



BROTHER

by NELSON S. BOND

*Who was this mysterious brown-garbed figure
who popped up in the middle of war-torn France
and spoke so wisely and terribly of her fate?*

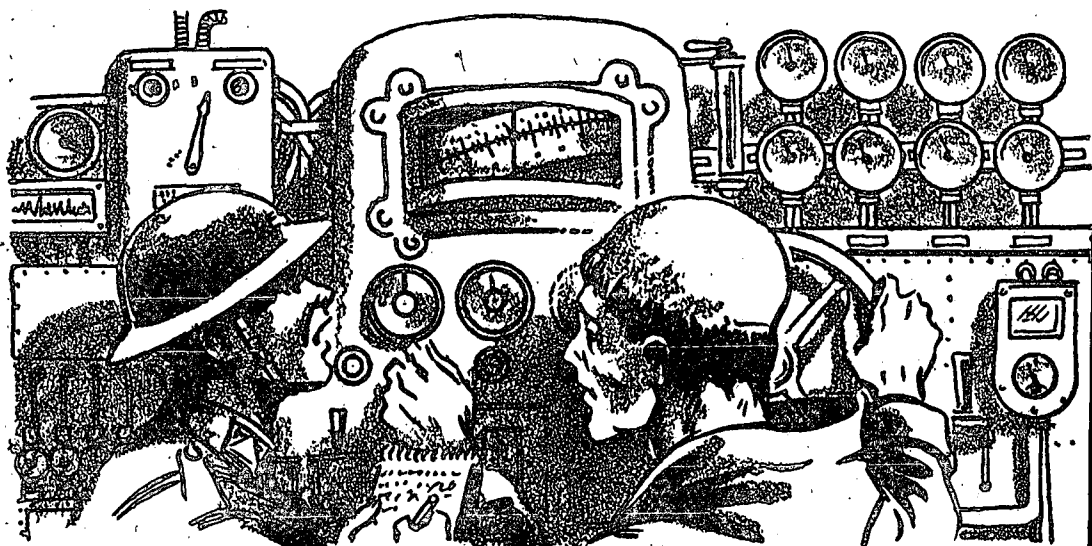
THE real Press Club in Manhattan is not behind that sober brownstone front and shining brass plate you pass on 42nd Street. That's just a front maintained by the boys to impress the general public and visiting firemen with their respectability. The *real* Press Club is up one block and two to the right and down a short flight of steps to a green-curtained spa which calls itself simply, *Al's Place*.

That's where the gentlemen of the working press congregate. Don't make the mistake of going there hoping to make the acquaintance of some wordslinger whose byline is familiar to you.

You won't be welcomed. If you're not escorted by one of the boys in the know, a roar of disapproval will greet your entrance. And even if you're thick-skinned enough to ignore that concerted "Get out!", you'll discover when you place your order at the bar that Al is fresh out of whatever brand of alcoholic refreshment you call for.

Al's Place is strictly for shareholders in the Fourth Estate. No laymen, sob-sisters, long-hairs, or persons who call themselves "journalists" are solicited. Al is loyal to the newspaper men. He maintains for them a strictly private establishment; the true, unofficial Press

"No," said Brother Michel, "what you see on the screen hasn't happened—yet!"



MICHEL ★



Club. And they, appreciatively, maintain Al in a style to which a thousand less fortunate barmen would like to become accustomed.

WE WERE sitting there one night, giving this cockeyed world the good old double-oh, taking busman's holiday as newsmen will, discussing beats we'd made and missed in our daily tussle with Old Man Deadline. Pinky Crockett of the *Intelligencer* was in reminiscent mood.

"My favorite story of all time," he said, "is the one about the cub who—"

"I'm empty again," interrupted Bud Callison of the *Blade*. "Who'll have another of the same? All around? All!"

"The cub who was sent to Harlan, Kentucky," persisted Pinky, "during the coal strike—"

"You see what Peg said this morning?" asked Jerry Travers, the *Clarion* city man. "He gave John L. fits for that defense tie-up in Indiana. Damn good thing, too."

"This cub," continued Crockett doggedly, "got a rush of words to the brain and started shoving mellerdrummer over the wire to his city editor. You know how cubs write, anyhow. Perpetual emotion. He started off something like, 'God sits brooding tonight on a little hill overlooking Harlan—'"

Ordinarily Pinky would have been allowed to finish his story, ancient as it was. But tonight he was in disgrace. We were giving him the quick-freeze treatment for having yesterday failed to cover for a buddy who was suddenly taken drunk.

