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ON THE COVER

this month, taken from Charles P. Tanner's "Flight of the Mercury," our space traveler is shown waving his fist in defiance to the creature who has kept him marooned. Toward the rear of the space ship is seen the three "ether" propellers that carry the ship across space.

NEXT MONTH

THE ANNIHILATOR COMES, by Ed Earl Repp. Yielding to the demands of our readers our popular author gives us now a sequel of his "Beyond Gravity." In this thrilling story, we get the further adventures of the great airship "Annihilator," and its brave commander, Bob Allison. Into the frozen north they go, to search for the missing explorers; and they encounter adventures and a terrible menace that man had never dreamed of. Incidentally our author gives us a new view of the Arctic zones that is startling and revolutionary, yet has a good deal of authority for it.

THE MARTIAN REVENGE, by Hendrik Dahl Juve. You can always depend on this author to furnish an unusual story, and in this interplanetary adventure he has indeed fulfilled our expectations. He has shown us indeed the perils that attend communication with a strange civilization and in this story has illustrated vividly the horror that might attend the revenge of an outraged race. Indeed, through the stirring story, he shows us many of the things which must be avoided if interplanetary travel is to be a success.

THE TORPEDO TERROR, by Edsel Newton. It has already been acknowledged that it is possible to send an airplane into the air and guide it by radio controls without the need of a pilot. The immense importance of this in a war in the air cannot be overestimated. For by means of radio controls it will be possible for a nation to send thousands upon thousands of planes laden with high explosives over the enemy lines. But "The Torpedo Terror" is not a war story, in fact it is the working out of a great mystery and the saving of the world from a terrible disaster.

A SUBTERRANEAN ADVENTURE, by George Paul Bauer. The third installment of this marvelous story of subterranean life finds our two explorers from the surface again at grips with their captors. Stupendous are the scenes pictured by our author—as he shows two men, aided by a girl, engaged in battling against a hostile nation in their own land. This story with every page is approaching an inevitable climax of drama and power.

PRIZE CONTEST—The second prize winning story from the February, 1930, AIR WONDER STORIES COVER CONTEST will be published in the August issue.

AND OTHERS

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By the Author of "The Day of Judgment."



WILLIAM TREVETHEN, loosening the last of the scale which coated the rows of boiler tubes upon which he sat, pitched his scraper away and rolled half-over to rub the painful corrugations pressed into his thigh by the round pipes. Tossing his caged electric bulb out through the open manhole above him, he got upon his hands and knees stiffly, preparatory to standing up and elbowing himself through the opening. Three forty-five P.M. by the boiler-house clock.

"Bill! Oh, Bill!" Twenty-five minutes later Jack Brinston stood upon the brick floor just inside the door, calling his co-worker. His eye fell upon the light-bulb hanging at the end of its cord beside Boiler No. 4, then traveled up over the rounded sweep of grimy steel exposed above the brick foundation. His glance finally came to rest upon an oval plate, from the center of which a long, inch-thick screw protruded.

"Damn that guy anyway! That's what ya git fer havin' a lousy cousin on the shift ahead! Lazy katoot not only can't finish his job but hasta leave me put the cover back on, just 'cause I'm ten minutes late; an' I'll bet he never flushed the scale out o' the bottom either. Well, I gotta get steam up f'r th' evenin' load by five-thirty; 'f I scale-burn somethin' I'll see't he's the guy't gets the hook fer 't!"

So saying, along with many other things that were more within the linguistic limits of a power-house fireman than those of decency, Jack climbed to the top of the boiler to replace the manhole cover, which by rights should have been a two-man job.

The cover is an oval piece of half-inch steel, just large enough to cover a hole admitting a man's body, and is curved to fit the contour of the top of the boiler. It fits on the inside against a metallic gasket. The purpose of the manhole is to allow a mechanic to get inside the boiler, either for repairs or to scrape off the encrusted scale, which, in course of time, decreases the steaming qualities. If allowed to thicken too much, it ultimately causes the tubes or boiler sheets to "burn"; that is, to be weakened by high temperature through the inability of the water inside the boiler to disperse the heat fast enough. Bill had been engaged in scraping the scale

from the rows of tubes, while sitting on top of them inside the boiler.

Wrestling with the heavy plate and spider, emitting grunts and maledictions of a force commensurable with the effort, Jack at last got the orifice closed, and, cursing the delay, turned on the water from the street main, busying himself with the other boilers while the water gushed in with a metallic tinkle. By the time water showed in the gauge-glass, the oil-burners, driven from the next battery of boilers, which had been under steam

all day, were already emitting their gasping roar from the other three fireboxes in this room.

