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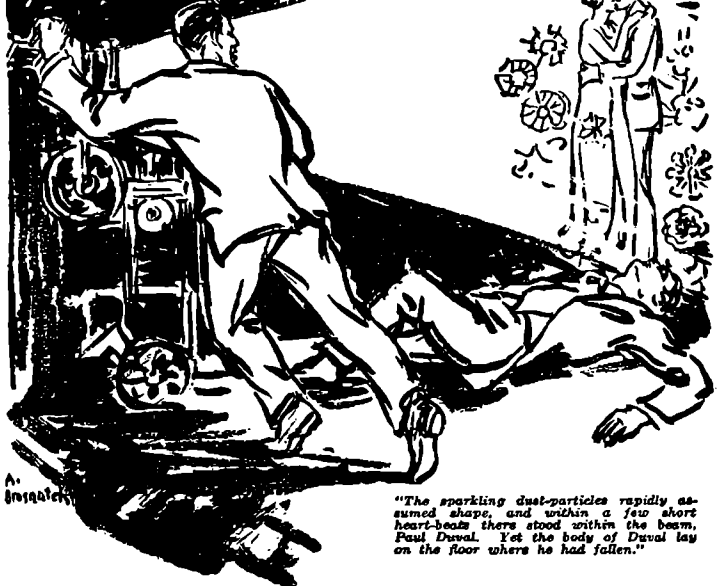
WEIRD TALES

400 Holiday Building

Indianapolis, Ind.

Duval's Weird Experiment

by F. Williams Sarges



"The sparkling dust-particles rapidly assumed shape, and within a few short heart-beats there stood within the beam, Paul Duval. Yet the body of Duval lay on the floor where he had fallen."

EVEN now as I sit in my study, the chance meeting leaves me startled. As I passed down the busiest street of this city, I saw a face emerge from the crowd and could have sworn it was Duval's. Before I could get near enough to be sure, it had vanished in the changing throng. It brought back memories of five years to me, in which Duval played the principal and tragic rôle. Tragic? That depends on your viewpoint.

Duval was a genius who made a tremendous discovery leading to consequences which for a time threatened my life. As to Duval—its effects on him are beyond the strangest

flights of a madman's dreams. But wait. I shall write down what I know of his weird experiment. I am in the mood to write this night. My memory is still rather good, but were it not, those events of long ago are so implanted in my mind that even Time's purging stream can not wash them out.

In our little circle were twelve whom mutual interest in scientific research with the weird and outlandish had brought together. Paul Duval was its youngest member. He was a brilliant scholar with one of those minds which leap ahead of pure reasoning and seem to see truths intui-

tively before reaching them by logical deductions or proving them by successful experimentation.

Once each month we would gather in my laboratory, which in those days was more drawing room than workshop, and discuss matters of interest to us, or read papers on subjects we had been probing. The first we heard of Duval's experiment was at such a meeting.

It was in December, I believe. We had swallowed our customary glass of wine, a ritual not possible in these degenerate days, and seated ourselves preparatory to listening to a paper Duval announced he wanted to read.

It was then he ventured to advance his amazing theory concerning the existence of the soul. He assured us he believed the intelligence to be another form of energy which left the body at death, but preserved its identity. He cited cases where life had actually ceased; when the breath was stopped and the heart no longer pulsed; but where by the injection of saline solutions or the use of other methods, the bodily functions had been caused to resume. However, in each case, though the processes of life seemingly went on, in no instance had the mind, the *intelligence*, returned to the body. This, he went on to say, proved the soul was something entirely separate and independent of the body, since the body could be made to function independent of the soul.

In the beginning we sat back in our chairs in amazement at the ideas he had set forth, then became a little disgusted and angry that the man should believe us so gullible as to swallow even the smallest part of the stuff he was reading. To us as scientists, all materialists, his theories were extravagant and ridiculous. When you died that was all there was to it. Life was a chemical reaction, and when that reaction stopped, you died. The man was impossible. He was a heretic.

