipzig but he got cheaper beer and better cigars in the USA. He was happy in God's country. So was his daughter, Eva, tall, blown Aryan who had kept just two steps ahead of Collins until he had given up in disgust and married a blue-eyed and just as tall and Aryan Irish girl from Chrystie Street.

On the way to a corner bar, Farnsworth related his sad story.

Pfeugel lifted his beer, gazed at it fondly and downed it in one gulp. He accepted one of the FBI man's cigars, lit it and sighed.

"Yess," he began, "I know Von Junzt. A clavar man. He vas der Professor of Occult Arts in der Munich University. Dabbled a lot in witchcraft und such non-sens."

"**YEAH,**" grunted Collins. "I understand that in the New Germany any kind of quack has a legal standing."

"He vas a vary cruel man," continued the Professor. "I saw him take a Jew vunce ven he vas Wager's sub gauleiter in Munich und—vell, I saw idt anyway," he said, sighing again.

"I'm ready to believe the guy magicianed himself out of that cell," groaned Farnsworth.

"Bah!" snorted Pfeugel. "You sound like dot idiot Barton. If der case vas as simble as dot, you couldt ask Stephen to make a few passes mit his hands und ask a spiritd to tall you vere is Von Junzt."

"Barton!" shrieked Farnsworth and threw his arms around the big bulk excitedly. "If it *was* witchcraft, red, blue, black or orange magic, Barton would know it."

Collins got rid of his beer in a hurry and crossed himself.

"This morning," he said to the empty air before him, "I'd have sworn that two and two made four and that the only way of getting a precipitate out of strontium potassinate was to pour calcium chlorate in it. God rest my soul!"

It took the trio twenty minutes to get to Barton's place in the Village.

The Village, of course, is a daffy place. Most of its legends have long since ceased to bear repeating. Lovecraft immortalized it in one of his shorter fantasies and that is as far toward eternal flame as it will really ever get, but even today a lot of faded

glamor hangs around its sloping Parisian roofs and towers that look like bad imitations of the Campanile. The Bohemian inhabitants are still there and salons flourish as much as they did in the days when Mabel Dodge Luhan had her famous hang-out on lower Fifth Avenue near Washington square and Omnipotent Zoom or Boom or something invented the post-war admonition: "Do as thou wilt" and topped off the advice with the biggest series of orgies this side of Sodem and Gomorrah. The rents are higher now because they've fixed the leaking roofs and drains and installed plumbing. Consequently, only the better class of "artists" can afford to live in the Village proper. But it is still possible to starve in a garret and while the wash hanging on lines in the belt of old stables that girds the Village may be colorful, it's ragged. Bohemia lives and the egg on its vest is still there.

Stephen Barton's apartment was on the twentieth floor of one of the biggest apartment skyscrapers in the Village and served, of sheer necessity by a private elevator. This all led to expense but his father didn't invent the only aperient on the market guaranteed not to turn you inside out for nothing. The necessity is nothing more or less than a need for privacy. The Village and environs are used to all sorts of odd characters, but some of Barton's friends and the people they brought with them were too much, even for the wilder Bohemian element. Barton was a crackpot and dippy as a bedbug. Such temporary boarders—and there were usually a score or more—as invaded his castle and fed like leeches on a fat vein were even worse than he was. Most of them were discredited scientists, investigators of "psychic" phenomena cultists and even a sprinkling of quite ordinary people whom Barton kept on hand to serve as guinea pigs in his experiments. They had nothing to complain about as their main interest in life was booze.

Barton's liquor bill was New York's biggest.

The Professor stumbled out of the elevator first.

Wham! A big dark object flew out of a corner and smacked him on the schnozzle. He saw stars for a minute and clawed freely at the air, murmuring Teutonic curses at one of Stephen's tenants, a Madame Duvray, a medium of sorts and parts who had her eye on Stephen and her bats

at the same time. As Pfluegel wiped his streaming eyes a door down the corridor opened and a long slinky woman rolled sinuously up to the elevator door and crooned the winged horror down from the ledge where it had stuck, hissing piteously. She gave the trio a dirty look, stroked the cheesy head of the ghastly thing and slithered away. The door to her room closed with a sharp bang.

"Der *fledermaus*," began the Professor lamely, still wiping his eyes.

"Forget it," barked Farnsworth. "Say, where the hell is everybody?" He took the others' overcoats and piled them carelessly on a highly decorated table near the elevator door. "The place is usually alive with vermin on Tuesdays," he continued. He strode up to a large Chinese gong standing by a large window giving out on the south and kicked it savagely. Booming noises crashed out. A mangy cur, sleeping behind the gong gave a dolorous series of barks and fled precipitously down the corridor. Simultaneously there was a piercing shriek.

"In the name of Heaven and the Holy Golden Abacus of Kai Ling! God's Wounds I should ever see the day that more horrible noises pervaded these awful halls. Is it possible for a good sorcerer to pursue his maledictions in peace? Begone devils, ere I call down upon ye the wrath of eighty-six and a half forgotten gods!"

A SHORT clay pipe stuck itself out of one of the portals lining the hall and spouted a particularly nauseating cloud of brown vapor. The trio, startled, breathed easier. It was only Sandy MacGoovern, best warlock born of the Highlands before winding head replaced crags as their chief obstruction to the view. His short, four and a half foot length, crowned with a thatch of pure white bristle followed the rest of the pipe in the corridor.

As he caught sight of the Professor and his companions, a genial smile broke upon his enraged features.

"Ah, 'tis the brethren. And what is the good word, today, friends?"

"Hello, Sandy," said Collins, smiling. "Did we break up your communion with the sperrits?"

"'Tis nothing," he replied and emptied his pipe on the floor. "The slimy devils are cagey this afternoon. I plied them with fresh blood from Goldfarb's Medical Supplies, Inc. I offered them honey from the

crevices of a bee's proboscis. I even danced the sacred Fling but nary a one showed his stinking head." The merry eyes twinkled as the other smiled amusedly. MacGoovern was the only one of Barton's collection of freaks they liked.

"Und where iss Hiss Imperial Machesty?" demanded Pfluegel.

"Yeah," interrupted Farnsworth. "We came on a professional call."

The large head stuck closely to the spindly shoulders inclined toward the far end of the hall.

"Sure and the High Priest of this unholy temple is occupied with his congregation smelling out a couple of ghosts that arrived with a piece of the original underwear of Charlemagne."

"Didn't know they wore it in those days," snorted Collins.

