

# Weird Tales

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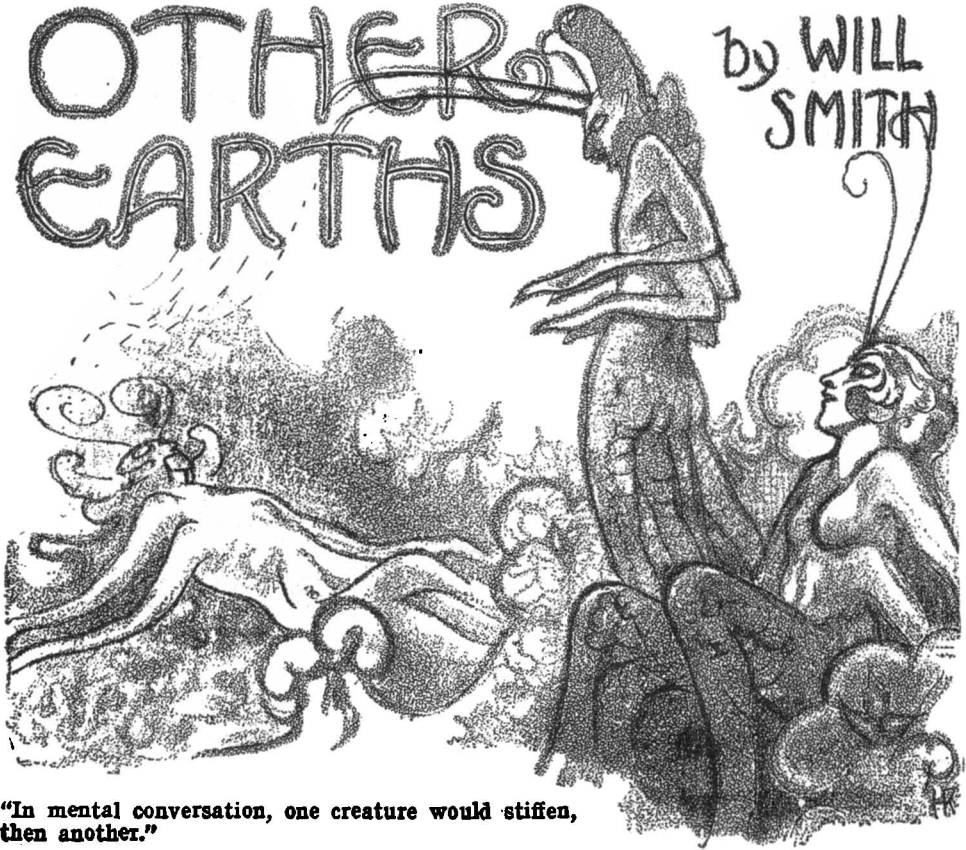
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# OTHER EARTHS

by WILL  
SMITH



"In mental conversation, one creature would stiffen, then another."

"PROJECT vision by radio!"  
"Exactly," said the professor, quietly. "Or rather, not exactly; although it does amount to the same thing. Let us say I can direct your vision by radio. And intensify its force."

"Do you mean to say there is such a thing as a *force* of vision?" I smiled. Professor Noone had always been noted, even back in college days, for his rabid refusal to accept some of the established laws of physics.

"Certainly there is a force of vision. It makes me tired the way people will accept some old alchemist's theories regarding everyday phenomena and call them laws. These people—some of the so-called best minds of the country, too—never question these snap-judgment laws,

but follow the old paths of science like so many blating sheep.

"An apple hit old man Newton on the head, and he jumped up and strung off his drivel about the laws of gravitation. It must have been the delirious babbling resulting from the blow. Yet because his theory sounded reasonable, people ever since have worshiped it. Why, I tell you——"

I was amused, but I hated to have him get started now on one of his hours-long impromptu lectures. Not for nothing had the faculty of Yaleton discharged him. I had thought at the time, along with most of the students, that the old fellow had been done an injustice. In the thirty years since, whenever I had thought of him I had idealized the professor

as a martyr. But here was the reality, crazy without a doubt.

To halt the tide of erudite nonsense that I felt sure was coming, I broke in: "But my time is limited, Professor. Why did you ask me here? Of course your laboratory is bound to interest me as a writer, and I——"

"Gravitation is a force coming not from some mysterious source in the center of the earth, but from the object or substance in question itself. Newton——"

"I must meet a fellow at half-past 8. When I ran across you on the street tonight I was pleased to find an old friend, and was interested in your description of this laboratory. I was glad to come see it, but as for this idiotic talk of——"

"Newton's apple attracted the earth, not the earth the apple. If the apple had been bigger and the earth smaller, the earth would have come up to meet the apple. In fact, I'm not sure but that's what happened. The earth may have carried Newton up to the apple, while the tree went on up beyond it. Of course Newton didn't know he was getting a free ride, but that's the point. We don't *know* anything in science, and we mustn't take anyone else's say-so."

"Well," I rose stiffly, "I will bid you good evening."

