

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XVIII

NUMBER 3

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 30, 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 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1931, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

## Contents for October, 1931

- Cover Design ..... C. C. Senf  
*Illustrating a scene in "Tam, Son of the Tiger"*
- The Eyrie ..... 292  
*A chat with the readers*
- The Dream Makers ..... A. Leslie 300  
*Verse; decoration by Donald Gelb*
- The Gods of Bal-Sagoth ..... Robert E. Howard 302  
*A powerful, heroic novelette of the epic days when the Norsemen waged red battle among the Northern isles*
- Old City of Jade ..... Thomas H. Knight 320  
*The story of a strange city in the South American jungles, whose inhabitants were immersed in a weird sleep*

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

- Satan's Circus** ----- Eleanor Smith 332  
*Strange horror lurked in the person of Madam Brandt, wife of the circus-owner—a grim, tragic tale*
- The Shot from Saturn** ----- Edmond Hamilton 343  
*A tale replete with thrills and surprises, about an attempted invasion of the earth by the planet Saturn*
- Black Terror** ----- Henry S. Whitehead 360  
*A story of vodu on the West Indian island of Santa Cruz, where strange beliefs can cause death by sheer terror*
- Tam, Son of the Tiger (Part 4)** ----- Otis Adelbert Kline 368  
*A serial story of Asian gods, a subterranean world, and a tremendous threat against mankind*
- The Resurrection of the Rattlesnake** ----- Clark Ashton Smith 387  
*The quiet study became the scene of panic terror when the presence of a dread reptile was discovered*
- The Captain Is Afraid** ----- August W. Derleth 391  
*The captain did not lack courage, but the howling of a dog brought stark terror to his soul*
- The Strange High House in the Mist** ----- H. P. Lovecraft 394  
*A hermit dwelt in a sky-perched cottage, where he communed with forgotten gods*
- Bitter Return** ----- Alfred Sprissler 401  
*A thin-spun golden hair on the lapel of his coat was the only clue to his lost love's visit*
- The Red Sail** ----- Charles Hilan Craig 403  
*Through life after life he experienced that terrible drowning episode—a tale of reincarnation*
- Weird Story Reprint:**  
**The Wolf-Leader (Part 3)** ----- Alexandre Dumas 406  
*An exciting werewolf novel, which does not appear in the published collections in English of Dumas' works*

---

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

**WEIRD TALES**

Western Advertising Office:  
**HAWLEY L. WARD, INC.**  
360 N. Michigan Ave.,  
Chicago, Ill.  
Phone, Central 6269

Eastern Advertising Office:  
**D. P. RIKER, Mgr.**  
303 Fourth Ave.,  
New York, N. Y.  
Phone, Gramercy 5380



"They struggled and reeled in mad battle, Harkness grasping Brant's pistol hand."

# The Shot from Saturn

By EDMOND HAMILTON

*A startling weird tale about an attempted invasion of Earth by the planet Saturn*

**I** REMEMBER well now the day on which the first news of the thing reached me. Brant and I were going over some erratic orbit-calculations of our classes and mutually cursing the fate that had made us astronomy instructors, when the door of the study flew open and Dr. Harkness, our superior, burst inside. His face was alight with excitement and in his hand was a folded newspaper.

"Brant! Fraser! You remember our observations of Saturn two months ago?" he shot at us.

We stared at him. "Why, of course," Brant finally answered.

"You remember what we saw with the reflectors?" he pursued.

"That little light jetting toward us from Saturn's upper limb?" asked Brant. "Yes,

of course we remember, but what's all this about?"

Harkness thrust the paper toward us. "Read that and you'll see," he said excitedly.

We took the paper. The article he indicated was a small item on an inner page. It bore a Quebec dateline and stated briefly that a meteor of great size had apparently fallen two nights before in the great forests east of Hudson Bay and some hundreds of miles north from Quebec.

The sky had been lit for miles by a livid flare and the meteor itself had been glimpsed falling, a great glowing body flashing slantwise down from the southern skies. It had apparently fallen in the unpeopled and little-known forest tracts near the headwaters of the Martana River. The nearest people to it were the inhabitants of Storton, a hamlet nearly a hundred miles down the river, but of course none of these had been interested enough to start a search for the fallen meteor.

We looked up, astonished. "Just another meteorite, it seems," I said. "What's it got to do with Saturn?"

"It came from Saturn," Harkness answered.

"From Saturn?" we repeated together. "What the devil——"

"The thing's beyond doubt!" he said swiftly. "Two months ago we and other astronomers saw that tiny light jet out for an instant from Saturn almost directly toward us. The thing was unprecedented and none knew what could have caused it. It came to me even then, though, that it might be the work of intelligence, might be even a strange signal of some kind, or some great work of intelligent beings.

"That was but a wild hypothesis of mine, but now it has been verified! For

now it is evident that the light we saw was caused by the firing of a great projectile out from Saturn toward the earth! And that projectile, that shot from Saturn, has reached earth and flashed down up there in the great northern woods, mistaken for a falling meteor by those who saw it! It's beyond doubt, I tell you!"

We could only stare. "But that postulates intelligent life on Saturn," Brant finally objected, "and as an astronomer you know as well as I do that by all accepted theories no life could exist there."

Harkness shook his head impatiently. "This isn't theory, Brant, it's fact! We saw that shot fired and we know now that it struck earth up there in the trackless forest. It is an unavoidable corollary that intelligent beings on Saturn fired it."

"But with what purpose?"

"We can't guess as yet," Harkness answered, "but there is one sure way to learn, and that is to go up and find that fallen meteor, or projectile, and examine it. I'm going to form a small expedition to do just that—Bates and Gall and Webster will go, I know—and you, too, Brant. I tell you this thing is of unprecedented importance."

"Well, it will probably start an unprecedented argument, at least," was Brant's comment.

**H**IS prediction was almost fulfilled when Dr. Harkness, two days later, announced his theory and purpose as to the fallen meteor.

