

THRILLING WONDER STORIES



The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction

Vol. XIII, No. 2
April, 1939

TENTH ANNIVERSARY
NUMBER NEXT
ISSUE!

FEATURING
THE ULTIMATE
CATALYST

A Novelet of Laboratory
Magic

By JOHN TAINE

ROBOT NEMESIS

An Interplanetary
Novelet

By

DR. EDWARD ELMER
SMITH

DAWN OF FLAME

A Complete Short Novel

By

STANLEY G.
WEINBAUM

Plus Stories by

DR. DAVID H. KELLER

EANDO BINDER

OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

JOHN COLEMAN
BURROUGHS and
HULBERT
BURROUGHS

JACK WILLIAMSON

—and others!

EVERY STORY BRAND-NEW

Table of Contents

● COMPLETE NOVELETS

THE JULES VERNE EXPRESS By EANDO BINDER.....	13
MEN MUST DIE By WARD HAWKINS.....	48
WHITE BARRIER By FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR.....	88

● THRILLING SHORT STORIES

EXPERIMENT By ROSCOE CLARK, F.R.C.S.....	29
BEYOND ANNIHILATION By HENRY KUTTNER.....	37
THE BROKEN AXIOM (Contest Story) By ALFRED BESTER.....	64
MADNESS FROM MARS By CLIFFORD D. SIMAK.....	76
ZEOH-X By RAY CUMMINGS.....	106

● SPECIAL FEATURES

SCIENCE QUIZ A FASCINATING KNOWLEDGE TEST.....	46
IF—(A Picture Feature) By JACK BINDER.....	74
SCIENTIFACTS By J. B. WALTER.....	86

● OTHER FEATURES AND DEPARTMENTS

SCIENCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.....	10
SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.....	106
SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE.....	113
THE READER SPEAKS.....	118
THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY.....	124
THE SWAP COLUMN.....	127

● ON THE COVER

Artist Brown has depicted a scene from the novelet, MEN MUST DIE, by Ward Hawkins, which appears in this issue.

Published bi-monthly by BETTER PUBLICATIONS, INC., 22 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y. N. L. Pines, President. Copyright, 1939, by Better Publications, Inc. Yearly \$3.00; single copies, \$15; Foreign and Canadian, postage extra. Entered as second-class matter May 21, 1936, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If a name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence.

Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk.

WHITE BARRIER

A Great Wall of Mysterious Force Partitions the World Into Two Segments—and Never the Twain Shall Meet!

By **FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR.**

Author of "Mind Out of Time," "We, the Invisible," etc.

PROLOGUE

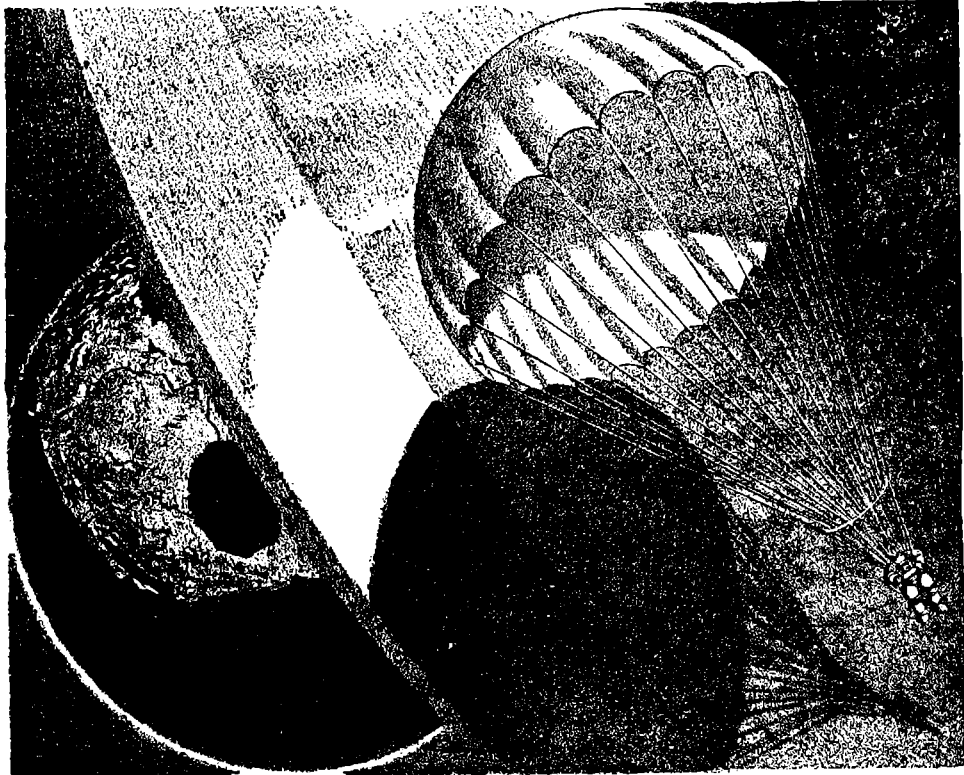
THE barrier arose mysteriously in the night. Across the Titan mountain ranges of Antarctica, across a black, lost, ice-encrusted continent where desolation reigned, it crept waveringly in darkness.

Across the Nordenskjold Ice Shelf and the Antarctic Archipelago, across sombre, gale-lashed seas to the Strait of Magellan, and then like a white serpent uncoiling over the mighty Andes, and across Bolivia, parts of Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica, to the Spanish Main.

The barrier was high and glistening

and white. A nebulously weaving veil, it seemed to tower to the firmament as it passed over the starlit Caribbean and up the North Atlantic to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the icy wastes beyond. Across Hudson Strait it crept between ice floes shattered by Thor's hammer and over the frozen, black soil of Baffin Island to Earth's northern pole.

But, to the east of that terrible, weaving veil there was no change in the familiar world. To the east were oceans, mountains, valleys and the habitations of men. To the east were sunlight and laughter and the song and flutter of birds. To the east the



"Half the world has vanished! The



A Complete Novelet of the Eighth Dimension

gray Atlantic, and Europe, Africa and most of Asia.

Europe's great cities remained. And all the little villages remained too, all the ivy-hung cottages and all the daisies in country lanes. All the old castles in the Pyrenees, the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome, the monasteries of Tibet in Asia.

But the barrier kept moving.

The great jungles still remained. The head-waters of the Amazon, Nepal and the Congo Basin. Lions, gorillas and sleeping sickness remained. The Pampas, Rio. And India, Persia and Siam.

Half the world remained. Teeming millions remained. Hundreds of millions of ordinary people and scientists, physicians, engineers, explorers, artists, scholars, soldiers. War remained. Greed remained. And the

earth beneath us has disappeared!"

great moon still shone on lovers, and the despairing cries of the dying still echoed through the void.

The barrier did not stop at the pole. It crept southward across the frozen Arctic Ocean, and cut Siberia in twain. It moved relentlessly downward over Outer and Inner Mongolia and the great protuberant sack which is Southern China and out into the Indian main. Across two vast oceans it sped in sunlight now, a quivering wall of whiteness that hungered for Earth's southern pole.