Phil Grogan of the *Times-Star* yawned ostentatiously. "Yeah, we know. So the C.E. wired back, 'The hell with Harlan; interview God!' Put these on my chit, Al. Okay, boys—down the hatch!"

Crockett gave up and swallowed his

drink in contrite silence. I guess we all felt a little bit sorry for him, then, because conversation languished until Grayson took the ball: He said thoughtfully, "That was a typical cub boner. But you know, I think I can almost understand how that kid felt when he started filing his epic. There are some stories that are just too damn big to play down. They seem to scream for dramatic presentation. Of course, you can't write them that way, so you don't write them at all. And the world loses a story that might—mind I say *might*—be of tremendous importance."

We looked at him in some astonishment. Grayson was just three days in by clipper from Lisbon, which haven of safety he had reached just one hop-skip-and-jump ahead of a bunch of Gestapolecats who wanted most desperately to create an international incident with Grayson as the *cause célèbre*.

Grayson's stories out of the Low Countries, then out of blitzed Paris and occupied France were Pulitzer Award stuff, but they hadn't endeared him to the Reich official news fabricators. They were harsh and cold and brutal and devastatingly revealing. Grayson wrote that way. Thus it was astounding to hear him defend a dramatic style of presentation. Callison shook his head. "A gag, Grayson?" he ventured. "I don't get it."

"It's no gag," said Grayson soberly, "it's the God's honest truth." He wrapped his long fingers around his highball glass, stared at, through, and beyond us. "Once—" he said, "perhaps only once in a newspaperman's career, he stumbles upon the perfect story. The story that has everything. Plot, incident, drama, and—more important than all these things—significance. When such a story comes, it should be written as befits its importance. And yet—"

HE PAUSED. Travers said, "You're holding out, Grayson. Have you found such a story? Then why the hell don't you write it, man? Use any style you damn well please. Write it in Choctaw or Sanscrit if it's that good."

"It's better," said Grayson simply, "but I won't write it. There's no use. Because, you see, no paper would print it. There are limits to what the public will believe. A story like this—"

I said, "But you can tell us, can't you, Grayson? Off the record, if you like."

He smiled wanly. "Off or on, Len, it doesn't make any difference. It still wouldn't be believed. But I *would* like to tell you. If you'd be interested—"

"We're all," I told him, "agog."

"Well," he said, "after Paris I went to Tours . . ."

AFTER Paris he went to Tours. That was not so easy as it sounded. Only two hundred and forty kilos separated the two cities. A month ago it was possible to negotiate the distance in a trifle over three hours. That was before the grim, clanking line of mechanized Nazi soldiery scythed the frightened populace out of its homes and onto the narrow roadways of France. Now the four hundred mile stretch of road between Paris and Bordeaux was packed solidly with a sluggish stream of refugees. Dazed little people, hurt children of a toppling empire who did not yet clearly understand what had happened. Whose only urge was to keep moving, ever south, away from the pain and noise and confusion that had uprooted them.

Grayson was the last of the American newsmen to leave Paris. He could have gone almost a week before with Ted Downs of the INS, or a couple of days ago with Reynolds, but had turned

down both offers of a lift. Some said Paris was to be conceded without a struggle, but there were counter-rumors that not so easily would the pleasure capital of the world be taken. Grayson conceived it his duty as a newspaperman to be on hand if something should happen. Until Billy Wallace of Universal talked turkey to him.

"You're getting out of here, Stu—but fast! It's only a matter of days, hours maybe, before the Germans march in. It's all right for a few dopes like me to stick around. Our noses are clean. But Herr Goebbels has your name written on his black list in capital letters. If they come in and find you here, it's going to be just too bad!"

Grayson said, "I'm sticking. They won't dare touch me. I'm an accredited press man from a neutral country—"

"So was Webb," pointed out Wallace. "But they got him. And in London, of all places. You can't tell *me* he just up and fell off that platform. He had cat-eyes. Now, look, chum—I've got a Baby Austin downstairs I've been saving to get buried in. It's no good to me, 'cause when the Nazis get here they're going to empty the town of petrol. But it has a full tank now. So you hop in it, point your nose south—then follow your nose like a bat out of hell!"

So now Stu Grayson was in Tours. But already Tours was not the place where he should be. For the Nazi bombers had come with the monotonous regularity of passenger trains at home—every hour on the hour—and dropped their flame-spewing, death-dealing visiting cards on the ancient city.

The government had fled again; this time to Bordeaux. The news correspondents had followed them, and all France, it seemed, clogged the southward road.

