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Miles J. Breuer

*Science Fiction Pioneer of the Nebraska Plains*

MICHAEL R. PAGE

In March 1926 a new magazine appeared on newsstands with a wondrous cover that showed skaters gliding on a sheet of ice with a Saturn-like planet looming in the background, and it featured classic stories by H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, Edgar Allan Poe, and others. This was the April 1926 issue of *Amazing Stories*, and with its appearance a new literary genre, science fiction, was born. Well . . . not quite. Science fiction had been around since the early nineteenth century when Mary Shelley published her classic novel *Frankenstein* in 1818 and had been a recognizable, but still largely undefined, genre when Verne penned his *Voyages extraordinaires* from 1864 to the end of the nineteenth century and Wells produced his scientific romances and stories in the 1890s. The selection of reprinted stories that Hugo Gernsback included in *Amazing's* first issue, and those he published over the course of the rest of 1926, bear this out. Still, Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* was the first magazine devoted exclusively to science fiction (called "scientifiction" in the early years), and in its pages the genre, particularly in its American idiom, was formed and defined.

Gernsback was an innovative publisher, with a special interest in radio and electronics, who had published several technological magazines since the first decade of the new century, starting with *Modern Electrics* in 1908. When *Modern Electrics* ended its run in 1913, Gernsback started a new magazine called *Electrical Experimenter*, which eventually morphed into *Science and Invention* in 1920. In these magazines Gernsback often included fiction and even published his

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own novel, *Ralph 124C 41+*, which also appears in the Bison Frontiers of Imagination (BFI) series. It dramatized the ideals of the scientific philosophy and the wonders of science and technology that were fast becoming part of everyday life. In the introduction to the Bison Books edition of *Ralph 124C 41+*, Jack Williamson notes that “the book was written to dazzle and enchant the reader with the wonders of coming technology.”<sup>1</sup> And that it certainly does, despite its stylistic limitations. *Ralph 124C 41+* was the first of many significant science fiction stories published in the teens that led to the development of the specialized category in the 1920s.

Science fiction had been developing in the pulps—the early American popular fiction magazines—and in the more literary fiction magazines in Britain since the late nineteenth century. The pulp era began when Frank Munsey’s boys’ paper *Golden Argosy* evolved into the adult all-fiction magazine *Argosy* in 1896. The success of *Argosy* at the turn of the century led to many competing all-fiction magazines, and Munsey expanded his publication list with *All-Story* in 1905, where the scientific romances of Edgar Rice Burroughs and A. Merritt were later featured in the 1910s. Science fiction, mostly of a high romance-adventure vein, was regularly featured in the fiction pulps of the early twentieth century, and by the end of the second decade other genre categories were emerging and specialty pulps began to appear. The first specialty pulp, *The Railroad Man’s Magazine*, appeared as early as 1906, but the now-familiar major genre categories did not fully materialize until later: *Detective Story Monthly* appeared in 1915, *Western Story* in 1919, and *Love Story* in 1921. The short-lived *Thrill Book*, which appeared in 1919, anticipated the development of the weird fantasy and science fiction categories in the ’20s. The success of both Burroughs and Merritt was instrumental in the future development of science fiction, despite the fact that their stories emphasized the romance rather than the science of the scientific romance. The “sense of wonder” that still awes readers, even in the most sober hard science fiction of today such as the planetary explorations of Gregory Benford or Arthur C. Clarke, derives from Burroughs’s and Merritt’s fantasies of forgotten worlds. Burroughs remains widely popular to

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day, as is evident from the success of his editions in the BFI series, and he must be counted among the central figures in the history of science fiction. As James Gunn notes in his genre history, *Alternate Worlds*, “Burroughs demonstrated once again the popular appeal of science fiction . . . [he] carried the pulps through a difficult time—if not alone at least in significant part. Now the field was ready for the specialized magazines, and a young publisher of radio and invention publications was dreaming about a magazine that would predict in detail the delightful, thrilling future in store for us through scientific progress.”<sup>2</sup>