Greedily it lapped at Australia's sunken reefs as it passed the Tropic of Capricorn, and the mists of a colder sea sped north to greet and embrace it. Across the Antarctic Ocean it swept on ghostly pinions, and over Wilkes Land's icy mountains and straight to its birthplace where it met itself in the swirling splendors of a newly risen dawn.

CHAPTER I

The Barrier

YOUNG James Powell's eyebrows were frozen solid. As he moved over the snow and ice his body felt remote to his consciousness and scarcely a part of him. All the warmth and radiance were concentrated in his mind. He moved mechanically, his heavy boots sinking deeply in the snow-blanket, trampling the dried-up Arctic sedges and lichens which clung to the icy soil.

His only companions in that gelid land were sentinel larch trees and barren-ground caribou. Overhead the stars blinked frostily in an aurora-laced sky.

Powell's breath froze as it left his nostrils; his lips were cracked, rime-flaked. His eyes were pale glacial hollows under his congealed brows.

He was a big man, raw-limbed, ungainly in his movements. His face was almost Indian in its impassivity. His big hooked nose was tipped with tiny icicles, his jaw was stoical and firm-set. He moved with a slow, lumbering gait, stopping from time to

time to stare up at the northern lights and the far-flung constellations.

The words of a quaint old rhyme were running through his head when the cabin came into view:

Ice on ice,
And snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter,
Long ago.

"Ice on ice—" He smiled ironically to himself. It had occurred to him that the interior of Labrador in mid-winter was not as lonely as the Antarctic continent or Greenland's frozen braes. But the thought was scant comfort. It was almost as lonely, almost as cold.

Yet James Powell had more than a quaint old rhyme to comfort him. The joy in his mind came swiftly back like a rushing tide. All the windows of the little cabin toward which he moved were aglow with welcoming lights, kindled by Louise, his wife.

Louise Powell did not defy the blizzard nor tramp the pitiless, frozen waste. Her courage was of a quieter sort. A slender girl of nineteen, she shared her husband's self-imposed exile with unflinching good humor. She was self-reliant, resourceful and in all respects the exact opposite of the helpless type. Her gracious presence comforted James and gave him strength. Her love was a radiant cloak wrapping him round.

Powell's profession was a grimly exacting one. A government meteorologist, he labored long hours and waged incessant war with the elements in the bleak, cold outlands. His salary was small; his tenure of employment uncertain. But James Powell hated cities and clerkships and adding machines. He was only happy when the wind and the stars conspired against him.

He was within hailing distance of the cabin when the door opened and his wife stepped out into the snow. She was wearing a coonskin coat and high leather boots, but her head was bare. She stood for a moment just outside the doorway, waving at him, her copper-colored hair ruffed by the wind, her face as radiant as the flambeaux of moon and stars and nebulously weaving aurora.

YOUNG Powell straightened. His eyes shone, and his big body shed its mechanical languor. He shifted the pack he was carrying and moved toward her with swift, purposeful strides.

She, too, advanced. Gladness at seeing each other, was in them both. And then—and then something white and glistening seemed to rise up between them. One instant Powell was striding forward, his arms extended hungrily. The next he was hurtling backward through the air.

The barrier seemed to rush toward him, to propel him through space with a sinister and terrible velocity. He landed on his back eighty feet away, coming down with a thud on the frozen soil. The fall to earth stunned him, jolted the breath from his lungs.

For a moment he lay helplessly groaning. There was a throbbing agony inside his skull, and the sound of the little stirring particles of snow and ice on all sides of him was magnified a thousandfold.

Hundreds of tiny, invisible hands seemed to be tugging at him, jerking erratically at his limbs as he struggled to a sitting position and stared about him.

His vision was blurred. But he was scientist and husband, and the scientist struggled to observe, the husband feared for his wife, and the scientific and marital emotions coalesced.

His faculties adjusted themselves slowly to the incredible change. Eighty feet from where he was lying a white and filmy immensity usurped all space before him. The barrier extended in a straight line north and south and thrust itself glisteningly upward into the sky. A cyclopean barrier of vapor-film that gleamed in the aurora-light, blotting out the cabin and half the stars of heaven.

The barrier had an obscure and appalling beauty. To the east of Powell gleamed the familiar, tundralike waste, the tumbled barrows of snow and ice, the immense circular patches of black, denuded soil. But to the west the firmament-towering barrier had swallowed up the world!

With a despairing cry Powell rose and staggered toward that nebulously

shifting white veil, his puny hands upraised. The husband and lover were uppermost in him now, and like a man demented he hurled himself against the barrier, screaming his wife's name. "Louise! Louise!"

But the barrier was impenetrable, unassailable. It stopped him in his tracks and sent him hurtling backward. A mysterious force seemed to emanate from it; an aura like an electric field that lifted him from the ground and sent him spinning.

HE regained his feet again, and came surging back. Again the gleaming barrier repulsed him. Ice and snow crackled under his feet as he assailed the balefully glistening film with relentless, never-tiring fury. A dozen times he attempted to hurl himself against it, to break through it. It was horrible to find that he could touch nothing tangible.

For the resistance he encountered was invisible and magnetic; a vibrant current-flow that caused his flesh to tingle as it lifted him from the earth and propelled him backward. The barrier both attracted and repelled him. Within an eight-foot radius its magnetic qualities were in the ascendant, but when he surged very close to it it repulsed him with vigor.

After a time his energies waned. He sank down in a crumpled heap on the glazed snow. Violent sobs racked him. He was conscious of being utterly, abysmally alone, and in the presence of a mystery so awful that his mind recoiled from its implications. All about him utter stillness reigned. He was enwrapped in a dead silence where nothing moved.

CHAPTER II

White Terror

HE was alone and yet not alone. In equally dead silence the little coastal town of Shallow Bay dreamed away the black midnight hours, and in the minds of those who slumbered there, were vague, subconscious stirrings—premonitions of disaster. That

high and terrible wall disturbed their sleep, perhaps with the same intangible magnetism which had repulsed the meteorologist, Powell, at his outpost a day's trek away. But it was a magnetism diffused; spread out tenuously over the frozen land.

It was not until the following day that Shallow Bay awoke to the full horror of a world sundered from itself, enwrapped over half its length in a glistening, filmy shroud.

Shallow Bay was a little, fur-trading town with a white population numbering eighteen souls. The whites knew the impact of horror. But the two hundred Eskimos—having no radios—did not yet know that a great, white "mist-bird" had settled down on the land, dividing with its firmament-towering wings all the barren wastes.

The Eskimos ambled sleepily through the wide, unpaved streets, between shacks ill-constructed and barren within, tar-papered against the weather's chronic inclemency.

Only the radios were vocal in that little town, their static-distorted squealings merging with spoken words in swift, frightening sequences as the day wore on, the long hours lengthening into a twilight that chilled men's souls, so bleak it seemed, so presageful of evil.

There were two radios in that little town. One was in the cabin of an eighty-year-old veteran furtrader named MacKenzie John, and the other, mellow-toned, belonged to the Canadian Government.

