



Robert W.
Lowndes,
Editor

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Feature Novelet

DOOMSDAY'S COLOR-PRESS

by **Raymond F. Jones 12**

There's power in the printed word that hasn't been tapped yet — if this story, by a master of science-fiction, is entirely fictitious!

A Novelet Of The Great Legend

... AND FOUND WANTING Wallace West 54
There comes a day when gods must be weighed in the balance!

Short Stories and Departments

DOWN TO EARTH (Editorial comment and Readers' Letters) 6

WE ARE ALONE Robert Sheckley 31
Other beings might know us better than we know ourselves!

LEGION OF THE LOST Alfred Coppel 41
The basis of this story is fantastic — but factual . . .

READIN' AND WRITHIN' (Book Reviews) Robert W. Lowndes 46

THE WINNING OF WOoha R. R. Winterbotham 47
Phil Jerome believes what he sees, only he doesn't know what he's seeing!

THE RECKONING 96
Here's the consensus of opinion on our July issue.

READERS' PREFERENCE COUPON 96
We like letters, but if you just want to vote, here's a simple way to do it.

*Cover by A. Leslie Ross, symbolizing the threat of "Doomsday's Color-Press"
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The water
was rising
as Teraf
clung . . .

FINAL NOVELET of the "GREAT LEGEND" SERIES

by Wallace West

... AND FOUND WANTING

The long-dreaded day arrived
when the "gods" were weighed
in the balance, and a world
died by its own hand.

*And the woman said, The serpent
beguiled me.*

Genesis. 3:13



THE LEADER of a successful forlorn hope expedition should be the proudest man in the world. He has surmounted obstacles others thought unsurmountable; he has, in effect, returned from the dead. What could be sweeter...more ego-fertilizing?

Yet, as Teraf, newly-crowned King of Hellas, stood before the golden throne of Zeus, Pitar of ten terrestrial kingdoms and viceroy of the Martian Anarchiate, and reported on his expedition to barbarous Egypt, his heart was ashes in his breast.

Grimly, Teraf told the assembled

Council how he and other crew members of the *Argo* had returned the Princess Pan Doh Ra to her imperious father in Sais, that ponderous city of stone spinxes and sacred cats. He described their narrow escape from the clashing towers which guard the harbor of Sais; their meeting with Medea, the sorceress and sister of Pharaoh Plu Toh Ra; their confinement near the den containing Egypt's secret weapon, a herd of man-carrying—and man-eating—pterodactyls; their final, almost miraculous, escape after destroying the herd but without gaining possession of the radioactive orichalcum whose theft from Atlan had crippled Mars' first experiment in interplanetary imperialism.

"Splendid, my boy!" Forgetting his gouty foot, the Pitar sprang from his seat and placed his hands tenderly on the young Hellene's broad shoulders. "Forget the orichalcum; you achieved your minimum objective—to obtain information and cripple the Egyptian offensive power. I will rec-

commend you for the highest honor the Martian Anarchiate has to offer . . . the Diamond Cross of Danae."

"We will be able to obtain pitchblende ore from western Africa for the manufacture of orichalcum soon," twittered Vulcan, guiding spirit of the Bab El power station. "Now that the threat of aerial attack from Sais has been lifted, we can carry on until communication with the home planet is restored."

"But what of Pan Doh Ra?" Teraf gulped miserably. "If she is really loyal to Atlan, her fate will be terrific. I wouldn't put it beyond her father to offer her as a sacrifice to his dark gods. If she is a traitor to us, as all the evidence seems to indicate, she undoubtedly will betray our plans in exchange for marriage with my renegade brother, Refo. He is enroute to Sais now."

"I'm sorry, Teraf," the old man sighed. "But love must always bow to pressing affairs of state. I can do nothing to aid your princess now. Later, perhaps, there may be . . ."

A panting messenger burst into the chamber and prostrated himself at the feet of Vulcan. He wore the harness of a minor engineer. "Sir," he gabbled. "Marco has fled the tower. . . . And five more ounces of orichalcum are missing from the Bab El vaults."

"Impossible!" The hunchbacked engineer was hobbling toward the door even as he spoke. "Marco is a good boy; I trained him myself. . . . And even if he turned traitor, a cat couldn't get through our lines—let alone a man carrying a lead container weighing more than a hundred pounds."

"But what," interposed Hermes, "if Marco has gone mad? He could have carried the stuff in his mouth in a very thin container, couldn't he?"

"Yes, of course." Vulcan hesitated at the door. "But the radiation would kill him in a matter of hours. . . . practically burn his head off."

"General Ares and Hermes will co-

operate in a search for the missing engineer, dead or alive," Zeus ordered. Then: "Have either of you any ideas as to where he might have fled before he collapsed?"

The warlord shook his head gloomily.

Hermes said: "I think I can at least produce what's left of Marco."

As Teraf left the chamber the chronicler dropped in beside him and slipped an arm through his. "Say, King," he grinned. "May I have an audience?"

THEY TRAVERSED the long corridor, entered Teraf's suite, where the chronicler poured himself a stiff drink and collapsed into his customary contortion on the most comfortable chair.

"I need your help in trailing Aphrodite," he began; "I have a hunch she had a hand in those thefts. I haven't got anything on her yet, but right now is the first time she's been out of my sight this week."

"That's a pretty serious charge against poor old Zeus' pet daughter."

"Well, look at it this way: she disappeared after the first batch of orichalcum vanished. Then, I've learned that she has been making sheep's-eyes at Marco."

"But what on earth could be her motive?"

"Here's the story. I picked it up from all sorts of places. The morgue at the Planet. . . newspaper gossip. . . You know. . ."

"Two years ago Aphrodite paid a visit to Sais. . . stayed there several months. At the time, it was rumored that Piu Toh Ra might take her as his queen; nothing came of it, so far as anybody knew. But she returned to Atlan with the idea that Martians were too wrapped up in business and colonization to pay any attention to the more esthetic things in life.

"Later she decided she wanted to be a 'business woman', too. . . wanted to amount to something like Athena. A complete change of heart, you see. She

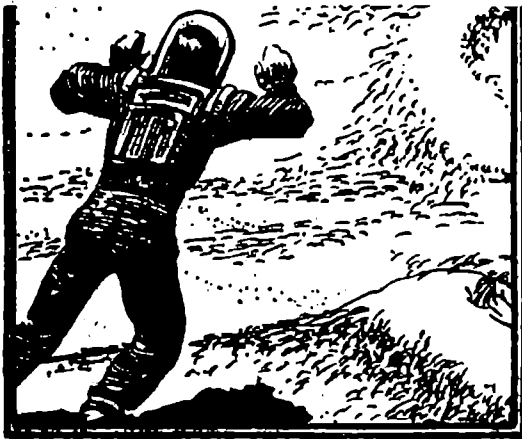
went up to Bab El and studied for a time under Vulcan, who adores her—the sentimental old fool. Flubbed her electronics in grand style, of course, and wound up by having violent flirtations with members of the staff...

Automatically Hermes' hand went out, only to discover that the decanter was empty.

"I'll ring for another," said his host.

"Never mind. Heracles was telling me there's a bottle or two of Iberian nectar in the cellars that have been gathering cobwebs since Poseidon's time. What say we broach them?"

A gnome-like cellar-man let them pass into the wine-vaults without question, then trailed after them like a misshapen ghost.



"Why don't you ask him where it is?" queried Teraf, st. ring helplessly at the array of bottles, barrels and kegs which surrounded them.

"Nuh uh! More fun to look!"

As they turned into an ill-lighted, cobwebby corridor the gnome skipped into the lead and blocked their way with long, outstretched arms.

"Can't go there, my masters," he bawled.

"And why not, you long-eared bat?"

"Orders from the Pitar, masters; I have them here." He thrust a hand under his leather jerkin. It came forth holding a curved blade with which he slashed the reporter.

Hermes slumped to the floor. Before there was time for the blow to be repeated, Teraf brought a bottle down

on the cellar-man's head. The gnome collapsed across the body of his victim.

"Don't wait," gapsed the chronicler, as Teraf bent over him. "You'll find Aphrodite down that corridor, I think; she wasn't at the council meeting, remember... Great Land of Nod, king, stop pawing me! The future of Atlan may depend..." He fainted.

SNATCHING the cellar-man's lantern, Teraf raced down the narrow passageway. Far in front he thought he caught a flash of white. He redoubled his pace.

The white patch doubled a corner. He skidded after it.

"Don't come a step nearer," panted a frightened voice. "I...I have you covered."

Teraf hurled himself headfirst at the shadowy figure ahead. They went down in a tangle, the gun sparkling harmlessly; the woman he had pinioned twisted and bit like a panther.

Seizing both her wrists with one hand, Teraf at last retrieved the lantern with the other and flashed its light on her face.

It was Aphrodite, of course, but a changed Aphrodite. Her face was almost as white as his own, now; her mouth was drawn into a square through which teeth gleamed. Her eyes showed mere greenish slits.

"Zeus shall hear of this!"

"So he shall." Teraf released her and picked up the gun. "Now march in front of me quietly, or you will return to the sea-foam from which the silly poets say you came."

Her mood changed. Bowing her head she begged and pleaded as she stumbled along before him.

"Got her?" queried a weak voice as they approached the end of the corridor.

"You bet." Teraf breathed a sigh of relief to find the reporter conscious again. "Can you hold out till I come back?"

"Sure. I'm bleeding a bit, but I'm hard to kill. Take her to Zeus your-

self; she'll bribe or seduce the guards. Hurry...back."

The Hellene dashed for the cellar entrance, now dragging his sobbing captive behind him. Up the stairs he stumbled and burst into the audience-chamber to find the Pitar surrounded by a sea of war-maps. Despite Aphrodite's screams, he blurted out his story.

ZEUS' FACE mottled with fury. He rang for the guard, then caught his daughter in his arms as she fainted gracefully. "Get Hermes to a doctor," he snapped. "If the cellar-man is alive, lock him up. Then take a squad and search that corridor; I'll take care of this."

Collecting men-at-arms as he ran, Teraf rushed back into the cellar. The gnome still lay across the body of the chronicler; he was dead. Hermes was unconscious again but his wound though deep, had not penetrated a vital organ. Teraf had him carried above post-haste.

With five men at his back, the Helene then went down the fatal corridor until he reached a dead end. There the lanterns revealed that the flooring had been torn up and clumsily replaced; under the dirt was Marco, and another.

And back behind a row of tall bottles they discovered a heavy leader container in which the missing orichalcum was now enclosed.