In the '20s Gernsback began devoting more space to fiction in his popular science magazines. As magazine historian Mike Ashley notes, Gernsback regularly published one scientific story per issue of *Science and Invention*, and in 1923 he published a special all-fiction issue with great success, the same year that another landmark pulp magazine, *Weird Tales*, was introduced.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly aware of the success that the scientific romances of Burroughs and Merritt were enjoying in the Munsey adventure pulps, Gernsback recognized a market for a new genre of fiction compatible with the new electrical technologies and the growing engineering paradigm that his magazines addressed. Historian Leon Stover has argued that science fiction emerged during what he calls the “research revolution” that took place in the closing decades of the nineteenth century when American industrialism and invention blossomed. Stover concludes: “Magazine science fiction, then, is a response to the research revolution, to the romance of industrial research. The romance is a bit faded now, but in the early days, when research was a new gospel to be missionized, its spirit was quite literally electrifying.”<sup>4</sup> The obvious symbolic figure for this research revolution was Thomas Edison, and it is worth noting that Gernsback’s associate editor, T. O’Connor Sloane, was Edison’s son-in-law. Soon Gernsback was to launch a magazine wholly devoted to science fiction in direct response to this budding “romance of industrial research.”

Gernsback launched *Amazing Stories* with the April 1926 issue, and science fiction as a recognizable genre of popular fiction was born. The magazine soon became widely popular and influential

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among science and radio enthusiasts, first reprinting classics of scientific fiction and then launching the careers of many new writers. In the 1930s *Amazing* was joined by Clayton Magazines' *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* (which began in 1930 and is still published today as *Analog*), *Wonder Stories* (Gernsback's immediate follow-up after he lost control of *Amazing*), and many others as the years went on. *Amazing Stories* weathered many ups and downs, changes of publishers, editors, and formats, and only recently ceased publication in 2005 after a run of over six hundred issues—though one expects that it will eventually reemerge.

In the early issues of *Amazing*, Gernsback relied on reprints of works by Poe, Verne, and Wells among others, as well as works by writers he had published in his radio magazines, since he had to build a readership for the new fiction out of which new writers could emerge. This happened quickly, and many new writers of note began contributing regularly to the magazine in its second year. However, in 1926 only eleven new stories appeared in the first nine issues of the magazine, and almost all of these were either from one-shot authors (perhaps pseudonyms of Gernsback and his staff) or from writers who had regularly appeared in *Science and Invention*. Late in 1926 a two-part serial, *Beyond the Pole*, appeared by a new author, A. Hyatt Verrill. Verrill, who would go on to become one of the most prolific writers of the early magazine era, could arguably be called the first new science fiction writer of consequence in Gernsback's magazine. But Verrill had already been writing juvenile novels (in his *Boy Adventurers* and *Radio Detectives* sequences) and other fiction since the middle teens, which were nominally science fiction, in addition to numerous exaggerated accounts of his real-life adventures into the South American interior. By the time Verrill appeared in *Amazing* he was fifty-six years old and had a substantial writing résumé.

Instead, the first new writer of consequence who can be said to have started his fiction-writing career in the science fiction magazines was Dr. Miles J. Breuer, a prominent physician and community leader from Lincoln, Nebraska. His first story, "The Man with the Strange Head," appeared in the January 1927 issue of *Amazing*,

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and from that beginning he went on to publish thirty-six stories, two novels, three poems, two editorials, and numerous letters in *Amazing* and its various competitors through 1942. It is not a stretch to suggest that Breuer is the first original writer to come out of the science fiction magazine market. Some of his contemporaries who also appeared in the next few years in *Amazing* had published science fiction earlier in *Weird Tales*, including Edmond Hamilton and Clare Winger Harris, but Breuer was the first of the new writers to get his start in *Amazing*. He would go on to be one of the most popular and influential writers in these pioneering years. Breuer's work was, in general, more representative of the genre ideals that Gernsback claimed he was looking for in his editorials and advertisements, even though much of what appeared in *Amazing* did not actually fit those ideals. Thus, Breuer is also, perhaps, the consummate writer of the early *Amazing*. Through careful devotion to the ideals of the genre, and by using Wells as a model, Breuer led the way toward the mature science fiction that emerged in the next generation during John W. Campbell's Golden Age.

