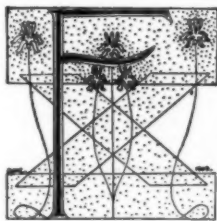


Illustrated by R. Dubois

[From the memoirs of his assistant and secretary,
Gertrude Delaney, D.Sc.]

VI.—THE DIMENSION OF TIME



EW girls have had the good fortune to be associated with such a great man as Professor Mudgewood; none, save myself, have followed the details and developments of such discoveries as he made. If I had not been a Doctor of Science I should probably not have met him; I should certainly never have been permitted to assist him in the more wonderful of his researches. I often think how strange are the forces that move us through life, and how a trivial event may make or mar our whole future. When I saw an advertisement in the daily paper which stated that Professor Mudgewood desired an amanuensis, and when, half in jest, I determined to try and persuade him that what he really wanted was a lady assistant, I never for a moment dreamed that he would engage me in that capacity, nor that later on I should be a privileged spectator—the only one—at the evolution of the greatest discoveries which science has ever yielded to man. Yet so it was. It is all a matter of history now; I have not seen the dear little man with the beaming round face and impossibly small legs since—well, I am becoming premature. I was with him for about eight years, and this memoir concerns what took place at the end of those eight years, his grandest discovery, which, owing to the facts now related, was never published through the usual medium.

Apart from his being perhaps the most expert experimentalist of his day, he was also a most profound mathematician. His experimental work

The Idler



I started up, and closed my book.

was all based upon mathematical research. Had it not been so, he could never have discovered the wonderful Retardatory Forces, which I have made the subject of a former memoir. His favourite method was to work out mathematical possibilities, and then to attempt to work them out on practical lines. I cannot describe these matters explicitly, for though myself a mathematician, I have never been able to plunge into the depths of formulæ in which the Professor revelled; his deepest and most profound calculations are still a mere craze of figures and letters to me; but that they were no mere phantasmagoria has been proved by the applications to which he put them. I would give much for erudition combined with inventive capacity

such as his. To him the fourth dimension was a reality; he could live in it, touch it, and even speak of it so cunningly that for the moment he could make the listener realise it and understand it; but when the magic of his explanation and personality wore off, alas! the fourth dimension, elusive as ever, became once more unthinkable. The little man had a wonderful way of explaining things and making them clear.

He was experimenting on the fourth dimension when I last saw him. He had proved its very essence to himself and to me in a practical manner, and it is of this matter which I am now going to tell.

Two years after I first became Professor Mudgewood's assistant, he had shown his appreciation of me by inviting me to help him in his most important experiments. Previously I had been given a minor part, and had been permitted no insight into his finest experiments until they were more or less complete. It may be imagined, therefore, with what chagrin I observed the Professor commence a new series of experiments, about three years after this, in which once again I was permitted no part. He built a partition across one end of his laboratories, and there he would work secretly without vouchsafing so much as a word even upon the subject matter of his work.

After three years, however, of this work he took me into his confidence.

I was reading, I believe, an article on "Inertion in molecules," and sitting in front of the fire in the Chemical Laboratory, when he entered in his usual energetic manner.

"Delaney," he cried, in an excited voice (he always used my surname, and I preferred it. It is more professional: it would sound absurd for a Professor to call his assistant "Gertrude," which is my Christian name!).

"Delaney," he cried again. "Eureka!"

I started up and closed my book. His speech was always excited and energetic, like his whole being, but I knew that something of more than ordinary importance was toward. The suppressed excitement in his voice was more noticeable than the expressed excitement.

I answered him casually, for he hated excitement in others. "I am glad you have found it, Professor. May I enquire what IT is?"

"IT?" he exclaimed. "IT?" Then he looked at me through his round spectacles, and surveyed me curiously from head to foot, as though he had discovered some new creature. I did not mind, for I was used to it. He

always expected one to know all about everything, even those things which he had taken care to keep as carefully guarded secrets.

