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WEIRD TALES

NOVEMBER

1940

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Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

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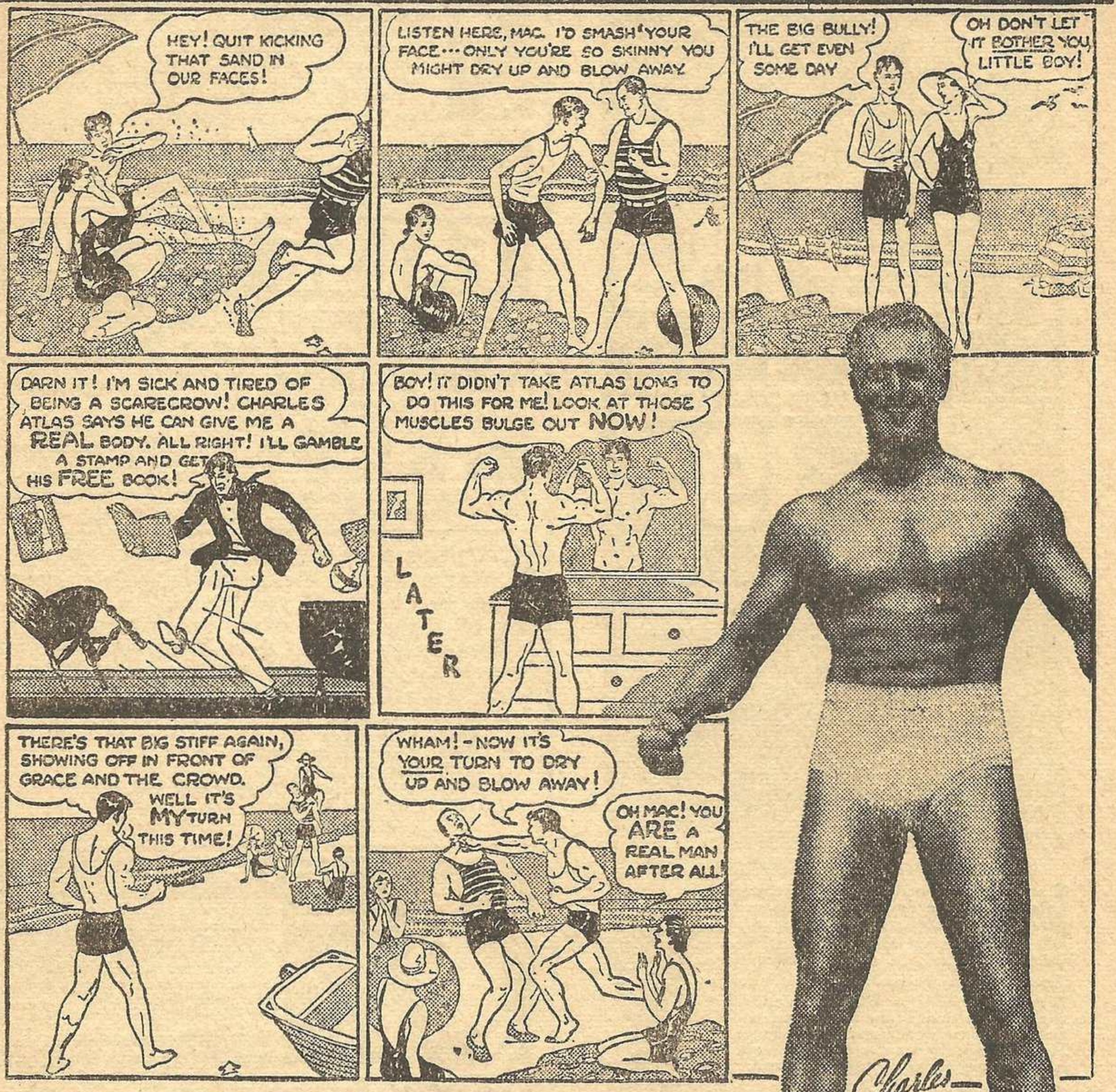
Vol. 35, No. 6

D. McILWRAITH, *Editor.* H. AVELINE PERKINS, *Associate Editor.*

THE INSULT THAT MADE A MAN OUT OF "MAC"



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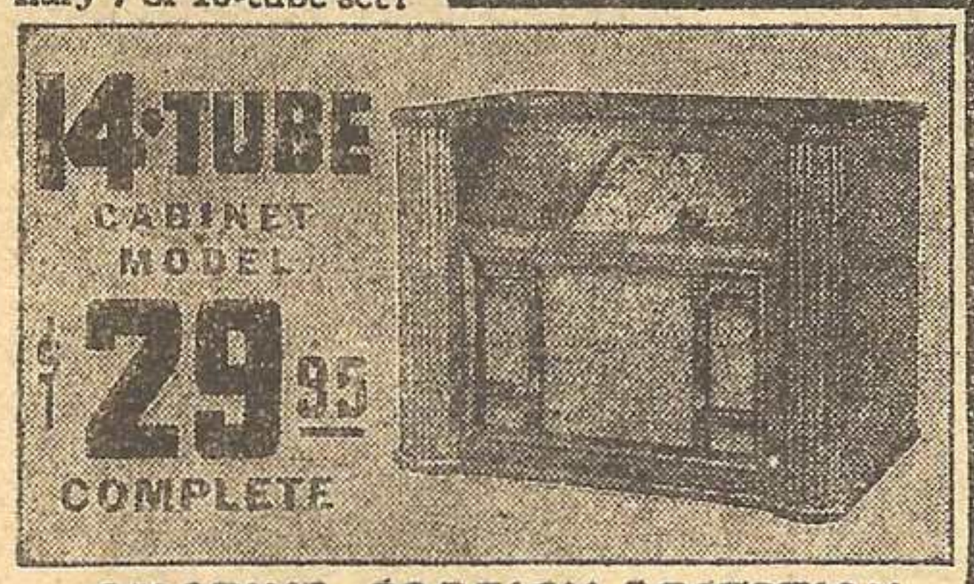

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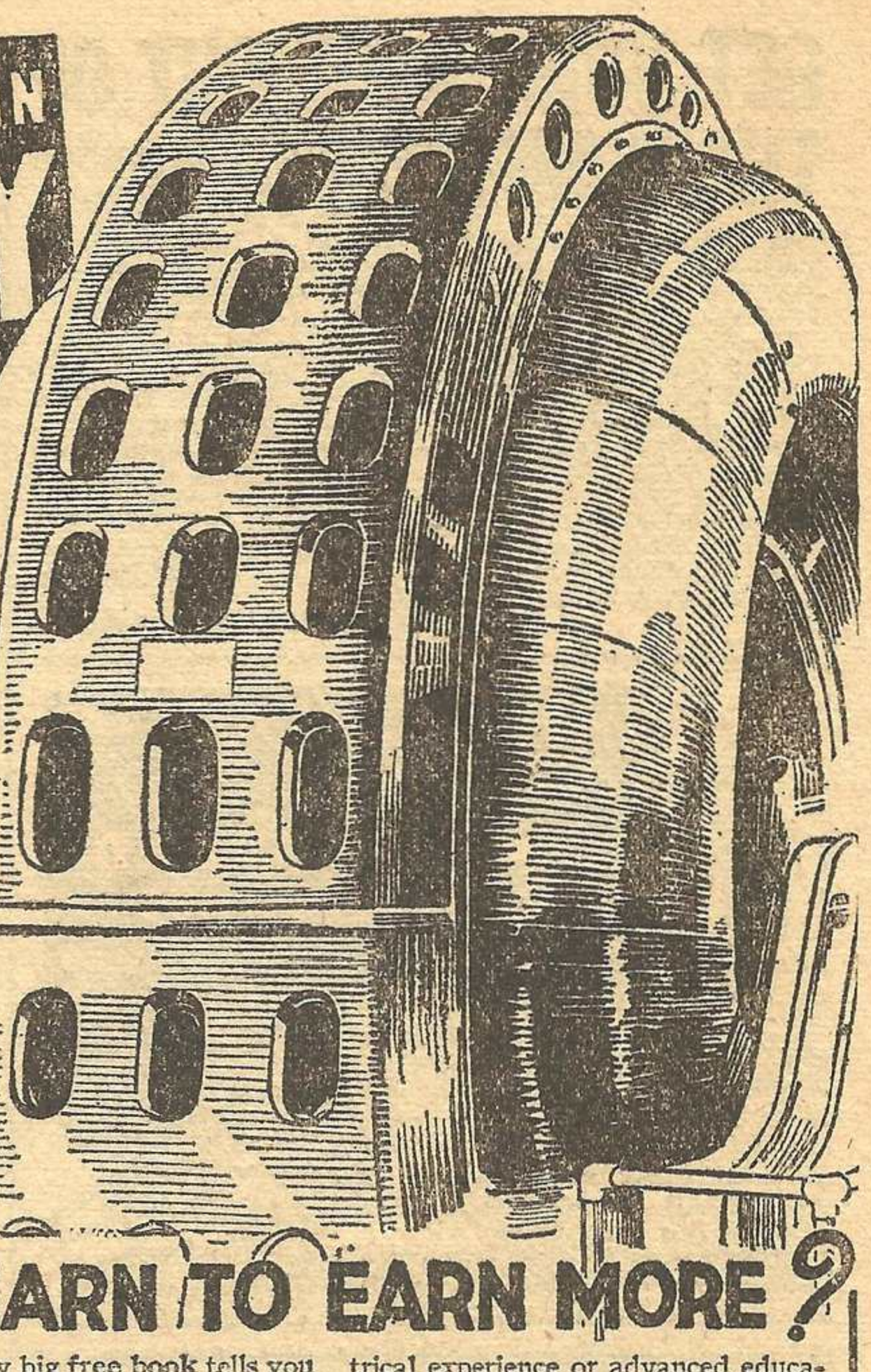

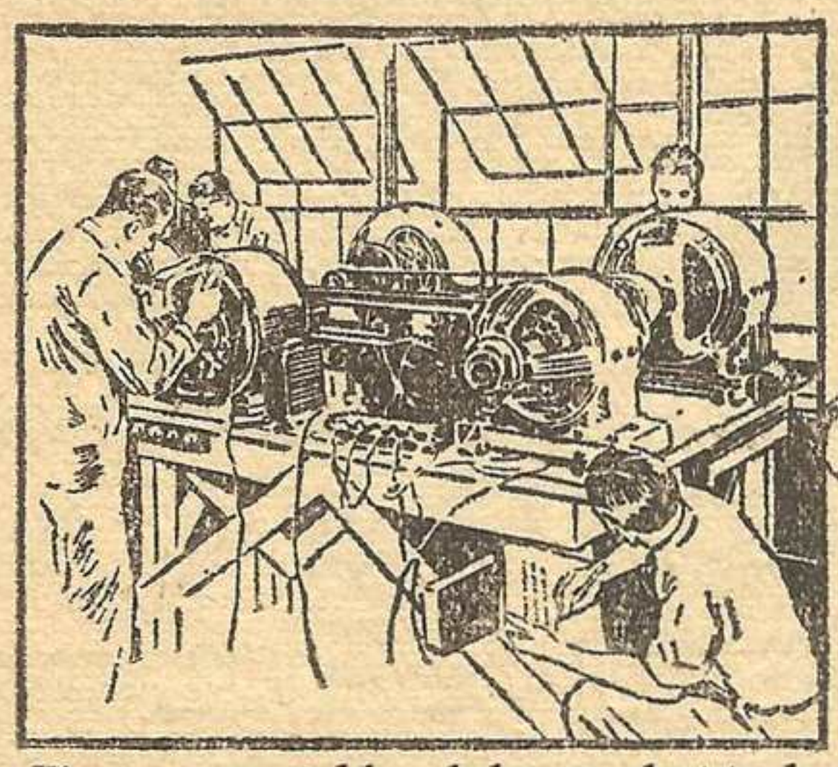

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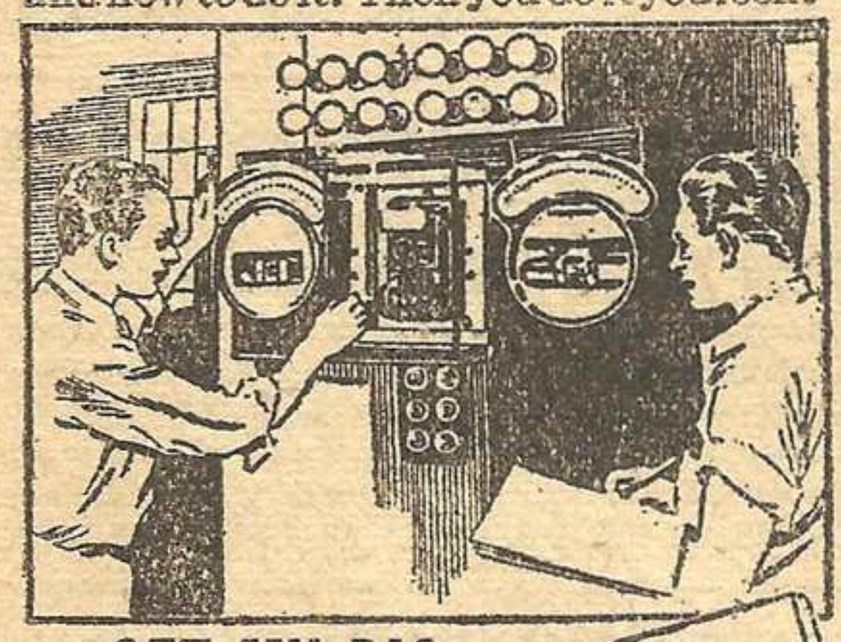

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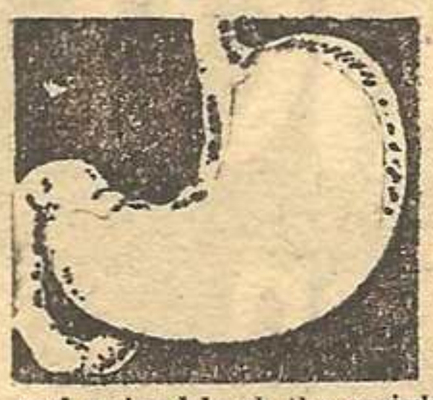

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30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
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32x4	2.95	1.25	30x5	3.65	1.65
33x4	2.95	1.25	33x5	3.75	1.75
34x4	3.25	1.35	35x5	3.95	1.75
32x4½	3.35	1.45			

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Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
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7.00-20	5.95	2.95	9.00-20	10.95	5.65
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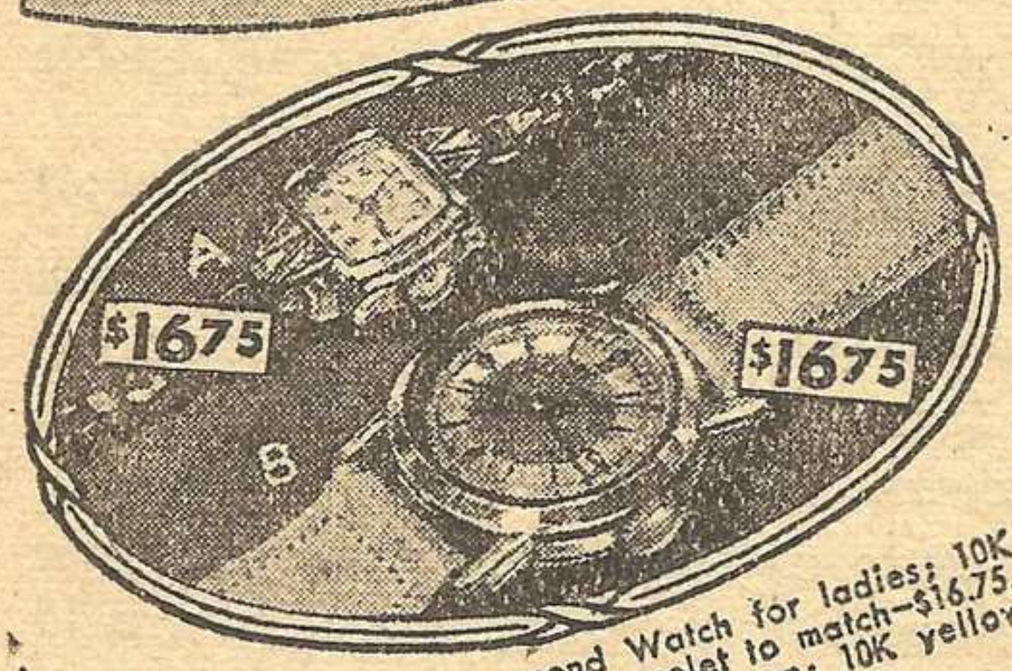

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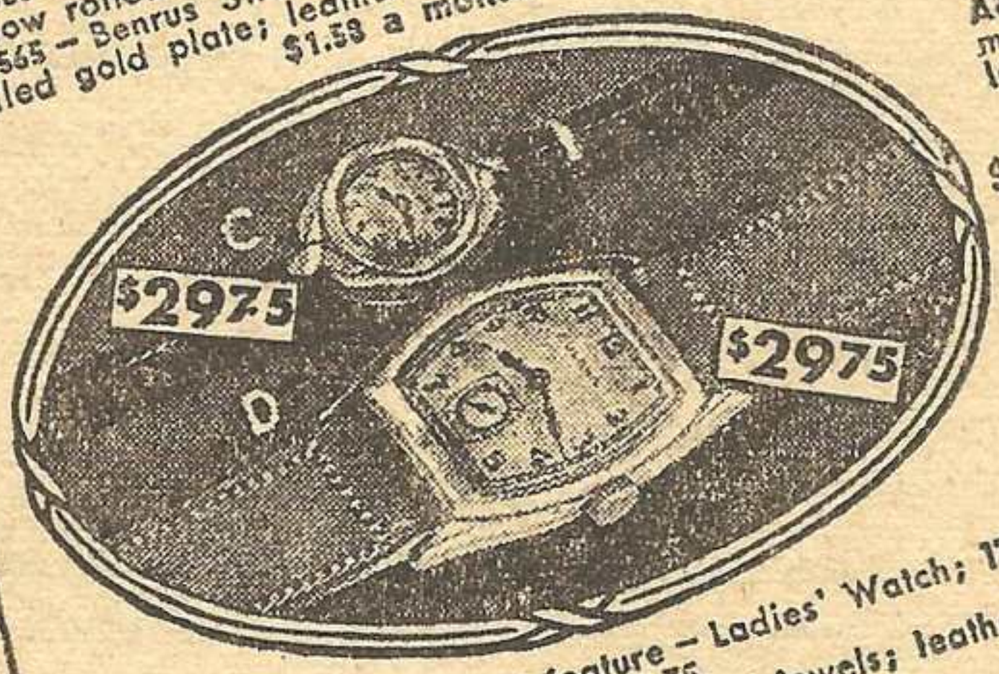

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$2.38 a month

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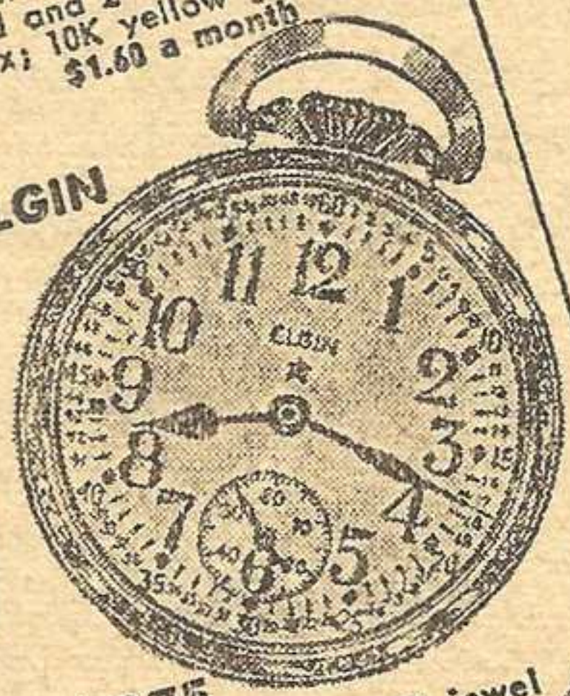
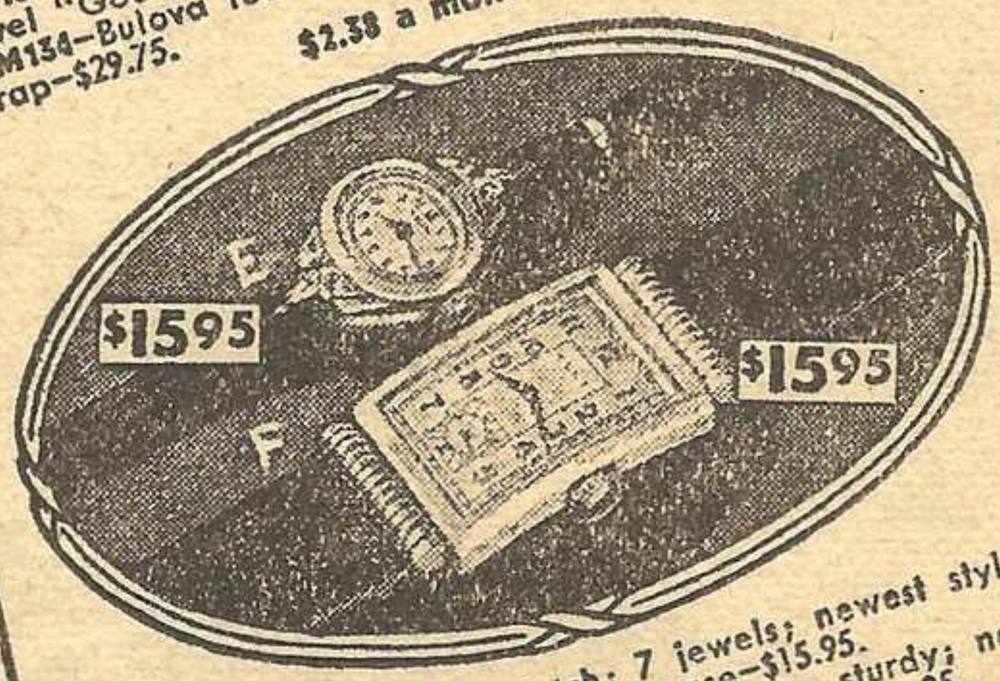


$29.75

Railroad style; 17 jewel Elgin; yellow gold color case.
$2.88 a month



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L. W. Sweet

MAIL ORDER DIVISION OF FINLAY STRAUS, Inc.

Dept. 760-K 1670 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

The Last Waltz

Even between the battlefield and the ballroom, love forged a chain no power on earth could break.

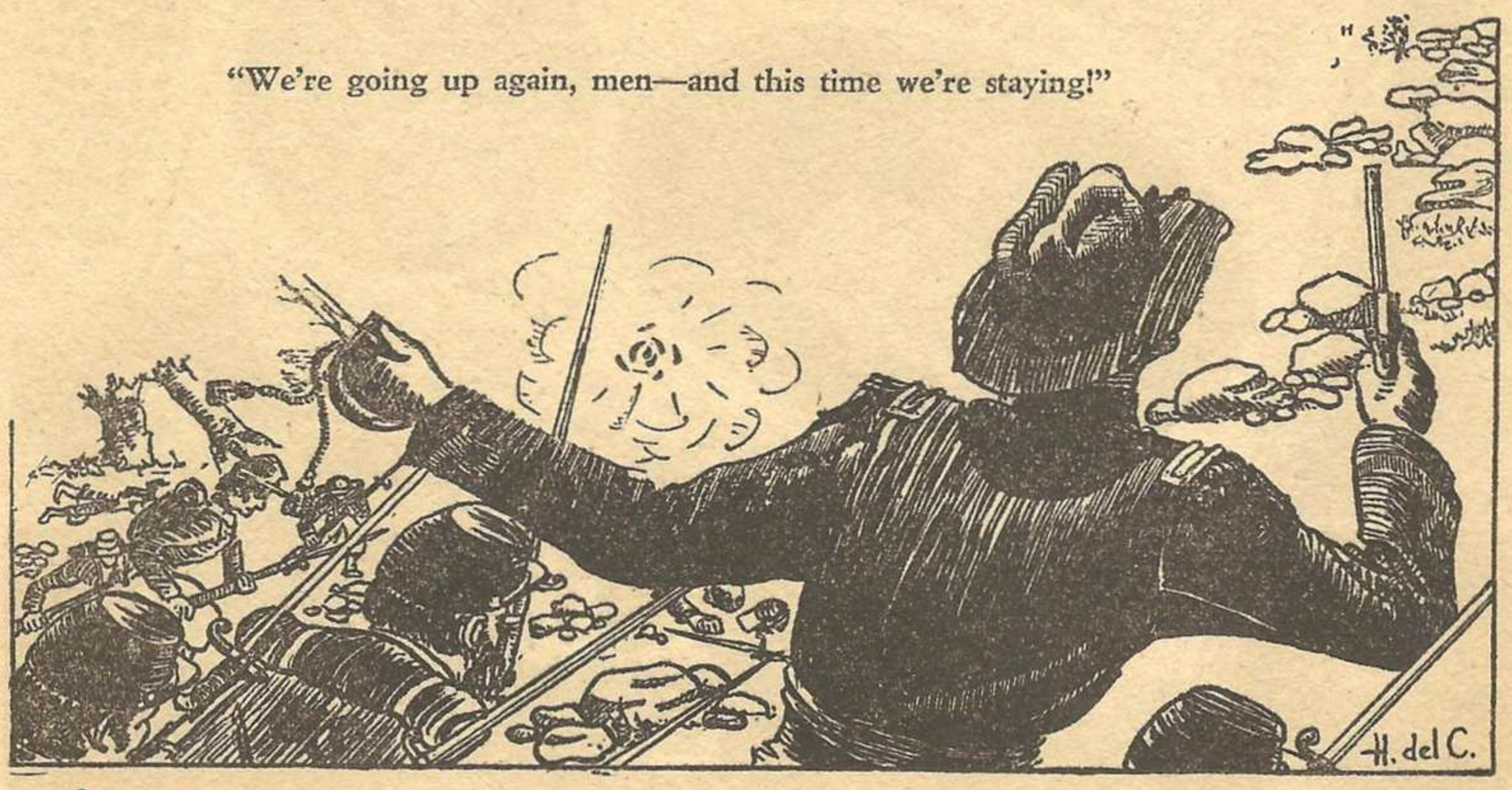
THE Eighth Zouaves had stormed the ridge twice. It must have been five hundred feet up to the heights where the red flag with its blue St. Andrew's Cross and thirteen silver stars waved challengingly and the butternut-clad infantry lay waiting behind their rampart of boulders. Five hundred feet of steep up-grade with fallen trees and underbrush to clamber over, and veterans from Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville to meet them at the top. One out of every three men in the line had fallen, you could see the deep red of their baggy trousers and the deep blue of their jackets like bright flowers on the black soil underneath the bullet-riven trees.

"Attention!" Colonel Dutcher's foghorn voice smashed through the muted roar of cannonading on the left. "We're going up again, men—and this time we're staying. Charge bayonets—forward, double quick, march!"

Dwight Fairchild transferred his sword to his left hand, wrapping the hilt-knot about his wrist, and dragged his heavy Colt from its holster. Captain Schwing was down, so was Lieutenant Ditmas; he was company commander — just past twenty, and in command. Drusilla would be proud when he wrote her about this— "Guide right; dress the line!" he shouted as he glanced along the rank of leveled bayonets. "At the double—forward!"

They were halfway up the height, now. The whine of Minié balls was like the droning of a nest of angry hornets; sometimes they cut a branch above his head with a sharp *snick!* sometimes they struck a tree trunk with a dull *pung!* When they ricocheted from the stones underfoot they screamed like demons in frustration.

"We're going up again, men—and this time we're staying!"



By

SEABURY

QUINN

"Why no, it was no bugle blowing retreat; it was an orchestra—and it was playing a Strauss waltz."

Twenty-five feet forward, thirty, maybe, a clump of boulders cropped waist-high from the loam. Funny they should stand like that—like a group of tombstones in a country churchyard—might be shelter for a Johnny behind them—

The face that rose behind the tallest stone was wreathed in a broad grin. It was a nice face, clean-shaved, boyish, and there was something almost friendly in the blue eyes underneath the battered broad-brimmed slouch hat. "Here y'are, Yank—tell Abe Lincoln I sent this!" the lad behind the rock called cheerfully, and then squeezed his trigger.

Fairchild felt the impact of the bullet like a fist-blow on his chest. It didn't hurt, not as much as he'd supposed it would, at any rate. Just knocked the wind from him, and made his left arm feel heavy and useless. "Right back at you, Reb—take this one to Jeff Davis!" he jerked his pistol up and fired.

It was comical, that look upon the other's face. A sort of shocked-surprised expression, as if to say, "You can't do this to me"—then the welling, gushing spate of blood that rushed out of the hole between the hatbrim and the smiling eyes; the opened gaping mouth. And then nothing. Like a jack-in-the-box the sharpshooter had dropped down behind the sheltering stone, a sliced second too late, and as the gray-clad boy fell Dwight stumbled, felt his left arm crumple under him, and lay against the leaf-mould with a spear of grass tickling his left ear and the sweet, clean smell of topsoil in his nostrils.

"Hully Gee, th' Loot's plugged!" he heard Sergeant Gilroy call, then, in his ear, but sounding far away, "Are ye hur-rt bad, sor?"

"Never mind me, Sergeant." Funny how he had to shout to make his voice sound even like a whisper. "Keep the men in line—"

Something bothered him. His mouth was full of sticky stuff. Salty. Nasty. And his left side hurt. It seemed as if a hand were pressed against it, holding down his chest. He couldn't breathe, and when

he tried it hurt so—hurt as if a bayonet bore into him just below the collar-bone.

As the gaitered legs swung past his face he reached out with his right hand, drawing himself nearer to the big pine tree. There, that was better. Lie here, take it easy, boy; you're going to be all right. They'll come back for you, soon as they have cleared the ridge. Mustn't ask 'em to stop now, though. This is a war we're having— Who cares about their old war? There's a flower—

It was a bloodroot, pale and pinkly-white, thrusting up through the dead black pine needles. He looked at it with his hand to his heart while the fresh, vigorous young blood trickled through his fingers and made an ugly stain on the precise blue tunic that he had always kept so carefully, brushing it each time he took it off, sponging it with a damp rag to remove dust and powder-stains. Who cares about the old coat? See that pretty flower—like the one Drusilla wore in her hair that night.

It was funny how the past reeled out before him, like one of those moving stereopticans they had in Hartley's Arcade, only run through in reverse. Somewhere near a bugle sounded—Retreat. Had they swept the Johnnies from the ridge? Why, no, it was no bugle, it was an orchestra, and it was playing a Strauss waltz. That flower was no humble country-blooming bloodroot, it was a pale pink rose, and it was in Drusilla's hair. "My waltz, Ma'am, I believe," he murmured to the little, nodding floret.

NEW YORK was in a winter mood. Since halfpast six the great white flakes had drifted through the breezeless air, the cobble stones of Broadway were cottoned by the thick snow fall, and the carriage-horses' hooves were silenced as the long parade of family broughams and hired hacks streamed northward from the Fulton and Grand Street ferries or south and west from fashionable First Avenue to the Broadway Central where the military and civic ball was in progress for the benefit of the Women's Sanitary Ambulance Corps. Gas light blazed in every window of the hotel, the crystal chandeliers of the ballroom gleamed diamond-like with bright reflections as the orchestra struck up the music for the grand march:

De Camptown ladies sing dis song,
Do-da, do-da;
De Camptown race-track ten miles long,
Do-da, do-da, day!

Most of the men were uniformed, their gold braid and buttons and bright sashes vying with the costumes of the ladies. Everybody who aspired to be mentioned in the Social Columns was present.

Dwight Fairchild felt his fingers tremble as Drusilla laid her hand in his. "You're very beautiful tonight, dear," he whispered as he bent toward her, "and it was sweet of you to wear my flowers." He glanced down at the spray of pale pink roses at her waist, then at the single blossom nestled in her soft dark hair. "I should have called for you, but duty—"

"La!" she interrupted with a pout. "Duty—always duty! Anyone would think that you were going to marry Mister Lincoln, 'stead of me." Then her brown eyes softened. "Why don't you resign from the army, Dwight? You know how Papa feels about this war, and," she added wistfully, "we could be married right away and have such fun together. The skating's lovely in the park these days, and all the roads are thick with snow. We could go sleighing out to Hempstead, or Freeport, and I know the sweetest little house in Williamsburg we can get for almost no rent—" The marchers separated as they reached the bandstand, and with a coaxing smile she turned away.

He kept time with the music as he followed the stout captain of hussars who marched before him, but though he still smiled he was troubled. It had not been easy to win Drusilla Willemese, for the dark-haired, pale-skinned heiress was conspicuous for her beauty even in the Brooklyn Eastern District, where pretty girls were by no means a rarity, and her suitors numbered scores. Afterwards, her parents' consent had been even harder to obtain, for the Willemese fortune was based upon the Southern cotton trade, and "Mr. Lincoln's war" had all but wrecked the cotton-factoring business. Only the insistent teasing of a pampered only daughter had secured a grudging assent to the engagement, with the understanding that no wedding should take place as long as young Fairchild continued in "King Lincoln's livery."

Now Drusilla urged him to resign, to quit his country in its time of peril. What if her father forced her to return his ring? There was Harold Martense, rich and handsome and outspoken in his Southern sympathies. Suppose the old man made her accept his suit?

The lines of marchers were together once more; her hand was in his again, her eyes were turned on him in entreaty. "Please, Dwight? They don't need you to fight their old war; there are plenty without you. Resign your commission and Papa will let us marry right away."

He danced a polka with her, then a rollicking mazurka; after that young Martense claimed her for the schottische. Now the orchestra struck up the *Blue Danube,* and he bowed before her. "My waltz, Ma'am, I believe."

They whirled around the floor once, twice; he held her tighter than convention permitted, for he was young, and terribly in love, and fearful of losing her. The power of his wanting was in his arm, and his almost fierce grip hurt her; but she loved the hurt. After all, he was a man, her Dwight. She lowered lace-veined lids and gave herself up wholly to the captivating rhythm of the music and the strength of his encircling arm.

Now they were by the ballroom vestibule and as he looked across his partner's creamy shoulder Fairchild saw a young man in zouave uniform who beckoned him imperatively. "Excuse me, darling," he whispered, then, as he reached the young enlisted man:

"Yes, Corporal?"

"Colonel Dutcher's compliments, sor. All officers are ordered to report at once to the armory."

"I'm called for instant duty, dear," Fairchild murmured. "Don't know what it is, but it's important, or they'd not have sent for me."

"Oh, Dwight, can't we even finish this?"

"No, dear; every minute counts. This is a war we're having. But"—as her eyes darkened with rebellion—"I'll be back to claim the dance, my dearest, never fear. Say you'll save it for me."

Her eyes were wide, moist, starry, and her lips trembled like a little child's. "Always and forever, dear heart. Come what may, this dance is yours, and yours alone. I'll never dance the *Blue Danube* with any other man. Claim it when you will. I'll hold it open for you—always."

Then, to the scandal of the chaperoning dowagers who were lined in straight-backed chairs along the wall, he bent and kissed her quickly. "I'll remember, dearest love. When you hear me say, 'My waltz, Ma'am, I believe,' you'll know that I've come back to claim the *Blue Danube* from you."

It had stopped snowing and grown colder since the ball began. A wind that seemed to scream with gleeful malice whipped down Broadway, snatching at their hats and clutching at their greatcoats as Lieutenant Fairchild and Corporal Gil-

roy climbed into a handsom-cab and set out for the armory.

Two hours later they marched to the Jersey City ferries and entrained for the South.

DRUSILLA sat before the cherry writing desk in her boudoir. Two candles in tall silver standards shed their light across the pad of correspondence paper which lay bare and blank before her, their flickering luminance struck flashes from the little diamond setting of the ring that lay beside the opened pad of paper, and from the larger stone that graced the circlet on the third finger of her left hand. "Dear Dwight," she wrote, then paused and nibbled at her penholder. This was going to be harder than she'd thought. She crumpled the sheet to a ball and threw it on the floor, then began again, "Dwight dearest." That was better, less formal, but—one couldn't be too affectionate when— She threw the second sheet of wadded paper down beside the first and started afresh.

The small ormolu clock on the dresser ticked away the minutes, and her pen scratched with a gently scraping sound across the linen paper. Sheet after sheet was torn or crumpled as she finished it; but finally the note was done. The writing was bold, ill-formed, altogether fashionable; its message was plain as any epitaph upon a tombstone.

Dear Dwight:

I loathe writing this, but Papa thinks I should tell you right away. After thinking matters over I know that our engagement was a mistake. You were young and so was I; you were fascinated by my pretty face (for I *am* pretty —my mirror tells the truth, even if the young men lie), I loved your pretty uniform and the pretty things you said, and we were both much more in love with love than with each other. After all, Dwight, what have we in common? You are devoted to your military career, "seeking the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth," as the poet says, while I want a home, and a husband who can be with me and think as I do.

Papa says Mr. Lincoln's war may last another five years, and by that time I should be an old maid, even if you came back and still wanted me. You see, I'm twenty-one next April.

So, I think we'd better let by-gones be by-gones. Harold Martense wants to marry him, and I'm sure that I've found love this time.

I'd send your ring back through the mail, but I'm sure some horrid Yankee soldier would steal it, so I'll just hold it here for you, and if you come back from the war, or when you're home on leave, if you'll call at the house Papa will give it to you.

Drusilla.

There, it was done, and a clever piece of composition, too. Not too flippant, not too serious; just the proper balance of gravity and frivolity. But final. Oh, definitely final. She picked up the small ring and looked into its tiny diamond, like a seeress gazing into a crystal. "You *were* a sweet old thing, Dwight," she murmured impulsively as she brushed her lips across the gleaming stone.

The evening had been hot and oppressive, but now a light breeze blew in from the river, fluttering the primly starched scrim curtains, making the straight candleflames sway dancingly. And with the breeze there came the distance-muted music of the orchestra of an excursion boat steaming home late from Block Island.

For a moment she heard without recognition, then suddenly her senses fitted the notes into the pattern of her memory. The

Blue Danube! Against her will her heart echoed and re-echoed the music.

"Oh, Dwight—Dwight dearest, Dwight belovèd!" Her sob-choked exclamation was half moan, half scream, pitched shrilly, but controlled. Papa must not hear her. She'd promised him—

She threw herself across the bed and pressed her face into the lavender-spiced pillow, weeping helplessly, noiselessly, till sheer exhaustion gave her a degree of peace.

DR. BOGARDUS splashed the soapsuds from his hands and wiped them on the fresh huck towel which the orderly had just brought to the lavatory. "Dum it, Frisby," he said as his colleague took possession of the wash basin, "I can't understand that young Fairchild in B-2. The feller should 'a' died two weeks ago, with the apex of his left lung almost shot away, but—dum it all!—he hangs on like a pointer pup to a root. Seems as if he's waitin' for something before he finally decides to kick the bucket."

"H'm?" Dr. Frisby laved his hands and dried them methodically. "Funny thing about these tough young 'uns. Half the time they get well when we've given up all hope, and spoil our reputations—"

"This one won't," Bogardus denied. "He can't. Hasn't got an earthly chance; just livin' on his nerve. When that breaks—" He shrugged into his blouse and bent his head back as he hooked the collar fastenings. "Come on, let's eat. I've done ten amputations today, an' I'm hungry as a wolf."

"Any mail, Sister?" Dwight looked up hopefully as the young woman in the blue habit bustled past his bed, the points of her starched *cornette* flapping like a bird's wing with the motion of her walk.

The young sister of charity looked down pityingly. She had not withdrawn from the world long enough to regard men impersonally, and this pale-faced boy with the great eyes who asked so plaintively for mail each day wrung her heart. "No mail today, Lieutenant," she responded gently. "The trains from the North are all delayed by troop movements. Maybe you'll get your letter tomorrow."

She met Dr. Frisby as she left the ward. "Dr. Bogardus seems so sure that young man's going to die," she volunteered, "but I'm not certain. He has a dreadful wound, it's true; but I never saw a man who clung to life so fiercely—"

"Yep, Bogardus said he seemed to be waitin' for something before he finally makes up his mind to die—"

The sister smiled. A knowing, woman's smile. "He's waiting for a letter from his sweetheart, Doctor. The hope of it's sustaining him. When it comes—unless it comes too late—I shouldn't be surprised if he got well and fooled us all."

"LIEUTENANT FAIRCHILD, here's your letter!" Sister Mary Agnes almost stumbled in her haste to reach Dwight's cot. "Now everything will be all right, and you'll get well—shall I read it to you?"

The big, unnaturally bright eyes in his pale face shone with an ethereal light. "Yes, please, if you will. I'm afraid I can't quite—"

"Never mind. Just rest quietly; I'll read it—" She had broken the seal and drawn out the sheet of folded paper. With a quick glance she scanned the irregular, fashionable writing, and for a moment all expression left her face. Then she smiled at him, not only with her lips, but with her eyes; eyes that were warm and understanding and kind. "It's a beautiful, sweet letter," she assured him. "Listen":

Dwight, my belovèd:

They tell me that you have been

wounded, and when I heard the news it seemed the bullet tore through my flesh, too, for we are so soon to be one, my darling, that whatever hurts you hurts me, just as everything that gives you happiness makes me happy.

Do you know they say the war will soon be over, dearest one? And you'll be coming back to me with all your honors thick upon you. But I'll not see the hero with his medals or the victor who returns in triumph from the battle; I'll only see my own true love, for whose return I've hoped and waited so long. How happy we shall be, my dear! All the happy times we've had together were but the prelude to the happiness we have in store for us.

Good night, my dearest, and know that every day I miss you, and every night I pray for your return.

Always and forever yours,

Drusilla.

She glanced down at him as she finished. He was looking straight before him, eyes wide, as if he saw a glory he had never dreamed of limned against the whitewashed wall of the hospital ward. She heard his quick, light breathing, she saw the sweat that started to his forehead just below the hair-line. She knew the signs. Hastily she rose to summon Dr. Bogardus, then returned to kneel beside the cot and recite prayers for the dying. And for herself. It was a sin to lie, but she was not repentant. Even as she asked forgiveness for the lie she knew that she would do the same thing many times again if by such sinning she could guard a dying boy from heart-hurt.

Presently she heard the doctor grunt. "All right, Sister. Call the orderlies. Get 'im out o' here. We're short o' beds."

Outside in the warm sunshine an almost convalescent trooper from the Fifth Michigan Cavalry baked himself luxuriously against a wall and played his accordion. The notes came wheezily, and plainly the musician played by ear, but the tune was easily distinguishable. The *Blue Danube.*

THREE hundred guests had passed the bride and bridegroom, showering congratulations and good wishes on them; now the wedding supper was completed, the last champagne toast drunk, and the company repaired to the ballroom where the orchestra was playing a soft prelude to the dance. The older people found seats by the wall, the youngsters looked expectantly toward Martense and his bride, for till they led off none might dance, and their feet were tingling to begin.

It had been one of those intolerable late-August days that sometimes afflict the west tip of Long Island, a day of humid heat that stopped the nostrils and clogged the throat, with neither life nor freshness in such air as moved, only more heat. But now a breeze was rising, whimpering through the pear trees in the garden, bringing a promise of rain. Thunder rolled and grumbled in the east out by Jamaica Bay, the horizon was brightened intermittently with the white glow of lightning.

"Shall we dance, my dear?" Young Mr. Martense bowed, reached out a white-gloved hand and clasped her small, sweet waist. The violin and clarinets struck up the *Blue Danube,* and in a moment they were whirling round the brightly lighted, mirrored room, the center of a hundred other whirling couples.

"You're cold?" he asked as she shuddered slightly in the circle of his arm. "Shall I have them close the windows?"

"Oh, no, please," she denied. "It isn't that I'm cold; it's just that—"

The storm burst on them with a screaming war-whoop. The building fairly staggered with the impact of the wind, the rain dashed with an angry hiss against the walls, and through the opened French

windows lashed a spate of water almost solid as a rising wave.

The flaring gas flames in the chandeliers were fluttering like tattered banners in the gale. One after another they wavered, flattened, and went out. The room was dark as Erebus, the shrouding blackness echoed with the startled screams of women and the men's ejaculations.

"Excuse me, dear, I'll have things right in no time," Martense murmured, and in his excitement forgot to escort her from the floor.

She looked about her in bewilderment. Accustoming themselves to the darkness, her eyes could descry figures, but not features.