Dr. Harkness began his statement by describing concisely the curious light-jet on Saturn that had been seen by a half-dozen or more observers two months before. He pointed out that it could very possibly have been caused by the firing of a great projectile, and then passed to the meteor that had fallen in the northern

woods, identifying it as the projectile in question.

It had not only reached earth no sooner after the sighting of the light-jet than a high-speed projectile might be expected to do, but had also approached earth from the direction of Saturn. There could be small doubt therefore, he concluded, that it was actually the projectile that had been seen fired, and as such to find it and examine it might yield startling results.

Thus far Dr. Harkness. He found himself met from the first by a very real skepticism concerning his theories.

The light-jet that had been seen on Saturn was beyond denial, but few astronomers gave it the startling interpretation he had given it. Many accounted it the result of great volcanic disturbances on the planet, while others considered it due to aurora-like electrical effects. Scores pointed out that whatever had caused the light-jet there was no real connection between it and the fallen meteor, and that to regard the latter as a projectile shot from Saturn was to enter the realm of the fantastic.

Saturn, they pointed out, had never been regarded by science as a possible abode of even the lowest forms of life. Its temperature was very low and though its surface was forever hidden from the peering telescope by the swirling mists that surround the planet, none could doubt that it was a frozen world on which no life could exist. The suggestion that Saturn held life intelligent enough to launch a projectile across space to the earth was not, therefore, to be taken seriously.

Dr. Harkness was not backward in answering these criticisms. He insisted that since Saturn was an older world than earth, what life existed upon it must be very old also, and logically farther ad-

vanced in intelligence than we of earth. That increased intelligence, he averred, would be sufficient to counteract the increasing cold and adverse conditions and maintain life upon the planet, not to speak of such a comparatively minor feat as sending a projectile across the gulf to earth.

Thus Harkness and his critics argued the matter in the next few days until he finally announced that in any case he was starting in the next week to find and examine the meteor or projectile for himself. His party would consist, he stated, of Dr. Everett Bates, the angular and acid head of Raines Observatory and the least imaginative of astronomers; Dr. Ralph Gall, one of Harvard Observatory's brilliant staff; Professor Clark Webster, the California astrophysicist; and his own assistant instructor, Paul Brant.

"Sorry I couldn't include you, too, Fraser," Harkness told me on the day before their departure. "But some one has to stay here at the university with our classes."

"Oh, Fraser doesn't mind," Brant grinned. "Fraser would far rather spend the summer with his students than up in the north woods. He'd much rather——" But there, at my threatening expression, he desisted.

Harkness was smiling absently. "Well, we may find nothing but a cinder at that," he said. "But I think not—I think somehow that this business is going to prove of tremendous importance."

On the next day, the last of May, Harkness and his party entrained for Quebec and Storton. The newspapers two days later told of their reaching Storton, the village on the lower Martana from which they were to start north in their search. I had also a message from Harkness there in which he stated that they

had found a powered river-boat that would hold their equipment and themselves, and would shortly start upstream in that, having decided not to augment their party by any of the local inhabitants.

A short news dispatch from Storton two days after recorded the start of the five up the river. That was, I knew even then, the last word from them for some time, since with their small party and single boat it was obviously impossible for them to keep up any continuous communication or contact with the village from the forests northward.

Despite this I waited anxiously enough for word in the next weeks, for I realized by then from the tenor of comment that Dr. Harkness had in fact staked his scientific reputation upon his venture. If he found but a mere meteor it would be something of a blow, I knew, for he had been so positive that the thing was actually a projectile from the other planet that he had rather over-emphasized his belief in the statements he had made.

**D**AYS passed into weeks and as there came no word from the party I became rather anxious concerning them, since in the great forest stretches they were almost as isolated from civilization as though upon the moon. Then at last, after more than a month, the silence on their part was broken by a message and my anxiety concerning them was dissolved in an excitement that was not confined to myself or to the university, but that was, in days, almost world-wide.

The message, sent in duplicate to the university officials and to myself, was flashed from Storton and was signed by Dr. Bates. Leaving Dr. Harkness and Brant and the rest of the party up the river at the scene of activity, Bates had come down alone in the boat to give notice to me and to the world of their

activity in that month of silence, and to give word of Dr. Harkness' amazing success.

For they had found the meteor and it was a projectile!

That was the first stunning fact in Bates' excited and almost incoherent message. But he had more than that to tell, and the rest was as astounding.

Dr. Harkness and his four companions, he stated, had travelled up the Martana River with no untoward accidents except for the near-capsizing of their boat in a rapid. They had before starting prepared a rough chart on which was located the approximate district in which the meteor had fallen, this obtained by graphing the directions from which its fall had been seen by far-separated observers. When they reached that district, a hundred miles up the river, they had made camp and had started their search.

Almost at once, Bates related, they had come upon what they sought. It lay not a mile from the river, in a grassy valley opening clear for a short distance through the forests. They had found the thing half buried by its crash into the earth. But though covered with a hard, crusted cinder, their first glance had told them that it was no meteor but a projectile, being in shape like a cylinder with one end pointed, twenty feet in length and eight in diameter.

Bates told of their excited inspection of the thing, of their chipping away the cinder that covered it and their finding a curious door in the projectile's metal side which could be opened from outside as well as from within. They had opened it after some effort. They had found inside a few simple mechanisms designed to supply breathable air in the projectile during flight, some supplies of what seemed food, and also what appeared to be records in a form of picture-writing.

These things Bates only mentioned, though, his and our excitement centering on what else they found in the projectile. Bodies—the dead bodies of Saturnians!

Bates' description of them in his message was so excited and incoherent that it could only be made out that the Saturnians, though somewhat man-like in form, had been much different from any humans of earth. There were four of them in the projectile and, Bates told, all had apparently been killed by the projectile's impact against earth, their heads or brain cases being crushed beyond recognition and their bodies broken. Daring pioneers across the void, they had perished at the instant they reached earth.

This epochal message of Bates ended by saying that Harkness and his companions were remaining for further study with the projectile. Bates had been sent down to Storton in the boat to flash word of their find to the world and also to request certain things which Harkness' party needed to facilitate their investigation of the projectile. A list of these was sent separately to myself.

