

Weird Tales

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE



A TALE
of the
TWELVE
WORLDS

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January 1925

INVADERS FROM OUTSIDE BY J. Schlosse

Weird Tales

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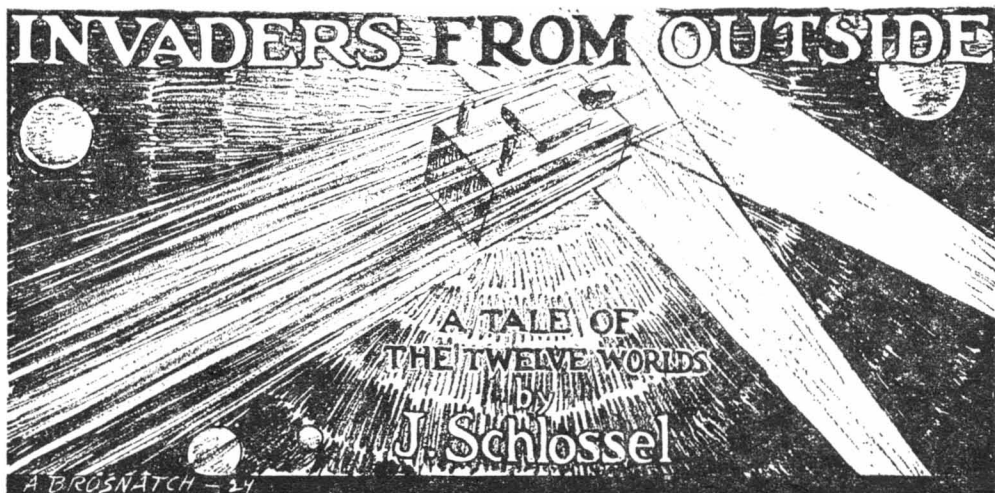
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ON EVERY hand huge brilliant suns, single or multiple, flashed past with their retinue of small dark planets. Though there was no sound to mark their passage through the heavens, yet one felt that here, indeed, was a roaring inferno. Slowly and steadily did the solar system forge ahead through this veritable whirlpool of mighty blazing suns. It was nothing less than a miracle that the sun should be able to guide his charge of planets safely through this densely star-packed region near the center of the Milky Way. Even though the sun now shone with his greatest possible splendor, he was nothing but a tiny dwarf sun within a region where white-hot giants abounded.

The intelligent inhabitants of the solar system had for ages past been sweeping the heavens with their ponderous astronomical instruments, endeavoring to see farther, always farther. Their telescopes were gigantic. With the aid of those huge eyes that stared unblinkingly out into the starry regions of the night, they were able to record, chart, and compare nearly every star within the island universe of which they were an insignificant part.

It can almost be said that no phenomenon of the sky, great or small, escaped their keen-eyed vigilance. Hot glowing suns and cold dead worlds came equally under their curious, all-penetrating gaze. Their system of research was as near perfect as possible; besides, if one or more of the members of that great body known as the Scientific Society of the Twelve Confederate Worlds missed something through an unavoidable local condition, the other members did not.

Always did they keep watch, and though their instruments embraced the limits of the Milky Way yet a large number of cold, dark worlds had slipped in past their vigilance, and one of these was now hurtling at an enormous velocity straight toward the solar system.

Ignorant entirely of its coming, of the curious zigzag course it followed, or of its desperate purpose, the inhabitants of those twelve civilized worlds went on confidently with their researches and their dreams of eternal peace.

Peace? To the average inhabitant of the Twelve Confederate Worlds the meaning of the words peace and war was unknown. Those two words were met with only in the oldest archives on each planet. For the perfect and se-

cure peace that the Twelve Confederate Worlds enjoyed had never been broken. They were the masters of the solar system. Peace was even older than the confederacy, and that was old beyond reckoning. No one knew or had the least conception when the Act of Confederation had been passed. It was forgotten in the bottomless seas of the past.

Not even the industrious inhabitants of Mars, though their civilization had reached its apex two hundred and fifty thousand Martian years before and their written records extended back twice that far, knew when that deathless compact had been agreed upon. Wrought deeply in the smooth, imperishable walls of adamant that surrounded the Moon's capital city, Ishree, was the entire history of the ages that had so swiftly glided into the past; but even this greatest and oldest of all histories faded into a mass of crisscrossed lines of undecipherable script long in the ancient past dealing with that memorable event. The records of the other civilized worlds were just as illegible in regard to the period when the twelve worlds had confederated.

