



JULES VERNE'S TOMBSTONE AT AMIENS
PORTRAYING HIS IMMORTALITY

AMAZING STORIES

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Our Cover

this month depicts a scene from "Radio Mates" by Benjamin Witwer, in which the scientist—at one time the victim of a vicious plot—is ready to turn the aerial switch, which will cause his sweetheart, in the mammoth transmitter tube, to disappear gradually and be transmitted through space by ether wave action, and be reproduced at some distant point, where he expects to follow immediately in like manner.

In Our Next Issue:

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, by H. G. Wells (a serial in 2 parts) Part I. In his characteristic manner, this famous author of scientification, gives us a vital, fast-moving story about a not too impossible attack upon the Earth by Martians sometime in the future. He gives us some strange and astounding ideas about the Martians, their means and methods of warfare, and adds to the realism and picturesqueness of the story by his vivid descriptions of well-known localities in England.

THE RETREAT TO MARS, by Cecil B. White. The discovery of a complete Martian library in a cave in Africa furnishes this leading author-astronomer of the West ample opportunity to tell an absorbing story of vivid detail about Martians. The mathematics contained in the story only add to its *verisemblance*. This is an unusual story, excellently told.

THE CHEMICAL MAGNET, by Victor Thaddeus. The suggestions of what chemistry in the future may yet accomplish is largely responsible for the atmosphere of sober reality which pervades this rather wonderful story. We know that the ocean contains gold in enormous quantities. Why not extract it?

ELECTRO-EPISODED in A. D. 2025, by E. D. Skinner. This is humorous story, in which radio out-radios itself, creating many marvelous wonders that seem extremely real and possible; it is a very interesting combination of wit, science and fiction.

THE SHADOW ON THE SPARK, by Edward S. Sears. To possess perfect health and a robust physique, does not mean that death from shock is impossible. On the other hand, if such a person dies, apparently from the effect of an operation for the amputation of a leg, some suspicion as to the real cause of his death is justifiable. Our new author weaves his science through this unusual murder story in a thoroughly ingenious manner.

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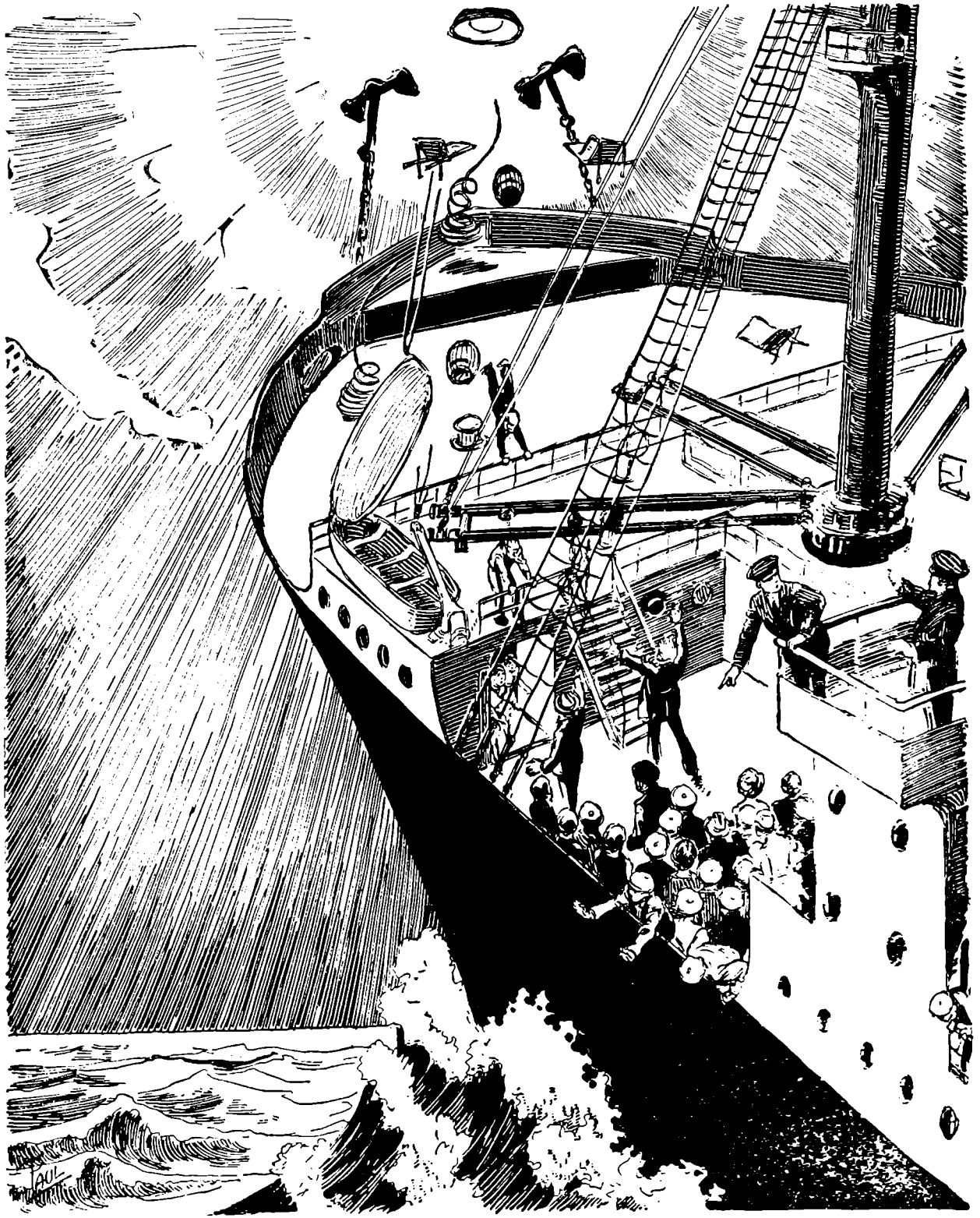
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The **ETHER SHIP** of **OLTOR**

By S. Maxwell Coder



FIRST HONORABLE MENTION IN THE \$500 PRIZE COVER CONTEST

Awarded to S. Maxwell Coder, 6926 Paschall Avenue, Philadelphia, Penna., for "The Ether Ship of Oltor."

THE ETHER SHIP OF OLTOR

By S. MAXWELL CODER

New York Bulletin, November 16, 2034:

The earth will shortly witness, and may even take part in, a most astounding astronomical phenomenon now in the making, says Professor Albert Dunhill, of the observatory at Stone Mountain, Vermont. According to calculations made by him, and independently by Zondersteitz, of Berlin, a wandering star and its satellites will pass near the solar system in a year and a half. It is a question whether the gravitational force of the sun will have the effect of so deflecting the group from its erratic course as to destroy the equilibrium existing between the members of the solar system. If this should happen, chaos is considered inevitable, but the chances are overwhelmingly against such an eventuality.