The things specified in the list seemed rather odd to me, including electrical apparatus, transformers and static-condensers and cables and the like, and also some flat sections of metal whose size was carefully specified, with tools for joining them, materials for mixing concrete in a small way, and tackles and pulleys of various sorts. The list was almost as hard to understand and incoherent as Bates' message.

According to Harkness' request, I, Fraser, was to procure these things with all possible speed and leave with them at once for Storton, where Dr. Bates would await me and proceed with me up the river to Dr. Harkness' camp. Knowing what profound excitement his discovery would arouse in the world, Harkness had

added that I could bring with me a small party of scientists and newspaper-men, not to exceed a dozen in number.

Thus ended the lengthy and rather incoherently worded message which Dr. Bates wired us from Storton. In hours it had set the scientific world afire with excitement.

Dr. Harkness had been right! It had been in truth, then, a shot from Saturn that had struck up there in the great forest! A projectile in which four beings of another world had been hurled across the millions of miles of space between Saturn and earth! And though they had perished in the shock of landing, who could say what knowledge their coming might not bring to us, what vistas it might not open? Within a day the newspapers were ablaze with the thing, and in that time I myself had attained to a fame or notoriety which I had never expected.

Not only was I assistant to Dr. Harkness, whose great discovery this was, but I was known to have been designated by him to take up to him the further supplies needed. In the next crowded few days, while I hurriedly assembled the equipment and materials Harkness had listed, I found myself besieged by those who wished to accompany me to the camp of the scientists. All such requests, though, I turned over to the officials of the university, who in the end selected those who formed our party.

Since Harkness had been definite in wanting no more than a dozen accompanying me, the party was strictly limited. When we started four days later, there were besides myself four news-writers representing the great press-syndicates, and seven scientists, all of prominence. I need mention only the names of Halsen and Gray, the biologists; Rockford, the Pennsylvania astronomer who had been one of the few to give any support at first

to the projectile theory; and McGregor, one of the young wizards of the biggest of electrical corporations, to show the caliber of those who made up our party.

It was on July 13th that we left New York for Quebec, the equipment that I had assembled at Harkness' request going with us in a special car. The odd nature of some of that equipment rather puzzled us all, but in the excitement of the start we gave it little thought.

We did not tarry in Quebec longer than to proceed from station to station, though we found awaiting us there newspaper-writers and photographers in plenty. I remember that on the next day as we bumped north toward Storton on the narrow-gage connecting-line we amused ourselves with some of the newspaper accounts. The imagination of the press had apparently been fired, and on the strength of Bates' meager description long accounts were given of the projectile and its finding and even of the dead Saturnians that had been found in it.

Some enterprising journals went so far, indeed, as to make up for themselves speculative pictures of the Saturnians, their wires to Bates for more information having received no answer. They drew highly colored pictures of a hypothetical Saturnian civilization, discussed the planet's conditions as though after a personal visit, and set us all laughing in one case by a serious prediction that within a short time Saturn and earth would be connected by a projectile-line with regular arrivals and departures.

Yet laugh as we did, we were almost as completely excited. Better than most, perhaps, we who were astronomers realized the colossal nature of this achievement of the Saturnians, despite their perishing at the moment of accomplishment. And we were tensely eager to inspect the projectile in which they had hurtled across

the great gulf, and more eager still to see the dead Saturnians who were the first evidence to earth that not only on earth did the universe hold life, and life that was intelligent and conscious.

IT WAS on the afternoon of the 16th that our train bumped into the lumber village of Storton. The entire population of the little place was gathered around its unpainted station to watch us disembark, though the somewhat stolid villagers showed small sign of excitement at the tremendous event that had taken place a hundred miles to the north. Dr. Bates was on hand to meet us also, and it was at that meeting that there shadowed me for the first fleeting time the growing sense of the strange and oppressive in which I was to move thenceforward.

For when we emerged it was young Halsen, one of the biologists, who happened to step down first, I just behind him. I saw Dr. Bates come striding down the platform toward our party, recognizing his tall, angular figure and impatient, intellectual face, his gaze intent upon us. To my astonishment, though, he grasped the hand of young Halsen first and shook it, addressing him.

"Fraser!" he was saying "I'm glad you've arrived!"

Halsen stared at him, guessing his identity. "I'm afraid we've never met, Dr. Bates," he said in a moment, "though of course I've heard much of your work. This is Fraser—I thought you knew him——"

Bates stared from Halsen to me astoundedly, and then his face broke into a strained smile. "Why, of course I know him!" he exclaimed, taking my own hand. "Eyesight went back on me there for a moment, Fraser, for I thought he was you. Harkness will be glad to see you—you've brought the stuff he listed?"



"Right here with us," I told him. "This is Dr. Halsen — Professor Gray — Dr. Rockford——"

Bates bowed rather jerkily as I made introductions. His whole manner seemed strange to me, his speech thick and incoherent at moments, and interspersed with grammatical errors astonishing to any who knew as well as I did his ordinarily precise manner and speech. He explained these things to me, though, as our party walked along the single street to Storton's one hotel. And in the explanation I received a staggering shock.

"Everything's ready to start up the river tomorrow," he told me first. "I've three boats ready besides my own, and they'll hold your friends and the equipment you brought, as well as a few workmen I'm taking back up from this village. Harkness will be glad to see you."

"And Brant?" I asked, but to my surprise he only looked oddly at me and then turned away.

"Brant!" I exclaimed, clutching Bates' arms in sudden apprehension, and he turned slowly back to me.

"Fraser, you'll have to hear it now," he said, "though I hadn't meant to tell you until later. Brant is mad!"

"Mad!"

"Stark and raving mad, yes. From the first we were under a mental excitement and strain that was terrific after we'd found the projectile. We were all a little crazy over it, I think—I know you think me queer now—but Brant was worst of all. He went clear off his head before we realized it."

"What happened?" I asked tensely.

