The Invaders

jan and meg had wandered off a bit from the others. They lay on a bank now, the soft grass feeling cool and somewhat tickly on their bronzed skins. Meg was eating an orange slowly, and every now and then sitting up to wash her fingers of the sticky juice in the clear little stream flowing from the spring, a quarter of a mile up the valley. Jan watched her every move, every graceful bend of her arms and back and neck with an interest and a strange tenseness he could not understand, and which vaguely bothered him.

"Meg," he said softly. Meg did not turn her head all the way round to him, but looked sidewise, her eyes dancing, still smih'ng and sucking at the sweet, bright fruit. "Meg," he said again softly. She made a face and began to turn her back on him.

He laughed suddenly and held her close. "Meg—"

For a moment she held him, too, then suddenly she was strug-gling wildly, trying to say something, her mouth smothered by his kisses. It was several seconds before Jan realized she meant it. Then abruptly he released her and looked in the direction her startled eyes followed—straight up.

There was a patch of sky, blue as a sapphire, deep and so clear it seemed some perfectly transparent crystal, not the milky blue of the sky over a city, as we know it.

And it was framed in a ragged, wavering frame of deep, clear, green leaves, and fronds. There were palms, and orange and other fruit trees.

And far, far above there was something gleaming, gleaming with the hard sheen that those rare bits of mirror-metal which they found in the Ancient Places had. It was something big, Jan knew, by the way it moved slowly and yet gave an impression of speed. He did not reason it out—but he knew it was huge. And it was

shaped like a banana, only a straight banana, and more rounded.

Jan helped Meg to her feet, and both stood watching the strange thing. It came down, very slowly, and very gently, like a bird cir-cling to earth. It seemed headed straight for them, settling slowly. Hastily, Jan and Meg moved over, out of its way, till the great thing floated gently down. First the palm fronds and tree leaves wavered, and sank, and the grass all below seemed to be pressed down. Jan and Meg felt a strange pressure that made them unac-countably uneasy as they watched it. They stepped even farther back, among the trees.

The thing was huge. The clearing was nearly half a mile across, and a mile and a quarter long, yet the great thing made even that vast place seem none too large. At last it settled below the trees, and halted, then dropped quite softly to the grass.

For minutes it remained motionless, and, the strange pressure gone, Jan and Meg came out slowly, hand in hand, straight and slim, their bodies bronzed by the semitropic sunlight. Slowly they advanced, looking curiously at the shining metal bulk.

Abruptly they started as a great section in the wall swung out-ward. Five strange things came out, warily, watchfully. They were tall, taller than Jan, nearly seven feet tall, and their bodies were small in the abdomen, and large in the chest. Their limbs were long and straight, and seemed more jointed than human limbs, but they were covered with cloths, as the Gaht-men covered themselves in the ceremonies, only these were finer cloths.

Their heads were large, rounded, they had no nose, and their ears were cup shaped, flexible and moving constantly. They had no covering on hands or feet, and both were prehensile. As the leader turned somewhat, Jan saw, wonderingly, that he had a long, thin tail, as prehensile and useful as the tail of a monkey. He was carry-ing something in it. Faintly, Jan envied him.

And Jan saw further, that he had three eyes! One eye on every side, so that he could see in all directions at once. A very strange creature, Jan thought.

Meg was curious; she wanted to see them more closely. She was pulling at his hand now, and Jan followed, somewhat cautiously, feeling a peculiar emotion, something like the way he felt when he fell, as though he were going to be bumped.

The five strange beings watched them intently, two eyes of each focused on them, and curious little sticks raised in the prehensile hands, pointing at them.

"Who are you?" asked Meg, her voice soft and silvery in Jan's

ears. The five made no direct answer. Only the leader said some-thing in a strange way, like the Mez-kahns—the brown men from the south—something Jan could not understand.

"You aren't Mez-kahns?" asked Meg doubtfully.

The leader said something more. The five started toward Jan and Meg. Jan felt more acutely the falling feeling, and pulled Meg back. Reluctantly Meg came back a step. Jan pulled harder as the swift-striding strange people came toward them. Meg held back. And finally, they were in the midst of the five. The leader seemed interested, observing them closely. Jan looked at them curiously, reaching out toward the bright-colored girdle one wore. Abruptly the leader snapped something—and Jan felt two strong hands grip his arms, two powerful feet grip his feet, and two living ropes wrapped abruptly about him.