But there he stood, reading his rubbish in that quick nervous manner of his, his somewhat ascetic face alight with enthusiasm. I remember the strange fancy passed through my mind that if he were dressed in flowing robes instead of the garments of conventional demand, he would resemble a prophet of old, as I had seen the prophets depicted in a book of pictures I had owned as a child.

We thought it a mad theory of his, while we admitted the truth of some of his statements. It is a scientific fact matter and energy are never destroyed, though they may undergo change. This is indisputably true, but when he held it a tenable theory that the mysterious power or force, or whatever it is we call "intelligence", was subject to the same rule, we thought (or at least I did) the strain of his work had unseated his reason. He admitted his "force" *might* change, but asserted that, being what it was, intelligence *must* retain its entity.

Well! You should have seen that gathering of scientists. They were like a pack of hounds, held in leash; eager to spring at the fox they had cornered. By the time he had finished reading, each one of us was ready to challenge nearly every statement he had made.

He closed by saying: "And now, gentlemen, having arrived at this conclusion, I propose to experiment along certain lines to prove my theory. If I can make it possible for the eye of man to behold a disembodied intelligence, there can no longer be any doubt as to the truth of my theory. Have you any questions to ask me?"

Half a dozen of us launched then at him simultaneously. Old Sir Philip Doyle, however, was the only one who could make himself heard above the clamor. I can remember that deep, booming voice of his today.

"Have you decided the 'certain lines' along which you propose to work?" he asked, sarcastically.

Duval hesitated a moment before replying. "Yes, I have," he answered.

"Would it be asking too much of you to let us know how you are going to do this?" The tone caused Duval to flush, and his answer was just a little tinged with defiance.

"I hardly like to say, Sir Philip; that is, just yet. But if such bodies do exist, they are invisible because too tenuous for the rays of light to reflect their images to the retina of the eye. In other words, light, as we know it, passes through them. As you are all aware, the rays which enable us to see are but a small percentage of the entire number given off from the sun. For instance, there is the ultra-violet ray, which penetrates most substances for a distance at least, but which will not pass through glass. Ordinary light rays will. This serves to illustrate. If I can devise some scheme which will make the retina of the eye sensitive to all the rays, or if I can make all the rays visible to the eye, the reflection of the total rays from my disembodied entities will make them visible."

He stopped to glance quickly at the various faces turned to him. In not one did he see agreement or even encouragement. I think it angered him. His jaw set for a brief instant, then a cold smile parted his lips.

"I can see you are all intolerant of my theory," he went on in a changed tone. "We shall see. I hope to prove to you that I am right, and in a very short while. Until then, I shall not trouble you again. Good night, gentlemen."

"Fool!" I heard Sir Philip mutter.

I HAD agreed with Sir Philip's muttered comment, and given no further attention to the matter until

about two weeks later when I picked up my morning paper to read that a man had been arrested during the night. While on the dark street where he had been picked up because of his peculiar actions, he had been tractable enough. On reaching the glare of an arc-lamp, he had suddenly seemed to go mad, screaming and mumbling between his ravings something about "the monster." His shirt was torn open at the throat, and on the naked flesh was a livid imprint which strangely resembled on one side a thumb mark, and on the other, the imprints of two fingers. The skin within the marks was red and shriveled like a freshly healed burn.

This would have interested me. What brought me to my feet was the statement the man had been identified by Paul Duval as his assistant, Jacques Marquard.

Had I known what was in store for me, I do not believe a team of wild horses could have dragged me to Duval's that night. There are some things even a man of science should not see.

But hardly had I finished reading the account in the paper when my telephone rang. I was the nearest to a friend Duval had, so suppose this had something to do with his calling me instead of one of the others. I recognized his voice immediately, though keyed up through some stress of emotion under which he was laboring. I suppose it was curiosity made me say "yes" to his request that I call that evening.