"Brant had a gun," he answered, "and before we knew it he tried to shoot Harkness—fired point-blank at him! He missed, and was going to shoot again when we rushed him. Before we could catch him, though, he had bounded off

into the forest yelling, and we saw nothing of him for a week. One night, though, he took a shot out of the dark at us and got Webster in the shoulder. Harkness and Gall and I searched the forest for him but he managed to elude us. That was two weeks ago, and though we haven't seen him since he must be lurking still around the camp, a sheer homicidal maniac. God knows how he manages to live in the forest."

"Brant mad," I said slowly. "Brant mad!"

It was that fact that was foremost to me in the next days as we travelled up the river. Brant mad! He had been my chum for years, and his calm, humorous mind seemed to me the last that would have ever broken beneath any strain. The horror and unexpectedness of it was staggering to me, and the excitement over the stupendous shot from Saturn and all it might mean to earth which formerly had gripped me faded from the foreground of my mind in contrast with it.

Rockford and Halsen and the others of our party showed their sympathy when they too heard, but I could see that to them it was a small enough matter when compared to the great fact of the coming of the Saturnians. They were as impatient as I to reach the end of our trip, not for my reasons but for ones as great to them. Our whole trip up the river was under a tension that gave it a flavor of the unreal.

Our four boats fought with throbbing motors up against the currents of the Martana, between green walls of vegetation that were the ramparts of the endless forests about us. From dawn until darkness each day we fought the currents, and Bates, now very different from the precise and mathematical figure of a few months past, kept us moving at the highest speed possible. To our eager questions he gave brusque answers, withdrawing

into himself, his voice harsh as he directed the half-dozen workmen he had brought with us.

Yes, that journey now seems in truth an unreal interlude, with behind us a world waiting eagerly for further information, and with ahead of us the strange projectile and stranger dead beings that in it had crossed the great deep from world to spinning world. One picture of those unreal days and nights remains clear in my memory, though—that of Bates' angular figure hunched outside our firelight at night, staring up broodingly at the yellow spark southwestward that was Saturn. Staring and staring—out at Saturn—

It was after ten days on the river that we came in late morning to the end of that trip, our boats heading in to a natural little cove where we found Harkness and Webster awaiting us.

As we stepped ashore Bates led me forward. "Here's Fraser at last," he said.

Harkness gripped my hand tightly. "Fraser, you can't know how glad I am you've got here," he told me. "You've brought the things I asked for?"

I was shocked. His familiar face was changed even more than that of Bates, lined and with his eyes somehow set and strange. Webster, too, was jerky in manner, his shoulder tied in a heavy bandage.

"I've brought everything, Harkness," I answered. "But what about Brant? Bates has told me that—"

"That Brant is mad," Harkness interrupted. "Yes. He is. The mental strain here—it has made a homicidal maniac out of him, Fraser. He's tried to kill me twice, did wound Webster here, and is roaming the forests here now full of delusions, a complete madman. We've hunted and can't even get near him."

Before I could say more the others were around us, greeting Harkness and

Webster excitedly, with a babel of questions. Harkness raised his hand.

"Please—not here," he said. "You'll see everything shortly, but now we must get these boats unloaded and the equipment started toward our camp. Bates, you and Webster will see to that? Then the rest of us can go on to the camp."

Leaving Bates and Webster to supervise the workmen unloading the equipment and supplies, therefore, we started with Harkness along a narrow path hacked through the thick underbrush of the forests that stretched sea-like around us. The path wound upward and inward from the river, and our party of a dozen or so seemed noisy enough as we followed Harkness along the hacked way. As we went on I wondered half despairingly where in the forests around us Brant might be lurking, driven by insane and murderous delusions, perhaps half dead from hunger and exposure.

**I**N LESS than a half-hour we emerged from the thick woods into a short and narrow valley, grassy and unwooded. A thousand feet from us in this lay the projectile.

It was half hidden from us by the heaps of earth which they had excavated from around it, but we could see its shape clearly. A big cylinder of gray metal that tapered to a blunt point at one end, it was a score of feet from base to tip and a third or a half that in diameter. It lay slantwise in a broad hole in the earth that had been formed by their diggings around it. Gall, waiting there, greeted us.

We followed Harkness toward it, staring wonderingly. There was a round thick door swinging open in the projectile's side half-way between base and tip, apparently made to close somewhat like the breech of a great gun, and Harkness led us in through this. The interior was

strangely disappointing in its simplicity. I do not know just what we had expected to find—intricate mechanisms and cogs and wheels, I suppose—but there was little to inspect.

We could see that a second cylinder was swung in some way inside the outer one, for shock-absorbing purposes, no doubt. There were no windows, but at two points the metal of the walls had been treated to make it quite as transparent as glass. There was an oxygen-production and air-purifying apparatus astonishingly like the similar equipment of our human experience, and a metal rack along one side held many cubes of white, pith-like substance that had formed the food-supply of the Saturnians in the projectile. There were flat tanks that must have held water or other drink, but these were empty.

The only other apparatus in the projectile was one near the cone-like nose of it, a square metal case behind the point or nose, which was connected by tubing with other flat cases attached to the walls, and which was at one point linked to a little control-box with a simple double-handled rheostat and switch. Near this, where the body of the cylinder began, were four squat swinging little platforms or chairs, one of the transparent portions of the wall being just above them.

Harkness pointed to the mechanism in the nose. "That's an electrical-repulsion mechanism," he said. "We found some odd picture-records or writing I'll show you later, and could make out the principle of the whole thing. That mechanism draws static electricity from the condensers you see attached to the walls, and is intended to stab forth a repelling charge of static just before the projectile reaches its goal, and so break its fall and prevent an annihilating crash."

"The projectile has then no motive-

power of its own?" Rockford asked keenly.

"None at all," Harkness replied. "It was shot from Saturn toward the earth just as a bullet is shot from a gun, though not by explosives but by electrical power, as I'll explain later. The mechanism in the nose is, as I say, for braking purposes only."

