

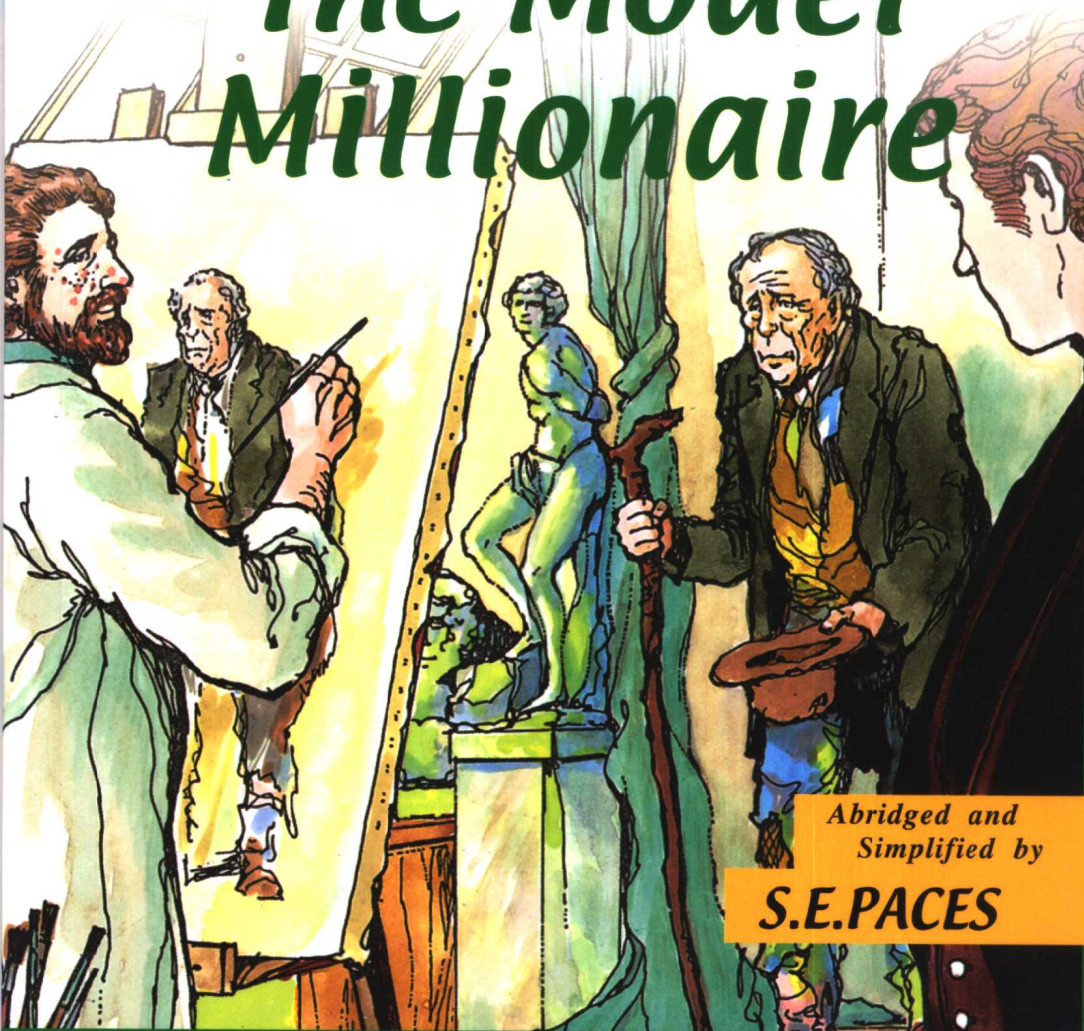
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# The Model Millionaire



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**S.E.PACES**

SOCIAL SCIENCES DOCUMENTATION PUBLISHING HOUSE 社会科学文献出版社

英语课外自学文库·第二辑·I

张道真 主编

# *The Model Millionaire*

《穷模特儿与百万富翁》

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奥斯卡·王尔德 等著

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出 版 人 / 谢寿光  
出 版 者 / 社会科学文献出版社  
地 址 / 北京市东城区先晓胡同 10 号  
邮政编码 / 100005  
网 址 / <http://www.ssdph.com.cn>  
责任部门 / 英语图书事业部  
(010)65281160  
项目经理 / 陈海力  
责任编辑 / 陈海力  
编辑助理 / 孙 霞  
光盘编辑 / 郭 鹏  
营销策划 / 吴海燕  
责任印制 / 同 非

