



JULES VERNE'S TOMBSTONE AT AMIENS
PORTRAYING HIS IMMORTALITY

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In Our Next Issue:

REMOTE CONTROL, by Walter Kateley. Due to the decrease of our advertising, our extra 16 pages were discontinued, which in turn crowded this story out from this issue also.

THE GREEN GIRL (a serial in 2 parts), Part II, by Jack Williamson. In the concluding chapters of this classic the author continues the accelerating pace set in the first instalment. The only intelligence we know of now is that which is housed in the human body. But is it really necessary for intelligence to have only such a habitation? Why might it not just as easily send out its influence through some other force, about which we know nothing at the present time? It seems to us not only possible, but probable, that there is such a force somewhere and may even some day be discovered. "The Green Girl" will, we are sure, rank in your favor with a number of your favorites, among which we unhesitatingly mention "The Moon Pool" and "The Skylark of Space."

THE CONQUEST OF THE EARTH, by Isaac R. Nathanson. Although this story about an Andromedan invasion of the earth is by an author who is new to our readers, the story reads like an old favorite. Mr. Nathanson has not only made a careful check on his science, but he has the gift of fiction writing. And we know you will welcome the announcement that there will be more by him soon.

THE METAL HORDE, by John W. Campbell, Jr. Here is another interplanetary story by our young scientist author that is even better than his previous ones. We can leave it to Mr. Campbell to give us a unique tale, original in its conception and ingeniously worked out.

THE FEATHERED DETECTIVE, by A. Hyatt Verrill. Under this author's skilful handling this tale has an individuality that easily stands with the best scientific detective story. The green turacou and the change of color of its plumage when wet is a much debated subject among ornithologists. Mr. Verrill knows his subject. We feel no more need be said.

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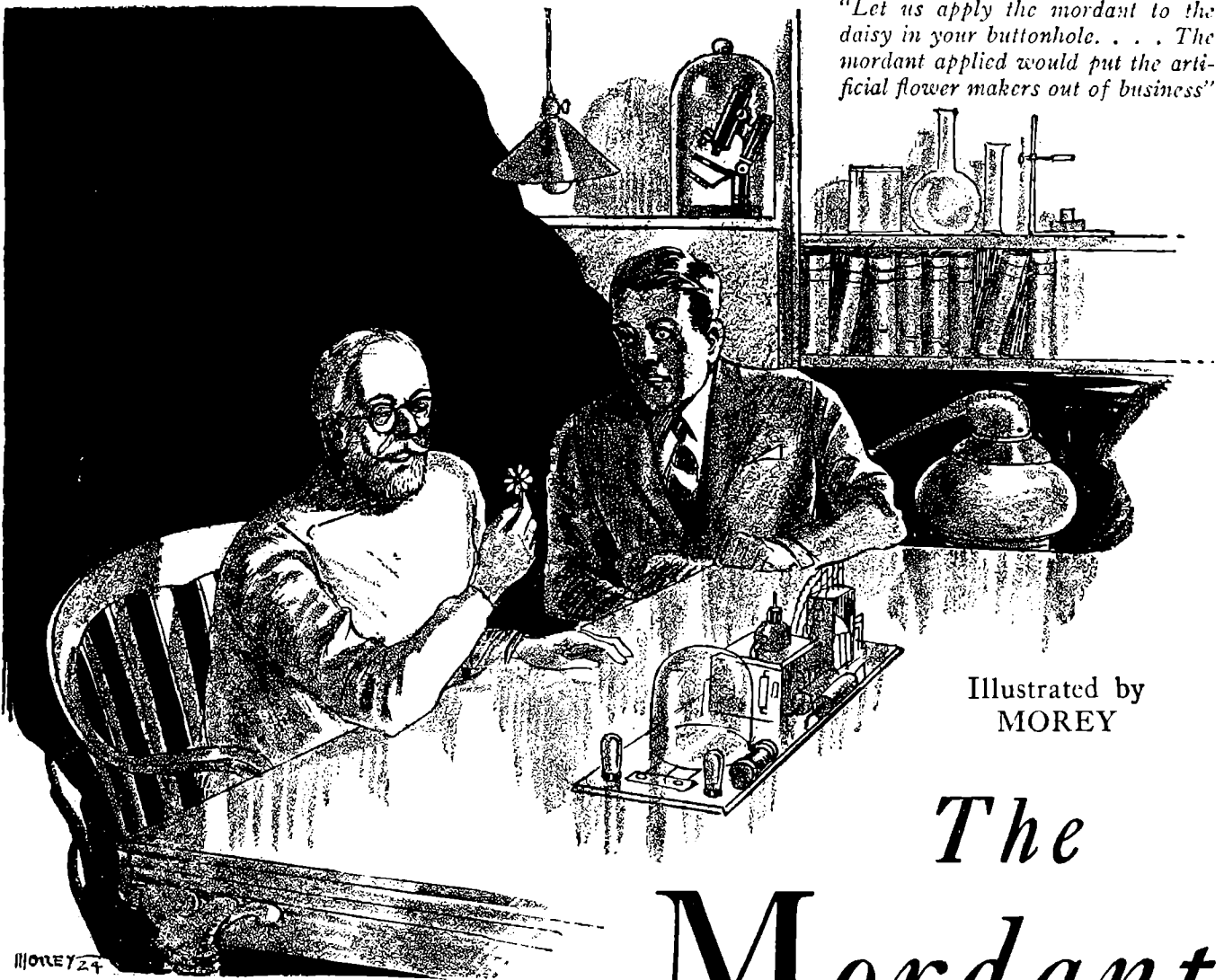
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Our Cover