Miles J. Breuer was born in Chicago on January 3, 1889, to Charles and Barbara Breuer, both immigrants from Czechoslovakia. The Breuers moved to Nebraska in 1893 while Charles pursued his medical studies at Creighton University in Omaha, where he received his MD in 1897. Charles Breuer became a prominent physician in southeastern Nebraska and an active member of the Czech community, publishing many popular medical articles in local and national Czechoslovak publications. Miles Breuer grew up in the Czech community of Crete, Nebraska, and graduated from Crete High School in 1906. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Texas in 1911 and his medical degree from Rush Medical College at the University of Chicago in 1915. He began practicing medicine in partnership with his father in Lincoln in June 1915 and was married to Julia Strejic in 1916. (They had three children: Rosalie, Stanley, and Mildred. The two girls became successful physicians in their own right, but Stanley was tragically killed in a 1939 hiking accident.)

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Not long after his marriage, Breuer's fledgling medical practice was interrupted by World War I, and he served for twenty months in France as a first lieutenant in the medical corps, where he worked to combat disease; indeed, his experiences as a frontline medical doctor sometimes inform his writing. A small collection of Breuer's war photographs is housed at the Nebraska State Historical Society. After the war, Breuer was extremely active in the local medical community and in other civic organizations, holding memberships and leadership roles in several medical associations, the Optimist's Club, the American Legion, the Elks, the Masons, the Chamber of Commerce, and the local schools, running for the board in 1928. He organized the junior Boy Scout movement, the Wolf-Cub Scouts, in Lincoln and is said to have been an avid hiker and nature photographer.<sup>5</sup>

Before beginning his career as a fiction writer, Breuer, like his father, frequently contributed medical articles to Czechoslovak newspapers, including a health column in the largest Czech agricultural monthly in America; he also frequently published medical papers and articles in both professional journals and popular periodicals from the late teens through the '30s. One article on menopause, "Change of Life" (*Hygeia*, May 1931), was recently cited in Judith Houck's *Hot and Bothered: Women, Medicine, and Menopause in Modern America* (2006), and another, "The Construction of Chemical Laboratory Equipment" (*Journal of Laboratory and Clinical Medicine* 2 [1916-17]), in Joel D. Howell's *Technology in the Hospital: Transforming Patient Care in the Early Twentieth Century* (1996). In both cases, Breuer's articles are cited as representative samples of medical practice in the early twentieth century. Other articles appeared in *Hygeia* in the years that Breuer produced his major fiction: "Something I Ate" (February 1930), "Tonics" (August 1930), and "Value Received for Doctors' Bills" (February 1931). In 1925 he was appointed to the editorial board of *Social Science*, the publication of the honorary social science fraternity Phi Gamma Mu in recognition of his work with college students suffering from psychological and social problems while at the University of Nebraska, where Breuer served as consulting physician. Breuer's interest in psychology and social dynamics would later figure into much of his science fiction. In

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later years, his interest in photography led to articles in photography magazines. Toward the end of his career, Breuer also published a brief how-to article in *The Writer*, which gives some insight into his writing process and is rather poignant considering that by that point Breuer's own fiction writing had virtually stopped. Here Breuer instructs beginning writers to "nail down the vague germ-idea so it does not escape" and then systematically build the story from there.<sup>6</sup> As involved as Breuer was, it is a wonder that he had time for science fiction at all. Yet he managed to be one of the most prolific writers in the early years of magazine science fiction.

