

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



A MAGAZINE of the

BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XII

NUMBER 1

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 460 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1928, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for July, 1928

- Cover Design.....C. C. Senf
Illustrating a scene in "The Witches' Sabbath"
- The Eyrie 4
A chat with the readers
- The Witches' Sabbath (Part 1).....Stephen Bagby 6
A startling two-part serial tale of devil-worship, witchcraft, and the Black Mass
- The Green Monster.....Arthur Macom 33
Out of the shuddering dark of the university cloisters leapt the Green Monster, to turn at last on its creator
- Tony the Faithful.....W. K. Mashburn, Jr. 43
An appealing little ghost-story of the South, in which a dog is the hero
- The Three-Storeyed House.....August W. Derleth 46
Strangely depressing was the effect of certain houses on Johnson, but there was a valid reason for this
- Folks Used to Believe:
Weird Recipes.....Alvin F. Harlow 48
Some of the strange beliefs of our ancestors

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

The Space-Eaters	Frank Belknap Long, Jr.	49
<i>A tremendous menace closed in upon the earth from outside the solar system—a powerful story of uncanny horror</i>		
Sonnets of the Midnight Hours:		
4. The Eye	Donald Wandrei	69
<i>Verse</i>		
On a Far World	Wilford Allen	70
<i>An invasion by a race of giants from a far world rocked civilization and obliterated the works of man</i>		
The Gates of Nineveh	Robert E. Howard	84
<i>Verse</i>		
The Bat-Men of Thorium (Conclusion)	Bertram Russell	85
<i>A three-part serial story about a giant submarine and a weird land underneath the ocean</i>		
Under the Moon	Eugene C. Dolson	96
<i>Verse</i>		
The Man Who Remembered	Willis Knapp Jones	97
<i>A tale of the Incas, and the Peruvian jungles, and the wrath of the Sun-god</i>		
The Grappling Ghost	Capwell Wyckoff	105
<i>Weird was the scene in that old house, as the Grappling Ghost clanked down the broad stairs in its suit of armor</i>		
The Statue of Anuta	Arthur W. Davenport	115
<i>Ismail Pasha's abode was haunted by a ghulah, and the cery howling of the apparition drove him almost to distraction</i>		
The Little Husbands	David H. Keller	126
<i>A fantastic little story about a race of giant Amazons who went hunting to get husbands for themselves</i>		
Symphonic Death	Fred R. Farrow, Jr.	131
<i>From beyond the grave Hans Scheel achieved an eldritch vengeance upon the critic who had scoffed at his genius</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
The Bowmen	Arthur Machen	134
<i>This is the story, first published early in the World War, that started the legend of the phantom archers at Mons</i>		

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

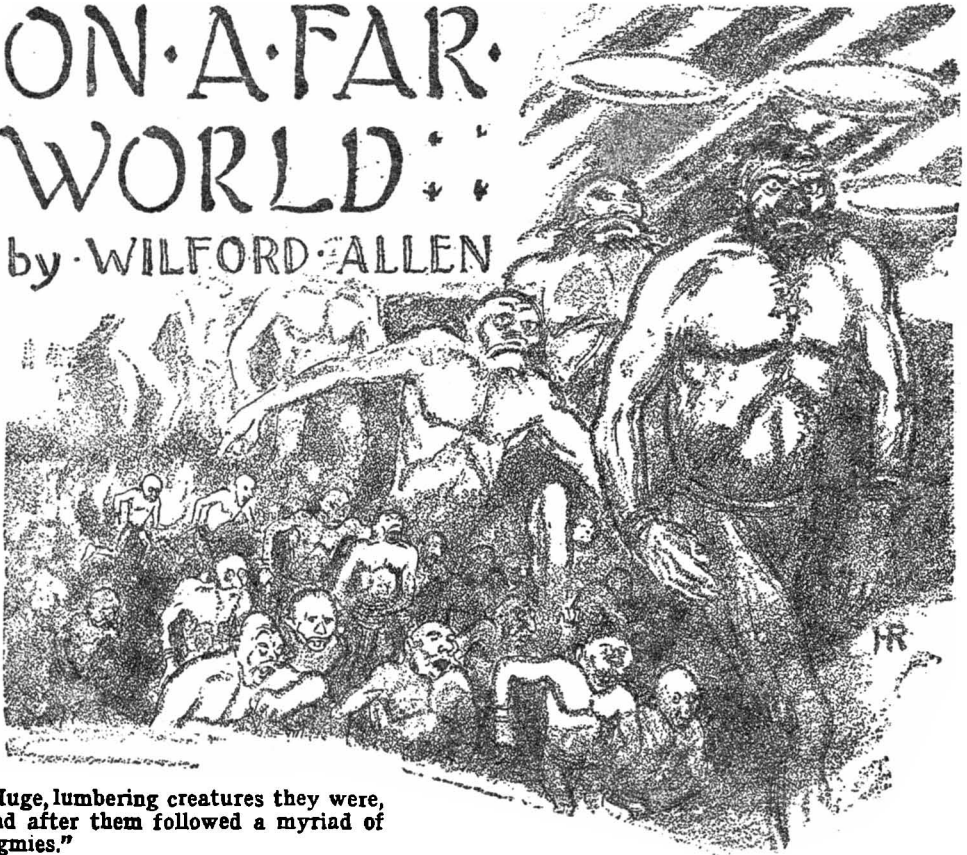
WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
YOUNG & WARD, Mgrs.
 360 N. Michigan Ave.
 Chicago, Ill.
 Phone, Central 6269

Eastern Advertising Office:
GEORGE W. STEARNS, Mgr.
 Flatiron Building
 New York, N. Y.
 Phone, Ashland 7389

ON·A·FAR· WORLD::

by·WILFORD·ALLEN



"Huge, lumbering creatures they were, and after them followed a myriad of pigmies."

