

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Time Mirror, by Clark South

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Time Mirror

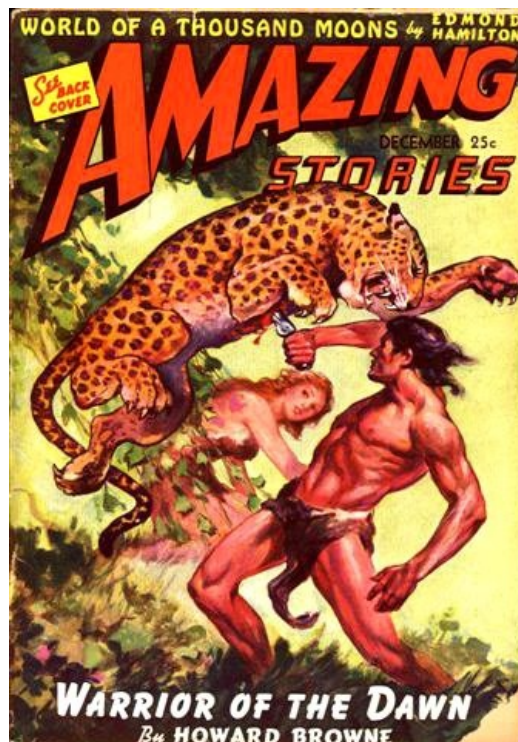
Author: Clark South

Release Date: June 3, 2010 [EBook #32670]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Greg Weeks, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TIME MIRROR ***



The TIME MIRROR

By CLARK SOUTH

[Transcriber Note: This etext was produced from Amazing Stories December 1942. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]

Pale moonlight spilled through the window and over the wedding gifts that crowded the little room.

"And this mirror, darling?" Mark Carter asked. "Who sent it?"

A sudden flicker of worry flashed across Elaine Duchard's lovely face. She bit her lower lip nervously. Pretended to inspect a great silver punchbowl that stood on a nearby table.

"Who did you say sent the mirror?" her sweetheart repeated.

Still another moment of taut hesitation. At last:

"It's from Adrian Vance, Mark."

Here was a strange mirror indeed! It reflected an image all right, but not an image from the same era in history!

"Adrian Vance!"

Mark spat the name as if it were an epithet.

"Sshhh! Not so loud!" A pause. "He's an old friend, dear. I can't forbid him to send us a present. After all he's just trying to be polite."

The man's brown eyes were smouldering. "Those were fine company manners he showed off the night you told him you were going to marry me instead of him!"

Then, savagely:

"I should have knocked out a mouthful of that damned antique dealer's teeth right then! Of all the gall—threatening you; saying you'd regret turning him down—"

Again the girl silenced him.

"Adrian always expected to marry me," she reminded. "My refusal broke him up terribly. He was disappointed. Angry. So he said a lot of things he didn't really mean. Now he's trying to make up for it."

"I still don't like that damned Vance! He's just the kind of snake who'd figure out a way to get revenge. Something hideous—"

Elaine laid her hand gently across her fiance's mouth.

"You're acting jealous, Mark, and there's no need to," she said softly. "You won. Remember? I'm marrying you tomorrow!"

Mark's hands stole around her slim, supple waist and drew her to him. Her thinly-clad body was warm and fragrant in his arms.

"I guess I keep forgetting," he said huskily. "Part of me still can't quite seem to believe it's true. That we're going to be together always."

The girl's ripe lips curved in a little smile. Slender fingers caressed her sweetheart's tanned cheek.

"You can believe it now, Mark," she whispered. "I'm yours. All yours. Forever."

And then, ever so gently, she drew his head down. Their lips met. Clung with young love's ardor.

At last Mark straightened. He drew a deep breath.

"You'd better go to bed now, dear," he advised. "Tomorrow's going to be a hard day."

Another pause. Then a wry smile crossed his lips.

"Besides, your father might not understand why you're wandering around the house with me in the middle of the night, even though we are going to be married tomorrow. That outfit you're wearing is subject to a lot of misinterpretation."

Elaine matched his smile with one of her own. She smoothed the diaphanous, curve-revealing negligee that displayed her charms to such advantage.

"Oh, he'd understand, all right," she retorted. "Only I'm afraid he'd understand a lot of things that aren't true." She gave vent to a dolorous sigh that the merriment sparkling in her blue eyes denied. "Father's all French, you know. He's quick to understand situations where young ladies appear *en deshabille*."

They turned to go. But again the Vance mirror caught Mark's eye.

"Strange-looking affair, isn't it?" he commented.

Elaine nodded. Drawing a comb from some place of concealment about her, she seated herself on a bench before the glass.

A unique creation, that mirror. Circular and fully three feet in diameter, it now stood propped on top of a boudoir table. At first glance its surface somehow gave an impression of queer, concentric waves rippling through it. Yet the reflections it threw back were true; perfect.

The frame was just as paradoxical. It looked as if it once had been garishly ornate. Now, however, age had transmuted gaudiness to an indefinable antique charm.

"Isn't it lovely?" breathed Elaine. She drew the comb through her hair. Watched the mirror and the moonlight transform its golden beauty to a rippling cascade of silver. Mark stared, fascinated, over her shoulder.

"The moonlight's beautiful tonight, Mark!" the girl murmured. "It makes my hair dance in the glass like the waves of the sea." Her voice faded to nothingness. Her eyes were half-closed.

"Your hair is always beautiful, Elaine," her lover whispered, "and it's no lovelier than all the rest

of you, every inch." A moment's hesitation. "But we've got to get to bed, darling. There'll be so much running around tomorrow—"

"Mark!"

Shock was in that sudden exclamation. Shock, and a little lilt of panic. It burst from Elaine's half-parted lips like the *thunk* of a bullet slamming into a hardwood board.

The man jerked to attention. Caught the girl's smooth shoulders in his big hands.

"Elaine! What is it?"

"Look! The mirror!"

"The mirror?" Mark Carter's puzzled brown eyes sought the gleaming surface of the glass. "What—?"

"The reflection! Look!"

Mark stared. Went suddenly tense in stark amazement, eyes wide.

For there, gazing back at him out of the mirror, was a new Elaine. An Elaine who stood beside a great black coach, the like of which had never rolled American highways.



There in the mirror was an image that was NOT a reflection!

This woman's face was Elaine's. Yet there the resemblance ended. The filmy negligee of his own fiancée was replaced by the rich warmth of a scarlet satin gown and endless yards of white lace ruffles. The creamy skin of his own Elaine's bare arms came back as covered with long white gloves to above the elbows. A perky little hat, of scarlet satin to match the dress, and topped with a huge aigrette plume, rode proudly upon the elaborate coiffure of golden hair.

Nor was it only in superficials that the reflection differed.

The other woman had a character all her own, too. It showed in the tilt of her head, the way she stood, the expression on her lovely face.

But most of all it showed in her eyes.

Proud eyes, they were, and intelligent. They looked into Mark's own brown orbs calmly and without flinching. And they were not the eyes of his sweetheart. No. There was an indefinable *something* lurking deep in their cool blue depths that differentiated the reflection from Elaine. That made the woman in the glass another personality. Similar in many ways, yes. Fundamentally the same kind of person, yes.

But not Elaine.

Still Mark stared, mouth agape.

A feeling was growing within him. A strange conviction that he recognized this other Elaine.

"I've seen her before, some place!" he muttered half-aloud.

And then Elaine was speaking again.

"What is it, Mark? What's happened? Why does that mirror reflect back another woman?" The girl's voice carried a little quaver of bewilderment; of fear, almost. Her whole body trembled as if a chill were running through her.

Her voice jerked Mark from his paralysis. He turned sharply. His eyes probed into every corner of the moonlit room, seeking vainly for some clue to account for this impossible phenomenon—

"Mark, I'm afraid!"

Even in the dim light of the little chamber the man could see the color drain from his sweetheart's face as she spoke.

"I've got the most awful feeling down inside of me, Mark. As if that woman was in another world, and as if she was pulling me away from you and into it. My thoughts—they're not mine; they're hers! My mind's draining out of me. Don't let me go, Mark. Don't let me! I love you, Mark—"

"Light! That's what we need!" Mark exploded into action. Sprang toward the wall switch. "Hold on, Elaine. Three hundred watts will drive that damned ghost away—"

"... I'm falling! I'm falling! Oh, Mark, I love you so! Mark, help me! *Help!*"

The girl's voice rose in a scream of wild terror. It tore at Mark's eardrums. Echoed through the stillness of the sleep-bound house like a banshee's wail.

The man's hand knocked up the switch. Flooded the room with light. Even as he did so he was whirling. Springing back to Elaine's side. And barely in time, for her backbone seemed to have turned to water. Her limp body was slipping to the floor in a nerveless heap, her muscles slack and unresponding. By a miracle of balance, Mark's hands caught her in time to break the force of her fall. He lifted her, unresisting, in his arms. Her ashen lips still were moving in the faintest of whispers—

"... *je t'aime, mon cher, je t'aime....*"

Her voice trailed off. A great sigh shook her. She lay unconscious in his arms.

Mark's brain was spinning like a top within his skull. He was breathing hard, and he was trembling, as if he had just run a long way.

"... I love you, my dear, I love you...."

That was what she had said.

But why had she spoken in French?

Even as he hesitated in an agony of indecision, the door burst open. The frail, white-haired figure of Professor Duchard, Elaine's father, stumbled into the room. His eyes were sleep-fogged, and spindly, pajama-clad legs showed below the dressing gown he had thrown about his thin shoulders.

"What is it? What has happened?" he mumbled. Even in his dazed state, he pronounced every syllable. There were no slurrings nor contractions in Professor Duchard's punctilious vocabulary.

"Elaine's fainted."

"Then carry her to her room. I shall get smelling salts from the medicine cabinet."

Turning, the professor scurried away. Mark followed, Elaine's soft body still limp and yielding in his arms. Ascending the stairs to her room, he laid her tenderly on the bed. Even as he did so, the girl's father hurried to his side, a dark green bottle in his hand. The old man was more fully awake now, and he looked down at his daughter with keen, intelligent eyes. Although outwardly he appeared calm, there was a little flicker of worry deep within those sharp blue optics.

"This should revive her!" he announced, waving the bottle. Pulling out the glass stopper, he held the container close under the girl's nose.

Elaine drew a little breath. The fumes swirled into her nostrils. She choked. Jerked spasmodically.

And slumped back, still unconscious!

Again the professor applied the carbonate of ammonium.

Again the results were the same.

The old man straightened.

"I do not like this," he clipped. "You had better tell me just what happened."

Mark shifted nervously under the scrutiny of the sharp blue eyes.

"Start at the beginning," the professor commanded. "I want to know from exactly what this 'fainting spell' resulted."

The younger man nodded slowly.