The high point of Breuer's early medical writing is his handbook *Index of Physiotherapeutic Technic*, where he catalogs a variety of methods for physical therapy, using both tried and true traditional methods (i.e., the human touch) and new advances in understanding and technology that facilitate patient recovery. The handbook purports to be one of the first such books on the topic of physical therapy and is meant as a quick ready-reference for practicing physicians. In the introduction to the book Breuer writes, "The widespread interest of the medical profession in the use of physical agents in treating the sick prompted this book. It seemed to the author that an index of technique proven valuable in the treatment of various diseases amenable to physical therapy might help to standardize technique and give a better method of comparing results."<sup>7</sup> This is reflective of the basic attitude toward technology, science, and human psychology that Breuer was to endorse in his science fiction. More than most of Gernsback's early writers, Breuer followed the ideals that Gernsback called for in his initial editorial for the field where he insisted that *Amazing Stories* was an entirely *new* sort of fiction magazine. As Gernsback famously wrote: ". . . a magazine of 'Scientifiction' is a pioneer in its field in America. By 'scientifiction' I mean the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story—a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision."<sup>8</sup> A few paragraphs later Gernsback voiced the general thesis behind science fiction (probably derived from Wells) that has been repeated in its essentials by most historians of the field ever since:

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It must be remembered that we live in an entirely new world. Two-hundred years ago, stories of this kind were not possible. Science, through its various branches of mechanics, electricity, astronomy, etc., enters so intimately into all our lives today, and we are so much immersed in this science, that we have become rather prone to take new inventions and discoveries for granted. Our entire mode of living has changed with the present progress, and it is little wonder, therefore, that many fantastic situations—impossible 100 years ago—are brought about today. It is in these situations that the new romancers find their great inspiration.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, further on in this editorial and in later ones Gernsback advocated scientifiction as a vehicle for what Bleiler calls “sugar-coated education into science; inspiration toward a scientific career; and prophecy of future technology.”<sup>10</sup> And though Breuer is notable for being one of the writers who actively refined Gernsback’s initial definition to insist on literary values of style, character, and psychologically nuanced themes—not dull stories of scientific pedagogy—he was at the same time writing the kind of Wellsian stories that Gernsback distinguished as scientifiction, as opposed to the science-fantasy romances of Burroughs and Merritt (though some of these were reprinted in the pages of *Amazing*, too) and the super-scientific space opera that would later emerge and come to dominate the magazine.

Indeed, Breuer contributed a significant editorial essay of his own, “The Future of Scientifiction” (see appendix 1 in this volume), which further defined the fledgling genre. Reiterating Gernsback’s point that everyday life was becoming increasingly oriented to the technological and the scientific, Breuer argued that as scientifiction progressed it would develop a more refined literary technique and take its place as a significant category of world literature. Recognizing the literary limitations of its early form of discourse, Breuer nonetheless predicted that scientific fiction would “take its seat at the banquet” with other literary forms because it examined the technological pres-

## The Man with the Strange Head

A man in a gray hat stood halfway down the corridor, smoking a cigar and apparently interested in my knocking and waiting. I rapped again on the door of Number 216 and waited some more, but all remained silent. Finally my observer approached me.

“I don’t believe it will do any good,” he said. “I’ve just been trying it. I would like to talk to someone who is connected with Anstruther. Are you?”

“Only this.” I handed him a letter out of my pocket without comment, as one is apt to do with a thing that has caused one no little wonderment:

“Dear Doctor”: it said succinctly. “I have been under the care of Dr. Faubourg who has recently died. I would like to have you take charge of me on a contract basis, and keep me well, instead of waiting till I get sick. I can pay you enough to make you independent, but in return for that, you will have to accept an astonishing revelation concerning me, and keep it to yourself. If this seems acceptable to you, call on me at 9 o’clock, Wednesday evening. Josiah Anstruther, Room 216, Cornhusker Hotel.”

“If you have time,” said the man in the gray hat, handing me back the letter, “come with me. My name is Jerry Stoner, and I make a sort of living writing for magazines. I live in 316, just above here.”

“By some curious architectural accident,” he continued, as we reached his room, “that ventilator there enables me to hear minutely everything that goes on in the room below. I haven’t ever said anything about it during the several months that I’ve lived here, partly

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because it does not disturb me, and partly because it has begun to pique my curiosity—a writer can confess to that, can he not? The man below is quiet and orderly, but seems to work a good deal on some sort of clockwork; I can hear it whirring and clicking quite often. But listen now!”