"They did," solemnly asserted the sprite and sidled closer to Farnsworth. "And would your worship have an extra tenner he wouldn't miss? There are a few odds and ends of equipment—skulls, monkey tails, bat wings, a piece of the True Cross necessary to my great experiments—"

"Scram, you little phoney!" blared the FBI man. "Not another dime! Not a plugged shekel! I gave you five dollars the last time and what did you do with it? Bought a chastity belt supposed to have belonged to the Queen of Sheba. Bah, you rattlebrain! An imbecile could swindle you out of your soul in his sleep. Provided you had one, I mean."

"But monied one, I conjured up from that inert metal a vision of loveliness sublime. 'Twas not the Queen herself, I'll grant you, but one of her chambermaids, Li-Hme, and there is not her equal on Min-sky's boards!"

Pfluegel blew his nose. He raised a threatening hand. Abruptly the Scotch wizard took to his hells. He left a trail of tinkling laughter behind him.

They knew the Inner Sanctum of old. Barton had had the walls of six apartments on the twentieth floor removed and special partitions put up to conform to his ideas of a Temple of Science. The corridor through which the trio had entered was merely the outer boundary of one of the four sides of the queer arrangement of rooms. Beyond a great pair of bronze doors at the hall's end lay the immense circular council or "conjuring" room, as Pfluegel put it, disgustedly, surrounded on three

sides by living quarters functioning also as "preparation" or dressing rooms for the quick changes of costume demanded by most of Stephen's odd rites he insisted were merely scientific procedure.

At the time of their last visit the population of Barton's madhouse had numbered a full score, not to speak of assorted cats, dogs, bats, snakes, monkeys and other animals which made the atmosphere when not otherwise permeated, hideous with groans, wails, barks, screams and caterwaulings.

As they passed down the corridor to the great portal, Collins leading the way, a shocking burst of phrases billowed out from behind the mighty doors.

"*Magicum! Squadigum! Squidicum! Sudge!*"

"*I command a Smootch to jump out of this sludge!*"

"Schrechlekleit!" screamed Pflugel and jumped a foot in the air. Without further delay, Farnsworth pushed against the doors and they swung in.

The council chamber was bathed, as usual, with a violet radiance emanating from a series of weird-looking tubes set high in the ceilings and around the walls. Built in the form of an amphitheater by the ambitious Barton who had imagined the need for a cooperating audience of about a hundred, it was sparsely filled to the tune of six or seven people. Through the dim illumination, the visitors were able to make out the series of strange machinery which Barton called his ray and vibration generators occupying most of the cleared central space. Barton's tall and spare form occupied a raised dais nearly drowned in cushions in the exact center of the circle of machines. Around him, scattered haphazardly in the rising circular seats were "Doctor" Speshan of Persia and other parts orientales, Hamil Ali Sala, a sharp hawk-visaged Arab of unknown antecedents, Madame Elsa Buboise, late of the Comedie Paris and sections of the Surete Files, Moots Schroon, a hexer from Pennsylvania, his wife Hepzibah, a grotesque creature seemingly minus a neck or nose, Sadie Max, a shrewd gold-digger from Scranton and a few assorted electrical geniuses rescued from spending the rest of their lives as licensed electricians by Barton's bounty.

THE lights went on, replacing the soft glow and the crackling sparks with a cold, penetrating flood of white. Barton

paid no further attention to his experimenters. He shook off the white smock he was wearing and flinging it carelessly on what looked like an operating table, motioned the trio to proceed to the nearest exit, beyond which lay a private drinking and smoking room.

He waved aside apologies for breaking into his experiments, summoned a servant, ordered a round of Scotches and sat down in one of the overstuffed chairs surrounding a comfortable table in the middle of the room. Cigars, cigarettes and pipe tobacco were close to hand. Collins filled his pipe. The Professor and Farnsworth lit stogies. Stephen Barton, choosing a delicately scented cigarette, asked our business. He sat listening sympathetically then shook his head.

"Despite Professor Pflugel's opinions, I am no accultist quack, gentlemen," he began, "but a *scientist*, an investigator into vibrations into sounds, colors, smells. **THIS** Von Junzt," he waved a hand vaguely toward the West, "is by reputation a supernaturalist, a pure fraud of the worst type, using incantations and spells. I appreciate your difficulties but I am sure that Von Junzt's disappearance can be explained by simple scientific laws. It may be true that he escaped in some spectacular fashion, but lacking *my* knowledge and especially my machinery and experience with the scientific method, I do not believe he could have done anything out of the ordinary. You presume—O, I can see it in your eyes—" he giped, pausing, "that this scoundrelly spy is skipping from place to place via some as yet undiscovered and unknown space or plane." He brushed his cigarette in an ash-tray and laughed lightly. "This might be possible to such a man as I, for I have had some very definite and conclusive results from my experiments, but Von Junzt, no! It is impossible!"

Pflugel looked contemptuous. He was derogatory of both Farnsworth and Barton. When he heard the word "results" he puffed up like a balloon.

"Stephen," he said, "you are a presumptuous liar. For an educated man this is ridiculous. Idt iss even silly. I haff listened to you for years. Talk, talk, talk. Und not one ouns of sense in a vordt of idt! Cease, Stephen, ve muszt consider der question from der scientific viewpoint. My dear friends, ve are liffing in der twentieth century, nodt in medieval Prague!"

Barton waved his cigarette under the Professor's nose.

"You are a skeptic," he announced sadly, "and all skeptics must be shown the error of their ways. Eh, gentlemen?"

"Nonsens!" roared Pfluegel.

"There are worlds beyond worlds, Heinrich," said Stephen soothingly. His eyes were dreamy. "Look!" he emptied his tall drink into a large bowl. Rapidly he bit off the end of two matches and held one poised above the liquid-filled bowl. From their deep seats, Collins and Farnsworth watched expectantly.

A match end dropped abruptly. Instantly a series of waves began spreading. Barton moved his hand slightly. Another match end fell. The waves met and overlapped. Then he brought his hand to a position directly between the merging vibrations. He dropped a whole match this time. Instantly the two minor circles were blanked out. He said nothing until the upheaval in the bowl had completely subsided.

"Everything is *vibration*. One basic vibration underlying the cosmos. Somewhere there must be room for another, maybe more."

"Vere?" cried Pfluegel excitedly. "Vere iss somevere? Can two objectds ogguby der same space at der same time?"