Albany Ledger, December 2, 2034:

Aaron Steiner, a produce raiser near Middleburg, declared today that his studies in the Bible have revealed a prophecy to the effect that the end of the world is due to arrive next year in December. He believes the onrushing celestial bodies recently discovered moving toward the sun will cause the earth to burn up, fulfilling the ancient prediction of the Hebrew soothsayers.

New York Bulletin, November 26, 2035:

Earth's End Certain, Says Swedish Scientist—No Noticeable Effect Here, Other Astronomers State

So great has been the change in the course of the wandering planetary system which was discovered moving in the general direction of the earth last fall that it is practically impossible for it to leave again without completely disrupting the whole solar system, according to Andrew Jensen, astronomical observer at the University of Stockholm. He believes that the two suns will rush together, and that the earth will be destroyed.

However, other scientists, both here and abroad, are of the opinion that although there may be temporary changes in the orbits of the outermost planets, no great effect will be felt on our globe.

Bulletin, January 7, 2036:

On the eve of what promises to be the most stupendous celestial event the world will ever have known, scientific circles are still in controversy over the question of the degree to which the orbit of the earth will be affected. The theory that chaos will result has been definitely abandoned, but there are some men of science who think the earth may be thrown so far from its course that it will receive insufficient heat from the sun to maintain human life in the future. The height of whatever disturbance there may be will be reached in the middle of February. The exact date cannot be foretold.

From "A History of the Cataclysm":

During all of that perilous time ending in February, 2036, an atmosphere of indescribable gloom and fear hung over the entire earth. The arguments of the learned ones concerning the possibility of our world being blotted out; the strange appearance of the sky at night; the unusual climatic conditions, aroused unreasoning panic in the populace. Religious fanatics, with their reiterations of the prophecies of doom, their dogma of an all-pervading evil spirit holding sway over the whole world, aroused dormant instincts to dependence on a higher power, and the people went religion-mad. This feeling led to unbelievable demonstrations of intolerance and persecution. Those intellectual persons who had previously begun to hope that the human race had

at last broken the fetters of medieval mental bondage, despaired of humanity ever achieving freedom of thought.

As the fateful night of the fourteenth neared, the situation became alarming. Suicides were frequent, and many went insane; while due to the unparalleled warmth in the air, with a superabundance of moisture, pestilence broke out. The green death spread to the four corners of the earth. Within a week of the start of the plague, thousands were stricken. . . . On the day of the impending catastrophe, horror of solitude drove residents of the rural communities to seek the multitudes already congregated in the cities. Excitement reached a feverish pitch. When evening approached, a roar could be heard issuing from the massed throngs—a sullen roar which rolled over the neighboring countryside like the knell of death.

Then, as darkness settled down, a strange silence came over the cities. There was no sound of traffic, no tumult of voices. Here and there a hysterical woman sobbed or someone prayed, making more acute the oppressive quiet. Everyone waited, staring at the heavens, where nothing was as usual. The sky was suffused with weird colors; the moon came up early in an altered position; the bright misty blotch marking the oncoming celestial wanderer had become vastly larger than on the preceding night. The stars shone but dimly in comparison, while the lurid radiance cast on the earth by the new sun made the night take on a ghastly hue.

Eleven o'clock passed; twelve o'clock. As the half hour struck, there came the first signs that the crisis was at hand. Showers of meteorites suddenly flashed across the sky, dazzling in their brilliance. While they rained in from the outer spaces, a tremor shook the ground. A sickening feeling came over everyone that the earth was no longer secure, that it was parting company with the sun and falling away into space. The pallid crescent of the new moon slowly rotated, changed form and became blood red, as the horizon colored in the west and the sun, our old sun, rose near to where it had set a few hours before.

Pandemonium broke loose. The most terrifying sights were to be seen that any human ever beheld. Amid the cries of the populace as it rushed madly from place to place could be heard the shrieks of the weak, trampled under foot. As the swaying ground began to topple huge buildings, an enormous tidal wave came in from the sea and swept all before it. . . .

Frantic messages, in other parts of the world, told of the sea receding from the shore, exposing the floor of the ocean as far as the eye could reach; of hurricanes in progress; of daylight turning into darkness.

Just as word was spread by the observatories that the worst was over, and the collision of suns had been providentially averted, there came a red ball through the sky directly toward the earth. Another sickening shudder of the ground, and then all was still, while looming large overhead appeared a new world.

Clipping from the combined New York papers, March 6, 2036.:

Reports from the observatories state that the new planet visible in the heavens is not Mars thrown out of its orbit, as was first supposed, but a member of the system which came so near to destroying the earth. The solar system has lost its outermost planet Neptune, to the attraction of the wandering sun, and has in turn captured Neone, as our new neighbor has been named.

It is an interesting question whether life exists on Neone. Its atmosphere and temperature are similar to those of the earth, but no signs of vegetation or habitation have been discovered. The red color is largely continuous, except at several regions of light blue, believed to be seas. After further recovery of the peoples of the earth from the effects of the catastrophe, efforts at wireless communication will be made.

TWO men stood at the rail of the liner *Empress of Ceylon* late one afternoon, watching the rise of Neone. A beautiful deep crimson, it left the purple sea in the east and slowly climbed through the heavens. With a number of their

ON awarding the First Honorable Mention in our \$500.00 prize contest, we selected this story principally because it is a very clever interplanetary type of story, that somehow reads quite differently from the usual run of such stories. The science in this story is excellent, and the whole treatment somehow reads exceedingly plausibly. There is an abundant amount of adventure contained in it. Particular attention is called to the excellent science throughout the story, and we are certain that you will enjoy an interesting twenty-five minutes of entertainment in perusing this fine story.

fellow passengers, they were absorbed in the sight, when suddenly one of them cried out:

"Say, Bob, what in the world is that thing, out there? Looks like a balloon."

He pointed to a silvery ball, until then unnoticed by anyone, above the sea toward the south. It

moved through the air in the direction of the ship, at a distance of several miles. Forgetting the still novel sight of the new planet, the men moved to a more advantageous position and watched the oncoming object with increasing surprise.

"Well, it certainly is novel construction for aircraft, Frank." Professor Robert Staunton looked puzzled. "Do you notice the absence of the usual exhaust hum? And the fixity of its angle to the horizon, its unwavering path, suggest gyroscopic control of some sort. If it keeps its present course, it should pass directly overhead."

The odd looking airship, if such it could be called, rapidly neared the liner, permitting closer observation of its peculiarities. It was a gigantic sphere, some 600 feet in diameter, made of a silver-white metal, except for two projecting caps at opposite ends of a diagonal axis, and a sort of semi-cylindrical ring encircling it, midway between the caps. Long rods projected from depressions spaced evenly around the red band. The caps and ring were composed of red metal, polished like the rest. The strangest thing about the sphere, however, was the presence of two blue-green balls of fire hanging suspended by faintly luminous cords from the centers of the caps.

As it approached the ship, its speed decreased, and on getting directly overhead, it stopped and slowly descended. Here a singular thing happened. Every eye had been on the globe, and the people on the deck had begun to retreat from the menace of the hanging balls of fire, now dangerously near them, when a shout came from the watch:

"The sea is rising!"

