

The Menace from Andromeda

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WITH a puzzled frown, Donald Standish looked up from the photographic plates in front of him to the patch of dark blue heaven visible through the half-opened dome of the Mt. Wilson observatory. There floated the enigmatic nebula of Andromeda—the huge telescope probing directly toward it—as if to pluck out the very secret of its being. He arose, and paced the confines of the huge room. Under thirty, clean cut in features, he had already earned an enviable reputation as an astronomer, which had won him a coveted place in the world-famous observatory. From the very beginning, the great nebula had exercised a peculiar fascination over him. In some inexplicable way Standish had always felt that there lay the secret of the universe waiting for him in the role of a Perseus to deliver and bring forth.

In truth, many other contemplative observers had speculated about that faint, dusty patch of light sprawled athwart the enchained and enchanted body of the legendary daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopeia. For centuries men had pondered in vain, seeking the nature of the faint light-cloud which so persistently evaded their probings. It was not until recently, with the great advance in the manufacture and use of precision instruments and telephoto lenses, that the astounding truth had been revealed to startled astronomers—this faint glimmer in the skies is a great island universe of stars; far beyond the confines of our own galaxy—millions on millions of suns and attendant planets, careening through the outermost reaches of space-time, so inconceivably remote that a ray of light traveling 186,000 miles per second would take nearly a million years to reach the earth.

Standish turned once more to the sheaf of photographs. Yes—there was no doubt about it, the faint pin-prick of light labeled on the sky charts as 12478, which he had himself named Alcoreth, showed an unmistakable increase in brightness in this most recent of his photographs.

For over a year, on every clear night, he had photographed the great nebula. The minute pin-pricks of light, representing huge stars, had been laboriously ticketed and compared. This queer behavior on the part of Alcoreth, hitherto a placid, ordinary star, aroused his interest.

"Something interesting happening to the constellation of that old lady," Donald remarked to himself, meditatively stroking his chin. "I'd better turn the prisms on her and see what's going on in her innards to account for it."

Deftly he adjusted the great spectroscope, and swung it on the errant orb. As he gazed, a startled "Whew" escaped him. These were not the spectral lines and bands customarily associated with hot gaseous stars in eruption.

"This is becoming more interesting—better verify it," he thought. Quickly he took out his series of comparison spectra. None of them checked with this spectrum.

Again he arose, and paced the room. This was evidently not a burning sun. Apparently it was a relatively cold mass. What then was it? Was it shining by reflected light? But, he argued with himself, there was no sun within billions of miles to produce such a vast outpouring of reflected light. There must be some other cause for its luminosity. Excitedly Standish paced about. Luminescence—phosphorescence. This must be a world composed of some radio-active mineral! He strode back to the spectroscope. No, these were not the characteristic lines of any radio-active mineral known to science. Again he took up his restless pacing. The word phosphorescence brought to his mind pictures of the fields at night alive with the darting sparks of fireflies—of the forests, and the glow of rotting fungus and decaying wood—of the tropic seas under the Southern Cross, criss-crossed with pallid witch-fires.

He stopped in his tracks. By George, that was it! Life forms—protoplasm—under certain conditions would become strongly luminescent. But no—that was too fantastic for serious consideration. And yet—and yet. Try as he would to dismiss the thought from his mind, it occurred again and again, until it obsessed him. He must check it, and that this very minute.

In the course of his researches, Standish had discovered that by causing the light of luminiferous protoplasm to pass through a series of gases, the spectroscope was capable of resolving the constituent elements. As yet the process was a guarded secret, but the material was at hand.

With trembling hands the astronomer set up four thin walled transparent chambers, put into each a definite quantity of a rare gas—different for each chamber—attached them in series to the great spectroscope in such a fashion that the light from Alcoreth passed through them, before reaching the prisms that would cause it to yield up its secret.

"What an idiot I am to waste my time on such a crazy idea!" he scoffed aloud, at the same time looking around guiltily. "It's damn foolish, all right, but what's the odds. Let's take a look-see." He inserted a comparison spectrograph of the organic elements, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, sulphur and phosphorus—the essentials of life as we know it on this planet.

With elaborate carelessness, hardly masking his inner trepidation, he gazed into the aperture. The spectrum appeared. A quick look, a longer one, then a concentrated stare—a feverish scribbling of calculations—then he arose with a mighty shout, that echoed from the great white dome. "Eureka, I have found it!" The cry of Archimedes on making *his* famous discovery. The impossible was true. The life elements were all present on that distant star, and what was infinitely more, its spectrum showed the peculiar arrangement of lines and bands which his research had shown was invariably associated with living protoplasm.

His immediate impulse was to broadcast his discovery to the scientific world. But then a thought sobered him. So fantastic a theory would never be accepted unless supported by impregnable proof. Premature publication, and he would become a laughing-stock. No, he must wait until his spectroscopic research was perfected. In the meantime, keep on observing this strange new world.