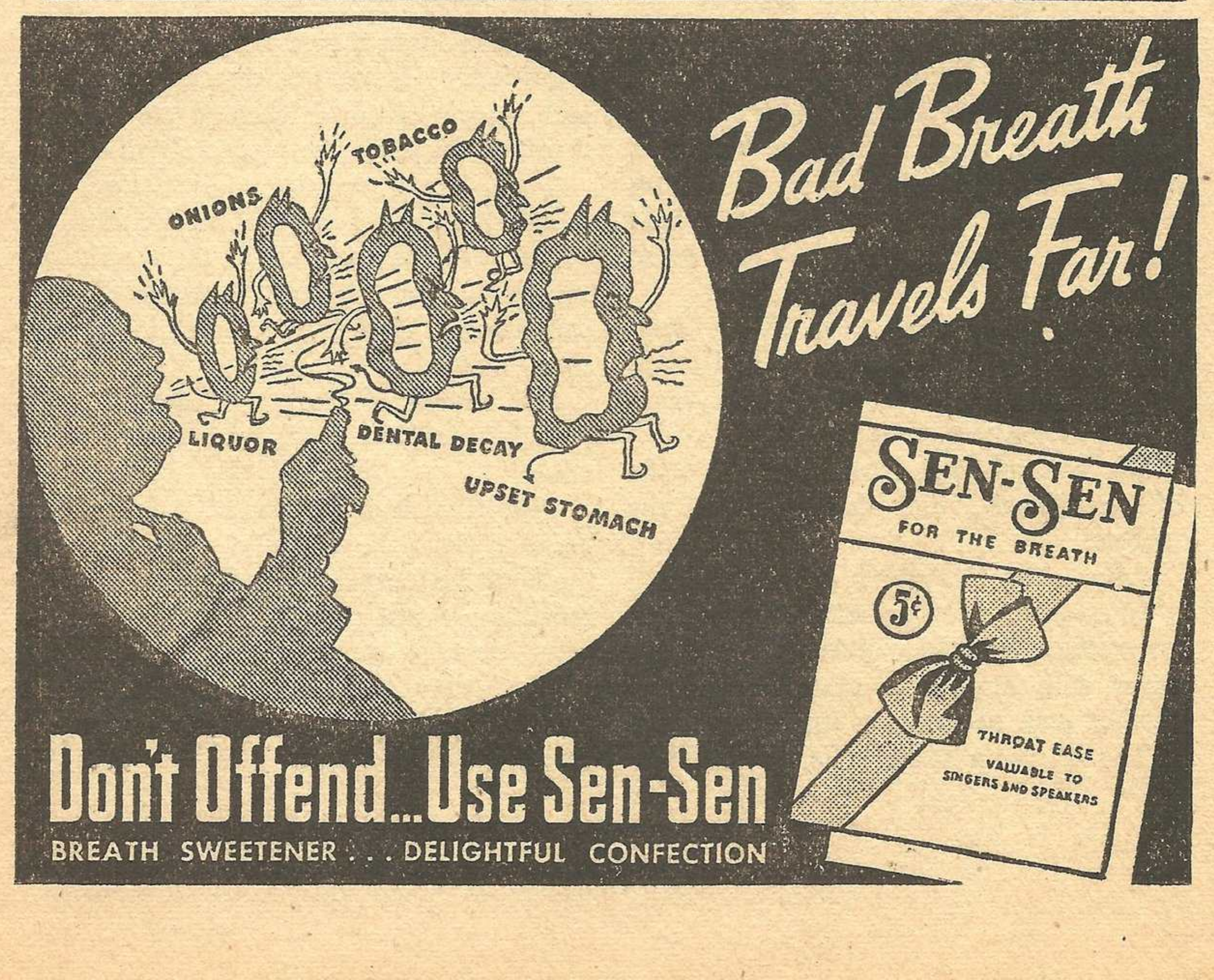
The orchestra was still playing and a few of the more daring couples danced, but she stood in a little zone of vacant space clutching her bouquet of bridal roses in the bend of one arm, her trailing veil of Valenciennes lace looped across the other.

Clear and piercing-sweet, the second movement of the waltz tune eddied through the darkness. She turned to make her way from the floor, but stopped in mid-step as a shadow, a bare shade darker than the darkness of the lightless room, loomed directly in her path.

"My waltz, Ma'am, I believe."

She felt her waist encircled by a strong arm. Not the formal embrace of conventional dancing, not the precise, stiff hold of her husband, but a tightening, almost stifling clasp that drew her to a broadcloth coat set with a double row of buttoms. As she raised her hand involuntarily her fingers touched the gold lace of an epaulet. No one at the reception had been uniformed, a soldier would have seemed incongruous in that company. But this man—

[*Turn page*]



"My waltz, Ma'am, I believe."

She drew back from the clutching, fierce embrace as she recalled his last words—her promise—but the arm about her tightened, and a laugh that had no hint of happiness or humor in it sounded softly in her ear.

"My waltz, Ma'am, I believe."

The words were taken up by the wind shrieking through the windows. They fell into a rhythm matching the cadences of the music.

She dropped her bouquet, and her stiffening fingers crawled up to her lips to stifle back a shrill cry of sheer terror.

Her heart was jerking like a thing in its death-throes. Her throat closed with compelling panic, and into every vein and artery an icy fluid seemed to pour in place of blood.

Her nerves were fraying out like slowly breaking threads. Her knees were weak as water, and she faltered, stumbled, all but fell; but the hungry-clasping arm about her held her up.

"My waltz, Ma'am, I believe."

Something burst like a bomb in her head. She was no longer fearful. This was glorious! The arm about her held her so close that it hurt; and she loved the pain of it.

Closer, tighter; hold me closer, dear, dear lover! Drag me down to hell or up to heaven with you. Anywhere—anywhere, as long as we're together!

She was sobbing; hard, dry, ugly sobs of heart-break, and laughing as she sobbed.

"My waltz, Ma'am, I believe."

"Yes—yes; your waltz! This and all my waltzes, belovèd. Never will I dance again with any other man; never shall another man so much as touch my hand.

The hurrying waiters forced the windows shut. They brought lights for the blown-out gas jets. Once more the room shone with the gleam of blazing chandeliers. The orchestra stopped playing, the dancers stood in a wide, frightened circle, watching the wild, whirling, pirouetting, spinning figure in the center of the floor.

Her bride's bouquet was thrown away and trampled underfoot, her veil was rent to tattered streamers, across her white shoulders the dark hair floated unbound, like the tresses of a drowned girl floating on the tide.

"Drusilla!" Harold Martense strode to her, laid a hand upon her arm. "Control yourself!"

She turned strange, empty eyes on him. Cold eyes, lifeless as the windows of a vacant house with all the curtains drawn—but with something peeping furtively underneath the lowered blinds.

She was humming an accompaniment to her dance. The *Blue Danube*. Her voice rose higher; rose and mounted like a quickening flame. It rose and shrilled and sharpened till it seemed no human throat could stand the piping strain of it.

Then, like a snapping violin string, its sound stopped suddenly, abruptly; utterly.

Her husband took her by the shoulders and shook her. "Stop this nonsense!" he commanded sharply. "Everything's all right, now—"

She looked at him as if she'd never seen him before; then, in a small, cold voice:

"He came back to me; back from the grave to claim the waltz I'd promised him the night he went away, and"—the racing, breathless words came in a tittering whisper—"*he took me with him!*"

Three days later she was sent to Blackwell's Island, pronounced incurably insane.

"He was burned at the stake in the year 1526!"

The Green Invasion

By DENIS PLIMMER

From the world of the ninth dimension came swarming the damned of all the centuries.

FOR Joan and me nothing has been the same since the night of the Green Invasion. Our outlook on the world has altered, our love for all that is permanent and peaceful has increased a thousand-fold, and above all else I believe that our souls reached their full maturity during those shattering seconds when the Green Invasion startlingly materialized in the empty midnight sky.

It all began with the strange behavior of Peter Barrows.

Peter had been our closest friend for more years than either of us cared to count, and his loyalty, humor, unselfishness, and courage had endeared him to both of us.

He was everything which I, Martin Gaye, am not. He was bold where I am cautious, reckless where I am wary, imaginative where the wings of my own mental powers skim close to the ground.

And now Peter had made us move!

He had come to us with lyric praise for a small apartment he had found in an old private house on lower Riverside Drive, a house which had flavor, character, atmosphere; whose rooms were large, with gaping fireplaces, broad windows, heavy and genuine oak panelling.

And, he assured us, we could afford the rent!

Unable to withstand the cataracts of enthusiasm he poured forth, we shifted at once and found everything quite as attractive as he had predicted. One matter only troubled us. This house had four stories, and each apartment occupied an entire floor. However, when we came the top floor alone was rented by, as the landlord explained to us, "a very quiet professional man."

The three floors below this "professional man" were empty. If the house was such a bargain, we speculated, why had not these three unimpeachable apartments been snapped up long before? We said nothing of this to Peter, however, and it was really so small a thing that it hardly gave us more than a moment's worry.

Our second night in our new home saw us fairly well settled. Joan was dressing to go to an evening fashion exhibit—Joan designs expensive looking clothes for girls who can't afford expensive clothes—and I was glancing through the evening paper. Finally Joan bounced into the drawing-room wearing, of course, one of her own creations.

"Ready to leave, dear?" I asked. She nodded, adding, "Anything interesting in the paper?"

"Yes," I replied, and read aloud the following:

An unaccountable electrical leakage has been reported today by officials of the New York Standard Electric Company. Firm engineers and accountants both state that they have discovered large discrepancies between the amount of current actually put out by the New York Standard Electric Company, and the amount of power registered on customers' meters. No explanation, officials report, can conceivably explain this difference.

"I don't think much of that," Joan observed. "Electricity's not the sort of thing a thief could very well abscond with, is it?"

And in a perfumed swirl of lace and velvet she was gone.

Forgetting the paragraph, I put the paper aside and settled down to work. The night was pleasantly cool—it was early May—and I had a sheaf of proofs to correct, proofs of my latest book, "Uncle Possum and the Bumble Bee." I write children's stories, a most engrossing occupation and one which I personally delight in.

The proofs before me were surprisingly good and needed little alteration. Within an hour I had reached the last page and had even pencilled in a final notation, when someone knocked on the outside door leading to the stairs. I jumped up immediately for I was expecting Peter, who, naturally, would be anxious to see us comfortably settled in this home he had chosen for us.

However, when I opened the door my visitor proved to be a boy of about seventeen, slight, blond, immature, and quietly dressed. My surprise was so great that I stood open-mouthed. The stranger spoke first.

"Mr. Gaye," he said, and his voice was far more mature than I had expected. I nodded. "I am your neighbor of the floor

above, Mr. Gaye. I have come to pay you a visit. Am I welcome?"

This courteous, balanced mode of address was so unusual that once again I was tongue-tied. However I managed to nod, and invited him in. When I re-entered the room behind him he had already reached my lighted desk. He swung about politely, and it was all I could do to hold back a cry of amazement, for this was no stripling! This was a man many years older than I and the spurious air of youth which had deceived me had been caused by the bad lighting in the hall. His thin face was furrowed and his eyes deep pits of discontent. But his slight unformed body spoke only of adolescence, and his fine flaxen hair might have adorned the head of a youngster.

"My name," he announced in his unruffled manner, "is Cardin Kane."

Collecting my wits I indicated a chair and brought him a glass of sherry. Then I surveyed my "professional man" at my ease. He was sipping the wine with discrimination and when his eyes met mine they were eloquent of respect for the fine liquor. The glance held for so long that I, never a man of much poise, felt constrained to break the silence.

"Mr. Kane," I began, "we understand that you're a professional man. In what sense?"

"I see by the proofs on your desk," he replied, "that your work lies with the arts. Mine is somewhat different. I am an electro-physicist."

"I suppose," I ventured then, "that you are connected with some institution of learning — or perhaps with one of the great commercial laboratories?"

Deliberately he finished his drink and, leaning toward me, spoke in a level controlled voice.

"Mr. Gaye," he said, "commercial laboratories and institutions of learning are chimeras in the popular imagination. They accomplish little, they encourage no new work. The great things of this world have been done by men working alone in lonely places. His colleagues laughed at Pasteur, the work of Harvey was scorned at first, and Lavoisier was guillotined in the Place de la Revolution! How much more should I then be ridiculed, I whose work is so much greater than theirs!"

He stared firmly into my face, his light brilliant eyes burning with intensity.

I managed to stammer in reply that I saw his point and that he had my complete sympathy.

"Sympathy!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Sympathy is a fine thing no doubt, but we who must fight humanity's battles in the face of humanity's distrust need more! We need help! Have I your help, Mr. Gaye?"

His personality was so completely overpowering that I could do no more than nod. At that he arose sharply and marched to the door.

"I'm glad to have seen you, Mr. Gaye," he said. "I believe that you and I shall be friends. I should like a friend. I have none, you know. I shall take the liberty of dropping in again tomorrow evening at this time. Good night."

The door opened, he stepped out, the door closed. I was alone!

WEAKLY I returned to my desk and stared at the pile of proofs before me. My mind was in a maelstrom of amazement. If this was to be our upstairs neighbor, then no wonder the house had no other tenants! And yet something about Cardin Kane attracted me. He was so strong, so purposeful, so dogmatic, that his mere presence had been a mental tonic.

Although I was anxious to have Joan's opinion of him, I decided not to prejudice her in advance. I would in fact say nothing, so that his visit of the following evening would be unheralded and therefore

his dynamic presence would affect Joan freshly.

The next day passed uneventfully and I saw nothing of the electro-physicist. With nightfall Peter arrived to share our dinner. His manner, I thought, betrayed intense excitement.

"How do you like the place?" he asked us more than once, and with such eagerness that we were both, I think, a little surprised. We tried to discuss Peter's work but his replies were monosyllabic and almost brusque. Peter had some sort of government job, the duties of which were to Joan and me ill-defined and hazy. The three of us had finally fallen into a dead silence when we heard a sharp rap on the door. I admitted our upstairs neighbor.

"Mr. Kane," I said, "allow me to present my wife, Joan. Joan, this is Cardin Kane who lives upstairs. Mr. Kane is a scientist."

THE two shook hands and suddenly Peter stepped forward.

"I'd like to meet Mr. Kane too, Martin," he announced. I introduced them, and the two men, standing in the center of the living room, nodded to each other.

"Mr. Barrows," asked the scientist smoothly, "is an old friend, Mr. Gaye?"

"A very old friend." Peter had answered for me. "Martin and Joan are very dear to me, and there's nothing I'd not do, Mr. Kane, to save them from any evil!"

"Evil?" Kane's eyebrows lifted a fraction. Then he turned to Joan and smiled. "You're most fortunate, Mrs. Gaye," he said, "to have two such stalwart defenders!"

Joan was silent.

"Tell me, Mr. Kane," said Peter then, "how does your scientific work progress?"

Kane seated himself comfortably in an easy chair.

"My work progresses superbly," he replied in a soft voice. "I have spent the days of my life on it, and I am, I believe, close to achieving my purpose!"

Peter had remained standing, and his body appeared tensed, almost as if he were preparing to spring.

"That must be most gratifying," he observed. "And the nature of your work, Mr. Kane? Won't you tell us a little of that?"

"I," Kane returned, "have something of the artist in me. I prefer not to expose my poor labors until they are in a fit condition to be exhibited. At the moment they are, so to speak, incomplete, and I should find it almost cruel to bare them to the public gaze!"

Peter nodded, lips compressed, eyes narrowed and intent.

"And how does *your* work progress, Mr. Barrows?"

For a tiny space of time there was silence and the two men eyed each other like expert swordsmen. Each time they spoke I seemed to hear the sliding ring of crossed rapiers.

"My work," said Peter slowly, "is so prosaic, Mr. Kane, that I hardly think you'd be interested. Government clerks have always appeared in society's eyes as a particularly down-at-heel lot whose lives have not for one moment the least spark of originality. I am one of that shabby crew, and my work is uninspired and routine to the extreme, just as yours must be exciting and adventurous!"

"Something tells me," Kane responded, "that anything you would be connected with would have somewhere in its heart a seed of danger!"

Peter smiled.

"All life bears a seed of danger," he said.

Kane rose.

"I must be getting back to my tasks, Mr. Gaye. I'm glad to have met your charming wife, and I'm glad to have met—Mr. Peter Barrows."

Peter bowed.

"The pleasure," he said, "is two-edged!"

Between the two I felt a subtle current flowing. Suddenly it blazed forth in words.

"Like a sword?" Kane had spoken.

"Like a sword," Peter replied. "Good night, Mr. Kane."

Kane walked to the door.

"Good night," he said.

AND the room was left to ourselves once more.

Peter turned to me and spoke gently.

"You have a most interesting neighbor, Martin!"

I grew hot with anger.

"Why did you bait him so, Peter?" I demanded. "I've never known you to express open resentment so clearly!"

"On the contrary," Peter corrected, "your Mr. Kane has my wholesome respect and admiration."

"You faced each other like enemies!"

Peter looked thoughtful.

"I shouldn't like to think of you as his friend, Martin," he said.

"I agree," Joan put in, "and I'll be more honest than either of you! If ever I hated a man on sight, I hated Cardin Kane!"

I began to feel that my neighbor was being unjustly treated.

"Kane," I remonstrated, "is a strange man, I admit, but all men are strange who've spent their lives on a certain piece of work, and who've been scoffed at for their pains!

Kane's existence has been hard and bitter. It's not surprising therefore that he's withdrawn and secretive in his manner!"

"I don't like him," Joan repeated very bluntly.

"Well, my dear," I said, "you must have your own way about that, but since Kane's our neighbor I do hope you'll try to conceal your dislike as much as possible!"

"May I endorse that?" said Peter.

"You?" Joan turned on him sharply. "I thought that you were on my side!"

"I've changed my mind. I now think that Kane might make a most interesting friend for Martin. A new type of human! Change is good for the soul!"

"Peter Barrows," Joan exclaimed, "you know that you hated the man just as I did! Would you make him *your* friend?"

"No," Peter replied slowly, "but I'm not Martin, am I? I'm only speaking for him."

Joan looked both amused and exasperated.

"What are you trying to do?" she demanded. "Mystify us?"

She turned to the radio and switched it on.

"There's a Toscanini concert," she explained. "I'd much rather listen to that than to either of you!"

However she was doomed to disappointment. The static was so loud that we were unable to hear a note.

"That's funny," I said, looking helplessly at the instrument. "We're supposed to have the newest static-eliminator on that set!"

Joan switched it off.

"Nothings right tonight," she murmured pensively, "except the moon and the stars! The evening's lovely! I'm going to walk in it! Anybody coming?"

"May I?" Peter smiled.

"Why not? And we can leave Martin to the tender affections of his Mr. Kane! I don't need a hat, Peter! Come on!"

The two headed for the door.

"Sure you won't come, Martin?" he asked.

I felt irrationally furious.

"To the best of my knowledge I haven't been asked," I replied huffily, "but if that's an invitation, consider it rejected!"

Joan ruffled my hair into my eyes.

"Watch out for the mad magician upstairs!" she advised, and arm in arm with Peter, departed.

Standing at the window, I watched them stroll down the Drive. The night was warmly fragrant, and, having turned down the chance of a walk which I should have enjoyed, I naturally felt restless. Again I tried the radio, but the static was even worse. Suddenly it occured to me that I might return Kane's visit and, incidentally, see something of his work at first hand. I considered this, staring across the river at the moving electric sign which told the time every two minutes.

"The time is now," it insisted, "9:58."

I started for the door.

OUTSIDE Kane's door I paused, for within were two voices, the scientist's and another's. I knocked, and with my knocking the voices ceased. For almost a minute I waited and was on the verge of knocking a second time when the door opened and a flood of harsh white light from the apartment dazzled me.

The scientist was standing in the entrance, his pale hair a golden shining halo in the radiance, his frail shirt-sleeved form even younger and less mature than before. My appearance apparently did not surprise him, for he ushered me in politely and gave me a chair.

"I thought you might return my call," he said, "and I'm glad to welcome you. Your friend has gone?"

I explained that Peter and Joan were out walking.

"Ah," Kane surveyed me shrewdly. "And you have come to learn something of my work, haven't you, Mr. Gaye?"

I nodded.

"Very good," Kane, seating himself in a chair facing mine, pressed the tips of his fingers lightly together. "First, Mr. Gaye, I must have from you a pledge of secrecy."

"Secrecy?"

"For the time being. Soon, of course, what I am about to reveal to you will be common knowledge, but until then—one likes to be sure of one's little theatrical effects!"

I gave him the promise he wished.

"Good. You must not speak of this even to your wife, nor to the interesting Mr. Barrows!"

"Very well."

Kane sat motionless, his gray luminous eyes reaching my face unblinkingly.

Suddenly—sharply—he spoke.

"This world we see is not all, Mr. Gaye. This world of tables and turnips—of watches and weddings—of bread and battles! This does not comprise all creation does it?"

I shook my head.

"There is much not visible to the naked eyes. The astronomer, for example, has calculated the existence of heavenly bodies which even the strongest telescopes cannot discern, and the physicist has communed with beta and gamma rays invisible to even the most powerful microscope."

I assented.

"So it would seem that this human plane upon which we live is but a small island surrounded by a vast unseen world. The unseen world of the astronomer, the unseen world of the physicist, and—"

"And—?"

"And the unseen world of the psychic!"

I experienced a spasm of disappointment. Psychic phenomena had never attracted me particularly, and I had always felt most psychic investigators to be either fools or charlatans.

This reaction was not lost upon Kane.

"You are skeptical of these things?" he inquired smiling.

"At least," I replied, "I have never had reason to be otherwise."

"In the Middle Ages," Kane mused," "a radio broadcast would have seemed

witchcraft! In ancient Rome gunpowder would have seemed essentially Jovian. In the Stone Age wheels would have seemed miraculous. The marvel of one age is the commonplace of the next!"

"But psychic investigation has been carried on during *all* ages," I objected, "and never successfully!"

Kane raised his hand.

"I wouldn't say that, Mr. Gaye. As a matter of fact, certain ancient peoples did establish contact with a world apart from our own."

"Go on," I encouraged.

"We think of the psychic, the invisible world," he stated, "as immaterial, as existing on a thought-basis rather than on a basis of matter."

"Yes?"

"We have been wrong!"

The silence which followed this announcement was profound.

"You mean," I said finally, "that what we have called the spirit world actually exists in a physical state, palpable and visible?"

"I do."

A thought flashed through my mind. When I had stood outside Kane's door, I had heard two voices in conversation. Now Kane appeared to be alone. I mentioned this.

"You're quick, Mr. Gaye," he replied. "You did hear two voices. One was mine, the other belonged to a scholarly priest of my acquaintance, a certain Brother Carolus Pius."

I looked about the room helplessly.

"But where is he?" I asked.

"Brother Carolus," Kane replied very softly, "was burned at the stake in the marketplace of Lyons in the year 1526!"

ALTHOUGH Kane's introductory remarks had prepared me for something of this sort, the shock was, nevertheless, great. I looked at him carefully to make sure that he wasn't indulging in some obscure scientific joke.

He was in deadly earnest.

"Brother Carolus Pius has been in constant communication with me," he went on, "for about two years. When I first contacted him, we could converse only in a very limited manner by means of ecclesiastical Latin, which meant that I understood about one word in three! Later it developed that Brother Carolus was an English monk who had traveled to France to spread certain heretical doctrines among the French Catholic peasantry, and that eventually he had been burned for his beliefs. He was, however, a man of strong spirit and unshakable will. Consequently he left certain documents buried in the crypt of a ruined Basque abbey. Last summer I went abroad and unearthed them. Just a minute."

Turning to an oaken chest he withdrew from it a large bulky package wrapped in rubberized cloth. This he placed on a table and unwrapped.

As the coverings fell apart, an indescribable odor filled the room, an odor of decay and ancientness, an odor which spoke of damp cloisters in forgotten monasteries, an odor which brought with it the chiming of ancient bells and the muttering of Popish prayers, an odor of magic and death.

"He had collected his entire writings in a single volume which he bound himself," Kane was saying. "This is it."

Before me on the table lay a large flat book covered in heavy unpolished leather. Kane opened it at random. The pages were of heavy parchment, and the writing was black, crowded, and crabbed.

"Can you read it?" I asked.

Kane shook his head.

"It's written in a Latin cypher," he explained. "So far I've been unable to persuade Brother Carolus to give me the key."

Tenderly rewrapping the ancient vol-

ume, he returned it to the chest. Then he went back to his seat.

"To continue,—in my conversations with Brother Carolus, I discovered, as I have said, that he was English. From that time on we spoke in English, and during that time I managed to purge his speech of many archaicisms which made him almost incomprehensible to modern ears. Now we chat quite naturally."

"And Brother Carolus belongs to the spirit world?" I asked.

Kane shook his head.

"Not to your idea of the spirit world," he said. "On his death something happened to him which happens only to the exceptionally bold and powerful souls of this world. Brother Carolus was translated into the Ninth Dimension!"

I probably looked very foolish, for the other continued quickly.

"As you know, this world of ours exists on a basis of three dimensions: length, breadth, and height. We have often spoken of a fourth dimension perpendicular to these three, and certain modern thinkers have decided that this fourth dimension is Time. No one, however, has gone further than that. No one has even considered the possibility of additional dimensions. I alone have studied such a possibility! I have found nothing concerning the fourth, fifth, and sixth dimensions, but I have discovered the seventh, eighth, and ninth! These represent various planes of existence, and were our eyes constructed better than they are, were our sensory perceptions keener, we should be able to perceive all these dimensions. However, as it is, the ninth-dimensional world which greatly resembles our own is completely invisible to us, despite the fact that it exists within the area of space covered by our earth and its envelope of atmosphere! The fact is that the world of the ninth dimension exists in a great curving plane in the highest reaches of the stratosphere!"

"But," I objected, "if that is so, it must be between ourselves and the sun. Why doesn't it affect us?"

"It does," Kane replied. "Popular opinion is that tides are caused by the influence of the moon. Actually, since the ninth dimensional world revolves more slowly than our own, its lag produces a gravitational retrograde pull. That is the true cause of tides!"

I was so utterly bewildered by the magnitude of the man's statements that I found myself captivated. Still, deep within me some grain of doubt continued to exist, for an instinct made me say, "I suppose you're the only person able to hear Brother Carolus?"

Kane looked surprised.

"*You* heard him, didn't you, when you were standing outside the door?"

"By what means do you get in touch with him?" I asked. "Through a medium?"

Kane shook his head.

"Through something much more everyday." Crossing the room, he opened a door. "Through a radio operating on a higher frequency than has hitherto been thought possible. Look."

JOINING him at the door, I saw beyond what appeared to be a radio, ordinary in everything except its cabinet, which appeared to be made of some material resembling heavy asbestos.

"It *is* asbestos," Kane replied in answer to my question. "The higher frequencies generate terrific heat. If the instrument were not insulated, it might easily start a fire."

Having thrown a switch on the instrument panel, he adjusted two knobs. I instantly heard a low roaring that resembled the sound of breakers on a distant coast. Quietly Kane picked up a small microphone formed of some unfamiliar rose-hued metal.

"Earth calling," he said softly. "Earth

calling — Earth calling — Earth calling! Come in, please!"

The roaring sound grew louder. Kane adjusted a dial.

"Earth calling—Earth calling! Come in, please!"

I scarcely dared breathe, so tense was the atmosphere in that quiet Manhattan room, and my heart was pounding frantically, The roaring stopped. There was a moment's stillness, and I became aware of a voice stealing through the speaker—a voice faint, rounded, but mellow.

A voice from the Sixteenth Century!

"Master Kane," it said, "what is your message, pray?"

Kane's eyes glowed.

"Just a little experiment," he replied.

Again the voice filtered through.

"Excellent! The lack of experimentalism was the downfall of Greek science. It rejoices my heart to see that you are wiser!"

"That's all," said Kane. "Good-by, Brother Carolus."

"Benedicite, Master Kane!"

Again the distant roaring filled the room. Kane flipped the switch. Silence swirled about us.

The scientist's face was queerly twisted.

"Are you convinced, Mr. Gaye?"

I nodded, for I could still hear in my head the whispered echoes of that voice which belonged to a monk burned alive more than four-hundred years ago!

"Imagine," Kane went on, conducting me back to the living room, "what it would mean for us to be in contact with men such as that constantly. Imagine the searchlight which a conversation with them would turn on all our wonderings about the after-life!"

Throwing himself into a chair, he sat biting his lower lip and clenching his hands.

"And this I have done alone in the face of universal ridicule!" he breathed. "This I have fought for over the opposition of vain men, of greedy men, of jealous men!" He seemed to have forgotten my presence as he sat contemplating the pictures which danced through his seething brain. Suddenly his body twitched, and he returned from his dream. "You've seen what I have done, Mr. Gaye, and you're convinced, aren't you? And you will tell no one anything of what you have seen? Good. You know at this moment more of my work and of myself than does any other person in this world! On your shoulders may some day fall the task of interpreting my motives—if by that time interpretation is wanted or even possible!"

Abruptly he rose.

"Good night, Mr. Gaye," he said ushering me to the door. "Good night. You have been present at a miracle! No matter what may come, you have had this moment!"

Standing there, his slenderness was almost ethereal, and his light eyes burned into mine like acetylene torches. Then the door closed, and I was left dazzled and bewildered, alone in the dark hallway.

As I made my way down to my own apartment, I kept puzzling over two things he had said. The first was "The task of interpreting my motives *if by that time interpretation is wanted or even possible!*" and the second was "*No matter what may come, you have had this moment!*"

Something in these phrases troubled me, but it was not until I had my hand on my own doorknob that I managed to localize my feeling. For in a staggering flash I saw that Kane had been talking *as if life as we know it were doomed!*

When I re-entered my cozy apartment, my face was cold with the sudden sweat of terror!

THE next day passed quietly enough, although my whole being was in a tempest of excitement and dread. I had spoken no word of my visit to Joan or to

Peter, and no outward clue suggested to either that I had experienced anything out of the ordinary.

After dinner that night a note was slipped under my door. It read:

My dear Mr. Gaye:

I should be gratified if you would visit me at about eleven this evening. I shall have important work to do, and I should like your presence in the twin capacities of assistant and chronicler.

I am,

Very truly yours,

Cardin Kane.

I kept this note from Joan, and during the following two hours managed to chat with her calmly and quietly, but ever my eye strayed to the flashing time-sign across the river, and ever within me I felt the leaping vibrant surge of adventure. Finally the shining letters of the sign proclaimed that the time was now 10:50 and, rising, I suggested casually that I should be the better for a brief stroll before bedtime. Joan agreed, and, fighting to control my excitement, I left her to hasten upstairs to Kane's door. My soft knocking brought an instant response, and Kane welcomed me in.

"I am overjoyed, Mr. Gaye," he said in his mellow voice, "that you were able to accept my little invitation. This night is my most important, and I felt the need of an observer who would later transmit an unprejudiced account of tonight's happenings to the future world." He stared keenly at me. "Did you notice anything unusual yesterday or today?"

I referred to the extraordinary amount of static on the radio.

"Ah," Kane replied quickly, "that's what I meant! The terrific influence my own high frequency set has on the surrounding district makes it probable that every radio in the neighborhood behaved as yours did!"

"Does that mean," I questioned, "that you were in constant touch with Brother Carolus?"

Nodding he took me into his laboratory. Great shades covered the windows and somewhere I could hear a low hum, as if from a generator.

Kane perched himself on a high lab stool and faced me.

"Mr. Gaye," he said, "this night is of all nights my zenith! For years I have planned this moment and now it has come! What I do tonight will rock the world with wonder! Around us seven million souls are peacefully relaxing at the end of another day and the vast city grows bright and gentle with evening! But here in this room I am preparing to jolt their sodden lives to the core! From pole to pole mankind shall hear my name, and those who jeered will bow, while those who laughed fall at my feet!" His light eyes were blazing with a fantastic fire and his voice rose to a high-pitched scream, as he said, "In letters of fire my name shall blaze across the heavens, and the seven million shall wake!"

For an instant of silence he sat panting on his stool.

"Mr. Gaye," he continued more calmly, "have you read anything in the papers recently about an unusual discrepancy in the electrical output of New York Standard?"

"Why, yes!" I cried. "Only the other day I—"

He silenced me with a glance.

"The world of the ninth dimension is a world in many ways similar to our own with this exception. Their substitute for oxygen as a source of physical energy is electricity. In quantity of electricity alone is their world less rich than our own. Had they sources of electrical power equal to ours, we should have known of them years

ago. By tapping the generators of the New York Standard Electric Company, I have for almost two months furnished them with an unbroken stream of power through the medium of an extremely sensitive antenna which operates from there!"

He pointed to a fireplace at the end of the room. A jungle of wires led from a huge transformer to the insulated base of a metal rod which disappeared up the chimney.

"That rod," he explained, "is my own contrivance. It is telescopic, and whenever I fear that its tip may be visible from the street, I contract it slightly. At night, however, the thin sensitive tip is quite invisible, and consequently I allow it to project as much as six feet above the chimney top. At this moment the tip reaches up into the dark, and from it a steady stream of power is flowing to the ninth dimensional world of Brother Carolus!"

For a moment I was too stupefied to speak.

"But," I said finally, "why do they need it? They must have sufficient to exist on!"

Kane laughed nervously.

"Oh, they have, Mr. Gaye," he chuckled. "They have! This supply is extra!"

"To what purpose?"

Kane's face slipped into a pattern of grimness.

"In order," he said slowly and impressively, "for them to break free of their own world and visit ours!"

"You mean that we shall be able to see them?"

"Exactly."

"But when?"

Kane arose and walked to the receiving set which he switched on. He picked up his microphone.

"Earth calling—Earth calling—" he began. "Come in, please—Come in please."

The voice which drifted down to us was thinner and harsher than that of Brother Carolus.

"Kane? Is it Kane?"

"Yes."

"What do you want?"

"What time are you starting?"

"You'll sight us at exactly midnight!"

Kane switched the instrument off and turned to me.

"Does that answer your question?" he asked softly.

I nodded, stupefied.

He crossed the room and raised the shades covering his two broad windows. Before us lay the peaceful curving Drive, the soft easy-flowing river, dark and polished, the darker palisades, and the broad arching night sky.

"The time is now 11:45," the sign twinkled tirelessly.

"Fifteen minutes more," Kane mused.

"Who," I asked, "was that who just spoke?"

Kane's face seemed oddly distorted.

"That voice," he replied, "was the voice of one of their leaders, Carlo Scarpa, a thirteenth-century forger who died screaming on the rack!"

"But why should he be among their leaders?" I exclaimed. "Why not some great saint or benefactor?"

Kane's voice trembled like wire drawn too tight.

"Because the good are weak and only the evil are strong! The ninth dimensional world is a world of splendid and glowing evil! All the arch villains of history reside there, and they are the most powerful spirits of all Creation!"

THE wide stretch of the Western sky looked threatening. Every few moments fitful lightning blazed russet, bloated, stabbed the dark.

The time was now 11:50.

"They should come," he said pointing to the heavens, "from that direction!"

He stood with his back to me, staring out like a mystic at the expressionless

night. Suddenly I had a vision of this ghastly horde already preparing to approach our green and pleasant earth, this army of thieves and murderers, of liars and blasphemers, of traitors and torturers. I suddenly sensed the power and goodness of the innocent seven million lying all about us. I knew then that, no matter what the cost, Kane's plan must be shattered and these bloody legions of evil repulsed!

I stared at the scientist's slender back and in a lightning moment of resolve my unpracticed fingers were at his throat. He whirled about like a mountain cat and drove at me savagely, striking, tearing, gouging! I hadn't fought any man since my fifteenth year and consequently I was out of training, but the holiness of my cause lent me strength.

For a few blind seconds we wrestled back and forth, toe to toe. Anything went in that desperate battle high above the streets of New York, and many were the rules that were broken! Kane's light body was deceptively powerful and he knew many tricks against which I had no guard. But I was bigger than he, and my superior weight told at first. We strained and panted, yet we were silent for there was no word to be said in this contest between hopeful life and lunatic death! I was gaining the upper-hand, though my muscles cracked with the effort, when suddenly I felt a sickening dagger of pain shoot through my body and I fell, face down on the floor. Kane seized my wrists and bound them with heavy rope. Despite my last feeble efforts he did the same to my ankles, and kicked my tortured body into a corner.

The time was now 11:55!

"Kane," I pleaded desperately, "stop that current!"

His lips curved with scorn as he wiped a slender trickle of blood from his mouth.

"You're like the rest," he said. "You fear evil and you fear its power! What do I owe the earth that I should defend it? No, let them come!"

His eyes scorched me.

"Only five more minutes, Mr. Gaye," he went on. "I should have killed you were I not more anxious that you should first see approach the inheritors of earth! That window should provide a perfect view! After they have come and commenced their rule, I shall arrange for your speedy execution, for there is little doubt that I shall be raised to a position of great eminence! In the meantime, watch the west, Mr. Gaye—watch the west!"

He threw the radio switch. An impersonal, sexless voice was heard.

"Calling Earth—Calling Earth."

The scientist grabbed his microphone.

"Kane speaking!"

"We are ready to depart."

Kane glanced at me triumphantly.

"I am waiting," he said.

I writhed wildly at the knots but they held firm.

"They have taken off," the voice announced. "The first contingent of multi-dimensional ships have taken off. I can still—wait!—they've disappeared! They are entering your dimension! Watch the west!"

The time was now 11:56! Kane adjusted a dial.

"Let's see what our own little world is saying and doing in their death hour," he suggested. Dance music filled the room, music from one of the Broadway night-clubs. "How gay! I shall soften it slightly, and we shall have the remarkable privilege of listening to emanations from two worlds. The world about to conquer —and the world about to die!"

NOT soon will those mad minutes pass from my memory, those minutes while Cardin Kane and I listened to murmurous dance music from Broadway as we

awaited an invasion from another world! While the glittering letters across the dark river spelled out the fateful passage of time!

Kane stood at the window, peering eagerly into the dark night.

Dramatically a voice crackled through the ether.

"Calling Earth—Calling Earth—Have you seen our ships, Kane?"

"Not yet."

With vivid suddenness the terrestrial radio music halted as an agitated voice cut through.

"We are interrupting this broadcast to bring you a special bulletin! We have just been informed that the New Jersey towns of Flemington, Flagtown, Roycefield, and Raritan are all in flames! The source of the conflagration is unknown! Please stand by for further bulletins!"

The music flowed on. Dumbly I looked at Kane. His whole body was shaking with excitement.

"Our friends are approaching," he said.

THE music jerked to a halt again and the voice of an announcer reached us.

"The mysterious conflagrations just reported have spread in a straight line through the towns of Somerville, Plainfield, Rahway, and Elizabeth! Elizabeth is now completely aflame! No explanation of the holocaust is known, although motorists report having seen a vaguely luminous patch in the western sky, which appeared to be proceeding in an easterly direction! Please stand by!"

Kane laughed in a high whinnying manner.

"It seems," he chortled, "that the ninth dimension has means of destruction which we earthbound creatures have never dreamed of!" Suddenly his body stiffened and his lean arm pointed to the window. "Look, Gaye! Look!"

High in the western night I could just make out a faint glow. It was of the palest apple-green.

"They're coming, Gaye! They're coming!"

I fought fiercely and the strong ropes cut deep into the flesh of my wrists and ankles until I could feel my hands and feet warm and damp with flowing blood. I had to break loose! I had to smash the source of electrical power before—

The radio interrupted.

"Flames have engulfed Newark! Journal Square is a roaring furnace!"

Somebody pounded heavily on the door.

Kane stood in the window like a statue.

"Look!" he shouted. "They're here!"

Suddenly the Palisades were blackly silhouetted against a rose curtain of flame. The time-sign across the river flickered and vanished. It looked as if all New Jersey were burning fiercely. Then high above in the night I saw the invaders!

THEY were approaching in disk-like conveyances at a terrific speed. The ships seemed made of some luminous metal, a brilliant apple-green in color. There were seventeen of them sweeping down the sky—flying in a W-formation. They were headed directly for Manhattan!

Again came the pounding on the door.

"Let us in Kane!" It was Peter! "For God's sake—"

"Peter," I shouted.

"Whatever they pass they set ablaze!" Kane drowned me out. "It is the most formidable machine of death ever devised!"

Both radio speakers, ethereal and terrestrial, clamored together. Above them cut Peter's high challenge.

"I'm going to shoot the lock! If you're inside Martin, watch out!"

My answer was unheard for the shattering explosion of Peter's revolver. The lock shot from the door and landed crash-

ing on the floor halfway across the room. I fought at the ropes.

The Green Invasion was lower now, and terrifyingly close! The whole lurid sky was filled with their luminous green disks, and I saw that they were *gigantic!* They were less than half a mile west of the river!

Kane had thrown himself against the door in an effort to withstand Peter's assault. For a precious ten seconds the door held.

Suddenly Peter broke through, leaping across the room like a tiger and his fingers were on Kane's throat!

They fought savagely, silently. The room was filled with the noise of the invaders' engines.

"The antenna in the fireplace, Peter," I shouted. "Smash it!"

Suddenly from the door another figure streaked into the room. It was Joan! In a flash she was at the fireplace tearing at the tangle of wires. The Green Invasion was above the river now, and a matter of hundreds of yards from New York. There was a smashing explosion and the whole night was as white as noon. I saw the green ships rear up toward the zenith like leaves in a tempest. For an instant the sky was blood-colored. Then dark swept in with a rush. When our eyes were accustomed to it we stared. For the night was empty. Below the scalded Hudson frothed and bubbled and heaved. Above, a high lonesome wind tore through the night.

The Green Invasion had been defeated!

On the floor Peter's hands were sunk deep in the scientist's neck. Joan plucked at his shoulder and Peter looked up. His eyes were dazed as his strangling fingers slowly relaxed. With a ripe heavy thud the gold-crowned head fell back against the floor. Cardin Kane lay still in the center of the laboratory from which he had directed the destruction of mankind. Already his unhappy soul was no doubt entering that nine dimensional world, the existence of which he had been the first to discover.

OF WHAT happened thereafter there is little need to write here, for the facts are too well known through the account which Peter wrote for the official use of the Intelligence Department and which has since been placed within the public reach.

It is interesting to note, however, that the Department had assigned Peter to the case two months earlier, when the first suspicion as to the true cause of the electrical leakage was guessed, that Peter had quietly found the area in which the leakage was occurring, that he had finally discovered the actual house, and that, for his own uses, he had persuaded Joan and me to move there.

The toll of death and devastation in New Jersey was appalling, but money for public works and rehabilitation of the ravaged area was raised through a nation-wide campaign. One shudders to think of what might have happened had Joan reached the antenna a minute later, and had the approaching ships reached Manhattan Island!

The danger seems to have passed now forever, yet even tonight when Peter, Joan and I dine together I know that our eyes will often wander heavenwards, ever on the watch lest again the Green Invasion appear high in the calm emptiness of the Western sky.

"What comes to the Sabbat? Witches and war-locks that ride the winds. Men in the diverse and curious shapes of strange beasts!"

Wine of the Sabbat

By ROBERT BLOCH

Wine whose bouquet was the enflamed embrace of a stone Sphinx—whose perfume was warm blood on obscene altars.

IT'S too damn bad this story hasn't got the proper setting. Prague would do it, I think, or Budapest—one of those foreign burgs that no one knows anything about but vaguely associates with Bela Lugosi or Peter Lorre. That's what this yarn needs; setting and atmosphere—what the books call "build-up" and what critics of weird fiction call "adjectivitis." But it's just my hard luck that this happens to be

true, and I can't see it in my mind any way except that in which it happened. So that's the way I'll have to tell it.

Maybe it's just as well. I've noticed that in what we laughingly call "real life" the big things come pretty much as a surprise. The Paramount Studio Orchestra doesn't play *Leiberstraum* in the background when you propose to a girl. There are no three pages of foreboding description preceding an actual railroad wreck in which you cut your throat. Those infrequent moments of icy horror in real life come suddenly, without warning. Sometimes they occur in the bright sunlight of morning, amidst prosaic happenings. Then it's the contrast, the *unnaturalness* of instantaneous dread in commonplace circumstances, which makes for true horror.

That's the way this thing was—no haunted castles, no mad hypnotists, no ravens wheeling and croaking under an accursed and blood-bloated moon.

But simple and sudden as it was, I still wake up in the middle of the night and feel cold sweat at the memory of Mabel Fiske's party.

When I met Mabel Fiske I was living in Los Angeles. That was before I turned commercial. I had a little room in a flop-house where I ate graham crackers and drank milk and wrote the Great American Novel. It dealt, as I recall it, with the life of a young man who lived in a flop-house, ate graham crackers and drank milk, and was writing the Great American Novel.

Excuse the autobiography, but it's necessary to account for my relations with Mabel Fiske.

Mabel Fiske had a house near Laguna Beach, a sense of humor, and a wide circle of acquaintances. That's why I liked her.

She had a house, and once a week I could drop in for a square meal. Hunger knows no conscience.

She had a sense of humor, and I like that sort of person. Loneliness is in itself a hunger.

She had a wide circle of acquaintance, and I met interesting people at her place. To a fellow of my garrulity, that's a god-send.

So I cultivated Mabel Fiske, I admit it. Not romantically, just socially. Mabel was a mousy little brunette of at least thirty-five.

Her late husband had been a scenarist of considerable means and since his death she had lived in a sort of haze—a haze in which her old friends moved in an extremely social set that dropped into the house at all hours of the day or night. Her home was a continual open house, open bar, and open forum.

Amongst the crowd that knocked lettuce out of the ice-box, burned the piano-keys brown with cigarettes, and added to the pile of empty fifths in the bath-tub were quite a number of interesting people. Movie folk predominated, but there were also at times visiting business men, college professors, dude ranch cowboys, aviators, taxi-drivers, hermits, Cubist painters, radio comics, messiahs, swamis, and admirals of the Pacific Fleet. But the occult note predominated on occasion. Mabel and her late husband seemed to have been on intimate terms with every yogi, divinator, metaphysicist and screwball on the Coast. They generally swarmed down for the weekends, waving their crystals and horoscopes and luck-charms, babbling of Paracelsus and Swedenborg and Hermes and Father Divine. In flowing robes, House of David beards, evening dress and goatees, burlap bags and bare feet—all came to prance under the genial influence of the juniper berry.