---

总 经 销 / 社会科学文献出版社发行部  
(010)65139961 65139963  
经 销 / 各地书店  
读者服务 / 客户服务中心  
(010)65285539  
法律顾问 / 北京建元律师事务所  
排 版 / 北京中文天地文化艺术有限公司  
印 刷 / 北京美通印刷有限公司

---

开 本 / 880×1230 毫米 1/32 开  
印 张 / 3.125  
版 次 / 2003 年 7 月第 1 版  
印 次 / 2003 年 7 月第 1 次印刷

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书 号 / ISBN 7-80190-031-6/G·002  
著作权合 / 01-2003-1258  
同 登 记 号  
定 价 / 本辑共四册 50.00 元  
(每册 12.50 元,各配送伴读光盘一张)

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**图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据**

穷模特儿与百万富翁 = The Model Millionaire / (英) 王尔德 (Wilde, O.) 等著; (英) 佩斯 (Paces, S. E.) 改写. - 北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 2003.7

(英语课外自学文库)

ISBN 7-80190-031-6

I. 穷... II. ①王...②佩... III. 英语-语言读物, 小说 IV. H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2003) 第 042669 号



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# 序

这次应社会科学文献出版社之邀，主编了这套《英语课外自学文库》，旨在为英语学习者创造一个良好的英语阅读环境。

长期以来，我深感国内缺乏适当的英语读物，在书店能够看到的英文原版图书不是价格昂贵，就是鸿篇巨制，对在校的学生及英语学习者来讲，这样既会造成畏难情绪又不实用，对培养他们学习英语的兴趣、提高他们的英语水平极为不利。社会科学文献出版社针对这种情形，同时配合他们的“自学英语行动计划”，精心策划出版《英语课外自学文库》，并诚邀我担纲主编，他们用心良苦，我也欣然应允。

《英语课外自学文库》首批编辑出版的各辑图书都是依据在世界各地流传广泛而受欢迎的英语文学作品缩写而成（以后还要出版各类英文版知识性读物），是长期在非英语国家从事英语教育的英国专家 S.E. Paces 特意为中国学生精心打造的。

这样的简写读本实际上也非常适合中国的初学英语的成年人。有些内容只要掌握上千词汇甚至几百词汇就能阅读，同时，语法结构也简单化。更为可取的是，每册图书都配有一张动画光盘，既可以像唱卡拉 OK 那样随字幕跟读，又可以在光盘上做相应的练习，而且光盘还具有修改练习错误的功能。总之，是一套听说读写兼顾，很实用又很有趣味的英语读物。

读原文著作，听原声讲话，通过英语学习英语，是吸收英语知识，掌握英语规律最有效的途径。大量阅读英语著作的作用很多，首先是培养阅读的兴趣和能力。认真读完这几十本简写著作，在为

精彩的故事所吸引的同时，英文阅读自然也打下了初步基础；其次是巩固课内所学知识，提高整体英文水平。课堂上所学的知识，孤零零很难巩固，如果在阅读中反复印证，就会既丰富了语法知识，又扩大了词汇量，不知不觉中语言修养就得到了稳步提高；再有就是通过阅读，能开拓视野，体会异域风情和文化背景，扩大知识面，反过来又为进一步学好英语打下基础。另外，在这里我要建议读者要充分利用原声朗读光盘来学习语音，提高口语能力。在读完一本书或一段文字之后，结合跟读录音，像讲故事一样的进行复述。试试看，你的英文水平会有神速的进步。

我念书的时候条件艰难，英文原著不容易找，我是千方百计地寻觅。现在，国家逐步富裕起来，有条件出版更多更好的英语读物给莘莘学子，让他们很容易从学校图书馆里借来阅读，让他们很容易从书店里买来做藏书随时翻阅。希望这套颇具规模的《英语课外自学文库》成为可以让学生们尽情遨游的英语学习海洋，成为广大读者乐而忘返的英语学习乐园。那么，作为主编，更作为一名英语教育工作者，我将倍感欣慰。