For three weeks he took innumerable photographs, barely pausing for sleep and food. The star increased in brightness, then tiny streamers shot forth intermittently, then slowly it waned. From a fifteenth magnitude star it passed gradually down the scale, till finally a last plate failed to show any trace of it. Alcoreth was gone, and with her, Standish's hope of everlasting fame.

The astronomer was in despair. How now could he convince the scoffers that he had witnessed the impossible—a world of living protoplasm! His proof was gone.

Yet, when he pondered over it—it did not seem impossible. Life—protoplasm—was only a particular combination of five or six elements. These elements are found throughout the universe. Was it inherently impossible, or even wildly improbable, for these elements to combine in some other world to form living matter, just as on our own earth various elements combined to form the rocks that constitute the structure of the world?

So Standish argued, and thought wistfully of Douglas Cameron, his chum of college days, now a research worker on cancer in an isolated laboratory in the fastnesses of Colorado. He thought of Douglas and his sister and assistant Mary. Those two would listen to his tale of discovery. How he wished Mary was with him now! Well, another month and she would be with him always, his wife and helpmate. He could see her now, the laughing eyes, tilted nose, puckered lips. She

was fair to look upon, his Mary, but wiry and strong, and behind that clear brow was a brain which made her fit sister to one scientist and wife to another.

"Well, to work again," he sighed, and continued the search for living worlds.

ALCORETH heaved herself in long undulations that caused a plashing of luminous vibration in the surrounding ether. For Alcoreth was hungry. Eons of slow starvation stretched everlastingly ahead. Already huge vacuoles were dotting her interior, as the plasmic matter shrank and shriveled away. The food supply was disappearing—no more did rocky crags of green and purple hue rise above Alcoreth's bosom. Only the inner core of minerals remained—and that was wearing dangerously thin over vast alcorethean fires.

Never to be forgotten was that frightful time when, questing for food to still the retching hunger, she had greedily absorbed too large a section of life reaching bottom rock, and torn through the thin layer.

In an instant, the devastating flames had leaped and seared through the protoplasmic tissue. The very thought of it caused vast shudders to course through Alcoreth. For ages, the hellish fire spewed and roared—devouring, incinerating—bringing the tortures of the damned to her viscid frame. In agony, she heaved and twisted, but to no avail. Her sister spheres gazed on in helpless pity, but could render no aid. That final period—when annihilation seemed imminent—and almost welcome—a slipping of the rocky substratum had miraculously closed the gap, and once again imprisoned the ravaging fires. Slowly, painfully, and with difficulty, Alcoreth recreated sufficient plasma to cover the wounded surfaces; but her marvelous powers of reproduction were lessened. Since that fateful time, she only nibbled gingerly at the food rocks, and the pangs of hunger grew and grew.

Message after message for assistance was sent on ethereal vibration to her sister spheres in that vast universe, and ever and anon some being kindlier than the rest would disrupt a fragment of the precious mineral, and cast it meteor-like through space towards the starving world. But these were mere sops. Alcoreth foresaw the inevitable. Already had protoplasmic worlds come to the end of their food supply, and either broken through to the central fires, and flamed through space like blazing torches to imponderable dust; or, cannibal-like, devoured their own substance—until the last pitiful bit of plasmic intelligence curled up on itself and died.

Alcoreth was determined to avoid either of these fates. But how? For an eon her highly developed intelligence, diffused throughout her structure, brooded over the problem. Speculatively she vibrated in unison with the etheric waves from the galaxy of the Milky Way, of which Earth was so minute a member. A quiver ran through her—causing a strange luminescence to run riot over the surface of her body. The solution was found—desperate, fantastic—failure meant annihilation—but then, so eventually did the present state. So Alcoreth set to work to do what was needful for the great adventure.

In this strange universe, electrons and protons had whirled just as naturally into the rhythmic forms of life—protoplasm—primitive plasm, as in our universe they had danced into the common rocks and minerals. Here, the first bits of plasma were causal in their beginnings; taking sustenance out of the abundant

mineral elements; slowly and laboriously evolving and growing more and more complex through differentiation of structure and function; and culminating in highly complex man. There the cooling mist of electrons patterned overwhelmingly into diffused plasm, with enough of other elements to create a normal food supply. Each world was a living entity; there was no necessity for differentiation of parts; intelligence was inherent and diffused throughout the entire mass, just as is found in the primitive unicellular animals and plants on earth.

The early forms of terrestrial life were able to absorb and digest mineral matter directly. In the universe of Andromeda, evolution had advanced further in that direction. Solid rock was ingested and digested rapidly and easily. Through eons of time, the vast inchoate consciousness of the mass developed into a highly energized intelligence, that could grasp intuitively problems far beyond our highest flights—and could communicate with other life-worlds by etheric vibrations. Mental states were marked by tremendous luminosity over the surface of the plasma, which in turn set the ether into rapid vibration.