But the Government meteorologist who operated the latter set was not enjoying its tonal perfections. The messages which were coming in to him over the ether were too grimly appalling.

Duncan MacHeth was a big man, as gaunt in face and figure as his subordinate, young James Powell. He was perhaps twice Powell's age. His hair was snow-white, his weather-bronzed face heavily seamed with crow's feet and long, linear wrinkles. He was clumsily clad in a heavy, black furskin coat which had been improperly cured and gave off a peculiar musty odor. He was sitting on the porch rail, swinging his long legs

nervously.

The radio was standing on the edge of the porch in reddening sunlight. From its built-in loud speaker came nothing but a succession of grimly staccato statements. No advertising cure-alls, no pauses for station announcements, no crooners, no swing music.

THE entire North American continent lies beyond the barrier. With the exception of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, the United States has been swallowed up!

"The third Maine plane has just returned to the Portland airport. Having followed the vanished Atlantic coast south to Cape Hatteras, the pilots report that the barrier extends unbrokenly from Maine to North Carolina and beyond. Since the Bahama plane followed the barrier north to Maryland, we know that the entire Atlantic coast and Cuba, have been swallowed up.

"We do not know whether the barrier is a mile thick, or ten miles thick, or continent spanning. We do not know how far it extends into the sky. The planes could discern it unmistakably at a height of three miles, but at higher altitudes clouds and mist obscured visibility. There is a dangerous ceiling all along the vanished Atlantic coast.

"We speak of 'following the coast' because we assume that the coast is still in existence, but concealed by the barrier. But we have no proof that the coast, the whole of America, in fact, continues to exist behind the barrier.

"We cannot penetrate the barrier. The first Maine plane flew directly toward it and was hurled to destruction. The pilot of the second plane veered off just in time. He reports that the first plane burst into flames before it went into a tailspin.

"We have desperately attempted to break through the barrier here in Maine. We have attacked it with all the weapons at our disposal. We have sent radio-controlled cars and tanks against it. We attempted to pierce it with a machine-gun barrage. We attacked it with gas and chemicals. We

even tried liquid air and high-voltage electrical bombardment.

"It is conceivable that the barrier may be a conductor of undreamed of electro-magnetic tensions arising from its contact with Earth's crust. We know that it is deeply grounded, that it extends far beneath the earth. We have excavated deeply in its vicinity, have employed mining drills, subterranean blasts—"

The voice broke off suddenly. There was a static screech that rasped the Government meteorologist's ears, made his throat ache. The voice resumed:

"We are receiving messages from three radio stations in South America. Venezuela reports that scarcely more than a thin coastal strip of the South American continent lies behind the barrier. But the Venezuelan report is only geographically correct. Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and two-thirds of Columbia have been swallowed up. The great Andes mountain chain, far western Brazil—"

There was another static screech. "Canada," resumed the voice. "Virtually all of Canada is gone. Only Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador remain. The station at Halifax reports—"

There was another nerve-shattering interruption. But this time it did not come from the radio's loud speaker. It came from behind the Government man, from a sun-reddened patch of snow and ice just beyond the shack, and it caused him to swing about on the long porch rail with blanching features and staring eyes.

DRAGGING himself across the snow, his face a ghastly, pain-racked mask, was a sobbing, gibbering man. He was flat on his stomach in the snow. His long arms were out-thrust and he was pulling his big body forward in slow, pitiful stages. He was digging with his huge, raw-boned hands into the snow blanket, seeking frozen roots to grasp and tug on.

MacHeth sprang swiftly over the rail and landed squarely on the snow, his heavy boots sending splinters of ice into the air. He fell to his knees beside the stricken man.

"Jim," he muttered. "Good Lord, Jimmy my lad, I thought you were ninety miles away. What happened, lad? What happened to you out there."

James Powell was incapable of speech. He tried to rise on his elbows, but fell back choking. His eyes were glazed and staring. No recognition in his eyes at all. MacHeth shuddered. Compassion shone in his gaze. He put his arm about Powell's shoulders, lifted him up.

The younger man groaned. A faint glint of awareness came into his pupils; then his face went blank again. His entire body sagged. But MacHeth knew what to do for a man half-frozen. Knew what to do for a poor, stricken lad with snow-maggots crawling through his brain.

Together they stumbled toward the shack, up the sloping porch where the radio was saying: "Europe is frantic. All the stations in Europe and North Africa are bombarding us with questions. They have not seen the barrier, but they have picked up our reports. Trans-oceanic planes have gone out from London, Paris and Leningrad. The old world will soon share our—"

Into the cabin they went unheeding. MacHeth's only concern now was to restore his young friend, pour warming drinks into him, get the stiff, frozen furs off and a bright, crackling fire close to his frost-numbered limbs.

Out on the porch the radio announced: "The barrier has encircled the world. Half Siberia, China are gone. The Indian Ocean—"

Warmth returned to Powell's body in painful, slow stages. MacHeth brought him safely past the danger line. MacHeth had stripped him to the buff and massaged him with snow until his eyes had ceased to stare filmily. Then—the fire, thick logs in a big, smelly stove, hot towels encircling him from ankle to throat, bandy in a glass that reflected the flickering radiance of a smoky oil lamp.

Powell watched little shifting lights dancing on the glass as MacHeth held it toward him. He stretched out hands that shook, cradled the glass in his palms, held it to his lips and drained it gratefully. He smiled

wanly. Warmth returned, creeping up his limbs.

Out on the porch the radio said: "Martial law has been declared in Maine and Vermont. The Governor of Maine and the Governor of Vermont are in conference at Portland. This is the New England Broadcasting Company, Station TVH, broadcasting on a 660 kilocycle wave length from Augusta, Maine."

JAMES POWELL was talking now. Words poured from his lips in a continuous stream. He was clutching the arms of his chair and talking, talking. His face, lighted fitfully by the smoky lamp, was pale and tormented.

"I tell you, MacHeth, it isn't just a local phenomenon. I followed it south for miles. God only knows how far that ghastly wall extends."

The older man said: "I know how far it extends, Jim my lad, but I'd rather take a flogging than tell you."

He was slowly pacing the floor, his big head lowered, his thumbs in his belt. His face was compassionate, grief-shadowed.

"Sure, I know what you're thinking, lad. I know why you've dragged yourself here through the snow and ice, hoping, praying, that the cold wouldn't kill you. You're thinking we can go back there with dynamite sticks and blast through to her."

He compressed his lips. "I haven't seen the barrier, Jim, but reports have been coming in over the radio. It extends far beyond the barren country."

Powell began to tremble.

"You mean, others have seen it?"

MacHeth nodded. "Thousands have seen it, lad. It encircles the globe from pole to pole. It's swallowed up America and the Pacific Ocean. A wave of hysteria is sweeping the world."

"It's swallowed up America! Then how—"

"Only a little strip remains, Jim. The northeastern coast of North America and Haiti and Porto Rico. We're completely cut off from the rest of the continent. The scientists on our little strip have been broadcasting at intervals, but no one knows what the bar-

rier is composed of.