One hundred and twenty million miles out beyond the orbit of Mars was the orbit of the next world belonging to the Confederacy. It bore no name, but was called No. 5. It was situated between Mars and the Jovian system of habitated moons. And then came Jupiter with his four civilized moons, each of which was a member of the Confederacy: Callisto and Ganymede, the two largest; Europa and Io, the two smallest. Far out beyond the Jovian system, about four hundred million miles, lay the orbit of Saturn. Out there he was supreme. He owed allegiance to none but his parent, the Sun. He held continual sway over his five habitable moons: Japetus, the outermost; Titan, the largest; while Rhea, Dione, and Tethys came in order named. There

were, of course, the moons of Uranus, but life there was still in the savage state.

The thrill that the first few fearless Martians experienced when they dared the unknown terrors of the vast airless seas in their flimsy crude craft can never be recalled. Bridging the space between the worlds was as common now as traveling from city to city. But there was no danger now, and neither was there any thrill in it. Even though the Confederacy was admitted to be old, very old, interplanetary travel was necessarily still older. It was the forerunner of the other.

THE very first trip from Mars was to the Moon, which circled the barbarous planet, Earth. Those intrepid Martian explorers expected to throw their lives away when they shot up into the absolute void of space. They never thought that they would return. And their folk waited season in and season out; still they did not hear from them. Years after all hope had been abandoned their craft was sighted in the clear sky. They were returning at last.

The Martians crowded around that ship after the initial shock and roar of its landing was past. As the captain stepped out of his frail craft he was cheered again and again by the admiring populace. Twenty had started out on that first trip into the infinite, yet only seven others besides the captain dragged themselves wearily on to the Martian soil. The other twelve lay buried in a strange world. They had for the most part succumbed to the frightful rigors of the trip over.

Their folk begged them, then and there, to tell of the terrible hardships and dangers that they must have gone through. Those daring pioneers first rested, and then they began their strange tales. That they were thickly garnished with wild imaginings was

suspected, but no one then could tell positively.

The travelers told of the wonderful feeling of lightness that pervaded them as they stepped out of their vehicle; of the Moon's strange vegetation, the great scarlet blossoms that were far larger than any vegetation on Mars. They described the smooth, unbroken plains; the great cities that dotted the lunar landscape; the civilization there that was even older than their own. They recounted in each detail the immense throngs that came to greet them; the perfect hospitality of the Moon dwellers; the genuine welcome.

They next told of the homesickness that had engulfed them and their inability to leave because they were short-handed. More than half of the crew had died and they could not work their vessel back. They had made many friends while they had sojourned there. They told their hosts of their yearning to return to their native soil and the reason why they could not. Their hosts volunteered to help them work their vessel back, and showered them with gifts when they took leave, and invited them to return.

When these first voyagers had told their tales and exhibited metals that were considered almost priceless on their own planet, but which could be had in any quantity on the Moon, their tale so fired the adventurous Martians that there was a stampede to sign on for the proposed expedition that their government was undertaking.

Other explorers started out in the direction of No. 5. They found the inhabitants there as far advanced as they were, but along different lines. The inhabitants of No. 5 were esthetic, pleasure-loving and beauty-loving creatures.

Others went still farther out, to Jupiter and the Jovian system of inhabited moons. Everywhere they found

civilizations almost equal to their own. They returned to Mars, their home. They had been received with hospitality everywhere, and treated with the respect due to an envoy from one world to another.

The government of Mars entered into a trade compact with the governments of the other worlds. The situation on Mars prior to the return of the first exploring expedition had been critical. The local markets had been overcrowded, and to avoid grave industrial crises it had been absolutely necessary that new markets be found at once.

After the return of the explorers the traders started out. They went in droves. They went almost to the limits of the solar system to obtain markets for their surplus products. That they had found new markets and kept them could be proved by the enormous traffic that each world now carried on with the others. The ancient method of transportation, those old ships propelled by the rocket discharge principle, were too slow. Why, their limit of speed was only about twenty thousand miles an hour. So slow! It took their ancient ancestors from one to eight Martian years to make one round trip. Compared to the modern almost instantaneous method of wireless transmission of solid matter, the rocket-propelled ships were slow and crude.

Though the inhabitants of Mars were the most aggressive, they did not presume to the right of leadership or the right to dictate terms. They were too far advanced to entertain such useless dreams of conquest. What they had or knew they gave without stint to the younger civilizations of the union. All was instantly accessible to every member of those twelve worlds through the Bureau of Knowledge and the Bureau of Means.