Jack allowed a pool of oil to run into the bottom of the firebox, soaked up a piece of waste, lit it, and was about to hurl it in, when he suddenly leaned against the boiler-face with closed eyes, while the burning waste fell from his hand to the floor. For a moment he remained thus, then moved unsteadily to seat himself on a box.

"God, I feel awful! Jest as though somethin' had all gone wrong somewhere, 'n I can't remember what. Guess'll hafta lay off the night life before I get the heebie-jeebies f'r fair!" He moved about uncertainly, frowning and shaking his head; then suddenly, as his eye fell on the boiler-room clock, twitched his shoulders roughly and picked up another piece of waste.

Half an hour later, listening to the gentle singing of the water within the boiler, he suddenly shivered, and began walking about uneasily, a dull, wondering alarm in his eyes. A few minutes later he was watching the boiler-head fixedly, unconsciously backing away with the demeanor of a man looking at a suspected infernal machine.

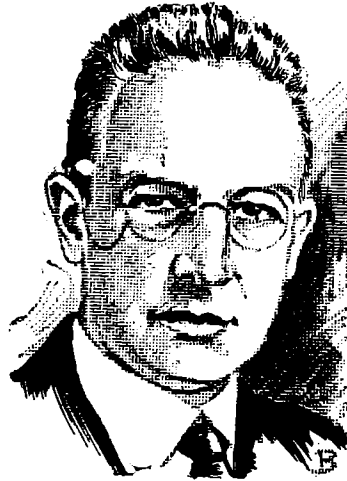
* * *

The Tragedy

DR. MADDIX was talking across the table through curls of cigarette smoke, to his one-time classmate, now instructor in archeology at the local university—Professor Lawrence Kerney.

"Dam'dest I ever heard of," said Maddix. "There are some things about it—more the things I can imagine than what I actually saw—that make me feel squeamish sometimes in the middle of the night.

"I was driving home along Front Street from the



VICTOR A. ENDERSBY

ALTHOUGH this is a short story, the editors really rank it among the best they have received. It is full of humor, pathos, tragedy and deep wisdom; and yet it is exciting from the start to the finish.

It is difficult to analyze the science of this story in order to show what it proves, for it has a bit of many sciences in it. And each is worked out with the skill and care of a man who knows what he is writing about. Mr. Endersby, we might say, is blazing a new path in science fiction—a path that most of our readers associate with the name of A. Merritt. Those who read "The Day of Judgment," Mr. Endersby's contribution to the November, 1929 Cover Contest, in the April issue of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, will agree with us that we have here a writer of the first rank.

Industrial Hospital, when this bird Brinston dashed out of the boiler-house door straight across the street, sort of mad-blind, no eyes for the traffic at all. He landed on the pavement at the other side, saw the wall in front of him, and turned around two or three times like a poisoned dog. Then he got his feet under him and his tail between his legs and was straight off for the docks at the end of the street. I backed into an alley, got turned around, and went after him hell-bent; suicide or nuts, I thought. He hopped a foot when I got hold of his arm on the pier, and just gibbered, stabbing in the direction of the power-house with his finger. By this time, as you may imagine, I was getting the jumps myself, and God only knows what I was expecting to see.

"There was nothing much at first. Three burners were going full blast, but No. 4 boiler was cut out and the fire killed. The manhole cover was off and steam pouring out of it. I was beginning to realize what kind of horror I was up against, and I was about as shaky as Brinston by the time I got to the top of the boiler.

"Well, I let a bulb into the boiler, and waved it back and forth; but the steam pouring out was so hot and thick that I had to shake enough sense into Brinston to get him to fan air into the hole with a big piece of canvas—noticing incidentally that most of the skin was off his palms and knees where he had been fighting the hot manhole cover. My own shoe-soles were beginning to heat up and stiffen on me. After a minute or two I got enough used to the steam and dark in the boiler to make out a blurry white patch. At this point Brinston went goofy and tried to climb into the boiler. But there was no use having two cooked corpses on hand, so I drove him back, feeling a little cooler myself. I realized there was no need for hurrying now.

"I got a piece of rope—there was quite a mob around by now—looped it around the victim's shoulders; and we dragged him to the top, finding that he had been floating mostly upright in the space between the boiler tubes and the outside shell, with his chin resting on a board which he had taken into the boiler for a seat on top of the tubes.