THE computing-room of the observatory was full that night. Three new comets had been discovered within the space of two days—something unprecedented; and in order to maintain the reputation of the observatory for getting out the first preliminary elements of the orbits, the whole staff and two of the advanced students had been pressed into service. In fact, it was a scientific necessity for us to act quickly, for the very reputation we enjoyed meant that the work would not be done elsewhere, the other observatories having formed the habit of awaiting the elements and ephemerides which we usually broadcast through the central distributing-bureau within twelve hours of the receipt of the last of the three necessary observations.

It was ten minutes past 1 when Crowley and his check computer successfully completed their last check, and it was not more than fifteen minutes later that the slowest team finished the ephemeris of the last comet and sent it on its way to the radio. Usually, after such a siege, we would be glad enough to go to our near-by homes and to sleep, but that night something, possibly the excitement engendered by the unusual circumstance of having three orbits to work up at once, seemed to hold us. The air was filled with eddying tobacco smoke, and everyone sat back in various postures of repose, chairs tipped backward, feet sprawled around or atop the computing tables.

Crowley's voice broke the silence drowsily, seeming to come through

the cloud of smoke like the voice of some figure in a dream.

"Too bad Breinbar isn't alive. I remember, back more than twenty-five years, we had two comets to work on at once. I was just a student then, and I took one of the orbits, with another student to check for me. Breinbar took the other orbit by himself; he never used a check computer—said he did his own checking in his head as he went along. I was just new then, and slow, of course, and I had not much more than transposed the observations into their heliocentric positions than Breinbar was at my shoulder. He had finished his orbit in a little more than two hours. Then he finished mine, and we were out of there before midnight. The man was a wonder, but he really did very little computing, for he was always busy working up something or other that he never dared publish, even when he had it demonstrated to his own satisfaction."

The voice fell silent for a moment, then resumed again, seeming to come from a distance.

"He was a queer man, a genius. He knew things that seemed impossible, that couldn't be proved. I have something in my desk now that he gave me—when I asked for it."

Crowley reached down and opened the lower drawer of his desk, bringing out a typewritten manuscript which showed the stain of age. Breinbar had been dead more than eleven years, and the sheets had been written years before he died—I don't know how many years.

Again we were lulled into immobility by the droning of Crowley's voice as it continued, though in a sense our minds continued active. At least I know that my mind during the ensuing hour was in one respect more awake than ever before or since—more able to receive and image vivid pictures.

"I never knew whether to believe

this or not," the computer's voice went on. "It is evidently pure imagination, and yet he claimed that it was fact. And there is something about it that even then made me doubt my own reasoning in rejecting it; has always made me doubt myself. So I asked him for it.

"I ought to explain that Breinbar had many interests which he did not dare let the scientific world at large know of, for fear of losing his standing as a scientist. In those days he would have been branded as a charlatan in the ranks of the world's scientists, had even the part of his many thoughts become known. One of his theories was that there existed a reservoir of intelligence, a place or thing where intelligence became for all practical purposes a tangible entity. To enter it wholly would bring about the end of his earthly body, but he believed that he was able to penetrate partially into the mystery at times, and to learn things that he could never have learned in other ways. It is certain that his genius could be explained more easily by such a fancy than by many of our so-called reasonable hypotheses.

"This paper tells a story which he said came from that pool of intelligence. You will see that it is in effect the history of the overwhelming of the life of a world by an invasion from another and entirely different sphere. In some respects it parallels our old earth-story of the flood. I am going to read it, and you can listen if you wish."

THIS [he began to read] seemingly imaginative tale is actually the history of the death of a civilization quite similar to ours which once existed on a favored planet of a far-off sun. It is drawn from the great pool of intelligence which holds the knowledge of all that has happened in the universe. That fact being sufficiently incredible, I will not undertake to detail how the story was

drawn from that pool. I am only setting it down on paper in the way we earth-folk have of preserving the records of our thoughts, for the benefit of those earth-people who can not draw on that greater reservoir of facts.

The planet, of which the people all spoke one language, called Nekka, was quite similar to our earth in most respects. Its distance from the sun, its periods of revolution about its axis and about its sun, were about the same as our earth's. That being the case, it was perhaps not unnatural that the course of the evolution of life there should closely parallel that on the earth, so that the time came when a very human population filled its cities. So close was this similarity, in fact, that it is as easy to picture what happened there as though it took place upon our earth.

Nekkan geologists made an intensely interesting discovery one day, though they did not dream of its significance then. Studying the gravel deposits of a Nekkan river, they brought to light the battered remains of some peculiar structure of strange fabrication. So crushed that its real shape and function were conjectural for a long time, there was still enough to show that it could not possibly be the product of the Nekkan civilization. Its position under the gravels placed its age at more than twelve thousand years, completely antedating Nekkan history.

