The Four Dimensional Auto-Parker

By BOB OLSEN

In place of our usual lines of introduction, the amusing poem which follows, we are sure, will be appreciated by our readers as an interesting substitute written by the author.

I read a yarn the other day—
A crazy concept, I must say.
It states that objects have extension
In what is called the "Fourth Dimension."

In hyperspace one could, no doubt,
Make tennis balls turn inside out;
And from a nut remove the kernel
And not disturb the shell external.

A crook could pilfer bonds and stocks,
Then laugh at prison bars and locks;
One step in this direction queer,
And presto! He would disappear!

Let's hope, in planning new inventions,
They'll give us cars with four dimensions.
When searching for a parking place
We sure could use some hyperspace!

—Bob Olsen.

Illustrated by MOREY

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, Mr. Underwood," my secretary announced.

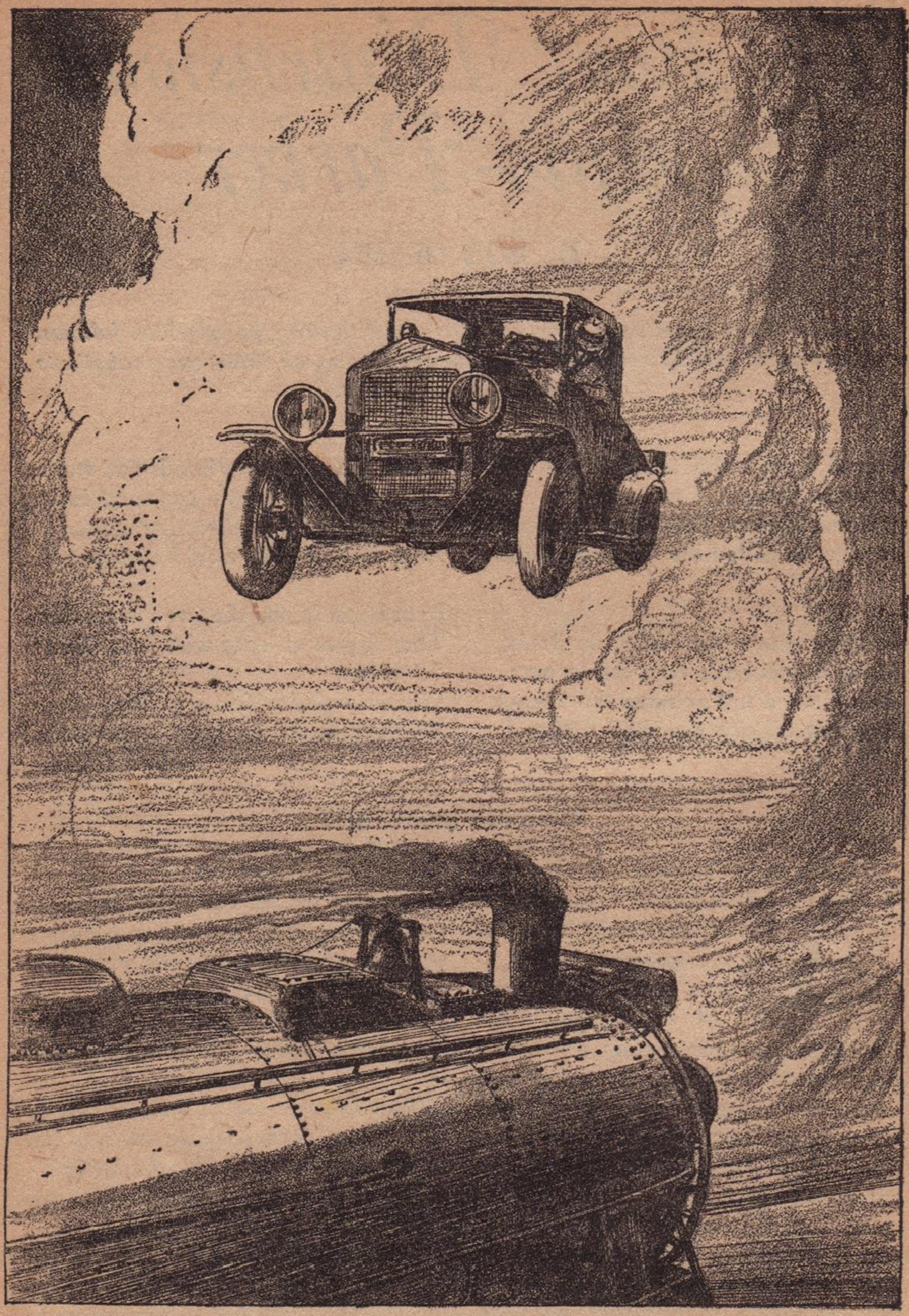
I was busy. I was worried. I was grumpy. The immediate task confronting me was a ticklish one. Desperately in need of cash to take care of pressing obligations, I was trying to dictate a super-collection letter. The trick of the thing was to make my request for payment of a past due account both forceful and diplomatic, so that it would extract a check painlessly and immediately, without offending a valuable client or betraying my own financial weakness.

Hanging up the mouthpiece of my dictaphone, I said wearily, "Please tell our visitor that we are not hiring any copywriters, that we are not buying any space, printing, engraving, artwork, radio time nor advertising novelties. You might also add that we are not able to help any charity, no matter how worthy it may be."

"But this man isn't a solicitor and he isn't looking for a job. He wants to talk to you about handling his advertising."

"Good heavens!" I yelled. "Do you mean to tell me that you are letting a prospective client cool his heels in our reception room? In the name of depression, hurry! Show him in here before he escapes!"