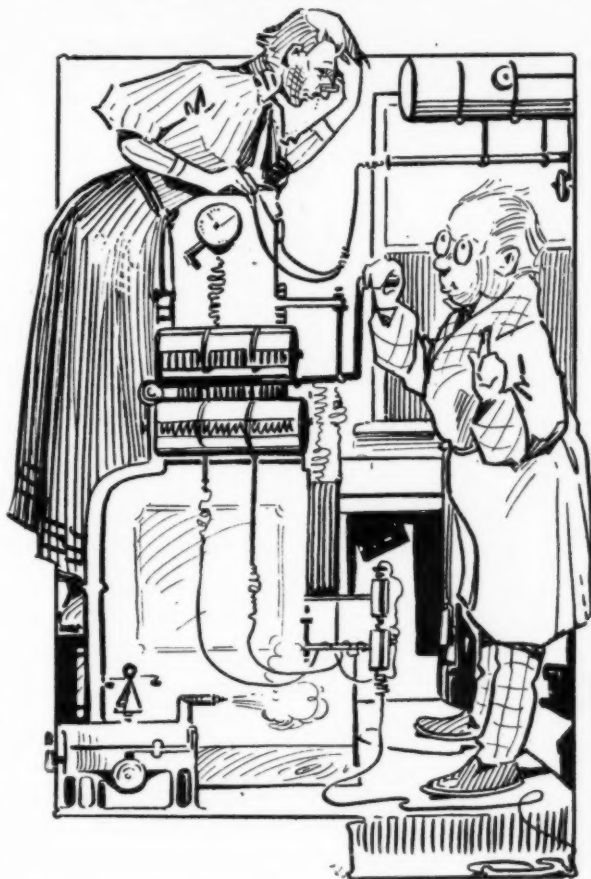
After a few seconds' survey he smiled, and removed his glasses. With irritating deliberation he wiped them with his large red handkerchief before replying. Then he tapped his teeth with them and thoughtfully observed the ceiling, and at last spoke in quiet, even tones.

"It, as you are pleased to call it, is merely the fourth dimension; not the theoretical fourth dimension, but the practical fourth dimension."

I was used to his wonderful discoveries, and almost anything else I would have believed. I fear that I must have smiled incredulously. There *could not* be any *practical* fourth dimension; if that, why not a practical fifth, or sixth, or millionth dimension? It was quite unthinkable.

He read my thoughts, but, strange to say, he did not seem annoyed.

"Delaney," he said, and shook his head mournfully, "how often have



"YOU YOURSELF SHALL GO AND SEE WHAT TIME IS LIKE BETWEEN THE BEATS."

The Idler



Now please attend.

I explained the practical fourth dimension to you? How often have you told me that I made it quite clear?"

I said nothing, but felt rather ashamed of myself.

"Yet I have found it," he continued. "It is quite simple—quite simple. And the matter works out just as I expected—exactly as I expected." He paused. "Exactly as I expected," he repeated again, dreamily.

He often echoed his words in this way, but generally much more jerkily. His change of manner began to impress me.

"Professor," I said, "I doubted your discovery at first. Permit me to apologise—the thing seemed incredible." To tell the truth, I still doubted his discovery, but I really could not hurt his feelings by permitting him to know that.

He scratched his head with the rim of his glasses. I did wish he would leave them alone. He was always playing with them.

"Perhaps so—perhaps so," he said, smiling. "If you have forgotten my reasoning, a practical demonstration will soon help you to remember it. May I first draw our attention again to the fundamental points?"

I nodded.

"Well, then, in the first place we exist in a land of three dimensions—length, breadth, height—and we can ordinarily conceive of no extra or fourth dimension. But we can conceive of beings in the *lower* dimensions, and a being in two dimensions would know only of length and breadth, and would have no conception of height; planes or plane surfaces would be the limit of his knowledge, and the third dimension would be as unthinkable to him as the fourth dimension is to us. Again, a being in one dimension would only know of length; both breadth and height would be unthinkable. Do you follow?"

I nodded.

"Then," continued the Professor, "it is no use our trying to imagine what a fourth dimension article *looks* like—that is as impossible as for a straight line to imagine what a plane *looks* like. To him only a straight line would be thinkable. We can, however, by analogy, arrive at some of the *properties* of the fourth dimension, or, rather, of a three-dimension article existing amidst an unknown fourth dimension, and yet not realising it. Am I still clear?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Very well, then, firstly as to the constitution of a fourth-dimension article. A plane surface is bounded by lines; in other words, a two-dimension article has a surface composed of articles of one dimension."