There was only one thing for Grayson to do: Keep moving. Of the details of his flight he was never afterwards certain. There are certain boundaries of horror beyond which the human mind refuses to take cognizance. Later, Grayson discovered that upon his mind's retina had been imprinted sights and scenes that at the time of their occurrence made no impression on him.

THE strafing of civilian-packed highways by swastika-marked pursuit planes which swooped down upon the roads, machine guns chattering leaden death into the defenseless fugitives. The sprawling, grotesque bodies in their wake. The scores upon endless scores of derelict motor vehicles abandoned by the roadside as the way grew longer and the petrol supplies shorter. The faces of the fugitives. ("Their faces," said Grayson. "At night I see their faces and their eyes. Not wracked with pain or fear or anger, but blank with bewilderment. They were numb with the shock of their betrayal.")

Grayson never reached Bordeaux. He was in Angoulême when the incredible rumor filtered through the fugitive column that the Renaud cabinet had resigned; that in Petain's withered hands now rested the fate and future of France. An uglier rumor came concurrently. There was talk of a separate peace. The bistro attendant from whom Grayson heard these things discounted his own words.

"So one hears without authority, m'sieu," he said cautiously. "But surely it cannot be of the truth. Petain of Verdun would never surrender to *les Boches*."

But the rumor was verified, sickeningly, the next day. The octogenarian Marshal was no longer the same Petain whose *On ne passe pas* had emblazoned

a watchword of valor and defiance into French history a quarter century before. His humble capitulation, his call to the French soldiers to lay down their arms, his plea to the Reich for an armistice were the last, crushing humiliation to an already spiritless people.

Grayson heard the news with a sense of quickening fear. Billy Wallace's warning now assumed new meaning. His name *was* on the Gestapo black list. If, as most assuredly they would, the Nazis occupied France or most of it, in the resultant upheaval and confusion the disappearance of one small American news correspondent would pass almost unnoticed.

It was madness to continue into Bordeaux. His only chance of safety lay in flight to Spain, or—Grayson snapped his fingers—or better still, Marseille. He had friends in Marseille. Also if there were an occupation of that *Provençal* port it would probably be by the junior partners of the Axis. And the Italians were disposed to be friendly to Americans; particularly American newspapermen.

So Grayson shifted his course south-eastward through Brive and Figeac, following secondary highways to expose himself as infrequently as possible to curious local officials. Past Rodez and Le Vigan, where it was easier to get gas but harder to get information. Then down the Rhone valley into St. Remy and Salon. It was there he met Frère Michel.

HE REACHED Salon in the dark of night, a phrase that was particularly apt since the town was, like every other in stricken France, swaddled beneath the mantle of a complete blackout. Grayson could not help thinking that this total absence of light represented Marianna's mourning. Yet the blackout was more than mere sym-

bolism; it was stark necessity as well. For although there was a well-confirmed rumor that Petain had already met the new Attila with the opera-bouffé moustache in the historic railway car at Compeigne and signed armistice terms, the cessation of hostilities was yet a night, a day, and another night in the offing.

This was a small but typical indication of the victor's vindictiveness. The vanquished had been ordered to lay down their arms immediately, yet still the planes of the conquerors swarmed over all of France bombing, burning, destroying, in the hectic last hours of pseudo-truce. Particularly was this true in southern France where, the waspish Morannes having been grounded, the Italian airmen were free to make a final, braggart display of their prowess.

So Grayson reached Salon in the dead of night, winding cautiously into the village through groves fragrant of olive and almond, past a dim-jutting wall built twenty centuries before by legionnaires whose fasces had been surmounted with the emblem SPQR.

He was nearly into the village proper when overhead he heard the high, thrumming drone of motors. Then the spiralling scream of falling death, then before him—so near that his tires rocked crazily on the shuddering earth, and the steering wheel struggled against his grip—the darkness bursting suddenly asunder in a pillar of crimson flame.

Instinctively Grayson stepped on the brakes. He had no fear of night bombing. He had for it, rather, the contempt of long familiarity. His only recognizable emotions were anger at thus being hindered in his flight and a fierce scorn for such an obvious and useless exhibition of terrorism on the part of the Italian airforce. He knew,

as they must also know, that the lazy village of Salon concealed no military objectives more important than the ancient, ravaged fortifications of the 15th Century. The canal of Craonne was a mere irrigation ditch.

But furious or not, he was under fire. And dangerously so. He heard cries before him, and the jet streets were illumined with a blaze that etched his surroundings in stark relief. Beside him loomed a massive, Gothic building. Its ramparts of staunch stone offered refuge. He abandoned his car and raced for the wall, seeking an entrance.