"God! When I saw that the man was *actually still breathing* I knew exactly the feelings of a man who meets a ghost! I'd as soon have expected to pull a live rooster out of a chicken-pie! I guess it was nothing but the fellow's good luck that gave me the instantaneous series of inspirations that saved his life.

"First off, his appearance showed that the skin was entirely cooked loose from his whole body, and I realized that the pressure of the rope around his shoulders was probably skinning him like a shedding snake. So I had it belayed to the steam drum, not daring to pull him on out through the metal rim. A queer recollection of some child-birth injuries—to the kid, I mean—flitted across my mind. Funny what a man can think of at such times!

"Next I hopped off the boiler, set some of the men drawing hot water into a small galvanized tank which was in the room, and rushed for a phone. There I started scraping up the biggest order of materials for Carrel-Dakin solution that anyone had ever asked for at one time. I don't know whether you know about the stuff; it saved countless numbers in the big war. It's

generally applied to a deep wound by branching rubber tubes, which keep the injured tissues constantly bathed in it. Under those conditions no infection is possible, and the injury heals the right way—from inside out. I thought, if you can't fill the wound with it, in this case, you can fill it with the wound!

Fast Work

"I KNEW it would be hours before we could get the stuff organized, and in the meantime I was taking a desperate chance, but the only one I could see. I had the galvanized tank full of good hot water hoisted up to the boiler-top by a chain-block hung to a roof-truss. Then we got two or three soft bandage slings under the body and gradually worked it out through the manhole, sousing it at once into the tank. I cut off the clothes as gently as I could, and exposed the whole body under water. Big patches of skin had come off with the handling, but I was interested to note that the cooking had seemingly just affected the skin, leaving the flesh underneath pretty healthy. I began to feel that my hunch had been right, and that I was about to get my hat plumed for the most spectacular piece of life-saving in the history of medicine around these parts.

"You know a few years ago we used to treat burns by covering them up with this and that—exactly the wrong thing to do. It's not the local injury that does the killing, but the absorption of toxins into the body from the burned tissues. Nowadays we treat major burns by scraping all the damaged skin and flesh from the injury and applying something—often paraffin.

"In this case I didn't think I would be up against a nerve-shock, for the reason that you can boil the flesh off a man's hand without pain, if you keep it in the water as you heat it up. The sensitivity is gradually killed. Obviously this heating had been gradual.

"I didn't want to pull off the skin until the solution was on hand, but I got worried about the effect of the toxins while I waited, and took a chance. I had chloroform on hand, but didn't need it; he stayed dead to all things mundane for hours. Well, I peeled him completely except his head and neck, which were merely badly scalded. There was a cut on his head, and from all the evidence I could gather, he must have slipped as he started to straighten up to climb out, hitting his head on the edge of the manhole. Either through luck or some dazed movement for self-preservation, he got his head on the board and floated, while his cousin came in, thought he had gone, and closed up the hole after yelling for him.

"According to the cousin's story, it never occurred to him that the man could be unconscious inside; in a well-regulated plant a man in the boiler always leaves a warning sign outside. Therefore Brinston was justified in firing the boiler. But later on he was seized with an overpowering hunch that something was wrong; he cut out the boiler and took off the plate. Then he went plumb ga-ga. No wonder! But that was nothing to what happened when the damn fool, moved by some horrible fascination, edged up to look into the tank after I had taken the skin off the body. We had to send him temporarily to the psychopathic ward then.

"After I had done all I could, and had to wait for the arrival of the solution, I worked on the problem why the fellow hadn't smothered in the steam. I tell you, Lawrence, the darned incident was, in itself, a whole education in medicine! But as to the last point, I knew that water ordinarily has a lot of entrained air, which is driven out as it is heated up. No doubt Trevethen was furnished with a small amount of fresh air mixed with the steam right up to the time Brinston opened the boiler. Being unconscious, he was breathing lightly and using up no oxygen by struggling. The water had just about come to a real boil when he was rescued.

A Queer Case

"WELL, he was still alive when we got the water switched for Dakin solution, although I had to use an oxygen tank on him a good part of the time to make up for the respiratory area of the skin of which he was deprived. And, by the way, the biggest problem we had in the hospital was to get oxygen applied to enough of the body surface. Christians plastered with gold leaf by the old Romans, you know, used to pass out in a few hours from asphyxia.

