

★ THE BEST IN SCIENTIFIC FICTION ★

STARTLING STORIES

Vol. 9, No. 1

CONTENTS

January, 1943

A Complete Book-Length Scientific Fiction Novel



WORLD BEYOND THE SKY

By

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

Cast into the Mysterious Realm of an Outer Universe, Don Strong and His Valiant Band Come to Grips with a Utopian Paradise Befooled by the Mad Ambition of a Ruthless Tyrant!..... 15

Other Unusual Stories

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-----|
| FORGOTTEN PAST | William Morrison | 82 |
| <i>Leclerc Seeks to Turn Time Backward in Its Flight</i> | | |
| THE GREEN TORTURE | A. Rowley Hilliard | 88 |
| <i>A Hall of Fame Story Reprinted by Popular Demand</i> | | |
| THE MAN WHO WAS KING | Nathaniel Nitkin | 94 |
| <i>Former Pals of an Ex-Space Pirate Face Annihilation</i> | | |
| THE GLADIATORS | Walt Dennis and Ernest Tucker | 106 |
| <i>A Handful of Rebels Are Confronted by Fearsome Doom</i> | | |

Special Features

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-----|
| THE ETHER VIBRATES | Announcements and Letters | 6 |
| THRILLS IN SCIENCE | Oscar J. Friend | 101 |
| REVIEW OF FAN PUBLICATIONS | Sergeant Saturn | 126 |
| MEET THE AUTHOR | A Department | 129 |

Cover Painting by Rudolph Belarski—Illustrating "World Beyond the Sky"

STARTLING STORIES, published every other month by Better Publications, Inc., N. L. Pines, President, at 4609 Diversey Ave., Chicago, Ill. Editorial and executive offices, 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y. Entered as second class matter September 29, 1938, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1942, by Better Publications, Inc. Subscription (12 issues) \$1.50, single copies \$.15; foreign postage extra. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope and are submitted at the author's risk. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If a name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence.

Companion magazines: Thrilling Wonder Stories, Captain Future, Popular Westerns, Thrilling Mystery, Thrilling Westerns, Thrilling Detective, Thrilling Adventures, Thrilling Love, The Phantom Detective, The American Eagle, R.A.F. Aces, Sky Fighters, Popular Detective, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Sports, Popular Sports Magazine, Range Riders Western, Texas Rangers, Everyday Astrology, G-Men Detective, Detective Novels Magazine, Black Book Detective, Popular Love, Masked Rider Western, Rio Kid Western, Air War, The Masked Detective, Exciting Detective, Exciting Westerns, West, Exciting Love, Exciting Navy Stories, Army Navy Flying Stories, Rodeo Romances, and Exciting Mystery.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

"Look!" exclaimed Galway. "Your skull is crushed!"



FORGOTTEN PAST

By WILLIAM MORRISON

One Plus Sign for a Minus Throws the Future—and Doom—on the Screen of Leclerc's Uncanny Machine When He Seeks to Turn Time Backward in Its Flight!

I DIED," said Leclerc. "That's the point. To all intents and purposes I died and came to life again as a new person. That's why I'm curious."

Galway stared around the laboratory. Parts of Leclerc's apparatus were scattered over three work-tables, and to Galway the whole set-up was completely baffling. Recording dials, vacuum tubes, electrodes, gadgets whose names he didn't know, were everywhere.

It looked ten times as complicated as the average radio hook-up. He

was so completely bewildered by the array of different instruments that he suspected that even Leclerc himself wouldn't be able to make the apparatus work.

"You're alive again," Galway pointed out.

"I know. But for that to happen, my second personality had to be destroyed. Let me describe what happened this way. Four years ago I suffered a spell of amnesia. It lasted for eighteen months. That's what I mean by saying I died. My body remained, but the mind I had possessed

until then disappeared just as completely as if a bomb had shattered me to bits."

GALWAY nodded. He understood how Leclerc felt. Sometimes he himself had an odd feeling that he died whenever he lay down to sleep, and came alive again when he got up the next morning. Some primitive people, he knew, actually seemed to think that was what happened when a man went to sleep.

"When I came to myself again—that is, when my *second* personality died, and my first one returned to life—I was wearing an expensive suit of clothes, had a money belt containing five thousand dollars around my waist, and was spending the night in a flophouse. I don't know how I came to be there."

"You could have hired detectives to investigate," Galway suggested.

"I did, but I got nowhere. I had no papers on me, and I never found out what name I had used during those eighteen months. I've always wanted to know. I simply burn up with curiosity every time I think about it."

"What does it matter?"

