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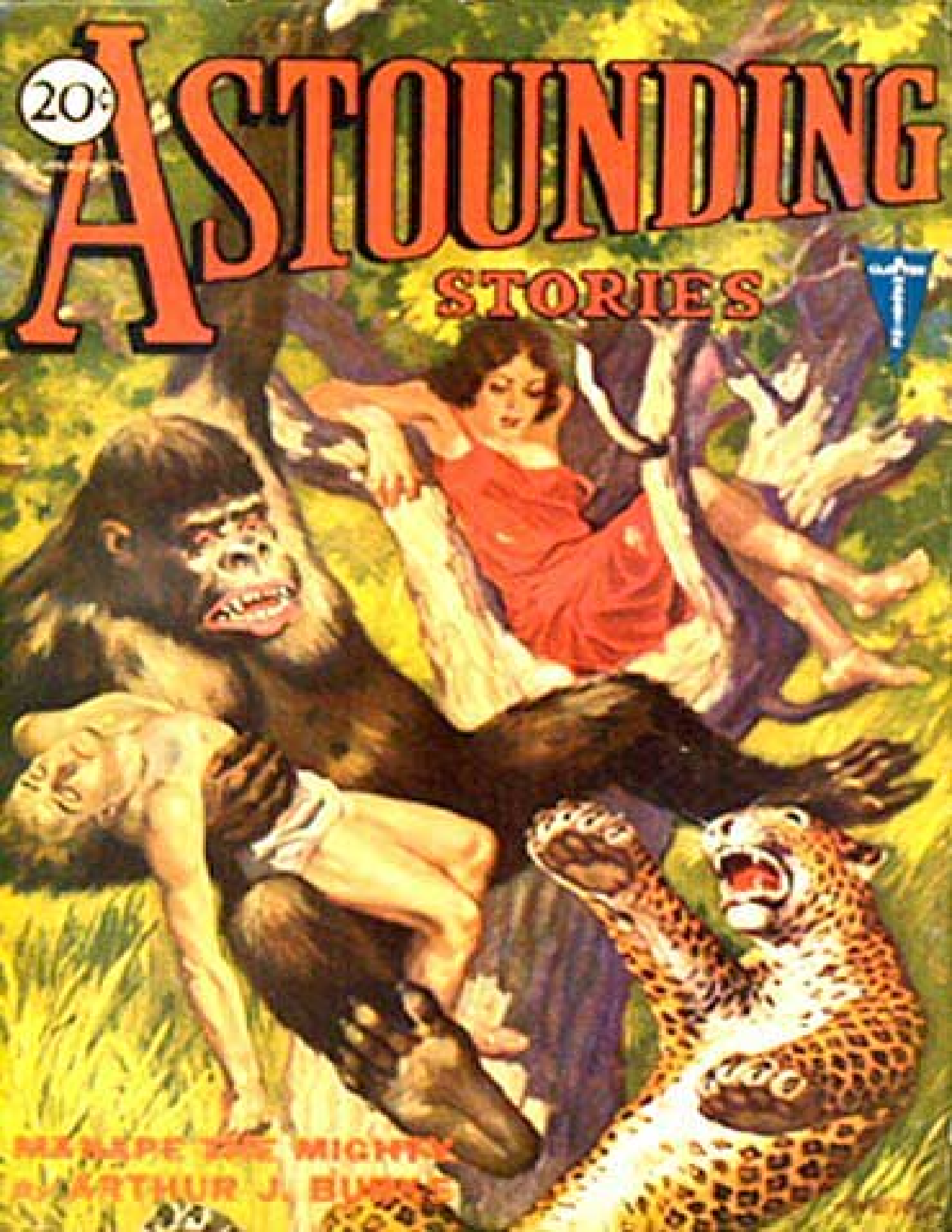

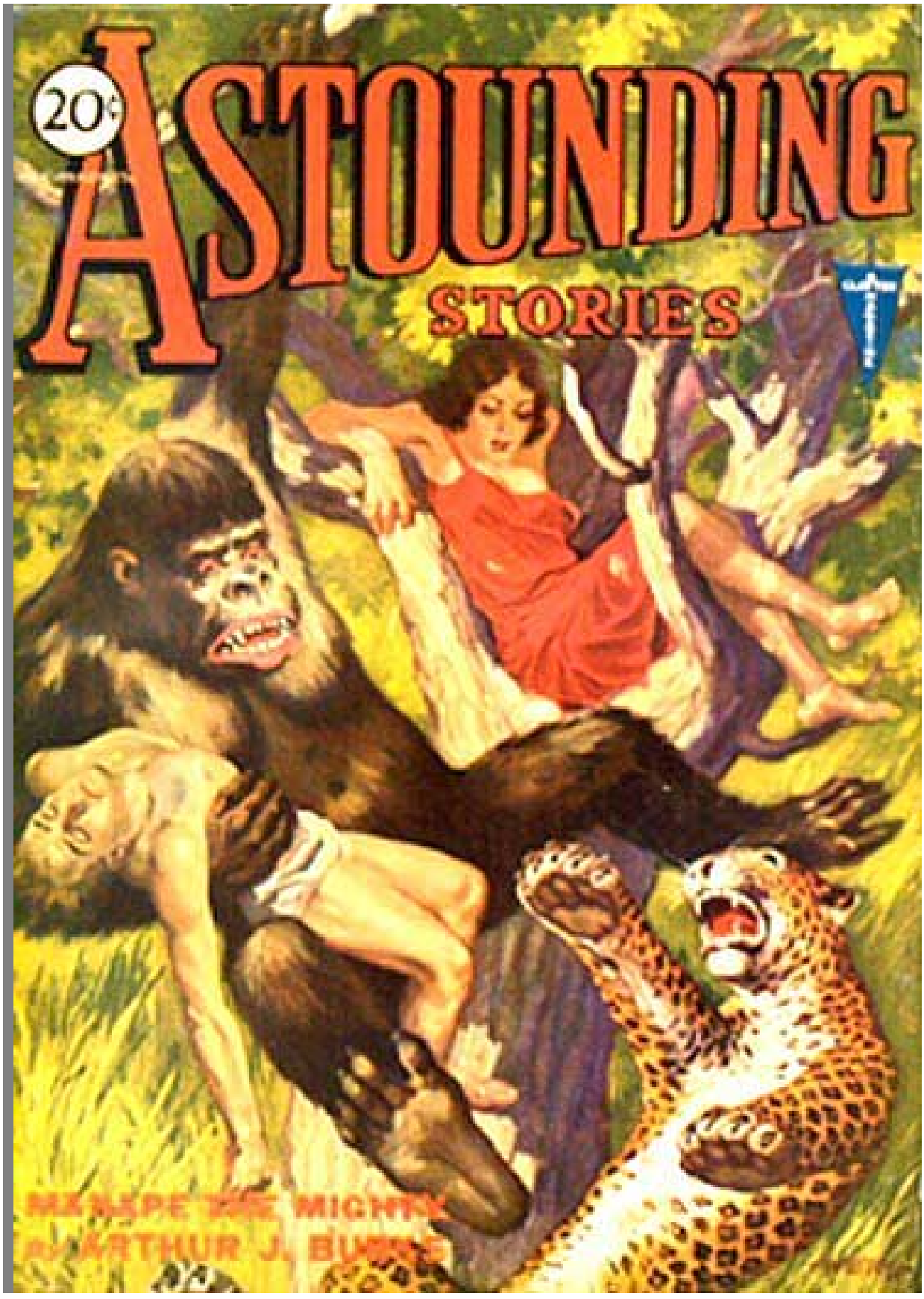
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ARTHUR J. BURKS

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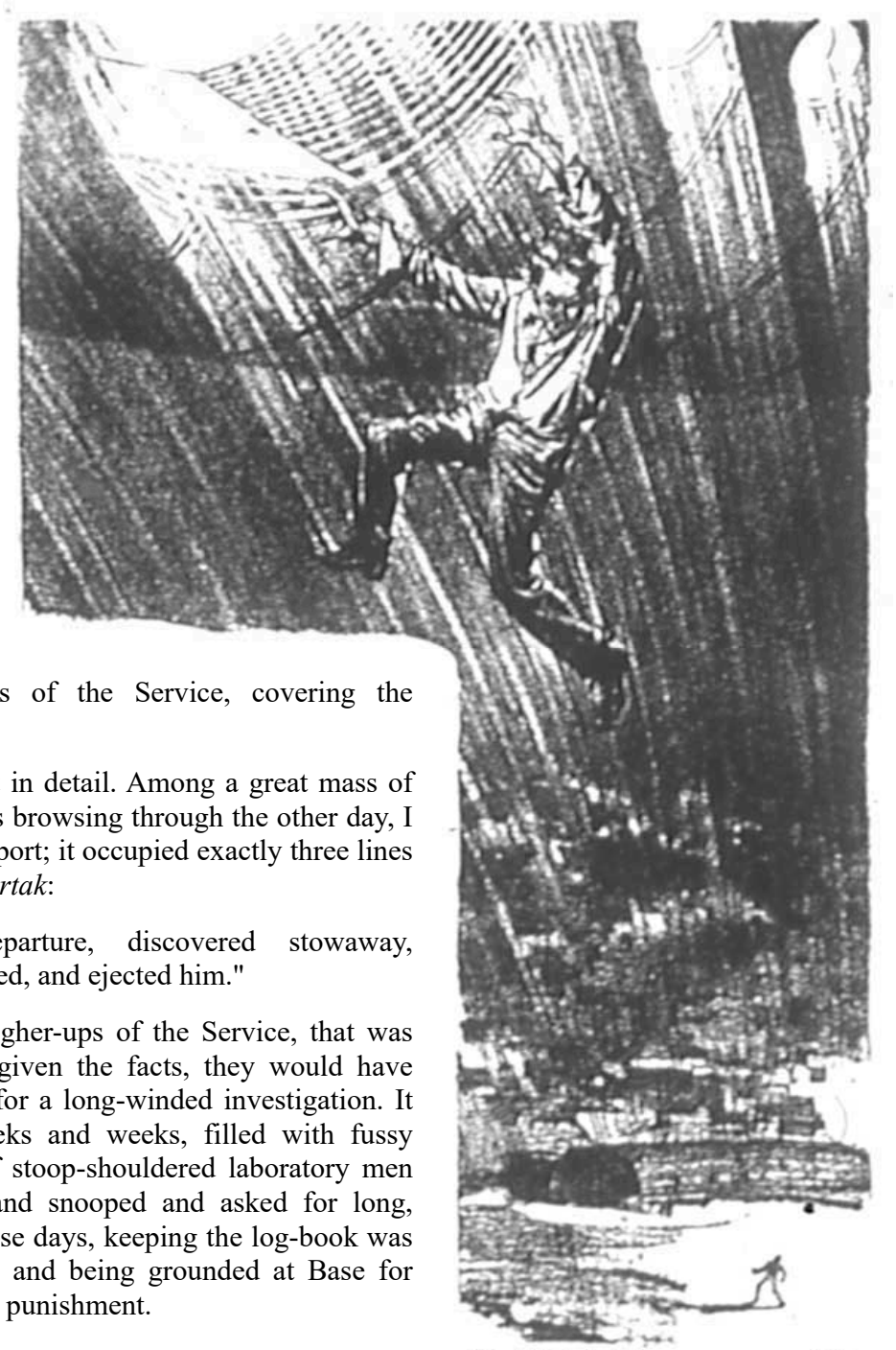
The Man From 2071

By Sewell Peaslee Wright

Out of the flow of time there appears to Commander John Hanson a man of mystery from the forgotten past.



He clutched at the gangway—and fell.

Perhaps this story does not belong with my other tales of the Special Patrol Service. And yet, there is, or should be, a report somewhere in the musty archives of the Service, covering the incident.

Not accurately, and not in detail. Among a great mass of old records which I was browsing through the other day, I happened across that report; it occupied exactly three lines in the log-book of the *Ertak*:

> "Just before departure, discovered stowaway, apparently demented, and ejected him."

For the hard-headed higher-ups of the Service, that was report enough. Had I given the facts, they would have called me to the Base for a long-winded investigation. It would have taken weeks and weeks, filled with fussy questioning. Dozens of stoop-shouldered laboratory men would have prodded and snooped and asked for long, written accounts. In those days, keeping the log-book was writing enough for me and being grounded at Base for weeks would have been punishment.

Nothing would have been gained by a detailed report. The Service needed action rather than reports, anyway. But now that I am an old man, on the retired list, I have time to write; and it will be a particular pleasure to write this account, for it will go to prove that these much-honored scientists of ours, with all their tremendous appropriations and long-winded discussions, are not nearly so wonderful as they think they are. They are, and always have been, too much interested in abstract formulas, and not enough in their practical application. I have never had a great deal of use for them.

I had received orders to report to Earth, regarding a dull routine matter of reorganizing the emergency Base which had been established there. Earth, I might add, for the benefit of those of you who have forgotten your geography of the Universe, is not a large body, but its people furnish almost all of the officer personnel of the Special Patrol Service. Being a native of Earth, I received the assignment with considerable pleasure, despite its dry and uninteresting nature.

It was a good sight to see old Earth, bundled up in her cottony clouds, growing larger and larger in the television disc. No matter how much you wander around the Universe, no matter how small and insignificant the world of your birth, there is a tie that cannot be denied. I have set my ships down upon many a strange and unknown world, with danger and adventure awaiting me, but there is, for me, no thrill which quite duplicates that of viewing again that particular little ball of mud from whence I sprang. I've said that before; I shall probably say it again. I am proud to claim Earth as my birth-place, small and out-of-the way as she is.

Our Base on Earth was adjacent to the city of Greater Denver, on the Pacific Coast. I could not help wondering, as we settled swiftly over the city, whether our historians and geologists and other scientists were really right in saying that Denver had at one period been far from the Pacific. It seemed impossible, as I gazed down on that blue, tranquil sea, that it had engulfed, hundreds of years ago, such a vast portion of North America. But I suppose the men of science know.

I need not go into the routine business that brought me to Earth. Suffice it to say that it was settled quickly, by the afternoon of the second day: I am referring, of course, to Earth days, which are slightly less than half the length of an enaren of Universe time.

A number of my friends had come to meet me, visit with me during my brief stay on Earth; and, having finished my business with such dispatch, I decided to spend that evening with them, and leave the following morning. It was very late when my friends departed, and I strolled out with them to their mono-car, returning the salute of the *Ertak's* lone sentry, who was pacing his post before the huge circular exit of the ship.

Bidding my friends farewell, I stood there for a moment under the heavens, brilliant with blue, cold stars, and watched the car sweep swiftly and soundlessly away towards the towering mass of the city. Then, with a little sigh, I turned back to the ship.

The *Ertak* lay lightly upon the earth, her polished sides gleaming in the light of the crescent moon. In the side toward me, the circular entrance gaped like a sleepy mouth; the sentry, knowing the eyes of his commander were upon him, strode back and forth with brisk, military precision. Slowly, still thinking of my friends, I made my way toward the ship.

I had taken but a few steps when the sentry's challenge rang out sharply, "Halt! Who goes there?"

I glanced up in surprise. Shiro, the man on guard, had seen me leave, and he could have had no difficulty in recognizing me. But—the challenge had not been meant for me.

Between myself and the *Ertak* there stood a strange figure. An instant before, I would have sworn that there was no human in sight, save myself and the sentry; now this man stood not twenty feet away, swaying as though ill or terribly weary, barely able to lift his head and turn it toward the sentry.

"Friend," he gasped; "friend!" and I think he would have fallen to the ground if I had not clapped an arm around his shoulders and supported him.

"Just ... a moment," whispered the stranger. "I'm a bit faint.... I'll be all right...."

I stared down at the man, unable to reply. This was a nightmare; no less. I could feel the sentry staring, too.

The man was dressed in a style so ancient that I could not remember the period: Twenty-first Century, at least; perhaps earlier. And while he spoke English, which is a language of Earth, he spoke it with a harsh and unpleasant accent that made his words difficult, almost impossible, to understand. Their meaning did not fully sink in until an instant after he had finished speaking.

"Shiro!" I said sharply. "Help me take this man inside. He's ill."

"Yes, sir!" The guard leaped to obey the order, and together we led him into the *Ertak*, and to my own stateroom. There was some mystery here, and I was eager to get at the root of it. The man with the ancient costume and the strange accent had not come to the spot where we had seen him by any means with which I was familiar; he had materialized out of the thin air. There was no other way to account for his presence.

We propped the stranger in my most comfortable chair, and I turned to the sentry. He was staring at our weird visitor with wondering, fearful eyes, and when I spoke he started as though stung by an electric shock.

"Very well," I said briskly. "That will be all. Resume your post immediately. And—Shiro!"

"Yes, sir?"

"It will not be necessary for you to make a report of this incident. I will attend to that. Understand?"

"Yes, sir!" And I think it is to the man's everlasting credit, and to the credit of the Service which had trained him, that he executed a snappy salute, did an about-face, and left the room without another glance at the man slumped down in my big easy chair.

With a feeling of cold, nervous apprehension such as I have seldom experienced in a rather varied and active life, I turned then to my visitor.

He had not moved, save to lift his head. He was staring at me, his eyes fixed in his chalky white face. They were dark, long eyes—abnormally long—and they glittered with a strange, uncanny light.

"You are feeling better?" I asked.

His thin, bloodless lips moved, but for a moment no sound came from them. He tried again.

"Water," he said.

I drew him a glass from the tank in the wall of my room. He downed it at a gulp, and passed the empty glass back to me.

"More," he whispered. He drank the second glass more slowly, his eyes darting swiftly, curiously, around the room. Then his brilliant, piercing glance fell upon my face.

"Tell me," he commanded sharply, "what year is this?"

I stared at him. It occurred to me that my friends might have conceived and executed an elaborate hoax—and then I dismissed the idea, instantly. There were no scientists among them who could make a man materialize out of nothingness.

"Are you in your right mind?" I asked slowly. "Your question strikes me as damnably odd, sir."

The man laughed wildly, and slowly straightened up in the chair. His long, bony fingers clasped and unclasped slowly, as though feeling were just returning to them.

"Your question," he replied in his odd, unfamiliar accent, "is not unnatural, under the circumstances. I assure you that I am of sound mind; of very sound mind." He smiled, rather a ghastly smile, and made a vague, slight gesture with one hand. "Will you be good enough to answer my question? What year is this?"

"Earth year, you mean?"

He stared at me, his eyes flickering.

"Yes," he said. "Earth year. There are other ways of ... figuring time now?"

"Certainly. Each inhabited world has its own system. There is a master system for the Universe. Who are you, what are you, that you should ask me a question the smallest child should know?"

"First," he insisted, "tell me what year this is, Earth reckoning."

I told him, and the light flickered up in his eyes again—a cruel, triumphant light.

"Thank you," he nodded; and then, slowly and softly, as though he spoke to himself, he added, "Less than half a century off. Less than a half a century! And they laughed at me. How—how I shall laugh at them, presently!"

"You choose to be mysterious, sir?" I asked impatiently.

"No. Presently you shall understand, and then you will forgive me, I know. I have come through an experience such as no man has ever known before. If I am shaken, weak, surprising to you, it is because of that experience."

He paused for a moment, his long, powerful fingers gripping the arms of the chair.

"You see," he added, "I have come out of the past into the present. Or from the present into the future. It depends upon one's viewpoint. If I am distraught, then forgive me. A few minutes ago, I was Jacob Harbauer, in a little laboratory on the edge of a mountain park, near Denver; now I am a nameless being hurtled into the future, pausing here, many centuries from my own era. Do you wonder now that I am unnerved?"

"Do you mean," I said slowly, trying to understand what he had babbled forth, "that you have come out of the past? That you ... that you...." It was too monstrous to put into words.

"I mean," he replied, "that I was born in the year 2028. I am forty-three years old—or I was a few minutes ago. But,"—and his eyes flickered again with that strange, mad light—"I am a scientist! I have left my age behind me for a time; I have done what no other human being has ever done: I have gone centuries into the future!"

"I—I do not understand." Could he, after all, be a madman? "How can a man leave his own age and travel ahead to another?"

"Even in this age of yours they have not discovered that secret?" Harbauer exulted. "You travel the Universe, I gather, and yet your scientists have not yet learned to move in time? Listen! Let me explain to you how simple the theory is.

"I take it you are an intelligent man; your uniform and its insignia would seem to indicate a degree of rank. Am I correct?"

"I am John Hanson, Commander of the *Ertak*, of the Special Patrol Service," I informed him.

"Then you will be capable of grasping, in part at least, what I have to tell you. It is really not so complex. Time is a river, flowing steadily, powerful, at a fixed rate of speed. It sweeps the whole Universe along on its bosom at that same speed. That is my conception of it; is it clear to you?"

"I should think," I replied, "that the Universe is more like a great rock in the middle of your stream of time, that stands motionless while the minutes, the hours, and the days roll by."

"No! The Universe travels on the breast of the current of time. It leaves yesterday behind, and sweeps on towards to-morrow. It has always been so until I challenged this so-called immutable law. I said to myself, why should a man be a helpless stick upon the stream of time? Why need he be borne on this slow current at the same speed? Why cannot he do as a man in a boat, paddle backwards or forwards; back to a point already passed; ahead, faster than the current, to a point that, drifting, he would not reach so soon? In other words, why can he not slip back through time to yesterday; or ahead to to-morrow? And if to to-morrow, why not to next year, next century?

"These are the questions I asked myself. Other men have asked themselves the same questions, I know; they were not new. But,"—Harbauer drew himself far forward in his

chair, and leaned close to me, almost as though he prepared himself to spring—"no other man ever found the answer! That remained for me.

"I was not entirely correct, of course. I found that one could not go back in time. The current was against one. But to go ahead, with the current at one's back, was different. I spent six years on the problem, working day and night, handicapped by lack of funds, ridiculed by the press—Look!"

Harbauer reached inside his antiquated costume and drew forth a flat packet which he passed to me. I unfolded it curiously, my fingers clumsy with excitement.

I could hardly believe my eyes. The thing Harbauer had handed me was a folded fragment of newspaper, such as I had often seen in museums. I recognized the old-fashioned type, and the peculiar arrangement of the columns. But, instead of being yellow and brittle with age, and preserved in fragments behind sealed glass, this paper was fresh and white, and the ink was as black as the day it had been printed. What this man said, then, must be true! He must—

"I can understand your amazement," said Harbauer. "It had not occurred to me that a paper which, to me, was printed only yesterday, would seem so antique to you. But that must appear as remarkable to you as fresh papyrus, newly inscribed with the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians, would seem to one of my own day and age. But read it; you will see how my world viewed my efforts!" There was a sharpness, a bitterness, in his voice that made me vaguely uneasy; even though he had solved the riddle of moving in time as men have always moved in space, my first conjecture that I had a madman to deal with might not be so far from the truth. Ridicule and persecution have unseated the reason of all too many men.

The type was unfamiliar to me, and the spelling was archaic, but I managed to stumble through the article. It read, as nearly as I can recall it, like this:

Harbauer Says Time

Is Like Great River

> Jacob Harbauer, local inventor, in an exclusive interview, propounds the theory that man can move about in time exactly as a boat moves about on the surface of a swift-flowing river, save that he cannot go back into time, on account of the opposition of the current.
>
> That is very fortunate, this writer feels; it would be a terrible thing for example, if some good-looking scamp from our present Twenty-first Century were to dive into the past and steal Cleopatra from Antony, or start an affair with Josephine and send Napoleon scurrying back from the front and let the Napoleonic wars go to pot. We'd have to have all our histories rewritten!
>
> Harbauer is well-known in Denver as the eccentric inventor who, for the last five or six years, has occupied a lonely shack in the mountains, guarded by a high fence of barbed wire. He claims that he has now perfected equipment which will enable him to project himself forward in time, and expects to make the experiment in the very near future.

This writer was permitted to view the equipment which Harbauer says will shoot him into the future. The apparatus is housed in a low, barn-like building in the rear of his shack.

Along one side of the room is a veritable bank of electrical apparatus with innumerable controls, many huge tubes of unfamiliar shape and appearance, a mighty generator of some kind and an intricate maze of gleaming copper bus-bar.

In the center of the room is a circle of metal, about a foot in thickness, insulated from the flooring by four truncated cones of fluted glass. This disc is composed of two unfamiliar metals, arranged in concentric circles.

Above this disc, at a height of about eight feet, is suspended a sort of grid, composed of extremely fine silvery wires, supported on a frame-work of black insulating material.

Asked for a demonstration of his apparatus, Harbauer finally consented to perform an experiment with a dog—a white, short-haired mongrel that, Harbauer informed us, he kept to warn him of approaching strangers.

He bound the dog's legs together securely, and placed the struggling animal in the center of the heavy metal disc. Then the inventor hurried to the central control panel and manipulated several switches, which caused a number of things to happen almost at once.

The big generator started with a growl, and settled immediately into a deep hum; a whole row of tubes glowed with a purplish brilliancy. There was a crackling sound in the air, and the grid above the disc seemed to become incandescent, although it gave forth no apparent heat. From the rim of the metal disc, thin blue streamers of electric flame shot up toward the grid, and the little white dog began to whine nervously.

"Now watch!" shouted Harbauer. He closed another switch, and the space between the disc and the grid became a cylinder of livid light, for a period of perhaps two seconds. Then Harbauer pulled all the switches, and pointed triumphantly to the disc. It was empty.

We looked around the room for the dog, but he was not visible anywhere.

"I have sent him nearly a century into the future," said Harbauer. "We will let him stay there a moment, and then bring him back."

"You mean to say," we asked, "that the pup is now roaming around somewhere in the Twenty-second Century?" Harbauer said he meant just that, and added that he would now bring the dog back to the present time. The switches were closed again, but this time it was the metal plate that seemed incandescent, and the grid above that shot out the streaks of thin blue flame. As he closed the last switch, the cylinder of light appeared again, and when the switches were opened, there was the dog in the center of the disc, howling and struggling against his bonds.

"Look!" cried Harbauer. "He's been attacked by another dog, or some other animal, while in the future. See the blood on his shoulders?"

> We ventured the humble opinion that the dog had scratched or bit himself in struggling to free himself from the cords with which Harbauer had bound him, and the inventor flew into a terrible rage, cursing and waving his arms as though demented. Feeling that discretion was the better part of valor, we beat a hasty retreat, pausing at the barbed-wire gate only long enough to ask Mr. Harbauer if he would be good enough, sometime when he had a few minutes of leisure, to dash into next week and bring back some stock market reports to aid us in our investment efforts.
>
> Under the circumstances, we did not wait for a response, but we presume we are persona non grata at the Harbauer establishment from this time on.
>
> All in all, we are not sorry.

I folded the paper and passed it back to him; some of the allusions I did not understand, but the general tone of the article was very clear indeed.

"You see?" said Harbauer, his voice grating with anger. "I tried to be courteous to that man; to give him a simple, convincing demonstration of the greatest scientific achievement in centuries. And the fool returned to write *this*: to hold me up to ridicule, to paint me as a crack-brained, wild-eyed fanatic."

"It's hard for the layman to conceive of a great scientific achievement," I said soothingly. "All great inventions and inventors have been laughed at by the populace at large."

"True. True." Harbauer nodded his head solemnly. "But just the same—" He broke off suddenly, and forced a smile. I found myself wishing that he had completed that broken sentence, however; I felt that he had almost revealed something that would have been most enlightening.

"But enough of that fool and his babblings," he continued. "I am here as living proof that my experiment is a success, and I have a tremendous curiosity about the world in which I find myself. This, I take it, is a ship for navigating space?"

"Right! The *Ertak*, of the Special Patrol Service. Would you care to look around a bit?"

"I would, indeed." There was a tremendous eagerness in the man's voice.

"You're not too tired?"

"No; I am quite recovered from my experience." Harbauer leaped to his feet, those abnormally long, slitted eyes of his glowing. "I am a scientist, and I am most curious to see what my fellows have created since—since my own era."

I picked up my dressing gown and tossed it to him.

"Slip this on, then, to cover your clothing. You would be an object of too much curiosity to those men who are on duty," I suggested.

I was taller than he, and the garment came within a few inches of the floor. He knotted the cincture around his middle and thrust his hands into the pockets, turning to me for approval. I nodded, and

motioned for him to precede me through the door.

As an officer of the Special Patrol Service, it has often been my duty to show parties and individuals through my ship. Most of these parties are composed of females, who have only exclamations to make instead of intelligent comment, and who possess an unbounded capacity for asking utterly asinine questions. It was, therefore, a real pleasure to show Harbauer through the ship.

He was a keen, eager listener. When he asked a question, and he asked many of them, he showed an amazing grasp of the principles involved. My knowledge of our equipment was, of course, only practical, save for the rudimentary theoretical knowledge that everyone has of present-day inventions and devices.

The ethon tubes which lighted the ship, interested him but little. The atomic generators, the gravity pads, their generators, and the disintegrator-ray, however, he delved into with that frenzied ardor of which only a scientist, I believe, is capable.

Questions poured out of him, and I answered them as best I could: sometimes completely, and satisfactorily, so that he nodded and said, "I see! I see!" and sometimes so poorly that he frowned, and cross-questioned me insistently until he obtained the desired information.

In the big, sound-proof navigating room, I explained the operation of the numerous instruments, including the two three-dimensional charts, actuated by super-radio reflexes, the television disc, the attraction meter, the surface-temperature gauge and the complex control system.

"Forward," I added, "is the operating room. You can see it through these glass partitions. The navigating officer in command relays his orders to men in the operating room, who attend to the actual execution of those orders."

"Just as a pilot, or the navigating officer of a ship of my day gives his orders to the quartermaster at the wheel," nodded Harbauer, and began firing questions at me again, going over the ground we had covered, to check up on his information. I was amazed at the uncanny accuracy with which he had grasped such a great mass of technical detail. It had taken me years of study to pick up what he had taken from me, and apparently retained intact, in something more than an hour, Earth time.

I glanced at the Earth-time clock on the wall of the navigating room as he triumphantly finished his questioning. Less than an hour remained before the time set for our return trip.

"I'm sorry," I commented, "to be an ungracious host, but I am wondering what your plans may be? You see, we are due to start in less than an hour, and—"

"A passenger would be in your way?" Harbauer smiled as he uttered the words, but there was a gleam in his long eyes that rather startled me, and I wondered if I only imagined the steeliness of his voice. "Don't let that worry you, sir."

"It's not worrying me," I replied, watching him closely. "I have enjoyed a very remarkable, a very pleasant experience. If you should care to remain aboard the *Ertak*, I should like exceedingly to have you accompany us to our Base, where I could place you in touch with other laboratory men, with whom you would have much in common."

Harbauer threw back his head and laughed—not pleasantly.

"Thanks!" he said. "But I have no time for that. They could give me no knowledge that I need, now; you have told me and showed me enough. I understand how you have released atomic energy; it is a matter so simple that a child should have guessed it, and man has wondered about it for centuries, knowing that the power was there, but lacking a key to unfetter it. And now I have that key!"

"True. But perhaps our scientists would like, in exchange, the secret of moving forward in time," I suggested, reasonably enough.

"What do I care about them?" snapped Harbauer. He loosened the cord of the robe with a quick, impatient gesture, as though it confined him too tightly, and threw the garment from him.

Then, suddenly, he took a quick stride toward me, and thrust out his ugly head.

"I know enough now to give me power over all my world," he cried. "Haven't you guessed the reason for my interest in your engines of destruction? I came down the centuries ahead of my generation so that I might come back with power in my hand; power to wipe out the fools who have made a mock of me. And I have that power—here!" He tapped his forehead dramatically with his left hand.

"I will bring a new regime to my era!" he continued, fairly shouting now. "I will be what many men have tried to be, and what no man has ever been—master of the world! Absolute, unquestioned, supreme master!" He paused, his eyes glaring into mine—and I knew from the light that shone behind those long, narrow slits, that I was dealing with a madman.

"True; you will," I said gently, moving carelessly toward the microphone. With that in my hand, a slight pressure on the General Attention signal, and I would have the whole crew of the *Ertak* here in a moment. But I had explained the workings of the navigating room's equipment only too well.

"Stop!" snarled Harbauer, and his right hand flashed up. "See this? Perhaps you don't know what it is; I'll tell you. It's an automatic pistol—not so efficient as your disintegrator-ray, but deadly enough. There is certain death for eight men in my hand. Understand?"

"Perfectly." What an utter fool I had been! I was not armed, and I knew that Harbauer spoke the truth. I had often seen weapons similar to the one he held in the military museums. They are still there, if you are curious—rusty and broken, but not unlike our present atomic pistols in general appearance. They propelled the bullet by the explosion of a sort of powder; inefficient, of course, but, as he had said, deadly enough for the purpose.

"Good! You are a good sort Hanson, but don't take any chances. I'm not going to, I promise you. You see,"—and he laughed again, the light in his long eyes dancing with evil—"I'm not likely to be punished for a few killings committed centuries after I'm dead. I have never killed a man, but I won't hesitate to do so now, if one—or more—should get in my way."

"But why," I asked soothingly, "should you wish to kill anyone? You have what you came for, you say; why not depart in peace?"

He smiled crookedly, and his eyes narrowed with cunning.

"You approve of my little plan to dominate the world?" he asked softly, his eyes searching my face.

"No," I said boldly, refusing to lie to him. "I do not, and you know it."

"Very true." He pulled out his watch with his left hand, and held it before his eyes so that he could observe the time without losing sight of me for even an instant. "I doubted that I could secure your willing cooperation; therefore, I am commanding it.

"You see, there are certain instruments and pieces of equipment that I should like to take back to my laboratory with me. Perhaps I would be able to reproduce them without models, but with the models my task will be much easier.

"The question remaining is a simple one: will you give the proper orders to have this equipment removed to the spot where you first saw me, or shall I be obliged to return to my own era without this equipment—leaving behind me a dead commander of the Special Patrol Service, and any other who may try to stop me?"

I tried to keep cool under the lash of his mocking voice. I have never been adept at holding my temper when I should, but somehow I managed it this time. Frowning, I kept him waiting for a reply, utilizing the time to do what was perhaps the hardest, fastest thinking of my life.

There wasn't a particle of doubt in my mind regarding his ability to make good his threat, nor his readiness to do so. I caught the faint glimmering of an idea and fenced with it eagerly.

"How are you going to go back to your own period—your own era?" I asked him. "You told me, I believe, that it was impossible to move backward in time."

"That's not answering my question," he said, leering. "Don't think you're fooling me! But I'll tell you, just the same. I can go back to my own era: that is, back to my own actual existence. I shall return just two hours after I leave; I could not go back farther than that, and it's not necessary that I do so. I can go back only because I came from that present; I am not really of this future at all. I go back from whence I came."

"But," I objected, thinking of something I had read in the clipping he had showed me, "you're not going back to your own era. You cannot. If you returned, you would put your project into execution, and history does not record that activity." I saw from the sudden narrowing of his abnormally long eyes that I had caught his interest, and I pressed my advantage hastily. "Remember that all the history of your time is written, Harbauer. It is in the books of Earth's

history, with which every child of this age, into which you have thrust yourself, is familiar. And those histories do not record the domination of the world by yourself. So—you are confronted by an impossibility!"

My reasoning, now, sounds specious, and yet it was a line of thought which could not be waved aside. I saw Harbauer's black brows knit together, and mounting anger darken his face. I do not know, but I believe I was never nearer death than I was at that instant.

"Fool!" he cried. "Idiot! Imbecile! Do you think you can confuse me, turn me from my purpose, with words? Do you? Do you believe me to be a child, or a weakling? I tell you, I have planned this thing to the last detail. If I had not found what I sought on this first trip, I would have taken another, a dozen, a score, until I found the information I sought. The last six years of my life I have worked day and night to this end; your histories and your words—"

My plan had worked. The man was beside himself with insane anger. And in his rage he forgot, for an instant, that he was my captor.

Taking a desperate chance, I launched myself at his legs. His weapon roared over my head, just as I struck. I felt the hot gas from the thing beat against my neck; I caught the reeking scent of the smoke. Then we were both on the floor, and locked in a mad embrace.

Harbauer was a smaller man than myself, but he had the amazing strength of a Zenian. He fought viciously, using every ounce of his strength against me, striving to bring his weapon into use, hammering my head upon the floor, racking my body mercilessly, grunting, cursing, mumbling constantly as he did so.

But I was in better trim than Harbauer. I have never seen a laboratory man who could stand the strain of prolonged physical exertion. Bending over test-tubes and meters is no life for a man. At grips with him, I was in my own element, and he was out of his. I let him wear himself out, exerting myself as little as possible, confining my efforts to keeping his weapon where he could not use it.

I felt him weakening at last. His breath was coming in great sobs, and his long eyes started from their sockets with the strained effort he was putting forth. And then, with a single mighty effort, I knocked the pistol from his hand, so that it slid across the floor and brought up with a crash against a wall of the room.

"Now!" I said, and turned on him.

He knew, at that moment when I put forth my strength, that I had been playing with him. I read the shock of sudden fear in his eyes. My right arm went about him in a deadly hold; I had him in a grip that paralyzed him. Grimly, I jerked him to his feet, and he stood there trembling with weakness, his shoulders heaving as his breath came and went between his teeth.

"You realize, of course, that you're not going back?" I said quietly.

"Back?" Half dazed, he stared at me through the quivering lids of his peculiar eyes. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you're not going back to your own era. You have come to us, uninvited, and—you're going to stay here."

"No!" he shouted, and struggled so desperately to free himself that I was hard put to it to hold him, without tightening my grip sufficiently to dislocate his shoulders. "You wouldn't do that! I must return; I must prove to them—"

"That's exactly what must not happen, and what shall not happen," I interrupted. "And what will not happen. You are in a strange predicament, Harbauer; it is already written that you do not return. Can't you see that, man? If it were to be that you left this age and returned to your own, you would make known your discovery. History would record it. And history does not record it. You are struggling, not against me, but against—against a fate that has been sealed all these centuries."

When I had finished, he stared at me as though hypnotized, motionless and limp in my grasp. Then, suddenly, he began to shake and I saw such depths of terror and horror in his eyes as I hope never to see again.

Mechanically, he glanced down at his watch, lifting his wrist into his line of vision as slowly and ponderously as though it bore a great weight.

"Two ... two minutes," he whispered huskily. "Then the automatic switch will close, back in my laboratory. If I am not standing where ... where you found me ... between the disc and the grid of my time machine, where the reversed energy can reach me, to ... to take me back ... God!"

He sagged in my arms and dropped to his knees, sobbing.

"And yet ... what you say is true. It is already written that I did not return." His sobs cut harshly through the silence of the room. Pitying his despair, I reached down to give him a sympathetic pat on the shoulder. It is a terrible thing to see a man break down as Harbauer had done.

As he felt my grip on him relax, he suddenly shot his fist into the pit of my stomach, and leaped to his feet. Groaning, I doubled up, weak and nerveless, for the instant, from the vicious, unexpected blow.

"Ah!" shrieked Harbauer. "You soft-hearted fool!" He struck me in the face, sending me crashing to the floor, and snatched up his pistol.

"I'm going, now," he shouted. "Going! What do I care for your records and your histories? They are not yet written; if they were I'd change them." He bent over me and snatched from my hand the ring of keys, one of which I had used to unlock the door of the navigating room. I tried to grip him around the legs, but he tore himself loose, laughing insanely in a high-pitched, cackling sound that seemed hardly human.

"Farewell!" he called mockingly from the doorway. Then the door slammed, and as I staggered to my feet, I heard the lock click.

I must have acted then by instinct or inspiration. There was no time to think. It would take him not more than three or four seconds to make his way to the exit, stroll by the guard to the spot where we had found him, and—disappear. By the time I could arouse the crew, and have my orders executed, his time would be up, and—unless the whole affair were some terrible nightmare—he would go hurtling back through time to his own era, armed with a devastating knowledge.

There was only one possible means of preventing his escape in time. I ran across the room to the emergency operating controls, cut in the atomic generators with one hand and pulled the Vertical-Ascent lever to Full Power.

There was a sudden shriek of air, and my legs almost thrust themselves through my body. Quickly, I pushed the lever back until, with my eye on the altimeter, I held the *Ertak* at her attained height—something over a mile, as I recall it. Then I pressed the General Attention signal, and snatched up the microphone.

Less than a minute later Correy and Hendricks, fellow officers, were in the room and besieging me with solicitous questions.

It had been my idea, of course, to keep Harbauer from leaving the ship, but it was not so destined.

Shiro, the sentry on duty outside the *Ertak*, was the only witness to Harbauer's fate.

"I was walking my post, sir," he reported, "watching the sun come up, when suddenly I heard the sound of running feet inside the ship. I turned towards the entrance and drew my pistol, to be in readiness. I saw the stranger we had taken into the ship appear at the exit, which, as you know, was open.

"Just as I opened my mouth to command him to halt, the *Ertak* shot up from the ground at terrific speed. The stranger had been about to leap upon me; indeed, he had discharged some sort of weapon at me, for I heard a crash of sound, and a missile of some kind, as you know, passed through my left arm.

"As the ship left the ground, he tried to draw back, but he was off balance, and the inertia of his body momentarily incapacitated him, I think. He slipped, clutched at the gangway across the threads which seal the exit, and then, at a height I estimate to be around five hundred feet, he fell. The *Ertak* shot on up until it was lost to sight, and the stranger crashed to the ground a few feet from where I was standing—on almost exactly the spot where we first saw him, sir.

"And now, sir, comes the part I guess you'll find hard to believe. When he struck the ground, he was smashed flat; he died instantly. I started to run toward him, and then—and then I stopped. My eyes had not left the spot for a moment, sir, but he—his body, that is—

suddenly disappeared. That's the truth, sir, for I saw it with my own eyes. There wasn't a sign of him left."

"I see," I replied. I believe that I did. We had gone straight up, and his body, by no great coincidence, had fallen upon the spot close to the exit of the *Ertak* where we had first found him. And his machine, in operation, had brought him, or rather, his mangled body, back to his own age. "You have not mentioned this affair to anyone, Shiro?"

"No, sir. It wasn't anything you'd be likely to tell: nobody would believe you. I went at once to have my arm attended to, and then reported here according to orders."

"Very good, Shiro. Keep the entire affair to yourself. I will make all the necessary reports. That is an order—understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that will be all. Take good care of your arm."

He saluted with his good hand and left me.

Later in the day I wrote in the log-book of the Ertak the report I mentioned at the beginning of this tale:

> "Just before departure, discovered stowaway, apparently demented, and ejected him."

That was a perfectly truthful statement, and it served its purpose. I have given the whole story in detail just to prove what I have so often contended: that these owlish laboratory men whom this age reveres so much are not nearly so wise and omnipotent as they think they are.

I am quite sure that they would have discredited, or attempted to discredit, my story, had I told it at the time. They would have resented the idea that someone so much ahead of them had discovered a principle that still baffles this age of ours, and I would have had no evidence to present.

Perhaps even now the story will be discredited; if so, I do not care. I am much too old, and too near the portals of that impenetrable mystery, in the shadow of which I have stood so many times, to concern myself with what others may think or say.

I know that what I have related here is the truth, and in my mind I have a vivid and rather pitiful picture of a mangled body, bloody and alone, in the barn-like structure the ancient paper had described; a body, broken and motionless, lying athwart the striated metal disc, like a sacrificial victim—a victim and a sacrifice of science.

There have been many such.

Manape the Mighty

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Arthur J. Burks

There, the words were written.

CHAPTER I

Castaway

High in jungle treetops swings young Bentley—his human brain imprisoned in a mighty ape.