"Yes."

"What is a solid, or three-dimension article, bounded by, then?" queried the Professor.

"By planes——"

The Professor's Experiments

259

"Then what is a fourth-dimension article bounded by?"

"By solids of three dimensions," I exclaimed.

"Quite right—quite right," he smiled. "But to you that is an unthinkable proposition. Nevertheless, since a *picture* of a solid is in *two* dimensions—for instance, your photograph has length and breadth, but no thickness—so a *picture* of the fourth dimension is in three dimensions, and we can therefore bring our imagination nearer to facts, for this means that such a picture is a solid; instead of illustrating fourth-dimension articles by means of *diagrams*, we must use *models*. You have seen my cuboid picture model?"



You poor little three-dimension animal.

"Yes," I replied again. I fear that my attention had been wandering somewhat, for the Professor wiped his glasses, then replaced them and stared at me somewhat sternly.

"We will pass to the final and important point. If you have not grasped the previous ones, you will grasp this one, for it is very simple. Now please attend."

I *did* attend, for I realised from his tone that I was about to hear something new. All the rest I had heard before, but it never appealed to me. There was no practical value in it. Now, however, it struck me that I should hear something fresh. My surmise was correct.

"The straight line does not realise that it is 'length without breadth,' and therefore does not itself understand that it has no breadth—no second dimension. But the two-dimension plane knows this, and therefore knows that more than one straight line can exist in the *same place at the same time*. For since a straight line has *no* breadth, therefore two straight lines side by side have *no* breadth, and therefore they can occupy the same place at the same time, so far as the *second* dimension is concerned, and it is conceivable that could they be informed of this fact, two straight lines might so manage to place themselves. Similarly the plane surface does not know that it has no thickness, but we of three dimensions know it, and we know that two or more plane surfaces, having no thickness—or third dimension—can exist in the same place at the same time, so far as the third dimension is concerned. Finally, a fourth dimension being, seeing, and understanding that we have no fourth dimension, but that we only know of three dimensions, understands that two solids can be so placed as to occupy the same place at the same time—"

"But, my dear Professor," I interrupted, "do you mean to say that you and I can stand on the same spot at the same moment without inconveniencing one another? Why, it's unthinkable, absurd!"

"Of course it is, you poor little three-dimension animal," he said benignantly; "but, nevertheless, it is a fact, and though we cannot see *fourth-dimension* beings—for our eyes can only take in three dimensions—

The Idler



I valued that watch, and
I was wrathful.

yet I have succeeded in determining fourth-dimension conditions, and therefore I can place two three-dimension articles simultaneously in the same place. I have done it."

I may say frankly I did not believe him. I did not think he was lying, but I thought that much learning had turned the dear little man mad. So I humoured him; I pretended to believe.

"Yes, yes," I said sympathetically. "Quite so—er—what are the necessary conditions; or would you rather postpone the discussion till to-morrow? You must be tired."

"Tired!" he exclaimed in amazement "I'm *never* tired—*never* tired." Again he paused and tapped his teeth with his glasses, then echoed thoughtfully once more, "I am *never* tired."

I gave in. He went on: "The conditions of the fourth dimension are such that their presence does not affect the third dimension's outlook. Again this is by analogy. The line knows not the nature of breadth, the plane knows not the nature of height, the solid knows not the nature of——" he paused.

"Yes?" I asked, expectantly.

"Of Time," was the reply.

"Of Time?" I queried.

"Of Time."

"Mad as a hatter," was my mental comment, but I refrained from expressing it aloud. I merely replied, "Quite so," in even tones. But the Professor took no notice; he went on again: "Time is vibratory, like light and heat—now you understand?"

Again I ventured, "Quite so."

This time, however, he was not deceived. "Nothing of the sort," he continued. "You do not understand—you understand nothing of the kind—nothing of the kind." He blew his nose violently on his large red handkerchief. "Nevertheless, it is very simple."

"The Professor must think *me* very simple," was my inward comment, and I began to repeat to myself the words, "Simple Simon met a pieman." Why they came into my mind I do not know. However, the little gentleman began to talk again, and I to listen.