He was a fool, all right, but not as Sir Philip had meant it. He was a glorious fool for daring to meddle with laws not for men to know or understand.

"I needed your help," said Paul simply, as he ushered me into his laboratory. "Poor Jacques was rather careless last night and got into trouble."

"What happened to him?" I demanded. "I read the account in the paper, but it told me nothing and aroused my curiosity a great deal."

Duval did not reply at once. Finally shrugging his shoulders: "I do not know, I had my back turned to him when it happened."

"But surely you have an idea. What was he doing? What made the marks on his throat? How——?"

"My dear fellow," he interrupted, have patience. All in due time. He was observing the effect of an experiment I was making. When I last saw him he was over by the screen you see in the corner. I was adjusting the focus of a ray projector to the screen. The power had been on at about half strength for some time. We had observed some phenomena which, to say the least, were strange. He called to me as some new thing occurred and stepped between the projector and the screen. As I said, my back was turned. I had turned it as I reached down to throw in the main switch which lets the full power into the electrodes. The next I heard from him was a most damnably disconcerting scream. I saw him rush toward me, clutching at his throat. Then—confound him—he picked up a spirit lamp and hurled it at me. He missed, but fractured a lens in the main projector. Then out he went, howling and squealing like a fiend from the Pit." As if that explained matters Duval spread out his hands with a "there-you-have-it" gesture and walked away from me toward the screen he had indicated. He was most annoying.

"What happened then? Did you follow him?" I wanted to know.

"Follow hell! I wanted to see how badly he had hurt the projector."

"But——"

"There are no 'buts'. I have told you all I know," he broke in curtly.

There were a dozen questions I wanted to ask, and at least one he

had not answered that I had already put to him, but it was clear he wanted to say nothing further on the subject. Plainly, as far as he was concerned, the affair of Jacques was of no further interest.

I followed him to where he had erected a contrivance in one corner of the room. Somehow, as I approached it, I could not repress an involuntary shudder. Why, I could not have told you, except it might have been a premonition of what was about to happen which went over me. At any rate, I remember I was interested in the strange apparatus which was before me.

I shall not attempt to go into the technical details of the device. Sufficient to say it mixed the rays from several machines, among them one capable of projecting the Roentgen ray, one the ultra-violet, and one the infra-red ray. There were others, but so little known are they to the layman, to describe them would only confuse.

As I have said, the machine mixed and focused the rays to a central point and through a peculiar-shaped lens which was slightly tinted. I do not remember the color distinctly, for at one moment it seemed to be of one hue, then as I took a different position, the color would change. About fifteen feet in front was the screen.

It was much the same as used in motion pictures, with this exception: it was coated with a faintly glowing substance resembling that which makes the hands of a timepiece luminous. As I watched, I thought I could discern at intervals little flashes of dark purple light, which seemed to travel from the bottom to the top of the fabric. I bent over to examine the lens.

"That is like the one Jacques broke," commented Duval. "Luckily I had another, or we should not be able to go on with the work until one could be ground. I might add it is

ground according to a formula I worked out a short time ago. It has an action on light I do not as yet wholly understand, and since it is made from quartz crystal instead of glass, permits the passage of several rays which glass would obstruct."

"What do you expect to find out?" I questioned, thinking he might be in the vein now to give me some information. Small satisfaction was mine, however.

"Everything, or nothing," he replied. "If I am right, perhaps I hope a disembodied intelligence or two will find their way between this lens and the screen and thus come under the influence of my rays. That I can not control, however."

"Well, haven't you any idea of what will happen?"

"Somewhat. Jacques thought he saw the outlines of some sort of figures on the screen, but got himself into trouble before he could tell what he saw. I was using only half-power, you know. Now if you will stand out of the way, I'll turn on the power, all of it this time, and we'll see what happens." He was trying to speak calmly, but I know the man must have been wild with excitement. I was sure he knew more than he would tell and suspected a great deal more than he knew. As for myself, I admit I was mightily interested, and strange to say just a little frightened, scientist though I was and accustomed to seeing strange things.

