



The Bell Tone
Leftwich, Edmund H.

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It is no use. It's too late. The earth—I must dig—alone.

To Whom It May Concern:

In order to clear up any misunderstanding or false impressions regarding the amazing case of my beloved friend and co-worker, Professor Howard E. Edwards, I submit herewith, extracts from the professor's notebook, which I found on the desk.

EVANS BARCLAY, B.S. Fellow IRE.

Jan. 25.

Last night, in my dreams, I was a monstrous ant, and had been digging myself a burrow in the soft fresh earth. The dream was intensely real, and when I awoke, I felt as tired as if I had actually been digging. My arms ached, and I was astonished, upon examining my hands, to find them raw.

Dressing hastily, I rushed to the back yard, and there, sure enough, near the fence, was a large hole about two feet deep and three feet long. Hurriedly, I filled it in and returned to the house.

I must rest for a few days, as I feel that the intense excitement caused by my investigations, is preying too heavily upon my mind.

At this time, I feel that I should make a brief summary of my findings in respect to the ants, so that Barclay may go over these notes upon his return from his vacation.

First: The ant colony is the source of a powerful bell-like tone which is radiated continuously on two wave-lengths, .0018 meter, and .00176 meter. This tone acts as a radio-beacon, and directs the ants to the colony, no matter where they may be located. The .0018 meter wave is used by the ants for their "clacking" conversations, by means of which they communicate with each other and the colony, receiving orders from the directing intelligence, reporting the location of food, and requesting help, when needed.

The wave .00176 meter, is used for sending thought images or pictures which may be sent with the "clacking" code, or independently. I cannot conceive a more efficient or highly specialized communications system. I *must* learn their secret, their methods.

Jan. 30.

This morning, while sitting at the receiver in a semi-doze, with the bell-tone ringing in my ears, I fell into that state known as "day-dreaming." Little "Nippy," my beloved fox terrier, and constant companion, rushed into the laboratory and ran up to me.

For a moment my mind went blank. My hands shot out. I grasped the dog around the throat and began to throttle him. I had risen from my chair, and the dog was nearly dead, when I slipped and fell, pulling the phone plug out of the receiver.

Instantly, my mind cleared, and words cannot express the remorse I felt at my inhuman actions. Nippy would have nothing to do with me, and crawled dejectedly from the room, a terrified look in his eyes.

I have no explanation for my actions.

Feb. 3.

The transmitter is ready for operation. I have constructed a pair of metal disc-electrodes which clamp tightly to my head and press upon my temples. This device will pick up the thought impulses from my brain, feed them directly into the radio-frequency amplifier, where they will be amplified, and then radiated in a tight directed beam.

My two ants were in their little enclosure under the microscope when I threw the switch to the "send" position. I pictured myself as I looked as a man, and sent the thought, "I am a man."

Hastily, I threw the switch to the "receive" position. I looked through the microscope.

The ants were lying on their sides. Somehow, I felt that the power was too great, and had stunned them. Keeping my eye to the microscope, I again threw the switch to "send," and cut the power to half.

"Get up, friends ... get up," I thought, as I pictured them rising. Sure enough ... the ants slowly regained their feet. They looked about in apparent bewilderment. Back again, in "receive" position, I was conscious of the thought image,

"The man ... he is the man. The man holds us here. He is killing us. We must kill the man."

They gnashed their fierce-looking mandibles. I snapped back to "send" and thought.

"No ... you must not kill the man. The man will not harm you ... he is your friend. He will help you."

As I watched, the ants seemed to become less excited. From the larger of the two, I received the thought,

"We are dying. The man is killing us with his strong vibrations. We must kill the man."

Then a very powerful thought impression burst upon my brain.

It seemed to come from the colony, three feet away.

"Warning to the man. Stop your thought transmissions at once! Your vibrations are killing us. We want nothing from you. We have everything we need. You will learn nothing from us. You will stop *at once!*"

I threw the switch to "send." Viewed through the microscope, the two ants were lying on their backs ... dead, to all appearances.