"A great deal. Did I marry, acquire a wife and child? Are there friends who are looking for me? I don't know. But I want to know. Eighteen months of my life gone, and I can't say where they've gone to. Do you recall, Galway, how you feel when you're trying to remember a name, and it seems just on the tip of your tongue, but you can't quite think of it? You can't solve your problem, and you can't put it out of your mind."

Galway nodded. "I know. Sometimes it's the devil and all."

"It's been that way with me. And it's been going on for more than two years. I've sometimes thought I'd go crazy trying to remember. What is that past I've forgotten? Where was I during those eighteen months? It's to answer these questions that I've invented this machine."

Galway shook his head. He didn't see exactly how the machine was going to help.

"What does it do?" he asked.

"Travel in time?"

"No, not that. Most of this talk of time-travel is rot. Notice that I don't say all of it, but most of it. You can't travel into the past. The past is an infinite region in the four-dimensional space-time continuum whose nature has been completely determined. All the world-lines, as Minkowski put it, the world-surfaces, the world-volumes are completely known. Traveling in the past would change them. It can't be done."

"I don't understand," Galway murmured, "but I'll take your word for it."

"You don't have to. Here." Leclerc gathered together a handful of papers, with equations marching in order on page after page. "Here are my calculations. The conclusions I've just given to you aren't obvious, and they didn't just come out of the air. I slaved for months to get them."

"All right. What then?"

"Travel into the future is another matter. The future is to a certain extent uncertain. Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle holds on the atomic level, and that's enough to assure indeterminism on a macroscopic scale. To put it mathematically—the past is single-valued, the future many-valued. The present is a branch point. Travel into the future changes the future. It would be difficult to do, but it's theoretically possible."

"Yes, but that," pointed out Galway, "is not your problem."

"Right. My problem is the past. Here an alternate sort of time-travel is possible with a history-scanning machine, such as the one I have constructed. Here the situation is reversed. I can, after a fashion, travel into the past—without affecting it, simply as an observer. I can show you Washington at Valley Forge, Lincoln at Gettysburg, and Wilson at Versailles."

"These things of the past are fixed regions in space-time. But I can't show you future events. I can't show you Roosevelt in Berlin, because whether or not he gets to Berlin is not yet decided. It depends on too many atomic processes."

"But your apparatus *will* show you the past?"

"It will, if you'll give me a hand for a while."

Galway nodded, and they set to work. Galway himself was no great hand in a laboratory, but he could appreciate skill when he saw it, and he marveled at the intelligence that Leclerc's fingers seemed to display. He himself was of some use as an assistant, and with Leclerc directing, the work progressed rapidly.

A fourth table held the only part of the apparatus that Galway could understand. This was a television receiving set, connected to work-table Number Three. But the ordinary tuning devices had been removed, and instruments of Leclerc's own substituted.

Leclerc tightened a final screw, and paused.

"Ready to go?" Galway asked.

"In a way. My space-control scanner isn't in good shape. It probably won't get a view more than a few miles away from here. I'll have to try extending the range later. But provided that I stayed within the city during those eighteen months, it'll do for now."

"How about the time control?"

"I expect some trouble with that. I've done some preliminary experiments, and discovered that one turn of the control wheel seems to put me back a few months, and the next turn five years. But I'll try to straighten that out later."

Leclerc had begun to adjust the different control switches. A suppressed excitement showed in his manner. Two of the vacuum tubes glowed. One remained cold.

"Something wrong?" asked Galway.

"No," Leclerc assured. "That's all right."

Galway was aware of a growing feeling of tension. Somehow he had come to share Leclerc's faith in the machine. It was going to recreate the past for them—and finally, after all his tortured searching, Leclerc was going to learn what had happened to him during those eighteen months.

Leclerc moved over to the television set. A picture suddenly flashed on

the screen, an image of Galway and Leclerc themselves, but in slightly different positions from the ones they now occupied.

"That's us a few minutes ago," Leclerc turned a dial slowly. And swore.

The picture had turned into a dull blur. Leclerc kept fiddling with the controls, but the blur remained. Suddenly a picture of himself alone flashed on the screen.

"It isn't as clear as I hoped," he said anxiously.

"Is that you four years ago, or ten, or twelve?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out."

The image of Leclerc moved to the right. The real Leclerc dashed to the space control to keep himself in view. The image put on a hat and coat, then walked out of the room. A second later, they saw it in the street.

LECLERC had difficulty in controlling his excitement. The image made for a subway station, hesitated, then moved on.

"By glory, I think I've hit it!" Leclerc exclaimed.

"You mean that this is the time you started on your travels in amnesia?"

"It seems incredible, but I think it is. What luck! I've gone down into that subway station every day for years. But as for the times I've passed it up and kept on going down the street—I don't remember any except that one occasion four years ago. That is the last thing I do remember until I awoke in that flophouse. From that moment my mind was a blank."