He could find none. He felt his way blindly, helplessly, along the wall as the motors droned overhead, as the bombing increased in fury and the whole village trembled beneath thudding shocks. Then suddenly, startingly, there was a quiet voice calling to him.

"Messire! Viens-tu, messire!"

THE call came from a shadowy figure in an arched niche. Grayson lurched gratefully toward the gateway.

"Thanks, friend," he panted. "Tony's really making things hot, no? Where's the shelter?"

"Tu es ung Anglaise?" His accoster seemed faintly surprised. *"A bas, messire."*

He led the way through a short, walled corridor, down a stone staircase mildewed with age, into a slab-lined cell so closely joined that it seemed to have been hewn of solid rock. Grayson heaved a sigh of relief. This was more than safety; it was sanctuary. When his companion closed the huge metal door behind them, engulfing silence stifled even the pounding reverberations of the holocaust above.

Some inner chamber of Grayson's consciousness had recognized an abnormality about the *Provençal* stranger with whom he was now closeted. But

in the haste and excitement of their meeting his mind had not found time to analyze his reaction. Now the man spoke again.

"*Dictes-moy*—" he said softly, "Tell me, my son, whence comest thou?"

And Grayson knew what it was that had struck him as unusual. The stranger not only addressed him in the familiar *tu* form, but he spoke in a *patois* so awkward and heavy as to seem almost archaic.

It was not the typical-tongue of the district. Grayson had spent so much time in the Midi and was familiar with the strong, resonant accent of the *Provençalese*, the heavy vowels and rolling r's. This was more like—Grayson strained for recognition that eluded him—more like the French *patois* spoken by the Canucks of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. An antique French derived from the tongue of Ronsard and Villon.

He was thankful, now, for his many salmon killing trips to the Gaspé. He answered slowly, choosing his words with care. "From Paris. I was on my way to Marseille, whence I hope to find a ship to England. My name is Grayson. Stuart Grayson."

His companion lighted, now, a stub of candle, placed it in a shallow wall sconce. By its guttering flare Grayson saw an older man, sturdily built, whose heavy beard was faintly salted with gray. A man lofty of brow and deep of eye, garmented in a long black robe that might be either a cassock or a scholar's gown. That, thought Grayson, explained his use of the familiar "thee." Priests customarily used it, as did masters addressing their pupils.

The older man nodded quietly. "I am called," he said, "Michel. Michel de—"

He gave the place name of a small cathedral town in northern France. But Grayson was only half listening. He

was glancing curiously about the chamber in which they stood. "*Ou sommes-nous, m'sieu?* Where are we? This is no new bomb shelter."

"No, my son, we are in the vault below the church of St. Laurent."

"Below?" Grayson studied his surroundings with new understanding. "Then these are—"

"The crypts, yes. The birds of death spew flame and violence above us, but here we are safe in the company of the imperishable dead. I, myself," said the old man, "shall some time rest here. Yea, shall and in thy day, do."

HIS words, thought Grayson, were vague and more than a little confusing. But recent events had addled the brains of men more important than this small town monk or sage. So he didn't press the question. He asked instead, "How long do you think this will last? I must get away from here tonight to make Marseille by morning. Tomorrow's probably the last day I'll be able to get out of the country. Before the Fascists march in."

The old man shook his head. "You can judge better of that than I, my son. I cannot say. But—" A curious eagerness lighted his eyes. "But you spoke of Paris. What has happened there? Why do you flee?"

Grayson answered shortly, "Don't tell me you haven't heard? Paris has fallen. France has surrendered. Tomorrow she becomes an occupied country like Poland and Norway and the rest. But you must know these things. Where have you been, anyway?"

"I have been—" The old man hesitated, "—traveling, my son. I am but newly come here. What you tell me is unexpected. So France bleeds again! Will she never find peace?"

"Not while there's a Hitler," said Grayson grimly. "Or a Nazi party."

A long pent anger burst within him. "The tragedy is we should have seen this coming long ago. The handwriting was on the wall if we'd only had sense enough to read it. The sects and creeds that sprang up in post-war Germany. The Neo-paganism trend. We thought it was an escape valve. Actually it was the forging of a new national philosophy that despised death, gold, honor—everything but the domination of the world."

His companion studied him appraisingly. "Thus it was, my son?"

"That's how it was," said Grayson bitterly. "I was as blind as the rest of them. Yet it's supposed to be my job to see things coming. I'm a newspaperman."

"And your country, England, is also in this war?"

"England is, yes. But that's not my country. I'm an American," Grayson told him.

"I see. An American writer. I, too, am a writer, my son. A—a poet, of sorts. Perhaps you know my verses?"