It seems like a paradox to say that they were civilized and still peaceful, that they did not understand the full

significance of war. They knew what war was, but not through personal contact. War, they held, was for the savages that lived on the three outer moons of Uranus, or for the nameless four-legged things that so miserably existed on the planet Earth, but not for the highly intelligent beings who owed allegiance to the Confederacy.

That strange, alien world that was speeding toward them, meanwhile, remained totally unknown. Its small size and its tremendous distance might have been the reason why their mighty telescopes could not bring it into view, or perhaps the curious zig-zag course it followed.

It made no difference how far advanced their civilization were, they could not read the future. That was admitted to be beyond the realms of possibility. But why couldn't there be one, only one, out of the combined populations of the whole twelve worlds to warn them of the approaching danger, to tell them that a strange world was approaching out of the depths of space at an inconceivable velocity?

THE inhabitants of the Twelve Confederate Worlds were not individualists. They had advanced beyond that stage on the day when their separate worlds had united, for on that day each race had given up its deep-rooted dream that its own peculiar species had been created supreme above all others. It was the intelligence, not the form or color of their fellow creatures, that they held in high esteem.

Messages in the musical tinkling universal language of the solar system were hourly broadcast from the central broadcasting stations on each planet. The latest news and all the improvements in the field of science throbbed through the ether on equal terms with the commercial matter that was being sent out continually.

It was strange that their instruments should be of such strength that they were able to search out and assign to its proper place the smallest and most minute star, yet not know of the approaching body.

A message came from Mars, the most industrious member of the Confederacy, that its scientists were working on an intricate instrument that would easily separate into its component parts the thousands of star clusters that dotted the region beyond the Milky Way. When this new instrument would be completed, the Martians promised, they would be able to see the surfaces of the dark bodies that attended the bright stars throughout the heavens.

The Confederacy was enjoying its golden era of peace and prosperity. There was no sign of war or strife. The tremendous advancements in every field of activity had long since eliminated the drudgery from existence. Life was very sweet, but not cloying. One question loomed up large: would not this perpetual peace and ease breed a race of cowardly degenerates?

The inhabitants of the twelve worlds had never been called upon to risk their lives against an invading force. They might be soft, as compared to their progenitors of the dark and bygone past, in the matter of muscles and in their ability to resist the naked elements. But what of it? Life was not so hard now. There really was no need of brawn. And besides, their science had made them practically immune to all the disease germs that bred within the solar system. Even though they were soft in the matter of muscle, their span of life was from twenty to fifty times the full life span of their early ancestors. Who could foretell whether they would prove in a pinch to be a race of cowardly degenerates or not?

And then, entirely unexpected (for danger always comes unexpected), from one of the huge observatories on Japetus, the outer moon of Saturn, there came an imperious command that all broadcasting immediately cease. As the broadcasting died down a message was repeatedly flashed through the ether: "A large body of planetary dimensions is hurtling toward the solar system at a terrific velocity."

The Martians worked night and day to complete their intricate half-finished instrument for long distance observation. It was completed at last and ready to be tested. It lived up to their highest expectations. Without any further delay it was sent to Japetus and there set up for observation.

Nothing further could be learnt with the old instruments. The inhabitants of each world waited for something definite to come from the Martian observatory on Japetus.

Some frightened inhabitants of the Confederacy demanded that governments declare martial law and conscript every individual so that they could commence building and outfitting a fleet of great stellar transports large enough to give every one a chance to flee from the doomed solar system. A few, more learned but equally wild, suggested that the Scientific Society of the Twelve Confederate Worlds concentrate their combined energies toward finding a way to hurl Neptune, the outermost of the solar family, out to meet it. But most of the inhabitants waited quietly, numbed by the terrible threat of doom.

No attention was at first paid to those who let their emotions run away with them, but later, when the hysteria of the few was spreading like wildfire, it was decided to banish all who were inclined to excessive nervousness to some far off spot until the crisis was either past or their fate definitely settled.

THE first reports, though not officially confirmed, came at last from Japetus. Its distance was estimated to be a little less than the distance that it takes light to travel in half a year. It was much farther away than the first wild reports had led them to believe. Later came its size, speed, and direction.

It was generally considered that it was a dead world—a piece of slag—hurtling through space at the incredible velocity of eighteen thousand miles a second! Just one-tenth the speed of light. At that speed it would be upon them in less than five years!

Its diameter was ascertained to be about two thousand miles, or one-fourth the diameter of the planet Earth. It was nothing but a tiny speck as stellar sizes go. Small as it was, at that rate of speed, it was large enough to wreck the civilization of the solar system. The question that naturally came to the inhabitants of those twelve civilized worlds was: was it only a burnt-out cinder thrown off by some mighty sun with such unerring aim and such great force that it should flash through the heavens straight for the solar system? Or was it inhabited by sentient beings?