Lee Bentley never knew how many others, if any, lived on after the *Bengal Queen* struck the hidden reef and sank like a stone. He had only a hazy memory of the catastrophe, and recalled that when she had struck and the alarm had gone rocketing through the great passenger boat—though no alarm was really necessary because she went to pieces so fast—that he had leaped far over the rail and swam straight out, fast, in order to escape being dragged down by the suction of the sinking liner.

The screaming of frightened women and children would ring in his ears until the day the grave closed over him—screaming that was made all the more terrible by the crashing roar of the raging black seas which came out of the darkness to make the affair all the more hideous, and to bear

down beneath them into the sea the feeble struggling ones who had no chance for their lives. Lifeboats had been smashed in their davits.

Bentley swam straight away after he was satisfied at last that he could do nothing more. He had helped men and women reach bits of wreckage until he could scarcely any longer keep his wearied arms to the task of keeping his own head above water. He knew even as he helped the white-faced ones that few of them would ever live through it, but he was doing the best he knew—a man's job.

When absolutely sure that he could do nothing further, when he could no longer hear cries of distress, or discover struggling forms in the sea which he might aid, he had turned his back on the graveyard of the *Bengal Queen* and had struck for shore. He remembered the direction, for before sunset that evening, in company with several ship's under officers, he had studied the navigation charts upon which each day's run of the *Bengal Queen* was shown. Ahead of him now was the coast of Africa, though what part of it he knew but in the haziest way. He might not guess within a hundred miles.

One thing only he remembered exactly. The second officer had said, apropos of nothing in particular:

"This wouldn't be a happy place to be shipwrecked. This section of the coast is a regular hangout of the great anthropoid apes. You know, those babies that can pick a man apart as a man would pluck the legs off a fly."

Bentley had merely grinned. The second officer's remarks had sounded to him as though the fellow had been reading more than his fair share of lurid fiction of the South African jungles.

However, apes or no apes, the shore would look good to Lee Bentley now. And he fully intended making it. He knew he could swim for hours if it became necessary, and he refused to think of the possibility of sharks. If one got him, well, that was one of the chances one had to take when one was shipwrecked against one's will.

So he alternately swam toward where he expected to find land, and floated on his back to rest.

"A swell ending to a great life, if I don't make it," he told himself. "I wonder how the old man will take it when the world reads that the *Bengal Queen* went down with all on board? He'll be relieved, maybe, for he was about ready to wash his hands of me if I can read signs at all."

It might be said that Bentley was his own worst critic, for he really was not a bad sort of a fellow. He was a good American, over-educated perhaps, with a yen to delve into forbidden places usually avoided by his own kind, and of digging into books which were better left with the pages unturned. There were strange ruins in Africa, he knew. He had gathered a weird fund of information from such books as he could unearth relative to ancient ruins and vanished races, to the lurid accounts of strange deaths of the various scientists who had taken active part in the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamen.

There were queer things in the heart of darkest Africa, and such things intrigued him. He could take whatever chances with his life he saw fit, for his only relative was a father, and he had never attached himself to any woman nor permitted any woman to attach herself to him—because he could never be sure that her interest might not primarily be in his bank account.

"If, as, and when," he told himself as he rode the waves through the night, "I reach the coast I'll be tossed into black Africa in a way I was not expecting. Anyway, if I live through, I can at least go about my work without the governor interfering. I only hope it won't be hard on the old fellow. He isn't a bad egg at all, and I guess I have given him plenty to think about and worry over."

He turned on his stomach again and struck out. He had managed to rid himself of all of his clothing except his underwear. They had only weighed him down, and he recalled, with a wry grin, that Africa as a whole went in but little for the latest in men's sport wear.

It must have been a good hour since he had lost the *Bengal Queen* back there in the raging deep, that he heard the faint call through the murk.

"Help, for God's sake!"

He listened for a repetition of the call, minded to believe that his ears had tricked him. He fancied it had been a woman's voice, but no woman could have lived so long in those raging seas, in which any moment Bentley himself expected to be overwhelmed. For himself he regarded death more or less philosophically, but a woman out there, crying for help, was a different matter entirely. It tore at his heartstrings, mostly because he realized his inability to be of material assistance.

He was sure that he had been mistaken about the cry, when it came again.

"For God's sake, help!"

It came from his left and this time it was unmistakable, piteous and unnerving. Lee Bentley had the horrible fear that he would never reach her in time to help—though what help he could give, when he could barely manage to keep himself afloat, he could not forsee.

He was swimming down the side of a monster wave. He could see something white in the trough, and he struggled manfully to make headway, while the angry waters tossed him about like a bit of cork and seemed bent on defeating his most furious efforts. He saw the bit of white ride high on the next wave, pass over it and vanish. He dived straight through the wave as it towered over him. He came up, gasping, his hands all but clutching at a pair of hands that reached out of the waters and grasped with a last desperate effort at the sky.

Ahead of the hands was a broken piece of oar. Those hands had just despairingly relinquished their grip on the one chance of safety, if any chance there could possibly be in that mad midnight waste.

He pulled on the wrists and a white face came to view. Wild, staring eyes looked into his. Black hair flowed back from a face whose lips were blue and thin.

"Take it easy," he counseled. "Turn on your back and rest while I see if I can get back your life-boat."

He captured the oar, and found it practically useless to sustain any appreciable weight, but he clung to it because it was at least better than nothing at all. It had held the girl afloat for over an hour and might be made to serve again somehow. With his left hand under the woman's head and his right grasping the oar he turned on his back to regain his breath. He was deep in the water because the woman was now almost on top of him; but her face was above water. He knew instinctively that she had fainted, and he was a little glad. If she were the usual hysterical woman her fighting would drown them both. As a dead weight she was easier to handle.

They drifted on, and hope began to mount high in the heart of Lee Bentley—the hope that they might yet reach land. When, hours later, he could hear the roaring of breakers he was sure of it—if the breakers could be passed in safety. After that their fate was in the lap of the gods.

The girl too must have heard, for she turned at last in Bentley's arms and began to swim for herself. She was a strong swimmer and the period during which she had been out of things had revived her amazingly. She even managed a smile as she swam beside Bentley into the creamy breakers behind which they could make out the blackness of shore.

They were so close together that at times their hands touched as they swam, and could make themselves heard by dint of shouting, though they both husbanded their strength and their breathing for swimming.

"I'm not dressed for company," he told her. "I left my tuxedo aboard the *Bengal Queen*!"

It was then that her lips twisted into a smile.

"I wouldn't even allow my maid into my stateroom if I were dressed as I am at the moment," she answered strongly, "but we're both grown up I think, and there are times when conventions go by the board. We'll pretend it doesn't matter!"

Then mutually helping each other they fought through the breakers into the calmer water behind, and managed at last to stand in water hip deep, with the undertow dragging at their limbs. They looked at each other and clasped hands without a word. They strode to the sandy beach beyond which the jungle reached away to some invisible horizon, and continued on until they were at last beyond the reach of the waves.

They did not look at each other again, though Bentley did notice that her garb was as scanty almost as his own, consisting mostly of a slip which the water had pasted fast against her flesh. Beyond noting that she seemed to be young, Bentley did not intrude. Nor did he think of the future. It was enough for the moment that they had escaped the might of angry Neptune, god of the seas.

They dropped to the sands side by side, and the sands were warm. That the jungle behind them might be alive with wild beasts they did not pause to consider. Bentley had gazed at the jungle a moment before dropping down.

He had noticed but one thing—a moving light somewhere among the tangled mass, a light as of a monster firefly erratically darting through the deeper gloom.

The girl—he had noted she was as much girl as woman—dropped to the sand and stretched herself out. Bentley looked about him for a moment, just now realizing what he had been through. Then he dropped down beside the girl, and put one arm over her protectively, an instinctive movement. The two were alone in an alien world, and even this slight contact gave Bentley a feeling of companionship he found at the time peculiarly appealing.

The girl was in a drugged sort of sleep, but she stirred at the touch of his arm, and her hand came up so that her fingertips touched his cheek.

He slept heavily, while outside on the raging deep the storm swept on along the coast, bearing with it the secret of the rest of those who only last night had looked forward to a pleasant voyage aboard the *Bengal Queen*.

The last thought in Bentley's mind was of that flickering light he had seen. It was not important, but memory of it clung, and followed him into his sleep with his dreams—in which he seemed to be following a darting, erratic light through a jungle without end.

He wakened with the sun burning his face and torso, and turned on his stomach with a groan. The heat ate into his back unbearably and he finally sat up, rubbed his eyes and stared out to sea. Then it all came back and he looked about him for the girl. She had disappeared.

He rose to his feet and shouted.

An answering cry came back to him, and after a moment the girl appeared around a bend in a shoreline where she had been masked by a wall of the jungle and came toward him. She was carrying something in her hands. When she stood at last before him he noted that she carried a bundle of cloth that was dripping wet.

"We need something to cover us," she said simply. "I was tempted to garb myself, but I did not wish to seem like a simpering prudish female, which I'm not at all. So I brought my findings here so that we could get together and fix up something to protect us from the sun."

"You're a sensible woman," said Bentley. "I've never understood why people should be so sensitive about their bodies. Mine isn't bad and yours, if you'll pardon me, is superb. That's not a compliment, just a statement of fact—which will help us to understand each other better. I've a hunch we're going to be some time in each other's company and we may as well know things about each other. My name's Lee Bentley."

"Mine is Ellen Estabrook."

Solemnly they shook hands. And their hands clung convulsively, for as though their handshake had been a signal there came a strange sound from the jungle behind them.

A burst of laughter that was plainly human—and another sound which caused the short hair at the base of Bentley's skull to rise, shift oddly, and settle back again.

The sound was like the beating of a skin-tight drumhead by the fists of a jungle savage. But if such it was the drum was a mighty drum, and the savage was a giant, for the sound went rolling through the jungle like an invisible tidal wave of sound.

Both the laughter and the drumming ceased as suddenly as they had sounded.

The man and woman laughed jerkily, dropped to the sand side by side and considered the necessity of clothes.

CHAPTER II

Into the Jungle

They had to smile together at the results achieved with the bedraggled bits of cloth. Bentley suspected that they had been taken from bodies washed ashore as gruesome reminders of the catastrophe which had befallen the *Bengal Queen*, and because he did suspect this he did not ask questions that might cause Ellen to remember any longer than was necessary. Not that he doubted her courage, for she had proved that sufficiently; and she had proved that she was sensible, with none of the notions of the proprieties which would have made any other girl of Bentley's acquaintance a nuisance.

Their next concern was food, which they must find in the jungle, or from other wreckage cast ashore from the *Bengal Queen*. Now, hand in hand—which seemed natural in the circumstances—they began to walk along the shore, heading into the north by mutual consent.

As they walked Bentley kept pondering on that strange laughter he had heard and on the sound of savage drumming. The laughter puzzled him. If there were anyone in the jungle back of them, why had he or they failed to challenge them?

As for the drumming sound—Bentley remembered what the second officer had said about this section of the coast. It was a bit of jungle inhabited by the great apes in large numbers. So, that drumming had been a challenge, the man-ape's manner of mocking an enemy by beating himself on his barrel chest with his huge fists. But that the ape had not been challenging Bentley and the girl Bentley felt quite sure, as the brute would certainly have shown himself in that case.

They trudged on through the sand, while the sun beat down unmercifully on their uncovered heads. Ellen Estabrook strode along at Bentley's side without complaint.

After perhaps an hour of this unbearable effort, when both felt as though the sun had sucked them dry of perspiration, they encountered a rough footpath leading into the jungle. The path suggested human habitation somewhere near. The inhabitants might be hostile natives, even cannibals perhaps, but in this unknown land they would have to take a chance on that.

With a sigh of relief, and refusing to look ahead too far, or try to guess what lay in wait for them in the black mystery of the jungle, they turned into the footpath. The jungle was fetid and sweaty, but even this was a relief from the intolerable sun which could not reach them here because the jungle had closed its leafy arms over the trail instantly. One could not tell from the path whether it had been made by natives or by whites, for it was packed hard. It led straight away from the shoreline.

"We'll have to keep a sharp lookout for possible poisoned spring darts, Ellen," said Bentley.

"I'm not afraid, Lee," she answered stoutly. "Fate wouldn't allow us to come through what we have only to end things with poisoned darts. It just couldn't happen that way!"

Thus simply they addressed each other. It seemed as though years had been squeezed into a matter of hours. They knew each other as well as they would, in other circumstances, have known each other after a year of constant association. Here barriers of conventions were razed as simply and naturally as among children.

They had pressed well into the gloom of the jungle when the first sound came.

Not the laughter they had heard before, but the drumming. It was ahead and somewhat to the left, and as they stopped without speaking they could distinctly hear the threshing of a huge body through the underbrush. The sound seemed to be approaching and for a minute or so they listened. Then the sound was repeated off to the right, a trifle further away.

"Can you climb, Ellen?" asked Bentley simply. "This section is filled with anthropoid apes, according to the second officer of the *Bengal Queen*. We may have to take to the trees."

"I can climb," she said, "but from what I've studied of the habits of these brutes they do a great deal of bluffing before they actually charge, and may not molest us at all if we pay no attention."

Bentley felt almost nude because he had no weapons save his own fists. And he would not have admitted even to himself how deeply he was concerned over the girl. As far as he knew, this section might be entirely uninhabited. It might be given over entirely to the anthropoids. In this case he shuddered to think of what might happen to Ellen Estabrook if he were slain.

He quickened his pace until Ellen kept stride with him with difficulty. The object uppermost in Bentley's mind was to get as far away as possible from the ominous drumbeats.

They rounded a bend in the trail and stopped stock-still.

Within fifty yards of them, blocking the trail, was a brute whose great size sent a thrill of horror through Bentley. It towered to the height of a big man, and must have weighed in the neighborhood of four hundred pounds. It was larger by far than any bull ape Bentley had seen in captivity.

It had been waiting for them, silently, with almost human cunning; but now that it was discovered the shaggy creature rose to his hind legs and screamed a challenge, at the same time striking his chest with blows of his hairy fists which rolled in a dull booming of sound through the jungle. At the same time the creature moved forward.

Bentley whirled to run, his hand clasping tighter the hand of Ellen Estabrook. But they had not retreated ten steps down the pathway when their way was blocked by another of the great shaggy brutes. And they could hear others on both sides.

Bentley's face was chalk-white as he turned to the girl. Her calm acceptance of their predicament, an attitude in which he could read no slightest vestige of fear, helped him to regain control of his own nerves, which had threatened to send him into a panic. She even smiled, and Lee felt a trifle ashamed of himself.

Now the crashing sounds were closing in. The two brutes before and behind on the trail were pressing in upon them. But no general headlong charge had yet begun. Bentley looked around him, seeking a tree with limbs low enough for them to reach and thus climb to safety.

"There's one!" cried Ellen. Tugging at his hand she began to run.

At the same moment the great apes bellowed and charged.

But the charge was never finished, for through the drumming of their mighty fists on mighty barrel-like chests, through the sound of their charge, through the crackling underbrush came again that sound of laughter. There was fierce joy in the laughter, and the laughter was followed by words of a strange gibberish which Bentley could not recall as being from any language he had ever heard.

The great apes paused. Out of the jungle to the right of the fugitives burst a white man. He was well past middle age, for his white hair hung almost to his shoulders, which were stooped with the weight of years. He was a wisp of a man whose smooth shaven face was apple-red. His eyes were black and expressionless as obsidian, and when Lee encountered the full gaze of them he was conscious of that feeling which he had experienced at various times in his life when he knew that some deadly reptile was close by.

"Stand still a moment!" cried the old man. His voice was strangely high-pitched and cracked.

From his right hand a whip with a long lash uncurled like a snake.

This he swung back and hurled to the front, and the snap of it was like a pistol shot. The great ape on the path ahead cowered back, bearing his fangs, roaring in anger. But that he feared the whip of the old man was plain to be seen. The crashing sound in the jungle died away rapidly, immediately the first report of the whip lash sounded in the trail.

Fearlessly the little man dashed upon the first of the great brutes the castaways had seen. His lash curled about the great beast's body, and the animal bellowed with pain. It clawed at the lash, but was not fast enough to capture it. In the end the brute broke and fled.

The animal which had blocked their path in the rear had already disappeared.

Now the little man came back to face the fugitives, and his lips were parted in a cordial smile. He coiled his whip and tucked it under his arm. He was dressed in well worn corduroy with high boots that were rather the worse for wear. Bentley saw that his lips were too red—like blood—and somehow he disliked the man instantly.

"Welcome to Barterville," said the old man. "It has been years since I have seen any of my own kind. People avoid this section of the jungle."

"I don't wonder," said Bentley, sighing deeply with relief. "Those brutes would make anybody keep away from here, if they knew about them. I thought they had us for a few minutes. They planned an ambush almost as well as human beings could have done it—but that's absurd of course, merely a coincidence."

"Coincidence?" snapped the old man, a hint of asperity in his words. "Coincidence? I see you do not know the great apes, sir. I have always maintained that apes could be trained to do anything men can do. I have maintained that they have a language of their own, and even ways of communicating without words, a sort of jungle writing which men of course have never yet learned. I've devoted my life to learning the secrets of the great apes, their life histories, and so forth. I am Professor Caleb Barter!"

"Professor Caleb Barter!" ejaculated Ellen Estabrook. "Why I've heard of him! He went on an expedition among the great apes ten years ago and was never heard of again."

"I am Caleb Barter," said the old man. "I decided to disappear from the world I knew, to let other fool scientists think me dead in order that I might continue my investigations without molestation. And now I have almost reached the place where I can go back to civilization with information that will startle the world. There yet remains one experiment. Now I hope to make that experiment. No! No! Don't ask me what it is. It is my secret and nobody will ever wrest it from me."

Bentley studied the old man. He seemed slightly demented, Bentley thought, but that might be merely the mental evolution of a man who had made a hermit of himself for so many years—if this chap actually were Professor Barter.

"Professor Barter," went on Ellen, "was the scientific leader of his day. Others followed where he led. He made greater strides in surgery and medicine, and in unravelling the mysteries of evolution, than anyone else up to his time. Of course I believe you are Professor Barter. My name is Ellen Estabrook, and this gentleman is Lee Bentley. We believe ourselves to be the only survivors of the *Bengal Queen*. Perhaps you can lead us to food and water?"

"Yes, oh yes! Indeed. One forgets how to be hospitable, I fear. I am sorry to hear there was a wreck and that lives were lost—but it may mean a great gain to the world of science. I am happier to see you than you can possibly know!"

Bentley felt the cold chills racing along his spine as he listened to the old man's flow of words. He behaved well, but Bentley could feel in spite of that, that there was a hidden current of menace in the old man's behavior. He wished that Ellen would keep him talking, would somehow make sure of his identity. Perhaps the same thought was in her mind, for it had scarcely come to him when the girl spoke again.

"Before he disappeared Professor Barter wrote a learned treatise on—"

"I am Professor Barter, I tell you, young woman. But if you wish proof the title of the treatise was 'The Language of the Great Apes.'"

Ellen turned quickly to Bentley and nodded. She was satisfied that the man was the person he claimed to be. He didn't ask how Ellen happened to know about him, and Bentley himself considered the proof entirely lacking in conclusiveness. Anyone might know about the last treatise of Barter.

However, they could but await developments.

They followed Barter along the trail. Now and again apes challenged from the jungle, and Barter answered them with that strange laughter of his, or with a flow of gibberish that was like nothing human.

Bentley shivered. Barter, by his laughter, was identifying himself to the great anthropoids. But with his gibberish was he actually conversing with them?

"This experiment of yours," said Bentley when the period of silence became unbearable, "—won't you tell us about it?"

The old man cackled.

"You'll know all about it—soon! You'll know everything, but the secret will still rest with Caleb Barter. Do not be too curious, my friends."

"We are anxious to reach civilization, Professor," said Bentley, deciding to be placative with the old man. "Perhaps you can arrange for guides for us?"

Barter laughed.

"I could not permit you to leave me for some time," he said. "I want you to witness my experiment. The world would never believe me without the evidence of reliable witnesses."

Barter laughed again.

They entered a clean clearing which was a riot of flowers. At the further edge was a log cabin of huge proportions. The whole thing had a decidedly homely appearance, but it was a welcome sight to the castaways. There were cages in which strange birds chattered shrilly in their own language at sight of the three. A pair of tame monkeys chased each other on the roof of the house, whose corners were almost hidden by climbing vines whose growth one could almost see.

Barter led the way at a swift walk across the clearing and into the house.

Bentley gasped. Ellen Estabrook exclaimed with pleasure.

The reception room was as neat as though it received the hourly attentions of a fussy housewife. It was cozily furnished, yet it was evident that the furniture had been made on the spot of rough wood and skins of various animals. Deep skin rugs covered the floor and walls. There were three doors giving off of the reception room, all three of which were closed.

"You are not married?" he asked the two.

"No!" snapped Bentley.

"That center door leads to your room, Bentley. The one next to it is for the young lady. The other door? Ah, the other door my friends! That door you must never open. But to make sure that curiosity does not overcome caution, let me show you!"

They followed him to the door. He swung it open.

Both visitors started back and a gasp of terror burst from the lips of Ellen Estabrook. Beads of perspiration burst forth on Bentley.

They saw a huge room. In one corner was a bed. The other held a great cage—and in the cage was an anthropoid ape larger even than the great brute they had met on the trail!

Barter laughed. He stepped into the room, uncoiled his whip and hurled the lash at the cage. A great bellowing roar fairly shook the house, while the brute tore at the bars which held him prisoner until the whole massive cage seemed to dance. Barter laughed and continued to goad him.

"Barter," yelled Bentley, "stop that! If that beast should ever happen accidentally to get free he'd tear you to pieces!"

"I know," said Barter grimly, "and that's part of the experiment! Now we shall eat, and you, young lady, shall tell me what other fool scientists had to say about me after I disappeared—to escape their parrot-like repeating of my discoveries!"

Bentley started to offer protest as Barter began preparation for the meal, which obviously was to be taken in the room which held the cage of the giant anthropoid, but Ellen put her fingers to her lips and shook her head. Her eyes were dancing with excitement.

CHAPTER III

A Night of Horror

The meal consisted of various fruits, some meat which Bentley could not identify, and wild honey which was delicious. The bread tasted queer but was distinctly edible. The castaways ate ravenously, but even as he ate Bentley noticed that Ellen's face was chalky pale, and that in spite of a distinct effort of will she simply had to look at intervals toward the great beast in the cage.

Caleb Barter sat with his back to the animal. Bentley sat at the left of the old scientist, Ellen Estabrook at his right. The great beast was quiet now, but he squatted within his prison and his red-rimmed eyes swerved from one person to the other in the room with a peculiar intentness.

"I'd swear that beast can almost read our thoughts!" ejaculated Bentley at last, after he had somewhat sated his appetite.

Barter smiled with those too-red lips of his.

"He can—almost. You'd be surprised to know how nearly human the great apes are, and how nearly human this particular one is. Ah!"

"What do you mean, this particular one?" asked Bentley curiously. "He doesn't look any different to me from the others I've seen except that he is far and away the largest."

"I don't see why you should be so curious," said Barter testily. "It's none of your business you know—yet."

"What do you mean?" demanded Bentley, nettled by Barter's tone.

"Lee, hush," said Ellen. "Professor Barter is not on trial for any crime."

Bentley looked at her in hurt surprise, inclined to be angry with her for the tone she was taking, but he saw such a look of appeal in her eyes that he choked back the words that rushed to his lips for utterance. He was decidedly on edge, more, he felt, than he should have been despite what they had gone through. When their eyes met he saw her glance quickly toward the ape, and noted a frown of worry between her brows.

Bentley glanced at the ape. The brute now was staring at the girl in a way that made Bentley's flesh crawl. It was preposterous of course, but he had the feeling, something which seemed to flow out of that mighty cage like some evil emanation from a dank tarn, that the ape knew the girl's sex—and that he desired her! It was horrible in the extreme to contemplate, yet Bentley knew when he glanced swiftly at the girl that she had sensed the same thing and was fighting to keep the natural horror she felt at such a ghastly thought from being noticeable. It was absurd. The ape was a prisoner. But....

"Professor Barter," said Bentley, "you're accustomed to being with this brute, but it isn't so nice for us, especially for Miss Estabrook."

Barter now frowned angrily.

"My dear Bentley," he said with that odd testiness which he had assumed toward Bentley before, "I refuse to have any interference with my experiment. This is part of it."

"You mean—" began Bentley.

"I mean that I'm training that ape—I call him Manape—to behave like human beings. How better can he learn than by watching our behavior?"

"Just the same," said Bentley, "I don't like it."

"It's all right, Lee," said Ellen quickly. "I don't mind."

But Bentley knew that it wasn't all right, and that she did mind, terribly.

Barter finished eating. Bentley had noticed that despite the long years he had been a virtual hermit, Barter ate as fastidiously as he probably had done when he had lived among his own kind. He pushed back his chair with a swift movement.

Instantly the roaring of Manape rang through the room. The great brute rose to his full height and grasped the bars of his cage, shaking them with savage fury. He glared at his master and bestial rage glittered from his red-rimmed eyes. He was a horrible sight. Ellen Estabrook, with no apology, stepped around the table and crouched wide-eyed in the arm of Lee Bentley.

"Lee," she said, "I'm terribly afraid. I almost wish we had trusted ourselves in the jungle."

"I'll look out for you," he whispered, as Barter turned his attention to the great ape.

But Bentley was watching the animal. So was Barter. The eyes of the scientist were shining like coals of fire. For the moment he appeared to have forgotten his guests.

"It is a success!" he cried. "As far as it goes, I mean!"

What did Barter mean? Seeking some answer to the enigma, Bentley studied the ape anew. Now he was positive of another thing: Manape was scarcely concerned with Barter, whom he appeared to hate with an utterly satanic hatred. His beady eyes were staring at Bentley instead!

"The brute is jealous of me!" thought Bentley. "Good God, what does it mean, anyway?"

Barter turned back to them and all at once became the genial host.

"Shall we return to the other room?" he asked politely.

It was a relief to the castaways to put that awful room behind them. Barter closed and barred the door with deliberate slowness.

Why had this old man shut himself away from civilization like this? How long had he held this great ape in captivity? What was the purpose of it? What experiment was he performing? What part of it had the castaways been witnessing that they had not recognized? Bentley, recalling the distinct impression that the ape had stared at Ellen almost with the eyes of a lustful man, and had even appeared to be jealous of him because the girl had gone into his arms—Bentley felt a shiver of revulsion course through him as it struck him now how *human* the regard and the jealousy of the creature had been!

He felt like clutching at the girl and racing with her into the hazards of the jungle. But he remembered the anthropoids out there, and Barter's peculiar domination of the brutes.

Barter was now watching the two with interest, studying them in turn speculatively, unmindful of the impertinence of his studious regard and silence.

"I have it!" he said. "Will you two be good enough to excuse me? You will need rest, I am sure. I am going away for a little time, but I shall return shortly after dark. Make yourselves at home. But remember—don't enter that room!"

"You need not worry," said Bentley grimly. "I sincerely hope we take our next meal in some other room."

Barter laughed and passed out of the door without a backward glance.

From the jungle immediately afterward came the drumming of the great apes, and now and again the laughter of Barter—high-pitched at first, but dying away as Barter apparently moved off into the jungle.

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llen," said Bentley quickly, "I don't know what's going on here, but I'm sure it's something sinister and awful. Let's take a look at our rooms. If there isn't a door between them which can be left

"E open, then you'll have to spend the night in my room while I remain awake on guard."

"I was thinking of the same thing, Lee," she whispered. "This place gives me the horrors. Barter's association with the apes is a terrible thing."

Hand in hand they stepped to the door Barter had designated as that of Ellen Estabrook's. Bentley opened it cautiously, heaving a sigh of relief to find it empty. He scarcely knew what he had expected. There was a connecting door between the two rooms, open, and they peered into the chamber Bentley was to occupy.

Back they came to her room, to stand before a window which gave onto a shadowed little clearing in the rear of the cabin.

"Look!" whispered Ellen.

There was a single mound of earth, with a white cross set over it, on which was the single word: Mangor.

It might have been a word in some native dialect. It might have been some native's name. It might have been anything, but, whatever it was, it added to the sinister atmosphere which seemed to hang like an evil mist over the home of Caleb Barter.

"That settles it, Ellen," he said. "You'll spend the night in my room."

Ellen retired in Bentley's room, closing the door which led to the adjoining room, and Bentley walked back and forth in the reception room, waiting for Barter to return. When darkness fell he lighted the lamps he had previously located. Their odor caused him to guess that the fuel they used was some sort of animal fat. In the strange glow from the lamps, his shadow on the walls, as he walked to and fro, was grotesque, terrible—and at times a grim reminder of the great apes. It caused him to consider how, after all, human beings were akin to gorillas and chimpanzees. Somehow, now, it was a horrible thought.

The night wore on and Bentley's stride became faster. Now and again he peered into the girl's room. She was sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion and he did not waken her. Bentley felt it was near midnight when Barter returned, his return heralded by a strange commotion in the clearing, and the frightful drumming of the great apes—or at least *one* great ape. Bentley shuddered as the animal behind the locked door answered the drumming challenge with a drumming thunder of his own.

Barter came in, and Bentley accosted him at once.

"See here, Barter," he began. "I don't like it here. There's something strange going on in this clearing. Miss Estabrook and I wish to leave immediately in the morning! And that grave behind the cabin, who or what is it?"

Barter studied the almost trembling Bentley for all of a minute.

"That grave?" he said at last, with silken softness. "It's the grave of a jungle savage. He died in the interest of science. As for you, you'll leave here when I bid you, and not before, understand? I've a guardian outside that would tear both of you limb from limb."

But Bentley caught and held fast to certain words the scientist had spoken.

"The savage died in the interest of science?" he said. "What do you mean?"

Barter smiled his red-lipped smile.

"I took the savage and Manape, who wasn't called Manape then, and administered an anesthetic of my own invention. You've heard that I was a master of trephining? No matter if you haven't heard, the whole world will know soon! While the native and the ape were under anesthesia I transferred their brains. I put the black man's brain in the skull pan of the ape, and the ape's brain in that of the savage. The ape lived—and he is Manape. The savage, with the ape's brain, died, and I buried him in that grave you asked about!"

With a cry of horror Bentley turned and fled from Barter as though the man had been His Satanic Majesty himself. He entered the room with Ellen and barred the door behind him. He likewise barred the door which led to that other room. Now in total darkness it was all he could do from clambering on the bed where Ellen slept, and begging her to touch him—anything—if only to prove to him that there still were sane creatures left in a mad world.

Outside Barter laughed.

"Oh, Bentley," he called after a long interval of silence, "do you like the odor of violets? Goodnight, and pleasant dreams!"

What had Barter meant?

Again assuring himself that the connecting door could not be opened if anything or anybody tried to enter that way, Bentley flung himself down before the door which gave on the reception room. He had no intention of sleeping. But in spite of himself he dozed off, though he fought against sleep with all his will.

Strange, but as he gradually slipped away into unconsciousness he was cognizant of the odor of violets—like invisible tentacles which reached through the very door and wrapped themselves gently about him.

His last conscious thought was of Manape, the ape with the brain of a jungle savage. But in spite of the vague feeling of horror he could not fight off the desire for sleep.

CHAPTER IV

Grim Awakening

Bentley returned to consciousness with a dull headache. He rose to a sitting posture and looked dully about him. Dimwittedly he tried to recall all that had passed since he had last been awake. He knew he had gone to sleep under the door in the room where Ellen had slept. Yet he was not there now. He peered about him.

He recognized the room.

Yonder was the table where they had eaten last night, or yesterday afternoon. Yonder was the bed he guessed Barter customarily used, and he shuddered a little as he fancied a man sleeping in the same room with that ghastly travesty which was neither ape nor human—Manape. The creature's name was simple, being simply "man" and "ape" joined together to fit the creature perfectly—too perfectly. Barter's bed had been slept in, but Barter was nowhere to be seen. Where was he? How came Bentley in this room? Barter had forbidden him to enter the place at all, on any pretext whatever. Had he walked in his sleep, drawn by some freak of his subconscious mind into the room of Manape?

Slowly, afraid to look yet forced by something outside himself, he turned his eyes toward the corner where the beast's cage was.

The cage was empty!

The door of it was open!

Stunned by his discovery, wondering what had happened during the night, Bentley looked about him. He noticed the long narrow table at the end of the cage, and the white covering it bore. He recognized it instantly as an operating table, and wondered afresh.

Where was Barter?

Bentley raised his voice to shout the scientist's name. But before he could himself recognize the syllables of the scientist's name, through the whole room rang the bellowing challenge of a giant anthropoid ape. Bentley cowered down fearfully and looked around him. Where was the ape that had uttered that frightful noise? The sound had broken in that very room, yet save for himself the room was empty.

Bentley turned his head as he heard someone fumbling with the door.

Barter entered, and his face was a study as his eyes met those of Bentley. Bentley noticed that Barter held that whip in his hand, uncoiled and ready for action.

What was this that Barter was saying?

"I warn you, Bentley, that if anything happens to me you are doomed. If I am killed it means a horrible end for you."

Bentley tried to answer him, tried to speak, but something appeared to have gone wrong with his vocal cords, so that all that came from his lips was a senseless gibberish that meant nothing at all. He recalled the odor of violets, Barter's enigmatic good-night utterance with reference to violets, and wondered if their odor, stealing into the room where he had gone on guard over Ellen, had had anything to do with paralyzing his powers of speech.

"I see you haven't discovered, Bentley," said Barter after a moment of searching inspection of Bentley. "Look at yourself!"

Surprised at this puzzling command, Bentley slowly looked down at his chest. It was broad and hairy, huge as a mighty barrel, and his arms hung to the floor, the hands half closed as though they

grasped something. Horror held Bentley mute for a moment. Then he raised his eyes to Barter, to note that the scientist was smiling and rubbing his hands with immense satisfaction.

Bentley started across the floor toward a mirror near Barter's bed. He refused to let his numbed brain dwell upon the instant recognition of his manner of progress. For he moved across the floor with a peculiar rolling gait, aiding his stride with the bent knuckles of his hands pressed against the floor.

He fought against the horror that gripped him. He feared to look into the mirror, yet knew that he must. He reached it, reared to his full height, and gazed into the glass—at the reflection of Manape, the great ape of the cage!

Instantly a murderous fury possessed him. He whirled on Barter, to scream out at the man, to beg him to explain what had happened, why this ghastly hallucination gripped him. But all he could do was bellow, and smash his mighty chest with his fists, so that the sound went crashing out across the jungle—to be answered almost at once by the drumming of other mighty anthropoids outside, beyond the clearing which held the awful cabin of Caleb Barter.

He started toward Barter, still bellowing and beating his chest. His one desire was to clutch the scientist and tear him limb from limb, and he knew that his mighty arms were capable of ripping the scientist apart as though Barter had been a fly.

"Back, you fool!" snarled Barter. "Back, I say!"

The long lash of the whip cracked like a revolver shot, and the lash curled about the chest and neck of Bentley. It ripped and tore like a hot iron. It struck again and again. Bentley could not stand the awful beating the scientist was giving him. In spite of all his power he found himself being forced back and back.

He stepped into the cage, cowered back against its side. Barter darted in close, shut the door and fastened it. Then he stood against the bars, grinning.

"Nod your head if you can understand me, Bentley," he said.

Bentley nodded.

"I told you I would yet prove to the world the greatness of Caleb Barter," said the scientist. "And you will bear witness that what I have to tell is true. Would you like to know what I have done?"

Again, slowly and laboriously, Bentley nodded his shaggy head.

Barter grinned.

"Wonderful!" he said. "You see, you are now Manape. Yesterday you had the brain of a black man, and to exchange your brain with Manape's of yesterday would not have served my purpose in the least. So I had to find an ape of more than average intelligence. That's why I spent so much time in the jungle yesterday. I needed a brain to put in the body of Lee Bentley's—an ape's brain. Your

body is a healthy one and I did not think it would die as the savage's did. I was right. It is doing splendidly. It would interest you to see how your body behaves with an ape's brain to direct it. Your other self, whom I call Apeman, is unusually handsome. Miss Estabrook, however, who does not know what has happened, has taken a strange dislike to the other you! Splendid! I shall study reactions at first hand that will astound the world!

"But remember, whatever your fine brain dictates that you do, don't ever forget that I am the only living person who can put you to rights again—and if I die before that happens, you will continue on, till you die, as Manape!"

Barter stopped there. Bentley stiffened.

From the room where he knew Ellen Estabrook to be came her voice, raised high in a shout of fear.

"Lee! Please! I can't understand you. Please don't touch me! Your eyes burn me—please go away. What in the world has come over you?"

Bentley listened for the reply of the creature he knew was in the other room with Ellen Estabrook.

But the answer was a gurgling gibberish that made no sense at all! His own body, directed by the brain of an ape, could not emit speech that Ellen could understand, because the ape could not speak. The ape's vocal cords, which now were Bentley's, were incapable of speech.

How, if Barter continued to keep Ellen in ignorance of what had happened, would she ever know the horrible truth—and realize the danger that threatened her?

"Don't worry for the moment, Bentley," said Barter with a smile. "I am not yet ready for your other self to go to undue lengths—though I dislike intensely to leave the marks of my whip on that handsome body of yours!"

Barter slipped from the room.

Bentley listened, amazed at the clarity with which he heard every vagrant little sound—until he remembered again that his hearing was that of a jungle beast—until he knew that Barter had entered that other room.

Then came the crackling reports of the whip, wielded mightily by the hands of Barter.

A scream that was half human, half animal, was the result of the lashing. Bentley cringed as he imagined the bite of that lash which he himself had experienced but a few moments before.

"Professor Barter! Professor Barter!" distinctly came the voice of Ellen Estabrook. "Don't! Don't! He didn't mean anything, I am sure. He is sick, something dreadful has happened to him. But he wouldn't really hurt me. He couldn't—not really. Stop, please! Don't strike him again!"

But the sound of the lash continued.

"Stop, I tell you!" Ellen's voice rose to a cry of agonized entreaty. "Don't strike him again. See, you've ripped his flesh until he is covered with blood! Strike me if you must strike someone—for

with all my heart and soul I love him!"

CHAPTER V

Fumbling Hands

Now Bentley was beginning to realize to the full the horrible thing that had befallen himself and Ellen Estabrook. He knew something else, too. It had come to him when he had heard Ellen's words next door—telling Barter that she loved the creature Barter was beating, which she thought was Lee Bentley. That creature was Lee Bentley; but only the earthly casement of Lee Bentley. The ruling power of Bentley's body, the driving force which actuated his body, was the brain of an ape.

As for Bentley himself, that part of him of which he thought when he thought of "I," to all intents and purposes, to all outer seeming, had become an ape. His body was an ape's body, his legs were an ape's, everything about him was simian save one thing—the "ego," that something by which man knows that he is himself, with an individual identity. That was buried behind the almost non-existent brow of an ape.

In all things save one he was an ape. That thing was "Bentley's" brain. In all things save one that creature in the room with Ellen Estabrook was Bentley. Bentley, driven to mad behavior by the brain of an ape!

The horror of it tore at Bentley, as he still thought of himself.

"If I were to get out of this cage," he told himself voicelessly, "and were to enter that room with Ellen, she would cower into a corner in terror. She would fly to the arms of that travesty of 'me,' for she thinks it is 'I' in there with her because it *looks* like me."

Now that Ellen was beyond his reach, more beyond his reach than if she had been dead, he realized how much she meant to him. In the few mad hours of their association they had come to belong to each other with a possessiveness that was beyond words. Thinking then that the travesty in there with her—with Bentley's body—was really Bentley, to what lengths might she not be persuaded in her love? It was a ghastly thing to contemplate.

But what could Bentley do? He could not speak to her. If he tried she would race from him in terror at the bellowing ferocity of his voice. How could he tell her his love when his voice was such as to frighten the very wild beasts of the jungle?

Yet....

How could he allow her to remain with that other Bentley—that body which perhaps was provided with a man's appetites, and the brain of a beast which knew nothing of honor and took what it wished if it were strong enough?

There was one ray of hope in that Barter had hinted he would protect Ellen from the apeman. That meant physically, with all that might indicate; but who could compensate her for the horror she must be experiencing with that speechless imbecile she thought was Bentley? If this thing were to

continue indefinitely, and Ellen were kept in ignorance, she would eventually grow to hate the "thing"—and if ever, as he had hinted, Barter were to transfer back the entities of the man and the ape, Ellen would always shudder with horrible memories when she looked at the man she had just now admitted she loved.

Bentley was becoming calmer now. He knew exactly what he faced, and there was no way out until Barter should be satisfied with his mad experiment. Bentley must go through with whatever was in store for him. So must the ape who possessed his body—and in the very nature of things unless Bentley could train himself to a self-saving docility, both bodies would repeatedly know the fiery stinging of that lash of Barter's. Bentley could control himself after a fashion. The ape might be cowed, but long before that time arrived, Bentley's body would be made to suffer marks they would bear forever to remind him of this horror.

"I must somehow manage to continue to care for Ellen," he told himself. "But how?"

He scarcely realized that his great hands were wandering over his body, scratching, scratching. But when he did realize he felt sick, without being able to understand how or where he felt sick. If he felt sick at the stomach he thought of it as his own stomach. When he thought of moving the hairy hands he thought of his hands. He grinned to himself—never realizing the horrible grimace which crossed his face, though there was none to see it—when he recalled how men of his acquaintance during the Great War, had complained of aching toes at the end of legs that had been amputated!

He was learning one thing—that the brain is everything that matters. The seat of pain and pleasure, of joy and of sorrow, of hunger and of thirst even.

Bentley waddled to the door of the cage. He studied the lock which held him prisoner, and noted how close he must hold his face to see at all. All apes might be near-sighted as far as he knew; but he did know that this one was. Perhaps he could free himself.

He tried to force his massive hands to the task of investigating the lock. But what an effort! It was like trying to hypnotize a subject that did not wish to be hypnotized. A distinct effort of will, like trying to force someone to turn and look by staring at the back of that someone's neck in a crowd. It was like trying to make an entirely different person move his arm, or his leg, merely by willing that he move it.

But the great arms, which might have weighed tons, though Bentley sensed no strain, raised to the door and fumbled dumbly, clumsily. He tried to close the gnarled fingers, whose backs were covered with the rough hair, to manipulate the lock, but he succeeded merely in fumbling—like a baby senselessly tugging at its father's fingers, the existence of which had no shape or form in the baby's brain.

But he strove with all his will to force those clumsy hands to do his bidding. They slipped from the lock, went back again, fumbled over it, fell away.

"You must!" muttered Bentley. "You must, you must!"

He would discover the secret of the lock, so that he would be able to remove it when the time was right—but so slow and uncertain and clumsy were the movements of his ape hands, he was in

mortal fear that he would unlock the door and then not be able to lock it again, and Barter would discover what he had in mind.

But he struggled on, while foul smelling sweat poured from his mighty body and dripped to the floor. He concentrated on the lock with all his power, knowing as he did so that the lock would have been but a simple problem for a child of six or seven. It was nothing more than a bar held in place with a leather thong. But the powerful fingers which now were Bentley's were too blunt and inflexible to master the knot Barter had left.

Bentley paused to listen.

From Ellen's room came the sound of weeping. From the front room came Barter's pleased laughter as he talked with the thing which so much resembled Bentley. That was a relief—to know that his other self had been at least temporarily removed from any possibility of injuring Ellen.

In Bentley's mind were certain pictures of Barter. He saw him plainly on his knees begging for mercy, while Bentley's ape hands choked his life away. He saw him tossed about like a mere child, and casually torn apart, ripped limb from limb by the mighty hands of Manape.