The literature of our missing link is not so voluminous as that which the strange discovery brought forth on Nekka. The usual scientific and popular controversies raged. As might be expected, the various speculations were fruitless, though the truth was scattered through them, if it could only have been sorted out and assembled. The only fact that seemed to be settled by the painstaking attempts at reconstructing the thing was that it had been some sort of a vehicle, but in a manner re-

motely similar to that of a submarine. Spectacular writers even suggested that it might have been a space-car, wrecked on Nekka thousands of years before after a voyage from some other world already civilized. But it was all pure conjecture, some more, some less, spectacular.

In a little laboratory, a young Nekkan student whose name we would probably spell Corring, was bending eagerly over a strange contrivance. Even in the university community of Nekkalota he was looked upon as being somewhat "off" on his subject of experimental psychology. He was known to have some crazy notion that he could extract from the ether the knowledge of things which had happened or were happening in other places. In fact, had it not been for his entirely human courtship of Elfa, the pretty daughter of one of the town's big men, he would have been regarded as crazy. As it was, it was the general belief that he was not yet lost, though treading in dangerous ways.

As he stooped eagerly, watching the movements of the recording arm of the machine, no sound came from his half-parted lips. Another man of about the same age, who had been sitting in the other end of the room engaged in some work of his own, came up as the humming noise from Corring's instrument grew louder in tone and volume, and leaned over his friend's shoulder. At the sight of the words being traced by the recording arm the newcomer's attitude of mild interest was transformed and frozen into one of amazed attention.

"Why, Corring! The thing is writing!" he gasped, as though the evidence of his own eyes were incredible to his intelligence.

Still intently watching the words as they formed letter by letter, Corring did not answer at once.

"Nekka! Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" The word was repeated again and

again on the tape, after the manner of the call-word of a telegraph instrument. "Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" The wording changed abruptly: "Warning—Drubbans coming to attack! Warning! Nekka! Nekka!" the call resumed again, repeating itself endlessly.

Corring straightened slowly and looked into his friend's staring eyes.

"Bort, do you see what I do there—Drubbans coming to attack—?"

"That's what it says," the other managed with an effort. "Someone's playing a joke on you. Knows what you're trying to do, and he's having his little fun with you," he finished, breathing more easily as he ventured the explanation.

"Probably right," Corring smiled wanly. Then he became suddenly serious again. "Drubba—that car they found under the Merling sands—that was made of corla, wasn't it? And corla isn't mined on Nekka so far as we know, while it seems to be one of the more common elements on Drubba. Do you suppose—?"

His face was white as he stopped as though afraid to finish his question.

"Of course I don't suppose," Bort growled nervously. "Someone's playing a trick on you. It's plain enough. Probably knowing about the corla car gave him the idea—that and knowing your fool notion about getting messages from space."

With one accord both turned back toward the tape again. It had grown in length to more than a yard, and still the same word was coming: "Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" Then again that warning. "Drubbans coming to attack!"

In spite of himself, Bort shuddered; then with sudden decision he pulled Corring by the arm. "Come on to sleep. Turn that thing off and let's get some rest and the joke will be on the other fellow if he stays up all night."

He moved as though to throw the dials around.

"Don't touch that!" Corring's alarm was evident in his voice. "I got that adjustment by accident, and I might not get it again in a lifetime!"

"Piffle!" the other grumbled. "Well, let it alone then. In the morning we can see how long the other fool stays up. Come on!" He emphasized his demand by switching off the lights.

BY MORNING the events of the night had receded in Corring's consciousness until they seemed a part of a dream, and he entered the laboratory fully expecting to find the tape clean of any words, so that the shock of seeing the pile of tape on the floor still being added to as the tape fed through the instrument, receiving its mysterious message, was almost as great as it had been the night before. The tape was almost exhausted, and still the message came, seemingly uninterrupted throughout the night: "Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" with the warning words at intervals of every yard or so: "Warning, Drubbans coming to attack Nekka!"

By 10 o'clock the heads of the physics and psychology departments were in his laboratory, watching the message issuing on a new tape. And still the warning was the same, the long reiteration of the name "Nekka," as thought to attract attention, with the warning interspersed every fifteen minutes.

The physicist was frankly incredulous, adopting the explanation that Bort had advanced. Corring's own psychology chief was wavering, drawn between his inclination to believe, and his reason, which argued for the hoax.

"Why, man!" the physicist was saying; "Drubba is at a distance from the sun a hundred times ours! It is cold, far too cold to support

life. And even if it had life, how could it reach us?"

"Yes, I know," Corring answered slowly. "But—I know I am making myself ridiculous—but how about that car of corla that they dug out from under the Merling? Where did that come from? So far as we know there were no beings on Nekka capable of building such a thing twelve thousand years ago. And—corla is abundant on Drubba."

"No." The other two shook their heads in unison, while the physicist continued, "Bort, here, is right. Someone has learned what you are doing, and has rigged up a corresponding apparatus to send this message to you." He turned back to the instrument. You've certainly got an ingenious thing here, though, Corring. Mind if I look it over?" He leaned closer; then an exclamation broke from his lips.

Clustering about, the others read the new message: "If you need proof," the thing was spelling out, "wire the observatory at Aberlun to turn the great telescope on the second moon!"

"Still kidding you, Corring," Bort smiled.

"We'll see," the experimenter said grimly. He brushed aside the efforts of the others to restrain him. "I'll do just what it says."

