

## SCIENCE STUDIES THE HOMING PIGEON,

or,

## THE HOMING PIGEON STUDIES SCIENCE

"Durham, N.C. Scientists at Duke University announced today that a drunken blind man will reel and roam and always get home. 'It's a sensible statistical principle,' they declared."

Consider drunken blind mankind. The first big-jawed, slant-brained pithecanthropoid, tossing peanuts to his uncle cavorting in the trees, accustoming himself to his opposable thumb, fumblingly invented the wheel and, cycling laughably with Arabic dead-reckoning and a fearful and useless eye on the heavens, careened into and sprawled onto the B.C. marker which coordinates Euclid and Aristotle. He raised here on one elbow and eyelessly surveyed these straight streets. Except for his festering paradisiacal snake bite, this would have been the time-place to forswear the demon. Distracted instead by pagan laughter and lured by squealed delight, he crawled past the lions munching their gladiators and, leaning now on the bar at Omar Khayyam's, quaffed a few for the road, which he noisily resumed, staggering and giggling into a cathedral, recently relighted, where he melted knee first to the stone floor and rolled over, admiring the ceiling and expecting that wine from above might soon pour down to transubstantiate him. The metronomic chandelier excited gastric warnings familiar to him from his days at sea, and he bolted dizzily up sloping stairs, retched over the displaced balcony and experimentally relieved himself of a gravitational

misconception. Still nauseated at his filthy groveling in the Papal court, he lurched uncertainly into Newton Place, where the newly-erected chamber-of-commerce sign cockily, yet with the reason of the age, proclaimed, "This is home. Absolutely the place. Boundless space." A tour de force! A detour! A bender! And now home! This proves the point syllogistically even to those who are stuffy about their undistributed middles.

The scientists also revealed that their discovery would improve domestic relations.

Bigjaw Slantbrain takes some alcohol-free nectar from the refrigerator, not because he needs a drink, but out of obligation to the sponsor. Subsided into a favorite chair and reflecting favorably on evolutionary primacy, he enjoys the world series in his living room. Enters now Xanthippe. When Socrates chose the deadly cup, obstinately explaining that a voice within informed him to, this is the voice he meant: "You obscene etherized essence. I told you to come home straight. The coaxial cable has been cut." A womanly exaggeration indeed, but not without truth: Joltin' Joe DiMaggio's swing, sinuating through the coaxial spaces, was arriving in different phases at equal places. "I know it's cut. I met a man whose wife sent him to fix it." A trifle disgruntled, Xanthippe heartily boots him into the cold night air where, consoling himself with fantasies of simpler and truer relations, detesting the chronology that bars him from gestation, he conceives of a new transformer that immediately restores the picture. As he sets out triumphantly for home, Joltin' Joe smashes the August 6, 1945 world's record for home-

run blasts. The exact details are indeterminable, but knowing that Xanthippe awaits, he has been rehearsing his speech of forgiveness. As he enters, she says, "You fool. What have you done? Don't you dare sit down. This is going to proliferate. Go on out and build us our bomb shelter."

#### FINAL REPORT

We are pleased to announce that we have proved that Xanthippe is the sensible principle that steers a man home; that beckons through gloom; that makes him crawl around and lie to the inquisition.

#### FULL DISCLOSURE:

We thank our sponsor, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, for its generous research grant and for its unfailing support and advice.