

THE MAN WHO MADE A MAN

BY HARLE OREN CUMMINS.

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When Prof. Aloysius Holbrook resigned his chair as head of the department of synthetic chemistry in one of the famous American universities, his friends wondered, for they well knew that his greatest pleasure in life lay in original chemical investigations. The papers in his laboratory were stated that the learned chemist has been taken to the Rathburn Asylum for the insane, wonder changed to inordinate curiosity.

Although nothing definite was published in the papers, there were hints of strange things which had taken place in the private laboratory in Brimmer street, and, before long, a story was current that, as a result of dabbling in the mysteries of psychology, a man had been killed while undergoing one of Prof. Holbrook's experiments.

It is to clear up this mystery, and to refute the charges of murder that I, who served for ten years as his assistant, am about to write this account, which, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains the facts of the case.

I had noticed for the year previous that Prof. Holbrook was much preoccupied, but I knew that this was due to some new experiment. Many times, when I came to his door at five o'clock to clean up as usual for the next day, I saw a notice pinned on the door telling me that he was in the midst of important work, and would not need me again that day. I thought nothing about it at the time, when he was experimenting with Dr. Bicknell, performing operations with hypnosis, instead of anesthetics, there were weeks at a time when I was not allowed even a glimpse of the inside of the laboratories. One day, however, as I came in to report, the professor called me aside and told me that he wanted to have a talk with me.

"You know, Friedrich," he began, "that I have been busy with experiments for a long time on a new problem, and I have not told you or any one else the object of my toil. But now I have come to a point where I must take some one into my confidence. I need an assistant, and I know of no one I can trust more than you, who have been with me now for nearly a dozen years."

I was naturally flattered. "Friedrich," he continued, rising and placing his hand on my shoulder, "this experiment is the greatest one of my life. I am going to do what has never been done before in the history of the world, except by God himself. I shall MAKE A MAN."

I did not realize at first what he meant. I was startled, not only by his wild statement, but also by the intense tone in which he had spoken.

"You do not understand," he said. But let me explain. You know enough chemistry to realize that everything, water, air, food, all things which we use in everyday life, are merely combinations of certain simple elements. As you have seen me, by means of an electric current, decompose a jar of pure water into its two component parts, two molecules of hydrogen to every molecule of oxygen, so you can bring these same elements together in the gaseous state, and if the correct proportions are observed, when an electric spark or a flame is brought into contact with the mixture, you will obtain again the liquid water. This is only a simple case, but the chemical laws which govern it hold equally well for every known substance found in nature. There are only about seventy-five known elements, and of these less than thirty compose the majority of the things found in everyday life.

"During the last six months I have been working with these elements, making different substances. I have taken a piece of wood, decomposed it with acids, analyzed it quantitatively and qualitatively, finding the proportions in which its elements were combined. Then I have taken similar elements, brought them together in the same proportions, and I have produced a piece of wood so natural you would have sworn it grew upon a tree."

"I have been analyzing and then making again every common thing which you see in nature, but I was only practicing. I have had an end in view. Finally I took a human body which I obtained from Dr. Bicknell at the medical college, and I analyzed the flesh, the bones, the blood, and in short every part of it. What did I find? Of that body, weighing 165 pounds, 164 pounds was nothing but water, pure water, such as you may see at the tap over yonder. And the blood which in the man's life had gone coursing through his veins, bringing nourishment to every part—what was that? Nothing but a serum filled with little cellular red corpuscles, which, in their turn, were only combinations of carbon, oxygen, sulphur and a few other simple elements."

"I have taken the sternum bone from a dead man's chest, analyzed it, then brought together similar elements, placed them in a mold and I have produced a bone which was just as real as the one with which I started. There were only two things in nature I could not reproduce. One was starch, that substance whose analysis has defied chemists of all ages; the other was the flesh. Though I have analyzed bits of it carefully, when I have brought together again those ele-

mentary parts, the flesh would not form.

"Chemists all over the world have been able to resolve the flesh into proteids, or as some proteids, as they are called. They form the principal solids of the muscular, nervous and glandular tissues, the serum of the blood and of lymph. But no man on earth except myself has ever been able to create a proteid. They have missed the whole secret because they have been working at ordinary temperatures. Just as the drop of water will not form from its two gases at 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit, nor at its own lower explosion temperature, unless the spark be added, so will protoplasm not form except under certain electric and thermal conditions."

"For the last two months I have been working on these lines alone, varying my temperatures from the extreme cold produced by liquid air to the intense heat of the compound blowpipe, and I have been repaid. A fortnight ago I discovered how it was that I had erred, and since then I have succeeded in everything I have tried. I have formed the proteids, the fats, and the carbohydrates which go to make up protoplasm, and with those for my sole foundations I have made every minute and complicated organ of the body. I have done more than that, I have put those component parts together and now behold what I have made!"

He lifted a sheet, which was thrown over a heap of something on the table, and I started back with a strange mixture of awe and horror. For, stretched out on that marble slab, lay a naked body, which, if it had never been living and breathing, as I lived and breathed, then I would have sworn I dreamed.

The thoughts which began to come into my mind probably showed in my face, for the professor said: "You doubt? You think that I have lost my reason, and this thing is some man who has killed? Well, I do not blame you; a year ago I myself would have scoffed at the very idea of creating such a man. But you shall see, you shall be convinced, for, in the next part of the experiment, I must have your help. I will show you how I have made this man, or I will make another before your eyes. Then you and I, we will go farther, we will do what no one has ever done before, we will make that inert mass A LIVING MAN."

The horror of the thing began to leave me, for I was fascinated by what he said, and I began to feel the same spirit with which he was inspired.

He took me into his private laboratory and before my eyes, with only the contents of a few re-agent bottles, a blowpipe, and an electric battery, he made a mass of human flesh. I will not give you the formula, neither will I tell you in detail how it was done. God forbid that any other man should see what I saw afterward.

"Now all that remains is the final experiment, and that will help I propose doing tonight," said the professor. "What we have to do is as much of a riddle to me as it is to you. It is purely and simply an experiment. I am going to pass through that lifeless stuff the same current of electricity which, if sent through a living man, would produce death. Of course, with a man who has died from the giving out of some vital function I could not hope to succeed, but the organs of this man which I have made are in a perfectly healthy condition. It is my hope, therefore, that the current which would destroy a living man will bring this thing to life."

We bore that naked body, not a corpse and yet so terribly like, into the electric laboratory, and laid it on a slab of slate, just at the base of its brain we scraped a little bare spot not larger than a pea, and, as I live, a drop of blood oozed out from the right wrist, just over the pulse, we made another abrasion, and to these spots we brought the positive and negative wires from off the mains of the street current outside.

I held the two bare, uninsulated bits of copper close to the flesh. Prof. Holbrook switched into circuit two thousand volts of electricity, and then before our starting eyes, that thing which was only a mass of chemical compounds BECAME A MAN.

A convulsive twitching brought the body almost into a sitting position, then the man's eyes opened and there burst forth from the lips a groan.

I have been in the midst of battles, and I have seen men dying all around me, torn to ribbons by shot and shell, and have not flinched, but when I tore the wires from that writhing, groaning shape and saw its eyes begin to heave with spasmodic breathing I fainted.

When I came to myself I was lying half across the slab of slate, and the room was filled with a sickening stench of an odor of burning flesh. I looked for the writhing form which I had last seen on the table, but those wires, with their deadly current, which I tried to tear away as I fainted, must have been directed back by a Higher Hand, for there only remained on the slab a charred and cinder-like mass.

And the Man Who Had Made a Man could not explain, for he was crawling about on the floor counting the nails in the boards and laughing wildly.