"Don't stand in front of the thing," he warned as he bent over to throw in the switch.

THERE was a hiss and a flash. The machine sputtered and emitted little crackling sounds. These ceased after a moment, to be succeeded by a low droning which gradually increased in pitch to a shrill whine. In front of us the screen gradually began to brighten, looking for all the world like a sheet of steel reflecting the last light of day after the sun had set.

I looked over at Duval. He stood with his head thrust forward, every force in his body concentrated in the sense of sight, as though he would see what he wished though he must create it through the power of his desire alone. I looked back at the screen. In the short interval since I had last seen it a radical change had taken place. Where it had glowed before, it was now dancing with a shimmering, eye-confusing light. The lens itself was throwing out a beam of radiance which the screen obstructed. The whole resembled in a faint way the effect of an ordinary light projector if its beams were sent against a sheet of white water, except there was no constancy of direction to the light which played across the screen we were watching.

Came a further change. Between the screen and the projector little points of light began to dart. They would hang like bright specks of dust in the beam for a flashing instant, then wink out. They multiplied in number and remained longer. Finally, here and there, one would come to stay, then others. Suddenly there seemed to be myriads of them and, startlingly, they were arranging themselves after a definite form. There was a shape there. I could see it now. There was something in that beam which was uncanny, monstrous. It was not human in form, but caricatured the human form. A hint of fiendishness was about it. Its eyes seemed turned on us in a frenzy of fury and killing lust. It gesticulated wildly and appeared to make threatening motions toward us.

I was held for a moment, fascinated by the horror of it. Then I was aware of a new sound, penetrating through the noise of the machine. It was thin and indefinable like the distant clamor of many little bronze bells, but without the effect of distance. The figure, plain now, and hideous, turned its head as if listen-

ing. What might have been fear played across its face and it hurriedly turned as though it would leave. Something behind it began to appear.

Involuntarily I stepped forward the better to see the Thing before it could disappear. I just brushed the path of the beam with my head and shoulders. Instantly I felt something terrible, yet caressing, touch my throat. A terrible pain shot through my brain. I remember hearing, in a detached way, someone scream and knowing it was myself. Then I knew no more.

I REGAINED consciousness with stark terror in my mind. I shrank in fear from the light above my head. Why, I could not have told. With an effort of will I forced myself to think. Gradually I remembered the events which preceded my misadventure. At the memory of that awful figure, its searing touch, and the brain-racking finger of pain which had searched out reason on its throne and unseated it, I shut my eyes and groaned. A soft hand touched me and I jerked away from it. It was too reminiscent of the terrible gentleness of the monster's touch at my throat. But I opened my eyes and was relieved to see a kind face over mine.

"Sure an' do ye feel bether now? Y' are all roight, me bye. Take it aisy."

The voice reassured me and I glanced around. The surroundings were unfamiliar. I was in a white cot, in a clean but sparingly furnished room. I glanced at the window. There were bars across it. I turned to the owner of the voice, who I now noticed wore the uniform of a nurse.

"What place is this?" I asked faintly.

"Niver mind that, me lad. Jist you turn over and slape a wee bit. We'll take care of ye."

"But where am I?" I demanded a little curtly.

"Whisht now, and ain't he th' stubborn wan? Sure it's the 'mergency ward ye are in."

"You mean in the city jail?"

"Yis, an' there is wo-o-r-rse places for yez to be, ye that were picked up be Officer Malone, screaming yer head aff, an' actin' loike a crazy loon."

I knew then what had happened. Like Jacques, I had been touched by the Thing and I had lost my reason. I supposed I had been making an ass of myself as he had. An idea occurred to me.

"May I have a mirror?" I asked. The nurse looked at me queerly, but said nothing as she complied with my request. As I had thought: on my throat were marks identical with those on Jacques, but deeper, though strange to say, they were not sore.