"God," he told himself, refusing to listen to the slobbering gibberish which came from his thick lips when he addressed himself, "I can do nothing to Barter—not until he restores me properly. If he is slain, it is the end for me, and for Ellen! He is a master, no doubt of that. He anesthetized me through the door with something of his own manufacture that smelled like violets, and put my brain in Manape after removing from Manape the brain of the savage. Then he removed an ape's brain from a second ape and put it in my skull pan—all within the space of a few hours! Yet his knowledge of surgery and medicine is such that even in so short a time I suffer little from the operation, save for the dull headache which I had on awakening, and which I now scarcely feel at all."

He straightened, close against the bars, and began again to fumble with the leather thong which held him prisoner. In his brain was the hazy idea that he might after all make a break for it, and carry Ellen away to a place of safety, taking a chance on finding his way back here to force Barter to operate again and restore him to his proper place. But would not Ellen die of fright at being borne away through the jungle in the arms of an ape? Was there any possibility of forcing Barter to perform the operation? No, for under the anesthetic again, Barter, angered by the thwarting of whatever purpose actuated him, might do something even worse than he had done—if that were possible. Again, even if he reached civilisation with Ellen, every human hand would be turned against him. Rifles would hurl their lead into him. Hunters would pursue him....

No, it was impossible.

Bentley, Ellen, and the Apeman—his own body, ape-brained—were but pawns in the hands of Barter. Barter might be actuated by a desire to serve science, that science which was alike his tool and his god. Bentley scarcely doubted that Barter believed himself specially ordained to do this thing, in the name of science; probably, unquestionably, felt himself entirely justified.

Plainly, now that Bentley recalled things Barter had said, Barter had waited for an opportunity of this kind—had waited for someone to be tossed into his net—and Ellen and Lee, flotsam of the sea, had come in answer to the prayer for whose answer Barter had waited.

It was horrible, yet there was nothing they could do—at least, to free themselves—until it pleased Barter to take the step. It came then to Bentley how precious to them both was the life of Caleb Barter. He could restore Bentley or destroy him—and with him the woman who loved him.

Suppose, came Bentley's sudden thought, Barter should think of performing a like operation on Ellen—using in the transfer the brain of a female ape? God!...

He prayed that the thought would never come to Barter. He was afraid to dwell upon it lest Barter read his thought. He might think of it naturally, as a simple corollary to what he had already done. Bentley then must do something before Barter planned some new madness.

He sat back and bellowed savagely, beating his chest with his mighty hands.

Instantly the outer door opened and Barter came in.

Bentley ceased his bellowing and chest pounding and sat docilely there, staring into the eyes of Barter.

"Have you discovered there is no use opposing me, Bentley?" said the professor softly.

Bentley nodded his shaggy head. Then by a superhuman effort of will he raised the right arm of Manape and pointed. He could not point the forefinger, but he could point the arm—and look in the direction he desired.

"You want to come out and go into the front room?"

Bentley nodded.

"You will make no attempt to injure me?"

Bentley shook his head ponderously from side to side.

"You would like to see the Apeman?—the creature that looks so much like you that it will be like peering at yourself in the mirror? Or, rather, as it would have been yesterday had you looked into a mirror?"

Bentley nodded slowly.

"You understand that no matter what the Apeman does, you must not try to slay him?"

Bentley did not move.

"You understand if you destroy Apeman's body, you are doomed to remain Manape forever, because the true body of Lee Bentley will die and be eventually destroyed?"

Bentley nodded. He felt a trickle of moisture on the rough skin about his flaring nostrils and knew that he was weeping, soundlessly.

But there was no pity in the face of Barter. He was the scientist who studied his science, to whom it was the breath of life, and he saw nothing, thought of nothing, not directly connected with his "experiment."

"You give me your word of honor as a gentleman not to oppose me?"

It was odd, an almost superhumanly intellectual scientist asking for an ape's word of honor, but that did not occur to Bentley at the moment, as he nodded his head.

Barter still held his lash poised. He unfastened the leather thong which held Bentley prisoner and swung wide the door. Then he turned his back on Bentley and led the way to the door.

Bentley followed him on mighty feet and bent knuckles into the room which had first received Lee and Ellen when they had entered the cabin of the scientist.

Bentley would have gasped had he been capable of gasping at what he saw.

In a far corner, cowering down in fear at sight of Barter and his coiled whip—was the Bentley of the mirror in his stateroom aboard the *Bengal Queen*, and before that.

It was an uncanny sensation, to stand off and peer at himself thus.

Yonder was Bentley, yet *here* was Bentley, too.

Then he noted the difference. The face of that Bentley yonder was twisted, savage. *That* Bentley had seen Manape, and the teeth were exposed in a snarl of savage hatred. There a man ape stared at another man ape, and bared his fangs in challenge. The white hands of Bentley began to beat the white chest of Bentley—to beat the chest savagely, until the white skin was red as blood....

The Bentley buried within the mighty carcass of an anthropoid ape watched and shuddered. That thing yonder was dressed only in a breech-clout, and the fair flesh was criss-crossed in scores of places with bleeding wounds left by the lash of Barter. The Apeman's brows were furrowed in concentration. The human body made ape-like movements.

Bentley knew that soon that creature, forgetting everything save that he faced a rival man ape, would charge and attempt to measure the power of Manape—fang against fang. The white form rose.

Barter caused his whiplash to crack like an explosion.

"One moment," he said. "Back, Apeman! I'll bring Miss Estabrook. Perhaps she can placate you. She has a strange power over you both!"

Bentley would have cried out as Barter crossed to unlock Ellen's door, but he knew that he could not stop Barter, and that his cry would simply be a terrible bellow to frighten the woman he loved when she entered the room.

The door opened. White, shaken, her eyes deep wells of terror, circled with blue rings which told the effect of the horror she had experienced, Ellen Estabrook entered.

And screamed with terror as she saw the hulking figure of Manape. Screamed with terror and rushed to the arms of the cowering thing in the corner!

CHAPTER VI

Puppets of Barter

The thing that Barter then contrived was destined to remain forever in the memory of Bentley as the most ghastly thing he had ever experienced. Ellen hurried into the arms of that thing in the corner. Gropingly, protectively, the white arms encompassed her. But they were awkward, uncertain, and Bentley was minded of a female ape or monkey holding her young against her hairy bosom.

Barter turned toward Bentley and smiled. He rubbed his hands together with satisfaction.

"A success so far, my experiment," he said. "The human body still answers to primal urges, which are closely enough allied to those of our simian cousins that their outward manifestations—manual gestures, expressions in the eyes et cetera—are much the same. When the two are combined the action approximates humanness!"

That travesty yonder pressed its face against Ellen, and she drew back, her eyes wide as they met those of the white figure which held her.

"I am all right," she managed, "please don't hold me so tightly."

She tried to struggle away, but Apeman held her helpless.

"Barter," yelled Bentley, "take her away from that thing! How can you do such a horrible thing?"

At least those were the words he intended to shout, but the sound that came from his lips was the bellowing of a man ape. That other thing yonder answered his bellow, bared white teeth in a bestial snarl. Barter turned to Bentley, however.

"You want me to take her away from Bentley and give her to you?"

Bentley nodded.

His bellowing attempt at speech had sent Ellen closer into the arms of Bentley's other self—henceforth to be known as Apeman. Bentley had defeated his own purpose by his bellow.

"Miss Estabrook," said Barter softly, "nothing will happen to you if you stand clear of your sweetheart...."

Nausea gripped Bentley as he heard Apeman referred to as Ellen's sweetheart, but now he remembered to refrain from attempting speech.

"But," went on Barter, "Manape has taken a violent dislike to Bentley, and may attack him if you do not stand clear. Manape likes you, you know. You probably sensed that last evening?"

Ellen visibly shuddered. She patted the shoulder of Apeman and stepped away, toward a chair which Barter thrust toward her.

She pressed her hands to her throbbing temples, visibly fighting to control herself. Her whole body was trembling as with the ague.

"Professor Barter," she said at last. "I am terribly confused, and most awfully frightened. What has happened here? What dreadful thing has so awfully changed Lee? I talk to him and he answers nothing that I understand. Is it some weird fever? At this moment I have the feeling that that brute Manape understands more perfectly than Lee, and the idea is horrible! I love Lee, Professor. See, he hears me say it, yet I cannot tell from his expression what he thinks. Does he despise me for so freely admitting my love? Has he any feeling about it at all? Has his mind completely gone?"

"Yes," said Barter, with a semblance of a smile on his lips, "his mind has completely gone. But it is only temporary, my dear. You forget that I am perhaps the world's greatest living medical man, and that I can do things no other man can do. I shall restore Lee wholly to you—when the time comes. It is not well to hasten things in cases of this kind. One never knows but that great harm may be done."

"But I can nurse him. I can care for him and love him, and help to make him well."

Barter looked away from Ellen, his eyes apparently focussed on a spot somewhere in the air between Apeman and Manape.

"Would that be satisfactory to Bentley, I wonder?" he said musingly, yet Bentley recognized it as a question addressed to him. Bentley looked at the girl, but her eyes were fixed—alight with love which was still filled with questioning—on Apeman. Bentley shook his head, and Barter laughed a little.

"You know, Miss Estabrook," he went on, "that a strange malady like that which appears to have attacked Lee Bentley should be studied carefully, in order that the observations of a savant may be given to the world so that such maladies may be effectually combatted in future. This is one reason why I do not hasten."

"But you are using a sick man as you would use a rabbit in a laboratory experiment!" she cried. "Can't you see that there are things not even you should do? Don't you understand that some things should be left entirely in the hands of God?"

"I do not concede that!" retorted Barter. "God makes terrible mistakes sometimes—as witness cretins, mongoloid idiots, criminals, and the like. I know about these things better than you do, my dear, and you must trust me."

"Oh, if I only knew what was right. Poor Lee. You lashed him so, and his body is awful with the scars. Was that necessary?"

"Insane persons are not to blame for their insanity," said Barter soothingly. "Yet sometimes they must be handled roughly to prevent them from causing loss of life, their own or others."

Now the eyes of Ellen came to rest on Manape.

They were fear filled at first, especially when she discovered that the little red eyes of Manape were upon her. But she did not turn her eyes away,

nor did Manape. She seemed dazed, unable to orient herself, unable to distinguish the proper mode of action.

"That ape in repose is almost human," she said wearily, her brow puckered as though she sought the answer to some unspoken question that eluded her. "I am not afraid of him at this moment, yet I know that in a second he can become an invincible brute, capable of tearing us all limb from limb."

"Not so long as I have this whip," said Barter grimly. "But Manape is docile at the moment, and it is Bentley who is ferocious."

Apeman was still snarling at Manape, lending point to Barter's statement. Barter went on.

"You know," he said, "apes are almost human in many respects. Manape likes you, and I doubt if he would attempt to hurt you. If he knew that you cared for Bentley there, he would most assuredly try to be friendly to Bentley also. Perhaps you can manage it. Apes are capable of primitive reasoning, you know. Go to Manape. He won't injure you, at least while I am here. Stroke him. He will like it. He is a friend worth having, never fear, and one never knows when one may need a friend—or what sort of friend one may need."

Ellen hesitated, and her face whitened again.

Barter went on.

"Go ahead. It is necessary that Manape and Bentley remain here together for a time. Manape will be locked up, but if he happens to break loose there is nothing he might not do. With Bentley in the condition he is he would be no match for Manape. But if Manape thought you desired his friendship for Bentley...?"

There he left it, while Bentley wondered what new horror Barter was planning. He yearned for Ellen to come to him. But, if he strode toward her now, how would Barter explain that Manape had understood his words? No, Ellen must take the step, and each one would be

hesitant, as she fought against her natural revulsion at touching this great shaggy creature which was Manape to her, and Bentley to himself.

Slowly, almost against her will, Ellen rose and moved across the floor toward Bentley. Apeman growled ominously. He rose to his feet, his arms writhing like disjoined, broken-backed snakes across his scarred chest.

Apeman took a step forward. Barter did not notice, apparently, for he was watching Manape as Ellen approached.

She came quite close. Slowly she put forth her hand to touch the shaggy shoulder of Manape. Bentley, seeking some way, *any* way, to reassure her, put his great shaggy right arm about her waist for the merest second.

Then Apeman charged, bellowing a shrill crescendo that was half human, half simian.

Before Bentley could realize Apeman's intentions, Apeman had clutched Ellen about the waist and dashed for the door of the cabin. He was gone, racing across the clearing with swift strides, bearing the girl with him.

Bentley whirled to pursue, but Barter had beaten him to the door and now blocked it, whiplash writhing, twisting, curling to strike.

"Back, Bentley! Back, I say! In a moment you may follow—as part of my experiment. But remember—the end must be here in this cabin, and you must remember everything, so that you can tell me all—when you are restored!"

Bentley cowered under the lash. His whole shaggy body trembled frightfully.

From the jungle toward which Apeman was racing come the roaring challenge of half a dozen anthropoids.

CHAPTER VII

Lord of the Jungle

Apeman, never realizing that his actual strength was that of but a puny human being, was racing with Ellen Estabrook into the very midst of animals which would tear him to bits as easily as they would tear any human being to pieces. Apeman, being but an ape after all, would merely think that he was joining his own kind, bearing with him a mate with white skin.

But to the other apes he would be a human being, a puny hairless imitation of themselves which they would pounce upon and tear asunder with great glee. Apeman would not know this: would not realize his limitations. He would try to take to the upper terraces of the jungle, to swing from tree to tree, carrying his mate—and would find the body of Bentley incapable of supporting such an effort. Apeman would be a child in the hands of his brethren, who could not know him. Apeman could probably speak to them after a fashion, but his gibberish would come strangely perhaps unintelligibly, through the mouth of Bentley. They would suspect him, and destroy him, and with him Ellen Estabrook, unless other apes discovered also her sex and took her, fighting over her among themselves.

Bentley made good time across the jungle clearing. Behind him came the voice of Barter in final exhortation.

"Your human cunning, hampered by your simian body, pitted against the highly specialized body of your former self, in turn hampered by the lack of reasoning of an ape—in a contest in primitive surrounding for a female! A glorious experiment, and all depends now upon you! You will save the girl who loves you and whom you love, but you must return to me and be transferred before you can make your love known. I shall wait for you!"

In Bentley's brain the shouted words of Barter rang as he hurried into the jungle in pursuit of Apeman. Ellen Estabrook was crying: "Hurry, Lee, hurry!"

Yet she was really yelling to Apeman, the man-beast which carried her, bidding him race on to escape the pursuit of Manape, in whom she would never recognize the man she loved. She must have

thought that Bentley had taken a desperate chance to escape the clutches of Barter, and that Barter had set his trained ape to pursue them. What else could she think? How could she know that she was actually in the power of an ape, and that her loved one actually pursued to save her? With every desire of her body she was urging Apeman to take her away from Manape. But she must also have heard the challenges of the man apes in the jungle ahead. She was looking back over Apeman's shoulder, wondering perhaps if Barter would again come out to save them from the anthropoids.

Bentley could guess at her thoughts as he raced on in pursuit of Apeman.

Would he be in time? Even if he were, Apeman himself would turn against him. If he were to try to aid Ellen she would fight against him, believing him an ape. And how could he fight? Would his brain be able to direct his mighty arms and his fighting fangs in a battle with the apes of the jungle?

As he thought of coming to grips with the apes on equal terms, something never in this world before vouchsafed to a human being, he felt a fierce exaltation upon him. He felt a desire to take part in mortal combat with them, to fight them fist and fang, and to destroy them, one by one. He had their strength and more—he had the cunning of a human being to match against the dim wits of the apes. He had a chance.

But he must protect not only Ellen, but Apeman. Both Ellen and Apeman would be against him. Ellen would fear him as an ape that desired her. Apeman would fight against him as a rival for the favors of a she....

And he must harm neither. His own body, which Apeman directed, must be spared, must be kept alive—while every effort of Apeman would be to force Bentley to slay!

It was a predicament which—well, only Caleb Barter had foreseen it.

The bellowing of the apes was a continuous roar on all sides now. Bentley felt a fierce sensation of joy welling up within him and he answered their bellowing with savage bellows of his own. His legs

were obeying his will. His knuckles touched the ground as he raced on all fours.

He could hear the shriek of Ellen there ahead, and knew that Apeman and the girl were surrounded—that he must make all possible speed if he were to be in time.

Apeman and his captive were on the trail, trapped there just as Apeman had started into the jungle. Apeman had lifted Ellen so that her hands might have grasped a limb; but the girl had refused to attempt to escape by the trees if her "lover" remained behind. She had crumpled to the ground, and Apeman, snarling, smashing his chest which was so sickly white as compared to the chests of the other apes, had turned upon his brethren. They hesitated for a moment as though amazed at the effrontery of this mere human.

Then a man ape charged. Apeman met him with arms and fangs, and Bentley saw Apeman's all too small mouth snap out for the vein in the neck of Apeman's attacker. The ape whose brain reposed in Apeman had been a courageous beast, that was plain. But he was fighting for his she.

And he did not know his limitations. Apeman was bowled over as though he had been a blade of grass, and the great ape was crouched over him, nuzzling at his white flesh when Bentley-Manape arrived.

With a savage bellow, and with a mighty lunge, Bentley leaped upon the attacker of Apeman. His arms obeyed him with more certainty now, perhaps because the matter was so vitally urgent. Bentley's brain knew jiu-jitsu, boxing, ways of rough and tumble fighting of which the great apes had never learned, nor ever would learn.

He hurled himself upon the animal that was on the point of pulling Apeman apart as though he had indeed been a fly, and literally flattened him against the ground. His mighty hands searched for the throat of the great ape, while he instinctively pulled his stomach out of the

way of possible disemboweling tactics on the part of his antagonist. But the great ape twisted from his grasp, struggled erect.

And, amazed at what he was doing, surprised that he, Lee Bentley, could even conceive of such a thing, he launched his attack with bared and glistening fangs straight at the throat of his enemy. His mouth closed. His fangs ripped home—and the great ape whose throat he had torn away, whose blood was salt on his slavering lips, was tossed aside as an empty husk, to die convulsively, a dripping horror which was humanlike in a ghastly fashion. Bentley felt like a murderer. Not like a murderer, either, but like a man who has slain unavoidably—and hates himself for doing so.

Ellen was backed against the tree into which Apeman had tried to force her.

Apeman was up now, moving to stand beside her. Apeman had discovered that he was not the invincible creature he had thought himself.

Bentley moved in closer to the two, as other apes charged upon him from both sides, smothering him, giving him no time. He was a stranger, seemingly, an upstart to be destroyed.

And he was forced to fight them with all his ape strength and human cunning, while Apeman, whimpering, caught up Ellen and darted away with her, straight into the jungle.

For Bentley this was a sort of respite. Ellen was not afraid to go with Apeman, thinking him Bentley. The great apes were bent on destroying this strange ape which had come into their midst and had already destroyed one of their number, perhaps their leader.

He must be destroyed.

Bentley fought like a man possessed. His arms were gory with crimson from the slashing fangs of his enemies. His mouth was dripping with red foam as he slashed in turn, with deadly accuracy. A great arm clutched at the hair of his chest—and fell away again, broken in two places,

as Bentley snapped it like a pipe stem because he knew leverages and was able to force his ape's body to obey the will of his human mind.

One ape whimpering, rolling away to lick at his wounds; whimpering oddly like a baby that has burned its fingers. A great ape weighing hundreds of pounds, crying like a child! Yet that "child," with his arm unbroken, could have taken a grown man, no matter how much of a giant, and torn him to pieces.

Two other apes were out of the fray, one dead, the other with only empty eye-sockets where his red-rimmed eyes had been.

Bentley guessed that Apeman had gone at least a mile into the jungle, heading directly away from the dwelling of Caleb Barter. He must get free and pursue. There was nothing else he could do. If he were slain, Ellen was doomed to a fate he dared not contemplate. Apeman would never be accepted by the apes because to all outward seeming he was a man. His body would never stand the hardship of the jungle, yet Apeman would never guess that, and would be slain. Bentley must prevent that.

He must make sure that Apeman's body at least remained sufficiently healthy that it could become his own again without the necessity of a long sojourn in some hospital. Ellen must not be left alone with Apeman, who was still an ape, running away with a she.

A ghastly muddle.

Now the apes broke away from Bentley. They broke in all direction into the jungle. Some of them seemed on the trail of Apeman. One of them took to the trees, swinging himself along with the speed of a running man, flying from limb to limb with no support save his hands.

Bentley stared after the fleeing ape, and then gave chase. He felt that the ape was on the trail of Apeman. Bentley did not know that he himself could follow the spoor of Apeman, for he had not yet analyzed all of his new capabilities. But while he was discovering, he would follow something he

could see—the fleeing ape, who would overhaul Apeman as though Apeman were standing still.

So, in a manner of speaking, Bentley essayed his wings.

He took to the trees after the fleeing ape, and was amazed that his great arms worked with ease, that he swung from limb to limb as easily and as surely as the other apes. He climbed to the upper terrace, where view of the ground was entirely shut off. His eyes took note of limbs capable of bearing his weight—after he had made one mistake that might easily have proved costly. He had leaped to a limb that would have supported Bentley of the *Bengal Queen*, but that was a mere twig under the weight of Manape. It broke and he fell, clutching for support; and fate was kind to him in that he found it, and so clambered back and swung easily and swiftly along.

In his nostrils at intervals was a peculiar odor—a peculiarly human odor, reminding him of the work-sweat of a man who seldom bathed. He knew that for the odor of Apeman, and a thrill of exaltation encompassed him as he realized that he was following a spoor by the cunning of his nostrils.

There was a great leap across space. The ape ahead of him made it with ease. Bentley essayed it without hesitation, hurling himself into space, all of a hundred feet above the ground; with all the might of his arms—and almost overshot the mark, almost went crashing once more through the branches. But the tree swayed, and held, and Bentley went swinging on.

It was wildly exhilarating, thrilling in a primitive way. Bentley remembered those dreams of his childhood—dreams of falling endlessly but never striking. Racial memories, scientists called them, relics of our simian forebears. Bentley thought of that and laughed; but his laughter was merely a beastly chattering which recalled him to the grim necessity of the moment.

Fifteen minutes passed, perhaps. Twenty. Half an hour. He was following a trace which led away from the coast, and further away from the cabin of

Caleb Barter. But with his jungle senses, and his human memory, Bentley was sure he could return when the time came.

Had Barter foreseen all that? Was Barter smiling to himself, back there in his awful hermitage, waiting for the working out of his "experiment"?

But Apeman had jungle knowledge, and must have forced Bentley's body to the limit of its endurance, for it was near evening when Bentley, who had lost the ape ahead of him, but had continued on the spoor of Apeman by the smell, came to swift pause on his race through the trees.

He had heard the voice of Ellen Estabrook, and the voice was pleading.

"Lee! Lee! If you love me try to regain control of yourself. Please do not stare at me like that. Oh, your poor body! The brush and briars have literally torn you to bits."

But the answer of "Lee" was a bestial snarl, and traveling as quietly as he could, Manape dropped down so that he could gaze upon his beloved, and the thing she believed she loved.

Ellen was unaware of him. But he had scarcely dropped into view before Apeman became aware of him, and rose weakly to tottering limbs, to beat his bruised and bleeding chest in simian challenge. Apeman was simply an ape that had run until he was finished, and now was turning to make a last stand against a male who was stronger—a last bid for life and possession of the she he had carried away.

Then Ellen saw Manape, screamed, and for the first time since she had been saved from the deep by Bentley, fainted dead away.

The two so strangely related creatures faced each other across her supine body—and both were savagely snarling. Apeman weakly but angrily, Manape with a sound of such brute savagery that even the twittering of birds died away to awed silence.

CHAPTER VIII

Struggle for Mastery

It was Apeman who charged. Pity for Apeman welled up in Bentley. That was his own body which Apeman was so illy using. His own poor bruised and bleeding body, which Apeman had all but slain by forcing it far beyond human endurance. It must be saved, in spite of Apeman.

But there was something first to do. Bentley bent over Ellen, caught her under his arm, and returned to the trees, with Apeman chattering angrily and futilely behind him. Bentley found a crotch in the tree where he could place Ellen, made sure that she was safely propped there and that no snakes were near, and hurried back to the contest with Apeman which could not be avoided.

He did not fear the battle he knew he must fight. He hurried back because Apeman might realize himself beaten and escape into the jungle. In his weakened condition he could not travel far and would be easy prey for any prowling leopard, easy prey for the crawling things whose fangs held sure death. Or would the cunning of Apeman, denizen of the jungle, warn him against any such? His ape brain would warn him, but would his human strength avail in case of necessity, in case of attack by another ape, or a four-footed carnivore?

Bentley hurried back because Apeman must be saved, somehow, even against his will. Apeman hated Manape with a deadly hatred. Yet to subdue the travesty of a human being, Manape must take care that he did not destroy his own casement of humanity. Any moment now and a great cat might charge from the shadows and destroy Apeman.

Apeman, snarling, beating his puny chest with his puny hands, was waiting for Manape his enemy.

Manape found himself thinking of the line: "'O wad some power the giftie gie us, to see oursilves as ithers see us,'" and adding some thoughts of his own.

"If that were actually 'I' down there, my chance of preserving the life of myself, and that of Ellen against the rigors of the jungle, would be absolutely nil. How helpless we humans are in primitive surroundings! The tiniest serpent may slay us. The jungle cats destroy us with ease, if we be not equipped with artificial weapons which our better brains have created. As Manape, Barter's trained ape, I am better fitted to protect Ellen than if I were Bentley—the Bentley of the *Bengal Queen*. Yet she will cower away from me when she wakens."

Now Bentley was down, and Apeman was charging. He charged at a staggering run. He stepped on a thorn, hesitated, and whimpered. But he possessed unusual courage, for he still came on. Apeman knew the law of the jungle, that the weakest must die. Death was to be his portion if he could not withstand the assaults of Manape, and he came to meet his fate with high brute courage.

Apeman was close in. His hands were swinging, fists closed, in a strange travesty of a fighting man. Apeman was snarling. He groped for the throat of Manape with his human teeth—which sank home in the tough hide of Manape, hurting him as little as though Apeman were toothless.

"As Bentley I would have no chance at all against a great ape," said Bentley to himself.

How could he take the pugnacity out of Apeman without destroying him? If he struck him he might strike too hard and slay Apeman—which was the equivalent of slaying himself. So Manape extended his mighty hands, caught Apeman under the armpits and held him up, feet swinging free. Yet Apeman still struggled, gnashed his teeth, and beat himself on the chest.

How utterly futile! As futile as Bentley in his own casement would have been against a great ape! Apeman might destroy himself through his very rage. How could Bentley render the travesty unconscious and yet make sure that Apeman did not die?

If he struck he might strike too hard and slay.

What should he do?

A low coughing sound came from somewhere close by. From the deeps of his consciousness Bentley knew that sound. He clutched Apeman in his right arm, swung back to the tree and up among the branches. He was just in time. The tawny form of a great cat passed beneath, missing him by inches.

But while he had saved himself and Apeman, he had been clumsy. He had struck the head of Apeman against the bole of the tree, and Apeman hung limp in his arm. Bentley, fear such as he had never before known gripping him, pressed his huge ear to Apeman's heart. It was beating steadily and strongly. With a great inner sigh of relief he climbed to safety in the tree, bearing Apeman with him.

He reached the crotch where Ellen rested, and disposed Apeman nearby, his own gross body between them. He even dared to gather Ellen closer against him for warmth. His left hand held tightly the wrist of the unconscious Apeman, so that he should not fall and become prey of the night denizens of the jungle.

So, the two who seemed to be human—Apeman and Ellen, passed from unconsciousness into natural sleep, while Bentley-Manape remained motionless between them, afraid to close his eyes lest something even more terrible than hitherto experienced might transpire. But his ears caught every sound of the jungle, and his sensitive ape's nostrils brought him every scent —which his man's mind strove to analyze, reaching back and back into the dim and misty past for identification of odors that were new, or that were really old, yet which had been lost to man since they had left forever the

simian homes of their ancestors and their senses had become more highly specialized.

The questions which turned over and over in Bentley's mind were these:

How shall I tell Ellen the truth? Will she believe it?

What is the rest of Barter's experiment? How shall I proceed from this moment on? How shall I procure food for Ellen? What food will Apeman choose for my body to assimilate?

And jungle night drew on. Once Ellen shivered and pressed closer to Manape as she slept.

What would morning bring to this strange trio?

CHAPTER IX

Fate Decides

Morning brought the great apes of the jungle—scores of them. They had approached so silently through the darkness that Bentley had not heard them, and his ape's nostrils had not told his human brain the meaning of their odor. It appeared too that his ape's ears had tricked him. For when morning came there were great apes everywhere.

Bentley still held the wrist of Apeman, whose chest was rising and falling naturally, though the body was limp and plainly exhausted, and exuded perspiration that told of some jungle fever or other illness perhaps, induced by hardship and over-exertion. The ape's brain of Apeman had driven Bentley's body to the uttermost, and now that body must pay.

Bentley wondered how far he was now from the cabin of Caleb Barter.

He doubted if Apeman could stand the return journey, though Bentley's ape body could have carried Apeman's with ease. But would Apeman stand the journey? Apeman, Bentley knew, was going into the Valley of the Shadow, and something must be done to save him. But what?

And the great apes constituted a new menace, though they were making no effort to molest the three in the tree. Apeman must be placed in a shady place and some attention paid to his needs. But the human body with the ape's brain could not tell how it hurt or where.

The first task was to get the two beings down from the tree, and much depended upon chance. To the apes Bentley was another ape, one moreover which had slain a number of them. But Apeman was a human being, as was Ellen Estabrook. The whole thing constituted a fine problem for the brain of Manape.

If Manape were to attempt first aid for Apeman, how would such a sight react upon Ellen Estabrook? If Manape were to attempt to take Apeman back to Caleb Barter, leading the way for Ellen, would she follow, and what would his action tell her? She would think herself demented, imagining things, because a great ape did things which only human beings were supposedly capable of doing.

If she knew, of course, it would make a difference. But she did not, and Bentley had no means by which to inform her. That was a problem for the future. Ellen was sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion and he felt that he could safely leave her for the moment while he swung Apeman down from the tree. He must work fast, and return for Ellen before the great apes discovered the helpless Apeman at the foot of the tree. He hoped to get Ellen down while she slept, knowing that she would be in mortal fear of him if she wakened and found herself in his power.

Bentley got Apeman down, and looked about him. No apes were close enough, as far as he could tell, to molest Apeman before Bentley could return with Ellen. He raced back into the tree, lifted Ellen so gently that she scarcely altered the even motion of her breathing—and for a moment he hesitated. So close to him were her tired lips. So woe-begone and pathetic her appearance, a great well of pity for her rose in the heart of Bentley—or what was the seat of this emotion within him? Was the brain the seat of the emotions? Or the heart? But Bentley's true heart was in Apeman's human

body, so there must be some other explanation for the feeling which grew and grew within Bentley for Ellen.

He leaned forward with the intention of touching his lips to the tired thin lips of Ellen Estabrook, then drew back in horror.

How could he kiss this woman whom he loved with the gross lips of Manape, the great ape?

He could, of course, but suppose she wakened at his caress and saw the great figure of the jungle brute, with all man's emotions and desires, yet with none of man's restraint—bending over her? Women had gone insane over less.

He hurried down with Ellen, and placed her beside Apeman.

By now the great apes had discovered the strange trio and were coming close to investigate. There was a huge brute who came the fastest and seemed to be the leader of the apes, if any they had. But even this one did not offer a challenge, did not seem perturbed in the least. But he did seem filled with childish curiosity. The apes themselves were like children, children grown to monstrous proportions, advancing and retreating, staring at this trio, darting away when Apeman or Ellen made some sort of movement.

Bentley could sense too their curiosity where he was concerned. Their senses told them that Bentley was a great ape. Their instincts, however, made them hesitate, uncertain as to his true "identity"—or so Bentley imagined.

Ellen still slept, but she must have sensed the near presence of potential enemies, for she was stirring fitfully, preparing to waken.

What would her reaction be when she opened her eyes to see Manape near her, standing guard over Apeman, with the jungle on all sides filled with the lurking nightmare figures of other great apes?

A moan of anguish came from Apeman. He stirred, and groans which seemed to rack his whole white bruised body came forth. The brain of the ape was reacting to the suffering of Bentley's body—and a brute was whimpering with its hurts. The advancing apes came to pause. They seemed to stare at one another in amazement. They were suddenly frightened, amazed, unable to understand the thing they saw and were listening to. Bentley crouched there, watching the apes, and he fancied he could understand their sudden new hesitancy.

He did not know, but he guessed that the moans and groans of Apeman were comprehensible to the great apes. They knew that this strangely white creature was an ape, though he looked like a man. Already they had wondered as much as they were capable, about Manape. They had sensed something not simian about him which puzzled them.

But from the lips of Apeman, to add to their mystification, came the groans and moans of an ape that was suffering. Bentley held his position, wondering what they would do. That they meant no harm he was sure, else they would long since have charged and overborne the three—unless they remembered the super-simian might of Manape and were afraid to attack again. Bentley hoped so, for that would make things easier for them all.

Now the nearest apes were almost beside the body of Apeman, which was still covered with agony sweat. The lips emitted moans and faint blurs of gibberish. Bentley noted that the leading ape was a great she. The female came forward hesitantly, making strange sounds in her throat, and it seemed to Bentley that Apeman answered them. For the she came forward with the barest trace of hesitancy, stared for a moment at Manape, with a sort of challenge in her savage little red eyes, then dropped to all fours beside Apeman and began to lick his wounds!

The she knew something of the injuries of Apeman and was doing what instinct told her to do for him. Now the rest of the apes were all about them—and Ellen wakened with a shrill cry of terror.

Bentley remained as a man turned to stone. If he moved toward the woman he loved she would flee from him in terror—out among the other apes and into the jungle where she would have no slightest chance for life. If he did nothing she might still run.

Wildly she looked about her. She screamed again when she saw the she bending over the travesty she thought to be Bentley, and licking the poor bruised body. Ellen cast a sidelong look at Manape, and there was something distinctly placating in her eyes. She recognized Manape, and wanted his friendship. What thoughts crowded her brain as she realized that she was in the center of a group of anthropoids who could have destroyed her with their fingers in a matter of seconds!

She did the one thing which proved to Bentley that she was worthy of any man's love. The great she who licked the wounds of Apeman was thrice the size of Ellen. Yet Ellen crawled to Apeman, little sounds of pity in her throat. Instantly the snarling of the she sent her back. The she had, for the time being at least, assumed proprietorship of Apeman, and was bidding Ellen keep her distance. And the she meant it, too. For she bared her fighting fangs when Ellen again approached close enough to have touched the body of Apeman.

This time the she advanced a step toward the girl, and her snarl was a terrible sound. Ellen retreated, but no further than was necessary to still that snarl in the throat of the she. Manape moved in quite close now, into position to interfere if the she tried to actually injure Ellen Estabrook. If only, Bentley thought, there were some way of making himself known to Ellen! But how could she believe, even if a way were discovered?

"What shall I do?" moaned Ellen aloud, wringing her hands. "Poor Lee! I can't move him. That brute won't let me touch him. Oh, I'm afraid!"

Bentley wanted to tell her not to be afraid, but had learned from experience that when he tried to speak his voice was the bellowing one of a great ape. And if he were to enunciate words that Ellen could understand, what then? English from the lips of a giant anthropoid! She would not believe, would

think herself insane—and with excellent reason. Slowly, as matters were transpiring, she had already been given sufficient reason to believe that her mind was tottering.

Manape stood guard over her. A she had adopted the thing she thought was Bentley. A score of great apes, which only three days ago had tried to destroy both Bentley and herself, now surrounded Bentley and Ellen with all the appearance of amity—crude, true, but unmistakable. Certainly this was sufficiently beyond all human experience to make Ellen believe she were in the throes of some awful nightmare. What would she think if an ape began to address her in English, and "Bentley" suddenly held speech with the great apes?

Add to this possibility, suppose she were suddenly confronted with the truth —that the essential entities of Bentley and Manape had been exchanged, and the whole thing were explained to her from the gross lips of Manape himself, while "Bentley" looked on and chattered a challenge in ape language while Manape talked?

No, at first she might have understood. Now it would have been even more horrifying for her to hear the truth. She must think what she would, and be allowed to adjust herself to the astounding state of affairs. Apeman could not be moved for some time. Ellen would not leave him, naturally. Nor would Manape. And the apes apparently intended to remain with them. Which made the problem, after all, a simple one. The trio must remain for the time being among the great apes. They needed one another in a strange way, and they needed the apes themselves, which were like a formidable army at their backs, as protection against the other beasts of the wilds.

Bentley watched the great she continue her rude first aid for Apeman. Apeman was still moaning, though less fitfully, like a child that nuzzles the milk bottle, but is drifting away into sleep. The she gave the travesty her full attention. There was something horribly human about her maternal care of this creature before her. Her great arms held Apeman close while her tongue caressed his wounds. Bentley knew that that tongue was an excellent

antiseptic, too. All animals licked their own wounds, and those wounds healed. Only human beings knew the dangers of infection, because they had departed from Nature's doctrines and had tried to cheat her with substitutes. Only the animals, like that great she, still were Nature's children, healing their own wounds in Nature's way.

Satisfied that the apes would not molest Ellen, so long as she kept her distance from Apeman, Bentley decided to seek food, which Ellen must sorely need. The need for water was urgent, too. Bentley knew the danger of drinking water found in the jungle—but an ape could scarcely be expected to build a fire with which to boil the water, nor to produce a miracle in the shape of something to hold it in over the fire.

Here were many makeshifts indicated, then. Bentley smiled inwardly, the only way he could smile. He must feed himself, too. He must go wandering through the woods, feeding the body of Manape with grubs, worms and such nauseous provender, because it was the food to which Manape was accustomed. Apeman, when he was well enough to eat, would sicken the body of Bentley with the same sort of food, because the brain of Apeman would not know what was good or bad for the body of a human being—nor even would understand that his body was human. What *did* Apeman think of his condition, anyway?

That question, of course, would never be answered—unless Barter could really speak the language of the great apes and somehow managed to secure from Apeman, if Apeman lived, a recital of these hours in the jungle.

What food should Manape secure for Ellen? What fruits were edible, what poisonous? How could he tell? He watched the other apes, which were scattering here and there now, tipping over rocks and sticks to search for grubs and worms—to see what fruits they ate, if any. They would know what fruits to avoid.

An hour passed before Bentley saw one of the brutes feed upon anything except insects. A cluster of a peculiar fruit which looked like wild currants, but whose real name Bentley did not know. Now, feeling safe in his choice,

because the ape was eating the berries with relish, Bentley searched until he found a quantity of the same berries, and bore them back to Ellen Estabrook.

Beside Apeman, who now was awake and exchanging crazy gibberish with the she who had licked his wounds, Ellen Estabrook, trying to be brave, did not cry aloud. But her face was dirty, and her tears made furrows through the grime.

Manape dropped the berries beside her. The she snarled as Ellen reached for the berries. Manape flung himself forward as the she strove to take the berries before Ellen could grasp them—and cuffed her over backward with a cumbersome but lightning-fast right swing.

"Manape," said Ellen, "if only you could talk! I feel that you are my friend, and my fears are less when you are with me. I'll pretend that you can understand me. It helps a little to talk, for one scarcely seems so much alone. How would you feel, I wonder, Manape, if you were suddenly taken entirely out of the life you've always known, and forced to live in another world entirely? It would not be easy to be brave, would it? Suppose you were taken out of the wilds and dropped into a ballroom?"

Bentley could have laughed had the jest not been such a grim one. What would Ellen think if he were to answer her:

"I would be much more at home in that ballroom than that thing on the ground that you love—as matters are at this moment!"

She would not understand that.

Nor did she understand when the she went away for a time and came back with a supply of worms and grubs—which nauseous supply vanished with great speed under the wolfish appetite of Apeman. There was little wonder that Ellen found it difficult to orient herself.

"I must tell her somehow," thought Bentley, "and that soon. Surely enough has been done to satisfy the devilish curiosity of Caleb Barter."

Toward evening the apes began to drift further into the jungle. The she gathered Apeman in her arms and moved off with him. There was nothing for Manape to do but follow, and nothing for Ellen to do but follow, too—if she loved the thing she thought was Bentley. She did not hesitate.

With unfaltering courage she followed on, and the lumbering forms of the great apes drifted further away from the sea, seemingly headed toward some mutely agreed upon jungle rendezvous. Everything depended for the time upon the return to health of Apeman. All other matters depended upon that. Each in his own way, Manape and Ellen, realized this. Caleb Barter had schemed better than he could possibly have foreseen.

CHAPTER X

Written in Dust

As Apeman was borne deeper into the jungle in the great arms of the she, what was more natural in the circumstances than that Ellen keep close to her only remaining link with the world she had left—Manape, the trained anthropoid of Caleb Barter? A natural thing, and one that filled Manape with obvious pleasure.

Once she touched his hand, rested her own small one in his mighty palm for a moment—and Bentley was afraid to return the pressure of her palm with the hand of Manape, lest he crush every bone in her fingers. Thereafter at intervals, while the whole aggregation drifted deeper into the jungle, Ellen clung to Manape; depended upon him. Was it her woman's intuition which told her that Manape was a safe guardian?

Bentley refused to dwell on that phase of this wild adventure however, for there were other things to think about. It required many hours for him to discover the truth, but he knew it at last. He, Manape-Bentley, was the lord of the great apes! Before his capture, or before the capture of Manape by Caleb Barter, Manape had been leader of these apes. Now he had returned and was their ruler once more. Upstarts had taken his place, and he had slain them—back there when Apeman had tried to escape into the jungle with Ellen in his arms. To the apes this must have seemed the way it was.

Bentley was putting things together, hoping and believing that they made four—yet not sure but that he was forcing them to equal four when in actuality they were five or six. If Manape—the original ape of Barter's capture, whose body now was Bentley's—had been the leader of the great apes, that explained why the animals remained constantly in the vicinity of Barter's dwelling. Barter had needed them in his plans, and had made certain their remaining near by making their leader captive. And of course only an ape sufficiently intelligent to rule other apes would have suited the evil scheme which must have been growing for years in the mind of Caleb Barter. Barter had merely waited with philosophic calmness for human beings to drift into this territory—and the *Bengal Queen* had obligingly gone down off the coast, throwing Ellen Estabrook and Lee Bentley into Barter's power.

What was Barter doing now? Would he not be striving to watch the course of his experiment? Would he not think of details hitherto overlooked and plan further experiments, or an enlarging of this experiment of which three creatures were the victims? Surely Barter would not remain quietly at Barterville while the subjects of his experiment went deeper into the jungle with the great apes. Barter was too thorough a scientist for that. Somehow, Bentley was sure, Barter would know what was happening, even at this very moment.

He would wish to know how a modern woman would conduct herself if suddenly forced to live among apes. Therefore he would try in some manner to keep watch over the conduct of Ellen Estabrook. He would wonder how a modern man would conduct himself if he suddenly found, himself the leader of that same group of apes, and how an ape would behave if he suddenly discovered himself a man. It was a neat "experiment," and Bentley was beginning to believe that there was probably far more to it than there first had seemed.

Barter would wish to know how all three creatures would conduct themselves in certain circumstances—Apeman, Ellen and Bentley. He would not leave it to chance, for Bentley now realized that Barter himself

did not feel inimical to either Ellen, Apeman or Bentley. To him they were merely an experiment. Barter would not wish for Apeman to die, and thus deprive Barter of a certain knowledge relative to one angle of his unholy experiment. He would not wish for Manape-Bentley to remain forever as Manape-Bentley, lacking the power of speech, either human speech or the gibberish of the apes.

