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Our Cover

this month represents a scene from the story entitled, "The Other Side of the Moon," by Edmond Hamilton, in which the scientist is shown on the moon, just after he has sent the ray up, and while he is attempting—despite the efforts of the turtle-men—to reverse the switch in order to enable his friends to return in the tube to the earth.

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EDWARD LANGRISH PRINTING CO., INC., JAMAICA, N. Y.

Euthanasia Limited

By David H. Keller, M. D.

*Author of "The Revolt of the Pedestrians,"
"The Yeast Men," etc.*

A LITTLE white-haired woman was working in her laboratory.

In spite of the fact that the room was filled to overflowing with a multitude of electro-scientific instruments, there was order and method in their arrangement and the entire atmosphere was one of exquisite cleanliness. Anna Van Why was, without doubt, an ultra-modern scientist, but there were certain inherited characteristics in her nature which it was impossible for her to escape from. Thus she combined the modern with the past. While she smoked, the ashes and the odor were instantly removed from the room by a vacuum ash receiver, a little invention of her own.

She had arranged the halves of apples in series, thus forming a vegetable battery which produced a potential of over one volt. She smiled to herself as she realized that she was the first human being who had ever approached the problem of life in that way. Before that morning millions of persons realized in a dim way that vegetation had life. She alone thought of the possibility of connecting that life with death.

Even as she was carefully measuring and recording the amount of electric potential formed by these segmented apples, her half brother came into the room. Between the two was a peculiar bond that was both negative and positive in its potentiality. They admired each other in some ways, detested each other in some ways, but always there was the strong tie of mutual scientific interest in all of the unanswered questions that Nature has put to puzzled man.

"The apple is alive, John," she said, as she looked up and saw who her visitor was. "I arrange them in certain sequence, connect them with fine copper wire and obtain over a volt of electrical potential. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Nothing new. We have all known for years that electric potential was a common property of nearly all living matter. Some fishes are veritable batteries, capable of discharging such an amount of electricity that men are disabled and often die in the water before they recover the use of their muscles. Plants have potential electricity; animals have. Did you ever rub a cat's hair in the dark? I never thought of an apple, but there is nothing new in it now that I do



Illustrated
by
WESSO

think of it. It is simply saying an old sentence with new inflection. Nothing to be excited about, is it?"

The white-haired woman smiled.
"There are two reasons why you are not interested in my apple battery, and both are very interesting. In the first place you see nothing commercial in it. You

¶ Considerable work has been done in obtaining an electric current from vegetable matter, such as apples or potatoes. In a book entitled "Plant Response," Bose offers conclusive proof that plants do have life and possess electric current. What further use might some day be made of plants in experimenting with life is hard to say. What is life? And what constitutes death? Dr. Keller introduces some ingenious and original ideas on this subject and some suggestions on the subject of Euthanasia, which means "beautiful death." This story is more than scientifically interesting. It possesses true literary value too and is well worth reading and re-reading to get the full significance of the ideas advanced.



She had arranged the halves of apples in series, thus forming a 'vegetable battery' which produced a potential of over one volt

cannot visualize some new kind of stock promotion to fool your gullible public. The second reason is that it is a part of my search for the real cause and meaning of death. You are too active, too much alive, to be interested in death. It means nothing to you. You only think of it to avoid thinking of it. Am I right?"

The well-dressed man laughed.

"Absolutely, Sister Anna. Life is too sweet for me to spend it thinking about the problems of death, and

a man has to have money in order to spend it and he has to spend it in order to have any comfort out of life. So your apple battery does not interest me. Go on with your vegetable investigation. I brought a copy of *Vogue* with me, and while you work with apples I will read about the peaches of society and later on we will go to dinner and I will spend on you some of the money I make out of that gullible public you would so like to protect from my ravages."

He had hardly started to read when another visitor came. He was a noted scientist from Edinburgh, and had come across the Atlantic for no other purpose than to see the celebrated electro-biologist, A. Van Why. He was more than surprised to find that she was a woman, for in her publications she had carefully concealed not only all personalities but even her own sex. So they both were surprised—she to think that anyone would be enough interested in her work to make such a journey to see her, and he to find that the scientist he so admired in literature was a little bit of a white-haired woman.

"If you can spare the time," he said, after the formalities of the introduction had been finished, "I wish that you would tell me about your investigations into the real nature of death. I have heard that you are almost alone in some of your ideas and that, if they are shown to be true, you will revolutionize our entire biological thought. Suppose you start with the idea that I am just a rather ordinary scientist—in other words, give me a rudimentary lecture on the subject."

"You underestimate your own importance as a scientist, Sir Lauder," Anna Van Why replied. "No one knows better than I do your remarkable contributions to electrical biology. If I do as you wish me to, it will be more with the idea of politely complying with a request, than to acknowledge any inferiority on your part. However, make yourself comfortable and I will see how elemental I can make the lecture.

