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# Ancestral Voices

*by Nat Schachner*

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The Year of grace 1935! A dull year, a comfortable year! Nothing much happened. The depression was over; people worked steadily at their jobs and forgot that they had ever starved; Roosevelt was still President of the United States; Hitler was firmly ensconced in Germany; France talked of security; Japan continued to defend itself against China by swallowing a few more provinces; Russia was about to commence on the third Five Year Plan, to be completed in two years; and, oh, yes—Cuba was still in revolution.

*NAT SCHACHNER*  
*Challenges Debate in the most*  
*provoking story up till now*

In short, a normal, workaday world in which the social sciences were once more relegated to the obscure utterances of long-haired professors, and the average man passed hurriedly over columns of politics and the international situation to pore intently on the chances of the Yankees over the Athletics, and the inch-by-inch measurements of the Hebraic challenger, Max Bernstein, juxtaposed against those of the Nordic heavyweight champion of the world, the mighty Hans Schilling himself.

What could possibly happen in a world of such even-going pace, except casual normalities, like:

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James Mann looked up feebly at the terrifying shadow of his boss. The boss was Spanish, darkly predatory.

"Look here, Mann," he was saying. "Your accounts are out two cents again."

"I—I can't understand it, sir."

"I'm not asking you to understand it," the boss said sharply. "I want accuracy, loyalty. The next time you make a mistake, out you go—fired. How much am I paying you now?"

"Fifteen a week, sir."

"The minimum, hey? You're not worth that much. Five would be more like it."

Now James Mann, bookkeeper and near-sighted bachelor, prided himself on one thing in his meek, rabbitlike existence. That was the fact that he was superior to all foreigners by virtue of his ancestor having signed the Domesday Book in illiterate, highly illegible Anglo-Saxon.

Something burst within him now, some long-underlaid streak of reckless insanity. He rose from his desk to a full five feet four; thrust a violently wagging forefinger under his boss's nose.

"You—you filthy foreigner!" he half screamed. "Keep your filthy job! My ancestors——"

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Now consider:

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Herr Hellwig, Dictator of Mideuropa, struck a characteristic pose. At once a hundred thousand Blue Shirts extended their hands and shouted in unison: "*Heil Hellwig!*" The roar of it shook the earth with the thunder of far-marching armies.

The bristly little mustache of his sallow face fairly quivered. His mouth opened; he spoke:

"The future of the world belongs to the Mideuropans! The other nations know it; they are panic-stricken! It was treachery, base treachery, that won for them before! Down with the Jews and Communists!"

"Down with the Jews and Communists!" thundered the antiphonal response.

Herr Hellwig was gratified.

"We have eliminated the scoundrels!" he orated. "We are a pure race of Nordics! Vercingetorix was our ancestor! We shall, we must prevail! Blah—blah—blah!"

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Or if you prefer the purlieus of Boston Brahminism:

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Georgiana Cabot looked with marked distaste at her tall, iron-gray husband. He was distinguished-looking, was Henry Cabot: especially now, as he put the last finishing touch to his dress tie and hummed before the mirror a slow, seductive waltz. She herself was faded, prim, and highly rouged.

"I don't mind so much your low-bred taste in having an affair with a chorus girl," she observed coldly; "but at least you could have the decency not to let all Boston in on the sordid details. Remember, you are a Cabot, and I——"

"Yes, yes. I know," the man said wearily. The light had gone out of his face. "You are an Adams, and a Daughter of the American Revolution. That's just the trouble. If you could forget those damning facts for a moment, perhaps there would have been no chorus girl."

"Why, Henry, it is outrageous of you——"

And so the quarrel started.

Of course, there are pleasanter scenes. Take this one for example:

---

The park in late springtime. A girl sat on the bench; overhead a dogwood spread its waxen blooms. The girl was beautiful, with a certain warm, olive-tinted Latinity to her. She palpably expected some one. Her eager eyes raked the winding path both ways; she glanced at her wrist watch, and the worried lines on her forehead deepened. She bit her lip.

There was the sound of crunching, hurried footsteps. She looked up, saw a very blond young man half running. Her face lit up with happiness. The worried lines disappeared.

"Paul!"

"Emily!"

The discreet squirrels looked the other way for the next minute or so. When they did glance around again, the girl was

patting her hair back into place, and the young man was explaining:

"I just had it out with the mater."