"Why, you poor fool!" Bort trotted after him. "You'll just let the whole world know what a fool you are!"

"I'll chance it," Corring muttered, as much to himself as to the other. "I'd rather be a live fool than a dead one." And quickening his pace he went out, leaving his friend to return slowly to the others, shaking his head sorrowfully.

ATTEMPTS were made to keep from the public the exact details of what the astronomers saw on the second moon through the great instrument which brought its surface

seemingly within a distance of three miles. The attempts succeeded for a time, in the sense that for a while the general public did not know just what had been seen. But somehow a rumor got out, and, in the way of rumors, it assumed as many forms as it had tellers. Panic seized the people, even before any official announcement came.

Inside twenty-four hours the defensive forces had received their summons, and orders had been issued placing the entire planet under the rule of the military. Then commenced the scenes of awfulness which were to continue in a mounting crescendo of horror for many years.

It soon seemed as though panic would do for the invaders what they presumably intended doing themselves. Orders, manifestos, appeals, issued in rapid succession from the government, but without any effect other than seemingly to increase the terror. The cities and districts most remote from control were given over to scenes of despoliation and death such as can only follow the coming of utter conviction in the minds of the people that all hope is lost. The law-abiding element was paralyzed by that conviction; the lawless seized the opportunity to enjoy if but for a short time the reign of anarchy. Fire, murder, and then disease, swept vast areas, while the government tried with one hand to restrain the people, and with the other to prepare against the invasion of beings whose very form was unknown. For no one knew just what form the threat would take, or what weapons would be effectual in repelling it.

The great telescope showed dark cars flitting through the empty space above the surface of the second moon, or at rest upon its surface. Estimates of the number varied, as they were constantly arriving and departing, and an accurate count was impossible. In size, they were

approximately two thousand feet in length by not more than five hundred in diameter. Featureless they seemed, apparently without doors or windows. But it was all too evident that they contained life, or at least that their movements were controlled by life of some degree.

The government had no choice but to conclude that the second moon was being used as a base for operations against Nekka. The accumulation of cars upon its surface grew rapidly. But so long as they remained on the moon they were beyond the reach of investigation and of attack alike, and Nekka could do nothing but go ahead blindly with such warlike preparations as in the past had proved efficacious in the old wars between its nations.

The laboratory of the research man, Corring, was guarded constantly. It became the center of great activity as the scientists of Nekka assembled, and under Corring's guidance constructed duplicates of his instrument, then variations of it, in the hope of obtaining new information. Each one as made was watched anxiously for anything—a word, sentence, anything—that could give a hint of the form the threatened blow would take or of what means would be effective in warding it off. But no further warning came.

Yet months passed, and there was no overt act on the part of the strange visitors on the second moon. The respite gave the government time to quiet the disturbances at home, but it was useless so far as giving time to prepare weapons was concerned. Every man was armed with weapons which had been useful in the past, but no one dared to hope that these would be successful against a foe who could navigate space itself in great space-ships. The only hope was that possibly the strangers had no evil intentions, but were only stopping on the second moon for a time. That idea was be-

ginning to gain ground among the people when suddenly the threat began to take more definite form.

With no warning of their coming, a squadron of the great space-ships swooped down on the capital. As the second moon was under constant surveillance, and the raiders were not seen to leave it, they may not have come from the moon, though it was certain that they returned to it after the attack. The first warning that the doomed city had was when a series of great explosions rocked its buildings into heaps of ruins. The people of the surrounding country, scurrying out of their houses at the shock of the explosions, saw the night air lit up as though by the flare of a great volcano. Within five minutes the great city was an inferno of flames, with the very stores of ammunition which had been gathered in the arsenals and forts for its protection adding to the destruction as they exploded. The horrified watchers saw the shining forms of the big ships, riding high above the stricken city, rising slowly higher to avoid the gigantic convection currents set up in the air by the conflagration.

For two hours the ships of death rode over the dying city, then as suddenly as they had come they disappeared without making any effort to communicate with the land below. Their mission was evidently accomplished. The observers at the Aberlun observatory saw them on their return, heading directly for a point in space where the second moon would be in eighteen hours. When the moon reached that point in its orbit the space-ships were arriving, and they settled down into the midst of a great concourse of similar vehicles which had assembled on one of the lunar plains.

THE wave of terror which swept over Nekka with the news of the disaster was even more horrible in

its results than the earlier wave. For while the other had mainly disorganized the more remote districts, the effect of this blow was almost to paralyze industry even in the great centers.

But if the general public was panic-stricken, the government itself rose superbly to the emergency. The great heads of the civil government had perished, together with many of the higher heads of the army, but the next ranking officials stepped into their places, and if it was the intention of the attackers to break down the leadership of Nekka by the blow delivered to its capital, the attempt failed. Adapting itself to the conditions forced upon it by the unknown foe, the government issued orders for the evacuation of the cities, instructing each urban family to take shelter with a designated rural household. The army necessarily had to hold the fortified positions, but even it was spread out as much as possible.

And the whole population gave up the last hope of escaping the fate that threatened.

Another long wait followed. It seemed inexplicable, the leisureliness with which the invaders took the situation. Where events had proved that they need fear no effective opposition, one would not have looked for delay. Yet they did delay, and a year passed, a year during which murder and disease decimated whole districts.