"But I don't understand it, then," Halsen interjected. "If they had this method of braking the projectile's fall and used it, and they must have used it or the projectile would have been shattered, how does it happen that the four Saturnians inside were still killed by the shock?"

Harkness stared at him, shaking his head. "It's rather strange," he admitted. "But so it was, for we found them crushed and dead. I can only surmise that they had underestimated the force of the impact, and though they used enough repulsion to keep the projectile from striking with shattering force, it still struck with enough violence to crush them inside it."

"And where are the dead Saturnians, then?" Halsen asked. "You didn't destroy the bodies, man—creatures of another planet? If you did, by all that's holy in the science of biology I'll——"

We all smiled at his excitement, though it held us to almost as high a degree. "No, we saved them, or what was left of them," Harkness told him. "I think you'll find them curious."

"Curious isn't the word," said Gall. "They're so unlike anything on earth that they're rather appalling."

"This way," Harkness directed. "We hollowed a cave for them in the valley's side for their better preservation—they'd have decomposed irreparably without the chemicals we used on them."

He and Gall led the way, with the rest of us an excited throng behind them, from

the projectile toward the valley's sloping side, where a black opening yawned. It was a cave excavated hastily in the soft earth, and we saw it was not large. Harkness picked up an electric lantern by the entrance and we followed him in, or the first few of us did, stooping and rubbing against the damp earth sides of the entrance. We found ourselves in a narrow, close little cave, and on its floor in a row lay the bodies of the four dead Saturnians.

We stared, tensely enough, and I found myself whispering, "Crustacean men!" They were such, in fact, to all appearances. I suppose that when they stood each must have been five feet or more in height. The long trunk or torso of each was cased in hard black shell of true crustacean look, and the short two lower limbs on which they had stood were stiff and jointed, and crustacean-like, as were the short upper limbs or arms. It was these that gave the otherwise unhuman bodies an oddly man-like appearance.

The heads had been apparently in each a bulbous shell-cased one set close on the upper trunk, but this was surmise only on our part because both heads and upper bodies were so horribly crushed and mangled as to be unrecognizable. The legs of all but one, too, had snapped beneath the shock, and in all the shell of the bodies was cracked. Instead of blood a black fluid had poured from them and clotted beside the bodies, and even over the reek of preservative chemicals which had been crudely produced and used upon them, there came to us from the four still crushed bodies an alien and repellent odor.

We stared at them. It was a curious moment, that in the dim-lit little cave. The four grotesque crushed bodies lying there before us marvelling men, the four who had dared across a void unthinkable

to meet death at the very end of their stupendous journey. I found myself wondering out of what ages of crustacean evolution they had risen, what crustacean hordes Saturn might not hold—swarming races alien to man yet greater perhaps than man in knowledge and power.

Harkness broke the awed silence. "You see the broken condition of even the limbs," he said. "They were all so when we found them—huddled together in the projectile and apparently instantly slain by the shock."

"Too bad that the heads should have been crushed so completely," Halsen said. "They have the characteristic chitinous integument of crustacea but no trace of the usual segment-structure of crustacean bodies. I'd have given a lot to have examined the brain of one of them."

Harkness nodded at the biologist's comment. "A pity that the heads were crushed into nothing," he agreed. "But brain or none, it's obvious enough that they were of a high order of intelligence. Their very achievement in flashing from Saturn to earth proves that."

"I wonder why they came," I said. "To have themselves shot to earth in that projectile—they must have had some strong reason."

"That's true, isn't it?" Rockford commented. "We've been all so excited over the great fact of their coming we've hardly thought of why they came."

Harkness shook his head. "The purposes of beings like that are beyond our speculations, I'm afraid," he said. "But we may learn that, and other things, before long. Now that you have come——"

With that perplexing half-statement he ended as we emerged from the cave, leaving Halsen and Gray so engrossed in their examination of the dead Saturnians that it was clear nothing for the time being could drag them forth. We found that

the workmen under Bates and Webster were arriving with the supplies and equipment we had brought, and already our half-dozen tents were being run up beside the two tents already pitched at the valley's end. The place had almost the appearance of a small village, alive with activity.

Harkness and Gall left us then to unpack our belongings and talk excitedly of what we had seen. The next hours they occupied in bringing to the camp the remaining equipment in the boats, and by nightfall it was all under canvas.

I FOUND an opportunity in those busy few hours, though, to question Webster and Gall separately about Brant's strange insane outburst. Both seemed under the same mental strain as Bates and Webster, their gaze almost a stare and their speech often oddly obstructed also. But both corroborated what I had already heard of Brant's maniacal attempt on their lives, Webster pointing mutely to the now-healing wound that Brant's bullet had made. A sick despair held me. It seemed to me that these alien beings who had crashed to their own deaths here, shot from an alien world, had released an alien madness—one that had made of Brant a lurking madman, that had inspired his murderous attacks on his own friends, that had affected even the minds of Harkness and the others, as was evident in their actions and speech.

I think that I alone realized this sinister atmosphere of the place, for the two biologists thought of nothing but the crushed alien bodies, and the others of the projectile and its origin. That night when we were eating around a long, makeshift table between the tents, electric lanterns dispelling the night around us, Rockford brought up the latter question.

W. T.—5

"You said you had found definitely from indications or records inside the projectile how it was shot from Saturn, Harkness?" he asked.

Harkness nodded. "Yes, we made it out without much trouble. Of course we knew that no explosives could have done it, for if powerful enough to hurl a projectile across the millions of miles between Saturn and earth, they'd have blasted it to fragments at the moment of firing. The propelling force of the projectile was the static charge of Saturn itself."

"The static charge of Saturn?" some one said, a little incredulously, and Harkness nodded quietly.

"Just that. Every planet has like earth a terrific static-electricity charge, is in fact a huge Leyden jar that is never discharged, because there is no way for it to discharge. The Saturnians found a way, that is all. They devised a method of turning loose the whole static charge of their planet for a moment or two beneath the projectile, repelling it with all that immeasurable force, since the projectile was given a like charge and so was repelled by the planet's charge. Repelled with such immense power, it was hurled out from Saturn at tremendous speed, and being pointed toward earth reached and struck this world."