"It all began after you went to bed," he explained. "I said good-night to Elaine, then decided to step outside and have a smoke before I turned in myself.

"When I got upstairs, Elaine opened her door. She already was undressed—had on the negligee she's wearing now. She said she wasn't sleepy, and that she'd decided to come back down for another look at the presents. So I came along...."

Carefully, yet concisely, Mark outlined the events which had preceded the girl's collapse. When he had finished, Professor Duchard looked even more worried than before.

"I do not like what you tell me," he informed the younger man. "I believe this is a case for a doctor. A good one. I have a friend who is a neurologist. I shall call him."

He disappeared toward the telephone.

Not once in the half-hour preceding the specialist's arrival did the girl stir. She lay upon the big double bed like a lovely corpse, unmoving save for the slight rise and fall of her breasts as she breathed.

The neurologist examined her with keen interest.

"A remarkable case!" he declared. "Her pulse and respiration have slowed to the point where they are scarcely apparent."

Professor Duchard nodded slowly.

"But what does it mean?" exploded Mark, beside him, his handsome young face pale and haggard. "Why can't you revive her?"

The doctor frowned, pinched his chin thoughtfully.

"A remarkable case!" he repeated slowly. "To be frank about it, I can't find the slightest clue as to what's wrong. She seems in a perfect state of health. Organically I can detect no possible cause for this coma. Yet she doesn't respond to any resuscitatory measures."

"But there must be something—"

The specialist shot Mark a disapproving glance. Without a word he opened his bag, taking from it a smaller case of instruments. He selected a long, slender dissecting needle. Plunged its point into a bottle of disinfectant.

"Watch me!" he commanded.

Turning to the bed, he plunged the needle an eighth of an inch into the unconscious girl's breast!

Mark's eyes went wide with horror. He started forward. Found himself halted by Professor Duchard's hand.

"You asked a question, Mark!" the white-haired scientist rapped. "The doctor merely is giving you his answer. Look at her!"

Elaine had not stirred! If anything, she lay even more still than before, not a muscle so much as quivering. Her eyes were closed, her face calm, her golden hair halo-like about her head.

The neurologist bared her thigh. Again plunged in the needle.

She did not move.

A dozen times the physician pricked her, moving over the white surface of her body from one nerve center to another. At last he straightened.

"You see?" he demanded grimly. "Anaesthesia is complete. She feels nothing."

Mark's eyes were horror-stricken. He was breathing hard.

"What does it mean, doctor?" he choked. "What's happened to her?"

The medical man motioned him closer.

"Touch her!" he ordered.

Half-afraid, Mark bent forward. He rested his trembling fingers against the girl's breast. The next instant he jerked back, his face gray with shock.

"My God!" he gasped. "She's dead! Her body's getting cold! She's dead!" His face twisted in a grimace of emotional agony.

"No!" contradicted the neurologist.

"What!"

"No," repeated the other. "She's not dead, young man."

"Then what—"

"The closest I can come to it in language you'd understand is to say that she's falling into a state of suspended animation," the doctor answered. "Her bodily functions are slowing down. I believe this will continue—that eventually her muscles will tighten into catalepsy."

"What will happen eventually?" Professor Duchard broke in.

The neurologist shrugged. "I don't know, professor. My hope is that she simply will continue to lie in a coma. But there is always the possibility that the thread of life will break. That she will die without recovering consciousness—"

"You can't let her!" cried Mark hysterically, unable to restrain himself longer. "She musn't die! She musn't! You've got to do something, doctor! There must be a way—"

"—if it can be found!" interrupted Professor Duchard. He again gripped the younger man's arm. "Do not let yourself go to pieces, my boy. That will not help."

"Because you, yourself, are a man of action, you want our friend, here, to prescribe for Elaine with the same speed and certainty that you would go after a hot news story. Only that is not the way of science, Mark. We must be patient and hope for the best, content in the knowledge that everything possible is being done for Elaine."

He turned to the neurologist.

"What do you recommend, doctor?"

"There's only one thing to do, Professor Duchard. We must place the girl in a hospital, where she can be taken care of properly and kept under observation."

The aged scientist nodded. "Yes. I thought that would be your suggestion."

"If you'll excuse me," the doctor continued, "I shall use your telephone to make the necessary arrangements."

He left the room.

Beside the bed, Mark Carter still stared dumbly down at the girl he loved. The girl who tomorrow—no, today, for it was nearly morning now—was to have become his wife. He tried to speak, but his throat was too twisted and thick with pain for words to come. His broad shoulders were slumped. His brown eyes blurred with tears. A queer, strained sound of awful grief tore itself from somewhere deep within his chest, like the moan of an animal in torment.

A hand touched his shoulder.

"Come, Mark. We can do no more good here."

Mute, stumbling, broken, Mark allowed Professor Duchard to lead him from the room. Down the hall. Into the old man's study.

"Sit down, my boy, and pull yourself together."

Mark dropped into the cool, fragrant depths of a timeworn leather chair. The professor relaxed in another.

"I want you to tell me your story again," Elaine's father said. "Think back carefully. Give me every detail."

Slowly, spiritlessly, Mark forced himself to concentrate on the happenings of the evening. His voice a dull monotone, he again recounted his story.

"This woman," probed Professor Duchard, his bright blue eyes stabbing into the other's brown orbs. "Tell me about her. What did she look like?"

Mark shrugged.

"She was only a reflection in a mirror, professor. It was Elaine. Probably the lighting gave me the illusion of someone else."

"Cease thinking of her as a reflection!" the savant retorted, his voice suddenly sharp. "You are a newspaperman by trade. You have been trained to observe closely. I want you to use those powers now. Think of this woman as a person. Describe her to me as if she were one—"

"She looked like Elaine," said Mark, racking his brain for details. "She looked just like her. Only different, the way two identical twins are different. You know what I mean, professor? The way a person's individual personality sticks out of him in spite of his appearance—"

"Yes. I quite understand."

"Well, that was the way it was with this woman. She was Elaine, but she wasn't. There was something about her that didn't belong to Elaine." His brows knitted. "It seemed as if I'd seen her before, somewhere. Just like I'd known her, but couldn't remember just when or where."

A pause.

"It was her clothing that made us notice her, though. She wore a red satin dress with more white ruffles than I ever saw before. She had a red hat, too, with a big plume. Her hair was done in a different style than I've ever seen. All fixed up. And she wore gloves that reached to above her elbow."

He searched his weary mind for more details. Gave it up in despair,

"I don't know, professor. I can't remember any more. She was just like a picture of one of the women attending a Louis XVI ball in France—"

A sudden light sprang into his brown eyes. He stopped short in mid-sentence.

"That's it!" he cried. "I've got it! I know where I saw her before!"

Professor Duchard leaned forward, blue eyes flashing.

"Where?" he demanded. "Hurry, man! Out with it!"

"You've got a picture of her!" Mark exclaimed excitedly. "Right here, in this study!" He half-rose from the leather chair. Peered into the corner behind him.

"It's gone!"

The professor's face was suddenly pale.

"That picture called 'Elaine Duchard's Escape'? The Jerbette? Is that the one you mean?"

"That's it. That's the one. Where is it?"

"It is gone," the savant answered grimly. "A genuine painting by Gustav Jerbette is worth a great deal of money. And I am not a wealthy man. When Adrian Vance offered to buy it—"

"Adrian Vance! That snake! He's the one who gave Elaine the mirror—"

The white-haired scientist was on his feet, his eyes suddenly very bright and cold. The veins stood out at his temples.

"I want to see that mirror!" he rapped. "This is the first time you have mentioned that it was he who sent it. Come on!"

Together they hurried down the stairs to the little room where the wedding gifts were on display. Mark started across toward the mirror. The professor's hand shot out. Caught the younger man's arm.

"Stand back!" he cried in a terrible voice. "Do not go near that mirror. Above all, do not pass in front of it!"

Mark stared at the savant open-mouthed. His earlier black despair was gone, now, replaced by sudden, inexplicable hope.

"Why not? What's wrong?"

The other licked dry lips.

"Nothing, I hope. The chances are a thousand to one that I am wrong. Yet an idea came to me, my boy. An incredible idea, and a horrible one. And if it is right"—he shook his head slowly—"may God have mercy on Elaine!"

Carefully, then, they approached the mirror. The professor studied it through narrowed eyes from a vantage-point far to one side. At last he turned to Mark.

"Do you notice any defects or flaws in the surface of that glass?" he demanded.

His daughter's fiance nodded.

"The whole thing's out of kilter, professor."

"How would you describe it? What do you mean by 'out of kilter'?"

Mark considered for a moment. Then:

"The impression I get is that this mirror was *poured* into a circular form, instead of being cut to shape. And that while it was still molten, something struck it in the center, so that little ripples formed in the glass, all the way from the center to the outer edge."

It was the scientist's turn to nod.

"Precisely my own view."

Moving away, he selected a candlestick and candle from among the gifts on display. He handed it to Mark.

"I want you to move this stick in front of that glass," he instructed. "However, you must be careful to stand well to one side, so that you, yourself, will not be reflected."

"What's the angle, professor? What do you expect to find? What's wrong with this mirror?"

The elder man shook his head, moved to a point where he could watch the surface of the glass.

"I do not know what to expect," he said. "I may be completely on the wrong track."

But his flashing eyes denied the words.

Seething with curiosity and excitement though he was, Mark carefully carried out his instructions. He moved the candlestick back and forth and up and down until it had been reflected from every inch of the mirror. And the farther he progressed, the more excited Elaine's father became.

"The reflection is perfect!" the old man cried. "It is true! Nowhere is there a single sign of distortion!"

"Yes. Of course it's true." Mark was a little bewildered. "Why shouldn't it be? Isn't every looking-glass supposed to throw back a reasonably exact image?"

"Of course, of course!" The scientist was impatient. "But can you not see the difference?"

"The difference? What difference?"

"Mark: this is not an ordinary mirror. That is what I mean! It denies every law of optics! Glass as full of waves and ripples as this apparently is should return hideously distorted reflections. Yet it does not do so!"

"But what—"

"We shall see. Come on! Bring the mirror to my laboratory."

Hesitating only long enough to throw a tablecloth across the face of the glass, the old man hurried out. Mark strode along in his wake, the heavy mirror in his arms. Together, they left the house and followed the bricked path to the little laboratory structure located at the far end of the lot.

"Set it down here, in this rack," the professor instructed, indicating an easel-like arrangement in one corner. He himself wheeled a strange electrical apparatus into position in front of the glass. Then took up a position behind a large glass screen, and motioned Mark to join him.

"What are you going to do?"

"You shall see!"

The white-haired savant threw a switch. The laboratory's lights went out. He pressed a button on the control board of the apparatus behind which they stood. Leaned forward eagerly, peering through the glass screen at the mirror. Manipulated dials and levers.