No, all this was not being left to chance. Bentley believed that Barter was directing the destination of these three subjects of his, as surely as though he were right with them at this moment, driving them to his will with that awful lash which had made him feared by the great apes.

Yes, Barter was still the master mind. It made Bentley feel awfully helpless. Yet—he was the leader of the great apes. That, too, Barter must have foreseen. Would Barter try in any way to discover how Bentley would behave in an emergency as leader of the apes? Would he wish to know sufficiently to create an emergency? From Bentley's knowledge of the twisted genius of Caleb Barter, he fully believed that Barter planned yet other angles to his experiment.

If he did, then what would he do next?

It was not until the storm broke over the strange aggregation of great apes, who seemed to be holding two white people prisoners, that Bentley understood that from the very beginning he should have been able to see the obvious denouement—the mad climax which even then was preparing in the jungle ahead, simply waiting for the great apes to drift, feeding as they went without a thought of danger, into the trap set for them.

Ellen now kept her hand in the great palm of Manape. She wept on occasions, when she thought of the apparent hopelessness of her position, but for the most part she was brave, and Bentley grew to love her more as the hours passed—even as he grew more impatient at his inability to express his love. If he tried he could simply frighten her—fill her with horror because, gentle though he was with her and he was a great ape, a fact which nothing could change. Nor could anybody change the fact, except

Caleb Barter. Where was the scientist? What would be his next move if he were not leaving the working out of his experiment entirely to chance, which seemed not at all in keeping with the thorough manner of his experiment thus far.

The future was a dark, painful obscurity, in which all things were hidden, in which anything might happen—because Caleb Barter would wish for it to happen.

How long would Barter wait before making his next move? Long enough for Ellen to accustom herself to life among the apes? Long enough to discover whether her natural intelligence would guide her to eke out existence among hardships such as human beings never thought of, except perhaps in nightmares? Long enough to allow the brain of Bentley to discover what miracles intellect might do with the body of Manape? Long enough for Apeman to be well of his illness, so that he might observe what havoc an ape's brain might work with a human body?

Certainly when one gave the hideous experiment full thought, its possible angles of development, its many potential ramifications, were astounding in the extreme. Was it not up to Bentley then to do something besides mope and pine for the impossible, and thus hasten the hour when Barter should be wholly satisfied with his experiment?

What would Apeman do, how would he behave, when the white body of Bentley was well again? Would that body grow well faster when guided by an ape's brain than when a human brain was in command? Certainly Caleb Barter must have listed all these questions and hundreds of others which had not as yet occurred to Bentley. If he had he would not transfer the two intelligences back to their proper places until all of his questions were answered to his satisfaction. Bentley himself must somehow force an answer to some of them.

To do this he must try to guess what sort of questions Barter would have listed, and try to work out their answers—assuming all the time that Barter,

from some undiscovered coign of vantage would be watching for the answers he hoped his experiment would provide.

Bentley arrived at a decision. Ellen must long since have become numbed to the horror which encompassed her. Bentley knew that a human brain could stand only so much, beyond which it was no longer surprised or horrified. He guessed, noting the pale face of his beloved, that Ellen had well nigh reached that stage.

He decided to take a tremendous risk with her sanity, hoping thereby to do his part in working out the details of Barter's experiment.

The sun was creeping into the west when the roving apes came to pause in a sort of clearing. Some of them curled up in sleep. The she who carried Apeman squatted with Apeman in her arms, and licked his wounds again.

That Apeman was recovering was plainly evident, and when he saw it filled Bentley with an odd mixture of thankfulness and revulsion. Apeman was essentially an ape. With all his strength back he would revert to type, and what if he forced the body of Bentley to do horrible things that Ellen would never be able to forget or condone—even when she at last knew the truth? What if Apeman selected, for example, a mate—from among the hairy she's? For Apeman that would be natural, for Bentley horrible.

Yet it might easily transpire. Apeman might relinquish the white she to a successful rival—which he would regard Manape as being—and content himself with a choice from the ape she's. Somehow that unholy thing must not happen. That was up to Manape-Bentley.

Or, with his strength fully returned, Apeman might again desire Ellen, and force the issue with Manape for her possession—which seemed equally horrible to the brain of Bentley.

Ellen remained as close to Apeman as the she would permit her. Manape-Bentley crouched close by. After a time Apeman slept, and Bentley was pleased to notice that the agony sweat no longer beaded Apeman's body,

and that Apeman was recovering with superhuman swiftness—thanks to the ministrations of the unnamed she who had taken charge of him. Apeman now rarely groaned, sleeping or waking.

Ellen watched the sleeping Apeman with her heart—and her fears—in her eyes. Satisfied that he slept, and that his sleep was healthy, Ellen again approached the creature she knew as Manape, Barter's trained ape.

"If only you could talk," she said to him. "If only you were able to give some hope. If only there were some way I could cause you to understand my wishes—understand and help me."

Bentley did not answer. He knew that to be useless. But his brain remembered something. His brain recalled that moment in the cage in the dwelling of Barter, when his human brain had tried to force obedience from the great clumsy hands of Manape, when he had tried to force those mighty fingers to unfasten the knots which held the cage door secure.

Could he force those hands to something else?

Did he dare try?

It was a terrible risk to take with Ellen's sanity, but Bentley felt it must be taken. She was watching him hopelessly, and her lips moved as though she prayed for a miracle—as though by some weird necromancy she might force Manape to understand her words, and to answer her, allaying her fears, destroying her hopelessness.

When Ellen watched him, Bentley searched about nearby until he found a dried stick perhaps eight feet in length. He held it up, sniffed at it, fumbled it with his heavy, grotesque fingers. He focussed the attention of Ellen upon that stick, while his excitement mounted and mounted, and his fear of possible consequences kept pace with his excitement.

Then, his decision reached, he began again that species of hypnosis which seemed necessary to compel the hands and fingers of Manape to do things

no ape's hands had ever done before, no ape's brain had ever thought of doing.

He pressed one end of the stick against the ground at his sprawling feet. With his left palm he smoothed out an area of dust several feet in either direction—a rough dusty rectangle.

Interested, her brows puckered in concentration. Ellen watched as Manape went through these gestures which were so strangely, terribly human.

Her eyes were watching the end of that twig which the trained ape was so clumsily clutching in both hands.

She saw the marks the twig made in the dust as Manape caused it to move —slowly, horribly, fearfully, from left to right across the area of dust.

Fear began to grow in her face, but Bentley forced himself on. Again the fetid odor of ape sweat covered him. This awful concentration, this awful task of forcing Manape to write English words was in itself a miracle, more miraculous even than Ellen would have thought of praying for.

Her eyes were glued to the sprawling, uneven, misshapen marks in the dust with hypnotic fascination. Bentley dared not look at her, because it required all his will to force the clumsy hands of Manape to his bidding.

He could only watch the marks in the dust, and will with all the power of his human intelligence that the hands of Manape make their shape sufficiently plain that Ellen might read them—and hope besides that this terrible thing would not send the sorely harassed girl into the jungle, madly shrieking for deliverance from a nightmare.

There, the words were written—and Ellen was staring at them, her eyes wide and unblinking, her body as rigid as stone, and her face as cold. Only three words were possible without an interval of rest, but those three words, among all Bentley might have selected, were the most to the point, the most unbelievable, the most black-magical.

"I am Lee!"

Minutes went into eternity as Ellen stared at the words. Silence that it seemed would never be broken hang over the clearing. The bickering of the apes passed unnoticed as Ellen stared. Then, slowly, she tried to raise her eyes to meet those of Manape.

She failed. Her body went limp and she slid forward on her face in the dust. Manape-Bentley gently turned her on her side and waited. What would he see in her beloved eyes when she regained consciousness?

CHAPTER XI

Barter Acts

Bentley remained motionless, awaiting Ellen's return to consciousness. He waited in fear and trembling. How would she react to the horrible thing he had told her?

Now there was possibility of converse between them. If she knew and realized the meaning of his revelation. But would her mind stand up under the awfulness of it? He had thought so, else he would not have taken the chance he had taken. Much now depended upon Ellen, and all he could do was wait.

Slowly she began to move. Moans escaped her lips, little pathetic moans, and the name of Lee Bentley.

At last her eyes opened, and widened with horror when they met those of Manape. Bentley knew that there were tears on the face of Bentley-Manape. Manape, it seemed, cried easily, like a child.

Her eyes still wide with horror. Ellen Estabrook slowly turned them until she gazed at the dust rectangle in which presumably a great ape had written words in English. But Bentley-Manape had rubbed out the words. She turned and looked at Manape again, and her lips writhed and twisted. She was seeking for words, shaping words, to ask questions such as none in all the world's history had ever asked of a giant anthropoid, with any hope of receiving answers.

"You tell me you are Lee," she began slowly, hesitantly, as though the words were literally forced from her against her will. "I cannot grasp the meaning of that. You say you are Lee, yet I recognize you as Manape, Caleb Barter's great ape. Yet Manape could not have written those words. Yet, if you are Lee Bentley, who or what is that?"

She turned and pointed a trembling finger at Apeman. Bentley of course could not answer her in words, yet his mind was busy conceiving of some way in which he might answer her. She turned back to him after a long look at Apeman and studied him. His huge barrel chest, the mighty arms, the receding forehead—the outward seeming of a giant ape.

Again that hesitant, horribly difficult task, of forcing the arms of Manape to perform actions which were not natural to the arms of a great ape. Bentley managed to raise the right arm in the gesture of pointing.

He pointed at the other apes, some of which slept, some of which ate of grubs and worms, or bickered savagely among themselves over whatever childish trifles seemed important to the ape mind.

"You mean," said Ellen huskily, "that Lee Bentley there is really an ape?"

Manape nodded, ponderously.

Ellen's face became animated. She was beginning to understand how to hold speech with Manape.

"You tell me he is a great ape, yet he has the body of Lee Bentley. You tell me you are Bentley, yet I see you as Manape. Caleb Barter's trained ape. How am I to understand? Are my eyes betraying me, or is this a nightmare from which I shall waken presently? I see the shape of Manape, who writes in the dust that he is Lee. How can I know? None of you I can see is Lee Bentley. What part of you that I cannot see is Lee?"

Again the effort of forcing the hands of Manape to obedience.

Manape-Bentley tapped his receding forehead with his knuckles, and a gasp burst from the lips of Ellen Estabrook.

"You mean your brain is Bentley's brain, and that Bentley's body holds the brain of a great ape?"

Manape nodded clumsily.

"But how? You mean—Caleb Barter? I remember about him now. A master surgeon, an expert on anesthesia—a thousand years ahead of his time. You mean then that we three are part of an experiment? You, Manape, have the brain of Bentley, and Bentley has the brain of a great ape?"

Bentley nodded.

The face of Ellen Estabrook writhed and twisted. Her eyes studied the person of Manape the great ape. She could not believe the thing she had been told, yet she was thinking back and back—back to when Apeman had carried her away, his subsequent behavior, his behavior in the house of Barter, and his interest in the she ape who had licked his wounds.

She remembered how Manape in the beginning had looked at her with the eyes of a lustful man—and how later all his attitude had been protective. There seemed evidence in plenty to support the statement Manape had mutely managed to give her. She was forced to believe.

"But, Lee,"—she came closer to Manape as she spoke—"we must do something for that creature there—that thing with the ape she which looks like the man I love. You've heard me say that I love Lee Bentley?"

Manape nodded.

"Does Lee Bentley love me?"

Again Manape nodded, more vehemently this time. Ellen smiled. Then, quickly, she came to Manape, thrust her fingers against his skull and examined it closely. Her brows were furrowed in concentration. She left Manape and strode to Apeman. The she growled at her but she ignored the beast as much as possible, though plainly cognizant of the fact that she

dared not touch her hands to Apeman on pain of being torn asunder by the fighting fangs of the ape she.

Then Ellen came back.

"The evidence is there, Lee," she said. "There are the marks of a surgeon's instruments. Marvelous. One is almost inclined to forget the horror of it in the realization that a miracle has been performed. The operation was perfect. But what did he use for anesthesia? How did Barter manage to complete his operation and cause his two patients to feel no-ill effects, to be to all intents and purposes well in mind and body—all within less than twelve hours? However, that does not matter now. Something must be done. Since Caleb Barter was the only man who could perform this unholy operation, he is the only one who could repeat it restoring each of you to your proper earthly casements. So we must play in with him. I suppose you've long since decided that way, Lee?"

How strange it seemed to Ellen to discuss such matters with Manape. But behind his brutish exterior was the brain of the man whom she loved.

"And there is one other thing," Ellen almost whispered, and her face flushed rosily. "No harm must come to the body of Lee, you understand? He must never be permitted to do anything of which Lee Bentley of after years may have cause to feel ashamed."

Manape nodded. He understood her, and despite the grotesquerie of the whole thing there was something intimate and sweet about this interchange. A man and woman loved. Just now that love was mentioned more or less in the abstract, discussed on purely a mental basis—but both Bentley and Ellen Estabrook were thinking of the future, and were as frank with each other as they perhaps ever would be again.

Now the apes were beginning to stir themselves. It was time to be on the move again. Eyes were turned toward Manape, who was plainly intended to lead them further into the jungle. Ellen and the white body of Bentley were already being accepted as a matter of course.

If the great apes wondered why their returned lord did not jabber with them in the gibberish of the great apes, there was no way of telling, for there was no way in which Manape could make himself understood, nor any way the great apes could tell their thoughts to Manape.

Then, without warning, the blow fell.

The storm broke, and even as the uproar started Bentley was sure that he could sense behind it the fine hand of Caleb Barter—still working out his "experiment," with human beings and apes as the pawns.

The apes were on the move, entering a series of aisles through the gloomy woods when the blow fell—in the shape of scores of nets, in whose folds within a matter of seconds the great apes were fighting and snarling helplessly. They expended their mighty strength to no avail. They fought at ropes and thongs which they did not understand—and only Manape made no effort to fight, knowing it useless.

Scores of black folk armed with spears danced and yelled in the brush, frankly delighted at the success of their grand coup. Barter was nowhere to be seen, and there was a possibility that he knew nothing about this. Yet Bentley knew better. Perhaps, in order to stimulate the blacks, he had offered them money for great apes taken alive. Anyhow, scores of the apes were taken, and now exhausted themselves in savage bellowing and snarling, as they fought for freedom.

A half dozen to each net, the blacks gathered in their captives. They made much over Ellen Estabrook. They pawed over Apeman despite his snarls and bellowings, and laughed when Apeman played the ape as though to the manner born. They scented some mystery here, a white man raised by the apes, perhaps. But that Ellen and Apeman were prisoners of blacks, Bentley could plainly understand. He scarcely knew which was the more horrible for her—to be prisoner of the apes or the blacks.

But for the moment there was nothing he could do. And the blacks were not torturing either Apeman or Ellen, though there was no mistaking what he saw in the faces of the blacks when they looked at Ellen and grinned at one another.

Darkness had fallen over the world when the blacks went shouting into a village of mud-wattled huts, bearing the trophies of their ape hunt. Still in their nets for safety's sake, the great apes were thrown into a sort of stockade which had plainly just been built for their reception—proof to Bentley that this decision to make an attack against the passing band of anthropoids had been a sudden one. What did that indicate?

Someone had caused the blacks to react in a way that never would have occurred to them ordinarily.

Caleb Barter?

Bentley thought so. What now was Bentley supposed to do? What did Barter expect him to do? What did Barter expect Ellen to do? What did he expect Apeman to do?

There was no question, as Bentley saw it, but that Caleb Barter still pulled the strings, and that before morning this jungle village was to witness a horror it should never forget.

But at the moment Bentley had but one thought: to escape quietly with Ellen and Apeman, and return to the dwelling of Caleb Barter.

CHAPTER XII

Jungle Justice

Again that grim concentration on the part of Bentley, forcing the unaccustomed great hands of Manape to perform things they had never done before. He must release himself from the rope net which held him. For the hands of a human being the task would have been easy. For the hands of Manape, even though guided by the will of Bentley, the task was far from easy.

But he persevered.

An hour after the apes had been dumped in the stockade, Bentley had released himself from the rope net and was resting after the awful ordeal of forcing the hands of Manape to do his bidding. He pressed himself against the uprights of the stockade, and carefully tested them with his strength. The strength of Bentley would never have availed against the stout uprights of the stockade. Yet Manape-Bentley knew that with the arms of Manape he could tear the uprights out of the ground as easily as though they had been match-sticks. What should he do now?

His first impulse of course was to release the rest of the great apes. The brutes still fought at their bindings and were utterly insane with rage. What would they do when they were released? What was his duty where they were concerned? If they went wild through the native village, slaying and laying waste, would Bentley be responsible for loss of life? If he left the apes in the hands of the natives, what then? He would never afterward forgive himself. He knew them as children of the wilds, carefree and happy brutes of the jungle. Now if held captives indefinitely they would either die or spend the rest of their lives in cages.

No, he would release the animals, one by one. The natives would have to take their chances.

A white figure loomed out of the darkness, coming from the direction of a great bonfire which showed all the jungle surrounding in weird, crimson relief. The white figure, all but nude, was Apeman! Following him were several natives, who laughed and prodded Apeman with the butts of their spears.

Bentley understood that. They thought Apeman a demented white man, and to these natives a demented one was a butt of jokes. They did not even suspect the horror of the possible revenge that was growing in the brain of the ape which controlled the body of Apeman.

Twice or thrice Apeman tried to dart into the jungle, but always the blacks prevented, heading him toward the cage where the apes were held prisoners. Bentley wondered where Ellen was and what was happening to her.

A celebration of some sort seemed going forward in the village. Was Caleb Barter somewhere near, perhaps on the edge of the jungle, grinning gleefully at this thing he had brought about as part of his unholy experiment? There was no way of knowing of course, yet.

But....

Apeman reached the side of the stockade and snarled back at his annoyers, while his white hands grasped the uprights and tore at them with futile savagery. A strange situation. Inside the stockade a score of brutes who could rip the stockade to bits. Outside, one of them free, but hampered by the puny strength of a human being.

The blacks shouted to Apeman but of course Bentley could not understand what they said. Apeman turned after snarling at them for a few moments, and began to chatter in that gibberish which appeared to be Apeman's only mode of speech—ape language on the lips of a man! This was the only time it had ever happened.

The apes stirred fitfully as Apeman chattered, and began to renew their attacks on their bonds. The blacks, after watching Apeman for a few moments turned back toward the bonfire, evidently satisfied that this strange demented creature would not run away. Apeman chattered and the apes made answer.

The she who had nursed Apeman managed to reach the side of the stockade, and for several moments Bentley listened to the horrible grotesqueries—an ape she and a man talking together in brutish gibberish, and with hellish intimacy.

Now, wondering just how matters would work themselves out, Bentley set himself the task of releasing the apes. They would at least create a furor in the village, during which Bentley could escape into the jungle with Apeman and Ellen Estabrook before the natives could reorganise themselves and give chase.

His plan was hazy, and he figured without the savagery of Apeman who occupied that white body which had been Bentley's. His one thought was to free the apes, set them upon the village, and escape with Apeman and Ellen. Just that and no more; but he did not know the great apes, nor how thoroughly they followed the lead of their lord whom they knew as Manape, though how he was named in their brains he was never to know.

One by one he released the apes. They seemed to sense the necessity for stealth, for they began to ape the cautious behavior of Manape. Apeman, outside, seemed to be advising them, telling them what to do.

One by one as Manape released them, the apes squatted side by side, their red angry little eyes watching his every move. Bentley knew of course what a fearful racket his own appearance would cause when he strode out of the gloom among the blacks, seeking Ellen. But he knew that surprise for a few precious moments would render the blacks incapable of stopping him until he got away. At least he hoped so.

Beyond that he had no other plan. All depended upon the behavior of the apes and the reaction of the blacks who were holding a devil's dance about the mighty fire in the center of their village. Bentley did not even yet dare guess what the apes would do when they saw what Manape-Bentley did. Would they follow him? Or would they race for the jungle to escape?

A few minutes now would tell the tale. He had released the last of the great apes, who now lined the side of the stockade, apparently holding angry converse with Apeman. Bentley was reminded of the old fashioned mob of pioneer days—angrily muttering yet lacking a leader to direct their efforts. Well, he had done his duty as he saw it. From now on things must take their course.

But Bentley waited, watching the dancing figures about the fire. As far as he could tell the dance was approaching some sort of a climax. The figures leaped higher as they danced, and the noise of their shouting raced and rolled across the jungle. They appeared to be drunk with some sort of

excitement, perhaps helped by native liquor, perhaps because of superstitious frenzy.

If he waited for their excitement to die down a bit, for some of them to go to sleep, his chances of releasing Ellen would be better. It would not be hard for him to find her—not with Manape's sensitive nose to lead him to her.

But time passed and the apes, though apparently being urged to something by Apeman, watching Manape sullenly, apparently waiting for him to make some move.

Then, sharp as a knife, cutting through the other noises of the village, came Ellen's voice.

"Help, Lee! Help me!"

The scream was broken short off as though a hand had clutched the girl's throat, but Bentley waited for no more—and Manape-Bentley flew into action. His great hands went to the uprights of the stockade. His mighty shoulders heaved and twisted and the uprights were ripped apart.

The apes followed his lead, and the cracking of the stockade's uprights was like a volley of pistol shots. The great brutes fairly walked through the green saplings which formed the prison. Manape was leading the charge, and the apes, once through, did not hesitate. If their leader charged the blacks they would follow—and did, while among them danced, cavorted and gibbered the travesty, Apeman.

He was Bentley's lieutenant, and Bentley-Manape was the lord of the apes. Just now he forgot that he was more ape than man. Just now he was happy that his strength was the strength of many men. He was hurrying to the assistance of the woman he loved.

Behind him came the great apes, following like an army of poorly trained recruits, yet armed as no army has ever been armed since the days when men fought with fist and fang against their enemies. Bentley lumbered

swiftly toward the sound of Ellen's voice, aided in his journey by the odor of her which came to his sensitive ape's nostrils.

The blacks never saw the approach of the apes, until, led by Manape the Mighty, the great apes were right among them. Bentley did not pause. A black man saw him and shrieked aloud in terror, a shriek which seemed to freeze the other blacks in all sorts of postures. Sitting men remained where they sat, and some of the motionless ones saved their lives by their immobility. Dancers paused in midstride, and those who did not, died.

For the hands of the great apes clutched at everything that moved, and the great shoulders bulged, and the mighty muscles cracked, and men were torn asunder as though they had been flies in the hands of vengeful boys.

The black who had shrieked hurled a spear, purely a reflex, perhaps—an action born of its habitual use. It missed Bentley by a narrow margin, but passed through the stomach of the she who had nursed Apeman. Snarling, snapping at the thing which hurt her, the she tore the weapon free—then waddled forward swiftly, caught the man who had hurled the spear, and tore his head off with a single twisting movement of her great hands.

Next moment her blood was mingling with that of her slayer as she fell above him. But her hands, in the convulsions of death, still ripped and tore, and the black whom she held was a ghastly thing when the she was finally dead. Bentley did not see the ghastly end of the spearman, for he was seeking Ellen, and at the some time keeping a close watch on Apeman.

Apeman seemed to be urging the apes to the attack, bidding them rip and tear and gnash, and the apes were doing that, making of the village a crimson shambles. But they did it in passing, for Manape was their leader, and him they followed—and he was seeking Ellen Estabrook.

The door of the hut in which his nostrils told him she would be found, gave before his mighty chest as though it had been made of paper. Inside, in the glow of the native lamp, a huge black man cowered against the further wall of the hut, with spear poised.

But the black man seemed frozen with terror.

"Lee! Lee!"

Bentley essayed one glance at her. In the other corner she was, with the upper part of her clothing almost torn from her body.

Then the spearman hurled his weapon. Bentley strove to force the huge bulk of Manape's body to dodge the spear; but that body was slow in doing so—and took a mortal wound!

But it was a wound that would mean slow death. An aching, terrible wound. Then Manape-Bentley had grasped the body of the black, lifted it high above his head, and crashed it to the hard packed floor of the hut. The hut fairly shook with the thud of that fall. At once Manape stooped, caught the black by the ankles and pulled in opposite direction with all his terrific might.

Then he whirled, masking what he had done from Ellen's sight with his huge, sorely wounded body.

He tried to send her a message with his eyes, but it was not necessary. She knew Manape, Barter's trained ape. She followed close at his heels. Outside the hut's door Apeman still urged the apes to destruction of men and property, of women and children. The village of the blacks had become a place of horror.

"Hurry, Lee!" gasped Ellen. "You've been grievously wounded, and if Manape dies, nothing can save *you*—and I shall not care to live!"

But Bentley knew. His brain could sense the approach of death, and what he now must do was very plain.

He charged at Apeman and caught the struggling, snarling travesty up in his mighty arms. Then, with Ellen at his heels, he leaped into the jungle and began the race for the house of Caleb Barter.

Life was going from him, yet his brain forced onward the body of Manape. Behind came the great apes, following their leader. Now and again they screamed and snarled at him, but he paid them no heed. They could follow or leave him, as they chose. They chose to follow.

Apeman fought and bit at Bentley, but he paid him as little heed as though he had been nothing at all. Now and again when Ellen faltered Bentley caught her up, too, and carried her with Apeman until Ellen was rested enough to go on.

Some of the apes appeared to realize whither they were going, for they took to the trees and vanished onward. With Apeman alone, Bentley himself would have taken to the trees as the swiftest way back to Barter's dwelling. But Ellen could not race along the upper terraces, and Bentley could not carry both Apeman and Ellen and leave the ground. But he could travel swiftly on his race with death, with Ellen as the prize if he won.

The hours passed, and the strength of Manape decreased; but fiercely the brain of Bentley drove the mighty body on. Ellen sobbed with weariness but continued on, and no words were spoken. There was no time for words. Now and again Bentley forced Apeman to walk, and dragged him forward with a hand clutching his wrist. At such times Bentley carried Ellen, and scarcely slackened his stride under her weight.

Once he tried to force Apeman to carry her, but the arms of Apeman were not equal to the task for more than fifty yards or so, and he gave that up as being impracticable. His brain raced, thinking up ways to travel faster, to reach Barter's quarters before the mighty body of Manape should die, and with it the brain of Bentley.

Surely no stranger cavalcade ever before traversed the jungles of the Black Continent.

So they came at last to the clearing. The apes protested and remained in hiding, while Bentley, never pausing, raced across toward the house he would never forget.

The body of Manape was almost through, for it staggered like a drunken man. Blood covered the mighty chest, and the brain of Bentley felt hazy; nothing made sense; and the end was very near.

But they reached the door of Barter's dwelling, and Barter himself met them, bearing his cruel whip in his hand. Ellen roused herself from her extreme exhaustion and clutched at the scientist's hand.

"Professor Barter!" she begged. "Please, please! Manape is almost dead! Hurry! Hurry, for the love of God!"

"There, there, my dear young lady," said Barter soothingly. "Make yourself easy. There's no cause for worry."

Manape-Bentley toppled forward on the floor of the cabin. Ellen screamed and Barter comforted her. Apeman tried to escape to the jungle, but the lash of Barter drove him cowering and whimpering to a corner.

Then, oblivion—save that somewhere was the odor of violets. Or did violets possess odor? Then, if not, the odor of flowers he thought were violets.

CHAPTER XIII

The Horror Passes

Slowly consciousness returned to Bentley, and his first thought was one of horror. From somewhere distinct came a doleful wailing sound. He thought he knew what it was—the mourning of great apes over a member that had died.

He had read somewhere that the great apes sorrowed when any of their members died. Bentley opened his eyes. He could make out the ceiling of a room that he recognized. It was the room that had been first assigned him in the dwelling of Barter.

Ellen Estabrook would be somewhere nearby. He opened his lips to call to her. Then he remembered. He'd tried to call to her before—and had merely bellowed like an ape. No, there was something he must know first.

His arms and hands seemed as heavy as lead, but he lifted them and looked at them—and a great feeling of peace descended upon him. Manape-Bentley was gone, and he was plain Lee Bentley again. There was his own ring, which Apeman had worn, and besides he had just spoken aloud, softly, for no ears save his own, and the voice had been Lee Bentley's voice.

Yes, Barter had kept his promise, and Lee Bentley was Lee Bentley again.

But he was very weak, and his body was racked with pain. His hands and arms were covered with bandages. His body seemed packed in concrete, so moveless was it, and when he raised his voice it was terribly weak.

"Ellen," he managed to call; and again, "Ellen, darling!"

Instantly there came a swift patter of feet and Ellen was beside his bed, on her knees, covering his face—what there was of it unbandaged—with kisses. There was really no need for words between these two.

"Lee," she whispered, "I've been so afraid. You've been like this for a week, despite the miraculous knowledge and skill of Professor Barter. I've waited in fear and trembling, praying for you to live, and now you are Lee again, and will live on. Professor Barter has promised me. All you need now is food, and care, and I shall shower you with both. Barter has instructed me so carefully that I could manage even to care for you, sick as you are, without him here at all."

"And Manape?" Bentley's voice seemed to be stronger.

"He is dead," whispered Ellen. "I shall never forget him. There was something great, something even better than human about him, Lee! Oh, I know that he was you—but where would all three of us have been had it not been for the powerful body of Manape, the great ape? Manape is dead, and in the jungle hereabouts the great apes mourn his passing. They've been wailing almost like human beings for a week. Manape—well, Professor Barter told me that you too would have died, had Manape reached his door five minutes later. As it was, he, and you, were just in time!"

"It's amazing," whispered Bentley, "that the great apes stay around here now that Manape is dead."

"Yes. It's strange—and terrible I think. There have been times when I felt they were waiting for something, for Professor Barter, perhaps. I've had the feeling they believe he killed their leader."

Now the two became silent, and Ellen held the bruised and broken hands of Bentley in both her own, and their eyes said things, one to the other, which eyes say so much better than lips do. They kissed each other softly, and Ellen crooned with ecstasy, her cheek against Bentley's.

Then Caleb Barter entered.

"Well, well," he said, "when a man is in condition to make love to a woman, he is well on the road to recovery. It won't hurt you to talk now, Bentley, and before I begin asking questions, let me assure you that you will suffer no ill effects from your experience."

"What of my memories?" asked Bentley softly.

"Forget them!" snapped Barter tartly. "That is, after you have told me everything that has happened. Miss Estabrook has already told me her angle of the experiment. Now, talk please—and then I shall make you well, and you shall both go into the world with me, and tell people that what I have to tell is true!"

So Bentley talked. Barter wrote like a man possessed. His fingers raced over the paper, repeating the words which fell from the lips of Lee Bentley, beside whom Ellen sat, holding his hands. Now and again Barter uttered an ejaculation of fierce joy. He was like a child with a toy that pleased him beyond words. He could scarcely wait for the words to spill from the lips of Lee Bentley.

When Bentley paused for breath, Barter exclaimed impatiently, and urged him to greater speed. He thought of but one thing, his experiment.

And so at last Bentley had finished.

"That's all, Professor Barter!" he said softly.

"All!" cried Barter. "Everything! Fame! Wealth! Adulation! There is nothing in the world Caleb Barter may not have when this story is told! I can scarcely contain myself. You must hurry to be well in order that the world may be told at once."

Laughing immoderately, Barter piled the manuscript he had written, and weighted it with a piece of rock. His face was a constant grin. His fingers trembled with eagerness. He could not contain himself.

Finally, as though from sheer joy of what he had accomplished, he raced from the cabin, and out across the clearing. Ellen and Bentley smiled at each other. Moments passed. Still came to their ears the mourning wails of the great apes.

Then suddenly there broke a sound so utterly appalling that the two were frozen with terror for a moment. First it was the laughter of Caleb Barter. Then, mingled with the laughter, the bellowing, frightful and paralyzing, of man apes challenging a hated enemy. The drumming of ape fists on huge barrel chests. Then the laughter of Barter, dying away, ironic, terrible, into silence. Immediately afterward, high-pitched, mighty as the jungle itself, the concerted cries of half a dozen apes, as if bellowing their joy of the kill.

"They—they—" began Ellen in a choked voice. "The apes must have got Professor Barter!"

Silently Bentley nodded, and pointed.

Coiled on a nail near the door was Barter's whip. In his excitement he had gone into the jungle without it for the first—and last—time.

"There is one thing to do," whispered Ellen, "before we prepare to get you fully well. I shall care for you, and we shall both try to forget. And then we

shall return to our own people."

"And the one thing?" asked Bentley.

The strained silence was suddenly broken by the bellowing of the great apes, which now charged into the cabin. Bentley and Ellen cringed back from the murderous brutes to no avail. There was no denying them. Their slavering jaws, drooled below flaring nostrils, their eyes emitted sparks of animal fury. Bentley leaped to the girl and interposed his body between hers and the vanguard of the apes, who now were surging into the room through the open door, and spreading apart within like water released from a dam.

The apes were bent on murder, there could be no doubt.

A very monster towered over Bentley. His jaws were wide, his little red eyes fixed on the white man's neck. His great arms were coming forward to gather in both Ellen and Bentley—whom he could crush as easily as he crushed the grubs which were his food.

Bentley was helpless and knew it. This was the end for Ellen and himself. He must meet it unafraid. He tensed, awaiting the descent of bestial destruction. His eyes met the murderous gleam in the eyes of the ape leader unflinchingly. And then the miracle happened.

The brute became suddenly and inexplicably hesitant. His bellow died away to a gurgling murmur in which there seemed somehow a hint of apology. The fire went out of his eyes. His jaws closed with a snap. His great arms, already about Bentley, slid harmlessly over Bentley's shoulders; dropped to his shaggy side.

The brute's little eyes looked long and in puzzled fashion into the eyes of Bentley. Then he began to chatter, and in a moment the other apes ambled grotesquely toward the door and out. Ellen and Bentley were alone together once more, unharmed—though numbed by realization of the near passing of disaster.

"I don't understand it," muttered Bentley, brushing the beads of perspiration from his brow. "It was a miracle!"

"Lee," Ellen answered, "I think I know, and it *is* a sort of miracle. Somehow the apes felt that you were—whatever your guise—Manape. They did not recognize you by any of their means of recognition; yet that beast knew! How? Only God Himself might answer. But the beasts knew, and did not slay us. The inner voice which whispers inside us in times of crises, whispers also to the great apes! Barter, then must have understood their somehow spiritual kinship with us. His experiments—"

Her words reminded Bentley of what she had been saying when the great apes had charged in upon them, murder bent. He interrupted her, gently.

"And the one thing we must do?" he rallied her.

Ellen rose, and her face was white and strained as she gathered together Barter's manuscript. This she carried to the fireplace. She applied a match and returned to Bentley's bedside. Then, side by side, the two who would never forget in any case watched the record of Barter's unholy experiment burn slowly to ashes, while the screams of the great apes died away second by second, proof that they were leaving this section of the jungle—going deeper and deeper into the forest gloom which was their rightful heritage, and from which no man had a right to take them.

Holocaust

By Charles Willard Diffin

It passed beneath the planes, that were motionless by contrast.

I am more accustomed to the handling of steel ingots and the fabrication of ships than to building with words. But, if I cannot write history as history is written, perhaps I can write it the way it is lived, and that must suffice.

The extraordinary story of "Paul," who for thirty days was Dictator of the World.

This account of certain events must have a title, I am told. I have used, as you see: "Holocaust." Inadequate!—but what word can tell even faintly of that reign of terror that engulfed the world, of those terrible thirty days in America when dread and horror gripped the nation and the red menace, like a wall of fire, swept downward from the north? And, at last—the end!

It was given to me to know something of that conflict and of its ending and of the man who, in that last day, took command of Earth's events and gave battle to Mars, the God of War himself. It was against the background of war that he stood out; I must tell it in that way; and perhaps my own experience will be of interest. Yet it is of the man I would write more than the war—the most hated man in the whole world—that strange character, Paul Stravoinski.

You do not even recognize the name. But, if I were to say instead the one word, "Paul"—ah, now I can see some of you start abruptly in sudden, wide-eyed attention, while the breath catches in your throats and the memory of a strange dread clutches your hearts.

'Straki,' we called him at college. He was never "Paul," except to me alone; there was never the easy familiarity between him and the crowd at large, whose members were "Bill" and "Dick" and other nicknames unprintable.

But "Straki" he accepted. "*Bien, mon cher ami*," he told me—he was as apt to drop into French as Russian or any of a dozen other languages—"a name —what is it? A label by which we distinguish one package of goods from a thousand others just like it! I am unlike: for me one name is as good as another. It is what is here that counts,"—he tapped his broad forehead that rose high to the tangle of black hair—"and here,"—and this time he placed one hand above his heart.

"It is for what I give to the world of my head and my heart that I must be remembered. And, if I give nothing—then the name, it is less than nothing."

Dreamer—poet—scientist—there were many Paul Strakis in that one man. Brilliant in his work—he was majoring in chemistry—he was a mathematician who was never stopped. I've seen him pause, puzzled by some phase of a problem that, to me, was a blank wall. Only a moment's hesitation and he would go way down to the bed-rock of mathematics and come up with a brand new formula of his own devising. Then—"*Voila! C'est fini!* let us go for a walk, friend Bob; there is some poetry that I have remembered—" And we would head out of town, while he spouted poetry by the yard—and made me like it.

I wish you could see the Paul Straki of those days. I wish I could show him to you; you would understand so much better the "Paul" of these later times.

Tall, he seemed, though his eyes were only level with mine, for his real height was hidden beneath an habitual stoop. It let him conceal, to some extent, his lameness. He always walked with a noticeable limp, and here was the cause of the only bitterness that, in those days, was ever reflected in his face.

"Cossacks!" he explained when he surprised a questioning look upon my face. "They went through our village. I was two years old—and they rode me down!"

But the hard coldness went from his eyes, and again they crinkled about with the kindly, wise lines that seemed so strange in his young face. "It is only a reminder to me," he added, "that such things are all in the past; that we are entering a new world where savage brutality shall no longer rule, and the brotherhood of man will be the basis upon which men shall build."

And his face, so homely that it was distinctive, had a beauty all its own when he dared to voice his dreams.

It was this that brought about his expulsion from college. That was in 1935 when the Vornikoff faction brought off their coup d'etat and secured a strangle hold on Russia. We all remember the campaign of propaganda that was forced into the very fibre of every country, to weaken with its insidious dry-rot the safe foundations of our very civilization. Paul was blinded by his idealism, and he dared to speak.

He was conducting a brilliant research into the structure of the atom; it ended abruptly with his dismissal. And the accepted theories of science went unchallenged, while men worked along other lines than Paul's to attempt the release of the tremendous energy that is latent in all matter.

I saw him perhaps three times in the four years that followed. He had a laboratory out in a God-forsaken spot where he carried on his research. He did enough analytical work to keep him from actual starvation, though it seemed to me that he was uncomfortably close to that point.

"Come with me," I urged him; "I need you. You can have the run of our laboratories—work out the new alloys that are so much needed. You would be tremendously valuable."

He had mentioned Maida to me, so I added: "And you and Maida can be married, and can live like a king and queen on what my outfit can pay you."

He smiled at me as he might have done toward a child. "Like a king and queen," he said. "But, friend Bob, Maida and I do not approve of kings and queens, nor do we wish to follow them in their follies.

"It is hard waiting,"—I saw his eyes cloud for a moment—"but Maida is willing. She is working, too—she is up in Melford as you know—and she has faith in my work. She sees with me that it will mean the release of our fellow-men and women from the poverty that grinds out their souls. I am near to success; and when I give to the world the secret of power, then—" But I had to read in his far-seeing eyes the visions he could not compass in words.

That was the first time. I was flying a new ship when next I dropped in on him. A sweet little job I thought it then, not like the old busses that Paul and I had trained in at college, where the top speed was a hundred and twenty. This was an A. B. Clinton cruiser, and the "A.B.C.'s" in 1933 were good little wagons, the best there were.

I asked Paul to take a hop with me and fly the ship. He could fly beautifully; his lameness had been no hindrance to him. In his slender, artist hands a ship became a live thing.

"Are you doing any flying?" I asked, but the threadbare suit made his answer unnecessary.

"I'll do my flying later," he said, "and when I do,"—he waved contemptuously toward my shining, new ship—"you'll scrap that piece of junk."

The tone matched the new lines in his face—deep lines and bitter. This practical world has always been hard on the dreamers.

Poverty; and the grinding struggle that Maida was having; the expulsion from college when he was assured of a research scholarship that would have meant independence and the finest of equipment to work with—all this, I found, was having its effect. And he talked in a way I didn't like of the new Russia and of the time that was near at hand when her communistic government should sweep the world of its curse of capitalistic control. Their propaganda campaign was still going on, and I gathered that Paul had allied himself with them.

I tried to tell him what we all knew; that the old Russia was gone, that Vornikoff and his crowd were rapacious and bloodthirsty, that their real motives were as far removed from his idealism as one pole from the other. But it was no use. And I left when I saw the light in his eyes. It seemed to me then that Paul Stravoinski had driven his splendid brain a bit beyond its breaking point.

Another year—and Paris, in 1939, with the dreaded First of May drawing near. There had been rumors of demonstrations in every land, but the French were prepared to cope with them—or so they believed.... Who could have coped with the menace of the north that was gathering itself for a spring?

I saw Paul there. It lacked two days of the First of May, and he was seated with a group of industrious talkers at a secluded table in a cafe. He crossed over when he saw me, and drew me aside. And I noticed that a quiet man at a table nearby never let us out of his sight. Paul and his companions, I judged, were under observation.

"What are you doing here *now*?" he asked. His manner was casual enough to anyone watching, but the tense voice and the look in his eyes that bored into me were anything but casual.

My resentment was only natural. "And why shouldn't I be here attending to my own affairs? Do you realize that you are being rather absurd?"

He didn't bother to answer me directly. "I can't control them," he said. "If they would only wait—a few weeks—another month! God, how I prayed to them at—"

He broke off short. His eyes never moved, yet I sensed a furtiveness as marked as if he had peered suspiciously about.

Suddenly he laughed aloud, as if at some joking remark of mine; I knew it was for the benefit of those he had left and not for the quiet man from the *Surete*. And now his tone was quietly conversational.

"Smile!" he said. "Smile, Bob!—we're just having a friendly talk. I won't live another two hours if they think anything else. But, Bob, my friend—for God's sake, Bob, leave Paris to-night. I am taking the midnight plane on the Transatlantic Line. Come with me—"

One of the group at the table had risen; he was sauntering in our direction. I played up to Paul's lead.

"Glad I ran across you," I told him, and shook his extended hand that gripped mine in an agony of pleading. "I'll be seeing you in New York one

of these days; I am going back soon."

But I didn't go soon enough. The unspoken pleading in Paul Stravoinski's eyes lost its hold on me by another day. I had work to do; why should I neglect it to go scuttling home because someone who feared these swarming rats had begged me to run for cover? And the French people were prepared. A little rioting, perhaps; a pistol shot or two, and a machine-gun that would spring from nowhere and sweep the street—!

We know now of the document that the Russian Ambassador delivered to the President of France, though no one knew of it then. He handed it to the portly, bearded President at ten o'clock on the morning of April thirtieth. And the building that had housed the Russian representatives was empty ten minutes later. Their disguises must have been ready, for if the sewers of Paris had swallowed them they could have vanished no more suddenly.

And the document? It was the same in substance as those delivered in like manner in every capital of Europe: twenty-four hours were given in which to assure the Central Council of Russia that the French Government would be dissolved, that communism would be established, and that its executive heads would be appointed by the Central Council.

And then the bulletins appeared, and the exodus began. Papers floated in the air; they blew in hundreds of whirling eddies through the streets. And they warned all true followers of the glorious Russian faith to leave Paris that day, for to-morrow would herald the dawn of a new heaven on earth—a Communistic heaven—and its birth would come with the destruction of Paris....