Dispatching this to the Pitar, Teraf hurried to the palace hospital. Hermes welcomed him with his usual quizzical grin. "I'm still in one piece, king," he whispered. "Vanya will have me up in about a week or I'll skin him. Check up and see if the cellar-man wasn't a relative of Marco's. Seems to me I remember something about a deformed brother... That's why we went down there in such a hurry. I got to figuring that Aphrodite would make a break for the cellar as soon as she thought I wasn't shadowing her." He yawned and went to sleep forth with.

In the audience-chamber, the council had been reassembled, hurriedly. Vulcan, his wrinkled face twisted by grief and disbelief, sat on the edge of a chair, staring alternately at his gnarled, scarred hands and at his former protege; Heracles lounged uncomfortably in his corner; Athena was helping a nurse to restore consciousness to the captive.

As Teraf entered, Aphrodite opened her eyes. "I didn't do it, father," she wailed like a little girl. "I was just looking for a bottle of wine. Teraf frightened me." She beat her round breasts with clenched fists.

"Let me see those hands," commanded the Pitar.

"I...I burned them... Scalded them while washing my hair; they're not pretty." She hid them behind her back.

"You never washed your own hair in your life." Zeus jerked the offending hands into the light; the palms were blistered and seared.

"Typical orichalcum burn," Vulcan gulped; "she probably got it putting the material in the big container."

"Aphrodite, look at me!" The Pitar took the broken woman by the shoulders. "Enough of your lies. I know there is one thing that you fear above all others; that is death! Now tell us why you did this foul thing."

The once-proud darling of the court whimpered and prepared to faint again. Her father shook her roughly. At this she recovered herself; her eyes became stony, her mouth tense. "Will I be pardoned if I tell everything?"

"You'll not die."

For a long moment she stared down at her ruby-studded sandals, then threw back her head defiantly. "Yes, I had Ander and Marco steal orichalcum for me! They loved me. They hid it in their mouths; they died for me. They were men, not machines."

"They are neither now," breathed

Zeus. "Proceed. Why did Plu Toh Ra want the stuff?"

"Plu Toh Ra?" Her glance wavered. "To blow up Atlan," she replied at last.

"Heracles," snapped the Pitar, "wring my daughter's pretty neck for me."

THE GIANT lounged forward, his hairy hands extended like hams. Aphrodite screamed, and her eyes started from her head.

"I'll tell everything," she gabbled. "Plu Toh Ra plans to capture the dam at the Pillars of Heracles and blow it up if you refuse to surrender. The orichalcum, except the little used to bomb Atlan, has been made into a bomb which will be held as a sword over you."

"And you connived in this?"

"Yes. Plu Toh Ra loves me as I always wanted to be loved; he, too, is a man. You others are mere slaves and drudges. He will marry me... make me his queen... have me worshipped as a goddess in Sais. He..."

"Shut up, strumpet!" Zeus whirled on the council. "There's not a moment to lose," he thundered. "Even now, the Pharaoh may be on his way; that visit from Refo, which Teraf has told us of, is probably the prelude to an attack. If the dam is taken we're helpless; if it is broken the waters of the Atlantic will sweep over all of Atlan, drowning it hundreds of feet deep. None will escape."

There was a bull-roar of fury from the corner into which Heracles had withdrawn. "It's my dam." The giant's eyes were wild. "I built it. And, by the fifteen little demons, I'll save it."

Zeus shook his head. "Iberia is almost a wilderness," he said soothingly; "those who go, will have to travel much of the way on horseback. Your weight would kill any horse in half a day's ride. And then, I'd rather keep you here; it's war to the death now, and I'll need every engineer in Atlan.

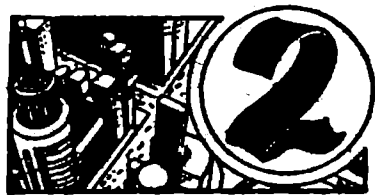
"Teraf, you've had experience traveling through rough country; start at once. A regiment of cavalry will follow, but you must get to the dam first and warn the guard. Plu Toh Ra is jamming our radio station with his own at Sais, so we can't get through that way.

"Take the fastest motor car at the palace. Quite a number of the internal-combustion kind have been taken out of museums and reconditioned. No airplanes have been made ready for service yet or we wouldn't be in this mess.

"The roads are good about half the way from here to the dam. After that you'll have to trust to luck and ingenuity. Apollo, give him gold for the purchase of horses.

"Probably the Egyptians have one or two days' start, but they have farther to go and must take a round-about course. They may have a few internal-combustion cars. Their pterodactyls are dead, or escaped you say, and their planes can't operate without power from Bab El.

"Now go, with our blessing; there'll be others following you, so don't hesitate to take chances. Don't think of your own life; think of Atlan. Let us hope this is not farewell."



In Egypt we have the oldest of the Old World children of Atlantis; in her magnificence we have a testimony to the development attained by the parent country; by that country whose kings were the gods of succeeding nations, and whose kingdom extended to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Ignatius Donnelly's "Atlantis."

IN SAIS, the arrival of Refo brought on a climax, the day before Aphrodite's treason had been revealed in Atlan.

Dusty and tired, the King of Hellas strode into the Pharaoh's presence unannounced; he found the Egyptian lecturing his daughter on her unseemly conduct. (The visit of the princess Medea to Teraf in the dungeons had been hushed up by the simple method of poisoning all the soldiers and priests who had been witness to it.)

Declaring that he would give her one more chance to act as a member of the royal household should, Plu Toh Ra had by this time placed his daughter on probation—that is, had given her the freedom of the palace.

When the black-haired northerner burst into the shadowed throne room, Pan Doh Ra rose. Without a glance or word she marched into her apartment and slammed the door.

"Pardon our daughter," said the ruler with a thin smile. "Her manners, and those of other members of our house, are not of the best... a fault which we shall now remedy." He rose to follow the girl.

"Stop," barked Refo; "this is no time to discipline wayward daughters. Is the bomb finished?"

His deep voice penetrated faintly through the massive door of the princess' quarters. Abandoning her intention to put as much space as possible between herself and her former betrothed, Pan Doh Ra placed one pink ear to the jamb.

"Not so loud," cautioned the Egyptian. "Walls have ears, even in Sais. Ha! A clever phrase!" He glanced about for a scribe; then, since none was present, scratched the deathless words on a piece of papyrus.

"Yes," he said, "the bomb is completed; a Martian engineer we kidnaped was induced to bring his labors to a close yesterday.... He may live for some time, they say... His bomb is a work of art. We used all the orichalcum at hand and will have to depend on that silly fool, Aphrodite, to provide us with more—if more should be needed."

"We must depart at once for the dam, then," Refo interrupted. "My

spies at Atlan say Bab El will be repaired within the fortnight; that will place so much power in Vulcan's hands that our cause will become hopeless.

"If we attempt to reach the dam after the tower is restored, the Pitar will know of it by radio at once, for your jamming will be futile. Unless we go with an army then, we would be arrested in one of the African colonies; if we stride now, we have our only chance at surprise and success."



"Perhaps you have heard"—the Pharaoh was speaking now, "that that renegade brother of yours succeeded in poisoning all of our pterodactyls except one on which he escaped from the dungeons. Our perfidious sister escaped with other Martians and Titans in an airship, which achieved the impossible by reaching Sais. We do not think that ship succeeded in making the return journey to Atlan; search parties are out."

"Medea, too?" Refo muttered.

The Pharaoh chose not to hear that remark. "We'll have to use a motorcar to reach the dam, and depend on horses if it breaks down."

"Teraf told me of his coup when he reached Athens," Refo interrupted with a bitter smile.

"Then he's dead!" The Egyptian pushed his ubiquitous cat aside and leaped to his feet with blazing eyes.

"Dead? Oh, I didn't have him killed, if that's what you mean. I haven't yet descended to fratricide."

"You're a sentimental fool! Well, at least he's safely imprisoned."

"No, I sent him to Atlan after he promised never to lead—an attack on Hellas."

THE PHARAOH'S jaw fell; he collapsed upon his throne. On the other side of the chamber door, Pan Doh Ra felt an icy hand relax its grip on her heart.

"You half-wit," the monarch raged. "You idiot. The Martians should decorate you for that deed!" He stared at his ally through slitted eyes and added: "We wonder if you are not secretly in league with Atlan."

During this harangue the cat had been creeping toward the Hellene on its golden belly; now, fur bristling and tail switching madly, it snarled and spat at Refo with a fury equal to that of its master.

By this time the Egyptian had worked himself into a frenzy. His eyes rolled. A fleck of spittle appeared on his lips. "When an empire is at stake you let sentiment override sense," he screamed. "Coward! Traitor! Sw—"

At the beginning of this tirade, Refo had stood as one turned to marble; as it proceeded the blood drained from his face. Now, as the Pharaoh's lips opened to utter the final insult, he leaped forward, kicked the clawing feline out of his way and gripped his fellow-conspirator by the throat.

"By Gaea and Chronos," he gritted. "Another word and I'll kill you, though I be slashed to mincemeat by your guards afterward."

Fascinated by the drama unfolding in the royal chamber, the princess had opened her door slightly and placed an eye to the crack; as Refo spoke she saw her father's rage drain slowly from him, like wine from a cracked vase. Finally he laughed shakily, though his eyes retained their wild glint. "Forgive us, friend," he muttered; "we are often carried away of late by these fits of passion. It is the strain of waiting. They mean nothing. Forget what we have said. Come." He straightened his great shoulders. "We start for the Pillars of Hercules at once."

As he spoke, his roving eyes lit on the door from behind which his

daughter was peeping. With the spring of a forest animal he gained the portal and threw it open, knocking the girl to the floor.

"Ignoble! Ignoble!" he raged again. "Oh, Isis and Osiris, what have we done that our own daughter should spy on us." He beat the heavy gold collar around his neck with jeweled hands.

"Up, Alhfa brat!" He stirred the cowering girl with the toe of his sandal. "You are no longer our daughter. We have no time to deal with you now, but when we return we shall have the pleasure of cropping those pretty ears. Until then..."

He returned to the throne, picked up the cat, which was still whimpering with terror from Refo's kick, placed it gently on the floor inside his daughter's room, then shut and bolted the door.

"Horus will see that she gets into no more mischief," he grinned wryly.



FOR HOURS Pan Doh Ra lay upon a divan to which she had dragged herself after the door was locked, staring dry-eyed out of the barred window. At last she got up and, closely followed by the limping Horus, once more made the dreary round of the apartment that had served as her prison off and on, ever since she had thrown mud at a stately high priest of Osiris—thereby forcing him to spend a ten-day period in purification.