"Time is vibratory. Our existence is like the pictures of a cinematograph—a series of rapid existences and non-existences. A cinematograph is a rapid series of pictures, and the eye retains the impression long enough to tide over the momentary absence of picture, which is therefore never noticed. If we could shut our eyes rapidly during *each* picture, and open them *between* the pictures, we should see nothing but a blank sheet. Is that clear?"

"Yes," I replied; I was again becoming interested.

"If," he continued, "a second series were turned on to the same screen simultaneously with the first, but with its pictures filling up the

The Professor's Experiments

261

blanks instead of coinciding with the other pictures, and if we continued to open our eyes when the original blanks were there, we should then see the second series, and not the first."

"Yes," I said again.

"And if someone else closed their eyes rapidly to the pictures *we* saw and opened them to the first series, they would only see that series."

"Yes."

"Therefore there would be two sets of pictures simultaneously existing upon the screen, which would be quite indistinguishable to the man with his eyes open all the time, while the other two who opened and shut their eyes would each see a picture, *but a different one*, and apparently *the only one*."

"Yes."

"So it is with existence in three dimensions.

We can only see one thing in one place at one time, but between the 'beats' of time another article can exist in that place, and can be seen by a man also in 'tune' or 'beat' with the article. Of course, that man would be invisible to another man who was in the first 'beat.' In other words, we flicker in and out of existence, but our memory and senses persuade us that we are continuous, whereas in reality we are no more continuous than the cinematograph; and between the flicker of our existence, other flickering beings, invisible to us, exist—in fact, whole series of such existences take place, and many things may exist in the same place at the same time, according to our usual acceptance of time."

"That would explain why a ghost could pass through a wall," said I. The remark was rather inane, but the thought flashed through my mind.

"Exactly," was the reply. "And now I will demonstrate these facts to you. Come with me behind the partition, and you shall see the greatest discovery science has ever made—ever made." He got up excitedly, and paced two or three times up and down the room. I tried to imagine that his rotund body and quickly moving legs were rapidly flickering in and out of existence; but the thought was impossible, although I called to mind that I might be doing it simultaneously, and should, of course, not notice the fact. It was really too absurd—that kind round face, with the beaming smile and owl-like eyes, was much too solid for me to accept these theories. However, I rose and followed him behind the partition.

There was not much to be seen there; the Professor had a passion, amounting almost to a mania, for "boxing in" his apparatus lest prying eyes should learn too much. He never seemed to realise that the only pair of eyes which could pry were my own, and that without explanation most of his machinery was quite incomprehensible. Here, as in the laboratory, the chief items of interest were hidden in three large cupboards, built along a bench which ran round two sides of the room. The only visible



The rabbit was produced, the clockwork set.

The Idler

connections between the cupboards consisted of heavy wires which might be for the conduction of electricity between them.

The Professor turned a switch, and immediately in one of the cupboards I heard a sound which I knew must proceed from a high-frequency electric machine. Why this should have been hidden, I knew not, unless it was of novel design. From the third cupboard, close to which we were standing, two flexible wires protruded, each about two yards in length, and terminated by a pair of platinum hooks. The Professor lifted one of these hooks.

"If I place an object on this bench and connect these two hooks to it," said he, "the circuit will be completed, and the object will fall out of the beat of time in which we exist, and will be lost to our vision."

I smiled indulgently. "Is it an electric circuit?" I asked.

"No. The high-frequency current is merely used to generate the requisite movement in my machine—there." He pointed to the middle cupboard. "The fluid or current is not Electricity, but Time!"

I had much difficulty in restraining my emotions, but with an effort I controlled myself and fell back upon a non-committal, "I see."

I thought that an experiment would convince the Professor, therefore I took my gold watch—a present from my father—and placed it upon the bench. I was about to pick up the two terminal hooks and apply them to it, when the Professor struck back one of my hands, and shouted "Fool!"

I looked at him in astonishment. I had never known him to do such a thing before. He repeated the expression more gently.

"Fool—if you pick up the terminals you will *yourself* complete the circuit. You will disappear, *and you will not be able to come back.*"

In spite of my unbelief, I stepped further away from the dangerous apparatus.