The figure turned right, and Leclerc cursed as he lost it. But a second later the space control had brought it into view again. From then on they kept it in sight.

The image of Leclerc was walking irresolutely. Finally it stopped, and raised a hand as if in pain to its head. For a few seconds it didn't move.

"I guess that's how it happened," breathed Leclerc. "No blow, no shock. Just a sudden blanking out of the mental processes."

The figure turned around, and made for the subway station it had passed. It put a nickel in a turnstile, and entered a train.

They could see the image of Leclerc himself fairly well, but it was impossible to make out clearly any of the other passengers. Their faces were hazy, out of focus.

For half an hour, the train moved on. It was a local, and even though the experience was no longer happening to him, Leclerc couldn't help expressing his irritation.

"Those blasted locals that stop every five or ten blocks are a nuisance. I must have lost my mind to take it."

Finally, Leclerc's image got out. It walked up a flight of stairs, then through a crowded station, and into a long tunnel. Here it took another train, and at the next stop got out again.

"Shuttle to Times Square," muttered Galway unconsciously. He was staring in complete absorption.

The image, once it reached Times Square, seemed at a loss again. It walked around uncertainly, and finally entered a movie theatre. For just a second Leclerc switched the space control to the theatre screen, and then he turned quickly back to his own image.

"One of those horror things. I hate them. What a personality change I must have undergone!"

"Why not," asked Galway, "turn the time control two hours ahead? There's no sense in inflicting that epic on us. Especially, as we don't even see it."

Leclerc shook his head. "I told you the time control is erratic. I'm not taking any chances of losing myself."

IT WAS two and a half hours before the image arose to leave the theatre. It seemed as bewildered as before. They watched it start to cross a busy street with the traffic against it, and then draw back.

The traffic light changed. But the figure remained motionless. Then, just as the green light died away, it moved forward again. A heavy truck bore down, and they saw the figure look up in alarm.

A second later, Leclerc, searching frantically, found the spot where the truck had thrown his body. His image was lying motionless.

"There's that shock you said you didn't get."

"You mean that this is the incident that was responsible for my amnesia?"

"Isn't it?"

Leclerc enlarged the image. Men were already crowding around, but he got the face into view without difficulty. The head was bloody, the skull—

"Leclerc!" Galway exclaimed suddenly.

"What is it?"

"Your skull is crushed! I mean, in the picture!"

"They must have taken me to the hospital."

"Hospital, like sin! Take a look at yourself! Do you think you lived after that? They took you to the morgue! You were dead!"

"Are you crazy?"

Leclerc's eyes were popping out of his head.

"I think I am," Galway muttered.

The two men stared at each other. Then Leclerc turned back to the scanner. He traced his image a little further, enough to assure himself that Galway was right. He saw himself examined by a doctor, carted off to the morgue, and left on a cold slab. In a few days, if he had the patience to wait, he would see himself buried. He didn't bother.

Galway's face was pale.

"You really died," he said. "It's odd that you should have told me that at the beginning."

"Yes, but I didn't mean it in a physical sense. My personality died. But a new one took its place, and my body remained." He gazed into a mirror, and put a hand to his head. "You don't think I'm a ghost, do you?"

"No, I don't. You're just as much alive as I am. And yet, you died. How do you explain it?"

Leclerc was not ready with an answer.

"I don't explain it," he replied slowly. "Something's wrong, but I don't know what. I'll have to try again."

He began to manipulate the time scanner once more. It was not difficult to catch an image of himself leaving the house. But most of the

time he caught the wrong image—of himself entering the subway directly. It was at least two hours before he found the one he wanted.

Galway stayed with him until he saw the image buy a ticket for the theatre again. Then he picked up his hat.

"I'll be blest if I sit through that show once more without seeing it," he said. "Good night."

Leclerc didn't even answer him. His eyes were shining a little too brightly, and he seemed not to hear. He was interested, as Galway put it to himself, in a certain little matter of life and death.

It was about a week before Galway saw the man again. In that time, Leclerc had lost about ten pounds, and his face had become old and haggard.

"Did you solve the difficulty?" Galway asked.

"No, I did not. The next time I kept an eye on what happened until the very end."

"Until you were buried?"

"Yes. It took several days, and I watched without leaving to eat or sleep. I had a crazy idea that maybe I wasn't really dead, that perhaps some doctor performed a miracle, and patched me up again. It didn't happen, of course. They put me under the ground, and I even saw myself beginning to rot. That was more than enough for me."

Galway shuddered. "It would have been enough for me too. And you haven't any idea of an explanation?"