"They could if their basic rates o vibration were different." Barton pointed to the bowl, "Two did, Heinrich. I blanked them out with a third, superior vibration. That's the purpose of this house of mine, noises, colors, smells, vibrations of all kinds are my stock in trade. With them I batter at the walls of unseen universes."

"Too bad you can't batter down a few of my difficulties," grumbled Farnsworth.

"When are you leaving for San Francisco?" asked Barton reflectively.

When the FBI man told him, the experimenter asked everyone to stay for dinner. Collins winced at the memory of past dinners in that high-flung cafeteria but accepted anyway, figuring he'd have plenty of time to pack his toothbrush.

Later, at dinner he thought he must have been crazy. Barton made a habit of allowing his people to indulge their little whims. At the table there appeared not only twenty guests but also their pets. Dogs crept in and between legs and several cats drove the Professor slightly wild by chewing on his shoelaces. Collins was beginning to enjoy the soup when one of Madame Bu-

boise's snakes started slithering up his leg. He lost interest in the food immediately.

ANOTHER of their ghastly habits was the bland assumption that their psychic familiars were present at the festive board, joining in the conversation and grim merriment. Madame Duvray, sitting to Farnsworth's right, persisted in carrying on a decidedly one-sided conversation with an Indian spirit named variously Bull-of-the-Woods and Perfume-That-Flies-On-the-Wind. Sadie Max, the Scranton wench was playing coyly with one of the snakes which was jabbing viciously at a bat diving over the Professor's soup like a Stuka, fishing tender morsels at every swoop. Hepzibah Schroon who buttressed Pfluegel from the other side fed two snakes who were engaged in crushing the life out of a small kitten whose tail sloshed around in the soup tur en, spattering slimy green drops.

"I'm not promising anything," said Barton, finishing his coffee and rising and taking Farnsworth by the arm, "but we may just get the teeniest weeniest results this evening." He swung his companion toward the doors of the council chamber. "We're working mainly in the dark, remember. Anything might happen. Time might slip sidewise. Nero might step into our world playing jazz on his lyre. We might even meet up with an intelligent germ. Look what we got this afternoon." He slipped a finger into the pocket of his smoking jacket and extracted a small cube of metal, pressing it into Farnsworth's hand. The FBI men shuddered. Under the slight pressure of his fingers the strange object seemed to crawl.

"What is it?" he asked.

"You tell me," snapped Barton, flinging open the doors. He let go of Farnsworth's arms, mounted the central dais, resumed his smock and held up his hands for silence to the other crowding through the portal.

"You will all observe the usual proprieties, please. No smoking, no talking except by the properly authorized persons. Ah, Madame Duvray, as you well know animals are not allowed in here. Get rid of that bat."

Collins looked around him cautiously and noticed uncomfortably that Sadie Max was seated behind him. He shuddered, knowing the woman was unpredictable.

Pfluegel grunted.

"All dots missing is a virchen, Stephen. Maybe ve should haff invited Eva."

"Never use virgins," replied the experimenter. "The spirits hate 'em."

"Achoo!" sneezed Pfeugel. He drew out a handkerchief and wiped his nose, glared fiercely at the several people who stared at him threateningly.

"Quiet there, Professor," warned Barton. "OK, Moots, turn on the reproducers one at a time."

Collins' hair was standing on end as Moots pressed a button on an improvised control board set on legs near his seat.

"Boogiewoogie! Boogiewoogie! Beat me Daddy, Eight to the Bar! Rah, rah, rah!" A torrent of babbling cut loose from an amplifier hidden behind baffle boards in the walls and the show was on.

The lights flickered, at first slowly, then faster and faster. Sparks shot blindingly from whirring machines in front of Barton.

Some of the celebrants were groaning softly, others bleating in short, interrupted bursts. Another phonograph wailed on:

"Shizzy, wizzy, lat, bat me! Hoji, poji, si, si *keeeeeeeeeeeee!*"

"Aunt Mary! OOOoooooo, Aunt Maryyyyyyyyy!" behind Collins a squeaky voice began piping. "Aunt Mary!" it piped again, "wow, auntie, marygantie! *Wow*, jigama-jantie!"

Woosch! Something smally, furry and winged swooped by Farnsworth and lost itself on the other side of the room. One of Duvray's bats was loose. Farnsworth swallowed audibly.

"Qviet!" whispered Pfeugel. "Idts only der *fledermaus!*"

Now Barton's voice came high and tinkling from the depths below. He seemed to be waving a wand tipped with a tiny red flashbulb at one end, mouthing some nonsense or other as he manipulated the stick. As the bulb flashed on a tremendous surge of power from beneath nearly pushed Collins out of his seat.

"Wroooooooomm! WROOOOOOMM! Wroooooo! WROOOOOOMM!"

"Qviet! Idts only der centrifuge!" came the Professor's voice hoarsely.

"What centrifuge?" screamed Collins, holding on to his seat as he began feeling slightly.

"Der *rotating* vun," cried Pfeugel above

the din. "Der whole room iss balanced on roller bearings!"

Someone groaned loudly as if in pain.

BY NOW the procedure had taken on a kind of rhythm. The various phonograph reproducers beginning in low tones were working themselves up to a frenzy, seeking passionately to join forces with the wails and shrieks that rose palpably, like a cloud, from the celebrants. The only living things out of tune in that chamber were the trio and the bat. It stumbled blindly from side to side, skidding off the rotating walls, crashing audibly into glass chimes and once or twice upset some small bottles of chemicals.

"Quiet!" hissed Sadie Max to no one in particular. Collins put his hand up behind him and caressed thin air. An instant later he was caressing a short length of snake that fell into his lap, crawled under his belt and sought the warmth of his legs. He sat rigidly, not daring to move. For all he knew it might be a *fer de lance*.

The thunder below rose alarmingly.

A thin reedy wail crawled out of the confusion of noises. "We begin *now*," it said. "We begin to open the door to Outside." Abruptly the tone changed and sank to an apologetic sob. "We seek freedom, *release*, power..."

The reproducers shrieked to a new crescendo. Another one broke in stridently.

"A wiggon is better than wwwoose. The weese are three and even four. Must then the wiggon bloose?"

"Rhythm!" cackled a female voice, "Shake, people shake! Time's awastin'! Shake, shake, *shake!*"

Sirens cut in.

"Achoo!" sneezed Pfeugel.

Crescendos rose deafeningly. The wails, groans and roars increased to the point of insupportability.

Collins held his breath. His teeth chattered. Chills shot up and down his spine and down his legs. They shook the snake loose. It fell to the floor hissing angrily.