An inexplicable excitement gripped Mark. He had a sudden, unshakable conviction that he and the professor were on the verge of incredible discoveries. Discoveries that would lead him to an explanation of the strange coma that held Elaine in its grim sway.

His brown eyes fastened on the mirror. The next instant they went wide with astonishment.

The glass screen behind which he and the professor were standing was clearly reflected.

But it was merely an opaque surface! Neither he nor the scientist could be seen behind it!

As if reading his mind, Professor Duchard gave vent to a little laugh.

"'One-way' glass," he explained. "It permits vision in only one direction." Then the humor went out of his voice. "We may thank God that science developed it before we are through."

Again he leaned forward, his eyes on the mirror.

An instant later he leveled a quivering forefinger.

"*Look!*"

There, in the semi-darkness where stood the looking-glass, a weird figure was beginning to glow!

Tension flooded through Mark's veins. His fingers knotted into fists. His eyes strained to catch the thing which grew upon the mirror's surface.

Slowly, like some wizard's evil phantasmagoria, the glowing lines came together. Took form. Painted a figure—

The figure of the woman in the mirror!

"That's her!" he cried excitedly. "That's the woman we saw reflected instead of Elaine!"

Professor Duchard snapped off the machine beside him. He turned on the lights. Swung around to face his daughter's fiance. His face was grey. Grim lines of worry etched deep into the flesh.

"So that is it!" he said. "That is what he has done to her!"

There was fear in his voice ... living, breathing fear. That and despair. The despair of utter hopelessness. His shoulders sagged with it. The sparkle had gone out of his eyes.

Mark gripped the old man's arm. Blood lust flamed in his own brown orbs. Every muscle was taut. The cords in his neck stood out like knotted ropes.

"What is it?" he demanded savagely. "Is it Vance? What has he done to her?"

Wearily, the scientist pulled his arm away and gestured the other to a seat.

"I shall tell you," he said. "You will not believe me, but I shall tell you."

"Yes. Go on. I'll decide for myself whether I'll believe you or not."

The professor stared into Mark's eyes.

"How much do you know about time?" he demanded.

"Time?"

"Yes. And time travel."

The younger man shrugged.

"Practically nothing," he admitted. "Oh, I've read a few stories, of course. But that's all. I don't know what the theory of it all is, if that's what you mean."

"I thought so." Professor Duchard sighed. "That being the case, there is little use in my wasting energy trying to give you any real understanding of it."

"However, I can tell you this: time is not the immutable thing most people presume it to be. Actually, it is only another dimension. As a research physicist, I have for many years been convinced of this."

"You mean that time travel really is possible? That men can be transported into the future or the past—"

The other held up a restraining hand.

"Yes. Time travel *is* possible, if men could break through into that other dimension." A pause. "Yet up until tonight, I never believed that man had found a way to pass that barrier."

"But professor! Think what you're saying! You're telling me that I could go back and murder my own grandfather. That I could prevent myself from being born—"

Again the elder man sighed.

"I was afraid of this," he said. "I knew you could not understand." He hesitated. Then: "At any rate, take my word for it that time travel is possible. Also, I assure you that there are any number of perfectly sound theoretical and practical reasons why you never could hope to murder your grandparents."

The other brushed the words aside.

"What about Elaine? What's all this got to do with her?"

"Everything. You see, my boy, it is *not* possible for us to transport our material bodies across time. They cannot bridge the gap. They must remain in the period in which they are born—"

"But Elaine—"

Never had Mark seen the white-haired savant so solemn. His aged face was drawn with worry. Yet there was terrifying self-confidence in his words.

"Elaine," he said quietly, "at this moment is trapped in time!"

There was a moment of stunned silence, then. Mark's brain was spinning. He stared at Professor Duchard through narrowed eyes, half-convinced that the man was mad. And yet—

"I am not insane," the scientist declared, as if answering an unspoken question. "Believe me, my boy, I am not."

"Go on."

"That mirror which Adrian Vance sent to my daughter actually is a crude time machine. A device for transporting a human soul to another period. Who devised it I cannot say. I believe it is old, and that Vance came upon it only by chance."

"But it isn't a machine. It's just a mirror—"

"Yet it is the gate through which a mind may be reflected into past or future. All that is needed is a focal point. A person to receive that mind. In this case, Adrian Vance made the focal point one of my ancestors, the first Elaine Duchard."

"The first Elaine Duchard!"

"Yes. She was the woman in the picture. And the woman whose image we now find imprinted in that devil's mirror."

"But how—"

"You remember how Adrian Vance swore vengeance when Elaine refused to marry him." The aged savant's voice choked with anger. "This must be what he planned. He bought the picture Gustav Jerbette painted of my ancestor. Then, by some process, imprinted her portrait in the center of this mirror, whose secret he somehow discovered. Apparently the picture does not show except at a certain angle. Perhaps only my daughter's coloring or facial configuration would ordinarily bring it out." He shrugged. "That I do not know."

Mark nodded slowly. He was breathing hard, his eyes dark with anger.

"At any rate," the other continued, "Elaine tonight looked into the mirror. By some accident—an accident Vance had counted on taking place eventually, of course—, she happened to get exactly the right angle. She saw her ancestor. Her mind flashed back through time, into that other Elaine Duchard's brain—"

And then, all at once, the old man's iron will cracked.

"She is trapped!" he cried in a voice like the wail of a north wind through the pines. "She is trapped in the body of that first Elaine Duchard, while her own lies here, a useless, unconscious husk! She will die, as our ancestor died—"

"What do you mean? How did the first Elaine Duchard die?" Mark was on his feet, fists clenched.

Professor Duchard sat slumped forward, his face buried in his hands, white hair awry.

"She was a tragic figure," he mumbled. "You saw her picture. You know how beautiful she was.

"She came from a minor family of the French nobility, but she loved a young Jacobin—a man such as those who, a few years later, overthrew the monarchy and founded the French republic.

"She had another suitor, however. A Baron Morriere. When he learned that she was going to marry another, he kidnapped her the night before her wedding. Her lover was present at the time, and was nearly killed trying to protect her. Later he returned to help her escape from the Chateau Morriere. They succeeded in getting away.

"But the baron's guards tracked them down and murdered them both two days later. And Gustav Jerbette gained his first renown—he was then but a young student—when he immortalized them by painting his famous picture, 'Elaine Duchard's Escape'."

"And now Elaine—"

The old man straightened wearily.

"Our Elaine will die," he said. "Her mind will be wiped out when the Morriere pikes stab through my ancestor's body."

"There must be some way of calling her back—"

"If there is, I do not know it." He shook his head. "No. There is nothing we can do."

"We can try!"

Mark's voice rang out like the clang of a great iron bell, echoing with grim resolve. His tanned jaw jutted hard with determination. His eyes flashed brown fire.

Elaine's father let his hands fall in a hopeless gesture.

"What is there to try, my boy? Elaine's mind is gone, back a hundred and fifty years into the past. Her body lies unconscious in a hospital. What can we do?"

A savage, humorless smile played over the other's lips.

"Earlier this evening you said I was a man of action," he told the savant tautly. "You said I knew how to handle things I knew about. Well, I think it's time for action. Real action!"

"But what action can we take? What can—"

"Who's responsible for what's happened to Elaine?"

"Responsible? Adrian Vance is responsible, of course. There is too much evidence for it to be coincidence—"

"Right!" Mark's eyes were black with rage. "That snake planned this. He said he'd get revenge. This"—he gestured toward the mirror—"is his way of doing it!"

"All this is rather obvious," the scientist commented wearily. "But the fact that Vance is guilty of this atrocity does us no good. Nor does it help Elaine—"

"But it will!"

"It will? How?"

The younger man hunched forward tensely.

"We're going to catch that devil and strangle an answer out of him!" he grated. "We're going to make him tell us how to bring Elaine safely back to 1942!"

"And if he does not know how? If he cannot help us?"

"That'll be too bad. Because then we'll just keep on strangling him." He laughed harshly. "Oh, yes. Vance may win. We may not be able to save Elaine. But"—and his face was terrible to see—"Vance certainly won't live long enough to gloat much!"

A spark of hope sprang into Professor Duchard's blue eyes.

"I wish I could believe you—"

"Forget it. We've got more important things to do than wishing. Look out that window!"

The white-haired scientist turned to the casement toward which the other pointed. Saw dawn reddening the eastern sky.

"It's morning already," Mark went on determinedly. "In a few hours more, we can start things rolling by having you call up Vance."

"Call up Vance? What would I say?"

The devil's bitter mirth played in the other's eyes. But it was a mirth spiked with menace.

"Simple. Just don't let on anything's wrong. Pretend that the wedding's to come off as scheduled. Then tell him that things are in a mess. All the excitement's got you tied in a knot. Because he's such a close friend of Elaine's, you thought maybe he'd be willing to lend a hand."

The spark of hope in the professor's eyes brightened to a glowing coal.

"I wonder...." he mused. "It might work—"

"Of course it'll work. It's got to. It's the only chance we have...."

It was nine fifteen precisely when Adrian Vance rang the doorbell. He stepped back. Polished the nails of his right hand on the grey suede glove which still garbed the left.

The door swung open.

"Good morning, professor."

"Good morning, Adrian." The savant stepped aside. "Please come in."

Not by the slightest vocal tremor or change of expression did the old man hint of his secret—that if necessary Adrian Vance would never leave this place alive!

"It is kind of you to come," he told the antiquarian as he led the way toward the back of the dwelling. "I never knew that a wedding could cause so much turmoil." He chuckled softly. "Of course, I have had little experience in such matters, my wife being dead and Elaine an only child. And my own nuptials were celebrated a good many years ago."

Every word, every inflection, was perfect. No actor could have matched that sinister soliloquy.

Vance smoothed the sleek black hair that at once crowned and characterized him.

"It's a great privilege to be allowed to assist in any way at Elaine's wedding," he observed unctuously. "Anything which I can do to help make this a happier occasion for her is a pleasure."

Blue fire flared in the scientist's eyes. He looked away quickly.

A moment later his composure was regained.

"There are some things in the laboratory I wish to bring to the house," he announced. "If you will come this way—" He opened the back door. Led the antique dealer down the brick walk to the laboratory.

Together, they stepped inside.

The door swung shut. In the silence its jarring slam echoed like a shot fired in a tomb.

Vance cleared his throat.

"So this is your laboratory, professor—"

Mark Carter stepped out of the shadows. His tanned face looked as if it had been carved from the rock of ages. His eyes were pools of sudden death.

He spoke:

"Elaine's gone, Vance. Through the mirror. We want her back."

Just that. Nothing more. But suddenly Vance was shaking.

"What are you talking about? I don't know what you mean."

Professor Duchard said:

"You are lying. I have examined the mirror. I tested with black light. It showed the picture of the first Elaine Duchard."