A glance over the rail more than verified his startled announcement. *The ship was on the top of a slowly growing hill of water!* To a distance of several hundred feet, the water gradually fell away on a steep incline, while beyond, could be seen the disturbed surface of what had been a placid and level sea a few minutes before. Frank Robinson, the nearer of the two friends to the forward end of the upper deck, came to a surprising conclusion.

"It's those mysterious fire balls, Bob! They must possess a powerful attractive force. Look at the chairs and things flying into them!"

From both ends of the ship, loose objects moved upward to the luminous masses as iron is drawn to a suspended magnet. Free ropes stood straight up in the air, and a lifeboat had turned upside down in its davits, where it strained at its fastenings. The passengers, thoroughly frightened, began to feel the pull on themselves. They huddled together as near to the center of the boat as they could get, or went below in terror. A strong wind had sprung up, singing through the wires, masts and stanchions as it, too, rushed toward the center of attraction. Great waves, carried by the sudden blast, came in from the surrounding ocean, climbed the slope and broke against the sides of the vessel, throwing great showers of spray upward. The spray, instead of covering the decks, kept right on going upwards until it vanished in the flame—cold flame, for no heat was perceptible.

At the captain's orders, shots were fired, but they only served to make the women more frightened.

Staunton went below and procured his automatic from the cabin, and when he returned, he informed his companion that the engines were stalled, the lights had gone out, and all clocks and watches refused to function. "Apparently," he said, "every electrical and mechanical device on the boat has been made inactive. There is nothing wrong with the generators as far as the chief engineer can discover, and he believes the engines have only stopped because the ignition current is in some manner short-circuited. All the storage batteries have become hot, through rapid exhaustion, although they have not been in use."

With an accuracy born of long practice, he placed his shots carefully on what appeared to be the weakest points in the terrifying shape above them, but as the lowermost part of the sphere was three hundred feet overhead, not much could be seen as to the effect of the bullets.

The hill of water had now become a veritable mountain. The first mate, who had been peering intently sidewise at the point where the sea reached its normal level, announced his belief that the whole thing was in motion.

"Look at that, fellows," he said excitedly, "if this water pile isn't moving at a lively clip, then I'm no seaman!"

HE had hardly finished speaking, when land showed at the horizon. It rapidly enlarged, and in a few minutes, the precipitous sides of Hendrick's Island, once a bird refuge, came into view. On toward it the liner was carried, until, near the beach below the cliffs, it stopped moving. The fire balls decreased in size, the water subsided and the *Empress of Ceylon* grounded in twenty-five feet of water.

The captain bellowed an oath, as the sphere moved on ahead over the island, leaving him stranded. He ordered the engines started, and no difficulty was experienced, but it was obviously useless to attempt to get free without aid. The sphere settled low above the cliff, hanging motionless. As those on the vessel watched, a door in the red ring silently opened downward, forming a platform, to which a man stepped. In the semi-darkness, he could not be seen clearly, but he seemed to be dressed in red, with a strange looking headgear. Quiet suddenly came over the noisy, excited people on the captive vessel, the silence of expectancy. Everyone looked upward. The man on the platform stood motionless with arms outstretched. To the amazement of the listening groups, he spoke no word.

Robert Staunton turned to his friend. With a catch in his voice, as if he were suppressing strong emotion, he said:

"Frank, are you thinking about Neone, and gold, and have you an idea that that man will take us back to deep water if we give him all we have? I'm not joking!"

Astonished, his friend looked at him. "Why yes! Those thoughts of mine—how did you know? What does it mean? And listen—several are speaking of the same subject." A low murmur of discussion had begun to run through the crowd.

Staunton grasped his friend's arm. "Do you remember the days when we fellows used to experiment with mental telepathy? For some reason, I have always taken the thing pretty seriously, and I often have felt that I knew what was going on in another person's mind, without always a conscious effort at reception. *I believe that man is from Neone, and is attempting to communicate with us by thought waves!* Come with me to the captain!"

They hurried to the bridge, where the ship's officers were discussing the situation. Staunton stated his belief, which was received with incredulity by all but one of them, who admitted having, rather subconsciously, thoughts on the same subject. Staunton then called six men at random from among the passengers, and on demonstrating that four of them had even discussed, half seriously, the possibility of the people in the sphere being from Neone, with intentions of stealing valuables from the liner, he commanded respect for his opinion.

"When a scientific man like him says it, there must be somethin' in it," a second class traveller offered.

Unwillingly, the captain allowed himself to be persuaded to get a quantity of gold from the safe, where a shipment of bullion was stored. Staunton had now assumed command of the situation.

"The man up there says he has made me his officer, and he is concentrating his thoughts on me. He wants all the gold in the ship placed on the bridge, and everyone is to retire from it."

The captain permitted a small portion only of the bullion to be used as Staunton directed, but he left the bridge readily enough, anticipating the triumph of his loudly voiced doubts.

For a moment, nothing happened. Then another door in the machine opened, and a long, snake-like rod descended and moved out to the ship. When the pyramidal end was immediately over the gold, it became faintly luminescent. The gold was gently lifted, and the rod moved back into the open door, which closed behind it. Everyone gasped.

The man disappeared from the platform for a moment, only to return and stand motionless again.

"That fool captain will destroy us all," Robinson heard his friend mutter. Staunton climbed to the bridge, and addressed the assemblage below.

"Listen to me! The man you see up there says he has indicators which tell him we have still a larger quantity of gold on board. He wants it all, every bit of it, and unless we comply with his request, he will cause the liner to be dashed up against the cliff. We have all seen that he has us entirely in his power, and it is useless to resist. The captain is right in trying to protect his owners' interests, but if everybody on board will sign a statement absolving him from blame, I'm sure he will do whatever he can to save the liner and the lives of everyone on board. I tell you, the situation is desperate! The creature in the globe is growing impatient, and this is the last thing he has to say."

THE captain, who knew when he was up against it, gave orders that the entire shipment of gold be placed on the bridge. Again the slender arm

came from the sphere, picked up the heavy boxes and conveyed them upward.

Soon after, the strange looking machine moved out over the liner, the fiery masses brightened and increased in size, the water rose and the liner floated free. It was conveyed to deeper water, after which its captor moved away and vanished over the horizon. Staunton took his friend aside.

"Frank, we are going to witness some of the strangest things anyone has ever seen, tonight. This affair is not ended, as far as you and I are concerned. That chap in the sphere told me a whole lot of things I did not see fit to pass on to the rest, and I gave a mental promise to visit him later this evening, after darkness had settled down completely. Are you game to come with me, to risk putting yourself completely in the power of the people who stole our gold? I assure you, they are more human than they seemed."

"Bob, you know better than to ask such a question. Has either of us ever balked where there was an adventure to be had? We have been in some pretty tight situations together, old man, and I'm with you any old time. Why the air of excitement? This thing must be more promising than you have led me to believe. What all do you know?"

