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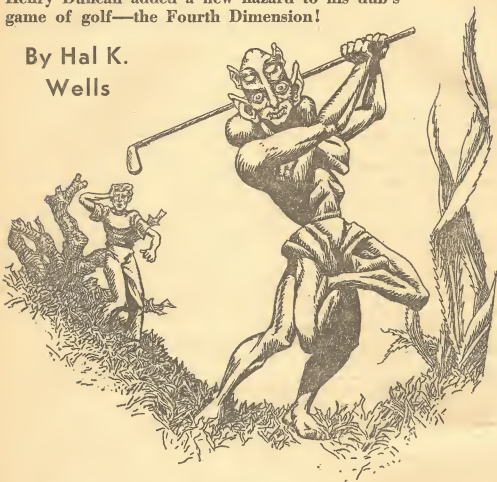
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DIMENSION - HAZARD

Henry Duncan added a new hazard to his dub's game of golf—the Fourth Dimension!

By Hal K.
Wells



IT WAS at exactly fourteen minutes after three o'clock of a sunny Sunday afternoon in early July that Henry Duncan swung himself suddenly and completely into the Fourth Dimension.

The phrase "swung himself" is used advisedly. It was the act of swinging a brassie on the fifteenth hole of the Midtown Municipal Golf Course that provided both the method and the motive power for Henry Duncan's unique transit across, through, and around the unimaginable terrain of interdimensional space.

Mr. Duncan's epochal flight from a nor-

mal and mundane world was quite unintentional. The Fourth Dimension was the one thing farthest from his mind as he spread his long legs stiffly apart, waggled his club in large-knuckled hands, and in grim desperation prepared himself for what he hoped would be the shot of a lifetime.

It *had* to be the shot of a lifetime. Henry's location at the time was upon the grassy bottom of a long, deep gully one hundred and fifty yards to the right of the fifteenth tee. He had arrived there by achieving a drive with a rainbow slice that

set a new record for even Henry. The other three members of his foursome had driven reasonably straight balls and were now making their untroubled way greenward somewhere on the fairway above Henry's head.

They were playing for fifteen cents a hole and the preceding three holes had been halved. That meant that this hole shot the works for all four. The winner would get \$1.80; each loser would be out sixty cents. The difference between those two amounts is a respectable item when your weekly salary as a grocery clerk happens to be \$17.50.

Henry knew that to take a niblick and pitch safely up on the fairway meant almost certain loss of the hole. There was one possible chance to snatch victory from the gaping jaws of disaster. A long screaming brassie shot straight as a rifle bullet down the narrow gully, with a carry of at least two hundred and twenty yards and a slight hook at the end, would bring him out hole high and with a short easy pitch to the green.

It was a shot the mere contemplation of which would have blanched the ruddy cheeks of Walter Hagen, but Henry Duncan went at it with the grimness of desperation. The head of his club ceased its wagging, hovered momentarily, then started the weird and intricate sequence of physical contortions that made up the Duncan golf swing. It was a phenomenon that was in many respects suggestive of a windmill in a violent cyclone.

The club-head started back with decorous slowness, then abruptly accelerated to a whistling rush as Henry belatedly remembered to clamp his head rigidly down. As the club reached its zenith he also belatedly remembered admonitions about shifting his weight to his right foot, keeping his left arm straight, cocking his wrists, and making a full pivot. He tried to carry out all the admonitions simultaneously.

The result was both spectacular and disastrous. Henry felt vaguely that there was something horrible happening even as the brassie came hurtling downward in its incredible arc. As it passed his right knee he grimly tried to snap both wrists into it, straighten his left leg, roll his weight, keep his eye on the ball, and hit from the inside out. These contortions, added to an already appalling total, proved the last straw.

The laws of chance were about ten billion to one that it couldn't possibly happen, but when the gods of chance wrote those laws they had never seen Henry Duncan swing at a golf ball. It did happen.

If there had been any spectators watching Henry at the moment, which there were not, they would have witnessed a very startling sight. In the fraction of a second before the whistling club-head met the ball, both club and player vanished, flicking from sight with the split-second swiftness of a page rapidly turned in a book. The only thing left to even denote they had been there was the ball still reposing on the grass a yard or so from the edge of a deep little pond on the gully floor.

AS HENRY vanished from the eyes of the world, the world also vanished from Henry's eyes. There was a period of frightful blackness and cold that was both lightning short and ages long, then around Henry a new landscape burst into view. The only visible being in this new world was a figure that stood about a yard in front of Henry and surveyed him with a face that was as blankly startled as Henry's own.

