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FOREWORD.

With this issue, the third of the first three experimental issues, the publication of AMATEUR SCIENCE STORIES must, we regret, come to an end. The experiment has been an interesting one of all concerned. Tyro-authors have had an opportunity of seeing their cherished work published, and readers have been able to enjoy well-written stories which, for some reason or other, were not quite suitable for the professional magazines.

The chief reason for its discontinuance is that we have not a sufficient supply of material. The seven stories in the three issues were all written by three people. This was largely due to the high standard upon which we have insisted, which scared off many amateur authors, and which secured the rejection of much of the material that was submitted. But AMATEUR SCIENCE STORIES has served its purpose by encouraging those who did crash its pages, and we are pleased to record that William F. Temple who, as "Temple Williams" wrote "Mr. Craddock's Life-Line" for our first issue, has had one of his stories published in the current issue of TALES OF WONDER.

If, in the future, amateur authors again awake to life, the magazine will be resurrected. Meanwhile, we invite all amateur authors to continue to submit their stories, and should any of them be of sufficient merit, they will be published in the forthcoming printed issues of TOMORROW.

It remains only for us to extend our sincerest thanks to those who have supported the magazine during its brief existence, whether by writing, subscribing, selecting or publishing, and to remind everyone that there is now a much better, regular, British science-fiction magazine - TALES OF WONDER.

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by

Arthur C. Clarke.

(N.B. All characters in this story are entirely fictitious and only exist in the Author's subconscious. Psych-analysts please apply at the Tradesmen's Entrance.)

It is with considerable trepidation that I now take up my pen to describe the incredible adventures that befel the members of the Snoring-in-the-Hay Rocket Society in the Winter of 1952. Although we would have preferred posterity to be our judge, the members of the society of which I am proud to be President, Secretary and Treasurer, feel that we cannot leave unanswered the accusations - nay, calumnies - made by envious rivals as to our integrity, sobriety and even sanity.

In this connection I would like to take the opportunity of dealing with the fantastic statements regarding our achievements made in the "Daily Drool" by Prof. Swivel and in the "Weekly Washout" by Dr. Sprocket, but unfortunately space does not permit. In any case, I sincerely hope that no intelligent reader was deceived by these persons' vapourings.

No doubt most of you will recollect the tremendous awakening of public interest in the science of rocketry caused by the celebrated case in 1941 of "Rex v. British Rocket Society", and its still more celebrated sequel, "British Rocket Society v. Rex." The first case, which was started when a five ton rocket descended in the Houses of Parliament upon Admiral Sir Horatio Frooth-Frenzy, M.P., K.C.B., H.P., D.T., after a most successful stratosphere flight, may be said to have resulted in a draw, thanks to the efforts of Sir Hatrick Pastings, K.C., whom the B.R.S. had managed to bribe as a result of their success in selling lunar real estate at exorbitant prices. The appeal brought by the B.R.S. against the restrictions of the 1940 (Rocket Propulsion) Act was an undoubted victory for the society, as the explosion in court of a demonstration model removed all opposition and most of Temple Bar. Incidentally, it has recently been discovered after extensive excavations that there were no members of the B.R.S. in the court at the time of the disaster - rather an odd coincidence. Moreover, both the survivors state that a few minutes before the explosion, Mr. Hector Heptane, the President of the Society, passed very close to the rocket and then left the court hurriedly. Although an inquiry was started, it was then too late as Mr. Heptane had already left for Russia, in order, as he put it, "to continue work unhampered by the toils of capitalist enterprise, in a country where workers and scientists are properly rewarded by the gratitude of their comrades". But I digress.

It was not until the repeal of the 1940 Act that progress could continue in England, when a fresh impetus was given to the movement by the discovery in Surrey of a large rocket labelled "Property of the U.S.S.R. Please return to Omak" - obviously one of Mr. Heptane's. A flight from Omak to England (though quite understandable) was certainly a remarkable achievement, and not until many years later was it discovered that the rocket had been dropped from an aeroplane by the members of the Hickleborough Rocket Association, who even in those days were expert publicity hunters.

By 1945 there were a score of societies in the country, each spreading destruction over rapidly widening areas. My society, though only founded in 1949, already has to its credit one church, two Methodist chapels, five cinemas, seventeen tract houses, and innumerable private residences, some as far away as Weevil-in-the-Wuzle and Little Dithering. Moreover, there can be no doubt in unprejudiced minds that the sudden collapse of the lunar crater Vitus was caused by one of our rockets, in spite of the claims of the French, German, American, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Swiss and Danish Societies (to mention only a few), all of whom, we are asked to believe, dispatched rockets moonwards a few days before the phenomenon was witnessed.