A reassuring official report was sent out. It said that there was absolutely no cause for alarm; that when the approaching body reached the spot in the heavens where the sun and his attending planets now were, the entire solar system would have moved on many hundred million miles away on its own course. At the rate of speed with which the approaching body was traveling, the attraction of our sun could not swerve it from its course; no, not even if our sun were ten thousand times his own size.

The astronomers welcomed its coming. Its speed was an unexplainable phenomenon of the heavens. "Nothing but a head-on collision with some

larger body could stop it," they declared.

All its surface peculiarities were known by even the youngest inhabitant of the Twelve Confederate Worlds. It was as smooth as a billiard ball—proof of its great age. A snowlike substance covered its surface, probably to a depth of five hundred feet. But the knowledge concerning it extended no deeper than its surface.

If their instruments could have seen beneath the snowlike covering, seen what was going on there, the Confederate Worlds would have begun feverish preparations for one of the most desperate struggles that had ever been fought.

They thought of tracing it back. At that speed (so they reasoned) nothing could have turned it from its course, and so it must have come almost as straight as a ray of light. But they were wrong, very wrong, for its flight was not governed solely by the mechanical laws that govern matter. The Confederate Worlds made no allowance for such a thing as a directing will. If they had known of its curious zigzag course, could they have accounted for it? They knew no laws to explain why it should swerve sharply aside when it came into the neighborhood of some of the mighty suns that had dotted its course as it flashed on its way toward the solar system, and then, after passing them, resume its former course. Instead of repulsing, those mighty suns irresistibly attract any wandering bodies that chance to come within the field of their influence.

It was impossible to trace back its course, but if they could have done so, they would have been dumfounded at the immense distance that the approaching body had covered.

It was a visitor from a far off region, indeed. Out beyond the borders of the Milky Way the star clusters gleam as thick as the stars shine over-

head on a clear, frosty night. But they do not shine with the sharp brightness of nearer stars. It is their distance, impossible to comprehend, that makes them appear nothing but a patch of soft, hazy light, notwithstanding the fact that each cluster shines with the combined light of fifty thousand to one hundred million huge flaming suns!

Everything must in time grow old. The living take their substance from the dead. The suns grow old and die. Everywhere in the heavens the ruins of dead star clusters can be seen—huge, shapeless masses that are absolutely dead-black.

And that approaching world and many others had come from somewhere out there, not from a living, glowing star cluster, but from the outskirts of a dead, intensely black region. From a region, if such a region can be imagined, where all matter has nearly reached a state of perfect equilibrium. Where all matter is nearly stable, and so all matter almost dead. There were no flaming suns there to give light to that terrible darkness. Each body within the borders of that lifeless region was breaking down. The molecules were disintegrating, the atoms flying free. In the boundless sea of ether the atoms were moving sluggishly away in vast, cloudlike masses. This was the end of a universe.

Like slinking rats from a sinking ship this approaching body had come from that region. It came with a grim, fixed purpose, nearer, still nearer. It was invisible to the naked eye. It was calculated to soon pass the solar system.

Some of the more hot-blooded members of the Scientific Society of the Twelve Confederate Worlds requested permission to take one of the society's interstellar vehicles, provision it for a lifetime, and go out to meet and board it. They painted in glowing pictures the advantages that the

Scientific Society would gain from their sacrifice, and the perfect descriptions that they would be able to broadcast back.

Their request was refused on the grounds that the new Martian instrument for observation installed upon Japetus could easily follow its flight for ages to come. It would be only a useless sacrifice of life to attempt to board that strange object.

In the secret code of the Scientific Society word was sent out that this body had actually stopped in its headlong journey. It hung poised, motionless, then began to fall slowly toward the solar system. These new and terrifying facts were not given to the general public. It would not help matters if they knew, but might bring on another attack of hysteria. The Scientific Society could hardly believe the evidence of its observation instruments.

The body continued to drop slowly toward the sun, and then, as it neared the orbit of Neptune, it turned, and at an acute angle it began to head for old Neptune, who was crawling out of the west to meet it. A collision seemed imminent. Its speed was very slow, no more than eighteen hundred miles a minute—just a fraction of its former tremendous speed, and it became still slower. When the newcomer came within a quarter of a million miles of Neptune it began to circle him, as if it were a moon.

The Scientific Society heaved a sigh of relief, and gave out the facts then to the public. The changing speed and the deliberate actions of this new member of the solar family were unexplainable; still, all the threatened danger seemed past.