In all Nekka there were none but haggard faces. No one but saw close friends or relatives break under the strain and die according to their make-ups; some deaths of quick violence, others the less dramatic but even more horrible death of long-drawn illness. Friend greeted friend with only a mute stare of hopelessness. Few mothers could summon a smile of encouragement for their own children. Where hope had failed, conversation seemed to be

only a waste of time, and people who had once chattered happily throughout the day and half the night now went about wordless, or with only a short and often surly word when necessity obliged. The great food and material factories being shut, the material side of life was flung backward many centuries in everything except warlike preparations. For the army, trained to know no possible course except resistance to the end, no matter how plainly evident that end might be, kept at its work. It was the only part of the Nekkan civilization which retained its morale. And it was not the morale of hope; for even there all hope was dead.

After the destruction of the capital, the great scientific laboratories at Nekkalota were broken up, as it was too dangerous to leave them in such a conspicuous place, at the mercy of such a raid as had wiped the capital from the surface of Nekka. To Corring was assigned the task of striving to re-establish communication with the source of that strange warning, for after the events of the last year or more, no one could doubt that it had been a warning. He took his corps of assistants far into the Nekkan mountains, where he established new laboratories which were as cunningly hidden as Nekkan arts could manage. And night and day the instruments were watched, with hopeless eyes, though no word ever appeared on the waiting tapes.

In their cunningly concealed laboratory in the remote mountain chasm, Corring and his coworkers still watched the Corring instruments for some further word which might throw a gleam of hope over the gloomy future which faced Nekka. But more and more of their time was absorbed by tense-faced watching of the television screens which mirrored the happenings of the hour on the planet. Through the screens they had seen the gray raiders floating above the rocking capital, had

seen the scenes of despair which were enacted everywhere on the surface of the ill-fated planet.

Then came the great invasion, when, so long as they obeyed their orders, Corring and his helpers could do nothing but clench their hands helplessly and stare with desperation into the television screens as the Drubbans began the drive which meant the murder of a civilization.

THE first warning was a short bulletin from the observatory: "Fleet of enemy ships taking off from second moon. Heading for point in space where Nekka will be in eighteen hours."

An hour later a second bulletin followed: "Many enemy space-ships leaving second moon headed after advance guard which left hour ago. Rough estimates of number in advance guard sixty, in main body following about five hundred."

A third bulletin still later told of yet another and greater body of ships. After that the news was of interest only to the military. To others it did not matter, for after their recent demonstration of power it did not seem to make any difference whether the invaders came in five hundred or in five thousand of their deadly vehicles.

The wisdom of Nekka in evacuating its cities was soon manifest, for, arriving punctually eighteen hours after the hope-destroying announcement from Aberlun, the great gray ships sought out every city of any size, and the horrified Nekkans saw from their fields great clouds of flame-shot smoke rising from the spots where their mighty cities had been, while the ground quivered continually with the great explosions, as though it were writhing under the shock of planet-shaking quakes.

Within the short space of six hours no place large enough to be an inviting target remained, though the great guns of the army spat fire

viciously and the death-rays flared greenly aloft from their hidden engines. The only discernible effect of the barrage of rays and shells was the destruction brought down on the forts from which they emanated; for the attacking craft, seemingly unscathed, would turn on each fort as soon as it disclosed its position; there would be a single explosion, and nothing but a gaping crater would mark the spot where elaborate defense works had stood. The single guns in the fields fared better, for but few of them were destroyed, but whether because the enemy were unable to locate them, or because they were deemed too insignificant to be worth the effort which their destruction would require, no one could know.

The few airships which ventured to approach the invaders were quickly brought down in flames before they managed to get close enough to inflict damage, if indeed they could have harmed the seemingly impenetrable gray hulks which bore the Drubbans. Before the graphic screens Corring and his friends marked in the failure of this defense the end of hope for Nekkan life.

Having blasted the Nekkan cities from existence, the invading forces gathered and settled down on the plains of Allwan, driving the unfortunate inhabitants before them in maddened terror. Then it was that the Nekkans made their supreme effort.

From hidden hangars everywhere fast planes appeared, took on their loads of soldiers and arms; and before night the strange fleet on the Allwan plains was hemmed in on all sides. Not a soldier there had any idea that he could be effective against the enemy when the latter should sally forth, yet it was all that their commanders could do to prevent them from dashing themselves blindly against the huge gray ships,

so great was the relief which came with the chance for action.

And still no sign came from within the ships, which were indeed as windowless as they had appeared to be to the astronomers at Aberlun.

Darkness came, and Nekka kept the plain bright with the light of many flares, expecting every moment to see the foe attack.

Morning came, and with it the first sign of life from within the ships. Officers, peering through their glasses, saw doors open simultaneously in all of the cars as though at some unheard signal. Huge, lumbering shapes clambered out clumsily, enough like human beings in form for there to be no doubt of their kinship, yet their like had never been seen on Nekka before, at least within the knowledge of the Nekkan race. For the coming of that car which had been buried beneath the Merling gravels twelve thousand years before was far beyond the recollection of the race. Huge the strangers were, standing fully twenty feet tall, and stocky, pudgy, their color a weird tone of greenish gray. But the strangest thing about them was the slow deliberation of their movements. It seemed incredible that such slow-moving beings could have handled anything which moved with the wasplike swiftness of their space-cars, for it would require a touch of lightning quickness on the controls to guide and control them as they had darted about the day before on their mission of destruction.