At first we contented ourselves with firing large models to considerable heights. These test rockets were fitted with recording

baro-thermographs, etc. and our lawyers kept us fully informed as to their landing places. We were progressing very favourably with this important work when the unwarrentable defection of our insurance company forced us to start work on a large, man-carrying space-ship. We already had a sufficiently powerful fuel, details of which I cannot divulge here, save to say that it was a complex hydro-carbon into which our chemist, Dr. Badstoff, had with great ingenuity introduced no less than sixteen quadruple carbon bonds. This new fuel was so violent that at first it caused a rapid change in our personnel, but by continued research it had been stabilised until the explosion took place when expected on 97½ occasions out of 100 - in which it showed its immense superiority over Dr. Sprocket's triple heavy hyper-hyzone (20 occasions in 100) and Prof. Swivel's nitrogen heptafluoride (probability of non-explosion incommensurable).

The ship itself was thirty metres long and was made of moulded neo-bakelite with crystallux windows, and consisted of two steps, which were ample thanks to our new fuel. The whole thing would have cost a great deal of money had we intended to pay for it. The rocket motors were made of one of the new borosilicon alloys and had an operating time of several minutes. Apart from these features, our ship did not differ materially from any other designed previously, except in so far that it had actually been constructed. We had no intention of venturing far out into space on our first flight, but circumstances of which I shall relate altered our plans in an unforeseen manner.

On the 1st. of April, 1952, everything was ready for a preliminary flight. I broke the customary vacuum flask on the prow of the ship, christened it the "Pride of the Galaxy", and we (that is, myself and the five surviving members of the council of twenty five) entered the cabin and carefully sealed the door, squeezing chewing gum into all the cracks.

The ship itself was resting on a balloon-tyre undercarriage and we had a straight run of two miles over various people's lawns and gardens. We intended to rise to a height of a few hundred miles and then to glide back to earth, landing as best we could with little regard to life or property save our own.

I seated myself at the controls and the others lay in the compensating hammocks which we hoped might save us from the shock of the take-off. In any case every space-ship has them and we could hardly do otherwise. With an expression of grim determination, which I had to assume several times before Iven Scunitzel, our official photographer, was satisfied, I pressed the starting button and - rather to our surprise - the ship began to move.

After leaving our grounds it tore through a fence into a vegetable garden which it rapidly converted into a ploughed field, and then passed over a large lawn doing comparatively little damage apart from setting fire to a few greenhouses. By now we were nearing a row of buildings which might offer some resistance, and as we had not yet lifted, I turned the power full on. With a tremendous roar, the ship leapt into the air, and amid the groans of my companions I lost consciousness.

When I recovered, I realised that we were in space and jumped to my feet to see if we were falling back to earth. But I had forgotten my weightless condition and crashed head first against the ceiling, once more losing consciousness.

When I recovered, I very carefully made my way to the window and with relief saw that we were not floating back to earth. My relief was short-lived when I found that the earth was nowhere in sight. I at once realised that we must have been unconscious for a very long time - my less robust companions still lay in a coma, or rather several comas, at the end of the cabin, the hammocks having given way under the strain, to the detriment of their occupants.

I first inspected the machinery, which so far as I could tell seemed intact, and then set about reviving my companions. This I readily did, by pouring a little liquid air down their necks. When all

were conscious (or as nearly so as could be expected in the circumstances), I rapidly outlined the situation and explained the need for complete calm. After the resulting hysterics had subsided, I asked for volunteers to go outside in a space suit and inspect the ship. I am sorry to say that I had to go myself.

Luckily, the exterior of the ship seemed quite intact, though there were bits of branches and a "Trophaeers will be Prosecuted" notice stuck in the rudder. These I detached and threw away, but unluckily they got into an orbit round the ship and returned round the back, catching me a resounding whack on the head.

The impact knocked me off the ship, and to my horror I found myself floating in space. I did not, of course, lose my head but immediately looked around for some method by which I could return. In the pouch on the exterior of the space-suit I found a safety-pin, two tram tickets, a double-headed penny, a football-~~pool~~ coupon covered with what seemed to be orbital calculations, and a complimentary ticket to the Russian ballet. After a careful scrutiny of these, I came to the reluctant conclusion that they offered little hope. Even if I could bring myself to throw away the penny, its momentum would, I rapidly calculated, be insufficient to return me to the ship. The tickets I did throw away, rather as a gesture than anything else, and I was about to throw the safety-pin after them - it would have given me a velocity of .000001 millimeters an hour, which was better than nothing (by, in fact, .000001 mm/hour.) - when a splendid idea occurred to me. I carefully punctured my space-suit with the pin, and in a moment the escaping jet of air drove me back to the ship. I entered the air-lock just as the suit collapsed, not a moment too soon.