this month depicts a scene from Part I of the story entitled, "The Green Girl," by Jack Williamson, in which the ship, built by the hero scientist to move through air, on the surface of the ground and through water, with equal adaptability, is shown breaking through the overlying water at the bottom of a certain point of the Pacific to a city under the ocean. The city is enabled to keep the ocean as a roof by virtue of a gas, which the intelligences inhabiting this sub-sea city have invented.

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"Let us apply the mordant to the daisy in your buttonhole. . . . The mordant applied would put the artificial flower makers out of business"



Illustrated by
MOREY

The Mordant

By Merab Eberle

IF the priests of ancient Egypt had discovered the mordant the awe-inspiring mummy would doubtless have been superseded by something more provocative of wonder—the human body preserved in its entirety.

Our museums would hold the bodies of men and women looking as though they slept—Egyptian princesses and Pharaohs would be before us in reality.

Without doubt, the morticians of our day would have made much of MacDowell's discovery of the mordant. There are still many people on whom the idea of death has such an effect that the holding of a body in a perpetual state of non-decay would seem to them the equivalent of an eternal and beautiful sleep. Death to such people would be no more to be dreaded than healthy slumber—provided they knew that they were to remain intact, bodily.

THERE are several mechanical means, like the movie films and phonograph records, to preserve youthful charms or a gorgeous voice or expressions of brilliant minds, but there is no growth, or even variation. What if some scientist should discover the secret of indefinite prolongation of life and a young body? Off-hand such a discovery would seem to be a boon to humanity. But is it? Consider the question carefully. Our new author apparently has, and gives us the results of his consideration in an excellent short story of scientific fiction.

MacDowell had different ideas about the matter. He sought for the mordant in his quiet little laboratories in the Black Hills, not because he wished to achieve preservation, but because he desired to see what might happen to those to whom a life of perpetual youth was given.

MacDowell believed in a soul and a God. Therefore he was not interested in the desires of those who wish the body to be preserved after death has made flesh useless.

I first met MacDowell before the world had accepted him. I knew that a follower of the celebrated Adams was in the

city. I had always been interested in the Adams' concept of disease and its cure. A good story, I thought, for the paper. Therefore I made especial effort to meet the scientist, MacDowell.

I was excited as I sped with my story to the city desk. Here was a man who was doing much more to eradicate disease than man had dreamed could be done. But the desk turned it down. Another advertisement by another quack.

Time and again I attempted to place the achievements of MacDowell before the public. No one would believe me. That is why the story of the mordant has not been told. The public, which denounces the newspaper for the sensational tales which it prints, would be surprised if it should learn how conservative the editorial desk can be upon occasion.

MacDowell in his earlier years as a scientist traveled about the country a great deal. His tours brought him to Youngstown three or four times a year. He always called me over the 'phone soon after his arrival and as speedily as I could leave my work, I would hurry to his hotel bedroom, where I would find him working, always working, with the strange instruments he had invented.