She was about to follow my orders when I amended them. "Wait! On sec-



As we shot across the top of the funnel I could smell the acrid odor of burning oil and feel the hot breath of the smoke which puffed through the cracks in the floor board of the car.

ond thought, I'll go out there and escort him into my office personally!"

I was right behind her as she opened the door. So suddenly did she halt that I nearly bumped into her. Pointing in dismay at the vacant chair in the waiting room, she moaned, "Oh, dear! He *did* get away!"

She was contradicted by a resonant bass voice which boomed out from behind us with a suddenness that made us both jump.

"No! I'm still here!" the voice rumbled

I wasn't exactly afraid, but I could feel my scalp tingle as I turned and confronted the owner of that mysterious voice. He was standing between me and my desk in a spot which I had passed over just a few seconds before.

In a terrified voice, the girl mumbled something that sounded like, "That's the man who wants to see you," and fled, slamming the door behind her.

My visitor's voice had surprised me. His appearance was even more startling. He didn't look like a prospective client for a reputable advertising agency. Of ordinary height, his figure had several incongruities. Supported on long, spindling legs was a veritable barrel of a chest surmounted by a pair of egregiously broad shoulders and an amazingly large head. It was almost totally bald, that head, but its lack of hirsute covering seemed to be compensated for by an enormous moustache, which gave to the man's visage a fierce, military appearance. Conspicuous as this facial appendage was, it was overshadowed by the eyes of my visitor, which were abnormally large and protuberant. This effect was intensified by the large, concave lenses of his horn-rimmed spectacles. Altogether it was a preposterous face—one not easily forgotten.

"I hope I didn't scare you," he snickered.

"Of course not," was my indignant denial. "Naturally I was a bit surprised. I can't understand how you got in here without my seeing you."

"I'll explain that presently. When you told your girl to show me in, I heard you and stepped inside without waiting for any further invitation. But perhaps I ought to introduce myself. My name is Socrates Thoroughgood. And I assume that you are—"

"Remington Underwood, at your service, Mr. Thoroughgood. My secretary informed me that you are looking for an agency to handle your advertising."

"That is correct. I realize that, in order to introduce a new product speedily it is necessary to use publicity. Advertising is a matter for specialists. That's why I came to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Thoroughgood. And may I ask the nature of this new product which you wish to advertise?"

"Before I answer that permit me to ask you a question."

"Certainly. Fire away."

"What is it that this country needs most to-day?"

"Don't tell me that you manufacture five cent cigars," I countered.

"Of course not," he snapped. "Please answer my question: What is it that the country needs most to-day?"

"Well, if you want me to give you an honest expression of opinion I would say this: What the country needs most today is some substitute for money, that can be obtained easily and painlessly. Is that the right answer?"

"Ridiculously not."

"Then please tell me. I'm not very good at riddles.

GLARING at me with his baleful, myopic eyes and accentuating his words by jabbing toward my nose with a hairy index finger, he declared, "What

the country needs today is HYPER-SPACE!"

"Hyperspace?" I gasped.

"Hyperspace," he nodded solemnly.

"Hyperspace?" I repeated. "What in the name of depression is hyperspace?"

He elevated the ends of his moustache, leading me to suspect that he was smiling, although I could not see his mouth.

"Ah!" was his triumphant cry. "Now we are getting somewhere! You admit you are ignorant! You have received the torpedo shock! You are now ready to listen and learn." (My reason, for punctuating his speech entirely with what advertising men call "squealers," is that all his sentences sounded like exclamations.)

"Why, yes," I stammered. "Yes, yes, of course. I am always glad to learn something new. Please tell me about this hyperspace of yours."

"I assume that you have heard of the fourth dimension," he inferred.

"Vaguely," I told him. "I've heard that Einstein uses a fourth dimension in figuring out his theories. Unfortunately, I don't happen to be one of the twelve men who understand Einstein."

"The fourth dimension is really quite simple," he informed me. "Anybody can understand it—even an advertising man like yourself."

"Thank you," I retorted in a tone meant to be sarcastic. "Perhaps you will be good enough to explain it to me."

"I can't take the time to go into the details now. Briefly, the fourth dimension is just an extension of space, like length, width and height. Ordinary human beings have the idea that every object in the world possesses only three dimensions. They call them by various names, such as breadth, thickness and altitude and they assume that these three dimensions represent the absolute limits of space, beyond which it is impossible to go. As a matter of fact, however, every object in the universe, animate and inanimate really has four dimensions."

"Who said so?"

"I said so."

"That, of course, settles the matter for all time," was my sarcastic rejoinder. "I don't suppose that the opinions of great mathematicians, who assert that there is no such thing as a fourth dimension, are worthy of consideration, since they do not agree with yours."

I expected this to nettle him but he only made a silly grimace and said, "It is true that some of the mathematicians, like Manning and Sidlis, who have worked on problems of non-Euclidian geometry, believe that their speculations are purely empirical and have no bearing on the world as it really is. On the other hand, there is at least one eminent authority who believes that the fourth dimension actually exists and who advances convincing evidence to support this belief."

"And I suppose his name is Thoroughgood," I remarked in an ironical tone.

"I'm not the only one. Did you ever hear of C. Howard Hinton, M.A.?"

I shook my head.

"Then I'd advise you to read his book entitled 'The Fourth Dimension.' Hinton devotes a considerable portion of this work to scientific proof that the fourth dimension actually exists. Let me give you an example."

Before I realized what he was going to do, Thoroughgood had ripped two or three sheets from my desk calendar, on which I had jotted down several important engagements. Then he lifted my gold-mounted fountain pen from its onyx base, inserted a dirty finger-nail under the jigger that operates the filling device and squirted a stream of ink from the business end of the pen. Some of the ink spattered all over a drawing which had cost me thirty-five dollars, but Thor-

oughgood didn't so much as say, "Excuse me."