I handed the glass back to her without comment on what I had seen, but demanded, "Tell the doctor I should like to leave."

The nurse left the room for a few minutes and returned, followed by the doctor in charge of the ward.

"Well," he greeted me, "you look fine. What happened to you, anyway? Three nights ago when they brought you in I wasn't sure whether you had the D. T.'s or were just plain crazy."

"I'm all right," I returned. "Just let me get into some clothes and I'll not bother you any longer." I chose not to answer his questions. He did not press them. He was probably used to patients who did not care to give an account of themselves.

"You look well enough to leave," he asserted, eyeing me judiciously. "Just a few formalities and we'll turn you loose." With that he took my name and address and asked me a number of questions about myself.

When I had complied with all he asked, he left the room, first telling the nurse to let me have my clothes.

She brought them to me and left me alone. I got to my feet a little gingerly and was relieved to discover I could find no ill effects from my adventure—that is, physically. I could never erase from my mind the horror which had been implanted there.

My first impulse, as I walked from the car to my laboratory, was to call Duval as soon as I could get to a telephone. I took it a little hard he had not taken some care of me after I had met with my misadventure. So far as I could learn he had not been near me. I resolved to wash my hands of the whole affair, and would have kept my promise to myself but for one thing.

I was met at the door of my rooms by my young assistant. With him was the very frightened maid who did Duval's place. Before I could greet them the girl had blurted out the information Duval was dead. She had found him that morning when she had come in to straighten up the place. Knowing where I could be reached, she had come to me instead of notifying the police.

As quickly as I could, I reached Duval's laboratory.

As I entered the door, I glanced involuntarily toward the machine in the corner. It looked positively malignant to me now. At its foot lay Duval, his body sprawled out; his hand on the main switch which he had managed to pull, though there was no room to spare between the two terminals. With his last bit of strength, apparently, he had shut off the power.

I ran over to him and lifted his hand, then asked sharply of the girl, noticing as I did so there were no marks on his throat: "How long ago did you discover him?"

"It must be all of an hour ago, sir."

Reaching up, I felt of one of the electrodes, which I had noticed became white-hot when the machine was

in action. It was stone-cold. Duval had been lying there for some time before he was found. I listened for the heart beat and rejoiced at my discovery. I could hear it, and the hand I had taken hold of was warm with life. He was not dead as I had feared (the maid had been afraid to touch him), and I proposed he should not be if I could save him.

THREE days passed. Duval was lying still unconscious on a cot in his laboratory. I was in the next room. For three days he had been watched constantly, but seemed to get neither better nor worse.

Getting up from my chair, I passed into the laboratory and walked over to the machine. I did not venture to touch the diabolical thing. To me, it seemed satanic, unholy, though it fascinated. I had looked it over carefully, time after time, but had never ventured to try to operate it. This time, as I raised my eyes from it and cast them in Duval's direction, I was delighted to find him watching me. I went to his side at once.

"Well," I said, "you look fine," smiling as I recollected the doctor had greeted me with the identical words. Indeed he did look well. His eyes were even brighter than usual, and not with fever. There was a look of strength in his face which I had never before observed. "How do you feel?"

"As you say I look," he replied. "You don't appear to be doing so badly yourself."

"No thanks to you," I said, a little crustily I fear. He smiled slightly.

"I tried to follow you the night you ran out of here hell-bent, but you were out of sight before I could catch you. I notified the police and they told me you had been picked up."

There did not seem anything further to be said about this particular matter. Duval was not in the least apologetic. Both of us were si-

lent for some time. I was waiting for him to speak, but he seemed content to preserve the quiet.

"Haven't you anything to say? What happened to you, anyway?"

"Pretty much the same as happened to you, I guess, only more of it."

"What do you mean? Out with it, man. Good Lord, I have been through enough on your account to entitle me to a little more light on this thing. You could at least let me know how your experience tallies with my own. Did you see the same Things I saw? Did you feel the same sensations I did?"