I enjoyed intensely these talks with the quiet, wonderful man. No one, by looking at his kindly face, would have thought of him as being above the average in intellect and achievement. Little could they dream that he was the greatest scientist of all time. There was no pretense in him. Sandy Scotch hair rode stridently above a sandy Scotch face. But, different from those of most Scotchmen, his lips were spread in an almost perpetual half-smile of forgiveness and condonement. The human race was hardly to be understood in its small achievement by this man so lonely in his genius—so far in the vanguard of science that he marched a lone soldier—often the victim of wounds inflicted by his comrades at the rear, even ranking officers of science with epaulets and medals of honor bestowed upon them by an appreciative public. The human race was hardly to be understood by him, but with his half-smile he forgave its sins of commission and omission.

"I have found a mordant," he announced one time.

The fact was of no immediate interest to me. I knew the name "mordant" was given to a substance which would fix a dye on cloth and give it a permanency of color that would baffle the effects of many washings and the bleaching rays of sunlight. Other significance I could not as yet realize.

"You can help me in testing it," he stated. I was ready, for, having helped him in many of his tests, my sympathy with his work made me faithful even at times when the experiments failed to achieve the results he anticipated.

His thoughtful face took on a quizzical look. "If you realized the import of what I am saying you would not lie back in your chair in such evident boredom. Many have sought what I have been seeking." He paused and eyed me curiously. "My mordant is equivalent to a draught from the fountain of youth."

I leaned forward in my chair. Here was a great story. I knew from past experience that I could not use it—could not, though my words be winged by fire, get it past the conservatism of the city editor's desk, but nevertheless, my whole being throbbled to cadences of exaltation. Few know the fire that sings through the veins of a reporter when something new is made accessible to him.

"But how—what is it—have you?" My words tumbled forth breathlessly upon one another. Then calming myself I asked, half-sarcastically, "Has the object of Ponce de Leon's search been found?"

"Not quite," he smiled. His manner shamed me for my agitation and for my sarcasm. "This is nothing that can give life to a person through the centuries. I do not say that such a treatment could not be given, but I doubt the wisdom of perpetrating such a curse upon the human race which has enough tragedy within a normal lifetime."

He thrummed his long fingers idly on the arm of the chair in which he lounged as though he were not speaking of amazing things.

"I have an ether rate which, when incorporated with any living object, will retard the development of old age. At the same time I do not wish to put a stop to the rich mental and spiritual development which comes through the years. Imagine the rounded beauty of a woman grown wise and kind with years and yet possessing the sweet grace, the bright and flashing eyes, the rounded form of youth." His eyes grew bright as though he were envisioning loves of his early youth made beautiful again.

"Have you tried it?" I, seasoned reporter who interviewed presidents and movie stars without undue excitement, sat forward in my chair—my heart beating with swift, rapid strokes—my mind whirling with the thought of a race kept perpetually and beautifully young.

"On no person—on a plant. Let us apply the mordant to the daisy in your buttonhole. It still looks in excellent condition. The mordant applied would put the artificial flower makers out of business. The import of my inventions is tremendous. With this machine of mine," he touched an instrument lovingly, solemnly, "the economic conditions of the world could be turned upside down.

"Right here I can say that the daisy is still in my possession—is still in very excellent condition—except where I have broken a petal or two. Several years ago I showed it to the curator of the New York Metropolitan Museum. He thought it was a fresh flower. I convinced him that it was not by leaving the daisy in his possession for a month. I had great difficulty in taking it from him. He was willing to pay me heavily. It would have a place all its own. My name could be blazoned across the case in which it was to be shown.

"But I had enough money on which to exist and the daisy was precious to me. I have a love for the mysterious, the unusual, which amounts to a passion. In my possession are many strange objects assembled through the years. Many leisure hours I have spent with them—wondering, marveling—feeling immensity spin past me and the inscrutable approach interpretation. And the most loved of this collection is the daisy, for it is tied up with remembrances as well as with wonder.

"I am striving to produce a state of continuous youth in people," continued MacDowell. "True, I can keep them well. That I have already demonstrated to you. But they grow old. I do not wish to keep them from death—that is not my desire. But why should flesh become such a wretched thing to gaze upon? The mordant, I believe, will keep youth intact."