Acutely the fall-feeling came. He fought desperately. Meg was caught too, and fighting as hard as he. Somewhere he heard others fighting their way through the brush. The leader was calling out something, and from the corner of his eye, he saw dozens of the strangers darting out of the ship, and flying off into the air, like birds; but they had no wings.

Suddenly a tingling struck Jan, the light faded, and only Meg's cry lingered in his ears as the darkness closed in about him.

The light was strange when Jan awoke. It was very blue, and his skin looked peculiar. It was a cool room, too, and the air smelled peculiar. He shivered slightly, and rose suddenly as the memory of Meg's cry came to him.

He was in a room like those in the Ancient Places, but this room was not fallen in, and it was made of stout metal. There were others in the room too; Kal, Too, Pahl, half a dozen others, and old fat-bellied Tup, the Gaht-man. Tup was still sleeping. Kal and Pahl were moving restlessly now, the others twitching slightly.

But Meg wasn't here! "Meg!" he called suddenly. There was no answer. The sound seemed to rattle down the metal corridor, and Jan went to the barred wall. There was a long corridor. At one end it opened into a large blue-lighted white room. The other end was out of his range of vision. But across the way he could see another room like that he was in. It, too, was barred. There were women there; some girls, one very old woman. But he could not see Meg. - He called again.

Suddenly one of the strange creatures came. It looked at him with two of its eyes, and barked a command. Jan felt the fall-

feeling and stopped calling. He whimpered Meg's name softly, then his attention was attracted down the corridor to the white room. There were several strange creatures there now. And a little table that slid across the floor on funny round feet like a slice of an or-ange. Then he saw Meg.

Meg was on the table, sleeping. He called her name and the crea-ture outside barked at him again angrily. Something hot stabbed at his chest. He cried out softly, but stopped calling Meg's name, and watched her.

Suddenly he was angry. Meg was his girl, but these strange crea-tures had taken her. He started to call out, but stopped in memory of the hot flash of light that came from the strange creature's little stick. He whimpered Meg's name softly.

Meg's eyes were closed, and she seemed to be sleeping very soundly or in a faint. Jan watched, and called her name softly to himself. The fall-feeling came over him again, till his stomach was all tight in his body, and his throat hurt him.

One of the strangers had something in his hand, something bright like the mirror-metal, and he was bending over Meg now. He made a swift movement, and even the fear of the guard's tube could not quiet Jan as he cried out desperately. For suddenly he saw Meg's smooth warm skin split open all along her abdomen, and the car-mine-red of her blood welled out suddenly. Her body changed in an instant from something slim and beautiful and bronzed to a hor-rible thing of red.

The lurid flashes of the tube did not silence Jan till they sent him back, far in a corner, quivering, his eyes blank, exhausted, fearful. He was muttering Meg's name softly and shaking all over.

It was nearly an hour later that he ventured again to look into the white room under the blue lights. There was something awful and red on the table with the funny feet now, but he couldn't know that it was Meg, so he thought she was gone somewhere else.

There were others who went to that white room with the blue lights. Jan only knew they had gone. Old fat Tup, the Gaht-man, went, and Theel, Yal's woman, and his child, but Jan sat in one corner, very quiet now, nursing his chest and back, which were raw and blistered from the ultraviolet burns of the guard's little stick. He was very quiet, and he moved very slowly. His stomach felt tight in him, and his throat hurt all the time, and with all of him he felt a great emptiness, because Meg wasn't coming back. The second day they brought fruits and some things which were

not good to eat, because they hadn't learned yet all they must know about this strange world and its inhabitants. The others in the cell ate the fruit, and because the guards were not so strict now, since they were not afraid of these humans, the men were allowed to call to the women across the way.

That day they brought in more humans and Yal was among them. The guards had to remove him because when he heard what had happened to Theel and the child he tore murderously at a guard who came close to the bars, and crouched back craftily in his corner and laughed and chuckled till the men in the cell edged away from him and his strange, roving eyes.

The fifth day each of the men was fed separately, and the strange creatures, who called themselves Tharoo, watched them. Jan would not eat much, but the little he ate made him horribly sick; so sick he did not struggle when

one of the Tharoo carried him out, tested him carefully, and gave him something else. In an hour he was feel-ing well. But one of the others was in a cramped ball of agony, the death he had suffered still frozen on his face.