"A SECOND after death occurs there is practically no difference in the body. The dead body is practically similar to the living body, just as the charged battery is similar in structure to the discharged battery. Only something has happened which makes us say that the person is dead. For over thirty years I studied this problem of death to see just what phenomena happened that could be held accountable for the change called death. All the peculiar phenomena I found were the result of death, rather than the actual cause of the cessation of life. All my studies in the circulation, respiration, blood chemistry, acid-alkali balance, failed absolutely to reveal the actual cause of death.

"Finally I approached the question from the standpoint of conductivity. I found that, as death approached, the central nervous system decreased while the liver increased in conductivity, and there were, at the same time, the changes one would expect in the electrical capacity of all of the bodily cells. But even here I felt that we were simply observing a fact instead of actually finding a real cause of the cessation of life.

"But I could not give up the idea that in some way electricity was connected with all the changes comprehended under the two words, life and death. There was no value in the study of the varied associates of death, such as hemorrhage, injury, infection, insomnia, anesthesia, asphyxia, surgical shock, the removal of vital organs. There must be some single factor back of and accompanying these myriads of complicating accessories. I knew what happened in all of them—the living structures, the individual cells, were unable to hold their form, and as a result, the delicate organic molecules lost their ability to hold together and began to disintegrate—I knew this happened. What I wanted to know was why it happened.

"One of the primary rules of biology that I accepted many years ago was that all life was governed by the same rules. In applying this rule to our problem I would simply state that in all living things the reason for life and the cause of death are the same for all. If an apple lives, it lives for the same reason that a man lives. The causes that kill man, also kill apples.

"With that rule in mind I again approached the problem of death. I now was able to have an unlimited supply of experimental material, without any opposition from the anti-vivisectionists. They did not care how many apples I used. So I worked with a great many different objects, all of which I thought could be called alive, in the same sense that man was alive. When I did this I satisfied myself that all life, plants, animals, fruits, have a certain electrical potential that can be measured during life, and which drops to zero at death. All that the supposed causes of death did was to decrease this potential. Irrespective of the name—anaesthetics, insomnia, poisons, injuries, freezing, boiling, or a hundred other forms of fatal complications—all that happened in every instance was this change in the potential. There was just one important fact to be considered and that was the difference in the potential of the nervous system compared to the other systems of the body.

"Our work with insomnia was interesting. Perhaps you know the old system of torture used by the Chinese. The prisoner's head is shaved and he is seated on a chair and held there so he cannot move. Above is a pail of water and from that pail a drop falls every minute on his hairless scalp. In a few days he dies. Hour after hour he has remained awake waiting for that drop to fall every minute. In our experiments we have found that insomnia reduces the potential of the nervous system to zero, at which point death occurs. If, however, just before zero is reached, the organism is permitted to rest and sleep, the potential climbs up from zero and the life of the individual is saved.

"The two forms of life that we did the most experimenting with were the apple and the amoeba. First let me tell you about the apple. We feel that it is alive. It was not only alive, but it breathed, consuming 3 to 4 cubic centimeters of oxygen every hour. Thus we had a second method of studying the life phenomena of the apple, one being the determination of its electric potential and the other its ability to consume oxygen. We had previously performed experiments on the rabbit and dog with adrenalin and temperature changes. We repeated these experiments on the apple and obtained identical results. For example we could anesthetize the apple, producing first a rise in the potential and an increased metabolism and then a continual fall to a zero point, where we had no potential and an absolute cessation in respiration. When the potential reached zero, the apple rapidly began to disintegrate—in other words, to rot.

"We invented a little apparatus to measure the potential of the apple. In perfect health this was about fifty millivolts. The idea of fruits inspired me to see if I could make a battery and this combination of half apples and wire on my table is the result. From it I obtained a potential of over one volt.

"With these facts in my possession I told my students that we were prepared to continue the same experiments with a form of life that we felt was really ancestral, the one-celled amoeba. One of my girls, a tireless worker with the microscope, finally perfected an electrode so fine that it could actually be inserted into the living amoeba as it lay under the microscope. We were now able to do three things. One was to measure the potential as we had the apple and all other forms of life, the second was the ability to withdraw the electric force from the amoeba and the third the ability to charge the amoeba with electricity. In other words, we were able to measure, decrease and increase the potential and all under the keen eye of the observer at the microscope. We performed most of these experiments with the Amoeba Pelomyxa, a large type that often attains a diameter of one-sixteenth of an inch.

"Its potential often reached fifteen millivolts. This potential changed when adrenalin, anesthetics and sodium iodide were added to the liquid in which the amœba was suspended. We could measure the change in potential under these various conditions by means of the little electrode which we placed inside the body of the one-celled animal. When we increased the potential by electrical means the amœba became active, but when the potential was decreased, the movements became less active and the body came together in a quiet mass. When zero was reached, the amœba disintegrated, first into large and then into smaller granules and finally became actually dissolved in the surrounding liquid. That, we felt, meant real death.