Standing within a couple of feet of the opening which was covered with an iron grill, I could hear footsteps. They were regular, and would decrease in intensity as the person walked away from the ventilator opening below, and increase again as he approached it; were interrupted for a moment as he probably stepped on a rug, and were shorter for two or three counts, no doubt as he turned at the end of the room. This was repeated in a regular rhythm as long as I listened.

“Well?” I said.

“You perceive nothing strange about that, I suppose,” said Jerry Stoner. “But if you had listened all day long to just exactly that you would begin to wonder. That is the way he was going on when I awoke this morning; I was out from 10 to 11 this forenoon. The rest of the time I have been writing steadily, with an occasional stretch at the window, and all of the time I have heard steadily what you hear now, without interruption or change. It’s getting on my nerves.

“I have called him on the phone, and have rung it on and off for twenty minutes; I could hear his bell through the ventilator, but he pays no attention to it. So, a while ago I tried to call on him. Do you know him?”

“I know who he is,” I replied, “but do not remember ever having met him.”

“If you had ever met him you would remember. He has a queer head. I made my curiosity concerning the sounds from his room an excuse to cultivate his acquaintance. The cultivation was difficult. He is courteous, but seemed afraid of me.”

We agreed that there was not much that we could do about it. I gave up trying to keep my appointment, told Stoner that I was glad I had met him, and went home. The next morning at seven he had me on the telephone.

“Are you still interested?” he asked, and his voice was nervous.

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“That bird’s been at it all night. Come and help me talk to the hotel management.” I needed no urging.

I found Beesley, the hotel manager, with Stoner; he was from St. Louis, and looked French.

“He can do it if he wants to,” he said, shrugging his shoulders comically; “unless you complain of it as a disturbance.”

“It isn’t that,” said Stoner; “there must be something wrong with the man.”

“Some form of insanity—” I suggested; “or a compulsion neurosis.”

“That’s what I’ll be pretty soon,” Stoner said. “He is a queer gink anyway. As far as I have been able to find out, he has no close friends. There is something about his appearance that makes me shiver, his face is so wrinkled and droopy, and yet he sails about the streets with an unusually graceful and vigorous step. Loan me your pass key; I think I’m as close a friend of his as anyone.”

Beesley lent the key, but Stoner was back in a few minutes, shaking his head. Beesley was expecting that; he told us that when the hotel was built, Anstruther had the doors made of steel with special bars, at his own expense, and the windows shuttered, as though he were afraid for his life.

“His rooms would be as hard to break into as a fort,” Beesley said as he left us; “and thus far we do not have sufficient reason for wrecking the hotel.”

“Look here!” I said to Stoner; “it will take me a couple of hours to hunt up the stuff and string up a periscope; it’s an old trick I learned as a Boy Scout.”

Between us we had it up in about that time; a radio aerial mast clamped on the window sill with mirrors at the top and bottom, and a telescope at our end of it, gave us a good view of the room below us. It was a sort of living room made by throwing together two of the regular-sized hotel rooms. Anstruther was walking across it diagonally, disappearing from our field of view at the further end, and coming back again. His head hung forward on his chest with a ghastly limpness. He was a big, well-built man, with a vigorous stride. Al-

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ways it was the same path. He avoided the small table in the middle each time with exactly the same sort of side step and swing. His head bumped limply as he turned near the window and started back across the room. For two hours we watched him in shivering fascination, during which he walked with the same hideous uniformity.

“That makes thirty hours of this,” said Stoner. “Wouldn’t you say that there was something wrong?”

We tried another consultation with the hotel manager. As a physician, I advised that something be done; that he be put in a hospital or something. I was met with another shrug.

“How will you get him? I still do not see sufficient cause for destroying the hotel company’s property. It will take dynamite to get at him.”

He agreed, however, to a consultation with the police, and in response to our telephone call, the great, genial Chief Peter John Smith was soon sitting with us. He advised us against breaking in.