"But that's the story! Now he's out as good as ever, with a nice new baby skin. And I'm cock-a-hoop with the medical profession as I would never have been after a mere forty years of good honest work!

"However, his hard luck didn't end there. His fiancée, who had once before been a bit hipped on Brinston, was all love and commiseration after the accident; but when he was pronounced safe, she had some kind of reaction. Used up all her affection in one big flame, I suppose. Anyway, as soon as he was up and around she broke with him and married Brinston. And as though that weren't plenty itself—though between us I think he's lucky to lose her—some old aunt died, leaving her a regular fortune. So Brinston not only skinned Trevethen literally, but took his girl and his prospective fortune. But of the two, I think Trevethen's the luckier! Brinston's a broken man. His conscience hurts from all three wrongs, though heaven knows they were all unintentional; and his system has never recovered yet from the shock."

Professor Kerney puffed for a moment rather rapidly though abstractedly.

"Edgar, it's a queer world," he remarked. "Some of these things line up with a hellish ingenuity, a sort of demoniac cynicism, which sadly strains the word 'chance.' The world's full of such. And another thing—a thing which sometimes makes the world seem a pretty weird place to me—is that no matter how aimless a human action is in seeming, it is not so in reality. We think we are masters of the hourly action; but I'm telling you that there's a moving hand within the brain—the unknown dictator—they can call it 'subconscious' if they want to, for it's as good a word as any to express total ignorance—which uses our senses and organs as catspaws without our knowledge.

"I know one case where a fellow dropped an important document behind a wainscoting, while sorting some papers. He never had the least idea what had become of it, and suffered financially and personally all his life

from the loss. But on his death-bed he described the location of the document correctly! *Something in him, Edgar, not only saw that document drop but dropped it on purpose! Why?*

"Take Brinston. That hunch was no hunch; it was subconscious knowledge coming out on top! Something in him *willed* to trap Trevethen, loil him to a turn, and let him escape! Yet that desire was so at odds with his normal, decent self, that its realization drove him temporarily insane, and will haunt him the rest of his life! And something in Trevethen willed that slip on the tubes! What do you know about Freud, Edgar?"

"I know that he ought to be spelled with an 'a,'" remarked the doctor unkindly. "Once I was half-spoofed by him like most of the medical profession. But I found that he was one of those half-truths worse than a whole-hearted lie. He had a good idea, true in its own sphere; but he rode it to death. A doctor learns plenty about dreams that won't click with the 'suppressed-desire' theory.*

"In fact, Lawrence, I had the same idea about this case that you're thinking of. But I'm convinced that Brinston loves Trevethen like a brother, from a lot of things I learned from both of them while the latter was laid up. They formerly got along like cat and dog on the surface, but—the real thing was different. In fact, in the case of the girl, each wanted to step aside for the other; they ended it by letting her do the picking herself, uninfluenced.

A Terrible Dream

"BUT here's something I've been turning over in my mind—never told anyone else. In some ways it's Freudian; but I sense something more in it than that; something that disturbs me deep down and won't leave me alone. It's a dream Trevethen told me. He says he had it as he was unconscious in the boiler, but of course he wasn't rational in the head for long after, so you couldn't really date it. I'll try to tell it in his own lingo; it has more carrying power that way. It was this:

"I had a dream in that boiler, doc, that I jes' can't get away from. I gotta tell it to somebody, 'cause it won't let me sleep nights. I wake up now yellin' with the idea I'm really doin' the awful thing I dream about. It's like this: I'm sittin' on a big stone chair with lions on, in a hall as big as all outdoors, with a big crowd all aroun' dressed like some kind o' movies I seen. There's kind o' Egyptian-like pitchers cut in the rock walls all aroun', and a lot o' little triangle-shaped marks under 'em and aroun' 'em. The people has on high hats, kind o' runnin' up narrow to the top like chimneys, without no brim, and straps runnin' around 'em like leggins. The men all has beards curled up kind o' tight and black like Jew peddlers, only fixed up fine and tied in clubs like women's hair usta be when I was a kid. They all has sort o' skirt clothes and sandals. I dream I'm dressed that way too, only finer.

"The people is all ranged in two long rows in front, reachin' away to the end o' the hall. Right in front o' me is a great big copper kettle, I guess anyway six foot deep, settin' up on legs. Some soldiers is buildin' up a

* It is the theory of Sigmund Freud, the eminent psychologist, that all dreams are the result of suppressed desires.

fire under this kettle on the rock floor.’”