"What did it mean? Simply this. We were able to produce every phenomenon of death simply by reducing the potential to zero. All the other factors, which we have been considering as the causes of death, simply do the same thing, namely, reduce the potential to zero. Therefore we feel that we have at last reached the point where we can say that death is caused by the reduction of the potential to zero.

"But, if at any time before zero is reached, we reverse the current and increase the potential, then the amœba resumes its active stage and continues to live. That, in a few words, Sir Lauder, is the result of our studies of the very interesting phenomena of death. Have you any help for us? Any criticism? Would you like to see an amœba under these circumstances come near death and yet live again? Or would you like to see an apple breathe?"

"This is all very remarkable, Miss Van Why. The most interesting thing to me is that practically every statement you have made has been known to me for some time, but I could never put the facts together so as to enable me to arrive at any logical or valuable conclusion. You have the divine touch that makes the dry bones of science alive and vital. I have an idea that your lecture can be commercialized. As I understand it, all of your fruit is brought enormous distances in iced cars. No doubt the expense is great. Yet in the constantly revolving wheels under the cars you have a potential source of electricity. Why not let me make a little invention, so that these fruit cars can be constantly charged with electricity generated by the revolving wheels in contact with brushes and thus, as the potential of the fruit is constantly maintained, it will reach the consumer in a perfectly healthy condition. If you have no objection, I will patent this idea and see if I cannot sell it to the parties most interested. I will make you a fifty-fifty partner. What say?"

The little biologist laughed.

"I have always heard that you Scots were canny and apt to pinch the penny. You come here to learn about death and almost before I finish, you see the way of adding to your fortune. Go ahead and success to you. Money does not mean anything to me, except to give me additional resources to finance my experiments. I notice that my little laboratory girls like it; they rave over every increase I am able to give them. Suppose you have dinner with my brother and me. We might be able to increase our potential, if we put some steak into our gastro-intestinal tract."

DURING the entire lecture, John Van Why had apparently continued to read his copy of *Vogue*. In reality he had paid the closest attention to every word his sister had said. He had not only listened, but there had been some very rapid and intensive thinking. However, he was a charming companion at the dinner table and in every way confirmed the oft-repeated statement of his sister, "that when John wanted to be nice, he could be very nice, indeed."

The next week John Van Why was a constant visitor at his sister's laboratory. There was a great attempt on his part to learn all there was to learn about the potential of the amœba and apple. His studious attention pleased and worried his sister. The year before, a week of such activity had been followed by a prolonged debauch, and Anna Van Why was too keen a psychologist not to realize that in certain respects the behavior of her brother was, to say the least, abnormal.

Finally he had mastered the delicate technique of every experiment. He had studied the amœba and exhausted the possibilities of the apple. Even a few rabbits, a dog, and a calf had succumbed to his scientific zeal. Then his enthusiasm died down; he ceased to work hours every day, and to all appearances resumed his former indolent habits. But he did not get drunk. His sister was more amazed than ever. Had she known what was really back of all his efforts to learn her technique, she would have been more than surprised.

JOHAN VAN WHY belonged to the Paint and Powder Club, one of the most exclusive and peculiar clubs in New York City. It was exclusive as well as exclusive, but at the same time there was an interesting bond among the members. It was not a bond of extreme sociability, either. Two interesting stories were told, which illustrated the exclusiveness of the membership and their relations to each other. The oldest member gave a dinner in honor of the youngest member. When asked why he had done so, he replied that he had been a member of this club for over fifty years and this young man had been the first member to offer him a cigarette. The other story tells of an old member who had gone into the reading room and died there. He was dead for three days before anyone knew it, because of an unwritten law which forbade anyone from speaking to, or in any other way disturbing the meditations of, a member in this room. No doubt both stories were greatly exaggerated, but they were often repeated and much enjoyed by the entire membership.

Back of the eminent respectability of the club was a sinister shadow. It was a prerequisite that each member be in some way a criminal, a deliberate law violator. But he must be clever enough to preclude any possibility of ever being caught.

At the time John Van Why became interested in the potential of amœba, a large majority of the membership of the Paint and Powder Club were bootleg specialists. In other words, they were specialists in the sale of every commodity whose sale was forbidden either by state or national law. Alcoholic beverages of every kind, narcotics, erotica in literature and dainty femininity, all provided the club members a reason for belonging to the club that specialized in providing society methods for enjoying themselves. John Van Why was considered one of the most brilliant members of the organization; his peculiar gifts as a biological chemist enabled him to support himself in more than one twisted method. And this was the peculiar bond between the membership, namely, the fact that every one of them should have been behind the bars and, while each one knew enough about the others to put them all there, up to the present time not one had ever been sentenced, for a part of the solemn obligation of membership was a sacred promise to commit suicide if the coils of the law ever threatened undue publicity and exposure of any particular member.