"ACHOOOOO!"

Simultaneously with the Professor's mighty sneeze, the noises ceased, stopped instantly as if by some outside agency. There were a few seconds of shocked surprise.

"Damn!" screamed Barton, cursing from the dais.

Then a storm broke loose.

It began somewhere over Pfluegel's head, travelling in widening spirals until it crashed into the circular walls and started travelling in again. Compared to this the previous uproar was a mere breath in a gale of wind. Voices hurled themselves from out of nothing and shouted. They sang, they wailed, they snorted and bawled. It sounded like the birth of chaos.

A cold wind rippled through the room. Then the flickering lights went out altogether, there was a tremendous shattering crash followed immediately by total silence.

"We're getting sick of this," said a new voice quietly. It seemed to come from all directions at once. Its timbre was distinct, level and decidedly unknown as though a snake or giraffe had been granted the power of speech. A whiff of perfume, heaving loaded with musk floated through the room.

"*We're getting bored with it,*" continued the voice. "Why can't you leave us alone. We're people, too, y'know. We like peace and quiet. But it's trouble, trouble, trouble all the time. Day in, day out you creatures from the other side putting your two cents in. What d'ye *want, anyway?*" Then there was a smothered noise like a suppressed yawn. "It's an ordered universe, folks. We're here, you're there. Why not live and let live? Think of all the upsets you things have been causing for centuries with your pokings and probings. Pushing your big noses where they're not wanted. Why we've got a colony of you creatures over here as big as a city. Don't take it as an insult, folks, *but you just don't smell right!* We're incompatible, see? Let's get this straight. Leave us alone and we'll leave you alone."

Perspiration ran down Farnsworth's forehead in streams. He absently wrung out his handkerchief.

"Umpf, wait a minute, folks," said the voice and suddenly a sound of commotion and struggling poured out of the emptiness. "One of your kind came over here a couple of years ago. He's been back and forth a lot of times since. Goes by a funny name I can't even spell. He's whackier than the usual run of you things. Wants us to drop our organized anarchy and go back to some form of dictatorial absolutism. The dope's already got your colony in an uproar. Well, take him back. We don't want him. He's poison."

"What the hell is all this?" roared Barton. Then a clap of thunder hurled him into his operating table. A terrible tornado tore out from the center of the room and nearly pulled his clothes off. Bits of cloth whirled about. From beneath could be heard the sound of the centrifuge whirling to a stop.

The lights went on.

The FBI man nearly split his eyelids as he caught sight of what was hanging, naked by the feet from nothing at all in the center of the room, just a little beyond Barton's head.

"Look out!" he yelled and Barton ducked. Writhing and mumbling curses the body dropped to the floor, its fall broken neatly by the pile of cushions surrounding Barton's sais.

"Von Junzt!" Farnsworth rose to his feet abruptly and dove over the ring of seats. Triumphantly bellowing, Professor Pfluegel followed, describing graceful arc as he jumped straight into the air and came crashing down on the unprotected body of the Nazi spy. Within thirty seconds they had him not merely subdued but tightly bound with some ornamental rope pulls hanging from the ceiling.

"Ha!" bellowed Farnsworth. "The magician! Well, maybe he could get through steel, but not *cold iron.*" He drew back one huge paw, and clipped the frantically cursing spy on the button, then he leaped for the nearest wall, plucked an old ornamental sword of wrought iron from its moorings and wrapped it nonchalantly around Von Junzt's wrists.

COLLINS shot a wide-eyed glance at the scene below. Then rising, he leaped over the balustrade and headed for the open bronze doors.

"What a scoop!" he yelled. "Von Junzt and a thousand bucks too!"

"Jimmy!"

"Chimmy!"

Collins bowled over Sandy MacGoovern as he sped out the door. The last sound he heard in that house was Sadie Max's voice. She was standing in her seat holding a snake by the tail.

"Aunt Mary!" she crooned to it. "Aunt Maryyyyyyyyyyyyy!"

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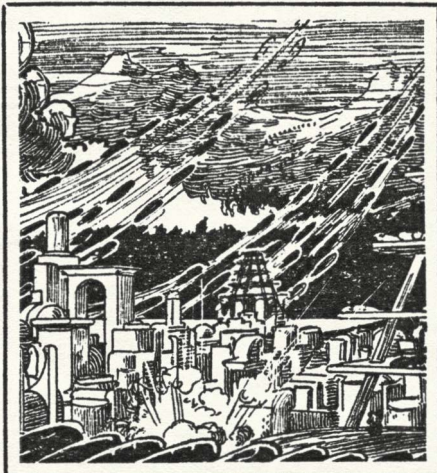
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Personally, We're a Bit Sceptical, But

Arthur Lambert

Maintains That This Is a Straightforward Account of How One
Hotchkiss Flubb Came Forth With

THE PERFECT INCINERATOR

IT WOULD never have happened if it hadn't been for the fact that Hotchkiss Flubb lived in one of those old-fashioned boarding-houses which seem to have been designed at least one hundred years ago.

Some people called him a dope, but he wasn't. Some called him a jerk. He wasn't a jerk, either. He was a goon. But first-class. Yes, indeed. He was a gadgeteer. That proves it.

Anyhow, the whole thing started because the landlady picked a Saturday morning to burn the garbage. Hotchkiss liked to sleep late Saturday morning. He liked to sleep late every morning, but he slept extra late on Saturday, thus saving the price of breakfast and lunch, both.

The incinerator, an inefficient contraption as old as the house, was located directly beneath our hero's window, and on this particular morning it was a particularly vile mess of garbage the landlady had elected to burn.

The thick smoke crept up the side of the house and eased itself over the window-sill. E. Flubb gagged, awakened, and rushed to the window—to stick his head out right into a particularly nauseous little cloud of the stuff.

When he came to, he was filled with a firm desire to bash someone on the head with a blunt instrument. Fortunately, this atavistic intention soon gave way to something more constructive. Not only constructive, but gadgety. He would invent a way to abolish smoke from incinerators for all time!

Hotchkiss Flubb and Napoleon Bonaparte had one thing in common. They liked to pace back and forth when in deep thought. Napoleon not only liked to, but did. But Napoleon didn't have feet like Hotchkiss.

Flubb stomped around his room for several minutes, thinking of how nice it would

be not to have any vile, stinking smoke to bother him any more. Along about stomp 6 7-8, the law of averages caught up with him, and his port gunboat became entangled with a dangling electric cord, and his precious electric toaster smashed to the floor and subsided after a couple of piteous clinks.