WITHIN me I felt welling up a vast desire to be treated by this mordant. Who has not felt the pang attendant upon seeing youth slip by? I was young

then—but had no desire to grow older. The man must have read my thoughts. He had uncanny powers.

"No, it is not for you—not yet—nor for me. The truth is that I am afraid of crippling my powers. I must do greater good in the world than I have yet done." He paused. His eyes peered into the distances and then he continued slowly:

"I have tested it out already—last year upon a morning glory in my garden in the Black Hills." MacDowell loved flowers. They proved quiet, unobtrusive friends and never waxed merry over what they judged to be the futility of his experiments.

"The flower trumpets did not perish. One by one they placed their glory on the vine. But note this well—this I feel intensely—the flowers came to full bloom, remained in full bloom. But beyond that they did not go. There was no seed. I am wondering if there can be a lack of mental fruition also. I need you in this work. You have the rare gift of intuition. Therefore the test will not be made on you."

"But, about the morning glory," I queried, "is it still living?"

"That would be difficult to say. It exists. The flowers are purple, but winter winds and heavy snows have torn and bruised them. No, I should say that it is dead—for it no longer grows and the spring brought to it no new leaf."

"And who is to be the fortunate victim of the mordant?" I asked, half envious of the person upon whom the test was to be made.

"That," he said, with his forefinger directed straight at me, "is where I need you. I wish to do no one harm. Unless the mordant brings good, the world is never to know of it. I have seen young, blooming mothers, upon whom I should have liked to test it. The idea of destroying their creative ability has deterred me. I do not wish to arrest mental development, so I shall not approach a scholar. I have come to the conclusion that it could be tested out to great advantage on some woman, who depends greatly on her beauty for the earning of a livelihood.

"I have no doubt that several of the stars of the screen would be glad to accept the test. There are operatic singers, actresses, who might for the sake of preserved youth be willing to undergo the experiment. But I have no way of approach. These favored beauties would think of me as a daring humbug. I might have difficulty in gaining access to them. My clumsy tongue could not induce them." There was a glint of merriment in his eye as he queried, "Could you do it?"

Rosa Celeste was my selection. You have all heard of her—the singer with the voice of golden fire—loved on the operatic stage for her grace of form and her ability in acting as well as for the divine gift in her throat.

Occasionally she would make concert tours and, as my especial lot on the newspaper I represented at the time was that of interviewing celebrities, I came not infrequently in contact with her.

Other stars had been made newspaper copy by me in the interim between MacDowell's request and my securing of Celeste, but I had been somewhat cautious in my approach. It is not pleasing to a man to have women look on him with disdain.

Celeste practically made the contact herself. Some chance question of mine made her exclaim, "But wouldn't we all want to drink of the waters of youth? To see

these arms grow flabby!" She shuddered dramatically. "To watch wrinkles come along the face! To mark the sparkle pass from the eyes—nothing more horrible!" Celeste's eyes were famous. I can recall her as she stood there. Beauty seemed to pour out in radiance from her. What a tragedy—what a bitter tragedy—that such wonder could perish. The dull walls of the hotel bedroom—reporters have unquestioned access to many places—took on a glow with her presence.

"And what would you give for eternal youth?" I asked, admirably, I thought, keeping eagerness from my voice.

Her soprano rippled off delightfully into a tenor bit of opera. Her eyes flashed at me challengingly. Then I recognized it as Faust's acceptance of Mephisto's offer. The exchange of soul for youth.

"No less than Faust gave," she laughed. "I should be glad to give audience to Mephisto himself."

Here was my opening. Fortunate for me indeed. "What if a kindlier spirit than he could give you what you wish?" queried I. My tones took on depth, eagerness.

She caught my spirit immediately. I swung into the tale of the kindly man who had found the fountain of youth. Told her that she could be the one chosen for a test. Then I explained what might be the danger—told her of the morning glory that did not bear seed.