"They've sent armored tanks against it, bombarded it with projectiles. It's more resistant than plated steel. It has hurled back energies potent enough to alter atomic structure. Apparently it's a sort of force field, but it's immune to high-voltage bombardment and cannot be electro-magnetic in nature."

His face twitched. "You're not alone in your grief, lad. I've lost my little girl in Winnipeg. It's conceivable she's alive and safe—merely cut off from us by a thin wall. But the barrier may be hundreds of miles in extent, a vast, all-engulfing mass stretching from coast to coast and swallowing up all the land between."

For an instant Powell sat as though stunned. His face was the color of clay; his eyes deep pools of agony. The older man had resumed his pacing. Back and forth, back and forth before the roaring stove, his shoulders bent and shapeless.

Slowly, unsteadily, Powell rose to his feet. "I know that Louise is alive, MacHeth," he said. "I haven't lost her. Oh, dear God, help me, give me strength."

Out on the porch the radio announced: "—widespread social disorganization. The disappearance of the United States threatens the economic stability of Europe."

CHAPTER III

Into the Stratosphere

THE Premier of France moved wearily over the arid New England soil, his face set in grim lines. Pierre Cambon was a young man of thirty-six. He looked twenty-five. Slim and boyish in build, he walked now without the resilience of youth, his thin-featured face turned toward the rising sun, his checkered mackintosh sloshing about his knees.

Before him stretched the level expanse of open countryside, black domed hills rising in the distance, a blue haze upon the world at dawn. Before him hundreds of tiny black fig-

ures were moving excitedly in a circle about a vast and intricate network of dangling ropes and cables.

The stratosphere balloon swayed a little in the faint breeze which was blowing down from the hills beyond. Towering for five hundred feet into the sky, its great, flabby body shone like frosted silver in the pale light of dawning.

About its spherical gondola the little, surging figures in black presently resolved themselves into the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the Italian Minister of Colonies, the King of the Belgians, the Premier of Poland, two admirals of the British Navy, a commander of the Italian Air Force, the Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the Premier of the Netherlands, the Crown Prince of Sweden, the Governors of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, newspaper men and women from all the capitals of Europe, writers, artists, photographers, military and civil representatives of the South American republics.

The Premier of France was a modest and unassuming young man. He did not take up his position with the dignitaries at the base of the gondola, but stood with lesser spectators in a roped-off quadrangle a hundred feet away, shading his eyes with his hand as he gazed up at the Gargantuan balloon.

On all sides of him other young men stood on tiptoe, camera cases strapped to their straining backs or pencils poised above opened notebooks. Reporters, photographers, young lads with no responsibilities that weighed upon them and robbed them of zest.

He tried to return across the years to his cast-off youth, to forget that he was responsible for the welfare and happiness of forty-two million human beings. He tried desperately to be one of those careless young men again. He rubbed shoulders with them, talked to them.

He told himself that even if half the world was lost, and all of Europe in travail, here was a moment worth living for. The spirit of man was about to soar again, perhaps on its last heroic journey.

High above the State of Maine, the *Corvus*—that was the balloon's name—would look down on a sundered world and its pilots would not be victimized by false hopes or vain illusions. Thirty miles above the surface of Earth, they would look down.

Beneath a jet black sky, in the wan light of the Sun's corona, beneath stars coldly glittering, in a swirl of deadly gases, they would look down. *And the world would know the truth at last.* It would know the truth of this thing which had swallowed up half the world, which had separated kith from kin, which had separated the meteorologist, James Powell, from his wife, Louise.

THE young man on Cambon's right was tremendously excited. He was a thin, pale young man with mouse-colored hair and the lonely look of genius. He had an open notebook in his hand and he was talking, talking.

"All they'll see is a white cloud blanket," he said. "A white cloud blanket spreading over the land."

Pierre Cambon turned and stared at him, a wry smile on his lips. "You're pretty skeptical about it, aren't you?" he said.

"Yes," replied the young man. "They won't see a thing. But the flight itself is—is tremendous. They're going to ascend twice as high as Captain Stevens, and the three Russians who dropped to their death from 72,000 feet in 1934. Can you imagine what it will be like up there!"

"I think I can," said the Premier of France cautiously. "It will be fairly warm, for one thing. The air will be as brilliant as the heart of a diamond, unobscured by dust particles or water vapor. They'll see the sun, the constellations and the northern lights simultaneously in different parts of the sky. Ultra-violet rays of the deadly 'black sheep' variety will burn their eyes out. And they'll perhaps explode, like those fish Mr. Beebe brought up from a quarter mile."

"You're forgetting the gondola and their protective suits," said the young man.

"Of course," said Cambon. "I'm speaking theoretically, suspending

them naked in the sky. But if the balloon rips and they have to use their parachutes the descent will not be pleasant."

Cambon's companion nodded grimly.

"The three Russians were disfigured beyond recognition," he said.

There was a curious, rippling interplay of light and shade on the cyclopean, helium-filled balloon, and the crowd close to it began to murmur excitedly.

"They're getting ready to take off," the young man said. "The first hundred feet will tell the story. One of Auguste Piccard's balloons burned up in Brussels before he could get it into the air. And his brother's big double-decker exploded in Iowa a short distance from the ground."

There was a sudden shout from the crowd. Whistles blew, a siren sounded and a woman screamed hysterically.

Cambon smiled, lapsed into American slang. "That girl can't take it," he said.

The big balloon began to rise. Slowly, steadily, it soared above the wildly pressing, shouting, gesticulating circle of frenzied onlookers, slipping its moorings so smoothly and unobtrusively that it was outlined against the hills in ascending splendor before Cambon could accustom his gaze to the blinding glare of sun-drenched rubber and silk.

The young man beside him was scribbling feverishly. On his left another young man was confiding to a girl with blond, bobbed hair and intense, too-earnest eyes the secret of the ascending balloon's lifting power.

"It's the largest bag ever constructed," he was saying. It has an area of nearly four acres and when it's fully inflated it will hold five million cubic feet of helium gas. The gas will be heated by electric batteries inside the gondola."

THE *Corvus* was rising swiftly now. Its immense gondola caught and reflected the sunlight in luminous bands. Behind the silver bag the morning sky was flecked with fleecy wisps of clouds stained yellow, blue and red by the shimmering radiance of the

solar disc. The hills far below were a glory of pale saffron. From their domed summits a thin white mist was ascending in spirals toward the rapidly mounting gondola.

The young man on Cambon's right said: "The dawn never came up like that before. It isn't a New England dawn at all."

Cambon did not reply. He was gazing intently skyward, shading his eyes with his hand. All about him other absorbed spectators, silent for the most part, were watching the great balloon ascend into the clouds. The spectacle was breathtaking in its loveliness.

For several hundred feet the balloon ascended steadily, unwaveringly, with the mechanical precision of a helicopter. Then, suddenly, it veered a little, responding to converging winds in the wake of the scurrying clouds. It swayed to and fro and spun about like a top.