THE instruments that had been brought to bear upon this new member showed that the snowlike substance that covered its surface was quickly evaporating under the warm, kindly glow emanating from old dy-

ing Neptune. In a little while all the snowlike substance had evaporated. It had turned into an almost transparent envelope of heavy, bluish gas.

The surface under the covering was then seen for the first time by the observers on the Twelve Confederate Worlds. Nearly the entire area of this new world was covered with square or oblong structures. In some places the square structures had been concentrated for reasons that were as yet unknown. In those places the foundations were truly massive; the structures had been built in tiers, each succeeding tier smaller than the one beneath it; and up, up they went until they formed pyramidal structures several miles in height.

Strange creatures that walked erect on only two feet next made their appearance. The inhabitants of the twelve worlds marveled. The two-legged creatures moved here and there, also seeing, it seemed, the surface of their world for the first time. They must have come up from beneath the surface. They were clad in a uniform, gray, hairy material that hung loosely upon their frames. Their movements were at first listless, but gradually they began to quicken. They looked around for a while and then went below the surface again.

It was not until the next day that they really began to come up in numbers. For the two succeeding days they poured up in a constant stream. In a little while the surface of their world was black with them. They must have hollowed out the very bowels of the planet to have accommodated such vast numbers. Like bees in a hive they were now swarming over their huge pyramidal structures and the smaller oblong buildings, everywhere.

The Scientific Society now realized that it had not been blind chance that had steered this body toward the solar system. It was evident that those intelligent creatures had directed their

world to this, a more favorable location.

Realizing that these creatures were intelligent, and thinking that they would probably need and appreciate aid after their long journey, the Twelve Confederate Worlds generously sent out a delegation to the newcomer to inquire if they could be of any assistance. Form or color meant nothing to the inhabitants of those twelve civilized worlds; it was intelligence that they held in high esteem.

No sooner did the party from the Confederate Worlds land than they were surrounded and killed! Neither a reason nor a warning had been given. They were killed with about as much compunction as one would kill some loathsome insects. After killing them, these strange two-legged creatures were seen to go about their tasks as if nothing had happened.

The inhabitants of the twelve worlds were startled, horrified. They actually did not know what to do. The act had no precedent in all their histories. Something must be done. But what? A reprisal? They did not even think of a reprisal, for they were essentially a peace-loving folk. It was unwise to send out another delegation to demand an explanation. They tried every means of interplanetary communication, but they elicited no response.

A few hours after the killing, a group of those strange creatures, but evidently in high command (for they were dressed in a bright red instead of the usual gray, and the gray-clad creatures prostrated themselves whenever the red-clad group came near them), had come up to view the remains of the slaughtered delegation. They were seen to question in turn those who killed them. Those questioned were seen to point up toward the sun, and toward the Twelve Confederate Worlds. The red-clothed were next seen to go over and examine the interplanetary vehicle that the

delegation from the twelve worlds had arrived in.

After the event of the red-clothed group the inhabitants of this strange world were seen to start building some new huge pyramidal structures and repairing the old ones.

Always before had it been the Confederate Worlds who were the masters of every situation, but now they were plainly bewildered. They decided to bide their time and wait. They did not fear the invader. It was quite a different matter, this killing of a few unsuspecting individuals, from attacking the twelve civilized worlds.

FROM the moment that the strange world so suddenly arrived, and with its first ruthless act took up its sullen position as a new member of the solar family, the watchful eyes of the Twelve Confederate Worlds did not leave it for an instant. Every act was viewed with suspicion. Intently did they watch the two-legged creatures repair and build the huge pyramidal structures that reared their heads several miles above the surrounding surface. With deep wonder they watched them bring out from the interior of their planet large, metal, boxlike objects. They were not producing them one at a time, but by the thousands, and stacking them up near the huge pyramidal structures. On the very pinnacle of each pyramid there was a square opening that was exactly the size of those metal boxes, and each opening extended down to the very base of its pyramid. The Scientific Society, try as it would, could not discover to what use those boxes were being put.

The numbers of those strange two-legged creatures were seen to increase, and still increase. The Scientific Society had often discussed, wondering, how so many could exist on so small an area. There seemed hardly room for a fraction of their numbers.

Where did they get their supply of food? They did not grow it on the surface, for there was no room. Did they manufacture artificial foods? Several times in past ages the Scientific Society had produced artificial foods, but the inhabitants did not seem to relish them, though they were as palatable and nutritious from the chemical standpoint as any of the foods that nature produced.