The memory of that incident served to revive her spirits somewhat; even as a child she had hated those shaven-pated men who, by means of their prophesies, influenced her father's every mood and action. As a grubby tomboy of ten, she had been particularly affronted because they trod solemnly about in robes so immaculate that it was considered a defilement if so much as a fly lighted upon them.

Automatically, she tried the bars of various slitted windows. They held fast as she knew they would; so she

resigned herself to another period of semi-starvation—unless her old nurse dared to smuggle her something more substantial than bread and water.

The cat also seemed satisfied with the results of the inspection and retreated purring into a corner. There it sat stiffly erect as though conscious that it was divine, surveying the princess through unwinking green eyes that reminded her of her father.

She had always despised the supercilious creature, but now, under its steady glare she began to experience nervous fear. It seemed to have a sinister intelligence and to be mocking her. The idea came that it might really be supernatural, as the people believed; that it embodied some fiend or perhaps her father's Ka—that twin soul which Egyptians were supposed to possess. But her life on Mars had taught her to laugh at such superstitions; she refused to think further along that line.

In the afternoon she watched while, to a great blare of trumpets, the Pharaoh, Refo, and three adjutants drove out of the palace courtyard. They were preceded, as was the custom, by a pet leopard led by two Nubians. And they were surrounded by the guard of honor which would escort them to the city walls on their 600-league expedition.



Night came, and with it a slave bearing two golden trays. On one reposed a generous slice of raw steak for Horus; on the other was the well-remembered jewelled cup of tepid water and decrepit piece of black bread.

She hurled the trays at the eunuch who brought them, then, as the door slammed on his dripping fat face, wished she hadn't. She thought of purloining the cat's meat from the

floor, but Horus already had wolfed it down, and the bread with it.

Pan Doh Ra spent the night in fitful sleep intermingled with dreams of the horror which would descend upon Atlan if her father succeeded in his purpose. Half-waking, she cursed the Martian strain in her which had prevented her killing the monster; fully awake, she shivered to note that the green eyes of the golden cat still were fixed upon her.

Dawn came and another weary, endless day. The conspirators must be far on their way by now. Computing the mileage as best she could, the princess reasoned that they would reach their destination in a week to ten days.

In a fury she again tugged at the unyielding bars, then vented her impotence by hurling bric-a-brac at the cat which, unaccountably, had changed its attitude and now insisted on fawning about her knees and striving to cover her with caresses. The animal dodged her missiles. After the barrage he retired to his corner, however, and bothered her no more.



IT WAS THE night of the fourth day. Pan Doh Ra could not sleep; for hours she crouched on a window seat, staring downward at the pinheads of light, which set off Sais from the plain, panting in the dead heat which presaged a sandstorm. Suddenly there came a rush of air outside the window. Had the storm broken? She glanced upward, but stars still glittered in the black sky.

Again came the roar of wind, to die away as quickly as it came. But this time a great bulk screened the stars for an instant.

Pan Doh Ra's breath caught in her throat. Was it? Could it be? She pressed her face against the bars. Outside poised a great bat-winged creature which stared at her with beady, brilliant eyes. "Sonny!" the

girl called softly. "Sonny boy! To me!" She started the faint crooning at which she was so adept.

The 'dactyl balanced a moment. Catching her scent and the crooning, it slid suddenly downwind and clutched the bars with its murderous claws. Sobbing with delight that one friend remembered her, Pan Doh Ra stroked the long, ludicrous head and whispered baby-talk into the mousy ears.

Then a thought struck her. "Sonny," she commanded. "Get me out of here. Come on boy; use that long head of yours."

The beast blinked sagely but made no move. Desperately, she began to tug at the bars.

With a guttural cluck of understanding, Sonny hurled himself backward with a roar of wings, still clinging tightly to his perch. Two of the iron bars snapped like dry sticks.

At this the cat, which had been bristling and spitting, screamed and launched itself full at the girl's breast, clawing at her eyes as she threw up frantic hands to protect her throat. The thing must have weighed twenty pounds; its attack forced her back against the broken bars until she was teetering over the void.

A demon seemed to possess Horus; his hind claws were ripping away the front of her gown. The pain became unbearable, and the girl felt herself fainting as she strove vainly to grip the furry throat.

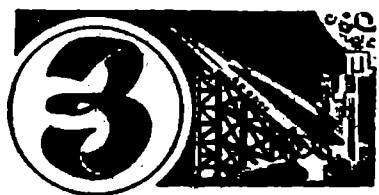
As she swayed through the window a long, snake-like neck shot over her shoulder; jaws clamped upon the back of the cat. Horus was jerked between the bars, shaken like a rat and hurled yowling into the night.

Sobbing with the weakness of reaction, Pan Doh Ra wriggled through the wrecked casement. Somehow she got astride of Sonny's back and, gripping the loose skin between his wings, gave the command to rise.

The tropical moon was casting a mellow glow over the city as they

swept around the palace to the accompaniment of a great shouting. Perhaps it was thought that Teraf had returned; perhaps the guard realized that the royal prisoner was escaping. However it was, there broke forth much snapping of guns and hurling of spears.

"Come on, rascal," shouted Pan Doh Ra as the long wings rose and fell, unharmed by the attack; "we're going to the Pillars of Heracles."



...there occurred violent earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all your warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappared, and was sunk beneath the sea.

Plato's Timaeus.

SEVEN DAYS out of Atlan, Teraf was encountering delays and heartbreaking difficulties. The roads in this almost unsettled part of the empire were atrocious; fuel was hard to find. Again and again he was forced to bump over long detours, or face the lengthy scrutiny of petty frontier officials.

Once in the Sicilian mountains, his progress had been blocked by a lordly sabertooth—but the tawny monster decided at the last moment not to contest the passage of this evil-smelling metal intruder. After baring its foot-long fangs, it stepped proudly aside into the underbrush lining the excuse for a road.

Farther on, the Hellene had a brush with bandits who were taking advantage of the disorganization of communication to raid frontier towns.

It was in the Iberian village of Alhaba, nine days out, that the abused car expired. Careful inspection con-

vinced Teraf that it was beyond repair by the local blacksmith; moreover, the road leading west was a mere trail.

Leaving the machine to the mercies of the villagers, Teraf hurried to an inn on the shabby public square, displayed the seal of Atlan to the landlord and demanded a fast horse. That fat and greasy individual surveyed the sacred symbol indifferently, rang one of the gold coins which his visitor proffered and opined that it was false. Despite the fact that several good horses were stamping in the courtyard, he advised the Hellene to look elsewhere.



Crossing the square, Teraf interviewed the owner of the town's only other hostelry and was snubbed with equal abruptness.

As he turned to leave, the innkeeper's slatternly wife entered from a back room; on her dirty wrist was a wide gold bracelet bearing the Ibis crest.

Teraf gripped her plump arm. "Where did you get that?"

She whimpered, her eyes flickering toward her husband.

Instinctively the prince ducked, just in time to avoid a thrown bottle.

Before the dour Iberian could continue the barrage, Teraf's knife was out and he had pinned the man in a corner, with point at throat. "Where did she get it?"

"Two men... Please, sir, don't kill your servant... They passed through here yesterday... The bracelet was a gift... to hinder those who followed."

Teraf's pulse throbbed in his temples. He dragged the quaking innkeeper into the courtyard and forced

him to saddle and bridle the best of the horses. Then, after tossing several gold pieces on the ground, he spurred out of town along the trail leading west.

The going became harder with each mile. It began to rain, a slow drizzle which soaked him to the bone. The country was wild and desolate; jagged rocks flanked the slippery road and sloped up to angry mountains which had their heads wrapped in mist.

He made twenty leagues before his horse foundered; this time he was able to obtain only a sorry nag from a farmer, but he kept on through the night.

At dawn he thought he sighted the figures of two horsemen at the top of a long rise far ahead. They were gone behind a sheet of rain before he could be sure.

The Egyptian must have realized that he was being followed, for the next village turned out against Teraf with pitchforks, shovels and axes. He barely escaped with his life and lost many precious hours making a detour through swampy country.

It was on the morning of the second day after this that he caught sight of the massive Rock of Gibraltar rearing its head into the clearing skies. The white marble pyramid which served as the African buttress for Hercules masterpiece still lay hidden in the mists, but the granite dam loomed across the entrance to the Mediterranean Valley. Behind it, he knew, raged the ever-rising Atlantic Ocean.

●

AN HOUR before Teraf's arrival, the horsemen ahead of him had swept up the long ramp which led to the entrance of the pyramid and shouted for the guard.

In due time a sentry came out of his little box, yawning and dragging

his gun behind him. Discipline had relaxed since the dam had been cut off from the rest of the world by the destruction of Bab El. He fell, his head burned off by a shot from the taller of the newcomers.

Both men dismounted and loosed a heavy object from one of the saddles; before the startled commandant could leave his breakfast, they had gained the top of the pyramid, a flat lookout post surrounded by a low railing.

Puffing with apoplectic rage, the commandant stormed up the stairs, with the rest of a now-thoroughly-aroused guard at his back. He found his visitors standing at the edge of the platform, their backs to the thunderous Atlantic. They had placed their burden between them and were regarding him warily as he popped through a trap door.

"This is an outrage," stormed the fellow as he wiped egg from the corners of his pouting mouth. "You're under arrest." He struck an attitude.

Before the soldiers could move, Plu Toh Ra tossed an object about the size of a hand grenade over the edge of the platform. "Look!" he roared.

The missile struck the broad top of the dam and exploded in a flare of prismatic light. A section of the stone caught fire, blazed like pine for a moment, then vanished utterly. It left a hole in the top of the dam at which the ocean waves leaped hungrily.

"We are your Pharaoh," the voice boomed again. "That was merely a toy; at our feet is a bomb thousands of times more powerful. Bow down, if you wish to save the dam and your wretched lives.

"But..." gabbled the commandant.

"But us no buts, slave. Aha, another of our pretty phrases! Bow down!"

The commandant bowed, then scuttled away, shooing before him those

of the guard who had not already fled.

"Now what?" asked Refo. The triumph of which he had dreamed for years, and which had come so easily, tasted flat in his mouth. "We've captured the Pillars, all right; but we stand to starve to death up here, unless your armies reach here before those of Atlan."

The Pharaoh did not answer. He was pacing the platform, his hawk face lifted toward the hurrying, broken clouds, as he murmured prayers of thanksgiving to Isis, Osiris and the rest of his gods.