"You're mad," said Vance. "You don't make sense."

"I fear I make too much sense, Adrian Vance. I wish I could disbelieve my own mind. But I cannot. I know that you have found a way to pass the barrier between space and time. I know that you have projected Elaine's mind into the past, leaving her body behind in a state of suspended animation."

"And we want her back, Vance," Mark broke in. "We want her back right now!"

He was moving forward, a juggernaut of menace, clenched fists half-raised.

"Keep away from me!" the antiquarian shrilled. His greasy face was paste-colored with terror. "Keep away! Don't touch me!"

The other caught his shoulders. Shook him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"Tell us!" he thundered. "Tell us how to bring her back!"

"I don't know what you're talking about! There wasn't anything wrong with the mirror I sent Elaine!"

"Tell us—"

The professor caught Mark's arm.

"Stop!" he begged. "Do not hurt him. There is a better way."

"A better way? What do you mean?"

The scientist turned to Vance.

"I am sure you are telling the truth," he said. "I feel certain the mirror is harmless." His tone was silky. A thin smile rippled across his aged face.

He was like a cat playing with a mouse.

"Only our friend, young Mr. Carter, remains to be convinced," he went on. "However, we shall have no difficulty in proving him wrong."

Adrian Vance stared at the professor in terrified fascination. His lips moved, but no words came.

The savant hurried across to an ancient desk which stood in one corner. Rummaged through it. Came back with a big sheet of heavy paper.

"Over there," said the professor—gesturing toward the spot where the mirror still stood upon the easel, again shrouded by the tablecloth—"is the glass that has caused all the trouble."

He smiled sympathetically at Vance.

"All so unnecessary, too, Adrian!"

"Unnecessary?"

"Of course. We shall demonstrate to Mark right now that it is not a means of time travel."

"Demonstrate?" Vance was shaking again. "How?"

Again the professor smiled.

"Oh, very simply. I have here"—he held up the heavy paper—"a lithographed portrait of the late General George A. Custer. You will recall he was killed by Indians at the battle of Little Big Horn—popularly known as Custer's last stand."

Vance's teeth suddenly were chattering.

"We shall hang this picture on your chest, Adrian," Professor Duchard went on. "Then we shall stand you in front of that mirror and give you a chance to concentrate on the reflection." He chuckled softly. "Of course, since the mirror has nothing to do with time travel, you need have no fear of your mind leaving your body and going back to that of General Custer, and death in a Sioux massacre—"

Without warning, Vance erupted into action.

As if by magic, the panic fled his face. His features contorted with hate. His eyes suddenly were glistening pinpoints of jet.

And even faster moved his sinuous body. He snaked free of Mark's restraining grasp. Sprang back like a wounded tiger. His right hand darted under his coat to his left armpit like a Gila monster streaking for cover.

Mark Carter's lips twisted in a snarl of rage. He lunged after the antiquarian, big fists balled and deadly.

"Look out!"

It was Professor Duchard, his voice a shrill warning blast.

Mark's eyes shifted. He caught the sudden spearing movement of Vance's right hand. Lashed out in savage fury to meet the new threat.

The antiquarian shrank back. The other's fist drove by him. Missed him by a hair.

And then his right hand was back in view. Back, and gripping the butt of a long-barreled Smith & Wesson Magnum. His teeth were bared, in a grimace of hideous triumph.

Like a rattlesnake striking, he slashed out with the heavy gun. Brought it down at his adversary's head in a vicious blow.

Mark still reeled, off balance, from his own missed blow. But he saw the gun descending. Threw up his arm to ward it off.

The barrel caught him at the juncture of shoulder and collar bones. Sent screaming pain stabbing to the farthest reaches of his brain. Paralyzed his whole side. He staggered drunkenly.

Again that triumphant leer contorted Vance's hatchet face. Once more he whipped the pistol barrel down.

And this time his aim was true. This time the heavy gun slammed home square at the base of the other's brain.

The universe was exploding inside Mark's skull. A crimson universe, with planets that burst into bloody flame. His control centers went numb. The life vanished from his muscles. He felt himself falling ... falling ... falling....

As if in some macabre nightmare, he heard Adrian Vance laugh. Saw the antiquarian step back and bring the gun in his hand to bear on Professor Duchard.

"So you're going to force me to bring Elaine back to the twentieth century!" the rejected suitor mocked. "So you think you still have a chance to save her from death at the hands of Baron Morriere's retainers!"

The old man's eyes were like blue steel as he met the antiquarian's gaze.

"You devil!" he said. "You admit it! You have killed her!"

Vance nodded, his narrow face sinister.

"Of course I admit it. Why shouldn't I? What is there you can do about it? Or do you think the police are going to hold me on a charge of subjecting your daughter to involuntary time travel by sending her a mirror?" He laughed harshly, smoothed his sleek black hair. Then continued:

"Yes, professor. Go to the police. Tell them all about my hideous crimes." Again he laughed. "See how long it takes them to put you under psychiatric observation."

The aged scientist's lips quivered with passion and despair.

"Why do you stay?" he cried. "You have won. Why do you mock us? Go away! Let us alone!"

"Oh, no." The other shook his head. "I don't want to leave just yet, professor. There are still some things I have to tell you. Things I learned while making preparations for Elaine's little trip."

He paused to gloat.

"How thoroughly have you investigated the case of that first Elaine Duchard, in whose body your daughter now resides, Professor Duchard?" he demanded.

The white-haired savant did not even answer. He leaned weakly against a laboratory bench, a broken man.

"Did you know, for instance," Adrian Vance continued, "that Baron Morriere's men tortured Elaine Duchard before they murdered her?"

"You fiend! Not even a savage would do a thing like that!"

Vance chuckled evilly.

"You exaggerate," he sneered. "Besides, Elaine's sweetheart, here"—he prodded the still-prone Mark with his foot—"no doubt will protect her."

His face darkened.

"And if you did not want harm to befall her, why did you let her reject me when I asked to marry her? I gave her her chance. When she didn't take it, what else could she expect but my revenge?"

"Go away. Please go away."

On the floor, Mark stirred uneasily. His brain was clear now, though his head throbbed like a jungle tom-tom under the beat of a mad witch doctor. Slowly, he tried his muscles. Tensed them. Relaxed them. Tested them for complete control.

Vance said:

"In case you still have any notions of rescuing your daughter from the far reaches of time, professor, forget them now. It's impossible to call a person back. In the first place, a time mirror would be needed—and the only one in existence, the one I bought from a French sorcerer who once studied under Eliphaz Levi, now stands on that easel in the corner."

Sobs racked the other's frail form. He still leaned against the bench, his face buried in his hands.

But on the floor, Mark Carter's jaw grew hard. He readied himself for a savage leap.

"Furthermore," their captor went on, "your precious Elaine remembers nothing of her life in this century. For all practical purposes she has become the first Elaine Duchard. I know this, because I tried out the mirror by sending one of my clerks three months into the past. He was possessed by a strange amnesia that left his mind a perfect blank so far as what had happened in those three months was concerned!"

The antiquarian paused, savoring the full effect of his words on Elaine's father with evil glee. His black eyes were shining with hell's own fire.

And in that tense, silent second, Mark Carter struck.

He came off the floor like a tiger springing, and the roar of a jungle beast was in his throat. His arms shot out to embrace Adrian Vance's legs and pull him down. His fingers hungered for the feel of his enemy's throat.

He was still in the air when the other moved. Like lightning, Vance leaped aside. Away from Mark's clutching hands. He landed, tense and poised, the gun in his fist sighted on young Carter's chest, a grin of triumph splitting his oily face.

"Did you think I was asleep, you fool?" he crowed. "Did you think I wasn't watching you every second out of the corner of my eye? I've been ready to kill you from the moment your eyelids first fluttered!"

Mute, his face still livid with hate, Mark staggered to his feet.

"Come on!" Vance challenged. "If you think you can jump me before I pull the trigger, come ahead! I'll be glad to take my chances before a jury when you're dead!"

Elaine's fiance glared helplessly. His fists clenched and relaxed again and again.

"You win," he said at last, his face grey beneath its tan. "Go on. Get out. You've got us licked."

But the antiquarian shook his head.

"Not quite yet," he answered. "I've still got one job to do."

Then, so fast the eye could hardly follow, his gun-hand came up.

Bang—bang—bang!

Three shots he fired. Three shots, straight toward the easel in the corner. Dead center into the mirror that stood upon it.

There was a wild tinkling of falling glass. The tablecloth slipped away. Revealed the shattered remnants of the time mirror.

"I'm taking no chances!" cried Vance. "Professor Duchard's reputation as a research physicist is too high." And then, mockingly: "However, I doubt that even he can make any good use of that mirror now!"

With that final sally, he backed away and out the door, the Magnum in his hand still grim and unwavering as he covered Mark and the old scientist.

Curtly:

"I wouldn't come out too soon if I were you."

The door slammed shut.

Mark started forward. But the professor caught his arm.

"It is useless," the savant said. "To follow him would bring death and would avail nothing, my boy. He has won."

Like men in a daze, then, they stared into each other's eyes. They saw only dull hopelessness. The last spark was gone out.

Slowly, Mark walked over to the corner where stood the shattered mirror. Looked blankly down at its fragments. Bending, he picked up a splinter. Inspected it idly.

The next instant he whirled about.

"Professor Duchard!" he rapped. "How did this devil's looking-glass work?"

The scientist looked up dispiritedly, shrugged.

"I could not make you understand. It is a complicated matter of space-time theory—"

The other strode back to him. Gripped his shoulder.

"I don't care about the details. Just try to give me a simplified version of the principle."

Professor Duchard gazed into the younger man's eyes. Caught the fierce light within them—the gleam of spirit that marks those who will not be downed for long, no matter what the odds. The ray of struggle that only death could take away.

For a long moment, then, the old man sat buried in thought. At last he looked up again. Broke the silence.

"Have you ever seen the physical experiment in which a wave of sound is used to break a glass?"

"No. But I've heard of it. I know what you're talking about."

"Very well, then. Imagine, if you can, that the barrier between space and time is that glass. It is apparently impenetrable."

"I see." Elaine's fiance nodded eagerly.

"Then try to conceive of a terrific wave of energy being concentrated against it, just as the sound wave is concentrated on the glass. But this time, the wave must be so manipulated as to strike the barrier as a pebble strikes and breaks a window. Otherwise it would be too weak to break through. Or, if it was strong enough, it would break down the entire space-time relationship."

Again Mark nodded, this time more slowly.

"You mean that the wave of energy really must be like a sword, stabbing one small hole through the barrier?"

"Exactly." A pause. "The time mirror represented just such a hole through the barrier. What appeared to us to be waves in the glass actually were frozen ripples in the space-time continuum—just as if you had dropped a stone in water, and the hole and ripples had frozen."