"Except for the clear statement to the effect that they are from Neone, I know little. I gathered that gold is used for fuel in the machine, and that their supply is low, but I can't swear to the accuracy of my reception of either thought. Got anything below you want to take with you? We leave in half an hour."

Without vouchsafing any more information to his friend, Staunton led the way to their staterooms.

Shortly after dark, they stood at the rail at the stern of the liner, peering into the distance. Just what they expected to see, probably neither of them could have said, but certainly they were both surprised at what did appear.

Silently, except for a faint high-toned hum, two glittering metal conveyances, so irregular in form as to defy description, flew over the water from out of the darkness to the stern of the boat. Each was operated by a man, indistinctly outlined, seated on one of two seats at the centers of the devices, behind transparent shields. The machines stopped in midair, just outside the rail. Understanding what was expected, the two waiting men climbed from the deck into the seats alongside the shadowy figures.

Immediately the figures moved rods, and the tiny vessels of the air flew away in the direction the globe had gone earlier in the evening. Not a word did the pilots utter, but their passengers, through the medium of powerful unbidden thoughts, were apprized that they need have no fear, and that the trip would be of short duration. Indeed, they had hardly started, it seemed, when the glow of the cord ends of the giant ball marked the nearness of their destination. Both felt that they had travelled with incredible speed, knowing as they did that they must have gone several miles in that brief interval. A door was open in the red ring when they arrived, and the machines flew through, coming to a gentle stop on the floor within.

Finding themselves inside the sphere, the two friends clambered from their seats and looked about them. They were in a dimly lighted room, made of the same metal that formed the outside of the ring. As they turned to look at their guides, they gasped in astonishment. Revealed clearly for the first time, the pilots of the machines were seen to be absolutely naked, their skins of a bright red, approaching vermillion. At least six feet in height, they were splendidly formed, but they had one distinguishing feature which marked them unmistakably as beings from another world. A membranous blue-gray, wing-like substance grew from their upper extremities. From the forehead, where it was over a foot in width, it extended down the neck on either side, over the shoulders and along the arms. It decreased gradually in width as it approached the middle of the forearms, where it ended. The presence of this alar appendage, and the entire absence of ears, were the only visible differences between these people and human beings. Eyebrows and lashes they had, but no hair grew on their heads in back of the membranous webs, which were attached from the forehead to the middle of the cranium.

THE guides led the way up a metal stair, and through a long passage at the top, to a large room where several of the odd looking red men sat or reclined on couches of fine fur. One of them arose as the newcomers entered, and they sensed that he was the leader. He radiated power and strength of mind. By thought, he informed them that he was Oltor, inventor of the machine and chief of the party. Cognizant of their wonder at the appearance of his people, and of the multitude of questions running through their minds, he led his guests to a couch and conveyed to them the information they desired, although it was evident that he was waiting anxiously to question them as well.

"As you know, we are from Astarak, the blood-red planet captured by your sun during the recent collision of solar systems. We have come to your land Unuat on a voyage of discovery. Unexpected difficulties in interplanetary space caused such a great waste of our fuel, the metal I took this evening from your vessel, that our supply was almost exhausted when we chanced to come upon your conveyance with a quantity on board. Because of our urgent need for it, I was forced to use severe measures to secure all you had, which I trust has not given the impression to you that I would actually have carried out the threats I made. You see, one more day would have seen the end of my space annihilator, without fuel. It would have settled to the ground, and we would have been marooned here forever. In such a time of necessity, one must use whatever methods will serve, regardless of one's inclination.

"The fibrous webs which interest you so much are prolongations of our brain substance, for the purpose of thought reception and selection, and the propagation and directing of thought impulses from our brains. For short distances they are not neces-

sary, but when we desire to converse with someone far away, they serve the purpose of intensifying out-going waves and of detecting faint vibrations from afar. But how do you communicate ideas? What are the formations on the sides of your heads? Why do you wear a covering?"

Staunton explained that thought transference was as yet only a freak phenomenon on the earth; that speech and writing were the methods of intercourse. He demonstrated articulate speech, and gave all the information that occurred to him. The Astarakians, incapable of hearing, were likewise incapable of speaking. Oltor, possessed of a wonderfully acute tactile sense, as were all of his race, felt the vibrations in the air when Staunton talked, and expressed surprise at what was to him a new and remarkable thing. Following many explanations, they were shown through the machine.

The lighting system consisted of transparent tubes, containing a fine crystalline substance aglow with phosphorescent fire. Their guide told them that a continuous reversible chemical reaction went on in the tubes, producing cold light in the same manner certain lower forms of life produced it in specialized organs.

For motive and attractive power, a complicated system was shown the men that they did not quite understand, in spite of the pains to which Oltor went to make it clear. Each of the cabins of the "strain ring," as the red band around the middle of the sphere was called, was equipped with an engine of the sub-atomic centripetal type common on Neone, the ideal toward which world scientists had been directing their energies for over a hundred years. The atomic disintegration of gold was somehow accomplished in the engines, furnishing energy, in an amount incredible in its magnitude, to an inner globe of strange composition, which was kept in continuous rotation around the red metal axis of the machine. The exact nature of the motive power was possibly the most inexplicable part of the apparatus: Rotation of the inner ball caused a state of terrific strain in the ether at the region of the ring. At this point in the explanation, Staunton turned to his friend.

"Remember Einstein's theories? *Gravitational force is nothing more than a state of strain in the ether, the result of an immense concentration of mass.* I wonder if the earth's rotation hasn't got something to do with it as well?"

Because of the strain produced by the ball, a flow of vibratory energy from the universe came in through the receptors depending from the axis caps, and was dissipated along certain designated radial propelling rods which projected from concave depressions of insulating material in the center of each cabin. The reaction set up by the energy radiated by the rods caused motion of the sphere in the opposite direction, so that if the rods on only one side were activated, the machine moved away, while if all were turned on, the opposing reactions prevented movement and it stood still. Gravitational force was overcome in the same way. Rotation of the entire sphere about a vertical axis permitted movement in any direction.

In the main control room, Oltor demonstrated the method of operation of the machine. One controlling device regulated the speed of the centripetal engines; others governed the direction in which the universal energy was returned to the ether by selecting certain of the propelling shafts and inactivating others; a sort of neutralizing screen could be placed in the way of an internal energy flow, causing the generation of immense quantities of heat for use in interplanetary space; levers put into motion mechanism that opened doors and caused flexible procuring rods to dart forth, like the one which had been used to secure the gold.

It was in the control room that the men first closely observed the heavy silver-white metal used in constructing most of the equipment.

"Say, Frank, I believe this is an alloy of platinum!" Staunton, with difficulty, was lifting a stool.

"Platinum? This whole works made of our rarest metal? If that's so, why do they make such a fuss over a few pounds of gold?"

"Why are you so excited over that metal?" Oltor inquired.