AS THOUGH a bandage had been removed from his eyes, Refo saw, now that it was too late, that Plu Toh Ra was far from the superman the Martian worshipped since his youth. This was merely a beak-faced, heartless barbarian who itched for power with which to aggrandize himself and his priests.

Refo tried to comfort himself with the thought that soon his Hellenes could return to the freedom of their Golden Age. At the same time he recalled the privation which had descended when the factories had stopped; what if there never had been a Golden Age?

The Pharaoh finally ceased his devotions and looked at Refo as though he had been a stranger. "You still here?" he growled at last. "Begone, Alpha traitor; only Egypt must be found holding the dam when our minions arrive."

"What?" For a moment the Helene's mind refused to grasp the significance of those words. "Very well," he resumed levelly after a long moment. "I will go. But let me warn you, Pharaoh, that when the commandant recovers from his fright he will realize that you don't dare destroy the dam because you also would be destroyed. Then he will come back with a hundred guards behind him.

...You must be mad to think you can defend this platform alone."

"Mad? Who calls us mad?" screamed the Egyptian. "Begone, we say. We know you now; you're an Atlantean spy, trying to rob us of our empire Isis! Osiris! Protect us!" He scrabbled in his garments for a weapon.

Clear and cold as a knifeblade, the realization came to Refo that he was facing a man gone suddenly insane. The attainment of Plu Toh Ra's dreams had tilted still farther a mind long distorted by ambition and religious frenzy."



"Come friend," he pleaded, trying to bring the other back to reason. "You cannot succeed if you defy Atlantis alone; we must stand together. The battle is just beginning. Let us talk it over."

"Talk it over? With a spy?" belted the madman. "Defy the Atlanteans? Ho! Who said there would be any Atlanteans to defy?" He burst into a howl of laughter.

Then, quick as one of his sacred cats, the Pharaoh leaped toward the orichalcum bomb and started dragging its heavy container to the edge of the platform.

WITH A PRAYER on his lips, Refo hurled himself at the Egyptian, but the lead box was teetering on the edge of the pyramid nearest the sea before he could break the madman's grip on its handles.

With a grunt Plu Toh Ra came erect. Refo did not give him time to reach for gun or dagger, but bored in with right and left jabs to the face and body. They grappled in the cen-

ter of the platform; as they strained and heaved, the Greek felt a rib crack—and realized that he was no match for his giant antagonist. The muscles of the frenzied man seemed made of steel.

An old wrestling trick came to him. He drove his knee into the Egyptian's groin and leaped free as Plu Toh Ra screamed in agony. But it gained only a momentary respite. Eyes blazing, his enemy came in again, arms extended for a bone-crushing grip.

Refo lost a precious second in reaching for his knife and the other was upon him. Those tree-like arms locked once more about his middle. They fell together, managing by some miracle not to roll under the railing, heaved and writhed back and forth. Refo had a slight advantage now, for the Egyptian was spending part of his energies trying to reach the bomb.

But the struggle was telling rapidly upon the Hellene. He was blinded with blood from a cut on his forehead; there came a roaring in his ears. He seemed to be breathing fire.

As his opponent weakened, Plu Toh Ra wriggled nearer and nearer the deadly box. At last he reached it with the toe of his sandal.

The bomb teetered sickingly. Holding his foe with one hand now, the Pharaoh pushed again. The container scraped faintly on the marble, hesitated—then vanished over the edge.

The maniac was filled with wild delight. "Ho, proud Atlan," he gabbled, relaxing his hold somewhat on his victim. "Ho, nation of drowning rats. Ho, Refo, behold your empire. After us the deluge! Aha, a pretty phrase. Take it down, scribe!" His old habit still working its customary reaction, he glanced around for someone to write down his deathless words.

Realizing his opportunity, Refo rallied all his forces. Tearing one hand free, he snatched the Egyptian's dagger from its sheath and drove it deep under the ribs; bright blood stained barbaric vestments.

Plu Toh Ra lunged to his feet, dragging the other with him. His eyes looked into those of the Hellene and Refo saw that somehow, those eyes had returned momentarily to sanity.—that the events just passed had been forgotten.

"Ah, Hellene, you have betrayed us after all," whispered the wounded man; "we should have known better than to trust an Alpha with our dreams."

He clapped a hand to his wet side, withdrew it and stared, bemused, at the strain. His knees sagged. With a desperate effort he drew himself to his full height. "We shall die together, then," he remarked simply.

Gripping Refo tightly, he hurled himself over the railing of the pyramid.



This refilling of the Mediterranean ...knew no check; it came, faster and faster; it rose over the tree tops, over the hills, until it had filled the whole basin of the Mediterranean and until it lapped the mountain cliffs of Arabia and Africa. Far away, long before the dawn of history, this catastrophe occurred.

H. G. Wells. "Outline of History".

TERAF GALLOPED up to the bottom of the pyramid just in time to see the dam guard scuttle out like rats and to witness the last moments of that fight on the platform. He divined from the actions of the tiny figures far above that something had changed his brother—that Refo was fighting on the side of civilization.

For a time, the combatants disappeared; then came the climax when Plu Toh Ra hurled himself and his enemy over the railing. Down—down they shot together on their 1,000 foot

slide over the steep marble slope toward the ground.

Teraf ran forward, pistol in hand, determined to finish the Egyptian at all costs—if he lived through the descent. But, as they swept closer, he saw that the Pharaoh was on the bottom, his arms and legs flailing limply; Refo was clinging to the giant's chest as though trying to escape the rough spots.

When they were half way down the incline, however, there burst into the zenith from behind the wall a blaze of colors like ten thousand rainbows or an aurora borealis gone insane. This was accompanied by a roar as if all the fires of hell were burning together and followed by the telltale mushrooming cloud of a radioactive explosion.

Teraf was hurled to the ground and knocked senseless. When he recovered, it was to find that his brother and the Egyptian had fallen only a few yards away. Painfully he crawled forward and bent over them. Plu Toh Ra was quite dead, and thoroughly mangled. Refo still breathed, his arms locked about the neck of his late antagonist in a vise-like grip.

As the younger brother succeeded in separating the two, a sound like thunder called his attention to the bulging center of the dam. A long crack appeared near the top of the structure; stone spouted outward, impelled by the hydraulic pressure behind it. Sea water followed in a roaring spout, melting the remaining stone like sugar and forming a pool which spread over the ground with lightning rapidity. In moments it blocked any hope of escape across the plain.

Working desperately against time, Teraf hoisted Refo on his shoulders and bound him there with strips from the Egyptian's torn garments. Then he took the only road to temporary safety; balancing the unconscious man on his back, he started a laborious climb up a series of handholds which had been cemented into the side of

the pyramid. In a kind of frenzy he advanced under the deadweight burden.

The dam was dissolving before Teraf's eyes, but as yet the pyramid itself held firm. Boiling water was spreading in every direction below him and already lapping at the base of the tower; dense clouds of steam formed but were whipped away by a rising wind.

Up, up, and still up! His arms seemed torn from their sockets; his hands and knees were bleeding; every rung in the ladder was a new achievement and a new agony.

Teraf dared look down no longer; the slope was too steep for that. Was the flood gaining on him? Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw another section of the dam give way; the roar of waters deafened him and made his senses reel.

Once he missed a chiseled niche and swung dizzily by one hand while a crazy world spun beneath him. Hours later, it seemed, he dragged himself and his burden over the edge of the bloodstained platform.

Now what? he wondered.

The answer was... death. There could be no escape: on three sides, the pyramid breasted a whirlpool; on the fourth—the one which had connected it with the heights of the African shore—a great crack had developed through which a scythe of water was slashing. Almost all of the dam had disappeared by now, to be replaced by a foaming chute of liquid, eight miles wide and moving with the speed of a demon.

Inland, the water had spread out and was sweeping forward in a solid sheet crested with uprooted trees and even solid blocks from the dam. Already it had inundated the countryside for several miles and was plunging on toward the horizon.

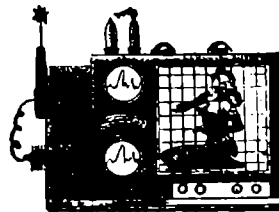
TERAF STOOD up shakily, and looked about him. A mile to the north he saw the craven commandant

and his soldiers overtaken and swept away like ants before the stream from a hose; they had attempted to reach the Iberian cliffs instead of the African heights.

Now, the pyramid itself began trembling from the onrush of the ocean. Massive almost beyond belief, it still tilted ever so slightly as its foundations were undermined; in a matter of minutes it, too, would begin to dissolve.

As Teraf tried to remember forgotten boyhood prayers to Gaea and Chronos, a movement by Refo caused him to forget them and kneel quickly. The elder Hellene's eyelids flickered. Lifting his head, he caught the significance of the mad scene and burst into wrecking sobs. "I've been a fool and a traitor, Teraf," he gasped.

The latter had to put his ear close to the moving lips to catch the words. "I ask no forgiveness," Refo went on, his voice gathering force. "I committed the unpardonable sin... the sin against all mankind. I was just a boy when I first met Plu Toh Ra, shortly after you went to Mars. He painted... pictures. He told of the woes of our peoples... imaginary woes, mostly, I know now. But at that time I was a knight errant, and besides, I loved a princess. My eyes were blinded by the Pharaoh's personality, too; instead of looking about me, I believed everything he said and joined in his high quest."



He reached out a bloodstained claw and grasped the equally-damaged hand of his brother. "All this," he muttered. "May I be forever accursed, May a vulture peck at my vitals forevermore. I thought to bring light to my people; instead I brought death to a world."

His eyes fluttered shut. As the pyramid lurched and swayed, threatening at every moment to hurl them into the abyss, Teraf waited with bated breath, the tears streaming down his face.

But Refo was not dead. His lids opened again. For a moment he stared vacantly, then struggled to a sitting position. "Look!" he screamed, his eyes almost starting from their sockets. "Saved! We are saved!"

Wondering what fevered image his brother had glimpsed, Teraf glanced upward. Then he too shouted and leaped to his feet in an ecstasy of wonder. Sweeping down toward them through the tempest, descending in long, slow spirals, came a pterodactyl. From between its wings peered the white face of Pan Doh Ra.

SONNY PLAINLY had no desire to land on the rocking platform; but the girl belabored him with her fists, choked him, finally prodded him with her dagger. At last the reptile chose the lesser of two evils and came in for a landing.