The girl turned swiftly.

"Paul! You told her?"

He nodded gloomily.

"Yes."

"And——"

"Damn it all!" he exclaimed irrelevantly. "Suppose my forbear was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. He might just as well have been hung, the old pirate!"

"And my father came over in the steerage. I understand."

The young man said fiercely:

"I won't give you up."

In spite of the red-faced cop standing stolidly not a hundred feet away; in spite of bright-eyed, chattering sparrows unversed in the delicacies of squirrels, his arms went out for her. She moved blindly toward him——

Now this is really very unusual; not only for 1935, year of normalities; it would have been passing strange even in 1933, when the world was stirring and quickening with the yeast of its motion. In the first place, it involves science, and science is always unusual. But listen for yourself:

---

The laboratory was filled with precision instruments, such as a hundred other physical laboratories could have duplicated. There was something else, however, and this was truly unique. Emmet Pennypacker had made it after three years of unremitting toil, and now it was finished. Any number of internationally known scientists, if they had known, as of course they didn't, could have told you that if an invention took Pennypacker that long to complete, it must be a world beater.

Pennypacker admitted it himself; there was no false modesty about the man! Even Sam Corey, his assistant, had to admit it, though he resented many other things in his chief. For it must be confessed that the scientist's personality was not particularly pleasing. He was ruthless, unscrupulous, avid for personal aggrandisement and glory. He swallowed the unsung, unknown labors of talented assistants like Sam Corey without so much as an acknowledgement; he tore the professional reputations of his colleagues to pieces if only it meant another column of praise in the press.

Now, as he stood, arms akimbo, in the laboratory, staring at his last and most marvelous invention, Pennypacker's lips were wreathed in a thin smile of triumph. Sam Corey watched the yellowish, high-cheeked features, the strong, beak-like nose, the single line of the thick, black eyebrow, with a bit of distaste. Pennypacker's fingers twitched. Lord! Was he going to repeat that idiotic, habitual gesture? There it came. The right hand moved unconsciously up, twisted around the back of the neck, and scratched the tip of the longish nose. A contortionist's trick; one that Sam Corey couldn't have duplicated if he tried.

Pennypacker stepped back.

"It's the supreme product of human powers," he said. "My name will resound through the ages as the greatest man of all time. Look at it, Sam! Look at it!"

Sam smiled wryly. Not a word about his share in the planning and making of the machine. As a matter of fact, the whole idea and construction had really been his. But he only said: "Absolutely, Mr. Pennypacker," and turned to stare at the machine as though it were the first time, and not the thousandth.

It was well worth staring at. Resting on a movable platform was a large square box, tall enough and wide enough to accommodate several men, as well as a cluster of shiny machinery, tubes, numerous gadgets and controls. What was peculiar about the box was the material of which it was made. A transparent, metallic-like substance, harder and less clear than glass, and shimmering in a sort of ecstatic dance as though its component atoms were afflicted with a stuttering St. Vitus.

"A beautiful thing," acknowledged Sam. "I hope it works."

"Works?" Pennypacker echoed, as though he had not heard aright. "Of course it works. This time machine is absolutely foolproof. Works! Ha!" He snorted and glared. "Even you could work it!"

"Of course," said Sam with subtle meaning. "But it's dangerous business, meddling with the past. What's done is done. 'The moving finger writes, and, having writ, moves on'—You know the rest. We try to introduce an anachronistic element into the past, and the consequences may be incalculable. Now, if you were traveling into the future, I'd be glad to \_\_\_\_\_"

"Bunk! Stuff and nonsense!" interrupted the older man rudely. "Don't quote poetry at me, Corey, to bolster up your cowardice. I'm going into the past for that very reason; it's more difficult. The glory will be greater, and—the world will believe more readily. I can bring back proof; the future is a myth; they'll accuse me of inventing it."

That was it, thought Sam bitterly. Thinking only of the effect upon an admiring world instead of the true scientific spirit. The past was dead; nothing to be learned there; but the future——

Aloud he said: "Curious element, *vibratium*. Without its strange property of reversing itself or speeding up in time, the machine could never have been made."

"Y-e-es," Pennypacker assented grudgingly, as though Corey were setting undue limits to his powers. Then: "But come; get everything ready. I am anxious to start."