Our hero was grief-stricken. It was a most expensive toaster, and he had spent long hours adding refinements of his own. Whenever a piece of toast was done, it would pop up five feet into the air, break out a parachute and an American flag, and come floating gently down, playing the Star Spangled Banner, finally landing on his plate, all buttered and spread with marmalade.

But Hotchkiss Flubb was made of stern stuff. In a few minutes he had the wreck pounded back into a rough approximation of its former glory. Then a peculiar thing happened.

He decided to test it. Besides, he was hungry. So he slapped in a couple of slices of bread and waited.

And waited.

After twenty minutes, even the enormous patience of a gadgeteer will give out. He opened the toaster. Tsk! Not a trace of red glowed in the coils. Hmmm—no toast either. No bread, no crumbs, no smell. Nothing.

The mind of the gadgeteer began to wonder, and he thrust some more bread in among the awry coils. Click! On went the toaster. Click! Off again. The result was the same as before—the bread was gone. He tried it again. And again, until the whole loaf had disappeared.

Click! No, it wasn't the toaster; Hotchkiss Flubb had spawned another idea. Here was the solution to his problem!

"Aha!" said Flubb, addressing a pale green, bookend elephant with a broken trunk. "Aha! Double Eureka with marsh-

mallow on top! Here, most certainly, is a smokeless, fireless, ashless incinerator." He arose and placed a fond hand on the machine, staring down at its warped and twisted coils. "And to think that I, Hotchkiss Flubb, have invented it!" He thrust out his chest.

However, Flubb was not all dreamer. He sweated all day in junkyards extracting the things he would need from the little greasy mountains. Miraculously, he managed to sneak his cumbersome, clanking booty up to his room without being caught by the landlady.

It was past midnight when he straightened up with a creak from his labors. Before him stood a rusty, crummy, but amazingly accurate and considerably larger replica of the battered toaster.

He tip-toed down the back way, and returned bearing the offending garbage can. He dumped the contents into the big machine and plugged in the cord. Nothing happened. He pulled out the cord and looked in. A pair of immaculate tin cans greeted his sight. Well, that didn't matter. The important thing was that the garbage was completely gone.

Flubb was elated. He was like a father with his kid's new electric train. All through the wee, small hours, he stole stealthily around the neighborhood, pilfering all the garbage he could get his hands on and taking back the spotless containers.

Came the dawn, and he relaxed in bed with a tired sigh, feeling a little like Santa Claus, even if he smelt differently. Ahhhh. Just think, Flubb, you can sell this thing to a big manufacturer, get royalties too. In a month or two, the Flubb Electro-Incinerator will be selling all over the country. Ahhh. Soon I shall be a millionaire and have lots of nice money. Why, snzznz . . . (A large, round snore rose from the bed and bumped about the walls, seeking an outlet. . . .)

And early Monday morning, Hotchkiss Flubb sat in the outer waiting room of the offices of J. Appleby van Spronk. While he was cooling his heels with most un gadgeteer-like impatience, a couple of individuals in a faraway (yet oh-so-near!) location, were discussing a matter of extreme importance.

The people of Gnertfwb shared the small planet of Glop with the neighboring nation of Mnorlglp. Just at the moment, Gori and Gulk of Gnertfwb were very much

concerned over some mighty queer happenings.

Their nation was being attacked for no apparent reason. This sudden onslaught had begun the evening before with the arrival of a huge projectile just outside the walls of the capital. A missile fifteen feet square had come Glopward out of thin air.

A report from their ambassador in Mnorlglp, inquiring if Gnertfwb were starting hostilities, completely upset the theory that Mnorlglp had made a treacherous attack on Gnertfwb. Both attacks were made with the same type projectile, and, stranger still, both had failed to explode.

RUMORS began circulating that these objects were ships from an unexplored part of the planet, crammed full of horrible creatures who had designs on both countries. This did not ease the tension appreciably.

And so these two, last holders of public confidence, met to decide on a plan of action. Even as the meeting was held, strange, alien-shaped objects were appearing all over the city from nowhere, and worse than the first ones, they stank abominably.

"It must be the Mnorlglpians," said Gori, "who else is there to attack us?"

"Yes, they are the only other nation on the planet," admitted Gulk, "but how in Glop could they slide fifteen foot projectiles at us without us seeing them?"

"Well," said Gori, "I don't know how they do it, but we've got to do something back. It's WAR!, Gulk. We—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of an elderly Gnertfwbian, name of Blarg, the nation's chief scientist. "Cheerio, chums," he greeted, "the mystery is solved."

"Yes? How are those blankety-blank Mnorlglpians doing it?" asked Gori.

"No, son. It is not the people of the other nation. The invader is not even of Glop!"

"Not—?" goggled Gori.

"Glop?" goggled Gulk.

"Exactly," smiled Blarg. "Not Glop."

"Well, I'll be a sossisnd," said Gori and Gulk together.

"Gentlemen," continued Blarg, "the nation that is hurling these monstrous projectiles at us, is not of this world, nor of this universe. The invader is hurling his bombs from the third dimension to us of the second, by means of some tremendous electrical machine. And gentlemen . . ."

here his voice sank to a harsh whisper, "these bombs are not explosives, or incendiaries, or gas. They are nothing more nor less than huge gobs of rotten garbage!"

"What?" gasped Gulk. "Garbage! Mighty Glop, our beautiful planet—used as a dump! This cannot be tolerated!"

"And it shall not," said Blarg, quietly. "I have perfected a machine that generates a repelling field, and which will cause their machine to reverse its action. And I shall put it into action within the hour! We shall not only be free of future bombardment, but will get rid of all the garbage already here!"

After waiting the whole forenoon, Hotchkiss Flubb had finally attained first place in the line waiting in the inner waiting room, only helplessly to observe J. Appleby van Spronk brush past on his way to lunch. The secretary said he'd be back in an hour, so they might as well make themselves comfortable.

Luckily, Flubb had brought his lunch in a paper bag, so he munched his artichoke sandwiches slowly and tossed the remains into his machine. He had torn a hole in the wrapping paper hours previously, and stuffed some garbage from a huge sack he had brought with him for demonstration purposes, and just to keep assuring himself that it worked as well on batteries as on house current.

When van Spronk returned an hour and forty minutes later, he motioned Flubb into the office with him.

His heart beating wildly, our hero rose

and tenderly carried his gadget over to the Great Man's desk, where he unwrapped it.