"Hm-m. No, that wouldn't do. The earth would be twitching constantly in all directions, going up to meet apples everywhere as fast as they ripen. It might try to meet an apple in Canton, China, and one in Canton, Maine, at the same time, and burst in the effort. However, I am convinced—I have proved—that Newton's apple attracted the earth. Apple, earth; earth, apple—which gives us 'earth-apple'. 'Earth-apple', or 'terpomo', is the way they say 'potato' in Esperanto. And

speaking of potatoes, I can demonstrate that—— *Sit down!*"

I fell into my chair, blasted into it by the explosive force of Noone's yell. I confess I was badly frightened. A raving maniac!

"Now then." The professor spoke with a cold, steely directness. "If you don't care for my 'idiotic talk', kindly refrain from questioning my statements. As for your friend, you will not meet him at half past 8. Oh, don't look so frightened—I'm not crazy, and nothing is farther from my thoughts than harm to you. You will not want to leave here tonight, that's all.

"I have one more thing to say on gravitation. This evening I propose to demonstrate something else, but another time I shall prove to you that the phenomenon of gravitation is due to a force generated within a given substance and reaching out toward the earth in the form of rays. And furthermore, I shall bend those rays for you. Can you imagine the result of bent rays of gravitation?"

I was appalled. Gravitation drawing in a curved line or even around an angle! It seemed plausible enough—as plausible as Newton's theory. . . . But it was absurd, of course! Still——

"What about the radio vision projector, Professor?"

"Now you sound interested. You will be more interested before morning. Come into my—astronomical observatory."

## 2

ALTHOUGH the room into which we passed was lined with charts of the heavens, it held none of the other aspects of the orthodox observatory. Where was the domed ceiling? Where the circular walls, the raised platforms, the slot in the roof? This was an ordinary little square room with the perfectly common type of

ceiling. The thing most obviously lacking I missed last. The telescope!

"Ah, yes!" Noone smiled genially: "The telescope. Here you are." He motioned toward the center of the room.

Still I was mystified. All the room contained, as far as I could see, was the group of furnishings in the middle of the soft drugget. There were a few armchairs arranged around an oak library table, a well-stocked smoking-stand and an innocuous-appearing radio cabinet. It looked to me like only a place for a gentleman to smoke and toy with the ether. But there were the charts, fast enough, and that cabinet might mean something.

"Be seated, Mr. Phillips. Have a cigar or something. We will—toy with the ether." For the second time, Professor Noone handled my mental phrase coolly, delving into the cabinet the while.

"Here are our head-sets. Ah, you place yours over your ears. That looks sensible enough, but let me put it over your eyes. So! Don't be alarmed. I shall don mine in the same way presently."

The man *was* crazy, then!

"We will now tune in. Thus. And now I have my eye-phones, so to speak, adjusted. Now who's crazy?"

Not Noone, surely! Or if he was, so was I. For before my eyes was spread out a vast, bright galaxy, exactly as if I lay sprawled on my back, star-gazing! So complete was the illusion that I fancied I felt a draft of cool night air on my forehead.

"While you are picking out a star to visit," Noone was saying, mildly, "let me expound another idiotic theory. Some old duck or other—no matter who it was, for he was wrong, of course—told us that vision consists, roughly, of light rays caught on a highly sensitive screen within the eye. If there is no light, we are told, there is no vision. The rays that

reach the eye have first to squirt out from some such source as the sun or an electric bulb or what not, strike the object to be seen, and bounce off into the eye—so the books say.

"I say that vision, like gravitation, originates within the object. The eye manufactures and gives off a ray of its own. Think of the Evil Eye, which is positively known to emit a shaft, baneful though it is. Light simply plays the part of a stimulant to the ray-making mechanism—a sort of catalytic agent. The more light, the more rays, and the more powerful they are. And the farther we can see.

"The eye rays, I have learned, are mainly exceedingly high-frequency electrical rays. My little apparatus catches these and adds to them the beams from an intense cold light generated within the cabinet. The resulting rays when put through a special kind of transformer are converted into powerful radio waves which are projected into space by a series of ordinary directional antennæ. So great is their power that they travel at a speed many thousand times greater than that of light. And distances measured in light-years become only a matter of minutes.

"The directional antennæ I control with certain knobs on the panel. The intensity, or range, of the vision ray is governed by the intensity of the light added, which I control with a single knob. The range is infinite.

"How do you like my telescope? Would you like to look closer at one of those planets? What about that pretty red one on the left?"

I heard Noone's fingernails rasping against the radio panel. Evidently he was turning on his cold light, for as I stared—upward, I must perforce call it—the stars grew nearer and brighter. The red star moved toward the left side of the picture and disappeared.

"The antennæ will fix that," said Noone. I heard a momentary sound as of static, and the star swung into view again. "There, our objective is centered properly. Let's move up on it."

So far, one could see as much through the regulation type of telescope. I began to suspect trickery of some obscure sort, but my suspicions were short-lived. A network of canals spread out before my eyes and every minute became nearer and plainer! Canals they were, unmistakably.

The professor began to speak, but in a voice so incredibly tender as to suggest a woman crooning over her baby.

"Mars!" he murmured. "Ever the subject of conjecture and controversy. And you and I are permitted to learn the answers to the questions of centuries."

Nearer grew the canals, and nearer. What had been only scratches across them developed rapidly into sets of parallel lines and then bridges—giant suspension bridges the like of which Earth engineers have never conceived! I grew giddy in my excitement as antlike creatures crawling along them changed and grew, until I could see them for what they were.