"You mean to say that I should be electrocuted?" I queried.

"No—I have said it is not electricity, but time. You would get out of beat with this world and this existence. See. You must connect up one terminal at a time, then you are safe." He suited the action to the word, and touched the terminals against my watch. Against my—I rubbed my eyes. There was no watch there. I valued that watch, and I was wrathful. "Why did you do that?" I exclaimed. "You knew it would go."

"Of course—that is what a watch is designed for." He chuckled at his joke, which I thought very feeble. "You put it there to test," he continued.

"But I did not think it would disappear," I replied, exasperated.

He seemed so sorry now, however, that I felt ashamed of having spoken harshly to him. His great eyes looked at me mournfully and helplessly as a child. Then I realised the wonderful thing which he had done, and I exclaimed, "Never mind—it is nothing compared with the wonder before us."

He brightened up again. "It is a wonder," said he, "a great wonder—I may say a *very* great wonder."

Then I began to think. After all, I had no proof that the watch did still exist, or that the vibratory theory of time had anything to do with it,



"THIS IS VERY GRAND! WE ARE MONARCHS OF A NEW WORLD."



The effect on the Professor was extraordinary.

The Idler

and I could not help expressing my thoughts, concluding with the words, "And it can never be *proved*."

"Proved!" cried the Professor, incensed. "Proved! Of course it's proved. I worked it out mathematically first. If you wish for more, however, you shall have it. You yourself shall go and see what time is like between the beats."

"No, thank you, Professor," I replied quickly, and drew further away.

"Not to-day—of course not to-day," he smiled. "Did you think I meant to-day?"

Dear me, no. You could not get back. But,

nevertheless, you shall go, and fetch your watch—that is, unless there are beings there who have already picked it up!"

"But if I can't get back to-day, how shall I ever get back—on any day?" I asked.

For a moment he gave no reply; then he said slowly, "I shall build another machine, like this one, but with batteries for primary motive power."

"That will not bring me back, though," I exclaimed. "For when I am out of beat, the machine will not be in existence for me."

"It will, though—it *will*." He looked quite pained at my stupidity. "I shall place the whole machine between these terminals and send it there—like luggage in advance—in advance."

I never knew anyone like the Professor for getting over difficulties.

Three months passed, and the new machine was at last complete. No one can imagine the excitement and tension of those three months. We both worked almost night and day, and at last everything was ready.

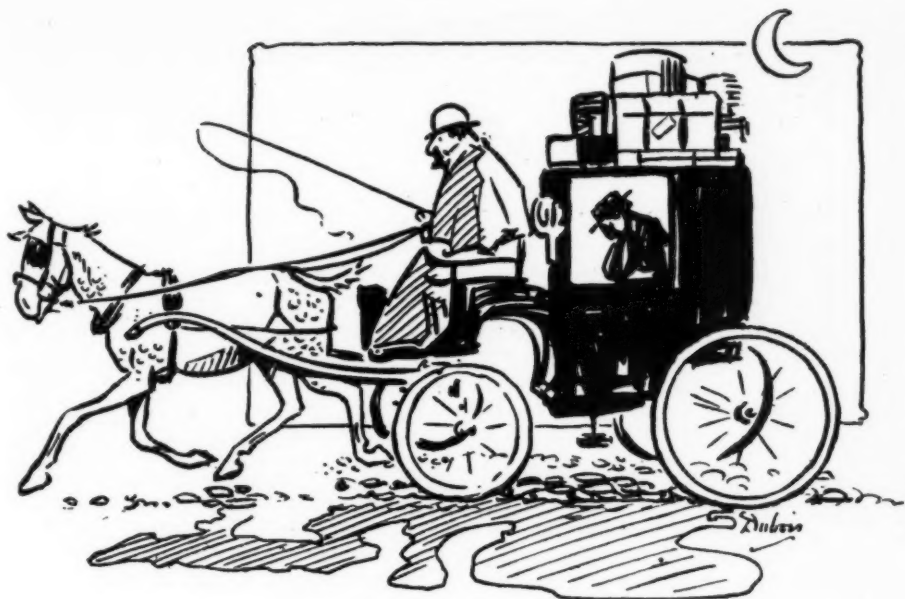
The new machine differed slightly from the first one, in that it had to be supplied with batteries to give the motive power. There was not likely to be any "main" which the Professor could "tap" for this in the "Inter-time," as we had now begun to call it.