"Is such a method really workable?" Rockford asked.

"I think you'll agree that it is after we set up the equipment you brought with you," Harkness told him.

"You mean you're going to test the thing?" Rockford asked.

"We are going to do much more than test it," was Harkness' calm reply. "The projectile is going to be shot out again into the void, this time from earth back to Saturn, and this time Bates and Webster and Gall and I are going inside it!"

We could not have been more astound-

ed had a bomb burst among us. Rockford found his voice first.

"Harkness—are you mad?" he demanded.

Harkness eyed us levelly. "What objections to the idea are there? Why, it is a chance to do what men have never done before, to flash to another planet! We have the projectile and we know how to operate it. With the projectile's oxygen-apparatus and our own food and water supply the thing will be easy. All that will be necessary is to set up the mechanism that will fire it out to Saturn.

"It was for that that I had you bring up here the equipment I specified. We can quickly set up the flat metal starting-disk on which the projectile will be set. We will have set up beside it the apparatus after the Saturnians' plan that will when operated turn the whole enormous repellent force of earth's static charge onto the projectile and send it flashing out in a dazzling burst of light and power as it was shot out from Saturn. If the four Saturnians who were then in it could reach earth, we can reach Saturn!"

"But they reached earth dead!" I exclaimed. "Crushed by the terrific shock as you would be when you reached Saturn!"

Harkness shook his head. "They underestimated the shock of contact and perished by it. We will not underestimate and will accomplish what they tried to do, will set up communication and contact between Saturn and earth. Think what it may mean for us to visit Saturn and return!"

"But why start from here?" Rockford put in. "Why not take the projectile back to civilization—then start——"

"How long would it take to transport the projectile out of here?" Harkness demanded. "No, the only way is to start from here, and the sooner the better. If

we wait long there will be such hordes of curiosity seekers here that we can do nothing. In two days we can set up the equipment and great static-ring necessary to fire the projectile out, and so two nights from now we four will start out in it to Saturn!"

His words were followed by a silence of amazement on our part, and in that silent pause there came something that startled us more than anything we had yet experienced. It was a voice, a high, ragged voice that ripped to us from the darkness just outside the ring of lantern-light in which we were gathered.

"You will *not* start!" it rasped, and with the words flame sputtered from the darkness as a pistol-shot cracked.

At the first word Harkness had thrown himself back and that alone saved him, for the bullet hummed past him an inch away. We were all on our feet in an instant. And there at the edge of our light-area, half visible against the darkness beyond, stood Brant! Brant, his clothes torn and stained, a ragged unshaven figure, his eyes burning like flames of madness and with a pistol raised still in his hand! But an instant we saw him and then as Harkness and Webster leaped with guns raised he had thrown himself back into the darkness.

Harkness and Webster were firing shot after shot into the darkness after him! I leaped, struck up their arms.

"Don't shoot—it was Brant! Brant!" I cried, astounded. "My God, Harkness, you don't want to kill him?"

Harkness' eyes were blazing. "I or any of us will kill him on sight!" he exclaimed. "The man's a homicidal maniac, I tell you—didn't you see for yourself? That's the third time he's tried to kill some of us!"

"But you can't shoot him down because he's mad!" I exclaimed. "To kill Brant—

you must be mad yourself, Harkness, to think of it!"

Rockford intervened. "Harkness is partly right, Fraser," he said. "Brant is no longer Brant but a dangerous wild animal. You saw yourself what a murderous maniac he's become—he must have been lurking out there in the darkness waiting for a chance."

"But we could all form a searching-party and beat the forests around here for him," I suggested. "Ten to one we could find him and tie him up, take him back down the river. This may be only a temporary insanity, and if Harkness will postpone the preparation of the projectile for a few days, we can——"

"I will *not* postpone it!" Harkness' voice was high and harsh. "I tell you that the greatest venture in the history of either earth or Saturn is not going to come to nothing out of pity for a single crazed man. The work is going on and two nights from now we are going to start!" And he strode off to his tent.

That night in my own tent my heart-sickness deepened. For Rockford and McGregor and Halsen and the rest, I could see, held with Harkness that the preparation of the projectile was of far more moment than the securing of my crazed friend. They discussed the project from end to end and were forced to concede that if Harkness and the other three could really utilize earth's static charge as the Saturnians had utilized that of their planet, they would be shot forth from earth by it with sufficient force to hurl them to the other world.

If they did reach Saturn, we speculated, what would they find? It was evident enough that the Saturnians had science beyond ours, to launch their projectile across the void as they had done. It might well be, then, as Harkness had said, that the earth-visitors who reached

the other planet might set up thus a communication between the two that would work immeasurably to our advantage. For it was evidently only by physical visits thus that the two worlds could ever communicate, the Heaviside layer around earth preventing the sending or receiving of any radio or electrical signals.

Yet I could not forget those crushed crustacean bodies. Man-like as they were in some respects, it was plain that these sons of Saturn had come up from ages of crustacean evolution instead of mammal evolution, rising to intelligence as great or greater than ours but by far different paths. Could ever, I wondered, two such alien races as they and we meet and remain friends? Or would intelligence bridge the gulf between them?

There was on the part of Harkness and the others, though, no such doubt apparent. For on the next morning began the work of setting up the equipment we had brought.

THE open valley might have been some construction camp, so busy we all were in the next two days. Harkness and Webster and Gall and Bates seemed dominated and driven by tremendous purpose, and drove us in turn. They had lost all semblance of their ordinary selves and seemed to have become monomaniacs. They explained nothing to us, but ordered Rockford, Halsen, all of us, as though we were on a par with the hired workmen that had come with us. We worked under their directions without understanding half of what we did.