The seventh day a change was made. Jan had learned a few of the words of the Tharoo. A guard came in and the seven in the cell were herded out, through the long passage of the ship. Outside, Jan looked about in some surprise. Nothing affected him much—only the emptiness within him. But he must be somewhere else. The clearing was gone. There were metal houses now, and a great thing of whirling, moving parts. There were Tharoo flying through the air, towing behind them great masses of the metal they had taken from the Ancient Places.

A Tharoo led the group to one side of the clearing, where raw earth had been turned up by the moving machine. With a flat thing he dug a hole, first breaking up the clotted lumps of earth, and then into the hole he stuck a dead bit of wood, scarcely an inch long. Then he covered it up and stepped on the place.

"Do," he commanded, and handed the flat thing and some of the bits of wood to Jan. Jan looked at the flat thing, clumsily stuck it in the earth, and did as the Tharoo had done. He did it twice, but it was uninteresting. He wanted to go into the shade of the trees and lie on the bank where he and Meg had lain, and think about Meg. He dropped the flat thing and turned away.

A searing flash in his side made him leap and cry out. The Tharoo was glaring at him angrily. "Do!" he roared, motioning to the flat thing and the bits of wood.

Jan learned to plant in three lessons. And beside him, in seven

rows, seven others learned to plant. Jan had never planted, nor had any of his fathers for nearly sixty generations. Nature had tended to that, and Jan had merely picked the fruits. Now he worked under the semitropic sun, and he worked stooped over. Presently his back ached, so he laid the flat thing down to go among the trees and rest. In an instant a guard was on him. Again the searing flash, again the roared command. Jan "did."

At night there were fruits, and many more humans had been brought in. The next day Jan and the others planted. At noon they stopped. Jan's back ached horribly and the emptiness within him grew. In the afternoon they were set at a new task. There were strange, long, flat things, and they were taught to saw. Great trees came down—hardwood trees that produced no fruit, no flower.

Another whirring, shrieking thing of metal clamored all after-noon. A heap of boards grew—raw, green boards—and Jan and the others learned the art of hammering in the strange cleats of the Tharoo. At sundown a row of twenty rough shanties had been built.

The next day they were furnished with simple chairs and beds. The Tharoo covered the beds with an elastic sheeting that held Jan's weary back comfortably as he rested at noon and ate the fruit other humans had been sent to gather. That night Jan was put in one of the shanties, and on a high metal tower a Tharoo sat with one of the strange little sticks that made a man unconscious when it glowed, and watched over the shanties.

Jan was a powerful young man. Some twenty-five times he had seen the rains, as the sun swung north, then south again. He stood six feet tall, a good four inches above the average, and his muscles were smooth and lithe with the easy but active life of his people. His intelligence was moderate for his race and time. For two thou-sand years no human being had had to think, or work, or escape danger. Two thousand five hundred years ago the Machine had left Earth, and the paradise it had left the planet remained, free of in-jurious creatures or disease. Man had had no need of intelligence. The witless lived as well as the shrewd. There was nothing to drive man, so he had fallen easily, gently down. Jan was fairly intelligent for his race—but he was not intelligent.

He did not understand when Wan was brought to his cabin. She looked at him for a moment in fear, then her big dark eyes opened wider in relief. "Jan," she said and went in.

"Stay," said the guard, and left.

"Wan," said Jan dully. He wondered vaguely why she was not

with little Tahn, where she belonged. Wan was a big girl, tall, and well-muscled, with keen, bright eyes and a not-too-beautiful face. She was larger than many men, larger even than the average man, and a good six inches taller than Tahn. Though she did not know it, nor did Jan, she was exceptionally intelligent

Jan ate the fruit that was brought them, lay down, and thought of Meg, and went to sleep. Wan watched him for some time. Then she, too, went to sleep.

For a week Jan worked at the building of the cabins. Then he learned to string wires between metal posts around the whole camp, and because he was growing used to work, his muscles hard-ened and gradually work became easier.

There were more in the camp now, many more. All the tribe Jan had known, and more. They came, and gradually they were forced to work, and to live in the cabins. There were two big ones—for many men in one, and many women in the other. And perhaps a hundred small ones.