He quickly folded one of the slips of paper, pressing it flat with his thumb. Opening up the paper he pointed to the blot of ink, which had assumed a fantastic shape resembling a cross between an octopus and a butterfly.

"There!" he exclaimed. "There you have an example of bilateral symmetry!"

"What am I supposed to do?" I sneered. "Kiss you or swoon with delight?"

Disregarding my sarcasm, he continued, "Can't you see the significance of this experiment? It proves that symmetry in a two-dimensional object—in other words, symmetry with respect to a line—may logically be explained as being due to a folding process, which can only be performed by moving the object through a higher dimension."

"You seem to be using English words," was my impertinent comment. "The only trouble is that they don't make sense."

"I see I must make allowances for an untutored mind," he came back at me. "Perhaps an analogy will make the point clearer. Imagine yourself to be absolutely flat, as for instance——"

"That won't require any imagination," I interrupted him. "Since the bank holiday was declared I *am* absolutely flat—as flat as a Mexican tortilla, if not more so."

"VERY well, let us suppose you are a two dimensional being. Suppose you saw a number of ink blots like this one—what would your natural inference be?"

"That some moron had been monkeying with a fountain pen," I replied.

He went right on, "Even though you lived in a two dimensional world and were unable to move in a third dimension yourself, it would be possible for you—or rather for a person of intelligence—to figure out that these symmetrical figures were produced by folding the paper through a third dimension, using a line as the axis of rotation. Is that clear?"

"If it will make you feel any better, suppose you assume that it is. And now I'm afraid you will have to excuse me. I have a very important—"

He cut in with, "This is the most important thing that ever came to your attention. I haven't finished. The least you can do is listen."

"All right," I sighed. "But please come to the point."

"Presently. Let me call your attention to an extremely significant fact: Symmetry with respect to a line is common. We find it both in organic and inorganic objects. But there is another type of symmetry. I refer to symmetry with respect to a plane. Did you ever stop to consider that this type of symmetry is found only in organic objects—in other words in objects which are created by life?"

"I can't say that I have given much thought to that consideration," I told him.

"Consider it now. Take your body for instance." He picked up from my desk an Oriental dagger which I had just used to open my mail, consisting principally of bills and duns. Brandishing the keen-edged weapon with a menacing flourish, he shouted, "Imagine this knife to be a huge cleaver. Suppose I bring it down on your cranium and split your body right through the middle."

As he said this he made a savage pass at me with the dagger. The point of it came so close to my nose that I felt a draft as it swished by. Startled and completely caught off guard, I leaped backward, stumbling over a waste paper

basket and crashing to the floor in a most undignified manner.

I'll have to give Thoroughgood credit for one thing: he didn't laugh. Perhaps he smiled a bit, but if he did, his expressions of mirth were successfully camouflaged by the Airdale vegetation on his upper lip.

When I had scrambled to my feet, he went on as if nothing had happened: "Suppose your body was split in two exact halves. They would be remarkably symmetrical—that is, with the exception of that wart over your left eyebrow. But observe this: Your body is symmetrical—not with respect to a line, but with respect to a plane—in this case the plane of cleavage.

"ASSUMING that symmetry may be explained as a result of a folding process, this suggests that your body might have been formed by folding. But to produce this type of symmetry it would be necessary to fold your body on an axis which is not a line but a plane. Folding of this kind is utterly impossible in a three-dimensional world. But it could easily be accomplished if you were able to move in a fourth dimension."

"Do you mean to say that you think human bodies are actually folded in the way you describe?" I exclaimed.

"Of course not. You mustn't take my explanations too literally. What I mean to imply is that symmetry with respect to a plane, such as is found in the human body and other living things, including flowers, fruits, vegetables, and so forth, suggests a four dimensional arrangement of the minute particles from which the growing organism is constructed. Is that clear?

"As clear as pea soup. I still don't get what you are——"

"Very well," he interposed. "Now listen to this: In proving the actual existence of the fourth dimension, Hinton does not rest his case solely on the evidence supplied by the phenomena of symmetry. After all, the strongest argument is that offered by electricity. Did you ever try to define electricity?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," I replied blithely. "Defining electricity is my favorite indoor sport."

"Very well, let's hear you define electricity."

"With pleasure. I would say that electricity is a force which can be transmitted by means of certain substances called conductors, and which may be converted into heat, light, mechanical energy and what have you."

"Not bad for a layman," he grudgingly admitted. "Your definition is about as good as any which has been offered so far; but, after all you really haven't even attempted to explain what electricity really is, or how it is transmitted along a conductor."

"I've always understood that no one knows what electricity is," was my rejoinder. "And also that nobody knows how it travels through a conductor."

"Not *through!*" he said in a manner which suggested a school ma'm correcting a stupid pupil. "One thing we do know about electricity: It doesn't travel *through* a conductor but *along* it or *around* it.

"What's the difference?" I inquired.

"Only this: No scientist of the old school has been able to explain satisfactorily why electricity behaves the way it does. This is because they are all hedged about and restricted in their reasoning by the conventional ideas of space as possessing only three dimensions. Hinton, however, shows that all the phenonema of electricity can very easily be explained by presupposing the existence of motion in a fourth dimension. Electricity is nothing more than a four dimensional vortex motion in the

ether surrounding a conductor. You know what a vortex is do you not?"

"Sure!" I grinned. "It wasn't so long ago that we had to pay a vortex on theater tickets."

Very impolitely he wrinkled his nose as if to inform me he regarded my clever pun as belonging in the same category as a bad smell. Then he went on:

"Perhaps you do not know that when a tornado or 'twister' rushes through the air, or when a whirlpool travels through a body of water, the eddy is made up of the same identical particles of matter. In other words it isn't a case of motion being transmitted from particles in one part of the medium to those in another part, but the same components move along with the vortex as it travels from place to place."