"Then when you looked into the mirror—"

"Your mind went out through that gap in the barrier. Ordinarily, of course, you would not even know that this was happening. But if your mind was concentrated on something in the past or future—as Elaine's was upon the picture of her ancestor—, you were automatically hurtled through time to that period."

The younger man frowned.

"Then why didn't my mind go, too, when Elaine's did? We both were looking into the mirror."

"But from different angles," the professor reminded him. "Remember, the actual break in the continuum was relatively small. Elaine, seated before the mirror, must have been directly in front of the gap, so she was sucked through. You, on the other hand—"

"Yes. I was standing up. Off center. So I didn't go." Mark nodded. "I see."

"And now," said the scientist, "the mirror is broken. Our last chance of saving Elaine is gone."

"No!"

"What?" The professor peered up at the other incredulously. "What do you mean, Mark?"

Brown eyes narrowed with excitement, Elaine's sweetheart held out the splinter of glass he had picked up. He shook it in front of the savant's face.

"Professor, every piece of glass that went to make up that mirror is laying over there on the floor."

"I am sorry, my boy." The elder man frowned. "I do not understand."

"Professor, if you break your glasses, all you have to do to get a new pair is to take the pieces to an optician. He'll figure the formula of the lens from the fragments and make you a new set."

"You mean—"

"I mean that we can put the pieces of that mirror together as if it was a jigsaw puzzle. From it, you can figure out some kind of a formula. Then, by experimenting, you can find what kind of energy bolt it takes to blast through the barrier!"

Something of the man's intensity, his enthusiasm, communicated itself to the professor. His blue eyes came alight.

"It is conceivable!" he declared. "Not likely. But conceivable." He gripped the fragment of glass which Mark held. "Yes! We shall try it! If it works, we can—"

He stopped short. His face fell.

"We can what?" he finished. "Another time mirror will not help us bring Elaine back—"

His companion interrupted fiercely:

"How do we know? There's always a chance we'll think of something, isn't there? And it's a cinch we won't accomplish anything just sitting here."

"But—"

"The least we can do is try!"

They worked like madmen in the hours that followed, heedless of the wedding guests who came and went from the house in bewildered knots. Unmindful of gashed fingers, Mark fitted the slivers of mirror together, while Professor Duchard tested and analyzed and figured at his side.

And then—

"I have it!" shouted the savant triumphantly. "I have the formula!"

"Then we can construct another mirror?"

Some of the old man's elation dropped away. He shook his head.

"Not yet. We know only the *effect* we want. But how to achieve it—" He shrugged.

Experiments. More experiments. Hours of experiments, with Mark and the professor hovering over an electric crucible bubbling with molten glass.

Hours of failure.

At last the old scientist straightened, his face haggard with weariness.

"It is no use," he said sadly. "I have exhausted my knowledge, and to no avail."

He turned away, shoulders sagging. Stumbled toward the door.

The next instant Mark's voice rose in a scream.

"*Look out!*"

Instinctively, without so much as a backward glance, the old man lunged forward. Even as he did so, he felt something jerk at his ankle. His leg came out from under him. He pitched to the floor.

Crash!

The crucible was falling, jerked from its place atop the lab bench! The electric cable which

supplied its current was twisted about the professor's ankle, somehow unconsciously caught by his foot as he worked.

Molten glass burst out of the pot in a white-hot wave. Slopped over the composition floor in a steaming river. Engulfed table legs and radiator pipes alike.

And then, like a writhing snake, the high tension line from which the crucible cable stemmed was whipping down, torn loose by the jar of the professor's leap!

Down it came! Struck the floor once. Lashed against the glass-engulfed radiator pipes, bare wires flashing.

A ball of purple fire exploded at the contact point, while the cable jerked and twisted like a living thing. The laboratory was suddenly permeated with ozone's peculiar odor.

"Look out!" cried Mark again.

But already Professor Duchard had jerked his foot free of the crucible line. He shrank back under the long bench, away from the writhing cable.

An instant later the current went dead. The crackling ball of purple fire evaporated into thin air.

Mark sprang across the room to where the scientist lay. He pulled him to his feet.

"Are you all right, professor? Are you hurt?"

"Yes, yes, my boy. It was a narrow escape, but your warning saved me. I am all right."

The savant leaned against the bench, trying to still the reflexive trembling of his body. His face was pale. He ran his tongue over lips suddenly gone dry as he stared down at the broken high tension line, and thought of what would have happened had it touched him in its spasm.

And then, suddenly, his blue eyes went wide with stark amazement.

"Mark!" he gasped.

"What's wrong, professor? What is it?"

"That glass on the floor! Look at it!"

The other stared uncomprehendingly.

"The waves, Mark! See the waves!"

A startled exclamation burst from the younger man's lips. He dropped to his knees. Scrutinized the puddle of glass.

But the scientist pulled him erect again.

"My instruments!" he ordered in a voice that trembled. "Quick! I must make tests—"

For half an hour he worked. And when at last he straightened, complete confidence gleamed deep in his eyes.

"Is it—"

Professor Duchard nodded.

"It is. That was the secret, my boy. The secret we sought but could not find. The time mirror is merely a special glass which has been subjected to a terrific electrical discharge, then silvered. That piece on the floor is worthless, of course; too many elements were uncontrolled.

"But knowing the formula as we do; knowing exactly what we are searching for and how to prepare it, I would stake my reputation that we can duplicate the mirror Adrian Vance sent to Elaine."

Mark's eyes were gleaming. His jaw hard.

"Then do it!" he commanded.

"But what good would it do? We cannot bring Elaine back—"

"Maybe not." The other's tanned face was grim. "But we can send me back to where she is."

"Send you back!"

"Yes." A pause. "You see, I've been thinking about the things you've told me, Professor Duchard. About time travel, and how it works.

"You say we can't save Elaine. Well, that's probably true. Maybe she's got to die in France, back in the days before the revolution."

A tremor of emotion passed over him as he said it. He swallowed hard. Then:

"But if she must die, she can at least die easily. Cleanly. Quickly, with a knife through her heart. She doesn't have to go the way Adrian Vance wants her to—tortured by a bunch of drunken scum, then cut to pieces without a chance to fight back."

There was pain in the professor's face, too, when he answered.

"I wish it were as easy as that, Mark."

Mark's voice was fierce.

"What's wrong with it? What's to stop me?"

The other sighed. Brushed back white hair with a sweep of one frail hand.

"You cannot change history, my boy," he said sadly. "A study of cosmology would show you that such things are immutable. You can go backward or forward through time and participate in them, but you cannot change them."

"How do you know? Who's traveled through time and then come back to say we can't change events?"

"You do not understand—"

"And I don't care!" the younger man flared. "I may fail—but I'm going to try! I'm not going to sit here, waiting for Elaine to die—"

"But you would have no memory of your life in this century! Remember what Vance said—"

"Right. That's the one thing that might stop me. I'm counting on you to take care of it, though. Is there anything you can do?"

There was a long moment of tension-studded silence. Then:

"Perhaps there is. I have been working on equipment to prevent fighter pilots 'blacking out' during power dives, and I believe there is a relationship between time travel and terrific speeds in space. It is possible that I could insulate you—"

"That's all I need, then. Make me a mirror, professor, and something to insulate me—"

"But you have no focal point! You might go through time to a place a thousand miles and a thousand years from where Elaine is captive—"

Mark laughed harshly.

"Wrong, professor! I've got the most accurate focal point in the world. Or I will have—"

"The most accurate—? What do you mean?" The old man's face was bewildered.

"I'll have the same focal point Elaine had, sir: Gustav Jerbette's painting, 'Elaine Duchard's Escape'." Again that laugh. "I'm going now to steal it from Adrian Vance!"

The house of Adrian Vance was one befitting a professional dealer in antiquities. It set far back from the street, towering against the sky like the black bulk of a medieval castle. A high iron fence surrounded it.

At this moment Mark Carter stood surveying the estate from the shelter of a nearby clump of trees.

"It's like a damned fortress!" he muttered to himself. "He's taking no chances on anyone getting in."

Turning, then, he gripped a branch of the nearest tree. Swung up into it. Clambered out, cat-like, until he lay beyond the fence and above the grounds of Vance's home.

The limb bowed under his weight as he proceeded until at last he was able to drop lightly to the ground.

One hazard passed!

"And with no worries about that fence being wired for an alarm system, either!" he told himself triumphantly.

He hurried toward the house, thankful for the darkness of the night.

On one side of the big building lay a terrace. French windows opened onto it.

Like a wraith in the night, taking advantage of every shrub and patch of shadow, Mark crept close to the casements.

They were locked.

The trespasser stripped off his coat. Wrapped it around his hand, a bulky, protective wad of cloth covering the flesh. Then, as silently as possible, he pressed on one of the small panes of glass close beside the lock. Harder ... harder ... harder....

With a faint tinkle of falling glass, the pane gave way.

Tense seconds crawled by on leaden feet. Mark's mouth was dry, his throat cottony. He stood taut, his back to the wall, waiting fearfully for some sign that Vance had been aroused.

At last he relaxed again. Reached through the broken pane and unlocked the big window. Swung it open, ever so gently, and stepped inside, fading swiftly into the thick blackness of the nearest corner.

Once Mark had interviewed a burglar as a feature assignment. He remembered the man's words now.

"Gettin' in ain't the hard part," the second-story worker had explained. "It's gettin' out that's tough. The first thing you gotta do on a job is to line up an exit."

Now, as his eyes grew accustomed to the blackness, Mark searched for a means of escape. There was a window at the far end of the room. He approached it with swift, silent strides. Opened it wide.

The slightest of creakings caught his ear. Instantly he was on the alert, every muscle tense.

The sound was not repeated. He relaxed.

Where would the picture be?

A large canvas hung above the fireplace. He tiptoed over to it.

The lovely face of the first Elaine Duchard looked down at him!

With trembling fingers he whipped a knife from his pocket. Looked about for a chair to stand on —

"It ain't smart to work a room without fixin' the door first," the burglar had said. "You feel lots better if you know nobody ain't gonna stumble in on you unexpected."

Ten seconds later Mark had wedged a straight-back chair under the knob of the only door leading into the rest of the house.

Turning, he hurried back to the Jerbette painting. With swift, deft slashes he cut it from its frame. Started to roll it up.

"Ah! A visitor!"

The trespasser whirled as if he had been stabbed. He stumbled from the chair on which he stood. As he did so, the brilliant beam of a five-cell flashlight hit him square in the face like a physical blow. It blinded him. Left him helpless.

"No doubt this is just a social call. Too bad that the police will call it breaking and entering with larcenous intent!"

It was the oily, mocking voice of Adrian Vance, and it came from the French window through which Mark had entered.

"Try to lie out of it!" Vance gloated. "Just try to explain that picture in your hands!"