My companions crowded round me, eager for news, though there was little that I could tell them. It would take prolonged measurements to discover our position and I commenced this important work at once.

After ten minutes' observations of the stars, followed by five hours intensive calculations on our specially lubricated multiple slide-rules, I was able to announce, to the relief of all present, that we were 5,670,000 miles from the earth, 365,000 miles above the ecliptic, travelling towards Right Ascension 23 hours 15 mins. 37.07 secs., Declination 153° 17' 36". We had feared that we might have been moving towards, for example, R.A. 12 hours 19 mins 7.3 secs, Dec. 169° 15' 17" or even, if the worst had happened, R.A. 5 hours 32 mins. 59.9 secs, Dec. 0° 0' 0".

At least, we were doing this when we took our observations, but as we had moved several million miles in the meantime, we had to start all over again to find where we were now. After several trials, we succeeded in finding where we were only two hours only two hours before we found it, but in spite of the greatest efforts we could not reduce the time taken in calculation to less than this value. So with this we had to be content.

The earth was between us and the sun, which was why we could not see it. Since we were travelling in the direction of Mars, I suggested that we could continue on our present course and try to make a landing on the planet. I had grave doubts, in fact, as to whether there was anything else we could do. So for two days we cruised on towards the red planet, my companions relieving the tedium with dominoes, poker and three-dimensional billiards (which, of course, can only be played in the absence of gravity). However, I had little time for those pursuits, as I had to keep constant check on the ship's position. In any case, I was completely floored on the first day, and was unable to obtain any credit from my grasping companions.

All the time Mars was slowly growing larger, and as we drew nearer and nearer many were the speculations we made as to what we should find when we landed on the mysterious red planet.

"One thing we can be certain of", remarked Isaac Guzzbaum, our auditor, to me as we were looking through the ports at the world now only a few million miles away. "We won't be met by a lot of old johnnies with flowing robes and beards who will address us in perfect English and give us the freedom of the city, as in so many science-fiction stories. I'll bet our next year's deficit on that!"

Finally we began our braking manoeuvres and curved down towards the planet in a type of logarithmic spiral whose first, second and third differential coefficients are in harmonic ratio + a curve on which I hold all patents. We made a landing near the equator, as close to the Solis Lacus as possible. Our ship slid for several miles across the desert, leaving a trail of fused quartz behind it where the blast touched the ground, and ended up with its nose in a sand dune.

Our first move was to investigate the air. We decided unanimously (only Mr. Guzzbaum dissenting), that Mr. Guzzbaum should be detailed to enter the air-lock and sample the Martian atmosphere. Fortunately for him, it proved fit for human consumption, and we all joined Isaac in the air-lock. I then stepped solemnly out onto Martian soil - the first human being in history to do so - while Ivan Schmitzel recorded the scene for the benefit of history. As a matter of fact, we later found that he had forgotten to load the camera. Perhaps this was just as well, for my desire for strict accuracy compels me to admit that no sooner did I touch the ground than it gave way beneath my feet, precipitating me into a sandy pit from which I was with difficulty rescued by my companions.

However, in spite of this mishap, we eventually clambered up the dune and surveyed the countryside. It was most uninteresting, consisting solely of long ridges of heaped-up sand. We were debating what to do when suddenly we heard a high-pitched whining noise in the sky and to our surprise a cigar-shaped metal vessel dropped to the ground a few yards away. A door slid open.

"Fire when you see the whites of their eyes!" hissed Eric Wobblowitz, our tame humourist, but I could tell that his joke was even more forced than usual. Indeed, we all felt nervous as we waited for the occupants of the ship to emerge.

They were three old men with long beards, clad in flowing white robes. Behind me I heard a dull thud as Isaac passed out. The leader spoke to me in what would have been flawless B.B.C. English had it not been for the bits he had obviously picked up from Schenectady.

"Welcome, visitors from Earth! I'm afraid this is not an authorized landing place, but we will let that pass for the moment. We have come to guide you to our city of Xzgtplk."

"Thanks", I replied, somewhat taken aback, "I'm sure we're very grateful to you for your trouble. Is it far to Xzgtplk?"

The Martian winced. "Xzgtplk," he said firmly.

"Well, Xzgtplk, then," I went on desperately. The other two Martians looked pained and took a firmer grip on their rod-like instruments they were carrying. (These, we learned later, were walking-sticks.) The leader gave me up as a bad job.