Frankly, I found it fascinating. I was impressionable enough to relish calling a film big-shot by his first name; avaricious enough to dream of meeting some befuddled publisher who might give my book to

a waiting world; human enough to enjoy those fantastic parties.

There it was. And there was I.

THERE was I, on Saturday evening of April 30th, 1940. I hitch-hiked down late that afternoon and hit the house about five. It was almost dinner-time and I had a very healthy appetite.

I walked in — you didn't knock at Mabel's, on a Saturday—and stared around the living room. There was a room worthy of its name. Never have I seen a room that looked quite so *lived* in. The walls were black with smoke, and there were lipstick frescoes on the mantel, and on the floor was what had once been an oriental rug but was now merely a sort of Teheran ash-tray. The furniture stood (and slouched, and tottered) in a war-torn parade of crippled chairs; armless, legless, even seatless. The sofas were sagging hulks of disembowelled stuffing. The hands of the grandfather's clock on the mantel were pulled down to form a mouth, and the face was repainted to caricature Groucho Marx. The fireplace under the mantel housed a portable refrigerator for those too weak to seek the kitchen's nourishment.

Glancing around, I noticed the faces of several old friends. Anyone you ever shared a drink with became an "old friend" at Mabel's.

There was Cyril Bruce, the movie actor —a matinee idol whose afternoon was nearly over. He was a tall, blond chap of about forty; his eyes ravaged by the effects of Kleig lights and bright lights in equal proportions.

Bruce stood deep in conversation with Ensenada Eddie; a swarthy little Filipino whose feet had never been confined by shoe-leather. Ensenada was a mysterious beachcomber who spent all his time writing free verse—he couldn't sell it.

Bruce and Eddie spotted me at the same time, drifted over. Bruce shook hands and Eddie offered me a glass, which meant the same thing to him. "Welcome to Liberty Hall," Bruce chuckled.

"Libertine Hall, I'd call it," remarked a voice behind me. It was Lavinia Hearn who spoke; a statuesque blonde who claimed to be a painter, but exhibited no signs of her work save a heavily-rouged face.

"Don't mind Lavinia, she's bottle-dizzy," said Arch Blaine, the writer's agent, appearing at her side. I liked Blaine; he usually rescued me from the attentions of the schizoid guests.

"Enjoying yourself?" he asked me.

Lavinia answered for me. "He always enjoys himself! But he seldom enjoys anyone else."

"Quite a crowd," I commented to Blaine as Lavinia, Bruce, and Ensenada Eddie wandered off. It was quite a crowd. In addition to those I'd met, I recognized a number of people wandering from the parlor to the kitchen and back. There was a cowboy, a playboy, and bus-boy; a composer, a housewife, an elderly woman psychiatrist, and a burlesque chorine. They were all (a) going to the kitchen for a drink (b) coming from the kitchen with a drink, or (c) staying in the kitchen and drinking.

The conversation sparkled like fake champagne.

"So I say listen Zanuck, if you want me to write General Grant into the picture you'll have to cut out the Ritz Brothers—and it was the custom of this Gilles de Rais to procure small children which he—gets fresh with me, see, so I says whaddya want for two beers, a floor show?—all right, I'm a radical. But I'm impartial—I hate everything—He's no naive in his sophistication —I'll mix a flock of them right away—sometimes wonder if people grow up or down—want to know is when's feeding time in this zoo?"

That last sentence struck a responsive

chord in my own breast, and lower, in my stomach. I turned to Arch Blaine.

"When *do* we eat?" I inquired.

"When Mabel Fiske gets back," he replied.

Lavinia, entering, heard him. "When Mabel *what?*" she giggled. "Blaine, you outlaw, you aren't inferring that our Mabel has gone out?"

Blaine nodded.

"But Mabel never goes out," Lavinia wailed. "It's the Apocalypse."

"She went down to L.A. to pick up some important guests," Blaine offered. Lavinia looked stunned.

"She wouldn't go ten blocks to meet Roosevelt. Or Charlie McCarthy."

"Must be a big evening planned," I said. "Wonder what's up—what kind of guests she's bringing."

"Step into the kitchen," Blaine advised. "The crowd out there ought to give you a hint. Their kind never shows up unless something is doing."

I stepped out. The kitchen was a dark shrine of Bacchus, but today it held queer worshipers. There were dark men in turbans, pale men in togas, gaunt women in flowing gowns. Beards wagged furiously, slim fingers gesticulated in ivory patterns, lips were red blurs of motion. Such a queerly dressed talkative crowd meant only one thing—occultists.

It was a meeting of the Isms and the Osophies; a congregation of Ologies and Abrists. The faces, on the whole, were unfamiliar to me, but they were interesting. The blur of sounds; deep male voices, shrill female tones, outlandish foreign inflections, blended into a conversational hash from which I gradually extracted information.

Tonight was April 30th. Tomorrow was May Day, then—maypoles and Communist parades, all that sort of thing. But this was not the point. Tonight was Walpurgis Eve. Walpurgis Eve, the immemorial night of the Sabbat—the Witche's Sabbat. Black Mass Eve.

On Walpurgis Eve the demon stars formed in a black conjunction. On Walpurgis Eve things walked that were meant to crawl; things crawled that were meant to lie and rot. On Walpurgis Eve the covens assembled and drank in honor of the Master of all Mystery. On Walpurgis Eve all ancient evil became reanimate. Christians kept their holy days, and Diabolists kept their unholy nights.

BUT where was Mabel Fiske on Walpurgis Eve?

Mabel had learned that Doctor Voidin was expected on the Coast; Voidin the Satanist. She meant to bag him, hence her trip.

This Doctor Voidin, who was he now? A rather fabulous figure; wealthy European manicheist. A dabbler in necromancy, some said.

What was he doing on the Coast? Oh, that was a secret. Of course, there were stories of underground Devil-worship out here; of a quite sizable cult whose devotees included many wealthy eccentrics, a smattering of movie-colony folk, and a number of serious students. Hearsay had it that the doctor was out to conduct the Mass—the Black Mass of the Sabbat, always held on Walpurgis Eve.

When and where? Who could say? Naturally, it was a secret. The Satanists did not reveal their faith or its mysteries. But it really was no joking matter, and there were amazing tales of the worship and how the rites were conducted, and why, and who attended. And where the blazes is that other fifth of gin?

I stood in the doorway and listened to that crowd of dilettantes babble of mysteries older than the Sphinx, and all at once the incongruity struck me full force. I started to laugh. Then I walked in and had a drink.

Arch Blaine joined me, and Lavinia, and Cyril Bruce. We were talking about *The Golden Bough* and double-scotches and Kwong-fu-Tze and Thorne Smith and *Till Eulenspiegel* and Bruce's new picture and Blaine's sobriety and Lavinia's tipsiness, and I just switched the conversation around to my book, very cleverly, and started to down my fifth drink, when Mabel Fiske entered.

Mabel Fiske entered, and that was unusual. Mabel was the kind of a woman who appeared; who drifted in. But tonight, despite my slight befuddlement, I could see that she *entered*.

Her slight figure poised momentarily in the doorway. I'd never quite swallowed that phrase—"poised momentarily"—when I read it; but that was exactly what Mabel did. She surveyed the crowd, and then deliberately advanced. Mabel was sober. Mabel's brown eyes sparkled.

"Hello, Bob," she greeted me. "Bruce, Blaine—you're wearing an alcohalo, Lavinia—help me to get these hammerheads out of here, will you please?"

We circulated, pushed, led, persuaded the majority of the drinking esthetes into the other room. Then Mabel beckoned to the waiting figures in the doorway.

"Come in, Doctor," she invited.

Now I had thought it was a joke. I'd been drinking with Blaine and ribbing him about the Sabbat, and picturing the long-haired old boy Doctor Voidin was going to be. Lavinia had called him a "French poodle with a dash of Sigmund Freud about the beard."

But the tall, cadaverously thin figure in the black coat was real. His was the pale face of the ascetic; his eyes the ancient black of forgotten midnights.

No, it wasn't the scotch in me, nor the Ben Hecht. Doctor Voidin's stare sobered; and warned. He brushed the single strand of silver back into his black, curly hair, and extended his talon—I swear to Heaven, for a moment I thought it was that!—to shake hands. His voice was the deep purr of a cat's. A black, wise, sinister feline.

"Pleased. You have written of goety, no? We must talk."

"My associate, Dubois."

I would have guessed "Hassim." But it was "Dubois," just as it had once been "Christophe." The man was a gigantic black; Haitiian, no doubt—ebony in evening dress.

"And the Reverend Mr. Orsac."

There was mockery in the way Doctor Voidin pronounced the title, and mockery in the eyes of the fat little bald-headed Orsac who grasped my hand in the cold, pudgy grip of a meeting in the morgue. I didn't like this fish-eyed little foreigner, and I didn't care for the sneering Negro giant. As for the tall, thin figure out of Poe—

"We will meet again at dinner," purred Doctor Voidin. He turned, with the Negro and the clergyman, and left the room in Mabel's company.

Lavinia smirked in astonishment. "What a trio," she remarked to herself. "Dracula, Uncle Tom, and Bishop Shapiro."

"That man is—disturbing," was Blaine's comment. He stared into my eyes, and I nodded slowly, knowing his thought.

"I wonder if Mabel knows just what's goin' on," Blaine continued. "He isn't one of the occult boys, by a long shot. I'm pretty skeptical, but if I ever saw living, psychologically incarnate Evil walk, it's walking in that man. I'm worried about tonight."

"DEATH," giggled Lavinia, "Takes a Holiday. And what a time he'll have at this party!"

Neither Blaine nor I could laugh at this sally. There was an ominous ring of truth in the witticism.

There was an ominous ring of the din-

ner-bell. Mabel had opened up the little-used dining room, and we turned to enter. There were only twenty of us at the table. Perhaps a dozen or so of the lesser figures departed, urged by Mabel. She had a newfound spirit of purposefulness which surprised me; ushering the guests out firmly.

Mabel shared the head of the board with Doctor Voidin. The black Dubois and Reverend Orsac sat nearby. Lavinia, Cyril Bruce, Blaine, and the esoteric crew comprised the remainder of the company.

It was a good dinner, for Mabel's place. The long table was spotless, for once. Food had evidently been brought from a restaurant, and it was decently served.

But no one spoke. There was a definite tension in the air. Mabel's changed manner seemed to amaze her friends to silence. The occultists glanced nervously at the grim figure of Doctor Voidin. To them he seemed appropriately playing the part of skeleton at the feast. Blaine and I watched his imperturbable death-mask throughout the meal.

No one ate much. Mabel whispered to Voidin, Voidin whispered to Orsac and Dubois.

I remembered those nasty rumors floating around the crowd in the kitchen and wondered. The rumor-mongers themselves were wondering, too. I could tell that, because they began to drink.

Lavinia set the pace, of course. "Brrrr," she giggled. She rose and went into the kitchen for a bottle. Others followed. It was steady, serious drinking at the table from then on. No laughter, no sociability —just a shuddering glance at the corpse-like face of the doctor and a hasty gulping from the glasses.

A mood had fallen over the company; one of those herd-impulse things which at times seems to grip a social gathering *en masse*.

"Condemned man drank a hearty breakfast," Lavinia whispered. She poured for Blaine and myself.

The scene began to remind me more strongly of Poe—of his story, *King Pest* about the revellers in a charnel house during a plague. A drinking-bout of the doomed, as it were.

We drank. Blaine stared at me. Mabel mumbled to Voidin. The occult brethern re-filled their glasses. And yet, there was nothing *really* wrong, or out of place. But that room held panic. I could feel it rising from each quickened breath. The way Voidin *stared* down the table. The gloating look in Orsac's eyes, the sneer of Dubois' face. Mabel's changed expression of determination. Something was very wrong. Was this really Mabel's house, were these Mabel's carefree friends? Something alien had crept in; crept in and crouched, waiting. Waiting for—what?

Mabel rose from her chair.

"Listen, friends. I have a surprise for you."

I caught it at once; the forced tone in her voice. She wasn't natural any more. Something had happened.

She continued. "Doctor Voidin, here, has just returned from a European trip and he tells me he's managed to get hold of some real wine. He brought along a half-dozen bottles or so, out in my car. Shall we try it?"

"Yeah. Why not?" And so forth, in varying tones and inflections. The guests were just primed for that psychological suggestion. I looked at Blaine queerly, and he winked. Yes, there was a *purpose* behind all this.

Dubois left the room. Presently the black returned, assisting the single servant in passing glasses around the table. Then he produced a number of tall, green bottles that bore no labels.

"Say, what kind of stuff is this?" asked Bruce.

Doctor Voidin smiled. "It's a special

preparation of my own vineyards," he replied. "A sacramental wine."

Dubois was pouring.

The words should have clicked in my brain, but I felt dazed. Previous drinks had set my mind wandering in dark channels of unwholesome fancy. For perhaps ten minutes I sat there in a sort of abstracted trance. I suppose I became aware of what was happening only when the conversation started.

For suddenly—it seemed sudden—everyone commenced to speak. I looked up. There was a queer animation in every countenance.

I looked down. My fingers clutched the stem of a wine-glass, filled with a dark red liquor.

I glanced about. Twenty hands were duplicating my gesture; clutching a glass of ruby fluid, raising it to drain the contents. Black, gigantic statue of silence, Dubois passed around pouring from the long green bottles as he refilled the glasses.

I RAISED my glass to my lips and inhaled the scent. It was bitter, yet alluring. It did not appeal to the physical senses, but to the imagination. It was the kiss of a cold woman named Mystery, it was the chill caress of a serpent; it was the enflamed embrace of a stone Sphinx.

I shook myself out of *that*. Where the devil did such thoughts come from? Looking up, I saw Voidin. He too was holding a glass, but as I watched, he carefully slipped it under the table for a moment and brought it up emptied. He wasn't drinking.

Neither was I. I nudged Blaine, who followed my gaze. Together, very discreetly, we followed Voidin's example. Dubois didn't notice. He refilled Blaine's glass, my glass, Voidin's glass. The strong perfume of the wine rose again, and I fought against the peculiar drugging scent. Quickly I looked about. That buzz of conversation sounded *wrong*. And on my left I saw Cyril Bruce's glassy eyes. He looked through me and said:

"Many are the moons that ride the night when the peacock soars to shadowed khem and the dark lord ascends to the throne of his delight"

He said it like that. Bruce, the actor, said it like that—no inflection, no capitalization, no punctuation in the monotony of his cold, dead tones. I stared raptly into his dead face as he drank his second glass.

"And over the graves the mandragora embrace for this is the night of their desire when all passion creeps from dark places to rule men who share the sabbat—"

I turned to Lavinia, stared into her purple pupils as her coral lips parted.

"Hail the Black Goat of the Woods! Prance from the stars, oh Prince, and thy hooves shall be bathed in shining red! The Black Goat comes—"

Quietly, I slipped my glass under the table and poured the refilled contents out upon the carpet. As I did so I again became aware of the abominable reek of the wine, welling in a black bouquet. It was the smell of hasheesh, the scent of musk, the odor of aphrodisiac, the perfume of warm blood on an obscene altar.

Voidin's wine, from his own vineyards —or the Devil's brew!

Wine of the Sabbat.

The words flamed through my brain.

The wine of Evil—the liquor that transformed men's nature; as the devil's ointment was said to transform the bodies of witches and wizards. It was being used.

Circe's wine.

I stared at faces—once-familiar faces—about me. Yes, Circe's wine. For I saw not men, but animals. Hog-snouts, hound muzzles, feline eyes and wolf-teeth and bat-ears and red slavering mouths crept through distorted flesh. The light caught each shadowed expression and caused it to simulate some animal countenance. And

from the throats came the growls of beasts.

The food was gorged, and ever the red wine poured. Claws snatched the glasses refilled by the silent Dubois. Talons trembled as they held beakers to snarling lips so that the long red tongues might lap.

They drank deeply, and then in torrents came that incomprehensible jumble of speech.

At the head of the table sat the Reverend Orsac, his wine untouched, fish-eyes closed. Mabel Fiske was chuckling with laughter. Doctor Voidin looked about him and smiled.

His smile was somehow worse than any of the bestial grimaces on the faces about me. It was a smile that could not, should not be—the smile of a corpse, the smirk of a death's-head.

He *knew*.

And Mabel knew. That laughter—for the first time I saw Mabel Fiske. There had been a method in her madness, a purpose. This was a climax, a consummation. It had all been planned, arranged.

The feast went on. The feast indeed! Mowing and braying, cackling and moaning like animals—the people I had once known drank of the red wine. Man into beast.

And then, as the shrieking rose to a crescendo—beast into demon.

Voidin rose to his feet and said "Come. It is the Hour!"

They followed into the other room; followed on hands and knees, crawling, leaping, rending their garments. Cyril Bruce was a hound from hell as he turned and bit savagely at Lavinia's leg in the doorway. The Reverend Orsac, Dubois, Mabel, and Doctor Voidin paused near the threshold in a whispering group.

And I—ludicrous figure, grotesque *farceur* in a melodramatic setting—crouched cowering under the table where Blaine had dragged me. We listened to Voidin's triumphant purr.

"You have worked well, Mrs. Fiske. Better than I had hoped for. There was no trouble introducing the wine to these sycophants."

"Three years," muttered Mabel, in low tones I didn't always distinguish. "Three years to pave the way—tolerated all sorts of fools—gained the reputation for eccentricity—rented house and posed as one of them—adopt themselves to the plan. When will the Change occur?"

Her speech capitalized the word. What Change? I wondered desperately for there were hints in her speech. Had she deliberately planned all this? In conspiracy with Voidin she had lured us here to put us under the influence of that accursed wine. But why?

Voidin's voice.

"Shall occur at once. Did you raise the Altar? Very well. I am ready to officiate. I have the sacrifice, and the Host."

ALTAR. Priest. Sacrifice. Host. Walpurgis Eve. *The Black Mass.*

And now from the next room, organ strains. Dubois played the organ. Dubois tortured the organ; he flayed its keys with massive, claw-like fingers that tore screams and sobs and groans that rose from Hell. It was the *Dies Irae* of the damned he played, beneath yellow candle-light, in a room evidently transformed during our meal by silent servitors. Incense flickered forth from braziers against newly hung black velvet drapes on the walls. And at the head of the room an Altar had been reared. This I saw from my vantage beneath the table, through a slit in the portieres. Now the view was obscured by the moving legs of Voidin, Mable and Reverend Orsac.

Blaine nudged me and whispered.

"I never would have believed it of her," he muttered. "A secret Satanist, paving the way, luring excitable guests to be drugged by the wine—"

Guests? The thought swept through my brain. Where were the guests in the other room?

"What comes to the Sabbat?

"Witches. and warlocks that ride the winds. Men in the diverse and curious shapes of strange beasts."

For some reason these words, resurrected in memory from some old monograph on demonology, now whispered through me. A part of my mind was struggling with hints of horror. Drugged wine, a Circe's wine that changed men to beasts. There was a Sabbat wine, I knew, drawn from grapes plucked by the moon of midnight; grapes nourished strangely by blood. I had read of such things.

And I had read the phrase that now rang in my head—*"Men in the diverse and curious shapes of strange beasts."*

Now the two thoughts met and mingled to produce a monstrous surmise. Satan is worshiped by mockery, and the human tenement is sacred because it holds a soul. If the human form can be violated, what greater mockery exists? Drugged wine. Beasts attend the Sabbat—

I stared into the other room and saw nightmare come true. For from the opposite side of the chamber they came, pouring in as an obscene horde. The gigantic shadows crept along the wall before I saw them—the shadows that should not, could not be. And then the bodies; the loping, trotting, crawling bodies!

A black dog, tongue lolling as it squatted and grinned a grin of agony. A black dog with the tormented eyes of Cyril Bruce!

The great gray cat entered with mincing terror; stauesque even in fear. A picture of Lavinia crossed my brain. The rats padded in; and the sow with the human eyes; the little green toad that hopped and hopped, croaking with fright and shame. Voidin tended the flames in the brazier set at the altar sides. He wore a black cassock now, and Orsac was garbed in a red cowl from which his white face leered forth. He grinned at the beasts and his laughter rose.

Of course I couldn't stand it. Mabel was just an eccentric alcoholic, Lavinia was a drunken *poseur,* and Bruce was an ordinary enough rounder, and this was a stucco house in California. We were in the Twentieth Century; not five miles away a movie house was playing Shirley Temple, and in a parked car down the road someone was listening to Raymond Scott's Quintette—

My mind fought. Mabel's queer guests had brought in a pack of animals for their screwball ceremonies, and my friends had gone. These amateur theatricals in the front parlor were just that.

So I desperately reasoned. But all the while I kept reviewing Mabel's scheme; how she'd planned for this night and given her guests the Sabbat Wine so that they might be changed to beast-forms and worship the power of Satan. I heard again the horrid cries from human throats, saw again the terrible change in visages once familiar. I saw the black dog with the eyes of Cyril Bruce, and the gray cat that walked like Lavinia. I fought, but I could not forget. And from the next room the organ boomed, I heard the whimpering of beasts, and smelled the acrid animal scent mingling with incense reek.

I fought, and lost.

"God, give me a drink!" I gasped. Blaine, crouching under the table next to me, reached one hand around and fumbled for a bottle. I grasped it and drank avidly in the darkness. The liquor warmed my senses.

"Now! We've got to do something." There was command in my voice. Blaine grasped my shoulder.

"I've a revolver in my car," he whispered. "If I can make it."

I gripped his hand. "Hurry!"

He scuttled away, crawled through the portieres, through the throng. I strained

to see his weaving figure as it reached the hall and disappeared. Then I sat back and took another drink.

And staring into the parlor, waiting, waiting, I saw Mabel enter. She was clad in white, and bore the Shepherd's Crook, which is shaped in a way that I cannot name.

She was Circe, face alight with the white fire that burns up from the Pit. The music ceased, the mowing beasts bowed down, and Voidin stood before the altar, in his hands the knife of sacrifice. The chanting began, and the animals moaned at the goading of Mabel's staff. The Sabbat was at hand!

I crouched watching, suddenly numbed. I felt cold. There is a tingling sensation when one's foot falls asleep, and now this sensation invaded my entire body. In another way it entered my mind. Shadows seemed to pour over my brain, buzzing away all thought. I felt it, and struggled to resist. I seemed able to clear my mind, but the numbness of my body persisted.

And then I jerked upright. Blaine had re-appeared. He stood in the doorway as the chanting rose, and his face was a grim shield of vengeance. In one hand he held the revolver, and as I watched he raised it, pointed it at Voidin's chest. I saw him.

They saw him.

"Slay!" The voice crackled from Voidin's throat. And the animal horde turned, swiftly. Blaine hadn't expected that. The pack was upon him even as he fired. The shot went wild, and then they were milling around his waist, leaping up for his throat. A dozen furry forms tore at Blaine's flesh and he went down, down in a moaning melee. He screamed.

I screamed. I clutched the portieres for support there in the doorway, for that numbness was stealing over me. My knees were giving way under me. I tried desperately hard to stand erect, but my body burned, and the bottle I held in one hand began to slip through my fingers. Madly I struggled to act.

I made it. Racing forward, tottering forward, I swung my bottle down, beating at furry backs. Fangs snapped at me; fangs freshly reddened at a ghastly feast. My torn fingers groped for the floor. I clutched the revolver, scooped it from where it had fallen. I was burning to the floor, they were baying at my waist, and yet I dared not sink. I wheeled and fired a shot, not into that nightmare horde, but through the portieres. The burst of quick flame was welcome as it seared into mounting light across the doorway. The throng turned and howled. Voidin leaped from the altar, Mable and Dubois at his heels.

But the revolver held them back. The flames spread swiftly — they had to, I prayed. Flames cleanse.

I held them; held them in swirling smoke and rising heat. They knew my purpose—to destroy them in fire.

Then through the wall of brightness I saw that they were looking at me in a peculiar way. And I felt the shivery horror of burning lance through my body—burning not of fire. I felt my hands drop the revolver, felt the room whirl as I readjusted perspective. I felt my bones wrench, and then I seemed to be on my knees. I was smaller, standing on shortened feet and hands as well. I was—I must admit it —on all fours.

They laughed then, as though something had happened, and tried to leap through the mounting barrier of the flames. But merciful Fate was with me, for of a sudden the fire blazed as the wood caught, and it swirled through the room fed on oils spilled from the brazier. Cries of horror drowned in a crackling red sea as I turned.

Turned on hands and knee—turned to stare down at the bottle still resting in my palm; the bottle Blaine had fumbled for on the table, the bottle from which I drank.

The bottle—containing the Wine of the Sabbat!

And it did not rest in my palm. It rested in a *paw*. They had laughed, and I was numbed, and on all fours. I had drunk the Sabbat Wine!

Then I crawled into the hall on hands and knees. I saw the big hall mirror bright in the flames behind me, stared at myself in the mocking glass. It was then that I screamed—although what rose in my throat was not a scream. The dreadful sound was a confirmation of what tortured eyes revealed to me in the reflection. I leapt from that burning house and surrendered to nightmare. Since Walpurgis Eve I have never returned.

I don't know how I got home. It's a long way from Laguna to Los Angeles, but I made it.

A man can't run that far, nor crawl on hands and knees. I might have been drunk or drugged by that wine, but I made it. Because the next morning I woke in my garret bed. I was naked, and tired, and shocked to read in the papers of the house that had burned last night in Laguna Beach. But I was in human shape, and to that my sanity clung. I wish I could convince myself that the Wine of the Sabbat was ordinary vintage.

I could, too, if I were not such an untidy person. Being untidy I had neglected to sweep my garret in days past. And the cruel sunlight of that morning glinted only too plainly on the uncarpeted area of floor stretching from the open door to my bed. The uncarpeted floor was dusty, and the dust had been recently disturbed.

Leading from door to bed were a series of great tracks in the dust; tracks leading inward only—the unmistakable, the damnable, the maddening pawprints of a giant wolf!

I lay back in bed and pulled the covers tightly over my head.

The Great God Death

By EDITH HURLEY

Upon a mountain in a secret place,
On a gigantic crag of ebon stone,
The Great God Death sits brooding and alone,
Far from the centers of the human race;
About him blow the winds of timeless Space
And at the foot of this titanic throne
Low bend the souls that he has called his own
For no one lives who looks upon his face.

And he, the ruler of this bitter land
Wherenever flower blooms nor song is heard,
But Fear and Silence weigh upon the air,
Regards with sadness his puissant hand
Where lies the body of a buoyant bird
That came upon his kingdom unaware.

An Adventure of a Professional Corpse

The Wife of the Humorous Gangster

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

There's good money in dying. It is surprising how many people can make use of a dead man.

THE ability to counterfeit death—

Yes, many's the handsome corpse I've made, but never under my real name. James F. Bronson is inscribed on no tombstone. Once I learned how to earn legitimate money, and big money, I went seriously to work at it. My physical abnormality, combined with the proper drugs, helped practice make perfect.

The element of chance, of adventure, of risk, so fascinated me that I would have traded professions with no one. And it is safe to say that no one would have traded professions with me. It is surprising how many people can make use of a dead man, however! This odd profession of mine had only one real drawback. I had to trust someone to bring me back to life after I was "dead."

For this little item, I very naturally needed a medico, and it was the curious adventure of the humorous gangster which provided me with a real find in this way. It was always a task to locate the right person. Although I was mixed up with nothing crooked I could not employ any doctor imbued with high faluting notions of professional ethics; such a man was too risky an equation.

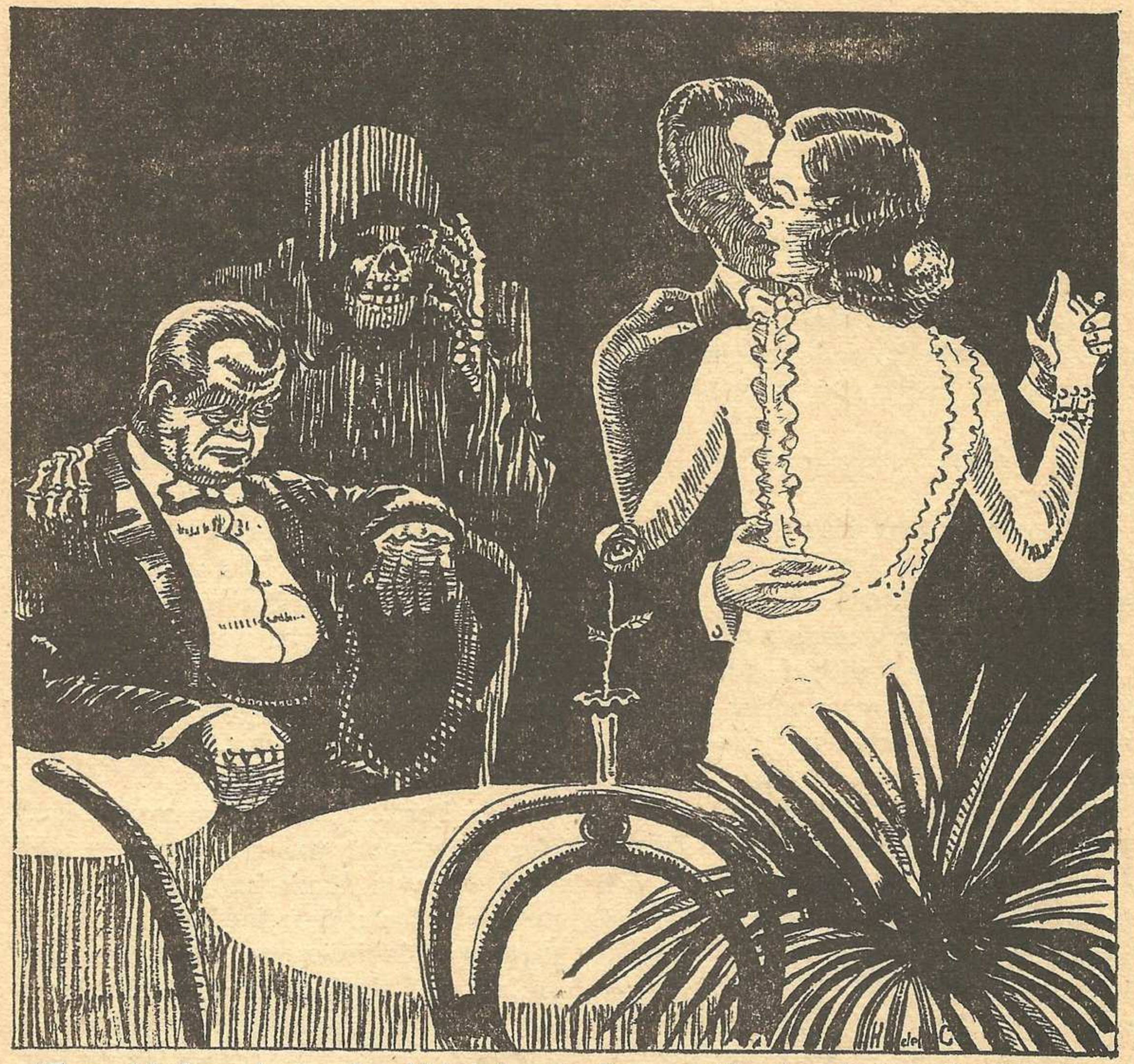
Coming to a mid-western city I followed my usual procedure of inserting a blind advertisement in newspapers, and then scouting around for the right man to work with me. In this instance I found him in the person of one Dr. Roesche, a young fellow of German extraction.

Roesche had brains, he was conscientious, and he was hard up. I liked him from the start, because he refused point-blank to touch anything shady, and when he heard of my business he turned me down cold. He would only change his mind when I had convinced him that I was considering nothing of an illegal character, and wanted nothing from him that would conflict with professional ethics.

"I need you to administer a hypodermic; no more," I told him, and then frankly set my case before him, showing that my heart was on the right side instead of the left. "It has a very slow beat, too. More correctly, no beat at all. It flutters rather than beats, so there's no pulse to mention. They tell me it's nothing very rare."

"Auricular Fibrilation," and he nodded. "And a barrel chest, I see. The heart isn't against the ribs—why, the stethoscope doesn't bring it up a bit!"

From a professional standpoint, he was



"Even while I was dancing, I could feel those deadly eyes drilling into the back of my head."

keenly interested. Also, we got on well together. Once he consented to work with me, he was full of ideas. Instead of the chance drug I used to put me to sleep, he suggested an improvement on it. The upshot was that I got the idea of a permanent partnership, and he was not averse to it.

"You'll have to show me where there's any money in it, though," he said cautiously.

"Come on back to my hotel, then. Stop at the newspaper offices on the way, pick up the answers to my advertisement, and you'll see quick enough."

We did just this, and reached my hotel with a dozen replies to examine.

Half of them I weeded out as crank letters, others as involving something crooked. Then I picked up one and read it aloud:

"Dear Sir:

"Your advertisement may be a fake, but if not, I can use you. Believe it or not, my purpose is on the level and my money legitimate. If you want to talk business, give me a ring at this number. Yours for eternity,

"Dion Caffery."

When he heard the writer's name, Roesche uttered a grunt.

"You don't know of him? Then you'd

better get acquainted with this town, Bronson. He runs a big flower shop on Seneca Avenue and lives in the apartment house overhead; in fact he owns it. His name used to be Cafferelli, but he changed it to Caffery."

I looked at him, puzzled. "Well? What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing, only he runs about half the rackets in the city, and he's in on the liquor game. In fact, the worst kind of a gangster."

This happened some years ago, during prohibition.

"Suppose we hear what he has to say?" I suggested. "The letter sounds interesting; even if the interview comes to nothing. I'd like to meet such a man."

Roesche assented with a shrug, and I called Caffery. To my surprise he had a very pleasant voice, and immediately agreed to drop in and see me.

I WAS more surprised when he showed up. He was heavily built but well dressed, and had pleasant, intelligent features with twinkling dark eyes. When I had introduced my partner, he looked from one to the other of us, whimsically.

"Just what kind of a gag is this?" he demanded. "Do I talk before witnesses?"

"You do if you want to talk," I said firmly. "If your proposition has anything crooked about it, then save it for somebody else. Dr. Roesche has to be in on the affair, as I can't work without him."

He broke into a hearty laugh, produced cigars, and dropped into a chair.

"You're all right, Bronson. Now, can you play dead enough so a doctor will pronounce you dead?"

"A good many have certified to it already."

"Just how is the trick worked? Loosen up with the details. They might not fit in with what I want."

I briefly indicated my abilities, and he nodded and leaned back in his chair, fully satisfied.

"Good. You'll do. What do you charge?"

"The fee depends entirely on the job," I said. "Frankly, I'm not sure I'd want to work for you, Caffery."

"And if you did, you'd make me pay big, eh?" He chuckled, displaying no resentment of my attitude. "Fair enough. I'll set the fee at ten thousand cash in advance. The work is to play a little joke on my wife and some of my friends. I want to pretend to kill you, and have some fun with the presence of a corpse."

I frowned at him. "Let's have straight talk, Caffery. In your business, which is no secret, why would you want an imitation corpse? I should think you could pick up a real one at a cheaper price."

He looked at me with a puzzled expression, and then smiled.

"Oh, I see! You have the conventional idea about what you call gangsters, eh? Well, Bronson, brush 'em all away. Give me credit for a little intelligence. I'm a pretty good business man, and I have average sense. I don't go around emptying a rod at anyone who looks crosseyed at me; in fact, I've never killed anyone in my life. However, it's high time that I did, and that's where you come in. Forget your moving picture notions of bad men, will you? I'm not running a barrel house or a low den of iniquity. I'm running a business, and I'm at the top of it."

How much of his talk was blarney and how much was true, I'm not sure to this day, but it was impressive. His easy good humor, his intelligence, carried it over. I was inclined to believe his words, and felt ashamed of my own hazy notions about a gangster chief.

"Now, here's the proposition," he said, and sobered. In fact, he took on a look of worry; his eyes lost their humorous glimmer and became very earnest. "I'm too

good-natured for my job, and that's no joke. My crowd is tough, sure. I've got to impress them. And chiefly, I've got to impress my wife. Nelly's a darling, but she just can't get out of the habit of flirting. Not that she means wrong by it, mind; just a habit. But it's got to stop."

I was startled.

"I don't like your idea," I said bluntly. "If you want to kill somebody, why should you, of all people, want to fake it?"

He made a helpless gesture. "D'you think I'm a fool? Murder is murder, Bronson. Can't you get it into your head that I'm no killer, that I don't want to spend my life in stir, that I've got enough brains to be something better than a gunman?"

Once more, contact with realities put to shame my vague conceptions of gangsters. This man was no crude, cold-hearted monster.

"Make your proposal, Caffery. I'll take it or leave it."

"Fair enough; here it is. Tomorrow night, I'm throwing a party at the Bon Ton Club. You come along there, wander in, and I'll greet you like an old friend. Play up to Nelly. She'll fall for you, strong; I'll say you're just in from New York, on a visit. I'll skip out with the boys, on business, and leave you to bring her home. When you get there, I'll be waiting. I'll rip into you for trying to play around with her and fire a blank, and you keel over. Her brother is a doctor and lives upstairs. If he finds you dead, I'll horse around and raise hell with everybody, and so forth. I'll have you carried into a back room. Dr. Roesch can be hidden there and fetch you around and sneak you out the back way, and everything's jake. The boys never will wise up to how I disposed of the body."

Joke? Maybe yes, and maybe not. He was too earnest about it.

I could see now that he had told the exact truth about himself. He was no killer, and his crowd probably knew it. He was clever enough to realize his shortcomings and conquer them by using his brains.

Behind this was the picture of a man trying to hold his wife—if she was his wife. As a matter of fact, she was nothing of the kind; I learned this later on. But Caffery was dead in love with her all the same. He would have married her, except that she had a husband already and could not get rid of him. Caffery was simply crazy about her, but the people with whom they associated, the life they led, the way she acted, had him in torment on the anxious seat.

"Suppose the cartridge in your gun should turn out to have a bullet in it?" I suggested uneasily. He grunted.

"Oh, hell! Roesche can see to that himself. He'll be in the apartment at the time."

I looked at Roesche, questioningly. Ten thousand dollars was a lot of money. And there was nothing illegal about this. To my look, he shrugged and made answer.

"It's your funeral, Bronson; and literally, maybe. I think it's a risky business. But you're the one to decide. I'm willing to take it on if you are."

"Yes, you ought to be," I said unhappily. Then I looked at Caffery. "Two things about your scheme are bad. First, there'd be no bullet hole when my body was examined. That is, I hope there'd be none."

He chuckled, and his eyes twinkled again.

"The unpleasant possibility sticks in your craw, eh? But you're right. Besides, there's the noise. How's this, now! I'll use a big persuader, stuffed with cotton instead of lead. Give you one crack, and finish you, and proud of it. Suit you better?"

"Much better," I said with relief. "The second thing is that it wouldn't be logical to go off your head and kill a man, just because you let him bring your wife home.

That is, a man you haven't seen for a long time, until that evening."

"Right," he agreed instantly, and plunged into the business with all the ardor of a small boy planning a parlor masquerade. He was amused and tickled by the whole thing. "I tell you, Bronson! Put off the party to Saturday night—see? On Friday night, I'll be at the Bon Ton for dinner, with Nelly and a couple of the boys. You drop in and meet us then, and play up a bit to Nelly—make it plenty strong. I'll invite you to the party the next night, which will be all jake. And on the way home I'll do enough talking about how you played up to Nelly, so things will look right when I blow you down. How's that? And is it yes or no?"

Under the circumstances, it could be nothing else than yes. Now that the blank cartridge business was out, the thing did not look so bad; in fact, I had already taken much riskier jobs than this.

So we buckled down to it then and there, settling all details and getting everything thoroughly understood, even to a floor plan of Caffery's apartment. And Caffery counted out five crisp thousand-dollar bills. The balance would be paid on Friday night.

"There's just one thing to guard against," I said in conclusion. "You mustn't let your doctor hold a mirror to my breath; that would give me away. Stop that at any cost, even if you have to call Roesche right in. That's one test I can't guard against."

"Right," said Caffery, and departed grinning.

The racketeer angle was not pleasant, but Roesche agreed with me that we now had the program foolproof. He had slightly changed the drug I used, so that any physical reflexes were more completely eliminated, and that same day he insisted on making a test with me. I submitted, and he was more than delighted by the results.

"It's marvelous, Bronson," he told me afterward. "With your eyes taken care of by the drops, and no mirror test, you'll get by with anything except a prolonged critical examination. Still, I'm uncertain about two things. First, the ultimate result on your health."

"Is that any worse than the ultimate result of a driving business life on any man?"

"Well, no," he agreed. "But what about the legal aspect of your stunt?"

I laughed at this, for I had long ago settled all such argument.

"Look it up; it's no crime, Roesche. That is, as I play the game. I might be arrested for attempting suicide, but I could beat out such a charge easily."

This was true. After he talked with a lawyer, his last doubt was settled.

WHEN I walked into the Bon Ton on Friday evening, I was nervous enough. The place was a flashy one, the crowd was large and well dressed, the orchestra banged heavily. I heard a yell, and Caffery came rushing toward me. He gripped me by both hands, hailed me lustily as "good old Mike Leary," and dragged me to his table.

It was a big one in the center of the place. His wife and four other men sat there, and I was given a chair beside Nelly. I had little to do except follow the lead of Caffery, who asked no delicate questions, and was soon at my ease. That is, outwardly.

Nelly Caffery, as she was generally known, was a genuine blonde. She was vivacious, young, impudent and saucy, and ablaze with life. The homage of men was the very breath of existence to her, and it was no trouble at all to fall into my role of admiring male.

But those other four men—well, they were young too, young and sleek and gay enough. They made me think of some-

thing my uncle said after he got home from South America and was talking about his travels and adventures.

"A real bad man don't usually look bad, but if a man's living on a hair-trigger it always shows in one place. His eyes. They go into you."

That was the way with these young men. Their eyes drifted into me. Dark eyes, for they all had Italian names. Their eyes would question me, then shift to Nelly or to Caffery.

We danced, we drank, we laughed and joked and enjoyed ourselves. Had it not been for the deference paid Caffery on every side, the men who spoke to him, the curious glances cast at him, I could hardly have believed that I was sitting with racketeers. There was no rough talk of any kind. Even Nelly, except for her conspicuous diamonds, seemed no more than a carefree, light-hearted girl intent on pleasure; and so she was.

Caffery entered into his part with an impish glee. Under the spur of his delighted abandon, he showed himself a roaring boon companion; but there was iron in him just the same. He was no fool. When he urged me to go on and dance with Nelly, he gave her a hot shot under cover of a laugh.

"Look out for her, Mike! Remember that a woman never has any principles, or if she has any, she calls 'em something else."

This was over Nelly's head, however. She was not long on brains.

She was flattered by my obvious attention, by my swift interest in her, and tried hard to pump me about myself. She was one of those women who think themselves very deep, who have a "Why?" for everything as though in search of hidden motives, who set themselves to understand a man with their eyes and lips better than he understands himself; they are usually fools. Such vapid, doll-like beauties usually fancy themselves very subtle, and I suppose they find many a sap who falls for their pretty ways.

I could see that Caffery had Nelly sized up just right. She was not bad; she did not have enough sense to be bad. But flirtation was inborn within her. She simply could not help snuggling in my arms as we danced, and putting her face close to mine, and drinking in all my flattery until her eyes sparkled like stars.

So, from Caffrey's viewpoint, the evening passed off most successfully, but the party broke up early.

"What are you doing tomorrow night, Mike?" exclaimed Caffery, before we left. "Come on and join us here about eight. We'll throw you a real party and run it into Sunday morning if you say the word!"

I hesitated and looked at Nelly. She begged me to accept, and I made it quite obvious that I accepted only because she wanted it. In fact, I was afraid I had overplayed my hand a bit.

But no. Caffery telephoned me half an hour later, and was positively chortling.

"Put it on thick tomorrow night, right from the start," he ordered. "I'll be called away early, then take the boys home. I'll be waiting when you get there."

"Don't wait too long, then," I said. "I have to put some stuff in my eyes, and it pretty near blinds me when it takes effect."

"I get you. Better wear a gun, for the looks of it."

"A gun? I haven't any."

"Then I'll slip you one at the table," and he rang off, chuckling.

I did not appreciate his humor at all.

Even less did I appreciate it on Saturday morning, when Dr. Roesche walked in and got me out of bed to read a newspaper. He waved it at me.

"Open war threatens!" he declaimed, grandiloquently.

"War?" and I yawned. "Where?"

"Right here. Caffery and Rafello fac-

tions; gangster's war. Boy, I'm glad you got full pay in advance last night! Here, read this."

It was not pleasant reading; I did not understand half of it, except that Caffery and some other racketeer had fallen out. However, it could not very well affect me, and I said so. Even if it did, I had taken Cafferys' money and must go through with the play.