It was just three Martian years from the moment that they had arrived to the solar system until they began to leap the tremendous void that separated Neptune from the four moons of Uranus. From each square opening on top of the pyramidal structures a steady stream of metallic cubes flashed out into the bleak void of space on their journey toward the moons of Uranus. Each square box was large enough to accommodate one hundred of those queer two-legged beings.

They landed upon the four moons of Uranus, and with the cubes that had carried them across the void they formed a wall surrounding their first rude camp. They immediately set to work building a city. The structures that they put up were identical with those that covered the surface of their own world. After their first city was completed these ruthless two-legged creatures went out in their thousands and commenced slaughtering for their furs the wild life that had lived there prior to their coming—killed those living creatures just for the bit of skin or fur that covered their backs!

The world of their origin, now the moon of old Neptune, still continued to send those metal cubes in a steady stream to the moons of Uranus. City after city sprang into existence. They flourished, growing so swiftly that the outskirts of each city soon blended into the outskirts of its neighbors.

The Twelve Confederate Worlds still continued to think of peace. It seemed strange that the inhabitants

of those twelve worlds did not realize their danger. They went about in the smug belief that they were invulnerable.

The one thing that most amazed those who studied the strange, two-legged aliens was the speed with which they continued to increase their numbers. In a very short time the four moons of Uranus were too small to hold them. An air of intense activity pervaded the four moons of Uranus. They commenced building pyramids that were to be at least six miles high. As soon as these were completed the square, metallic cubes made their appearance and were stacked up by thousands near by.

The invaders leapt from the moons of Uranus to the five habitable moons of Saturn, which were members of the Confederation. The inhabitants of those five Confederate Worlds were unprepared. There was a steady whiz as the cubes shot through the air of those five worlds. They came in countless hordes.

Rhea, Dione, and Tethys, the three smallest, were snuffed out in a twinkling. Japetus and Titan put up so savage a front that they were able to hold them off. Each sent its desperate appeal for help throbbing through the ether.

Even though the invaders had many efficient death-dealing weapons and used them ruthlessly, the unprepared inhabitants of Japetus and Titan put up so grim a struggle, fought so fiercely with what they could lay their hands upon, that they were able to stop the forward charges time after time. Still it was plain that those pitiless two-legged invaders held their most desperate attempts at resistance cheaply—held them in sneering contempt—held even the whole combined power of the Twelve Confederate Worlds in contempt—played with them as a cat would play with a mouse!

The Confederate Worlds awoke to their danger at last. Was it too late? They sought in their museums and in the old archives of their early histories for plans of death-dealing devices that their own ancient, blood-thirsty ancestors had used. They discarded their foolish dreams of peace and selected the ideas for the most terrible weapons that they could find; and they began to manufacture these with lightning rapidity. Meanwhile, the inhabitants were conscripted, and the use of the weapons explained to them; and they were soon ready to be sent out against the invaders. The Twelve Confederate Worlds did not make the terrible mistake of under-rating their antagonists.

A GREAT force of invaders had surrounded Eelce, one of the largest cities on Titan, and were slowly forcing the weary defenders back. The invaders fought with swift, death-dealing weapons, while the defenders had only sticks and stones to oppose them. Was it any wonder that the dispirited inhabitants of Titan were being forced back on every hand?

The city of Eelce was full of weary, trembling fugitives who had fled before the invaders from the surrounding open country. The morale of the defenders was breaking. Time after time they tried to fight through the slowly tightening ring of those terrible two-legged invaders. The defenders were slaughtered in their thousands. They were driven back from every nook and cranny until they met in the center of their city. This could hardly be called their last stand: they were merely waiting their turn to be butchered. In one solid, compact mass they cowered in the public square in the center of the city. The only protection at their backs was a solidly built public building, Eelce's central station for wireless transmission of matter. Would help never come?

There came a shout of encouragement from the main wide entrance to the wireless transmission of matter building, and a solid line, some thirty deep, of fully armed Jovians from the four Confederate Worlds of Jupiter leapt out to attack. A wide avenue was immediately opened in the tightly packed mass of Eelce's cowering populace, and the Jovians leapt through and spread out fanwise in front of the defenseless inhabitants.

Each of the Jovians in the front lines carried on his back a small tank that sprayed out a hundred feet in advance a chemical, which ignited everything it touched and burnt with a hot, livid flame. Those behind them carried stubby metal tubes, which would bark with short, thunderous reports, and which left ruin and death in the ranks of the invaders.

Help had come in the blackest moment. Similar scenes were taking place in all of the larger cities on Titan.