张道真

2003年7月于深圳

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## THE STAR DUCKS

*BILL BROWN, a well-known American writer of science-fiction, shows an attractive sense of humour. You cannot fail to enjoy this in THE STAR DUCKS.*





## The Star Ducks



Rafferty, "*The Times*" top reporter, stopped his car in front of old Alsop's farm-house. He parked it under a walnut tree in the drive. He got out and looked round him in some surprise. Where was the crowd that he had expected to see there? Where were the police? Where was the ambulance? There was not a soul to be seen. His reporter's eye noted the peaceful old house, the neglected garden, the fences that were falling down, the chicken-houses and the muddy farmyard. He pushed the broken front gate open and climbed the shaking steps that led to the back porch.

Mr. Alsop came out on the porch to meet him. "How do you do?" he said.

Rafferty pushed his hat back a little. "I'm Rafferty of '*The Times*'. Rafferty," he said.

"Rafferty?" said Mr. Alsop in a puzzled tone. It was clear that he did not read "*The Times*".

"I'm a reporter. Somebody has just phoned us that a plane's crashed round here."

Mr. Alsop looked thoughtful and scratched his head. And then he answered slowly, "No."

Rafferty saw at once that Alsop was a very slow thinker and so he gave him time to think. Mr. Alsop shook his head slowly and again said "Nooooooooo."

The door squeaked and Mrs. Alsop came out on the porch. She looked a little brighter than her husband and so Rafferty spoke to her, repeating his information. She shook her head slowly and said, "Nooooooooo," just as her husband had done.

Rafferty turned round, his hand on the railing of the porch, ready to go down the steps and back to his car.

"I guess it was a phony message," he said. "We get lots of them. Somebody said that he'd seen an aeroplane come down in your field — in flames — that is, with flames coming out of the back of it."

Mrs. Alsop's face lighted up. "Ohhhhhhhh!" she said. "Yes, that's right. But it didn't crash. It just came down. And it isn't an aeroplane really. It hasn't got any wings on it."

Rafferty stopped with his foot lifted over the top step. "I beg your pardon?" he said. "An aeroplane came down? And it didn't have wings?"

"That's right," Mrs. Alsop said. "It's out there now in the barn. It belongs to some folks who bend iron with a hammer."

"Ha! Ha!" thought Rafferty. "This smells like news."

"Maybe it's a helicopter?" he said.

Mrs. Alsop shook her head. "No, I don't think so. It doesn't have any of those fan things on it. But you can go and see for yourself if you like. You take him to the barn, Alfred. And see that he walks on the planks because the ground's so muddy."

Mr. Alsop led Rafferty round the house on the planks that had been placed over the mud. "Well," thought Rafferty, "in my job I've had to meet a lot of strange folks and real idiots, but I've never met any as dumb as these Alsops."

"I've got a fine lot of chickens this year," Mr. Alsop said slowly. "Never had better. But do tell me, Mr. Rafferty, do you think that chickens will do well up there on a star?"

Rafferty, without thinking, looked up at the sky and his foot slipped off the plank into the mud.

"Up there on a what?"

"I said up there on a star," said Mr. Alsop in his slow, calm way.

They had now reached the door of the barn and Mr. Alsop was trying to push it open. "You have to push hard," he said. "It sticks." Rafferty put his shoulder to the door and pushed it open. He looked inside and instantly knew that here indeed was a story.

The object inside the barn looked like an enormous plastic balloon that was only half blown up. It was round on top and its flat bottom rested on the straw-covered floor. It was just small enough to go through the barn door. "It's somebody's crazy idea of a spaceship," thought Rafferty and instantly in his

mind he saw the headlines that would appear in very large letters on the front page of his newspaper:

**"LOCAL FARMER BUILDS ROCKET SHIP FOR MOON VOYAGE"**

"Mr. Alsop," he said hopefully, "you didn't build this thing, did you?"

Mr. Alsop laughed and said, "I don't know anything about building things like that. Some friends of mine came in it."