That mystery was solved when after them there came a swarm of pigmies; creatures which would look small beside any man. Darting in and out among the huge lumbering forms of the gray-green Drubbans, they looked even smaller than they were. They outnumbered the giants three to one, and in fact it was on the basis of that ratio that they took their places in the invading array—each

giant followed, as by his dogs, by three of the dwarfs.

That day there was better planning in the Nekkan army than in that of the invaders. For the mistake which the strangers made in attacking with their pigmy slaves proved in the final analysis to be their undoing, though it could not prevent the virtual extinction of the Nekkan race. For the order went among the Nekkan forces: "Keep out of the way of the giants, but bend all of your energies toward exterminating the pigmies. Our observers at Aberlun say that the second moon is now deserted; the invaders, staking all on a single blow, are attacking with all of their forces, holding nothing in reserve. It is obvious that they depend upon their pigmy slaves to accomplish their quick movements, and if we can destroy the smaller strangers, we shall have a respite in which to prepare our resistance to the giants."

WHOEVER was responsible for that order had analyzed the situation accurately, except in one particular. The end of that day of desperate conflict found the pigmies wiped from the face of Nekka, their very remains annihilated by the disintegrating effect of the Nekkan rays of war. With them had perished fully half of the defending army. But it was then that the full horror of the situation finally penetrated the consciousness of the Nekkans. The gigantic invaders were virtually immortal!

It is not difficult to understand why, when one takes time for cool reflection. They had come from a planet far removed from their sun. Its year measured more than a thousand of the Nekkan years; its day lasted years of Nekkan time. It was not only natural but inevitable that life processes on Drubba should be in accord with its slower time. The life-span of a Drubban would cover

a thousand generations of Nekkan life; his movements would seem to a Nekkan to be correspondingly slow. Drubbans were present in the invading army who had been a part of that scouting expedition which had lost the member that had been dug up from the old bed of the Merling twelve thousand Nekkan years later.

But the horrible thing about it, the fact which did in truth spell the end of things to the horrified Nekkans in this emergency, was that even though it were possible to inflict a mortal wound on a Drubban (and during the battle they had showed themselves to be immune to the effects of the strongest Nekkan rays), even if it could be possible to kill one, the time it would take him to die would be measured by months of Nekkan time, and during much of that time he would still be in full possession of his destructive faculties.

As the terrible realization came home to the Nekkans, they broke in panic, even their officers joining the mad rush to get beyond sight of the great green things that could not die.

And the Drubbans, advancing deliberately but relentlessly, spread slowly over the land, a great green wave of destruction which searched out each Nekkan and, disdainful of science, tore him to pieces with great green hands of pudgy flesh, unmindful of what scratches the Nekkans in their mad but fruitless struggles might chance to inflict.

It was a task of some difficulty to the Drubbans, too, however leisurely it may have seemed to the terrified refugees or to others who had the same consciousness of time as they. For, to the time sense of the invaders, the entire event was measured by the time which a few Drubban hours would fill. To their minds, their movements were swift and effective as they pursued and clutched the smaller enemy who danced in and out among them with

the speed of a fly dodging the swatter. It required persistence to catch and swat the "flies," but Drubba had learned to be persistent during the million years of its racial history, and finally, after what to the Drubbans was only the part of a day, though to the dying Nekkans many months, all had been killed except what few had managed to get into holes in the rougher mountains where the Drubbans did not think it worth their while to follow. Even so, on our earth, we allow the wolves to exist when they confine their activities to the rough lands where it is too much trouble for us to pursue.

During that day when the two mutually antagonistic civilizations were locked in their struggle for survival, the Corring instruments were unwatched in their mountain hiding-place. There was not a man in the laboratory who did not live that day before the television screens. Nerves and muscles straining to the breaking-point, at the end of that day of horror, when the Nekkan forces finally broke into disorganized flight, each of the far-off watchers fell back, shaken and weak as though he, too, had shared physically in the death struggle. As they looked into one another's pallid faces, the same thought staring from the dilated eyes of all, for a time no one broke the silence of realization. Then Corring's lips moved, so feebly that if the others understood his words it was rather because the same words were in their own minds than because they heard his voice.

"This is the end!" was all he said, and the others nodded in voiceless agreement.

Then, the last purposeful effort to save the race of Nekka having failed completely, fate took a hand in the guise of an instinctive act, born in the heart of Corring of a strange parentage: despair, and his love for Elfa.

His arms thrown aloft in a gesture of despair which the others recognized and shared in, he staggered to his room, and in a few minutes returned, clothed for a long journey, his pockets stuffed with a month's supply of concentrated nourishment.

"You men are free." He paused a moment on the threshold, as the others clustered about. "It is the end. You can stay here and die afterward, or go out and die quickly—whatever way you wish it to be. Myself—I am choosing to go."

As he stumbled down the chasm, all thought was obliterated from his mind save one: to reach Elfa before the end.

IF THIS were a love story and not the history of the death of a civilization, the course of Corring in his search for his love might be told; for it was inconceivably long and difficult. Under the circumstances it was so improbable of success as to be an impossibility. A mathematician would be obliged to recognize that the chance of its having a successful conclusion as a mathematical probability would be less than one out of billions; so that it is difficult to understand that it was successful, unless one accepts the possibility of the interference of—something.