*Men! Mars is inhabited!*

3

**T**IME? I knew nothing of time. I was rapt, enchanted. Eighty-three came and went, and might have come a dozen times, for all I knew. I was conscious only of the quick, hushed breathing of the man beside me on Earth, and the teeming life and cataclysmic sights of that world above us.

Mars—with its queer people so miraculously like the familiar conception of Wells, its gigantic structures, titanic feats of a civilization far, far beyond ours—we explored at

will. So transported were we that it was perhaps an hour before either spoke.

We had come to rest directly over, as it were, a monster building with even more than the usual number of queer antenna wires overhead.

"I have been here many times"—it was Noone, scarcely breaking the silence—"and learned many things. Shall we look in the windows? My antennæ will direct our vision anywhere."

We seemed to float downward, to halt beside a great, single-paned window perhaps two hundred feet from the ground.

"The middle story," Noone whispered, "and the most interesting. Now!"

For a moment I had the sensation of touring slowly and smoothly in midair, as though suspended spiderwise by a thread. Next I was looking through the crystal-clear, foot-thick plate-glass.

How can I, with faculties poor even by Earth standards, hope to describe the myriad activities of the insect-men within? In the short space I could bear to look, I saw miracle heaped on miracle in the most matter-of-fact kind of way. Dross into gold? Easy, for these people. I saw it done in the twinkling of an eye. That was the least of their stolid marvels. It was all too steep for me, and to call back my reeling senses I shut my eyes.

"Don't!" The professor fairly screamed it. "You made me miss the most important part—the very crux—of an experiment that— But pardon me; of course you didn't understand. When you want to shut your eyes again let me know. Just to teach you, watch what happens when I shut mine."

I had to smile, in spite of my chagrin. I understood quickly enough why Noone had been annoyed at me. At his shout I had of course popped

my eyes open. I had fixed them absently on a Martian workman inhaling—literally—his lunch. I was just in the act of wondering how the food smelled when the scene was wiped out!

In a flash what had been a vista of whirring machinery and hurrying little men became a great luminous ball covered over with a network of lines.

"You see, Mr. Phillips, you are half-way between Earth and Mars. The reason, of course, is that by closing my eyes I cut off half the optic force. Of course I can remedy the situation by increasing the cold light, but it's much easier for me to—open my eyes again."

The workman rose and stretched, and all seemed well on Mars.

"Likewise"—the scene changed again as the professor went on—"I can close one eye and leave you three-quarters of the way between here and there. If I shut both eyes and you shut one, you will be one-quarter of the way along, as you can doubtless understand by now." Professor Noone laughed, his good humor restored.

"Let's look over some of the other planets," he suggested amiably. "We can return to Mars later if we wish. Let's see now."

He shut off the light entirely, and immediately came my original sensation of lying on my back gazing at the stars. The red planet was in the middle of the heavens now. The scientist went on.

"Look them over and pick out another star. Venus over there! Going up?"

"Hold on, Professor. Honestly, this is—it seems somehow—indecent. To hang over another world—or over this world either, I suppose it is possible—looking down on its creatures, peering in their windows, seems too—godlike. I'm afraid——"

"Phillips, do you believe in God?"

Such a question fired at me at such a time had an indescribably terrifying effect, and I tore off that blasphemous head-set. As I glared at the man, Noone had followed suit, and we sat eye to eye.

"Certainly. Don't you?"

"Absolutely. Yes indeed, my dear Phillips. How else can I account for the wonders I have seen? There must be some great purpose behind it all. But as for the God of the orthodox Bible—if you have faith in such a One, hold tight to it. I propose to show you things now that will shake that faith. Shall I go on?"

Shake my faith in the Bible? No man could do that—let this one try if he wished. Yet my voice held far from the stoutness I meant it to hold as I answered him.

"Go ahead."

4

"I HAVE to follow a blazed—or blazing—trail to get to my present objective. I have named the planet 'Ago'. The inhabitants call it—but you will learn."

I wondered why all the mystery. Once more I tried to bulwark my courage against fear of the unknown. But the journey in itself was fearsome enough.

We were bound, optically speaking, far beyond the realm of the wildest astronomer's nightmare. Just as a starter, the professor had tuned us in on Neptune.

"Neptune is the farthestmost away from Earth of all the known planets," Noone muttered. "I have been amused to learn that the astronomers during 1924 made the discovery that the known universe is at least a million light years across. With my little radio telescope these learned gentlemen would find their known universe increasing somewhat. Why, see here——"

We had been standing, figuratively, on the surface of Neptune. All the while he was speaking Noone had been swinging our vision ray backward and forward, sweeping it slowly across the new, fearsome sky. With his last words he had brought the ray to bear steadily on a certain tree-shaped constellation and was now bringing that constellation rapidly nearer. Only dimly visible at first, the tree was flashing at us at such a pace that I instinctively recoiled. In a matter of seconds the tree had leaped upon us and we had passed through it. I breathed again. I had the sensation of having miraculously survived a blow from a burning Christmas tree.

In the center of our field of vision, among a host of queerly colored bodies, there hung one star of a hard, brilliant white. Our pace slowed.