For fifteen minutes Cambon stood without movement, pressed close to the ropes of the press quadrangle, unmindful of the strain on his pupils.

A mile above the earth the great ship veered again, dipping in a slow curve and then passing slowly westward until it was lost to view in the scoured and glistening bowl of the sky.

Cambon's companion snapped his notebook shut.

"Boy, I never thought they'd make it. Getting a bag that size into the air is no tyro's job. Did you notice how smoothly they rose?"

Cambon nodded. In American slang he affirmed, a trifle ineptly. "It sure was a sweet takeoff."

The young man looked at him, smiled. "You're a Frenchman, aren't you?"

The Premier of France nodded.

The young man extended his hand. "Name's Greason," he said. "I'm a special correspondent for the *Bangor Post-Dispatch*. We've a long wait ahead of us, so we may as well be sociable."

Cambon said: "A good idea. You can call me Pierre. They tell me they've put in a lunch counter in the

barracks where we're supposed to wait. How about stacking up on some eggs and coffee."

"Swell," said Greason. "Let's beat these babies to it if we can."

The barracks consisted of two immense, bleakly forbidding buildings on the rim of the flying field, eighty feet from the roped-in quadrangle. A break in the repertorial ranks had already occurred, men and girls hurrying over the barren ground toward food, warmth and shelter.

The lunch counter completely encircled the spacious assembly hall of the Maine National Guard, Third Regiment Armory, which had been temporarily converted into a waiting room for representatives of the press. The revolving enameled chairs were already filling when Greason and the Premier of France seated themselves before an electric waffle stove and a pretty blonde waitress with a rose in her hair.

They ordered fried eggs with bacon and black coffee.

"It's funny about that Canadian joining the party, isn't it?" Greason said. "What was his name—Powers, Powys—"

"**P**OWELL," said Cambon. "Apparently a very intense young man. He pleaded with them to take him along. He said he had nothing to live for."

"I seem to remember reading about it in the *Dispatch*," said Greason. "He was out in the north country when the barrier arose. He was living in a pinewood shack right in the path of the barrier. He was within thirty or forty feet of the cabin and his wife was running out to greet him when the barrier arose, and swallowed her up."

"Poor lad," said the Premier of France.

"Yeah, it was tough. I don't wonder he went half crazy."

Warmed by the coffee, and solaced by after-breakfast pipes, they withdrew from the counter and sank into wicker easy chairs in the center of the assembly hall. Time did not drag as they sat there talking. The morning passed so quickly that they were surprised and a little incredulous when

the pretty waitress changed the menu above the lunch counter and the vacant stools began to fill again.

The two men pushed their chairs back and started across the assembly hall. They were halfway to the door when the wail of sirens brought them up short.

Greason turned to his companion.

"News," he said. "They've either landed safely or—"

He let the sentence trail off, his face suddenly grim. There was a scraping of chairs behind them, an excited murmur as the siren wails grew in volume. The newspapermen and women raced for the door. Greason and Cambon sprinted to avoid being bowled over.

The press quadrangle was soon crowded to capacity. The loud speaker which had been set up boomed, and a hush fell over the gathering.

"Attention everyone. Attention everyone. The *Corvus* has alighted in Nova Scotia, eight miles north of Halifax. Captain Daly and Lieutenant Williamson ascended twenty-nine miles and drifted westward above the barrier."

A long-drawn murmur rose from the crowd. The loud speaker resumed: "Daly and Williamson have just arrived in Halifax. Although neither pilot has sustained serious injuries, Williamson is in a state of exhaustion bordering on collapse."

There was a brief pause for station identification. "This broadcast is coming to you from Government Station HY3, Cape Sable, Nova Scotia."

But the question everyone was asking was: "The mystery of the barrier—have they fathomed it at last?"

As though in reply to this question the loud speaker said:

"Captain Daly reports discoveries of a most startling nature. As the recording instruments have not as yet been checked over, allowances must be made for minor inaccuracies in the transcriptions which we have been authorized to read to you."

Another voice took over: "Government Station HY3, Cape Sable, Nova Scotia. Attention everyone. Reading from Captain Daly's notes. Reading from Daly's notes."

CHAPTER IV

Wonder Incredible

IT was an experience never to be forgotten. Captain Daly's notes read as follows:

6 A.M.—We are getting ready to take off. We are prepared for every imaginable contingency. We have checked all instruments; and the parachutes are in perfect order. Williamson is at the controls; James Powell is pacing the gondola. I am extremely nervous myself; jittery.

6:15 A.M.—We are off! The gondola is five hundred feet from the ground and rising rapidly. We had no difficulty at all in ascending. We did not drift over the ground before the gas started expanding. Our electrical heating mechanisms are miracles of efficiency. We rose straight up, and are still rising.

6:30 A.M.—We are rising nine hundred feet a minute. There are no clouds directly beneath us and the air outside is clear, the visibility splendid. We are now sixteen thousand feet above sea level and beginning to drift westward. Just before we reached this level we passed through a miniature whirlwind in the lower atmosphere. The converging currents spun us about until the air-chimneys rattled.

6:45 A.M.—30,000 feet above sea level and drifting rapidly in a westerly direction. Most of the land beneath us is obscured by cirrus clouds. The sky is turning from marine to dark blue. No violet tinge yet visible. We are approaching the lower limit of the Tropopause. Berson ascended to about this height in 1901. Berson, stratosphere pioneer, we salute you across the twin gulfs of time and space.

7 A.M.—43,000 feet. We have passed the lower boundary of the stratosphere. The sky is dark purple; all clouds have vanished. Our westward drift still continues.

7:15 A.M.—We are now ten miles above the surface of the earth. Piccard, Zille and Cosyns, we salute you.

We have rivaled your marks; we are soaring higher. We cannot be far from the barrier. The sky is now dark mauve-violet deepening into gray. Beneath us the land is beginning to curl up on its outer edges like the rind of a sun-dried fruit. Horizons are almost imperceptibly rising toward us; the earth directly below sinking into a hollow flecked with red splotches like spilled blood. A curious optical illusion.

We can see the sun's corona now. The sun is a dull red ball in the eastern sky. The stars are obscurely visible; faint ghost-specks in the firmament.

7:30 A.M.—Twelve miles above Earth. The temperature is rising slowly. Outside the cabin it is forty degrees centigrade below freezing. The dial thermometer inside the cabin registers seven degrees. We have confirmed Captain Steven's observations regarding cosmic rays. At this altitude we are experiencing a terrific bombardment of both cosmic and ultra-violet radiation. The cosmic rays are fifty to seventy times stronger than on Earth. Heaven knows what would happen to us if we were suspended unclothed outside the gondola. Perhaps we should shrivel to cinders.

8 A.M.—We are tremendously excited, exhilarated inside our suits. We feel buoyant, light-headed. I cannot account for it. The oxygen supply is stable and constant.

PERHAPS the radiations are affecting us. Or perhaps we are close to the barrier and responding to its mysterious emanations. According to Williamson's calculations, we are only a few miles from the barrier. But we cannot see it. All the west is veiled in a peculiar, mistlike haze. Meteor-dust, perhaps.