We stood before the complete apparatus ready to make the momentous test of the truth of the Professor's theories. As I finished tightening up the last wire a thought struck me.

"Suppose, Professor, that when you are sending one object over to the "Inter-time," there is *already an object in the exact spot where your object will suddenly appear!* What do you think will happen?"

The Professor had recourse to his handkerchief. Why will clever people adopt curious customs and clothing and accessories? This handkerchief was at least a yard square, and of a deep crimson colour, and it always came out when the Professor wished to make a momentary pause in the conversation.

"I have thought of that," he replied deliberately. "I have given considerable thought to that matter—*very* considerable thought. I cannot be sure what would happen, but I surmise that the effect of one article



THAT NIGHT I LEFT FOR PARIS.

attempting to force itself *internally* into the same position in space as another article in the same beat of time would be spontaneous combustion—explosion—dissolution into primordial atoms—both articles would disappear.”

“Then,” said I, “it is hardly safe for one of us to venture across. It may happen that the centre of some world, hot and fiery, exists there, or that some other solid body is present which would have an equally disturbing effect on one’s constitution.”

“It is possible,” was the somewhat cold rejoinder, “but it is not probable. Look out at night into our own space. Do you think that a body suddenly appearing would be more likely to touch solid matter, or to be in mid space?”

“The chances would be strongly against it coming into contact with a solid,” I replied, “but likewise it would not be able to breathe, and it would soon fall towards some world in space, attracted by gravity.”

The Professor seemed impatient. “Well, well,” said he, “we shall soon know. I am testing it before I go. I am fixing a rabbit between the poles of the machine, and I have already fixed a clock-work mechanism to set the machine going one minute after it leaves our presence. If the rabbit reappears in the *same place and in health*, I shall go, too. Otherwise, I shall not—I shall *certainly* not go!”

The rabbit was produced; the clock-work set; the two terminals of the old machine connected to the side of the new one—and the new one was gone!”

The Idler



I helped him clumsily to the ground.

Anxiously we waited, staring at the empty bench. The clock in the next room slowly ticked out the seconds.

"Tick—tick—tick." Would the time never pass? This was the crucial moment. The summit of a life. Was success or failure to crown it? "Tick—tick—tick." The perspiration sprang from every pore in my body—yet the Professor seemed cool and undismayed; he was watching intently the empty bench, and I, too, stared.

"Tick—tick—tick . . ."

"Success!" I cried. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. There was the rabbit on the bench, and it was alive!

The effect on the Professor was extraordinary.

He laughed, he cried, he danced round the room on his little legs, and waved his crimson handkerchief.

"I am going to the 'Inter-time' at once," he cried, "at once—at this very moment." He stood still in front of the machine. He became rather pale, and his chin and mouth were fixed and rigid. He seemed to understand at last that there was something terrible and strange, as well as merely exciting, in stepping into the unknown.

He said no more, however, but looked at me with a wan smile; then resolutely seized the terminal hooks—

I was alone in the room.

I felt sure that he would come back safely; the rabbit's "journey" had been so successful. Nevertheless, the minutes while I waited seemed like hours. I turned round, and looked out of the window.

"Here is your watch."

I started and turned round. There, standing on the bench whence the new machine had been despatched to the "Inter-time," stood the Professor, beaming and smiling.

I helped him clumsily to the ground, and for the moment was bereft of speech.

"I found it floating just in front of me," he explained calmly.

"Is there water—or what—there?" I exclaimed, astonished.

"Neither. As far as I can make out there is air—nothing but air. Rather denser than our atmosphere, and containing a larger proportion of oxygen, but exhilarating—very exhilarating—I may say it is extraordinarily exhilarating." He paused and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"If there is no sun, how did you see?" I asked.

"It is all light—beautiful light—everywhere. Apparently the atmosphere is luminescent. It is difficult to walk at first, because there is no solid, but the friction of the hands against the atmosphere enables one to move—as in swimming. I do not think there are any solids in this 'Inter-time,' for no force seemed to affect me. In any event, they must be far away. Perhaps in other beats—in other—"

The Professor's Experiments

267.