"INTERESTING if true," I remarked. "And so what?"

Ignoring my flippant question, he proceeded: "Another significant fact is that a vortex cannot remain suspended and isolated in a fluid. The ends of the vortex must reach the boundary of the fluid. These boundaries may be external or internal. For instance, one end may be on the surface and the other end on the bottom of a river, or the vortex may extend between two objects in the fluid, terminating with one end on each object, but it is utterly impossible for a vortex to remain half way in a fluid without terminating in two boundaries of the fluid."

"What about a smoke ring," I reminded him. "Isn't that vortex?"

"Yes," he admitted. "It is a vortex with the ends united to form a circle. I'm glad you brought that up, because it illustrates the idea I am undertaking to convey to you. In a smoke ring, the particles are revolving like small rings strung on a large ring. In other words the ring is repeatedly turning inside out. That of course is possible in three dimensions, since the ring is similar to a two dimensional object which is being twisted through a third dimension.

"The vortex motion which Hinton uses to explain electrical phenomena is somewhat analogous to this movement except that instead of moving in rings, the vortexes are in the shape of hollow spheres, which are constantly turning inside-out. To use a familiar analogy, the smoke ring is like a rubber band being twisted, while the vortex motion of the electric current is like a tennis ball which is being repeatedly turned inside out."

Which led me to say, "Baron Munchhausen told some good ones, too."

"What I am telling you are facts, not fairy tales," was his indignant response. "But I can readily see that there is little use for me to cast any more pearls. Let it suffice to say that Hinton's theory, of four dimensional vortex motion in the ether surrounding an electrical conductor, supplies a very logical and convincing explanation of the way electricity behaves. I shall not burden you with a complete exposition of this theory."

"For which I am very grateful to you," I said. "And, by the way, Mr. Thoroughgood, now that you have finished your scholarly dissertation, would you mind answering a question or two?"

"Very well," he condescended. "What do you want to know?"

"As I understand it, you wish to advertise a device which is based on this fourth dimension which you have just explained to me. Is that correct?"

He nodded.

"I see. And I assume that you know it costs money to advertise. Even a small advertising campaign will cost several thousand dollars. Are you in a position

to take care of the financial end of your sales and advertising program?"

"Of course not," he blandly informed me. "That's why I came to you. I was told that you have connections with wealthy people who are looking for worthy enterprises in which to invest their money. I am willing to part with a third interest in my invention for—"

"Excuse me," I cut in. "Whoever told you I could help in the financing of an advertising campaign must have been a historian. It is true that I have done something of the kind in the past—but that was many years ago. I suggest that you read the newspapers. Perhaps you may then become cognizant of the novel fact that conditions are different now. It happens that I am extremely busy today, so I trust you will excuse me."

"YOU talk as if you are trying to get rid of me," he said reproachfully.

"I'm glad you are intelligent enough to take the hint." (I was still rankling a bit over his insinuation concerning the supposed stupidity of advertising men.) "Please pardon my bluntness, but I am afraid it will be impossible to induce anyone to gamble real money on an unproven enterprise."

"Aren't you jumping at conclusions?" he intimated. "At least you can afford to spend a few minutes in witnessing a demonstration of my invention. If you don't you may live to regret it."

Having had previous experiences with inventors, and knowing what persistent pests they are, I sighed resignedly and said, "O. K. Go ahead and demonstrate. But you'll have to make it snappy."

"Thank you, Mr. Underwood. But first, if you don't mind, it will be necessary for me to add a word or two to the explanation of hyperspace I gave you a moment ago. The best way to understand the possibilities of the fourth dimension is to consider what a three dimensional consciousness would mean to a two-dimensional being.

"Imagine what such a creature would look like: Totally flat. Not even as thick as the thinnest tissue paper or gold leaf. Absolutely incapable of moving away from the single plane upon which he lives.

"The home of such a being would be like an architect's floor plan. Mere outlines of rooms drawn in ink on a piece of paper. Yet they would be ample to provide shelter and privacy. To imprison him, all you need to do is to draw a pencil mark all around him. Unless he can find some way to penetrate the thin layer of graphite he will be forced to stay inside the enclosure.

"But suppose one of these Flatlanders —presumably more intelligent than the rest—discovers the existence of a third dimension and constructs a device by means of which he can lift himself for a fraction of a centimeter away from his two dimensional world. If he did this in the presence of another Flatlander he would seem to disappear miraculously. Then he could easily step over the walls of his graphite prison and could enter any building in Flatland without opening the doors or windows.

"Substitute for your two dimensional creature an ordinary man who is able to move his body into the fourth dimension and you will have some idea of the possibilities of my hypershoes."

"Hypershoes?" I echoed. "Is that the name of your invention?"

"It's the name of one of them. I have several inventions but they all make use of the fourth dimension. When I entered your office a few minutes ago I passed directly from the reception room to the center of this office. That's why you didn't see me until I made myself visible to you."

"Do you mean to say that you went through the fourth dimension?" I exclaimed.

"PRECISELY. With the aid of these hypershoes which I am now wearing, I simply moved into hyperspace for a fraction of an inch. Then it was an easy matter for me to step over the wall of this room—or *through* it, if you like—without being seen by you or your secretary."

An alarming thought flashed into my brain. Perhaps the man was crazy. He certainly didn't talk like a rational person. Neither did that wild glare in his eyes betoken complete sanity. I decided it was best to humor him. On the other hand I was anxious to get rid of him as quickly as I could without endangering myself.

"Excuse me, Mr. Thoroughgood," I said, handing him his delapidated straw hat. "Don't you think it's a bit stuffy in here. Perhaps a walk in the open air will do us both good."