"Quick," shrilled its rider as the beast clung to the railing, facing the storm and flattening its wings against the floor in order not to have them torn away. "Sling Refo across his back. There! Now get on behind him. Quick! If you love me, quick! The pyramid is sinking."

Toiling like one possessed, Teraf lifted his brother into position and bound him there as best he could. Then he gripped loose folds of skin on the bony back and mounted, while the monster eyed his wrathfully.

"Up, Sonny boy," crooned Pan Doh Ra, bending over the snake-like neck. "Up with you."

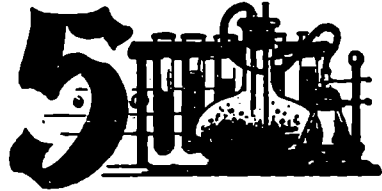
The 'dactyl flapped its wings obligingly, but did not rise. The load was too great.

"Leave me behind," Refo begged, struggling with his bonds. "Let me die here; that will save Zeus the trouble of executing me."

"Up, lazy beast," the girl shouted but to no avail.

The problem was solved for them at that moment. Slowly, but with definite purpose, the pyramid began to settle on its side. The sea rose toward them, its waves reaching out like hungry maws.

The pterodactyl squealed with terror. Its wing flapped madly. As the platform fell from under them, it caught a rush of wind and rose sluggishly into the stormy air.



*I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris
and he;*

*I galloped, Dirck galloped, we
galloped all three;*

*Behind shut the postern, the
lights sank to rest*

*And into the midnight we gal-
loped abreast.*

Robert Browning.

A HOT SUMMER morning, and a world lay dying of its own hand. It had been a fair world of green mountains, vast forests, silver streams and infrequent farms, villages and small towns.

That world had grown too quickly, too proudly, in the short century since the slender ships from Mars had settled in the valley, then near what is now the island of Crete. Barbarians objected to being lifted by their bootstraps to civilization—particularly when the boots pinched their undisciplined toes! They revolted against what they considered, rightly or not, to be exploitation by their masters. "If there's civilizing to be done," they said, "we'll manage it ourselves, thank you, even though it takes a bit longer."

Taking advantage of this vague unrest in the ten terrestrial kingdoms, which paid more or less unwilling tribute to Mars, at a time when a comet

had temporarily cut communications with the "home" planet, Plu Toh Ra of Egypt had turned Martian technology upon itself. Using radioactive materials stolen from Atlan, the colonial capital, the Pharaoh fashioned a bomb with which he had blown up the great dam between the Pillars of Heracles—the dam which held back the waters of an Atlantic Ocean swollen by the melting ice floes of a receding glacial age.

A hot summer morning, 8,000 years ago...



Now the Pharaoh's daughter and the two Hellenic brothers who loved her were clinging to the back of the last pterodactyl as, the only survivors of that epoch-ending explosion, they flapped wearily back toward Atlan in an effort to warn the valley of its doom.

The flight was a nightmare of roaring winds and ebon skies. Their overloaded flying reptile seemed to creep over the landscape—in reality, it was making a steady 75 miles an hour before a gale which had risen to aid the flood waters in their work.

"Think we'll make it?" Teraf shouted.

"If Sonny's and your strength holds," Pan Doh Ra answered. "I don't dare land to rest him, for he would never go up again with the three of us. On the other hand, I'm afraid you won't be able to hold Brother Refo in place for many hours."

"I'll manage," he gritted, easing the unconscious former king of Hellas into what he hoped was a more comfortable position on the 'dactyl's leathery back. "Can we beat the flood to Atlan, though?"

"I think so," the girl said. "The waters of the Atlantic have to spread over the entire valley as they advance; that will slow them. We should arrive a day or two before the crest. See; already we have drawn ahead!"

She pointed downward where virgin forests were bowing to the storm. Far to the rear, a white wall advanced. As they watched, it took a village in its stride. They saw a few peasants run aimlessly across the plain. Teraf only imagined he heard their screams as the torrent engulfed them.

Through the sunless day and a night unlit by moon or star, they flapped onward.

"Sonny has the homing instinct," the girl said once; "he'll head for Sais. That should take us within sight of Atlan."

Refo recovered sufficiently to sit up. The three clung together, shivering with the cold, soaked by the driving rain, yet nodding now and then from sheer exhaustion.

The elder Hellene's mind seemed to be wandering; alternately he cursed Plu Toh Ra and himself for having brought on the debacle. Finally he slept, his arms about the princess, his head on her shoulder, while Teraf supported him from the rear.

"Not a bad sort, your brother," the girl called over her shoulder, "if only he could learn to laugh. Life gets tangled up if one goes through it with a long face. You should never have left him, Teraf; he was no match for the Pharaoh.

"Poor father," she went on sadly. "If mother had lived, he would have been different, I think. She could laugh at him and make his illusions of grandeur seem ridiculous. I tried that, too, after she was gone, but I was only a little girl. For the want of a laugh, an empire was lost. Plu Toh Ra would have loved that sentence... would have had it inscribed on papyrus or marble. How he did adore those trite phrases... honestly

thought he invented them. When I told him they were as old as the Nile, he beat me."

"You loved him, then?" Teraf was frankly puzzled.

"Why—yes, I guess I did, in a way. He was all I had after mother died. If Zeus hadn't been a dear, soft-hearted old fool he would have disciplined my Pharaoh years ago; that would have put an end to his ambitions. When I was a child, before the high priest began to whisper in his ear, he wasn't so bad. Let that be his epitaph."

She was silent, while Sonny's wings flapped above and below them with monotonous regularity. Teraf touched her shoulder. "May I laugh with you, if we get out of this?"

She reached back and squeezed his hand.

DAWN CAME, a ragged whitening of the sullen clouds. With it, Sonny seemed to lose the mechanical smoothness of his flight; the rhythm of his wing-stroke faltered again and again. But under the admonishments of Pan Doh Ra, the 'dactyl always managed to pick up the swing, as though he realized that heroic efforts were expected of him. Now and then he whimpered, however, and turned his hideous head back to stare at his mistress with red-rimmed eyes.

"We'd better lighten ship," said the princess at last. "I should have thought of it before."

She kicked off her sandals and tore from her throat and wrists the priceless necklaces and bracelets which adorned them, tossing the jewels away without a sigh.

Teraf, and Refo, who had awakened by now, followed her example by casting away their weapons and shoes.

Sonny squealed as if in appreciation; the beat of his wings steadied.

before the crooked mountain surmounting Atlan was revealed to them by a ray of sunlight which flashed providentially through a break in the clouds.

"We're making it," shouted the girl.

The cry seemed to rattle the pterodactyl. It winced and turned glazed eyes toward them. The beat stopped. The black wings shot upward; they were falling like a plummet.

"He's gone," shrieked Pan. The beast's head was flopping loosely. "Goodbye Teraf. Goodbye Refo. I've tried..."

Then, as the ground whirled up to meet them, Sonny made his last effort. His bat-wings started their beat again; he pulled up several hundred feet from the ground and went on.

The princess screamed with joy. To lighten the burden still further she tore off her already scanty garments and rode before them, nude as dawn; Refo and Teraf followed her example.

For a few minutes the wings steadied to almost their old, tireless swing. Atlan, beautiful in its groves, its marble porticos and blue, encircling canals, came swiftly nearer. Teraf saw that the streets were decorated with flags and filled with people.

Pan spoke to her steed then, starting him on a long glide toward the palace grounds. Wild with excitement, she turned and, over Refo's shoulder, kissed Teraf full on the lips.

"We'll save them yet," she cried. "Given two days, they can escape to the highlands of Crete and Sicily or build makeshift boats and float to safety."

But something was wrong with Sonny again. Wings stiffly extended but his great head sagging, he quivered and jerked so that his riders had to cling tightly. Lower and lower he swept in a straight, steep glide. Teraf could see the upturned faces of the crowds below and the guns of the fortress swinging to bear on them.

The princess pled wildly with her

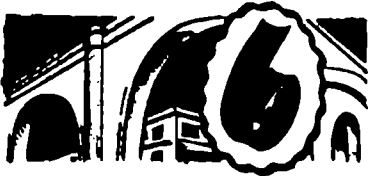
It was three o'clock that afternoon

mount, beat him with her fists, prodded with the dagger. There was no response. The glide continued.

"We'll miss the palace," she cried. ... "We're falling into a canal," she screamed a second later.

The inner band of water, its bridges lined with watchers, caromed toward them. They were so close that Teraf could see the open-mouthed wonder on the faces...

They struck with a terrific splash. One of the wings crumpled back, wrapping Teraf in its rubbery folds. The waters closed over his head. He struggled desperately for a moment, then relaxed. It was too much trouble; he was tired...



*Which removeth the mountains,
and they know not: which over-
turneth them in his anger.
Which shaketh the earth out of
her place and the pillars thereof
tremble.*

Job, 8-5 and 6.

"**G**REAT Land of Nod!" Teraf heard the words as he pitched and rolled on a red hot gridiron in hell. "He's coming 'round after all."

The Hellene opened his eyes and stared blankly—at the ground. The agony continued; he turned his head to discover Hermes kneeling across his body, pumping firmly on his ribs.

Water poured from his nose and mouth. He spluttered and fought. At that Hermes released him and rolled him over. "Wh—what you trying to do?" Teraf gasped. Then, as memory returned. "Where are the others?"

"They're safe, up at the palace." The chronicler was all grins. "Knocked out cold by the crash but coming around. Had the devil's own

time dragging you from under that carcass; thought you were done for." He mopped his perspiring face and leaned weakly against a buttress of the nearby bridge.

Someone threw a robe over Teraf's nakedness. He sat up, blinking at a throng of blurred faces about him. The faces started spinning and blacked out.

"Easy now," he heard Hermes saying. "Lie down; I'll get a stretcher. A good sleep should bring you 'round all right."

"Sleep!" The horror of what impended cleared the prince's head. He dragged himself to his feet. "The flood is coming; Heracles' dam has been smashed. Take me to the Pitar at once."

Instantly he realized his mistake. After a frozen moment the faces about him paled. Then there was a puzzled muttering which broke into frenzied shouts.

"The dam! The dam is out!" screamed an Alpha who was first to understand the implication. "Flee for your lives! The ocean is coming."

The shout was taken up by others. The crowd milled about, then started racing across the bridge in blind panic. Screams rent the air; within seconds, people were being pushed over the balustrades by the crush.

Teraf's knees buckled, but Hermes slipped an arm around his shoulders and held him up. Together they started running toward the palace, which lay a quarter of a mile through the park. As they went, the strength of despair flowed into the Hellene and lent wings to his feet.