Henry stared at the apparition for a frozen moment of shocked horror, then closed his eyes and shuddered in relief as he realized that such a thing couldn't really exist, of course. It was his own fault. He should have had more brains than to

have eaten that chocolate ice-cream cone on top of two hot dogs and a bottle of beer for lunch. He opened his eyes, and groaned. The incredible being was still there.

"Go away!" Henry said irritably. "All I need is a shot of bicarb!"

The figure looked like a cross between a biologist's nightmare and a Hindu artist's idea of the God of Destruction. It was about seven feet in height, with a bald shining head and skin the unpleasant hue of a green pumpkin. It had four arms, four legs, four eyes, and four ears.

Half of the creature's weird anatomy seemed to be in a state of profound slumber at the moment. The lower pair of eyes in the broad green face was placidly closed, the lower pair of arms was peacefully entwined across the enormous chest, and one pair of legs was drawn far up and folded across the abdomen. The other half of the thing, however, was very much awake.

The two upper eyes stared balefully at Henry through large irises that were the color of ripe tomatoes. The two upper arms, so multi-jointed as to be almost tentacular, flashed in the air and weird weapons of gleaming metal appeared magically in the eight-fingered hands. Then as Henry made no hostile move the other seemed to relax. The hostility faded from the tomato-red eyes, and the hands nonchalantly tossed the weapons into the air where they instantly vanished in faint puffs of tenuous mist. The act did nothing to restore Henry's badly shaken composure.

The creature's mouth opened. "Go away!" it said. "All I need is a shot of bicarb!" The words were an exact echo of Henry's, even to the definitely nasal Duncan accent. The creature repeated the phrase again, then shook its head as though puzzled. It pointed abruptly at Henry's brassie in a gesture that was unmistakably interrogatory.

"That's a brassie," Henry explained nervously. "It's a golf club, you know."

"Brassie—golf—club—know," the creature repeated thoughtfully. It pointed at Henry's head. "My head," Henry said doubtfully. The names for hands, feet, and neck quickly followed. Then pantomime gave the words for walk, stop, and jump. That seemed to suffice. The creature was silent for only a moment, then said, "That will do it all right, I think. But I must admit it is a very silly sort of language and very inefficiently constructed."

Henry's jaw dropped. "Why, you speak English after all!" he exclaimed.

"Naturally," the other said. "You just taught it to me."

"But how did I teach you?" Henry faltered. "I only told you ten or twelve different words."

"Two different words would have been enough. Some of us even argue that it can be done with one. I asked for the extra ones merely to save time. Given two or more words of any language, the deduction of all other words in that language is a simple matter of pure logic. A race that will call a certain kind of a wheeled vehicle a 'bicycle' will inevitably call the inside of a cow's stomach 'tripe.' You see that, don't you?"

HENRY didn't, but he let it go at that. "If I'm really here," he said, "which I certainly hope I'm not, where am I, and what in the heck happened to me?"

"You are on Quadruhl, a planet in what your people call the Fourth Dimension," the other answered calmly. "It isn't the ridiculous state of existence that you visualize as a Fourth Dimension, of course. The so-called dimension that you try to conceive in your tesseracts and other fourth-plane-perpendicular-to-three ideas is obviously merely the outside of the third dimension in which you already exist. Or for that matter, it is the inside, for no

complete dimension could ever have any side inside or outside any other side. I am sorry if it sounds a trifle confusing, but your primitive language simply does not contain the necessary words for me to make myself any clearer."

"Oh, you're doing fine," Henry assured him feebly.

Henry's head was beginning to ache dizzily and he had a horrible feeling that if he ever stopped long enough to realize that all this was really happening to him he would very promptly go crazy. In an instinctive effort to postpone that evil moment as long as possible he hastily tried to keep his mind occupied by asking more questions.

"How did I get here?" he demanded.

"I don't know exactly," the other answered. "There are a few scattered places between our dimensions where the wall is very thin. You were probably standing by one of those thin spots and in some manner you went through the intricate and almost impossible series of bodily movements necessary to carry you physically through the barrier."

So that was it, Henry reflected in shocked amazement. During his golf career he had done many strange things with a wooden club. He had swung himself off his feet on several occasions. He had knocked himself unconscious by wrapping the club-head around his left ear on the follow through. He had allowed the club to slip from his hands and slaughter an innocent calf that was grazing in a pasture twenty yards away. But he had now achieved the ultimate!