Then one day Jan was transferred, and on a strange, flat boat with rounded, upturned edges he floated away, high across the for-ests, to one of the Ancient Places. Under the directions of the Tharoo, he dug,

and turned stones and worked all day, and his back ached badly that night.

Wan watched him as he turned and twisted that night. Then she went over to him. "Jan, I will help," she said. Jan listened to her voice, deep and clear, and thought of Meg's silvery voice. He groaned again, then sighed as Wan found the stiff muscles with powerful fingers and soothed them expertly. He fell asleep as Wan kneaded the stiffness from him.

He thanked her when morning came, and thanked her again that night when she rubbed the stiffness from his muscles, and won-dered vaguely why Wan was not small and slim like Meg, but like a man in her strength.

A Tharoo in clothes of a different cut came to the cabin that day when Jan was gone and took a sample of Wan's blood and ex-amined it, while Wan watched with keen, dark eyes. A slow, half understanding came to them, and she looked intently into one of the Tharoo's eyes, and the Tharoo looked at her, and a strange pas-sage of mutual estimation took place. Wan understood something of the Tharoo scientist, and the Tharoo felt a strange sympathy and understanding within him. This woman of a race once as great as

his own, a lone specimen behind whose strange double eyes shone a still-living intelligence and keen understanding.

Those men of the Tharoo were not such as their descendants be-came. These were men great and bold, men of fine ideals and high courage. Across twenty-seven light-years of space the ship of Tharoo had come, and the four other ships with her. Picked ships they were, with picked people; people picked for courage and stamina and fine character. They looked at man and saw in him the fallen remnants, the scattered blocks of his character and attain-ments tossed down and jumbled as the great stone and metal blocks of his great cities were scattered and tossed down.

They were all there still. All the parts of the vast edifices man had reared were there—scattered—jumbled. All the parts of man's high intelligence and character were still there in his descendants-scattered—jumbled.

With tender hands and keen minds they reconstructed from these scattered, jumbled blocks the great buildings that once were. And now, from the scattered, jumbled remnants of man's character they were trying to re-erect his character and intelligence.

Wan perhaps sensed something of this. At least she grasped something of the message which that drop of red on the slip of glass had told the Tharoo as he peered at it through his strange tube. She craned her neck, and the doctor bent aside. She looked through the tube, and saw in it a sea, filled with strange yellow fish, round and sunken in the middle, and other creatures swimming slowly, and changing always. And a bit of something black that strange, colorless, jellylike things were tearing at savagely. Wan stepped back and looked. Only the slip of glass and the tiny drop of carmine.

She shrugged her shoulders, and slowly turned away to her work. All that day she worked with a curious half smile. Perhaps she won-dered what the Tharoo would do about whatever message the little tube had brought. She watched him as he tested one after another of the women of the cabins, and none of those in the great lodge.

Jan found fruit and a new liquid waiting when he returned that night. It was deep blue, and smelled enticing. He tasted it gingerly. It was good, and he drank it. And somehow, that night, when Wan rubbed his back, he did not think of Meg, but of Wan, and Wan looked different. He decided perhaps it was Wan he loved instead ofMeg—

For chemistry was far more powerful than Jan's not-too-able mind.

TO THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS OF THAR,

Greetings:

I, Tarwan Rorn, Commander of the First Detachment of the First Expedition of Colonization, make report on this, the third month of our stay on the planet Artd, as the inhabitants know it, and the thirty-seventh day of the forty-fourth year of the expedi-tion.

This represents the last message cylinder in our possession.

With its sending, our last ties with Thar will be forever severed, for it will be many years before we will be able to again find a stock of fuel sufficient to power a message cylinder capable of reaching Thar, and, we fear, long ere then, Thar will be no more.

We were able to reach this sun and its habitable planet with the very dregs of our fuel. The system consists of nine major planets and an infinitude of tiny meteorlike bodies. But two planets were directly habitable, and two ships have landed on each planet. The flagship, under my command, landed on the third planet in order from this sun, as the enclosed report of the astronomers will show. The remainder of the flight landed on the second planet.

The other eight ships of the First Expedition left us shortly after the last message cylinder was sent,

seeking in other directions for places suitable for colonization. I fear that they will have been un-successful. We were forced to visit a vast number of stars before this was chosen, by the greatest of good fortune.