"Well, Phillips," the professor chuckled, "their 'known universe' is far behind us. We traveled along at a leisurely gait until we got to Neptune, but you must know we ticked off quite a distance. The astronomers admit that Neptune is nearly three billion miles from our sun. The jump to Neptune, however, was a mere bagatelle. Our quick second jump—the leap through the trees—was something like one million times as long. Now, as for this nice white star ahead, so many million light-years away from Earth, what do you suppose it is?"

"Ago?" I hazarded, brightly.

"No. Just the second of some seventy blazes on our trail to Ago."

Stunned, I subsided.

"I should like to make all my jumps as quickly as the last one," said Noone, "but unfortunately I can't always have such a fine starry hoop to jump through and guide my jump. We shall have to go slowly and cautiously at times. Now watch the white star."

I watched, while this body never

dreamed of by ordinary astronomers grew. It became a pea, a marble, an orange, and so on until it lost all spherical shape and became a sheet of beaten silver filling our field of vision. Still it drew nearer; the silver became lined, scarred, and discolored in spots. Presently it was the surface of a world—a bleak, evilly forbidding world.

Again Noone manipulated his antennæ until we got a view of a new sky. Again he located a star far beyond and brought it close.

"It took me a year to find this short path to Ago. It has been three years since I first stumbled onto the planet and lost her, and it was a year before I found her again."

Professor Noone talked on for some time, describing his method of plotting out the course. Some day, he hoped to have a system of micrometrically divided dials on his antennæ controls, so that he could make a memorandum of the exactly correct direction of any desired star.

The talk was interesting, but it had been a long time now since we had pushed off from Earth, and the strain was beginning to tell on me. How many trillions of light-years away could this Ago be? I wondered again why Noone had chosen such a name, and what the Agonians called their planet. How, for that matter, did Noone know what they called it? How could he know their language or read their writings? If he did know the name, why not tell it to me?

"Ah!" The professor's pleased little exclamation aroused me. "Now we are in Ago's solar system." And presently, "That pale bluish planet! It's Ago. Watch it."

Here was an end to the suspense, then. I was glad to fix my attention on the planet and watch it go through the same metamorphoses as had those others. But as the surface came near enough for us to make out the contour of the continents I observed that



which ended the suspense indeed. Now the world was so close I could easily pick out the mountains, lakes and forests. I spoke to my companion with a trace of pique.

"This is an anticlimax, I must say, Professor. Didn't you rather go astray in your calculations?"

"That's only the first of a number of questions you will be asking directly," he said imperturbably. "I can't possibly answer them all, so I shall refrain from answering any. You will see."

I SAW, all right. I saw that Professor Noone, A.M., Ph.D., and Lord knows what-all, with all his attainments, was positively crazy. This planet to which I had been led with such a blare of trumpets was—Mother Earth!

"'Ago', eh? Well, I know what the inhabitants call it. They call it 'Earth'."

"The inhabitants call it Earth," parroted Noone.

Oh well, this was novel at least. Let the show go on. I watched the familiar outline of North America spread out and pass from the sides of the field. The Mississippi flowed through the center of the picture for a moment and then moved over and away to the left. The well-known colored patchwork of states was oddly but naturally missing, and so were the printed names. But here was something I could recognize at once—the Capitol at Albany. Down the Hudson we sped, and here was—

"New York," I shouted.

"New York," came Noone's echo.

"See here, Professor. Of course I see the joke now. You wanted me to see ourselves as others see us. But why the name 'Ago'? And what has this to do with shaken faith?"

No answer.

Down to earth we sank, to land in the very street in which Professor Noone's house stood. But—

"What is wrong with this picture?" My tone was light enough, but the lightness cloaked a consciousness of something faintly cery.

The scientist deigned to say, "Ah!"

Something *was* wrong. What was it? Up the street we moved, and in the direction of the house in which we sat. At a corner I scanned a sign. There it was: "Nason Street."

Nason Street was correct. But something was *wrong!* The sign, now. It looked queer; the lettering looked unfamiliar, even funny. As we passed on I noticed the roadway. Where was the paving? Come to think of it, the light back at the corner had been dim—an oil lamp! Where were the usual automobiles? What about this quaint conveyance approaching? As I lived, a horse and buggy!

Here at last was No. 129, Noone's house; but how queerly different! The doorway was flanked with oil lamps. As I stared the door opened, and out came Professor Noone himself, with a roll-rimmed derby balanced on his head and sporting a beautifully waxed, black mustache!

"Proff No One, of Yaleton," I gasped, "to the life!"

"None other," said Noone.

"What does it all mean? What—?"

The man rested a hand on my arm. "Let's drop over to Yaleton," he suggested calmly. "Perhaps there you will find light."

Once more we were over the house-tops, and once more as we sailed along I marveled at the familiar, yet unaccountably amiss, aspect of my stamping ground of years. Dim and dark, the streets gave an impression of being uninhabited, deserted. Yet lights there were, here and there, and even the light of an occasional vehicle. But those lights that moved were so dim, and they moved so slowly!

These were not the thickly intermingling, hurrying bright shafts of automobile headlamps. I thought again of the ancient "horseanbuggy" of Nason Street.

Yaleton swung into view below us, and my heart leaped and stopped. Yaleton, certainly, but not the bustling little college community I had visited only last week. This was the Yaleton of student days, thirty-odd years gone.