"With two exceptions, it is the most highly prized and the scarcest metal to be found on our earth, worth more, by far, than the yellow substance you use for fuel. If you wish to make restitution for having forcibly removed gold from the ship, return to them half the weight of this, and they will be more than pleased with the bargain."

OLTOR gazed out of a transparent door at the sky, then moved a few levers and overhauled the liner, ploughing its way along through the sea in the darkness. As the deck became crowded, he lowered a few small articles and several chairs to the bridge, then Staunton descended, after promising to return with his and his friend's belongings, for an extended visit in the capacity of interpreters of the phenomena to be observed on the surface of the earth. The captain of the ship rather dubiously accepted the tools and chairs, but regained his humor when told by a man of the undoubted standing of the scientist that they were of platinum.

During the next few weeks, as agents for Oltor, the men purchased, in addition to a quantity of gold, which was a rare metal on Arastak, or Neone, certain representative books, pictures, machines and other things calculated to inform his people of life on the land of Unuat, as the earth was known to them.

The ship of space visited only one city, for hardly had they neared it when its telephonic and lighting systems were rendered inactive, due to the rush of energy from all around to the receptors. Thereafter, Staunton and Robinson took turns making their way by land to the civic centers. Oltor and his companions never descended. They refused to wear clothing, and they were advised against mingling with humans without it.

The collection of earth-made things was at last considered large enough, and the furnishings of the sphere were becoming scarce. Oltor had been testing various metals procured for him, and he seemed excited when, in replying to a query about steel,

Robinson told him that the metal was so plentiful that nearly all building frameworks, ocean going vessels, and machinery were made from it. Then, when Esma, second in command, suggested the acquisition of a liner similar to the one captured in the sphere's search for gold, to house the things to be taken from the earth, Oltor acquiesced with a celerity that indicated an ulterior motive in his desire to possess one, but he offered no explanation.

With some trouble, the *Femorus* was purchased, at an exorbitant price, considering the fact that since the cataclysm, ocean voyages were seldom taken. The vessel was left several miles out at sea by its crew, who departed in tugs, watching in amazement while it was towed away by the sphere. It was taken to the rocky island where the other purchases had been left, and it was speedily loaded, after which Oltor pressed his new-found friends to visit Astarak as his guests.

"How will we get back?"

The red man laughed. "Don't worry. I do not intend adding you to my collection of curiosities. I think, since my space annihilator has proved to be such a success on this trip, that I shall take another expedition to the planet you call Venus, in half a year or so. You may return then. If you really must come sooner, I will gladly bring you."

They surprised him by their eagerness to go with him. Having no fetters in the way of families or affairs, and being of an adventurous turn of mind, they had been hoping for the opportunity.

So it was, that five weeks after they had first seen the apparition in the sky, the men left the earth for a strange planet. The first human beings ever to start on such an epochal trip, they felt an overpowering sense of loneliness as the landscape below them rapidly fell away. The great ocean liner, held by the mysterious affinity of matter for the energy-absorbing receptors, swung twenty feet or more below the lower part of the luminous balls that always surrounded them.

Oltor moved the controlling levers farther, and the sphere simply catapulted upward. Gradually, he shut off the propelling rods on the side toward his home planet, letting more and more of the etheric strain energy be dissipated in the direction of the earth, giving a high uniform acceleration to the space ship.

"For over a day, you will find it necessary to stand on the side of the cabin toward the earth, to keep upright. The acceleration of the cabin acts exactly as an unusually great gravitational force. As we near top speed, be careful not to make any sudden movements. The velocity will soon be constant, and you will become without appreciable weight."

Earth's attraction had become negligible long before. As acceleration decreased, the men felt themselves becoming lighter on their feet, and the lightest touch of a finger on the wall sent them across the room. Walking was out of the question. As Staunton expressed it, they were literally in the "interstellar laboratory" Einstein had described early in the twentieth century.

Although the temperature outside the sphere approached absolute zero, and the machine moved in a

perfect vacuum, the heat and oxygen producing devices kept the cabins as suitable to live in as any closed room could be. The doors and walls were air tight and nearly perfectly insulated against heat radiation.

As they looked down on the vanishing world, the adventurous pair saw what had been clearly defined continents gradually blend with the oceans, until at several hundred thousand miles distance, there was nothing visible except a brightly mottled sphere, hanging in space. As the moon passed near, their pilot had to make an adjustment of the propellant rods to compensate for its gravity. The moon's glaring and pitted surface passed and shrank into smallness with fearful rapidity.

The distance between Astarak and the earth at the time of the journey was approximately 18,000,000 miles, and the ether ship made the trip in a trifle over five mean solar days, as they are known on the earth. This meant an average speed of 2,500 miles per minute!

OLTOR began deceleration at the end of the fourth day, as Astarak loomed big ahead, less than three million miles away. Rotation of the cabin ring, placing the gyroscopic mass of the sphere between the main cabins and the planet, nearly neutralized gravitational pull on the group within, but the inertia of their bodies gave a strong gravitational effect, while motion was slowly decreased, and the men found it advisable to lie down on the side of the cabin toward Astarak. Standing gave the sensation of the carrying of a great weight.

It was with keen interest that they at last saw the surface of the strange world rise toward them. Dry, it appeared, not a cloud marring the clearness of its atmosphere. At first sight, it looked extremely barren and rocky, in comparison with the fertile earth, but as the sphere dropped further down, lakes and rivers became visible, and one small ocean.

"The erosion that has taken place here is remarkable. How old would you say Astarak is, Bob?"

"I'm no geologist, but it certainly must be at least two million years older than the earth. These crags and furrows probably were once plateaus and plains, but since Oltor says the quality of the ground is so much different from that of the earth that there is no similarity whatever, we cannot tell how much faster or slower the water cut it down."

Oltor moved rapidly over the jutting mountains toward his city. Here and there could be observed patches of vegetation; several times what looked like slinking animals were seen; and twice the ship of space passed near collections of odd looking structures called cities by the red people.

"We now approach the largest group of habitations on the planet, where my wife and friends await me," came the thoughts of Oltor. "All the circular structures you see are the upper parts of the houses of my race. They are cylindrical in shape for the same reason your people build homes in the form of a rectangle—ease of construction and, to a certain extent, convention. We live in the tops of them, and an inferior race of slaves is per-

mitted to occupy the lower rooms. The entrances, you observe, are below the living quarters, and open into rooms where are kept flight machines and food, letting light enter unimpeded from all sides of the top rooms. The lowest entrances are those of the slaves, who use artificial illumination altogether. Streets, a necessity on your planet, have not been in existence here for thousands of years. They lost their usefulness at the start of the age of flight, which came with the discovery of atomic disintegration. All transportation and travel have been by means of sub-atomic engine-driven conveyances since that momentous discovery, and the elevated streets connecting mountain tops to each other, which history tells us of, have long since vanished."

They had now reached a deep chasm, in the midst of hundreds of buildings. Oltor called attention to a small group of people on a pinnacle of rock, one of whom was waving his arms in token of greeting.

