

# A Conquest of Two Worlds

## Part 1

by Edmond Hamilton

### Introduction

Much early science fiction is often dismissed as formulaic space opera that consisted of nothing more than blasting rockets and blazing rayguns. Substance and social conscience, it is said, did not arrive until the "mature" SF that began to appear in the 60s. Yet, as with most any type of genre fiction, it is a disservice to label the genre with such a broad classification. Case in point: the story presented here.

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Cover by Frank R. Paul (?)

Edmond Hamilton wrote his share of space opera during his long career and was even given the nickname of "World Wrecker" for the sheer scope of his early work. "A Conquest of Two Worlds", however, reaches beyond its space opera trappings to present a cautionary tale that views the past through a story of the future. Certainly there are the usual rockets, atomic weapons and earth-like environments one would expect from a space opera, but the main theme of the story questions both Manifest Destiny and colonialism. Rather heady stuff for a science fiction story and it is all the more remarkable that it originally appeared in 1932 during the height of the Depression: a time when the thoughts of most authors were on other matters and showing again that Hamilton was first and foremost an author. That he happened to write genre fiction was just the way he made a living.

"A Conquest of Two Worlds" originally appeared in the February, 1932 issue of *Wonder Stories*.

Bob Gay

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**Editor's Note:** Both of the book reprintings of "A Conquest of Two Worlds" lacked a Chapter 1, even though they kept the other chapters in the body of the story. Rather than attempt to insert a first chapter, we have simply followed their lead.

### Story

**JIMMY CRANE**, Mart Halkett and Hall Bumham were students together in a New York technical school in the spring when Gillen's flight changed the world. Crane, Halkett and Bumham had been an inseparable trio since boyhood. They had fought youthful foes together, had wrestled together with their lessons, and now read together, as an amazed world was reading, of Ross Gillen's stupendous exploit.

Gillen, the stubby, shy and spectacled Arizona scientist, burst the thing on the world like a bombshell. For sixteen years he had worked on the problem of atomic power. When he finally solved that problem and found himself able to extract almost unlimited power from small amounts of matter, by breaking down its atoms with a simple projector of electrical forces of terrific voltage, Gillen called in a helper, Anson Drake. With Drake he constructed an atom-blast mechanism that would shoot forth as a rocket stream, exploded atoms of immeasurable force, a tremendous means of propulsion.

For Gillen meant to conquer space. Through that momentous winter when Crane, Halkett and Bumham had not a thought beyond their school problems and school sports, Gillen and Drake were