"Remember what he said about never having killed anybody?" said Roesche. "I bet he knew this was coming. He's pulling some rough stuff with you, to impress his own men; that was true enough. I'm glad tonight ends our connection with that outfit."

I was more than glad. I was delighted. The idea of lying dead to the world while warring gangsters pumped lead into me and made me an actual corpse, haunted me. Roesche was none too happy either, as evening approached. Caffery had decided that upon leaving the Bon Ton with his friends, he would pick up Roesche and plant him in the back room, unknown to his henchmen. And poor Roesche, less accustomed to risks than I was, did not like the notion at all; still, he could not help himself.

At eight o'clock that evening I walked into the Bon Ton again and found the party assembled. Once more there was a big table, with Nelly the only woman at it. Caffery had six of his men here now, all of the same type, and he had done the thing up proud, with flowers galore and silver wine-buckets and all the trimmings.

I was the guest of honor, and he took a gleeful, chuckling pleasure in the irony of it. In the eyes of his companions, I fancied an ominous and sardonic suspense, as though they were watching and waiting; undoubtedly, Caffery had been talking about my attentions to his wife. He had not been talking to Nelly, however. She was bubbling over with high spirits, both kinds—the champagne flowed like water.

Even when I was dancing, I could feel those deadly eyes drilling into the back of my head; it took a real effort to play my part with Nelly, but I played it according to my instructions. And she did not make it a bit hard for me, either. Knowing that she would get a scare out of the whole thing, and nothing worse. I had small hesitation in making my admiration for her quite evident.

At the table, my seat was next to Caffery. Thus, under cover of the tablecloth, it was not difficult for him to slip a pistol into my lap. The touch of the thing startled me; I had for the moment forgotten our telephone conversation.

"Oh, it's not loaded," and he was evidently amused by my repugnance. He spoke under his breath. "Stick it away and pull it when I jump you. It'll look better."

"I hope you're getting your money's worth," I retorted. He laughed.

"I aim to get it, you bet!"

Getting the pistol into a hip pocket and cursing its weight, I led Nelly out on the floor again. She must have caught some warning from one of the other men, for now she gave me a sharp admonition, not unmixed with alarm.

"Watch your step, Mr. Leary! My husband doesn't like free and easy ways."

I smiled down into her eyes. "What's the harm, baby? I don't make you sore, do I?"

"You might, easy enough. Get wise; they're watching us."

"Let 'em watch," I said, and held her the more tightly. "You're a swell dancer; come on, forget your troubles!"

That was easy enough for her. When we came back to the table she was flushed and laughing, chattering away brightly; but under the watching, waiting eyes of those sleek men, I rather lost my confidence.

It was just nine o'clock, and the dinner

was hardly well under way, when a waiter brought a note to Caffery. He read it, and then shot a muttered order at his men. Two of them rose and went out. Even though I knew he had arranged it all, I had to admire the manner in which he handled the affair.

"Sorry, folks," he said to us, with a shrug and a smile. "I've got to pull out. Business. Mike, you stick around and enjoy yourself, and bring Nelly home later on. I'll leave the car for you. Nelly, you see that Mike has a good time."

"No. I'll go with you," she said quickly. Caffery rose, laughing.

"Not much! I'm not going home. May not be back until late."

"Might as well have one more dance," I said to Nelly.

"Just one, then," she assented. "We'll finish dinner and go."

SO Caffery and his men said good-night, and Caffery paid for the party as he went out. There was no longer any point in my continuing with the act, so I did not try to prolong matters at all. Nelly was nervous and uneasy, and my lack of enthusiasm was not calculated to lift her sudden depression.

"What's wrong with you, anyway?" I demanded, as we danced. "You seem to be out of humor with everything, all at once."

"I am. Just wrought up, I guess—" She broke off abruptly, staring over my shoulder. Her eyes dilated. Her face went white. "Let's get out of here, Mr. Leary. You don't mind, do you? I'm tired of dancing."

"Oh, it's all right with me," I replied, searching for the cause of her agitation and failing to find it.

We got off the crowded floor, came back to the table, and I persuaded her to take a swallow of wine before we left. She needed it, for some reason.

We delayed only a moment or two, but all of a sudden she straightened up and looked at a man who was approaching our table. Her eyes flickered, and then steadied, as she pulled herself together.

He was a short, heavy-set man in full evening dress. He was pale, with slick black hair, and there was an ugly twist to his lip. He paused at our table, gave me one swift and incurious glance, and then nodded amiably to Nelly.

"Hello," he said carelessly. "Where's Caffery?"

"I don't know," she replied. "He left a while ago."

"All right. Tell him I was looking for him, will you?"

With another careless nod, the man sauntered on. He joined two other men near the entrance, and they disappeared. Nelly was looking after him, and I saw that she was white once more, but her eyes were bright and eager and not in the least terrified.

"What's it all about?" I asked, as she rose. "Who was your friend?"

"My God, don't you read the papers?" she snapped at me. "That was Nick Rafello. I'll get my wraps and put in a phone call, and meet you at the door."

Rafello, eh? If he had come a few minuntes earlier—well, I had missed something, and was heartily glad of it. A burning anxiety gripped me to finish this business and get rid of the whole mess.

And yet, even as I went to the men's room and made my own preparations, I thrilled to a glimmer of realization, of sharp suspicion. When Caffery left, the woman had been disconcerted and dismayed. When Rafello had shown up, she was agitated and alarmed; then, the look she had exchanged with Rafello—

How had Rafello known that Dion Caffery was going to be here? Had Nelly tipped him off?

Well, it was none of my business. In another hour I would be done with the

whole racketeer crowd, and for ever. Yet I could not forget the look those two had exchanged; eyes can speak more than tongues, at times. A look of understanding, of inquiry, of tacit comprehension. Anything further had been prevented by my presence at the table.

Was I really on the edge of underworld drama? Or was the whole business a product of my fevered imagination? Hardly likely, I thought; I could read faces. However, I had to get to work before rejoining Nelly.

It was a scant ten minutes ride from here to the Seneca Avenue apartment of Caffery, which was just the time margin I needed. In the privacy of the men's room, I measured out my dose of the drug mixture which would make me dead to the world, and swallowed it. Then, a much slower matter, I put the drops of homatropine and cocaine into my eyes—the drops which would deaden the cornea to any reflex test, and enlarge the pupils to simulate the look of death.

When I rejoined Nelly at the entrance, she was impatient.

"You certainly took your time," she snapped. "Look here, Mr. Leary. The car's outside and I don't need any escort—"

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed jovially. "Your husband told me to escort you home, and I mean to do it. Besides, it's only plain courtesy, Nelly. Come along."

We got into her limousine and were driven away, and a few minutes later halted before the apartment house.

As we went inside, I noted that the flower shop on the street level was open and was doing a good business; it was a Saturday night, so this was to be expected. Inside, Nelly tried to dismiss me again, but I insisted on going up to the apartment with her. As I was no longer paying her any devoted attention, she assented with a shrug.

We left the elevator and came to her apartment door. She inserted a key, threw open the door, and turned to me. The passage showed empty, and I wondered if Caffery were really here.

"Good-night, Mr. Leary," she said. "It's been—"

"Oh, let me come in for a minute anyhow," I exclaimed. "I'd like to put in a phone call, if you don't mind."

She hesitated. Just then a soft, hard laugh reached us, and she swung around. Caffery appeared in the passage.

"Yeah, come on in," he said. I was startled to see that his look of good humor had vanished; he was acting his part, I thought. "Come on, come on, and shut the door! I want to see you—the both of you."

There was an ugly note in his voice. I shoved Nelly inside, followed her, and pulled the door shut. Then, behind Caffery, appeared several of his henchmen, watching us. He drew back and ordered us into the parlor. I obeyed.

"What's the big idea, Caffery?" I demanded belligerently. His attention was fastened on Nelly rather than on me, and there was a blaze in his eyes.

"Oh, you!" He swung on me with a laugh—a harsh, grating laugh. If he was pretending, he was doing it ominously well. By this time, the drug was taking pretty full effect on me, while the stuff in my eyes left me nearly blind.

"I'll learn you to play around with my wife," he said viciously. "I'll learn her a few things, too, but you first. Why, damn you, d'ye think I'm blind and dumb? You blasted cheating bastard—"

I fumbled for the gun, could see nothing clearly, realized he was coming at me. Then something hit me over the head—something soft enough, but with a resounding thwack. I let the gun fall, and as I collapsed and lay quiet, heard Nelly scream. Then, before the drug blurred my brain, I heard something else.

"You!" It was Caffery's voice, hoarse now and filled with madness. "I've been too damned good to you, Nelly; you just took me for a sucker, eh? Well, I've got you dead to rights. Thought you'd bring Rafello in on me tonight and walk off with him after I was dead, eh? Shut up, damn you! I've got the proof of it—"

She screamed again, uttering wild protest. Cafferys' voice reached me faintly. I could not stir my brain was dulling out.

"There's your own letter to him, blast you! The woman I loved—why, good God! I'd have gone to hell for you, Nelly! And maybe I will, right now. Anyhow, you won't play and jockey with the love of any other man—"

There was the roaring explosion of a pistol above me, and everything was gone. I was out, and completely out.

LATER, Roesche told me what happened there in the front room.

Caffery stood as though paralyzed, staring down at the woman he had just shot; the front of her evening gown was blackened by powder. Then his men stirred and broke into action. One of them knelt beside me. They conferred briefly, Caffery standing the while and staring down like a wooden image.

"Hey, Dion!" one of them exclaimed, and shook him by the shoulder. "Come out of it. What'll we do about this Leary guy? You biffed him too hard; he's croaked. Don't matter about Nelly. We can all swear that it was suicide. Here, give me the gun—"

He took the pistol from Caffery's hand, wiped it with his handkerchief, and then stooped. He pressed the dead fingers of the woman about it, and rose.

"Come on, Dion! Wake up! What about this guy?"

Caffery came out of his stupor. His face, aged and drawn and contorted, bore a stamp of horror. Then, meeting the intent gaze of the men around, he pulled himself together.

"Him? Leary?" A harsh cackle of mirthless laughter came from him. "Oh, to hell with him! Leave him to me; I'll handle the matter later. Carry him into the back bedroom, two of you, and shut the door."

"But Dion—"

"Do what I say, damn you!" he burst out, and they hastily obeyed. I was lifted and taken into the back room, where Roesche was hidden. And the minute we were alone together, he lost no time in fetching me back to life; not a quick job, unfortunately.

When two of his men would have touched Nelly's body, Caffery forbade them. Of course, his whole plan in regard to me was completely gone. There was no need of bringing in any doctor, or of bothering further with me.

"Somebody get out there," said Caffery, as a knock came at the door. "Some damned fools will be raising hell about the shot. Tell 'em it was an accident—anything at all. Tony! You go up and fetch Nelly's brother down here."

"Her brother?"

"Yeah," and Caffery's voice was grim. "He can certify to her death. She is dead, isn't she?"

"Yeah."

Caffrey slumped, and he turned away. "All right," he said. "Go on and do what I say. I'll be back in no time. Keep her brother here, and keep him scared."

"Where you going?" one of the men asked.

Caffery looked down at the still, dead figure of the girl. "I'm going downstairs to get some flowers," he said gently, and his face changed and softened. "Roses. White roses. She always liked 'em best. Poor kid! She just got carried away; too much glitter. Yes, I'll get enough white roses to cover her out of sight."

He looked up, met the eyes of his men, and his voice barked out at them.

"Get busy. Round up everybody. As quick as I've attended to those roses, we go to work, understand? Tonight; here and now. Yes, Rafello's got a glitter to him, damn him! There won't be any glitter when I'm done with him. Get busy."

He went on out of the apartment.

Meanwhile, Roesche had been working like a madman over me. He gave me a dangerously strong injection, for he knew what had happened out front, and was scared stiff; however, he kept his head.

Caffery had shown him the way out. As soon as he had me half awake, he got me on my feet and rushed me out. I was dazed and groggy, of course; the descent of those back stairs of the apartment house was a nightmare. Roesche, with his arm around me, carried me part of the way, but the night air soon cleared my brain.

Then matters came easier. Once out of that accursed place, the feeling of relief was overwhelming. We went on down, and now the alley was before us, with only another short flight of steps to cover.

At this moment, a sound like a shot came from the street. Roesche laughed shakily.

"Backfire, eh? Gave me a start, though—"

Half a dozen more sounded, almost in a bunch.

"Backfire, hell!" I exclaimed. "That's shooting. Let's get away from here."

I was able to walk fairly well now. We drifted down the alley, came out on a street, and in another five minutes were in a taxi and on the way to the hotel.

"Well, we're out of it," and Roesche drew a long breath.

"Was it a dream?" I demanded. "Did he shoot her, or did I imagine it?"

"You imagined nothing," Roesche said grimly, and told me what had happened.

"Good lord!" I exclaimed. "Let's pack and clear out by the first train—anywhere." And we did it.

Morning found us reaching a city three hundred miles distant. We were breakfasting in the diner, before leaving the train, when the morning papers were brought aboard. Roesche got hold of one, glanced at the headlines, and then, without a word, laid it in front of me. We read it together.

As we descended those back stairs, the previous night, Caffery had been killed. We had heard the shots. He had been shot down as he stood in his flower shop, shot down by "parties unknown."

At the moment, he had been ordering white roses.

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure and despair, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn how. And when you do, well, there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which had bound me for years went a-shimmering — and now? — well — I own control of the largest circulating daily newspaper in my County. I own the largest office building in my City, I drive a beautiful limousine, I own my own home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago, I talked with God. Actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that strange Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest, unhappiness, ill-health or despair in your life, well — this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me. No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be — all this can be changed. For this is not a human power I'm talking about — it's a God-Power, and, of course, there can be no limitations to the God-Power, can there? Would you like to know how you too may talk with God? Would you like to know how this God-Power may come into your life as it came into mine? Then write a letter or post-card to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept 399, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent you free of charge. But write now — while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the best one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable — but it's true or I wouldn't tell you it was. Adv't Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

The Sandwin Compact

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

Frightful voices speak from behind a ponderous door.

I KNOW now that the strange and terrible happenings at Sandwin House had their beginnings much farther back than any of us then imagined, certainly farther back than Eldon or I thought at that time. Manifestly, there was no reason to suppose in those early weeks during which Asa Sandwin's time was running out that his trouble grew out of something in a past so remote as to be beyond our comprehension. It was only toward the end of the affair at Sandwin House that terrible glimpses were afforded us, hints of something frightful and awful behind the commonplace events of everyday life broke through to the surface, and ultimately we were enabled to grasp briefly the heart of what lay beneath.

Sandwin House had originally been called Sandwin-by-the-Sea, but its later appellation had soon come to be far more convenient in use. It was an old-fashioned house, old as such houses were old in New England, standing along the Innsmouth road not too far from Arkham: of two stories and an attic, with a deep basement. The roof was many-gabled, with dormer windows rising from the attic. Before the house old elms and maples stood; behind, only a hedge of lilac separated the lawns from the sharp descent to the sea, for the house stood on a high point of land some-

"Three generations of Sandwins had made a compact with these beings!"

what removed from the highway itself. In appearance it might have seemed a little cold to the casual passer-by, but to me it had always been colored by memories of childhood vacations spent there with my cousin Eldon; it represented relief from Boston, escape from the crowded city. Until the curious happenings that began in the late winter of 1938, I retained my early impression of Sandwin House; even so, it was not until after that strange winter's end that I became aware of how subtly but certainly Sandwin House had changed from the haven of childhood summers to a malign harbor for incredible evil.

My introduction to those curiously disturbing events was prosaic enough; it came in the shape of a telephone call from Eldon as I was about to sit down to supper with my fellow librarians of Arkham's Miskatonic University in the small club of which we were members. I took the call in the club's lounging room.

"Dave? This is Eldon. I want you to run up for a few days."

"Too busy, I'm afraid," I replied. "I'll try to make it next week."

"No, no—now. Dave—the owls are hooting."

That was all; there was nothing more. I returned to the heated discussion in which I had been engaged when I was summoned to the telephone and had actually picked up the threads of that discussion once more when what my cousin had said effected the necessary bridge into the years past, and instantly I excused myself and left for my rooms to prepare for the journey to Sandwin House. Long ago, almost three decades ago, in those carefree days of childhood play, there had been established between us a certain agreement; if ever one of us uttered a certain cryptic sentence, it was to be interpreted as a cry for assistance. To this we pledged ourselves. That cryptic sentence was: *The owls are hooting!* And my cousin Eldon had spoken it.

WITHIN an hour I had arranged for a substitute to take my place in the library of Miskatonic and was on my way to Sandwin House, driving faster than the law permitted. Candidly, I was half amused, half frightened; the pledge as we had made it in those days was serious enough, but it was, after all, a fancy of childhood; that Eldon had seen fit to utter now that cryptic sentence seemed to me evidence of something seriously disturbing in his existence; it seemed to me now rather the last appeal of dire distress than any casual harking back to childhood.

The night descended before I reached Sandwin House; a chill night with frost. A light snow still covered the ground, but the highway was clear. The last few miles to Sandwin House lay along the ocean, so that the drive was singularly beautiful: the moonlight making a wide path of yellow on the sea, and the wind rippling the water so that the entire bosom of the sea sparkled and gleamed as with some inner light. Trees, buildings, hillslopes broke into the eastern horizon line from time to time, but lessened the sea's beauty not at all. And presently the large ungainly structure that was Sandwin House broke into the skyline.

Sandwin House was dark save for a thin line of light well toward the rear. Here Eldon lived alone with his father and an old servant, though a country woman or two came regularly to clean the place once or twice a week. I drove the car around to one side where an old barn served as a garage, put the car away, took my bag and made my way to the house.

Eldon had heard me. I encountered him in the darkness just beyond the door, his long face touched a little with moonlight, his dressing-gown held closely to his thin body.

"I knew I could count on you, Dave," he said, taking my bag.

"What's up, Eldon?"

"Oh, don't say anything," he said nervously, as if someone might hear. "Wait. I'll tell you in time. And be quiet; let's not disturb father for the time being."

He led the way into the house, going with extreme care down the wide hall toward the stairs, behind which his own rooms were. I could not help noticing the unnatural quiet of the house and the sound of the sea beyond; it struck me then that the atmosphere was faintly eery, but I shrugged away this feeling.

In the light of his room, I saw that my cousin was seriously upset, despite a false air of healthy welcome; my coming was clearly not an end, but only an incident. He was haggard, his eyes were dark and red-rimmed, as if he had not slept for some days, and his hands moved constantly in that access of nervousness so common to neurotics.

"Now then, sit down; make yourself at home. You've had supper, eh?"

"Enough," I assured him, and waited for him to unburden himself.

He took a turn or two about the room, opened the door cautiously and looked out, before he came back to sit down beside me. "Well, it's about father," he began without preamble. "You know how we have always lived without any visible income, and yet always seemed to have money. That's been for several generations in the Sandwin line, and I've never bothered my head about it. Last fall, however, money was running very low. Father said he needed to go on a journey, and he went. Father seldom travels, but I remembered then that the last time he traveled: almost ten years ago, we were also in dire straits. But when he came back, there seemed again to be plenty of money. I never saw my father leave the house, and I never saw him come back; one day he was gone; another, he was back. It happened the same way this time—and after he was back, there seemed again to be plenty of money available for our use." He shook his head, perplexed. "I confess to you that for some time thereafter I looked through the *Transcript* with the utmost care on the lookout for some notice of robbery; but there was none."

"Some business, perhaps," I murmured.

HE SHOOK his head. "But that isn't what worries me now. I could forget that if it weren't for the fact that it seems to have some connections with father's present condition."

"Is he ill, then?"

"Why—yes and no. He isn't himself."

"What do you mean?"

"He isn't the father I knew. I can hardly explain myself, and, naturally, I'm upset. I was aware of this for the first time when I learned he had returned and, pausing outside the door of his rooms, heard him talking to himself in a low, guttural voice. 'I've tricked them,' he said to himself several times. There was more, of course, but at the moment I did not listen. I knocked on the door, whereupon he called out harshly and ordered me to return to my quarters until the following day. Since that time he has been behaving with increasing queerness, and of late he has seemed to me definitely afraid of something or someone—I don't know which. And some unusual things have begun to take place."

"What things?" I asked bluntly.

"Well, to begin with—the wet doorknobs."

"Wet doorknobs!" I exclaimed.

He nodded gravely. "The first time father saw them, he had old Ambrose and me on the carpet demanding to know which of us had gone through the house with wet hands. Of course, neither of us had; he dismissed us abruptly, and there

was an end to that. But from time to time a doorknob or two would show up wet, and father began to be afraid of finding them so, developing a kind of apprehension I couldn't mistake for something else."

"Go on."

"Then there are, of course, the footsteps and the music. They seem to sound from the air, or from the earth—frankly, I don't know which. But there is something here I don't understand, and something of which father is frankly afraid; so that he keeps more and more to his rooms; he doesn't come out sometimes for days, and when he does, walks with the air of a man momentarily expecting some enemy to pounce upon him, with his eyes for every stray shadow and movement, and no great concern for Ambrose or me or the women who come in to clean—though he has not permitted any of these women in his rooms, preferring to keep them clean himself."

What my cousin had said distressed me not so much for my uncle's sake as for his own; indeed, at the conclusion of his narrative, he was almost painfully upset, and I could neither treat what he had told me with the levity I had the impulse to do, nor with the gravity he seemed to think it merited. I preserved, accordingly, an interested impartiality.

"I suppose Uncle Asa is still up," I said. "He'll be surprised to find me here, and you won't want him to know you've sent for me. So I rather think we'd better go on up now."

MY UNCLE ASA was in every respect his son's opposite; while Eldon tended to be tall and thin, Asa was squat and heavy, not so much fat as muscular, with a short, thick neck, and a curiously repellant face. He had scarcely any forehead; thick, black hair grew only an inch above his bushy eyebrows, and a fringe of beard ran along his jaw from one ear to the other, though he wore no moustache. His nose was small, almost non-existent, in contrast to eyes so abnormally large that a first glance from them invariably startled any beholder. In addition to the unnatural size of his eyes, their prominence was augmented by thick-lensed spectacles which he wore, for in later years his eyes had grown progressively weaker and he found it necessary to consult an oculist every six months. His mouth, finally, was singularly wide and thin; it was not gross or thick-lipped, as one might have supposed it would be in one so squat and heavy, but its width was astonishing, for it was no less than five inches across, so that, what with the thick shortness of his neck and his deceptive fringe of beard, it was as if the line of the mouth divided his head from his torso. He had a strangely batrachian appearance and already in our childhood we had nicknamed him *The Frog*, because at that time he bore a facial resemblance of the creatures Eldon and I often caught in the meadows and swamp across the highway inland from Sandwin House.

At the moment of our entrance to his upstairs study, Uncle Asa was bent over his desk, hunched in that aspect so natural to see. He turned at once, his eyes narrowed, his mouth partly open; but almost instantly the aspect of sudden fear was gone, he smiled affably, and shuffled away from his desk toward me, one hand outstretched.

"Ah, good evening, David. I had not thought to see you before Easter."

"I found I could get away," I replied. "So I came. Besides, I hear little from you and Eldon."

The old man flashed a quick glance at Eldon, and I could not help thinking that while my cousin looked older than he was, my uncle certainly looked less than the sixty-odd years that were his. He put

out chairs for us and immediately engaged me in conversation about foreign affairs, a subject upon which I found him astonishingly well informed. The easy informality of his manner did much to offset the impression I had received from Eldon; indeed, I was well on the way to thinking that some grave mental illness had taken possession of Eldon, when I received confirmation of my cousin's suspicions. In the middle of a sentence about the problem of European minorities, my uncle suddenly broke off with his head cocked a little to one side, as if he were listening for something, and an expression of mingled fear and defiance crossed his face. He seemed to have forgotten about us entirely, so complete was his absorption.

For almost three minutes he sat in this manner, while neither Eldon nor I made any move whatever beyond turning our heads a little in an effort to hear also what he heard. At the moment, however, there was no telling to what he listened; the wind outside had risen, and the voice of the sea murmured and thundered along the shore; beyond this rose the sound of some nocturnal bird, an uncanny ululation with which I was not familiar; and above us, in the attic of the old house, a kind of rustling was constant, as if the wind were crying through an aperture somewhere into the room.

For the duration of those three minutes, then, no one of us made a move, no one spoke; then abruptly my uncle's face was contorted with rage; he leaped to his feet and ran to the one open window on the east, closing the window with such violence that I thought the glass must surely break. But it did not. For a moment he stood there mumbling to himself; then he turned and hurried back to us, his features as calm and affable as ever.

"Well, good-night, my boy. I have much work to do. Make yourself at home here, as always."

He shook hands again, a little ceremoniously, and we were dismissed.

ELDON said nothing until we reached his own rooms once more. Then I saw that he was trembling. He sat down weakly and held his head in his hands, murmuring, "You see! I told you how it was. And that's nothing."

"Well, I don't think you need worry about it," I assured him. "In the first place, I am familiar with any number of people who continue to work in their minds while carrying on conversations, and suddenly cease talking when ideas hit them with any force. As to the episode of the window—I confess I cannot attempt to explain it, but——"

"Oh, it wasn't my father," said Eldon suddenly. "It was the cry, the call from outside, that ululation."

"I thought—a bird," I answered lamely.

"There's no bird that makes a sound like that; and the migration hasn't begun except for robins and bluebirds and killdeers. It was that; I tell you, Dave—*whatever it is that makes that sound, speaks to father!*"

For a few moments I was too surprised to answer, not alone because of my cousin's sincerity, but because I could not deny that Uncle Asa had indeed conducted himself as if someone had spoken to him. I got up and took a turn about the room, glancing at Eldon from time to time; but it was evident that my cousin needed no belief of mine to confirm his own; so I sat down near him again.

"If we assume that such is the case, Eldon, what is it that talks to your father?"

"I don't know. I heard it first about a month ago. That time father seemed very frightened; not long after, I heard it again. I tried to find out where it came from, but I could learn nothing; that second time it seemed to come from the sea, as it did tonight; subsequently I was positive it came

from above the house, and once I could take oath it came from beneath the building. Shortly after that first time, I heard music—weird music, beautiful, but evil. I thought I had dreamed it, because it induced in me strange, fantastic dreams—dreams of some place far from earth and yet linked to earth by some demonic chain—I can't describe them with any degree of justice at all. At about the same time I was conscious of the sound of footsteps, and I swear to you that they came from somewhere in the air, though on a similar occasion I felt them beneath—not a man's steps, but something larger making them. It is at approximately these times that we find wet doorknobs, and the whole house gives off a strange fish-like odor that seems strongest just outside my father's rooms."

In any ordinary case, I would have dismissed what Eldon had said as a result of some illness unknown to him as well as to me, but to tell the truth, one or two things he had said stirred to life chords of memory which had only begun to bridge the abyss between the prosaic present and that past time in which I had become familiar with certain aspects of life on the dark side, so to speak. So I said nothing, trying to think of what it might be I sought in the channels of my memory, but failing, though I recognized the connection between Eldon's narrative and certain ghastly and forbidden accounts hidden in the library at Miskatonic University.

"You don't believe me," he accused suddenly.

"I neither believe nor disbelieve for the present," I replied quietly. "Let's sleep upon it."

"But you *must* believe me, Dave! The only alternative I have is my own madness."

"It isn't so much a matter of belief as it is some reason for the existence of these things. We shall see. Before we go to bed, tell me one thing: do you know whether you alone are affected by these things, or does Ambrose experience them, too?"

Eldon nodded quickly. "Of course he does; he's wanted to leave, but we've been able to dissuade him so far."

"Then you needn't fear for your sanity," I reassured him. "Now, then, for bed."

MY ROOM, as always when I stayed in the house, adjoined Eldon's. I bade my cousin good-night and walked down the hall in the darkness, entering my room with some anxiety about Eldon occupying my thoughts. It was perhaps this anxiety which accounted for my slow reaction to the fact that my hand was wet; I noticed this at the moment I reached up to take off my coat. I stood for a moment staring at my gleaming hand before I remembered Eldon's story; then I went at once to the door and opened it. Yes, the outer doorknob was wet; not only was it wet but it gave off a strong smell of aquatic life, that same fish-like odor of which Eldon had only just a few moments past spoken. I closed the door and wiped my hand, puzzled. Could it be that someone in the house was deliberately plotting against Eldon's sanity? Surely not, for Ambrose had nothing to gain by such a course, and so far as I had been able to ascertain over the years, there was no animosity whatever between my Uncle Asa and Eldon. There was no one else who might be guilty of such a campaign of fright.

I got into bed, troubled still, and trying to bridge the distance between the past and present. What was it happened at Innsmouth almost ten years ago now? What was it lay in those shunned manuscripts and books in Miskatonic University? That I must see them, I knew; so I resolved to return to Arkham as soon as possible. Still trying to search my memory for some clue to the solution of the night's events, I fell asleep.

I hesitate to chronicle what took place shortly after I slept. The human mind is unreliable enough at best, let alone in sleep or just after, when the mental processes are clogged by sluggishness resulting from sleep. But in the light of subsequent events, the dream of that night takes on a clarity and reality which I would have thought possible of nothing in the strange half-world of sleep. For I dreamed; I dreamed almost immediately of a great vast plateau in a strange, sandy world, which bore some resemblance to the high plateaus of Tibet or the Honan country I had once visited. In this place the wind blew eternally, and singularly beautiful music fell upon my ears. And yet that music was not pure, not free of evil, for always there was an undercurrent of sinister notes, like a tangible warning of tribulation to come, like the grim fate notes of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. The music emanated from a group of buildings on an island in a black lake. There all was still; figures stood unmoving, strange-faced beings in the guise of men, some curious hybrid Chinese standing as if on guard.

Throughout this dream it seemed as if I moved with the wind high above, a wind that never ceased. How long I was there, I could not say, for I dreamed endlessly; presently I was away from this place, I looked down from high above the sea upon another island where stood great buildings and idols, where again were strange beings, few of them in the guise of men, and again that deathless music sounded. But here also was something more: the voice of that thing which had but recently in time talked to my Uncle Asa—that same weird ululation emanating from deep within a squat building whose cellars must certainly have been inundated by the sea. For only a brief time I looked upon this island, while from somewhere within me I knew its modern name: Easter Island—then I was gone, held above the frozen fastnesses of the far north, looking down upon a secret Indian village where natives worshipped before idols of snow. Everywhere was wind, everywhere music and the sound of that whistling voice like a prolog to terror, a warning of incredible and awful evil soon to flower, everywhere the voice of primeval horror shrouded and hidden beneath beautiful unearthly music.

I woke soon after, unbearably tired, and lay with eyes open staring into the darkness. Slowly I emerged from somnolence, and slowly I became conscious that the air in my room was heavy, laden with the fish-like odor of which Eldon had spoken; and at the same time I was aware of two other things—the sound of retreating footsteps, and the fading ululation I had heard not only in my dreams but in my uncle's rooms only a few hours ago. I jumped from bed and ran to the window, looking eastward; but there was nothing to be seen, nothing to be known save that the sounds seemed certainly to emanate from the vast ocean beyond. I crossed my room again and went out into the hall, where the smell of aquatic life was much stronger than it was in my room. I knocked gently on Eldon's door and, receiving no answer, entered the room.

He lay on his back, his arms flung out and his fingers working. That he still slept was evident, though at first I was deceived by the whispered words coming from his lips. In the act of awaking him, I paused, hand outstretched, and listened. His voice was for the most part too low in pitch to carry well, but I did catch several words spoken apparently with greater effort to be clear: *Lloigor—Ithaqua—Cthulhu;* these words were repeated several times before I caught hold of Eldon's shoulder and shook him. His awakening was not swift, as it should have been, but sluggish, uncertain; only after a full min-

ute did he become aware of me, but from the moment of that recognition he was his usual self, he sat up, conscious at the same time of the odor in the room, and the sounds beyond.

"Ah—you see!" he said gravely, as if this were all the confirmation I now needed.

HE GOT out of bed and went over to the windows, standing there to look out.

"Did you dream?" I asked.

"Yes, and you?"

We had had substantially the same dreams. Throughout his narrative about his dreams, I became conscious of movement on the floor above: furtive, sluggish movement, carrying with it sounds as of *something wet* sloshing across the floor. At the same time the ululation beyond the house faded away, and the sound of footsteps, too, came to a stop. But there was now present in the atmosphere of the old house such an air of menace and horror, that the cessation of these sounds contributed little to our peace of mind.

"Let's go up and talk to your father," I suggested abruptly.

His eyes widened. "Oh, no—we won't dare disturb him; he's given orders."

But I was not to be daunted; I turned alone and went up the stairs, where I paused to knock peremptorily on Uncle Asa's door. There was no reply. I came to my knees and looked into the room through the keyhole, but I could see nothing; all was dark. But someone was there, for voices came out occasionally; the one was clearly Uncle Asa's—but strangely guttural and rasping, as if it had undergone some vital change; the other was like nothing I have ever heard before or since—a deep, throaty sound, a croaking, harsh voice, somber with menace. And while my uncle spoke in intelligible English, his visitor quite evidently did not. I set myself to listen, and heard first my uncle's voice.

"I will not!"

The unreal accents of the things in the rooms with him sounded beyond the door. *"Iä! Iä! Shub-Niggurath!"* There followed a succession of rapid mouthings, as if in violent anger.

"Cthulhu will not take me into the sea; I have closed the passage."

Violence again answered my uncle, who seemed, however, to remain unafraid, despite the significant change in the caliber of his voice.

"Nor Ithaqua come in the wind: I can foil him, too."

My uncle's visitor spat a single word: *"Lloigor!"* and there was no reply from my uncle.

I WAS conscious of a subtle undercurrent of terror, quite apart from the atmosphere of menace that pervaded the old house; this was because I had recognized in my uncle's speech the same words spoken but a few moments ago by Eldon in his sleep, and understood that some malign influence was at work in the house. Moreover, there began to drift back into my mind certain memories of strange narratives brought back across the years from a time when I had delved into the forbidden texts at Miskatonic University: weird, incredible tales of Ancient Gods, of evil beings older than man; I began to dwell upon the terrible secrets concealed in the *Pnakotic Manuscripts,* in the *R'lyeh Text,* those vague, suggestive stories of creatures too horrible to contemplate in the prosaic existence of today. I attempted to shake myself free of the cloud of fear that insidiously overcame me, but there was that in the atmosphere of the house to make this impossible. Fortunately, the arrival of my cousin Eldon did what I myself could not do.

He had crept up the stairs behind me

and now stood waiting for some move on my part. I motioned him forward and told him what I had heard. Then we bent to listen together. There was no longer the sound of conversation, but only a sullen, unintelligible muttering accompanied by the growing sound of footsteps, or rather, of sounds which, by their spacing, might have been footsteps, but were made not by any creature familiar to my ears by its sound, but by something which seemed at every step to be walking into a bog; now there was, too, a faint inner trembling in the old house, a strange, unnatural shuddering, which neither decreased nor increased, but continued until the sound of footsteps ceased, fading into the distance.

During all this time no sound had escaped us, but when the footsteps crossed the room behind the door and *went on into space beyond the house,* Eldon caught his breath and held it until I could hear the blood pounding in his temples bent close to mine.

"Good God!" he burst out at last. "What is it?"

I did not trust myself to answer, but had begun to turn slightly to make some kind of reply, when the door opened with a suddenness that left us both speechless.

My Uncle Asa stood there; from behind him on all sides came an overpowering smell, as of fish or frogs, a thick miasmic odor of stagnant water so powerful that it brought me close to nausea.

"I heard you," my uncle said slowly. "Come in."

He stepped aside, and we entered his rooms, Eldon still somewhat reluctant. The windows in the opposite wall were wide open. At first the dim light disclosed nothing, for it was itself as if shrouded in fog, but presently it was evident that something *wet* had been in the room, something that gave off a heavy vapor, for walls, floors, furniture—all were covered with a heavy dew, and here and there on the floor stood pools of water. My uncle did not appear to notice, or, accustomed to it, had forgotten about it; he sat down in his arm-chair and looked at us, motioning us to seats before him. The vapor had begun almost imperceptibly to lift and Uncle Asa's face grew clearer to my eyes —his squat head even deeper in his body now, his forehead gone entirely, his eyes half closed, so that his resemblance to the frogs of our childhood days was marked: a grotesque caricature, horrible in its implications. With only the slightest hesitation, we sat down.

"Did you hear anything?" he asked. But without waiting for an answer, he went on. "I suppose you did. I have thought for some time I must tell you, and now—there may be little enough time left.

But I may deceive them yet, I may escape them. . . ."

He opened his eyes and looked at Eldon; he did not seem to see me at all. Eldon leaned forward a little anxiously, for it was evident that something troubled the old man; he was not himself, he seemed only half present, with his mind still wandering in some far place.

"The Sandwin compact must end," he said in a guttural voice not unlike that I had heard in the room. "You will remember that. Let no other Sandwin be in bondage to those creatures. Did you ever wonder where our income came from, Eldon?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, yes—often," Eldon managed to reply.

"And it's been that way for three generations; my grandfather and my father before me. My grandfather signed my father away, and my father signed me away—but I shall not sign you away, never fear. This must be its end. So they will not allow me to go naturally as they did grandfather and father, they will take me before instead of waiting. But

you will be free of them, Eldon, you will be free."

"Father, what is it? What's the matter?"

He did not appear to hear. "Make no compact with them, Eldon; shun them, avoid them. Evil is their heritage, such evil as you cannot know. These are things you are better without knowing."

"Who was here, Father?"

"Their servant; he did not frighten me. Nor of Cthulhu am I afraid, nor Ithaqua, with whom I had ridden high over the face of the earth, over Egypt and Samarkand, over the great white silences, over Hawaii and the Pacific—but Lloigor, who can draw the body from the earth piecemeal, Lloigor with his twin brother, Zhar, and the horrible Tcho-Tcho people who tend them in the high plateaus of Tibet—of him . . ." He paused abruptly and shuddered. "They have threatened me with his coming." He took a deep breath. "Let him come, then."

MY COUSIN said nothing, but looked his distress.

"What is this compact, Uncle Asa?" I asked.

"And you will remember," he went on, oblivious to my question, "how your grandfather's coffin was kept shut, and how light it was. There's nothing in his grave, only the coffin; and in your great-grandfather's, too. They took them, they have them, somewhere they have given them unnatural life, a soulless life—for nothing more than our sustenance, that small income we have had and the knowledge they gave us of their hideous secrets. It began, I think, in Innsmouth—my grandfather met someone there, someone who like him *belonged* to those creatures who came up, frog-like, out of the sea." He shrugged and glanced once briefly toward the windows on the east, where now fog glowed whitely and the sound of the sea rose distantly, the long roll and murmur of water.

My cousin was about to break the silence that had fallen with another question, when Uncle Asa turned once more to us and said briefly, curtly, "Enough now. Leave me."

Eldon protested, but my uncle was adamant. By this time I needed little further enlightenment; the stories I had heard about Innsmouth, the Tuttle affair on the Aylesbury road, the strange knowledge concealed in those shunned texts at Miskatonic University—the *Pnakotic Manuscripts,* the *Book of Eibon,* the *R'lyeh Text*—and, darkest of all, the dread *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred: all these things revived long-forgotten memories of potent evil Ancient Ones, elder beings of incredible age, old gods who once inhabited not only earth but the entire universe, who were divided between forces of ancient good and forces of ancient evil, of which the latter, now in leash, were yet greater in number if not in power. Most ancient of all, the Elder Gods, the forces of good were nameless; but weird and terrible names identified the others—Cthulhu, leader of the elemental water powers; Hastur, Ithaqua, Lloigor, who led the forces of air; Yog-Sothoth and Tsathoggua of earth. It was now apparent to me that three generations of Sandwins had made a hideous compact with these beings, a compact that promised surrender of soul and body in return for their great knowledge and security in the natural life of the Sandwins: but the most ghastly aspect of this compact was the obvious indication that each generation swore away the succeeding generation. My Uncle Asa had at last rebelled, and he now awaited the consequences.

Once more in the hall, Eldon put a hand on my arm and said, "I don't understand."

I shook him off almost roughly. "Nor I, Eldon; but I've some idea, and I want to get back to the library and verify it."

"You can't go now."

"No, but if nothing happens for a day or so, I'll go. I'll come back later."

We spent an hour or so in Eldon's room, talking all around the trouble, and listening almost morbidly for evidence of further activity above; but there was nothing, and presently I returned to bed, almost as ill at ease for the lack of strange sounds and odors, as I had previously been at their happening.

The remainder of the night passed uneventfully, and so did the next day, during all of which my Uncle Asa did not come from his room. The second night passed quietly, also; so that on the following day I returned to Arkham, welcoming the sight of the ancient gambrel roofs and Georgian balustrades as the face of home.

IN a fortnight I returned to Sandwin House, but nothing more had happened. I saw my uncle briefly and was astonished at the change in his aspect: He had grown to look more and more batrachian, and his body seemed to have shrunk a little. He made some effort to conceal his hands, but not before I had seen a peculiar transformation there: a curious growth of skin from finger to finger, the significance of which did not at first dawn on me. I asked him once what more he had heard from the visitors of that night two weeks ago.

"I'm waiting for Lloigor," he said cryptically, his eyes fixed beadily on the east windows, and a grimness about his mouth.

In this hiatus, I had learned more about the dread secrets of the Elder Gods and the beings of evil they had long ago banished to the hidden places of earth—the Arctic wastes, the desert land, the shunned Plateau of Leng in the heart of Asia, the Lake of Hali, the vast and remote caverns under the seas. I had learned enough to be convinced of my uncle's hideous compact: the pledge of body and soul to serve the spawn of Cthulhu and Lloigor among the Tcho-Tcho people in remote Tibet, to serve them in after-life in their constant struggle against the domination of the Elder Gods, the seals put upon them by the retreating Ancient Ones, the struggle to rise again and spread horror throughout earth.

That my uncle's father and grandfather were even now so serving in some distant fastness, I could not reasonably doubt, for evidence of evil activity was all about me, not alone in tangible things, but in the incredibly strong aura of intangible terror that held the house in siege. On that second visit I found my cousin somewhat reassured, but still waiting half fearfully for something to happen. I could not stir him to any hope, but must perforce reveal to him some of the things I had verified in the ancient and forbidden books reposing in the vaults of Miskatonic.

On the night preceding my departure, while we sat a little uneasily in Eldon's room waiting for something to happen, the door was suddenly opened and my uncle came in, walking with a strange, halting gait unnatural to him. He seemed somehow to have grown smaller, too, now that I saw him on his feet, and his clothes bagged on him.

"Eldon, why don't you go into Arkham with David tomorrow," he said without preamble. "A little change will do you good."

"Yes, I'd like to have him," I said.

Eldon shook his head. "No. I'll stay to see that nothing happens to you, Father."

Uncle Asa laughed brittlely and, I thought, with a faint sneer, as if to deprecate anything Eldon might attempt to do. If Eldon did not understand his father's attitude, it was clear enough to me, since

I knew more than Eldon something of the power of the primeval evil to which my uncle had become allied.

My uncle shrugged then. "Well, you're safe enough; unless you're frightened to death. I don't know."

"You expect something to happen soon, then?" I asked.

The old man gave me a searching glance. "It is clear that you do, David," he said thoughtfully. "I expect Lloiger, yes. If I am able to fight him, I shall be free of him. If I am not——" He shrugged and added, "Then, I think, Sandwin House will be free of this accursed cloud of evil that has shrouded it for so long."

"There is a time?" I asked.

His glance did not waver, but his eyes narrowed a little. "When the full moon rises, I think. If my computations are correct, Arcturus must also be above the horizon before Lloigor can come on his cosmic wind—for, being a wind elemental, he will travel as wind. But I will be waiting for him." He shrugged once more, as if he were dismissing some trivial event instead of the grave threat to his life that was inherent in his words. "Very well, then, Eldon; do as you wish."

He left the room and Eldon turned to me.

"Can't we help him fight this thing, Dave? There must be some way."

"If there is a way, your father knows it."

He hesitated for a long minute before he spoke of something evidently on his mind for some time. "Did you notice father's appearance? How he seems to have changed?" He shuddered. "Like a frog, Dave."

I nodded. "There is some relation between his aspect and that of the creatures with whom he has become aligned. There was something of this in Innsmouth, too —people who bore a strange resemblance to the inhabitants of Devil Reef before the reef was bombed; you must remember it, Eldon."

He said no more until I spurred him on by telling him that he must keep in touch with me by telephone.

"That may be too late, Dave."

"No. I'll come at once. At the first sign of anything amiss, call me."

He agreed, and he went to bed for a restless but quiet night.

THE April moon reached its greatest fullness at approximately midnight on the night of April twenty-seventh. Long before that time, I was ready for Eldon's telephone call; indeed, more than once in the late afternoon and early evening hours, I had the impulse to go to Sandwin House without waiting for Eldon to call, but I resisted. At nine o'clock that night, Eldon called; oddly enough, I had just become cognizant of Arcturus standing over the roofs of Arkham in the east, its amber light glowing brightly despite the brilliance of the moon. That something had happened, I knew, for Eldon's voice shook, his words were clipped, he was eager to say what he must so that I could come without delay.

"For God's sake, Dave—come."