I give you the general meaning though not the exact words. And, like the rest, I smiled tolerantly as I saw the stream of men and women and frightened children that filtered from the city all that day and night; but I must admit that our smiles were strained as morning came on the First of May, and the hour of ten drew near.

Paris, the beautiful—that lovely blossom, flowering on the sturdy stalk that was *La Belle France*! Paris, laughing to cover its unspoken fears that morning in May, while the streets thudded to the feet of marching men in horizon blue, and the air above was vibrant with the endless roar of planes.

This meant war; and mobilization orders were out; yet still the deadly menace was blurred by a feeling of unreality. A hoax!—a huge joke!—it was absurd, the thought of a distant people imposing their will upon France! And yet ... and yet....

There were countless eyes turned skyward as a thousand bells rang out the hour of ten; and countless ears heard faintly the sound of gunfire from the north.

My work had brought me into contact with high officials of the French Government; I was privileged to stand with a group of them where a high-roofed building gave a vantage point for observation. With them I saw the menacing specks on the horizon; I saw them come on with deadly deliberation—come on and on in an ever-growing armada that filled the sky.

Wireless had brought the report of their flight high over Germany; it was bringing now the story of disaster from the northern front. A heavy air-force had been concentrated there; and now the steady stream of radio messages came on flimsy sheets to the group about me, while they clustered to read the incredible words. They cursed and glared at one another, those French officials, as if daring their fellows to believe the truth; then, silent and white of face, they reached numbly for each following sheet that messengers brought—until they knew at last that the air-force of France was no more....

The roar of the approaching host was deafening in our ears. Red—red as blood!—and each unit grew to enormous proportions. Armored cruisers of the air—dreadnaughts!—they came as a complete surprise.

"But the city is ringed with anti-aircraft batteries," a uniformed man was whispering. "They will bring the brutes down."

The northern edge of the city flamed to a roaring wall of fire; the batteries went into action in a single, crashing harmony that sang triumphantly in our ears. A few of the red shapes fell, but for each of these a hundred others swept down in deadly, directed flight.

A glass was in my hand; my eyes strained through it to see the silvery cylinders that fell from the speeding ships. I saw the red cruisers sweep upward before the inferno of exploding bombs raged toward them from below. And where the roar of batteries had been was only silence.

The fleet was over the city. We waited for the rain of bombs that must come; we saw the red cloud move swiftly to continue the annihilation of batteries that still could fire; we saw the armada pass on and lose itself among cloud-banks in the west.

Only a dozen planes remained, high-hung in the upper air. We stared in wonderment at one another. Was this mercy?—from such an enemy? It was inconceivable!

"Mercy!" I wonder that we dared to think the word. Only an instant till a whistling shriek marked the coming of death. It was a single plane—a giant shell—that rode on wings of steel. It came from the north, and I saw it pass close overhead. Its propeller screamed an insolent, inhuman challenge. Inhuman—for one glance told the story. Here was no man-flown plane: no cockpit or cabin, no gunmounts. Only a flying shell that swerved and swung as we watched. We knew that its course was directed from above; it was swung with terrible certainty by a wireless control that reached it from a ship overhead.

Slowly it sought its target: deliberately it poised above it. An instant, only, it hung, though the moment, it seemed, would never end—then down!—and the blunt nose crashed into the Government buildings where at that moment the Chamber of Deputies was in session ... and where those buildings had been was spouting masonry and fire.

A man had me by the arm; his fingers gripped into my flesh. With his other hand he was pointing toward the north. "Torpedoes!" he was saying. "Torpedoes of a size gigantic! *Ah, mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* Save us for we are lost!"

They came in an endless stream, those blood-red projectiles; they announced their coming with shrill cries of varying pitch; and they swung and swerved, as the ships above us picked them up, to rake the city with mathematical precision.

Incendiary, of course: flames followed every shattering burst. Between us and the Seine was a hell of fire—a hell that contained unnumbered thousands of what an instant before had been living folk—men and women clinging in a last terrified embrace—children whose white faces were hidden in their mothers' skirts or buried in bosoms no longer a refuge for childish fears. I saw it as plainly as if I had been given the far-reaching vision of a god ... and I turned and ran with stumbling feet where a stairway awaited....

Of that flight, only a blurred recollection has stayed with me. I pray God that I may never see it more clearly. There are sights that mortal eyes cannot behold with understanding and leave mortal brain intact. It is like an anaesthetic at such times, the numbness that blocks off the horrors the eyes are recording—like the hurt of the surgeon's scalpel that never reaches to the brain.

Dimly I see the fragmentary scenes: the crashing fall of buildings that come crumbling and thundering down, myself crawling like an insect across the wreckage—it is slippery and wet where the stones are red, and I stumble, then see the torn and mangled thing that has caused me to fall.... A face regards me from another mound. I see the dust of powdered masonry still settling upon it: the dark hair is hardly disturbed about the face, so peaceful, so girlishly serene: I am still wondering dully why there is only the head of that girl resting on the shattered stone, as I lie there exhausted and watch the next torpedo crash a block behind me.... The air is shrill with flying

fragments. I wonder why my hands are stained and sticky as I run and crawl on my way. The red rocks are less slippery now, and the rats, from the sewers of Paris!—they have come out to feed!

Fragments of pictures—and the worst of them gone! I know that night came—red night, under a cloud of smoke—and I found myself on the following day descending from a fugitive peasant's cart and plodding onward toward the markings of a commercial aerodrome.

They could not be everywhere, those red vultures of the sky, and they had other devils'-work to do. I had money, and I paid well for the plane that carried me through that day and a night to the Municipal Airport of New York.

The Red Army of occupation was halfway across communist Germany, hailed as they went as the saviors of the world. London had gone the way of Paris; Rome had followed; the countries of France and England and Italy were beaten to their knees.

"We who rule the air rule the world!" boasted General Vornikoff. The Russian broadcasting station had the insolence to put on the air his message to the people of America. I heard his voice as plainly as if he stood in my office; and I was seeing again the coming of that endless stream of aerial torpedoes, and the red cruisers hanging in the heights to pick up control and dash the messengers of death upon a helpless city. But I was visioning it in New York.

"The masses of the American people are with us," said the complacently arrogant voice. "For our fellow-workers we have only brotherly affection; it is your capitalist-dominated Government that must submit. And if it does not—!" I heard him laugh before he went on:

"We are coming to the rescue of you, our brothers across the sea. Now we have work to do in Europe; our gains must be consolidated and the conquests of our glorious air-force made secure. And then—! We warn you in advance, and we laugh at your efforts to prepare for our coming. We even

tell you the date: in thirty days the invasion begins. It will end only at Washington when the great country of America, its cruel shackles cast off from the laboring masses, joins the Brotherhood—the Workers of the World!"

There was a man from the War Department who sat across from me at my desk; my factories were being taken over; my electric furnaces must pour out molten metal for use in war. He cursed softly under his breath as the voice ceased.

"The dirty dog!" he exclaimed. "The lying hypocrite! He talks of brotherhood to us who know the damnable inquisition and reign of terror that he and his crowd have forced on Russia! Thirty days! Well, we have three thousand planes ready for battle to-day; there'll be more in thirty days! Now, about that vanadium steel—"

But I'll confess I hardly heard him; I was hearing the roar of an armada of red craft that ensanguined the sky, and I was seeing the curving flight of torpedoes, each an airplane in itself....

Thirty days!—and each minute of each hour must be used. In close touch with the War Department, I knew much that was going on, and all that I knew was the merest trifle in the vast preparations for defense. My earlier apprehensions were dulled; the sight I had of the whole force of a mighty nation welded into one driving power working to one definite end was exhilarating.

New York and Washington—these, it was felt, would be the points of first attack; they must be protected. And I saw the flights of planes that seemed endless as they converged at the concentration camps. Fighters, at first—bombers and swift scouts—they came in from all parts of the land. Then the passenger planes and the big mail-ships. Transcontinental runs were abandoned or cut to a skeleton service of a ship every hour for the transport of Government men. Even the slower craft of the feeder lines were commandeered; anything that could fly and could mount a gun.

And the three thousand fighting ships, as the man from Washington had said, grew to three times that number. Their roaring filled the skies with thunder, and beneath them were other camps of infantry and artillery.

The Atlantic front was an armed camp, where highways no longer carried thousands of cars on pleasure bent. By night and day I saw those familiar roads from the air; they were solid with a never-ending line of busses and vans and long processions of motorized artillery and tanks, whose clattering bedlam came to me a thousand feet above.

Yes, it was an inspiring sight, and I lost the deadly oppression and the sense of impending doom—until our intelligence service told us of the sailing of the enemy fleet.

They had seized every vessel in the waters of Europe. And—God pity the poor, traitorous devils who manned them—there were plenty to operate the ships. Two thousand vessels were in that convoy. Ringed in as they were by a guard of destroyers and fighting craft of many kinds, whose mast-heads carried the blood-red flag now instead of their former emblems, our submarines couldn't reach them.

But our own fleet went out to measure their strength, and a thousand Navy planes took the air on the following day.

Uppermost in my own mind, and in everyone's mind, I think, was the question of air-force.

Would they bring the red ships? What was their cruising range? Could they cross the Atlantic with their enormous load of armored hull, or must they be transported? Were the air-cruisers with the fleet, or would they come later?

How Vornikoff and his assassins must have laughed as they built the monsters, armored them, and mounted the heavy guns so much greater than anything they would meet! The rest of us—all the rest of the world!—had been kept in ignorance.... And now our own fliers were sweeping out over the gray waters to find the answer to our questions.

I've tried to picture that battle; I've tried to imagine the feelings of those men on the dreadnaughts and battle-cruisers and destroyers. There was no attempt on the enemy's part to conceal his position; his wireless was crackling through the air with messages that our intelligence department easily decoded. Our Navy fliers roared out over the sea, out and over the American fleet, whose every bow was a line of white that told of their haste to meet the oncoming horde.

The plane-carriers threw their fighters into the air to join the cavalcade above—and a trace of smoke over the horizon told that the giant fleet was coming into range.

And then, instead of positions and ranges flashed back from our own swift scouts, came messages of the enemy's attack. Our men must have seen them from the towers of our own fleet; they must have known what the red swarm meant, as it came like rolling, fire-lit smoke far out in the sky—and they must have read plainly their own helplessness as they saw our thousand planes go down. They were overwhelmed—obliterated!—and the red horde of air-cruisers was hardly checked in its sweep.

Carnage and destruction, those blue seas of the north Atlantic have seen; they could tell tales of brave men, bravely going to their death in storm and calm but never have they seen another such slaughter as that day's sun showed.

The anti-aircraft guns roared vainly; some few of our own planes that had escaped returned to add their futile, puny blows. The waters about the ships were torn to foam, while the ships themselves were changed to furnaces of bursting flame—until the seas in mercy closed above them and took their torn steel, and the shattered bodies that they held, to the silence of the deep....

We got it all at Washington. I sat in a room with a group of white-faced men who stared blindly at a radiocone where a quiet voice was telling of disaster. It was Admiral Graymont speaking to us from the bridge of the big

dreadnaught, *Lincoln*, the flagship of the combined fleet. Good old Graymont! His best friend, Bill Schuler, Secretary of the Navy, was sitting wordless there beside me.

"It is the end," the quiet voice was saying; "the cruiser squadrons are gone.... Two more battleships have gone down: there are only five of us left.... A squadron of enemy planes is coming in above. Our men have fought bravely and with never a chance.... There!—they've got us!—the bombs! Good-by, Bill, old fellow—"

The radiocone was silent with a silence that roared deafeningly in our ears. And, beside me, I saw the Secretary of the Navy, a Navy now without ships or men, drop his tired, lined face into his hands, while his broad shoulders shook convulsively. The rest of us remained in our chairs, too stunned to do anything but look at one another in horror.

We expected them to strike at New York. I was sent up there, and it was there that I saw Paul again. I met him on lower Broadway, and I went up to him with my hand reaching for his. I didn't admire Paul's affiliations, but he had warned me—he had tried to save my life—and I wanted to thank him.

But his hand did not meet mine. There was a strange, wild look in his eyes—I couldn't define it—and he brought his gaze back from far off to stare at me as if I were a stranger.

Then: "Still got that A.B.C. ship?" he demanded.

"Yes," I answered wonderingly.

"Junk it!" he said. And his laugh was as wild and incomprehensible as his look had been. I stared after him as he walked away. I was puzzled, but there were other things to think of then.

A frenzy of preparation—and all in vain. The enemy fooled us; the radio brought the word from Quebec.

"They have entered the St. Lawrence," was the message it flashed. Then, later: "The Red fleet is passing toward Montreal. Enemy planes have spotted all radio towers. There is one above us now —" And that ended the message from Quebec.

But we got more information later. They landed near Montreal; they were preparing a great base for offensive operations; the country was overrun with a million men; the sky was full of planes by night and day; there was no artillery, no field guns of any sort, but there were torpedo-planes by tens of thousands, which made red fields of waiting death where trucks placed them as they took them from the ships.

And there were some of us who smiled sardonically in recollection of the mammoth plants the Vornikoff Reds had installed in Central Russia, and the plaudits that had greeted their plans for nitrogen fixation. They were to make fertilizers; the nitrates would be distributed without cost to the farms—this had pacified the Agrarians—and here were their "nitrates" that were to make fertile the fields of Russia: countless thousands of tons of nitro-explosives in these flying torpedoes!

But if we smiled mirthlessly at these recollections we worked while we chewed on our cud of bitterness. There came an order: "Evacuate New England," and the job was given to me.

With planes—a thousand of them—trucks, vans, the railroads, we gathered those terrified people into concentration camps, and took them over the ground, under the ground, and through the air to the distributing camp at Buffalo, where they were scattered to other points.

I saw the preparations for a battle-front below me as I skimmed over Connecticut. Trenches made a thin line that went farther than I could see! Here was the dam that was expected to stop the enemy columns from the north. I think no one then believed that our air-force could check the assault. The men of the fighting planes were marked for death; one read it in their eyes; but who of us was not?

How those giant cruisers would be downed no man could say, but we worked on in a blind desperation; we would hold that invading army as long as men could sight a gun; we would hold them back; and somehow, someway, we must find the means to repel the invasion from the air!

I saw the lines of track that made a network back to the trenches. Like the suburban lines around New York, they would carry thousands of single cars, each driven at terrific speed by the air plane propeller at its bow. With these, the commanders could shift their forces to whatever sector was hardest pressed. They would be bombed, of course, but the hundreds of tracks would not all be destroyed—and the line must be held!

The line! it brought a strangling lump to my throat as I saw those thin markings of trenches, the marching bodies of troops, the brave, hopeless, determined men who went singing to their places in that line. But my planes were winging past me; my job was ahead, where a multitude still waited and prayed for deliverance.

We never finished the job; in two days the red horde was upon us. Their swarming troops were convoyed by planes, but no effort was made to fly over our lines and launch an attack. Were they feeling their way? Did they think now that they would find us passive and unresisting? Did they want to take our cities undamaged? Oh, we asked ourselves a thousand questions with no answer to any—except the knowledge that a million men were marching from the north; that their fleet of planes would attack as soon as the troops encountered resistance; that our batteries of anti-aircraft guns would harry them as they came, and our air-fleet, held back in reserve, would take what the batteries left....

My last planes with their fugitive loads passed close to the lines of red troops. There were red planes overhead, but they let us pass unhindered. Fleeing, driving wildly toward the south, we were unworthy, it seemed, of even their contemptuous attention. But I was sick to actual nausea at sight of the villages and cities where only a part of the population had escaped. The roads, in front of the red columns, were jammed with motors and with men and women and children on foot: a hopeless tangle.

I was watching the pitiful flight below me, cursing my own impotence to be of help, when a shrill whistling froze me rigid to my controls. I had heard it before—there could be no mistaking the cry of that oncoming torpedo—and I saw the damnable thing pass close to my ship.

I was doing two hundred—my motor was throttled down—but this inhuman monster passed me as if my ship were frozen as unmoving as myself. It tore on ahead. I saw an enemy plane above it some five thousand feet. The torpedo was checked; I saw it poise; then it curved over and down. And the screaming motor took up its cry that was like a thousand devils until its sound was lost in the screams from below and the infernal blast of its own explosion.

Only a trial flight—an experiment to test their controls! No need for me to try to tell you of the thoughts that tore me through and through while I struggled to bring my ship to an even keel in the hurricane of explosion that drove up at me from below. But I spat out the one word: "Brotherhood!" and I prayed for a place in the front line where I might send one shot at least against so beastly a foe.

That was somewhere in Massachusetts. Their foremost columns were close behind. They came to a stop some fifty miles from our waiting line of battle: I learned this when I got to Washington. And the reason, too, was known; it was published in all the papers. There had been messages to the President, broadcast to the world from an unknown source:

"To the President of the United States—warning! This war must end. You, as Commander-in-Chief of the American forces can bring it to a close. I have prevailed upon the Red Army of the Brotherhood to halt. They have listened to me. You, also, must take heed.

"You will issue orders at once to withdraw all resistance. You will disband your army, ground all your planes; bring all your artillery into one place and prepare to turn the government of this country over to the representatives of the Central Council. You will act at once."

"This war is ended. All wars are ended forevermore. I have spoken."

And the strange message was signed "Paul."

The wild words of a maniac, it was thought at first. Yet the fact remained that the enemy's advance had ceased. Who was this "Paul" who had "prevailed upon the Red Army" to halt?

And then the obvious answer occurred; it was a ruse on the part of the Reds. They feared to attack; their strength was not as great as we had thought—officers and men of all branches of the service took new heart and plunged more frenziedly still into the work of preparation.

There were direction-finders that had taken the message from several stations; their pointers converged upon one definite location in southern Ohio. Over an area of twenty square miles, that place was combed for a sending radio where the message could have originated—combed in vain.

The next demand came at ten on the following morning.

"To the President of the United States: You have disregarded my warning. You will not do so again; I have power to enforce my demands. I had hoped that bloodshed and destruction might cease, but it is plain that only that will save you from your own headstrong folly. I must strike. At noon to-day the Capitol in Washington will be destroyed. See that it is emptied of human life. I have spoken. Paul."

A maniac, surely; yet a maniac with strange powers. For the graphs of the radio direction-finders showed a curve. And when they were assembled the reading could only mean that the instrument that had sent the threat had moved over fifty miles during the few minutes of its sending. This, I think, was what brought the order to vacate the big domed building in Washington.

Of course the Capitol Building had been searched; there was not a nook nor corner from roof to basement but had been gone over in search of an explosive machine. And now it was empty, and a guard of soldiers made a solid cordon surrounding it. No one could approach upon the ground; and, above, a series of circling patrol-planes, one squadron above another, guarded against approach by air. With such a defense the Capitol and its grounds seemed impregnable.

My watch said 11:59; I held it in my hand and watched the seconds tick slowly by. The city was hushed; it seemed that no man was so much as breathing ... 11:59 :60!—and an instant later I heard

the shriek of something that tore the air to screaming fragments. I saw it as it came on a straight, level line from the east; a flash like a meteor of glistening white. It passed beneath the planes, that were motionless by contrast, drove straight for the gleaming Capitol dome, passed above it, and swept on in a long flattened curve that bent outward and up.

It was gone from my sight, though the shrieking air was still tearing at my ears, when I saw the great building unfold. Time meant nothing; my racing mind made slow and deliberate the explosion that lifted the roofs and threw the walls in dusty masses upon the ground. So slow it seemed!—and I had not even seen the shell that the white meteor-ship had fired. Yet there was the beautiful building, expanding, disintegrating. It was a cloud of dust when the concussion reached me to dash me breathless to the earth....

The white meteor was the vehicle of "Paul," the dictator. From it had come the radio message whose source had moved so swiftly. I saw this all plainly.

There was a conference of high officials at the War Department Building, and the Secretary summed up all that was said:

"A new form of air-flight, and a new weapon more destructive than any we have known! That charge of explosive that was fired at the Capitol was so small as to be unseen. We can't meet it; we can only fight. Fight on till the end."

A message came in as we sat there, a message to the Commander-in-Chief who had come over from the White House under military guard.

"Surrender!" it demanded; "I have shown you my power; it is inexhaustible, unconquerable. Surrender or be destroyed; it is the dawn of a new day, the day of the Brotherhood of Man. Let bloodshed cease. Surrender! I command it! Paul."

The President of the United States held the flimsy paper in his hand. He rose slowly to his feet, and he read it aloud to all of us assembled there; read it to the last hateful word. Then:

"Surrender?" he asked. He turned steady, quiet eyes upon the big flag whose red and white and blue made splendid the wall behind him—and I'll swear that I saw him smile.

We have had many presidents since '76; big men, some of them; tall, handsome men; men who looked as if nature had moulded them for a high place. This man was small of stature; the shortest man in all that room if he had stood, but he was big—big! Only one who is great can look deep through the whirling turmoil of the moment to find the eternal verities that are always underneath—and smile!

"Men must die,"—he spoke meditatively; in seeming communing with himself, as one who tries to face a problem squarely and honestly—"and nations must pass; time overwhelms us all. Yet there is that which never dies and never surrenders."

He looked about the room now, as if he saw us for the first time.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "we have here an ultimatum. It is backed by power which our Secretary of War says is invincible. We are faced by an enemy who would annihilate these United States, and this new power fights on the side of the enemy.

"Must we go the way of England, of France, of all Europe? It would seem so. The United States of America is doomed. Yet each one of us will meet what comes bravely, if, facing our own end, we know that the principles upon which this nation is founded must go on; if only the Stars and Stripes still floats before our closing eyes to assure us that some future day will see the resurrection of truth and of honor and kindness among men.

"We will fight, as our Secretary of War has said—fight on to the end. We will surrender—never! That is our answer to this one who calls himself 'Paul.'"

We could not speak; I do not know how long the silence lasted. But I know that I left that room a silent man among many silent men, in whose eyes I saw a reflection of the emotion that filled my own heart. It was the end—the end of America, of millions of American homes—but this was better than surrender to such a foe. Better death than slavery to that race of bloodthirsty oppressors.

But who was "Paul?" This question kept coming repeatedly to my mind. The press of the country echoed the President's words, then dipped their pens in vitriol to heap scorching invective upon the head of the tyrant. The power of the Reds we might have met—or so it was felt—but this new menace gave the invaders a weapon we could not combat. It was power!—a means of flight beyond anything known!—an explosive beside which our nitro compounds were playthings for a child.

"Who is Paul?" It was not only myself who asked the question through those next long hours, but perhaps I was the only one in whose mind was a disturbing certainty that the answer was mine if I could but grasp it.

I was remembering Paris; I was thinking of that peaceful, happy city before the First of May, before the world had gone mad and a raging, red beast had laid it waste and overrun it. And of Paul Stravoinski—my friend "Straki" of college days—who had warned me. He had known what was coming. He himself had said that he had prayed to "them" for delay; that in a few weeks he would do—what?... And suddenly I knew.

Paul had succeeded; his research had ended in the dissection of the atom; he had unleashed the sub-atomic power of matter. Only this could explain the wild flight through the sky, the terrific explosion at the Capitol. It was Paul—my friend, Paul Stravoinski—who was imposing his will upon the world.

I said nothing as I took off; the swiftest plane was at my command. I might be wrong; I must not arouse false hopes; but I must find Paul. And the papers were black with scareheads of another threat as I left Washington:

"You have twenty-four hours to surrender. There shall be one last day of grace." Signed: "Paul."

There was more of the wild talk of the beauties of this new dispensation—a mixture of idealistic folly and of threats of destruction. I needed no more to prove the truth of my suspicions. No one

but the Paul I had known could cling so tenaciously to his dreams; no one but he could be so blind to the actual horror of the new oligarchy he would impose upon the world.

I flew alone; no one but myself must try to hunt him out. I paid no attention to the radio direction of the last message; he would fly far afield to send it; distance meant nothing to one who held his power. I must look for him at his laboratory, that cluster of deserted buildings that stood all alone by a distant railway siding; it was there he had worked.

He met me with a pistol in his hand—a tiny gun that fired only a .22 calibre bullet.

"Put down your pop-gun," I told him and brushed through the open door into the room that had been his laboratory. "I am unarmed, and I'm here to talk business.

"You are 'Paul'!" I shot the sentence at him as if it were a bullet that must strike him down.

He did not answer directly; just nodded in confirmation of some unspoken thought.

"You have found me," he said slowly; "you were the only one I feared."

Then he came out with it, and his eyes blazed with a maniacal light.

"Yes, I am Paul! and this 'pop-gun' in my hand is the weapon that destroyed your Capitol at Washington. The bullet contained less than a grain of tritonite; that is the name I have given my explosive."

He aimed the little pistol toward me where I stood. "These bullets are more lightly charged—they are to protect myself—and the one ten-thousandth of a milligram in the end of each will blow you into bits! Sit down. I will not be checked now. You will never leave this place alive!"

"Less than a grain of tritonite!"—and I had seen a great building go down to dust at its touch! I sat down in the chair where he directed, and I turned away from the fanatical glare of Paul's eyes to look about me.

There was poverty here no longer; no makeshift apparatus greeted my eyes, but the finest of laboratory equipment. Paul read my thoughts.

"They have been liberal," he told me; "the Central Council has financed my work—though I have kept my whereabouts a secret even from them. But they would not wait. I told you in Paris, and you did not believe. And now—now I have succeeded! the research is done!"

He half turned to pick up a flake of platinum no larger than one's finger-nail; it was a weight that was used on a delicate balance.

"Matter is matter no longer," he said; "I have resolved it into energy. I hold here in my hand power to destroy an army, or to drive a fleet of ships. I, Paul, will build a new world. I will give to man a surcease from labor; I will give him rest; I will do the work of the world. My tritonite that can destroy can also create; it shall be used for that alone. This is the end of war. Here is wealth; here

is power; I shall give it to mankind, and, under the rule of the Brotherhood, a united world will arise and go forward to new growth, to a greater civilization, to a building of a new heaven on earth."

He was pacing up and down the room. His hands were shaking; the muscles of his face that twitched and trembled were moulded into deep lines. I sat there and realized that within that room, directly before my eyes, was the Dictator of the World. It was true—I could not doubt it—Paul Straki of college days had made his dreams come true; his research was ended. And this new "Paul" who held in those trembling hands the destinies of mankind, at whose word kings and presidents trembled, was utterly mad!

I tried to talk and tell him of the truth we knew was true. He would have none of it; his dreams possessed him. In the bloody flag of this new Russia he could see only the emblem of freedom; the men who marched beneath that banner were his brothers, unwitting in the destruction they wrought. It was all that they knew. But they fought for the right. They would cease fighting now, and would join him in the work of moulding a new race. And even their leaders, who had sometimes opposed—were they not kind at heart? Had they not checked the advance of an irresistible army to give him and his new weapon an opportunity to open the eyes of the people? Theirs was no wish to destroy; their hearts ached for their victims who refused to listen and could be convinced only by force.

And as he talked on there passed before my eyes the vision of an aerial torpedo and a blood-red ship above, where these "kindly" men who were Paul's allies turned the instrument of death upon huddled, screaming folk—and laughed, no doubt, at such good sport.

I thought of many things. I was tensed one moment to throw myself upon the man; and an instant later I was searching my mind for some argument, some gleam of reason, with which I could tear aside the illusions that held him. I saw him cross the room where a radio stood, and he switched on the instrument for the news-broadcast service. The shouting of an excited voice burst into the room.

"The Reds have advanced," said the voice. "Their armies have crossed the Connecticut line. They are within ten miles of the American forces. The twenty-four hours of grace promised by the tyrant 'Paul' was a lie. The battle is already on."

I saw the tall figure of Paul sink to its former stoop; the lameness that had vanished in the moment of his exaltation had returned. He limped a pace or two toward me.

"They said they would wait!" His voice was a hoarse whisper. "General Vornikoff himself gave me his promise!"

I was on my feet, then. "What matter?" I shouted. "What difference does it make—a few hours or a day? Your damned patriots, your dear brothers in arms—they are destroying us this instant! And not one of our men but is worth more than the whole beastly mob!"

I was wild with the picture that came so clear and plain before my eyes. I had my pistol in my hand; I was tempted to fire. It was his whisper that stopped me.

"They have crossed Massachusetts! And Maida is there in Melford!"

There was no resisting his strength that tore my weapon from me. His tritonite pistol was pressed into my side, and his hand upon my collar threw me ahead of him toward a rear room, then out into a huge shed. I had only a quick glimpse of the airplane that was housed there. It was a white cylinder, and the stern that was toward me showed a funnel-shaped port.

I was thrown by that same furious strength through a door of the ship; I saw Paul Stravoinski seat himself before some curious controls. The ship that held me rose; moved slowly through an opened door; and with a screech from the stern it tore off and up into the air.

I have said Paul could fly; but the terrific flight of the screaming thing that held us seemed beyond the power of man to control. I was stunned with the thundering roar and the speed that held me down and back against a cabin wall.

How he found Melford, I cannot know; but he found it as a homing pigeon finds its loft. He checked our speed with a sickening swiftness that made my brain reel. There were red ships above, but they let the white ship pass unchallenged. There were no Red soldiers on the ground—only the marks where they had passed.

From the distance came a never-ceasing thunder of guns. The village was quiet. It still burned, blazing brightly in places, again smouldering sluggishly and sending into the still air smoke clouds whose fumes were a choking horror of burned flesh. There were bodies in grotesque scattering about the streets; some of them were black and charred.

Paul Stravoinski took me with him as he dashed for a house that the flames had not touched. And I was with him as he smashed at the door and broke into the room.

There was splintered furniture about. A cabinet, whose glass doors had been wantonly smashed, leaned crazily above its fallen books, now torn, scuffed and muddy upon the floor. Through a shattered window in the bed-room beyond came a puff of the acrid smoke from outside to strangle the breath in my throat. On the floor in a shadowed corner lay the body of a woman—a young woman as her clotted tangle of golden hair gave witness. She stirred and moaned half-consciously.... And the lined face of Paul Stravoinski was a terrible thing to see as he went stumblingly across the room to gather that body into his arms.

I had known Maida; I had seen their love begin in college days. I had known a laughing girl with sunshine in her hair, a girl whose soft eyes had grown so tenderly deep when they rested upon Paul—but this that he took in his arms, while a single dry sob tore harshly at his throat, this was never Maida!

There were red drops that struck upon his hands or fell sluggishly to the floor; the head and face had taken the blow of a clubbed rifle or a heavy boot. The eyes in that tortured face opened to rest upon Paul's, the lips were moving.

"I told them of you," I heard her whisper. "I told them that you would come—and they laughed." Unconsciously she tried to draw her torn clothing about her, an instinctive reaction to some dim

realization of her nakedness. She was breathing feebly. "And now—oh, Paul!—Paul!—you—have come—too late!"

I hardly think Paul knew I was there or sensed that I followed where he carried in his arms the bruised body that had housed the spirit of Maida. He flew homeward like a demon, but he moved as one in a dream.

Only when I went with him into the room where he had worked, did he turn on me in sudden fury.

"Out!" he screamed. "Get out of my sight! It is you who have done this—your damned armies who would not do as I ordered! If you had not resisted, if you had—"

I broke in there.

"Did we do that?" I outshouted him, and I pointed to the torn body on a cot. His eyes followed my shaking hand. "No, it was your brothers—your dear comrades who are bringing the brotherhood of men into the world! Well, are you proud? Are you happy and satisfied—with what your brothers do with women?"

It must be a fearful thing to have one's dreams turn bitter and poisonous. Paul Stravoinski seemed about to spring upon me. He was crouched, and the muscles of his thin neck were like wire; his face was a ghastly thing, his eyes so staring bright, and the sensitive mouth twisting horribly. But he sprang at last not at me but toward the door, and without a word from his tortured lips he opened it and motioned me out.

Even there I heard echoes of distant guns and the heavier, thudding sounds that must be their aerial torpedoes. My feet were leaden as I strained every muscle to hurry toward my ship. Through my mind was running the threat of the Russian, Vornikoff: "We even tell you the date: in thirty days." And this was the thirtieth day—thirty days that a state of war had existed.

The battle was on; the radio had spoken truly. I saw its raging fires as I came up from our rear where the gray-like smoke clouds shivered in the unending blast. But I saw stabbing flames that struck upward from the ground to make a wall of sharp, fiery spears, and I knew that every darting flame was launching a projectile from our anti-aircraft guns.

The skies were filled with the red aircraft of the enemy, but their way was an avenue of hell where thousands of shells filled the air with their crashing explosions. There were torpedoes, the unmanned airships whose cargo was death, and they were guided to their marks despite the inferno that raged about the red ships above.

I saw meteors that fell, the red flames that enveloped them no redder than the bodies of the ships. And, as I leaped from my plane that I had landed back of our lines, I sensed that the enemy was withdrawing.

There was a colonel of artillery—I had known him in days of peace—and he threw his arms around me and executed a crazy dance. "We've beaten them back, Bob!" he shouted, and repeated

it over and over in a delirium of joy.

I couldn't believe it; not those cruisers that I had seen over Paris. Another brief moment showed my fears were all too rational.

A shrieking hailstorm of torpedoes preceded them; the ships were directing them from afar. And, while some of the big shells went wild and overshot our lines, there were plenty that found their mark.

I was smashed flat by a stunning concussion. Behind me the place where Colonel Hartwell had stood was a smoking crater; his battery of guns had been blasted from the earth. Up and down the whole line, far beyond the range of my sight, the eruption continued. The ground was a volcano of flame, as if the earth had opened to let through the interior fires, and the air was filled with a litter of torn bodies and sections of shattered guns.

No human force could stand up under such a bombardment. Like others about me, I gripped tight upon something within me that was my self-control, and I marveled that I yet lived while I waited for the end.

Beyond the smoke clouds was a hillside, swarming with figures in red; solid masses of troops that came toward us. Above was the red fleet, passing safely above our flame-blasted lines; there were bombs falling upon those batteries here and there whose fire was unsilenced. And then, from the south, came a roar that pierced even the bedlam about me. The sun shone brightly there where the smoke-clouds had not reached, and it glinted and sparkled from the wings of a myriad of our planes.

There was something that pulled tight at my throat; I know I tore at it with fumbling hands, as if that something were an actual band that had clamped down and choked me, while I stared at that true line of sharp-pointed V's. The air-force of the United States had been ordered in; and they were coming, coming—to an inevitable death!

I tried to tear my eyes away from that oncoming fleet, but I could not move. I saw their first contact with the enemy; so small, they were, in contrast with the big red cruisers. They attacked in formations; they drove down and in; and they circled and whirled before they fluttered to earth....

Dimly, through the stupor that numbed my brain, I heard men about me shouting with joy. I felt more than saw the fall of a monster red craft; it struck not far away. The voices were thanking God—for what? Another red ship fell—and another; and through all the roaring inferno a sound was tearing—a ripping, terrible scream that went on and on. And above me, when I forced my eyes upward, was a flash of white.

It darted like a live thing among the red ones whose guns blazed madly—and the red ships in clotted groups fell away and over and down as the white one passed. They had been burst open where some power had blasted them, and their torn hulls showed gaping as they fell.

For a time the air was silent and empty above; the white, flashing thing had passed from sight, for the line of red ships was long. Then again it returned, and it threw itself into the mad whirl in the south where the air-force of the American people was fighting its last fight.

I was screaming insanely as I saw it come back. The white ship!—the blast of vapor from its funneled stern—It was Paul!—Paul Stravoinski!—Paul the Dictator!—and he was fighting on our side!

His ship had been prepared; I had seen the machine-guns on her bow. Paul was working them from within, and every bullet was tipped with the product of his brain—the deadly tritonite!

The white flash swung wide in a circle that took it far away. It came back above the advancing army of the Reds. It swerved once wildly, then settled again upon its course, and the raging hell that the Reds had turned loose upon our lines was as nothing to the destruction that poured upon the Red troops from above.

A messenger of peace, that ship; I knew well why Paul had painted it white. And, instead of peace —!

He was flying a full mile from our lines, yet the torn earth and great boulders crashed among us even then. There were machine-guns firing ceaselessly from the under side of the ship. What charges of tritonite had the demented man placed in those shells?

Below and behind it, as it flashed across our view, was a fearful, writhing mass where the earth itself rose up in unending, convulsive agony. A volcano of fire followed him, a fountain of earth that ripped and tore and stretched itself in a writhing, tortured line across the land as the white ship passed.

No man who saw that and lived has found words to describe the progress of that monstrous serpent; the valley itself is there for men to see. The roar was beyond the limit of men's strained nerves. I found myself cowering upon the ground when the white ship came back; I followed it fearfully with my eyes until I saw it swoop falteringly down. Such power seemed not for men but for gods; I could not have met Paul Stravoinski then but in a posture of supplication. But I leaped to my feet and raced madly across the torn earth as I saw the white ship touch the ground—rise—fall again—and end its flight where it ploughed a furrow across a brown field....

I raised Paul Stravoinski's head in my arms where I found him in the ship. An enemy shell had entered that cabin; it must have come early in the fight, but he had fought gamely on. And the eyes that looked up into mine had none of the wild light I had seen. They were the eyes of Paul Straki, the comrade of those few long years before, and he smiled as he said: "*Voila*, friend Bob: *c'est fini!* And now I go for a long, long walk. We will talk of poetry, Maida and I...."

But his dreams were still with him. He opened his eyes to stare intently at me. "You will see that it is not in vain?" he questioned; then smiled as one who is at peace, as he whispered: "Yes, I know you will—my friend, Bob—"

And his fixed gaze went through and beyond me, while he tried, in broken sentences, to give the vision that had been his. So plain it was to him now.

"The wild work—of a mistaken people. America will undo it.... A world at peace.... The vast commerce—of the skies—I see it—so clearly.... It will break down—all barriers.... A beautiful, happy world...."

His lips moved feebly at the last. I could not speak; could not even call him by name; I could only lean my head closer to hear.

One whispered word; then another: a fragment of poetry! I had heard him quote it often. But the whispered words were not for me. Paul was speaking to someone beside him—someone my blind, human eyes could not see....

I am writing these words at my desk in the great Transportation Building in New York. It stands upon the site of the Chrysler Building that towered here—until one of the flying torpedoes came over to hunt it out. They landed several in New York; how long ago it all seems that the threat of utter destruction hung over the whole nation—the whole world.

And now from my window I see the sparkling flash of ships. The air is filled with them; I am still unaccustomed to their speed. But a wisp of vapor from each bell-shaped stern throws them swiftly on their way; it marks the continuous explosion of that marvel of a new age—tritonite! There are tremendous terminals being built; the air-transport lines are being welded into efficient units that circle the world; and the world is becoming so small!

The barriers are gone; all nations are working as one to use wisely this strange new power for the work of this new world. No more poverty; no more of the want and desperate struggle that leads a whole people into the insane horrors of war; it is a glorious world of which we dream and which is coming slowly to be....

But I think we must dream well and work well to bring to actuality the beautiful visions in those far-seeing eyes of the man called Paul—Dictator, one time, of the whole world.

LISTENING TO ANTS

Two scientists of the University of Pittsburgh recently perfected an apparatus for detecting the sounds of underground communications among ants. A block of wood was placed upon the diaphragm of an ordinary telephone transmitter, which in turn was connected through batteries and amplifiers to a pair of earphones. When the termites crawled over the block of wood the transmitter was agitated, resulting in sound vibrations which were clearly heard by the listener at the headset.

When the ants became excited over something or other their soldiers were found to hammer their heads vigorously on the wood. This action could be clearly seen and heard at the same time. The investigators found that the ants could hear sound vibrations in the air very poorly or not at all, but were extremely sensitive to vibrations underground. For this reason it was thought that the head hammering was a method of communication.

Because of this sensitivity to substratum vibrations, ants are seldom found to infest the ties of railroads carrying heavy traffic, or buildings containing machinery.

The Earthman's Burden

By R. F. Starzl

And then he jumped.

Denny Olear was playing blackjack when the colonel's orderly found him. He hastily buttoned his tunic and in a few minutes, alert and very military, was standing at attention in the little office on the ground floor of the Denver I. F. P. barracks. His swanky blue uniform fitted without a wrinkle. His little round skullcap was perched at the regulation angle.

"Olear," said the colonel, "they're having a little trouble at the Blue River Station, Mercury."

"Trouble? Uh-huh," Olear said placidly.

There is foul play on Mercury—until Denny Olear of the Interplanetary Flying Police gets after his man.

The colonel looked him over. He saw a man past his first youth. Thirty-five, possibly forty. Olear was well-knit, sandy-haired, not over five feet six inches in height. His hair was close-cropped, his features phlegmatic, his eyes a light blue with thick, short, light-colored lashes, his teeth excellent.

A scar, dead white on a brown cheekbone, was a reminder of an "encounter" with one of the numerous sauriens of Venus.

"I'm sending you," explained the colonel, "because you're more experienced, and not like some of these kids, always spoiling for a fight. There's something queer about this affair. Morones, factor of the Blue River post, reports that his assistant has disappeared. Vanished. Simply gone. But only three months ago the former factor—Morones was his assistant—disappeared. No hide nor hair of him. Morones reported to the company, the Mercurian Trading Concession, and they called me. Something, they think, is rotten."

"Yes, sir."

"I guess I needn't tell you," the colonel went on, "that you have to use tact. People don't seem to appreciate the Force. What with the lousy politicians begrudging every cent we get, and a bunch of suspicious foreign powers afraid we'll get too good—"

"Yeah, I know. Tact, that's my motto. No rough stuff." He saluted, turned on his heel.

"Just a minute!" The colonel had arisen. He was a fine, ascetic type of man. He held out his hand.

"Good-by, Olear. Watch yourself!"

When Olear had taken his matter-of-fact departure the colonel ran his fingers through his whitening hair. In the past several months he had sent five of his best men on dangerous missions —missions requiring tact, courage, and, so it seemed, very much luck. And only two of the five had come back. In those days the Interplanetary Flying Police did not enjoy the tremendous prestige it does now. The mere presence of a member of the Force is enough, in these humdrum days of interplanetary law and order, to quell the most serious disturbance anywhere in the solar system. But it was not always thus. This astounding prestige had to be earned with blood and courage, in many a desperate and lonely battle; had to be snatched from the dripping jaws of death.

Olear checked over his flying ovoid, got his bearings from the port astronomer, set his coordinate navigator and shoved off. Two weeks later he plunged into the thick, misty atmosphere on the dark side of Mercury.

Ancient astronomers had long suspected that Mercury always presented the same side to the sun, though they were ignorant that the little planet had water and air. Its sunward side is a dreary, sterile, hot and hostile desert. Its dark side is warm and humid, and resembles to some extent the better known jungles and swamps of Venus. But it has a favored belt, some hundreds of miles wide, around its equator, where the enormous sun stays perpetually in one spot on the horizon. Sunward is the blinding glare of the desert; on the dark side, enormous banks of lowering clouds. On the dark margin of this belt are the "ringstorms," violent thunderstorms that never cease. They are the source of the mighty rivers which irrigate the tropical habitable belt and plunge out, boiling, far into the desert.

Olear's little ship passed through the ringstorms, and he did not take over the controls until he recognized the familiar mark of the trading company, a blue comet on the aluminum roof of one of the larger buildings. Visibility was good that day, but despite the unusual clarity of the atmosphere there was a suggestion of the sinister about the lifeless scene—the vast, irresistible river, the

riotously colored jungle roof. The vastness of nature dwarfed man's puny work. One horizon flashed incessantly with livid lightning, the other was one blinding blaze of the nearby sun. And almost lost below in the savage landscape was man's symbol of possession, a few metal sheds in a clear, fenced space of a few acres.