It had been over six months since Van Why had thought of anything new in the way of bootleg industry. His fellow members chided him with the fact and accused him of growing old. It was therefore with a feeling of keen enjoyment that he entered the club one evening and asked a few of his special companions in

fashionable crime to join him in one of the private card rooms. While the room was well protected against cavedroppers, still Van Why was careful to talk in a low voice.

"How about forming a new company, gentlemen? There are five of us. Would you care to put in twenty thousand each?"

The general answer was favorable, provided the company would pay.

"I am sure it will pay," Van Why assured them. "Do you think that I would invest that much if I didn't see several hundred per cent return in the next year? Of course I won't give you the details. Some of you would not understand them if I did, but here are the simple facts—"

He talked for over two hours and at the end of that time the company was formed. It was decided that the stock should be paid for in cash at once and that every member of the company should start at once as a salesman.

"And if you work it right," said Van Why, "we will have plenty of business."

IT was exactly a year later that Anna Van Why had an interesting caller. He was none other than the Chief of the Secret Service of the City of New York. This department was so operated that only a few knew of its existence, and no one except the Governor and the Mayor of the city knew who was at the head of it. However, the chief, with a fine sense of human values, made no effort to conceal either his name or his position from the little biological chemist.

"We are in trouble," he said, "and the big part of our worry is that we do not know enough. About eight months ago the first of a peculiar series of deaths occurred in New York. Later on there were a few similar deaths in other of the large cities, but most of them have been in New York. There is something odd about these fatalities, something so mysterious and strange that the best of our physicians and pathologists are absolutely at sea. The fact is that these persons have died without any real cause for doing so. We heard that you knew more about death than almost anyone else, so I decided to come and ask you for help. Will you give it?"

"Certainly. How many cases are under suspicion?"

"Twelve that we have quietly investigated."

"Any complete autopsies?"

"Yes, and one by Bruner. You know, he is the best pathologist in the State. On three cases there was a complete chemical examination to determine the presence of poisons. We found nothing; absolutely nothing."

"In any of these cases was there any reason why the person should want to die?"

"That is hard to answer. Some of the men seemed to have everything to live for. In other cases, there might have been reasons, family trouble, threatening financial failure."

"Did you consider a wave of suicides?"

"Yes, but when a person kills himself he generally leaves some sign. He must use some means which will leave at least a trace of its action."

"That is true. Of course, in the East, the mystics die simply because they want to."

"We are not in the East. These men are Catholics and Methodists, and do not show, either in their lives or education, even the remotest knowledge of any peculiar religious cults."

"A final question. Here are twelve deaths. Is there any one fact that is in any way common to all of them or half of them?"

"Yes, so far they have all been men."

"Anything else?"

The Chief thought a while—

"Perhaps this may interest you. All were over fifty and wealthy."

"Part of it does. When a man reaches that age, he either wants to live or he wants to die. If he is wealthy he wants to live. Death to a wealthy man at that age is very unpleasant."

"Death is always unpleasant."

"I cannot agree with you. At times it comes as one of the greatest blessings man can ask from the gods. Will you do me a favor? Send me one of the best operators you know of; give him funds enough to handle any emergency and let me work on this problem with him. For the time being, forget that there is a problem. But if you ever hear from us, act quickly."

"What kind of a man do you want?"

"A brilliant man, who looks as though he did not know very much."

"Those are hard to find. The poor lookers are usually the poor doing kind. I will see what I can do. Will you send us regular reports?"

"We are not going to send you anything till we are all through."

"That is unusual, Miss Van Why."

The little lady grew cold. "I thought you came here for help? Take it—or leave it."

"I see. How about your charges?"

"Pay your detective. I am a biologist, not a crime-hound."

The Chief laughed. He had to. Then he asked one more question: "Do you belong to the book-a-month club that specializes in detective stories?"

"I do not. I still have enough intelligence to select my own literature."

And that was the end of the interview.

Some weeks later, in fact so much later that Anna Van Why had nearly forgotten the incident, a card was brought to her by her secretary. It had simply one word on it—

TAINB

"Who is he, Elenore?"

"Blest if I know. Just looks like an ordinary, dried up, middle aged man to me. He said that he had an appointment with you."

"If he has, I have forgotten it. Send him in to my private office."

SHE found that the man was indeed very ordinary, middle aged, small and dried up. He was almost as small as she was.

With the ability acquired through long years, she looked the visitor over very carefully for a few seconds before she spoke.

"Well, what is it? This is my busy day," she said.

"My name is Taine, madam."

"I got that from your card. What can I do for you?"

The man simply handed her another card. On it the astonished woman read:

"This is the man you wanted."

"I don't want any man," she exclaimed. She had, for the moment, completely lost sight of the conversation of long ago with the Chief. "What were you to see me about? A position as janitor?"

"I guess I will have to tell you," the man said with a sigh. "I thought probably you would recognize the name, but since you don't, I will have to tell you. Some weeks ago you asked the Chief of the New York Secret Service to send you a detective that was brilliant and at the same time looked like an imbecile. I am the man. Taine, from San Francisco."