He said no more; he needed to say no more. Within a few minutes I was in my car speeding up the coast toward Sandwin House. The night was quiet, windless; killdeers and whippoorwills were calling, and an occasional nighthawk swooped and sky-coasted within the glow of my car's lights. The air was fragrant with the smell of growing things, the rich aroma of turned earth and early foliage, of swampland and open water, all in direct contrast to the horror that clung tenaciously to mind.

As before, Eldon met me in the yard at Sandwin House. I had no sooner got out of my car than he was there beside

me, greatly distraught, his hands trembling.

"Ambrose has just gone," he said. "He went before the wind started—because of the whippoorwills."

As he spoke, I was conscious of the whippoorwills: scores of them calling from all around, and I remembered the superstition believed by so many of the natives —that at the approach of death, the whippoorwills, in the service of evil, called for the soul of the dying. Their crying was constant, unceasing, rising most steadily and loudly from the meadows west of the Sandwin House, but sounding to some degree all around: a kind of maddening outcry, for the birds seemed close, and the cry of a whippoorwill, nostalgic and lonely at a distance, multiplied many times and placed near by, becomes a harsh, shrill call, difficult to tolerate for long. I smiled grimly at Ambrose's flight, and remembered Eldon's saying he had gone before the wind began. The night was windless still.

"What wind?" I asked abruptly.

"Come in."

He turned and led the way swiftly into the house.

From the moment that I stepped across the threshold of Sandwin House that night, I entered another world, remote from that I had just left. For the first thing of which I was cognizant was the high rushing sound of great winds; the house itself seemed to tremble under the impact of tremendous forces from without, and yet I know, having just come in from outside, that the air was quiet, that no wind blew. The winds, then, sounded within the house, from the upper stories, those quarters occupied by my Uncle Asa, those quarters linked psychically to the incredible evil with which he had become allied. In addition to this incessant rushing of wind, there came as from a great distance that shudderingly familiar ululation, striking in from the east, and at the same time the sound of gigantic footsteps, the soggy, wet footsteps, accompanied by an undeniable sucking noise that seemed to emanate from somewhere beneath us and yet beyond the house itself, beyond even terrestrial earth as we knew it: this, too, arose from some psychic source; this, too, was a manifestation of those evil beings with whom the Sandwins had made that ghastly compact.

"Where's your father?" I asked.

"In his rooms; he won't come out. The door's shut, and I can't go in."

I WENT up the stairs toward the door to my uncle's quarters with the intention of opening that door by force. Eldon came protestingly behind; it was no use, he assured me; he had tried it and failed. I was almost upon the door when I was stopped in mid-stride by an impassable barrier—no thing of substance, but a wall of cold, chilling air beyond which I could not go, no matter how much I tried.

"You see!" cried Eldon.

I tried and tried again to reach through that impassive wall of air toward the door, but I could not. Finally, in desperation, I called out to Uncle Asa. But no human voice answered me; I was not answered at all save by the roaring of great winds somewhere beyond that door, for, strong as the winds had sounded in the lower hall, in the quarters occupied by my uncle the sound of them was incredibly powerful, and it seemed as if at any moment the walls must fly asunder by the terrific forces that were unleashed there. Throughout all this time, the sound of footsteps and the ululation too were growing in magnitude; they were *approaching* the house from the direction of the sea, if such an occurrence were possible in the light of their seeming already there, a part of the unholy aura of evil in which Sandwin House was cloaked. Simultaneously with the approach of these sounds from the

water, there struck into our consciousness another sound from high above us, a sound so incredible, that Eldon looked at me and I at him as if we had not heard aright: it was the sound of music and of voices singing, rising and falling, alternately clear and vague. But in a moment we understood the source of that music as the same from which had come that weirdly beautiful music we had heard in our dreams in Sandwin House; for the music, on the surface of it so beautiful and ethereal, abounded with hellish undertones. It was such music as the sirens might have sung to Ulysses, it was beautiful as the *Venusberg* music, but perverted by evil that was horribly manifest.

I turned to Eldon, who stood wide-eyed and trembling behind me. "Are there any windows open?"

"Not in father's rooms. He worked at that the past few days." He held his head cocked to one side and suddenly gripped my arm. "Listen!"

There arose now from beyond the door a growing ululation accompanied by a ghastly gibbering from among which certain words were audible, certain horrible words only too familiar to me from sight of them in those forbidden books at Miskatonic University, the sounds of those creatures bound in unholy alliance to the Sandwins, the evil mouthings of those hellish beings long ago banished to outer spaces, to remote places of earth and universe by the Elder Gods on distant Betelgeuze.

I LISTENED with mounting horror, made all the greater by knowledge of my impotence, and tinged now with a certain nameless fear for my own existence. The mouthings beyond the door mounted in intensity, with occasionally a sharp sound that must have been made by someone different from them. Their own voices were clear, however, rising and falling even as music still sounded distantly, as if a group of servants were singing their adoration for their master, a hellish chant, a triumphant ululation:

"Iä! Iä! Lloigor! Ugh! Shub-Niggurath! . . . Lloigor fhtagn! Cthulhu fhtagn! Ithaqua! Ithaqua! . . . Iä! Iä! Lloigor naflfhtagn! Lloigor cf'ayak vulgtmm, vugtlagln vulgtmm. Ai! Ai! Ai!"

There was a brief lull, during which some voice came as if in answer: a harsh, frog-like croaking of words unintelligible to me: in a voice whose harsh sound still bore some overtones vaguely, arrestingly familiar to me, as if somewhere before I had heard certain of these inflections. This harsh croaking came more and more hesitantly, the gutturals apparently failing the speaker, and then once again rose that triumphant ululation, that maddening chorus of voices from beyond the door, accompanied by such a feeling of dread horror that no words can describe it.

Trembling violently, my cousin held out his arm to show me that his wrist-watch indicated but a few minutes before midnight, the hour of the full moon. The voices in the rooms before us continued to rise in intensity, and the wind rose, so that it was as if we stood in a raging cyclone; at the same time the harsh croaking voice resumed again, mounting in intensity until abruptly it changed into the most awful wailing man ever heard, the crying of a lost soul, the demon-ridden scream of a soul lost for all time.

It was then, I think, that realization came to me, that I knew and recognized the harsh croaking voice as not one of my uncle's hellish visitor's at all, but *the voice of Uncle Asa!*

At the moment of this ghastly recognition, which must have come to Eldon at the same time, the sounds beyond the door rose to unbearable shrillness, the demoniac winds thundered and roared; my head whirled; I clapped my hands to my ears—

so much I remember, and then nothing more.

I AWOKE to find Eldon bending over me; I was still in the upper hall, lying on the floor before the entrance to my uncle's quarters, and Eldon's pale, luminous eyes were peering anxiously into mine.

"You fainted," he whispered. "So did I."

I started up, startled by the sound of his voice that seemed so loud, though it had been but a whisper.

All was still. No sound disturbed the quiet of Sandwin House. At the far end of the hall the moonlight lay in a parallelogram of white light, lending a mystic illumination to the darkness all around. My cousin looked toward the door to my uncle's quarters, and I went forward unhesitatingly, and yet afraid of what we might find behind it.

The door was still locked; we had finally to break it down. Eldon struck a match to relieve the deep darkness of the rooms.

I don't know what Eldon expected to find, but what we found was far beyond even my most fearful expectations. Even as Eldon had said, the windows had been boarded up so securely that not a single ray of moonlight penetrated the rooms, and on the sills had been laid a strange collection of five-pointed stones. But there had been one point of entrance my uncle had evidently forgotten: the attic window, though this was closed and locked save for a tiny break in one pane. The course of my uncle's visitors had been unmistakable—a wet trail leading into the quarters from the trap-door near the attic window. The rooms were in frightful condition: no single thing remained intact save the chair in which my uncle habitually sat; it was indeed as if a powerful gale had torn asunder papers, furniture, hangings with equal malevolence.

But it was my uncle's chair to which our attention was directed, and what we saw there was all the more frightful in its significance now that the tangible aura of horror had been removed from Sandwin House. The trail leading from the trap-door and attic window went directly to my uncle's chair and back again: a strange shapeless procession of marks—snake-like, some of them, the prints of webbed feet, which, most curiously, seemed to emanate from the chair in which my uncle had been wont to sit and pass outward: all led back to that tiny break in the pane of the attic window; something had come in and something more had gone out. Incredible, terrible, awful to contemplate—what must have taken place while we lay beyond the door, what must have wrung from my uncle that terrible wailing we had heard before we lapsed into unconsciousness.

For of my uncle there was no trace save one—the ghastly remnants of what stood *for* him, rather than *of* him. *In the chair, his favorite chair, lay his clothes: not taken off and flung carelessly down, not that—but in the horrible, life-like position of a man sitting there, fallen a little together: from cravat to shoes, the terrible mockery of a man sitting there—but they were empty, a shell about which clung an abysmal clothing shaped by some ghastly power beyond our comprehension into the effigy of the man who had worn them, the man who, by all the evidence, was drawn or sucked out of them as by some frightful, malign being who employed in his aid the terrible wind heard within the rooms: the mark of Lloigor, who walks the winds among the star-spaces, the terrible Lloigor against whom my uncle had had no weapon!*

"Two luminous specks seemed to smoulder where he had looked to see the eyes."

The Mirror

By LIAM KENNEDY

Who—or what—was the murderous wraith in that old dressing-room? The terrifying experience of an opera singer.

SIGURDSEN strode briskly down the main street of the little Hungarian town and paused before the Opera House, noting with a nod of satisfaction that his name showed up well on the playbills. His company was to open there that night, and after spending a short week-end in Buda he had traveled down as late as he dared and come straight from the railway station, carrying his make-up and personal properties in a leather bag.

The Opera House was in the center of

a block of shops, with no passage on either side of it, and Sigurdsen continued his progress along the street in search of the turning which would lead him to the stage door. Some thirty yards further along he found a side street at the end of which he turned into a dark alley which seemed to lead in the required direction.

The alley was a particularly unpleasant place, for one side of it was occupied by a row of derelict houses, while on the other side a blank wall stretched away into the darkness, showing no sign of the door which he sought.

He thought that it must be the fog which deadened the noises of the main street so that no sound of distant traffic came to his ears and he seemed to walk in an eery silence. He stumbled along through the murk, grumbling to himself at the callousness of theatre proprietors, until at last he discerned a dim glow of light in front of him and realized that he had reached his destination.

The dilapidated condition of the stage door served but to increase his discontent. In contrast to the front of the theatre, which was quite new, its interior and the passages leading away from it looked as if they had been standing there for centuries.

His growing dissatisfaction was slightly assuaged by the stage-doorkeeper who greeted him (to the satisfaction of his professional soul) by name and offered to show him to his room. The theatre, he explained, was a maze of corridors backstage, and a stranger might easily lose himself among them. With a grudging word of thanks, Sigurdsen followed his guide down a flight of stone stairs and along a bewildering succession of gloomy passages, until at last the stage-doorkeeper threw open a door and stood aside to allow him to enter, saying as he did so: "I've made it as comfortable for you as I can, sir. You won't want to change it, will you?"

Something in the tone of the man's voice startled the opera-singer, and he turned to look at him. He saw a face still young, unusually refined for the occupant of so humble a position, but white as wax, and lined and ravaged by some tempest of the soul which puzzled him. Only the eyes were plain to read, for they burned and smoldered with the same agony of hope which had rung in his voice.

Without waiting for a reply he closed the door and was gone, leaving Sigurdsen to stand wondering at his unusual question—at the agony in his voice—and (strange afterthought!) why no sound of receding footsteps had accompanied his retreat along the corridor.

THE room which, to his disgust, was lit only by two candles in sconces at the side of the table, was squalid enough to set him grumbling again, although there were signs that someone had tried to make it comfortable. There was a small square of carpet by the table and the floor had been swept clean. The clothes-hooks on the wall were empty, as was a large dress-basket which stood against the wall between the table and the door, and Sigurdsen determined to give the wardrobe-master a piece of his mind when he arrived late with his stage-clothes. Seating himself at the table, which was furnished with a large mirror, he set to work to put on his wig, leaning forward close to the glass as he made the join.

Behind his own image in the mirror he could see the door, the wall with the clothes-hooks and the top of the dress-basket into whose empty interior he had already peered; and the first time the lid of the basket moved, he was so intent upon his work that he did not immediately notice it. By the time it had forced itself upon his attention there was a definite gap between the lid and the rim, and he swung round in his chair, staring at it in surprise.

The lid was shut, as he knew that it should be, and with an angry shake of the head he turned back to the mirror. This time, however, for some reason which he would have found it hard to explain, he kept a wary eye over the shoulder of his reflected image, upon the top of the basket, only to discover with an unpleasant sense of shock that the lid was now open wider than before, as though it were being pushed up from below. Once again he turned away from the image in the glass and looked directly at it. The lid was shut, though he had heard no sound of its falling, and he strode angrily over to it, wrenched it open, and once more examined the interior of the basket. As he expected, it was empty, and he slammed down the lid, muttering his annoyance as he did so. Once again he sat down at the table—and this time his heart seemed to miss a beat and his body stiffened, for the image in the glass showed him that the lid was now half open and he could see it slowly rising as he watched it.

It was at this moment that he began to be afraid. He wanted to turn away from the mirror, for some vague instinct warned him that in its depths he was about to see something which was not good for him to look upon. He felt an urge to smash the mirror in pieces—to get away from the dressing-room—from the theater, if possible; but some force stronger than himself, stronger even than his fear, held him prisoner. He stared into the mirror and watched the lid of the basket rising, rising, until at last it rested back against the wall and he braced himself to look on that which had lifted it.

There was nothing.

He was soon to discover that although there might be nothing visible, nothing tangible in the basket, *something* was there, for he was immediately conscious of a wave of cold which seemed to pour from its mouth with the silent flow of milk—a freezing, numbing tide which rose higher and higher about him until it reached the level of his face, filling his nostrils with the unforgettable smell of death. Then it flowed over his head and he was completely engulfed. He felt as though he were encased in a block of frozen putrescene, unable to tear his eyes from the well-spring of its emission—the depths of the mirror.

Nor had he long to wait, for as he watched he saw the basket begin to tremble and a creaking sound came from it. He fell into a violent fit of shivering, for he knew, with a terrible certainty, that something which he could not see was alive in the basket—alive with a different life from his own—and it was coming out.

He heard a soft squelching sound upon the floor and the rustle of cloth being dragged free of the wicker, though he could still see nothing. Or *was* there something beginning to take shape in the mirror—something darker than the surrounding gloom—a formless shadow out of which two luminous specks seemed to smolder where he had instinctively looked to see the eyes.

THE shadow came nearer until it stood immediately behind his reflected image, and now he was able to discern things about it which had not been clear to him before. It had looked formless because its garments were not clean-cut, but ragged and torn at the edges and dirty gray in color, and he realized with a violent shrinking of his body that they were grave-clothes, earth-stained and worm-eaten and rotten. He knew that he must escape before the thing came closer: the mere thought of its touch set him to retching: but no power on earth could have moved him from his chair. The thing might get between him and the door and put its hand on him!

He saw it pass round to the side of him,

and, despite his terror, was compelled to look into the luminous specks reflected in the mirror. To his comfort, the eyes were not looking at him but downward to the table. His glance passed beyond the eyes and he saw with a numb frozen horror that it had no face. Yet there should have been something there, for a soiled filthy bandage passed from what might have been the top of the head down and under where he had expected to see the jaw. But the bandage framed a gray nothingness, and he felt that even a grinning skull would have been better than that.

By this time, Sigurdsen felt that he had plumbed the last depths of human terror—that he could endure no more and remain alive. Indeed, the thought passed through his mind that he must be already dead and part of the world of shadows into which he was staring. Perhaps the thought comforted him a little and numbed the sources of his terror; by no other reasoning can he explain how he lived through the next few moments.

As he stared into the depths of the mirror he saw the thing take up his grease-paints and begin to make itself a face.

Out of the gray nothingness there gradually emerged a pale yellowish mask as the foundation color was put on. Then, swiftly and skilfully, the highlights were painted in: the cheeks were reddened and a little pink put on the point of the chin: and, last and most horrible of all, the eyes were outlined and a Cupid's bow formed on the lips.

It was a woman's face which now smiled at him, slowly and terribly, from the depths of the glass, but a ghoulish parody of womanly beauty such as Sigurdsen could not have imagined in his wildest nightmares. It was like a face made of multi-colored wet blotting-paper and gave the impression that if you touched it, it would fall to pieces. But when, staring insanely into the mirror, he saw that the thing was whitening its grave-ravaged arms and hands with the contents of a wet-white bottle, he was seized with a violent fit of nausea and the room spun about him so that for a moment the mirror was obscured.

When he could see clearly again the thing was behind him in its old position, but closer—much closer—than before. He knew now that the moment of climax was upon him, and in a wild paroxysm of terror he strove to lift himself from the chair.

The thing placed its arms about his neck and fondled him.

Nothing which he had feared up to this moment could compare with the terror which racked him now. The arms were soft and womanish, but spongy and wet—and cold—cold as frozen metal, which burns and blisters where it touches. And as they caressed him, he could smell the sour reek of wet clay. He felt that if he did not get loose from them he would go mad and die of disgust. Yet worse was to follow; for after what seemed an eternity of nausea he realized that something new was entering his soul: a horrible, horrifying pleasure, an obscene delight in the touch of those hellish caresses. His last feeble resistance flickered out like a candle in the wind and he surrendered.

He felt the arms being drawn back and cold wet hands began playing about his throat. The fingers were searching—searching, as Sigurdsen realized in a helpless, drugged fashion, for that one particular grip by whose aid even a weak woman can break a man's neck like a rotten stick. As he sat there in a kind of sodden ecstasy, he wondered why the thing should wish to kill him in this manner.

Suddenly, through the growing darkness of the mirror, he saw the door flung open and the stage-doorkeeper stood on the threshold, his face a twisted mask of anguish. Sigurdsen noticed, in a foolish half-witted way, that he seemed to be a long

way off and that when he spoke his voice sounded faint and distant.

"Pray!" he sobbed. "Pray! Oh the long night of Eternity! The long, black night of Eternity!"

It was as though a blinding light had flashed through the room, and in a sudden blaze Sigurdsen saw clearly the awful peril in which he stood. He knew that he must fight the thing that stood behind him or be lost. Not his body, but his soul was the prize, and he too would know the long terror of eternal night.

With an effort which almost racked him in pieces he flung his will against the evil which was ravishing him and knew, on the instant, that his challenge was accepted. Wave upon wave of sensuous anesthesia flowed over him, while those wet spongy arms renewed their fondlings, and the thing seemed to break into a horrid whispering, suggesting unspeakable delights. Sigurdsen fought with the courage of despair and in the deep recesses of his spirit struggled to pray. For a moment the strength of the attack seemed to waver. Struggling to his feet, he grasped the mirror with his two hands and brought it down with a crash upon the make-up table, breaking it into fragments. A dreadful bubbling scream rose from behind him, and he sank deep into unconsciousness.

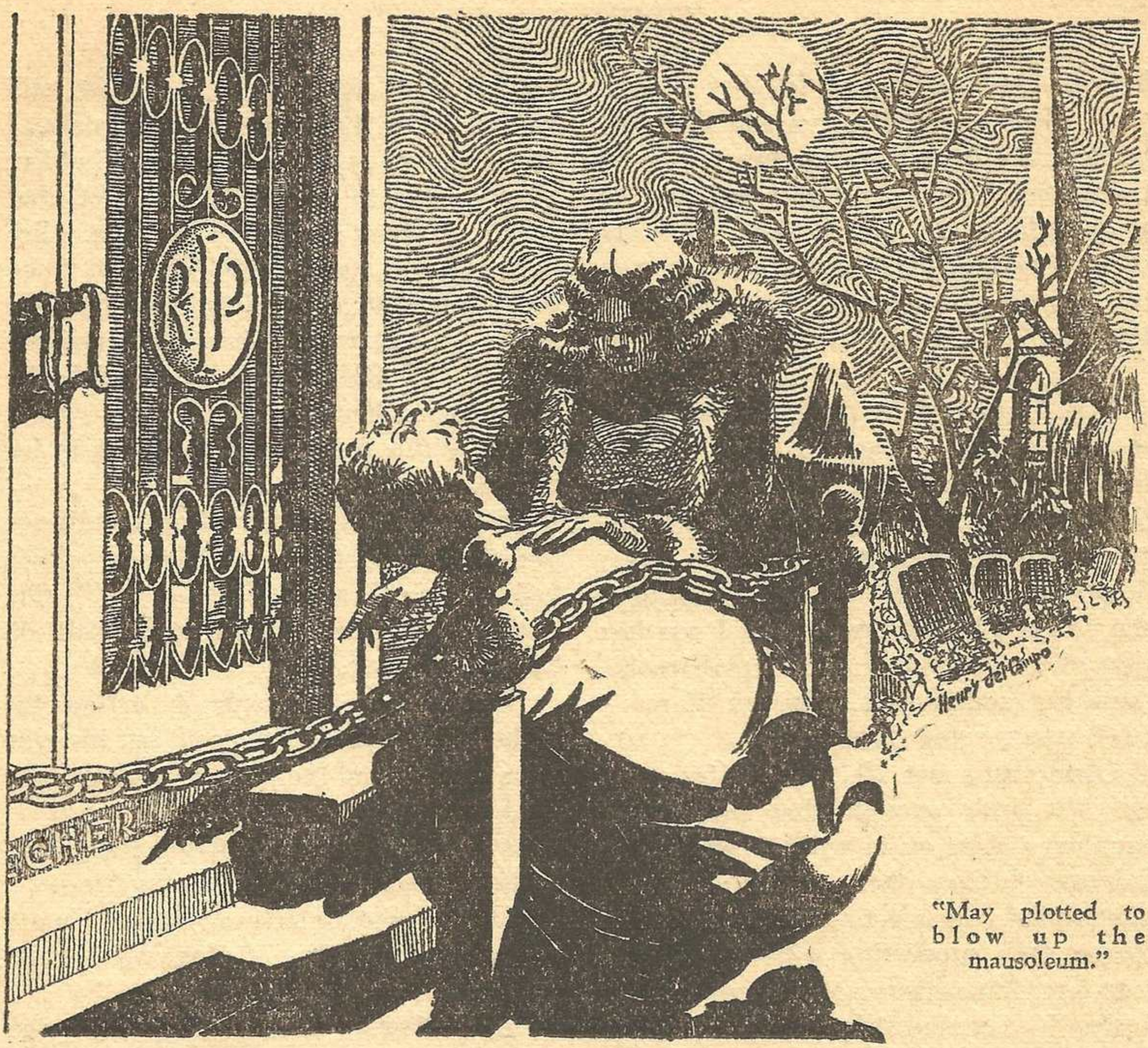
When he came to his senses he found himself, lying on the cobblestones of the alley, his leather bag still unopened by his side. No light shone out into the new lifting fog—he could see no stage door in the wall. He picked himself up and staggered back to the main street, to find that the stage door for which he was searching was in the opposite direction and was reached through an arcade in the side of the block. He arrived there in a state of collapse, was taken to his hotel and put to bed, and for three weeks he hovered on the verge of insanity.

Later, when he had recovered sufficiently to talk of his experience, he drew the story of the theatre from the unwilling manager.

Some fifty years previously, when the old theatre was still standing, a resident stock company had played there whose principal actress was more than ordinarily beautiful. She had begun her professional career in a traveling circus where she had learned a good deal of out-of-the-way knowledge, and, so she confessed at her trial, had become a willing initiate to Satanism. On her own statement she took a keen delight in the act of murder and had actually succeeded in killing twelve men before she was caught, first lulling them to a sense of security with her caresses, and then breaking their necks by means of that peculiar grip which Sigurdsen had such good reason to remember. Her method of killing led the police to believe that the criminal must of necessity be a man of considerable physical strength, and she might never have been caught had it not been that her lover betrayed her. He was a young man of good family who, besotted by her beauty, left his home and took up the position of stage-doorkeeper in order to be near her. She told him of the murders and initiated him into the horrid mysteries of her cult; but he revolted under the burden of guilt, betrayed her to the police and poisoned himself. At her trial she professed herself proud of what she had done in the service of her master and went to her death laughing and unrepentant.

After her execution, said the manager, strange things continued to happen at the old theatre. More mysterious deaths took place, always in the old manner, until the proprietor of the building, vowing that there was a curse on it, had it pulled down and erected the new theatre in its place. And the part where the old dressing-rooms were situated was walled off and filled up with rubble, so that you couldn't get into it if you wanted to.

But Sigurdsen knows better.



"May plotted to blow up the mausoleum."

Turn Over

By DOROTHY QUICK

Turning in his grave was Rufus Fletcher's way of making his family turn over a new leaf.

THE very last time I saw Rufus Fletcher he was in a rage.

"Young man," he snarled, "you'd best keep away from my family. The things they do are enough to make me turn over in my grave!"

I muttered something about being sure Celia was too sweet to worry anyone.

He looked at me and little wrinkles of laughter pushed the anger out of his eyes.

"That shows how much you *don't* know, young man. Blonde curls, blue eyes, peaches and cream complexion, a beautiful torso and a smile that mows them down! That's Celia. She looks like an angel at the top of a Christmas tree, too

holy to touch, but don't let that mislead you. She's engaged to you and she came in at four o'clock this morning and spent twenty-five minutes in the hall saying good-night to the upstart she'd been out with. I declare, it's enough to make a man turn in his grave when a girl carries on like that!"

IT WAS enough to make me feel some cool prickling down my spine. I, too, had spent a long time saying good-night to Celia on various occasions, Celia in my arms, her lips clinging to mine. I was deeply in love with Celia. I'd thought she was in love with me, but if I was just part of a racket—her fiancé, perhaps because her grandfather approved of me—I felt rage surging through me.

"And that's not all," old Rufus went on. "It isn't enough that my granddaughter carries on in what I consider an indecent fashion—her mother does the same thing. She's got a gigolo! A young Italian she's supporting with my money! I declare, I'm ashamed of Frances and her husband—a stuffed shirt—as for Timothy, he's my only son, but he gives me no peace. Wastrel, drunkard, his wife's a fool, and my grandson Rufe is no better. He doesn't drink, but his business methods are nefarious. He'd skin me alive if he could get another nickel for it, and he knows his methods burn me up."

"But, sir," I interjected, I was afraid he would have a stroke, the red was mounting in his face and his white eyebrows jutted out from his forehead like tufts of cotton on a ripe tomato.

"No buts. My other daughter ought to be a comfort to me—the spinsters in the family usually are—but May isn't. She's got queer Communistic ideas, and practically goes around waving a red flag. I sit on her of course—I sit on all of them. They know what I want, what I like and what I don't. I keep them in line, but I'm getting old—eighty-one, and what will happen when I'm gone I don't know. I don't expect any peace in my grave, but I've found a way to manage them. Tell that father of yours I want to see him. I'm going over it again with him just to be sure he understands. Don't marry Celia unless you can wield a horsewhip and are willing to. She's young—you might be able to tame her down."

Just at this point Celia, ravishing in ice blue satin and ermine, came in.

"So," she said, in the voice that always reminded me of the chiming of silver bells, "he's been maligning me." She dropped a kiss on the old man's halo of thistledown hair.

"Get along, and come in earlier tonight." His tones were gruff, but his eyes were smiling and the red was fading from his forehead.

"I'll make it three, just for your sake. Come on Terry." She caught my hand.

"Don't forget to tell your father, I want to see him tomorrow," Rufus called as we went out.

"Oh, dear," Celia whispered, "he wants to see his lawyer. That's a bad sign!"

"I don't consider wanting an interview with my father anything of the sort," I said stiffly.

"Stupid, you know I didn't mean that. Your father's a dear, almost as nice as his son." We were in the famous hall Rufus had been talking about, and Celia put her arm around my neck. "I'm afraid he's going to change his will again, and maybe this time I'll be out. Oh, well, let's forget these sordid things." She tilted her face so her lips came close to mine.

I didn't kiss her. I was remembering what old Rufus had said.

"Celia," I remarked sternly, "my lovemaking can't be very satisfactory if you have to find other kisses, so perhaps we'd better consider our engagement—"

Her face paled and she put her lovely hand over my mouth.

"Oh, no, Terry. No! I guess Rufus told you about last night? You were so busy I did go out with Bob Morton. I did drink too much, I did let him kiss me. I wanted to find out if any other man could thrill me as much as you do."

"Did you—find out?" I managed to mumble through her fingers.

"I found out that I got a certain animal reaction—any man that isn't unattractive can give a woman that—but there wasn't any more—no sting to it. I didn't want to carry on, I didn't want to belong to him wholly the way I want to belong to you. Oh, Terry, let's get married soon." She took her hand away.

I KISSED her. "We'll be married in June," I announced.

She clung to me. "No, Terry, sooner. Let's go down to City Hall tomorrow. The Fletchers are rotten stock, and even though my name's Norton I have Fletcher blood. I need someone to look after me. Let's get married right away!"

"Good idea!" Rufus popped his head out from behind the velvet curtain where he'd been hiding. "Promise me, Terry, you'll marry her no matter what that weak-minded creature, her mother, says."

"I promise," I told him with due seriousness. We shook hands, while Celia clapped hers, then smiling, like a benign old Santa Claus, he let us out the front door.

"Best night's work I've done in a long time." His words floated after us, but Celia and I were too busy making plans for the wedding to hear. Neither of us had any way of knowing that we would never see Rufus alive again.

When we came home we were met by Mrs. Norton who told us that shortly after we'd gone, Rufus had had a stroke and died almost immediately.

"We were just talking when it happened—just talking—poor dear father." She began to sob.

I could imagine what the "just talking" had consisted of! Being in my father's law office, where Rufus Fletcher's affairs were handled, I knew every time his daughter "talked" to him it meant money, requests that usually were granted. Tonight he'd been on a rampage anyway so had probably refused. That would have been a signal for fireworks. I could picture everything perfectly but I hadn't much time to check. Here I was with two wailing females on my hands. Celia had buried her face on my shoulder and begun to cry. I knew her tears were genuine, she had been fond of the old man, but I wasn't sure about her mother's.

I was greatly relieved when I saw my father coming downstairs. He looked very solemn and rather disturbed.

"I'm glad you're here, Terry," he nodded to me, and then addressed Mrs. Norton. "I'm sorry to intrude on your grief and that of the other members of the family, but in view of the"—he hesitated—"rather unusual directions Mr. Fletcher has left for his burial, I thought I'd better talk to the family at once. The others are waiting in the library."

Then and there I *knew* Mrs. Norton's grief wasn't real. She stopped sobbing at once and regarded my father coldly. "Surely Mr. Winthrop, we might have a few hours of privacy."

"It seems best to acquaint you with these—er—somewhat unusual provisions —at once—"

"Just what are these arrangements to which you refer?"

"If you'll come to the library I'll go into them fully."

In solemn procession we followed my father. Celia clinging to me. Once there we found Thomas Norton, very quiet and Timothy Fletcher and his son. Timothy

had been drinking and young Rufe had the avaricious look in his eyes his grandfather had disliked. His mother, Bertha Fletcher, was a nondescript kind of person; she was sniffling unobtrusively. May Fletcher sat straight and stiff in a high-backed chair. She was the only one who resembled Rufus, and the likeness came more from her thick white hair, which aureoled her face as her father's had done.

They all looked up when we came in and Thomas Norton came over and put his arm around his wife. She promptly shrugged it away. Frances was the brittle, beauty parlor type—a woman of forty-five who looked thirty, but nevertheless gave the impression to a really observant regard, that without the make-up, massages, and lotions she would look her age.

Young Rufe acted as spokesman. "We are all very curious, Mr. Winthrop."

My father sat down and eyed him.

"I don't doubt it. Once again my apologies for intruding upon your—er—grief, but as Mr. Fletcher has made some very peculiar arrangements I thought you should know about them beforehand. For instance the coffin that your father ordered —and paid for—is extra wide."

There was a little chorus of exclamations. May Fletcher finally crashed through with, "May I ask why?"

"Certainly. Your father expects to turn often in his grave."

Another chorus of exclamations; the shock stopped Celia's crying.

"Mr. Fletcher said that with the collection of heirs he had—I beg your pardon but I am quoting the words of your father —that he would probably spend most of his time turning in his grave, so he might as well do it in comfort."

"Preposterous—won't allow it!" Timothy spoke up.

My father shook his head. "You can't prevent it. Mr. Fletcher had it put in his will. The coffin will be connected with a very expensive electrical apparatus, which will register each turn on an instrument in my office. It has already been installed in the family mausoleum by the electric company Mr. Fletcher selected. When Mr. Fletcher's—er—remains are placed there it will be connected with wires coming from the coffin. In the bottom is a thin pad on which Mr. Fletcher will lie. If Mr. Fletcher turns in his grave, it will definitely be registered. I have instructions to have a clerk constantly watching the instrument in my office which will register the convolutions."

"It's crazy, and shows that my grandfather—" Rufe began.

My father held up his hand.

"There's a good reason for it. Mr. Fletcher has left his estate divided equally between you all, including Mr. Norton and Mrs. Timothy Fletcher. He said he'd like them to have some independence—they hadn't had any so far, and if they didn't soon they'd be buried without ever having been able to call their souls their own."

Mrs. Norton bit her lip, Timothy Fletcher laughed aloud, while his son was obviously annoyed.

Father continued, "The money is to be held in trust by the bank and myself and paid out in a monthly allowance to each one, *but* if Rufus Fletcher turns in his grave that month's check is to be withheld from the person responsible for his turning and divided equally among the others, or if I cannot determine who is responsible, then no one is to receive any money that month, and the money is to go to charity."

"We can break the will," Rufe squinted his eyes. "It's perfectly obvious that my grandfather was out of his head."

MY FATHER smiled. "Mr. Fletcher anticipated that you might say that, and also that the—er—unusual arrange-

ments might give some cause for such a conclusion, and guarded against any action on your part. He had three of the finest sanity experts examine him and certify to his sound mentality, also two judges and his personal physician. I think you'd not get very far with a suit, Rufe, and I must also tell you that anyone who tries to break the will can have no share whatever in the estate."

Rufe's importance collapsed like a deflated rubber tire.

Mrs. Norton began sputtering until May drew herself up still higher in her chair.

"Don't be ridiculous, Frances. It's all very silly. I'm sure I'd never do anything to—to—make Father turn in his grave, but if that's the way he wanted things to be we'll have to abide by what he says in the will."

"I'll jolly well say so, and I think it's a good joke on all of us." Timothy laughed.

"You won't think it's so funny when you have to stop drinking." It was the first time Bertha, Timothy's wife, had ever asserted herself so far as I, or anyone else, knew. We all looked surprised, Timothy most of all. The mirth trickled out of him.

Frances Norton looked at May. "You don't need to be so sure of yourself either, my dear sister. Father didn't approve—"

"When it comes to approving, how about your—" May cut in but father stopped her.

"It may interest you to know a few of the things your father most disliked. He gave me a list, but it's pretty firmly stamped on my mind. Once again I apologize—you'll realize, however, I'm only quoting:

"May's Communistic ideas. None of my money can support anything but Americanism, and I don't like her holier-than-thou attitude either. The two don't go together and she'd better forget them both.

"As for Frances, she'd better stick to her husband, forget society and try to be a good mother, and not spend so much on clothes.

"Timothy—stop drinking. Get to know your wife and thrash your son.

"Rufus, try to learn it's more blessed to give than to receive, and honesty is the best policy.

"Celia, be sweet and natural, stop playing, and make Terry a good wife."

At this point Celia put her hand in mine.

Then Father went on. "He said, 'The only thing Thomas and Bertha can do to make me mad is not to take advantage of the independence I'm giving them.' There, I think these things are almost verbatim, but I'll mail a copy to each of you. I also forgot to mention there is a register here as well as in my office." He walked to the book case, turned a key, swung open the door; the books came with it, and behind was something that looked like a radio. On the dial, which resembled a compass, were four things—"R. I. P., Full Turn, Turn to Right, Turn to Left." There was a needle that at present indicated "R. I. P.," "Resting in peace." Father said, "If there's any change, the needle indicates it, also a bell rings. It will, I'm afraid make quite a bit of noise. Rufus wanted it like that, but once it is noted in my office, where it rings simultaneously, though not so loud, it will be switched off until the next time."

"Idiotic! We're all fools to even listen to this rigmarole. I shall consult a lawyer!" Rufe raged.

"If you do, you'll lose your inheritance. Besides the firm of Winthrop and Winthrop is the best in the city. The world knows that," Thomas Norton said pompously.

Timothy laughed. "Don't be an idiot yourself, my boy. There's no use giving up anything or fighting the will. Everything will be just as Father wanted it."

Everyone looked at him in surprise.

"Are you going to stop drinking?" his wife asked.

He laughed again. "Of course not. You don't suppose I believe Father can turn in his grave—do you believe it?" He threw the question in my father's face.

For the first time that evening my father smiled.

"I've been wondering how long it would take that point to penetrate, and who would see it first. Congratulations, Timothy. You are quite right. I don't believe Rufus Fletcher or anyone else can turn in their grave. I told him so. He didn't agree, but that's beside the point. I take it no one wants to interfere with Mr. Fletcher's arrangements."

NO ONE did, not even young Rufe. He was quite chagrined that he had not thought of such an obvious solution. There was a general lifting of spirits. Even May unbent and talked kindly to Bertha.

Celia clutched my hand harder, pulled me down until my face was on a level with hers. "Terry, I want to be married right away."

"Now?" I exclaimed. "But the funeral!"

"I don't care. Grandfather wished us to be married right away—we promised. I—I don't want him to turn over in his grave."

I looked at her closely and saw that, incredible as it seemed, she actually believed it was a possibility. I leaned over and kissed her, then led her to my father.

"We want to be married right away, Dad—tomorrow."

The others, who had begun to cluster in little groups, immediately focused their attention on us.

"Isn't this a bit soon?" my father asked, but I could tell from his tone he didn't dislike the idea.

Celia began to explain. She told them what Rufus had said earlier in the evening, and our promise, and reiterated that she didn't want her grandfather to turn in his grave.

"I quite see your point. So far as I can see it's only advancing the date. I'll arrange with Judge Freeman to marry you tomorrow. Fortunately you've got the license."

Father knew I'd been carrying that around for weeks.

"Nothing of the sort. Just because Celia is an heiress is no reason for gobbling her up immediately!" Frances Norton was her nastiest self.

Father replied to her. "Celia's always been an heiress and, so far as that goes, my boy not only is my heir but has money of his own."

"I don't care. I positively forbid the match, and Celia's not of age. I won't allow her to be married before June—if then—"

There was a silence broken by a piercing scream from upstairs. We all rushed outside to find Molly, the housekeeper, rushing down the steps faster than her age would ordinarily have allowed.

"It's the master!" she gasped. "I was sitting there watching him and all at once he moved. As sure as I'm speaking he turned over on the bed. He's lying on his side, and I don't believe it's dead he is!"

No one spoke, no one moved. Frances turned white under her rouge. My father rushed upstairs and came back looking pale around his mouth.

"There's no doubt he's moved. He was lying on his back when I left. Telephone for the doctor, Terry."

Dr. Linden lived next door. He came in and solemnly reiterated that Mr. Fletcher was quite dead, mumbled something about it being either a practical joke or a cadaveric spasm, and went away as quickly as he had come.

Celia turned to her mother.

"It was just after you said I couldn't marry Terry. Grandfather knows what

we say, what we do! I'm going to do what he wanted. I'm going to marry Terry tomorrow."

This time Frances Norton made no protest.

WE WERE married at noon. I took Celia home to my apartment for the honeymoon as we had to attend the funeral the next day. I told her I didn't think she should go to the cemetery but she shook her head.

"I'm going to be a good wife, Terry, and do what you say, but not this. Grandfather would want me to be there. I did so many things he didn't like when he was alive that I want to make up for them now."

"So you believe he knows?" I asked, as I kissed her.

"Yes, I do. The money doesn't count, Terry. I—I just want to please him."

"I know that, sweet." I kissed her again.

THE funeral was quite in keeping with the Fletcher tradition. The extra wide coffin was so arranged with flowers that its unusual size passed without notice. The interment was to be private. It took place with a great bevy of electrical experts who connected a complicated series of wires supervised by my father, while the heirs took refuge in stony silence. Timothy, for once, was quite sober, and clung to Bertha in a fashion that brought a glow of happiness to eyes from which it had long been a stranger. Celia was the only one who cried, but I knew that underneath her grief was the great happiness we had found together which would soon pull her out of her misery.

When everything was finally settled, we left the mausoleum and father locked the door and put the big heavy key in his pocket.

"I forgot to tell you, there's to be a guard here day and night. Mr. Fletcher was afraid someone might cut the wires." He looked at Rufe and from the young man's face it was easy to read that he had had such an idea—even though his words denied it, "As though it would be necessary!"

"You forget—" Frances began.

"That," Rufe faced her fiercely, "was a cadaveric spasm, or else Molly moved him. Anything else is unthinkable."

"According to instructions I am probating the will at once. Shall I come and read it to you all tonight?" my father asked.

"No," Rufe flung at him. Being the business man of the family, he seemed to always assume the role of spokesman, and nobody differed.

"Your first checks will be due on the 15th." It was the tenth, so there was not long to wait.

"Considerate," Rufe sneered.

Then the group broke up.

THREE days later Celia and I were invited to dinner by—wonders of wonders—Bertha Fletcher. It was the first time we'd been to the Fletcher home since the funeral. Celia's mother had pointedly ignored her daughter's existence. Celia didn't want to go but when I pointed out it would be much better to be friendly, and this was a way of breaking the ice—besides encouraging Bertha's independence, she gave in very sweetly. As we went up the steps she said, "It's funny, but I don't feel any sense of belonging here any more."

"Of course not—you belong to me."

The door opened; Broadstairs, the butler, was delighted to see us. Bertha came out of the living room. I was amazed at the change in her. Before she had been an inconspicuous old maid type, despite having a husband and son. Now she was as smart looking as Frances and much prettier, for her skin was naturally lovely, and

the dusky hair which was rejoicing in its first permanent made her look young and stylish.

"I'm glad you came," she said hurriedly. "We want to see if you can't do something with your mother. She's been seeing a lot of that Mr. D'Alvari and I thought—"

Thomas Norton came down the stairs and greeted Celia affectionately. He, too, had suffered a "sea change." He was more natural and much less pompous. The other drifted in—Frances, brittle as a newly formed icicle. It seemed funny to think of them all still living in the old house as they had done when Rufus was alive.

Conversation was difficult at first but soon simmered into normality.

After dinner the ladies left the dining room. I saw determination in Celia's eye, and knew she meant to speak to her mother.

Timothy refilled his brandy glass.

"It's funny how strained we've all felt —as though we had the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads."

"Don't be silly, Father. It's all nonsense. Grandfather can't turn over in his grave. No bell's going to ring." Rufe spoke calmly.

"Are you sure of that?" There was eagerness in Timothy's voice.

"Certainly."

"Then why didn't you sign the papers for the Carleton deal you knew Rufus wouldn't approve of?"

The young man laughed. "Because there was a clause *I* didn't approve of! Not for any silly foolishness about graves."

"Oh." Timothy drained his glass and filled it again.

"Let's go upstairs," Thomas Norton suggested, nervously eyeing the brandy bottle.

We all started upstairs, but when we reached the drawing room, Timothy wasn't with us.

"I'd better go back and look for him," Norton said to me. "He's been drinking very little since the funeral. I'd hate to see him start." He turned toward the door, but Frances' high-pitched voice arrested him. "Thomas, I wish to tell you all that I will not have my friendships interfered with—"

"But, Mother, I only suggested—" Celia began.

"That my friendship with Tony D'Alvari is more than a friendship," Frances cried. "You've all been talking about me behind my back, setting my own child against me—afraid I'll make Father turn over in his grave, I suppose, whereas the truth is—"

It went on and on—arguments until I wanted to pick Celia up and carry her home. It had just reached the point where a hair-pulling row between Frances and Bertha seemed imminent when the bell began to ring.

At first they thought it was the front door, but gradually the idea of what it really was seeped through their consciousness. It was the bell in the library! Rufus Fletcher had turned over in his grave. When we got there, the library dial had registered a full turn!

It seemed incredible, but they had seen with their own eyes when the apparatus was installed that here was no possible trickery. My father had attended to that. The only thing that could ring the bell was movement inside the coffin.

I shivered inwardly. Celia was quite calm, and apparently not surprised.

"I knew it would happen." She had to talk loud, the bell made such a clamor.

"It's your doing," Rufus told Frances. "You and your gigolo! That's what made him turn."

Frances gasped, but recovered herself quickly.

"Not at all. I've done nothing. Father —Father wouldn't turn over for a family quarrel—he actually enjoyed those. I—it's much more likely to be *your* father. He's probably drunk, and father always hated that."

She was right—about Timothy. We found him sprawled on the dining-room table, the empty brandy bottle beside him. There was no doubt of his condition being the cause of the infernal din that still went on from the bell.

By the time we'd gotten him to bed, my father arrived. Frances was screaming hysterically, "I can't stand it—Father couldn't turn over in his grave, but he has, he has! Oh, please make that bell stop!" Just at that moment the bell ceased ringing. It was a tremendous relief to us all.

Young Rufe tried to put some of the blame on Frances, but after everyone else had spoken up Frances was absolved from blame. She was still hysterical, so Celia took her upstairs where Bertha was already watching over Timothy.