Sam walked through a slide door into the machine. He adjusted the shining, shimmering controls, made certain tests, carefully ascertained that the automatic reverse was set for three hours, to insure the return of the machine within that time limit.

"All set, sir," he reported.

Pennypacker gulped down a colloidal solution of the new element to impregnate his body with its peculiar qualities. Then he walked steadily into the machine. The man was brave in his fashion.

"I'd like to go with you, sir," said Corey.

Pennypacker stopped, swung on his heel, glared through the open door at his assistant.

"No!" he literally barked. "This first trip is mine, mine alone! You wait here and watch."

The slide slid noiselessly into position. Corey saw a strangely distorted figure press a button inside.

"Good-by," he shouted viciously, sure that he could not be heard. "I hope you meet your great ape of a great-great-grandfather. He'll commit suicide when he sees what he created!"

The time machine cleared magically a moment, then clouded into milky opaqueness. The sharp outlines blurred and faded until there was only a gray mist; then nothingness. The machine had started on its tremendous journey back into time!

Sam Corey cursed to relieve his feelings; then, because he was above all a scientist, sat down to await the ending of the three-hour interval, every nerve taut for the slightest interruption to the great experiment.

---

Mrs. Murphy sat dry-eyed, listening to her lord and master. When he paused for a particularly strangling hiccup, she

said:

"You're drunk!"

Her three children, ranging from Bridget, seven, to Tim, three, the cause of all the commotion, hung on to her ample skirts, whimpering, frightened.

Mr. Murphy sank into a rickety wooden chair and wiped his slobbering mouth with the back of an uncertain hand.

"Drunk, 'm I?" he muttered, glowering. "Well, maybe I am! An' why shouldn't I be, Mrs. Murphy?" he roared suddenly. Tim began to cry loudly.

Mr. Murphy rose unsteadily to his feet, glared at his youngest offspring with bloodshot eyes.

"Look at 'm!" he shouted. "Black's ace o' spades! A bloody Eytalian, thass wha' he is. Ain't no Murphy 'bout 'm; like Bridget an' Michael, the darlints. You, Mrs. Murphy"—he pointed a wavering, hairy finger—"been—been unfaithful!"

He sank back into the chair, bowed his head on the table, and keened beerily.

Mrs. Murphy shrugged her shoulders with a Mona Lisa smile. She was used to these scenes; they occurred every time Mr. Murphy came home more than ordinarily drunk.

Tim, the youngest, looked so un-Irish.

---

In Cuba there was the usual revolution. Gonzales, the president pro tem, was about to be shot by order of Merrido, the president-to-be. The firing squad were sighting down their rifles, waiting for the signal.

In England a newly made member of Parliament was haranguing a bored House of Commons; in Sicily a peasant was lustily treading out the dark-red juice of the grapes with bare, muscular feet, singing the "Drinking Song" from *Otello* to the accompaniment of his downward jumps. An orthodox Jewish rabbi was conning his prayer book. An OGPU officer stalked into a Russian factory to arrest a sabotaging counter-revolutionist. A Turkish soldier waited at the barred gate to the harem.

All quiet on the western, southern, eastern, and northern fronts!

No! I almost forgot. There was one event stirring in this year of 1935 that had the world by the ears. America certainly was all agog; every one discussed it, argued with all the factual discrepancies and rancor of experts. Broadcasting networks were hooked up as never before; announcers were on their toes; reporters pounded furiously on typewriters; cable and wireless companies reaped a harvest; and Europe, Australia, Africa, Asia, waited for the tremendous dénouement. Mideuropa was wild with Hellwigish enthusiasm, of course.

The mammoth, gigantic, overadvertised conflict of all time was in progress. Max Bernstein, Semitic challenger, against Hans Schilling, champion, for the heavyweight championship of the world!

The Garden was black with humanity; tier on tier of them, crammed into every available inch of space, clinging to the rafters, solidly packed into the aisles, hysterical, limp, raucous, imploring, yelling for blood.

It had been a great fight so far. The great bulk of the champion, with his ponderous reach and bone-crushing, sledge-hammer blows; the lighter, shorter challenger, with his superior speed and agility. Both were battered out of all semblance to humanity; both were groggy and game.

