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ZENITH emanates from 41 Longford Place, Victoria Park, Manchester 14, England, being a production of those brilliant intellectuals Harry Turner & Marion Eadie. Fiction, verse, and controversial material on any topic likely to interest fans, are welcome. The next issue should appear during April and if a "Z" appears alongside, don't forget to renew your sub, buddy; or else! As we warned you, the price is now 6d. per copy - any complaints?

THE AWAKENING

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BY

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

The Master wondered whether he would dream. That was the only thing he feared, for in a sleep that lasts no more than a night dreams may come that can shatter the mind - and he was to sleep for a hundred years.

He remembered the day, still only a few months ago, when a frightened doctor had said, "Sir, your heart is failing. You have less than a year to live". He was not afraid of death, but the thought that it had come upon him in the full flower of his intellect, while his work was still half finished, filled him with a baffled fury. "And there is nothing you can do?" he asked. "No, Sir, we have been working on artificial hearts for a hundred years. In another century, perhaps, it might be done". "Very well", he had replied coldly. "I shall wait another century. You will build me a place where my body will not be disturbed, and then you will put me to sleep by freezing or any other means. That, at least, I know you can do".

He had watched the building of the tomb, in a secret place above the snow-line of Everest. Only the chosen few must know where the Master was to sleep, for there were many millions in the world who would have sought out his body to destroy it. The secret would be preserved down the generations, until the day when man's science had conquered the diseases of the heart. Then the Master would be awakened from his sleep.

He was still conscious when they laid him on the couch in the central chamber, though the drugs had already dimmed his senses. He heard them close the steel doors against their rubber gaskets, and even fancied he could hear the hiss of the pumps which would withdraw the air from around him, and replace it with sterile nitrogen. Then he slept, and in a little while the world forgot the Master.

He slept the hundred years, though rather before that time the discovery he had been awaiting was made. But no-one awakened him, for the world had changed since his going and now there were none who would have wished to see him return. His followers had died and, mysteriously, the secret of his resting place was lost. For a time the legend of the Master's tomb persisted, but soon it was forgotten. So he slept.

After what by some standards would have been a little while, the earth's crust decided that it had borne the weight of the Himalayas for long enough. Slowly the mountains dropped, tilting the southern plains of India towards the sky. And presently the plat-

sea of Ceylon was the highest point on the surface of the globe, and the ocean above Everest was five and a half miles deep. The Master would not be disturbed by his enemies, or his friends.

Slowly, patiently, the silt drifted down through the towering ocean heights on to the wreck of the Himalayas. The blanket that would someday be chalk began to thicken at the rate of not more than a few inches every century. If one had returned some time later, one might have found that the sea bed was no longer five miles down, or even four, or three.

Then the land tilted again, and a mighty range of limestone mountains towered where once had been the oceans of Tibet. But the Master knew nothing of this, nor was his sleep disturbed when it happened again ... and again ... and again ...

Now the rain and rivers were washing away the chalk and carrying it out to the new oceans, and the surface was moving down towards the buried tomb. Slowly the miles of rock were washed away, until at last the metal sphere which housed the Master's body returned once more to the light of day - though to a day much longer, and much dimmer, than it had been when the Master closed his eyes. And presently the scientists found him, on a pedestal of rock jutting high above an eroded plain. Because they did not know the secret of the tomb, it took them, for all their wisdom, thirty years to reach the chamber where he slept.

The Master's mind awoke before his body. As he lay powerless, unable even to lift his leaden eyelids, memory came flooding back. The hundred years were safely behind him - his desperate gamble had succeeded! He felt a strange elation, and a longing to see the new world that must have arisen while he lay within his tomb.

One by one, his senses returned. He could feel the hard surface on which he was lying: now a gentle current of air drifted across his brow. Presently he was aware of sounds - faint clickings and scratchings all around him. For a moment he was puzzled; then he realised that the surgeons must be putting their instruments away. He had not yet the strength to open his eyes, so he lay and waited, wondering.

Would men have changed much? Would his name still be remembered among them? Perhaps it would be better if it were not - though he had feared the hatred of neither men nor nations. He had never known their love. Momentarily he wondered if any of his friends might have followed him, but he knew there would be none. When he opened his eyes, all the faces before him would be strange. Yet he longed to see them, to read the expressions they would hold as he awakened from his sleep.

Strength returned. He opened his eyes. The light was gentle, and he was not dazzled, but for a while everything was blurred and

misty. He could distinguish figures standing round, but though they seemed strange he could not see them clearly.

Then the Master's eyes came into focus, and as they brought their message to his mind he screamed once, feebly, and died forever. For in the last moment of his life, as he saw what stood around him, he knew that the long war between Man and Insect was ended - and that Man was not the victor.