"They are my family and a few friends, who know of my coming. See, there are my wife and son, with their webs erected in anticipation of my leaving the ship. I do not wonder that they are eager for news. They will be unable to learn anything until we open a door, for the metal of the walls is impervious to thought waves."

Oltor turned the controls over to another member of the party, and a door was opened outward and downward from the cabin, forming a platform to which the trio stepped. Spellbound, the earth men stood looking at the view spread out now in its entirety. Below them was a vast rocky valley, completely surrounded by beetling cliffs. Two torrents of water rushed down from opposite walls, and formed a madly tossing whirlpool in the depths of the gap, from whence issued a deep and sullen roar. Far above, on the tops of the rocks, innumerable cylindrical dwellings precariously reared themselves—pillared structures, on slender towers. The group of red creatures was the only sign of life in the otherwise desolate city. They occupied one of the most inaccessible spires of moss covered rock. When the door opened in the sphere, the assembled beings snapped their webs into the position of attention, and the men felt the emotions from below, of love, anxiety, and wonder at the great liner hanging from the receptors. Oltor and several others of the crew flew down to the group, and later his guests joined them.

Greetings, explanations, and the pawing-over of the newcomers finally sufficing for the time being, they reascended and conveyed the "museum," as the vessel purchased was apparently intended to be, to a lake without the city, where it was floated. The space annihilator was put in the care of a crew taken aboard for the purpose of overhauling its engines and machinery.

"Now, my friends, here are two individual sub-atomic propulsion machines taken from the stores of the sphere, and they are yours,"—Oltor demonstrated them. "You will find the control easy."

The contrivances consisted of a shielded seat, surmounting a tiny complexity of metal, with a platinum rod projecting upward for control of speed and direction. Quietly they ran, but created

a great disturbance in the air below and in back of them.

"What makes them go, Bob, any idea?"

"I gather that repulsion of air is the source of their movement, but whether it is through projected electrons or charged and repelled air molecules, I frankly don't know. The fundamentals on which they are constructed, I find rather beyond my grasp."

After some difficulty in mastering the operation, they flew back to the city. It was several days before it seemed natural, moving about the country through the air in machines no larger than themselves.

The ensuing days brought much of adventure and excitement to the two. Oltor took them on hunting and fishing trips, after the horrible looking monsters living in caves and crevices along the rivers, and creatures, resembling pterodactyls, which spread their twenty-foot wings over the fastnesses of the mountains. Gigantic bats, considered delicacies for the quality of their meat, the men hunted but once. The bats only ventured forth from their hidden retreats late at night, and no moon alleviated the darkness of that world. It was not pleasant to be abroad among winged monsters which were attracted by lights carried by the hunters, and they were content to forego the thrill thereafter.

ONE pastime frequently indulged in was that of exploring the vast underground waters. Nearly all the rivers of that remarkable planet entered great caves in the sides of the mountains, and formed, far within, subterranean lakes, where abound creatures of sufficient size and ferocity to satisfy the bravest adventurer.

One day Oltor led the way into a cavernous hole where a river flowed its silent way, cautioning his friends to keep as near to the roof as possible, to avoid the tentacles of a sort of serpent that had an unpleasant habit of reaching for bats in the crevices of the walls, while it swam blindly along in the darkness. They came at length to a distant lake, the farther shore of which was invisible in the light of the bulbs carried at their sides. Two surface snakes were sighted simultaneously, toothed reptiles that subsisted by catching small water creatures venturing too far from their crevices in the shore. Robinson pricked one with a spear, and when it made off across the lake, Oltor went with him in pursuit of it, leaving Staunton to the smaller of the monsters. He prodded his victim into a rage, but after snapping its jaws in an effort to crush its tormentor, it turned and fled. Staunton chased it around the shore, forgetting caution in his excitement. Ahead of him, in the rock above the water, a black hole gaped, unobserved. As he flew forward in a quick effort to corner the escaping serpent, he passed within a few feet of the opening in the wall. So suddenly that he was completely bewildered, a clammy hand wrapped itself around his arm and he was jerked into the cave.

Far over the lake, Oltor and Robinson heard a scream; saw the lighted area which had marked their friend's whereabouts vanish.

"Good lord, Oltor, something's got Staunton!"

"Hurry! He may have been drawn under the water!" came the reply from the red man, already speeding for the spot.

Within the cave, Staunton struggled for his life. Temporarily blinded by something twined around his head, he slashed at a tangle of hairy, wet arms encircling him. Freeing his vision, he looked. He was being drawn toward the foul mouth of a horrible giant water spider. Feeling his strength failing, he shouted for help, just as his last light bulb was crushed, the phosphorescent powder dying out on the wet floor.

Then, as he felt the nearness of the hairy body, a blue ray shot over him, from the entrance to the cave, full into that awful head. He felt the arms grow limp, and in a moment Oltor stood at his side, holding in his hand a thin tube he had habitually carried on their excursions underground. As they left for the upper regions, with more than their fill of excitement for the day, Oltor explained.

"This tube constitutes one of the main protective weapons of my race. For centuries we have used it. When an intense thought pulse, of a specific nature, is directed on the tube, a ray emits, which has the power of short circuiting the mental impulses of the nervous system. Incidentally, you may have a chance of seeing some of our weapons in use, if what I learned today is true."

"What, you expect a war? Whom with?"

"I will tell you this evening, after a messenger has made his report. I sincerely hope there is nothing to the story."

Back in the city, an air of excitement prevailed. Numbers of men were flying back and forth from one meeting to another. After Oltor returned from a conference with the leaders of the red race, he appeared grave. Calling his friends aside, he conveyed to them the trouble.

"As you have seen, this is an old planet, incapable of producing the quantities of food you are accustomed to seeing on Unuat. In the past, there have been several wars here, wars of self-preservation. The most recent one was at the time my race conquered the Ektars, who live now in the lower rooms of our towers, satisfied with slavery to us. I have never told you of that war. The Ektars, or dwarfs, originally lived beyond the chain of seas to the east, in a region where there once had been a superabundance of food. Not controlling the number of their children born, as our environment compels us to do, they multiplied so rapidly that our people began to suffer from lack of food. Since it was a question of survival, and any moral consideration must give way to the perpetuation of the race, my ancestors, though far fewer in number, entered the region and killed a sufficient number to restore the balance of life existing between men and food animals. Because the same thing had happened many years before, it was decided that the only satisfactory method of procedure was to enslave them, and they have been in that condition ever since. We have humane methods of controlling their numbers.

"Including the Royas in the south, there are probably not more than two million people to be

found on the whole planet. It is the Royas who are causing the present stir in the city. They are now advanced far enough to question our supremacy, and any day may see the beginning of a war to determine which race shall people Astarak in the future. The brown race of Royas have always kept very much to themselves. Little is known concerning their culture or their inventions and discoveries, but I fear, if observers have not been mistaken in what they claim to have seen, that the race is possessed of a destructive ray against which we have no defense. If that is true, and there should really be a war, we will have to depend on offensive measures to end it. I am sure we have weapons little dreamed of by the Royas."