Much to my surprise he consented.

"All right," he said. "Maybe that *would* be a good idea. I have another invention outside that has even greater possibilities than my hypershoes. I shall be glad to show it to you. But before we leave this room I wish to make sure you are convinced that my hypershoes really can project a person into the fourth dimension."

"I'll take your word for it," I assured him.

"Don't try to deceive me. I know you are skeptical, but it won't take me a minute to convince you."

Standing on one foot, he lifted the other one and pointed to the bottom of his shoe. I noticed then that the sole was about half an inch thick. Three cylindrical holes were cut part way through the leather, two of them under the ball of the foot and the third in the center of the heel. Inside each of these cavities was a peculiar metal object covered with small lumps like the surface of a raspberry.

"These things are composed of a large number of three-dimensional spheres grouped together in such a way, that they extend for an appreciable distance into the fourth dimension," he elucidated. "In their present position they are all within our three dimensional world. By means of a mechanism inside my shoes which I can operate with my great toe, I can push these knobs out into hyperspace—or rather, I push them against the floor and the reaction causes my body to be projected out into the fourth dimension. Watch me and I'll show you how it works."

THEN, right in front of my eyes, in that brightly illuminated office, a most preposterous thing happened. With amazing rapidity Thoroughgood's body proceeded to shrink. It reminded me of one of those rubber toys, shaped like a grotesque man, that can be blown up like a huge balloon and which, when deflated decreases rapidly in size while still retaining its human shape. Before I had time to blink my visitor had vanished completely!

To say that I was astonished is putting it mildly. My face must have betrayed my amazement, for a rasping guffaw bellowed forth from the thin air a few inches from my ear.

"Pardon me for seeming to laugh," it roared. "I can't help it. You look so funny with your eyes popping out and your mouth wide open."

I shut my mouth and tried to think of some withering rebuke, but before I had time to utter a word, the weird, disembodied voice went on, "To prove to you that I can do what I said I could I am going to return to the waiting room by stepping right through the wall of this office. Kindly observe that the door remains closed, until I open it and enter from the other side."

An instant later I heard a piercing

scream which came from the direction of my secretary's desk in the adjoining room.

Leaping toward the door, I reached for the handle; but before I could grasp it, the knob turned and there in the opening stood Socrates Thoroughgood in his natural shape and size.

"Excuse me for startling you," he said over his shoulder to the girl. "Mr. Underwood was skeptical so I had to use drastic means to convince him." Then he stepped across the threshold and closed the door.

"Well!" he demanded. "Are you satisfied now?"

"Why, yes," I stammered. "That is—well—of course it was done by slight of hand but it was a very clever trick."

"Trick?" he scowled. "You think it was just a trick?"

"Not exactly a trick." I tried to hedge. "But—"

"But fiddlesticks! I did it by passing through the fourth dimension and I'll defy you or any one else to prove otherwise."

In an effort to appease his anger, I said, "Please pardon me, Mr. Thoroughgood. Your demonstration was so unusual that it took me completely by surprise. My eyesight is not very good and I thought perhaps I didn't see correctly. It actually looked as if your body shrank away to nothing."

"Certainly. What you saw was a series of cross-sections."

"Cross-sections?" I gasped.

"Yes. Three dimensional cross-sections of my four dimensional body. You can easily understand that if you think of a two dimensional analogy. Imagine yourself to be a Flatlander swimming on the surface of a quiet pool of water. Close to you floats a three dimensional sphere with half its volume below the surface. Since you can perceive only two dimensions, all you can see of the sphere is a part of a circle—the cross section of the sphere made by the surface of the water.

"NOW, suppose the sphere is pushed down into the water or lifted out of it. What happens? To you it will look as if the circle you saw first had become smaller and smaller until it finally disappeared entirely. Do you comprehend?"

"Yes," I replied. "That is clear enough. As the ball is lifted out of the water the cross sections become smaller and smaller."

"Precisely! And that's exactly what happened to me a moment ago. In reality my body was unchanged. But you could see only that portion of it which happened to be in your own three dimensional world. As I moved into hyperspace it naturally looked to you as if my body was shrinking in size."

"If that's the case, it ought to be possible for you to stop the shrinking process before disappearing entirely," I suggested.

"Certainly," he responded. "Watch me do it!"

I watched.

Once more he began to decrease in size, this time more slowly. When he was about an inch tall the shrinking ceased. The tiny moustache moved, but the words that I heard seemed to come from a point at least five feet above the floor.

"There you are! And if you don't think this is just a cross-section, try to lift me!"

I bent over, gingerly took hold of the diminutive shoulders and attempted to lift the tiny man. He seemed to be fastened to the floor. Even when I grasped him with both my hands and pulled with all my might I could not budge him.

While I was doing this, he began to

swell out once more until he had resumed his normal size.

"There!" he grinned. "I guess that ought to convince you."

"It does," I agreed. "I'm thoroughly convinced that you can make your body look smaller and can pass from one room to another without opening the door between them. Nevertheless I fail to see any commercial value in your invention."

Much to my surprise he took this criticism quite good naturedly.

"I MUST admit that my hypershoes are somewhat limited in application," he concurred. "But I find them rather useful, nevertheless. For instance: Suppose I am walking down the street and I see a creditor approaching me. All I have to do is wriggle my big toes and presto! I vanish! The man I wish to avoid thinks he is seeing things and I am spared an unpleasant interview. In the same way I can get rid of process servers, technocrats, bridge players, fathers of new babies, and other disagreeable bores."

"But," I protested. "Most of us are not so troubled by creditors and process servers that we need to use such drastic means of escaping them. There is only one class of people who would be willing to buy your hypershoes. To them they would be extremely valuable, it is true, but I shouldn't think a reputable man like yourself would want to traffic with that type of person."