Alcoreth was busily at work. All over her body, she was rolling up into globules of protoplasm. The surfaces of these hardened into cell walls or cysts. Alcoreth was now dissociated into countless trillions of spores—as we call them. Each spore was in itself a unit of life, in a state of suspended animation; capable of resisting the frigid cold of space; capable of existing thus through countless ages; and expanding into life anew under favorable conditions.

Clerk Maxwell, the great English physicist, toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, proved that light had a definite propulsive force, and that particles of matter, if minute enough, could be propelled through the ether with tremendous velocities by the electromagnetic rays of light. Svante August Arrhenius, the eminent Swedish biologist, used this discovery as a basis for bold speculation. Was it not possible—he argued—for minute spores of life to pass through interstellar space from world to world, and germinate anew on barren, uninhabited worlds?

All this Alcoreth knew as elemental truths. If only some of her spores could land on some far-off world, unaccountably and strangely formed of mineral matter solely—there to burgeon and grow with lightning-like rapidity in the midst of such plenty—what a marvelous rebirth! For inherent in each spore was the intelligence of the mass, and Alcoreth would exist anew in the alien universe.

Finally all was in readiness. The time for the perilous emprise had come! The teeming aggregate of spores concentrated their mighty intelligence. They heaved and swelled. Weird radiances played over their surfaces. Huge luminous masses propelled themselves into space. Cloud after cloud of spore forms tore themselves loose, and shot forward. The tremendous journey was begun! Never in all the history of the universe was there a stranger migration!

Criss-crossing the illimitable void were innumerable light vibrations. Instantly the spores were scattered in all directions, caught up by onrushing waves, carried along with the speed of light, scurrying towards the uttermost confines of space-time.

On—on—through the illimitable void! Ages—eons—thousands and hundreds of thousands of light years—never ceasing—never slackening in their headlong flight! Past mighty suns—past strange planets—past pale nebulosities—past pallid

shapes of interspatial denizens—past rushing comets with hair afire—past meteors, debris of uncounted worlds—on—on! Whole universes waxed great and waned to pin pricks in the darkling void! On! On!

The Milky Way—a bend of light waves past the Sun—the earth planet loomed vast—a gravitational pull was exerted—and a cloud of spores had reached the end of their tremendous flight. Slowly through the warm air they settled and floated and dropped to the surface of the Atlantic Ocean.

MISSING FISHING VESSEL SAFE IN PORT!

Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Sept. 27th AP.

The fishing smack ELLEN MORSE, two weeks past due, docked here this morning with a record catch. The vessel was blown off its course during the storm reported three weeks ago by the remainder of the fleet, and, on the abatement of the gale, ran into an unusually large school of haddock 100 miles off the Banks. She remained to take advantage of the unexpected good fortune. All on board are well.

The crew report that during the catch a peculiar shower composed of small brown globules fell on and about the vessel. As this occurred at the height of the catch, no specimens of the *dust* were preserved.

The early editions of one or two newspapers that September morning of 1938 carried this small squib. A commuter or two, traveling long distances, having exhausted the headlines, the sport pages, the stock reports, read it. Then it passed into the oblivion which awaits all such space-filling items. No sixth sense, no intuitional alarm bell, warned any reader of the horror which this dust cloud, so casually observed, had brought to earth.

Only in the Mt. Wilson Observatory did one man start on reading the report. Standish, alone in all the world, saw here more than a mere unusual occurrence. And even he could place no great stress on it. A careful clipping of the two-inch account, a reference to data jotted down a few weeks before, then the clipping and the notes in that neat scientific script were filed away.

It was a fair world that the dust cloud had entered. All the nations were at peace and had been for twenty years. The great strides in mechanical and scientific progress of the first two decades of the 20th century had somewhat slowed down. Not yet had the commerce of the world taken to the air. While swift passenger and mail services across the continents and the seas had become commonplace, as yet aerial navigation had not been cheapened sufficiently to remove from the surface the carrying of freight. The life-blood of the nations, the foodstuffs, the textiles, the myriad varied components of commerce, still coursed in the old arteries along the surface of the seas. Still were the harbors of the world crowded with shipping, still across the seven seas plodded in the old slow way the gleaming freight-liners and the tramps. Still across the continents streamed the long freight-trains, mile-long caravans bearing ore, coal, grain, food, and raiment that the race might be fed, and be clothed, that man might be housed, kept warm, might live and work.

The year 1938 was ushered out in the age-old flare of horns and carousal, the age-old watch-night prayers, and the fateful twelve-month of 1939 began. Again a newspaper item noted by but few signalled the approach of horror.

New York—April 3rd.