But I interrupted him. A longing—absolutely irresistible—came over me. "Let me go, too," I exclaimed.

The Professor smiled. He took my hand, and together we let the current from the machine pass through us.

I felt no shock. A gentle tremor passed through me, a pleasurable sensation. The laboratory did not fade away. I can best express what took place by saying that "it went out"—just like a candle. Simultaneously I seemed to wake in a bath of light, pure, soft violet light, and as I breathed, a sense of exhilaration and peace pervaded my whole being.

I heard the Professor's voice. It was very clear, I noticed, and I have since attributed this to the fact that there were no solids to echo or reflect the sound.

"There is the new machine," said he; and I beheld it two or three yards to the right, floating in space.

So far I had made no movement; now, without thought, I took a step forward towards the machine. But I advanced no nearer to it. My movement had the effect of turning me upside down! But I did not *feel* upside down; I was only pointing in one direction, and the Professor in the other. There was no gravity, and no "right side." I felt wonderfully light and strong.

A few movements of my hand against the air brought me into the reverse position again, and then by the same means I approached the machine, albeit I had no "balance" and some difficulty in maintaining any desired position. The Professor moved with more ease—he had already had some practice, I remembered.

"This is grand," said he, "very grand! We are monarchs of a new world!"

"A very immaterial world," I laughed.

"Nevertheless, we can *send* what materials we like over here," he went on. "I shall have a holiday room here. I shall come for rest! Think of our power! We can become monarchs of the terrestrial globe! We can, in time, penetrate prison walls and palace chambers; we can do what we will with impunity and fly here for safety. Not that I wish to do this; by no means—certainly not—by no means!" He shook his head gently.

The possibilities grew before me every moment. What power was in our hands!



It was the best I could do.

The Idler

"We will send over bricks and mortar and workmen," he went on. Then paused thoughtfully. "No, not bricks and mortar; wood would be more suitable; and beds and food. We shall open a new era—start a new universe—people new TIME!"

He began to examine the machine. "Tut, tut!" he exclaimed, "there is something in the air that affects these batteries strongly. They have not been here an hour, yet they have almost run down. They work very feebly." He looked at me. "We must have an electric machine, or perhaps two, over here, or we shall not be able to get back, one day." He laughed. "Now you go," he continued, "and send me those two spare batteries at once. Don't come back; I will fix them and follow in a few minutes when I have looked over the machine."

I smiled. The matter was not serious, so long as *one* of us was on the other side to send the batteries. I took the terminals in my hands, and once more one existence was blown out and another lighted. I was standing on the bench in the laboratory.

I quickly went across the room, and fetching the two spare batteries, sent them over to the "Inter-time."

Then I waited.

Five minutes lengthened into ten; ten minutes into fifteen. I grew anxious. At last an hour had passed, and still the Professor did not return. Had something happened to the batteries? Were the new ones out of order? I was distracted with anxiety. Only the old butler lived in the house, and he regarded us as mad; he never asked questions, and never came into the laboratory, and never talked. Stolidly he did that which he had to do—which was but little. Now I sent him with a note ordering some new batteries. These arrived in an hour's time, and I hurriedly sent them "across." Then, as nothing happened, I sent wire, terminals, screws, tools—anything which might be of assistance had the machine broken down. Then I flung myself into a chair and wept.

I knew that it was useless for me to go to him. Yet what could I do? It was maddening to know that he might require some little detail, and that he could not let me know.

At last a ray of comfort came to me. At least, I could go on sending things to him. I might even build another machine; but no, this was an impossibility, for I did not understand it thoroughly.

I had dinner brought into the outer laboratory, and carried half of it into the private room. I sent the Professor half a roast chicken, a bottle of wine, bread, butter, pepper, and salt. I sent him plates and knives and forks (and had to account for them to the butler afterwards!). Finally, I sent him his pipe and matches and tobacco and—an arm-chair! It was the best I could do. Then I sat down and waited, and racked my brains and wondered. I felt miserable and helpless.