The beginning of the tenth round of a fifteen-round so-called boxing contest. The bell clanged harshly, and its last notes were lost in the roar of the crowd. Everybody was on his feet, struggling for a better view, cursing his neighbor, collars sweaty and torn, chanting:

"Knock 'im out! Kill 'im! Get the big bum! In the breadbasket! Put the big palooka out!"

In short, all the cultured give-and-take of a fully developed civilization.

The two gladiators were in the center of the ring; the beating lights glistened from sweaty, muscular bodies.

Schilling led off with a smashing right. Bernstein ducked slightly, and the blow passed over his shoulder. He countered with a short jab to the chin. The champion's head rocked back. The crowd yelled. Schilling shook his head, swung his left. It caught Bernstein in the side; staggered him. To save himself, he clinched. There was a rapid hammering of blows on reddened ribs; then the referee sprang in.

"Break!" he shouted.

The fighters parted. Schilling's lips went back from split mouth in a snarl.

"Yah!" he taunted. "Kike! Back to the ghetto!"

Bernstein went dead-white, then the dark blood swarmed over head and shoulders. He swung suddenly from the floor. Every ounce of power was in that blow. It smashed square into Schilling's nose.

The giant rocked on his heels, went down. The referee sprang over him; Bernstein backed into a corner. The Garden was wild with sound.

"One—two—three—four——"

The referee could hardly be heard in the tumult.

"Five—six—seven—eight——" he called.

Somewhere in the dim, bewildered brain of the fallen champion sounds penetrated. He heaved, staggered slowly to his feet on the last count, grinned foolishly, and fumbled for his opponent.

Bernstein drew his right calmly back; measured the befuddled giant for the final killing blow. The glove flicked forward; the roar of the mob was indescribable——

---

Emmet Pennypacker seemed suspended in the void; a void of sullen blankness in which there was neither day nor night, form nor shape, machine nor man. How long this state of not being lasted, he never was able to tell. Time itself had no sense or meaning.

Then awareness came; awareness of a lightening in a materialized universe; a sense of solidity to body and a pressure against unyielding floor. The time machine was slowing down.

Pennypacker's thoughts went round and round in whirligig fashion. "Don't know where stop—stop where can—calculations impossible—impossible know—maybe no world—out in space—*afraid*——"

His senses cleared; he gaped foolishly around. The machine was solid about him; the walls were milky-white. That meant he was almost at the end of his journey. He felt uneasily for the gun in his pocket. It was still there, fully loaded, but it gave him no comfort. He regretted now that he had wanted all the glory for himself; Sam Corey would have been a tower of strength.

The milkiness was clearing. He strained his eyes anxiously. What was outside; what strange monsters and steamy swamps? Perhaps the earth was a molten mass; perhaps it had whirled backward from under him, and he was suspended horribly in space.

The *vibratium* walls shimmered into translucency; the atoms were approaching normal speeds. A tiny jar, and vision was established. The machine had come to a halt.

Emmet Pennypacker stared, groaned, and cowered back.

The machine was resting against the solid stone of a wall. It was the edge of a great square in the heart of an ancient city; Roman, by the massiveness and simplicity of its architecture. But that was not what had elicited the groan from Pennypacker.

The city was in flames; the sparks flew upward on surges of dense black smoke; walls tottered and fell in ruining destruction. Even that did not represent the full horror of it. For the great square was a shambles; the bodies of dead and dying lay in great, sprawling heaps. Through the *vibratium* walls came shouts and screams and shrieks and the crash of collapsing houses.

Figures rushed wildly across the square, like puppets jerked by invisible strings. Men in the characteristic Roman armor ran headlong, unarmed, the doom of approaching death on set lips and darkened eyes. Women, old, young, granddames, maidens, fled helter-skelter, stumbling over the dead, hair streaming wildly, shrieking with insane intensity.

There were other men; strange, savage-looking barbarians; swart, yellowish, misshapen, and squatly powerful. Some ran with flaming torches, thrust them into open doorways, and ran on, leaving flame and smoke to burst out behind in gushing blasts. Others staggered under heaped piles of loot, bedecked in grisly fashion with pendant ornaments and mincing bracelets; others shouted and sang in wild, vinous accents, and others ran methodically and with deadly precision. Their short swords rose and fell—and came up dripping, bloody. A fleeing Roman soldier went crashing, cloven to the nape; an ancient *bel-dame* shrieked and stopped in bloody gurgle.