"What are the flags and crowds for," he managed to gasp as they raced up a broad driveway.

"Bab El— Been repaired. Power goes on in an hour. Feast Day. All that."

"Too late."

"I know. But what a scoop this is for the Planet...the last scoop."

They stumbled up a flight of steps,

through the reception-hall, burst past the guards before the audience chamber door and literally fell into the presence of the monarch, who was holding a consultation with Athena and Heracles.

Athena screamed at the sight. Heracles leaped forward and caught the messenger of doom as he slumped.

Word by word, Teraf panted out his story while Hermes, sprinted for the vision screen to get his last scoop to the *Planet*.

"...have at most two days," the Hellene concluded.

TEARING Hermes away from the visor in the midst of his story, Zeus spun the dials until Vulcan's face appeared on the screen. "Turn the power on immediately," he thundered. "Damn the danger" (as the engineer began to protest). "Turn on the power instantly; the dam has been broken and the flood is coming."

General Ares was called next; the Pitar shot him close-clipped orders to make ready the flying fleet, load the ships with refugees and unload at Crete. "Come back and load again," he concluded; "keep it up till your men drop."

"Can't save a tithe of them now," the warlord barked. "City's in an uproar already. Streets jammed. Panic. Do best we can."

"Cut in the public screens as soon as the power comes on, then. Warn everybody to make for the mountains. Take any other measures necessary," Zeus was continuing, when an imperative screaming from the machine caused him to make rapid adjustments.

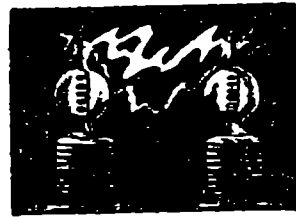
"The power's on," he cried over his shoulder; "I'll try to reach Sicily."

There was a nerve-wracking delay, but at last the scared face of the Sicilian commandant appeared. "Yes," he babbled, "the water's almost here. It will be pouring through the valleys within a few hours. We're evacuating

to the mountains. Some may escape."

The Pitar whirled. "It's coming faster than we thought," he snapped. "We don't have much more than twenty-four hours. Athena, take over here and warn your colonies. The entire valley is doomed, tell them; only the mountains offer safety. Tell them the power's on, and to use every means of transport...build rafts...anything."

"Heracles," he shouted at the engineer, who had been sobbing windily. "Stop that blubbing; get down to the military section and help Ares. "Hermes, you may have the screen when Athena finishes. Tell your paper to issue extras and handbills showing the best routes to the highlands, if it can get anybody to man the presses. If it can't, go down and man them yourself.



"Teraf, help Hermes if you are able; if not, report to Dr. Vanya."

Hermes looked at Athena for a moment, then shook his head and turned toward the door. As Teraf started to follow him to the *Planet* offices, Zeus slipped an arm about his shoulders.

"Good work, my boy," he said sadly. "No one could have done more. You say your brother has redeemed himself somewhat. I'm glad; always did say he was a good man gone wrong. I'll put him to work if he recovers. Drop in and see your princess before you go into the city. Better get some clothes, too."

IT WAS only then that Teraf realized he was still wearing but a cloak. One of the guards brought him his harness and he slipped into it before hurrying to the infirmary.

"I'm glad! I'm glad!" Pan Doh Ra sobbed incoherently as she clung to him. "Oh, Teraf. You're all right? I love you. Poor Sonny. Is Refo safe?... Half my own people will drown in the lowlands of the Nile. Have I done enough to atone for the Pharaoh's sin?... I love you."

Disregarding a hovering nurse, he managed to restore her composure. But now a new problem presented itself. The girl scrambled out of bed and announced that she did not intend to leave her lover.

It was useless to argue. "Where you go, I go," she declared. "I'll never let you out of my sight again; you always get into trouble when I do. If we die tomorrow, we'll at least die together." Taking his arm, she led him out of the room.

At the vantage-point of the palace facade, they halted for a moment to stare out over the city. Its streets were black with people. A faint clamor of shouting rose from the crowds.

Already the suburban plains were alive with fugitives. Radio cars drove madly through unfortunates fleeing on foot. The dread which had overwhelmed Atlan ever since the oceans had started their slow rise a century before had left no room for doubt of the catastrophe, once the rumor had spread.

As they watched, the first airships, laden to the rails, took off from the military circle, skimmed over the city and head for Crete.

"Tens of thousands will be saved," whispered Teraf as he guided his sweetheart into the repulsion car reserved for use on royal command.

"And millions will die." Her tired face was wet with tears.

A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Job, 10-22



THE CAR took them through the military sector. But the bridges across the second canal into the city proper were jammed with wild-eyed humanity; they had to fight the rest of their way on foot.

Under the stress of the panic, Atlan's police system had broken down. Here and there frantic patrolmen, in their distinctive green trappings, struggled vainly to keep the crowds in some sort of order. Teraf saw one officer stop in the midst of an impassioned harangue, throw up his arms and begin screaming; he had been caught, like millions of others, in the universal hysteria.

A few barbarians, who could not grasp the impending disaster, were looting deserted warehouses as they passed through the second circle. They eyed Pan Doh Ra's dark beauty like buyers at a slave-mart, but drew back when Teraf placed a hand on his pistol.

Weary from battling the mobs which fought to storm the hangars and greater throngs which, carrying what few belongings they could salvage, were heading for the suburbs, Teraf and the girl staggered at last through the *Planet* building's imposing portals. They found the offices seething with hysterical, but well-directed activity; the presses were roaring with the final edition—an Extra printed entirely in red. Its headlines played down the disaster and implored the populace to "be calm." Inside were reassuring statements by government leaders, mocked by maps of the best routes to safety.

Teraf located a sweating Hermes. He dragged them into the broadcasting studios and put them to work with a group of superficially-calm

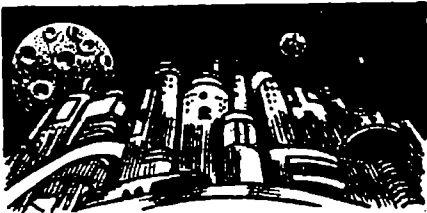
young men whose duty it was to do their utmost to quiet the panic. For hours they begged the unheeding masses of humanity on the streets to build rafts and made impossible promises of rescue for all.

As the sun went down, and the evening passed with sickening rapidity, the staff began to dwindle; here and there, reporters rose from their work, glanced guiltily about and hurried out.

Seeing this, Nubro, the *Planet's* editor, began wandering about the offices, soothing his men, dropping words of advice and cracking jokes. Many a reporter with fear-whitened lips took a new grip on himself, and turned back to continue his hoarse and useless shouting to the stampeding crowds.

But Nubro could not be everywhere at once. It was hardly midnight when he approached the three friends, gripped Hermes and Teraf by the hands and said, as though commenting on the weather: "You folks had better get back to the palace; the printing staff is entirely gone. I'll try to hold a few men to continue broadcasting until dawn. You can do nothing more here."

He escorted them to the door and waved a grim farewell as they dived into the mob.



THE CONFUSION was even worse than when they had come. There were now two struggling currents of refugees. One stream was hurrying toward the military sector, confident of escape in the airships; an equal number, haggard from wasting precious hours at the jammed bridges, were fighting their way toward the open country.

Endless traffic-jams and savage,

reasonless fights were taking place. The bright streets, that morning filled with merrymakers, were strewn with personal belongings and occasional battered bodies. Serene on the rooftops, an occasional skeptic watched the battle, confident that the flood could never come.

The bridges to the military sector were completely jammed, by now; for blocks, a packed mass of humanity screamed and begged to cross. From time to time the heavy bridge gates were opened for a few seconds to allow several thousand lucky ones to enter, then crowded shut again by husky soldiers. To prevent anyone from swimming the canal and overpowering the military, fire-screens had been turned partly on; their lurid ways lent an unearthly glow to the scene.

For a time, the exhausted trio tried to fight a way through the mob. It was no use; those they tried to displace struck at them with fists or knives.

Hermes, his hand over his incompletely-healed wound, sank to the ground.

"There's no way through that mob unless we can fly," he gasped. "Shall we head for the open country?"

"Might be a way under," hazarded Teraf. "The catacombs..."

"The catacombs!" Hermes struggled to his feet. "What a super-idiot I am. Come on; let's try them, anyway. There's an entrance near here."

Under his guidance they entered a deserted warehouse, squeezed through a slit in the cellar wall and found themselves in a damp, bone-filled tunnel.

"I'm not sure," the chronicler hesitated. "I've been down here with a torch, but it's different in the dark. Come on, though; it's our only chance."

Joining hands, they crept along the passage. Again and again their feet crushed through ancient skeletons, or

they bumped painfully into rocks and beams fallen from the roof.

"There should be an exit about here if we took the right turning," Hermes muttered at last. "We should have passed under the canal. Where is that damned exit? My matches are all gone. We'll have to separate and feel along the walls. All of us must shout at intervals."

They wandered about, testing the mouldy walls with their hands, disturbing flights of bats, gasping in the putrid air. And all the while, precious minutes were passing and unreasoning fear that the waters might come and drown them like rats in a burrow was growing upon them. At times Teraf had to bite his lips to keep from howling.

At first they kept close together; but as the chambers branched, they were forced to separate farther and farther, still keeping in touch by shouts.

At last Teraf shouted Pan Doh Ra's name and got no answer.

"Pan! Pan!" he called again and again, but only the rustling of the wings of bats he had disturbed answered him.

A hand gripped his arm. It was that of Hermes, who had returned from an excursion into a dead-end tunnel. "Which way was she when you last heard her?" he demanded.

"Straight ahead... I think."

"Come on, then."

For an infinity they cast about shouting. When it seemed that all hope was lost, a faint hail responded to theirs. They ran forward, stumbling over rocks and phosphorescent bone piles.

"Pan!" shouted Teraf after a particularly mad scramble had left him bruised and bleeding.

"Here," answered the faraway ghost of voice. "I've found a crack in the wall, I think; there's a draft coming in."

A FEW moments later she was in the Hellene's arms, shaking as

with the ague. "I got lost," she sobbed. "Couldn't make you hear me. I must have fainted, I guess. When I came to, there was a faint breath of air fanning my face."

They explored frantically. Finally the chronicler gave a whoop. "Here it is; we must have missed it by inches before. Follow me."

"Looks like rain," he panted inanely as they stood in the open shortly thereafter, filling their lungs in great gasps.