The Hardin Line officers here report that yesterday afternoon, while their private radio station was receiving the routine daily report from the Hardin freighter, ULYSSES, communication suddenly ceased and could not be re-established. At the time the ULYSSES was 50 miles due east of Cape Hatteras. Vessels in the vicinity have been requested to investigate.

Thus it began. The Ulysses was never heard of again. Other ships cruising over the position from which it was last reported could find no trace of the freighter, nor any of the usual evidences of marine disaster. Ten thousand tons of steel and wood, thousands of tons of freight, one hundred men, had disappeared without trace.

A month later, another great ship broke suddenly off in the midst of a wireless dialogue and vanished as completely as though it had never been. In quick succession a third, a fourth, a fifth abrupt vanishment caught the attention of the world within a week. No longer was the news relegated to the inside pages of the daily papers, but glaring front page headlines broadcasted the tidings of disaster. Marine insurance rose to exorbitant rates; the navies of the earth were scouring the Atlantic; only the most essential traffic was proceeding. At last the world was aware that something brooded out there in the ocean which threatened the very life-blood of the earth.

One peculiar feature of the disappearances was early noted. The tragedies had occurred in no localized region of the ocean. Plotted on the maps which now appeared on the front page of every paper, it was seen that a broad belt of waters, extending from Nova Scotia on the north to the Caribbean on the south was dotted with the black crosses of disaster. It was as if some tremendous power was erecting a fearful barrier across North and South Atlantic, a barrier which would end the commerce of the centuries between the Eastern and the Western Hemispheres, saying to the trade of the world: "Thou shalt not pass!"

And now indeed the barrier was complete. So rapid had been the multiplication of casualties that by the end of June over a thousand vessels had unaccountably vanished. On July 1, a general order was issued by the Admiralties of every nation forbidding all commercial traffic across the Atlantic. Supplies of food and other necessities were routed across the Pacific, across Asia and Europe to England and the seacoast countries of the Old World. Now, on the broad expanse of the Atlantic, unwonted quiet reigned, broken only by the gray war-craft searching, searching, for what they knew not.

A pall of horror overspread the world. The sole topic of conversation on the street, in business places and in houses was the mysterious barricade across the ocean and speculation as to its cause. In the capitals of the world the heads of government conferred about nothing else. In the universities, in the headquarters of the scientific organizations, theory and counter-theory were spun as to the nature of this thing which had paralyzed commerce. The attention of all the earth was centered on the great radio towers and the word that came through them from the gray war vessels out on the tossing waters, searching, searching, ever

searching for the thing which so swiftly, so relentlessly swallowed up the great vessels and small which ploughed the waves.

Ever there was the same news. Each day the tale was—"Battleship So and So, while reporting all well at such and such time ceased communication. Other vessels in the vicinity have been ordered to investigate." And then, one by one, the other vessels, too, would drop out of sight, never to be heard of again.

On the newspaper maps it was noted that the belt of black crosses widened and lengthened, extending ever closer to the shores of the Atlantic. And the horror deepened—blacker was the dread of the people.

ON the thirty-first of July the first faint intimation of the nature of the menace reached the world. The United States naval station at Arlington reported that while in communication with the U.S.S. TEXAS it had received the following messages:

"From NXL Lat—Long—10:12 A.M. July 31, 1939.

"First officer reports iridescence covering entire surface of ocean to east and extending north and south as far as horizon. We are proceeding closer."

"From NXL Lat—Long—10:15 A.M. July 31, 1939—are now nearing iridescence. It is sweeping toward us—"

Here communication ceased. The TEXAS had joined the long list of missing ships.

Hurriedly summoned into radio conference, the scientists of the world discussed this meagre report. A veritable babel of conflicting ideas, of fine-spun theories, of concepts old and new wove back and forth across the ether.

The least regarded explanation of the phenomenon, the most derided, was the exposition by the astronomer of Mt. Wilson of his theory of an invasion of protoplasm in spore form.

In the streets of the cities wild-eyed ranters appeared at every corner. To excited, pallid crowds they raved of the judgment of God upon an evil world, of the second coming of Christ (or Buddha or Mohammed), of the end of the earth. As yet only those whose intelligence was of the lowest took stock in their dire predictions, but Hysteria, with staring eyes and wind-tangled hair, strained at the chains with which civilization had bound her.

The world will long remember the morning of August 5, 1939, when the full nature of the Menace burst upon it. All that had passed before paled into insignificance at the startling news from Florida. That state of palms and oranges, that winter playground of the idle rich, no longer exists. But its name will long remain in the minds of man as the region where first the Menace came upon the land.