The professor seemed to be making some sort of calculation. "Let's see. 1927 minus 30—Hm-m. This is April 30th. Well, well!" And to me he said, "Phillips, this is a coincidence. Watch the little play I'm sure is about due."

By now I had lost the power of coherent thinking, almost of wondering. Our ship of vision settled to earth directly in front of Carmel Hall, in which I remembered were the college executive offices. A lamp sputtered on a post by the open doorway, but the vestibule was dark. I was trying to wonder at the changed appearance of the place, when a wide inner door swung open, to reveal a number of men sitting around a table. I started from my chair, shocked out of my mental paralysis.

"Professor Hitchcock—the man with the beard! He's been dead for years!"

Noone shook his head sadly. "Dear old Walter Hitchcock. The best president this college has ever had. I missed you at the funeral, Phillips. I thought that of all the students, you would——"

"He wanted to expel me, and to write my father!" I had forgotten the absurdity of it all, and was actually defending myself.

"Ah, yes. I know. We shall see. Do you recognize any of the other gentlemen present?"

Of course I did. There were Professor Higgins, Professor Smith and the rest. I even recognized the jan-

itor of my dormitory, although I had forgotten his name.

"Proff No One is late, as usual," remarked my companion. "He will be here presently. You remember we just saw him leave his house. Of course we beat him here. He is still on the train, no doubt. The other faculty gentlemen are getting impatient—as usual." Noone chuckled delightedly.

It must have been a hot night at Yaleton, though it was cool enough here. The janitor arose and opened the door still wider. The president lifted his long beard and ran a large handkerchief around under his collar. Even in my bewilderment I had to smile at what this operation revealed. As I had always suspected, Professor Hitchcock wore no necktie.

But wake up, Phillips! All this can not be—should not be. This ancient graybeard is dead!

The old president gave me the lie. He arose from his chair, glared around from one to another of his companions with his beard jerking up and down in rapid, angry speech, and banged his fist down upon the table—all most unseemly actions for a cadaver. Evidently his anger was increased by the absence of Professor Noone.

Like an actor in a play, the latter individual now made his entrance. Hitchcock strode over to him before Noone had time to hang up his low-comedy derby, grasped him by the shoulder and shook a closely written paper under his nose.

"Is this——?" I wet my lips. They were parched from hanging apart so long. "Is this where you—where they——?"

"I didn't get fired this night. This concerns—another. You will see directly. There—look now!"

Merciful heavens! I looked—I looked at Horace H. Phillips! I saw *myself* go up the steps and pass into that room of the past!

Again I was forced to laugh in the midst of my horrified stupefaction. So this funny-looking youth was Horace M. Phillips of Yaleton University! This gangling lad with the tight-legged, bell-bottomed trousers of yellow and the tight, blue cutaway coat! Yes, sadly; it was I.

"Come now, Professor. Tell me what this means. The scene is familiar enough. Professor Hitchcock, after what he considered the worst of my college-boy pranks, resolved to expel me and write my father why. He called me here to tell me, and to show me the letter, and——"

"And in the morning he told you he had decided to destroy the letter and give you another chance, eh?"

"Yes, but——"

"If you will stay the rest of this act you will get some light on that too."

I gave up for the nonce the effort to learn what all this delving into the past could mean, and tried to concentrate on the scene before me. I stood by while young Phillips got the dressing-down of my life. As he left the room I saw the younger Professor Noone step up to the president and begin what appeared to be an impassioned plea. Now he would throw a gesture in the direction of the letter lying on the table, and now he would seem to appeal to the other men in the room. Once he leveled an accusing finger at the janitor, at which the fellow quailed.

Finally, after many negative shakes of the great beard, Professor Hitchcock threw up his hands in eloquent despair and nodded. At once the meeting was dissolved.

"Learn something, Phillips?" the scientist asked slyly, almost bashfully. "Oh, well; no matter. Now as for that prank of yours, I always suspected—— Let's peek in a window or two."

The scene changed until I found myself on a level with the second

story window of a dormitory. In the room was a young man sitting dejectedly before a table under a lamp. We paused only long enough to see the youth—Mr. Phillips again—place an arm on the table edge and bow his head onto it, before we dropped to a lighted window in the next story.

"Deak Johnson's room—and there's Deak," I whispered.

I had never cared for this fellow, I remembered, nor he for me. Rivalry in athletics had something to do with it, I had thought, as did also a certain 1897 flapper of the town. Still, I had never before suspected that Deak's rancor ran so deep as this.

As I pressed my disembodied eyes to that doubtless long-since-shattered window-pane, I saw the janitor enter the room. Deak rose, asked a question or two, nodded in a satisfied manner and handed the man a green-back. As soon as he was alone Deak sat down and began to write.

"The plot thickens," chuckled Noone. "We must read that letter. Here we are."

Just as in a movie close-up, the letter lay before our eyes. Deak's hand and pen traveled rapidly across it, tracing the words that damned him forever in my eyes:

"Dear Pa: My scheme worked perfectly, and Phillips has been given his walking papers. The janitor was just in to inform me his fake testimony had done the trick. Thought you would be interested because——"

Because, of course, Deak's father was interested in anything, however mean, that would result in a victory for his son over that of old Joe Phillips. I could see the whole miserable business now, and I knew whom to thank for my deliverance from what had threatened to be a disgraceful mess.