Indeed, lightning was flashing in the west. Huge banks of cloud, pierced through by forks of flame, were creeping rapidly toward the zenith.

They became conscious once more of the imploring voice of the populace from across the canal. In the glow of the fire screens, thousands of pale faces were turned toward the hangars near which they now stood. Those in the front rank stretched out imploring arms; mothers lifted babies so they might be seen. Occasionally the crush became so great that people were pushed into the canal, there to die in the boiling waters.

Turning away from that ghastly scene, the three found their way to the War Lord. Ares was in his element as he stood, legs wide, hands behind back, in the midst of his officers, shouting laconic instructions regarding the loading of his ships.

"Not needed here," he grunted when they had managed to reach his side. "Job for the military." But as they turned to go, he held up his hand imperiously. "One moment. Ship being withdrawn for use in rescuing those at palace. Help provision it."

Then he thawed for a moment and gripped the hand of each in turn. "Good luck. May not meet again. Appreciate your spirit." He jerked away and began shouting orders as before.

A subaltern led them to the appointed ship, a war-cruiser capable of carrying 500 refugees; it left its moorings as the watching citizens screamed in disappointment. A short

while later it descended on the plain surrounding Bab El Tower.

As they alighted, the storm broke in a downpour of rain and roar of shifting winds.

For hours they moved between the power station, the palace and the ship, carrying provisions, weapons, light machinery, important records and many lead orichalcum containers. Nothing was forgotten which would tend to make life easier for the exiles-to-be. Over their heads as they worked charged endless flights of ships going and coming from the military sector. Even the *Poscidon*, clumsy though she was for anything but inter-planetary travel, had been pressed into service, they noted, and was carrying thousands to safety.

DESPITE the fact that she had not slept for days, Pan Doh Ra worked like a man, thrusting her streaming shoulders against bales and boxes, sometimes throwing herself down on the flooded ground for a brief rest, but always arising to join her lover.

"For the first time in my life I'm doing useful labor," she called out once. And again: "This is better than being a princess on bread and water. but I must look pretty awful."

As the blinding storm let up for an interval, Teraf realized that a man-toiling beside him was Refo. The brothers gripped hands silently, then went on with their work.

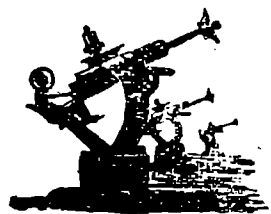
A bleak dawn was filtering through the clouds when Vulcan reported that the ship could carry no more cargo and was ready to load passengers.

He called Teraf, Refo and Pan Doh Ra to him. Together they splashed down to the palace, entering the audience chamber to find Zeus still tinkering with the visor dial. Hera's plump body was occupying her throne. The Pitaress, who usually went about in a fever of excitement, had become calm in the crisis and was speaking words of encouragement to her harrassed spouse.

The ruler glanced at the newcomers through red-rimmed eyes, then turned back to the controls. "Been trying to get the commandant at Albia," he said over his shoulder. "Looks as if they had been flooded."

"But Albia is only a little more than forty leagues from Atlan," Vulcan exploded. "If it is flooded, we have only three or four more hours; it's time to get everyone aboard."

For a moment longer Zeus twisted the dials, then turned away from the useless machine.



Soon the cable cars which connected the palace with the top of Crooked Mountain were filled with the royal household, palace attendants, soldiers and officials. They came quietly, but all turned their faces, whenever possible, toward their former home.

The Pitar and his council stood in the Bab El control room at last, surveying those who had worked with him so well for so many decades—who had witnessed with him, most of them, the rise and fall of the greatest empire the world had ever known.

"We have done our best, friends," he said to them quietly, "I thank you. Of course our exile will be only temporary; communications will be re-established with Mars in a few months or years. Then Atlantis will grow mightier than before.

"Until then, we shall be forced to live in some region out of reach of the waters. I suggest the mountains of Hellas. Athena, do you approve?"

"That would be safest," his silvery-haired daughter nodded. "We should be able to establish ourselves there, now that Refo has rejoined us. The Hellenes like me; they will have, I believe, a wholesome respect for us if we use them fairly. Besides, since Hellas is the weakest spot in the em-

pire except Egypt, we should settle there and try to revive their loyalty so that the glory of Atlantis may be more quickly revived if...when communications are restored."

"It certainly would be a good idea to have those shameless Hellenes where we could watch them," Hera burst out. "I always said..." Zeus shook his grey head and his wife subsided.

"Are we all here?" asked the Pitar. He glanced about the room, checking off those present.

Vulcan hesitated. "What of Aphrodite?"

"I had forgotten," Zeus admitted, shamefaced as though he had been caught in a major crime. "She is confined to her quarters. Apollo, go fetch her."

A FEW MOMENTS later, the woman who had made the deluge possible entered the room. Unlike all the others, who were reeling with fatigue, she was carefully gowned and her gorgeous hair was bound with a silver fillet. But she was pale under her rouge and seemed smaller than when they had last seen her. And there were faint lines on the oval face.

"Kill me. Kill me," she moaned, kneeling at her father's feet and resting her head on the floor. "I am not fit to live."

Teraf, listening, detected the same theatrical note as of old. *She's playing the martyr now*, he thought, and his lips curled. The others drew back as though she might contaminate them, but Zeus gently lifted her up and slipped his arm around her shoulders. "Too late for that, my dear."

Aphrodite heaved a fluttering sigh and threw her bare round arms about him. The Pitar's mood changed at the gesture. He shook her off brusquely and turned to give orders for the exodus.

The last council on the soil of Atlantis was held in that little office. Just outside, the black hulk of the warship gleamed in the downpour.

Vulcan was the first speaker. Bal-

ancing on his crippled legs, he looked at everyone in turn and then said simply: "Two of us must stay here, Your Pitarship. The power machinery will go out of balance at once, if left to operate by itself. I must stay, of course, but I need one assistant. He does not have to be an engineer; he will only pull levers and carry out my instructions. I would ask one of my own men to stay, but each of them has a family, and I would not separate them...I would prefer an unmarried man.

"Who will volunteer," asked Zeus.

Every person in the room stepped forward. Even Aphrodite, an hysterical light in her green eyes, begged permission to die in this heroic fashion. Heracles also was insistent.

Zeus shook his head at both of them.

"No, Heracles," he said, "I will need your engineering knowledge in Hellas; "then, patting the hand of his daughter, "Such a death would be too noble for you, my dear."

"The quiet simplicity of paradise would never suit your tastes. Besides, I would be helpless without you to care for me." The last words seemed to give him pause. "But my life is about over; why shouldn't I stay?" He looked hard at Vulcan. "Two old friends, dying together."

"If I can't stay, neither can you, sir," growled Heracles, flexing his muscles.

THERE WAS a movement in the tightly-packed group and Refo pushed his way forward. "It's not your duty but mine, Pitarship; all this could not have happened except for me. I must stay."

"So be it," said Zeus after a moment's thought. Then to the others. "Come; it's time to go."

Pan Doh Ra stepped forward, her dark hair gleaming wetly in the pale morning light. Behind her stood Teraf.

"One more request, Father Zeus," she smiled wanly. "I am Queen of Egypt now. I also am partially re-

sponsible for this... for this mess. I've been talking to Teraf. We agree that if you lend us a small ship, we'll go to Sais instead of Hellas and try to hold Egypt for the Empire. The Hellenes love and will obey Athena; you'll not need Teraf."

Again the Pitar considered, to nod at last.

"You're a smart girl, Pan." He pressed her hand. "My private ship, which holds two passengers only, is in the palace hangar. Take it." He motioned Teraf to advance and, almost bashfully, laid a hand on each of their heads in the old Pitaric blessing.

"Time's up," Vulcan interrupted. "Two hours at most before the flood reaches Atlan, and possibly another two before it becomes deep enough to submerge the power station. You'd best go at once; when the station is wrecked, power will drain out of the ether like water through a sieve. Your ships will have time enough to land after that happens, but no more. If you go at once you may reach Hellas and Egypt."

Oppressed by a sadness greater than they had ever known, the little company filed by the crippled engineer and the tall, dark Hellene who now stood at his side, gripping their hands and saying a few inadequate words of farewell before passing out into the rain to be shepherded aboard ship by Mars and his lieutenants.

As Pan Doh Ra stepped forward, Refo dropped to his knees and, seizing her hands, covered them with kisses.

"I am beneath notice because I believed the worst of you," he whispered so softly that the others could not hear. "No, don't say you forgive me" as she opened her lips to object; "I'm not worth forgiveness. Only remember that. I loved you, even when I said I hated you. But Teraf cares for you more than I know how to. You will be happy together."

He rose, gripped his brother's arms for a moment, then fled into the interior of the station.



And behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead: And I only am escaped to tell thee.

Job, 10-19

THE RULERS of Atlantis filed slowly into the streaming black ship which already housed all the other refugees from the inner circle.

Zeus was the last to go. For a long minute he stood staring out over his rain-washed empire; Atlan blazed with lights, which were only partially dimmed by the illumination pouring out of the ship's open hatches. The cries of the city's inhabitants were muted by distance. From the military zone, laden ships were still departing for Crete as empty ones returned to assume new burdens.

The Pitar bowed his grey head, placed the tips of his fingers to his brow, then limped up the nearest ramp. The door closed behind him with an irrevocable hiss of compressed air.

From the office, Teraf and Pan watched the hull rise lazily from its muddy resting place. At the altitude of 300 feet it circled the mountain, then turned toward the northeast. In seconds it was lost among clouds.

"This is no time for weeping," the girl sobbed as she slipped cold fingers into her lover's hand. "They'll make Athens; we must be sure to reach Sais. Let's go."

They clambered into the cable-car and dropped silently toward the shining palace. As they dashed through its echoing corridors, they were startled by a faint yapping from Aphrodite's chambers. Teraf pushed open the door. Inside crouched a little dog,

whimpering with loneliness and that uncanny foreknowledge of disaster which brutes have.

Scooping up the forgotten pet, the Hellene followed Pan Doh Ra toward the Pitar's roof hangar. There it took only a few moments to push the slim, cigar-shaped flier out on its runway and to squeeze into a little cabin. Soon they were circling above the city, the dog nestling under the girl's robe.



The seething crowds on the streets of Atlan looked for all the world like ants in a suddenly-disturbed hill. The entire countryside also was alive with minute pedestrians—motorists long since had reached safety or deserted their mired vehicles. All the refugees were heading northward toward the mountains across fields which had been churned into quagmires.

Over this scene, airships continued to dash back and forth on their errands of mercy; General Ares would not stop them until there was just time for the last passengers to reach safety.