8:15 A.M.—Of course we do not know that the barrier extends as high as this. The sounding balloon which the Maine government sent up last week seemingly contacted it at fourteen miles, but we must allow for a wide margin of error. Cosmic rays may have affected the recording instruments. So far we have not

glimpsed the barrier.

We are now 72,500 feet. Stevens, we salute you. We have surpassed your glorious achievement and soar into the unknown. The sky is now definitely black. The sun is a halo-encircled disc of red flame smoldering in an ebon immensity and all the stars of heaven are beckoning us on. Immense and far-flung constellations, island universes without number, receding to the rim of space.

I could wish for a less Earthbound vehicle. The great bag above us is paltry beneath the stars. I could wish for a smooth, cylindrical shape with an explosion chamber at its base. Then there would be no limits to our penetration of the unknown.

9 A.M.—We have sighted the barrier! The thin haze to the west has dissolved completely and the barrier is distinctly visible in the distance. We are drifting straight toward it. A smooth, white, glistening wall, it towers above us, cutting off the sky to the west and obscurely reflecting the glimmering constellations. We cannot see above it.

9:30 A.M.—We are now within three or four miles of the barrier and twenty-three miles above Earth's surface. Man has never before ascended so far into the sky. The temperature is still rising. It is now only a few degrees below freezing. We have tested the air through the atmosphere chimneys and have discovered that it contains decidedly poisonous ingredients. Methane gas in sufficient quantities to kill a legion of rats. I wish we had taken up some *Drosophila* flies for testing purposes. At this level the cosmic radiation is terrific. I'm convinced it would alter chromosomes beyond recognition; produce fruit-fly monsters of utterly fantastic pattern.

10 A.M.—We have reached the summit of the barrier. We can see above it. It does not extend indefinitely into the sky. We are now twenty-six miles above Earth and within less than a mile of the great wall, drifting straight toward it, but slowly.

10:15 A.M.—We are passing above the barrier. We are passing completely over it. We have attained an altitude of twenty-eight miles and have ceased

to ascend. Beneath us there is a glistening white opacity extending in all directions. The Earth below is completely invisible. We are drifting slowly westward above the barrier.

10:30 A.M.—We have made a terrifying discovery. No words can do justice to a mystery so unfathomable, so appalling. I scarcely know how to record what we have seen. My companions are too stunned and confused to speculate about it at all. They are waiting for me to break the strange reticence that has risen between us. They are almost pathetically confused and terrified. I am writing swiftly in silence. I seem to be remote from my body. My hand is trembling unaccountably.

HALF the world has vanished! The Earth beneath us has disappeared. Directly beneath us stars are shining in the black depths of the sky. Beyond the barrier there is —*nothing*.

It is difficult to adjust oneself to a thought so staggering. *The barrier has cut the world in two!* All that remains is a half-globe spinning through the sky. Incredible, unthinkable—

We are drifting over the vanished hemisphere as though Earth were still a sphere. The vast, glowing space gulf beneath us is exerting a balanced gravitational pull.

Where has the missing half gone? The Earth should be in fragments, should be receding toward the outer planets or rushing in erratic orbits about the sun. If there is no turning mass beneath us, why were we not sucked into a vortex by the Earth's receding bulk?

In utter defiance of every physical law, the Earth is still revolving on its axis and following its age-old course about the Sun. A half-globe revolving in the sky, maintaining the equilibrium of a sphere. The mind shrinks back appalled before a mystery so terrifying.

11 A.M.—A ghastly tragedy has occurred. James Powell has leaped to his death. I was writing rapidly when he arose from beside the massive, lead-ensheathed ionization chamber opposite the sky-escape port and crossed

to where I was standing. He seized my pad and pencil and scrawled a few lines hastily. Then he handed the pad back and pulled me about until I was facing him. He stared at me steadily, feverishly for a moment. His lips moved. Behind the quartz window of his helmet his face was tormented, convulsed.

Poor, poor devil. He was trying to say good-bye. The terrible, burning intensity of his gaze should have warned me. But it all happened so swiftly I was caught off guard.

He leapt boldly into space. Beyond the open port we saw his encumbered body plummet downward into the abyss.

His parachute unfolded thousands of feet beneath us. We watched it blossom and dwindle until it became a tiny white speck receding into the vast, black bowl of the sky.

When I closed the sky-escape port I was shaking like a leaf. Williamson had to steady me. I sat down and read Powell's hastily scrawled, last message.

It said: "Good-bye, Harry, Fred. All my world is gone. All my life has disappeared like the stars at dawn. I have lost the woman I love, and the world which awaits your return is not my home at all. Perhaps I shall meet her again in some eternal world, beyond, space, beyond time. I am going to meet Death now. He will unlock all gates. If there is a key, he will place it in my hands. If there is no key, no gate even—well, I am grateful for what life gave. I stood once in the sunlight and spoke her name."

11:15 A.M.—We have reversed our course and are drifting back across the barrier. We are returning to the half-Earth spurned by poor Powell. The mystery, the horror seem remote now, like emotions experienced in another life, long ago. We have passed beyond feeling. I write mechanically, desiring simply to complete this record. In a moment we shall be descending through familiar skies. A sea of mist is rising like a tide to the east of us.

* * * * *

THE loud speaker fell suddenly silent. From the vast assemblage

on the flying field there arose murmurs of wonder, incredulity, horror and awe. Men and women formed suddenly into little agitated groups, like crystals volatilizing in a test-tube. Little groups that gesticulated and jumped erratically about, forming grotesque patterns far out on the field.

Greason and Cambon remained isolated. From the long range of distant hills a mist was creeping down into the valley, swirling over the level expanse before them on the edge of the press quadrangle.

"My people," Cambon murmured. "My people—where are they . . ."

Greason glanced up at the smoky disc of the sun, high in the noonday cloudsky. "Our little race will carry on," he muttered.

Cambon was envisaging fifty million Frenchmen revolving on a half-globe in the wide wastes of the firmament.

He said: "There is no courage like the courage of my countrymen. Long live France!"

CHAPTER V

Strange Awakening

JAMES POWELL'S parachute billowed cloudlike against the black, star-studded sky. The man beneath turned slowly, his stratosphere suit bathed in the wild, free light of the abyss; his gleaming helmet shimmering with micro-rays from Orion, the great warrior constellation.

Far above him and rapidly receding was the Gargantuan balloon which had carried him beyond the world. All about him stretched the boundaries of night and a vastness that surged rampant, a star-glow stupendous. Only one little portion of the sky was opaque, as though some cosmic giant had shut a door in the outer corridors of space.

The Earth perhaps. The half-Earth, blocking out a few of the stars; the half-Earth, spinning to its doom. To James Powell, suspended in space above a world that had vanished it did not greatly matter.

He cursed man's inventiveness. A

parachute that opened automatically was no boon to a man bent on death. To float slowly through space when all the senses cried out for annihilation, for an end to despair and grief, was torment.