But that could come later. For the immediate present all I wanted was some explanation of the phenomenon I was witnessing.

"Shut it off, Professor." There was real determination in my tone now. "I want you to answer my questions."

Without a word Noone did as directed, and we removed our head-sets.

"What we have seen," I commenced, "is authentic, to be sure. It is impossible that it can be happening again before our eyes. That scene was enacted thirty years ago."

"'Ago'—that's the word!"

## 5

"FIRE away, Professor." I spoke along my cigar.

"Phillips, I presume you know the popular theory as to how this earth originated."

I nodded.

"For once, the popular theory is correct. Eons ago a lump of some kind of matter was thrown off by our sun. That lump, after passing through ineffable convulsions and slow metamorphoses, has become what we call 'Earth'.

"But do you realize that every single thing—every brick, every man, every *word* even—of this Earth was done up in that ball of matter? Oh, I don't mean it was present in the form of a brick, a man or what not; but it was surely there in its component parts—its elements. If not from that original ball, whence *did* the things of today come?"

"Nothing ever *happens*. There are no accidents. There is a physical cause for everything. Every whim of a man's mind, healthy or otherwise, can be traced to some tiny blood-vessel, nerve-end or spore of the physical brain. And those spores in their turn had a logical, physical origin. You say events which changed the world's history hinged on a whim? But those events had an immutable cause, because the whim did. Perhaps the father of the whim had eaten something for dinner that caused an ab-

normal—or prevented a normal—flow of blood to the brain. The abnormal brain fostered a different thought or whim than it would have done had the person concerned eaten something else for dinner. His dinner menu in turn depended on some other equally physical cause.

"The same logic applies to events which hinge on so-called 'chance' and 'miracles'. A man is out in a rowboat, say, being blown toward the rocks by a tremendous wind. When he is within a rod of the rocks the wind suddenly veers and blows him in the other direction. 'A miracle!' says he. Or 'providence', or 'luck', depending on whether the man is of a religious turn of mind.

"Pish, tush! That sudden change of wind had perfectly natural causes, and had been brewing for days perhaps. Furthermore, if the man and his boat had not been present the veering of the wind would have taken place just the same. A minute's fearless cogitation should convince the most unyielding Fundamentalist that what I say is true, that nothing ever just happens, and that everything has a physical cause.

"Now, Phillips, with all that in mind, consider what conditions would be obtaining here at this moment if the sun had delayed a minute in throwing off that lump of matter. Exactly the same condition would obtain, except that we would be one minute behind where we are now. Instead of being 11:55 p. m., the time now would be 11:54. But you and I would be sitting here; and you would be Phillips, and I would be Noone. Don't you agree?"

I did.

"If the sun had delayed a hundred years in throwing off our lump, of course the world would be a century behind the times. But it would have been the same old world—the lump would have contained its same old potential events. You and I would

not be here, Phillips, but our forefathers would. And they would be doing the same things now that they actually did do one hundred years ago. That's logic, isn't it?

"This Earth, with all its complication of different substances, really contains only a comparatively few elements. Out of those few elements all the material things that have ever been made. That, of course, is an old thought. But perhaps a new thought is, that all the *abstract* things came from those same material elements. Think it over."

The old man paused, while I strove to marshal my frayed reasoning powers for a rout of this necessarily nonsensical theory. But strive as I might, I could not find a vulnerable spot in it. It could not be, of course, and yet—— I remained silent.

"Suppose, Phillips, that even as our sun once threw off a little package of elements, another sun gave birth to an identical package. Impossible? Hold on.

"I have convinced you that nothing ever *happens* in this world. Should not the same rule apply to the great assembly of worlds, the universe? Whatever caused our sun to spew us forth may well have caused some other sun to do the same thing. There are millions upon millions of solar systems—a fact I had never thoroughly appreciated until I perfected my sight projector. Among so many millions of suns, why is it improbable that another world—another not very complicated package of elements exactly like this one—could be born? We should wonder, rather, how large a number of such worlds there are. *How many Earths!*

"In the short time at my disposal I have already found several. One of them I have shown to you. The events of that Earth are identical with those of ours. Why? Because its embryo contained the same elements in the same proportions. But

it was not born at the same time. The calendars and clocks there show the period to be just twenty-nine years, ten months, twenty-one days and twenty-two hours behind ours. Roughly, present-day events of that world are events of this world thirty years ago."

Ago! The planet I had just visited! Impossible! It was the absurd dream of a madman. But with my own eyes I had seen the proof. I had seen a world I knew was Earth, and knew was not Earth of today.

A slice from my past relived before my eyes! I could easily guess what that other Horace M. Phillips was doing now. That night, if I remembered rightly, I had sat with bowed head until long after the lamp had burned out, then crawled miserably into bed. What a prophet Phillips of Ago would call me could I but tell him what had taken place in my life since that night!

Suddenly came a new thought, most radical of all.

## 6

"I HAVEN'T dared, that's all," the professor was saying. "But since you will voyage with me I will undertake it." He turned to his cold light control.

What a blast of light was at work in that cabinet. I shuddered as I thought for the hundredth time of what would happen should that ordnance of rays become turned backward upon us. There would be one black flash, and then blindness. Death, more likely, I thought, as I considered the piercing power of the shaft. One thing sure, there would be no charred eye-sockets from this heatless light.