Teraf recalled his first glimpse of Atlan when he had returned from Mars such a few weeks before. Except for the mob, the scene looked much the same. Then the street lights had been on because of the gloom. Now they gleamed forgotten—as they would do until the waters descended. Beacons were flashing as usual in the military circle; marble buildings gleamed white in the rain.

"Won't we wake up soon and find that this is a dream...that everything is as it used to be?" breathed Pan. "Surely no flood can destroy all this power...all this beauty."

Teraf turned the ship toward Egypt and gave it full power. As he did so there came a momentary rift in the

clouds which allowed a warm shaft of sunlight to illuminate the city; clear as a cameo it lay, a gem on a strip of green velvet.

He heard the girl sobbing.

The beam of sunlight passed on, swept westward. In the far distance it flashed across a white line, was advancing majestically.

The clouds closed again; the vision faded.

FOR TWO HOURS they flew, crossing the Egyptian frontier at last and rapidly approaching their destination. A half hour more would see them safely landed at Sais.

It was then that Pan Doh Ra, who had been weeping softly with her head on her lover's shoulder, looked up and made a discovery. There was a tiny vision screen on the ship's instrument board.

"There's a screen in the Bab El engineroom," she exclaimed as she manipulated the visor dials. "I must try to tell Refo that I *do* forgive him; I'll never sleep again if I don't."

Several minutes passed without a response to their call. Then a blur of light appeared on their four-inch screen. It swirled, brightened and finally coalesced to show the Bab El control room.

Vulcan and Refo were there, working furiously in water which reached to their ankles. In the background, generators and transformers purred smoothly. "Refo!" cried the princess.

The Hellene looked up, lifted one hand to his forehead as he caught sight of her on his own screen, then hurried to help the hunchbacked engineer, who was frantically shifting dampers in the pile which occupied the rear wall of the room.

When this task was done, Refo turned back to the screen.

"Can you make it to Sais?" he inquired calmly.

"Yes," the two refugees spoke together. And Teraf added through dry

lips. "We're only about twenty leagues away, now."

"Good." Refo might have been talking about the weather. "The city is gone... tidal wave hit it half an hour ago." He staggered as the engine room door burst open and the water about him gushed higher.

"When you feel the power weaken, go into a steep glide," interrupted Vulcan. Having completed his last act as engineer of Bab El, he waded forward and now stood beside his helper, mopping his bald head. "That way you should be able to land before the ether drains."

"Can't you still get away?" cried Teraf in a sudden frenzy as he recalled what he had forgotten before—that a two-place flier was always kept at the top of Crooked Mountain.

The cripple shrugged as he leaped to a switchboard to make an adjustment.

"The pile would blow in two minutes if left to itself," he replied stoically. "The military ships are still in the air on their last flight and the Pitar's party hasn't landed yet. We're in for it. Good luck to you. Remember about that glide." He stumbled away through the hip-deep flood.

"Refo." screamed Pan Doh Ra as the Hellene turned to follow. "Listen! I do forgive you. Goodbye."

The face of the man in the engine room lighted. He sloshed forward as though trying to touch her. His face magnified until it filled the tiny screen. "Thank you, my love," he called.

A roar of falling waters filled the loudspeaker. For a second Refo's exalted face flickered on the screen; then a click and the instrument went dead.

The ship's engines faltered and the nose started to come up. It steadied as Teraf adjusted the controls for a glide toward the Sais airport. Tenderly he slipped his arm around Pan's shaking shoulders and kissed her dark hair.



L'ENVOI

Chief: ... You see the end of things.

*The power of a thousand kings
Helped us to this, and now the power
Is so much hay that was a flower.*

*Lucius: We have been very great
and strong.*

Chief: That's over now.

*Lucius: It will be long
Before the world will see our like.*

*Chief: We've kept the thieves be-
yond the dyke*

A good long time, here on the wall...

*Lucius: Colonel, we ought to sound
a call*

To make an end of this.

Chief: We ought.

*Look—there's the hill-top where we
fought*

*Old Foxfoot. Look—there in the whirl.
Old ruffian knave! Come on. Fall in!*

John Masefield's The Frontier.

A THENS. HERMES to his friend Teraf—greetings and health.

Your messenger has just arrived, after more than a year of wandering over what is left of Arabia. The other messengers you speak of never got through.

Strange how distances stretch out now—into infinity. And time stretches too. Ten years since the flood! Great Land of Nod!

You ask me to visit you in Sais, but I fear that is impossible—though if things get worse here I may change my mind. They need me in Hellas, these queer people who have suddenly become very old and helpless; who dream of past greatness more and more as the years creep by.

We are established, as perhaps you

have heard, on Mount Olympus, not far from Athens. We landed there safely, just before the power failed. Your old capital was completely destroyed by the flood and the earthquakes and storms which followed. A new Athens has been built by refugees farther up in the mountains, but it is a sorry place made up mostly of stone huts and a few tottering temples. Perhaps in time...

Heracles has built a palace of sorts for the court on top of Olympus, where defense is easy. Marble and all that, but no running water or conveniences. Cockroaches in the kitchens! Bugs in the bedrooms! Terrible, in fact. I can't stand the place, and am living in the proverbial vine-covered cottage half a league to the south. Have a wife now... a little girl from Attica. You'd like her.

I go up to the palace each week and publish my own version of the *Planet*... mostly a scandal sheet about court gossip. Put it out on a crazy flat-bed press I made myself. I preach the gospel of hope... Tell them that communication soon will be restored and that the Anarchiate will send help... all that sort of rot. The fact is, of course, that the meteor-belt shows no signs of clearing; not a ship can get through. And last week Mars stopped calling us. Our miserable radar station isn't strong enough to answer them so the Anarchiate has sent through a message saying that, since no reply has been received from Earth since the flood, it is presumed that everyone in Atlan perished.

We have perished, really, and I know it. But I feel so sorry for Zeus and the rest of them, that I put on a brave face and scurry about acting as messenger and quartermaster for their eternal intrigues. The Hellenes tolerate me because they think I have a charmed life or something; but they call me a thief, and block every effort I make to salvage machinery and other remnants of the old culture.

What few factories escaped the catastrophe are falling apart now; no power. The natives wear skins and

eke out a miserable existence by farming the rocky valleys and raising sheep on the mountain slopes. What was the use of all that education they received under the empire? They make no use of it.

Athena, bless her soul, still has some influence over them. She tries to maintain a few schools. If you ask me, they are a waste of time, except that they keep her busy. She's really splendid, though. Perhaps I'm too pessimistic; her simple teachings may make the Hellenes a great race in generations to come... if the barbarians don't finish them first.

I ALMOST wish Hercules had let Zeus stay with Vulcan. The Pitar isn't the man he used to be. Grows a bit senile, poor chap; has illusions that he is still ruler of the earth... when he is not planning how to restore the empire or winning new enemies among the populace by making love to the Hellenic girls.



Hera is fatter than ever, and just as jealous. Still has her receptions, although nobody but the Atlanteans go. But Zeus was right when he said he couldn't live without her; she waits on him hand and foot, now that attractive servants are hard to find.

Aphrodite has aged terribly, particularly since she has been replaced by Medea as official court vampire. Yes, the Argonauts escaped, even though their ship did crash on its way back to Atlan. All of them finally made their way here, where their *good* right arms have been much needed, I can tell you. Theseus is talking of having another *Argo* built, so he can sail to Africa after pitchblende with which to make orichalcum, but I doubt that anything will come of that. The last word we got from Zim Bab-

we was that savages were storming the city. Nothing since then. Of course, there are pitchblende deposits in the Caucasus. Maybe...

Getting back to Medea, she leads Jason a sorry life—due to the fact, I suppose, that she never became queen of Iberia after all. She also messes around with Egyptian spells, which don't work, and Egyptian poisons, which do. Lately she took a fancy to Heracles, but he couldn't be bothered, so I'm afraid he is in for trouble. Zeus has sent him to do some cleanup work around Hellas, in order to get him out of harm's way for a while; I hear that he has greatly impressed the natives with his feats of strength.

Poor old Herc. He's a good civil engineer, of course, but what we need is a nuclear physicist—and electronics are just beyond him. Can't get the workings of an atomic pile through his big head. Sits and puzzles over plans, and talks about rebuilding Bab El—but it's all Hellenic to him. I try to help, but I'm a chronicler, not a chemist. The few real engineers who escaped from Bab El are not up to it either, without Vulcan's help. How we miss the old man!

Thank Gaea and Chronus for Ares, though; he and most of his men managed to reach Crete on that last flight of warships. He's with us now, curt and authoritative as ever, but a real tower of strength when the natives threaten to get nasty.

FUNNY THING. The Hellenes have come to regard us as malignant supermen—almost as gods. So does the old order change. They hate us, though they respect us—thanks to Zeus' thunderbolts, as they call our guns. We brought enough orichalcum to charge those weapons for so long as we last, so I anticipate no real trouble.

The people have a sneaking admiration for Athena and Heracles—but, strange to say, Refo has become their real idol. They've got the whole story

twisted, somehow; he is no longer the misguided king who brought about the destruction of a world, but a demigod who strove with the high gods and failed. They've even given him a new name—call him Prometheus, the forethinker.

They have carved a statue of him in chains on the mountain facing Olympus. Grewsome sight it is, with the vultures nesting around it; a constant reminder of our sorrows. The Hellenes say, of course, that the vultures are sent by Zeus to torture their hero.

All kinds of hocus-pocus stories have been built around him; Refo is to return soon, they say, and lead his people back to the Golden Age. Solar-myth stuff, you see, but I suppose it helps them forget their empty bellies.

Incidentally, I would not advise you to visit Athens just now; you've become a solar-myth, too, my boy. The natives have you classified as the traitor who stole his brother's sweetheart and caused the latter's failure in his struggle to steal atomic fire from the gods. They think of you as being eternally bowed down by the weight of your misdeeds. I might add that they've even changed your name to fit the story. You are now Epimetheus, the afterthinker. As for Pan Doh Ra... Well!

Glad to hear from your messenger that things are holding up so well in Egypt. You have a civilization there that you can sink your teeth into. It isn't much, compared to Atlantis; but it's better than this barbarian hole and may be able to carry the torch until civilization has a chance to recover from its shock or until Mars gets through to us again. Just don't let the Arabs or the Ethiopians gobble you in the meantime.

Well, good luck. It's growing too dark to write, and we have no electricity here. Give my love to Pan.

Farewell.