Concrete reinforcements were quickly sunk into the ground, and upon them was set a metal ring ten feet in diameter, made from the sections we had brought with us. Tube-like connections ending in fans of diverging copper strips were sunk deep in the earth around the ring, and led

through strangely circuited coils to the ring's edge. All of this, we understood, was destined to release earth's static charge into the ring and hurl the projectile out from that ring, but the details were beyond our comprehension and the confidence and sureness with which Harkness and Webster and the others directed us was amazing, considering that it was only by an examination of the projectile and the mechanisms and records inside it that they had gained the knowledge necessary.

By the afternoon of the second day the ring and mechanisms were finished and we strained with tackle and roughly made shears to swing the projectile into place onto it. That done, the tilt of the ring, which had been carefully measured, kept the projectile pointed up in a southerly direction toward the ecliptic, and toward a spot along it which Saturn would near at midnight. At midnight the circuit of the mechanisms around the ring would be closed and the projectile, with Harkness and Webster and Gall and Bates inside it, would be hurled out by all earth's tremendous static charge, the closing of the circuit giving the projectile a like charge and thus instantaneously repelling it and flinging it outward. It would be aimed at a spot a little beyond Saturn on the ecliptic, though, to allow for the Saturnian orbital motion.

Thus with the projectile in place Harkness kept the rest busy that afternoon's remaining hours in inspecting and testing the vital oxygen-apparatus, storing the concentrated food and water in it, testing the projectile's own static-recoil mechanism that would break its fall on reaching Saturn. The four hardly gave heed to us now other than to snap orders at us, so driven were they by excitement as they approached the end of the work and the beginning of their venture. I saw that

Gall and Bates were standing guard around the projectile by then with auto-matics swinging at their hips, apparently taking no further chances of mad attacks by Brant.

We had seen nothing of Brant during those two days, though as busy as we all were with the preparation of the projectile, we had had small chance to do so. Rockford had assured me that as soon as Harkness and his three started in the projectile we would search the forests for Brant as I had desired and take him back with us to civilization, where his insanity might pass. With this assurance I had to be content, for by then Rockford and Halsen and the rest were nearly as excited over the great venture of Harkness and the others as they were themselves.

To me in those two days, though, it had all seemed utterly unreal. The coming of the Saturnians, the finding of their projectile by Harkness and his four companions, that was unprecedented enough but not unexplainable. But this wild resolve of Harkness and Bates and Gall and Webster to use the projectile to hurtle back to Saturn, the insane haste with which they had rushed preparations for the venture, their callousness in their excitement to the fate of their companion who was roaming the forests demented—all these things made the whole business seem out of reason.

But Harkness drove steadily on with the last preparations, and the coming of darkness that night found the projectile ready on the ring from which it would leap out into space. I think now that by then we were all worked up to a pitch of tense excitement such as few men have experienced. Harkness and his three companions were the most steady of us all by then, going over projectile and mechanism for the last time, explaining to Rockford and Halsen how the circuits were to



be closed at midnight, when the four would be in the projectile ready to flash out. There would be a tremendous up-flash of light and force from the ring when the circuits were closed, we knew, but we and the surrounding mechanisms would not be in its path.

So the first hours of night passed, with the yellow light-spot of Saturn creeping farther across the sky and with the projectile on the tilted ring aimed upward like a great pointing finger. By the time the hour of eleven had passed, with less than an hour remaining before the projectile's start, a terrific tension was upon us all. Bates and Gall, still armed, were remaining by the projectile's door while Harkness and Webster went over the mechanisms and switches with Rockford for a last time. The others were gathered excitedly around them, and as I made my way back to my tent for the colored glasses we were all to wear as protection against the great upflash of light, I saw that the end of the valley in which were the tents was deserted.

Behind me the looming projectile and the excited throng around it made a weird scene in the light of the electric lanterns suspended about it. I turned, looking back at it, as I entered my tent. Then from somewhere in the tent's dark interior was a rush of movement and before I could turn or cry I was crushed to earth and held tightly, a hand over my mouth and my arms pinioned as though by superhuman force. Helpless, I looked up at the dark figure crouching on me to see, in a gleam of light through the tent-flap, the haggard, wild face of Brant!

I knew cold fear then such as I had never experienced, for Brant's eyes still were burning, mad. Gripping me, though, he was whispering tensely to me.

"Fraser! Fraser, you hear me? It's

Brant, and I'm not mad—you must believe me—not mad!"

He bent closer. "You'll not cry out if I release you? You'll listen to me, Fraser—just listen to me? I know you think I'm insane but if you'll just listen——"

"I'll listen," I managed to choke, and as he released me I sat up beside him in the tent's dark interior. "Keep steady, Brant, and you'll be all——"

His bitter laugh cut across my words. "All of which means that you think I'm mad yet and are trying to soothe me. Fraser, it was Harkness and Bates and Gall and Webster who told you I was mad, wasn't it? And you believed it when you saw me trying to kill them two nights ago?"

"They told me," I said, "and I did see——"

"Fraser," he said slowly and clearly, "Harkness and Gall and Webster and Bates told you nothing, for they died weeks ago, really. The four who told you, the four who are out there now making ready to flash to Saturn, are not they. They have the bodies of Harkness and Bates and Gall and Webster, yes—but *in those bodies are the brains of the four Saturnians who came to earth in that projectile!*

"Fraser, it's true! You must not think me mad! When we five came up here we found the projectile, truly enough, where it had fallen. But outside it were the four Saturnians, the four monstrous crustaceanmen, who had reached earth in it unharmed! They had weapons—strange forces—and they captured and held us. They did not bother questioning us but used instruments, mechanisms, that drew knowledge from our brains as though water from a tank!

"They swiftly learned our speech, our

knowledge of earth's general features and peoples and resources. In the process we were able to make out much concerning them. They had indeed been shot to earth from Saturn, we learned, four of the countless millions of crustacean peoples that inhabit that world. They had been shot to earth because Saturn had become almost too cold for continued life, and because the Saturnians wished to know whether earth would be a habitable world for them!

"They had been shot to earth to learn whether it was habitable and to return to Saturn with a report. If they returned and reported it habitable all the Saturnian hordes would pour across space in projectiles to earth! But if they did not return at all, the Saturnians would know that it was uninhabitable and so would give up the idea and would seek some other world for conquest.