Let it be as it may, we send this word that though Thar must be destroyed in the coming disruption of her sun, the Tharoo shall not perish from the Universe, though necessarily so many millions must die. This fragment of the race lives to start up anew.

We are not the first race to live on this planet. There was once a great race here. Many ages ago they built their great buildings of stone and metal, stone white as salt and red as bromine, metals blue and golden and silvery. They built towers then that stretched thousands of feet into their sky, as blue as copper sulphate, and their gardens covered the ground below, green and crimson and blue. They had machines that flew effortlessly through the air, repulsing gravity, machines completely automatic that thought for themselves. Machines made their food and their clothes, and they needed almost no direction from the race. They were great, greater perhaps than our race. And in all their cities we find no trace of weapons save as museum pieces. There is in all this world no dan-gerous animal, and apparently no disease.

They fell. There are descendants of this race of the rainbow cities

and the thousand-foot towers outside the ports as I inscribe this record. They are a strange race, with a mop of close-curled hair on the top of their heads, but two eyes, working always in unison. Their feet are not prehensile, nor have they tails. They use only their hands. They are shorter than we, but more powerful, their compact bodies sturdy to resist the somewhat higher gravity of this planet.

But in their eyes there is not the intelligence that built the rainbow cities, nor planned the gardens. Nature makes the gardens of this world now, and the sun warms them. They wear no clothes, for the air is warm. It is fragrant to them, with the perfumes of the myriad flowers of their garden plants, run wild now. The forests that cover the planet from north polar cap to south are thick with the fruits that feed them. They never work in this paradise.

We are too few to do the vast labor that must be done. So they are working for us—and in return we shall attempt to do something for them. They do not know; did they, they would not desire it. We are trying to resurrect the race that built the thousand-foot towers of white and garnet and gold; we are trying to breed them back to what they must have been. We cannot see how so great a race could have fallen so suddenly. And—for a time, it seems, so low. We have found the bones of these people in and about their cities, and the bones are charred with fire, and gnawed by teeth. At one time, shortly after the fall, they must have become cannibalistic.

They are not now. They are peaceful, a strange gentle race. We have made them do much work about the cities, the "Ancient Places" as they call them. They are very strange in their reactions to us. They do not hate us, nor do they try to fight against work. They merely prefer the cool shade, and hunting the fruits of the forests.

And it is a strange sight to watch them among the cities. The Tharoo stand about, and the archaeologists instruct them, and guide them, and they look up with their strange paired eyes in curi-osity and wonderment. They grub among the ruins of their rainbow cities and do not know their ancestors built them, nor appreciate the magnificence that once was there and that still is.

The thousand-foot towers Me in jumbled masses, their salt-white surface blocks cracked and powdered by the fall, their pure color distorted by the rust-red streaks where the steel frames have melted away in the rains. Most of the tall buildings have fallen as the slow etching of time destroyed their bones. The great girders of steel and the walls cracked, and caved, and fell to the ground.

But here and there one remains, perhaps with portions of its gleaming-white walls fallen, and the glistening frame showing, for many have framework of steel as uncorroded as the day it was rolled out in the presses that have long since decayed. It is stain-less. And in others the framework remains whole and unrusted, but it is twisted and ruined. The metal is soft and silvery. The archa3ologists, in testing it, exclaimed that the buildings could ever be built of such stuff. A metallurgist found the answer. It will be of interest to us.

The metal is nearly as soft as annealed copper, yet once it was hard and strong as steel. It is an aluminum alloy, like our alloy duraluminum. The metallurgist has restored its strength by heat treatment, and it is even stronger than our best alloy. It seems to re-tain its strength permanently and to increase in strength with time, as does ours. But in the long time that has passed, the strength leaked out of the metal and, as it softened, the building crumbled.

Some buildings still stand whole. Low and beautiful, and once set amid gardens, they are now almost covered by the semitropic forests. They stand white amid deep green, their airy columns seeming to float the buildings. They are more beautiful than any ever built on Thar.

And the Mauns, as the race calls itself, look at them, and wonder perhaps at them, and aid the archaiologists in clearing the rubbish from their doorways, and removing the debris of their own oc-cupancy.

There are certain respected ones among the Mauns—god-Maun they are called—who object, for these things seem to have some meaning to them. Bits of wheels, bits of gears, bits of drive chains. They seem to have some reverence for machinery. They will polish our machines, these god-Maun, with a strange air of reverence, though they do not understand more than the simplest bits, such as the interworking of gears.