Anna Van Why flushed almost pink.

"It was not as bad as that. I never said anything

about looking feeble-minded. What I wanted was a rather ordinary looking man who was a brilliant detective. I remember it all now. The Chief wanted me to help him on an investigation that had him puzzled. So you are Mr. Taine. I wonder why the Chief sent to California for an operator?"

"Because he could not get the man he wanted any other place."

The biologist began to laugh.

"Excuse my slang but you don't hate yourself very much, do you?"

"Sometimes, but here is the way it is with me and the Chief. Three years ago I was offered that position, and I did not want it, so I recommended another man for it and that man is the present Chief. Naturally he feels under obligations. He used to work under me."

"Just why did you refuse? That is the best position of its kind in America—at least so it seems to me."

"It is a good position, but we have lived in San Francisco for a long time, and my wife has been President of the Ladies' Aid Society in her church for the last twelve years. She just about runs it. She had an idea that if we moved to New York, it would take her a long time to become acquainted in the church—so she says, 'Let's stay here where we are known.' Besides, there are a lot of Chinamen there and I like to work with them."

"I see."

"Let's get started with our work. Just what do you want me to do?"

"Didn't the Chief tell you?"

"Not a word."

"All right. Then we can start from the beginning. There have been a number of mysterious deaths in New York and you are here to find out about them."

"Good. Tell me about them."

Anna Van Why told him all she had learned from the Chief.

As he listened, he looked every bit the dull man that the biologist had asked for. So true was he to the type, that the biologist was annoyed, and ended by saying sharply:

"I trust you have been paying attention."

"Yes, ma'am. I have been listening to you talk; but so far you haven't said anything."

"What do you mean?"

"You have not given me a single point to start with."

"That is your business."



¶ The secretary ordered these to be opened, and out poured twenty-dollar gold pieces

"I see. Now tell me this: Why are you in this game?"

"For years I have studied death. The Chief heard this and came to me."

"And you told him to send a detective to you?"

"Yes."

"What did you want with the detective, Miss Van Why?"

"I thought—it seemed to be a job for a detective—"

Taine smiled.

"I believe you are right."

"Of course I am right."

"Suppose you tell me what you have learned about death."

So she told him about her amœba experiments.

When she finished, he looked more foolish than ever. At last he said: "It all seems very interesting, but how do the amœba feel about it?"

And that was the final straw. She decided that the man must be either a fool or a liar. Surely such a dumb mind could never have qualified for the position of Chief of the Secret Service of a great city like New York. As far as she was concerned, the conversation was ended, but Taine did not seem disposed to go.

"I would like to see one of those amœba," he said.

"I will have my assistant show you some," the biologist said rather curtly. She was beginning to be thoroughly bored with the man. "I am so busy that I have no time to spend with you myself."

TAINE had a thoroughly good time with the assistant. In a few minutes he was chatting with her as though they had known each other for years. And before he left, he learned that a man by the name of Sir Lauder of Edinburgh had once visited the laboratory and had listened to a lecture on the potential of apples. He found out something else.

He went back to see the chief.

"How did you like Miss Van Why?" that worthy asked.

"You ask her how she liked me. She was so impressed by my dumbness that she actually became annoyed with me. However, I am ready to get to work and the next time you hear from me I will have something to tell you. Do me a favor: Phone to the little lady and tell her that you had made a mistake; that you were going to use a local man, and that Taine was going back to San Francisco. She will feel happier to know it and I do not want her to bother me in any way. She is very much of a woman and you know they are peculiar in some ways. She will be delighted to know that I was sent back to San Francisco as incompetent. Now suppose we go over the case as far as you have the details."

The two men were closeted for over three hours. At the end of that time Taine left, with the simple request that if he ever called for help, the chief should not waste any time responding.

"Because," said Taine, "when I ask for help, I sure need it."

IT was some months after that talk between the chief and Taine that a young bootlegger of the alcoholic type took John Van Why into one of the private card rooms at the Paint and Powder Club.

"I have a chance to make a killing for every member of the club, John, if you go in on the deal with us."

"Meaning what?" was the disinterested reply.

"Meaning at least a million for all of us."

"Applesauce."

"Not at all—the real thing. I have felt some of the gold. I ought to know."

"Some new kind of graft? Bootleg? Vice? There certainly cannot be anything new. If any outsider

came and told us something new, I would be ashamed of our membership."

"I admit that. This is nothing new in a way, but it certainly is new as far as the business side of it is concerned. This old chap can give every one of the boys pointers in his particular line of bootleg. He is a veritable mine of information in regard to all of our specialties."

"What does he want?"

"A chance to put his proposition before us. Says he will make us all millionaires if we listen to him."

"Why didn't you listen?"

"He wouldn't talk. Said he wants to entertain the membership at a banquet, at which time he will give us his entire program."

"Well, suppose we all go?"

"That is not the point. He wants to entertain us in the club."