Back, back they drove the invaders. The Twelve Confederate Worlds (now there were only nine, and two of those threatened with momentary extinction) hurled their conscripted forces across the void so swiftly and in such numbers that the invaders were startled. Reluctant to give ground that they had previously gained, the two-legged warriors contested desperately each inch of their retreat. From every direction they were met by the defenders, who were armed with weapons as good as their own.

Could these be the despised, peace-loving inhabitants of the solar system whom they had meant to destroy so as to have undisputed possession of the entire solar system? They could hardly believe it, for the once peaceful Jovians fought with a ferocity that was terrible.

Whenever the invaders stopped and tried to stand their ground, the defenders swarmed up; the chemicals sprayed fires upon the two-legged in-

vaders; and those in the lines behind the first came with their short metal tubes that roared with thunder and wrought havoc in the ranks of the invaders. The Jovians forced them back, always back, and began to surround the isolated detachments of the invaders and destroy them. Not till they had wiped them completely from Titan did they turn their attention toward the beleaguered inhabitants of Japetus.

The inhabitants of Japetus were still fighting desperately when the Jovians came. Following close on the heels of the Jovians came the first detachment from No. 5. There was also a steady influx of invaders. A desperate battle raged for possession of Japetus. Reinforcements were pouring in on both sides.

The invaders, who had successfully destroyed the inhabitants and buildings on Rhea, Dione, and Tethys, now turned their attention toward Titan. Once more the invaders stormed Titan. They did not drop down upon defenseless inhabitants this time. They were met and repulsed by a strong force of beauty-loving inhabitants from No. 5. Those beauty-loving beings from No. 5, despite their estheticism, fought with an incredible fury in defense of the union of the twelve worlds.

When the news of the first setback reached the invaders, from the four moons of Uranus and from their densely packed parent world steady streams of cubes shot out toward the Twelve Confederate Worlds. They were bringing new and better weapons to combat those of the Confederacy. They were coming at incalculable speed, using their own secret means of propelling the cubes besides the additional attraction that the sun's gravitational force exerted upon them. But though the invaders could send their forces swiftly, the Twelve Confederate Worlds could transport their defenders ten times more quickly.

Prior to the invasion, the passenger service from world to world had always been subordinate to the commercial traffic of the wireless transmission of matter system of transportation that interlaced the twelve worlds. But with a few slight modifications the whole system of transportation was made available for passenger service. The Twelve Confederate Worlds were now able to hurl their defenders from world to world at the speed of light.

In a steady line the defenders would march into a station for wireless transmission of matter, enter the automatic transmission chamber and there receive the preliminary charge of specific high-frequency current that would cause temporarily suspended animation; then they would automatically be carried to separate vibrating chambers of high intensity, which would cause the electrons that composed the bodies to be impinged upon the sending apparatus in the compartment; a few minutes later, the process reversed, they would be ready to leave the receiving station at their destination. After the experience of leaping millions of miles at the speed of light they would be none the worse except for a slight touch of nausea.

NOW the invaders came in countless swarms. The number of cubes that had attacked the five moons of Saturn was as nothing compared to the flood of cubes that whipped past the orbit of Saturn and headed for Jupiter's moons. The remnant of invaders who were still attacking Japetus shot out to join the main body of invaders as they shot past the moons of Saturn.

A detachment of cubes, about fifty thousand in number, leapt ahead of the main force of invaders and attacked the moons of Jupiter. The Confederacy hurled its forces there to repulse them. But it was only a feint on the part of the invaders, for

their real objective was lone No. 5. They had been taught a lesson on Titan and Japetus. No longer did they hold the fighting qualities of the Confederacy in contempt.

They did not leap down upon the surface of No. 5 as they did upon the five moons of Saturn; instead, thousands of cubes filled with high explosives and noxious gases were directed toward No. 5's surface. After that, the terrible, two-legged invaders landed and killed off all that were left of the half-gassed inhabitants. They also destroyed all the stations for wireless transmission of matter.

The invaders made No. 5 their headquarters. Cubes were pouring in from every direction. It seemed that they were abandoning their own world that circled old dying Neptune. The four moons of Uranus were also being deserted by the two-legged invaders. They were massing for one supreme attack. No. 5 would be the center from which they intended to sally forth.

The inhabitants of the Twelve Confederate Worlds realized it. Thousands of the defenders offered their lives, offered to steer large interstellar vehicles loaded to the limit with high explosives to No. 5. But those in supreme command demurred, for the Scientific Society had just perfected a new, terrible weapon. This was manufactured with all possible speed and sent to the eight remaining worlds of the Confederacy. Hope flamed anew throughout the eight sorely tried worlds.