"What type of person do you mean?"

"Criminals. Don't you realize what dangerous w e a p o n s your hypersoes would be if they fell into the hands of unscrupulous crooks? They would be able to rob homes, stores and banks, and to commit any other crimes with impunity. Even if they were apprehended they could easily escape from any prison in which they were incarcerated."

"That's right," he admitted. "Funny I never thought of that angle. Of course it wouldn't do to let any criminals get hold of my hypershoes."

"You couldn't very well prevent that if you advertised and sold them publicly," I pointed out to him.

"All right," he agreed. "Suppose we forget the commercial possibilities of my hypershoes. I have other inventions which are even more significant. One of them in particular has wonderful possibilities for profitable manufacture and sale. I have it outside. Let us go down and take a look at it."

While we were descending in the elevator he gave me this preliminary explanation: "The most serious problem in our large cities today is the automomobile parking situation. Consider a business man like yourself, for instance. Each day you drive your car from your home in Hollywood or the Wilshire District to downtown Los Angeles. When you get there your automoble becomes a serious hindrance instead of a help. There isn't a parking lot within three blocks of your office. The nearest one you can find charges you about fifty cents per day for taking care of your car. If you wish to call on another business man, say ten blocks away, you first walk three blocks to your car, then drive it five or six blocks and park it, walking a few more blocks to your destination. Every time you do this it costs you anywhere from twenty cents up to fifty cents for parking privileges. I'll venture to predict that you spend at least fifteen dollars per month for parking charges only."

"Twenty-five dollars per month would come closer to it," I told him.

"THERE you are!" was his triumphant response. "You spend twenty-five dollars per month for parking your car—to say nothing of the an-

noyance and the time lost in walking back and forth between parking lots and office buildings. Wouldn't you be glad to buy an attachment for your car which will enable you to park anywhere—right outside your office or any other building—anywhere, at any time, as long as you wish, and without paying a penny for parking privileges?"

"Why, yes," I started to say. "I'd be——"

"Of course you would!" he cut in. "Especially when you could buy such a device, completely installed, for only twenty-three dollars! You could pay for it out of what you now squander needlessly for parking fees in one month. After that your savings would all be velvet."

"Sounds too good to be true," I enthused. "How do you expect to accomplish a miracle like that?"

By this time we had reached the street floor. My office was in the Van Nuys Building at the corner of Seventh and Spring Streets. With Thoroughgood leading the way we walked east on Seventh Street and then turned into Spring Street.

"I came down Spring Street, so it was more convenient to park on this side of the building," he explained. As usual the spaces adjoining the curb, with the exception of the no-parking sections, were full of cars, packed close together with their bumpers touching fore and aft.

"Do you see those four disks out there?" he said, pointing toward the space between the street car tracks and the parked automobiles. Following his directions, I was barely able to distinguish four objects that looked like small, flat ashtrays turned upside down. They marked the corners of a rectangle, about five feet wide and eight feet long.

When I told him I saw the disks he declared, "That's where my car is parked." To prove this amazing assertion he bent over and did something to the disk which was nearest to us.

"Better wait for the next traffic signal!" I cautioned him, but I was too late.

Just as the bell jingled and the "go" semaphore swung up to a horizontal position, a tiny, toy automobile materialized before my astonished eyes. It swelled out rapidly. In a fraction of a second it became a full sized car.

And what a car!

It was a Buick roadster of the pre-war vintage. The crumpled fenders flapped disconsolately. The tires were threadbare. The "two-man top" was festooned with tattered fabric.

Like excited race-horses, the double line of impatient vehicles leapt forward and charged down upon Thoroughgood's delapidated flivver. The leader happened to be a big truck heaped high with gravel. It was almost across Seventh Street, when the driver saw the ancient Buick loom up in front of him. His brakes shrieked in agony as he did his best to stop. Luckily he had not gathered much momentum and he was able to bring his truck to a skidding stop a split second after he crashed into the rear of the roadster. Then, the tension released, he gave vent to a torrent of abuse and profanity that would have made a mule driver blush with shame.

Thoroughgood paid no attention to him. Calmly and deliberately he stepped to the side of his car, snapped on the ignition switch and then walked to the front and proceeded to spin the crank.

After four or five unsuccessful tries, there was a roar from the exhaust and the car began to tremble like a man with the ague.

"All right, Mr. Underwood! Hop in!" he commanded.

In order to escape from the gaping crowd which had gathered around us, I

thought it best to obey. With a noise like a dog worrying a bone, the flivver got under way.

Thoroughgood turned west on Eighth Street, then headed north on Broadway.

"I NEARLY always park in loading zones or in front of fire plugs," he explained as we clattered over the first intersection. Usually there is plenty of parking space of that sort available, but sometimes even the loading zones are full. Then I park directly in the right of way. It isn't quite as satisfactory on account of the traffic and the dumb drivers, but it will do in an emergency. Now I'll show you how my four-dimensional parker works."

We were about halfway between Fifth and Sixth Streets. When we reached the mid-block pedestrian crossing, which was marked by metal hexagons sunk into the paving, he swung in close to the sidewalk and stopped at the place where the curb was colored a brilliant red. Conspicuously lettered in white paint was the warning, "No Parking At Any Time."

I was about to step out when a police officer came running toward us.

"Hey, you!" he yelled. "Move on! You can't park there."

Heedlessly, Thoroughgood switched off the ignition and set the hand brake. By that time the traffic officer had planted one huge foot on the running board of the car.

"Didn't you hear me?" he panted. "Move on before I give you a ticket."

"Better move on," I advised, giving Thoroughgood an emphatic nudge with my elbow.