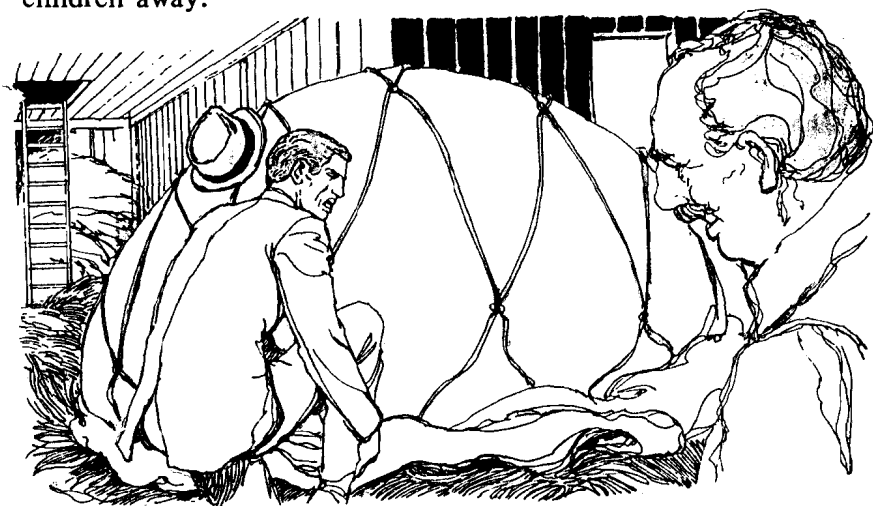
Rafferty gave him a sharp look, thinking that he was joking, but the farmer's face was quite serious.

"Who are these friends of yours?" he asked.

"Well, it sounds a bit funny," said Mr. Alsop, "but I don't really know. You see, they don't talk in a way I can understand. In fact, they don't talk at all. The only thing that we've been able to make out is that their name means bending iron with a hammer."

Rafferty, who was walking closer to the machine to get a better look, gave a sudden cry of pain and rubbed his leg.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Mr. Rafferty," Mr. Alsop said, "all round the thing there's a kind of wall that you can't see. And if you knock against it, it hurts, doesn't it? It's there to keep the children away."



"These friends of yours, Mr. Alsop, where are they now?"

"They're over at the house," Mr. Alsop replied. "You can see them if you'd like to. But you'll find it hard to talk to them. They're rather different from us."

"Russians?" Rafferty asked.

"Well, no, I don't think so. But you'll be able to tell."

"Come on. Let's go," said Rafferty and led the way across the muddy farmyard towards the house."

"These folks came here the first time about six years ago," Mr. Alsop began to explain. "They wanted some of our eggs. They thought that they might be able to raise chickens up there, where they live. But it took them three years to get home and of course in that time the eggs went bad. And so the folks turned round and came straight back for some more. This time I've made them a nesting-box so that they can raise chickens on the way home." He gave a sudden laugh. "I can just see that ship-thing of theirs, far up in the sky, full of my chickens!"

Rafferty climbed up on to the back porch in front of Mr. Alsop and hurried through the back door into the kitchen. Mr. Alsop caught his arm to stop him when they were at the door of the living-room.

"Mr. Rafferty, my wife can talk to these people better than I can. Let her do the talking. She and the lady get on quite well together."

"Okay," said Rafferty. He pushed Mr. Alsop gently through the door and entered the room close behind him. He stood in the doorway and stared.

Mrs. Alsop was sitting in an armchair facing her visitors, a man and a woman. They were sitting side by side on the couch, waving their slender antennae to and fro. Their faces were purple and quite without any expression. Their eyes were round and very large. Their faces seemed to have been painted on.