Pennypacker thus found himself in the Roman city of Aquileia, in the year 452 A. D., at the very moment that Attila's Huns had broken through the city walls!

Pennypacker screamed once and dashed for the controls. He did not want to remain in this terrible place! He did not want to travel in time any more! If only he could get back to safe-and-sane 1935, he would destroy the time machine; he would——

He groaned and cowered away. He had forgotten. The controls were locked on automatic reverse; he must wait, wait three hours. Three hours! Eternity in this scene of carnage and horror! He would go mad! He would be discovered and killed!

A piercing screech filtered through the glassy wall. He raised his head from his hands. A girl was running straight across the square, running swiftly over *débris* and the dead, her long white garment whipping backward with the wind of her flight. Her tawny hair was disordered; her eyes were wide with fear. Behind her clattered a Hun—squat, powerful, hairy, his thick brow a single straight gash, his nose curved like a vulture's, his skin tough and yellow.

There was brutal, avid desire in his slanted eyes, and he was gaining on the fleeing girl. Pennypacker jerked forward with an oath. The girl was running straight for the time machine; her eyes flared into hope.

Pennypacker yelled insanely, beat upon the locked, immobile controls. He was discovered! He would be killed! He did not want to die in this long-dead past.

The girl has reached the deceptive glass of the machine, was hammering with small, tender fists against the solid wall. The Hun leaped the intervening distance, caught at her shoulder. The hope in her eyes gave way to horror. She screamed in last despair as the hairy arms encircled her, swung her like a sack of meal over a squat, powerful shoulder.

The gaze of the Hun and that of the man of A. D. 1935 met. The Hun grinned brutally and turned to carry off his prey. The girl's hand fluttered feebly to Pennypacker in a final imploring gesture.

Something cracked within the man. Not knowing what he did, swearing horribly, his hand fought the slide control. The door sprang open. Still unknowing, the gun somehow in his hand, he raised it, shot. The bullet tore at the barbarian's leg. It sagged; he sat grotesquely down.

Pennypacker ran out of the machine to help the girl, but she forestalled him. She had flung clear; was up on her feet, and, without looking backward, without so much as a "Thank you," fled like a startled animal straight for the nearest building and disappeared into the portico.

Pennypacker stared after her in disgust, and even as he stared, a party of Huns dashed into the very structure the girl had thought to hide in. Pennypacker shrugged his shoulders.

"Serves her damn right," he muttered, and turned to go back into the machine.

Pennypacker did not know it, but he had interfered with the course of history and unwittingly sealed his own fate. The



girl would have been his many-times-removed great-grandmother! Thus time revenges itself on those who pry into its secrets.

There was another surprise waiting for him. The barbarian Hun had managed to drag himself with his shattered leg into the machine, and as Pennypacker, still dazed, entered, he felt himself caught in a grip of iron.

He cried out with the pain of it, and struggled to free himself, but it was like the futile buzzing of a fly enmeshed in a spider's web. The hold on his leg gripped all the tighter. Pennypacker ceased struggling, and caught hold of a jutting control. The barbarian, because of his wounded leg, could not rise or draw him nearer for the finishing blow; and Pennypacker, holding grimly onto the control, could not free his captured leg.

A straining, heaving tug of war, and then, as if by mutual consent, both ceased pulling, to remain in a sort of status quo. Their eyes turned and met.

Pennypacker was so shocked that he almost let go his hold. The features of the Hun—the straight black brow, the yellowish tinge, the nose—they all seemed strangely familiar, as though they were a caricature of some one he knew. The Hun, too, seemed greatly puzzled. He stared up with dark, savage eyes; the straight brow furrowed with unaccustomed thought.

Then, almost simultaneously, their free hands stole around the nape of their necks and scratched gently at the longish noses.

The characteristic, unconscious gesture of Pennypacker that used to infuriate Sam Corey most unreasonably. Duplicated, back in time, at the sack of Aquileia, by a Hun, an unspeakable savage, a deformed creature stemming from the Asiatic steppes, following the scourge of God, scum of humanity!

Pennypacker let go his hold in the surprise of it, dropped to the floor within easy reach of the fierce barbarian. But the Hun, though still gripping his leg, made no other move. He sat there, his wounded leg stiff in front of him, staring at the modern man.