"But it blossomed, did it not?" she laughed. "It flowered. That would be enough for me. Who would wish their thoughts to find a full fruition if they were to be borne on a withered plant? Seed means nothing to me. It is not in the future that I wish to live—not in children—not in strange new thoughts. Tell your friend that Rosa Celeste desires to remain beautiful." She was dramatically lovely at the moment. Light flashed from her famous eyes. It was as though a thirsty person saw an oasis—a poverty-stricken wretch heard that he was the inheritor of vast wealth.

SHE was given the mordant. For a few years there is little to record of her. She was just as beautiful as before—just as popular—the idol of a public which paid its tributes in large audiences and by demanding of the press tales of a great favorite.

In ten years she was just as lovely as when the mordant was first given her. Like the morning glory vine, she took on new splendors. Each new blossoming of beauty added itself to the sum total. People commenced talking of her fadeless charm. When she came to sing in Youngstown I interviewed her and found her full of joy over the mordant—full of eager queries as to the welfare of her benefactor. Ecstatic over the fact that not one wrinkle detracted from the youthful contour of her face.

"Not a gray hair, my friend. I am still good to look upon. The men adore me. Do you not adore me? But why does the great MacDowell not give to others what he has given to me? Is he not satisfied with his results on me, his test tube?" She preened herself before the mirror.

"He is busy with other things at present," I stated. "There are little things like wars to be thwarted and plagues to be harnessed. Nevertheless, he is interested in the success of the mordant. But he is slow in his decisions."

I myself am impetuous in my nature—wish things to

come to a head speedily. Never could I have watched through the years the outworking of experiments as did this MacDowell. I could very well understand Celeste's attitude toward him. "When he sees so glorious a creature as myself, how can he help but think his experiment a good one?" she seemed to say.

In five years more of time—fifteen in all—there was a real change in the star. Her voice, while in some respects lovelier—seemed to lack a certain modernity. It remained impervious to the changes that come from without—from the great down-pressing of events. There was a certain quality to her acting which was no longer the fashion. Yet reputation bore her along at the same high place in the world's estimation.

She was charming—unbelievably so. Newspaper syndicates used her name at the head of beauty columns. They paid handsomely for the privilege of doing so. She endorsed cold creams and face powders.

"I need none of them," she confided to me, laughing almost wickedly. "But for those poor people who have not the mordant there is no other hope. I give it to them. The powders and the paints, the creams and eyebrow pencils may help for a while. But see—not a wrinkle—not a gray hair."

Of course her beauty was world-talk. With that I was familiar, but not with another characteristic of which I was soon to hear. It seemed that Celeste was becoming known for her sadness—that her face, so radiant in years past, had almost a look of despair upon it.

So I was not surprised when she sent for me, on one of her last appearances in Youngstown, to make inquiries concerning the mordant. "There is something within me which does not grow. I am a creature of utter loneliness. I am not at home with the youngsters of the day. I am not at home with my peers in age. I am bound to the past by some hidden force that will not let me go. Yet I keep a look of youth."

What change had come over her? Here was a magnificent womanhood—radiant—compelling. Yet it did not affect me with its glory as it had done in previous years. Was my taste altering with the passing years or had some subtle change affected the divine Celeste? Whatever this was—whatever its origin—I felt a strange pity arise within my heart.

It was then that I took counsel with MacDowell. He was growing old. I felt that fact keenly. Lines had been etched upon his face by the sharp pencil of time. Yet he was not using the mordant.

"As I feared," he deliberated. "The mordant keeps the years from bearing the fruit that is their right. Youth is not the thing desired by the creator. In the seed there is a glory beyond our seeing. Of our bodies come our children as fruit. Of our souls—growth of the spirit and eventually immortal life. That I believe. What means the withered husk of flesh after the fruit has ripened?"

I knew at the moment that there was a soul. The man had such a depth of meaning to his voice that, sceptic as I was, irreligious as I wished to be, I could not keep from thinking that there was a tremendous power which held the world in its hand and gave heed to destiny.

Something pulled my eyes toward the man. Old, I thought, of face—old, old and wrinkled. Yet, I paused in my thought, almost amazed that such an idea could have come to me, here was beauty too. A beauty, different indeed, but greater than that of Celeste's.

What was the light that poured from his eyes? What source did this radiant stream have within this man's being? I gazed upon a sight as glorious as a sunset streaming from behind dark, age-old crags.