Grayson shook his head. "I'm afraid—"

The old man sighed. "I had hoped my work might be familiar to you. It is a history. A history in verse. Each new day, each new journey, adds another chapter. That which you have just told me is worthy of a stanza—

"En germanie," he said, "naistront diverse sectes S'approchant fort de l'heureux paganisme . . ."

*"In Germany will spring up different sects,
Closely approaching a careless paganism . . .*

*A new sect of philosophers
Despising death, gold, honor, and riches—"*

IT WAS, thought Grayson, pretty lousy verse. Not only that, but it

was in damn bad taste. Years hence, when this was all over and men could look back upon what was now happening with a detached analytical view, there would be histories of the period. But they would not, he felt sure, be poorly rhymed histories written in a jumbled, archaic *patois* by a dingy *maitre*—for so by now Grayson had decided his companion to be—from an obscure village.

Still, you couldn't tell a man who had befriended you and possibly saved your life that his verse was bad and he was half cracked. Grayson turned toward the door, opened it. "It's quiet, now. They must have gone. Shall we go up?"

"As you wish, my son. But tell me first—this Hitler you spoke of? Has he gained many followers?"

"Too many. His own countrymen, the Italians; even the newspapers thought for a while he was a good thing for Germany. He was restoring a nation in chaos, they said. He had admirers here and in England. They saw the National Socialistic state as a buffer between the democracies and Soviet Russia. But when the chips went down they discovered that Socialism and Nazism were one and the same. The democracies were caught in the middle. Well—"

They had reached the great arched gateway by now. The bombers had gone, leaving part of the little town ablaze behind them. The streets of Salon were a wild confusion, but Grayson felt that was an advantage to him rather than a hindrance. He held out his hand.

"Well, goodbye, sir. And thank you for your help."

"Go thou in peace, my son," said the old man.

And Grayson turned to the spot where he had left his car. Only to pull

up with a cry. The Austin no longer existed save as a heap of twisted metal. A crater yawned in the street where it had stood; fused at the bottom of the crater lay the ruins of the vehicle he had hoped would bear him to safety.

His cry brought Michel to his shoulder. "What is it?"

"My car;" choked Grayson. "Smashed to smithereens. I doubt if there's another one in town. I wouldn't dare look for it anyway. And if I'm not in Marseille by morning—"

It was at that moment, in mid-sentence, that the sun and Grayson's world collided. Stars roared hurtling to earth in a crash of tumultuous thunder. He was aware of a dreadful concussion plucking him from his feet, tossing him bodily back through the arch into the corridor beyond . . . of the taste of hot salt blood in his mouth and pain that lanced his body with agony . . . then a crushing earth, and darkness surging up to meet him . . .

GRAYSON said, "Al—" Al, who had been listening from behind the bar, started violently. "Set 'em up, Al. Same thing all around."

Al said, "Yessir, right away, Mr. Grayson."

Phil Grogan said, "Wait a minute, Stu. This round's on me."

"Me," corrected Grayson. "I owe you all one for having listened to me thus far. I'm sorry I ever started. It's a whacky story. And it gets even whackier."

"Put it away," said Grogan. "Your money's no good in this joint."

Grayson shrugged. "Well, O.K. But you see, now, what I meant when I said this was a story no newspaper could print. I'm convinced that it's the greatest, most important, most significant thing that ever happened to me, and possibly that ever happened to any

living soul. But I can't prove it. Because, you see, I was injured in the delayed explosion of that time bomb.

"You—I suppose you know how I got to Lisbon?"

"By boat," said Callison. "Wasn't it by boat?"

"That's what I told them," said Grayson, "to explain my presence there. But I don't know. I don't *think* so, but I honestly don't know.

"After I'd been there a few days and come to my senses a bit, I covered the waterfront like a bloodhound looking for some skipper who remembered having had me as a passenger. I found none. Still, that doesn't signify, for ships were constantly shuttling in and out of Portugal in those hectic days.

"So here starts the hair-thin line, on the one side of which lies fact, and the other side fancy. Perhaps what I am about to tell you really happened to me. I think it did. On the other hand, you must remember that I was injured and possibly delirious. The whole thing may have been a wild fantasy, born of the night and the crypt and the horror and the strange old sage who spoke in a Villonesque *patois*."

"Suppose," I suggested, "you get on with the story?"

"Well—" said Grayson . . .