He had swung himself not only off his feet, but off the entire world, completely away from the Sun and the Solar System and also out of the whole sidereal universe. If he had only, he reflected bitterly, kept his head down when he swung at that ball back there on the gully floor this horrible thing would probably not have happened to him.

"Did anybody else ever do it before?" he asked forlornly.

"Oh yes, it happens every five or ten years, though you are the first to arrive on my particular place here for nearly a century. The last one I had was an Italian hermit who had a strange fondness for living in trees. So I built a fine large tree for him to live in, but I must have built it too high for he became dizzy and fell."

"It killed him, I suppose."

"No. Physical death is impossible in this dimension. His atomic construction was still more third dimensional than fourth. So while he ceased to exist here he merely flicked back into existence on your plane again. Did he not tell your people about it?"

Henry shook his head. If the Italian gentleman, or any other voyagers returning from this eldritch world, had ever been foolish enough to try to tell anybody about it there was little doubt that they had spent the remainder of their Earthly lives in nice padded cells somewhere.

"Odd," the other commented. "You must be a singularly uncommunicative people, as well as being physically deficient to the point of being a race of congenital cripples."

HENRY hastily looked himself over in some trepidation to see if he had lost any parts during his weird transdimensional flight. He hadn't.

"I'm no cripple," he protested indignantly. "I'm all here."

"Yes, what there is of you, but judged by any sane and normal standard you are scarcely more than half a man. Only one pair of eyes, one pair of ears, one pair of arms, and one pair of legs. No wonder you have to spend a third of your pitifully short lives in wasteful slumber. If you had the normal physical equipment sleep would be unnecessary for your body as a whole. You would simply do as I do and allow half the members and organs to rest while

the other half remains actively awake."

"You mean there's two of you everywhere?" Henry said incredulously.

"Oh no, that would be too complicated. We'd be fighting with each other all the time. I only have one mouth, one stomach, one pair of lungs; and all that. And I only have one brain, though it does have three major lobes; one for each of my sets of members and a large one to coordinate them. By the way, what is your name?"

"Henry Duncan."

"I am glad to meet you, Henry-Duncan. Mine, as near as it can be translated into your silly language, is George-Albert. Can I offer you something to eat or drink?"

One of the arms waved in the air and produced an object about the size of a watermelon, with a soggy looking exterior that was a not particularly appetizing shade of mottled purple.

"You must be a magician!" Henry exclaimed.

"Not at all, quite normal. Here on Quadruhl there is none of the pathetic inefficiency of manufacture found in your barren dimension. Our atmosphere is an inexhaustible reservoir of atomic material. Innumerable specialized nerve ends in our hands transform these atoms directly into the necessary molecular groupings to construct any inanimate object or even lower life form. When we are through with what we have thus made we simply reverse the process and return its atoms to the atmospheric reservoir. Very simple, really, but there's no use my trying to explain it any further. You wouldn't understand it."

"No, I guess I wouldn't," Henry agreed feebly. "Could you get me a glass of water, please? I seem to be awful dry."

"Water?" George-Albert frowned. "That always was difficult for me. How about some wine? The Italian hermit was very fond of wine."

"No, thanks," Henry said firmly. "Wine doesn't agree with me."

"All right, I'll get you water then. But don't blame me if it tastes a little strange. Water is a liquid we do not have here in Quadruhl and the hermit could never give me a really accurate description of it."

A large glass filled with clear liquid appeared in George-Albert's hand. Henry took a gulp, and promptly spluttered. "That's gasoline!" he exclaimed indignantly. The second effort turned out to be camphor. The third had a strong tinge of peppermint but seemed drinkable enough otherwise, so Henry gulped it down.

Between large bites of the purple melon George-Albert looked speculatively at the brassie that was still in Henry's hand.

"I am very fond of games," he said. "Tell me about golf."

Henry did, and under the warming influence of having so attentive a listener he laid it on with a very liberal hand. He described a golf course of a difficulty that could exist only in a pro's nightmare, and he pictured his own prowess as combining all the abilities of the Messrs. Snead, Nelson, Jones, and Diegel, with a little added skill that none of those ever had.

"Good," George-Albert said, gulping down the last of the melon. "We'll have a game."

HE SWIFTLY made a replica of Henry's brassie and followed it with a bag and other necessary clubs from Henry's descriptions of them. Henry had his putting ball in his pocket—a cherished 75 cent Soar-Hi whose immaculate cover had never known the touch of any club ruder than a putter—and George-Albert promptly made a dozen balls like it. Then the Quadruhlian surveyed the landscape around them. It was a rolling expanse of neutral brownish hue, barren save for an igloo-shaped structure some twenty yards distant.

