

THE LOVE GERM

By H. M. Egbert

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The three professors looked inquiringly at the younger member of the faculty as he entered the room. If pity had been known in the year 2215 it might have been said that pity was reflected upon their faces. As it was not the look must have been merely curiosity.

The white-robed, sterilized nurse would have been called beautiful three centuries before. But her wealth of blond hair was hidden by the hideous hood that was the fashion, and in her loose garments she looked more like a mandarin.

She, too, gazed curiously at the young fellow who entered and took his station respectfully before the professors.

"No. A 69 W P 14," began the eldest professor, addressing him by the name he bore, "you are still decided to become the subject of this experiment?"

"Yes, sir," replied the young man.

"You are making it in the interests of civilization. You have weighed the consequences? You know that it will mean persecution, ostracism, and worst of all, the existence within your system of a diabolical germ, which has become so rare that it is necessary to demonstrate its existence by performing this inoculation?"

"I have considered all the consequences, gentlemen," replied the young man.

The three professors addressed the nurse.

"No. B. 27 F F 7," began the second professor, "you, too, have volunteered to sacrifice your happiness for the sake of science? You, too, are undergoing this martyrdom with a full knowledge of consequences?"

The other two asked her almost the same question, though not in identical words. There was a faint smile

upon the nurse's face as she replied: "Yes, gentlemen, I am prepared to suffer this martyrdom," she answered.

"Then you have both been warned, as is required by law," said the eldest professor. "I shall now proceed to inoculate you both with the rare germ known as *diplococcus amoris*, found only in Patagonia and Fiji."

It was a weighty experiment. During the three centuries that had elapsed love had become rarer and



"Yes, Sir," Replied the Young Man.

rarer. Marriages were now and had long been regulated by the state. Spasmodic cases of love had been reported to the medical faculty, but except for these epidemics, now becoming rarer as the principles of hygiene were better understood, there had not been a case in years.

It was the desire of the physicians to observe a genuine case of love, in order to revise the textbooks on this disease, that had led the professors to cast about for two suitable sub-