Van Why frowned.

"That's different. You know the rules. No one not a member can pass the front door."

"I know that, but you are Chairman of the Rules Committee. You can secure the necessary permission."

"Is that all you want?"

"Absolutely."

"All right. I was afraid you had something else up your sleeve. Go ahead. Tell him to throw the banquet. You are sure you understand him? He's going to give us each a million?"

"Not give it to us—make it possible for us to earn it in a short time."

"That's about the same thing, if the time is short enough. Get word to the members and have them all here. If it is a good thing for one, it is a good thing for all, and you know our obligation. Tell him that as the Chairman of the Rules Committee I ought to have a bonus for letting him in."

"He appreciated that and sent you this piece of jade. Said it was in inferior kind of present, but would you accept it. You need not be bashful. I got one just like it and sold it yesterday for ten thousand."

"You made one mistake, Amerson," said Van Why. "You should have told him I was twins and needed two. You attend to the details and I will see the boys."

TWO weeks later the banquet was given to the thirty-nine members. That was the entire membership. Their boast was that they would be equal to the 40 Thieves of Bagdad just as soon as they found a man bad enough to be worthy of the last place. Naturally, that finishing touch was never given. The thirty-nine members and two Chinese guests made forty-one at the table. They were seated twenty on each side, with the host at the head. He was most wonderfully clad in stiff silken robes, heavy with gold thread and encrusted with jewels. At times he talked in Chinese to the interpreter on his left; at times he was silent; but always he kept his fan slowly moving in his hand. The other Chinaman was in European dress, and in every way appeared to be enjoying the evening.

It was evidently one to be remembered. None of the members of the Paint and Powder Club, not even the most blasé, had ever spent one like it. From the finding of the presents at the table, from the drinking of the first cocktail, to the rendering of the last act of an ultra-Parisian cabaret, no effort was spared to adequately entertain every one of the Nine and Thirty Thieves. And when the end came, the food was cleared away, the servants had departed and the doors were locked; every member was unanimous in the declaration that Ching-Lee or What'sisname was a prince of a good fellow and no mistake would be made in electing him to membership.

THEN the smaller Chinaman stood up and started to talk. He explained that he was private secretary to his master, who was a great man in China. He was not worthy to repeat the thoughts of this great man, but as no one else in the audience could understand the Chinese language, it would be necessary for him to act as interpreter. His master would say a few words and then he would translate them. This would take time, but he was sure that they would be repaid in the end. There might be a little difficulty in putting all of his master's thoughts into fluent English, but they would, no doubt, excuse him for any grammatical blunders.

With this introduction, the Chinaman at the head of the table, without rising, started to talk in his native language. After a few minutes he paused and that much of his speech was repeated in English. After eight pauses he came to a final pause, and this is what he said in those eight parts of his address:

"Most illustrious and wonderful merchants of the Western World. I feel that I am unworthy of eating with you or venturing to address such a noble gathering of upright and successful business men. You will pardon my audacity in presuming to sit with you at the same table. From far away China I have come, learning of your wisdom and success in life.

"It is my hope to begin business dealings with you which will be worthy of your illustrious attention. For some years a group of merchants in China have undertaken, in a small way, the varied business which occupies your time. These merchants have thought it wise to elect me their president. By a spirit of co-operation we have been able to assume control of all this commerce in the East. Last year we did a total business of over two thousand million; in your business circles this would appear small, especially the profits of twenty-three per cent of the gross, but we felt that it was very fair.

"With the hope of increasing this pitiful success, we decided to ask the great men of the West to become our partners and we therefore have in mind a new company, the western office of which will be in New York City. We need more than a few men to join this company, all of them being expert in his particular line of trade. I have therefore suggested to my Board of Directors that we give these men, each one of them, five millions in stock, and in addition a present of one million in gold, if they agree to our proposal. I have the stock certificates downstairs; also the gold. As I felt that some of you would prefer paper, I have a number of millions in United States bonds and large bills. If we can come to terms, I will transfer this to you tonight.

"It is not fair to ask you to join without having a definite idea of our resources. First is our control of the opium and morphine trade. We are soon going to have the entire trade in our hands and have unlimited facilities for placing it in any part of the world. That, with cocaine, forms a large part of our pitifully small business. Then I know that you are interested in alcohols. My association has the names of over thirty-five thousand of the big bootleggers in the United States. We have each man card-indexed. We know his habits and the extent of his business; we know his customers. If you join us we will promise you that inside of three months all of these thirty-five thousand men will either be dead or fleeing for their lives. Our control of the Tongs in your country makes this promise easy to keep. Once these men are dead, some of you who are specialists in this line will assume charge of this wonderful industry, which your remarkable country has so energetically fostered by your most wise laws.

"No doubt some of you are interested in the fair sex. We control the sale and use of women in the East and there is no reason why we should not, by the same

business methods, control it in the western hemisphere. As you know, most of the men engaged in this business are rather timid in their speculations, but with men of intelligence interested, the entire business can be run on an honorable and highly profitable scale.