Three days passed. I became hopeless. I told the butler that his master had gone away for a time. His only reply was the usual stolid "Yes, miss." I was thankful that he was such a model butler, and that he did not ask inconvenient questions.

The Professor's Experiments

269

Still, I did not absolutely despair. I was determined that the Professor should have every opportunity, and that I would not be responsible for his failure. One day I sent him some planks, with ropes to bind them. I thought he would be more comfortable with something solid under his feet, for perpetual floating in space must become monotonous. Then I sent him a carpet and some pillows, and after that more food,—tins of milk, cocoa, beef, butter, bread, water,—everything I could think of, including an oil stove and a kettle.

At last I began to despair. Two months had passed, and still the man who had discovered the property of the fourth dimension did not appear. He could not get back into tune with earth time.

I had told the butler that his master had gone away. Suspicion might fall upon me if I varied this story, so I paid the man a month's wages and told him his master would be away a long time and did not require him any more, and that I was going, too, in a day or so. This latter I had not intended to do, but—

Fortunately the man made no comment, but with a respectful "Yes, miss," and later a respectful "Good afternoon, miss," he went.

Then I tried again. With sudden dismay I remembered that the Professor had had no change of clothing. I sent him collars, shirts, socks, and finally, with a view to making circumstantial evidence should enquiry ever be made, I sent two portmanteaux, an overcoat, a hat, stick and umbrella, and a rug. These, at least, would be *absent*, if a search took place, and would confirm my story that he had gone away.

It was impossible not to laugh when I thought of his surprise at receiving these things. I pictured him seated on the chair in the middle of a carpeted floor, floating in violet space, with his luggage and food floating round him, and mopping a perplexed brow—with the inevitable red silk handkerchief. Then my laughter stopped—I saw another picture. A man toiling hopelessly at the useless machine, resting and working, striving vainly—doggedly—but without hope, to come back to life; a man absented from the world, doomed to silent banishment till the crack of doom. A man who would live while the food held out; who would die, and float in space till eternity should end.

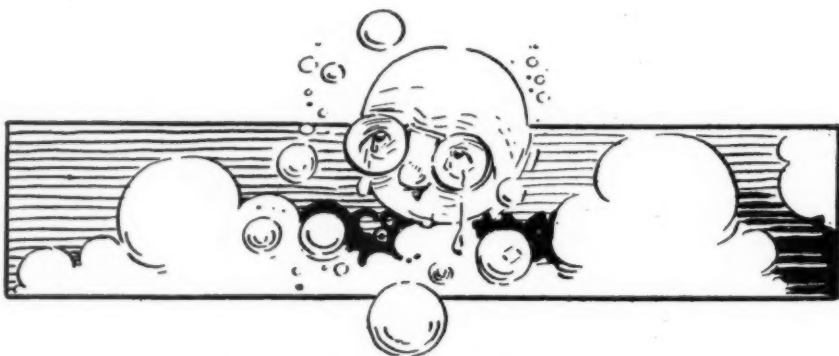
The horror overwhelmed me; my nerves were run down, and I wept hysterically again and again, helplessly.

I kept on sending him food, till one day the machine failed to work. It had not been built for continuous labour. Strenuously I worked at it, but my knowledge was not sufficiently deep. After a week I gave it up. The machine, in a thousand nameless pieces, was scattered round the room. I had failed.

That night I left for Paris. I pretended that the Professor had sent for me, but that I could not find him. I went to the Prefect of Police. Then I went to Nice, and broke down utterly. Often I have wondered what did happen to the machine in the "Inter-time." Was I to blame? Sometimes I fear that I may have sent one of the various articles into the

The Idler

Professor himself, and that he and it were totally destroyed by the shock. Sometimes I wonder whether in this way I destroyed the machine. Always, I see the Professor's eyes, no longer bright, but tired and hopeless; they haunt me, and I shall never forget them. Never!



I SHALL NEVER FORGET THEM NEVER.



A certain fashionable photographer has undoubtedly achieved the pinnacle of tactful achievement. A woman with a decided squint came to him for a photograph.

"Will you permit me," he said promptly, "to take your portrait in profile? There is a certain shyness about one of your eyes which is as difficult in art as it is fascinating in nature."