But he paid no attention—either to me or to the officer. All he did was to give a few twists to a T-shaped handle which protruded from the left side of the steering column.

What happened then was as ludicrous as it was astonishing. Looking down, I saw the running board melt away beneath the heavily shod foot of the officer. The removal of this prop caught him off balance and he plunged forward, sprawling on his hands and knees in the road. He staggered to his feet, picked up his cap, scratched his head and looked about him with a bewildered expression on his tanned countenance.

"Well I'll be a dirty name!" I heard him mutter. "Guess I must be seeing things!"

His face was so near to me that I could easily have reached out and tweaked his nose (had I been in a nose-tweaking mood). Though I could see him and hear him very distinctly, he seemed totally oblivious of our presence so close to him.

Thoroughgood leaned over and whispered in my ear, "We are now in hyperspace. That's why the officer can't see us. All we need to do is wait until he goes away. Then we can get out."

For several minutes the policeman remained in our immediate vicinity, gazing up at the sky and peeping underneath the two automobiles which were parked near-by. Finally he abandoned the search and returned to his post at the intersection.

Thoroughgood gave the handle a reverse twist and the car returned to its original position.

"Let's get out now," he directed. "Come around on this side and I'll show you how the parking device works."

Standing outside the car, he was easily able to reach the handle which stuck out at right angles from the steering column.

"If you will look underneath the car you'll see four rods hanging down from axles, just inside the wheels. Can you see them?"

"I can see two on this side," I told him.

"ALL right. Those rods are part of a small but very powerful pneumatic jack which is operated by the compressed air in this tank on the running broad. Watch what happens to them when I turn it on."

Watching I saw the rods move downward until their disk-shaped feet were in contact with the pavement. Then the rods melted away and the car began to shrink in size. In a few seconds it had disappeared completely.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "Neat, isn't it?"

"Very neat," I concurred. "Will it work with a large, heavy car?"

"Certainly. It will work with any vehicle—even with a ten-ton truck. Naturally the supporting rods will have to be built stronger for a heavier car and it may be necessary to use a larger air tank, but otherwise the same mechanism will do for any size car. You must bear in mind that it is only necessary to lift the car a fraction of a centimeter away from the three dimensional boundaries."

"I see. Would you mind explaining how you get the car back out of the fourth dimension?"

"That's the simplest part of the whole performance. You will notice that in the center of each of these disks there is a small milled protuberance about the size of a quarter. Any one of them can be used for lowering the car. All I have to do is to turn one of these tiny dials. That permits the air to escape and the force of gravitation brings the car back. Would you like to try it?"

Following his instructions, I turned the coin-like wheel on one of the disks. There was a hiss of escaping air and Thoroughgood's car grew before my eyes from a tiny speck to its normal size.

"Do you know how to drive a Buick?" the inventor asked me.

"I used to drive one many years ago," I told him. "The middle notch is the neutral, isn't it?"

"That's right. Suppose you take the wheel this time. Turn on the ignition and I'll crank it for you."

Little realizing what I was getting myself into, I took my place at the wheel, turned the switch and put my foot on the clutch pedal. Thoroughgood cranked and this time the motor started at the first try. With surprising alacrity he clambered into the seat beside me without stopping to open the door.

"Quick!" he yelled. "Get going! Here comes that cop we fooled a while ago!"

I looked back. Sure enough! There was our friend the traffic officer. He was coming toward us at a dead run. Even at a distance I could see that there was blood in his eye.

In my haste to escape I put it in reverse and jammed on the brake at the same time. The motor coughed a growling protest at this outrageous treatment and gave up the ghost. By this time the officer, book in hand, was asking me for my operator's license.

"Twist the four dimensional parker," Thoroughgood said as he pointed to the handle which protruded from the steering column.

He didn't have to tell me twice. With my left hand I twisted the handle and kept on twisting it until it would twist no further.

"That's enough!" the inventor yelled. "Shut it off! Quick!"

But the warning came too late. The car began to shudder and to rock back and forth. At first I thought the motor had started again, but I soon discovered that the motion was quite different from the vibration of the engine. Like a sapling in a heavy wind, the Buick swayed and strained. Then, with the suddenness of a cannon shot, the car

with the two of us in it leaped into the air.

IT is useless to attempt an accurate description of the wild flight which then ensued. Moving sideways in an easterly direction, the flivver seemed to flow along with breath-taking swiftness, following closely the contours of the obstructions that lay in our path.

Climbing up the face of a building, seemingly only a fraction of an inch from the wall, the flying car swept across the roofs, only to plunge with sickening speed to the sidewalk below. Then across the street it sped, hurdling automobiles and pedestrians who seemed to be entirely oblivious of our presence. On the opposite side, we shot up and over the next building and so on until we reached the outskirts of the city.

Soon we were brushing the tops of the grape vines and the orange trees in the vineyards and orchards of San Bernardino County. Then, as if we were on a colossal roller-coaster track, we were tearing up and over mountain ridges, coasting at break-neck speed down precipitous slopes and shooting across picturesque, wooded valleys. Then we were playing leap-frog with the cactus and giant Joshua trees of the Mojave Desert.

As it hurtled along on its preposterous journey, our levitated machine went through the most outrageous maneuvers. It spun and somersaulted and skidded, now moving sideways, now upside down, now on end with its radiator nudging the ground. Strange to relate, these eccentric gyrations didn't seem to bother me in the least. Even when we were traveling with our wheels pointing heavenward, I had no difficulty in keeping my seat. The violent spinning didn't even make me dizzy.

With hundreds of square miles of desert land in which to navigate, it seemed rather strange that our flying car should decide to travel for some distance along the only railroad in that section of the country. Possibly there was some magnetic attraction between the rails and the metal of the automobile or maybe it just happened that the railroad and our own itinerary coincided for a stretch. At any rate, we located the rails and followed them for a considerable distance.