Staunton had several times spoken to his friend about Oltor's reticence concerning certain machines and queer looking contrivances they had seen at various places in the cities, and Robinson suggested the probable solution.

"Our minds are so notoriously easily read, that an unseen enemy would experience no difficulty in discovering any secrets we might possess."

"I feel like a child among these people. Things they have known for centuries, we cannot even begin to understand. Yet, their intelligence, *per se*, is not so remarkable. A mental problem, I have noticed, is no more readily solved by the best of them, than by either of us. It would seem to prove that in the evolution of a race, mental power does not change much. Mental webs have been evolved here, but I doubt if their reasoning powers have increased at the same time. These people have a vast accumulation of knowledge, which gives them the edge on us. If an earth child were brought up here, his education beginning at the advanced stage of that of the young ones of Oltor's race, he would have no more trouble than they, in grasping what are to us intricate principles."

ONLY a few days after the conferences, Oltor aroused his visitors from sleep, sometime in the night.

"Come quickly, my friends, we are attacked—the Royas! We must reach the space ship before they can come between it and the city. Hurry! You cannot stop to put those fool clothes on!"

He rushed them down to the machines. Naked, like their guide, they sped through the night. As they passed over the city, they saw moving shadows within many of the dimly outlined windows. The entire city was awake, a thing to them unprecedented, for night was not a pleasant thing among those black crags and pits. It was the custom to go to bed early, after a short evening spent at mental games and "conversation."

Oltor, in the lead, sent back messages to his companions. Indicating a slowly moving, egg-shaped thing:

"That black form, scarcely visible in the starlight, is a fighting machine which has destroyed a group of houses at the outskirts of the city. They passed over, and the houses crumbled beneath them, no one knows by what kind of destructive ray. One occupant escaped death, and has aroused the city.

A swath of death and ruin is being left in the path of that airship, though most of the people are now making for the upper spaces. It is high time the city's defenders were in their towers."

They had now reached a point where another airship was discernible, rapidly moving in the direction of the space annihilator, the faint glow of which could be seen at the pinnacle above which it was kept.

"We are too late to reach the space ship, and we will have to trust that the crew will discover their peril in time. Come this way!"

Oltor took them to one of the highest towers in the city. It was deserted. A red man turned away as he saw the group entering, and raced to a nearby tower. Oltor went to a long tube projecting from an opening in the wall, threw a switch and a red ray pierced the gloom. Almost at the same time, other beams of red, and several of blue, sprang from different places in the night, and all concentrated on the nearest airship.

"Wow! Feel the heat radiating from the front end of that tube, Bob? And look at the airship!"

When the first beam had touched the enemy ship, it had turned and attempted to escape, but before moving far, it changed in color from black to cherry red, becoming steadily brighter, as slowly, then with increasing velocity, it dropped into the canyon. As it started to fall, the red rays left it and sought the other one. Apparently the operators of the remaining vessel had discovered the plight of their fellows, for they made off rapidly, followed by a searchlight from the distant space ship, the occupants of which had got into action too late to take part in the battle.

The disabled airship landed with a crash on the bank of the river, above the falls. As it struck the water, a cloud of steam and a loud hissing issued from the valley.

Oltor answered the unspoken questions of the startled spectators of the midnight battle.

"Within this tube, heat waves are generated and concentrated, and red light waves are permitted to emit with them, to permit easy direction of the beam. We heated that ship to near incandescence, but the one which escaped carried sufficient information away to make this method of defence worth little in the future. It is rather easy to insulate against the heat rays, and the Royas will never be caught again as they were to-night. In fact, I am inclined to think they sent only two ships in order to find just what defences we have against them. I expected to see dozens in their attack."

Awed, Staunton and his friend followed Oltor to the area of devastated homes. They were much surprised to see, in the light sent from nearby towers, that where there had formerly been dome shaped dwellings, nothing remained but piles of stone dust! For nearly fifteen feet from what had been the roofs of the destroyed buildings, the stone of which they were made had in some manner been crumbled. Of the occupants, nothing tangible remained.

"They have a terrible weapon, Oltor."

"Yes, I have heard of its action before, and know of no method of overcoming it. It is some

kind of invisible radiation which causes intermolecular strains of such a magnitude that cohesion is overcome and solid matter disintegrates. Several months ago, two of our airships were seen to melt away as they approached the region of the Royas. Later, my agents found several small pieces of the metal you call steel below where the ships were attacked. They were the only parts of the ship structure to escape at least partial destruction. Here, in these ruins, I find several fragments of the same metal, untouched, though the machines of which they formed a part are otherwise completely destroyed."

"Then that is the real reason you were so anxious to secure the liner, because its steel can be used for protection against the rays?"

"WELL, I had something like that in mind, but an offensive device made from it is what I am after. Iron is too scarce to be used extensively as a covering for our houses. Until we can invade the enemy cities in comparative safety, we are at their mercy. Sooner or later they will be successful against our triple defense, of which you have seen the two most important parts, the infra-red and the blue death rays. The infra-red is useless against proper insulation, and the blue ray cannot penetrate metal. The third device may serve no more than once—you will pardon me for not divulging it. Although I place most of my hopes in some kind of a steel fighting machine, I lack a transparent window which will have the same resistant qualities as the steel. I have experimented with glass from the vessel brought from your world, but it will not do."

By early dawn, the fallen airship had cooled sufficiently to permit its removal from the edge of the river, and it was taken to a place where Oltor and several others opened and examined it with a view to determining the method of generation of the mysterious rays. To their keen disappointment, the heat of the red beams had so wrecked the delicate arrangement of tubes and machinery that no useful knowledge could be gained.

Returned to their quarters, the three sat down, in troubled thought. The earth men were faced with the possibility of having to remain forever in a strange world, should the Royas be victorious in their next attack. Oltor gloomily viewed the prospects of his ancient race bowing in defeat to a people they had always looked down upon. Suddenly, Staunton sprang to his feet.

"I have it! I have it! Remember the cabin of that airship? It had a transparent place in the iron wall right near the machinery, and the operators must have looked through it in safety while they manipulated the mechanism. The iron cabin proves there was danger within the ship from the rays. The only bodies found were crowded in that small room!"

Oltor extended his hand. "My friend, if your surmise is correct, you will have been instrumental in saving my people. Let us go again to the burned shell."

They hurried to the scene of their previous dis-

appointment, and removed a clear slab of crystal from the cabin of the ship. Oltor subjected it to tests, and after a time, looked up from his work, excitedly.

"This is a rare form of rock, to be found only in certain parts of the mountains, but before the day is over, I will have the vessel in the lake prepared for offensive warfare, and taken to the southern ocean in readiness for an advance on the sea cities of the Royas. We are taking somewhat of a chance, but everything indicates that we have the right material."

Calling to him the leading men of the race, he explained the discovery and his plans. Speed was needed, for possibly the next night would find the enemy insulated against heat, which would leave the red cities almost defenseless.