“A man has a right to walk that way if he wants to,” he said. “Here’s this fellow in the papers who played the piano for 49 hours, and the police didn’t stop him; and in Germany they practice making public speeches for 18 hours at a stretch. And there was this Olympic dancing fad some months ago, where a couple danced for 57 hours.”

“It doesn’t look right to me,” I said, shaking my head. “There seems to be something wrong with the man’s appearance; some uncanny disease of the nervous system—Lord knows I’ve never heard of anything that resembles it!”

We decided to keep a constant watch. I had to spend a little time on my patients, but Stoner and the Chief stayed, and agreed to call me if occasion arose. I peeped through the periscope at the walking man several times during the next twenty-four hours; and it was always exactly the same, the hanging, bumping head, the uniformity of his course, the uncanny, machine-like exactitude of his movements. I spent an hour at a time with my eye at the telescope studying his movements for some variation, but was unable to be certain of any. That afternoon I looked up my neurology texts, but found no clues. The next day at four o’clock in the afternoon, after not less than 55

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hours of it, I was there with Stoner to see the end of it; Chief Peter John Smith was out.

As we watched, we saw that he moved more and more slowly, but with otherwise identical motions. It had the effect of the slowed motion pictures of dancers or athletes; or it seemed like some curious dream; for as we watched, the sound of the steps through the ventilator also slowed and weakened. Then we saw him sway a little, and totter, as though his balance were imperfect. He swayed a few times and fell sidewise on the floor, we could see one leg in the field of our periscope moving slowly with the same movements as in walking, a slow, dizzy sort of motion. In five more minutes he was quite still.

The Chief was up in a few moments in response to our telephone call.

“Now we’ve got to break in,” he said. Beesley shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. Stoner came to the rescue of the hotel property.

“A small man could go down this ventilator. This grill can be unscrewed, and the lower one can be knocked out with a hammer; it is cast-iron.”

Beesley was gone like a flash, and soon returned with one of his window-washers, who was small and wiry, and also a rope and hammer. We took off the grill and held the rope as the man crawled in. He shouted to us as he hit the bottom. The air drew strongly downwards, but the blows of his hammer on the grill came up to us. We hurried downstairs. Not a sound came through the door of 216, and we waited for some minutes. Then there was a rattle of bars and the door opened, and a gust of cold wind struck us, with a putrid odor that made us gulp. The man had evidently run to open a window before coming to the door.

Anstruther lay on his side, with one leg straight and the other extended forward as in a stride; his face was livid, sunken, hideous. Stoner gave him a glance, and then scouted around the room—looking for the machinery he had been hearing, but finding none. The Chief and I also went over the rooms, but they were just conventional rooms, rather colorless and lacking in personality. The Chief called an undertaker and also the coroner, and arranged for a post-

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mortem examination. I received permission to notify a number of professional colleagues; I wanted some of them to share in the investigation of this unusual case with me. As I was leaving, I could not help noting the astonished gasps of the undertaker's assistants as they lifted the body; but they were apparently too well trained to say anything.

That evening, a dozen physicians gathered around the figure covered with a white sheet on the table in the center of the undertaker's workroom. Stoner was there; a writer may be anywhere he chooses. The coroner was preparing to draw back the sheet.

"The usual medical history is lacking in this case," he said. "Perhaps an account by Dr. B. or his author friend, of the curious circumstances connected with the death of this man, may take its place."

"I can tell a good deal," said Stoner, "and I think it will bear directly on what you find when you open him up, even though it is not technical medical stuff. Do you care to hear it?"

"Tell it! Go on! Let's have it!"

"I have lived above him in the hotel for several months," Stoner began. "He struck me as a curious person, and as I do some writing, all mankind is my legitimate field for study. I tried to find out all I could about him.