Baking in the glare of the August sun, terrifically hot, though still but an hour above the horizon, a small group waited on the platform of the ramshackle station of St. Nicholas, a few miles inland. Southern railway schedules were proverbially elastic and thus little thought was given to the fact that it was a full half hour past the time when the west-bound "number 9" should have made its appearance. The station-master (baggage-man, telegrapher, porter, etc.) had reported that the wires

were down to the east but this was a none too rare occurrence. The talk was, of course, of the vacant Atlantic (for now even the searching warships had been withdrawn) and the horror which had cleared it of shipping.

"It's my idee," quote the village druggist, who was on his way to Jacksonville for his monthly buying trip, "It's my idee that the Germans are gonna start another war and they've got millyuns of submarines out there. If I was President—What the heck is that up the track?"

The oracular dictum was interrupted by the appearance to the east of a hand-car on the rails, traveling at the uttermost speed of which this conveyance was capable. It was being operated by one man, and his frantic heaving at the pump handle gave evidence of more than ordinary haste. The four-wheeled platform fairly flew along the steel pathway—"Jingo Neddy, he's clippin' it some!" "Who is it, kin you make out?" "It's Bob, the agent at Pablo Beach—musta been a wreck!" "What's he yellin'?"

There was time for but a few startled observations when the hand car had already reached the station. Its operator, pale, disheveled, staring with panic, shaking in an ague of fear, was shouting, "Run, run, it's coming. All gone, all gone, wiped out. Oh my God. Get 'em all out. Run, run!"

That fateful morning of August 5th, the little town of Pablo Beach; one of the many which once dotted the East coast of Florida, just waking to another day of toil, had been overwhelmed by a tremendous mass of quivering jelly suddenly heaving itself out of the ocean. "It was higher than the biggest house in town, and it stretched along the shore as far as I could see. It quivered like jelly, and it rolled—it rolled on up the beach and over the houses and the people. Everybody run toward it at first, only me, and I would have only *number 9* was due, and I had to stick by my key. Everyone run toward it, and it just rolled on and over them. It 'peared to move slow, but it must have been coming fast 'cause, when folks started to run away from it, it just kind of sent out part of itself a bit faster, and it caught them. God, it was terrible. Just before I grabbed the hand-car and got away it caught Pop Saunders, the postmaster. I saw it catch him. It just kind of heaved, and swallowed him up. I saw him inside of it, just like a fly in calf's foot jelly, just as clear, with his mouth open, and his eyes staring, and his legs kicking and his arms working, but his kicking and squirming didn't bother the thing any. And then his face kind of run together till it was just a blotch—and that's all I saw!"

IN London, in Berlin and Paris men stopped their midday occupations to read aghast the story of the Florida station-agent. In New York, Boston and Baltimore the wheels of industry never started that day, as the office workers, the laborers, and the corporation presidents were halted on their way to their day's occupations by the dread tale. Sleeping Denver and 'Frisco waked to nightmare terror by the shouting of the extras in the streets.

In the Mt. Wilson observatory Donald Standish, keeping his sleepless vigil at the eyepiece of his beloved telescope, was startled by the ringing of the "emergency news" bell on the broadcast receiver in a corner. Hurriedly switching on the speaker, he heard the terrible tale. "Gosh! I was right."

The stars were forgotten now. Standish joined the world in anxious waiting for the next report. It came:

U.S. News Service. Bulletin 25.

The governor of Florida has mobilized the militia and troops are already moving rapidly toward Pablo Beach. Federal aid has been called for. The Secretary of War has ordered all available regulars with railroad artillery, flame-throwers, and gas projection apparatus to the threatened region. It is confidently expected that all danger will be over shortly.

U.S. News Service. Bulletin 26.

Troops have now arrived within a mile of the infested territory. Infantry is being deployed, armed with gas bombs and flame throwers. The 16 inch railroad guns are being prepared for action.

Bulletin 26a.

Artillery is now firing high explosive shells into the advancing mass. Infantry is rapidly approaching within range.

U.S. News Service. Bulletin 27.

Artillery fire is utterly ineffective. Its only result is to hurl great globs of jelly into the air. They fall on the advancing infantry and envelop them. The loss is appalling. Indescribable scenes of horror are being witnessed. Even before the enfolded soldiers cease their struggles against asphyxiation their forms begin to melt away. They appear to be digested by the jelly. The big guns have been ordered to cease fire. The effect of the poison gas which is being released in great clouds is now being observed.

Donald could restrain himself no longer. "Fools," he burst out. "All their big guns and their gases will never stop that stuff. Some scientific method of attack must be found."

The next bulletin proved him right.

Poison gas has no effect. Flame-throwers wither the jelly when they reach it, but on both sides of each point of operation the mass continues its relentless march. Reports reach us now that the east coast as far north as Charleston has been invaded.

Donald burst out again. "We must find a way to stop the advance of the jelly, and then to kill it. Perhaps Doug will have a notion. He ought to, he's been working with cells long enough. I'll call him. Besides, I haven't spoken to Mary since noon yesterday."