"Skip it," he said. "It's about fifty miles away as the crow flies, though as there aren't any crows on Mars we have never been able to check this very accurately. Could you fly your ship behind us?"

"We could," I replied, "though we'd rather not, unless Xzg— er, your city, is heavily insured with a reputable firm. Could you carry us? No doubt you have tractor beams and such-like".

The Martian seemed surprised. "Yes, we have," he said, "but how did you know it?"

"Just a surmise", I replied modestly. "Well, we'll get over to our ship and leave the rest to you."

We did so, carrying the prostrate Guzzbaum with us, and in a few minutes were speeding over the desert after the Martian ship. Soon the spire of a mighty city reared above the horizon and in a short time we landed in a great square, surrounded by teeming crowds.

In a trice, or less, we were facing a battery of cameras and microphones, or their Martian equivalents. Our guide spoke a few words and then beckoned to me. With characteristic foresight I had

prepared a speech before leaving earth, so I pulled it from my pocket and read it to, no doubt, the entire Martian nation. It was only when I had finished that I noticed I was reading the lecture: "British Science-Fiction Authors: Their Prevention or Cure?" which I had given to the S.P.A. a few months before and which had already involved me in six libel actions. This was unfortunate, but from the reception, I am sure that the Martians found it of interest. The Martian cheer, oddly enough, closely resembles the terrestrial boo.

We were then taken (with difficulty) onto a moving road which led to a giant building in the centre of the city, where a lavish meal awaited us. What it consisted of we never succeeded in ascertaining, and we rather hope it was synthetic.

After the meal we were asked what part of the city we would like to visit, as it was entirely at our disposal. We did our best to explain what a variety show was, but the idea seemed beyond our guides and as we had feared they insisted on showing us over their power-plants and factories. Here I must say we found our knowledge of contemporary science-fiction invaluable, for everything with which the Martians tried to surprise us we had heard of long before. Their atomic generators, for instance, we compared unfavourably with those described by many terrestrial writers (though we took care to secure the plans) and we expressed surprise at their inability to overcome those laws of nature that have been repealed by our economists and politicians for years. In fact - and I say it with pride - the Martians got very little change out of us. When the tour finished I was lecturing the leader on the habits of termites and behind me I could hear Mr. Guzzbaum (now, alas, his normal self) criticising the scandalously low rates of interest allowed in Martian trade.

After this we were not bothered any more and were able to spend most of our time indoors playing poker and some curious Martian games we had picked up, including an interesting mathematical one which I can best describe as "four-dimensional chess." Unfortunately, it was so complicated that none of my companions could understand it, and accordingly I had to play against myself. I am sorry to say that I invariably lost.

Of our adventures on Mars I could say a great deal and am going to at a later date. My forthcoming book, "Mars with the Lid Off" should be out in the spring and will be published by Blotto and Windup at 21/-. All I will say at the moment is that we were very well entertained by our hosts, and I believe that we gave them a favourable impression of the human race. We made it quite clear, however, that we were somewhat exceptional specimens, as we did not want our hosts to be unduly disappointed by the expeditions after ours.

So well indeed were we treated that one of us decided not to return to earth when the time came, for reasons which I shall not go into here, as he has a wife and family on earth. I may have something more to say about this matter in my book.

We had, unfortunately, only a week in which to stay on Mars as the planets were rapidly moving apart. Our Martian friends had very kindly refueled our ship for us, and also gave us many mementoes of our visit, some of them of considerable value. (Whether these souvenirs belong to the society as a whole or to the individual officers is a matter that has not yet been settled. I would, however, point out to those members who have been complaining that possession is nine points of the law, and where the possessors are my esteemed colleagues, it is more like ten.)

Our return to earth was uneventful and thanks to our great reserve of fuel we were able to make a landing where and how we liked. Consequently we chose a spot which would focus the eyes of the world upon us and bring home to everybody the magnitude of our accomplishment.

Of our landing in Hyde Park and the consequent evaporation of the Serpentine, enough has been written elsewhere, and the spectacle of three-inch headlines in the next day's "TIMES" was proof enough

"HOW WE WENT TO MARS". (Cont. from page 6.)

that we had made our mark in history. Everyone will remember my broadcast from the cells in Vinc Street Police Station, where we were taken at the triumphant conclusion of our flight, and there is no need for me to add any more at the moment, since, moreover, it might embarrass my lawyers.

We are content to know that we have added something, however small, to the total of human knowledge, and something, however large, to the bank balance of our society. What more than this could we desire?

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 THE END.  
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