The fact that, once he had found her, the desire to live should have returned again in full force, is not so hard to understand, nor even the fact that almost two months after he had staggered out in search of death, he staggered back, up the rocky gorge, bearing the almost lifeless body of the girl; though that last fact, the flight toward their refuge, when they were obliged to travel by night in constant fear and, for days at the last, foodless and often without water, would seem incredible enough unless one granted the existence of a fate weaving for Nekka again.

And then it did seem that fate was inclining toward the dismal rem-

nants of the once great race. For, the very night that Corring fell over the door-sill of his hiding-place, to be gathered up with Elfa and tenderly cared for by the few who were left of his assistants, the instruments began to write!

They wrote for some time before the glad fact was known. For, not unnaturally, the hopeless men, only waiting for death, had long since given up their watch. It was pure chance—or was it?—that one in passing an instrument should glance at it carelessly, to be galvanized into shrieking activity by what he saw.

"Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" The words, springing into vivid black existence on the background of the white tapes, were again coming, endlessly. The inarticulate shouts brought all up, breathlessly.

"Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" Over and over, as before; then, finally, the message that they were waiting for with bated breath: "Nekka! You have one chance yet. I am forbidden to tell you this, but I have evaded my guards and if you will take this quickly there is still time before they come. Make sure, for this is the last time. The punishment for this disobedience will be total extinction for me as an intelligent entity, but since I too was a Nekkan, I do this gladly.

"Your only chance now lies in destroying the invaders by means of an epidemic. Take these directions carefully. If followed exactly they will enable you to create and breed bacteria, which, though harmless to yourselves, will within two weeks of Drubban time destroy the entire Drubban race as completely as you destroyed the pigmy slaves they took from Yarru. For them, there is no antidote to the venom of these organisms."

The directions were far too complicated for us to understand. Only a science which has attained the point reached by Nekkan science could have translated the directions into action. It is a tribute to those half-

dead survivors of the Nekkan race that, affrighted themselves at the prospect, they succeeded.

You might think that they began at once. But they did not. The promise had been deliverance from their enemies after two weeks of Drubban time. But that meant virtually a lifetime for Nekkan beings, and after such a period, would any of that pitifully small remnant of the Nekkan race be left?

Yet their unknown friend in the Beyond of space was right when he had said they had no other hope. And there was one gleam of hope, the fruit of that act, seemingly so purposeless, yet perhaps purposeful on the part of some greater Intellect, when Corring, in despair, had gone to seek for Elfa.

For, after long months during which each step of the experiment was taken only after long and careful checking against the well-guarded instructions, the effort to create living organisms was successful. Nekkans had actually created life! But the achievement which once would have brought a thrill produced only a gasp of relaxation from the little group who had breathlessly awaited the verdict. For only the first step had been taken.

There was no certainty that the organisms which had been created in that midnight moment had the needed attributes, though the conviction was in the minds of all that they had the promised power; for had not the other statements of the unknown friend proved true? And, even so, there remained the task of communicating the organisms to the Drubban invaders, then of holding on until the promised deliverance came.

The success of that last desperate effort depended largely upon the quick and thorough dissemination of the bacteria to the Drubbans, who by then had spread over the whole surface of the planet and were busy in erecting their fantastic habi-

tations. It was evident that the chance of success was increased with every new focus of infection which could be established. And there were left only eighteen weakened Nekkans for the fearful task.

The plan, when finally matured, was for fourteen to set out and travel by night, and with the benefit of Corring's experience in evading the great green invaders, for each to reach a definite place before releasing the death-dealing bacteria. By starting at least fourteen different foci of infection at strategic points, it seemed that the epidemic, if as deadly as they had been promised, would spread through the green-hued race in the space of considerably less than the two weeks of Drubban time.

Necessarily, the chance of any one of the fourteen returning alive was nil, but there was no hesitation on the part of any as they set off in the dark of night almost a year later. For each knew that he was doomed anyway, and life had no great value to any of the chosen messengers of death to the Drubbans.

Corring and Elfa, as the nucleus of the new civilization on Nekka, were to remain behind, with the two medical men of the group, whose duty would be to keep them in health through the long period of waiting. For theirs was the task of living until the invaders had disappeared from the face of the planet, then to come forth with their progeny to found a new Nekka.

THERE was no word in the months following the grim-faced departure of the avengers. None of them ever returned with word; none had expected to return. The four left in their lonely hiding-place did not dare to take the risk of venturing forth to ascertain the success of their offensive measures. All they could do was to wait for the forty years of Nekkan chronology which corresponded

with the two weeks of Nekkan time that the bacteria required for their work.

Two years of Nekkan time passed. There was now a fifth member of the little party—a child of a few months. Hope would have burned higher had the little group had any way of knowing whether success was attending the fight on the Drubbans by the bacteria. But, completely in the dark, rendered pessimistic again by the passage of so many months of loneliness, no one dared to hope.

Then came the proof, although it was not welcome when in the coming it reduced the number of the surviving group to three. For it was the two physicians who were called upon to follow the footsteps of the fourteen in sacrificing themselves for the good of the race. In their going, though, they left a ray of hope for the two remaining adults, for the thing that took their lives was the proof of the successful spread of the synthetic bacteria through the green-gray race.

A sudden fearful sound broke on the mountain quiet, reverberating from far down the canyon. The five in their hiding-place had never heard its like before. While they peered down the gorge in terror, the contorted figure of one of the Drubbans came into view, bounding up the stream bed with the ludicrous movements which we see in a slow-motion picture. The creature seemed to be in frightful pain, mad as though from the delirium of fever.