As the astronomer made his way to the personal communications set, the call light on that device began to flash. He answered it. "Mt. Wilson Observatory, Standish speaking."

"Professor Standish, this is President Adams' office. There will be a radio conference of scientists in half an hour. You are requested to listen in."

"Right."

"Now to get Doug," rapidly whirling the dials to Cameron's wave length.

Quickly the connection was completed. "Hello Doug, did you get the news? They know now that I was right. What, you haven't heard! Might have known nothing matters to you but your blasted cancer. There soon won't be anybody left for you to save from cancer. Get this—"

In quick, succinct phrases the savant outlined to the bacteriologist the tale of horror which was echoing round the earth. He did not get very far, however, for an exclamation of horror stopped him. As he listened to the broken phrases of Cameron, the tanned face of the astronomer paled with horror. His knuckles whitened with the force of his grip on the receiver.

"What's that? Mary flew to New York yesterday to get you some pigments. Man, don't you realize that it's a matter of hours till the protoplasm visits New York. Get Mary back at once.

"Damnation! You can't? The radio on her phone is out of order? How was she flying, by sight? Can't you reach her? No? Then I'm going after her. The devil with the conference. One hair on Mary's head is worth more than the rest of the world to me. You'll go with me? Get ready then, I'll make it as fast as I can."

In a trice Donald's flying suit was on, the hangar's doors were opened, and the trim little sport plane zoomed up to the 5,000 foot speed level, then like an arrow flew to the east.

Meanwhile message after message of terror had been winging its way into the ether. All the east coast of Florida, Southern Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, in rapid succession had seen the creeping, iridescent terror. Resistlessly out of the sea it was heaving, twenty-five feet high, hundreds of miles long, this vast jelly-like tide of destruction. It was as if the sea had congealed and was making a final triumphant drive for mastery over its eternal enemy, the land. With the inevitableness of fate itself the thing rolled up, enveloping all that opposed it, enfolding the shrieking mobs which tried to flee before it, and most horribly of all, digesting them.

IN New York the streets were packed with pale-faced throngs. Although every home had its receiver, the desire for the companionship of others had sent the entire population into the streets. The public loud-speakers, the newspaper bulletin boards were the nuclei of the masses. As one item after another of disaster was broadcast by the news-purveying agencies, a groan would rise from the crowds and then silence would come again. For these were silent crowds; the magnitude of the calamity had stricken the people dumb.

Forcing her way through the packed masses and into the hundred story tower which Columbia University had just occupied, was Mary Cameron. Astounded on her arrival by the terrific news of calamity, she was anxiously intent upon completing her errand and speeding her plane back to her brother. But tremendous difficulties had delayed her. Traffic was well-nigh suspended. It had taken an enormous bribe to persuade a taxi-driver to undertake the journey from the Governor's Island landing field, through the vehicular tunnel and up Broadway to the new educational centre in what had been Central Park. Held to a snail-like pace by the masses which packed the streets from building line to building line, the trip had taken hours. But now, at dusk, she had reached her goal.

The great building was deserted. But the doors of an elevator stood open and she could operate the simple mechanism. Swiftly she rose through the hundred floors of this latest apotheosis of education to where, in the very tip of the soaring tower, Cameron's home laboratory was located. She unlocked the door, and entered the room. Quickly dropping her close-fitting cap and leather flying suit she began to assemble the bottles and jars listed on the slip which she had brought from the mountain retreat she had left the night before. But the strain of twenty-four hours of flying by sight and of the terrific scenes she had just witnessed suddenly told on even her wiry constitution, and she dropped into a chair for a moment's rest. She closed her eyes—in a moment she was sound asleep.

Startled awake by a roar which, ascending from a thousand feet below, rattled the windows with the force given it by millions of throats, she found the room glowing with a green and spectral light. The usual murmur of the great city had changed to a terrific tumult in which she could sense a terrible agony of fear even at this alpine height. She ran to the window. Night had fallen, but it was not dark. From far below came the green light, a glowing luminescence, which reminded her of some rotting fungus which she had one night found in the woods near Cameron's laboratory. The glowing material made a gridiron there beneath, filling the streets south and west, till it merged in sheets of green flame where she knew the harbor and rivers lay. Immediately beneath her the streets were still clear, but bathed in that unearthly light she could see black streams. In the cupboard she knew her brother had a pair of binoculars. Quickly getting them, she focussed them on the black streams. She saw people, thousands, tens of thousands, rushing north, shouting in a frenzy of terror, and there, only a little south, the glowing green light pouring up the streets, towering far above the hurrying struggling mobs, moving with incredible swiftness, engulfing the stragglers. The menace had reached New York!

She swept the glasses north whence came a rolling as of thunder. Far up the Sound she could see flashes—the forts at the upper end of the city were firing their big guns. South again, and below, quiet now, the glowing jelly had filled the streets. New York was dead.