Once more I marveled at the wisdom of the man beside me. He had learned much from the Martians, had he? Well, he was not so very ignorant to begin with. It took a fairly

smart man to get an entrance certificate to Mars University.

"It was on Mars that I learned the principle of cold light," the professor put in. "Before that time my mercury vapor light was a constant——"

"Did the Martians give you a post-graduate course also in mind-reading?" I shifted uncomfortably.

Noone laughed. "I learned that simple trick at Facultus College. 'Facultus' is the name I gave to a particularly offensive little star I stumbled upon one day. It is inhabited solely by poly-legged, crawling beings whose only means of communication is through their waving antennæ.

"Just for an hour's amusement I studied the creatures. I noticed that the centipedish fellow sending out thoughts had both his antennæ tense and quivering, while the one receiving allowed himself to slump, relaxed all over, his eyes assuming that stupid expression peculiar to college faculty members. In a mental conversation first one creature would stiffen and then the other. This led me to wonder if thoughts were only another manifestation of high frequency waves or rays. I believed the inhabitants of that far-off world knew how to exercise some set of functions that put their minds into a receptive state for the thought rays. Probably relaxing all the muscles of body and brain, as it were, allowed this faculty to gain ascendancy.

"To shorten a long story, my theory proved out. Imperfectly to be sure—as yet I wear no antennæ—I have developed a thought-receiving or mind-reading faculty for myself. That faculty is present in you, in all of us. Some few on Earth know how to use it."

Where was my scoffing? I could not scoff. My mind was worn out—I was tired. I remember a subdued chuckle from Noone, the sound of a

more rapid turning of knobs, and I slept.

It seemed only a minute before the professor's voice insinuated itself into my consciousness.

"Easy now," he was murmuring. "You are awake, but let your eyes open slowly. Loose the force of your vision gradually. That's it. Slowly!" I heard the whir of controls. Presently, "There! You understand I had to reduce the light force in proportion to your waxing eye force. Now what do you see?"

"Ago," I grunted.

"Still sleepy, eh? Look closely."

I batted my eyes—with far-reaching results—and looked again. There was the Mississippi as it had appeared before, and the Great Lakes. Evidently the professor had again chosen to approach the world on our home side. We drew nearer.

"Well?"

Still I could see nothing to distinguish this sun-bathed world from our Earth or Ago. It was one or the other, surely. But no! Those scintillating spots!

Hundreds of them! Wherever I looked I could see them. Below us lay a country speckled over with a starry rash. A new United States!

"Aha! New! You bet it's new. Never in history has our country borne such markings. They are the proof that this is our goal. We are now at the point where I have always turned back in terror. Once more, shall we go on? It rests with you."

I dared not think. "Go on," I said huskily.

7

**A**T FIRST we judged the Earth under our eyes to be at least a hundred years older than ours.

It was when we were, as before, tracing a course above the Hudson and coming to earth as we progressed downstream, that we got our

first close-up of the mysterious spangles we had observed shining from near the surface. They turned out to be great metallic spheres of a golden color, covered with countless square facets from which the sunlight flashed constantly. The great spheres were mounted on individual steel towers of varying heights. Coming on a number of the things in a group high above a vast tobacco field, we paused to study them.

As we speculated as to their use, each ball, in unison with all the others in the group, began to surround itself with a bluish, lambent aura. The auras increased in size and density until the central golden cores shone through but dimly. The bluish haze-clouds became shot through at increasingly shorter intervals with forked, zigzagging tongues of flame, for all the world like miniature lightning shafts. Each moment the flames leaped farther and farther from out their auras, accompanied by a volley of crackling.

Presently the little flickers began to meet one another in their darting courses across the field. At each intersecting point a little ball of mist was formed, until perhaps a score of them were being wafted about between the towers. Soon all had joined into a blanket of black cloud.

"Rain-making!" gasped Noone.

He was right. Below, through occasional rifts in the cloud, we could see the tobacco plants being drenched in a copious shower, while the fields on all sides remained bathed in clean sunshine.

"Another scientists' dream come true," I said. "Weather control, then, is possible."

"Certainly. And another theory of mine is vindicated. These people are using an idea I have had for years. This is merely a demonstration of static electricity doing useful work. Those huge balls are nothing but electrodes of giant Leyden-jars.

At the operator's will some of the nodes become charged with negative static electricity, and others positive. You saw for yourself what happened when the charges overflowed the capacity of the electrodes."

"A home-made thunder shower, eh?"

"That's it. Meanwhile, the nodes in the other fields are grounded to keep any tiny accumulations of static drained from the premises. And doubtless they radiate a mild warmth to break up any stray hatful of rain-causing vapor."

Useful static! I thought of how I had cursed the static only last evening when it had ruined a perfectly nice batch of broadcast from KIFI for me.

"Home radio audiences never think of static here," Noone said confidently. "The weather control people collect it all for their own use."

The shower below us was abating, the de-energized balls reflecting the sunlight and gleaming even brighter than before. We moved off.

"What next?" I breathed.