“Here,” said Dr. Maddix, “he began to sweat and to twist at my arm. He had to gulp and choke several times before going on.”

“Doc, they’s a *man* in that pot! And the water keeps gettin’ hotter an’ hotter, an’ he paddles aroun’ grabbin’ at the side an’ lettin’ go ’cause it burns his fingers, and’ he looks at me with eyes that makes my blood freeze clear down to my toes. An’ I’m holdin’ a gal—an awful purty gal—in my arm, while she fights an’ kicks, and ever’ time this feller grabs an’ lets go she squalls some-thin’ awful so it’s ringin’ in my ears yet. An’ I got an awful yen for her that’s just burnin’ me up, an’ I hate this feller so that seein’ him suffer is jes’ like pie. And the happy feelin’ over him gets all mixed up with wantin’ this gal an’ knowin’ I’m going to have her—’til I jes’ seem to sort o’ float like on a jag. An’ all mixed up with it is a kind of awful horror of myself and ever’thin’ else that makes me wanta die; I hate this feller an’ have a terrible pity fer ’im, and feel the way I usta as a boy when I’d hurt a frog or mouse an’ be awful sorry for it and hafta kill it to put it outa its misery. An’ somehow all through it this feller seems to be mixed up with Jack Brinston—and—Oh Doc, Doc, it keeps comin’ back to me nights! You *gotta* give me somethin’ fer it!”

“That dream, Lawrence, haunted the poor devil until he began to get well, then it faded. And do you know, I met him in the street yesterday, inquired after his health; and when I asked him whether the dream still bothered him, he said, ‘What dream?’”

Professor Kerney was glaring at his friend white-eyed.

* * * * *

“Why, what the devil’s the matter with *you*, Lawrence?” said Maddix.

“Edgar, had Trevethen ever seen any Assyrian stuff?” Kerney said slowly.

“No, I happen to know that he hadn’t. The nearest he had ever seen was some Egyptian stuff. That struck me too, so I showed him a picture of the Assyrian tire factory put up in Los Angeles by the Samson people—which’d be a good match for ‘Ye Olde Gas Shoppe’ out on the San Bernardino road. He clicked at once to the style of dress and the cuneiform writing as what he’d seen in his dream. But I ascertained positively that he’d never seen either the factory or

anything else on the Assyrian line. Lawrence, for God’s sake, have a drink! I didn’t know you were so squeamish about surgical matters.”

“That,” said Professor Kerney, in a slow voice dragged with some effort from his larynx, “isn’t what I’m squeamish about. Listen to this! We got in a new set of Babylonian tablets about three months ago. I’ve nearly finished the translations, on which I’ve been working nights.”

He picked up his brief-case from its position leaning against his chair, and fumbled through a mass of sheets, finally handing one to Dr. Maddix.

The latter read painstakingly.

“Fixed on the West Gate by divine command of Damik-Khimitu the Mighty, King of Babylon, Lord of the Four Quarters of the Earth and Provider of Prosperity and Abundance for the Multitudes of Men; that the magnanimity of the Great King be made known to the inhabitants of the Earth.

“It came to pass in the Year-of-the-Destruction-of-the-Kassites-at-Amara, that Nabu-Shapik, the Satrap King of Shur-Uppak, well-beloved half-brother, did refuse to the Great King his second wife, toward whom the Great King did condescend to extend his ennobling desire.

“Whereupon Damik-Khimitu the Great did cause to be brought in chains to Babylon the body of Nabu-Shapik the Satrap King, together with his second wife.

“And in the court of Babylon the Great, the King Damik-Khimitu did cause to be boiled in a copper vessel four cubits deep, the living body of Nabu-Shapik until the skin did loosen.

“Whereupon the Great King in his mercy did take from the vessel Nabu-Shapik, and did cause to be anointed with the magic balms of the royal physicians, the flayed body of the impious Satrap King. So that after the space of three moons, Nabu-Shapik was healed of his hurts. But the Great King did keep unto himself the second wife of Nabu-Shapik, and did abolish the Kingdom of Shur-Uppak, taking unto himself the lands and the cattle and the gold of Nabu-Shapik.”

“Wouldn’t you like to know the answer?” asked Professor Kerney in a voice which perceptibly failed of casualness.

Dr. Maddix laid down the sheet and selected a smoke, noting with some interest that the cigarette-case rattled against the table as he picked it up.

“No,” he said slowly. “I don’t think I would!”