"Well, I'm in a fine fix now! I'm safe enough here, but how am I going to get away. Probably starve to death. Well that's better than being swallowed up by that thing down there."

A terrific crash downtown came to her startled ears; then almost before she could turn, another, and another. Down on the tip of the Island, where first Manhattan had reached toward the sky, there was a clear space where the 85-story Bank of Manhattan building had been. Woolworth too was gone, and all the mountainous structures below. As she gazed, she saw the 150-story City Hall Tower, just completed, sway, then, like some giant of the forest felled after centuries of growth by the woodman's axe, topple over, and gathering speed, crash into the lambent sea which bathed its foot. As it struck the surface of the quivering flood of light there was a tremendous splash, and through the air for hundreds of feet flew huge glowing fragments. They fell on the roofs and the serried façades of the buildings for blocks around, and then, to Mary's horror, they spread, and wherever the patches of light lay the sturdy structures of steel and granite began to melt.

"Good God! I'm not so safe after all. The ghastly stuff eats even the material of which these buildings are made. I wonder how long this place will last. I guess it's finish for me."

ALL this time the yellow sport plane had been rushing across the continent, sliding down the radio beacon from New York. Intent on the path ahead, the two leather clad figures bent over the dashboard. No talk, for the muffler had been cut for greater speed. No talk, but the thoughts of the two were identical. "What's happening in New York? What's happening to Mary? Is she safe?" Over and over these thoughts reiterated themselves in the weary brains. These two great scientists, in whose intellects lay perhaps the saving of the world, had forgotten everything save that wisp of a girl in New York, sister of one and sweetheart of the other.

At last the Appalachians appeared, passed beneath them, fell away behind them. Night had come. Donald who had yielded his place at the stick to Cameron, suddenly clutched his companion's arm and pointed ahead. On the horizon there pulsed a greenish glow. Standish's mind flew back to that star in Andromeda, whose passing he had watched months before. Here again he saw the light whose components he had analyzed in his gas spectroscope! The plane was headed directly for New York, and straight ahead of them the luminescence was at its brightest!

Ten minutes now, and they were circling over the great city. From the bay to Westchester, from the Palisades east to the sea, the city was invested. As far north as the ridge of giant erections about 42nd Street the smooth expanse of the phosphorescent sea told of the progress of destruction.

Cameron reached for the lever which silenced the roaring exhaust of the twin engines.

"If only we're in time; if only she is still in my lab. I'm going to go past the windows and see."

Throttled down to its slowest flying speed, the little plane dipped gracefully past the doomed tower rising high above the glowing rectangle of the park. Not twenty feet from the tower it glided. And there, in the window which both men sought so eagerly, was the figure they had hardly hoped would be there!

Up again then for consultation.

"Doug, how close can we get to that window?"

"I'll get within a foot, or we'll all go to hell together."

"Then do it, and I'll get her out, but first tell her what we plan. Get a flashlight; she knows the Morse Code. Remember how I used to signal her in the old days?"

"A long slow glide now, about 500 feet away, lucky that your window faces the park."

Cameron obeyed, while the astronomer flashed his dots and dashes.

"On the sill, ready to jump."

A wave of the brave little hand signalling understanding. Then up again.

Up to 5,000 feet and a mile away. Then while Standish creeps out to the end of the wing, the motor is shut off and a long glide begun. Down, on a long slant, straight for that pinnacle rising sheer ahead. Down, ever down, with increasing speed hurtles the plane. A miracle of accurate steering, another miracle of perfect

timing, and sheer muscular strength are required. Stark courage from all three, or the gallant attempt at rescue must end in disaster. Will they, can they do it? Too near—and a crash; too far and a new attempt cannot be made. For see, already the great tower sways with approaching dissolution.

Perfect aiming, the plane almost grazes the side of the tower. Perfect execution—a hundred feet from the window on whose sill Mary stands, one hand clinging to the sash, the other outstretched; the ship dips, then suddenly rising, almost stalls directly opposite the opening. Perfect timing—the hand of the man on the wing grips the hand of the girl on the sill; a leap, a tug, and there are now two on the wing. Frantically Cameron works at the controls; frantically the lovers cling to the taut surface of the fabric on which they sprawl. Overbalanced, the craft reels drunkenly. Then the roar of the motor, the wings grip the air, and all is safe.

As Cameron zoomed upward, the hundred-story University rocks in ever-widening arcs; then slowly, slowly it begins to fall. Intact, entire, as it had for so short a time soared over the City, so it falls. Slowly at first, then with gradually increasing speed the great structure falls, until with a rush almost too fast for the eye to follow, it crashes into the lucent tide.

Into the little cockpit tumble the lovers, trembling, exhausted with their supreme effort. Cameron too, is trembling, but he must guide the ship with its precious freight. Westward now they turn, westward through the horrible night.