"I don't have to explain, Vance. You know why I'm here."

The wail of a siren sounded in the distance.

"Oh, of course I know." The other was laughing softly, greasily. "But will the police understand, Carter? That siren you hear—it's coming here, you know; I called the station before I came down to grab you."

Mark's heart jumped like a wounded stag. He looked around wildly. Was this to be the end of it all? Was he to lie in jail while Elaine went to her death, back there in Bourbon France?

His captor was speaking again:

"I didn't dream I could have this much luck! To see that slut Elaine dead—that was the height of my ambition. But now—to have you sent to the penitentiary for burglary—"

The words ended in a roar of laughter. It died, and Vance went on, his tone grim and deadly:

"It's time you dropped that picture, Carter. Drop it—and put your hands up!"

The picture! The one link between 1942 and 1780!

"Drop it!"

Slowly, Mark's hands relaxed. He let the picture fall to the floor.

"Now—raise your hands and walk over to the corner. Stand with your face to the wall!"

Mark moved like one paralyzed. His hands came up as if they were weighted with lead. His brown eyes were fixed on the shadowy finger back of the flashlight, and impotent rage and hatred seethed within them.

Yet what could he do? Jump Vance? Try to wrest the inevitable gun from the antiquarian's hand?

Almost imperceptibly, he shook his head. No. It was impossible. His slug-riddled body would pitch lifeless to the floor before he could take two steps forward.

Nor was it mere fear of death that made him halt. That he would have faced, and gladly.

But what actually held him back was that such a suicidal attempt would avail him nothing. It would bring him no nearer his real goal than before: Elaine still would meet that awful doom which history had recorded as her fate!

"Turn around, damn you! Get over to the corner! Put your face to the wall!"

Ever so slowly, Mark turned. His brain was pounding with frantic effort as he strove to find some flaw in the awful wall of circumstance that rose about him.

And then he saw the curtain!

It was just an ordinary curtain, buff-colored and a trifle stiff with starch.

But it hung in front of the window he had opened as an emergency exit when he came in. At the moment, it swayed ever so slightly in the ripple of draft.

Most important of all, that window was set in the wall against which Adrian Vance had directed that he stand. The corner Vance had indicated was a step to the right of where Mark now stood; the window, a step to the left. And a grand piano half-sheltered it from the antiquarian's line of fire!

"Hurry up! Get into that corner!"

Instinctively, the captive tensed to leap.

But the picture! What about it? He must have it! Without that painting, the time mirror Professor Duchard was constructing would be useless!

Then, suddenly, a grim smile played across Mark's lips. There was an angle! There was one wild chance by which he might escape alive and take Jerbette's masterpiece with him!

"Hurry up, or I'll shoot!"

Like a stone from a sling, Mark hurled himself toward the window in a headlong dive. The blackness of the outer night engulfed him.

In the room behind, Vance's Magnum roared a cannonade of death. Copper-jacketed slugs splintered the sill at the fleeing man's heels.

Mark landed on one shoulder in a somersaulting roll. The next instant he was on his feet and sprinting for the shadows at the corner of the house.

Flashlight in hand, Vance sprang to the open window.

On Mark ran, and on. Around the house as fast as he could go. Then the smooth plateau of the terrace loomed before him, with its wide-open French window.

He slowed, silenced his pounding footsteps.

On the other side of the big room, still peering out the window through which Mark had hurled himself, stood Vance. His sleek form was silhouetted behind the flashlight's beam.

Like a wraith in the night, the other slipped inside. He crossed the room on tiptoe. His hand darted down to snatch the rolled picture from where it still lay on the floor.

And then Vance turned. His flashlight caught Mark.

But this time it was the antiquarian who was surprised. He jerked back. Already his adversary was leaping for the cover of a heavy mahogany table. Vance snapped a shot at him. Tried again to place him with the light.

Mark's hand came down on a porcelain vase. He hurled it at Vance with all his might.

Vainly, his enemy tried to dodge. But too late. The vase *thunk'd* home against his left shoulder. The flashlight fell to the floor.

Like a thunderbolt, Elaine's fiance lunged forward. His left hand slashed down; pinioned the arm that held the Magnum. His right fist came up with express-train speed. Smashed home on the point of Vance's jaw. The antiquarian's body jerked spasmodically. Went limp. Sagged to the floor.

But now the sound of harsh voices and running feet came to Mark's ears.

Clutching the Jerbette painting in one hand, he ducked back out the window. Even in the gloom he could see black figures converging on the house. A sedan stood in the driveway, its spotlight sweeping the house.

"The police!"

Cold sweat stood out on Mark's forehead as he gasped the exclamation. But he did not hesitate. Keeping to the shadows, he headed for the still-open gate through which the car had come.

The iron fence loomed close. He ran along it in a half-crouch.

"Hey, you! Stick 'em up or we shoot!"

For the barest fraction of a second Mark halted in mid-stride. The spotlight was swinging toward him.

But the gate was only a dozen yards away. He made for it in a mad rush. Bullets sang about him. Slugs ricocheted from the iron spikes. But on he went. Lunged through the opening and into the shadowy fastnesses across the street.

The return to Professor Duchard's laboratory was a nightmare of mad dashes and narrow escapes. Squad cars seemed everywhere. Police always on his heels.

And then—

He was slipping through the door, alive and unharmed, with the picture clasped under his arm!

The professor jerked about from the task of hanging a new and bigger time mirror on the easel. It still was shrouded with a heavy cloth.

"It's ready?"

The scientist nodded.

"Yes. I got special co-operation from an old friend who is manager of a glass works." He paused. "And you?"

Mark waved the Jerbette.

"I got the picture," he clipped, "but we're going to have to work fast. The police probably are on their way here now. Vance caught me in the act of stealing the painting." He still was panting from the exertion of his race here.

"Then clip it to this frame quickly!" The professor indicated an arrangement like an oversize drawing board. He hurried to assist the younger man. In a moment their work was done.

There, at last, was "Elaine Duchard's Escape." Mark for the first time studied it carefully.

Four people were shown. The central figure was that of the first Elaine Duchard. She was in the act of entering a carriage, her lovely face alive with panic. Beside her a young man—his face in the shadows—held a horse pistol on another man. This second man's features were twisted with hate; Mark thought he never had seen such malevolent eyes.

"Baron Morriere" the professor explained. "The younger man is Jacques Rombeau, Elaine Duchard's lover."

Mark nodded. Turned to scrutinize a third man, unidentifiable, who was clambering to the driver's seat of the coach.

The next instant the laboratory was re-echoing with the sound of heavy blows upon the door.

"Open up!" roared a muffled voice. "It's the law!"

"The police!" Mark's face went pale.

Professor Duchard darted to the bench which lined one wall. Seized a strange-looking helmet which stood there. Rushed with it to Mark.

"The insulator-helmet!" he explained hastily, his blue eyes feverish with excitement. "Strap it on! Quickly!"

"Open up!" the alien voice roared again. "We want in!"

And then the angry accents of Adrian Vance:

"Break it down, officer! Don't let them get away!"

Mark hauled the frame on which the painting was stretched to a position in front of the mirror. Whirled back. Gripped his companion's hand.

"Will it work, professor? Will the mirror take me back through time?"

"That I cannot tell you, my boy. But it should. You know the formula I worked out. You understand the process by which it was constructed." A second's pause. "Actually, I believe it should work far better than the previous time mirror. The one Vance gave Elaine was very old, very crude. This one is the product of modern science, modern workmanship. It creates a tremendously larger rift in the space-time continuum—"

A shot rang out.

At the other end of the laboratory, the outside door burst open, lock shattered. Uniformed police rushed in, Adrian Vance at their head.

"Mark! Quickly! I shall hold them!"

With a savage jerk, Elaine's fiance ripped aside the cloth that veiled the new time mirror. The reflection of Jerbette's painting sprang across its silver surface.

Mark's jaw went hard with tension. He glued his eyes to the figure of Jacques Rombeau, Elaine Duchard's lover.

Behind him, Adrian Vance charged down the laboratory, struggling to shake off the frail, tenacious figure of Professor Duchard. He brought up his heavy Magnum.

But Mark paid him no heed. Already his brain was spinning, his senses reeling. Yet still he concentrated on the lithe, tense figure of Jacques Rombeau holding the fuming Baron Morriere at bay. And through his mind the words kept ringing:

"I shall take over the brain of Jacques Rombeau! I shall save Elaine from her fate!

"I shall change history!"

"You dog!" said Baron Morriere in a voice that trembled with passion. "I'll see you drawn and quartered for this! You'll swing from the highest gibbet in all France—"

"Save your breath!" snapped Mark—and then nearly dropped the horse pistol he grasped as the sound of his voice struck his ears. For he spoke in the French of the late eighteenth century, and the voice was not his own, but that of Jacques Rombeau!

From behind him came another voice—faintly tremulous, the voice of a woman:

"Jacques, *mon cher!* We are ready! Quick!"

"Right!"

Then, prodding the baron's stomach with the gun barrel:

"Why I don't kill you now I'll never know. *Le Bon Dieu* knows I've got cause enough. And may He have mercy on your soul if you try to follow us!"

Turning on his heel, Mark sprang aboard the coach. From the driver's seat came a shout and the crack of the whip. With a jerk that nearly threw Mark to the floor, they were off!

"Oh, Jacques! I was so afraid! The baron—"

He turned in his seat. Looked into the lovely, appealing face of Elaine Duchard. Her arms reached out to him. Instinctively he accepted the embrace. He held her close, and his lips sought hers.

It was strange; incredible. Even as he kissed the girl, Mark realized it. He was two people simultaneously—Mark Carter and Jacques Rombeau. The brain of the former had traveled back through time into the body of the latter. In so doing, it had somehow acquired all the knowledge, the personality, the character traits of Rombeau. Yet because the mind of Mark Carter had been protected by Professor Duchard's insulating helmet, he still was able to think independently—almost as if his own twentieth century being was held apart in a special brain lobe within Jacques Rombeau's skull!

"I knew you would come, Jacques! I knew it!"

A wave of sentiment choked off Mark's reply. Again he kissed the soft hollow of that first Elaine Duchard's throat, trying the while to fight off the awful sense of futility that swept over him as he remembered history's verdict as to her fate.

Then, suddenly, the coach was halting.

"Whoa, there!" came the voice of the burly man on the box. And then: "Well, Jacques, what now? We're away from the castle, but where do we go?"

Mark swung to the ground. Glanced back to where the Chateau Morriere still loomed black and

menacing on a distant ridge.

"Every road and bridge is blocked," the other went on. "The peasantry's none too peaceful in these parts, and the baron's taking no chances."

Mark nodded slowly.

"What do you think, Baroc?" he asked. Somehow, he knew that was the man's name.

The burly one scowled.