"Like all of my countrymen, I am interested in fine jewels and precious stones. It is a shame that these are kept from your countrymen by the high tariff. All that will be changed under the direction of our new company and the evasion of unjust taxes will constitute a large part of our profits. This phase of the business of the company will be in the hands of those of you who are best suited by past experience to handle it.

"We will also control the bootleg business in fine books. What a sad commentary on your peerless civilization to think that there are so many books that cannot be bought openly in your shops. I feel that, as far as culture is concerned, we are doing your populace a great favor in making the books, illustrations and art of past and present ages easily available to the collector and lover of this form of art.

"Thus we come to you with gifts in our unworthy hands. We have been able to succeed, but we need your help. We wish to establish the control of euthanasia, which is sadly needed in our own country. No doubt the lives of you glorious sons of the West are so carefree that you need no such word in your vocabulary, but in the East, life at times becomes impossible, especially for our business antagonists. For centuries we have experimented in this form of trade, but feel that all of our methods are ancient and antiquated compared with the brilliant form your wisdom has lately discovered. We bring you everything from the East and only ask that you allow us to take back this wonderful secret to our needy friends."

THUS came the end of the address. The secretary spoke of his own initiative:

"And now, gentlemen, you have heard the master. At each place you will find a little pencil and a little card. If you will sign your name and your specialty and your willingness to become a director in this new company, I will be glad to send for the gold and stock certificates. They are downstairs waiting for your disposal, thirty-nine million in cash and for each man five million in stock. You can form your own company and elect your own officers for the western half of the combine. I assure you that my master is able to keep his promise in every way."

There was a hasty conference, a babble of low whispers, but at the end thirty-nine signed pledges were in the hands of the secretary. He went to the locked door, unlocked it, gave an order to the waiting servant and went back to his seat. Soon five men staggered up, carrying baskets filled with greenbacks and gold coins. The gold coins were in canvas bags, but the secretary opened one of these on the table and out poured twenty dollar gold pieces, like so many marbles out of a sack. He took them by handfuls and tossed them over the table.

"Look at them, gentlemen; the genuine article."
"Well, give us our six million," demanded one of the men almost hysterically.

"We will be glad to do so, but first we must know the wonderful secret of your new method of euthanasia."

"What does he mean?" asked a man to his neighbor. But that man walked around to the back of John Van Why's chair.

"You have to tell him, John."

"I am not going to."

"You have got to!"

"I won't!"

The controversy attracted the attention of all. Finally the two Chinamen whispered. Then the secretary arose.

"The condition of this entire agreement," he said, "was that my master take back with him the priceless secret of euthanasia, which was discovered by one of your members. I believe his name is Van Why. It now seems that the gentleman does not wish to contribute this secret toward the good of the new company. Under these circumstances my master feels that the negotiations are at an end, and expresses his profound regret that the new company is impossible. He requests me to have the thirty-nine million carried to a place of safety."

And he started to the door to call the servants. A dozen excited men blocked his path, another dozen surrounded Van Why, imploring him to act in a decent, sensible manner, while others forgot that the dignified Chinaman did not understand a word of English and excitedly told him that he would be given any secret the club possessed.

Amid the confusion, the dignified Oriental never changed his countenance, never lost a stroke of his fan. He gazed on the surging club members as though they were shadow men on the silver screen. He hardly looked interested. Finally John Van Why stood up and called for silence.

"I'll give in," he said. "I had a good thing and I wanted to hold onto it, but I see that it is for our good to listen to this man. So you boys stay here, and I will take the two into my bedroom and tell them about it. Don't touch that gold till I come back. You will kill each other if you decide to try and divide it. Come on, you two men, let's get through with it."

The secretary muttered a few words to his master and then the three left the room. The remaining thirty-eight men looked at each other with anxious drawn faces.

"My word!" exclaimed one of the men. "What did they give us to drink? This has certainly been a night to remember." He suddenly drew his revolver and pointed it at one of the men. "Stop! Hands off that gold. When one gets it, we all do."

Twenty minutes passed and then another twenty and an hour. They were all seated now around the table, smoking. Suddenly the door opened and a group of policemen rushed in.

"Everybody! Hands up!" ordered the plain clothes man at the head of the squad of police.

"What's the charge, Officer," asked one of the calmest of the club.

"Talk to headquarters," was the reply.

"I have always said," was the man's whispered answer, "that they would never get me alive." No one seemed to hear him, but he put a ring in his mouth, bit on it and in thirty seconds was dead. The other men, less brave or more sane, according to the viewpoint, filed sadly out to the waiting wagon. One of the last of them looked pitifully at the baskets of gold and paper money.

"Say, Officer," he begged, "you're not going to let that lie around loose, are you?"

The inspector laughed. "That's all right. Just stage stuff."

AN hour later Anna Van Why was awakened by her telephone.