What did this man possess? And through my mind sped the thought that I was gazing upon a soul—a soul so great that its grandeur and its luster could not be contained in the entirety behind the aging walls of flesh that gave it habitation.

Then I knew what I had found lacking in Celeste. What it was that seemed to take something of glory from her. The youth of the flesh could not be affected without injury to the soul—without drying up the very sources of the spirit.

The power of the heavens which has given youth its fair dwelling and its lure of fresh, firm flesh had so designed it that the aging of the body brought riches to the soul—or so it seemed to me at the moment. Perhaps all the sorrows attendant on decay of outward form and all the agonies, that come from gazing in mirroring surfaces upon faces that are no longer pleasing to the eye, are needful to higher development.

I found my doubt of the existence of a wise God suddenly shaken at the foundations. I trembled before my new knowledge—was shaken to the core of my being.

I WAS confused when MacDowell brought back my wandering mind by saying, "I can release Celeste from the mordant—that will be easy. But will she wish to be released? Her associates will leave her if she is kept beneath the influence of the mordant. Unreleased, she will be as forlorn as last year's rose left blooming in a winter garden. Can she forego beauty and youth? She feeds upon her power."

"You could release her without her being aware," I counselled. "That would be a kindly thing to do." I felt almost fatherly toward Celeste now, I who had been twenty when she was thirty and I who was fifty when she was still thirty—at least in the record of her years as placed upon her face.

"I doubt it. In fact, I believe that it would be the sheerest cruelty to give her over to the power of the years. I do not know what ravages might suddenly take place after the removal of the mordant. Celeste might suddenly become old in looks. Remember, she is fifty. To place a woman who looks thirty in a position where she would suddenly take on the lines and sagging muscles of half a century would not be advisable.

"It would mean that she could not grow through twenty years of time to a place where she might accustom herself to a change both professionally and actually. If Celeste asks for the release I shall give it to her. If not, she shall remain fair to look upon when you and I are withered husks."

"Can she die?" I breathed sharply. The thought of eternal life had once seemed sweet to me. But sorrow had made her home on my doorstep. Life perpetual no longer seemed desirable. And life with a stunted spirit a damnable, awful thing.

"Most assuredly she can die," he stated. "Even as you and I. But the body will remain intact."

Celeste did not care to let the mordant release its power over her. Occasionally I saw her—occasionally I heard her sing. Beautiful as ever—her voice fresh with an eternal touch of spring—not of the present spring, but of past and remembered springs.

"I do not wish the power to go," she sighed. "I could not bear to watch my flesh shrivel as I gazed into a mirror." Her eyes dilated with a wild terror. It was as though she envisioned such a process tearing her glory from her.

"Not that I should mind so much being dead." There was something almost childlike about her, pleading, terrified. "It seems to me that only in non-existence can I find peace." She leaned toward me with a soft confiding. We had grown to be friends because of the secret of which we were a part. "Sometimes I grow extraordinarily weary of it all."

I shuddered to myself, for I was fifty at the time—she was sixty. The thought of supporting an ecstatic youth in the fact of remembered trouble had little lure for me.

THE terrible storms on the Atlantic in my fifty-first year brought to her the death which she had longed for. The yacht on which she, together with several of society's youthful favorites, had set out for a joyous cruise was not seen again, according to the stories.

A wire came into the office, four months later, which said that the body of a young woman, resembling Celeste, had been found on a wild bit of the Maine coast.

I was no longer a reporter, but sat at the main desk, where the older men are relegated. The news editor—a mere boy of thirty—barked at me above the hurried clack of typewriters, "You knew her, didn't you? Suppose you get on the story. Give it a sob touch. Take a look at the woman."

A plane hurried me to the spot and I found the glorious Celeste lying still and cold on a cot in a fisherman's shack. She was a little bruised, but still serene and beautiful. Yet her clothes were torn and stained with many months at sea.

However, the story came to nothing, for eventually the yacht floated in on another bit of coast—a mangled thing—bearing within its ruins bodies made unrecognizable by time.

The newspaper would have nothing of my finding of Celeste.

Gray skies looked down upon a gray and rocky coast and the sea gull's cry mingled with the singing of the little band of fisherfolk, when Celeste was laid at rest.

Just recently the curator of the museum asked me again for my daisy.

The price offered had substantially increased over that of former years.

THE END