He opened his mouth; thick, barbarous speech spewed forth. Pennypacker, beyond fear, shook his head and said nothing. The Hun tried again. This time more haltingly, with frequent stops as he fumbled for the words and with mutilated intonations. But Pennypacker, who was somewhat of a scholar, caught the drift. The Hun was addressing him in ancient Latin.

"You—do that," the savage warrior mouthed. "That old trick—my family. Father do it; great father; way back. Who you? Were you from? How——"

Pennypacker stared down at the distorted, bestial features in front of him. He shuddered. That strange familiarity—it resolved itself into a weird caricature of his own face. That trick gesture—his own father and great-grandfather, according to tradition, had been addicted to it.

It was impossible; a nightmare come to plague him!

He winked his eyes violently; hoping to awake, to find himself in bed back in 1935. But no; the scenes of slaughter and lust continued around him; the ancestral Hun gave him back feature for feature; the grip on his leg had not relaxed.

Then he went mad; stark, raving mad.

"Go away," he shrieked, "vision out of hell! I disown you. I defy you. You never fathered me! I come of Norman stock! You devil, you!"

He struck futilely at the grinning visage, a stinging, glancing blow. The Hun's puzzled grin gave way to a scowl of utter ferocity. The beast, the Oriental savage, came to the fore with a rush. He had been struck, insulted. It called for blood, the warm, satisfying gush of blood from gaping wounds. The terrifying battle cry of the Huns ripped out of his throat, filled the machine with its ululations.

*"Ula-ula-ula-loo-loo!"*

His right arm whipped around, caught Pennypacker by the throat. The scientist felt himself strangling; his hands plucked

unavailingly at the steely grip; red, hate-filled eyes stared into his; hot breath was on his cheek.

He tried to cry out, and could not. The hands were constricting. Everything was a red haze. His arms dropped limply. The right hand contacted with something hard. A last gush of consciousness. That must be the gun. His fingers clutched, raised it.

Something told him he must not fire; the consequences would be infinitely incalculable; but he was dying, anyway. There was no mercy in the Hun. The red haze deepened. His hand moved in reflex action. The muzzle tilted; the finger compressed. There was a shattering roar; the barbarian shook violently, stared in hurt surprise, and slowly collapsed.

Pennypacker felt the death-dealing grip loosen, felt rather than saw the sprawl of the Hun. Then—suddenly—darkness, vague, illimitable——

Men were running to the machine with great shouts. Huns with weapons in their hands. The *vibratium* walls cleared, turned milky-white, and faded. The automatic reverse had gone into action. The three-hour limit was up!

---

James Mann, bookkeeper, shouted under the nose of his astounded boss: "My ancestors——"

He staggered, held himself painfully. Then——

The boss said: "My God!" and fell back into a chair.

He rubbed his eyes, tried to control the trembling of his limbs.

He stared around the office with bloodshot, haggard eyes.

It was empty!

James Mann had vanished, as though he had never been!

That was it—as though he had never been.

The boss raised himself, fighting back insanity. He ran around, peering under desks and chairs. No use!

"Mann!" he cried, his voice a semishriek. "Come back! I know it's a joke! You're hiding some place. I'll raise your salary! I'll do anything!"

No answer, for the very good reason that James Mann never existed on this earth.

"Oh, my God!" mouthed the boss, and fell on the floor in a fit. There they found him, his other employees. Shrieking and gibbering—mad!

---

Herr Hellwig was in splendid fettle. He played upon the hundred thousand Blue Shirts as though they were a many-stopped organ.

"Blah! Blah! War!" he shouted. "War against the enemy! I call on Vercingetorix, our ancestor; Odin, Thor, all the gods of Valhalla——"

The Blue Shirts flamed, upended sun-bright swords, crashed out:

"War! *Heil Hellwig!*"

And stopped as though paralyzed.

A hundred thousand stared, a hundred thousand moaned, a hundred thousand—no—*ninety thousand*, broke into epic, panic flight.

Their leader, calling on his ancestors, on his ancient gods, had vanished, gone as though he had never been.

The gods had revenged themselves!

---

With Henry Cabot it was much simpler.

His wife choked on a fish-wife epithet, most unbecoming in an Adams and a Daughter of the American Revolution, and evaporated.