We hadn't been on the right of way for more than a few seconds when a west bound transcontinental train loomed up in the distance. Rapidly as it approached us, our own speed was many times faster. It looked as if a terrific head-on collision was inevitable. I started to clamber over the side of the car, but Thoroughgood grasped my arm and held it with a grip of steel.

Surely, I thought, the engineer would see us and would try to stop the train before we reached it, but he didn't slow up or even blow his whistle. Straight toward us that great locomotive thundered. When it was almost upon us, our car gave a slight upward lift, slid deftly over the cow-catcher and scuttled over the roof of the locomotive cab. As we shot across the top of the funnel I could smell the acrid odor of burning oil and feel the hot breath of the smoke which puffed through the cracks in the floor board of the car.

BEFORE I had time to draw two breaths, we had swept across the roofs of the coaches and had sweeped down upon the empty tracks once more. When we came to a curve in the track, the machine deserted the roadbed and shot in a straight line across the desert to the banks of the Colorado River. Down the west bank we coasted, skipping across the water and zooming up the cliffs on the opposite shore. Then away over

the sage-brush wastes of Arizona we scurried.

During this long journey—which had consumed but a few minutes of time, neither Thoroughgood nor I had spoken a word. I was too busy hanging on to my seat and watching the panorama which unrolled beneath us with amazing swiftness, to bother about conversation. Finally, however, I managed to gasp, "What's going to happen to us?"

He shook his head. "You'll find out soon enough," he croaked. "For the present there's nothing for us to do but sit tight."

"You can do as you please," I panted. "But the first good chance I get, I'm going to bail out."

The chance I was looking for came a few seconds later. As we approached a city, which I afterward learned was Prescott, we passed over a stretch of woodland where the trees were crowded together. So close did we come to the tree-tops that I almost fancied I could hear the branches swishing against our tires. Climbing out on the running-board, I prepared to hurl myself away from the car. Taking a tip from the method used by railroad men in alighting from a moving train, I faced forward and leaped in the same direction we were moving. Head over heels I plunged, keeping pace with the car which sped along beside me. I managed to straighten myself out and to clutch at the branches which swept past, a fraction of an inch beneath me. I caught hold several times but the twigs I grasped either broke off or were wrenched out of my hands by the force of my own inertia.

I did succeed in retarding my progress somewhat, however, and soon I was crashing through the branches, bounding from one tree to another, bumping into boughs and clutching madly at everything that came within my reach. Fortunately the grove in which I landed was carpeted with thick, springy underbrush. Like a trained acrobat, I landed with my body curled into a ball and rolling along the ground. Except for a few minor scratches and bruises, I was uninjured.

I walked to Prescott, which was about a mile from the place where I had alighted, and went at once to the railway station. There I inquired about the next train for Los Angeles. The agent who sold me my ticket told me that I would have to wait for a little over two hours.

As I entered the Pullman car, you can imagine my astonishment when I saw in the seat across the aisle from me none other than Socrates Thoroughgood.

"Hello there!" I greeted him. "So you decided to bail out too, did you?"

"Yes. When I saw you land, I made up my mind to follow your example. But I had to wait until I hit the woods east of the city."

"What happened to your car?" I inquired.

"The last I saw of it, the old boat was still going strong. By now it is probably crossing the Atlantic."

"By the way, Mr. Thoroughgood," I remarked. "I wish you would tell me just what happened when I twisted that dohickey of yours."

"I CAN easily explain that," he responded. "You gave it too much air. The jack pushed the car so far out into hyperspace that it got caught in the ether drift."

"The ether drift?" I questioned.

"Yes. Doubtless you know that not only the earth but the whole solar system is drifting through space at a terrific speed. Luckily for us, at the time we became detached from the earth's

gravitational field, we happened to be at a spot which was near the front of the earth as it shot forward. The slip stream pushed us close to the earth's surface instead of away from it as would have been the case if we had been on the receding side of the globe."

"And suppose we had been on the receding side of the globe, as you call it. What would have happened then?"

"In that case, you and I would now be frozen stiff and would be drifting around in space somewhere between here and the planet Mars," he replied.

"I thank you," I grinned. "If you don't mind, I'd like to ask you just one more question. Now that you have lost your car, does that mean also the loss of your four dimensional parking device?"

"Certainly not. I can easily construct another one. But you may depend on one thing."

"And what is that?"

"The next one I build is going to be absolutely fool-proof!"

THE END

A Farmer's Wife and Meteorites

A rather amusing incident or series of incidents is told of happenings in the Western part of this country. A farmer's wife there, for some reason or other, took an interest in meteorites, of which there were a number lying about in the vicinity of their home, so she used to collect them, her husband taking no interest in the matter. When she managed to get an unusually large one on his wagon, he contemptuously threw it off. But presently a collector came along who was interested in these celestial visitors, and he began purchasing them from the farmer's wife, and we are told that the farmer at once changed his point of view and took a very active interest in the affair. Quoting the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, we may say that he "Found Gold and Gems in These Dull Facts" and found that a meteorite was a "rock of diamonds" just like Emerson's "day of facts." All efforts to find the large meteorite mentioned above failed. So if meteorites come in the way of any of our readers, let them treat them with a certain degree of respect as they have a business standing.

One point to be kept in mind is that meteorites have never been asteroids—they are a distinct thing. When found on the earth they are meteorites, blazing through the night skies they are meteors and before they are meteors we may almost assume them to be nameless—they seem really to require three names.

The Fall of Lucifer; A Meteor in Milton

From morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star.
Milton—Paradise Lost, Bk. 1, L. 742 et seq.