"No, I haven't. No idea whatever. Great heavens above, I thought the state I was in before was bad enough. But now that I know what happened to me—this is worse."

He was right, thought Galway. He himself had spent an unpleasant week wondering at the explanation of Leclerc's death. He could imagine what Leclerc had gone through.

He spoke to Leclerc on the phone a month afterward. Still no solution. This time Leclerc seemed not too far from insanity. And then Galway, feeling that he was of no help, and affected by a kind of dread superstition that he tried in vain to shake off, as

if Leclerc were really a ghost, lost sight of him.

IT WAS a year before he heard of Leclerc again. There was a small one-column headline in one of the papers, and Galway stared at it at first without realizing what he was reading:

MAN KILLED BY TRUCK IDENTIFIED

The man who stepped out of a motion picture theatre in an apparent daze, and was then killed while crossing the street has been identified as Joseph Leclerc.

Galway threw the paper down, and a shiver went through him. The explanation had been simple enough to any one not blinded, as Leclerc had been, by the prejudice of preconceived theories. Leclerc had observed the future instead of the past.

His device was not a history-scanning machine at all. It was a device for looking ahead in time, not back. Why had he made the mistake he had? Galway had a fair idea. Somewhere, on those pages of calculations, Leclerc had made a mistake. From one equation to the next he had substituted a plus sign where a minus should have been, or vice versa. And he had carried that mistake through to the very end.

As simple and trifling a mistake as plus for minus, and his ideas of past and future had been twisted completely about. He had said that no one could foresee the future, because the future was indeterminate.

It had not been indeterminate for him. Every time he had looked into it, he had seen the same thing. On the fatal day, he had left his laboratory with his mind in confusion, and had traced the same journey to death that he had watched his image make.

The forgotten period in Leclerc's past, which he had thought to see again, would now remain forgotten forever.

Galway threw the paper he had been holding onto a table, and then had to sit down because his knees were trembling. He was aware suddenly of a great temptation.

He could look into his own future.

He could do just as Leclerc had done, trace his own history to the end, discover what kind of life he would lead, how he would die.

If he looked, the sight would drive him crazy, just as it would have driven Leclerc crazy if he had lived a little longer. He was sure of that. All the same, the temptation was strong, almost irresistible.

When his knees felt stronger, he

stood up slowly, and made his way to Leclerc's laboratory. There he smashed the apparatus that was now scattered over five tables instead of four.

He ground pieces of glass under his heel with a fury that was inspired by both anger and fear.

It was only the television set that he thriftily left undamaged for the sake of Leclerc's unknown heirs.



BEST STORIES BY YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS
IN OUR COMPANION MAGAZINES

THRILLING WONDER STORIES

and

CAPTAIN FUTURE

Each 15c at All Stands

Getting Up Nights Makes Many Feel Old Too Soon

If you're feeling out of sorts, Get Up Nights or suffer from Burning Passages, Backache, Swollen Ankles, Nervousness, Rheumatic Pains, Dizziness, Circles Under Eyes and feel worn-out, the cause may be non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles.

Worry, Colds, working too hard, or overeating or drinking may create an excess of Acids and overload your Kidneys so that they need help to flush out poisonous wastes that might otherwise undermine your health.

Help Kidneys Remove Acids

Nature provides the Kidneys to clean and purify your blood and to remove excess Acids. The Kidneys contain about nine million tiny tubes or filters through which the heart pumps blood about 200 times an hour, night and day, so it's easy to see that they may get tired and slow down when overloaded.

Fourteen years ago a practicing physician's prescription called Cystex was made available to the public through drug stores, making it easy and inexpensive to help thousands suffering from non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles in these three simple ways: 1. Help the Kidneys remove excess acids which may become poisoning and irritating. 2. To palliate burning and smarting of the urinary passages and bladder irritation. 3. Help the Kidneys flush out

wastes which may become poisonous if allowed to accumulate, thus aiding nature in stimulating an increase of energy, which may easily make you feel years younger.

Guaranteed Trial Offer

Usually, in non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder disorders the very first dose of Cystex goes right to work helping the Kidneys flush out excess Acids, poisons and wastes. And this cleansing, purifying Kidney action, in just a day or so, may easily make you feel younger, stronger and better than in years. An Iron clad guarantee insures an immediate refund of all your money unless you are completely satisfied. Get Cystex from your druggist today for only 35c.

ARTHUR'S NOTE: Cystex is produced under the direction of a licensed physician for The Knox Co., one of the largest drug companies in the world with laboratory connections in the U.S.A., Canada, England, Australia and South America. The guarantee of money back unless satisfied is enforced 100% and is a dependable

form of assurance to all users of Cystex.

Now 35c-75c-\$1.50
Cystex