At first I thought he was going to fall back on the natural secretiveness which seemed a part of the man. But his jaw set as though he had made a resolution after much mental debate.

He replied solemnly: "I am going to tell you. The first part of it I have never breathed to any man. It concerns something very personal in my life which happened before I ever thought of this experiment. Now don't think me a mawkish sentimentalist, will you?"

"Of course not," I replied, smiling at the mere thought of a sentimental Duval.

"Well, here goes. There was a time in my life when science was not the only interest I had. Just one time. Of course it was a girl. Not much more to it except we had a misunderstanding and she married someone else. But I have always loved her, and believed she loved me, after she had had time to think. Anyway, a few years ago she died. So much for pre-experiment times.

"When I rushed out after you the other night, I did not stop to shut off the machine. I came back to find a decided change had taken place before the screen. Instead of the monster, there was a very human-looking girl in the rays. Moreover, she

seemed to have substance which the monster did not have, and ——"

"If you think that monster did not have substance, you should have felt him as I did," I interrupted.

"Well, he didn't have very much," impatiently, "or you would never have gotten out of the beam alive." I felt I had sufficient evidence to argue that point but let him proceed.

"The girl was able to communicate with me, though her voice could not be heard. Her thought vibrations seemed intensified by the rays and produced her thoughts in my brain. She moved her lips as in speaking, and the impression I got was the same as any two persons conversing.

"Naturally, I asked her about herself and she told me what virtually substantiates my theory. The soul does leave the body and maintains an entity. If the person to whom it belonged has lived without violation of nature's laws, both moral and physical, the form assumed is more perfect than if the opposite were true. In other words, the entity reflects by its form the character of the person to whom it formerly belonged. The monster represented the soul of a degenerate murderer, she told me.

"I asked her if she were not afraid of it, and she laughed as she told me good overcame evil in her plane as in ours. I asked her if there were any more like herself, and she said there were. I asked her to bring some of them within the rays, and she did. I saw many intelligences of persons I had known in life.

"This gave me an idea. I asked her if she could find my old sweetheart. She said she would try if I would describe her, which I did. Then she went away.

"I did not see her until two nights later, when she suddenly appeared within the rays and asked if I did not have a picture. My earthly description might fit any number of intelligences, she said. I did have a

picture. I carried it always with me. I took it from my breast pocket and held it out to her. She seemed to have some trouble in seeing it from that distance so I stepped closer, too close. I came within the beam.

"The next thing I knew something seemed to envelop me. My body felt as though it were being squeezed by some tremendous pressure. To my horror, I found that once within the ray, I was powerless to travel other than farther into it. I began to lose my senses and the last I remember is the summoning of all my strength to reach and throw the switch."

"You reached it," I told him, "but you saved your life by a very narrow margin. The switch was barely opened."

THIS should have ended the experiment and the story should stop here. Any sensible man would have been satisfied with the treatment he had received and let well enough alone. Not Duval. He was burning up with a desire to see if the girl could find the one he had loved. And he persuaded me to see the thing through with him.

In a day or so after the conversation I have recorded, I received a telephone message from Duval. He was ready to go ahead with the experiment.

It was 7 o'clock when I arrived at his place, on a cold January evening. I seated myself in front of his very cheerful fireplace, while he made some last minute changes in his device.

"I am using a little more power tonight," he offered. "Her thought vibrations are sometimes a little faint."

There was no need for me to make any comment, so I remained silent, merely nodding I had heard him. I was thinking. During that thinking I had made up my mind I was going to stay at a respectable distance from the beam. Try my best, I could not

throw off a foreboding spirit which seemed to hover over me from the moment I had entered the laboratory.

At last everything was ready. There was the hiss and flash as before. Perhaps it was because he was using more power, or it may have been my imagination, but the series of phenomena which seemed necessary before materialization was attained came in faster sequence that night.