The invaders did not delay an instant. They had experienced only two setbacks. So far they had the best of it. They sent a stream of cubes filled with explosives and gases toward Callisto, the outer moon of Jupiter, and destroyed all life on it. At the same time they sent a mighty force to Mars.

The Martians had been preparing a fleet of swift interstellar vehicles and

were prepared to offer stubborn resistance. As the invaders neared Mars, the Martians left the surface of their world and went out to meet them in the empty void. The two forces met, and from the start the Martians were outclassed. They were slowly forced back to the surface of their own world, for the cubes were superior in every way to the Martian craft.

From the six remaining Confederate Worlds, jets of intense light leapt toward No. 5. This playing of light on the invaders seemed so weak and ineffectual! It was the new weapon. The light at times appeared to be of delicate purple. It would grow until it was a bright purple, then fade into invisibility. It seemed the weapon of a child, and yet whatever it touched was destroyed.

The invaders shot their cubes out in every direction, but were picked off by the jets of all-destroying light. Whenever two jets of light touched a cube, there was a short explosion; that was all. The purple from the twin jets would fade, and the results that followed were the same as if the terminals of powerful electric currents had short-circuited there. The jets of light were merely carriers for an electric current that was capable of vaporizing any substance that came between any two jets.

The jets of light from the six worlds had now reached No. 5, and were destroying everything upon the surface. The invaders came to the bitter realization that this was the beginning of their end. They had waited too long. They should have attacked the Twelve Confederate Worlds on the day of their arrival. They tried to leave No. 5 by the cubes, but the twin jets of light easily picked them off.

The Confederation turned its attention to Mars. It sent its forces down upon Mars as the rain comes
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INVADERS FROM OUTSIDE

(Continued from Page 16)

down in a cloudburst. The invaders were cut off absolutely from all reinforcements from their own kind on No. 5. Knowing that they were doomed, they maneuvered their cubes to form a protecting wall between them and their foes. The defenders became the aggressors. They began storming the barricade. The invaders were bunched together behind the cubes waiting.

A LOW hum came from behind the cubes. It rose and rose. It came from the throats of the two-legged invaders. The sound was not displeasing. It gathered volume every instant. Though it was not very melodious at first, still it teemed with pathos. One by one the invaders joined in the song. It hinted of a mighty, daring attempt and of a bitter failure. It was their death song.

Meanwhile the invaders on No. 5 who had, through their great knowledge of stellar mechanics, guided their own world from out of the depths of space, were now working desperately in their attempt to install machines that would enable them to swing No. 5 out of its orbit. They had failed in their attempt to conquer the Confederation, and their only wish was to take No. 5 from out of the solar system and escape.

They were installing the machines underground. They threw up shield after shield to protect themselves from the death-dealing rays. Two out of every five machines that they installed were destroyed by the twin jets of light.

The number of invaders left on No. 5 was very small. In desperation they started the machines. The speed of No. 5 began to increase, and she was

rotating faster, too. Something had gone amiss. The jets of light, in destroying nearly half of their machinery, had upset their calculations. The two-legged invaders on No. 5 were seen to run wildly about. They tried to stop the machinery that they had started, but somehow could not do so.

The rotation of No. 5 became still swifter. Hundreds of thousands of cubcs were hurled into the heavens by the centrifugal force of that rotating world. The Confederacy picked off as many as it could with the crossing jets of light, but some managed to escape and were seen heading for Neptune. No. 5 was breaking up! The centrifugal force had become greater than its power of gravitation. Huge masses were seen to detach themselves and go whirling off into space.

Saturn, the largest body in the vicinity, was seen to draw fully one-third of the matter that had composed No. 5 in its general direction. The powerful gravitational force of the Sun drew many large pieces, some of which were more than eight hundred miles in diameter, toward himself. The Moon, circling the Earth, came from behind its protection and bore the brunt of a stream of small pieces that struck its surface. Life there was instantly destroyed. The surface of the Moon became partially incandescent. Parts of the Earth, thanks to the Moon, escaped practically uninjured. But there was only a wild kind of life existing there. Jupiter received its share. Two large fragments went hurtling toward Mars.

In destroying No. 5 the invaders had destroyed themselves and nearly all the life on the solar system. The survivors of the Twelve Confederate Worlds made their way to the Earth, the least injured of the planets, and there they began anew, in a strange environment, to build the civilization that had been wrecked by the invaders from beyond the Milky Way.

THE END