GRAYSON'S wakening was like the rising of a diver from a dark, swirling depth into a weirdly unfamiliar world. It was not that he suffered bodily pain. By some miracle he had escaped all injury except a few bruises. But the fierce, close explosion of the delayed bomb had dealt his nervous system a violent blow. It was shell-shock, though he didn't know it then. He didn't know anything at the time of his awakening. Not his name, nor where he was, nor what he was doing here, or above all who might be the

bearded stranger bending over him.

He pushed himself up on one elbow and moaned as a myriad tiny cogs in his brain seemed to shriek rebellion at the movement. "Where am I?" he asked.

"Peace, my son," his companion soothed him gently. "You are safe now."

Wisp of recollection seeped back upon Grayson. A once-heard name eluded him. He grasped at it . . . caught it. "You are—Father Michel."

"*Brother Michel*, my son," corrected the old man. "Now rest, and be still. All will be well soon."

"And this is the crypt," murmured Grayson. "No, it is not the crypt!" His eyes widened as he scanned his surroundings. They were neither on the open streets of Salon nor the underground refuge where they had taken temporary shelter. They were in what seemed to be a sort of metal cubicle. The interior of their room or conveyance—Grayson could not tell which, though a faint, almost imperceptible swaying motion led him to believe it was the latter—was Spartan in its simplicity. Only on one wall were set several levers and a dial, the purpose of which Grayson could not remotely hazard.

"No, we are no longer in the crypt," said Frère Michel.

"Then, where—?" asked Grayson confusedly.

Brother Michel's voice was calm and his hands were deft as they moved the levers on the forward wall. "It was needful that you be brought away, my son. You were hurt and in danger. Only thus could I bear thee to a friendlier spot." His brows contracted into a mild frown. "I had not meant that any save myself should ever look upon this conveyance. But surely it cannot be of harm if one single time I

concern myself in affairs that are to be. And who knows but it was thus planned, by He who ordains all?"

HIS meaning was obscure, his actions even more so. And it pained Grayson to try to concentrate. His thought processes were thick and sluggish, as though stifled beneath a comforter of down. He did not understand. Never during that weird voyage did he clearly understand what was transpiring about him. It was as though he drifted in a febrile dream peopled with strange sights and scenes.

Brother Michel was speaking again, but Grayson heard his words only fitfully. "Let us go up the stream a little way, my friend. I would learn what is to come of that which we have seen. Shortly I shall return thee to thy proper place."

He tugged yet another of the intricately wrought levers, and it seemed to Grayson that the floor beneath him shuddered for a moment in impatient flight. Then;

"This should be—far enough," said Brother Michel. "Let us see what now transpires."

What window or portal he opened, Grayson could not say. But where had been shadowy darkness, now warm sunlight flooded the chamber, and it seemed they looked down upon the fields of France from towering heights. ("It was as though," said Grayson, "we were in a plane." But it wasn't that. Even in my dazed condition I'm sure I would have recognized the drone of airplane motors. And besides, did you ever know a plane to stop and hover over a single spot, motionless? That's what we did.")

So they looked down upon the fields of France. But these were not the lazy, quiet fields through which Grayson had driven in his pellmell flight from Paris.

This *champs* was abustle with activity. Widespread upon the great plain, so far as the eye could see, were massed men and troops and armament. Westward lay the rolling sea. Ships lay in the harbor; grim, gaunt dogs of war. Armed barges lined the beach. A clouded instinct for news stirred Grayson. Forgetting to be astonished that so swiftly could the occupation of France have been accomplished, he cried, "Invasion! They're preparing for an invasion of Britain!"

The old man shook his head, smiling sagely. "Nay, my son. That attempt I saw thwarted while you slept. Not yet shall England admit a foe. Look again at the banners of the warriors."

AND Grayson, looking again, saw that he had indeed misjudged the nationality of those assembled on the seacoast plain. Their uniforms were not the gray-green of the Nazi troops. There were blue uniforms and khaki, olive, and even plaid. And Grayson marked at different points throughout the camp banners he recognized. The tricolor of France; the St. George's cross of England. The flags of Poland and Norway and Belgium, the Netherlands and tiny Portugal.

He turned to his companion confusedly. "But I don't understand. This is an army of the Allies—on French soil! But France has fallen. And the English were driven out at Dunkirk."

"Time passes swiftly, my son," said "Brother Michel, "and with its passage many changes are wrought. Hear! Even now the bugle sounds! The army of exiled and vanquished sets forth to reclaim its own. Let us see what shall come of it."

As suddenly as light had blossomed in the small conveyance, it faded. Once again they were walled in foursquare

metal. There was that sensation of flight. Then Brother Michel's pronouncement.

"This should be Rome—shortly hence."