Henry Cabot rubbed his eyes unbelievably, said something under his breath. He was in truth a Cabot, a Brahmin of Brahmins, schooled to self-repression, so he did not faint nor call wildly for help.

He took a step forward, stopped. No question about it; his wife had evaporated. He made a move toward the telephone to call the police, paused again, shrugged his shoulders. They would not believe him, of course.

A slow smile broke over his aristocratic countenance. He commenced humming the interrupted waltz, adjusted his necktie, went out to meet his chorus girl.

---

Emily closed her eyes, nestled forward for Paul's strong arms, and fell half across the bench. She picked herself up, opened her eyes, and screamed.

She was alone!

The red-faced policeman came on a lumbering run, swinging his stick. One look at the hysterical, shrieking girl and he blew a shrill blast on his whistle. A brother officer came racing; a crowd gathered with the facility that all New York crowds possess.

"Call the ambulance, Pete," No. 1 said. "Bellevue, psychopathic ward. It's a pity; she's got good looks."

He turned savagely on the crowd.

"G'wan, scram! What d'ye think this is—a circus?"

Max Bernstein let loose the killing blow, straight for the unprotected, sagging jaw of Hans Schilling, the champion. Within seconds there would be a new champion.

The Garden was bedlam. Expensive straws showered unnoticed on straining, blood-lustful humanity. The climax to the battle of the century. The announcers danced insanely before the microphones; their voices cracked and hoarse.

"Folks, it's coming, on its way! It's connecting! Max Bernstein's fist—Hold on! Wh-what's that? Where am I? Where are we? Oh, my God!"

The microphones went dead, forgotten. In a million homes, ears, thirstily waiting for the description of the final blow, strained in vain. Even the roar of the crowd went mute. Then—confused sounds, terrified, wailing, like animals in mortal agony.

Home-sitting fight fans shuddered, turned off their radios; rushed to phone broadcasting stations, clamoring for information, clogging all wires.

Hans Schilling, Nordic champion, and Max Bernstein, Jewish challenger, had both puffed out like wisps of smoke in mid-blow, in the very center of the ring, under the fierce, beating glare of the floodlights!

---

Sam Corey waited alertly in the laboratory, his eyes glued to the split-second clock; the platform where the time machine should reappear.

Three hours! Eternity!

Never did seconds drag more interminably. The machine had vanished according to schedule; the first half of the experiment was a success. Somewhere in time, in the dim past ages, the machine rested; somewhere in time, Emmet Pennypacker existed, no longer an entity in the year 1935.

What was happening to him? Sam Corey tried to visualize; could not concentrate; gave it up, and waited, every sense taut on the dragging clock.

A quarter to three! Pennypacker had started at twelve. Ten minutes, five minutes, one minute, fifteen seconds. Sam Corey sprang up. One second!

A vague opalescence, a shadowy mist gathering: a milky, coherent cloud, and the familiar shimmer of the *vibratium*-built time machine. It had returned on the dot, obedient to the automatic reverse.

Sam allowed his scientific feelings to overcome him. He gave an exultant whoop, dashed forward to the machine. He stopped, cried out in horror, jumped in through the open slide door, knelt at the motionless body within.

It was minutes before he arose. When he did, he was a strangely aged, stooped man. Gone was the zest of youth, never to return. His lips were grim, taut; his eyes hard. Very deliberately he dragged the body out into the laboratory; very deliberately he searched around until he found what he wanted. It was a sledge hammer. Methodically he smashed into smithereens the time machine, the greatest invention that man had ever conceived.

At last, satisfied that no one part was intact or recognizable, he went to the phone and called the police—and the reporters.

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It was a tragedy of colossal dimensions that struck an astounded world. A holocaust that left its impact on future generations, making it impossible for any scientist to dare meddle again with time.

Fifty thousand men, women and children vanished that fatal day; fifty thousand human beings of every race and clime; in savage Africa, in far-off Australia, in teeming China, in blue-eyed northern Europe, in dark-haired southern Europe, in the vast stretches of America, the melting pot of all races.

Gone, vanished, disappeared without a trace, as though they had never been!

That was it: they had never been, explained Sam Corey to the horde of clamoring reporters, while a bewildered world, mourning lost dear ones, surfeited with supernatural tragedy, groped for a coherent answer.