Van Spronk wrinkled his nose at the now empty garbage sack, and scowled at the machine. "What's this?" he barked.

"An insiss-siss-siss-cinerator," stuttered Flubb. "You see, sir," he hurried on, regaining his composure, "my machine is the perfect incinerator. You just put garbage in here, turn this switch, and it's gone. No smoke, no ashes, no nothing."

"Hmmp!" snorted van Spronk. "Another crackpot inventor! Take that fool machine, and that stinking garbage, and get out of here!"

"But sir," Flubb insisted desperately, "it really works. It'll only take a minute to show you. Look." He reached into the sack and pulled out a moldy head of cabbage.

J. Appleby van Spronk held his nose.

Flubb popped the cabbage into the machine and flipped the switch.

A certain party, name of Blarg, also flipped a switch.

Van Spronk's terrified secretary tried to climb into the filing cabinet between "Frozen Assets" and "Fumble & Co." as the head of Hotchkiss Flubb poked itself out of the immense mound of smelly garbage that suddenly occupied the office.

The head, half a grapefruit skin cocked rakishly over one eye, looked around bewilderedly. From somewhere in the interior of the pile, came a muffled bellow. Directly in front of him, Flubb spied the door.

He used it.

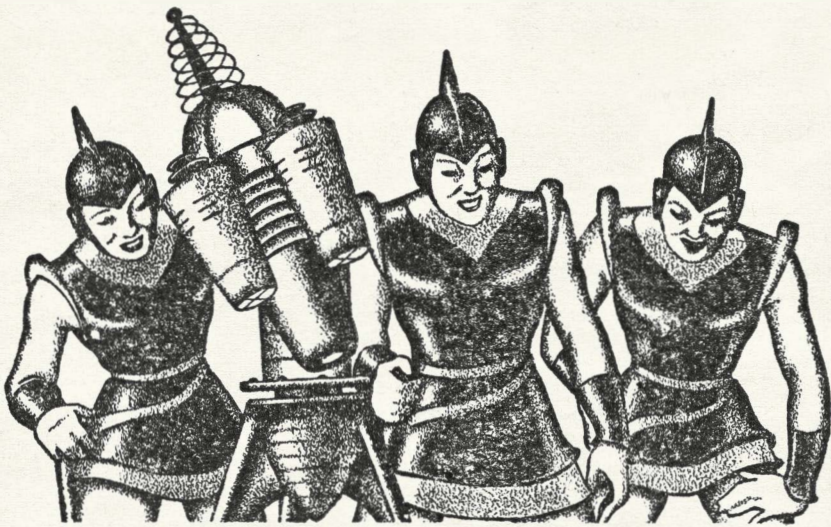
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Recently your editor received some phonograph discs from Walt Dougherty and the Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Association, telling of Stf Fan #1, Forrest J. Ackerman's induction into the nation's armed forces.

Forry told us of how, the day he was inducted, he was happy to find several old issues of SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY and FUTURE among the piles of popular magazines at a nearby USO station. (Incidentally, we hope, along with Forry, that the title of one of the tales he read "They Never Come Back" isn't prophetic!) Dave Kyle, another fan in service, has also mentioned to us the joy with which he saw Stf and Fantasy magazines at USO centers.

YOU, dear reader, can do a lot for lovers of fine Fantasy and Stf tales, who are now fighting for everything Science Fiction stands for, by sending YOUR copies of this and other Science-Fiction magazines to USO stations. It's a little thing that will mean more than words can tell.

THE EDITOR



THE DELIVERERS

By Richard Morrison

RIMBAUD'S first request when I arrived was to write out this account before he died; I think he's just lying there, waiting for me to finish before letting himself go. He always did have remarkable control over his physical faculties.

If this seems a bit hard-boiled to you, please bear in mind that I am trying to keep my mind on writing this, and keep that lump in my throat from strangling me. Henri Rimbaud is the kind of a guy that makes me realize humanity is worth saving after all.

It began fifteen years ago, when Rimbaud first became interested in the idea of worlds (or universes) occupying the same space as we do but separated from us by vibration keys. That isn't very clear, but perhaps this will help: Consider the basic rate of vibration underlying all matter in this universe of ours as in a given key, like a key in music. Consider other matter, occupying the identical space, as in a different key.

A similar range of notes, but at different pitches.

Rimbaud spent five years before he decided that this was more than just theory—then ten years in trying to find some way of proving it. His method was to make a door to one of these other universes.

But, unfortunately, science and research doesn't exist in vacuo, as Rimbaud puts it. Things that happen outside the lab or the study room affect it plenty. Rimbaud lived in France during these years and saw his country delivered into the hands of Nazi barbarians by generals whose fear of a great victory was their moving force, who were willing to give Hitler everything, free, rather than risk a decisive battle, chance the downfall of the Reich and the rise of their hated democracy in Germany.

France lay crushed, betrayed by its generals and statesmen the night Rimbaud found the door to another universe and the Rulos. I can never forget that night, never forget the

first sight of these beings from across the vibration barrier. They were men—some variety of men at least. Impressive, huge beings—their skins green in hue. Intelligence and, what I can only call human sympathy, was apparent in their faces and their eyes.

I would say that they were as far ahead of man's development here as we are in advance of the Neanderthal man.

We felt that superiority as they faced us in the doorway of Rimbaud's machine and their thoughts tingled in our minds. It was like hearing clear, bell-like tones, yet, even as you heard, realizing that there was no sound producing them. We held a wordless conversation with them for hours, telling them of our world, and of the titanic struggle between those who would continue humanity's upward advance, and those who, for their own selfish profit, were eager to destroy our civilization and reduce the human race to slavery.

We wondered if the Rulos would understand.

They told us that they, in centuries past, had come through just such a struggle, said that this was a part of the development of any race of beings like us. And they offered to aid us in our fight.

How can I describe the demonstration of power that the Rulos gave that night? The Nazis tried to laugh it off as a Commando raid, described it as a feeble excursion which cost the enemy dearly and attained no objectives. But Rimbaud and I saw it. . . .

We saw three of the titans, armed with weapons deadly beyond describing, their bodies used as gliders, swooping down upon the city, pouring deadly fire into the frantic Ger-

man troops. Now and then a searchlight would play upon their faces, faces hard and avenging, yet, even so, compassionate for the poor, deluded fools they were destroying—a compassion which could never become sentimentality and weakness toward a merciless foe.