And where he had seen below him the army of the Allies Grayson found himself looking down upon the Seven Hills of the ancient city. But it was a fearful scene upon which he gazed. A scene of flame and ruin, fire and death and desolation. Sky-searing tongues of flame swept avenues that once charmed a world with their beauty. Great craters yawned where had stood milestones of a glorious elder culture. The charred, abandoned hulk of one once magnificent edifice brought a cry of horror to Grayson's lips.

"The Heart of Rome! Even this great capital destroyed!"

Said Frère Michel. "Even so, my son. Thus ends the folly of the second pretentious Cæsar.

"*Romaine pouvoir*," he said, as though committing a verse to mind against some future setting down, "*sera de tout a bas . . .*

"*Roman power will be completely brought low*

*O Great Rome, thy ruin approaches,
Not only of thy walls but of thy blood
and substance . . .*"

IT WAS then that something of Grayson's dull-witted acceptance slipped from him. His slow mind began to comprehend that which he had seen, and a great, incredulous wonder gripped him. He turned to his companion feverishly.

"What magic is this Frère Michel? Where are we? What are we doing? How are we seeing these things? These events cannot be!" He pounded his temples as an effort toward coherent thought drove bright hammers of pain through him. Logic supplied but one

answer. "Am I—" he demanded fearfully, "Am I insane?"

Frère Michel turned, smiling gently. "Peace, my son, you are not insane. You are but tired and ill. Rest, now, and in a moment more I shall leave you in a haven of safety."

He touched Grayson's brow and the touch of his hand was soothing. Grayson's panic left him. He slept then, and perhaps in slumber found healing, for when he wakened again his mind was clearer and he heard the words of his companion without confusion.

"We have come, my friend."

Grayson roused himself. "Come? Come where?"

"To the land of the Lusitains. We are on the outskirts of Lisbon. You will find the city without trouble."

Grayson stumbled to his feet. It was as his companion had said. "But—but how did we get here?"

"Through the highway of that which is to be, we have returned to the now," said the old man strangely. "Go now, my son, in peace. And if you will, tell they who tremble and are afraid of that which you have seen. Bid them be of good heart, confident that liberty and justice shall not yet pass. For I, Michel of the tribe of Isaachar, have seen so and now so tell you. Perhaps if you seek in some hidden place you may find written that which I have yet to write. Look for it, my son. It will open to you many doorways of hidden knowledge. And now, farewell!"

He stepped back into the curious metal cage which for a time had borne them both. Then suddenly it and he were gone. A great weakness and a nausea overcame Grayson. He did not remember walking into the city . . .

GRAYSON stopped. "Well," he said. "That's all. That's the story."

There was a faint half smile upon his

lips, but in his eyes a sort of eagerness, a sort of wistful desire for understanding.

I think we all looked at him stupidly for a few minutes. I know I did. Phil Grogan broke the silence. He said, "Damn it, Stu, *what* story? I don't get it. You drew a blank in the south of France, had a delirious dream about an old monk who talked double-talk—and you say that's the greatest story you ever ran into! Am I just plain dumb, or is there something I've missed?"

"I have already told you," said Grayson soberly, "that the story could never be printed. You must make two assumptions before it makes any sense whatsoever. The first is that though I was shocked I was not delirious, and that the things I saw really happened to me. The second—"

"Well?" said Callison.

"I didn't understand the second myself until some time later," said Grayson slowly. "Not until, completely baffled by a mystery I couldn't explain, I did a little intensive research."

"I discovered some rather peculiar facts connected with the town of Salon and the church of St. Laurent. Buried in the crypt beneath that church lie the remains of one who in his day was famed as astrologist, prophet, and seer. A curious, secretive man, descended of the Jewish tribe of Isaachar whose priests—or so the legends tell—during the Exodus bore away something far more precious than silver or gold. The documents from the initiation chambers of the Egyptian temples. All the geometric, algebraic, and cosmographic formulæ by which it is said the Egyptian priests could divine the future."

"That's not so funny as it sounds. There are many, even today, who will tell you that in the construction of the great pyramid of Cheops was outlined

the trend of human events for more than five thousand years to come.

"This French frère of the 17th Century—suppose he had somehow inherited this now lost secret? Suppose it were not so esoteric as mechanistic? Oh, I know you think I'm talking nonsense, but—I was there. I saw those things myself. And later, studying the rhymed history of the future written by this prophet, I found not only a 'prediction' of those things which he and I had together seen, but read also the actual words we had spoken to one another!"