"Laying out a course will be a little bigger job," George-Albert said. "I'd better wake me up." He shook himself. The closed pair of eyes opened, the resting pair of arms untwined, and the spare pair of legs dropped to the ground.

"I had also better warn Alice-Ella that I am going to be using this immediate vicinity for new construction," George Albert commented. "She sometimes becomes very angry when I build new things around her without telling her beforehand."

Henry could detect no sound or even any gesture by George-Albert toward the igloo but a signal of some kind was obviously made for a door in the side of the structure opened and a female Quadruhl-ian emerged. In size and anatomical structure Alice-Ella closely resembled George-Albert with the exception that her eyes were the bright yellow color of a ripe lemon and there was a circle of yellowish fuzz around her head just above the upper pair of ears, above which her skull arched in a bald and gleaming green dome.

George-Albert paused for sixty seconds to teach Alice-Ella the English language, then turned back to Henry.

"This is Alice-Ella," he said. "She is my sister. She is also my mother, my wife, my daughter, and sometimes my second cousin. Our relationships are a little more involved here than they are in your world. Alice-Ella, this is Henry-Duncan. He just broke through the dimensions."

"Oh, another poor little Half-Man," Alice-Ella cooed in a voice that would have shattered plate glass windows at thirty paces.

All of Alice-Ella was awake at the moment. Her four feet carried her across the ground in a rush that had all the speed and grace of a charging rhinoceros. She swept Henry up helplessly in her four hands, stared fondly at him for a moment out of her four lemon-yellow eyes, then began violently battering Henry's fore-

head against the top of her granite-like skull.

Henry howled in indignant protest. Alice-Ella set him gently on the ground again and stared at him in apparent bewilderment.

"What is the matter, little Half-Man?" she asked. "Do not people in your world make love to each other?"

"Yes," Henry spluttered, "but we don't do it by knocking each other's brains out. We sit a girl on our lap and then we hug and kiss each other."

"Show me how," Alice-Ella said eagerly.

"Make a good strong chair for us," Henry said. Alice-Ella did. Henry started to sit down, then abruptly changed his mind. Holding Alice-Ella would be a great deal like trying to hold the Rock of Gibraltar on his lap. "I'd better sit on *your* lap," he said hastily.

Alice-Ella sat. Four legs made a lap that seemed alarmingly vast but Henry climbed up, embraced Alice-Ella's ample torso as far as he could reach, and gingerly planted a kiss upon her greenish colored lips.

Alice-Ella sighed in gusty contentment. "It is a strange way to make love, little Half-Man," she said, "but I like it! Let us do it some more."

They did. Henry had always been an ardent devotee of both plain and fancy necking, but for the first time in his life he found himself getting a great deal more than he wanted. There was not only far too much of Alice-Ella, both in number of parts and in gross tonnage, but there was also far too much enthusiasm in using those parts. It was a great deal like being necked by a cross between an octopus and a boa-constrictor.

His ribs ached from the pressure of four arms that had the sinuous strength of steel cables. His face was raw from rubbing against the sandpaper surface of Alice-Ella's cheeks. His mouth was bruised

from being crushed against lips that were as stiffly unyielding as saddle-leather. It was with a feeling of overwhelming relief that he finally heard George-Albert summoning him.

Alice-Ella held him for a moment longer to whisper a word of unexpected warning in his ear. "Be careful, little Half-Man. My brother has a very violent temper. Do not cross him in any way in this queer game that you are about to play or he will fly into a terrible rage and kill you. And I do not want you to be killed, little Half-Man. I want you to return and make love to me some more!"

She carefully set Henry upon his feet. He looked around him and saw that during his ordeal of courtship George-Albert had apparently been working all his anatomical parts at top capacity. Where there had once been a barren landscape there now stretched the first hole of a golf course.

HENRY stared at that first hole in incredulous horror. Too late, he regretted from the bottom of his heart his overdrawn descriptions of Earthly golf courses and of his own prowess thereon. George-Albert had not only included every hazard that Henry had mentioned, but he had also added others that could occur only to the triple-lobed brain of a Quadruhlian.

The green was at least five hundred yards distant. It looked to be about half the size of a small billiard table. A waist-high thicket of dagger-spined cactus behind it made a rough that was stark suicide to even enter. On either side of the tiny green yawned traps sixty feet in circumference and so deep that sulphurous vapors drifted upward apparently from the very bowels of the planet.