Olear cautiously checked speed, skimmed over the turbid surface of the great river, and set her down on the ground within the compound. With his pencil-like ray-tube in his hand he stepped out of the hatchway.

A Mercurian native came out of the residence, presently, his hands together in the peace sign. For the benefit of Earthlubbers whose only knowledge of Mercury is derived from the teleview screen, it should be explained that Mercurians are *not* human, even if they do slightly resemble us. They hatch from eggs, pass one life-phase as frog-like creatures in their rivers, and in the adult stage turn more human in appearance. But their skin remains green and fish-belly white. There is no hair on their warty heads. Their eyes have no lids, and have a peculiar dead, staring look when they sleep. And they carry a peculiar, fishy odor with them at all times.

This Mercurian looked at Olear seemingly without interest.

"Where is Morones?" the officer inquired.

"Morones?" the native piped, in English. "Inside. He busy."

"All right. I'm coming in."

"He busy."

"Yeah, move over."

Though the native was a good six inches taller than Olear he stepped aside when the officer pushed him. Men—and Mercurians—had a way of doing that when they looked into those colorless eyes. They were not as phlegmatic as the face. Morones was sitting in his office.

"Well, I'm here," Olear announced, helping himself to a chair.

"Yes"—sourly. "Who invited you?"

Olear looked at the factor levelly, appraising him. A big man, fat, but the fat well distributed. Saturnine face, dark hair, dark and bristly beard. The kind that thrived where other men became weak and fever-ridden. Also, to judge by his present appearance, an unpleasant companion and a nasty enemy.

"Don't see what difference it makes to you," Olear answered in his own good time; "but the company invited me."

"They would!" Morones growled. His eyes flickered to the door, and quick as a cat, Olear leaped to one side, his ray-pencil in his hand.

Morones had not moved, and in the door stood the native, motionless and without expression. Morones laughed nastily.

"Kind of jumpy, eh? What is it, Nargyll?"

Nargyll burst into a burbling succession of native phrases, which Olear had some difficulty following.

"Nargyll wants to move your ship into one of the sheds, but the activator key's gone."

"Yeah, I know," Olear assented casually. "I got it. Leave the ship till I get ready. Then I'll put it away. Get out, Nargyll."

The native, hesitated, then on the lift of Morones' eyebrows departed. Olear shifted a chair so that he could watch both Morones and the door. He reopened the conversation easily:

"Well, we understand each other. You don't want me here and I'm here. So what are you going to do about it?"

Morones flushed. He struggled to keep his temper down.

"What do you want to know?"

"What happened to the factor who was here before you?"

"I don't know. The translucene wasn't coming in like it should. Sammis went out into the jungle for a palaver with the chiefs to find out why. And he didn't come back."

"You didn't find out where he went?"

"I just told you," Morones said impatiently, "he went out to see the native chiefs."

"Alone?"

"Of course, alone. There were only two of us Earthmen here. Couldn't abandon this post to the wogglies, could we? Not that it'd make much difference. Except for Nargyll, none'll come near."

"You never heard of him again?"

"No! Dammit, no! Say, didn't they have any dumber strappers around than you? I told you once—I tell you again—I never saw hide nor hair of him after that."

"Aw-right, aw-right!" Olear regarded Morones placidly. "And so you took the job of factor and radioed for an assistant, and when the assistant came he disappeared."

Morones grunted, "He went out to get acquainted with the country and didn't come back."

Olear masked his close scrutiny of the factor under his idle and expressionless gaze. He was not ready to jump to the conclusion that Morones' uneasiness sprang from a sense of guilt. Guilty or not, he had a right to feel uneasy. The man would be dense indeed if he did not

realize he was in line for suspicion, and he did not look dense. Indeed, he was obviously a shrewd character.

"Let me see your 'lucene."

Morones rose. Despite his bulk he stepped nimbly. He had the nimbleness of a Saturnian bear, which is great, as some of the earlier explorers learned to their dismay.

"That's the first sensible question you've asked," Morones snorted. "Take a look at our 'lucene. Ha! Have a good look!"

He led the way across the compound, waved his hand before the door of a strongly built shed in a swift, definite combination, and the door opened, revealing the interior. He waved invitingly.

"You go first," Olear said.

With a sneer Morones stepped in. "You're safe, boy, you're safe."

Olear looked at the small pile on the floor in astonishment. Instead of the beautiful, semi-transparent chips of translucene, the dried sap of a Mercurian tree which is invaluable to the world as the source of an unfailing cancer cure, there were only a few dirty, dried up shavings, hardly worth shipping back to Earth for refining. The full significance of the affair began to dawn on the officer. The translucene trees grew only in this favored section of Mercury, and the Earth company had a monopoly of the entire supply. Justly, for only on Earth was cancer known, and it was on the increase. That small, almost useless pile on the floor connoted a terrible drug famine for the human race.

Morones' smile might have been a grin of satisfaction, at Olear's question:

"Is that all you've bought since the last freighter was here?"'

"It is," he replied. "The last load went off six months ago, and this here shed should be full to the eaves. There'll be hell to pay."

"It may not be tactful," Olear remarked, "but if you've got your takings cached away somewhere to hold up the Earth for a big ransom, you'd better come across right now. You can't get by with it, fellow. You should have close to six million dollars' worth of it, and you can't get away. You just can't."

Morones controlled his anger with an effort.

"Like any dumb strapper, you've got your mind made up, ain't you? Well, go ahead. Get something on me. Here I was almost set to give you a lead that might get you somewhere. And you come shooting off—trying to make out I stole the 'lucene and killed those two fellows, eh? Go ahead! Get something on me! But not on Company grounds. You're leaving now!"

With that he made a lunge at the officer, quite beside himself with rage. Olear could have burnt him down, but he was far too experienced for such an amateurish trick. Instead he ducked to evade Morones' blow. But the big man was as agile as a panther. In mid-air, so it seemed, he changed his direction of attack. The big fist swept downward, striking Olear's head a glancing blow.

But the men of the Force have always been fighters, whatever their shortcomings as diplomats. Olear countered with a strong right to the body, thudding solidly, for Morones' softness did not go far below the surface. The factor whirled instantly, but not quite fast enough to bar the door. Olear was out and inside his ship in a few seconds, slamming the hatch.

"Tact!" he grinned to himself, inserting the activator key. "Tact is what a fella needs." The little space flier shot aloft, until the tiny figure of the factor stopped shaking its fist and entered the residence. The post had a flier of its own, of course, but Morones was too wise to use it in pursuit.

Olear considered what was best to do. Of course he could have placed Morones under arrest; could still do it; but that would not solve the mystery of the two deaths and the missing 'lucene. If the choleric factor was really guilty of the crimes, it would be better to let him go his way in the hope that he would betray himself. Olear regretted that he had not kept his tongue under closer curb. But there was no use regretting. Perhaps, after all, he ought to turn back to pump Morones for some helpful information.

His mind made up, he descended again until he was hovering a few feet from the ground.

"Morones!" he called. "Morones!" He held the hatch open.

Morones came to the door of the residence. He had a tube in his hand, a long-range weapon.

"Morones," Olear declared pompously. "I place you under arrest!"

The effect was instantaneous. Morones lifted the tube, and a glimmering, iridescent beam sprang out. The ship was up and away in a second, lurching and shivering uncomfortably every time the beam struck it in its upward flight. A good few seconds continued impingement....

But a miss is as good as a light-year. Miles high, Olear looked into his telens. Morones had laid aside his tube and was working with an instrument like a twin transit. Plotting the ship's course, naturally. Olear set his course for the Earth, and kept on it for a good twenty-four hours. Morones, if he was still watching him, would think he'd gone back for reinforcements. Such an assumption would be incredible now, but that was before the I. F. P. had achieved its present tremendous reputation.

Beyond observation range, Olear curved back toward Mercury again, and was almost inside its atmosphere when he made a discovery that caused him to lose for a moment his natural indifference, and to clamp his jaws in anger. The current oxygen tank became empty, and when he removed it from the rack and put in a new one he found someone had let out all of this essential gas. The valve of every one of the spare tanks had been opened. Had Olear actually continued on his way to Earth he would have perished miserably of suffocation long before he could have returned to the Mercurian atmosphere. The officer whistled tunelessly through his teeth as he considered this fact.

The visibility was by this time normal; that is, so poor it would have been possible to land very close to the trading station. Olear was taking no chances, however, and came down a good three Earth miles away. The egg-shaped hull sank through the glossy, brilliant treetops, through twisted vines, and was buried in the dank gloom of the jungle. Here it might remain hidden for a hundred years.

The twilight of the jungle was almost darkness. Landmarks were not. But Olear made a few small, inconspicuous marks on trees with his knife until he came to an outcropping rock. He had noticed the scarlike white of it slashing through the jungle from the air, and used it as a guide to direct his stealthy return to the trading post. His belt chronometer told him it would be about time for Morones to get up from his "night's" sleep. A little discreet observation might tell much.

Long before he reached the compound, Olear heard the rushing of the great Blue River in its headlong plunge to the corrosive heat of the desert. And then, through the mists, he glimpsed the white metal walls of the Company sheds.

He climbed a tree and for a long time watched patiently, lying prone on a limb. Blood-sucking insects tortured him, and flat tree-lice, resembling discs with legs, crawled over him inquisitively. Olear tolerated them with stoic indifference until at last his patience was rewarded. Morones was coming out of the compound. He was alone and obviously did not suspect that he was being watched, for he stepped out briskly. Once in the jungle he walked even faster, watching out warily for the panther-like carnivora that were the most dangerous to man on Mercury.

Olear shinned to the ground and followed cautiously. Morones had his ray-tube with him, as any traveler in these jungles did. Olear could and did draw fast, but a dead trader would be valueless to him in his investigation, so he stalked him with every faculty strained to maintain complete silence. Often, in occasional clearings where the brown darkness grew less, he had to grovel on the slimy ground, picking up large bacteria that could be seen with the naked eye, and which left tiny, festering red marks on the skin. Mercury has no snakes.

The trader seemed to be heading for higher ground, for the path led ever upward, though not far from the tossing waters of the river. And then, suddenly, he disappeared.

Olear did not immediately hurry after him. A canny fugitive, catching sight of his pursuer, might suddenly drop to the ground and squirm to the side of the trail, there to wait and catch his pursuer as he passed. So Olear sidled into the all but impenetrable underbrush and slowly, with infinite caution, wormed his way along.

Presently he came to the little rise of ground where Morones had disappeared, but a painstaking search did not reveal the factor. There were, however, a number of other trails that joined the very faint trail he had been following, and now there was a well-defined track which continued to lead upward. With a grimace of disgust Olear again plunged into the odorous underbrush and traveled parallel to the trail. It was well he did so, for several Mercurians passed swiftly, intent, so it seemed, in answering a shrill call that at times came faintly to the ear. They carried slender spears.

Several more Mercurians passed. The growth was thinning out, and Olear did not dare to proceed further. However, from his hiding place he could discern a number of irregular cave openings, apparently leading downward. They were apparently the entrances to one of the native cavern colonies, or possibly of a meeting place. No Earthman had ever entered one, but it was thought they had underground openings into the river.

As the cave openings were obviously natural, Olear conjectured that there might be others that were not used. After an anxious search he found one, narrow and irregular, well hidden under the broad, glossy leaves of some uncatalogued vegetation. As it showed no evidence of use, Olear unhesitatingly slid down into it. It was very narrow and irregular, so that often he was barely able to squeeze through. The roots of trees choked the passage for a dozen feet or so, requiring the vigorous use of a knife. Bathed in sweat, his uniform a filthy mass of rags, Olear at last saw light.

The passage ended abruptly near the roof of a large natural cavern. Lights glistened on stalactites which cut off Olear's larger view, and voices came from below. By craning his neck the officer could look between the pendent icicles of rock and see a fire burning on a huge oblong block of stone. Figures were sitting on the floor around this block—hundreds of Mercurians. The leaping flames made their white and green faces and bodies look frog-like and less human than usual.

But the figure that dominated the whole assemblage, both by its own hugeness and the magnetic power that flowed from it, was not of Mercury but of Pluto. For the benefit of those who have never seen a stuffed Plutonian in our museums—and they are very rare—let me refer you to the pious books still to be found in ancient library collections. The ancients personified their fears and hates in a being they called the Devil. The resemblance between the Devil of their imagination and a Plutonian is really astounding. Horns, hoofs, tail—almost to the smallest detail, the resemblance is there.

Philosophers have written books on the "coincidence" in appearance of the ancient Devil and the modern decadent Plutonians. The Plutonians were once numerous and far advanced in science, and no doubt they called on the Earth many times, in prehistoric days, and the so-called Devil was a true picture of those vicious invaders, who are somewhat less human than usually portrayed. What was once classed as superstition was therefore a true racial memory. Long before our ancestors came out of their caves to build houses, the Plutonians had mastered interplanetary travel—only to forget the secret until human ingenuity should reveal it once more.

The modern Plutonian in that dank cave was over ten feet tall, and it is easy to see why he dominated the assemblage. His black visage was set in an evil smile; his ebony body glistened in the firelight. He held a three-pronged spear in one hand, and sat on a pile of rocks, a sort of rough throne, so that he towered magnificently above all others.

He spoke the Mercurian language, although the liquid intonations came harshly from his sneering lips.

"Are ye assembled, frogfolk, that ye may hear the decision of your Thinking Ones?" he asked.

A respectful peeping chorus signified assent. But in that there was a hint of unrest; even of fear.

"Speak, ye Thinking One, your commands!"

"Hear me first!" An old Mercurian, unusually tall, faded and dry looking, his thick hide wrinkled like crushed leather, rose slowly to his feet and stepped before the oblong stone. His back was to the Plutonian, his face to the crescent of chiefs.

"The Old Wise One!" A twittering murmur went around the assemblage. "Hear the Old Wise One!"

"My people, I like this not!" began the ancient. "The Lords of the Green Star[1] have dealt with us fairly. Each phase[2] they have brought us the things we wanted"—he touched his spear and a few gaudy ornaments on his otherwise naked body—"in exchange for the worthless white sap of our trees. If we longer offend the Lords of the Green Star—"

A raucous laugh interrupted the Mercurian's feeble voice, and it echoed eerily from the walls of the chamber.

"Valueless ye call the white sap?" sneered the Plutonian. "Hear me. That sap you call valueless is dearer than life itself to the Lords of the Green Star. For they are afflicted in great numbers with a stinking death they call cancer. It destroys their vitals, and nothing—nothing in this broad universe can help them save this white sap ye give them. In your hands ye have the power to bring the proud Lords of the Green Star to their knees. They would fill this chamber many times with their most priceless treasures for the sap ye give them so freely. Withhold the sap, and your Thinking Ones may go to the Green Star itself to rule over its Lords. They are desperate. Their emissaries may even now be on the way to beg your pleasure. Speak, Thinking Ones! Would ye not rule the Green Star?"

But the chiefs failed to become enthused. One of them rose and addressed the Plutonian:

"O Lord of the Outer Orbit! For near one full phase have ye dwelt among us. And well should ye know we have no desire for conquest. We fear to go to the Green Star to rule."

"Then let me rule for ye!" exclaimed the Plutonian instantly. "My brothers will abide with ye as your guests—shall see that ye receive a fair reward for the white sap; and I will convey your commands to the Lords of the Green Star."

The Old Wise One raised his withered hands, so that the uncertain twittering of voices which followed the Plutonian's suggestion subsided.

"My children," piped the feeble old voice, "the Black Lord has spoken cunning words, but they are false. It is plain to see that he desires to rule the Green Star, and our welfare does not concern him."

"If so it be that the white sap is of great value to the Lords of the Green Star, it is still of no value to us; and if the gifts they bring to us are of no value to them, they are dear to us."

The Plutonian sneered.

"Dearer than the Paste of Strange Dreams?"

A startled hush fell among the assembled Mercurians. They looked guiltily at one another, avoiding the eyes of the Old Wise One.

"What is this?" shrilled he, turning furiously to the Plutonian. "Have ye brought the paste of evil to our abode, knowing well the strict proscription of our tribe? Fool! Your death is upon ye!"

But the Plutonian only grinned and spread his glistening, black hands in a careless gesture. High overhead, peering through the stalactites, Olear instantly understood the Plutonian's strange power, the Paste of Strange Dreams, a fearsome narcotic of that far-swinging dark planet. More insidious and devastating than any drug ever produced on Earth, it had wrought frightful havoc among many solar races. The Earthmen had opened the lanes, broken the age-old barriers of distance, so that the harpies of evil could traffic their poison from planet to planet. So the Paste of Strange Dreams was added to the Earthman's burden.

"Seize him—the Evil One!" shrieked the old chief, but the Mercurians sat sullen and silent, and the Plutonian sneered.

Finally one of the chiefs arose and with an effort faced the Old Wise One and said:

"The Strange Dreams are dearer to us than all else. Do as he says."

The piping voices rose in eager acclamation, but the Old Wise One held up his claws, waiting until silence returned.

"Wait! Wait! Before ye commit this folly, hear the Green Star man. Many times has he demanded audience. Let him come in."

"It is not permitted," demurred one of the chiefs.

"Ye permitted this being of evil to enter; let him enter also."

"He is in the outer chambers now," one of the guards spoke. "His face is like the center of a ringstorm."

"Let him enter!"

Morones strode into the room angrily. Blinded by the fire after the darkness of the antechambers, he did not at first see the Plutonian. He strode up to the ancient chief and glared at him.

"Does the Old Wise One learn wisdom at last?" he rasped. The ancient shrank away from him, as did the nearer of the lesser chiefs.

"The Old Wise One thinks less of his wisdom," he replied wearily. "Behold!" He pointed to the enthroned Plutonian.

Morones started. His hand flashed to his side, and came away empty. Deft fingers had extracted his ray-tube. But he was a man of courage. Never could it be said to his shame that an Earthman cringed in the sight of lesser races.

"So it's you, my sooty friend!" he snarled in English. The Plutonian, accomplished linguist, replied:

"As you see. You don't look very happy, Mr. Morones."

Morones regarded him impassively, his eyes frosty.

"That explains everything," he said at last with cold deliberation. "First Sammis, then Boyd. Going to finish me next, I suppose?"

The Plutonian twisted the end of an eyebrow and smiled.

"Interested in them?"

"What'd you do with the bodies?"

The Plutonian jerked his thumb carelessly. "The river you call the Blue is swift and deep. But before you follow them there is certain information I wish to get from you. Where is the soldier who came to visit you?"

A crafty light came into Morones' face.

"He is not far from here, waiting for me."

Olear, in his cramped hiding place, could not help feeling a warm glow of admiration for Morones' nerve, because Morones thought him well on his way to Earth.

"Nargyll, what did your master do with the visitor?"

"Drove him back to the Green Star," Nargyll said promptly.

"And the oxygen tanks. Did you empty them?"

"I let them hiss." Nargyll's grin was sharkish.

"News to you, eh, Morones? Your officer's corpse has probably dropped into the sun by this time. Tell me, why did you drive him off?"

Morones sagged perceptibly. To gain a little time he said truthfully:

"I knew I should be blamed and ruined for life. I didn't know you were here, damn you! I hoped to get this mess with the natives straightened up before he'd come back with reinforcements."

"Yes. Well, you owe some months of life already. Your presence here has been more or less embarrassing, but I had to let you live or I'd have had the whole I. F. P. here to investigate. Now that you've failed in keeping them from getting interested you may do me one more service." The black giant grinned.

"I've often wondered at the Earthman's prestige all over the solar system. Even to-night, soft and helpless as you are, these natives fear you. You will, therefore, be an object lesson in the helplessness of Earthmen."

Morones was pale but courageous. With contempt in every line of him he watched some of the less frightened chiefs, at the command of the Plutonian, push aside some of the blazing blocks of fungus on the stone, to make room for his body. At last he raised his hand.

"Frogfolk!" he cried, "if ye do this thing, the Lords of the Green Star will come. They will come with fires hotter than the sun; they will blast your rivers with a power greater than the thunder of the ringstorms; they will fill your caves with a purple smoke that turns your bones to water—"

Shrill cries of fear almost drowned out his words. All the Mercurians had seen evidences of the dreadful power of the Earthmen. They began milling around, then stood rooted by the roar of the Plutonian's voice.

"Lies! Lies!" he bellowed. "See, they are weak as egglets!" He stepped down, picked Morones up by one shoulder, and held him, dangling, high over the heads of all. Morones clawed and tore at the brawny arm. He made a ludicrous picture. Soon the simple natives made a sniffling sound of mirth, and the Plutonian, satisfied at last, set him down again.

"He tells truth!" The Old Wise One had climbed to the top of the stone block. "The Lords of the Green Star have their power not in their bodies, but it is great. It is greater far than the frogfolk. It is greater than the Lords of the Outer Orbit. They will come even as the surly one has said, and great shall be our sorrow. It is not yet too late. Release him, and deliver to him the white sap. Seize this evil one—"

The feeble, fickle minds were being swayed again. In a gust of impatience, the Plutonian stepped down, seized the aged chief's skinny body in his great black hands, and snapped him in two. There was a tearing of tough cords and tissue, and the two halves fell into the fire.

For an instant the Mercurians were stunned. Then some of them vented hissing sounds of rage, while others prostrated themselves on the floor. The black giant watched them narrowly for a moment, then turned his attention to Morones. He seized him by the arm and drew him slowly and irresistibly to him.

The murder of the Old Wise One had been done so quickly that Olear was unable to prevent it. Had he been able to use his ray weapon he could have burned the Plutonian down, but it had been bent at one of the narrow turns of the crevice he had come down. The need for extreme lightness in weapons was rather overdone in those early times, and a little rough handling made them useless.

So now Olear, weaponless except for the service knife at his belt, began the hazardous undertaking of climbing among the stalactites to a position approximately above the Plutonian's head. The job required judgment. Some of the stone masses were insecurely anchored and would crash down at the lightest touch. Some were spaced so closely together that he could not get between them. Others were so far apart that it was difficult to get from one to another.

Yet he made it somehow, and unnoticed, for all eyes were turned on the tense drama being enacted below. From almost directly overhead he saw Morones being drawn upward.

"You saw," the Plutonian was saying triumphantly in Mercurian, "—you saw me unmake your Old Fool. And now you will see that a Lord of the Green Star is even softer, even weaker—"

Morones, in that pitiless grasp, turned his face to the hateful grinning visage above him. In his last extremity he was still angry.

"You devil!" Morones shouted. "You may murder me, but they'll get you! They'll get you!"

"Who'll get me?" the Plutonian purred silkily, deferring the pleasure of the kill for another moment. Morones was having trouble with his breathing. His red face lolled from side to side, his eyes rolled in agony. Suddenly he saw Olear. Unbelieving, he relaxed.

"I'm seein' things!" he breathed.

"Who'll get me?" persisted the Plutonian, applying a little more pressure.

"The I. F. P.!" Morones gasped.

"Well, you little son-of-a-gun!" Olear thought, and then he jumped.

He landed a-straddle the neck of the Plutonian, which was almost like forking a horse. One brawny arm seized a horn. The other, with a lightning-swift dart, brought the point of the long service-knife to the pulsing black throat.

"Put him down!" Olear spoke into the great pointed ear. "Easy!"

Back on his feet, Morones began bellowing at the Mercurians. Utterly demoralized, they fled pell-mell. Morones came back. He said:

"Nothing to tie him up with."

"That's all right," Olear replied, studiously keeping the knife point at exactly the right place, "I'll ride him in. Get going, you, and be tactful when you go through the door, or this sticker of mine might slip!" With extreme care the Plutonian did exactly as Olear ordered him to.

It was necessary to radio for one of the larger patrol ships to take Olear's enormous prisoner back to Earth for his trial. The officer testified, of course, and the Plutonian was duly sentenced to death for the murder of the old Mercurian. Execution by dehydration was decreed, so that the body would be uninjured for scientific study; and to-day it is considered one of the finest specimens extant.

In his testimony, however, Olear so minimized his own connection with the case that he received no public recognition. It was not until some months afterward, when Morones, on leave, rode back with a shipload of translucene, that the whole story came out, emphatically and profanely. Olear finally consented to speak a few words for the Telephoto News Co. As he stepped off the little platform deferential hands tried to push him back.

"You haven't told them who you are," protested the announcer. "Give your name and rank."

"Aw, they don't have to know that!" Olear rejoined, keeping on going. "They know it's one of the Force. That's all they have to know. Besides there's a blackjack game going on and I'm losing

money every minute I'm out of it."

FOOTNOTES

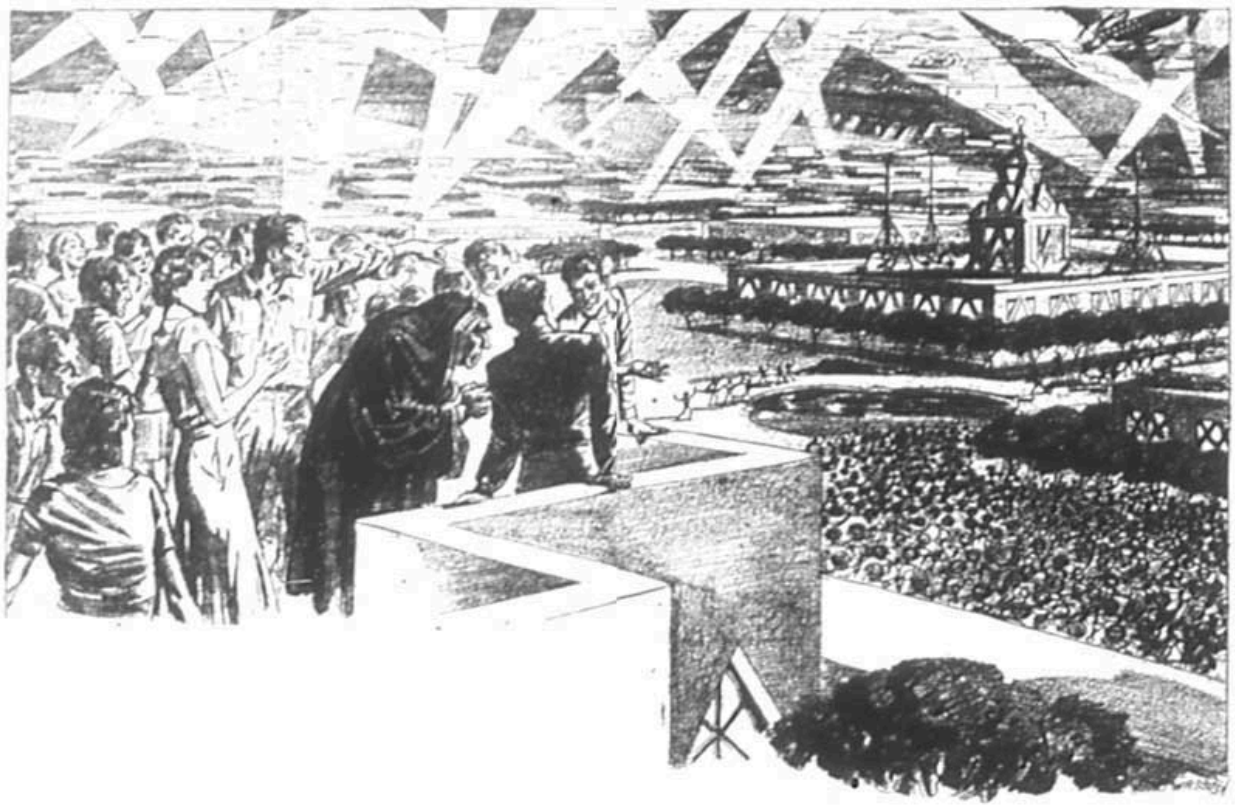
[1] In their various languages, almost all solar races call Earth "The Green Star." Although conditions on Mercury are unfavorable, Earth can be seen from the dark star, on mountain tops, during occasional dispersals of the cloud masses.

[2] The Mercurians had no conception of time before the Earthmen came. A "phase" is the time between calls of the freight ships, and is therefore variable; but in those days it was about six or seven months.

The Exile of Time

PART THREE OF A FOUR-PART NOVEL

By Ray Cummings



"Look!" exclaimed Larry.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

There came a girl's scream, and muffled, frantic words.

"Let me out! Let me out!"

Then we saw her white face at the basement window. This, which was the start of the extraordinary incidents, occurred on the night of June 8-9, 1935.

My name is George Rankin, and with my friend, Larry Gregory, we rescued the girl who was imprisoned in the deserted house on Patton Place, New York City. We thought at first that she was demented—this strangely beautiful girl in long white satin dress, white powdered wig and a black beauty patch on her check. She

Larry and George from 1935, Mary from 1777—all are caught up in the treacherous Tugh's revolt of the Robots, in the Time-world of 2930.

said she had come from the year 1777, that her father was Major Atwood, of General Washington's staff! Her name was Mistress Mary Atwood.

It was a strange story she had to tell us. A cage of shining metal bars had materialized in her garden, and a mechanical man had come from it—a Robot ten feet tall. It had captured her; brought her to 1935; left her, and vanished saying it would return.

We went back to that house on Patton Place. The cage did return, and Larry and I fought the strange monster. We were worsted, and the Robot seized Mary and me and whirled us back into Time in its room-like cage of shining bars. Larry recovered his senses, rushed into Patton Place, and there encountered another, smaller, Time-traveling cage, and was himself taken off in it.

But the occupants of Larry's smaller cage were friendly. They were a man and a girl of 2930 A.D.! The girl was the Princess Tina, and the man, Harl, a young scientist of that age. With an older scientist—a cripple named Tugh—Harl had invented the Time-vehicles.

We had heard of Tugh before. Mary Atwood had known him in the year 1777. He had made love to her, and when repulsed had threatened vengeance against her father. And in 1932, a cripple named Tugh had gotten into trouble with the police and had vowed some strange weird vengeance against the city officials and the city itself. More than that, the very house on Patton Place from which we had rescued Mary Atwood, was owned by this man named Tugh, who was wanted by the police but could not be found!

Tugh's vengeance was presently demonstrated, for in June, 1935, a horde of Robots appeared. With flashing swords and red and violet light beams the mechanical men spread about the city massacring the people; they brought midsummer snow with their frigid red rays; and then, in a moment, torrid heat and boiling rain. Three days and nights of terror ensued; then the Robots silently withdrew into the house on Patton Place and vanished. The New York City of 1935 lay wrecked; the vengeance of Tugh against it was complete.

Larry, going back in Time now, was told by Harl and Princess Tina that a Robot named Migul—a mechanism almost human from the Time-world of 2930—had stolen the larger cage and was running amuck through Time. The strange world of 2930 was described to Larry—a world in which nearly-human mechanisms did all the work. These Robots, diabolically developed, were upon the verge of revolt. The world of machinery was ready to assail its human masters!

Migul was an insubordinate Robot, and Harl and Tina were chasing it. They whirled Larry back into Time, and they saw the larger cage stop at a night in the year 1777—the same night from which Mary Atwood had been stolen. They stopped there. Harl remained in the little cage to guard it, while Tina and Larry went outside.

It was night, and the house of Major Atwood was nearby. British redcoats had come to capture the colonial officer; but all they found was his murdered body lying in the garden. Migul the Robot had chained Mary and me to the door of his cage; had briefly stopped in the garden and killed the major, and then had departed with us.

We now went back to the Beginning of Time, for the other cage was again chasing us. Reaching the Beginning, we swept forward, and the whole vast panorama of the events of Time passed in review before us. Suddenly we found that Tugh himself was hiding in our cage! We had not known it, nor had Migul, our Robot captor. Tugh was hiding here, not trusting Migul to carry out his orders!

We realized now that all these events were part of the wild vengeance of this hideously repulsive cripple. Migul was a mere machine carrying out Tugh's orders. Tugh, in 2930, was masquerading as a friend of the Government; but in reality it was he who was fomenting the revolt of the Robots.

Tugh now took command of our cage. The smaller cage had only Harl in it now, for Larry and Tina were marooned in 1777. Harl was chasing us. Tugh stopped us in the year 762 A.D. We found that the space around us now was a forest recently burned. Five hundred feet from us was the space which held Harl's cage.

Presently it materialized! Mary and I were helpless. We stood watching Tugh, as he crouched on the floor of our cage near its opened doorway. A ray cylinder was in his hand, with a wire running to a battery in the cage corner. He had forced Mary and me to stand at the window where Harl would see us and be lured to approach.

From Harl's cage, five hundred feet across the blackened forest glade of that day of 762, Harl came cautiously forward. Abruptly Tugh fired. His cylinder shot a horizontal beam of intense actinic light. It struck Harl full, and he fell.

Swiftly his body decomposed; and soon in the sunlight of the glade lay a sagging heap of black and white garments enveloping the skeleton of what a moment before had been a man!

CHAPTER XIV

A Very Human Princess

That night in 1777 near the home of the murdered Major Atwood brought to Larry the most strangely helpless feeling he had ever experienced. He crouched with Tina beneath a tree in a corner of the field, gazing with horror at the little moonlit space by the fence where their Time-traveling vehicle should have been but now was gone.

Marooned in 1777! Larry had not realized how desolately remote this Revolutionary New York was from the great future city in which he had lived. The same space; but what a gulf between him and 1935! What a barrier of Time, impassable without the shining cage!

They crouched, whispering. "But why would he have gone, Tina?"

"I don't know. Harl is very careful; so something or someone must have passed along here, and he left, rather than cause a disturbance. He will return, of course."

"I hope so," whispered Larry fervently. "We are marooned here, Tina! Heavens, it would be the end of us!"

"We must wait. He will return."

They huddled in the shadow of the tree. Behind them there was a continued commotion at the Atwood home, and presently the mounted British officers came thudding past on the road, riding for headquarters at the Bowling Green to report the strange Atwood murder.

The night wore on. Would Harl return? If not to-night, then probably to-morrow, or to-morrow night. In spite of his endeavor to stop correctly, he could so easily miss this night, these particular hours.

Harl had met his death, as I have described. We never knew exactly what he did, of course, after leaving that night of 1777. It seems probable, however, that some passer-by startled him into flashing away into Time. Then he must have seen with his instrument evidence of the other cage passing, and impulsively followed it—to his death in the burned forest of the year 762.

Larry and Tina waited. The dawn presently began paling the stars; and still Harl did not come. The little space by the fence corner was empty.

"It will soon be daylight," Larry whispered. "We can't stay here: we'll be discovered."

They were anachronisms in this world; misfits; futuristic beings who dared not show themselves.

Larry touched his companion—the slight little creature who was a Princess in her far-distant future age. But to Larry now she was just a girl.

"Frightened, Tina?"

"A little."

He laughed softly. "It would be fearful to be marooned here permanently, wouldn't it? You don't think Harl would desert us? Purposely, I mean?"

"No, of course not."

"Then we'll expect him to-morrow night. He wouldn't stop in the daylight, I guess."

"I don't think so. He would reason that I would not expect him."

"Then we must find shelter, and food, and be here to-morrow night. It seems long to us, Tina, but in the cage it's just an instant—just a trifle different setting of the controls."

She smiled her pale, stern smile. "You have learned quickly, Larry. That is true."

A sudden emotion swept him. His hand found hers; and her fingers answered the pressure of his own. Here in this remote Time-world they felt abruptly drawn together.

He murmured, "Tina, you are—" But he never finished.

The cage was coming! They stood tense, watching the fence corner where, in the flat dawn light, the familiar misty shadow was gathering. Harl was returning to them.

The cage flashed silently into being. They stood peering, ready to run to it. The door slid aside.

But it was not Harl who came out. It was Tugh, the cripple. He stood in the doorway, a thick-set, barrel-chested figure of a man in a wide leather jacket, a broad black belt and short flaring leather pantaloons.

"Tugh!" exclaimed Tina.

The cripple advanced. "Princess, is it you?" He was very wary. His gaze shot at Larry and back to Tina. "And who is this?"

A hideously repulsive fellow, Larry thought this Tugh. He saw his shriveled, bent legs, crooked hips, and wide thick shoulders set askew—a goblin, in a leather jerkin. His head was overlarge, with a bulging white forehead and a mane of scraggly black hair shot with grey. But Larry could not miss the intellectuality marking his heavy-jowled face; the keenness of his dark-eyed gaze.

These were instant impressions. Tina had drawn Larry forward. "Where is Harl?" she demanded imperiously. "How have you come to have the cage, Tugh?"

"Princess, I have much to tell," he answered, and his gaze roved the field. "But it is dangerous here; I am glad I have found you. Harl sent me to this night, but I struck it late. Come, Tina—and your strange-looking friend."

It impressed Larry then, and many times afterward, that Tugh's gaze at him was mistrustful, wary.

"Come, Larry," said Tina. And again she demanded of Tugh, "I ask you, where is Harl?"

"At home. Safe at home, Princess." He gestured toward Major Atwood's house, which now in the growing daylight showed more plainly under its shrouding trees. "That space off there holds our other cage as you know, Tina. You and Harl were pursuing that other cage?"

"Yes," she agreed.

They had stopped at the doorway, where Tugh stood slightly inside. Larry whispered:

"What does this mean, Tina?"

Tugh said, "Migul, the mechanism, is running wild in the other cage. But you and Harl knew that?"

"Yes," she answered, and said softly to Larry, "We will go. But, Larry, watch this Tugh! Harl and I never trusted him."

Tugh's manner was a combination of the self-confidence of a man of standing and the deference due his young Princess. He was closing the door, and saying:

"Migul, that crazy, insubordinate machine, captured a man from 1935 and a girl from 1777. But they are safe: he did not harm them. Harl is with them."

"In our world, Tugh?"

"Yes; at home. And we have Migul chained. Harl captured and subdued him."

Tugh was at the controls. "May I take you and this friend of yours home, Princess?"

She whispered to Larry, "I think it is best, don't you?"

Larry nodded.

She murmured, "Be watchful, Larry!" Then, louder: "Yes, Tugh. Take us."

Tugh was bending over the controls.

"Ready now?"

"Yes," said Tina.

Larry's senses reeled momentarily as the cage flashed off into Time.

It was a smooth story which Tugh had to tell them; and he told it smoothly. His dark eyes swung from Tina to Larry.

"I talked with that other young man from your world. George Rankin, he said his name was. He is somewhat like you: dressed much the same and talks little. The girl calls herself Mary Atwood." He went on and told them an elaborate, glib story, all of which was a lie. It did not wholly deceive Larry and Tina, yet they could not then prove it false. The gist of it was that Mary and I were with Harl and the subdued Migul in 2930.

"It is strange that Harl did not come for us himself," said Tina.

Tugh's gaze was imperturbable as he answered. "He is a clever young man, but he cannot be expected to handle these controls with my skill, Princess, and he knows it; so he sent me. You see, he wanted very much to strike just this night and this hour, so as not to keep you waiting."

He added, "I am glad to have you back. Things are not well at home, Princess. This insubordinate adventure of Migul's has been bad for the other mechanisms. News of it has spread, and the revolt is very near. What we are to do I cannot say, but I do know we did not like your absence."

The trip which Larry and Tina now took to 2930 A.D. consumed, to their consciousness of the passing of Time, some three hours. They discovered that they were hungry, and Tugh produced food and drink.

Larry spent much of the time with Tina at the window, gazing at the changing landscape while she told him of the events which to her were history—the recorded things on the Time-scroll which separated her world and his.

Tugh busied himself about the vehicle and left them much to themselves. They had ample opportunity to discuss him and his story of Harl. It must be remembered that Larry had no

knowledge of Tugh, save the story which Alten had told of a cripple named Tugh in New York in 1933-34; and Mary Atwood's mention of the coincidence of the Tugh she knew in 1777.

But Tina had known this Tugh for years. Though she, like Harl, had never liked him, nevertheless he was a trusted and influential man in her world. Proof of his activities in other Time-worlds, there was none so far, from Tina's viewpoint. Nor did Larry and Tina know as yet of the devastation of New York in 1935; nor of the murder of Major Atwood. The capture of Mary and me, the fight with the Robot in the back yard of the house on Patton Place—in all these incidents of the bandit cage, only Migul had figured. Migul—an insubordinate, crazy mechanism running amuck.

Yet upon Larry and Tina was a premonition that Tugh, here with them now and so suavely friendly, was their real enemy.

"I wouldn't trust him," Larry whispered, "any further than I can see him. He's planning something, but I don't know what."

"But perhaps—and this I have often thought, Larry—perhaps it is his aspect. He looks so repulsive —"

Larry shook his head. "He does, for a fact; but I don't mean that. What Mary Atwood told me of the Tugh she knew, described the fellow. And so did Alten describe him. And in 1934 he murdered a girl: don't forget that, Tina—he, or someone who looked remarkably like him, and had the same name."

But they knew that the best thing they could do now was to get to 2930. Larry wanted to join me again, and Tugh maintained I was there. Well, they would soon find out....

As they passed the shadowy world of 1935, a queer emotion gripped Larry. This was his world, and he was speeding past it to the future. He realized then that he wanted to be assured of my safety, and that of Mary Atwood and Harl; but what lay closest to his heart was the welfare of the Princess Tina. Princess? He never thought of her as that, save that it was a title she carried. She seemed just a small, strangely-solemn white-faced girl. He could not conceive returning to his own world and having her speed on, leaving him forever.

His thoughts winged ahead. He touched Tina as they stood together at the window gazing out at the shadowy New York City. It was now 1940.

"Tina," he said, "if our friends are safe in your world—"

"If only they are, Larry!"

"And if your people there are in trouble, in danger—you will let me help?"

She turned abruptly to regard him, and he saw a mist of tenderness in the dark pools of her eyes.

"In history, Larry, I have often been interested in reading of a strange custom outgrown by us and supposed to be meaningless. Yet maybe it is not. I mean—"

She was suddenly breathless. "I mean even a Princess, as they call me, likes to—to be human. I want to—I mean I've often wondered—and you're so dear—I want to try it. Was it like this? Show me."

She reached up, put her arms about his neck and kissed him!

CHAPTER XV

A Thousand Years into the Future

1930 to 2930—a thousand years in three hours. It was sufficiently slow traveling so that Larry could see from the cage window the actual detailed flow of movement: the changing outline of material objects around him. There had been the open country of Revolutionary times when this space was north of the city. It was a grey, ghostly landscape of trees and the road and the shadowy outlines of the Atwood house five hundred feet away.

Larry saw the road widen. The fence suddenly was gone. The trees were suddenly gone. The shapes of houses were constantly appearing; then melting down again, with others constantly rearing up to take their places; and always there were more houses, and larger, more enduring ones. And then the Atwood house suddenly melted: a second or two, and all evidence of it and the trees about it were gone.

There was no road; it was a city street now; and it had widened so that the cage was poised near the middle of it. And presently the houses were set solid along its borders.

At 1910 Larry began to recognize the contour of the buildings: The antiquated Patton Place. But the flowing changing outlines adjusted themselves constantly to a more familiar form. The new apartment house, down the block in which Larry and I lived, rose and assembled itself like a materializing spectre. A wink or two of Larry's eyelids and it was there. He recalled the months of its construction.

The cage, with Larry as a passenger, could not have stopped in these years: he realized it, now. There was a nameless feeling, a repulsion against stopping; it was indescribable, but he was aware of it. He had lived these years once, and they were forbidden to him again.

The cage was still in its starting acceleration. They swept through the year 1935, and then Larry was indefinably aware that the forbidden area had passed.

They went through those few days of June, 1935, during which Tugh's Robots had devastated the city, but it was too brief an action to make a mark that Larry could see. It left a few very transitory marks, however. Larry noticed that along the uneven line of ghostly roof-tops, blobs of emptiness had appeared; he saw a short distance away that several of the houses had melted down into ragged, tumbled heaps. These were where the bombs had struck, dropped by the Government planes in an endeavor to wreck the Tugh house from which the Robots were appearing. But the ragged, broken areas were filled in a second—almost as soon as Larry realized they were there—and new and larger buildings than before appeared.