CROCKETT stared at him incredulously. "But you're talking about time travel, Grayson! You're saying this prophet was no charlatan but a man who had actually gone forward and seen—"

"I'm not *saying*," corrected Grayson, "I'm only—wondering. I think a lot of

people are wondering, too, in view of the fact that in this prophet's book, *The Centuries*, appear predictions that one by one, over a four hundred year period, have come true. Complete with names, dates, places.

"It is implausible, yes. But is it impossible that I should have met him on one of his investigatory flights? I think not. I hope not. For if my hunch is right, I have seen in advance that which all of us will rejoice to read of in the days to come. The fall of Rome, the triumph of Britain, the coming of a more peaceful, happier, world."

Crockett said, "But what's this man's name, Stu? I don't remember any Michel—"

"That was not all his name," said Grayson. "There was more of it. I told you his name as I heard it before I had greater understanding. Michel de Nostre-Dame was his full name. We know him by another name today. We call him—Nostradamus."

Advertisement

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and as a result of that little talk with God a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, dismal, sickening failure, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn the secret. And when you do—well—there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which bound me for years went a-shimmering—and now—?—well, I own control of the largest daily newspaper in our County, I own the largest office building in our City, I drive a beautiful Cadillac limousine. I own my own home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago, I actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that strange mystical Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest,

unhappiness, or ill-health in your life, well—this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me. No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be—all this can be changed. For this is not a human Power I'm talking about—it's a God-Power. And there can be no limitations to the God-Power, can there? Of course not. You probably would like to know how you, too, may talk with God, so that this same Power which brought me these good things might come into your life, too. Well—just write a letter or a post-card to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 36, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent to you free of charge. But write now—while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the most profitable one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable—but it's true, or I wouldn't tell you it was.—Advt. Copyright, 1939, Frank B. Robinson.

Romance of the Elements - - - Iodine



IT WAS FROM ASHES OF SEAWEED GATHERED ALONG FRENCH SHORES, THAT BERTRAND COURTOIS, IN 1811, ISOLATED IODINE. ONE DAY HE ADDED SULPHURIC ACID TO A "MOTHER LIQUID" HE OBTAINED BY EXTRACTING SEAWEED ASHES WITH WATER; WHEN HE DISTILLED IT, BEAUTIFUL VIOLET VAPORS AROSE, THEN CONDENSED IN HIS RETORT TUBE TO FORM DARK, LUSTROUS, METALLIC-LIKE CRYSTALS.



MEDIAEVAL REMEDY

AS EARLY AS 1170 A.D., THE PEOPLE OF PALERMO, ITALY, WERE USING THE ASHES OF SPONGES FOR TREATMENT OF GOITER! SPONGES, LIKE SEAWEED AND OTHER MARINE GROWTHS, ARE RICH IN IODINE.



IN THE 1820'S RUMORS FLEW THAT SWITZERLAND'S DR. COINDET WAS USING IODINE TO CURE GOITER, SO PEOPLE BEGAN TAKING IT WITHOUT MEDICAL ADVICE. WHEN MANY SICKENED AND SOME DIED THEY VIOLENTLY CONDEMNED IODINE, AS A VIRULENT POISON.

WHILE SOJOURNING IN PARIS IN 1813 SIR HUMPHREY DAVY OF ENGLAND GOT HIS HANDS ON SOME IODINE. SECRETLY INSTALLING A PORTABLE LABORATORY IN HIS HOTEL ROOM, HE HURRIEDLY TESTED THE SUBSTANCE BETWEEN PARTIES GIVEN IN HIS HONOR BY UNSUSPECTING FRENCH SCIENTISTS. BUT GAY-LUSSAC SAVED THE DAY FOR FRANCE BY BEING FIRST TO ANNOUNCE ITS PROPERTIES. . .



BAUMAN



FOUND IODINE IN THE THYROID GLAND IN 1885. INDEED, THIS ELEMENT IS PRESENT IN MOST ALL ANIMAL AND PLANT ORGANISMS. IODINE, IT IS SAID, IS A GREAT DEVELOPER OF THE GREEN PIGMENT IN PLANTS. IN THE FORM OF CERTAIN SALTS, IODINE IS USED EXTERNALLY AND AS A COUNTER-IRRITANT.

IODINE is number 53 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is I, and its atomic weight is 126.932. It is a shining, blackish-gray, crystalline solid. It has a specific gravity of about 4.95. It is chiefly found in "Chile-salt-peter" (NaNO_3). It is soluble in alcohol, carbon disulfide, chloroform, aqueous potassium iodide. It is used in the manufacture of coal-tar dyes, iodoform, in medicine, photography, and in chemical analysis. Iodine is an oxidizing agent.

NEXT MONTH: The Romance of Actinium