"Paris, I suppose," he grunted. "If you once get there, and into the slums, the devil himself couldn't rout you out."

"Do you think we can make it?"

"Maybe." A shrug. "We could try the post road."

"All right. Let's go."

They jogged on through the night, the coach swaying and bumping over the rough track. Then lights began to sparkle ahead. Baroc pulled up.

"The Golden Cock Inn," he grunted, nodding toward the lights. "Morriere's guards will be there. We'll have to run for it, so be ready for rough going."

The next instant they were rolling again. Closer the lights came, and closer. Now they were almost abreast them....

"Halt!"

A man was running toward them, waving his arms.

Baroc shattered the night with a fearful oath. His long whip cracked over the backs of the double-span of greys ahead. The horses leaped forward.

They were past the inn, driving hellbent through the pitch-blackness of the countryside. But behind them was a tumult of shouts, a wild disorder.

Mark shot a glance through the window. Caught a glimpse of running figures.

"Jacques! Are they after us?" There was panic in Elaine's voice.

A clatter of hooves answered her before Mark could open his mouth. The girl clung to him, her face chalky with fear.

"If the baron catches me again, Jacques—"

"He won't catch you! I promise it, Elaine! He won't!"

But the words of Adrian Vance leaped into his brain like red-hot branding irons:

Elaine Duchard was tortured and murdered by Baron Morriere's retainers!

Were these men the ones history had marked to do the awful deed?

The thunder of hooves was almost upon them now. The coach rocked from side to side. Bounced wildly from one rut to another.

A hoarse bellow from Baroc:

"They're coming, Jacques!"

Then out of the night like the wind itself the riders came. Big men, with fierce eyes and savage, brutal faces. Men cut from the same pattern as their master, Baron Morriere.

"Halt!"

"To hell with you!"

A rider surged ahead. He cut in toward the coach's horses.

"Oh, no, you don't!"

Baroc's whip lashed out. Bit into the face of the horseman. Laid the flesh bare from eye to jaw. The man gave a shriek of agony. Pitched from his saddle into the road. The coach leaped high as it struck his falling body.

But the others closed in. One sprang from his horse to a precarious perch on the mounting-board. His bearded face leered in. A knife flashed.

Boom!

The man fell back, dead before he hit the ground, his throat torn out by the slug from Mark's horse pistol. The coach was blue with the acrid stench of gunpowder smoke.

"Oh, Jacques! Don't let them get me! I love you so, Jacques—no matter what happens—"

Mark's arm was tight around Elaine. His face was taut and grim as they bounced onward. He fingered the haft of a broad-bladed knife in his belt.

"They won't get you! I promise it—"

Then, suddenly, their enemies were rushing to the attack again. From all sides they came. The point of a sword cut off Baroc's hoarse cry in mid-breath. He pitched from the box.

On through the night plunged the driverless coach, the horses mad with fright. A bridge loomed ahead. They raced for it like creatures from hell, flanks lathered, nostrils flaring.

Another rider tried to spring to the coach. Mark's knife flashed out. Drove home.

Then they were onto the bridge.

With a roar the coach jumped sidewise on the boards. Crashed into the flimsy railing. Tottered for a moment above the stream. Plunged backward into the water, dragging the horses with it.

Mark felt himself hurled back into one corner. His head smashed hard against something. Consciousness waned.

But the rush of water revived him. He lurched half-erect as the river spilled through the windows in a tidal wave.

Elaine lay unconscious on the floor. He caught up her limp body. Kicked open one door. Lunged out into the turbulent stream. Drifted with the current, barely keeping their heads above water.

From the banks came the shouts of searching men.

Onward Mark and Elaine drifted. The girl's eyes still were closed. Her body slack.

All his life those endless hours were a nightmare to the man. He remembered, vaguely, that they lay hidden under the roots of a willow while guardsmen on the bank above them cursed the luck that had let the pair escape. Mark's teeth were chattering and his muscles weak. Elaine's face, beside him, was growing blue with cold. Yet still she did not recover consciousness.

Then, at last, the baron's men were clumping off, and Mark was dragging his sweetheart out onto the bank.

A voice said:

"Praise God they did not find you!"

Mark staggered to face the man who spoke. His hand flashed to the knife in his belt.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

The stranger was old. The hands he raised in a gesture of peace were toil-worn.

"Only a poor peasant, friend," he answered. "I welcome you because the baron's men would not be hunting you were you not his enemies—may his soul rot in hell!"

"You will help us?"

The old man nodded.

"As much as I can. There is an abandoned chateau near here. You can hide there. I shall bring you food."

All but one wing of the ancient edifice to which the peasant took them was in ruins, gutted by fire. It stood high on a hill like a blackened skeleton.

"Once those who lived here were as cruel and proud as Baron Morriere," commented their guide. "Fire made them our equals."

And the part of Mark that was Jacques Rombeau answered:

"Fire will make many equals in the years to come, old man. And swords will help, for a poor man's arm can strike as lusty a blow as any lord's."

They laid Elaine on a bed of straw high in the unburned wing. She was conscious now, but screaming in delirium.

"We've got to get a doctor!" Mark grated tensely. "If she dies—"

The thought brought him up short. History said Elaine Duchard could not die! No! She must be tormented and murdered! And already the time was short, for Professor Duchard had asserted

that she was killed two days after her first escape. Twelve hours had passed since he and the girl had clambered into the coach. That left thirty-six—

The old peasant was shaking his head.

"There is no doctor here who can be trusted," he declared. "One and all, they would run to Baron Morriere. The nearest who would help you and keep his mouth shut is in Paris—"

For ten long seconds Mark struggled with himself.

Elaine was sick. Perhaps dying. Well, why not let her die? Wouldn't it be better than to see her perhaps back in the hands of Baron Morriere? Was it not to kill her that he, Mark Carter, had come across a hundred fifty years of time? Had he not sworn he would contradict history's verdict—

"Jacques! Don't let them get me! Save me! Jacques—"

She was screaming in delirium again, her lovely face pale, her golden hair water-soaked to limp stringiness. Mark knelt beside her. Chafed her wrists. Sponged the fevered brow.

"Jacques! Jacques!"

"History be damned!"

He shouted it aloud. Sprang erect, eyes flashing cold fire.

"I won't let her die now, and I won't let the baron get her! History or no history, she's my Elaine, and I'll save her!"

He whirled on the bewildered peasant.

"How far is it to Paris?"

"About eleven miles."

"Then I'll go there. I'll get a doctor." Even as he spoke, Mark was pulling on his jacket. He strode toward the door, then hesitated and came back. He gripped the old peasant's shoulders. "Stay with her, old man, 'till I come back."

"I shall stay."

Mark drew the knife from his belt. Handed it to the other. When he spoke, his voice was but a cracked whisper:

"If *they* come ... use this. She would rather have it so."

And the answer came back:

"I promise it, friend! They shall not take her alive!"

A wild trip it was, that journey to Paris. A dozen times before he was beyond Baron Morriere's domains, Mark was certain he would be trapped.

Then he was in the city and searching out the doctor's office in a vast, ancient rookery on the Left Bank. Outside—although it was only mid-afternoon—hovering storm clouds transformed day into night, while, at last, he pounded on the door to which he had been directed.

The door opened. A scowling, youthful man with tousled hair glared out at him, reeling tipsily all the while.

"Wha' y' want?"

"I'm looking for Doctor d'Allempier."

"Then why y' come here? *I ain'* no doc-tor. Me, I'm painter. Gustav Jerbette. 'M bes' dam' pain'er —"

Disgust welled within Mark's heart like the thunder that rumbled overhead. He jerked free of the drunk's pawings.

And then, suddenly, he stopped. Stopped coldly and completely, as if he had been turned to stone. Deep within him an idea was growing. An idea so stupendous that it made his brain reel within his skull.

He whirled on the drunk.

"What did you say your name was?"

"'M Gustav Jerbette. 'M pain'er. Bes' dam' pain'er—"

The next instant the tipsy one was reeling backward into his room under the impetus of a powerful shove.

"Hey! Wha's idea?" he bumbled. "Qui' pushin'—"

"Shut up, you stew-bum! I'm going to sober you up if I have to kill you! You've got a job to do!"

The doctor was a grave, bearded man. At last he rose from beside Elaine's straw bed in the fire-gutted chateau.

"How is she, doctor? Is there any hope?" Mark's voice was choked with emotion, his face drawn and haggard with strain.

Slowly, the medical man shook his head.

"I am sorry, *m'sieur*," he said quietly. "I can offer you little solace. Her lungs already are filling. I doubt that she can last until morning."

The other was breathing hard. His eyes were like fiery gimlets.

"Isn't there anything you can do?" he begged, half-sobbing. "Can't you at least give her something so she'll recover consciousness? I must talk to her—"

"That I can do."

The physician turned back to the bed. Raised the dying girl's head from the pallet to administer doses of several medicines.

"I have done all I can," he said. "From here it is in the hands of *Le Bon Dieu*."

Dazedly, Mark thanked him. Paid him with coins from Jacques Rombeau's wallet.

The door to the room beyond opened on sagging hinges and Gustav Jerbette stepped out. His eyes still were red-rimmed from drink, but otherwise he appeared sober.

"It's done," he said in a disgusted tone. "Lord knows it looks like nothing in this world or the next, but it's done."

Again Mark dealt out coins.

The old peasant entered the room.

"The baron is furious," he reported grimly. "They are searching every hut and hovel—"

The doctor shifted his feet nervously.

"Since there is nothing more I can do—" he murmured.

Mark seemed to shake off the strange, dream-like lassitude that gripped him.

"Of course, gentlemen. All of you have done your best. But there isn't any need of your staying longer, imperiling your lives by the chances of Baron Morriere's vengeance. Please leave—and my thanks go with you."

Out they marched, a weird procession: painter, doctor, peasant. Only the old man hesitated at the door.

"God be with you, friend!" he whispered, and pulled the heavy portal shut behind him.

Like a man in a trance, Mark watched them go. His feet were spread apart; fists clenched. Nor did the Sphinx at Giza look out upon the world with a face more grey or stony or implacable than was his.

"History!" he cried aloud, and his voice was half-hysterical. "Damn history! I'll beat it yet! Those devils shan't have Elaine—"

"Jacques!"

It was Elaine. Wanly she looked up from the pallet where she lay. Tried to force a smile.

Mark dropped to his knees beside her.

"Elaine! My darling!"

The girl raised a hand that trembled. Caressed his forehead.

"Poor Jacques!" she whispered. "He looks so worried; so frightened—"

"And good cause he has, too!"

Mark whirled, every muscle taut, at that harsh voice.

There, in the doorway, backed by his guardsmen, stood the Baron Morriere!

Tension hung over the silence of the room like smoke above a battlefield.

