



Once more the Good Doctor contributes his little bit to the increase of entropy, and, lower lip steady, we find ourselves unreasonably granting him the right to do so. . . . Among other, more interesting things, he explains a long-range advantage of dropping the bombs as soon as possible, if they are to be dropped at all.

THE MODERN DEMONOLOGY

by Isaac Asimov

YOU WOULD THINK, CONSIDERING MY BACKGROUND, THAT ANY time I had ever so slight a chance to drag fantasy into any serious discussion of science, I would at once do so with neon lights flashing and fireworks blasting.

Imagine my chagrin, then, when it turned out that I had spent a whole article on a discussion of entropy (see "Order! Order!," *F&SF*, February, 1961) and totally ignored the most famous single bit of fantasy in the history of science.

The omission was pointed out to me through the agency of a kind letter from what surely must be the Gentlest of all possible Readers; one that expressed very tactful surprise that I had managed to discuss the subject without mentioning Maxwell's demon.

Alas, I am contrite, and I shall now correct my error—and at considerable length.

When a hot body comes into contact with a cold body, heat flows

places on Earth where a man can go to be alone?

"And then, suppose industrialism did begin to spread. Think of the transition period. I told you once about the horrors that are a matter of historical record, when the ancient Communists set out to Westernize their countries overnight. That would happen again. Not that the Brahmards would do it; they're good men. But other leaders elsewhere—half barbarians, childishly anxious for power and prestige, breaking their own cultures to bits in their impatience—such leaders would arise.

"Of course it's wrong that people go poor and hungry. But there's more than one solution to that problem. Each civilization can work out its own. We do it in the Islands by exploiting the seas and limiting our population. You do it in Merica by dry farming and continental trade. The Okkaidans do it by making moderation into a way of life. The Sber-yaks are working out a fascinating system of reindeer ranches. And on and on. And how much we learn from each other!"

"Even from Beneghal," Lorn said dryly.

"Yes," she nodded, quite grave. "Machine techniques in particular. Although . . . well, let them follow their own path, but no one in the Island envies them. I really don't think their way—the old way—is anything like the best.

Man isn't made for it. If industrialism was so satisfying, why did the industrial world commit suicide?"

"I suppose that's another reason you're afraid of atomic energy," he said. "Atomic war."

She shook her head. "We aren't afraid. We could develop the technology ourselves and keep anyone else from doing so. But we don't want that tight a control on the world. We think Maurai interference should be kept to an absolute minimum."

"Nevertheless," he said sharply, "you do interfere."

"Yes," she agreed. "That's another lesson we've gotten from history. The ancients could have saved themselves if they had had the courage—been hard-hearted enough—to act before things snowballed. If the democracies had suppressed every aggressive dictatorship in its infancy; or if they had simply enforced their idea of an armed world government at the time when they had the strength to do so—Well." She looked down. Her hand left his and went slowly across her abdomen; a redness crept into her cheeks. "No," she said, "I'm sorry people got hurt, that day at Annaman, but I'm not sorry about the end result. I always planned to have children, you see."

Lorn stirred. His cigar had gone out. He relit it. The first puff was as acrid as expected. Sunlight

slanted in the windows to glow on the wooden floor, on a batik rug from Smatra and a statuette of strangely disturbing beauty from somewhere in Africa.

"Well," he said, "I told you I don't hold any more grudges. I guess you don't figure to keep atomic energy down forever."

"Oh, no. Someday, in spite of everything we do, Earth will have grown unified and dull. Then it will again be time to try for the stars."

"So I've heard various of your thinkers claim. Me, though . . . philosophically, I don't like your attitude. I'm resigned to it, sure. Can't have every wish granted in

this life. I did get the fun of working on that project, at least. But damn it, Alisabeta, I think you're wrong. If your own society can't handle something big and new like the tamed atom, why, by Ok-tai, you've proven your society isn't worth preserving."

He felt instantly sorry and started to apologize: no offense meant, just a difference of viewpoint and— But she gave him no chance to say the words. She raised her head, met his gaze, and smiled like a cat.

"Our society can't handle something new?" she murmured. "Oh, my dear Lorn, what do you think we were doing that day?"

TO THE STARS

The children will go to the stars.
 It's no use laughing;
 It's no use weeping;
 The boys are halfway there already.

We give them flesh
 And ABC
 And two-plus-two,
 And set them free,
 Not to lose them entirely,

And in the quiet of the night
 We look out the window and watch
 The planets circling like wolves.

—JAMES SPENCER