I can not hope to list here all the marvels unfolded for us in the next hour or two. Many of them failed utterly to register with me. Such things as pneumatic tubes for underground passenger traffic, aerial travel made safe, sane and commonplace, economic improvements shown by the total lack of evidences both of poverty and of great wealth—these things perhaps lie within the scope of my descriptive powers. But my mind is not that of a scientist. Professor Noone, however, seemed to comprehend the most stupendous of the prodigies, even anticipate them.

Why, one might wonder, did the scientist keep us so long in downtown New York? Why not hasten to Nason Street, to see how our familiar neighborhood would look after a hundred years? I did not wonder;

for I too feared, for all my brave words, to face anything touching on our personal future. I too was content to procrastinate.

CENTRAL PARK was changed but little. We had just noted this fact when our attention was attracted by a man—in costume exactly like that of the man of today—sitting on a bench reading a newspaper.

“Here’s where we answer the date question,” said the professor, lowering our eyes to the man’s shoulder level. “Ah! Would you believe it!”

The paper was dated July 10, 1937.

Only about ten years ahead, then! And as for my personal future, here it was spread on the paper before me:

**NOTED AUTHOR HOME FROM CHINA TRIP**

**Horace M. Phillips Deplores  
Passing of Old Orient**

The piece stated, among other things, that “a feature of the passage was Mr. Phillips’ winning of the pool on the ship’s run for both days.”

I was amused, elated—and relieved immeasurably. It was certain that I had nothing to worry about in the next ten years, at least.

Noone congratulated me heartily enough, but even in the warmth of his tone I could detect an undercurrent of chill, of dread. This I pretended not to notice.

“Well, well. I’ll bet there’s something in that paper about the great Professor Noone, also. Probably the world before us—shall we name it ‘Ahead’, or ‘Hence’, or what?—owes most of its scientific wonders to that gentleman. I’ll bet all ‘Hence’ has been watching you ever since you announced the invention of the eyesight shooter.”

The old man was silent. I continued, apparently undaunted. “To come back to this Earth for the moment, do you intend to make public your discoveries at once, or will you set yourself up for a while as a

prophet and soothsayer in general? You could certainly get by either as a cold scientist or an ardent occultist.”

I could not babble on forever in the face of Noone’s persistent dull silence, but evidently my blather had an effect. I found myself approaching Nason Street at once.

How different was the street now from that of today, and that of Ago! In place of lumbering buggies and carefully regulated automobiles, the roadway was filled with little individual electric cycles darting at breath-taking speed. Even these, however, were regulated; for a strip of grass-ground along the center of the street kept the two currents of traffic separated. Heavy vehicular traffic was completely absent.

“Bulky commodities are no longer in demand, I judge,” said Noone, “at least in residential districts. Coal, for one thing, is probably long out of date. There must be heavy loads in local traffic in some sections—where building is going on for instance. Ah, here is No. 129.”

Instantly the professor’s pall of glumness settled down, although I could see no reason for it as yet. The old house looked about the same as it does now. Surely there was nothing about it to suggest anything so very dreadful.

The first evidence of something wrong we found to be the professor’s laboratory—the room adjoining that in which we were sitting. We had peered through the window, to look upon a scene of utter desolation. The dust of years lay thick over everything, marring the scientist’s most precious possessions.

“Only one thing could keep me away from this room.” The old man’s voice was filled more with regret than sadness. I dared not ask what that one thing was.

As we stared appalled, a playful mouse knocked down what we quickly



identified as Noone's notebook; it lay open upon the floor, freed of dust by its fall and easily legible. The left-hand page was half filled with the professor's cramped writing. The notes, which were utterly meaningless, ceased in the middle of a long technical word. The entry thus abruptly broken off was dated Dec. 21, 1929. Two years from now!

Why had I assented to taking this damnable trip to a world not meant for our eyes?

"Let's—let's turn back," I whispered, groping toward my companion.

"Too late." Noone strove to make his tone stronger, less unhappy. "But this laboratory—I—I can't bear—I don't care to look at it."

Downstairs we found a family of youngish people just arising from luncheon. Afternoon here; then. An aged servant entered the room, asked a question and was answered by a nod.

"My nephew's family," Noone muttered. "The old fellow is John Staples, who let you in this evening. More friend than servant, too. Now I'll bet—good old John! Let's see where he goes."

Staples had evidently gotten the afternoon off, for presently we saw him emerge from the back door, clad in street clothes and carrying a long-

ish pasteboard box, and signal one of the little hovering taxi-planes. We had no difficulty in keeping the machine in our field of vision and following it across the city and out over the rolling hills of Westchester. Here the plane dipped and swung out of sight beyond a massive set of stone buildings.

I could hear the trembling of Noone's hand at the controls. I knew he must be reading the name on the great central building as we passed over it. Why would he not turn back?

The plane we found parked in a field a little to the rear of the buildings. The driver sat at the wheel alone, while Staples wended a way across the field, unwrapping his package as he went. We followed him along a path and through the opening in a hedge. Beyond, Staples had stopped and knelt beside—

With a curse I ripped at those cursed eyepieces. Professor Noone unhurriedly removed his, and—smiled! He had seen.

A grave behind a madhouse! Such was the fate of that other Professor Noone on that other Earth! And he knew, as I knew, that nothing could alter the course of destiny, and that the same fate was to be his on *this* Earth. Yet he smiled! A brave man is Professor Noone—old Proff No One of Yaleton University.