Powell's face was haggard and twitching inside the helmet of his protective suit. He wanted only one fulfillment now; to become one with the Universe; a part of its mysterious chemistry, a part of its inner life. One with Auriga and the Pleiades, one with Cassiopeia, Cetus, Gemini, one with the fire mists and the spiral nebulae.

And dreaming thus, hoping thus, tormented, in agony, a flyspeck of living matter suspended helplessly in the black night of space, he passed from consciousness and dreaming into a merciful oblivion that blotted out the stars. . . .

* * * * *

LIGHT caressed James Powell's eyelids gently, causing him no pain, bringing solace to his awakening mind, dispelling the terrible, deep darkness. Light that glowed and burned through the thin skin of his eyelids until they flickered back and he saw the clear blue of the sky and the radiant stranger bending above him.

"Hello," she said. "Jam Powan, hello."

Dazed, incredulous, he raised himself on his elbow and stared about him.

Standing in a circle about him were seven men and five women. Tall, lithe-limbed, wondrously radiant, they stood silently watching him, their flowing, tuniclike garments shimmering opalescently in the warm, bright sunlight.

"You have returned to Earth, Jam Powan," said the girl at his side. "after twenty thousand years."

Powell stared at her mutely, his mind unable to adjust itself to sunlight after darkness, the wonder and strangeness of the firm earth under him, and a woman by his side.

"Jam Powan, we knew you would return," she said. "The legends did not lie. Thousands of years ago you passed into the lost hemisphere. You passed into it deliberately, fearlessly,

because love is stronger than death."

A tall, fair-haired youth detached himself from the watching circle, fell to his knees beside the girl.

"I will talk to him," he said. "Let me talk to him, Melcha."

"Yes, Sanjii." The girl nodded and began to stroke Powell's forehead gently with her palm.

The young man said: "Melcha and I speak the old Earth language, English. For many years we have studied the old language, mastering even its idiom. We are—yes, research scholars."

Melcha smiled. "Sanjii is pedantic," she said. "He does not know the full, singing sweetness of the old language. But his idiom is more exact than mine."

"Yes," corroborated Sanjii. "And there is so much that needs explaining. You will live now in a strange, new world. Your mind will have to adjust itself—oh, with such terrible swiftness. The shock will be like a birth-pang. So with clear, strong words I will ease the pain a little."

He paused an instant, nodding, regarding Powell compassionately. Then he said:

"Twenty thousand years ago half the world passed into a little traveling involucre or kink in the outer rind of our eight-dimensional space.

"The scientists of your age did not know that space was eight-dimensional. Your astrophysicists, Einstein, Eddington, De Sitter, envisaged the Universe as a great, bubblelike system constantly expanding and doomed to eventual extinction. They did not know that the Universe was neither expanding nor contracting, but simply renewing itself in multi-dimensional layers.

"Something like a snake shedding its skin, writhing out from the crinkled, aging envelop, and leaving a cast off slough to disintegrate into heat-death. For millions of years our Universe has been shedding its skin, Stupendously across space in convulsive patterns. The scientists of your age were bewildered by this crinkling of space. Your Einstein, in a moment of intuitive genius, glimpsed a little of the truth.

BUT even your Einstein did not know that space is constantly renewing itself. The multi-dimensional conflux of space-time continuums which the science of our age has accepted as a true picture of reality would be incomprehensible to a man of the twentieth century.

"Even your Einstein did not know that in certain regions of the vast, outer space-rind which is the universe of stars the skin is sloughing convulsively, folding space in upon itself, concealing in limbo the outermost galaxies. The dark nebula which the mariners of your age called the 'Coal Sack' is such a region—the tear or break is complete there.

"Have you ever watched a snake shed its skin? The integument sloughs unevenly. Little ripples run along the entire snake; little surface tremblings on the still intact skin. Half of Earth was caught up in a little, premonitory shiver far from the region of convulsive sloughing. A tiny, tremulous surface-kink which went back on the 'snake' again.

"We knew that it would go back. The scientists of our age do not grope feebly in darkness or think in terms of empty abstractions. To us the Universe is an open book and we have added to our powers until we can read without stammering. Lately we have known that the kink would smooth out again. We have known that our age would see the re-emergence of the lost hemisphere.

"For twenty thousand years half of Earth has existed in a kind of spatial vacuum. For twenty thousand years millions of Earth's inhabitants have existed in a static void, ceasing to age, ceasing to change at all. Like beetles in amber or bodies frozen in a glacier. All change, all movement, all animal consciousness were arrested on the vanished half-globe."

Sanjii stopped and the girl took up the story. "The half-globe has just emerged from the spatial kink, Jam Powan. All over Earth the men and women of our world are helping the confused, bewildered, terrified inhabitants of the lost hemisphere to adjust themselves to the change."

Sanjii frowned slightly.

"Please do not interrupt, Melcha," he said. "Twenty thousand years ago a barrier arose between the hemispheres. Half the world vanished into the kink, leaving a thin region of super-gravitation where the fundamental particles of matter, protons, were in turbulent flux. That region was the barrier of your age, the barrier which you crossed high in the sky. The barrier was the point of suture; the dividing line between the world that remained, and the vanished hemisphere.

"The world that remained maintained its integrity as a sphere and continued on its accustomed orbit about the Sun. It is difficult to explain to a man of the twentieth century how that was possible. The actual properties of eight-dimensional space would be incomprehensible to you.

SUPPOSE I put it this way. When space crinkles, the matter which it contains maintains its integrity in certain directions, continues to exist as a ghostly shell of force within a zone of four-dimensional curvature—the old Einsteinian curvature. The vanished hemisphere did not shed its mass entirely. It remained a 'ghost hemisphere' balancing the half-globe that survived outside the kink, maintaining Earth's integrity as a sphere. Of course my explanation is inexact, but when you have mastered the science of our age you will comprehend it clearly."

He paused once more. James Powell's brow was wet. The circle of radiant men and women drew closer about him and watched him with compassionate, benevolent interest.

The girl said: "Sanjii speaks stiffly. Oh, how I long to greet you as a woman would who loves. I love you, Jam Powan. All the women of our world love you."

Sanjii smiled. "You have become a symbol of Earth's heroic youth," he said. "We have awaited your return with eagerness."

Powell spoke. His tongue seemed thick and unwieldy; he pronounced words with difficulty.

"Is what you're trying to tell me,"

he said slowly, "that I passed above that barrier *twenty thousand years ago?*"

Sanjii nodded. "Yes. High above Earth you leaped fearlessly into space from the stratosphere balloon *Corvus*. You thought you were leaping to your death. All about you stretched il-limitable space. You did not know that you were descending into the vanished hemisphere. Above the barrier the space-kink was unprotected

barrier and descended to Earth above the triangular sealand which was then called Nova Scotia. Even now their names, Dalan, Wallansun, have a curious horror for us."

Sanjii's scowl deepened. "Be quiet, Melcha. You are not doing Jam Powan too much good with that kind of talk. When your companions returned, Jam Powan they were exhausted and terrified. They brought back a message of despair to a despair-

by the fiercely raging proton screen. It sucked you in."