"Here's your friend," called Duval, and the monster with whom I had had my experience came into view. Almost with his coming came the tintinnabulation of the bells. I could see Duval nod his head as if satisfied with something, or as if things were shaping themselves to his desire.

"I'm going to ask tonight what makes those little bell sounds," he said. "They always come before the lady arrives." He was attempting to speak lightly, but I could feel the tension under which he was laboring. As for me, I was anything but comfortable. However, I kept my eyes glued to the screen. The thought had passed my mind that maybe the monster could find his way outside the ray. If he could, I did not intend to tarry and visit with him. When he left I felt better.

Then for the first time I saw the "lady," as Duval called her. She came into the space between the screen and the projector, much as a more material body would emerge from a fog, only here it was the reverse. She seemed at first a strange luminous mist which assumed solidity.

Finally we could see her features plainly. As they became distinct I heard Duval gasp. He was looking at the figure, his face alight. I said something to him, but he did not appear to hear me. When he spoke it was not to me.

"Marguerite!" he breathed in half awed, half sobbed tones. The girl seemed to hear him, for she turned

her eyes to his. When she saw him she smiled. Then faintly came what seemed to be a voice, as her thought waves impinged on our brain cells.

"Paul!" it seemed to say. "Paul!"

"Marguerite," he answered. "Can it really be you? Why, you are more beautiful than ever!"

The girl smiled again, and Duval took a step nearer the beam.

"Don't go too near," I warned. "You know it means death."

"Or happiness," he replied without looking at me.

"Stop," I cried again, as he moved another step forward. "Can't you see she's luring you into the beam?"

"Be still, you fool! I know what I am doing."

I said no more, and even took a step or two backward as he waved me away. I wish to God I had not! The girl's thoughts were coming to us again.

"I have been waiting for you, Paul," softly came the thought.

"I have never forgotten you," he answered. "I'd give anything, my life itself, if I could be with you."

She held out her arms to him. I could feel her sweetness and seductiveness myself, though I should have thought her hellish enough, for she was trying, sweetly trying, to call him to her. He was like a man hypnotized.

"Come," was her thought. I could feel the desire which radiated from her being. "Come, if you love me more than life, come."

He had taken two slow steps before. Now he strode swiftly toward her. I leaped to his side and tried to hold him, but he thrust me violently aside. Before I could recover my balance, he was within the beam, walking to Marguerite like a man in a dream. She was still holding out her arms to him. As I stood rooted in dread of what I saw, he reached her. Her arms encircled his neck. Never shall I forget the utter horror of the mo-

ment. Their lips seemed to touch. Then with a cry such as never came to mortals before, he threw back his head and dropped at her feet.

I rushed over to the switch. The woman saw what I was about to do and motioned me commandingly to stop. Something in her manner caused me to pause an instant. It was long enough, for in that second I glanced at the body of Duval. From it a mist of sparkling, darting dust-particles arose, like those I have described. They rapidly assumed shape, and within a few short heart-beats there stood within the beam, Paul Duval. Stupefied with astonishment, I looked at the floor. There was Duval lying where he had fallen.

In a frenzy I tore at the switch, but before the beam faded, I saw what seemed to be Duval and the Woman walk arm in arm in the direction of the screen. I believe the phantom Duval even waved me a careless good-bye.

But I had no time for this. I rushed to the inert form of my friend and hastily placed him on the cot. His pulse was beating but I could not bring him to his senses. I worked on him through the night. I had a great physician attend him. To no avail. He continued to lie as one dead.

This continued to the third day. As I was watching him he opened his eyes. With a sob of relief I knelt by his side and spoke to him. At the sound of my voice the face turned toward me. For the moment it was Paul's. Then I noticed the eyes were dull and vacant. The mouth drooped and the drool ran down the corners. He did not recognize me.

Then I understood. This was not Duval lying on the cot before me, but the clay of Duval. The real Duval was in the misty figure which had gone with the Woman. This poor creature which looked up at me was a stranger, an idiot. The intelligence which had made it a man had gone.