The raid did not take long. It was over in a matter of minutes. No correspondents saw it—or, if they did, their mouths were quickly shut. A Commando raid—nothing more.

And that, the Rulos told us (that was the sound that seemed to tinkle in our minds whenever they referred to themselves as a people), was but a sample of what they could do. They would return in force, if Rimbaud were willing, and help us crush the Nazi menace utterly and forever.

And, as the three otherworld beings re-entered the door to their world I felt an exhilaration such as no man has known before. I felt as if a titan had lifted me to the pinnacle of the cosmos so that I might behold the panorama of eternity around me.

As the last of the beings entered the door, and turned to bid Rimbaud farewell, I saw him pause a moment as the doctor's brow furrowed with intense thought. For a full minute the two stood thus.

An instant—then they were gone.

And Rimbaud, tears running down his face, reached forward and shattered the tubes of his machine with his fist, unconscious of the glass which cut his hand!

I stood there, my heart stopped, my mind racing madly in endless circles, too stunned for speech. Then he came over to me, pushed me gently into the armchair.

"They understand," he said quiet-

MESSENGER TO ★ ★ ★ ★

INFINITY

By J. Harvey
Haggard

The Task of Tau spread over many worlds and across the span of unguessable years

A GLEAMING binary swung in the blue sky, sending a moist warmth across the swaying fern-frowths of the fourteenth Planet of Aligena. Feathered creatures of bright colors flashed through the underbrush and made noises there. A figure came stalking down through the shaded clearings, and small scaly bodies scurried out of sight, leaving ungainly tracks scrawled in the swamp mud.

Tau the metal man, a mechanical half-sentient messenger from the far distant past, strode impassively along, not heeding the smaller creatures of the jungle. He had sighted the tiny habitable world from the distant depths of an outer galaxy, and had moored his space-ship in a clearing that was not distant.

He halted his berylite six-foot body in a leafy glade and let the wind play about his cold outer surface. The inscrutable, lens-cased orbs in his head peered about, taking in the scene with photographic detail.

"Life! This is life!" he thought to himself. "This is the life the Master said I would find some day. Now I know what to do."

Though his memories were of a distant past, of a remote planet, and of the Master whose atoms might lie even now in the etheric dust, Tau remembered with perfect clarity. He could recall the aged countenance of the Master, the broad forehead, the jutting chin, and the determined undertone of his deep voice.

"Men may die in the convulsions which will presently engulf the universe," the Master had said, "but their deeds live after them. You shall be my deed, Tau. And you must live as the universe trembles in its agony of collision with another universe. All mankind must die, but you shall live through it."

And Kendall Smith's face had lighted inwardly as though from some deep inspiration. Tau the metal man, nestled in the cradling bracework in which his shape had

taken form, had said nothing in reply, but in the neuro-chemical mechanisms of his brain the words had been imprinted forever.

"You're just a robot!" the Master had said, "with responses and reactions that are the involuntary activations of metal and chemical-change impulse, yet I believe that some day in the aeons which will pass, you will learn to reason for yourself to some extent, and perhaps understand the germs of life into the far distant future."

And now Tau the metal man, standing in the mire of that world of the future the Master had talked about, wondered at the mystery which was called Life, and doubted if he clearly understood what the man had meant. One thing he knew certainly, that his metallic body was created to bridge the epoch which yawned between the life-lines of the past and those of the future. Old Kendall Smith, stalking back and forth in his laboratory, had explained as much, and Tau had never forgotten.

"Our life-line is narrowing, the earth is dying," the Master had explained. "That one-in-a-million chance of opportune conditions in which life may exist is vanishing. I doubt if the circumstances can be duplicated in the entire cosmos. But someday, after the universes have collided, they must return again. It is not within the powers of man to bridge the gap of space and time, but you, Tau the robot, swinging in the non-conducting realms of the vacuum of space, will be next to eternal."

Tau had learned the secrets of extracting radiant energy from the atom, had become adept in applying the forces to the mechanisms that propelled the space-ship and supplied motivation for his own metal body. Many other secrets the Master had taught him in the laboratories, and he had come to know the uses of the scientific paraphernalia that were sealed in the inner heart of the space-craft. When the occasion came for Tau to use the equipment,

Kendall Smith had said, he would understand the true nature constituting life.

So Tau groped through the mires of a strange world, into which he had been commanded to carry man's life-seed, and for him the Master was not a dissipated husk long since scattered to the cosmos in a distant past, but a real and living entity, guiding each of his movements in a meditated fashion. Time and space were merely chasms in Tau's consciousness, and a dominating purpose drove him onward.

THE binary descended. Night fell. Glittering shards of the stars pierced the black firmament. Night creatures let out occasional shrieks and snarls. Once a six-legged catlike creature, half as tall as the metal man, was attracted by Tau's movements, and sprang upon him. Tau's responses were mechanical, and he knew no such thing as fear. He simply ripped the creature apart with the tremendous strength that surged in his metal arms.

Later that night he returned to the spaceship. As he approached the gleaming ovoid a circular door opened. Crossing its threshold, he passed into the interior, distorted by intricate mechanisms, and the aperture closed behind him.

Slowly Tau walked to the center of the room, his body reflected in gleaming surfaces of berylite stanchions and sheathings. In the center of the whorled contrivances a row of ingenious troughs lay exposed. Each of these troughs was centered by a molding that had the perfect outline of a man, empty in the crystalline interior.

All that night iridescent gleamings crawled along the monstrous glassite tubes, illuminating the busy robot with an eerie splendor. Miniature lightning shot and sparkled from insulated spheres high in the nose of the craft. Pulsating, sluggish liquids gave off radiant colors and seeped through tortuous channels along the tubes of glassite. The central troughs became opaque, and formed a webwork now into which the throbbing aqueous masses were assembling. A chill current of the outer atmosphere was forced by rotating blades along a channel that whirled in a maelstrom around the central apparatus.

Tau worked swiftly, but days fled by as he watched the quiescent gauges and indicators, lengthened into months. Blinding storms raged unheeded on the exterior

of the ovoid craft. Winter came and fled.

At last David and his tribe came to life, all molded from a magnificent scale. During those long months of creation, Tau had imprinted knowledge and learning upon the brains of the dormant bodies. Each awoke with a full knowledge of what had transpired on the dying plant of earth, and each knew that a strange newborn world awaited them. The largest and most magnificent man was named David. The Master had been careful in instructing Tau about that. Kendall Smith had never had a son. And this synthetic offspring in a distant life-line of the cosmos would be almost like a son for him.