"Did you think you'd get away, you fool?" the noble gloated. "Did you think you'd escape Raoul Morriere's vengeance?"

Mark was breathing hard. His face was pale, his eyes over-bright. Deep within his brain words were pounding, with the beat of a giant sledge....

"I shall defeat fate!" those words throbbed. *"I shall rewrite history! Not as I wanted to. No. But they shall not have Elaine—"*

His hand clashed down, then, as a cobra strikes. Down to the broad bladed knife Jacques Rombeau carried in his belt. All his mind, all his heart, was concentrated on this one thing: Even though lightning should strike him this very instant, he would seize that knife. Whip it out. Bury it to the hilt in Elaine's breast, that death—not Baron Morriere's retainers—might claim her!

But his hand clutched empty air. He stared down in shocked incredulity. Stared down, and remembered—

He had given that knife to the old peasant before he went to Paris! And he had failed to ask it back!

"Look! He reaches for his knife!" whooped the baron. "He would protect his sweetheart!"

The guardsmen behind him joined in his roar of laughter.

Something came over Mark Carter in that moment. Something at once cold and deadly, and hotly, fiercely passionate. He felt a kinship to all earth's fighting madmen—the Malay, run amok; the Viking, gone berserk; the Arab, charging through hell to paradise.

Like a human projectile he launched himself, straight for the throat of Baron Morriere!

"Ai!"

It was not a word, that sound that came from the noble's throat. No. There was something more primitive than that about it.

It was terror, incarnate.

Before the man could move, Mark's fingers were clutching at him, tearing his clothing and his flesh. Again he screamed.

As one possessed, Mark jerked him from the bosom of his guardsmen. Hurling him bodily across the room, to slam against the farthest wall with a crash that echoed through the ancient wing.

But now the guardmen's paralysis was broken. They surged forward as one man.

"Jacques! Look out!"

Elaine's scream lent strength to her lover's arms. He slammed the door in the face of the oncoming fighters. Half a dozen swords stabbed deep into its wood, so closely were they upon him. He hurled himself at the portal. Forced it shut by sheer desperation. Slammed home its triple bolts.

He turned, then, his breath coming in great, sobbing gasps.

Baron Morriere had lurched to his feet. His right hand gripped a sword, his left a dagger.

"You'll die yet, you dog!" he snarled. "I'll spit you on my sword like a pig above a bed of coals!"

The flames of the pit showed in Mark's eyes.

"And I'll see *you* in hell," he grated.

With a curse of contempt, the baron charged.

Mark sprang aside.

Again the other rushed to the attack.

Once more Mark dodged. But now desperation gleamed in his eyes. He was unarmed, helpless. One slip, one misstep, and that cruel blade would pin him to the wall!

Another rush. Another escape. But this time the blade had come close. Mark's shirt was ripped; his shoulder bleeding from a long scratch.

Even worse: from the end of the room came the sound of splintering wood as the guardsmen smashed in the panels of the door. A moment more and they would be upon him!

Again the deadly play of wits. And then, suddenly, Mark found himself penned in a corner. Trapped. The baron faced him, panting, his face alight with evil joy. And beyond the noble, on her bed of straw, Elaine Duchard stared at her lover with horror-straight eyes.

"Die, you dog!"

The baron lunged. His gleaming sword stabbed for Mark's vitals. The unarmed man's teeth clenched to take the fatal blow.

It never came!

One moment the baron was charging. The next, falling.

"Elaine!"

For the girl's white body was sprawled across the floor. Her thin hands still clutched the baron's ankle.

The next instant her lover was at the noble's throat. His fists beat a tattoo of mayhem on the other's face. Forced him back against a window-sill. Beat him to a senseless, bleeding pulp.

"Jacques!"

He whirled. Saw the door at the far end of the room buckle and give way.

With one sweep of his arms, he sent the baron's body toppling through the window. Falling down ... down ... down, to death on the stone-slab walk three stories below.

Even as he did it, Mark was leaping toward Elaine. He caught her in his arms and lunged for the room's second door. He made it bare inches ahead of the guardsmen's swords.

This door was lighter. Already it rattled under the blows of the baron's men.

"Let me die, Jacques!" Elaine whispered. "I know I am going. You need not try to save me."

"Don't say it!" Mark's voice was a jagged knife of command. "You can't die now. Don't say it!"

He carried her, then, to where the picture Gustav Jerbette had painted stood. A strange picture, for that day and age, for it portrayed Mark Carter and his fiancée, Elaine Duchard, standing side by side in front of a building clearly identifiable as Professor Duchard's laboratory. And the pair were dressed, not in the garb of eighteenth century France, but in that of twentieth century America.

"Shut your eyes, Elaine!"

Warily, the dying girl obeyed.

With one savage jerk, Mark whipped the cover from another stand. A stand on which stood a mirror. A mirror whose surface seemed to ripple in the fading light. A circular mirror, full three feet in diameter. A mirror with a garishly ornate frame.

His hands trembling with feverish haste, Mark adjusted the picture to reflect in the glass.

Already the door was cracking.

He snatched Elaine from where she lay. Held her half-conscious body before the mirror.

"Open your eyes, Elaine! Open your eyes and look at that girl in the mirror! Concentrate on her, Elaine! *Concentrate!*"

His own eyes were fixed on the image of his twentieth century self that Gustav Jerbette had painted. His brain ached with the force of will he was exerting. He felt himself falling through endless miles of space. Falling ... falling ... falling....

"Thank God!" exclaimed Professor Duchard fervently. "You both are safe!"

Dazedly, Mark and Elaine looked at each other across the narrow aisle separating their white hospital beds. Across the room, sunlight streamed in an open window, its rays glistening on the snowy linen of a third but empty bed.

"What happened?" Mark queried in a bewildered tone. "I was in your laboratory, professor, and Vance rushed in—"

"You went through the time mirror, my boy. Back to eighteenth century France. And Vance went with you. Apparently he came too close to the glass in his eagerness to stop you; his eyes must have focussed on one of the other figures from Jerbette's picture, reflected in the gap through the space-time barrier. He fell in a coma at the same instant you did."

"But I don't remember anything!" Mark protested. "I was going to go back through time to save Elaine, even if I had to change history to do it. Then Vance came in, and everything went blank—"

"Yes," broke in Elaine. "The same thing happened to me. I was sitting in front of the mirror Adrian gave me. Then I saw my ancestor from the painting, and I seemed to be falling—"

Professor Duchard nodded.

"Of course. Time travel apparently brings with it complete loss of memory—"

"But I was insulated against amnesia!" exclaimed Mark.

"Only on the trip back, my boy. Not on your return. No doubt you remembered the twentieth century while in the eighteenth. But your return destroyed your memories of Bourbon France."

The younger man scowled.

"It doesn't make sense," he grunted. "I'm beginning to think the whole business is so much imagination. After all, how could I transport Elaine back from 1780 to 1942? Or myself, for that matter—"

"Perhaps I have some information which will throw light on the subject," the white-haired scientist interrupted. "Yesterday my old friend, Strong, the historian, was passing through the city. He came here to see me.

"He told me he had run across Gustav Jerbette's unpublished memoirs in the course of his researches. And Jerbette, in describing how he came to paint 'Elaine Duchard's Escape,' says the figure in the time mirror on which you concentrated—the man with the horse pistol—was the first Elaine Duchard's lover, Jacques Rombeau.

"Jerbette says Rombeau came to him with a strange assignment. First he took him to the largest glass works in Paris and made him wait while the craftsmen manufactured a special mirror to his order. Then Rombeau led the way to an abandoned chateau a few miles out of Paris. Elaine Duchard lay hidden on the top floor, desperately ill.

"Jerbette's job was to paint a picture of the girl and a strange man, as described to him by Rombeau. Both wore clothes of a different type than any then known, and were in strange surroundings. The job done, Rombeau dismissed the painter. Later, Jerbette says he heard that the two lovers were surprised and murdered by Baron Morriere and his men, although the baron himself was killed in the fight.

"All this so intrigued Jerbette that he promptly painted his famous 'Elaine Duchard's Escape,' showing the lovers getting away from the baron's chateau."

Mark frowned. Shook his head.

"I see how you think it ties in, Professor," he admitted, "but there are too many loopholes."

The savant smiled.

"Yes, there are loopholes," he agreed, "but I do not think there are too many.

"The strange portrait Jerbette painted unfortunately never turned up again. It, of course, would be final proof. For if we found a picture of you—Mark Carter—and Elaine, in a twentieth century scene and wearing modern clothes, yet painted by Gustav Jerbette, there could be no doubt that your brain—cloaked in Jacques Rombeau's body—did the job.

"However, Jerbette does leave a very accurate description of the mirror Rombeau had made. And there is no doubt in my mind that it is the same one Vance gave to Elaine."

"But it's impossible!" Mark protested. "I couldn't have made a time mirror with the primitive equipment of that era—"

"I believe you could. Our work in discovering the formula for the one I made gave you a sufficient understanding of the device's fundamentals to construct a crude model."

"But a terrific bolt of electricity was required, professor. And there was no electrical equipment in those days. It's a complete anachronism."

"You think so?" The old scientist smiled. "Well, I do not wonder. You convinced Jerbette that Jacques Rombeau was stark, raving mad."

"You mean—"

"What other conclusion could any sane mortal draw from the actions of a man who insisted on defying God and the elements by exposing great circular trays of molten glass on top of the highest tower in all Paris during the worst electrical storm in years, until finally one of them was struck by lightning?"

Mark stared open-mouthed. Again he and the bewildered Elaine exchanged glances. And instinctively their hands reached out across the aisle, to join in love's tender clasp. The happiness of utter confidence and peace glowed in their eyes.

Then, still holding the girl's hand, Mark turned back to the professor. His brows knitted with incredulity.

"My God!" he exclaimed half to himself. "Could it be possible? Could I have done such a thing?"

Abruptly, he halted.

"No!" he clipped decisively. "There are other angles to be considered. Vance, for instance. You say he went with me through the time mirror—"

"Yes." The savant nodded slowly. "That, Mark, is the final proof. The evidence beyond contradiction. The thing that convinces me—"

"Proof? Evidence? I don't get it."

"You will recall, Mark, that Jerbette's memoirs said Baron Morriere was killed in that final battle with Jacques Rombeau?"

"Yes. Of course. What's that got to do with it?"

The scientist leveled a trembling finger at the window across the room, through which the sunlight still streamed. Never had he been more impressive. Solemn conviction gleamed in his blue eyes.

"Not five minutes before you and Elaine aroused from your state of suspended animation," he said, "Adrian Vance—still in a coma—sprang from his bed to that window and hurled himself to his death!"

Horror widened the two young people's eyes. Elaine's face was pale.

But understanding now was flooding through Mark. He nodded slowly.

"You can't change history!" he said.

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TIME MIRROR ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the

individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical

to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.