The rest of us milled over the situation for a long time without reaching any definite conclusion. Thomas Norton believed in the supernatural, just as Celia did; Rufe didn't. I never had, but in view of the facts it was beginning to look as though I were wrong.

I didn't like the glint in Rufe's eyes.

"I am going to investigate that mausoleum and the wiring," he announced.

"Investigate all you like, but you can't open the coffin. That's in the will," Father told him. "Mr. Fletcher didn't want to be given what he spoke of as "the once over" every time one of you doubted whether he'd moved or not."

"If there's trickery it doesn't come from *inside* the coffin." Rufe looked at me.

"May I ask—" I began.

"Certainly. If one of us loses his share, there's that much more for the rest. You married Celia pretty quickly, and she's been behaving remarkably for a Fletcher. I can only assume that's your influence!" he sneered.

"Celia happened to love her grandfather. She's the only one of you with a heart. She also thinks it's quite possible for him to turn and she isn't going to be responsible. So far as the money is concerned, I have plenty without Celia's. I wouldn't touch a penny of it."

Rufe walked out of the room and May, the stiff bulwark of propriety, cried out, "Father—Father!" and fainted.

On the way home I asked my father, who was walking a few blocks with us, "Do you believe old Rufus is turning over in his grave?"

My father hesitated. "I wouldn't have a week ago, but now—"

THAT was the way we all felt. Except young Rufe, who went to the mausoleum the next morning with a formidable barrage of experts of his own. They had hardly started their investigation when the bell began to ring. I was in our office at the time, and could hear it buzzing away in the room set apart for it. Rufe continued his investigations despite it, but all he got was the indisputable opinion that the bell had to be rung by movement within the coffin.

So he returned to the Fletcher mansion with no satisfaction and much poorer, for he had lost his first allowance on account of the bell's ringing.

The rest of the month was hectic—the bell went off so frequently. Sometimes our office had difficulty in placing the cause. Once was obvious. After the allowances had been paid Frances Norton gave a generous check to D'Alvari. Rufus Fletcher's instructions had been definite about keeping an eye on the activities of his family. Father had suspected D'Alvari would be the source of trouble sooner or later, so he had had him watched. The

minute he went to cash the check, the bell rang!

Once it seemed as though we'd have to give up placing the blame for a half turn on old Rufus' part, and Father said he'd withhold everyone's allowance for the month. Then Bertha tearfully confessed that she'd given her money to Timothy. That, of course, didn't fit in with Rufus' idea of independence.

Another time the bell sounded was when young Rufe signed the papers for a business deal his father had mentioned. The dial registered a full turn for this.

Even my sweet Celia was responsible for a turn to the left. Being lonely and bored when I had had to work late several nights, she went out dancing with Joe Blake. I knew about it and didn't mind, but Rufus apparently did, for the bell rang.

May Fletcher set it off several times; two donations to the Communist party and one speech distinctly on the Red side were the causes.

Timothy also was responsible for electrical discords and half revolutions, for he went on drinking. Even Thomas Norton made old Rufus turn when he allowed his wife to interfere with his going to his college dinner because she wanted him to stay at home with her.

The St. John Orphanage was much richer that month and Rufe had to run the house, as he had means of his own.

The worst of all was when May plotted to blow up the mausoleum. The guards pretended to be bribed, but reported what was going on, and we caught her with one of her Communistic friends about to plant a time bomb. The needle made three full turns around the dial and the bell went on for hours.

Things continued like this for several months, then the bell rang less frequently. Finally Rufe called a family meeting one morning. We all came and sat silently in the Fletcher library. The book case was open and the dial was plain to be seen. Nobody jested about it any more; in fact, they were too serious.

"I've never believed in ghosts. I really thought when Mr. Winthrop first mentioned the turn over business that Grandfather had been insane. I realize now that this isn't so. There are more things in heaven and earth than we dream of. Grandfather turns all right! It registers, and if he didn't move—actually move, I mean—it wouldn't. I've had experts, and I've sat hours out in that cold mausoleum with the guards. I know no one touches the wires. I've even encouraged Father to get drunk to see if the bell would ring at the right time. Well, it did. I am convinced, and I've called this meeting because I think we're being fools."

"What do you mean?" Frances asked.

"To lose money all the time and be responsible for disturbing our relatives' rest. After all, it lies with us as to whether Grandfather turns over or not."

I could see Father nodding his head with approval. Bertha, who had been angry when Rufe spoke of getting Timothy drunk, deliberately calmed down, and Timothy himself laughed in his jovial way.

"It would come hard with me. I'm fond of brandy."

"You'll stop drinking it if I have to beat you to a pulp," Rufe told him.

"Look—look at the dial!" Celia cried.

Our heads turned, like those of people at a tennis match, toward the dial. The hand, which had been at "R. I. P.," had begun to quiver and move toward the "Half turn to the left."

"I didn't mean it, sir—really!" Rufe spoke as though his grandfather was actually in the room. "I wouldn't beat him, but I will see he behaves himself—you'll like that, I know!"

The hand moved back to "R. I. P." where it was finally still.

"That settles it," Timothy whispered.

"I've never really quite believed Father moved, but I do now."

"How can he know what we do, as we do it, so quickly?" May asked.

"All things are possible to the soul. It is free and can be everywhere." Thomas Norton, who was very religious, spoke the words as though he were in a pulpit of the church.

"The old Egyptians had a theory—they believed that a unity was composed of three parts—the body, the ba, or spirit, and the ka, which was more or less the body's guardian. The ka stayed in the tomb to watch over the body, but the ba, or spirit, could roam about at will—sometimes even take human form, though eventually it must return to its two other components," Bertha told us. "It's Father's spirit that knows everything we do, though his body registers it."

I COULDN'T help thinking how completely Bertha had changed. She had always been scholarly, but before Rufus Fletcher died she would no more have dared to share her knowledge of erudite matters than she would have appeared in the nude.

"There's another explanation," I put in, for I had been giving the matter considerable thought. "I believe that everything produces a vibration of its own, like a radio wave length, for example. Well, Rufus Fletcher's body may be so attuned to the things he disliked that when one of them happens it produces an automatic reaction."

May nodded her head. It was plain that this appealed to her more than any of the other reasons.

"I think the dead do know what we do. I believe they have power—much more than we, even if they can't make themselves visible. I'll do anything I can to have Grandfather rest in peace, and not have that horrid little hand moving around." Celia's voice shook with emotion.

"Good girl," for once Rufe wasn't intolerant. In fact, his whole nature seemed to have mellowed. "Now, how about the rest of you?" He looked around; everyone nodded. "You'll stop drinking?" He directed his question to Timothy.

"I'd be a brute if I didn't. Perhaps the thought of Dad turning over will keep me sober. I hope so." Timothy was actually serious.

Bertha put her hand in his. "I'll help you, Tim—and—I'll be independent."

Rufe switched to May. "And how about the Communist party?"

She sniffed. "I'm finished with them anyway. Ever since we tried to bomb the mausoleum and they told me I belonged with the aristocrats because I owned a marble palace, for that's what they thought the mausoleum was, I'm through! I'm thinking of taking up the cult of Karish-el-Khiam."

"Look," Rufe swung around, "Grandfather doesn't like it!" The needle was wobbling again.

"All right—I wasn't very enthusiastic about Karish. I'll go and help the Reverend Spleen at Father's own church."

The needle went back to "R. I. P."

"And don't think it's on account of the money," May went on. "I—I hate to think of Father so restless—"

"So do I!" exclaimed Frances. "I've been worrying about it lately and I told Toni last week I didn't want to ever see him again. You know, Father seems closer now that he's dead than when he was alive. I want you to know, Thomas, there's never been any harm in my friendship with D'Alvari. I was just vain enough to be flattered with attention, and silly enough to want to be young and go on dancing and having good times. I've given you some horrid moments, but I'll make up to you for them."

Norton took his wife's hand. "I've been foolish, too, letting you go your own way—staying in too much. Hereafter we'll step out together. I can dance myself—after a few lessons."

Celia's tears were quite dry now and she smiled happily.

"That just about settles everything then," Rufe said, "except I do want you to know it isn't all money with me either. I'm going to give up all my shady transactions and be as honest in my dealings as Grandfather was. He made his fortune squarely, I guess I ought to be able to do as well. It's only lately that I've realized what a darn fine man he was. I want to think of him at peace." Rufe actually wiped a tear away from the corner of his eye.

Father got up and said that their decision had made him personally very happy and he knew that it would have an even greater efficacy where Rufus Fletcher was concerned. Everyone shook hands and the conference ended on a high note, unusual for that family.

ON OUR way back to the office I asked Father, "What did you think of my theory of vibration?"

"It's as good as any. I've got one of my own."

"Why didn't you mention it?"

"I don't want to interfere with their good resolutions. They'll be hard enough to live up to as it is. But I'll tell you if you promise to keep it to yourself."

"Of course."

"Not even a whisper to Celia."

I promised solemnly.

Then Father began. "Rufus Fletcher knew his family. He knew that underneath all that screw ball exterior was intrinsic worth, but he was wise enough to see that only something drastic could strip off the outer skin. He was also sure that, alive, he couldn't do it, but he obviously thought he might be able to—dead. I know he believed thoroughly in after life, and the survival of the soul. But Rufus Fletcher wasn't a man to take chances. It has occurred to me that he might have had some kind of an electric machine hidden in the lining of the coffin that would ring the bell and register turns or half turns every so often. He'd know his family well enough to know there'd be plenty of cause."

"That's a swell theory, but it doesn't explain how the bell rang so opportunely."

"Coincidence."

"And the way the neddle quivered this morning when young Rufe threatened to beat up his father, and May spoke of that cult."

"Oh, I'll admit it's a theory you can shoot full of holes, still it's odd that he said in the will his coffin must never be opened or disturbed. It was because he made such a point of that I got the idea. I may be right or wrong. I don't suppose we'll ever know the truth."

We never did. The complete right-about change in the Fletcher family didn't happen all at once. There were lapses; Timothy found it hard to give up his brandy and Frances, even if she is my mother-in-law, is primarily a fool. The bell rang occasionally in spasmodic lengths of time over a period of thirteen months—just long enough to "set" the entire family in their new roles. Soon they were letter perfect; then the bell ceased ringing.

No one ever doubted that it would sound again if they didn't live up to Rufus Fletcher's idea of them, so they did—and Rufus Fletcher rested at peace in his grave.

Had he ever turned over? Had my father just happened to hit on the real solution, or had Rufus Fletcher's last slumbers actually been disturbed? Personally I believe they were, but it's a question that will never be answered.

"Charles was capering like a ballet dancer—was chanting in a nameless language."

The Impossible Adventure

By H. T. W. BOUSFIELD

The evolution of the human family disproved, denied—every speculator since Darwin, wrong.

IF YOU find this story incredible, I must ask you to remember that it is based upon notes made by my uncle who died in the Spring of 1939 and left me what small property he had—an old-fashioned and dilapidated house in Caithness, a quantity of debts and very little money with which to settle them.

My uncle must have been, I think, a man of greater classical learning than he believed, and if his notes had been published by himself in the form of a properly annotated paper he might have reached the head-lines. But as I hardly know the difference between Greek and Latin other people must make what they can of the affair. I cannot even date it, but I should imagine Uncle David's impossible adventure happened in the early thirties—if one is to believe that it happened at all—because I do vaguely remember that his great-niece, Barbara Schofield (not my side of the family), was lost in an air-liner in the Spring of 1933 or 1934, and the house itself was badly damaged by fire about a year earlier.

I say at once, I have no corroborative evidence. I am too busy to go to Greece—and I have no intention of doing so; it would cost hundreds, with an interpreter and so on. As for the Macdonald couple who looked after the Caithness house, anybody is welcome to their address, and I wish anybody joy of them—rude, independent, ungrateful. In fact, insolent.

(*Undated*)

THIS is a brief account of an adventure that befell me, David Gannon, in Greece less than two years ago. I must record it before I cease to believe in it myself.

My interest in Greek remains has never been scientific enough to qualify me for membership of any learned Society, I fear. I have been an amateur, and rather an idle one, all my life. But I have some critical faculty in literature, and I have a natural gift for languages. Greek literature and legend consoled me in my schooldays, and when I visited Greece for the first time I did not mind the primitive conditions that then confronted any traveler who went where tourists are not expected. The flowers in the valleys and the snow on the hills actually seemed more familiar and more dear than my native Scotland.

I vaguely intended to write. But to my shame I never produced anything in all the years except one small book of lyrics—I refer to my *Sporades* which appeared in 1927 and is now out of print. It wasn't a success, I may say. The English Press as a whole ignored it, though a small edition went quite well in America.

I suppose I was Greek-mad, but I most certainly was not insane!

I could not write well, I say, of the Greece I loved, but I must write now of what I saw and did and experienced during my third year in Hypata.

It's in Arcadia (to use the traditional name). I made it my headquarters as soon as I saw it. Indeed I bought in that remote mountain village a house of sorts where I could watch the sunrise and dream my sterile dreams and write my poems that were never quite good enough—and forget that better men than I were doing real work in the world.

In Hypata I spent the Spring and early Summer, undisturbed by political upheavals and changes of government. Nothing ever changed in Hypata. It was too high and too far away.

The peasants accepted me without animosity. They never treated me as an alien and one—my real friend and my servant—had, I believe, a genuine affection for me.

He was an old man called Peter.

Now Greece is a volcanic country, full of semi-extinct volcanoes—a country where the hills are never quite asleep. There are earthquakes in Greece that never seem to make front-page news in London—many earthquakes.

I got quite used to them, but I remember—in March it was—being shaken almost out of my bed by what seemed an endless convulsion, so that I thought the little house would fall down on me. It did not; it was sturdily built of stone, but when

Peter arrived the next morning with goat's milk and provisions he had a tale to tell.

There had been a fall of rock, five hundred feet above me. A vineyard had been overwhelmed. The peasants had fled to the valleys. The hill-top was scarred and broken. And Peter had been caught in the catastrophe and narrowly escaped with his life.

In his guttural dialect he told me an incredible thing.

"I have found a centaur," he said. "It is wounded, and unless you can help it will die."

That is the proper way in which to announce the impossible: "I have found a centaur." As one might say: "The trout are rising; come quickly."

Of course we went through the natural exchange of incredulity and re-assertion. But I was dressing all the time I argued and disbelieved, and I ran as fast as Peter, the old goat, up that hill.

The fall of rock had been more tremendous than I'd imagined. Fortunately it had crashed away from Hypata. The top of the little mountain had been obliquely sliced off as if by a sharp knife. And one astounding thing was that a great tunnel was revealed, running down spirally into the earth.

IT WAS in the mouth of this tunnel that the incredible deferred to the impossible—

Most people imagine a centaur as a horse, four legs and all, with a man's body, neck, head and arms where the normal horse's head would grow. Such a monster is one of the commonest things in Greek art, and there are plenty of appropriate legends to describe them. It appears that such centaurs somehow contrive to be notoriously amorous as well as chronic dipsomaniacs, and no poet or story-teller bothered to answer the many physiological questions that must have occurred to the least critical minds.

But I dimly remembered that before the quadrupled centaur established himself upon the average amphora there were earlier legends of creatures, derived before evolution, or God, had finally settled the problem of the ultimate body of man—creatures human to the buttocks, and then with two legs indeed, but horses' legs hoofed and covered with hair.

Before us there was something that was all man to the hips, and then all horse. It might have been dead. It was unconscious. One of those strange but strangely graceful legs had been broken by a rock. There was a bruise on the forehead.

I shall never be able to describe my sensations at the sight. I believe I might even have sniggered, but from the waist up, at any rate, there was a fellow-creature who needed help. And from the waist up was no savage, no half man or missing link, but a blond, strapping youth with a fine head, regular, intellectual features, a mass of cropped fair hair, a muscular body. From the waist up he would have made a model for Praxiteles. From the waist down the evolution of the human family was disproved, denied.

I imagine he was about seventeen years old.

In the most fantastic circumstances one can only do ordinary things. I know something of first-aid—indeed, I once began to become a doctor, but I got bored with the hard work. So I could examine "it" fairly professionally, and I soon found that there was nothing seriously wrong, apart from a simple fracture of the leg, and Peter, far calmer than I, helped me to carry it down to my house. It groaned once or twice, but I'd set the leg before pain really restored consciousness.

Life in that face made it beautiful, and intelligent. Wary blue eyes caught mine with astonishment. Movement attempted

was with pain abandoned. My centaur spoke.

I thought there was a hint of Greek in those unintelligible words, but nothing sounded that I could catch on to. I tried a dialect or two. Peter tried. I could see we were a millenium too modern. But with gestures evidently we managed to convey that we were friendly, and the centaur accepted a drink of milk, and presently slept.

This strange thing had been naked when we found him. In my bed, with blankets up to his chin, he looked like an athletic undergraduate. He looked like the sort of rowing-blue that flappers try to waylay for his autograph on the towing-path at Putney.

I said to Peter:

"Have you spoken about this to anybody?"

"No, sir."

"Then swear to me you will not. Swear to me that until I permit you to do so you will not even whisper that we have found —what is it that we have found?"

"I think, sir," said Peter, "that we have found a young god."

That day was spent by the centaur in sleep, and I spent it in trying to force some sense into my conventionally astonished brain.

THAT night there was another upheaval, and the following morning Peter reported that the mouth of the tunnel was quite obliterated.

I made Peter into a nurse, and apart from occasional attacks of awe he did very well. The patient was quick enough to notice the awe and I could see it relieved and amused him. Oh, he was a very normal young man of seventeen with the blankets up to his chin, and he began to pick up as only youth and health can. I sat most of the time by the bedside, finding by trial and error what he liked to eat and drink.

Very soon I gave up any attempt to understand his language and I began to teach him mine.

I had never taught anybody anything before, but I think he was unusually quick. He tacitly agreed to learn, and I soon discovered what he called himself—at least it sounded like "Chalchis," though that is the name of a city. Anyway, I called him "Charles." After a bit he realized that he was to be "Charles," and he laughed and nodded.

The first time he said slowly, in quite good English: "I am Charles, and you are Daveed," I mixed myself a strong drink; I don't know why.

I used to wake up in the night and disbelieve in the whole thing, until I realized I was lying on the floor, and Charles had my bed. Old Peter, of course, was wonderful. I think he was as interested as I was, and I know he told nobody. But as Charles began to get better I began to worry.

What was to be done with him? Sometimes he reminded me of Pan, but there were no goat's horns on his head; his ears were not pointed, and those unbelievable hoofs were not cleft. I began to see nothing incongruous in horse's legs attached to a magnificent human body. I began to think my own useless toes, that had to be cased in leather before I could carry myself over stony ground, the absurdity, the deformity.

When I have time to write a full account of this, the photographs I took of Charles standing, running, sitting * will prove indeed that his lower limbs were more practical than a normal man's. What of natural selection, of survival of the fittest? Every speculator since Darwin has been wrong.

How long would it take an ordinary

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* *Editor's Note:* I have not been able to find any photographs. My uncle had a camera, but two rolls of undeveloped films which I discovered amongst his effects produced nothing but vague shapes.

H. T. W. B.

modern youth, who was trying his best, and who knew no English, to express himself in that language? In three weeks Charles at any rate knew enough to tell me something about himself.

According to him the race of Centaurs had always lived in enormous caverns deep under the Arcadian Hills ever since some pre-historic battle with the Greeks had almost exterminated them. You can imagine my questions. What of air? They had plenty, it seemed, which Charles supposed came from unnoticed caves in those wild regions. That must have been a fact, or Charles himself could not have existed. What of light? Torches. Imagine a race living by torch-light for five thousand years! He added, however, that his people paid many visits to the surface of the earth, and were seldom or never seen by men. Any man or woman who came upon a centaur by chance was invariably murdered. So fear can persist! Food? They lived normally upon the blind fish caught in their underground lakes, upon mushrooms, and on any sheep or goats, birds or rabbits they managed to snare in the world above. Cereals were naturally outside their normal diet. They liked fruit when they could steal it. Vast bituminous deposits, I gathered, provided fuel for light and for fires.

Their politics? A simple patriarchal community. Religion? One god, who might have paralleled Chronos; one goddess—perhaps Diana. Arts? Pottery. Literature? They could write. He showed me some scrawls that I have carefully preserved. Upon my soul they were ideographs, as you can see; I have taken particular pains to preserve them.*

I asked if they knew clothing—for in winter the cold in those parts can be biting. It appeared that clothing was one of their greatest problems. Almost any vegetation that they could furtively gather from the world above was beaten into fibre and with infinite care woven into fabric. Cloth was their medium of currency. A centaur with a spare robe or two was rich. No yard of cloth that could hold together, however thread-bare, was ever abandoned. And the skins of animals, of course, were used as well. But nobody wasted clothes by wearing them just to cover their nakedness.

I MADE friends with Charles. I won his devotion by giving him a shirt, a pair of trousers and a rather worn tie of my old school!

No extravagant socialite—as I believe they call rich and idle young women—has ever been more interested in clothes than Charles. I began to feel ashamed, when he got well enough to move about, that I had not provided myself with a more imposing wardrobe. He tried on everything I had—and his only distress was that my socks and my shoes were beyond him.

I had wondered at the hairlessness of his face. Can you imagine shaving with a blunt strip of immemorial tempered bronze? Apparently that was what Charles was accustomed to—for he explained that beards were forbidden as savagery. His delight at an old safety-razor and rather blunt blades was pathetic.

And Charles himself? He cheerfully admitted that he had no affection for his family or his race. He had no curiosity as to their fate in the earthquake. But he was quite sure they must have survived as they had survived a thousand in the past. How many of his race? He neither knew nor cared, but he did know that for some hundreds of years they had been dwindling in numbers. Were there ten thousand left? Not so many. Five? Perhaps. Two thousand more likely. His own contemporaries seemed to be suffering from an epidemic of depression.

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* I am still hoping to discover these specimens of picture writing. If I do, they will be found as an appendix to this paper.

H. T. W. B.

(If it were due to inbreeding, Charles himself showed no signs of deterioration). Himself, he had been forbidden to go up the tunnel on the night when the earthquake came by his father—the chief of the community—but he went because he did not care whether he were killed or not.

How did they know when volcanic disturbances were likely? There was a special class of Observers, who were also the priests, and they knew always—how, Charles did not know.

He easily got bored with too much questioning, but I obtained quite enough information for a paper that will stagger the British Association. Only I do not propose to publish it until I secure proper recognition. And the end of this adventure has, of course, produced some legal difficulties. I must take advice. I don't want to be prosecuted. I realize that I may thoughtlessly have placed myself in an awkward position.

One acts for the best, and then, alas, thinks later—too late.

By the time Charles was up and about, chattering to me in fluent but execrable English, overeating himself with all the luxuries I could get (and they were not many) I made him listen to my chief worry, which was his own future.

At first he was blandly prepared to assume that I was always going to live in Hypata, and he was always going to enjoy the hide-and-seek life of pretending to be a man in flannel trousers. But as his own keenness to learn English defeated his attempts to misunderstand me, we had to have a show-down.

I wanted him to go back. I promised an expedition to rescue his race from their self-imposed imprisonment. I convinced him that they would run no more risk of slaughter than he had. He believed that modern men would be more than merciful, more even than benevolent, but he just would not co-operate. He said at last that he hated them, and their Patriarch, his own father, most of all. His mother was dead, and he unfilially stated he had never liked her. He had no brothers or sisters. He had no friends. And he was glad of it. He admitted that the destruction of one tunnel-mouth would not cut his people off from the world, but he refused to show me others.

HE WAS going with me, he said, wherever I went. He was going to see the modern world.

Even in flannel trousers he could not hide those legs. They were comic, they were tragic, in trousers. They bent the wrong way!

A naked centaur might be beautiful, even awesome; a centaur in trousers was below the waist a figure of fun or of pity.

And the weather was getting too hot for comfort. I was supposed to go home. Indeed, I had to go home, for my affairs needed a little attention and my Scottish house a little care.

I had to go back.

I interviewed Peter, and the interview was short. Peter would obey me and not even whisper about my centaur, but look after him, feed him, hide him, protect him in my absence, Peter would not do for all the money in Athens.

Then I had a telegram from my old fool of a family solicitor who ought to have been able to do by himself what I paid him to see to instead of me.

I *had* to go.

And I found I'd drifted into an absurd affection for Charles.

He was so gay and so amusing, and so utterly selfish and imprudent. He was so intelligent and quick. He could by then even read and write English. His comments on what he read enthralled me. Imagine them—! No proverbial hen with one chick was such a fool as I.

"Very well," I said, "you'll have to come

to Scotland with me. And if you don't do exactly everything I tell you, down to the smallest detail, I'll kill you!"

"You will kill *me?*" said Charles. "My dear, kind David, you could not kill me; I am strong, and young. And you will not want to. I will be so good and quiet. I will never disgrace you."

So far, so good. Obviously, by disguising Charles as an invalid, I could get him down to the coast, and as an invalid I could get him to Scotland without any tiresome questions being asked. But there are more things than tickets to buy when one goes from one country to another in these days. A passport for Charles was the next thing.

The methods by which undesirable persons can get passports have bothered the police of every country for many years, and I have (when I thought about it) inveighed against the scoundrelly underground traffic as sincerely as any other respectable citizen. Yet without the help of that underworld I do not know what I should have done.

Since some sort of passport must have been obtained, or I could never have got Charles out of Greece, there is no point in pretending that I did not get it. It was expensive. It purported to have been signed by Curzon of Kedlestone. It carried Charles' photograph—just head and shoulders—and it had an array of past visas that would have deceived the devil himself.

Even if I'm prosecuted, I shall not betray the source from whence it came, because the job was well done. But I wish I had that passport still, even if it were evidence against me.

During my inevitable absence in contriving this international crime, Charles (now Charles Mountain, according to that same passport) behaved with perfect circumspection under the eye of Peter, and when I returned feeling like a criminal—an international crook—he just said: "Now we can go?"

WE WENT.

The journey was uneventful, but very tiring for me. I had to see that Charles spoke as little as possible, for his accent naturally was far from perfect. We decided he should always speak in a whisper when he had officially to speak, on account of some unspecified injury to his throat. Really he was very good. He allowed himself to be wheeled about—always—on the boat that took us to Marseilles, and if he did make a little noise in our cabin, I was always prepared to take the blame.

I must have been over-anxious, for nobody complained. Such a handsome young man could not help attracting some attention, even in my rather shabby coats and caps and so on, and there was one young woman on that French boat who showed a very undesirable interest in him that Charles might have encouraged. But, as I say, he was very good—and I really did not give him a chance; when I was about —and I was always about—he resigned himself to the rôle of invalid. I told the few acquaintances I could not help picking up that he was my nephew who had been gravely injured in a motor smash.

Once across France, once across the Channel, I had no more worry over his passport. Really it was so good that nobody could question it. In Marseilles I bought him clothes. I could not bear him to be so shabby as my old things made him, so we reached Scotland without the least incident, though the journey was terribly expensive. Special carriages, stretchers, ambulances almost ruined me. But he had to go flat on his back.

My house in Caithness is not marvellous. I know it needs modernizing in half-a-dozen ways. But it has one advantage: Robert Macdonald and his wife, who

looked after it in my father's time as well as mine, are absolutely reliable.

They have never, I know, approved of my journeys abroad, but they are utterly faithful, and the first thing I did when we had arrived and the ambulance men had gone away was to call old Robert into my study.

I made him sit down, and I said to him:

"My guest, Robert, is no ordinary man. I may as well tell you now as later. He is a demi-god."

"And what heathen thing may that be, sir?"

"He is a centaur. He is a man—not yet a Christian, maybe, but a man. Only his legs are not a man's legs. Now he is to stay here until I can decide what is to be done. You must look after him, and I rely on you not to talk. And I rely on you that Elspeth doesn't talk either."

"Elspeth won't talk. But what's wrong with his legs? And what's a demi-god—what heathen thing have you brought?"

"I have brought here," I said, "a centaur. His legs are horse's legs."

"Indeed," said Robert.

"You can see him," I said.

I took him into the Jacobite room.

"Get up, Charles," I said. "This is Robert Macdonald who will look after you. No need to fear him! he served my father before me." And Charles stood up and held out his hand.

"Good-day," said Charles in his funny accent.

But Robert Macdonald crossed himself, and then he bowed. "In this house, sir," he said, "you have nothing to fear," and he turned to me. "I served your father before you, and my father did so before me. I do not know what this means, but there'll be no talking."

And then he went out.

And then I knew my worry was only just beginning.

I'M a coward, I suppose; at least a procrastinator. No need to do anything at once. That day, and next day, and the day after I was safe—we were safe. I needn't think immediately in that remote house where nobody would come that I didn't want to see. Time enough to decide when—when I had to.

Old Elspeth fell for Charles at once—as definitely, though dourly, as the pretty girl on the French boat. She gave us her best cooking, she waited on Charles hand and foot. She began to hint I was cruel to the poor wean in keeping him locked up, as she described it.

For his part, Charles was far too interested in his new surroundings to regard himself as a prisoner. With Robert's connivance I got rid of the only gardener, and he could get some exercise in the grounds. But most of the time he spent in the library and making me explain what he read of a world he still could not quite believe in.

Charles was never bored—and I was not, for I saw with every hour that I *must* make up my mind to do something. Even if we were not discovered by some mischance, the day was bound to come when I should have to betray Charles to the world. I could not bear to think that my beautiful, amusing, incredible Charles might be photographed and placarded as a monster. It would have killed him.

I'd settled matters with my old fool of a solicitor by letters and expensive trunk telephone calls, and that meant my family would know I was back from Greece. There is no defense from a family solicitor, especially a stupid one.

I was actually planning a disguise for Charles, artificial feet to be made by some bribed craftsman under the direction of a reliable orthopaedist, when I got a telegram from my great-niece, Barbara, to say she had heard I was back and she proposed to come and stay with me for a week.

Barbara never writes letters, and fortunately for her she has enough money to make her telegrams long. She was coming to stay with me because she had broken her engagement with John (who was John?) and she felt the pure air of Caithness would cure her wounded heart. Or words to that effect.

It was nearly lunch-time when I got that telegram, and the aged Angus who obliges now and then by carrying telegrams from the local post-office admitted he had loitered by the way. Loitering to him, meant anything you like in hours or days.

To cut a long and agonizing story short, I had hardly collected Charles from the orchard and hurried him indoors when she arrived.

I knew—I knew then that the game was up.

Barbara Schofield—my late wife's great-niece, actually—is very pretty. At least I think so. I'm not too old to admire pretty women, I hope. Her hair really is Titian red, and her eyes really are dark blue, with dark lashes. She's far too pretty to be happy, for only a plain woman can be sure of a faithful husband, and only a poor woman can even hope for one.

Barbara is rich, poor child, and critical and intelligent. Poor child.

I had an invalid staying with me, I told her, the son of a very old friend of mine who had been grievously injured in a motor accident in Greece. The young man, indeed, was half Greek, and his English mother had died in bringing him into the world. The motor accident had caused a spinal injury which could only be cured by rest and quiet.

BARBARA was all agog to see him. She had taken a course of nursing. She would look after him.

"That's just what you can't do," I told her. "The Macdonalds do all the looking after he requires. But you can see him and read to him and maybe improve his English—he's very keen on getting better with his mother-tongue—and cheer the poor boy up. Yes," I said, "it will be a distraction to you, too, during your short stay here, and it will maybe take your mind off this John of yours. Who is John, by the way? I can't imagine any young man you had a fancy for letting you go."

"We won't talk about John, Uncle David, if you don't mind," she said. "John is nothing more to me than a reminder that I can be just as much a fool as any other woman. And I thought I was wise.

"But what do you mean by a short visit? Don't you generally spend the summer up here? I'm going to stay a month at least."

"A month?" I said.

"Don't you want me to stay, Uncle David?"

"My dear," I said, "my dear—you know you're welcome for ever, but an old man with an invalid in the house, in this remote place isn't an interesting proposition for anything as pretty as you."

"Uncle David, I was twenty-one last week—though you never sent me a birthday present—and I've come here for a rest-cure. You're not going to turn me out just because there's an invalid who takes up Elspeth Macdonald's time? I'll make my own bed, and I can cook."

"Do you know Greek?" I asked her.

"Now, Uncle David, you know I never went to Girton or to Oxford. If he speaks Greek and he doesn't speak French, I shall have to speak to him in English—. Uncle David, did you say 'thank God'?"

"I said nothing of the kind, but it's best for you to speak English to the poor boy, for that's the best way to improve his English—and he's very sensitive about not being very good yet with his mother's tongue."

"What's the name of this young man?"

"Charles Mountain—Mountain was his mother's maiden name, and he is adopting it by deed-poll, for he wants to get naturalized. Now go and tidy yourself for lunch, and after lunch you shall be introduced."

Then I talked to Charles. I told him to be careful. I warned him not to give himself away. I reminded him that we had not yet decided just how to introduce him to the modern world. He promised to be good, but his eyes were sparkling with excitement. He was terribly good-looking.

At lunch Barbara pestered me with questions, and the less I answered them the more curious she grew. After lunch I took her up to Charles' room. He was swathed in blankets and rugs in his wheeled chair.

They stared at each other. Good Heavens, how they stared at each other! I could see what had happened. In a moment she had forgotten John—whoever John might have been. Charles perhaps had nothing to forget—

When I got her away my Charles was on fire. When I saw her later, Charles was all she would talk about.

I SUPPOSE I knew then that the situation was hopeless. If there is such a thing as love at first sight it had happened then under my roof.

Every day Barbara would spend her time talking to and reading to Charles. Whenever she was out of his room I was warning him and prompting him what to say about himself, his English mother and his Greek father.

The unfortunate creature, you see, actually knew far less about modern Greece than I did.

I had to describe Athens to him, Sparta, Olympus, Crete. I had to promise that I would find a way of telling Barbara the truth. I tried to convince him of the absurdity of loving a modern English girl. I tried to re-open the possibility of collecting an expedition to rescue his nation.

And the implacable Macdonald warned me that there was tragedy all about us.

"Why will you not get her away?" he asked me every morning. "She must go," he said. "You can see how it is with them. It can't go on. It's wicked and heathen and unchristian." He crossed himself as he always did when we discussed Charles. "The poor creature's not to blame. But you'll be to blame, ye'll have blood on your hands if the young lady doesn't leave."

Barbara didn't leave.

Then, too, there was the question of exercise for Charles. A youth of his age, fit and well, cannot spend his life in an invalid chair. It was Macdonald who suggested midnight exercise, and midnight exercise it had to be, when Barbara was in bed and asleep. But I believe it took years off my life, the arranging of midnight runs and midnight exercise—and then trying to be normal and awake next day. Charles of course could sleep as an invalid should. I had no excuse for falling asleep whenever I sat down in a chair.

And all the time I *could not think* of a way to tell Barbara the truth about Charles, and Charles was beginning to get a look in his eyes that scared me.

And Barbara simply ceased to consider any date of going home or away anywhere else.

Well, I suppose the end was inevitable, but if I had ever had any luck it need not have been quite so dramatic.

I could not watch over Charles' midnight exercise indefinitely — I'm not a young man any longer. It was late summer and the weather was fine and the moon was full, when it all happened. Elspeth Macdonald was ill, and her obstinate old husband insisted on staying with her.

Now Charles was generally most ab-

stemious. I'd naturally as we were in Scotland introduced him to whiskey in moderation. That night, finding himself alone when he got up, for some reason he must have got drunk.

I was awakened by wild singing—chanting is perhaps the right word. There is a stone terrace on the garden side of the house where most of the bedrooms look out. I listened half asleep for a minute or two and then with dread in my heart I leapt out of bed and rushed to the window.

There on the terrace was Charles, capering like a ballet-dancer, his hoofs clattering, and chanting a dirge-like chant in his nameless language. Naked as the day Peter and I found him, the sight did not seem to me so much indecent as terrifying—beauty and grace and animalism and despair.

I said that most of the bedrooms were on that side of the house. Barbara's room was one of them.

Then I heard her screaming.

Now I am an elderly man, unused to alarms, and my nerves had been tried pretty high. When I heard the chanting and the screaming, only the frenzied haste with which I dressed saved me, I think, from fainting—and the clatter and the singing and the cries went on.

I found Barbara half out of her open window, crying and sobbing and calling to Charles, and he took no notice of her and went on dancing and went on singing.

Remember, I was alone that night. How I got some clothes on her, how I dragged her out by the front of the house I shall never quite remember, but by the time I'd got her into the car she was in a state of collapse. I drove her to the doctor's, knocked him up, told him some frantic story of burglars, ghosts and nightmares, and he gave her an injection and let her stay—and let me stay—until morning.

Thank God he did.

MY HOUSE—most of it—was burned down that night, and Charles was burned in it. Macdonald and I buried what was left of him, but that was after Barbara, white and silent, had left for the South, borrowing money from the doctor for her fare.

She never asked me to forward her belongings. She never mentioned Charles to me. She never asked any questions. I never saw or spoke to her again.

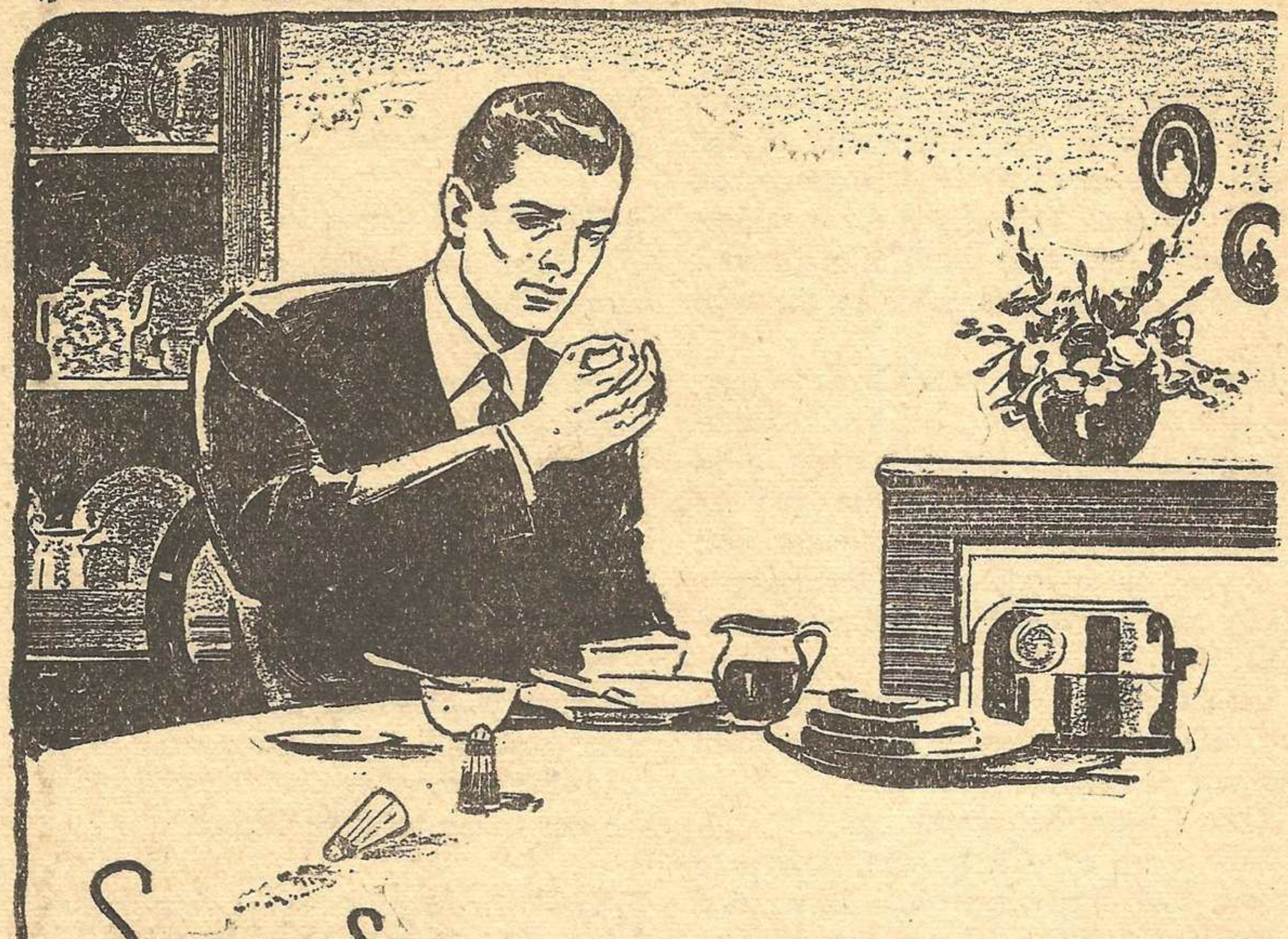
But I heard she'd taken up flying, and the poor child killed herself when her plane crashed in the Mediterranean in the following year. I've always wondered if she was trying to fly to Greece.

FIRST the illegal passport, then the unreported death and burial—I still dare not make an official report. But the above is a brief, skeleton summary of the facts.

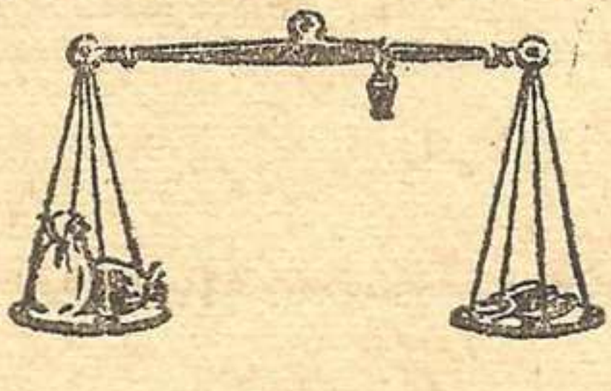
NOTE: The house was damaged but by no means destroyed. My old uncle patched it up before he died. Unless the whole property is dug up I don't see how I can find the Centaur's grave. Nobody seems to be sure whether or not David Gannon had an invalid visitor just before the fire. And the Macdonalds simply will not speak. But their very silence makes me think there is some truth somewhere in this incredible affair. I may take my time but I shall probably do something, find out something definite in the end.

H. T. W. B.

SUPERSTITIONS



SPILLING SALT PROYOKES BAD LUCK UNLESS A PINCH OF IT IS THROWN OVER THE SHOULDER THREE TIMES. SALT WAS USED IN RELIGIOUS SERVICES, AND PERHAPS FOR THIS REASON IT RECEIVED SPECIAL RECOGNITION IN FORMER DAYS WHEN TO EAT SALT WITH ANYONE CEMENTED FRIENDSHIPS AND EVEN TERMINATED DEATHLY FEUDS. AT ONE TIME, ALSO, IT WAS VALUED ALMOST AS MUCH AS GOLD, AND SOLDIERS, OFFICIALS AND WORKING PEOPLE IN GREECE AND ROME RECEIVED ALL OR PART OF THEIR PAY IN SALT. FROM THIS CUSTOM OF PAYING WITH SALT ALSO COMES THE POPULAR PHRASE, "TO EARN ONE'S SALT"...



AND TABOOS

by Hill

THE SIGHT OF A MAGPIE IS UNLUCKY UNLESS YOU SPIT IN YOUR HAT! THE MAGPIE WAS A SACRED BIRD IN FORMER DAYS, AND WAS SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT THE CREATION OF DAY AND NIGHT.

A YAWN IN THE PRESENCE OF A HINDOO WILL CAUSE HIM TO SNAP HIS THUMBS, IN THE BELIEF THAT THIS WILL HINDER THE SOUL FROM LEAVING THE BODY BY ISSUING THROUGH THE OPEN MOUTH!

"He half glimpsed a great bleached thing that set him trembling."

The Mound

By Z. B. BISHOP

A shuddery tale of a world so devilish and old that men refused even to speak of it—by the author of "The Curse of Yig."

AFTER ten years I have been able neither to forget nor explain the phenomena which, as a scientist, I should like to dismiss as a hallucination. I am an ethnologist, whose specialty is the origin of the various Indian cultures. As a sort of hobby I frequently combine my regular research with tracking down superstitions which the white men have inherited from their red neighbors.

My hobby naturally aroused my interest in the mound superstitions of Oklahoma, where my work had often taken me. I had seen many of these vast, lonely, artificial-looking mounds in the western part of the state; and in 1928, during a brief

lull in my work, I decided to investigate the oldest and most common of the mound legends, a local and distinctive tale which, though really old, was wholly new to the outside world of research. There was an added thrill in the fact that it came from the remote town of Binger, in Caddo County, a place I had long known as the scene of a very terrible and partly inexplicable occurrence connected with the old snake-god myth.

The tale, outwardly, was an extremely naïve and simple one, and centered in a huge, lone mound or small hill that rose above the plain about a third of a mile west of the village, a mound which some thought a product of nature, but which others believed to be a burial-place or ceremonial dais constructed by prehistoric tribes. This mound, the villagers said, was haunted by two Indian figures that appeared in alternation; an old man who paced back and forth along the top from dawn till dusk, regardless of the weather and with only brief intervals of disappearance, and a squaw who took his place at night with a blue-flamed torch that glimmered continuously till morning. When the moon was bright, the squaw's peculiar figure could be seen fairly plainly, and over half the villagers agreed that the apparition was headless.