The Eugenists are working with the best members of this race. Many have been chosen for their remnant of the once-great intelli-gence the race must have had. Others for their magnificent and beautiful physique. For they are beautiful animals, their flesh smooth and firm, the muscles working in swift curves beneath their brownish, hairless skin.

But they are meeting with some difficulty, for these people are not mere animals, to be bred at the choice of the

Eugenists. They still have intelligence, and with intelligence comes will and choice. Certain couples, poorly matched, have chosen each other, and

remain inconsolable and unhappy when separated, and refuse to mate with other and fitter mates.

They are separated for a bit, and chemistry plays a part, and gradually we hope to restore to this race the heritage they have lost. But it is hard, too, to select good stock. We know nothing of their past. The doctors and the psychologists are devising tests, and working very hard at the problem of calibrating them.

They are as engrossed in the task as any, for two reasons. The strange history of this race has caught their imagination. The mys-tery of their fall—the sight of these strange, unknowing people grubbing among the ruins of their greatness without the faintest recognition of their ancestors' achievements. And never was such a problem given to physicians—the task of raising a race to intelli-gence!

It will not be a matter of years, but of generations. Arthal Shorul, the Assistant Chief Eugenist, feels that the best answer lies in the inbreeding of pure strains, and a final outbreeding to the desired qualities. Waorn Urntol, his superior, feels that this is a quicker, a more scientific way, perhaps, but one less desirable because of the intermediate results of cripples and monsters.

I agree with Waorn Urntol, yet I fear that Arthal Shorul may win in the end, for he is younger, by half a century, and this is a matter of generations, in any case.

It is hard to decide which is the better way—these friendly, gen-tle creatures are so pleasant, so likable—

Jan-i looked up slowly at the young Tharoo entering the room. He stood tall and slim in his white cloak of the Medical against the sil-very gray of the metal wall. The young Tharoo looked down at old Jan-i with a pleasant smile.

"Greetings, Jan-i. Feel better today?"

Jan shook his head slowly. "No, master, I do not. All my muscles hurt. It is the rains. I will feel better only when the summer comes. Even under the lights it is no good. They used to help." Jan-i looked up at the blue-white glow of the room light. "But"—he shook his head—"they are no good. Wan used to rub the pain out of me," he said sadly, and smiled softly at the Tharoo, "but all your learning will not do so much." He stopped a moment before he went on. "But that was twelve years ago now. Jan-12 was a little boy then. He has his house now."

"I was speaking to Jan-12 this morning about you. You will have another grandchild soon, Jan-i."

Wan-4 looked in at the doorway for a moment at the sound of voices, and bowed slightly to the Tharoo. "He is no better this morning, master?" she said.

"Your father will feel better soon, I am sure, Wan-4," replied the doctor. Wane's face altered slightly as she retreated. Jan-i shook his head slightly, sighing.

"No, you are wrong. Only the summer can help my old muscles. I have known this longer than you, master." He smiled with wrin-kled old lips. "I can remember the Landing, and that was nearly fifty summers ago. You were not, then."

Rannor Trinol laughed. "No, but it may be I have learned more still. And," he said gently, "here is something that will relieve you of that ache, Jan-i. It is evening now. Take it, and you will feel no more ache, I promise you."

Doubtfully, Jan-i drank the pleasant-smelling liquid. "I doubt it," he persisted, shaking his head. But almost at once a pleasant lethargy came over him. In five minutes the ache was gone.

Fifteen minutes later his ten living sons and eight daughters came into the little room, with four of his grandchildren. Silently they helped to arrange the tired old body for the final disposition. Rannor Trinol stepped out then, and reported to the Directing Council of Maun Eugenics that he had carried out their recom-mendation.

Waorn Urntol, Chief of the Eugenists, died. It had been inevitable, as inevitable as death always is. It was sixty-three years after the Landing when he died, an old, old Tharoo.

Arthal Shorul, formerly second in command of the Eugenists' di-vision, took over his post. Arthal Shorul was highly efficient, a trained scientist, his whole mind and energies bent toward the most rapid advance possible in his fields. There was an immediate reor-ganization of the Eugenists' Department.