"The four Saturnians had reached earth and had seen at once that it was habitable for their races. They had started to construct the great static-mechanisms and ring that would be necessary to hurl their projectile back to Saturn, but this would take them long with their limited equipment, and their capture of us had suggested to them an easier way. They would transpose their four Saturnian brains into four of our human bodies, and then, posing as four humans, would send for the equipment needed and would be shot back to Saturn with it!

"That is what they did. I saw them with their dissolving forces and super-anesthetics cutting open Harkness' skull, removing and destroying his human brain, and then removing the brain of one of themselves and placing it in the skull of Harkness. When it was finished Harkness rose to all appearances the same as ever, but he was no longer really Hark-

ness but a Saturnian, a Saturnian brain cased in Harkness' human body!

"With Harkness assisting, they did the same then with the others until in all appearances they were four humans, Harkness and Webster and Gall and Bates, able with the knowledge they had gained from us to talk and behave like humans, yet really Saturnians! They meant, I know, to gain further knowledge from me and then kill me before outsiders came, but I managed to escape them, and lurked in the forests around this camp, my one purpose to kill these four Saturnians masked in the bodies of my four friends before they could get back to Saturn with the news that would bring a terrible invasion down upon our world!

"I saw Bates, the pseudo-Bates, start down the river to send off word to the world for the equipment they needed. In the meantime they prepared the projectile to confirm their story, and took their dead and useless crustacean Saturnian bodies to save as evidence that the Saturnians in the projectile had been killed on reaching earth. They crushed the heads and upper bodies into fragments so that the absence of a brain in each of those bodies would not be detected.

"I knew what their plans were and tried to kill them twice but could not. The night after you came I tried again, and you, seeing, thought me mad as they had told you. In the last days I have seen you all setting up the static-mechanisms under their direction, to send them back to Saturn in human bodies, never doubting that they were other than the four men you knew, and never dreaming that in so doing you were preparing doom for earth. For if they start out tonight, if they reach Saturn, it means that doom indeed, a dread invasion of millions of crustaceans that will sweep humanity from the earth!"

AS BRANT'S desperate whisper ceased I felt my own brain spinning. I clutched his arm convulsively.

"Saturnian brains in human bodies! My God, Brant, it's impossible—insane——"

"It's true! Think back, Fraser—you must see that it's true!"

My thoughts stabbed back. A thousand unexplained little incidents of the preceding days rushed to my mind. Bates' non-recognition of me when he had met us at Storton—his and the others' occasional strange thickness of speech and jerkiness of manner—Harkness' callousness toward Brant's fate—the strange feature of the projectile found intact yet the Saturnian bodies inside it crushed—it all rushed upon me, staggeringly.

"My God, it is true then!" I whispered. "Four Saturnian brains—in those human bodies—but what can we do?"

Brant clutched my arm. "Fraser, that projectile must not start! If they reach Saturn in it, it is the end for humanity, for across the void from Saturn will flash countless projectiles crammed with crustacean hordes to conquer earth. There is no time to explain to the others now—in moments they start—and it is we who must hold them here——"

His words were cut short by a metallic clang from the distance!

"They've entered the projectile!" I cried. "We're too late!"

"No!" he shouted. "Quick, Fraser!"

Somehow in the next instant we were out of the tent and running toward the projectile and its surrounding mechanisms. The projectile's door was closed, and ready in it, I knew, were the four Saturnians masked in the bodies of Harkness and Bates and Webster and Gall. Rockford's hands were on the great double switches that would close the cir-

cuits, the others standing in a silent, awe-struck circle about him.

"Rockford!" I screamed. "Wait!"

Rockford whirled, astonished. His hand was still on the switches and Brant's gun came up. "Rockford—back from those switches!"

"They're both mad!" Rockford shouted to the others. "Catch them—it's time for the projectile to start——!"

"For the love of God, Rockford, don't——" My cry was cut short by the others rushing upon me. There was a clang as the projectile's door swung open! Harkness was emerging, eyes twin flames of hate. He was shouting to the others in the projectile, crying to them to close its door while he threw the switches, sacrificing himself to send the other three back to Saturn with the word that would bring doom to earth!

But as he raced toward the switches Brant was ahead of him, had met him! They struggled, reeled in mad battle, Harkness gripping Brant's pistol-hand. The others were upon me but as I saw Bates and Gall and Webster pouring out of the projectile too I fired toward them almost without aim, and Gall crumpled. Rockford and the rest crushed me to the ground in the next instant. Bates and Webster were running toward the wild scene with guns upraised and with deadly purpose.

But at that moment Brant wrenched his hand free from Harkness' grasp and brought his heavy pistol down in a blow that crashed through Harkness' skull as though it were of cardboard! Twin detonations split the night as Bates and Webster fired together, but at almost the same instant Brant's pistol seemed to explode interminably, and Webster and Bates staggered and swayed and fell! Then Halsen and Gray were on Brant,

tearing the pistol from him, both of us clutched by a score of hands.

"Fraser! Brant! You've killed them—killed your own friends—killed them!" Rockford was crying crazily.

I could not speak, but Brant, sagging in their grasp, pointed down to the limp body of Harkness beneath him. "Look!" he said only, pointing to the shattered skull. Beneath should have shown the gray brain but instead there was only a strange black smooth mass at which Halsen stared, unbelievably, Gray and he bending as though unable to credit their eyes, Rockford and all the others as stupefied as the two biologists.

"My God!" Halsen choked. "Hark-

ness' brain gone, and that in place of it! What——"

"You wanted the brains of those four dead Saturnians to examine, Halsen," said Brant. "Well—there's one of them—and you'll find the others in the skulls of the other three." And as they stared, staggered, releasing us, the stupefying explanation dawning on them, Brant looked up toward Saturn's yellow spark up amid the stars. "Waiting up there—waiting—for the word that will never come now, the attack on earth that will never take place. But none of us can blame them, surely, for they fought only for their world and race as we for ours—as we for ours——"