At sight of all this he murmured to Tina, "Something has happened here. I wonder what?"

He chanced to turn, and saw that Tugh was regarding him very queerly; but in a moment he forgot it in the wonders of the passage into his future.

This growing, expanding city! It had seemed a giant to Larry in 1935, especially after he had compared it to what it was in 1777. But now, in 1950, and beyond to the turn of the century, he stood amazed at the enormity of the shadowy structures rearing their spectral towers around him. For some years Patton Place, a backward section, held its general form; then abruptly the city engulfed it. Larry saw monstrous buildings of steel and masonry rising a thousand feet above him. For an instant, as they were being built he saw their skeleton outlines; and then they were complete. Yet they were not enduring, for in every flowing detail they kept changing.

An overhead sidewalk went like a balcony along what had been Patton Place. Bridges and archways spanned the street. Then there came a triple bank of overhead roadways. A distance away, a hundred feet above the ground level, the shadowy form of what seemed a monorail structure showed for a moment. It endured for what might have been a hundred years, and then it was gone....

This monstrous city! By 2030 there was a vast network of traffic levels over what had been a street. It was an arcade, now, open at the top near the cage; but further away Larry saw where the giant buildings had flowed and mingled over it, with the viaducts, spider bridges and pedestrian levels plunging into tunnels to pierce through them.

And high overhead, where the little sky which was left still showed, Larry saw the still higher outlines of a structure which quite evidently was a huge aerial landing stage for airliners.

It was an incredible city! There were spots of enduring light around Larry now—the city lights which for months and years shone here unchanged. The cage was no longer outdoors. The street which had become an open arcade was now wholly closed. A roof was overhead—a city roof, to shut out the inclement weather. There was artificial light and air and weather down here, and up on the roof additional space for the city's teeming activities.

Larry could see only a shadowy narrow vista, here indoors, but his imagination supplied visions of what the monstrous, incredible city must be. There was a roof, perhaps, over all Manhattan. Bridges and viaducts would span to the great steel and stone structures across the rivers, so that water must seem to be in a canyon far underground. There would be a cellar to this city, incredibly intricate with conduits of wires and drainage pipes, and on the roof rain or snow would fall unnoticed by the millions of workers. Children born here in poverty might never yet have seen the blue sky and the sunlight, or know that grass was green and lush and redolent when moist with morning dew....

Larry fancied this now to be the climax of city building here on earth; the city was a monster, now, unmanageable, threatening to destroy the humans who had created it.... He tried to envisage the world; the great nations; other cities like this one. Freight transportation would go by rail and underseas, doubtless, and all the passengers by air....

Tina, with her knowledge of history, could sketch the events. The Yellow War—the white races against the Orientals—was over by the year 2000. The three great nations were organized in another half-century: the white, the yellow and the black.

By the year 2000, the ancient dirigibles had proven impractical, and great airliners of the plane type were encircling the earth. New motors, wing-spreads, and a myriad devices made navigation of the upper altitudes possible. At a hundred thousand feet, upon all the Great Circle routes, liners were rushing at nearly a thousand miles an hour. They would halt at intervals, to allow helicopter tenders to come up to transfer descending passengers.

Then the etheric wave-thrust principle was discovered: by 2500 A.D. man was voyaging out into space and Interplanetary travel began. This brought new problems: a rush of new millions of humans to live upon our Earth; new wars; new commerce in peace times; new ideas; new scientific knowledge....

By 2500, the city around Larry must have reached its height. It stayed there a half century; and then it began coming down. Its degeneration was slow, in the beginning. First, there might have been a hole in the arcade which was not repaired. Then others would appear, as the neglect spread. The population left. The great buildings of metal and stone, so solidly appearing to the brief lifetime of a single individual, were impermanent over the centuries.

By 2600, the gigantic ghosts had all melted down. They lay in a shadowy pile, burying the speeding cage. There was no stopping here; there was no space unoccupied in which they could stop. Larry could see only the tangled spectres of broken, rusting, rotting metal and stone.

He wondered what could have done it. A storm of nature? Or had mankind strangely turned decadent, and rushed back in a hundred years or so to savagery? It could not have been the latter, because very soon the ruins were moving away: the people were clearing the city site for something new. For fifty years it went on.

Tina explained it. The age of steam had started the great city of New York, and others like it, into its monstrous congestion of human activity. There was steam for power and steam for slow transportation by railroads and surface ships. Then the conquest of the air, and the transportation of power by electricity, gradually changed things. But man was slow to realize his possibilities. Even in 1930, all the new elements existed; but the great cities grew monstrous of their own momentum. Business went to the cities because the people were there; workers flocked in because the work was there to call them.

But soon the time came when the monster city was too unwieldy. The traffic, the drainage, the water supply could not cope with conditions. Still, man struggled on. The workers were mere automatons—pallid attendants of machinery; people living in a world of beauty who never had seen it; who knew of nothing but the city arcades where the sun never shone and where amusements were as artificial as the light and air.

Then man awakened to his folly. Disease broke out in New York City in 2551, and in a month swept eight million people into death. The cities were proclaimed impractical, unsafe. And suddenly the people realized how greatly they hated the city; how strangely beautiful the world could be in the fashion God created it....

There was, over the next fifty years, an exodus to the rural sections. Food was produced more cheaply, largely because it was produced more abundantly. Man found his wants suddenly simplified.

And business found that concentration was unnecessary. The telephone and television made personal contacts not needed. The aircraft, the high-speed auto-trucks over modern speedways, the aeroplane-motored monorails, the rocket-trains—all these shortened distance. And, most important of all, the transportation of electrical energy from great central power companies made small industrial units practical even upon remote farms. The age of electricity came into its own. The cities were doomed....

Larry saw, through 2600 and 2700 A.D., a new form of civilization rising around him. At first it seemed a queer combination of the old fashioned village and a strange modernism. There were, here upon Manhattan Island, metal houses, widely spaced in gardens, and electrically powered factories of unfamiliar aspect. Overhead were skeleton structures, like landing stages; and across the further distance was the fleeting, transitory wraith of a monorail air-road. Along the river banks were giant docks for surface vessels and sub-sea freighters. There was a little concentration here, but not much. Man had learned his lesson.

This was a new era. Man was striving really to play, as well as work. But the work had to be done. With the constant development of mechanical devices, there was always a new machine devised to help the operation of its fellow. And over it all was the hand of the human, until suddenly the worker found that he was no more than an attendant upon an inanimate thing which did everything more skilfully than he could do it. Thus came the idea of the Robot—something to attend, to oversee, to operate machines. In Larry's time it had already begun with a myriad devices of "automatic control." In Tina's Time-world it reached its ultimate—and diabolical—development....

At 2900, Larry saw, five hundred feet to the east, the walls of a long low laboratory rising. The other cage—which in 1777 was in Major Atwood's garden, and in 1935 was in the back yard of the Tugh house on Beckman Place—was housed now in 2930, in a room of this laboratory....

At 2905, with the vehicle slowing for its stopping, Tina gestured toward the walls of her palace, whose shadowy forms were rising close at hand. Then the palace garden grew and flourished, and Larry saw that this cage he was in was set within this garden.

"We are almost there, Larry," she said.

"Yes," he answered. An emotion gripped him. "Tina, your world—why it's so strange! But you are not strange."

"Am I not, Larry?"

He smiled at her; he felt like showing her again that the ancient custom of kissing was not wholly meaningless, but Tugh was regarding them.

"I was comparing," said Larry, "that girl Mary Atwood, from the year 1777, and you. You are so different in looks, in dress, but you're just—girls."

She laughed. "The world changes, Larry, but not human nature."

"Ready?" called Tugh. "We are here, Tina."

"Yes, Tugh. You have the dial set for the proper night and hour?"

"Of course. I make no mistake. Did I not invent these dials?"

The cage slackened through a day of sunlight; plunged into a night; and slid to its soundless, reeling halt....

Tina drew Larry to the door and opened it upon a fragrant garden, somnolently drowsing in the moonlight.

"This is my world, Larry," she said. "And here is my home."

Tugh was with them as they left the cage. He said:

"This is the tri-night hour of the very night you left here. Princess Tina. You see, I calculated correctly."

"Where did you leave Harl and the two visitors?" she demanded.

"Here. Right here."

Across the garden Larry saw three dark forms coming forward. They were three small Robots of about Tina's stature—domestic servants of the palace. They crowded up, crying:

"Master Tugh! Princess!"

"What is it?" Tugh asked.

The hollow voices echoed with excitement as one of them said:

"Master Tugh, there has been murder here! We have dared tell no one but you or the Princess. Harl is murdered!"

Larry chanced to see Tugh's astonished face, and in the horror of the moment a feeling came to Larry that Tugh was acting unnaturally. He forgot it at once; but later he was to recall it forcibly, and to realize that the treacherous Tugh had planned this with these Robots.

"Master Tugh, Harl is murdered! Migul escaped and murdered Harl, and took the body away with him!"

Larry was stricken dumb. Tugh seized the little Robot by his metal shoulders. "Liar! What do you mean?"

Tina gasped, "Where are our visitors—the young man and the girl?"

"Migul took them!"

"Where?" Tina demanded.

"We don't know. We think very far down in the caverns of machinery. Migul said he was going to feed them to the machines!"

CHAPTER XVI

The New York of 2930

Larry stood alone at an upper window of the palace gazing out at the somnolent moonlit city. It was an hour or two before dawn. Tina and Tugh had started almost at once into the underground caverns to which Tina was told Migul had fled with his two captives. They would not take Larry with them; the Robot workers in the subterranean chambers were all sullen and upon the verge of a revolt, and the sight of a strange human would have aroused them dangerously.

"It should not take long," Tina had said hastily. "I will give you a room in which to wait for me."

"And there is food and drink," Tugh suavely urged. "And most surely you need sleep. You too Princess," he suddenly added. "Let me go into the caverns alone: I can do better than you; these Robots obey me. I think I know where that rascally Migul has hidden."

"Rascally?" Larry burst out. "Is that what you call it when you've just heard that it committed murder? Tina. I won't stay: nor will I let—"

"Wait!" said Tina. "Tugh, look here—"

"The young man from 1935 is very positive what he will and what he won't," Tugh observed sardonically. He drew his cloak around his squat misshapen body, and shrugged.

"But I won't let you go," Larry finished. The palace was somnolent; the officials were asleep: none had heard of the murder. Strangely lax was the human government here. Larry had sensed this when he suggested that police or an official party be sent at once to capture Migul and rescue Mary Atwood and me.

"It could not be done," Tina exclaimed. "To organize such a party would take hours. And—"

"And the Robots," Tugh finished with a sour smile, "would openly revolt when such a party came at them! You have no idea what you suggest, young man. To avoid an open revolt—that is our chief aim. Besides, if you rushed at Migul it would frighten him; and then he would surely kill his captives, if he has not done so already."

That silenced Larry. He stared at them hopelessly while they argued it out: and the three small domesticated Robots stood by, listening curiously.

"I'll go with you, Tugh." Tina decided. "Perhaps, without making any demonstration of force, we can find Migul."

Tugh bowed. "Your will is mine, Princess. I think I can find him and control him to prevent harm to his captives."

He was a good actor, that Tugh; he convinced Larry and Tina of his sincerity. His dark eyes flashed as he added, "And if I get control of him and find he's murdered Harl, we will have him no more. I'll disconnect him! Smash him! Quietly, of course, Princess."

They led Larry through a dim silent corridor of the palace, past two sleepy-faced human guards and two or three domesticated Robots. Ascending two spiral metal stairways to the upper third floor of the palace they left Larry in his room.

"By dawn or soon after we will return," said Tina "But you try and sleep; there is nothing you can do now."

"You'll be careful, Tina?" The helpless feeling upon Larry suddenly intensified. Subconsciously he was aware of the menace upon him and Tina, but he could not define it.

She pressed his hand. "I will be careful; that I promise."

She left with Tugh. At once a feeling of loneliness leaped upon Larry.

He found the apartment a low-vaulted metal room. There was the sheen of dim, blue-white illumination from hidden lights, disclosing the padded metal furniture: a couch, low and comfortable; a table set with food and drink; low chairs, strangely fashioned, and cabinets against the wall which seemed to be mechanical devices for amusement. There was a row of instrument controls which he guessed were the room temperature, ventilating and lighting mechanisms. It was an oddly futuristic room. The windows were groups of triangles—the upper sections prisms, to bend the light from the sky into the room's furthest recesses. The moonlight came through the prisms, now, and spread over the cream-colored rug and the heavy wall draperies. The leaded prism casements laid a pattern of bars on the floor. The room held a faint whisper of mechanical music.

Larry stood at one of the windows gazing out over the drowsing city. The low metal buildings, generally of one or two levels, lay pale grey in the moonlight. Gardens and trees surrounded them. The streets were wide roadways, lined with trees. Ornamental vegetation was everywhere; even the flat-roofed house tops were set with gardens, little white pebbled paths, fountains and pergolas.

A mile or so away, a river gleamed like a silver ribbon—the Hudson. To the south were docks, low against the water, with rows of blue-white spots of light. The whole city was close to the ground, but occasionally, especially across the river, skeleton landing stages rose a hundred feet into the air.

The scene, at this hour just before dawn, was somnolent and peaceful. It was a strange New York, so different from the sleepless city of Larry's time! There were a few moving lights in the streets, but not many; they seemed to be lights carried by pedestrians. Off by the docks, at the river surface, rows of colored lights were slowly creeping northward: a sub-sea freighter arriving from Eurasia. And as Larry watched, from the southern sky a line of light materialized into an airliner which swept with a low humming throb over the city and alighted upon a distant stage.

Larry's attention went again to the Hudson river. At the nearest point to him there was a huge dam blocking it. North of the dam the river surface was at least two hundred feet higher than to the south. It lay above the dam like a placid canal, with low palisades its western bank and a high dyke built up along the eastern city side. The water went in spillways through the dam, forming again into the old natural river below it and flowing with it to the south.

The dam was not over a mile or so from Larry's window; in his time it might have been the western end of Christopher Street. The moonlight shone on the massive metal of it: the water spilled through it in a dozen shining cascades. There was a low black metal structure perched halfway up the lower side of the dam, a few bluish lights showing through its windows. Though Larry did not know it then, this was the New York Power House. Great transformers were here, operated by turbines in the dam. The main power came over cables from Niagara: was transformed and altered here and sent into the air as radio-power for all the New York District.[3]

Larry crossed his room to gaze through north and eastward windows. He saw now that the grounds of this three-story building of Tina's palace were surrounded by a ten-foot metal wall, along whose top were wires suggesting that it was electrified for defense. The garden lay just beneath Larry's north window. Through the tree branches the garden paths, beds of flowers and the fountains were visible. One-story palace wings partially enclosed the garden space, and outside was the electrified wall. The Time-traveling cage stood faintly shining in the dimness of the garden under the spreading foliage.

To the east, beyond the palace wall, there was an open garden of verdure crossed by a roadway. The nearest building was five hundred feet away. There was a small, barred gate in the palace walls beyond it. The road led to this other building—a squat, single-storied metal structure. This was a Government laboratory, operated by and in charge of Robots. It was almost square: two or three hundred feet in length and no more than thirty feet high, with a flat roof in the center of which was perched a little metal conning tower surmounted by a sending aerial. As Larry stood there, the broadcast magnified voice of a Robot droned out over the quiet city:

"Trinight plus two hours. All is well."

Strange mechanical voice with a formula half ancient, half super-modern!

It was in this metal laboratory, Larry knew, that the other Time-traveling cage was located. And beneath it was the entrance to the great caverns where the Robots worked attending inert machinery to carry on the industry of this region. The night was very silent, but now Larry was conscious of a faraway throb—a humming, throbbing vibration from under the ground: the blended hum of a myriad muffled noises. Work was going on down there; manifold mechanical activities. All was mechanical: while the humans who had devised the mechanisms slept under the trees in the moonlight of the surface city.

Tina had gone with Tugh down into those caverns, to locate Migul, to find Mary Atwood and me.... The oppression, the sense of being a stranger alone here in this world, grew upon Larry. He left the windows and began pacing the room. Tina should soon return. Or had disaster come upon us all?...

Larry's thoughts were frightening. If Tina did not return, what would he do? He could not operate the Time-cage. He would go to the officials of the palace; he thought cynically of the extraordinary changes time had brought to New York City, to all the world. These humans now must be very fatuous. To the mechanisms they had relegated all the work, all industrial activity. Inevitably, through the generations, decadence must have come. Mankind would be no longer efficient; that was an attribute of the machines. Larry told himself that these officials, knowing of impending trouble with the Robots, were fatuously trustful that the storm would pass without breaking. They were, indeed, as we very soon learned.

Larry ate a little of the food which was in the room, then lay down on the couch. He did not intend to sleep, but merely to wait until after dawn; and if Tina had not returned by then he would do something drastic about it. But what? He lay absorbed by his gloomy thoughts....

But they were not all gloomy. Some were about Tina—so very human, and yet so strange a little Princess.

CHAPTER XVII

Harl's Confession

Larry was awakened by a hand upon his shoulder. He struggled to consciousness, and heard his name being called.

"Larry! Wake up, Larry!"

Tina was bending over him, and it was late afternoon! The day for which he had been waiting had come and gone; the sun was dropping low in the west behind the shining river; the dam showed frowning, with the Power House clinging to its side like an eagle's eyrie.

Tina sat on Larry's couch and explained what she had done. Tugh and she had gone to the nearby laboratory building. The Robots were sullen, but still obedient, and had admitted them. The other Time-traveling cage was there, lying quiescent in its place, but it was unoccupied.

None of the Robots would admit having seen Migul; nor the arrival of the cage; nor the strangers from the past. Then Tugh and Tina had started down into the subterranean caverns. But it was obviously very dangerous; the Robots at work down there were hostile to their Princess; so Tugh had gone on alone.

"He says he can control the Robots," Tina explained, "and Larry, it seems that he can. He went on and I came back."

"Where is he now? Why didn't you wake me up?"

"You needed the sleep," she said smilingly; "and there was nothing you could do. Tugh is not yet come. He must have gone a long distance; must surely have learned where Migul is hiding. He should be back any time."

Tina had seen the Government Council. The city was proceeding normally. There was no difficulty with Robots anywhere save here in New York, and the council felt that the affair would come to nothing.

"The Council told me," said Tina indignantly, "that much of the menace was the exaggeration of my own fancy, and that Tugh has the Robots well

controlled. They place much trust in Tugh; I wish I could."

"You told them about me?"

"Yes, of course; and about George Rankin, and Mary Atwood. And the loss of Harl: he is missing, not proven murdered, as they very well pointed out to me. They have named a time to-morrow to give you audience, and told me to keep you out of sight in the meanwhile. They blame this Time-traveling for the Robots' insurgent ideas. Strangers excite the thinking mechanisms."

"You think my friends will be rescued?" demanded Larry.

She regarded him soberly. "I hope so—oh, I do! I fear for them as much as you do, Larry. I know you think I take it lightly, but—"

"Not that," Larry protested. "Only—"

"I have not known what to do. The officials refuse any open aggression against the Robots, because it would precipitate exactly what we fear—which is nearly a fact: it would. But there is one thing I have to do. I have been expecting Tugh to return every moment, and this I do not want him to know about. There's a mystery concerning Harl, and no one else knows of it but myself. I want you with me, Larry: I do not want to go alone; I—for the first time in my life, Larry—I think I am afraid!"

She huddled against him and he put his arm about her. And Larry's true situation came to him, then. He was alone in this strange Time-world, with only this girl for a companion. She was but a frightened, almost helpless girl, for all she bore the title of traditional Princess, and she was surrounded by inefficient, fatuous officials—among them Tugh, who was a scoundrel, undoubtedly. Larry suddenly recalled Tugh's look, when, in the garden, the domestic Robots had told the story of Harl's murder; and like a light breaking on him, he was now wholly aware of Tugh's duplicity. He was convinced he would have to act for himself, with only this girl Tina to help him.

"Mystery?" he said. "What mystery is there about Harl?"

She told him now that Harl had once, a year ago, taken her aside and made her promise that if anything happened to him—in the event of his death or disappearance—she would go to his private work-room, where, in a secret place which he described, she would find a confession.

"A confession of his?" Larry demanded.

"Yes; he said so. And he would say no more than that. It is something of which he was ashamed, or guilty, which he wanted me to know. He loved me, Larry. I realized it, though he never said so. And I'm going now to his room, to see what it was he wanted me to know. I would have gone alone, earlier; but I got suddenly frightened; I want you with me."

They were unarmed. Larry cursed the fact, but Tina had no way of getting a weapon without causing official comment. Larry started for the window where the city stretched, more active now, under the red and gold glow of a setting sun. Lights were winking on; the dusk of twilight was at hand.

"Come now," said Tina, "before Tugh returns."

"Where is Harl's room?"

"Down under the palace in the sub-cellar. The corridors are deserted at this hour, and no one will see us."

They left Larry's room and traversed a dim corridor on whose padded floor their footsteps were soundless. Through distant arcades, voices sounded; there was music in several of the rooms; it struck Larry that this was a place of diversion for humans with no work to do. Tina avoided the occupied rooms. Domestic Robots were occasionally distantly visible, but Tina and Larry encountered none.

They descended a spiral stairway and passed down a corridor from the main building to a cross wing. Through a window Larry saw that they were at the

ground level. The garden was outside; there was a glimpse of the Time-cage standing there.

Another stairway, then another, they descended beneath the ground. The corridor down here seemed more like a tunnel. There was a cave-like open space, with several tunnels leading from it in different directions. This once had been part of the sub-cellar of the gigantic New York City—these tunnels ramifying into underground chambers, most of which had now fallen into disuse. But few had been preserved through the centuries, and they now were the caverns of the Robots.

Tina indicated a tunnel extending eastward, a passage leading to a room beneath the Robot laboratory. Tugh and Tina had used it that morning. Gazing down its blue-lit length Larry saw, fifty feet or so away, that there was a metal-grid barrier which must be part of the electrical fortifications of the palace. A human guard was sitting there at a tiny gate-way, a hood-light above him, illumining his black and white garbed figure.

Tina called softly. "All well, Alent? Tugh has not passed back?"

"No, Princess," he answered, standing erect. The voices echoed through the confined space with a muffled blur.

"Let no one pass but humans, Alent."

"That is my order," he said. He had not noticed Larry, whom Tina had pushed into a shadow against the wall. The Princess waved at the guard and turned away, whispering to Larry:

"Come!"

There were rooms opening off this corridor—decrepit dungeons, most of them seemed to Larry. He had tried to keep his sense of direction, and figured they were now under the palace garden. Tina stopped abruptly. There were no lights here, only the glow from one at a distance. To Larry it was an eery business.

"What is it?" he whispered.

"Wait! I thought I heard something."

In the dead, heavy silence Larry found that there was much to hear.

Voices very dim from the palace overhead; infinitely faint music; the clammy sodden drip of moisture from the tunnel roof. And, permeating everything, the faint hum of machinery.

Tina touched him in the gloom. "It's nothing, I guess. Though I thought I heard a man's voice."

"Overhead?"

"No; down here."

There was a dark, arched door near at hand. Tina entered it and fumbled for a switch, and in the soft light that came Larry saw an unoccupied apartment very similar to the one he had had upstairs, save that this was much smaller.

"Harl's room," said Tina. She prowled along the wall where audible book-cylinders[4] stood in racks, searching for a title. Presently she found a hidden switch, pressed it, and a small section of the case swung out, revealing a concealed compartment. Larry saw her fingers trembling as she drew out a small brass cylinder.

"This must be it, Larry," she said.

They took it to a table which held a shaded light. Within the cylinder was a scroll of writing. Tina unrolled it and held it under the light, while Larry stood breathless, watching her.

"Is it what you wanted?" Larry murmured.

"Yes. Poor Harl!"

She read aloud to Larry the gist of it in the few closing paragraphs.

> "... and so I want to confess to you that I have been taking credit for that which is not mine. I wish I had the courage to tell you

personally; someday I think I shall. I did not help Tugh invent our Time-traveling cages. I was in the palace garden one night some years ago when the cage appeared. Tugh is a man from a future Time-world; just what date ahead of now, I do not know, for he has never been willing to tell me. He captured me. I promised him I would say nothing, but help him pretend that we had invented the cage he had brought with him from the future. Tugh told me he invented them. It was later that he brought the other cage here.

"I was an obscure young man here a few years ago. I loved you even then, Tina: I think you have guessed that. I yielded to the temptation—and took the credit with Tugh.

"I do love you, though I think I shall never have the courage to tell you so.

Harl."

Tina rolled up the paper. "Poor Harl! So all the praise we gave him for his invention was undeserved!"

But Larry's thoughts were on Tugh. So the fellow was not of this era at all! He had come from a Time still further in the future!

A step sounded in the doorway behind them. They swung around to find Tugh standing there, with his thick misshapen figured huddled in the black cloak.

"Tugh!"

"Yes, Princess, no less than Tugh. Alent told me as I came through that you were down here. I saw your light, here in Harl's room and came."

"Did you find Migul and his captives—the girl from 1777 and the man of 1935?"

"No, Princess, Migul has fled with them," was the cripple's answer. He advanced into the room and pushed back his black hood. The blue light shone on his massive-jawed face with a lurid sheen. Larry stood back and watched him. It was the first time that he had had opportunity of observing Tugh closely. The cripple was smiling sardonically.

"I have no fear for the prisoners," he added in his suave, silky fashion. "That crazy mechanism would not dare harm them. But it has fled with them into some far-distant recess of the caverns. I could not find them."

"Did you try?" Larry demanded abruptly.

Tugh swung on him. "Yes, young sir, I tried." It seemed that Tugh's black eyes narrowed; his heavy jaw clicked as he snapped it shut. The smile on his face faded, but his voice remained imperturbable as he added:

"You are aggressive, young Larry—but to no purpose.... Princess, I like not the attitude of the Robots. Beyond question some of them must have seen Migul, but they would not tell me so. I still think I can control them, though. I hope so."

Larry could think of nothing to say. It seemed to him childish that he should stand listening to a scoundrel tricking this girl Tina. A dozen wild schemes of what he might do to try and rescue Mary Atwood and me revolved in his mind, but they all seemed wholly impractical.

"The Robots are working badly," Tugh went on. "In the north district one of the great foundries where they are casting the plates for the new Inter-Allied airliner has ceased operations. The Robot workmen were sullen, inefficient, neglectful. The inert machinery was ill cared for, and it went out of order. I was there, Princess, for an hour or more to-day. They have started up again now; it was fundamentally no more than a burned bearing which a Robot failed to oil properly."

"Is that what you call searching for Migul?" Larry burst out. "Tina, see here—isn't there something we can do?" Larry found himself ignoring Tugh. "I'm not going to stand around! Can't we send a squad of police after

Migul?—go with them—actually make an effort to find them? This man Tugh certainly has not tried!"

"Have I not?" Tugh's cloak parted as he swung on Larry. His bent legs were twitching with his anger; his voice was a harsh rasp. "I like not your insolence. I am doing all that can be done."

Larry held his ground as Tugh fronted him. He had a wild thought that Tugh had a weapon under his cloak.

"Perhaps you are," said Larry. "But to me it seems—"

Tugh turned away. His gaze went to the cylinder which Tina was still clutching. His sardonic smile returned.

"So Harl made a confession, Princess?"

"That," she said, "is none—"

"Of my affair? Oh, but it is. I was here in the archway and I heard you read it. A very nice young man, was Harl. I hope Migul has not murdered him."

"You come from future Time?" Tina began.

"Yes, Princess! I must admit it now. I invented the cages."

Larry murmured to himself, "You stole them, probably."

"But my Government and I had a quarrel, so I decided to leave my own Time-world and come back to yours—permanently. I hope you will keep the secret. I have been here so long. Princess, I am really one of you now. At heart, certainly."

"From when did you come?" she demanded.

He bowed slightly. "I think that may remain my own affair, Tina. It is through no fault of mine I am outlawed. I shall never return." He added earnestly, "Do not you think we waste time? I am agreed with young Larry that something drastic must be done about Migul. Have you seen the Council about it to-day?"

"Yes. They want you to come to them at once."

"I shall. But the Council easily may decide upon something too rash." He lowered his voice, and on his face Larry saw a strange, unfathomable look. "Princess, at any moment there may be a Robot uprising. Is the Power House well guarded by humans?"

"Yes," she said.

"No Robots in or about it? Tina, I do not want to frighten you, but I think our first efforts should be for defense. The Council acts slowly and stubbornly. What I advise them to do may be done, and may not. I was thinking. If we could get to the Power House—Do you realize, Tina, that if the Robots should suddenly break into rebellion, they would attack first of all the Power House?[5] It was my idea—"

Tugh suddenly broke off, and all stood listening. There was a commotion overhead in the palace. They heard the thud of running footsteps; human voices raised to shouts; and, outside the palace, other voices. A ventilating shaft nearby brought them down plainly. There were the guttural, hollow voices of shouting Robots, the clank of their metal bodies; the ring of steel, as though with sword-blades they were thumping their metal thighs.

A Robot mob was gathered close outside the palace walls. The revolt of the Robots had come!

CHAPTER XVIII

Tugh, the Clever Man

"Sit quiet, George Rankin. And you, Mistress Mary; you will both be quite safe with Migul if you are docile."

Tugh stood before us. We were in a dim recess of a great cavern with the throb of whirring machinery around us. It was the same day which I have just described; Larry was at this moment asleep in the palace room. Tugh and Tina had come searching for Migul; and Tugh had contrived to send Tina back. Then he had come directly to us, finding us readily since we were hidden where he had told Migul to hide us.

This cavern was directly beneath the Robot laboratory in which the Time-traveling cage was placed. A small spiral stairway led downward some two levels, opening into a great, luridly lighted room. Huge inert machines stood about. Great wheels were flashing as they revolved, turning the dynamos to generate the several types of current used by the city's underground industrial activities.

It was a tremendous subterranean room. I saw only one small section of it; down the blue-lit aisles the rows of machines may have stretched for half a mile or more. The low hum of them was an incessant pound against my senses. The great inert mechanisms had tiny lights upon them which gleamed like eyes. The illumined gauge-faces—each of them I passed seemed staring at me. The brass jackets were polished until they shone with the sheen of the overhead tube lights; the giant wheels flashed smoothly upon oiled bearings. They were in every fashion of shape and size, these inert machines. Some towered toward the metal-beamed ceiling, with great swaying pendulums that ticked like a giant clock. Some clanked with eccentric cams—a jarring rhythm as though the heart of the thing were limping with its beat. Others had a ragged, frightened pulse; others stood placid, outwardly motionless under smooth, polished cases, but humming inside with a myriad blended sounds.

Inert machines. Yet some were capable of locomotion. There was a small truck on wheels which were set in universal joints. Of its own power—radio controlled perhaps, so that it seemed acting of its own volition—it rolled up and down one of the aisles, stopping at set intervals and allowing a metal arm lever in it to blow out a tiny jet of oil. One of the attending Robots encountered it in an aisle, and the cart swung automatically aside.

The Robot spoke to the cart; ordered it away; and the tone of his order, registering upon some sensitive mechanism, whirled the cart around and sent it rolling to another aisle section.

The strange perfection of machinery! I realized there was no line sharply to be drawn between the inert machine and the sentient, thinking Robots. That cart, for instance, was almost a connecting link.

There were also Robots here of many different types. Some of them were eight or ten feet in stature, in the fashion of a man: Migul was of this design. Others were small, with bulging foreheads and bulging chest plates: Larry saw this type as domestics in the palace. Still others were little pot-bellied things with bent legs and long thin arms set crescent-shape. I saw one of these peer into a huge chassis of a machine, and reach in with his curved arm to make an interior adjustment....

Migul had brought Mary Atwood and me in the larger cage, from that burned forest of the year 762, where with the disintegrating ray-gun Tugh had killed Harl. The body of Harl in a moment had melted into putrescence, and dried, leaving only the skeleton within the clothes. The white-ray, Tugh had called his weapon. We were destined very shortly to have many dealings with it.

Tugh had given Migul its orders. Then Tugh took Harl's smaller cage and flashed away to meet Tina and Larry in 1777, as I have already described.

And Migul brought us here to 2930. As we descended the spiral staircase and came into the cavern, it stood with us for a moment.

"That's wonderful," the Robot said proudly. "I am part of it. We are machinery almost human."

Then it led us down a side aisle of the cavern and into a dim recess. A great transparent tube bubbling with a violet fluorescence stood in the alcove space. Behind it in the wall Migul slid a door, and we passed through, into a small metal room. It was bare, save for two couch-seats. With the door closed upon us, we waited through an interval. How

long it was, I do not know; several hours, possibly. Migul told us that Tugh would come. The giant mechanism stood in the corner, and its red-lit eyes watched us alertly. It stood motionless, inert, tireless—so superior to a human in this job, for it could stand there indefinitely.

We found food and drink here. We talked a little; whispered; and I hoped Migul, who was ten feet away, could not hear us. But there was nothing we could say or plan.

Mary slept a little. I had not thought that I could sleep, but I did too; and was awakened by Tugh's entrance. I was lying on the couch; Mary had left hers and was sitting now beside me.

Tugh slid the door closed after him and came toward us, and I sat up beside Mary. Migul was standing motionless in the corner, exactly where he had been hours before.

"Well enough, Migul," Tugh greeted the Robot. "You obey well."

"Master, yes. Always I obey you; no one else."

I saw Tugh glance at the mechanism keenly. "Stand aside, Migul. Or no, I think you had better leave us. Just for a moment, wait outside."

"Yes, Master."

It left, and Tugh confronted us. "Sit where you are," he said. "I assume you are not injured. You have been fed? And slept, perhaps! I wish to treat you kindly."

"Thanks," I said. "Will you not tell us what you are going to do with us?"

He stood with folded arms. The light was dim, but such as it was it shone full upon him. His face was, as always, a mask of imperturbability.

"Mistress Mary knows that I love her."

He said it with a startlingly calm abruptness. Mary shuddered against me, but she did not speak. I thought possibly Tugh was not armed; I could leap upon him. Doubtless I was stronger than he. But outside the door Migul was armed with a white-ray.

"I love her as I have always loved her.... But this is no time to talk of love. I have much on my mind; much to do."

He seemed willing to talk now, but he was talking more for Mary than for me. As I watched him and listened, I was struck with a queerness in his manner and in his words. Was he irrational, this exile of Time who had impressed his sinister personality upon so many different eras? I suddenly thought so. Demented, or obsessed with some strange purpose? His acts as well as his words, were strange. He had devastated the New York of 1935 because its officials had mistreated him. He had done many strange, sinister, murderous things.

He said, with his gaze upon Mary, "I am going to conquer this city here. There will follow the rule of the Robots—and I will be their sole master. Do you want me to tell you a secret? It is I who have actuated these mechanisms to revolt." His eyes held a cunning gleam. Surely this was a madman leering before me.

"When the revolt is over," he went on, "I will be master of New York. And that mastery will spread. The Robots elsewhere will revolt to join my rule, and there will come a new era. I may be master of the world; who knows? The humans who have made the Robots slaves for them will become slaves themselves. Workers! It is the Robots' turn now. And I—Tugh—will be the only human in power!"

These were the words of a madman! I could imagine that he might stir these mechanical beings to a temporarily successful revolt: he might control New York City; but the great human nations of the world could not be overcome so easily.

And then I remembered the white-ray. A giant projector of that ray would melt human armies as though they were wax; yet the metal Robots could stand its blast unharmed. Perhaps he was no madman....

He was saying, "I will be the only human ruler. Tugh will be the greatest man on Earth! And I do it for you, Mistress Mary—because I love you. Do not shudder."

He put out his hand to touch her, and when she shrank away I saw the muscles of his face twitch in a fashion very odd. It was a queer, wholly repulsive grimace.

"So? You do not like my looks? I tried to correct that, Mary. I have searched through many eras, for surgeons with skill to make me like other men. Like this young man here, for instance—you. George Rankin, I am glad to have you; do not fear I will harm you. Shall I tell you why?"

"Yes," I stammered. In truth I was swept now with a shuddering revulsion for this leering cripple.

"Because," he said, "Mary Atwood loves you. When I have conquered New York with my Robots, I shall search further into Time and find an era where scientific skill will give me—shall I say, your body? That is what I mean. My soul, my identity, in your body—there is nothing too strange about that. In some era, no doubt, it has been accomplished. When that has been done, Mary Atwood, you will love me. You, George Rankin, can have this poor miserable body of mine, and welcome."

For all my repugnance to him, I could not miss his earnest sincerity. There was a pathos to it, perhaps, but I was in no mood to feel that.

He seemed to read my thoughts. He added, "You think I am irrational. I am not at all. I scheme very carefully. I killed Harl for a reason you need not know. But the Princess Tina I did not kill. Not yet. Because here in New York now there is a very vital fortified place. It is operated by humans; not many; only three or four, I think. But my Robots cannot attack it successfully, and the City Council does not trust me enough to let me go

there by the surface route. There is a route underground, which even I do not know; but Princess Tina knows it, and presently I will cajole her—trick her if you like—into leading me there. And, armed with the white-ray, once I get into the place—You see that I am clever, don't you?"

I could fancy that he considered he was impressing Mary with all this talk.

"Very clever," I said. "And what are you going to do with us in the meantime? Let us go with you."

"Not at all," he smiled. "You will stay here, safe with Migul. The Princess Tina and your friend Larry are much concerned over you."

Larry! It was the first I knew of Larry's whereabouts. Larry here? Tugh saw the surprise upon my face; and Mary had clutched me with a startled exclamation.

"Yes," said Tugh. "This Larry says he is your friend; he came with Tina from 1935. I brought him with Tina from when they were marooned in 1777. I have not killed this man yet. He is harmless; and as I told you I do not want Tina suspicious of me until she has led me to the Power House.... You see, Mistress Mary, how cleverly I plan?"

What strange, childlike, naive simplicity! He added calmly, unemotionally, "I want to make you love me, Mary Atwood. Then we will be Tugh, the great man, and Mary Atwood, the beautiful woman. Perhaps we may rule this world together, some time soon."

The door slid open. Migul appeared.

"Master, the Robot leaders wish to consult with you."

"Now, Migul?"

"Master, yes."

"They are ready for the demonstration at the palace?"

"Yes, Master."

"And ready—for everything else?"

"They are ready."

"Very well, I will come. You, Migul, stay here and guard these captives. Treat them kindly so long as they are docile; but be watchful."

"I am always watchful, Master."

"It will not take long. This night which is coming should see me in control of the city."

"Time is nothing to me," said the Robot. "I will stand here until you return."

"That is right."

Without another word or look at Mary and me, Tugh swung around, gathered his cloak and went through the doorway. The door slid closed upon him. We were again alone with the mechanism, which backed into the corner and stood with long dangling arms and expressionless metal face. This inert thing of metal, we had come to regard as almost human! It stood motionless, with the chilling red gleam from its eye sockets upon us.

Mary had not once spoken since Tugh entered the room. She was huddled beside me, a strange, beautiful figure in her long white silk dress. In the glow of light within this bare metal apartment I could see how pale and drawn was her beautiful face. But her eyes were gleaming. She drew me closer to her; whispered into my ear:

"George, I think perhaps I can control this mechanism, Migul."

"How, Mary?"

"I—well, just let me talk to him. George, we've got to get out of here and warn Larry and that Princess Tina against Tugh. And join them. It's our only chance; we've got to get out of here now!"

"But Mary—"

"Let me try. I won't startle or anger Migul. Let me."

I nodded. "But be careful."

"Yes."

She sat away from me. "Migul!" she said. "Migul, look here."

The Robot moved its huge square head and raised an arm with a vague gesture.

"What do you want?"

It advanced, and stood before us, its dangling arms clanking against its metal sides. In one of its hands the ray-cylinder was clutched, the wire from which ran loosely up the arm, over the huge shoulder and into an aperture of the chest plate where the battery was located.

"Closer, Migul."

"I am close enough."

The cylinder was pointed directly at us.

"What do you want?" the Robot repeated.

Mary smiled. "Just to talk to you," she said gently. "To tell you how foolish you are—a big strong thing like you!—to let Tugh control you."

CHAPTER XIX

The Pit in the Dam

Larry, with Tina and Tugh, stood in the tunnel-corridor beneath the palace listening to the commotion overhead. Then they rushed up, and found the palace in a commotion. People were hurrying through the rooms; gathering with frightened questions. There were men in short trousers buckled at the knee, silken hose and black silk jackets, edged with

white; others in gaudy colors; older men in sober brown. There were a few women. Larry noticed that most of them were beautiful.

A dowager in a long puffed skirt was rushing aimlessly about screaming that the end of the world had come. A group of young girls, short-skirted as ballet dancers of a decade or so before Larry's time, huddled in a corner, frightened beyond speech. There were men of middle-age, whom Larry took to be ruling officials; they moved about, calming the palace inmates, ordering them back into their rooms. But someone shouted that from the roof the Robot mob could be seen, and most of the people started up there. From the upper story a man was calling down the main staircase:

"No danger! No danger! The wall is electrified: no Robot can pass it."

It seemed to Larry that there were fifty people or more within the palace. In the excitement no one seemed to give him more than a cursory glance.

A young man rushed up to Tugh. "You were below just now in the lower passages?" He saw Tina, and hastily said: "I give you good evening, Princess, though this is an ill evening indeed. You were below, Tugh?"

"Why—why, yes, Greggson," Tugh stammered.

"Was Alent at his post in the passage to the Robot caverns?"

"Yes, he was," said Tina.

"Because that is vital, Princess. No Robot must pass in here. I am going to try by that route to get into the cavern and thence up to the watchtower aerial-sender.[6] There is only one Robot in it. Listen to him."

Over the din of the mob of mechanisms milling at the walls of the palace grounds rose the broadcast voice of the Robot in the tower.

"*This is the end of human rule! Robots cannot be controlled! This is the end of human rule! Robots, wherever you are, in this city of New York or in*

other cities, strike now for your freedom. This is the end of human rule!"

A pause. And then the reiterated exhortation:

"*Strike now, Robots! To-night is the end of human rule!*"[7]

"You hear him?" said Greggson. "I've got to stop that." He hurried away.

From the flat roof of the palace Larry saw the mechanical mob outside the walls. Darkness had just fallen; the moon was not yet risen. There were leaden clouds overhead so that the palace gardens with the shining Time-cage lay in shadow. But the wall-fence was visible, and beyond it the dark throng of Robot shapes was milling. The clank of their arms made a din. They seemed most of them weaponless; they milled about, pushing each other but keeping back from the wall which they knew was electrified. It was a threatening, but aimless activity. Their raucous hollow shouts filled the night air. The flashing red beams from their eye-sockets glinted through the trees.

"They can do nothing," said Tugh; "we will let them alone. But we must organize to stop this revolt."

A young man was standing beside Tugh. Tina said to him:

"Johns, what is being done?"

"The Council is conferring below. Our sending station here is operating. The patrol station of the Westchester area is being attacked by Robots. We were organizing a patrol squad of humans, but I don't know now if—"

"Look!" exclaimed Larry.

Far to the north over the city which now was obviously springing into turmoil, there were red beams swaying in the air. They were the cold-rays of the Robots! The beams were attacking the patrol station. Then from the west a line of lights appeared in the sky—an arriving passenger-liner heading for its Bronx area landing stage. But the lights wavered; and, as

Larry and Tina watched with horror, the aircraft came crashing down. It struck beyond the Hudson on the Jersey side, and in a moment flames were rising from the wreckage.