The girl said: "You lost memory and desire for twenty thousand years."

"You ceased to age or change thirty miles above the surface of the vanished Half-Earth," elaborated Sanjii. "As soon as you passed into the kink you ceased to dream or remember. Time stood still."

Melcha said: "Your companions in that valiant flight returned across the

ing world, and that is why their names chill and depress us. When we are fearful or dismayed we say: 'Dalan-wallan.' But your name—your name, Jam Powan, is a synonym for dauntless courage and a love that was stronger than death."

"We know *why* you leaped boldly into space, Jam Powan," said Melcha. "Your name has become a legend and a glory. Down across the ages all women in love have adored you."

“WE were confident you would return,” said Melcha. “We knew that you were suspended in the kink, high in the sky above the old land of New Yorak. When the kink began to smooth out, we drew near to this point. I and my companions welcome you, Jam Powan, man of the twentieth century. We welcome you and all your people, all the poor, bewildered, pitiful lost ones who have returned to life and the process of growing old.

Melcha suddenly flung her arms about Powell’s shoulders, laid her head upon his breast and murmured. “I love you, Jam Powan.”

Light from the great sun tinted her fair skin, her milk-white shoulders. Her long, unbound hair was the color of honey. Sanjii scowled, grasped her arm and drew her from the bewildered man on the ground.

“Melcha, you must not. In the twentieth century men and women were not so candid and fearless.”

Powell brushed his eyes with the back of his hand. He was still confused and a little terrified. He said tremulously: “I think I understand. You are in love with love.”

Melcha nodded delightedly. “To all women all men are lovely,” she said. “And to all men, all women. We do not think it shameful to be in love with love.”

A faint, half-bewildered smile hovered for an instant on Powell’s white lips. “But—it is difficult to explain—there is no room for another in my heart.”

“We know that, Jam Powan,” said Melcha. “We have brought her to you. Look!”

She stood up, raised her arm and pointed. The men and women about Powell had stepped to one side, leaving his vision unimpeded. Before him stretched a level expanse of open countryside. Less than a hundred feet away and a little to the left of where he was reclining, an immense, silvery cone was slowly revolving in the sunlight.

Melcha said: “Look, Jam Powan. That is the ionosphere rocket, Draco. Fifteen minutes ago it ascended into the ionosphere from the old land of Newfoundland.”

Even as she spoke a crescent of blackness bisected the tapering summit of the cone. Slowly it wavered and widened, dividing the periphery of the rocket into two glowing segments. From nebulously weaving darkness three forms emerged. They seemed to float through the air as they descended to the base of the still revolving cone. Powell began suddenly to tremble. He rose to his knees, his heart leaping wildly, his eyes widening in incredulous wonder.

Two tall and radiant figures were advancing toward him over the level ground. Lithe-limbed, fair of countenance, their flowing tunics caressed by the light breeze, they moved with the buoyancy and grace of gods unaging in the morning of the world.

BETWEEN them walked a slender young girl. She was wearing a coonskin coat and high leather boots and her copper-colored hair was blowing in the wind.

Powell got unsteadily to his feet. Gone now was his bewilderment and despair; all the confusion of his strange awakening. In a single heartbeat of time he was restored, made whole again.

The advancing girl paused suddenly. She trembled and cried out—and cried out again, her voice inarticulate with wonder. For a long, startled moment she stood staring at him, her eyes shining, her breath coming fast. Then she swayed a little and spoke his name, raising her arms eagerly toward him.

This time no barrier came between them.

Quicker than thought he was at her side. He caught her to him and kissed her hair and lips and eyes, unmindful of any audience.

“My darling Louise,” he murmured, cradling her face with his palms, straining her to him until he could feel the beating of her heart. Sobbing, murmuring endearments, she clung to him, drawing him repeatedly to the sweetness of her lips until the sunlight seemed to brighten about them and the fire of their love soared and blazed like flames in a parched wilderness.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

TODAY'S headlines serve as the most potential source of inspiration for the science fiction writers of tomorrow! And we can prove it.

For example, it was the glamour associated with "Bring 'Em Back Alive" Frank Buck that inspired the Gerry Carlyle series by Arthur K. Barnes. Mr. Barnes thought it would be intriguing to write about the various strange forms of life existing on distant planets. And he was right—Gerry Carlyle, the female huntress who roams the nine worlds collecting alien creatures for the London Interplanetary Zoo, proved a big hit with our readers.

A few months later Henry Kuttner decided to chronicle the exciting experiences of the movie-makers of tomorrow. Thus the Hollywood-on-the-Moon series was born.

You've probably followed the rollicking exploits of the Judge Hardy family in the films. Wait a few issues and one of our popular authors will introduce you to the Abbott family of the future. You'll be fascinated by the story of one man's family and the experiences encountered in a novel spaceship-trailer. Watch for the first of this series in an early issue.

And so it goes. Science fiction writers have but to saturate themselves with the world around us and they will be able to write of imaginary worlds.

THE EIGHTH DIMENSION

EVER since H. G. Wells introduced the "fourth dimension" to literature, scores of pseudo-scientific yarns have been written around that theme, utilizing the concept with variations. A few writers went further, embellished their stories with trimmings culled from the observations on Einstein's theories on this subject. But who would ever dream writing about—the eighth dimension?

The answer is, Frank Belknap Long, Jr. And in his novelet, **WHITE BARRIER**, he does that simple little trick. Maybe some day he can come back and tell us about the fifth, sixth, and seventh dimensions. We're still curious. At any rate, here's the author's lowdown on the story behind **WHITE BARRIER**:

White Barrier began with a vision. I was gazing at a globe of the world on my desk when my imagination took a fantastic liberty which startled me. The writing urge has to be set in motion, and when the animating spark is a vivid vision the results are usually more satisfying than when it's just a plot with an interplanetary setting.

I saw the terrestrial globe revolving behind my typewriter in a completely bisected state, one of its hemispheres enveloped in a tenuous haze, the other still intact. Then the haze-enveloped hemisphere dwindled and vanished altogether.

I got to wondering what would happen if the world should divide like that. I saw a half-globe spinning in the sky, still revolving about the sun and maintaining its integrity as a sphere.

Instantly amazing conjectures and possibilities leapt into my mind. What would happen to all the people on the surviving hemisphere, how would they react to a loss of half the world?

It would mean a tremendous shakeup, both physical and psychical. I envisaged nations adopting emergency measures of the most startling significance, individuals driven half-insane by the loss of relatives and friends, the mind of the human race exposed to a terror so appalling that there would be an upheaval surpassing the seething turmoil in a suddenly overturned nest of termites.

The story then unrolled before me, with the characters assuming traits which surprised me. Writers seldom know precisely in advance how their characters will behave

(Continued on page 126)

(Continued from page 125)
when circumstances harass them, and in this story the circumstances were distinctly cataclysmic.

Perhaps it's a bit immodest for an author to praise his own brain children, but they met an unprecedented challenge with such quiet heroism and withal so audaciously that I feel I may be forgiven for saying that I am proud to have created them.