This and minor variant versions seemed to have been current ever since the settlement of the Wichita country in 1889; and were, I was told, sustained to an astonishing degree by still-existing phenomena which anyone might observe for himself.

Eager to see what bizarre wonders might be lurking in this small, obscure village so far from the searchlight of scientific knowledge, I went to Binger in the late summer of 1928, arriving at twilight, with a feeling of being cut off from wholesome and everyday things. The station platform was filled with curious loafers, all of whom seemed eager to direct me

when I asked for the man to whom I had letters of introduction. I was ushered along a commonplace main street whose rutted surface was red with the sandstone soil of the country, and finally delivered at the door of my prospective host. Those who had arranged things for me had done well, for Clyde Compton was a man of high intelligence and local responsibility. His mother, who lived with him and was familiarly known as "Grandma Compton," was of the pioneer generation, and a mine of anecdote and folklore.

That evening the Comptons summed up for me all the legends current among the villagers. The ghosts, it seems, were accepted almost as a matter of course by everyone in Binger. Two generations had been born and reared within sight of that queer, lone tumulus and its restless figures. The neighborhood of the mound was naturally feared and shunned, so that the village and the farms had not spread toward it in all the four decades of settlement; yet venturesome individuals had several times visited it.

Some had come back to report that they saw no ghosts at all when they neared the dreaded hill; that somehow the lone sentinel had stepped out of sight before they reached the spot, leaving them free to climb the steep slope and explore the flat summit. There was nothing up there, they said—merely a rough expanse of underbrush.

WHERE the Indian watcher could have vanished to, they had no idea. He must, they reflected, have descended the slope and somehow managed to escape unseen along the plain; although there was no convenient cover within sight. At any rate, there did not appear to be any opening into the mound; a conclusion which was reached after considerable exploration of the shrubbery and tall grass on all sides. In a few cases some of the more sensitive searchers declared that they felt a sort of invisible restraining presence; but they could describe nothing more definite than that. It was simply as if the air thickened against them in the direction they wished to move.

But it was not from the tales of these sane, observant seekers that the chief terror of the ghost-mound sprang; indeed, had their experience been typical, the phenomenon would have bulked far less prominently in the local legendry. The most evil thing was the fact that many seekers had come back impaired in mind and body. Others had not come back at all.

The first of these cases had occurred in 1891, when a young man named Heaton had gone with a shovel to see what secrets he could unearth. He had resolved to get to the bottom of the mystery, and watchers from the village saw him hacking diligently at the shrubbery atop the mound. Then they saw his figure melt slowly into invisibility, not to reappear for long hours, till after the dusk drew on, and the torch of the headless squaw glimmered on the distant elevation.

About two hours after nightfall he staggered into the village and burst into a shrieking monolog of disconnected ravings. He howled of shocking abysses and monsters, of terrible carvings and statues, of inhuman captors and grotesque tortures.

"Old! Old! Old!" he moaned over and over. "Great God, they are older than the earth. They know what you think, and make you know what they think—they're half man, half ghost—crossed the line—melt and take shape again—everything made of gold—monstrous animals, half human—dead slaves—madness—*that white man—oh, my God, what they did to him!* . . ."

Heaton was the village idiot for about eight years until he died. Since his ordeal,

there had been two more cases of mound-madness, and eight of total disappearance. Immediately after Heaton's mad return, three determined men had gone out to the lone hill together, heavily armed, and with spades and pickaxes. Watching villagers saw the Indian ghost melt away as the explorers drew near, and afterward saw the men climb the mound and begin scouting around through the underbrush. They were never seen again.

Only when the incidents of 1891 were largely forgotten did anybody dare to think of further explorations. Then, in 1910, a youth not old enough to recall the horrors made a trip to the shunned spot and found nothing at all.

By 1915 the acute dread and wild legendry of '91 had largely faded into the commonplace and unimaginative ghost-tales at present surviving—that is, had so faded among the white people. On the nearby reservation were old Indians who thought much and kept their own counsel. About this time a second wave of active curiosity and adventuring developed, and several bold searchers made the trip to the mound and returned. Then came a trip of two Eastern visitors with spades and other apparatus: a pair of amateur archeologists connected with a small college, who had been making studies among the Indians. No one watched this trip from the village, but they never came back. The searching-party that went out after them, among whom was my host Clyde Compton, found nothing whatsoever amiss at the mound.

By 1920, so short is human memory, the mound was almost a joke, and the tame story of the murdered squaw began to displace the darker whispers on everybody's tongue. Then two reckless young brothers —the especially unimaginative and hard-boiled Clay boys—decided to dig up the buried squaw and the gold for which the old Indian had murdered her.

They went out on a September afternoon, about the time the Indian tom-toms begin their incessant annual beating over the flat, red-dusty plains. Nobody watched them, and their parents did not become worried at their failure to return for several hours. Then came an alarm and a searching-party, and another resignation to the mystery of silence and doubt.

Later one of them came back. It was Ed, the elder, and his straw-colored hair and beard had turned white. On his forehead was a queer scar like a branded hieroglyphic. Three months after he and his brother, Walker, had vanished, he skulked into his house at night, wearing nothing but a queerly patterned blanket which he thrust into the fire as soon as he had got into a suit of his own clothes.

He told his parents that he and Walker had been captured by some strange Indians, not Wichitas or Caddos, and held prisoners somewhere toward the west. Walker had died under torture, but Ed had managed to escape. The experience had been so horrible he could not talk about it. He must rest, and anyway, it would do no good to give an alarm and try to find and punish the Indians. They were not of a sort that could be caught or punished.

BEFORE he climbed the rickety flight to his room Ed took a pad and pencil from the living-room table, and an automatic pistol from his father's desk drawer. Three hours later Ed Clay put a bullet through his right temple. He left a sparsely written sheet of paper on the rickety table near his bed. He had, it later appeared from the whittled pencil-stub and stove full of charred paper, originally written much more; but had finally decided not to tell what he knew beyond vague hints. The surviving fragment was only a mad warning scrawled in a curiously backhanded script—the ravings of a mind obviously deranged by hard-

ships—and it read thus: rather surprisingly for the utterance of one who had always been stolid and matter-of-fact:

For gods sake never go nere that mound it is part of some kind of a world so devilish and old it cannot be spoke about me and Walker went and was took into the thing just melted at times and made up agen and the whole world outside is helpless alongside of what they can do—they what live forever young as they like and you cant tell if they are really men or just gostes—and what they do cant be spoke about and this is only 1 entrance—you cant tell how big the whole thing is—after what we seen I dont want to livve aney more France was nothing besides this — and see that people always keep away o god they wood if they see poor walker like he was in the end.

Yrs truely

ED CLAY

At the autopsy it was found that all of young Clay's organs were transposed from right to left within his body, as if he had been turned inside out. Whether they had always been so, no one could say at the time, but it was later learned from army records that Ed had been perfectly normal when mustered out of the service in May, 1919.

That was the end of the explorations of the mound. In the eight intervening years no one had been near the place, and few indeed had cared even to level a spy-glass at it. The thing was accepted at face value as a mystery not to be probed, and by common consent the village shunned the subject.

It was very late, and Grandma Compton had long since gone upstairs to bed, when Clyde finished telling me this. I hardly knew what to think of the frightful puzzle, yet rebelled at any notion in conflict with sane materialism. Compton motioned me to follow him outdoors. We stepped from the frame house to the quiet side street, and walked a few paces in the light of a waning August moon to where the houses were thinner. As I looked out over the vast expanse of earth and sky in the direction Compton pointed, I saw a spark that was not a star—a bluish spark that moved and glimmered against the Milky Way near the horizon. In another moment it was clear that this spark came from the top of a long, distant rise in the outspread and faintly-litten plain; and I turned to Compton with a question.

"Yes," he answered, "it's the blue ghost-light — and that is the mound. There's not a night in history that we haven't seen it—and not a living soul in Binger that would walk out over that plain toward it. It's a bad business, young man, and if you're wise you'll let it rest where it is. Better call your search off, son, and tackle some of the other Injun legends around here."

2

BUT I was in no mood for advice; and though Compton gave me a pleasant room, I could not sleep, through eagerness for the next morning with its chances to see the daytime ghost. I rose and dressed at dawn, and when I heard others stirring I went downstairs. Compton was building the kitchen fire while his mother was busy in the pantry.

After breakfast he lit his pipe, helped me collect my things and beckoned me to follow him. As we walked along the lane I stared at the mound, far away and very curious in its aspect of artificial regularity. It must have been from thirty to forty feet high, and at least a hundred yards from north to south. It was not as wide as that from east to west, Compton said, but had the contour of a rather thinnish ellipse. He, I knew, had been safely out to it and back several times. My pulse mounted, and I seized quickly on the high-powered binoculars which Compton quietly offered me. Focussing them hastily, I saw at first only a tangle of underbrush on the distant mound's rim—and then something stalked into the field.

It was unmistakably a human shape, and I knew at once that I was seeing the daytime "Indian ghost." I did not wonder at the description, for surely the tall, lean, darkly robed being with the filleted black hair and seamed, coppery, expressionless, aquiline face looked more like an Indian than anything else in my previous experience. And yet my trained ethnologist's eye told me at once that this was no redskin of any sort hitherto known to history, but a creature of vast racial variation and of a wholly different culture-stream. Modern Indians are brachycephalic; round-headed: and you can't find any dolichocephalic or long-headed skulls except in ancient Pueblo deposits dating back 2500 years or more; yet this man's long-headedness was so pronounced that I recognized it at once, even at this vast distance and in the uncertain field of the binoculars. I saw, too, that the pattern of his robe represented a decorative tradition utterly remote from anything we recognize in southwestern native art.

As he paced back and forth along the top of the mound I followed him for several minutes with the glass, noting the kinesthetic quality of his stride and the poised way he carried his head; and there was borne in upon me the strong, persistent conviction that this man, whoever or whatever he might be, was certainly *not a savage*. He was the product of a *civilization*.

Compton left me when we drew near the mound. We shook hands and I tried to joke about the ghost, but Compton didn't smile. When I reached the mound I turned and watched his bent form shuffling homeward.

There were no signs of a path toward the top; and, burdened as I was, I managed to scramble up only with considerable difficulty. When I reached the summit I found a roughly level elliptical plateau about three hundred by fifty feet in dimensions, uniformly covered with rank grass and dense underbrush, and utterly incompatible with the constant presence of a pacing sentinel. This condition gave me a real shock, for it showed beyond question that the "Old Indian," vivid though he had seemed, could not be other than a hallucination.

I looked about with considerable perplexity and alarm, glancing wistfully back at the village and the mass of black dots which I knew was the watching crowd. Training my glasses upon them, I saw that they were studying me avidly with their glasses; so to reassure them I waved my cap in the air with a show of jauntiness which I was far from feeling. Then, settling to my work I flung down pick, shovel, and bag, using my machete to clear away underbrush. It was a weary task, and now and then I felt a curious shiver as some perverse gust of wind arose to hamper my motion with a skill approaching deliberateness.

As I turned up the soil with my trench-knife I could not help wondering at the relative thinness of the reddish regional layer. The country as a whole was all red sandstone earth, but here I found a strange black loom less than a foot down. It was such soil as one finds in the strange, deep valleys farther west and south, and must surely have been brought from a considerable distance in the prehistoric age when the mound was reared.

Kneeling and digging, I felt my implements strike a hard surface, and wondered if a rock layer rested beneath. Prying about with the trench-knife, I found that such was not the case. Instead, to my intense surprise and feverish interest, I brought up a mold-clogged, heavy object of cylindrical shape, about a foot long and four inches in diameter.

SITTING down, I cleaned the magnetic cylinder against the rough corduroy

of my knickerbockers. The carvings and chasings were horrible, nameless monsters and designs fraught with insidious evil; and all were of the highest finish and craftsmanship. I could not at first make head or tail of the thing, and handled it aimlessly until I spied a cleavage near one end. Then I sought eagerly for some mode of opening, discovering at last that the end simply unscrewed.

The cap yielded with difficulty, but at last it came off, liberating a curious aromatic odor. The sole contents was a bulky roll of a yellowish, paper-like substance inscribed in greenish characters, and for a second I had the supreme thrill of fancying that I held a written key to unknown elder worlds and abysses beyond time. Almost immediately, however, the unrolling of one end showed that the manuscript was in Spanish—the formal, pompous Spanish of a long-departed day. In the sunset light I looked at the heading and the opening paragraph, trying to decipher the wretched and ill-punctuated script of the vanished writer.

The yellow scroll with the green script began with a bold, identifying caption and a ceremoniously desperate appeal for belief in incredible revelations to follow:

RELACION DE PANFILO DE ZAMACONA Y NUNEZ, HIDALGO DE LUARCA EN ASTURIAS, TOCANTE AL MUNDO SOTERRANEO DE XINAIAN. A.D. MDXLV

En el nombre de la santisima Trinidad, Padre, Hijo, y Espiritu-Santo, tres personas distintas y un solo. Dios verdadero, y de la santisima Virgen nuestra Señora, YO, PANFILO DE ZAMACONA, HIJO DE PEDRO GUZMAN Y ZAMACONA, HIDALGO, Y DE LA DONA YNÉS ALVARADO Y NUNEZ, DE LUARCA EN ASTURIAS, juro para que todo que deco está verdadero como sacramento. . . .

I paused to reflect on the portentous significance of what I was reading. "The Narrative of Panfilo de Zamacona y Unex, gentleman, of Luarca in Asturias, Concerning the Subterranean World of Xinaian, A.D. 1545." Here, surely, was too much for any mind to absorb all at once. A subterranean world—again that persistent idea which filtered through all the Indian tales and through all the utterances of those who had come back from the mound. And the date, 1545—what could this mean? In 1540 Coronado and his men had gone north from Mexico into the wilderness, but had they not turned back in 1542?

My eye ran questingly down the opened part of the scroll, and almost at once seized on the name *Francisco Vasquez de Coronado*. The writer of this thing, clearly, was one of Coronado's men, but what had he been doing in this remote realm three years after his party had gone back? I must read further, for another glance told me that what was now unrolled was merely a summary of Coronado's northward march, differing in no essential way from the account known to history.

It was only the waning light which checked me before I could unroll and read more, and in my impatient bafflement I almost forgot to be frightened at the onrush of night in this sinister place. Others, however, had not forgotten the lurking terror, for I heard a loud distant hallooing from a knot of men who had gathered at the edge of the town. Answering the anxious hail, I restored the manuscript to its strange cylinder. Leaving the pick and shovel for the next day's work, I took up my hand-bag, scrambled down the steep side of the mound, and in another quarter-hour was back in the village explaining and exhibiting my curious find. As darkness drew on, I glanced back at the mound I had so lately left, and saw with a shudder that the faint bluish torch of the nocturnal squaw-ghost had begun to glimmer.

Promising the townsfolk a clear account of my findings in the morning, and giving them ample opportunity to examine the bizarre and provocative cylinder, I accom-

panied Clyde Compton home and went up to my room to make the translation. Opening my hand-bag in the light of a single electric bulb, I took out the cylinder. The designs glimmered evilly on the richly lustrous and unknown metal, and I could not help shivering as I studied the abnormal and blasphemous forms that leered at me with such exquisite workmanship.

At last I took out the manuscript and began translating—jotting down an outline in English as I went, and now and then regretting the absence of a Spanish dictionary when I came upon some especially obscure or archaic word or construction. There was a sense of ineffable strangeness in thus being thrown back nearly four centuries in the midst of my continuous quest, thrown back to a year when my own forebears were settled, home-keeping gentlemen of Somerset and Devon under Henry the Eighth, with never a thought of the adventure that was to take their blood to Virginia and the New World; yet when that New World possessed, even as now, the same brooding mystery of the mound which formed my present sphere and horizon.

3

OF HIS youth in Luarca, a small, placid port on the Bay of Biscay, Zamacona told little. He had been wild, and a younger son, and had come to New Spain in 1532, when only twenty years old. Sensitively imaginative, he had listened spellbound to the floating rumors of rich cities and unknown worlds to the north. Hearing of Coronado's contemplated expedition in search of these wonders, and of the greater wonders whispered to lie beyond them in the land of buffaloes, young Zamacona managed to join the picked party of three hundred, and started north with the rest in 1540.

History knows the story of that expedition, how Cibola was found to be merely the squalid Pueblo village of Zuni, and how de Niza was sent back to Mexico in disgrace for his florid exaggerations; how Coronado first saw the Grand Canyon, and how at Cicuye, on the Pecos, he heard from the Indian called El Turco of the rich and mysterious land of Quivira, far to the northeast, where gold, silver, and buffaloes abounded, and where there flowed rivers two leagues wide. Zamacona told briefly of the winter camp at Tiguex on the Pecos, and of the northward start in April, when the native guide proved false and led the party astray amidst a land of prairie-dogs, salt pools, and roving, bison-hunting tribes.

When Coronado dismissed his larger force and made his final forty-two day march with a very small and select detachment, Zamacona managed to be included in the advancing party. He spoke of the fertile country and of the great ravines with trees visible only from the edge of their steep banks; and of how all the men lived solely on buffalo-meat. And then came mention of the expedition's farthest limit—of the disappointing land of Quivira with its villages of grass houses, its brooks and rivers, its good black soil, its plums, nuts, grapes, and mulberries, and its maize-growing and copper-using Indians. The execution of El Turco, the false native guide, was casually touched upon, and there was a mention of the cross which Coronado raised on the bank of a great river in the autumn of 1541—a cross bearing the inscription, "Thus far came the great general, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado."

These northerly natives seemed more reluctant to talk about the rumored cities and worlds than the Mexican Indians had been. Their vagueness exasperated the Spanish leader, but Zamacona, more patient than his chief, found the tales interesting, and he learned enough of the local

speech to hold long conversations with a young buck named Charging Buffalo, whose curiosity had led him into much stranger places than any of his fellow-tribesmen had dared to penetrate.

It was Charging Buffalo who told Zamacona of the queer stone gates or cave-mouths at the bottom of some of those deep, wooded ravines which the party had noticed on the northward march. These openings, he said, were mostly concealed by shrubbery, and few had entered them for untold eons. Those who went to where they led, never returned—or in a few cases returned mad or curiously maimed. But all this was legend, for nobody was known to have gone more than a limited distance inside any of them within the memory of the grandfathers of the oldest living men. Charging Buffalo himself had probably been farther than anyone else, and he had seen enough to curb both his curiosity and his greed for the rumored gold below.

Beyond the aperture he had entered there was a long passage running crazily up and down and round about, and covered with frightful carvings of monsters and horrors that no man had ever seen. At last, after untold miles of windings and descents, there was a glow of terrible blue light, and the passage opened upon a shocking nether world. About this the Indian would say no more, for he had seen something that had sent him back in haste.

But the golden cities must be somewhere down there, he added, and perhaps a white man with the magic of the thunderstick might succeed in getting to them. He would not tell the big chief Coronado what he knew, for Coronado would not listen to Indian talk any more. Yes—he could show Zamacona the way if the white man would leave the party and accept his guidance. But we would not go inside the opening with the white man. It was bad in there.

The place was about a five-days' march to the south, near the region of great mounds.

These mounds had something to do with the evil world down there; they were probably ancient closed-up passages to it, for once the Old Ones below had had colonies on the surface and had traded with men everywhere, even in the lands that had sunk under the big waters. It was when those lands had sunk that the old Ones closed themselves up below and refused to deal with surface people.

The refugees from the sinking places had told them that the gods of outer earth were against men, and that no men could survive on the outer earth unless they were demons in league with the evil gods. That is why they shut out all surface folk, and did fearful things to any who ventured down where they dwelt. There had been sentries once at the various openings, but after ages they were no longer needed. Not many people cared to talk about the hidden Old Ones, and the legends about them would probably have died out but for occasional ghostly reminders of their presence.

ZAMACONA was held spellbound by the Indian's tale, and at once resolved to accept his guidance to the cryptic doorway in the ravine. He did not believe the accounts of strange ways attributed by legend to the hidden people, for the experiences of the party had been such as to disillusion one regarding native myths of unknown lands; but he did feel that some sufficiently marvelous field of riches and adventure must indeed lie beyond the weirdly carved passages in the earth.

At first he thought of persuading Charging Buffalo to tell his story to Coronado—offering to shield him against any effects of the leader's testy skepticism—but later he decided that a lone adventure would be better. If he had no aid, he

would not have to share anything he found, but might perhaps become a great discoverer and owner of fabulous riches. Success would make him a greater figure than Coronado himself, perhaps a greater figure than anyone else in New Spain, including even the mighty viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza.

On October 7, 1541, at an hour close to midnight, Zamacona stole out of the Spanish camp near the grass-house village and met Charging Buffalo for the long southward journey. He traveled as lightly as possible, and did not wear his heavy helmet and breast-plate. Of the details of the trip the manuscript told very little, but Zamacona records his arrival at the great ravine on October 13th. The descent of the thickly wooded slope took no great time, and though the Indian had trouble in locating the shrubbery-hidden stone door again amidst the twilight of that deep gorge, the place was finally found.

It was a very small aperture as doorways go, formed of monolithic sandstone jambs and lintel, and bearing signs of nearly effaced and now undecipherable carvings. Its height was perhaps seven feet, and its width not more than four. There were drilled places in the jambs which argued the bygone presence of a hinged door or gate, but all other traces of such a thing had long since vanished.

At sight of this black gulf, Charging Buffalo displayed considerable fear, and threw down his pack of supplies with signs of haste. He had provided Zamacona with a good stock of resinous torches and provisions, and had guided him honestly and well, but refused to share in the venture that lay ahead. Zamacona gave him the trinkets he had kept for such an occasion, and obtained his promise to return to the region in a month; afterward showing the way southward to the Pecos Pueblo villages. A prominent rock on the plain above them was chosen as a meeting-place; the one arriving first was to pitch camp until the other should arrive.

In the manuscript Zamacona expressed a wistful wonder as to the Indian's length of waiting at the rendezvous—for he himself could never keep that tryst.

Zamacona felt no immediate premonition of evil upon entering that ominous doorway, though from the first he was surrounded by a bizarre and unwholesome atmosphere. The passage, slightly taller and wider than the aperture, was for many yards a level tunnel of cyclopean masonry, with heavily worn flagstones underfoot, and grotesquely carved granite and sandstone blocks in sides and ceiling.

For three days, as best he could reckon, Panfilo de Zamacona scrambled down, up, along, and around, but always predominantly downward, through this dark region of paleogean night. Once in awhile he heard some secret being of darkness patter or flap out of his way, and on just one occasion he half glimpsed a great bleached thing that set him trembling. The quality of the air was mostly endurable, though fetid zones were now and then met with. One great cavern of stalactites and stalagmites afforded a depressing dampness.

At what he considered the end of the third day, Zamacona reached a level passage of artificial masonry with dark, basaltic blocks. There was no need for a torch now, for all the air was glowing with a bluish, quasi-electric radiance. It was the strange light of the inner world that the Indian had described; and in another moment Zamacona emerged from the tunnel upon a bleak, rocky hillside which climbed above him to a seething, impenetrable sky of bluish coruscations, and descended dizzily below him to an apparently illimitable plain shrouded in bluish mist.

He had come to the unknown world at last, and a strange sense of glory filled him, for he had imagination enough to know what it meant to stand alone in an inex-

plicable nether world whose existence no other white man suspected.

SEATING himself for rest and thought, Zamacona lightened his pack by removing an amount of food and torches sufficient to take him back through the tunnel. These he proceeded to cache at the opening, under a cairn hastily formed of the rock fragments which everywhere lay around. Then, readjusting his lightened pack, he commenced his descent toward the distant plain, preparing to invade a region which no white man had ever penetrated, and from which, if legend were to be believed, no organic creature had ever returned whole.

Zamacona strode briskly along down the steep, interminable slope, his progress checked at times by the bad walking that came from loose rock fragments, or by the excessive precipitousness of the grade. The distance of the mist-shrouded plain must have been enormous, for many hours' walking brought him apparently no closer to it than he had been before.

The rock-strewn nature of the soil gave few opportunities for tracks of any kind, but at one point a rather level interval had caused the loose detritus to accumulate in a ridge, leaving a considerable area of dark-gray loam absolutely bare. Here, in a rambling confusion indicating a large herd aimlessly wandering, Zamacona found abnormal prints.

It is to be regretted that he could not describe them more exactly, but the manuscript displayed far more vague fear than accurate observation. Just what it was that so frightened the Spaniard can only be inferred from his later hints regarding the beasts.

Zamacona finally gave way to weariness and slept beside what seemed to be an ancient road. Next day he rose early and resumed his descent through this world of blue mist and desolation and preternatural silence. As he advanced, he at last became able to distinguish a few objects on the distant plain below: trees, bushes, rocks, and a small river that came into view from the right and curved forward at a point to the left of his contemplated course. Then he saw a blurred mass moving over the distant plain. He had seen no more of the sinister footprints, but something about that slowly and deliberately moving mass sickened him. Nothing but a herd of grazing animals could move just like that, and after seeing the footprints he did not wish to meet the things which had made them.

The next afternoon, to use the language of the outer world as the manuscript did at all times, Zamacona reached the silent plain and crossed the soundless, slow-running river on a curiously carved and fairly well-preserved bridge of black basalt. The water was clear, and contained large fishes of a wholly strange aspect. At last he came upon a crumbling temple, decorated with nauseous bas-reliefs depicting scenes and beings, objects and ceremonies, which could certainly have no place on this or any sane planet. The door of the place stood open, and absolute darkness filled the windowless interior. Conquering the repulsion which the sculptures had excited, Zamacona took out flint and steel, lighted a resinous torch, pushed aside curtaining vines, and crossed the ominous threshold.

For a moment he was quite stupefied by what he saw. It was not the all-covering dust and cobwebs of immemorial eons, the fluttering winged things, the shriekingly loathsome sculptures on the walls, the bizarre form of the many basins and braziers, the sinister pyramidal altar with the hollow top, or the monstrous, octopus-headed abnormality in some strange, dark metal leering and squatting broodingly on its hieroglyphed pedestal, which robbed him of even the power to give a startled

cry. It was merely the fact that, with the exception of the dust, the cobwebs, the winged things, and the gigantic emerald-eyed idol, every particle of substance in sight was composed of pure and evidently solid gold.

Even the manuscript, written in retrospect after Zamacona knew that gold is the most common structural metal of a nether world containing limitless lodes and veins of it, reflects the frenzied excitement which the traveler felt upon suddenly finding the real source of all the Indian legends of golden cities.

Zamacona's ecstasy was dispelled by a tremendous wave of fear as, for the first time in this silent world, he heard a rumble of very definite and obviously approaching sound. There was no mistaking its nature. It was a thunderously charging herd of large animals. He looked about frantically for a refuge in the great, gold-painted interior. He felt he must close the long-disused door, which still hung on its ancient hinges, doubled back against the inner wall.

Soil, vines, and moss had entered the opening from outside, so that he had to dig a path for the great gold portal with his sword; but he managed to perform this work very swiftly under the frightful stimulus of the approaching noise. The hoof-beats had grown still louder and more menacing by the time he began tugging at the heavy door itself, and for awhile his fears reached a frantic height, as hope of starting the age-clogged metal grew faint.

Then, with a creak, the thing responded to his youthful strength, and a frenzied siege of pulling and pushing ensued. Amidst the roar of unseen stampeding feet success came at last, and the ponderous golden door clanged shut, leaving Zamacona in darkness but for the single lighted torch he had wedged between the pillars of a basin-tripod. There was a latch, and the frightened man blessed his patron saint that it was still effective.

Sound alone told the fugitive the sequel. When the roar grew near it resolved itself into separate footfalls, as if the evergreen grove had made it necessary for the herd to slacken speed and disperse. But feet continued to approach, and it became evident that the beasts were advancing among the trees and circling the hideously carven temple walls. The curious deliberateness of their tread Zamacona found alarming and repulsive, nor did he like the scuffling sounds which were audible even through the thick stone walls and heavy golden door. Once the door rattled ominously on its archaic hinges, as if under a heavy impact, but fortunately it still held. Then, after a seemingly endless interval, he heard retreating steps and realized that his unknown visitors were leaving.

Since the herds did not seem to be very numerous, it would perhaps have been safe to venture out within a half-hour or less, but Zamacona took no chances. Opening his pack, he prepared his camp on the golden tiles of the temple's floor, with the great door still securely latched against all comers; drifting eventually into a sounder sleep than he could have known in the blue spaces outside.

4

ALTHOUGH it was late, I continued my translation of the singular document I had unearthed at the mound. Determined to discover the source of the legend of the ghostly walkers, the old man by day and the apparently headless squaw by night, I plunged deeper into the archaic Spanish manuscript of Panfilo de Zamacona, anxious to find possible clues to the Oklahoma mound legends which this Sixteenth Century Spaniard might reveal.

Fascinated by his dramatic account of

the timeless underworld with its gold and strangely horrible footprints, I relighted my pipe and went back to the difficult task of translation.

Zamacona, once the mysterious horde had left him securely locked in the golden temple, slept from exhaustion. What finally roused him was a thunderous rapping at the door. It beat through his dreams and dissolved all the lingering mists of drowsiness as soon as he knew what it was. There could be no mistake about it—it was a definite, human, and peremptory rapping, performed apparently with some metallic object, and with all the measured quality of conscious thought or will behind it. As the awakening man rose clumsily to his feet, a sharp vocal note was added to the summons. Feeling sure that his visitors were men and not demons, and arguing that they could have no reason for considering him an enemy, Zamacona decided to face them openly. He fumbled with the ancient latch till the golden door creaked open from the pressure of those outside.

As the great portal swung back, Zamacona stood facing a group of about twenty individuals of an aspect not calculated to give him alarm. They seemed to be Indians, though their tasteful robes and trappings and swords were not such as he had seen among any of the tribes of the outer world, while their faces had many subtle differences from the Indian type. That they did not mean to be irresponsibly hostile was very clear, for instead of menacing him in any way they merely probed him attentively and significantly with their eyes, as if they expected the gaze to open up some sort of communication.

The longer they gazed, the more he seemed to know about them and their mission, for although no one had spoken since the vocal summons before the opening of the door, he found himself slowly realizing that they had come from the great city beyond the low hills, mounted on animals, and that they had been summoned by animals who had reported his presence; that they were not sure what kind of a person he was or just where he had come from, but that they knew he must be associated with that dimly remembered outer world which they sometimes visited in curious dreams. How he read all this in the gaze of the two or three leaders he could not possibly explain, though he learned why a moment later.

As it was, he attempted to address his visitors in the Wichita dialect that he had picked up from Charging Buffalo, and after this failed to draw a vocal reply he successively tried the Aztec, Spanish, French, and Latin tongues—adding as many scraps of lame Greek, Galician and Portuguese, and of the peasant *patois* of his native Asturias, as his memory could recall. But not even this polyglot array—his entire linguistic stock—could bring a reply in kind.

When, however, he paused in perplexity, one of the visitors began speaking in an utterly strange and rather fascinating language whose sounds the Spaniard later had much difficulty in representing on paper. Upon his failure to understand this, the speaker pointed first to his own eyes, then to his forehead, and then to his eyes again, as if commanding the other to gaze at him in order to absorb what he wished to transmit.

Zamacona, obeying, found himself rapidly in possession of certain information. The people, he learned, conversed by means of soundless radiations of thought, although they had formerly used a spoken language which still survived as the written tongue, and into which they still dropped orally for tradition's sake, or when strong feeling demanded a spontaneous outlet. He could understand them merely by concentrating his attention upon their eyes, and could reply by summoning

up a mental image of what he wished to say, and throwing the substance of this into his glance.

When the thought-speaker paused, apparently inviting a response, Zamacona tried his best to follow the prescribed pattern, but did not appear to succeed very well. So he nodded, and tried to describe himself and his journey by signs. He pointed upward, as if to the outer world, then closed his eyes and made signs as of a mole burrowing. Then he opened his eyes again and pointed downward, in order to indicate his descent of the great slope. Experimentally he blended a spoken word or two with his gestures; for example, pointing successively to himself and to all of his visitors and saying *"un hombre,"* and then pointing to himself alone and very carefully pronouncing his name, *Panfilo de Zamacona.*

BEFORE this strange conversation was over, a good deal of data had passed in both directions, but Zamacona in particular had learned many things. The underground world, he found, was called *"Xinaian,"* or *"K'n-yan,"* as it could probably best be represented phonetically to Anglo-Saxon ears. The people of K'n-yan possessed various marvelous abilities. They had conquered the phenomena of old age and death so that they no longer grew feeble or died except through violence or will. They could also regulate the balance between matter and abstract energy, even where the bodies of living organic beings were concerned, by the sheer force of the technically trained will. In other words, with suitable effort a learned man of K'n-yan could dematerialize and rematerialize himself, or, with somewhat greater effort and subtler technique, any other object he chose; reducing solid matter to free external particles and recombining the particles again without damage. Had not Zamacona answered his visitors' knock when he did, he would have discovered this accomplishment in a highly puzzling way, for only the strain and bother of the process prevented the twenty men from passing bodily through the golden door without pausing for a summons. This art could be taught to some extent, though never perfectly, to any intelligent person.

The people of K'n-yan all dwelt in the great, tall city of Tsath beyond the mountains. Formerly several races had inhabited the underground world, but the men of Tsath had conquered and enslaved the rest, interbreeding them with certain horned and four-footed animals of the red-litten region. The slave class was by now extensive and highly composite, being bred not only from ancient conquered enemies, but also from outer-world stragglers, from dead bodies curiously galvanized into effectiveness, and from the naturally inferior members of the ruling class. The acts of the slaves were controlled by their masters who gave them hypnotic impressions in the morning of all they were to do during the day. The most mechanical of the slaves were those called the *y'm-bhi,* organisms which had died, but which had been mechanically reanimated for industrial purposes by means of atomic energy and thought-power. It was the *y'm-bhi* who were used for the amusement of the people in the amphitheater, and many of them consequently showed evidences of horrible subtractions, distortions, transpositions, graftings, and even of decapitation. The flesh of a special slave class was the principal meat stock of K'n-yan, and especially of the *gyaa-yothn,* the great floundering white beasts which so horrified Zamacona that he only hinted at the black fur on their backs, the rudimentary horn on their forehead, and the unmistakable trace of human or anthropoid blood in their flat-nosed, bulging-lipped faces.

In government, Tsath was a kind of semi-anarchical state; habit rather than law

determining the order of things. The race suffered from a paralyzing ennui and decadence, and was interested solely in physical fundamentals and new sensations, desiring only that the mutual encroachments of pleasure-seeking should not cripple the massed life of the community. Family organization and the civil and social distinction of the sexes had long ago perished.

As the conversation continued, Zamacona felt a growing repulsion and alarm —at what was told, at the strange, telepathic manner of telling, and at the inference that he must never return to tell the outer world of the existence of K'n-yan and its golden treasures. In fact, the men of Tsath were so displeased to learn that men from Spain and France and England were exploring those parts of the upper world where the passages to K'n-yan lay, that they determined to post sentries once more at all the unblocked passages to the outside world which they could remember. Their decision made Zamacona wish he had never descended to this region of magic and abnormality, but he realized that for the present his policy should be to appear to acquiesce and to furnish his visitors with all the information they might desire. They, on their part, were fascinated by the outer-world data which he managed haltingly to convey.

It was really the first reliable surface information they had had since the refugees straggled back from Atlantis and Lemuria eons before; for all their subsequent emissaries from outside had been members of narrow and local groups without any knowledge of the world at large: Mayas, Toltecs and Aztecs at best, and mostly ignorant tribes of the plains. Zamacona was the first European they had ever seen, and the fact that he was a youth of education and brilliancy made him of still more emphatic value as a source of knowlede.

The long conversation of Zamacona and his visitors took place in the green-blue twilight of the grove just outside of the temple door. Some of the men reclined on the weeds and moss beside the half-vanished walk, while others, including the Spaniard and the chief spokesman of the Tsath party, sat on the low, monolithic pillars that lined the temple approach. Almost a whole terrestrial day must have been consumed in the colloquy, for Zamacona felt the need of food several times, and ate from his well-stocked pack while some of the Tsath party went back for provisions to the roadway, where they had left the animals on which they had ridden. At length the leader of the party brought the discourse to a close, and indicated that the time had come to proceed to the city.

There were, he said, several extra beasts in the cavalcade, upon one of which Zamacona could ride. The prospect of mounting one of those ominous hybrid entities whose fabled nourishment was so alarming was by no means reassuring to the traveler. There was, moreover, another point about the things which disturbed him greatly; the apparently preternatural intelligence with which some members of the previous day's roving pack had reported his presence to the men of Tsath and had brought out the present expedition. But Zamacona was not a coward, and followed the men boldly down the weed-grown walk toward the road where the things were stationed.

The party observed Zamacona's discomfiture and hastened to reassure him as much as possible. The beasts or *gyaa-yothn,* they explained, surely were curious things, but were really harmless.

It argues well for the intrepid fiber of those Renaissance Spaniards who conquered half the unknown world, that Panfilo de Zamacona actually mounted one of the morbid beasts of Tsath and fell into place beside the leader of the cavalcade: the man named Gll-Hthaa-Ynn, who had

been most active in the previous exchange of information. It was a repulsive business; but after all, the seat was easy, and the gait of the clumsy *gyaa-yoth* surprisingly even and regular. No saddle was necessary, and the animal appeared to require no guidance whatever.

WHEN the cavalcade drew near the compact outskirts of Tsath, and well within the shadow of its terrifying towers, Gll-Hthaa-Ynn pointed out a monstrous circular building before which enormous crowds were lined up. This, he indicated, was one of the many amphitheaters where curious sports and sensations were provided for the weary people of K'n-yan. He was about to pause and usher Zamacona inside the vast curved façade, when the Spaniard demurred. This was the first of those friendly clashes of taste which were to convince the people of Tsath that their guest followed strange and narrow standards.

Tsath itself was a network of strange and ancient streets; and despite a growing sense of horror and alienage, Zamacona was enthralled by its intimations of mystery and cosmic wonder. The over awing towers, the monstrous surge of teeming life through its ornate avenues, the curious carvings on its doorways and windows, the odd vistas glimpsed from balustrated plazas and tiers of titan terraces, and the enveloping gray haze which seemed to press down on the gorge-like streets in low ceiling-fashion, all combined to produce such a sense of adventurous expectancy as he had never known before.

He was taken at once to a council of executives which held forth in a gold-and-copper palace behind a gardened and fountained park, and was for some time subjected to close, friendly questioning in a vaulted hall frescoed with vertiginous arabesques. A daily program was laid down for the visitor, after he was emphatically told he must never think of returning to the upper world. There were to be conversations with persons of learning in various places, and lessons in many branches of Tsathic lore. Liberal periods of research were allowed for, and all the libraries of K'n-yan both secular and sacred were to be thrown open to him as soon as he might master the written language. Rites and spectacles were to be attended, except when he might especially object, and much time would be left for the enlightened pleasure-seeking and emotional titillation which formed the goal and nucleus of daily life.

A house in the suburbs or an apartment in the city would be assigned him, and he would be initiated into one of the large affection-groups, including many noblewomen of the most extreme and art-enhanced beauty, which in latter-day K'n-yan took the place of family units. Several horned *gyaa-yothn* would be provided for his transportation and errand-running, and ten living slaves of intact body would serve to conduct his establishment and protect him from thieves and sadists and religious orgiasts on the public highways.

Upon his choosing an apartment in preference to a suburban villa, Zamacona was dismissed by the executives with great courtesy and ceremony, and was led through several gorgeous streets to a cliff-like carven structure of some seventy or eighty floors. Preparations for his arrival had already been instituted, and in a spacious ground-floor suite of vaulted rooms slaves were busy adjusting hangings and furniture. There were lacquered and inlaid taborets, velvet and silk reclining-corners and squatting-cushions, and infinite rows of teakwood and ebony pigeonholes with metal cylinders containing some of the manuscripts he was soon to read, standard classics which all urban apartments possessed.

There were windows, but at this shadowy ground-level they were of scant illuminating value. In some of the rooms were elaborate baths, while the kitchen was a maze of technical contrivances. Supplies were brought, Zamacona was told, through the network of underground passages which lay beneath Tsath, and which had once accommodated curious mechanical transports.

Before his inspection was finished, the permanent staff of slaves arrived and were introduced, and shortly afterward there came some half-dozen freemen and noblewomen of his future affection-group, who were to be his companions for several days, contributing what they could to his instruction and amusement. Upon their departure, another party would take their place, and so onward in rotation through a group of about fifty members.

5

THUS was Panfilo de Zamacona absorbed for four years into the life of the sinister city of Tsath in the blue-litten nether world of K'n-yan. All that he learned and saw and did is clearly not told in his manuscript, for a pious reticence overcame him when he began to write in his native Spanish tongue, and he dared not set down everything. Much he consistently viewed with repulsion, and many things he steadily refrained from seeing or doing or eating. For other things he atoned by frequent countings of the beads of his rosary.

He explored the entire world of K'n-yan, including the deserted machine-cities of the middle period on the gorse-grown plain of Nith, and made one descent into the red-litten world of Yoth to see the cyclopean ruins. He witnessed prodigies of craft and machinery which left him breathless, and beheld human metamorphoses, dematerializations, rematerializations, and reanimations which made him cross himself again and again. His capacity for astonishment was blunted by the plethora of new marvels which every day brought him.

But the longer he stayed, the more he wished to leave, for the inner life of K'n-yan was based on impulses very plainly outside his radius. As he progressed in historical knowledge, he understood more, but understanding only heightened his distaste. He felt that the people of Tsath were a lost and dangerous race—more dangerous to themselves than they knew—and that their growing frenzy of monotony-warfare and novelty-quest was leading them rapidly toward a precipice of disintegration and utter horror.

As a means of keeping the image of home in mind, he began about this time to make rough drafts of the manuscript relating his adventures; delighting in the loved, old, Spanish words and the familiar letters of the Roman alphabet. Somehow he fancied he might get the manuscript to the outer world, and to make it convincing to his fellows he resolved to enclose it in one of the Tulu-metal cylinders used for sacred archives.

But even while he planned, he had little real hope of ever establishing contact with the earth's surface. Every known gate, he knew, was guarded by persons and forces that it were better not to oppose. His attempts to escape had not helped matters, for he could now see a growing hostility to the outer world he represented. He hoped that no other European would find his way in, for it was possible that later comers might not fare as well as he.

In the year 1545, as he reckoned it, Zamacona grew hopeful. An opportunity for escape came from an unexpected source: a female of his affection-group who conceived for him a curious individual infatuation based on some hereditary memory of the days of monogamous wedlock

in Tsath. Over this female—a noble-woman of moderate beauty and of at least average intelligence, named T'la-yub—Zamacona acquired the most extraordinary influence, finally inducing her to help him in an escape, under the promise that he would let her accompany him.

Chance proved a great factor in the course of events, for T'la-yub came of a primordial family of gate-lords who had retained oral traditions of at least one passage to the outer world which the mass of people had forgotten.

Zamacona, now working feverishly to get his manuscript into final form in case anything untoward should happen to him, decided to take with him on his outward journey only five beast-loads of unalloyed gold in the form of the small ingots used for minor decorations—enough, he calculated, to make him a personage of unlimited power in his own world.

T'la-yub he would perhaps allow to share his fortune, for she was by no means unattractive; though possibly he would arrange for her sojourn among the plains Indians, since he was not overanxious to preserve links with the manner of life of Tsath. For a wife, of course, he would choose a lady of Spain, or at worst, an Indian princess of normal outer-world descent and a regular and approved past. But for the present T'la-yub must be used as a guide. The manuscript he would carry on his own person, encased in a book-cylinder of the sacred and magnetic Tulu-metal.

THE expedition itself is described in the addendum to Zamacona's manuscript, written later, and in a hand showing signs of nervous strain. He set out after taking the most careful precautions, proceeding as far as possible along the faintly lighted passages beneath the city. Zamacona and T'la-yub, disguised in slaves' garments, bearing provision-knapsacks, and leading the five laden beasts on foot, were readily taken for commonplace workers; and they clung as long as possible to the subterranean way, using a long and little-frequented branch which had formerly conducted the mechanical transports to the now ruined suburb of L'thaa.

Amidst the ruins of L'thaa they came to the surface, thereafter passing as rapidly as possible over the deserted, blue-litten plain of Nith toward the Grh-yan range of low hills. There, in the tangled underbrush, T'la-yub found the long-disused entrance to the forgotten tunnel; a thing she had seen but once before—eons in the past. It was hard work getting the laden gyaa-yothn to scrape through the obstructing vines and briars, and one of them displayed a rebelliousness destined to bear dire consequences—bolting away from the party and loping back toward Tsath on its detestable pads, golden burden and all.

It was nightmare work burrowing by the light of blue-ray torches upward, downward, forward, and upward again through a dank, choked tunnel that no foot had trodden since ages before the sinking of Atlantis; and at one point T'la-yub had to practice the fearsome art of dematerialization on herself, Zamacona, and the laden beasts in order to pass a point wholly clogged by shifting earth-strata. It was a terrible experience for Zamacona; for although he had often witnessed dematerialization in others, and even practiced it himself to the extent of dream-projection, he had never been fully subjected to it before. But T'la-yub was skilled in the arts of K'n-yan, and accomplished the double metamorphosis in perfect safety.