Waorn Urntol had hoped to establish a tradition in his work with the strange Maun race, a tradition that would continue. For sixty-three years he had made the course of his efforts smooth and the efforts of the others had been carefully directed in the same smooth channel, till, even at his death, he believed the smooth, well-worn groove would be followed. For withal that he was a great scientist, he had been a kindly being, a being understanding of emotions as well as of results.

There had been two courses open to him in his great work of

raising again the light of intelligence in the Maun race. He could work as did evolution, breeding always

among different strains, em-phasizing the best strains, slowly breeding up to the best in each generation, and with each little advance over the best of the last generation, breeding to the new peak.

Or—he could work harshly, swiftly, as only artificial breeding ex-periments can. Root out the evils, let weakness kill weakness by combining in one individual till the very concentration of weaknesses killed. Inbreeding, brother to sister and son with mother till every slight characteristic was distorted, and by its dis-tortion, magnified into detectability. So that a slight tendency to nervous instability became stark lunacy, till a tendency to short life became certain death as an infant—and killed the tendency to short life along with the infant.

Waorn Urntol, being influenced somewhat by emotions, had mated one strong man to one strong woman, and hoped for stronger children, and repeated with other couples.

Arthal Shorul, being a scientist of pure fiber, went over the care-fully written notes of Waorn Urntol, and looked through the grow-ing card index, and marked certain cards with blue and certain others with red, till, when he was through, there was a file of some two thousand five hundred cards, edged in blue, and over eight thousand edged with red.

Two thousand five hundred Mauns, just maturing, or only recently matured and mated, were picked. There was a new camp built off to one side of the old Maun Settlement, to the west of the rising metal spires of Landing City. There brother would be mated with sister. Progress would be swift and scientific now.

There were those Tharoo Eugenists who did not like this chang-ing of well-worn grooves, and they worked with the eight thousand or so who still lived in the original settlement.

The younger of the Tharoo Eugenists welcomed the change, and were transferred to the new group.

And, in general, life went on the same. For the majority of the Tharoo, all Eugenics was concentrated in the care and raising of many infant Tharoo. Centuries before the Tharoo came, a human scientist had said, "Nature abhors a vacuum." There was a vacuum of Tharoo on Earth, and nature was remedying this condition.

Landing City grew steadily, the metal needle-spires of the city creeping outward rapidly. But in time a new city was founded; then other cities. The labor of city building was great, and because

the Tharoo were few, the Mauns were taken along, that they might help.

Fifty years after the landing, in commemorating the event, Waorn Urntol had said: "It is our greatest task, and our first duty to this planet which has furnished us a new chance for life, to raise again the intelligence of this race which has so strangely, so suddenly, fallen to abysmal ignorance. What mystery lies behind this fall? Perhaps, in raising them again, we may find the secret. But first—we must aid them not merely to solve the mystery, not merely because they belong to the planet, but because here is an intelligent fel-low creature whose mind has been beclouded. We must aid and strengthen the sick brother. Can a race do less for a race than an in-dividual would do for another individual?"

One hundred years after the Landing, in the ceremony of com-memoration, and the dedication of the great Central Shrine that housed the Ship which had brought them across the inconceivable distances, Tagrath Keld said: "We have already made progress, we Eugenists, in raising Maun's intelligence. Certain of our specimens show distinctly good intelligence. The great experiment is progress-ing slowly, to be sure, but steadily. The original Mauns were almost totally unable to cooperate, but already great advances have been made, and their abilities to aid, and obey directions are increasing rapidly. There are many lines of investigation opening to us con-stantly. So great is the problem, that still many years must pass be-fore the details of the research can be properly laid down. A prob-lem of such scope has never before been encountered by any Tharoo scientists in their research."

Two centuries after the Landing, one Tagrath Randlun was the Maun Eugenist in command. In part, he said at the Commemo-ration of the Landing: "Every year we are getting better control over the Maun Eugenics problem. The original group of two thou-sand five hundred has been multiplied to more than fifty thousand, while the other, once larger, group which was not actively con-trolled by us has almost died out. Every year sees a more perfect approach to the attainment of the ideal—the ability to predict definitely what type of Maun will result from a given cross-mating of our purified strains. We are attaining, also, greater and greater diversification of types. The usefulness of the Mauns is increasing rapidly."

In the celebration of the Third Century, the Mauns were referred to only briefly, by one of the orators. "Had we not found, on this

planet, a semisavage race capable of direct utilization in the mighty labors of our forefathers, who might say what ages must have passed before our conquest of the planet was so complete?