Mrs. Alsop turned towards Rafferty with a smile. "Mr. Rafferty," she said, "these are the people who came to see us in that aero-



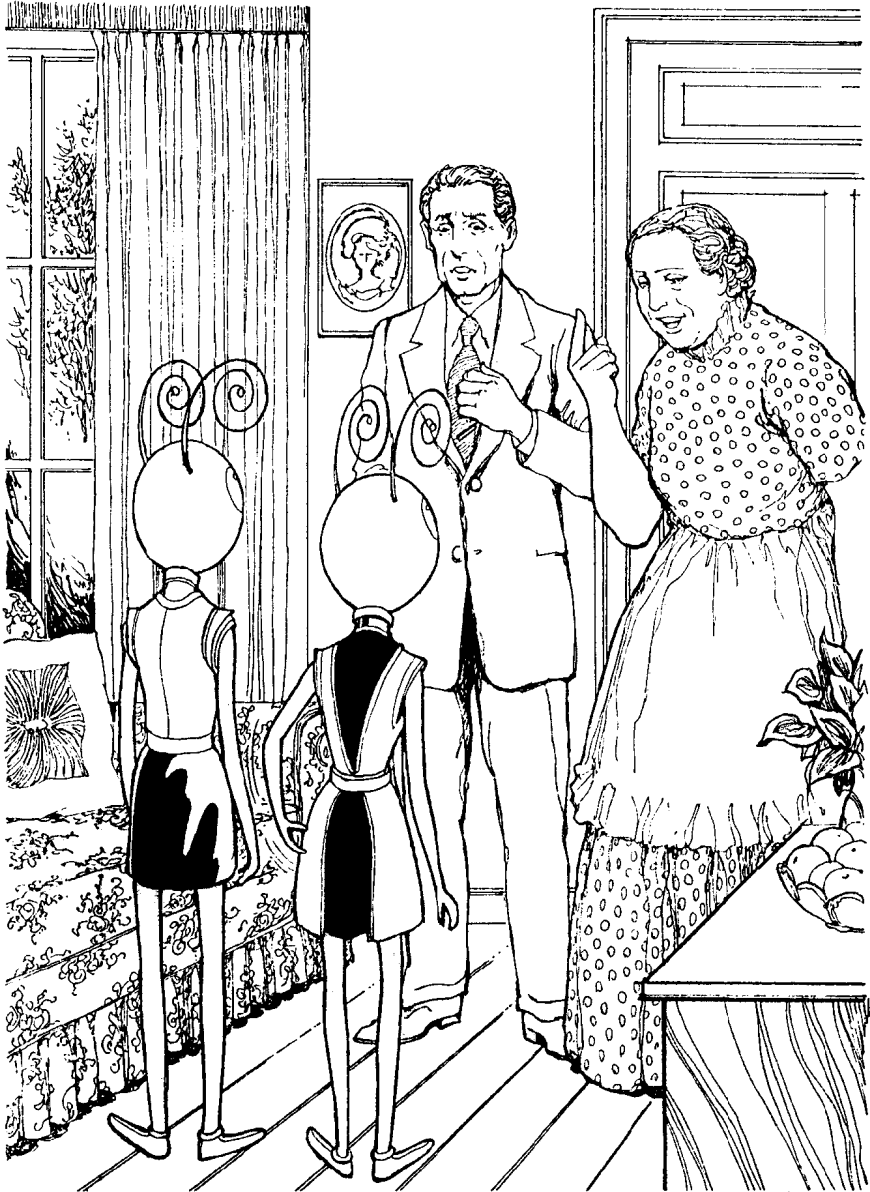
plane.” She raised her finger and the two strangers instantly bent their antennae towards her. “This is Mr. Rafferty,” she told them, speaking in a loud voice as if she were talking to people who were hard of hearing. “He’s a newspaper reporter. He wanted to see your aeroplane.”

Rafferty was too astonished to speak but he managed to nod. The strangers curled up their antennae and nodded in return. The lady scratched her side with her left claw.

Rafferty said to himself, “It’s a trick. It must be a trick. Now, Rafferty, you’re a smart fellow, don’t let them take you in. Be careful, Rafferty.”

He turned to Mrs. Alsop and in a voice that he tried to keep from shaking, asked, “What did you say their names are, Mrs. Alsop?”

“Well, we don’t really know,” she answered. “You see, they can only make pictures for you. They point those funny horn-things of theirs at you and they just think. That makes you think too – the same thing that they are thinking. I asked them what their name was and then I let them think for me. They put in my head the picture of a man hammering some iron on an anvil. So I guess their name is something like MAN-WHO-BENDS-IRON. It’s a kind of Red Indian name, maybe.”



Rafferty looked at the people who bent iron and then at Mrs. Alsop.

"Do you suppose," he asked, "they would talk to me, that is, think to me?"