The terrain between the green and the tee was one that looked as though it had been designed by Edgar Allan Poe during one of his least cheerful moods. It was a

vast chasm that to Henry's horrified gaze lacked only about three feet to equal the Grand Canyon. The floor of the abyss was filled with an assortment of hazards that would have appalled the soul of Dante.

Gigantic craters in which molten lava seethed in scalding fury were side by side with vast stretches of green-slimed swampland in whose turgid ooze great scaled shapes writhed in saurian horror. Devil-trees dotted the landscape, each with scores of flesh-hungry tentacles whipping the ground around its trunk. Over to the left was a Cyclopean rock den in which dozens of great bloated pythons surged in demoniac undulation. To the right was another huge stony basin filled to the brim with monstrous hairy spiders, the smallest of which would have filled a wash-tub.

"But there's no fairway anywhere!" Henry protested through chattering teeth.

"There shouldn't be any," George-Albert answered in surprise. "This is only a par three hole, just a simple little pitch to the green. I think a seven iron will just about do it."

George-Albert selected a mashie-niblick from his bag and teed a ball up. A moment later Henry watched the awesome spectacle of a seven-foot golfer with a chest as large as a rain barrel swing a club in four hands, keep two left arms straight and punch mightily through with two right arms while he pivoted on four legs and rigidly kept four eyes on the ball. The result was phenomenal. The ball shot away with the whistling scream of a bullet, rose skyward in a colossal and incredible arc, then dropped dead on the distant green, barely a yard from the flag.

"Looks like a birdie," George-Albert said complacently. "Let's see you do any better."

Henry's fingers shook so badly that he had to take both hands to tee his ball. He

selected, not a mashie-niblick, but his brassie. Not that it made any difference what club he chose. Henry knew he couldn't reach that distant green with anything short of a 6-inch fieldpiece.

HE STOOD upon quaking legs, feebly waggled the club-head, and looked out over the chasm. For the first time in his life he wished quite sincerely that he were dead. He gazed at the swamp saurians, the devil-trees, the pythons, and finally at the spot to his right and one hundred yards distant where the monstrous spiders swarmed in their great rock basin.

Henry groaned in utter agony of soul. He was mortally afraid of even a one-inch house spider. And these bloated monstrosities had puffy bodies the size of wash-tubs! There wasn't a chance in the world of his ball landing anywhere else. From bitter experience Henry knew the arching trajectory of his inevitable slice down to the last inch, and that final inch would terminate squarely in the center of the spider-filled basin.

Henry glanced sideways at George-Albert, and what he saw brought a sudden gleam of desperate inspiration to his eyes. George-Albert was leaning over to return the mashie-niblick to his bag. His back was turned squarely upon Henry. The distance wasn't over fifteen feet, and the target looked as wide as the side of a box-car.

If George-Albert's temper were as murderously hair-trigger as Alice-Ella had warned, Henry should be sure of prompt results if he carried out his wild inspiration. Henry's jaw hardened in resolution. A hundred violent deaths would be preferable to one trip down among those sprawling spider horrors in the chasm. And anyway George-Albert had said that an Earth-dimension being couldn't really be killed here but would simply be flicked back to whence he had come.

Breathing a silent prayer that George-Albert had known what he was talking about, Henry took careful aim, swung his club back in a whistling arc, and let fly. At that point-blank distance, even Henry couldn't miss. His golf ball went rocketing into George-Albert's posterior with a sound like the crack of a pistol.

The heavens shook with George-Albert's roar of pain and fury. Four tomato-red eyes blazed stark murder at Henry as George-Albert spun around, and four hands snatched from the air every kind of a weapon they could hold. Henry had a single split-second glimpse of bullets, knives, poison gas, death rays, and battle-axes hurtling toward him.

All of the lethal missiles seemed to hit at once. There was a flashing moment of rending, tearing pain, then again the black chill of transdimensional flight. A landscape again formed around Henry but this time it was the familiar landscape of the gully to the right of the fifteenth fairway of the Midtown Municipal Golf Course.

As long as he remained a golfer he would always be in danger. At any moment, on any shot, on any course, he might again go through the weirdly improbable sequence of physical contortions that would again hurl him into Quadruhl. And there awaiting him would be the murderous fury of George-Albert, the unspeakable horrors of the chasm of hazards, and, above all, the four waiting arms of the amorous Alice-Ella!

Henry shuddered. On the gully floor in front of him a deep pool offered a simple and certain escape from his deadly peril. Henry grimly tossed his brassie far out into the water. Ten seconds later it was followed by eight more clubs, one golf bag, five balls, and every tee he had in his pockets.

Henry was completely—and permanently—giving up golf.