"Let us give thanks, then, to Great Mahgron that he, in his infinite wisdom, caused this strange race of Mauns to be created on this far, far distant planet eons before our forefathers landed."

As the messenger left him, Hol-57-R-3i trembled slightly. He looked again at the brief line of symbols which called him to the Tharoo Head.

Silently, but swiftly, he packed his apparatus back into place, swinging the microprojector into its case, running his hands over it with a caressing movement. Finally he locked the bench cabinet and jerked abruptly toward the doorway. The yielding, spun-metal flooring muffled the tread of his heels, irregularly betraying his nerv-ousness, his hesitancy.

Finally he reached the outer door, crossed the Eugenists' Court and entered the Tharoo Eugenist Bureau.

Then, for one instant, the slight slip the Tharoo Eugenics Depart-ment workers had made some generations before betrayed itself again. Almost, history changed its course.

For a brief instant Hol-57 stiffened, turned abruptly, rigidly, and took two powerful strides toward the door. A magnificent specimen of humanity; six foot two in height; his bare torso muscular, browned and lithe with muscles; bis carriage erect, forceful; his keen, intelligent face stern and determined, held high on a graceful, muscular neck above broad shoulders; a powerful, dominating figure.

Then, in an instant, some subtle thing escaped. The body was still powerful, lithely muscled, still a magnificent specimen—but suddenly it was a magnificent specimen of Maun Type R-31. It was not dominating, nor forceful. It was fearful.

Hol-Sy of Type R-3i, turned slowly, and went on toward the office of the Tharoo Head.

A Maun female, of the secretarial type, M-n, looked up at him, glanced at the tattooed identification, and pressed a button. A musi-cal hum sounded in the inner office, echoing a moment later in the lower hum of an enunciator in the front office. The secretary nod-ded, and Hol-57 went on in.

He folded his arms in salute as he entered the Tharoo's office, and lowered his head.

"Tharoo," he said softly.

Grath Muni looked at him keenly with two eyes.

"Hol-57, I have a communication from you here. Did you not re-ceive my veto?" he asked sharply.

"Aye, Tharoo."

"You did!" roared the Tharoo Head of the Eugenists. "Then what in the name of Great Mahgron is the meaning of this? Did you actually send this second outline of your plan? I vetoed it—it would mean the breeding of a Maun type undesirably ambitious and possessing initiative to a degree I do not care for.

"I vetoed this. What defect in you caused this unheard-of action —questioning my actions, arguing with me?"

"Because I have been trained to seek ways of increasing the eco-nomic value of the Maun types. Because I have studied the statis-tics and learned that scarcely a score of new, useful ideas, inven-tions, have been produced this year. Because I saw a need for a class capable of original, different thought. I presumed to send a second recommendation of my plan because I did not think you had fully comprehended the reasons for my suggestion, and the need—the economic need—of such a type."

Grath Muni swung his third eye into position, by inclining his head and looked at Hol-57 very coldly and very long. ""You thought,'" he quoted very softly. "You thought I might not have comprehended and took a most unwarranted, undesirable step—and showed altogether too high a degree of initiative."

He paused for a moment, raised his head and looked at Hol-57 again with but two eyes. Then he continued coldly. "R-3i is an as-signed research problem type, and in research types we have been forced to permit a rather high degree of initiative. Evidently your type is particularly undesirable. Fortunately you represent a fairly new type of scarcely seventy individuals, male and female, adult and young.

"The type shall be discontinued. The existent members shall be destroyed. At once. Report at once to Gar-46-N-3."

For a single instant Hol-5/s great body stiffened again. He remained rigid, undecided. But just for an instant.

Then, slowly, he relaxed as Grath Muni turned away and pressed a tiny stud.

"Aye—Tharoo," he said softly as the huge Gar-46 entered, a giant seven feet and a half tall, muscled as Hercules never was.

"Aye—Tharoo," he repeated even more softly. In the vocabulary of the Mauns, "Tharoo" meant "Master."

For the Tharoo were the masters. They were the intelligent race for which the planet had been created. They had always been the masters. They always would be. The Maun knew no other time.

Gar-46 took Hol-57 in his charge, and with him, in effect, type R-3i, which had shown an undesirable degree of initiative.