"He has an office in the Little Building, and did a rather curious business. He dealt in vases and statuary, bookends and chimes, and things you put around in rooms to make them look artistic. He had men out buying the stuff, and others selling it, all by personal contact and on a very exclusive basis. He kept the stock in a warehouse near the Rock Island tracks where they pass the Ball Park; I do not believe that he ever saw any of it. He just sat in the office and signed papers, and the other fellows made the money; and apparently they made a lot of it, for he has swung some big financial deals in this town.

"I often met him in the lobby or the elevator. He was a big, vigorous man and walked with an unusually graceful step and an appearance of strength and vitality. His eyes seemed to light up with recognition when he saw me, but in my company he was always formal and

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reserved. For such a vigorous-looking man, his voice was singularly cracked and feeble, and his head gave an impression of being rather small for him, and his face old and wrinkled.

“He seemed fairly well known about the city. At the Eastridge Club they told me that he plays golf occasionally and excellently, and is a graceful dancer, though somehow not a popular partner. He was seen frequently at the Y.M.C.A. bowling alleys and played with an uncanny skill. Men loved to see him bowl for his cleverness with the balls, but wished he were not so formally courteous, and did not wear such an expression of complete happiness over his victories. Bridley, manager of Rudge & Guenzel’s book department, was the oldest friend of his that I could find, and he gave me some interesting information. They went to school together, and Anstruther was poor in health as well as in finances. Twenty-five years ago, during the hungry and miserable years after his graduation from the University, Bridley remembered him as saying:

“My brain needs a body to work with. If I had physical strength, I could do anything. If I find a fellow who can give it to me, I’ll make him rich!”

“Bridley also remembers that he was sensitive because girls did not like his debilitated physique. He seems to have found health later, though I can find no one who remembers how or when. About ten years ago he came back from Europe where he had been for several years, in Paris, Bridley thinks; and for several years after this, a Frenchman lived with him. The city directory of that time has him living in the big stone house at 13th and ‘G’ streets. I went up there to look around, and found it a double house, Dr. Faubourg having occupied the other half. The present caretaker has been there ever since Anstruther lived in the house, and she says that his French companion must have been some sort of an engineer, and that the two must have been working on an invention, from the sounds she heard and the materials they had about. Some three or four years ago the Frenchman and the machinery vanished, and Anstruther moved to the Cornhusker Hotel. Also at about this time, Dr. Faubourg retired from the practice of medicine. He must have been about 50 years old,

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and too healthy and vigorous to be retiring on account of old age or ill health.

“Apparently Anstruther never married. His private life was quite obscure, but he appeared much in public. He was always very courtly and polite to the ladies. Outside his business he took a great interest in Y.M.C.A. and Boy Scout camps, in the National Guard, and in fact in everything that stood for an outdoor, physical life, and promoted health. In spite of his oddity he was quite a hero with the small boys, especially since the time of his radium hold-up. This is intimately connected with the story of his radium speculation that caused such a sensation in financial circles a couple of years ago.

“About that time, the announcement appeared of the discovery of new uses for radium; a way had been found to accelerate its splitting and to derive power from it. Its price went up, and it promised to become a scarce article on the market. Anstruther had never been known to speculate, nor to tamper with sensational things like oil and helium; but on this occasion he seemed to go into a panic. He cashed in on a lot of securities and caused a small panic in the city, as he was quite wealthy and had especially large amounts of money in the building-loan business. The newspapers told of how he had bought a hundred thousand dollars worth of radium, which was to be delivered right here in Lincoln—a curious method of speculating, the editors volunteered.

“It arrived by express one day, and Anstruther rode the express wagon with the driver to the station. I found the driver and he told the story of the hold-up at 8th and ‘P’ streets at eleven o’clock at night. A Ford car drove up beside them, from which a man pointed a pistol at them and ordered them to stop. The driver stopped.

“‘Come across with the radium!’ shouted the big black bulk in the Ford, climbing upon the express wagon. Anstruther’s fist shot out like a flash of lightning and struck the arm holding the pistol; and the driver states that he heard the pistol crash through the window on the second floor of the Lincoln Hotel. Anstruther pushed the express driver, who was in his way, backwards over the seat among the packages and leaped upon the hold-up man; the driver said he heard