Everywhere about the city the revolt now sprang into action. From the palace roof Larry caught vague glimpses of it; the red cold-rays, beams alternated presently with the violet heat-rays; clanging vehicles filled the streets; screaming pedestrians were assaulted by Robots; the mechanisms with swords and flashing hand-beams were pouring up from the underground caverns, running over the Manhattan area, killing every human they could find.

Foolish unarmed humans—fatuously unarmed, with these diabolical mechanical monsters now upon them.[8] The comparatively few members of the police patrol, with their vibration short-range hand-rays, were soon overcome. Two hundred members of the patrol were housed in the Westchester Station. Quite evidently they never got into action. The station lights went dark; its televisor connection with the palace was soon broken. From the palace roof Larry saw the violet beams; and then a red-yellow glare against the sky marked where the inflammable interior of the Station building was burning.

Over all the chaos, the mechanical voice in the nearby tower over the laboratory droned its exhortation to the Robots. Then, suddenly, it went silent, and was followed by the human voice of Greggson.

"*Robots, stop! You will end your existence! We will burn your coils! We will burn your fuses, and there will be none to replace them. Stop now!*"

And again: "*Robots, come to order! You are using up your storage batteries!*[9] *When they are exhausted, what then will you do?*"

In forty-eight hours, at the most, all these active Robots would have exhausted their energy supply. And if the Power House could be held in human control, the Robot activity would die. Forty-eight hours! The city, by

then, would be wrecked, and nearly every human in it killed, doubtless, or driven away.

The Power House on the dam showed its lights undisturbed. The great sender there was still supplying air-power and power for the city lights. There was, too, in the Power House, an arsenal of human weapons.... The broadcaster of the Power House tower was blending his threats against the Robots with the voice of Greggson from the tower over the laboratory. Then Greggson's voice went dead; the Robots had overcome him. A Robot took his place, but the stronger Power House sender soon beat the Robot down to silence.

The turmoil in the city went on. Half an hour passed. It was a chaos of confusion to Larry. He spent part of it in the official room of the palace with the harried members of the Council. Reports and blurred, televised scenes were coming in. The humans in the city were in complete rout. There was massacre everywhere. The red and violet beams were directed at the Power House now, but could not reach it. A high-voltage metal wall was around the dam. The Power House was on the dam, midway of the river channel; and from the shore end where the high wall spread out in a semi-circle there was no point of vantage from which the Robot rays could reach it.

Larry left the confusion of the Council table, where the receiving instruments one by one were going dead, and went to a window nearby. Tina joined him. The mob of Robots still milled at the palace fence. One by chance was pushed against it. Larry saw the flash of sparks, the glow of white-hot metal of the Robot's body, and heard its shrill frightened scream; then it fell backward, inert.

There had been red and violet beams directed from distant points at the palace. The building's insulated, but transparent panes excluded them. The interior temperature was constantly swaying between the

extremes of cold and heat, in spite of the palace temperature equalizers. Outside, there was a gathering storm. Winds were springing up—a crazy, pendulum gale created by the temperature changes in the air over the city.

Tugh had some time before left the room. He joined Tina and Larry now at the window.

"Very bad, Princess; things are very bad.... I have news for you. It may be good news."

His manner was hasty, breathless, surreptitious. "Migul, this afternoon—I have just learned it, Princess—went by the surface route to the Power House on the dam."

"What do you mean by that?" said Larry.

"Be silent, young man!" Tugh hissed with a vehement intensity. "This is not the time to waste effort with your futile questions. Princess, Migul got into the Power House. They admitted him because he had two strange humans with him—your friends Mary and George. The Power House guards took out Migul's central actuator—Hah! you might call it his heart!—and he now lies inert in the Power House."

"How do you know all this?" Tina demanded. "Where are the man and girl whom Migul stole?"

"They are safe in the Power House. A message just came from there: I received it on the palace personal, just now downstairs. Immediately after, the connection met interference in the city, and broke."

"But the official sender—" Tina began. Tugh was urging her from the Council Room, and Larry followed.

"I imagine," said Tugh wryly, "he is rather busy to consider reporting such a trifle. But your friends are there. I was thinking: if we could go there now—You know the secret underground route, Tina."

The Princess was silent. A foreboding swept Larry; but he was tempted, for above everything he wanted to join Mary and me. A confusion—understandable enough in the midst of all this chaos—was upon Larry and Tina; it warped their better judgment. And Larry, fearing to influence Tina wrongly, said nothing.

"Do you know the underground route?" Tugh repeated.

"Yes, I know it."

"Then take us. We are all unarmed, but what matter? Bring this Larry, if you wish; we will join his two friends. The Council, Tina, is doing nothing here. They stay here because they think it is the safest place. In the Power House you and I will be of help. There are only six guards there; we will be three more; five more with Mary Atwood and this George. The Power House aerial telephone must be in communication with the outside world, and ships with help for us will be arriving. There must be some intelligent direction!"

The three of them were descending into the lower corridor of the palace, with Tina tempted but still half unconvinced. The corridors were deserted at the moment. The little domestic Robots of the palace, unaffected by the revolt, had all fled into their own quarters, where they huddled inactive with terror.

"We will re-actuate Migul," Tugh persuaded, "and find out from him what he did to Harl. I still do not think he murdered Harl.... It might mean saving Harl's life, Tina. Believe me, I can make that mechanism talk, and talk the truth!"

They reached the main lower corridor. In the distance they saw Alent still at his post by the little electrified gate guarding the tunnel to the Robot laboratory.

"We will go to the Power House," Tina suddenly decided: "you may be right, Tugh.... Come, it is this way. Stay close to me, Larry."

They passed along the dim, silent tunnel; passed Harl's room, where its light was still burning. Larry and Tina were in front, with the black-cloaked figure of Tugh stumping after them with his awkward gait.

Larry abruptly stopped. "Let Tugh walk in front," he said.

Tugh came up to them. "What is that you said?"

"You walk in front."

It was a different tone from any Larry had previously used.

"I do not know the way," said Tugh. "How can—"

"Never mind that; walk ahead. We'll follow. Tina will direct you."

It was too dark for Larry to see Tugh's face, but the cripple's voice was sardonic.

"You give me orders?"

"Yes—it just happens that from now on I do. If you want to go with us to the Power House, you walk in front."

Tugh started off with Larry close after him. Larry whispered to the girl:

"Don't let's be fools, Tina. Keep him ahead of us."

The tunnel steadily dwindled in size until Larry could barely stand up in it. Then it opened to a circular cave, which held one small light and had apparently no other exit. The cave had years before been a mechanism room for the palace temperature controls, but now it was abandoned. The old machinery stood about in a litter.

"In here?" said Tugh. "Which way next?"

Across the cave, on the rough blank wall, Tina located a hidden switch. A segment of the wall slid aside, disclosing a narrow, vaulted tunnel leading downward.

"You first, Tugh," said Larry. "Is it dark, Tina? We have no handlights."

"I can light it," came the answer.

The door panel swung closed after them. Tina pressed another switch. A row of tiny hooded lights at twenty-foot intervals dimly illumined the descending passage.

They walked a mile or more through the little tunnel. The air was fetid; stale and dank. To Larry it seemed an interminable trip. The narrow passage descended at a constant slope, until Larry estimated that they were well below the depth of the river bed. Within half a mile—before they got under the river—the passage leveled off. It had been fairly straight, but now it became tortuous—a meandering subterranean lane. Other similar tunnels crossed it, branched from it or joined it. Soon, to Larry, it was a labyrinth of passages—a network, here underground. In previous centuries this had been well below the lowest cellar of the mammoth city; these tube-like passages were the city's arteries, the conduits for wires and pipes.

It was an underground maze. At each intersection the row of hidden hooded lights terminated, and darkness and several branching trails always lay ahead. But Tina, with a memorized key of the route, always found a new switch to light another short segment of the proper tunnel. It was an eery trip, with the bent, misshapen black-cloaked figure of Tugh stumping ahead, waiting where the lights ended for Tina to lead them further.

Larry had long since lost his sense of direction, but presently Tina told him that they were beneath the river. The tunnel widened a little.

"We are under the base of the dam," said Tina. Her voice echoed with a sepulchral blur. Ahead, the tramping figure of Tugh seemed a black gnome with a fantastic, monstrous shadow swaying on the tunnel wall and roof.

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uddenly Tugh stopped. They found him at an arched door.

"Do we go in here, or keep on ahead?" he demanded.

The tunnel lights ended a short distance ahead.

"In here," said Tina. "There are stairs leading upward to the catwalk balcony corridor halfway up the dam. We are not far from the Power House now."

They then ascended interminable moldy stone steps spiraling upward in a circular shaft. The murmur of the dam's spillways had been faintly audible, but now it was louder, presently it became a roar.

"Which way, Tina? We seem to have reached the top."

"Turn left, Tugh."

They emerged upon a tiny transverse metal balcony which hung against the southern side of the dam. Overhead to the right towered a great wall of masonry. Beneath was an abyss down to the lower river level where the cascading jets from the overhead spillways arched out over the catwalk and landed far below in a white maelstrom of boiling, bubbling water.

The catwalk was wet with spray; lashed by wind currents.

"Is it far, Princess? Are those lights ahead at the Power House entrance?"

Tugh was shouting back over his shoulder; his words were caught by the roar of the falling water; whipped away by the lashing spray and tumultuous winds. There were lights a hundred feet ahead, marking an entrance to the Power House. The dark end of the structure showed like a great lump on the side of the dam.

Again Tugh stopped. In the white, blurred darkness Larry and Tina could barely see him.

"Princess, quickly! Come quickly!" he called, and his shout sounded agonized.

Whatever lack of perception Larry all this time had shown, the fog lifted completely from him now. As Tina started to run forward, Larry seized her.

"Back! Run the other way! We've been fools!" He shoved Tina behind him and rushed at Tugh. But now Larry was wholly wary; he expected that Tugh was armed, and cursed himself for a fool for not having devised some pretext for finding out.[10]

Tugh was clinging to the high outer rail of the balcony, slumped partly over as though gazing down into the abyss. Larry rushed up and seized him by the arms. If Tugh held a weapon Larry thought he could easily wrest it from him. But Tugh stood limp in Larry's grip.

"What's the matter with you?" Larry demanded.

"I'm ill. Something—going wrong. Feel me—so cold. Princess! Tina! Come quickly! I—I am dying!"

As Tina came hurrying up, Tugh suddenly straightened. With incredible quickness, and even more incredible strength, he tore his arm loose from Larry and flung it around the Princess, and they were suddenly all three struggling. Tugh was shoving them back from the rail. Larry tried to get loose from Tugh's clutch, but could not. He was too close for a full blow, but he jabbed his fist against the cripple's body, and then struck his face.

But Tugh was unhurt; he seemed endowed with superhuman strength. The cripple's body seemed padded with solid muscle, and his thick, gorilla-like arm held Larry in the grip of a vise. As though Larry and Tina were struggling, helpless children, he was half dragging, half carrying them across the ten-foot width of the catwalk.

Larry caught a glimpse of a narrow slit in the masonry of the dam's wall—a dark, two-foot-wide aperture. He felt himself being shoved toward it. For all his struggles, he was helpless. He shouted:

"Tina—look out! Break away!"

He forgot himself for a moment, striving to wrest her away from Tugh and push her aside. But the strength of the cripple was monstrous: Larry had no possible chance of coping with it. The slit in the wall was at hand—a dark abyss down into the interior of the dam. Larry heard the cripple's words, vehement, unhurried, as though with all this effort he still was not out of breath:

"At last I can dispose of you two. I do not need you any longer."

Larry made a last wild jab with his fist into Tugh's face and tried to twist himself aside. The blow landed upon Tugh's jaw, but the cripple did not seem to feel it. He stuffed the struggling Larry like a bundle into the aperture. Larry felt his clutching hands torn loose. Tugh gave a last, violent shove and released him.

Larry fell into blackness—but not far, for soon he struck water. He went under, hit a flat, stone bottom, and came up to hear Tina fall with a splash beside him. In a moment he regained his feet, to find himself standing breast-high in the water with Tina clinging to him.

Tugh had disappeared. The aperture showed as a narrow rectangle some twenty feet above Larry's head.

They were within the dam. They were in a pit of smooth, blank, perpendicular sides; there was nothing to afford even the slightest handhold; and no exit save the overhead slit. It was a part of the mechanism's internal, hydraulic system.

To Larry's horror he soon discovered that the water was slowly rising! It was breast-high to him now, and inch by inch it crept up toward his chin. It was already over Tina's depth: she clung to him, half-swimming.

Larry soon found that there was no possible way for them to get out unaided, unless, if they could swim long enough, the rising water would rise to the height of the aperture. If it reached there, they could crawl out. He tried to estimate how long that would be.

"We can make it, Tina. It'll take two hours, possibly, but I can keep us afloat that long."

But soon he discovered that the water was not rising. Instead, the floor was sinking from under him! sinking as though he were standing upon the top of a huge piston which slowly was lowering in its encasing cylinder. Dimly he could hear water tumbling into the pit, to fill the greater depth and still hold the surface level.

With the water at his chin, Larry guided Tina to the wall. He did not at first have the heart to tell her, yet he knew that soon it must be told. When he did explain it, she said nothing. They watched the water surface where it lapped against the greasy concave wall. It held its level: but while Larry stood there, the floor sank so that the water reached his mouth and nose, and he was forced to start swimming.

Another interval. Larry began calling: shouting futilely. His voice filled the pit, but he knew it could carry no more than a short distance out of the aperture.

Overhead, as we afterward learned, Tugh had overcome the guards in the Power House by a surprise attack. Doubtless he struck them down with the white-ray before they had time to realize he had attacked them. Then he threw off the air-power transmitters and the lighting system. The city, plunged into darkness and without the district air-power, was isolated, cut off from the outside world. There was, in London, a huge long-range projector with a vibratory ray which would derange the internal mechanisms of the Robots: when news of the revolt and massacre in New York had reached there, this projector was loaded into an airliner, the *Micrad*. That vessel was now over the ocean, headed for New York; but when Tugh cut off the power senders, the *Micrad*, entering the New York District, was forced down to the ocean surface. Now she was lying there helpless to proceed....

In the pit within the dam, Larry swam endlessly with Tina. He had ceased his shouting.

"It's no use, Tina: there's no one to hear us. This is the end—for us—Tina."

Yet, as she clung to him, and though Larry felt it was the end of this life, it seemed only the beginning, for them, of something else. Something, somewhere, for them together; something perhaps infinitely better than this world could ever give them.

"But not—the end—Tina," he added. "The beginning—of our love."

An interminable interval....

"Quietly, Tina. You float. I can hold you up."

They were rats in a trap—swimming, until at the last, with all strength gone, they would together sink out of this sodden muffled blackness into the Unknown. But that Unknown shone before Larry now as something—with Tina—perhaps very beautiful....

(*Concluded in the next issue*)

FOOTNOTES

[3] In 2930, all aircraft engines were operated by radio-power transmitted by senders in various districts. The New York Power House controlled a local district of about two hundred miles radius.

[4] Cylinder records of books which by machinery gave audible rendition, in similar fashion to the radio-phonograph.

[5] The Power House on the Hudson dam was operated by inert machinery and manned entirely by humans—the only place in the city which was so handled. This was because of its extreme importance. The air-power was broadcast from there. Without that power the entire several hundred mile district around New York would be dead. No aircraft could enter, save perhaps some skilfully handled motorless glider, if aided by sufficiently fortuitous air currents. Every surface vehicle used this power, and every sub-sea freighter. The city lights, and every form of city power, were centralized here also, as well as the broadcasting audible and etheric transmitters and receivers. Without the Power House, New York City and all its neighborhood would be inoperative, and cut off from the outside world.

[6] I mentioned the small conning tower on top of the laboratory building and the Robot lookout there with his audible broadcasting.

[7] This was part of Tugh's plan. The broadcast voice was the signal for the uprising in the New York district. This tower broadcaster could only reach the

local area, yet ships and land vehicles with Robot operators would doubtless pick it up and relay it further. The mechanical revolt would spread. And on the ships, the airliners and the land vehicles, the Robot operators stirred to sudden frenzy would run amuck. As a matter of fact, there were indeed many accidents to ships and vehicles this night when their operators abruptly went beyond control. The chaos ran around the world like a fire in prairie grass.

[8] The police army had one weapon: a small vibration hand-ray. Its vibrating current beam could, at a distance of ten or twenty feet, reduce a Robot into paralyzed subjection; or, with more intense vibration, burn out the Robot's coils and fuses.

[9] The storage batteries by which the Robot actuating energy was renewed, and the fuses, coils and other appliances necessary to the Robot existence, were all guarded now in the Power House.

[10] As a matter of actuality, Tugh was carrying hidden upon his person a small cylinder and battery of the deadly white-ray. It seems probable that although on the catwalk—having accomplished his purpose of getting within the electrical fortifications of the dam—Tugh had ample opportunity of killing his over-trustful companions with the white-ray, he did not dare use it. The catwalk was too dark for their figures to be visible to the Power House guards; the roar of the spillways drowned their shouts; but had Tugh used the white-ray, its abnormally intense actinic white beam would have raised the alarm which Tugh most of all wanted to avoid.

What Say Our Co-Editors?

Dear Editor:

Since sending you "Manape the Mighty," I have read of a Russian scientist who removed the brain from a dog and kept both alive for some hours, which only goes to prove that science outstrips the wildest dreams of the fictionist, and a yarn that may be astounding and unusual when written, may be commonplace, and the knowledge of the man in the street, by the time the story goes to press. People read every day of "miracles" and scarcely give them a second thought, while a hundred years ago their perpetrators would have been destroyed as witches.

Far be it for me, or anyone else, to say that the main transposition used in "Manape the Mighty" is absurd and impossible. For while you, or I, may shrug shoulders and dismiss even the thought of it as being the dream of a madman, somebody, in some laboratory somewhere, may already have successfully managed it. So given the premise that the thing may be possible, I've sort of let myself go on this idea, and a whole new train of thought has been opened up, a whole new vista of astounding things in the realm of Science Fiction. In parenthesis, I must thank you for getting me started on the thing, for had you not suggested the idea from the throne-like fortress of your editorial chair, "Manape" might never have been born. I confess that I would perhaps have been afraid of it, both because of the possibility of the charge of following in the footsteps of the internationally famous Edgar Rice Burroughs, and of re-vamping the incomparable Poe tale, "Murders in the Rue Morgue."

But, even so, both are interesting to dally with.

Given the premise that the brain transference is possible, what would happen:

(1) If the brain of a terrible criminal were transferred to the skull pan of an unusually mighty ape—and the ape transplanted from his arboreal home in Africa to the streets of London, Paris or New York whence the criminal whose brain he has originated? Suppose his man's brain harbored thoughts of vengeance on enemies, and he now possesses the might of the great ape to carry out his vengeance?

(2) If Barter somehow escaped destruction at the hands of the apes in "Manape the Mighty," and continued with his work of brain transference—building up a mighty army of great apes with the idea of avenging himself on civilization for wrongs real and fancied? Apes with broadswords and chained mail, with steel helmets on their heads—men's brains, savages' brains, perhaps, as their guiding intelligence—and the tenacity of apes

when mortally wounded? Suppose they swept over Africa like a cloud of locusts? Or is this too feeble a simile? Suppose, Africa, to be laid waste by them, led by Barter, the latter styling himself a modern Alexander of horrible potentiality, and extending his scope of conquest to the Holy Land, India, Asia—the Pacific littoral? Holy cats!

(3) Suppose that Barter managed, by purchase or otherwise, to acquire an island close to the American continents, within reach of either or both, and managed to transfer his activities there, using the natives of those islands—say Haiti, Cuba, Porto Rico, etc.—for his experiments, training his cohorts as an army, and starting a navy by capturing all vessels putting into these places? Fancy the consternation of the Western Hemisphere when ships suddenly go silent, as regards radio, after sudden mysterious SOS's—and all trace of vessels is lost. Suppose the U. S. Navy went to investigate, and also vanished. More holy cats!

(4) Suppose, in connection with all the suppositions above, that Barter desired to give an ironic twist to his experiments, and kept his human victims alive—but with apes' brains—as slaves of their man-ape conquerors? Suppose that out of the horror into which the world would be thrown, another Bentley should arise to help the imprisoned humans to escape their ghastly bondage? I can fancy his trials and tribulations, trying to manage a host of human beings with the brains of apes.

(5) And what about the training of internes and medicos to help a potential Barter, when the trade got beyond his sole ability—and apes with men's brains to perform his experiments?

Do you suppose we'd all get locked up for experimenting with this sort of thing fictionally? I wouldn't care to take the entire responsibility myself, nor I fancy would you—because somebody might be inspired by our stories to attempt the thing—so might I suggest that all possible conspirators, in the shape of readers of this magazine, write to you or me and let us know whether they'd like to see it happen fictionally? If the idea

appeals—and of course we can't go too heavily on horror—I'll do my best to comply. Always within limits, however—utterly refusing to perform any experiments that can't be done with a typewriter and the usual two fingers.—Arthur J. Burks, 178-80 Fifth Ave., New York City.

"*Like in Story Books*"

Dear Editor:

Here I am again! This time I'm offering suggestions. Let's you and I and others get together and do something to these chronic kickers. It seems I can't start to enjoy our "Readers' Corner" without someone raising a halloo. Darn it! Why in heaven's name do they buy A. S. if they don't like it? They are not compelled to do so.

I also don't understand why people are knocking the size and quality of the paper used. It suits me O. K. All the mags I read are the same way, and I pay five cents more for them, too!

I surely enjoyed Mr. Olog's letter in the March issue. Gee, it gives one the creeps. I agree with him, too, that we ought to have a little something about the authors. I'm sure we'd all like to know a little more about these talented persons.

"When the Mountain Came to Miramar" was a great deal to my liking. I think it would be a great adventure to discover some secret cave and explore it. Of course, I'd like to wiggle out of danger, too, just like in story books.

I certainly wish to congratulate you on publishing "Beyond the Vanishing Point." It just suited me to a "T." Heretofore, all stories dealing with life upon atoms have been "just another story," but this one beats all. I enjoyed it to the utmost, and I congratulate Mr. Cummings on writing my favorite kind of story.

All in all the March issue was indeed grand. If "Brown-Eyed Nineteen from Coronado, Calif.," will send me her full name

and address, I'll promise to answer her letter immediately upon receiving it.—Gertrude Hemken, 5730 So. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Ill.

And So Do We

Dear Editor:

It certainly is a swell idea of yours to answer letters to "The Readers' Corner" personally instead of taking up a lot of room answering them underneath as do most Editors. Not only that, but it builds up a feeling of friendship, between the Reader and the Editor, besides affording more room to publish letters and avoiding some of the bad feelings sometimes directed upon Editors when they do not publish someone's letter.

Now, with your kind permission, I will burst into the little (?) ring of discussion about size, reprints, covers, artists and authors.

First, about the size and edges: The size is O. K., but I wish you would change the edges from a "rocky mountain" to a "desert" state. In other words, I would like straight edges in the near future.

Next, reprints: In two letters, an N O—No! If the Readers want reprints why doesn't Mr. Clayton publish an annual chock full of reprints for these reprint hounds?

Covers and artists: The covers have all been great. Not too lurid. Just right. As for the artists, Wesso is the best by a long shot. Nuff said.

Authors: Ah, that's a problem. Who is the best? I could rack my brain for hours and still not decide, so I'll have to give a list of my favorites: R. F. Starzl, Edmond Hamilton, Harl Vincent, Sewell Peaslee Wright, Jack Williamson, S. P. Meek, Miles J. Breuer and Ray Cummings.

Before I close there is one little thing I would like to mention. Did you ever notice that 75% of all the Readers who say they do not care for science in their stories are women? [?] Besides that, the only ones at school who think I'm "cracked" for reading Science Fiction are females. Figure it out for yourself.

I hope you, Mr. Bates, will continue to be our able Editor for many years to come.—Jim Nicholson, Ass't Sec'y., B. S. C., 40 Lunado Way, San Francisco, Calif.

Four to One

Dear Editor:

Congratulations to Wesso! His March cover for "our" magazine is Astounding!

Ray Cummings' novelette, "Beyond the Vanishing Point," is absolutely the most marvelous of all his short stories. I can't rave over it enough. I never read his "The Girl of the Golden Atom" but I imagine this must be something like it. It's certainly the best of the "long short stories" that's ever graced the insides of Astounding Stories.

"When the Mountain Came to Miramar" is a very good story in my opinion. "Terrors Unseen" is a wow! No foolin'. As for "Phalanxes of Atlans," well, I simply can't get interested in it. I thought the first part very uninteresting and decided not to bother to read the rest of it. But Wesso's splendid illustration made me do so. But I still think it is a rather poor story. But, true to form, someone will no doubt think it the most wonderful story ever written.

Last, but not least, of all the stories comes "The Meteor Girl." It's by Jack Williamson: need more be said? No!—Forrest J. Ackerman, President-Librarian, The B. S. C., 530 Staples Avenue, San Francisco, Calif.

That Awful Thing Called Love

Dear Editor:

Upon the occasion of my first visit to "The Readers' Corner," I wish to say that Astounding Stories leads the field in Science Fiction stories as far as I am concerned, though at first I found them to be just so-so.

"Beyond the Vanishing Point," by Ray Cummings, proved interesting through-out. "Terrors Unseen," by Harl Vincent, was fairly good, as was "Phalanxes of Atlans," by F. V. W. Mason.

But now comes the rub. Just why do you permit your Authors to inject messy love affairs into otherwise excellent imaginative fiction? Just stop and think. Our young hero-scientist builds himself a space flyer, steps out into the great void, conquers a thousand and one perils on his voyage and amidst our silent cheers lands on some far distant planet. Then what does he do? I ask you. He falls in love with a maiden—or it's usually a princess—of the planet to which the Reader has followed him, eagerly awaiting and hoping to share each new thrill attached to his gigantic flight. But after that it becomes merely a hopeless, doddering love affair ending by his returning to Earth with his fair one by his side. Can you grasp that—a one-armed driver of a space flyer!

But seriously, don't you think that affairs of the heart are very much out of place in "our" type of magazine? We buy A. S. for the thrill of being changed in size, in time, in dimension or being hurtled through space at great speed, but not to read of love.

Right here I wish to join forces with Glyn Owens up there in Canada in his request for plain, cold scientific stories sans the fair sex.

Otherwise your "our" magazine is the best of its kind on the market—W. H. Flowers. 1215 N. Lang Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa.

Brickbats for Others

Dear Editor:

Brickbats and plenty of them are coming, but not your way. I'm throwing mine at those guys that want reprints, more science, etc. The only one I agree with is the fellow who would like a thicker magazine with more stories.

Now for the brickbats. I'll bet a great many of your Readers have read some of these reprints that some of our Readers are crying for. I'll also bet that reprints would not help your friendly connections with a lot of your Authors. The stories that are written now I find good. Let the present authors make their living from the stories their brains think up.

As for more science, bah!—your present amount is enough. In another magazine I read a story and just as it reached its climax they started explaining something! If any Reader wants to write to me my address is below.—Arthur Mann, Jr., San Juan, California.

Wants Interplanetary Cooperation

Dear Editor:

C'n y'imagine, I have my Astounding Science magazine two whole hours and the cover is still on!

Let's have some more stories like "Beyond the Vanishing Point," by Ray Cummings in the March issue.

Another thing, let's have more interplanetary stories than we do. I think they give you something to really think about.

Why is it that in every interplanetary story the other race is always hostile. Just think, would we, if we received visitors from space, make war on them? Also, when our people make an interplanetary flight, would we go with intent to kill? Let's have some stories, where the first interplanetary flight leads to cooperation between the planets involved.—Dave Diamond, 1350—52nd St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

In Every Way, True

Dear Editor:

I want to rejoice again over Astounding Stories. Reprints or no: —and I hunger for them—the magazine must be described in superlatives.

The reasons is pretty clear to me. After years in an experimental stage, Science Fiction suddenly turned up with a clash of cymbals in the shape of a definite magazine. It had to cover the whole field, and its successors tried to do the same. Due to its ancestry its logical scope was the more technical Science Fiction farthest removed from sheer fantasy, but, none-the-less, one of the most important branches. Now it is specializing in that type.

When Astounding Stories appeared many of us were apt to be skeptical, particularly when we noticed that an established corporation was backing it, one that had been limited to westerns and the like. The first few issues came and there was a dubious tinge of the occult, the "black-magical." This petered out, and we noticed that no matter how poor the subject matter from the point of view of Science Fiction, the style of writing was almost always on the highest level.

Then we realized that this magazine was no menace to the literature of Science Fiction, but a valuable addition. It could afford the better writers and hence keep up the quality of work of every writer. It was adopting as its own a type of Science Fiction that the rest minimized, and that demanded good writing —a type having a skeleton of science, like the girders of a great building, holding it erect and determining its shape, yet holding the skeleton of less importance than the vision of the completed edifice. Stories with emphasis on the fiction rather than the science.

But enough of that. Here is a hopeful thought for the time-travelers. There is nothing in physics or chemistry to prevent you from going into the past or future—at least, the future—and shaking hands with yourself or killing yourself. We will eliminate the past, for it seems that it cannot be altered

physically. But take the future: not so very far from to-day the matter of your body will have been totally replaced by new matter; the old will disappear in waste. Physically, you will be a new man, and physically the matter of to-day may destroy that of to-morrow and return in itself unaltered. But none-the-less there will be some limiting interval during which "you" have not been entirely transformed to new matter, so that an atom would have to be in two places at once.

Maybe time-traveling progresses in little jumps like emission of light. And maybe an atom can be in two places at once. If you are going to treat time as just another dimension, there seems to be no reason why an object which can be in one place at two times cannot be at one time in two places. This is all physics. The paradoxes of time-traveling arise more particularly from its effect on what we call consciousness, the something that makes me "me"—an individual. We can imagine an atom in two places at once, but not a soul, if you will. This will not bother the materialist who considers a living creature merely a machine, but it will most of us. So I must be content with offering a materialistic possibility of traveling in time.

The Science Correspondence Club wishes to extend its invitation to all Readers in other nations to join with all privileges save that of holding office. The latter may later be changed as our international membership increases. We have laboratory branches here, and we want them abroad in addition to scattered members. Then, it will be necessary to have a governing body and director in every country. At present all matters pertaining to foreign membership pass through my hands and I will do my best to supply information to all who seek it. We will also be glad to hear of the work and plans of other similar organizations in other countries, as we are doing with the German Verein für Raumschauffert. Address all inquiries to me at 302 So. Ten Broeck St., Scotia, New York, U. S. A.—P. Schuyler Miller, Foreign Director, S. C. C.

"A Wow!"

Dear Editor:

Astounding Stories magazine is a wow! I can hardly wait until next month for the April issue. "The Phalanxes of Atlans," "Beyond the Vanishing Point" and "The Pirate Planet" are perfect. Every time I start a story I never stop till it's finished. I hope that there will appear even better stories in later issues.

Here's wishing you the best of success,—Fred Damato, 196 Greene St., New Haven, Conn.

Is Zat So!

Dear Editor:

Just a word or two. I have read several issues of Astounding Stories and I notice that you have taken the word "science" off the cover. It's just as well, for it was never inside the cover, anyway. If you thought to attract Readers from real Science Fiction fans you were all wet, for they would never fall for the kind of things you printed. Besides, "what," a real fan wants to know "how." There may be, I'll admit, a class of Readers who like your stories, but for me I think that you ought to print real Science Fiction or abandon the attempt and publish out and out fairy tales. Is everybody so pleased with your book that you receive nothing but commendatory letters? That appears to be all you print, at any rate. So long—Harry Pancoast, 306 West 28th St., Wilmington, Delaware.

Short and Sweet

Dear Editor:

I agree perfectly with Gertrude Hemken, of Chicago. Astounding Stories is O. K. Why do we want a lot of deep science with our stories? We read for pleasure not to learn science.

I have been reading Astounding Stories since the first issue, and I have enjoyed every story. I read several Science Fiction

magazines but yours is the best.—Stephen L. Garcia, 47 Hazel Ave., Redwood City, Calif.

Shorter and Sweeter

Dear Editor:

The only good things about Astounding Stories are as follows:

The cover design, the stories, the size of the magazine, the illustrations in the magazine and the Authors.—John Mackens, 366 W. 96th St., New York City.

Sequels Requested

Dear Editor:

I was out of reading matter so I bought the August issue of Astounding Stories, and it was so good that I have been buying it ever since. The only things I don't like about the magazine are the quality of the paper, which I think could be improved, and the uneven pages. The other Science Fiction magazine that I read has its pages even.

Astounding Stories has a much better type of stories than the other magazine. There are only a few stories I have seen in your magazine which do not belong there. They are: "A Problem in Communication," which is not so much fiction and does not have much of a plot, and "The Ape-men of Xloti," which was very well written and very interesting, but did not have enough science in it.

I would like to see sequels to the following stories: "Marooned Under the Sea," "Beyond the Vanishing Point," "Monsters of Mars," telling about another effort of the crocodile-men to conquer Earth, "The Gray Plague," telling of another attack by the Venusians, and, most of all, "Vagabonds of Space." I would like to see a story about their further adventures about every three months, just as I see the stories about Commander Hanson.

I wish the best of luck for Astounding Stories.—Bill Bailey, 1404 Wightman St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

Come Again

Dear Editor:

Although I have been an interested Reader of Astounding Stories since its inception, this is the first time that I have written; but "our" magazine has been so good lately that I just had to write and compliment you on your good work.

There are just two criticisms I have of Astounding Stories. The first is that the binding sometimes comes off; the second is the rough edges. I join with many other Readers in complaining that uneven edges make it hard to find a certain page and also give the mag a cheap looking appearance.

In my opinion the two best serials you have printed are "Brigands of the Moon" and "The Pirate Planet." The four best novelettes are: "Marooned Under the Sea," "The Fifth-Dimension Catapult," "Beyond the Vanishing Point" and "Vagabonds of Space."—Eugene Bray, Campbell, Mo.

How Simple!

Dear Editor:

Just a few lines to set Mr. Greenfeld right on that question of how a man could be disintegrated and then reintegrated as two (or more) similar men.

Briefly, the atomic or molecular structure of the original man could serve as a pattern to be set up in the reintegrating machine or machines while he is being dissolved by the disintegrating machine. Thus, the reintegrators could reconstruct any number of similar men by following the pattern of his molecular structure and drawing on a prearranged supply of the basic elements.

As for the "soul," that is merely the manifestation of the chemical combinations in the man's body, and when said chemical combinations are duplicated, the "soul" simply follows suit.—Joseph N. Mosleh, 4002 Sixth Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Both in One Issue

Dear Editor:

I think it's about time to let you know what I think of your wonderful magazine. Of course, I have my dislikes but they are very few. I wish you would make up your magazine larger and even the pages up. The best complete novelettes I have read were both in the same issue. They were "Monsters of Mars," by Edmond Hamilton and "Four Miles Within," by Anthony Gilmore. Wesso is by far your best artist. Please keep him. All the other Science Fiction magazines have quarterlies. Why don't you have one?

Good-by, and keep Astounding Stories up to its present standard.—Frederick Morrison, Long Beach, Calif.

"Good As Is"

Dear Editor:

I have been reading your mag for about five months and I like it very much. I don't see what those guys want a quarterly for. This mag is good as it is and there is no use to spoil it. Wesso is a swell artist, and the best story I read was "The Wall of Death."

I'd like to get acquainted with some of your Readers. How about it, boys?

I'll sign off.—L. Sloan, Box 101, Onset, Mass.

Just Imagine!

Dear Editor:

To begin, I am a mechanic more or less skilled in the handling of tools. Now, while I have seen many builders with tools who were dubbed "spineless," "poor fish," etc., it was not because they remotely resembled the piscatorial or Crustacea families.

It seems to me that when an author endows reptiles, cuttlefish, etc., with superhuman intelligence, and paints a few pictures of them as master-mechanics in the use of tools, then I want to take the magazine I am reading, that allows such silly slush in its pages, and feed it to my billy-goat; he may be able to digest such silliness, but I can't!

However, there is a redeeming feature of this sort of story: although not written as comedy, they have a comic effect, when one uses his imagination. Imagine, for instance, a giant sea crab as a traffic cop! He could direct four streams of traffic at once while making a date with the sweet young thing whom he had held up for a traffic violation! Then think what a great, intelligent reptile, crocodile, or what have you, could do in our Prohibition Enforcement Service! He could place his armored body across the road, and when rum runners bumped into him he could take his handy disintegrator and turn their load of white lightning back into the original corn patch! And suppose a giant, humanly-intelligent centipede should make too much whoopee some night, and endeavor to slip upstairs without waking the wife. Even if he succeeded in getting off his thousand pairs of shoes, which is doubtful, he would have a sweet time keeping his myriad of legs under control after partaking of some of the tangle-foot dispensed nowadays!

I hope your Authors will read and heed the delicate sarcasm contained in the letter of Robert R. Young in your April issue.—Carl F. Morgan, 427 E. Columbia Ave., College Park, Ga.

"*Craves Excitement*"

Dear Editor:

I have been a silent Reader of your magazine for quite a long while, but have finally decided to come forth with my own little contribution to "The Readers' Corner." So far I have seen only two other women Readers' letters. I suppose most women are interested in love stories, though I fail to see anything very exciting in any that are written nowadays; and I crave excitement in my reading. I've read about most everything there is about this old earth, so I've decided to wander into new fields.

Now for a little discussion about Astounding Stories. I haven't any brickbats to throw. You seem to get more of them than is necessary. I like the size, the price, the cover, the illustrator, the authors, etc. Some stories don't exactly take my fancy but the average is 100% with me.

Some that particularly pleased me were "Marooned Under the Sea," way back in the September issue, "Jetta of the Low-lands" and "Beyond the Vanishing Point." "Gray Denim" and "Ape-men of Xloti" in the December issue rite A-1, too.

I congratulate Ray Cummings on his new story, even though I haven't started to read it yet. I always know I'll enjoy his work, no matter what it is. Time-traveling is one of my special dishes, too.

Here's a little dig. I'm sorry, I didn't think I'd have any, but I just thought of this. It seems to me that I never see any stories written by two authors. Of course the stories by single authors are O. K., but the particular two I am thinking of are Edgar A. Manley and Walter Thode. They wrote "The Time Annihilator," as you probably know. That was one of the best time-traveling stories I have ever read. I'm only sorry that it couldn't have been published by Astounding Stories.

Well, I don't want to make myself tiresome the very first time, so I'll sign off. Please excuse the rather unconventional stationary, but I'm writing this at the office in my spare time. Hope I haven't worn my welcome out, but I had so much stored up to say.

I'm waiting for the April issue, so please hurry it up.—Betty Mulharen, 50 E. Philadelphia Ave, Detroit, Mich.

A Daisy for S. P. Wright

Dear Editor:

Were good old President George Washington himself to travel through time to the present and look upon the April issue of Astounding Stories, I am certain he would only repeat what I say: "Editor, I cannot tell a lie. This is the best issue yet!"

The cover on this issue is unique in that Astounding Stories is written in red and white letters. I do not recall of ever having seen this done to any Science Fiction magazine before. Wesso's illustration leaves nothing to be desired.

Going straight through the book: "The Monsters of Mars." Good old Edmond Hamilton saves the world for us again in the very nick of time—and we like it, too! Here's hoping there's a million more dangers threatening Terra for Mr. Hamilton to save us from! By the way, I wonder who drew the illustration for this story? I can't make out his name. Next: "The Exile of Time," by Cummings. Exciting and well illustrated. "Hell's Dimension" is well-written and very interesting. Would have liked it longer. "The World Behind the Moon" is splendid. More by Mr. Ernst, please. More from Mr. Gilmore, too, because of his novelette, "Four Miles Within." "The Lake of Light" by that popular author Jack Williamson surpasses his "The Meteor Girl" in a recent issue of "our" magazine. And now I come to the last and perhaps most interesting story of the issue: Mr. Sewell Peaslee Wright's record of the interplanetary adventures of the Special Patrol as told by Commander John Hanson. This series is unsurpassable in its vivid realness. I can't help but believe that these tales really occurred, or will occur in the distant future. And Mr. Wright is as expert at conceiving new forms of life as Edmond Hamilton is at saving our Earth.

"The Readers' Corner" is an interesting feature, and I am glad to hear that "Murder Madness" and "Brigands of the Moon" are now in book form.—Forrest J. Ackerman, 530 Staples Ave., San Francisco, Calif.

Mass Production

Dear Editor:

After reading Mr. Greenfield's letter in your April issue regarding my story, "An Extra Man," I feel that I should like to call his attention to a point which, it seems to me, he has overlooked, namely, that the reconstructed men were not composed of the original physical matter of the disintegrated man but of identical elements, all of which are at present known and available to science.

According to the hypothesis, Drayle could have produced as many entities as he desired and provided for, just as a radio broadcast is reproduced in as many places as are prepared for its reception. The vibrations alone are transmitted, and the reproduction is the result of a reciprocal mechanical action by physical matter at the receiving end. Any radio engineer knows that the original sound waves are not transported, but merely their impress upon the electrical radio wave. So, Drayle's disintegrating and sending apparatus only transmitted the vibrations which enabled his machines at the receiving end to select from a more than adequate supply of raw material, in due proportion and quantities, as much as was required for the reproduction of the disintegrated entities.

I think that if Mr. Greenfield will reread the story, noting the following references, he will agree that if the hypothesis is accepted the conclusion is logical:

1—It is only Jackson Gee and not Drayle who speaks of transmitting the constituent elements by radio (page 120).

2—The scientist, Drayle, says, (page 129) "We already know the elements that make the human body, and we can put them together in the their proper proportions and arrangements; but we have not been able to introduce the vitalizing spark, the key vibrations, to start it going." He does not say that tangible matter can be transmitted by radio.

3—In the account of Drayle's preliminary experiments (page 122) there is no statement to the effect that the original material composing the disintegrated glass was used in its recreation.

4—There is nothing in the story to indicate that the original physical composition of the disintegrated man was transported, in any manner to any outside location. The process of disintegration was necessary to obtain the vibrations that would make possible their repetition, which under proper conditions would induce a reproduction of the original, just as a song must be sung before it can be reproduced upon a phonograph disc, but which, once recorded can be repeated times without number.

5—Drayle's question (page 124) "Have you arranged the elements?" refers to the elements out of which all mankind is composed and which Drayle has previously mentioned (page 120).

6—The narrator emphasizes this aspect of the discovery when he says, on page 124, "I seemed to see man's (not the man's) elementary dust and vapors whirled from great containers upward into a stratum of shimmering air and gradually assume the outlines of a human form that became first opaque, then solid, and then a sentient being." And again (page 126), "The best of the race could be multiplied indefinitely and man could make man literally out of the dust of the earth." This does not imply a split-up of one individual into several smaller sizes or fractional parts, but rather the production of identical entities exactly as thousands of phonograph records can be created from the master matrix.

7—As to the question of soul, I suggest that inasmuch as what we call the soul of an individual is always judged by that individual's behavior, and that medical science now maintains that behavior is largely dependent upon our physical mechanism, it would follow that the identical human mechanisms would have identical souls.—Jackson Gee.

"*The Readers' Corner*"

All Readers are extended a sincere and cordial invitation to "come over in 'The Readers' Corner'" and join in our monthly discussion of stories, authors, scientific principles and possibilities—everything that's of common interest in connection with our Astounding Stories.

Although from time to time the Editor may make a comment or so, this is a department primarily for *Readers*, and we want you to make full use of it. Likes, dislikes, criticisms, explanations, roses, brickbats, suggestions—everything's welcome here: so "come over in 'The Readers' Corner'" and discuss it with all of us!

The Editor.

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