"You see," said Sam, after the awe-stricken men had thrown vain glances at the smashed machine, stared with sharp intakes of breath at the thing on the floor, "you can't play around with time. I warned Pennypacker, but he wouldn't listen. I helped him build the machine—it was his idea completely," he added hastily. He did not want the credit that rightly was his. The execrations of mankind would immortally follow the creator.

"To go into the future," resumed Sam, "yes, that might be possible: though even then there might be trouble. It's a delicate business. But into the past! The past is done, completely. The tale is told. 'The moving finger writes, and, having writ, moves on——' You know the rest."

The reporters looked at each other, nodded wisely, and scribbled. A good line: make note to look it up, where it came from, back at the copy desk.

Sam crossed his legs. He was beginning to enjoy himself.

"You go back into the past," he said, "and what happens? You intrude into a state of affairs that's already worked out: cause and effect. Your mere presence is sufficient to set up disturbances that should never have existed."

A reporter raised his head, looked with avid, fascinated eyes at the thing on the floor.

"But that," he muttered. "What is it?"

"I'm coming to that," Sam said deliberately. "Pennypacker did more than intrude. He killed a man; a man who had lived and bred children, and who in turn bred children, and so on ad infinitum. Reason mathematically: figure the number of generations; the spread of offspring. Fifty thousand is conservative; I'm surprised half the world didn't go!

"The man died by an act that should never have happened. The consequences are simple. The children he must have had after his untimely decease, and I use the word *untimely* advisedly, were therefore never born. Accordingly, all his descendants whom we supposed alive to-day never were. They were illusions, figments of our imagination, and necessarily vanished into nothingness the moment their putative ancestor shuffled off his mortal coil."

"But this thing," persisted the stubborn reporter. "And where is Pennypacker?"

For the first time Sam Corey smiled. Years of bitterness under the selfish egotism of Pennypacker were now bearing pleasant fruit.

He got up, went to the body.

"This," he repeated. "Look at it; it's a Hun of Attila's time. Read Gibbon's description. Note something further. It's a caricature, I grant you, but a painfully accurate caricature of Emmet Pennypacker, the eminent scientist. This Hun was Pennypacker's direct progenitor. Pennypacker killed his own father, so to speak, and therefore never existed. Pennypacker, gentlemen, was a myth!"

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Here this veracious chronicle should end, but there is just one further incident to be told, if only to season unmitigated horror with a little spice of grim humor—if only to point a moral.

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Mrs. Murphy was waiting for the return of her lord and master; frightened, hard, and faintly triumphant, in bewildering succession. Little Tim clung to her ample Sunday-going black dress, whimpering.

It was evening. The papers were out already, screaming headlines about the world-wide tragedy and the incredible explanation. She hushed poor Tim with absent, stroking fingers, and waited.

Mr. Murphy walked elaborately through the door, more drunk than usual. The holocaust had caught him at work—riveting; a pal had vanished from his side. That meant drinks to drown the memory; more drinks to vanquish thought.

He stared blearily at Mrs. Murphy, at poor, dark-haired Tim. Ancient suspicions awaked in him, as they were wont to do on such occasions.

"Look at 'm!" he shouted. "Black's ace o' spades! A bloody Eytalian, thass wha' he is! Ain't no Murphy 'bout 'm, like Bridget an' Michael. Say—whe-where's my children?"

Mrs. Murphy rose to magnificent heights. Her voice was filled with grief, with strange triumph.

"You—drunken—fool!" she said. "A lot you know! Bridget and Michael were not your children! They've been took. Tim is your only child. You—fool!"

She sat down, panting from the effort, a little frightened now, hugging Tim close against the inevitable outburst.

Mr. Murphy looked at her with cold-sober eyes. The drink was completely out of him.

He pushed a hairy hand across his brow.

"They've been took," he muttered. "Took!"

He looked across at Tim, and the child flinched away.

"Tim—only one left!"

Mr. Murphy's brow cleared.

"O' course!" he roared, and banged his fist on the table. "I knew it all along! Tim's a real Murphy; there's black Irish in 'm."

He gestured splendidly.

"Shure, Mrs. Murphy, ye needn't be thinkin' ye've pulled the wool over my eyes all these years, you ould darlint!"

[The end of *Ancestral Voices* by Nat(haniel) Schachner]