Mrs. Alsop looked rather worried.

"I am sure that they'd be glad to, Mr. Rafferty. The only thing is, it's pretty hard at first. Hard for you, I mean."

"I'll try it," Rafferty said. He took out a cigarette and lighted it. In his confusion, he held the match until it was burning his fingers.

"Just throw it in the coal bucket," said Mr. Alsop.

Rafferty threw the match into the coal bucket.

"Ask these – er – er – people where they come from, will you?"

Mrs. Alsop smiled. "I asked them that once before," she said, "and I didn't get a very clear picture. But I'll have another try."

Mrs. Alsop raised her finger. Instantly the strangers bent their antennae towards her, pointing directly at the middle of her forehead.

"This young man," shouted Mrs. Alsop, "wants to know where you folks come from."

Mr. Alsop nudged Rafferty. "Just hold up your finger when you want an answer," he said.



Rafferty felt like a fool but he held up his finger.

The lady whose husband bends iron bent her antennae down until they pointed to Rafferty's forehead, straight between the eyes. Then suddenly his brain seemed to change into rubber and he felt that someone was twisting it and beating it into a new shape. He felt very frightened. And then he seemed to be flying through space, through a great white vacuum. Stars and meteors went flashing by him until he came to a great star of dazzling brightness. The picture disappeared. Rafferty found that he was shaking all over and was almost too weak to stand. His burning cigarette was on the floor. Mr. Alsop bent and picked it up.

"You dropped your cigarette, Mr. Rafferty. Here it is. Did you get your answer?"

Rafferty's face was as white as a sheet.

"Mr. Alsop!" he cried. "Mrs. Alsop! This is no trick. It's all true. These creatures have really come from space!"

Mr. Alsop said calmly, "Sure, they've come a long way."

"Do you know what this means?" Rafferty asked, wild with excitement and trying in vain to keep his voice down. "Do you know that this is the most important thing that has ever happened in the history of the world? Do you know that this is — yes, it is, it's the biggest story that ever was? And it's happening to me, do you understand?" He was shouting now. "Where's your phone?"

"We don't have a telephone," said Mr. Alsop in his slow way. "But there's one down at the petrol-station. Mr. Rafferty, these people have to leave in a few minutes. Why don't you stay and see them off. The chickens are already on board and the nesting box and the feed."

"No!" Rafferty shouted. "They can't leave yet! Listen, I've got to phone! I've got to get a photographer!"

Mrs. Alsop smiled.

"Mr. Rafferty," she said, "we tried to make them stay for supper but they just have to set out at a certain time. They have to go out with the tide — or something like that."



"It's not the tide," said Mr. Alsop. "It's the moon. It's a question of where the moon is."

The two strangers from space were sitting quietly on the couch, their claws folded in their laps and their antennae curled to show that they were not listening-in to other people's thoughts.

Rafferty looked wildly round the room for the telephone that he knew was not there. "I must get the editor," he was thinking. "He'll know what to do. Or will he say that I'm crazy?" He did not know what to do. "Do something," his brain urged him. "This is the biggest story that ever was and you just stand here doing nothing."

"Listen, Alsop!" Rafferty shouted. "Have you got a camera? Any kind of camera?"

"Oh, sure," Mr. Alsop said. "I've got a fine camera. It's a box camera but it takes good pictures. I'll show you some that I've taken of my chickens."

"No, no! I don't want to see your pictures. I want the camera!"

Mr. Alsop went into the parlour to look for his camera and Rafferty could see him feeling his way among the many objects on the top of the cupboard.

"Mrs. Alsop," shouted Rafferty, "I've got a lot of questions to ask them."

"Ask away," she answered cheerfully. "They won't mind."

But what could he ask these creatures from space? He had their names. He knew what they had come for. He knew where they had come from . . . . .

Mr. Alsop's voice came from the parlour.

"*Ethel*, have you seen my camera?"

"No, I haven't," Mrs. Alsop answered sharply. "You put it away yourself."

"It's a pity that I haven't got any films for it," said Mr. Alsop.

It was then that the strangers from space turned their antennae towards each other. They seemed to have reached a decision because both of them, at the same instant, got up and flew like