During the day, the parties sent out to get the rock found every known deposit either exhausted or heavily guarded by groups of brown skinned Royas, armed with death dealing machines which they used with telling effect. Oltor's people had to bring fighting devices and do battle for the rock, and by nightfall the liner was not completely equipped.

With the coming of darkness, the cities of the red men were put on the defense. Ray towers were manned, new tubes placed at strategic points, and Oltor arranged some new apparatus, without an explanation of its purpose. On various towers and pinnacles, he placed his mechanism, then, high overhead, he left a giant sphere in the control of one man, who had orders to maneuver it over the city, above the enemy ships, should an attack start, and to leave it on a signal from Oltor's tower.

Preparations being completed, the wait began. Before the watchers had time to get weary, the sky hummed faintly with the sound of numbers of engines. The extraordinarily keen tactile sense of the Astarakians apprised them of the oncoming fleet almost as soon as the earth men were able to hear them. Immediately the night blazed with long fingers of light. In the distance, flying high, came nearly a score of ships, gray in color. Oltor's fears had been realized—some kind of insulation had been placed around them. Heat beams, concentrated on them as they neared the city, seemed to have no effect. Rapidly, they approached. From the towers, houses could be seen starting to crumble beneath the deadly rays. The construction of the generators apparently limited the play of the descending beams, for a ship had to be almost directly over a building before affecting it. Several of the invaders must have been poorly insulated against the terrific heat coming from the city, and they turned back, one of them falling. Inexorably, the others continued coming on. Fascinated, the earth men watched this thrilling battle of silence.

When the fleet was well over the edge of the city, Oltor gave the signal for the man in the sphere, far above, to leave. His companions read thoughts of exultation. "They have come right into my trap, all of them!"

After allowing enough time for the escape of the sphere operator, he threw a switch.

(Continued on page 366)

The Ether Ship of Oltor

By MAXWELL S. CODER

(Continued)

TINY green points of light appeared at various points in the city, at first no more than faint luminous emanations. Gradually they increased in length, if not in intensity, until they became wavering columns of phosphorescent mist, rising straight upward, while at a great distance overhead, the sphere became visible, shining with a ghastly glow. As the seconds passed, a strong wind was felt springing up. The phosphorescent columns now grew taller rapidly, suddenly being met by green streamers from the sphere, and the connecting bands of light waved back and forth like seaweed in the swell of the ocean. The wind increased in volume, becoming a cold blast, coming from everywhere, roaring ominously. Its course was upward, toward the glowing fire ball in the sky. The airships were midway between the green emanating devices and the suspended receiving ball. Too quickly for them to make their escape, they were carried upward by the terrific force of the ascending current of air, which had assumed the proportions of a tropical world hurricane. Turning and twisting, the ships were blown crashing together as they reached the center of the disturbance. Striking the ball, they split and spewed figures, pieces of metal, machinery. The ball was destroyed, the green light vanished, and gradually the air tumult subsided. Those ships which escaped annihilation made off toward their home land as though the devil were after them. For a while the red men triumphantly swept the sky and the earth with searchlights, then repaired to an assembly room to discuss plans for the next day's expedition into enemy country. Oltor was unani-

mously elected leader of the trip. His sphere, the experimental model that had preceded the present interplanetary vessel, had saved the city.

At noon following, the liner *Femorus* was ready. Below decks, men peered from windows made of the rock. Tubes and other contrivances were arranged to emit their death dealing beams from the front of the vessel. Atomic engines replaced the electric motors of the engine rooms, and after a trip made at a speed never before approached in the *Femorus'* history, the far shore of the southern sea appeared over the horizon. A cruise along the coast brought them to a great city, built on the hilltops at the water's edge. Several airships met the vessel, following overhead and making the water hiss all around, without noticeably affecting the men inside. Then figures appeared on the towers, manning larger machines. In that concentration of destructive rays, the liner became almost unbearably hot.

"The intermolecular strain is not great enough to disrupt the steel, but we shall be helpless from heat, if we can't end the struggle soon." Esma wiped his streaming face.

"It will end soon, and the poor creatures haven't got a chance," replied Oltor. "Man the tubes!"

Several bluish beams shot up from the windows to the towers. "Staunton, you can see where we would be if we had attempted to take the offensive without using your discovery of this morning. Having these transparent windows, we are going to put every machine in that city out of business. Look at them dropping."

On the tops of the structures in the city, the

men were affected in a most remarkable manner. Most of them fell off and crashed into the rocks below, while others seemed to go insane, jumping about, struggling with each other, throwing themselves violently from the edge.

"Yes, they do look like a bunch of maniacs." This from Oltor. "These tubes are somewhat similar to the one I had that day in the underground lake, built on a larger scale. They generate etheric waves, approaching, in length, those of thought. Depending on mental resistance and bodily conditions, they have different results. In that spider, death was instantaneous, while in human beings, the short-circuiting of mental impulse is not always complete, and death does not always ensue directly. Partial shunting of the life force causes insanity or paralysis. Unfortunately, the metal of the airships dissipates the energy of the rays, making them ineffective against those above us. I am going to try to get rid of them. They are getting lower, and this heat is becoming unbearable."

At what he considered the proper moment, Oltor manipulated a long lever which had been placed through the decks that morning, carrying a roughly concave steel plate, made from strips taken from the liner, on its upper end. As the plate was swung into position and rocked back and forth, one of the low hanging ships crumbled at one end, then fell into the water. Another fell, followed by two more. Their own rays, reflected back on them, played havoc with the Royan fleet. The *Femorus* had now reached the edge of the city. A long street just ahead, through the center of it, was crowded with fugitives, carrying pieces of

metal and all kinds of utensils for protection from the death scourging their homes. The last opposing enemy machine, except those in the remaining airships, had ceased functioning.

"I cannot destroy a race as brave and intelligent as these people seem to be," declared Oltor. "They have shown no signs of fear, and they do not seem willing to surrender. In spite of the fact that hundreds are dying, insane or paralyzed, the others strive against us with what appears to be the only weapon they possess. Turn the tubes off!"

A signal asking for an armistice had come from one of the towers, the airships were called back, and a group of men came down to the water's edge for a parley. Oltor and several of his friends ascended to the deck, and stepped to the shore.

Oltor, that great soul, treated the vanquished race as friends. In a short communication, he pointed out the necessity of peace to prevent the peoples destroying each other; the advantages of exchange of knowledge between them. He offered them absolute equality with his race, and the result of the discussion was the Royas' acceptance of the friendship of the red peoples of Astarak.

A short time afterward, the ether ship was provisioned and stocked for another venture into interplanetary space. The spirit of the explorer had taken possession of Oltor, and he was determined to visit Venus, that planet of the impenetrable atmosphere.

"Well, fellows, we start in a week. No doubt you want to return to your own world, after such a long stay here, so I will drop you off there. I pass near."

Staunton, winking at Robinson, agreed with him.

THE END.