At first the four hoped it would pass on up the canyon, but some vagary of fate drew to its attention the little-worn and carefully hidden path which led up to the refuge.

Elfa, her face blanched by fear, clasped the child in her arms and fled lightly up the path behind the laboratory, back into the mountains. Corring leapt forward to take his place beside the two physicians. The others thrust him back quickly.

“Go!” The one called Ludnor growled the word out. “Go with her and hide above and watch. We will try to stop the thing. If we do, come back. If not, keep on and—good luck!”

Ludnor must have the credit for what was done. For, realizing that what was needed was not the eventual destruction of the Drubban—the bacteria would accomplish that—but rather to put it out of action instantly, he wasted no time in reaching for any weapon. Instead, he ran directly toward the thing to attract its attention, then turned and fled toward the brink of the five-hundred-foot cliff below the trail.

The Drubban, seeing him, pursued, all the venom of its tortured body finding vent in the chance to catch and rend an enemy. Ordinarily, Ludnor would have out-distanced the clumsy pursuer in the rough ground in which he was at home, but it was no part of his plan to do so. Closer and closer he let the green thing come, until, his movements carefully timed, he reached the brink of the precipice with the other just one bound behind. He dodged then, and would have escaped as the Drubban plunged over to land below, a broken hulk, but the poison working in the veins of the pursuer had quickened its motions abnormally and it reached out an arm as it swept past the dodging Nekkan, striking him full with the momentum of tons. The two vanished together, and there was only a single cry which arose from the throat of the Drubban just before the thud which told that they had been broken on the rocks below.

The end came to the other a few moments later, when a second Drubban, which had followed the first unnoticed when the attention of all had been riveted on the other, threatened to bring disaster in spite of the sacrifice of the life of Ludnor.

For the second physician, unnerved by the spectacle of his col-

league's death, hesitated too long. The creature caught him close in its fat green arms. The cries of pain from the victim mingled for a moment with the hellish sounds from the Drubban's throat, then ceased. And still the monster tore and tore, and in the tearing lost its chance for further destruction. For the effort seemed to use up the last spark of the green-hued thing's vitality, and even as it let what was left of the Nekkan slide from its bloody hands, it toppled over, dead.

THAT night, Corring sat late in his laboratory, working, while Elfa sat near by, watching. Suddenly he raised his head, and the girl saw in his eyes the glow of hope. Her own face lighted as she leaned toward him eagerly.

"Elfa," he breathed in a tone which told plainly that he could hardly believe it yet, himself. "Elfa, I can't believe it, but it's true. The Drubban's blood gives cultures of the bacteria that we made here! It killed him! If it works as quickly on the others—we may not have to wait for forty years. But"—as he saw the eagerness beginning to grow on her face—"but we mustn't be too impatient. It might kill this individual in a short time, and still take many years to spread through the whole land. But it's working!"

That night for the first time since the terrible thing had commenced years before, the two stood under the stars and looked up with a realization of what the world, the universe, is. Without hope, there had been no beauty in the world. Given hope again, the far twinkling worlds again became eternal symbols of the majesty and beauty of life which extends through all space and things and time.

Shoulder to shoulder they stood with their eyes fixed on the tiny points of light which perhaps were great suns shedding their life-giving

light on other races. Corring drew his woman against his side.

"It will be a long wait, Elfa, but it is our job. Our job as a part of the same life that makes those stars shine, Elfa. And afterward, who knows but that sometime we can go out and visit those worlds? Maybe that is where our Unknown Friend was, when he disobeyed and saved our lives.

* * * * *

IT WAS the sudden silence that followed the ending of the even droning of Crowley's voice which aroused me. I looked around through the smoke-filled room. The others were blinking their eyes as though they, too, felt that they had been dreaming. Crowley was silently folding the faded manuscript.

"Well, you've heard it," his voice broke in on my thoughts again, still dreamily. "What do you think?"

"It couldn't be," Wallace's voice answered for the rest, and it, too, sounded as though it were speaking from another world. "*It—couldn't be! But, Crowley—it could be, for all we know!* Something of the sort must have happened somewhere in the universe in all the eternity of time and space that is available for its happening. The only part of it that I would doubt would be that a human, even Breinbar, could have learned of it."

"That part, Wallace," Crowley's voice carried its utter conviction. "that part might well be true, if only the other could. For I knew Breinbar, and I would say that if there is in the universe a pool of such knowledge, he might have fathomed it indeed!"

We did not discuss the thing afterward, yet I am sure that in the minds of the others who heard it that night in the smoke-filled atmosphere of the old computing-room, it has occupied, as in my mind, more time than any

other thought. I can not drive from my mind the picture of Charles Breinbar, sitting at his desk late into the night, putting on paper the word-description of the pictures which came into his mind from that reservoir of the knowledge of the universe. For that is the way it is pictured in my mind—that he saw things in his mind just as they had happened in a far universe at a time ago perhaps measured by the life of

a world—saw them enacted as actual happenings. As they actually happened? Or as they happened in his imagination? Ah! You have me there.

But at times, I, like Crowley, half believe, when I recall those words of Wallace's: "It could be, for all we know. Something of the sort must have happened—somewhere in the universe in all the eternity of time and space that are available. . . ."