"This Miss Van Why? This is Police Headquarters. Sorry to tell you your brother John is dead. Yes. Hit by a taxi on Broadway; no signs of injury, but he died at once. Must have suffered a fractured skull. No, he was not drunk. Only an accident. Seems he was trying to get an old lady out of danger and got hit himself. We sent the body out of Morgan's Parlors till you decide what to do."

The little white-haired woman stayed awake for the rest of the night. Over and over she said to herself, "I

am so glad that he died sober; I am so glad he died sober trying to help the poor old lady; I am so glad—so glad—"

It was not till morning that she started to cry.

The next morning at ten a little insignificant man called at the unmarked office of the Chief of the Secret Service.

"I am through, Chief," said Taine. "I want to report and go back to San Francisco. Wife writes that there is going to be a Church Social of some kind and thinks I ought to be there. You know she is the president of the Ladies' Aid Society and every once in a while she makes me go with her."

The chief smiled. "How often I have heard that line. Forget it and tell me what happened, because I am just about bursting with curiosity. What shall we do with those thirty-seven crooks you had us pinch?"

"Let your judgment be your guide. Here is a signed confession from every one giving his name, his special line of bootleg and his willingness to join some kind of a society for the further promulgation of vice. There is a card here for each man. One man killed himself, but the others were too yellow. I fancy your men will be able to identify most of them and you can handle them as you wish. They had nothing much to do with those peculiar deaths you asked me to investigate. These here men are just extra fish that got into my net."

"But how about the deaths? Have a cigar and begin your story."

"Thanks, but I never smoke. Nicotine hurts the delicate enamel of the teeth and once that goes they soon decay. Ever hear that line before? Well, I will save your life by telling you briefly what I did. Anna Van Why was the key. She knew more than she wanted to know, only she didn't know it. I found out from one of her assistants that the dear old lady had given a lecture on a new cause of death to an Edinburgh man, Sir Lauder, and that at that time the half brother, John Van Why was there. It seems that John was brilliant and bad, while the sister, Anna, was brilliant and good. Same father but different mothers. So I investigated John and found he belonged to the Paint and Powder Club. That was just a name for a den of organized vice of every kind. In your cells you have as sweet a collection of degenerates as was ever collected. No vice without its representatives there, and every one claiming to be a perfect gentleman.

"I found they were all bad and that some of them were poor. So I sprang some parlor theatricals on them and they fell for it. I got Sam Lee, a pretty good Chinaman I know here, but dumb as they make them, to pose as a rich mandarin and I went along as his private secretary. I told Sam I would give him fifty bucks, so you add that to my expense account. Well, I gave them a good strong line and at the end offered to make them millionaires if they would give me the secret of their new form of euthanasia, which means painless death. Of course I was shooting in the dark, but the secret came out. John Van Why had been doing the stunt and they knew it. John didn't want to tell, but the others forced him, so we went to his room. There he sat down and told us that he and three others in the club had formed a company, called EUTHANASIA LIMITED. He furnished the brains and the machinery and the others brought in the trade. He said that there had been sixteen killed so far at twenty-five thousand each. A few of them had made their own arrangements because they were tired of life, but in all the other cases the arrangements for the death had been made by a wife or child to enable the heirs to inherit the property. I do not want to take the time telling you about it, but Anna Van Why had found that every living thing had what she called a potential, a definite amount of elec-

tricity of some kind—and you take this potential from the amœba—that's a kind of bug, Chief—or from an apple, or rabbit or man and they just die. So John, he invents a Morris chair and when the person sits in it, the electrical apparatus in the cushion somehow reduces this potential and he just dies there, in the chair, and the family thinks he died of heart failure or something. Rather cute idea. I told him point blank that I did not believe him, so he says, "Here is one of the chairs, and shows me just how it works. At that, I pull my gun on him and tell him he is under arrest. He is, of course, rather horrified and asks if he can sit down for a few minutes. I never think a thing and tell him to do so, while he is getting his nerve back—and what does he do but sit right down on that chair and turn on all the power and in five minutes he is dead. Died before I realized what was killing him. I sent for the policemen I had stationed at a nearby phone and they pinched the gang. Then I had the undertaker come for John and the other man that swallowed the

poison, and then I thought of that poor sister, so I phoned her and told her John was hit by an automobile while he was trying to help a poor old lady, and that he was a brave man and not drunk when he died. That will make her feel better and I gave that story to the press, so of course he is a hero. And there won't be any more mysterious deaths—at least not that kind. Can I go home, Chief?"

The chief looked at the little insignificant man with awe.

"You are a wonder, Taine," he finally said. "You are sure a wonder. What do we owe you?"

"Whatever you think is right. My wife takes ten per cent for her society so the more you give me the better off the church will be. You send me a check. But please don't ever tell Miss Van Why what really happened. She is one nice old lady, even though she did think I was a fool."

That day marked the end, not only of the Paint and Powder Club, but also of Euthanasia Limited.

THE END