All of Tau's knowledges were conveyed to David and his followers, and he led them into the unknown dangers of the pristine jungled planet, guarding them from the ferocious animals while they learned the edible fruits from the poisonous ones. Gradually David's men came to recognize the dangers and constructed crude weapons for their own defense.

Another winter descended upon the new world. Food had been stored in the big compartment of the space vessel. Furs of slain animals had been cured to provide clothing and warmth.

SPRING thaws came and Tau led them again into the jungle, but now David was big and strong and wary, quite able to defend himself against the dangers of the forest, and Tau's presence was hardly needed, though he always hovered near with the semblance of a strange guardian angel of metal.

Five men and five women had been given life by Tau's instruments, and it was inevitable that a gradual pairing off would take place. Myri, a model of womanly perfection, had grown to adore the handsome leader of the tribe, and Tau was one of the first to notice signs of fecundity.

A terrific storm lashed the planet. Giant trees groaned and split across the trunks. The raging downpour built up into outer floods that raged down the lowlands in mighty rivers, sweeping everything in its path to destruction. Of all this Tau was oblivious. The fury of the tempest was deadened by the berylite walls of the spaceship, and was not as loud as the shrill cry of the new-born babe.

Thunder boomed outside. Lightning forked across the rent heavens, sending

flickering flashes of illumination through the beating sheets of rain that poured across the glassite sheathing above the neglected control mechanisms. David the second was born, and for a time was cuddled against the breast of the metal man, whose terribly strong arms held him as lightly and delicately as could a bed of thistle down. The imperturbable orbs of immobile transparency gazed downward, and suddenly Tau the metal man staggered.

David took the child with a startled cry and stood eying the tottering robot. Tau's consciousness was centered upon his dragging limbs and for a moment his mentality flickered as though it were gone, then returned. He saw that his metallic body was dark and stained with an odd encrustation, and he turned and made his way to the cubicle in which he had sat while an aeon of time slipped away in the depths of interplanetary space. There he had watched universes in turmoil, and there he had seen the life-line of one aeon merge with that of another.

THERE was one hooded mechanism at which he always sat, and when he was just so, the mind of the Master would speak from down the ages, and the image of Kendall Smith arose, as it had always done, in his mind. He thought he visualized the Master now, out of the dim consciousness of the past. Tall and arresting

with the vigorous personality of a dynamic intelligence, the keen grey eyes peered at him again, as they had done in the distant past.

"You, Tau, are just a man of metal," the Master was saying, "and yet I've a feeling that part of myself is implanted within you, just as part of my mind is implanted into the mechanisms of your consciousness. As a thing of metal, floating in a non-conducting void, you are something that is almost eternal. Yet if you succeed in finding a habitable world, such as the earth has been in the past, the atmosphere of that planet will suffuse about you, and in the triumph of my wishes will lie your downfall. Oxides of the surrounding air will cause your gradual deterioration, and the only one who could help you will be nothing more than motes of cosmic dust in the unpredictable corners of the surrounding universe."

Unseen by David or any of the others, Tau slipped to the door and down a corridorway. Through an aperture he could glimpse the inner room where Myri lay, nursing the infant at her breast. For just an instant he paused, for the Master had never seemed closer than in that single moment.

Turning finally, the metal man walked impassionately through the doorway and vanished into the driving blasts of the lashing storm.

The Deliverers

(Continued From Page 145)

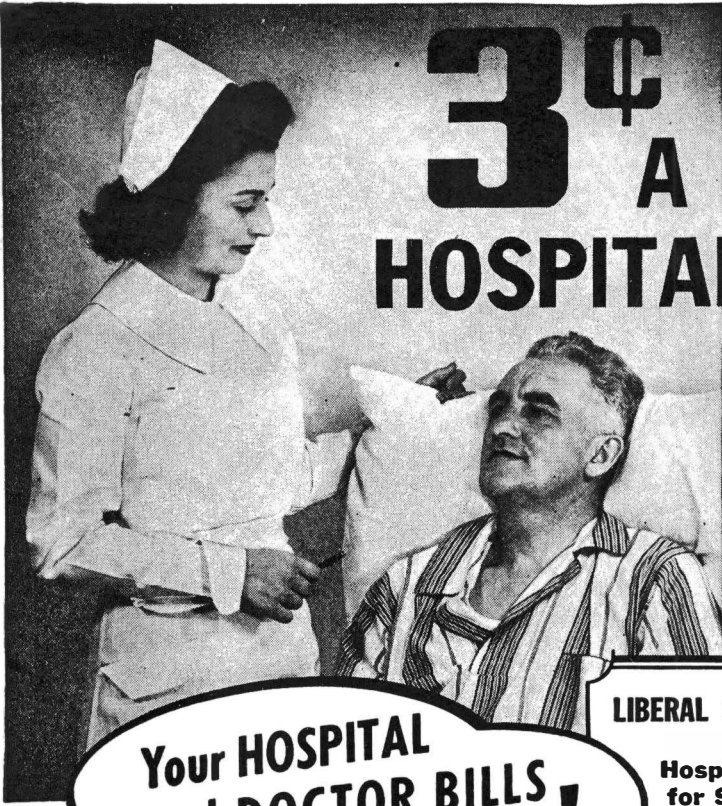
ly. "They know. For a moment, mon cher, I was exhilarated even as you, over the prospect of seeing France and the world saved from the Nazi beast. And they would have made no strings to the offer—no obligations upon our part. Deceit and ulterior motives are not in them.

"But we cannot afford to let ourselves be delivered by another race, Larry. It would not solve our problems; it would not teach us those things which can only be learned through our own striving.

"The Rulos offered us a miracle. But suppose it were done. Would

we then be free? No, mon cher. For lacking the understanding which can only come through the solving of our own problems, the realization through struggle of what we are fighting, we would only be ripe for more grisly betrayals in the future. Even now, there are far too few people who truly understand what Hitler and the Nazi beast means. When understanding comes to millions of my countrymen and yours—then they will be ready for what the Rulos can offer them.

"The Rulos had forgotten, momentarily, that a race must be its own deliverer."



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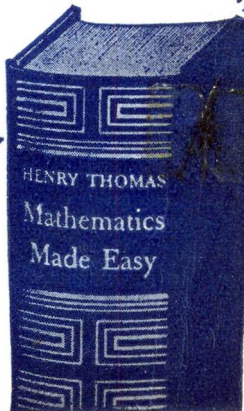
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