At last they came to a very narrow place where the natural or only slightly hewn cave-walls gave place to walls of wholly artificial masonry, carved into terrible bas-reliefs. At this point the passage opened into a prodigious vaulted and circular chamber of human construction, wholly

covered with horrible carvings, and revealing at the farther end an arched passageway with the foot of a flight of steps. T'la-yub knew from family tales that this must be very near the earth's surface, but she could not tell just how near. Here the party camped for what they meant to be their last rest-period in the subterraneous world.

IT MUST have been hours later that the clank of metal and the padding of beasts' feet awakened Zamacona and T'la-yub. An alarm had been given at Tsath by the returning *gyaa-yothn* which had rebelled at the briar-choked tunnel-entrance, and a swift party of pursuers had come to arrest the fugitives. Resistance was clearly useless, and none was offered.

Zamacona and T'la-yub were tried before the three *gn'agn* of the supreme tribunal in the gold-and-copper palace behind the gardened and fountained park, and the Spaniard was given his liberty because of the vital outer-world information he still had to impart. He was told to return to his apartment and to his affection-group, taking up his life as before, and continuing to meet deputations of scholars according to the latest schedule he had been following. No restrictions would be imposed upon him so long as he might remain peacefully in K'n-yan, but it was intimated that such leniency would not be repeated after another attempt at escape.

The fate of T'la-yub was less happy. There being no object in retaining her, and her ancient Tsathic lineage giving her conduct a greater aspect of treason than Zamacona's, she was ordered to be delivered to the curious diversions of the amphitheater; and afterward, in a somewhat mutilated and half-dematerialized form, to be given the functions of a *y'm-bhi* or animated corpse-slave and stationed among the sentries guarding the passage whose existence she had betrayed.

Zamacona soon heard, not without many pangs of a regret he could scarcely have anticipated, that poor T'la-yub had emerged from the arena in a headless and otherwise incomplete state, and had been set as an outermost guard upon the mound in which the passage had been found to terminate. She was, he was told, a night-sentinel, whose automatic duty was to warn off all comers with a torch; sending down reports to a small garrison of twelve dead slave *y'm-bhi* and six living but partly dematerialized freemen in the vaulted, circular chamber if the approachers did not heed her warning. She worked, he was told, in conjunction with a day-sentinel—a living freeman who chose this post in preference to other forms of discipline for certain offenses against the state.

It was now made plain to him, though indirectly, that his own penalty for another escape-attempt would be service as a gate-sentry. It was intimated that he, or parts of him, would be reanimated to guard some inner section of the passage, within sight of others, where his abridged person might serve as a permanent symbol of the rewards of treason. But, his informants always added, it was of course inconceivable that he would ever court such a fate. So long as he remained peaceably in K'n-yan, he would continue to be a free, privileged and respected personage.

Yet in the end Panfilo de Zamacona did court the fate so directly hinted to him. True, he did not really expect to encounter it, but the nervous latter part of his manuscript makes it clear that he was prepared to face its possibility. What gave him a final hope of scathless escape from K'n-yan was his growing mastery of the art of dematerialization. Having studied it for years, and having learned still more from the two instances in which he had been subjected to it, he now felt increasingly able to use it independently and effectively.

Of course he could not bear away any gold, but mere escape was enough. He would, though, dematerialize and carry with him his manuscript in the Tulu-metal cylinder, even though it cost additional effort, for this record and proof must reach the outer world at all hazards. He now knew the passage to follow, and if he could thread it in an atom-scattered state, he did not see how any person or force could detect or stop him. The only trouble would be if he failed to maintain his spectral condition at all times. That was the one ever-present peril, as he had learned from his experiments.

For many nights after his ultimate resolution Zamacona prayed to St. Pamphilus and other guardian saints, and counted the beads of his rosary. The last entry in the manuscript—which toward the end took the form of a diary more and more—was merely a single sentence: *"Es mas tarde de lo que pensaba—tango que marcharme"* . . . "It is later than I thought! I must go." After that, only silence and conjecture—and such evidence as the presence of the manuscript itself, and what that manuscript could lead to, might provide.

6

WHEN I looked up from my half-stupefied reading and note-making, the morning sun was high in the heavens. The electric bulb was still burning, but such things of the real world—the modern outer world—were far from my whirling brain. I knew I was in my room at Clyde Compton's at Binger, but upon what monstrous vista had I stumbled? Was this thing a hoax or a chronicle of madness? If a hoax, was it a jest of the Sixteenth Century or of today? The manuscript's age looked appallingly genuine to my not wholly unpractised eyes.

Moreover, what a monstrously exact explanation it gave of all the baffling phenomena of the mound, of the seemingly meaningless and paradoxical actions of diurnal and nocturnal ghosts, and of the queer cases of madness and disappearance! It was even an accursedly *plausible* explanation, evilly *consistent,* if one could adopt the incredible. It must be a shocking hoax devised by someone who knew all the lore of the mound. There was even a hint of social satire in the account of that unbelievable nether world of horror and decay. Surely this was the clever forgery of some learned cynic, something like the leaden crosses in New Mexico, which a jester once planted and pretended to discover as a relic of some forgotten Dark-Age colony from Europe.

Upon going down to breakfast I hardly knew what to tell Compton and his mother, as well as the curious callers who had already begun to arrive. Still in a daze, I gave a few points from the notes I had made, mumbling my belief that the thing was a subtle and ingenious fraud left there by some previous explorer of the mound—a belief in which everybody seemed to concur when told of the substance of the manuscript.

When I reached the mound that morning, there was no one in sight. Repeating my upward scramble of the previous day, I was troubled by thoughts of what *might* lie close at hand, *if* any miracle, any part of the manuscript *were* actually half true. In such a case, I could not help reflecting, the hypothetical Spaniard Zamacona must have barely reached the outer world when overtaken by some disaster, perhaps an involuntary rematerialization.

He would naturally, in that event, have been seized by whichever sentry happened to be on duty at the time—either the discredited freeman, or, as a matter of supreme irony, the very T'la-yub who had planned and aided his first attempt at escape, and in the ensuing struggle the cylinder with the manuscript might well have

been dropped on the mound's summit to be neglected and gradually buried for nearly four centuries.

It was a very real shock which chased this morbid speculation from my head, for upon glancing around the elliptical summit I saw at once that my pick and shovel had been stolen. This was a highly provoking and disconcerting development; baffling, too, in view of the seeming reluctance of everyone in Binger to visit the mound. Was this reluctance a pretended thing, and had the jokers of the village been chuckling with anticipation of my discomfiture as they solemnly saw me off ten minutes before? I took out my binoculars and scanned the gaping crowd at the edge of the village. No; they did not seem to be looking for any comic climax.

Everything else on the mound was as I had left it: brush cut by my machete, slight, bowl-like depression toward the north end, and the hole I had made with my trench-knife in digging up the cylinder. Deeming it too great a concession to the unknown jokers to return to Binger for another pick and shovel, I resolved to carry out my program as best I could with the machete and trench-knife in my hand-bag; so, extracting these, I set to work excavating the bowl-like depression which my eye had picked as the possible site of a former entrance to the mound. As I proceeded, I felt again the suggestion of a sudden wind blowing against me which I had noticed the day before—a suggestion which seemed stronger, and still more reminiscent of unseen, formless, opposing hands laid on my wrists, as I cut deeper and deeper through the root-tangled red soil and reached the exotic black loam beneath.

Then, quite without warning, the black, root-woven earth beneath my feet began to sink cracklingly, while I heard a faint sound of sifting, falling matter far below me. I saw that the earth was sifting down into some large cavity beneath, so as to leave a good-sized aperture when the roots that had bound it were gone. A few more hacks of the machete did the trick, and with a parting cave-in and uprush of curiously chill and alien air the last barrier gave way. Under the morning sun yawned a huge opening at least three feet square, and showing the top of a flight of stone steps down which the loose earth of the collapse was still sliding. My quest had come to something at last! With an elation of accomplishment almost overbalancing fear, I replaced the trench-knife and machete in my hand-bag, took out my powerful electric torch, and prepared for a triumphant lone, and utterly rash invasion of the fabulous nether world I had uncovered.

IT WAS difficult getting down the first few steps, both because of the fallen earth which had choked them and because of a singular up-pushing of a cold wind from below. The electric torch showed dank, water-stained and salt-encrusted walls fashioned of huge basalt blocks, and now and then I thought I descried some trace of carving beneath the nitrous deposits.

My descent became swifter, and I avoided studying the terrible bas-reliefs and intaglios that had unnerved me. All at once I saw an arched opening ahead, and realized that the prodigious staircase had ended at last. But with that realization came horror in mounting and magnitude, for before me there yawned a vast vaulted crypt of all-too-familiar outline—a great circular space answering in every least particular to the carving-lined chamber described in the Zamacona manuscript.

It was indeed the place. There could be no mistake. And if any room for doubt yet remained, that doubt was abolished by what I saw directly across the great vault. It was a second arched opening, commencing a long, narrow passage and having at

its mouth two huge opposite niches bearing loathsome and totanic images of shockingly familiar pattern.

From this point onward I ask no credence for what I tell—for what I *think* I saw. It is too unnatural, too monstrous and incredible, to be any part of sane human experience or objective reality. My torch, though casting a powerful beam ahead, naturally could not furnish any general illumination of the cyclopean crypt; so I now began moving it about to explore the giant walls little by little. As I did so, I saw to my horror that the space was by no means vacant, but was instead littered with odd furniture and utensils and heaps of packages which bespoke a populous recent occupancy—no nitrous relic of the past, but queerly-shaped objects and supplies in modern, everyday use. As my torch rested on each article or group of articles, however, the distinctness of the outlines soon began to grow blurred, until in the end I could scarcely tell whether the things belonged to the realm of matter or to the realm of spirit.

Wild conceits surged through my mind. I thought of the manuscript and what it said about the garrison stationed in this place—twelve dead slave *y'm-bhi* and six living but partly dematerialized freemen —that was in 1545—three hundred and eighty-three years ago— What since then? Zamacona had predicted change —subtle disintegration—more dematerialization—weaker and weaker— It occurred to me with shuddering force that I was building my speculations out of a full belief in the Zamacona manuscript—this must not be—I must get a grip on myself. . . .

But every time I tried to get a grip I saw some fresh sight to shatter my poise still further. This time, just as my willpower was driving the half-seen paraphernalia into obscurity, my glance and torch-beam had to light on two things of very different nature; two things of the eminently real and sane world which grew more instead of less distinct the longer I looked at them. I say they were of the eminently real and sane world, yet they did more to unseat my shaky reason than anything I had seen before—because I knew what they were, and knew how profoundly, in the course of nature, they ought not to be there. *They were my own missing pick and shovel, side by side, and leaning neatly against the blasphemously carved wall of that hellish crypt.*

The cursed hypnotism of the manuscript got at me, and I actually *saw* the half-transparent shapes of the things that were pushing and plucking—those leprous paleogean things with something of humanity still clinging to them—the *complete* forms, and the forms that were morbidly and perversely *incomplete* . . . all these, and hideous *other* entities—the four-footed blasphemies with ape-like face and great projecting horn . . . and not a sound so far in all that nitrous hell of inner earth. . . .

Then there *was* a sound—a flopping; a padding; a dull, advancing sound which heralded beyond question a being as structurally material as the pickax and the shovel—something wholly unlike the shadow-shapes that ringed me in, yet equally remote from any sort of life as life is understood on the earth's wholesome surface. My shattered brain tried to prepare me for what was coming, but could not frame any adequate image. I could only say over and over again to myself, "It is of the abyss, but it is *not* dematerialized."

The padding grew more distinct, and from the mechanical cast of the tread I knew it was a dead thing that stalked in the darkness. Then—oh, God, *I saw it in the full beam of my torch; saw it framed like a sentinel in the narrow passage. . . .*

LET me collect myself enough to hint at what I saw—to explain why I dropped torch and hand-bag alike and fled empty-handed in the utter blackness, wrapped in a merciful unconsciousness which did not wear off until the sun and the distant yelling and shouting from the village roused me as I lay gasping on the top of the accursed mound. I do not yet know what guided me again to the earth's surface. I only know that the watchers in Binger saw me stagger up into sight three hours after I had vanished; saw me lurch up and fall flat on the ground as if struck by a bullet. None of them dared to help me; they knew I must be in a bad state, so tried to rouse me by yelling in chorus and firing off revolvers.

It worked in the end, and when I came to I almost rolled down the side of the mound in my eagerness to get away from that black aperture which still yawned open. My torch and tools, and the hand-bag with the manuscript, were all down there; but it is easy to see why neither I nor anyone else ever went after them. When I had staggered across the plain and into the village I dared not tell what I had seen. I only muttered vague things about carvings and statues and snakes and shaken nerves. And I did not faint again until somebody mentioned that the ghost-sentinel had reappeared about the time I had staggered halfway back to town. I left Binger that evening, and have never been there since, though they tell me the ghosts still appear on the mound as usual.

But I have resolved to hint here at last what I dared not hint to the people of Binger on that terrible August afternoon. I don't know yet just how I can go about it—and if in the end you think my reticence strange, just remember that to imagine such a horror is one thing, *but to see it is another thing*. I saw it.

I think you'll recall my citing early in this tale the case of a bright young man named Heaton who went out to that mound one day in 1891 and came back at night as the village idiot, babbling for eight years about horrors and then dying in an epileptic fit. What he used to keep moaning was *"that white man—or, my God, what they did to him . . ."*

Well, I saw the same thing that poor Heaton saw—and I saw it after reading that manuscript; so I know more of its history than he did. That makes it worse, for I know all that it *implies*—all that must be still brooding and festering and waiting down there. I told you it had padded mechanically toward me out of the narrow passage, and had stood sentry-like at the entrance. That was natural and inevitable—because the thing *was* a sentry. It had been made a sentry for punishment, and it was quite dead, besides lacking head, arms, lower legs and other customary parts of a human being. Yes, it had been a very human being once; and what is more, it had been *white*. Very obviously, if that manuscript was as true as I think it was, this being had been used for *the diversions of the amphitheater*, before its life had become wholly extinct and supplanted by automatic impulses controlled from outside.

On its white and only slightly hairy chest some letters had been gashed or branded—I had not stopped to investigate, but had merly noted that they were in an awkward and fumbling Spanish; an awkward Spanish implying a kind of ironic use of the language by an alien inscriber familiar neither with the idiom nor the Roman letters used to record it. The inscription had read: *"Secuestrado a la voluntad de Xinain en el cuerpo decapitado de Tlayub"* — *"Seized by the will of K-n-yan in the headless body of T'la-yub."*

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GHOST FARM

By DULCIE BROWNE

MY FATHER'S farm was situated in the San Joaquin Valley near Tulare Lake—which had receded until it was no more than a dank mud-hole. It was said, however, that the lake had, at one time, covered a large area in the center of the valley and that the place where we lived was a portion of that old lake bed.

Be that as it may, the land was fertile and father had done quite well so far. He had working for him an Indian from the reservation some miles away. Old Skip was a good worker but silent and of a reserved disposition, showing no emotion at any time.

The only time I ever saw Skip display any feeling was the time when my father voiced his intention of plowing up a high spot in the center of the ranch which had hitherto been uncultivated on account of not being accessible to irrigation water. Old Skip showed a great deal of excitement and displeasure at my father's suggestion and departed to the reservation in high dungeon. Nothing daunted, father hitched up a team and began to play the knoll. I was with him when we discovered the human skulls planted so close to the top of the ground that the plowshare threw them up in the furrow.

It was easy to see that the skulls were those of Indians and that they had been buried many years ago. Putting the team in the barn father took a shovel and began to dig in the spot where most of the bones were turned up. He found many of them of all sizes, indicating that men, women and children had all been buried together in all kinds of shapes. There were also many stone implements buried with them.

When Skip heard of the find, as all the countryside did before long, he came back to the ranch and advised father to stop digging the bones up. His voice contained a warning as he said:

"You make lots of money. You will lose money if you not stop digging. Skip know."

But father only laughed at what he considered an old Indian superstition and kept right on digging. Of course, people came from far and near to examine and exclaim over the weird find, while the hole in the ground grew bigger every day and the pile of bones higher.

It was at this time that we children began to hear strange noises about the house, and there were times when one could actually see in a strange sort of way, as though the thing were a vision; that a human form

was near. Sitting below stairs one could not help hearing the distinct sound of footfalls in the rooms upstairs. Then, too, there was that sound of striking flint that could be heard in any room in the house. My parents ignored these sounds and forbade us to speak of them in their hearing. But so noticeable did they become that we referred to that company of shadowy occupants as "They," and to us they became like members of our own household.

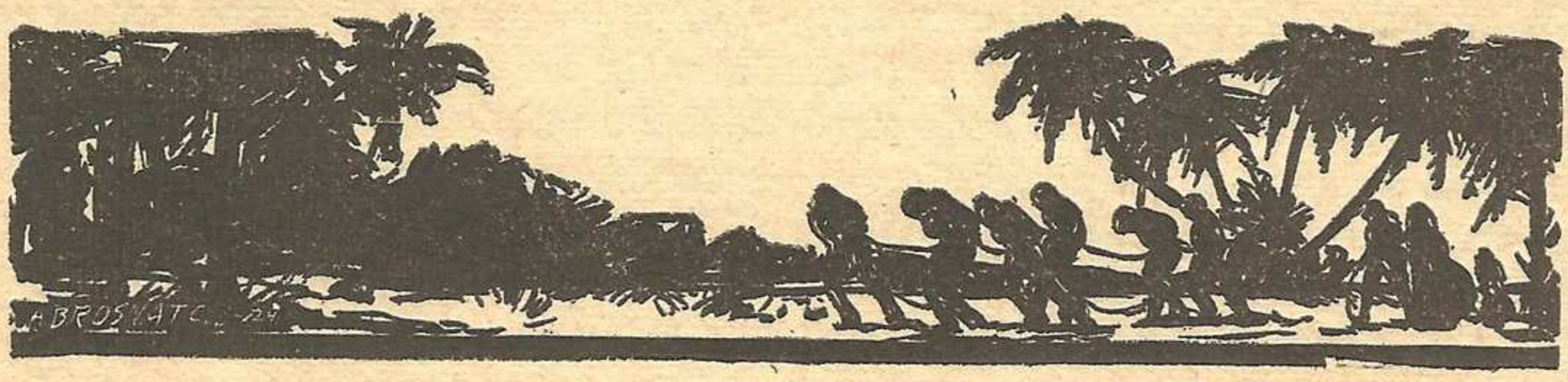
Father had now dug a pit so deep that it was over his head and water was seeping in. And then he came to a large flat rock. The rock could easily have been six by eight feet, had it been entirely square instead of roughly so. When he had completely uncovered it it took about a dozen of the neighbors to help him get it up out of the ground. I understood that father expected to discover hidden treasure, and his hopes were higher still as he dug in the mud and slush where the rock had been. But there were only more bones. Only one skeleton and that of a huge man over seven feet tall.

Here my father's quest was at an end. There had been no treasure, and father was keenly disappointed. He began refilling the huge hole, throwing the bones back in wild disarray. As he filled in the last spadeful of earth he seemed glad to be rid of the whole business.

When father ceased his operations it would have seemed that the phenomena in the house would be ended. But it was not so. Things were as they had been. And there was a noticeable difference seen in the whole ranch. The fowl and animals began to perish with strange diseases, the crops were not coming up to expectations. There was a dull gray tinge settling over the very buildings and even the shade trees that had flourished so greenly in the yard were wilting and yellowing.

The next year there was no green thing growing on the whole ranch, in spite of father's careful planning and culture. Experts came. They shook their heads and went away perplexed. My father's place became a blighted area among all the green fields of our neighbors. Father was losing money in every transaction he made. Two years later we left the farm, abandoned it to the gray horde.

Today the farm is just the same. Other folk have moved there from time to time and left when they found they could grow no crops. The house stares vacantly out of its paneless windows. I often wonder if that Indian horde still inhabits it and what secrets they whisper to each other as they pass through the deserted rooms, the soft padding of their feet resounding as I heard them many times.



THE EYRIE

IT IS with profound regret that we announce the death of Farnsworth Wright who was editor of WEIRD TALES for many years and was so largely responsible for the success of the magazine. It seems fitting that we should print here in the Eyrie a letter about Mr. Wright from a man who not only was one of his personal friends, but also a constant contributor to WEIRD TALES. The staff of WEIRD TALES, its contributors and countless of its readers join with Seabury Quinn in his tribute to a great editor and scholar.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

LIKE everyone who has long been a reader of or contributor to WEIRD TALES, I was greatly shocked and grieved at the news of Farnsworth Wright's passing. Any one who has read WEIRD TALES must have been impressed by his thorough knowledge of weird literature, his complete understanding of the great background of folk lore, superstition and comparative religion from which such literature is drawn, and his nice sense of discrimination in selecting the cream of such stories by modern authors to carry on the tradition of the Georgian and early Victorian masters of Gothic tales. Helped and encouraged by his expert criticism and kindly advice a whole generation of writers was developed, and though many of these have "graduated" to other media of expression, none, I am sure, will ever forget the debt he owes to Farnsworth Wright. There is today hardly a writer of fantasy whose success does not date from the encouragement he received from Mr. Wright, and there is certainly no one engaged in creative work who ever dealt with Farnsworth Wright who does not think kindly of him.

To those of us who were privileged to know him personally the loss is even greater. We knew him as a cultured gentleman, a charming host, an incomparably congenial companion, and a true and loyal friend. His steadily failing health caused us all concern, but his courage and resolution were so great that none of us realized how near the great beyond he was. His cheerful letters lulled us into a sense of false optimism, and when news of his death came our surprise was almost equal to our grief.

As for his abilities, his work provides the finest monument possible. In the old files of WEIRD TALES can be read the biography of a man whose genius made possible a magazine which was and is truly unique. As to his epitaph: If it be true that in imitation lies the sincerest form of flattery, Farnsworth Wright has been eloquently acclaimed. When he assumed the editorial chair of WEIRD TALES almost twenty years ago he was a lone adventurer setting out to bring a highly specialized form of entertainment to the reading public. A recent issue of *Author & Journalist* lists twenty-two magazines devoted exclusively to fantasy or pseudo-scientific fiction. Could any greater or more sincere compliment be paid his vision or his work?

SEABURY QUINN.

Did It Happen?

From Denver, Colorado, E. Hoffmann Price writes:

"Looking at the July *Eyrie* and noting the comment (page 124) on Alice Olsen's true experience yarn about the ghost girl at the Cocoanut Grove reminds me of a bit of background I picked up on that same story. I was in Salt Lake City some while ago and picked up substantially the same account, from a newspaper man, a couple of months before it was printed in WT. One is at times inclined to be skeptical about 'true' experiences; but this one seems to stand up under investigation. The names given in your account are, wisely enough, somewhat different from the first hand account I got. There was also an ingenious and pretty successful attempt at a 'logical' explanation. Inasmuch as persons locally known are the principal characters of the tragedy, the story behind the story was never printed. This is not intended to refute Mr. McDonald's interesting discussion; I merely thought that readers would be interested to know that there was actually such a mystery, at least enough to warrant an expense account of $7.35 for the investigator before he was told that even if his deductions were true, the whole business would still be dropped. Whether sure enough supernatural, or a clever hoax that kicked back, fatally, is neither here nor there. A remarkable yarn and what WT printed was just about the straight of it."

From Springfield, Missouri, Donald V. Allgeier writes:

"For ten years I have been a WT fan and during that time it has always been my favorite of all magazines. I still have nostalgic memories of some of the great stories in the magazine's past. I was afraid that bi-monthly publication might be necessary, but I was relieved to see that the high quality of the stories remained. Why not restore the old custom of voting for the best story each issue and printing the title of the winner? That used to spur me to write in at least once every two months.

"I like most of the illustrations. Bok is good, as is Ferman and, occasionally, del Campo. The best story in September was, by all odds, 'Sea Born.' "

[What do you readers think of Mr. Allgeier's "voting for the best story" suggestion? We feel it might be a good idea to restore this feature. Let us know what you think?]

Fact Articles

Blair Moffett writes from Springfield, Pennsylvania:

"Mr. Frank Bristol, several issues back, and Mr. Al MacDowell in the last, made a good suggestion: I'd like to second it. The suggestion was: why not publish short fact articles on occult, esoteric, mythological, and kindred subjects? This would add immensely to WT's value, and give a sane and sound direction to the swiftly growing interest in this type of study that can be noticed all over the country. 'It Happened to Me' is, it seems, an absorbing step in this direction. Mr. MacDonald's article was excellent, and gives an interpretation esoterically, that explains one point of view. And 'The Black Art' finished the Eyrie off very nicely."

[We hope to continue printing more of "the Black Art" type of articles whenever there is sufficient space.]

Golden Chalice

From Dyersburg, Tenn., James G. Merriman writes:

"There is one point I'd like to raise. In the story on "The Golden Chalice" (July issue) there is nothing miraculous about the Cup itself that is, it was excavated, not sent down from Heaven as in the legends—it was just a battered drinking vessel. How, then, does Mr. Gruber account for its being golden? Neither Jesus nor any one personally connected with Him was rich, and He would not have used golden dishes, anyway."

In answer to the Holy Grail query raised by Mr. Merriman, the author of "The Golden Chalice" replies: "In the legends I've read about the Chalice, it has always been golden. Although the size and shape have varied according to the different legends, some even having it a shallow dish, rather than a cup. But always it has been golden. The Holy Grail, which Sir Galahad sought so strenuously, was supposed to have been of gold.

"Religion must be taken on faith alone.

Recorded history does not always bear out religion.

"If He could turn a few loaves into enough to feed a multitude, He could certainly change a dish made of baser material into gold—if He wanted to. Mr. Merriman must have skipped over his Bible a little hastily, if he says that everyone connected with Him was poor. At least one of the twelve apostles was a rich man. I leave the name for Mr. Merriman to discover.

"The particular cup in my story was based on the one shown at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, which like the one in my story was excavated near Antioch. It was definitely golden.

"Why wouldn't He have used golden dishes? "FRANK GRUBER."

THE mystery of Holy Grail remains one of the most fascinating unsolved riddles of all time. . . . Certainly no other single object has collected about itself such a wealth of myth and legend—every Christian and semi-Christian land has its own especial version concerning this mystical vessel of thin and hammered gold (which, as you know, is reputed to have been used by Christ at the Last Supper).

In the Arthurian legends the Golden Chalice has the romantic name of the Holy Sangreal. Perhaps this—the quest by the knights of a legendary king for a legendary grail—is the most fascinating of all the chalice myths. Sir Launcelot, who captained the holy search party, traveled for many years through the dark forests of England's pre-mediaeval West—where in high towers wizards cast their spells and enchantment waited round every twist in the path.

In charming old English one legend relates: "So it befell on a night, at midnight, he arrived before a castle, which was rich and fair, and there was a postern opened towards the sea, and was open without any entry, save two lions kept the entry; and the moon shone clear." Sir Launcelot went into the castle, and after an encounter with a dwarf, who temporarily paralyzed his arm, came upon a chapel. Here he beheld the Holy Sangreal itself, covered with scarlet samite, and standing on an altar where one candle burned. But before he could approach it, he was sud-

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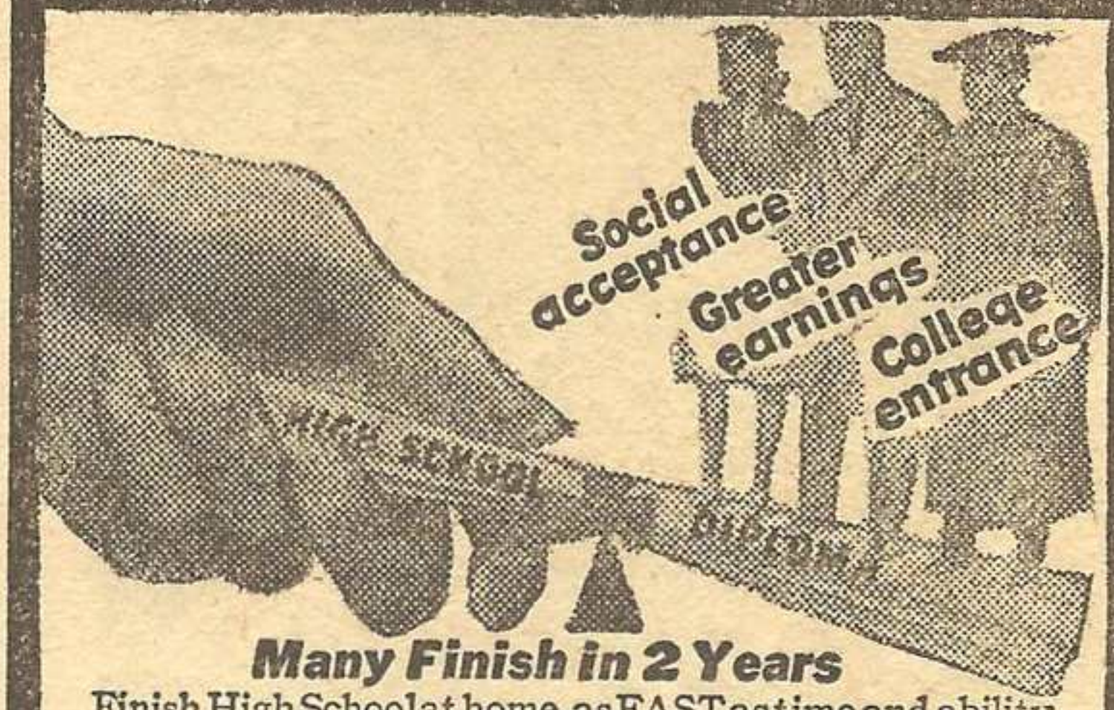

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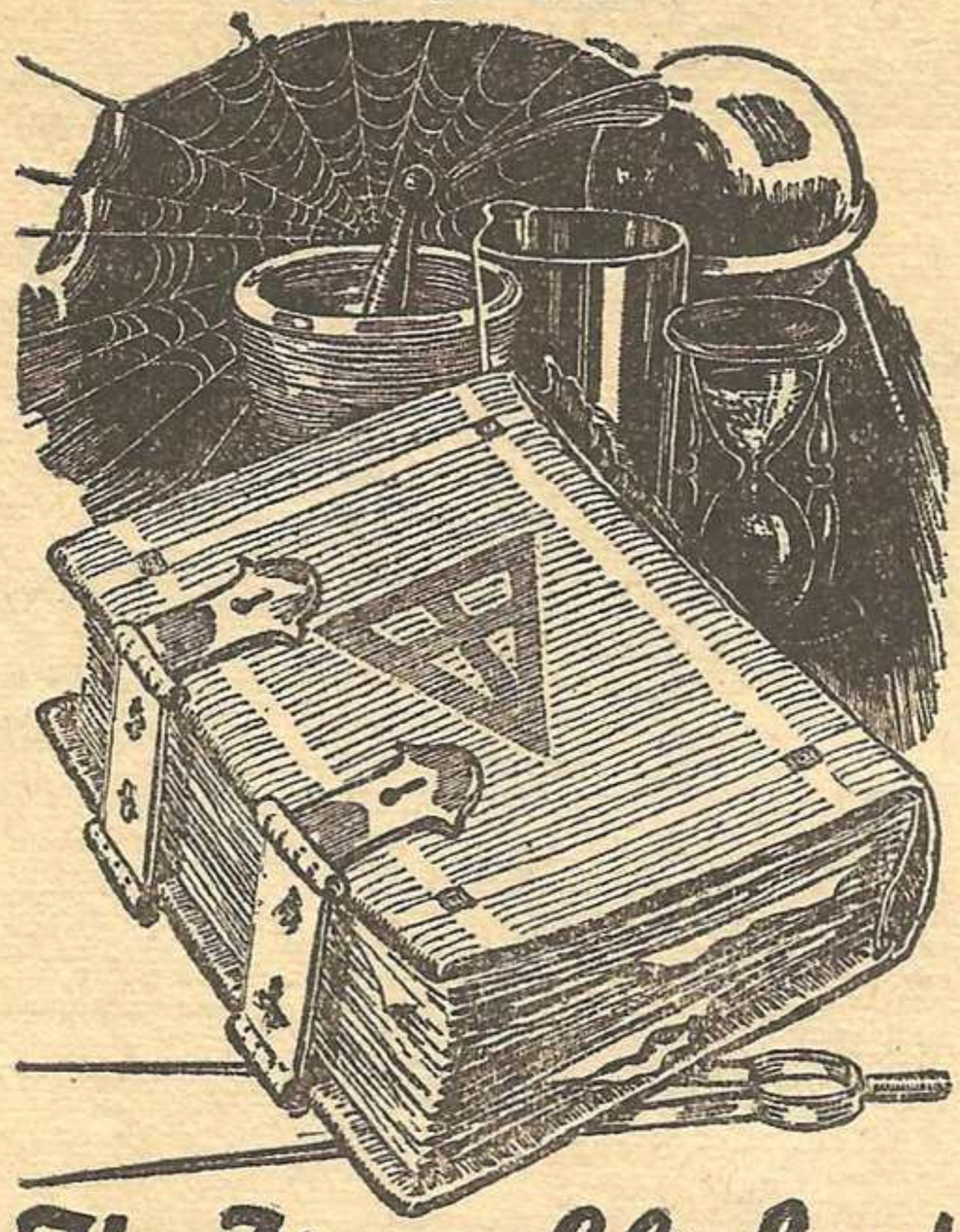
SECRETS ENTRUSTED TO A FEW



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denly struck with fire, and lay unconscious and near death for twenty-four days.

Men have searched in a thousand lands for the Holy Grail; no one, not even an archeologist, has ever found it.

W E I R D

TALES CLUB

9 Rockefeller Plaza

New York, N. Y.

THE WEIRD TALES CLUB is growing. During these last several weeks we have had the largest response since the Club first got under way, and, as you see, the list of members in this issue is three times as long as the list printed in the September number. This is all very encouraging, and we can all hope that in the not so distant future your Club will expand to proportions where it will be of real value to fans and readers.

You will be glad to hear that a membership card—carrying a design by Hannes Bok—is being prepared. This card will be sent to everyone enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

Incidentally, a number of readers have suggested in their letters that we print members' ages. So perhaps all those desiring their ages published would tell us when writing in?

If you are not already a member, why not drop us a line, so that we can enroll you on the Club roster, and publish your name and address in the magazine?

We're looking to you to keep the WEIRD TALES CLUB rolling!

WEIRD TALES CLUB,
9 Rockefeller Plaza,
New York, N. Y.

Well, it seems from the amount of correspondence and serious inquirers, that the oft-wished-for WT Club is under way at

last. I believe I voice the opinion of all the correspondent-members when I say that those who have discovered others of like interests through this Club have found it most interesting, instructive, and an all-around satisfaction.

Thanks for bearing with me; and a toast to all those who have made it possible for "factual fantasy" lovers to get together.

Blair Moffett.

340 Powell Road,
Springfield, Pa.

WEIRD TALES CLUB,
9 Rockefeller Plaza,
New York, N. Y.

The WEIRD TALES CLUB is a good idea, and I would like to tell WT readers that we already have a club here in Eastern Massachusetts which meets around Boston, and we would welcome any fantasy or science-fiction fans desirous of joining.

Art Widner, Jr.,
Director of The Stranger Club
Box 122, Bryantville, Mass.

WEIRD TALES CLUB,
9 Rockefeller Plaza,
New York, N. Y.

We readers of WEIRD TALES in Cleveland are forming a club to discuss the stories in your unusual magazine. Readers wishing to cooperate in the formation of this club are advised to contact the undersigned immediately, for further discussion.

More of Bloch!

Allen R. Baker.

3562 E. 140th St.,
Cleveland, Ohio.

WEIRD TALES CLUB,
9 Rockefeller Plaza,
New York, N. Y.

I'm alone. Oh yes, I have friends and acquaintances, but no one with whom to discuss the subjects in which I'm most interested. Books, the theater, radio, composing, AND SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY. So I'm alone.

Could you please publish my name and address in WEIRD TALES, as a member who would like to establish communication with kindred souls close by, with a view to arranging reciprocal visits?

John Wasso, Jr.

119 Jackson Ave.,
Pen Argyl, Pa.

New Members

Herbert Arthur Sloane, 214 Chillicothe St., Portsmouth, Ohio.

Alexander MacDowell, Box 46, Walden, N. Y.

Albert B. Stavitsky, 322 Clinton Ave., Newark, N. J.

Harry Lambert, 3312—36th Ave. S, Minneapolis, Minn.

Harold De Ford, 39 India St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Earl H. Williams, 1512A State St., East St. Louis, Illinois.

John Wasso, Jr., 119 Jackson Ave., Pen Argyl, Pa.

Agnes Faulkner, 818 Greenlawn Ave., Peoria, Illinois.

Lester Balcom, 294 Summer St., Malden, Mass.

Rosalyn Moody, Monroe, Georgia.

William Hammarstrom, Waretown, N. J.

Julian H. Woodruff, P. O. Box No. 5, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

W. C. Murray, Camp Clayton, Calif.

Al. Moore, 1511 N. E. Tillamook St., Portland, Oregon.

Winifred Marx, c/o Marxochime Colony, New Troy, Michigan.

Dick Balch, 18969 Ohio Ave., Detroit, Michigan.

Richard Geney, R. F. D. No. 1, Owosso, Michigan.

Harry Wyman, 327 Niagara St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Roy E. Bowman, R No. 2, Waynesboro, Va.

Wallis Clarke, Cadiz, Kentucky.

Beatrice A. Brownlee, 460 Clayton St., Denver, Colorado.

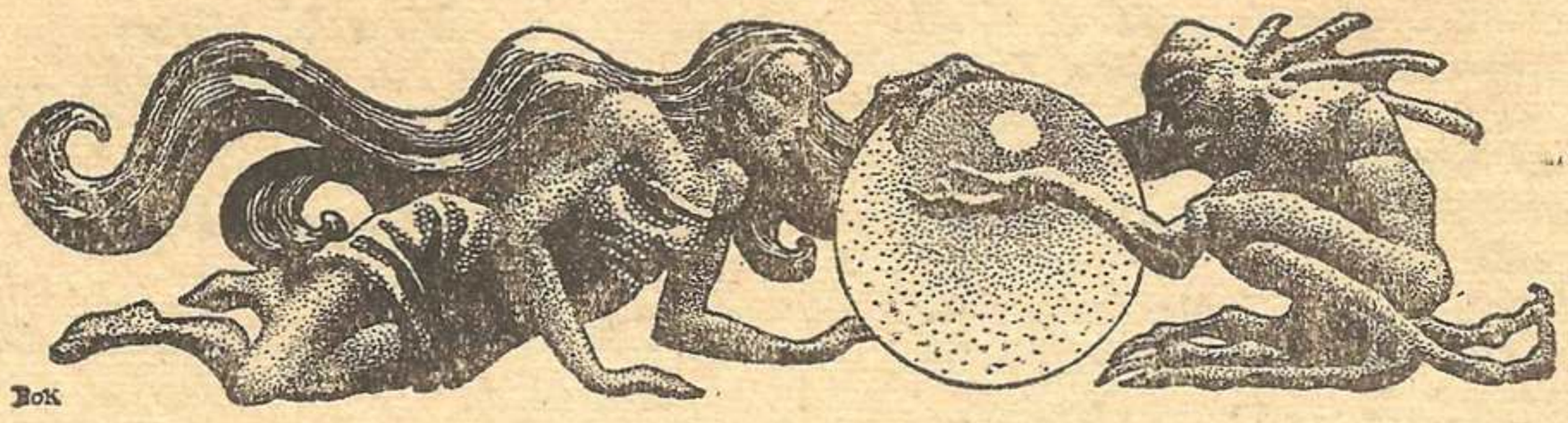
Jerome Kelley, P. O. Box No. 250, Camp Hendersonville, North Carolina.

Elsie May Mercer, 215 Edkley Ave., Peoria, Illinois.

Agnes Waga, 13 North Main St., Perry, N. Y.

Robert Lenoir Mayo, 181 Park Place, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Allen R. Baker, 3562 East 140th St., Cleveland, Ohio.



THE SHAPE OF THRILLS TO COME

Peer into the future with us for a few minutes—and take a look at what is coming in the next

WEIRD TALES

All fans of SEABURY QUINN (and that means WEIRD TALES' fans) will be glad to hear that another fine yarn by this great writer is scheduled. It's titled . . .

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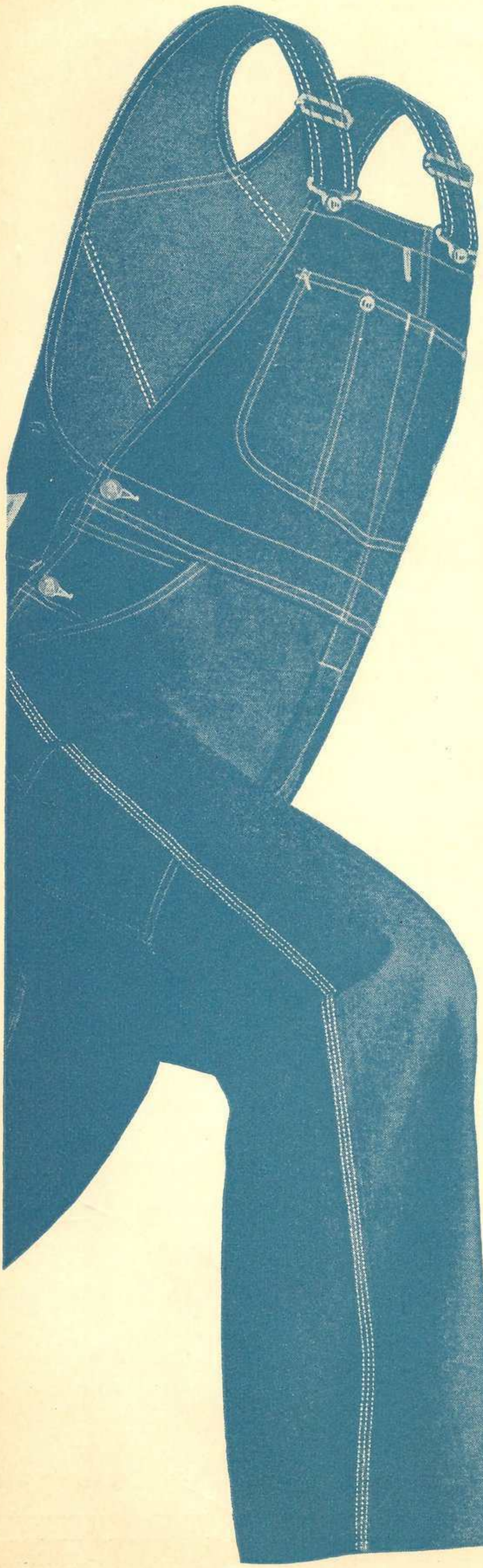

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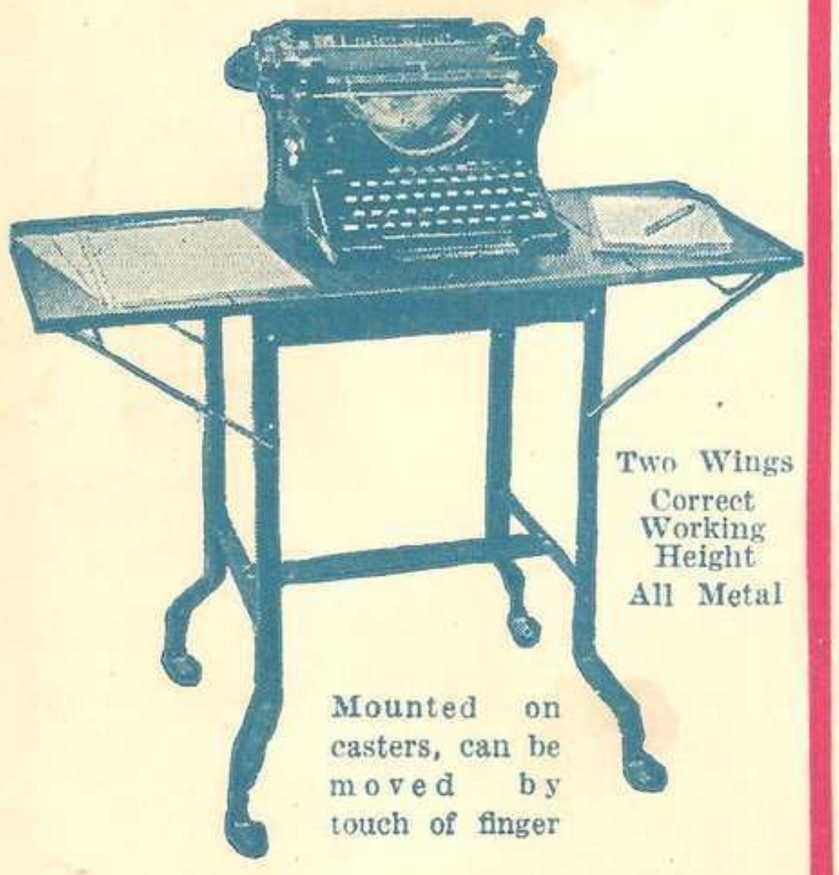

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