"What if I don't stop?" I sent the thought question, "I want to learn the secret of your communication. In return, I will teach you many things. I can't stop now!"

I changed to receive, and the answer came back,
"If you do not stop ... we will kill you!"

I turned off the apparatus, but the powerful bell tone continued to pound incessantly into my brain.

I laughed. They'd kill me ... would they? Those tiny insects ... what could they do? Well—let them try, but I'd get what I was after. I would not quit now, with success so near. What if my transmissions did kill a few of them? Of what importance were the lives of a few ants as compared to the advancement of the science of Communication?

Feb. 9.

I found myself digging again in the back yard yesterday. As before, I had been "day-dreaming," when an overwhelming desire to go outside and feel the cool moist earth between my fingers and on my face took possession of me.

I rushed out into the back yard, and began digging feverishly ... madly, until finally I fell, exhausted. Then my mind cleared and I filled in the hole.

About half the ants have died, due no doubt to the strength of my radiations. No matter how low I cut the power, they still cannot live but a short time under the force of my transmissions. They have stopped sending thought impressions entirely, and are using only their "clacking" code signals, which they seem to realize I cannot understand.

I feel that they are undertaking some sort of campaign against me. For hours they congregate, closely packed, their antennae stiffly pointed straight up. Their thought currents seem to be flowing into and merging with the bell tone, which grows stronger and more penetrating day by day.

In my back yard, there are four large ant hills, and at each hill, curiously, there is no activity except the same mass concentration of the ants. Have they, too, been affected by my radiations and joined forces with the original colony against myself?

The bell tone continues to grow stronger.

Feb. 11

Mrs. Winslow, the middle-aged widow, who comes to clean my house and laboratory twice a week, was here this morning.

She is short, dumpy, and inclined to be stout. As she went about her work, I noticed particularly the fat firm flesh of her neck, just below the

jaw. I felt an uncontrollable desire to sink my teeth deep into that flesh, and enjoy the taste of the warm fresh blood.

I had actually risen from my chair to accomplish my desire, when the telephone rang ... and my mind cleared.

Feb. 14.

I have decided to stop my experiments with the ants.

As they refuse to send any more thought impressions, there is nothing further I can learn from them. Somehow, I feel that they are gaining a hold upon my mind, and that every time I listen in on the receiver, that hold becomes stronger. I firmly believe that I would have attacked poor Mrs. Winslow, had not the ringing of the 'phone so opportunely interrupted me. I have sent word for her to stay away ... as I cannot trust myself.

I keep a box of fresh earth on the table in my laboratory. I often run my hands through it, and taste it. It is remarkable how much this soothes my nerves.

Feb. 16.

It is too late!

For two days, I have kept my apparatus shut off. I have not so much as looked at the ants, but still that confounded bell tone rings in my ears with all the insistence of African tom-toms. Hour by hour ... the tone becomes more penetrating. I cannot sleep, and can eat but little.

As a last resort, I destroyed my ant colony. I even went so far as to pour boiling water on the four ant hills in my yard.

Still ... the bell tone persists. I can stand it no longer!

Perhaps if I were to dig ... again in the yard ... in the soothing earth, I could forget... .

(News Clipping: From Philadelphia Banner)

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS ENGINEER DEAD

Howard E. Edwards, Suicide

Philadelphia, Feb. 18. The body of Howard E. Edwards, B.S., PhD., Member I. R. E., eminent authority on Radio Communications, aged 56, was found this morning in the back yard of his residence, 1427 Raines Avenue. The body was almost completely buried in a long narrow hole in the ground.

At first, foul-play was suspected, but later it appeared that Edwards had dug himself into the ground and died of suffocation, as his nostrils and mouth were filled with dirt.

Dr. P. A. Hofner, who examined the body, found no wounds, stated that Edwards had been dead for about two days, and pronounced the death as a clear case of suicide, the strange means employed probably due to an unbalanced mental condition.

Elaborate radio apparatus upon which Edwards had been working had been smashed to bits.

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