And now for the first time, they can look about them and take stock. The air is thick with darting planes, fleeing westward from the scourge. Below them not a house that is not ablaze with light, not a highway that is not jammed with rushing conveyances, not a railroad which is not crammed with hurrying trains, westward every one. Looking behind, from north to south, in the wide sweep which their height of 7000 feet allowed them, nothing but that terrible spectral green light, nothing but that immense sea, not of water, but of all-devouring jelly, come across that vast infinity of interstellar space to harry the earth and conquer it. And overhead the black velvet sky, and the stars, gleaming still in the wide arch of the heavens as they did when Earth was a whirling mass, as they still shall when this ball is nought but a cold, dead thing.

"Switch on the communication receiver C; let's hear what the news broadcast says."

U.S. News Service. Bulletin 1248.

The entire eastern coasts of North and South America are now completely covered with the jelly. Extent of the investment from ten miles to twenty-five. Spain and southern France are being slowly covered; the rest of the western coast of Europe penetrated only from a mile to five.

U.S. News Service. Bulletin 1249.

The scientific conference is still in session. No solution has as yet been arrived at, but the chairman wishes to announce that the people of the earth need not despair; progress is being made. Donald Standish, the noted astronomer, is still unaccountably missing. It is requested that any one having information as to his present location communicate at once with 2 AG, the government intelligence station."

Mary turned to Donald, in whose arms she was still being tightly held. "Oh, Don, why did you leave your post for me. The world needs you, why did you leave it for me?"

"Dear, if you had gone, the rest of the world could have followed for all of me. But now, now that you're safe, we must get back. I've got a hunch that Doug and I together can arrive at the right thing to do. We can't land now. Once down in that mob we'd never be able to take off again. Besides, neither of us can think straight just yet; too much has happened in the last thirty hours. We'll soon be home now, and we'll get busy. Drive her, Doug."

Now the sun had overtaken them and a new day was begun. Close ahead rose the peaks of the Rockies, among them the mountain on which perched Cameron's wilderness laboratory. A long spiral, and the little ship of the air dropped gently on the landing field at its door.

The passengers debarked stiffly from the light plane, then Douglas taxied it into the hangar. Emerging promptly, the three of them entered the house.

Physically exhausted as they were by the long journey, there was yet no thought of sleep. They were still shaking with the horror of those frightful scenes they had so recently witnessed.

Mary was tottering with weariness, but held herself bravely. Not for worlds would she permit her lover to see how near the verge of hysteria she was, now that the danger was past. She looked around the long comfortable room—cheery fireplace and all—with a shudder. How peaceful and quiet everything was—and over there—nameless horrors out of hell—the indescribable stampede of maddened humanity—the hideous screech of some poor devil engulfed by the advancing monster—no, no!—that way lay madness—she must stop.

Donald was watching her anxiously. "Mary, you must get some sleep at once."

"I'm all right—just a little attack of nerves," she smiled wanly. "Don't trouble yourself about me; I want to help, too."

"We'll puzzle this out ourselves, and when you wake, if we've evolved any ideas, we'll let you in on it. Now, be a good girl and go to bed. Haven't you something soothing in your lab?" he turned to Douglas.

"Certainly; just the thing for you, Mary." Douglas went to the cupboard and poured out a small tumbler full of a pale liquid. "Just drink this down, and you'll slide so smoothly into the arms of Morpheus, the next thing you know the birds will be twittering in the trees. Here you are; take it."

Mary looked at them both for a moment—saw the worry in their eyes, and capitulated. "All right, boys, if you insist; though I'm sure I can be of help." She drank the potion, and retired to her bedroom.

The two men filled their pipes, and settled back in their chairs. Their bodies were poisoned with fatigue, but their brains were racing keenly. For a while they smoked in silence, gratefully inhaling the fragrant fumes.

Standish was the first to break the silence.

"As you know, Doug, I have a theory that accounts for this demoniac visitation, but when I sprang it on the conference, I was laughed at for my pains."

Douglas looked at him keenly. He knew his chum, and knew that he was not given to hazarding wild hypotheses unless they contained a solid substratum of truth.

"Go over it again," he said quietly. "I promise to listen with an open mind."

Donald launched again into his tale—the strange living star in the island universe—its explosive disintegration into space—the queer dust cloud of tiny globules reported by the fishing smack—followed by the appearance of this horrible amorphous life-mass that was threatening to engulf the earth.

Cameron listened intently. Thoughtfully he drummed with his fingers on the arm of his chair. He, too, was familiar with the hypotheses of Clerk-Maxwell and Arrhenius.

"There is a good deal of plausibility about your theory," he acknowledged thoughtfully, "and it accounts also for the vast proliferating powers of this monstrous mass—no life as we know it on this planet could even approximate the uncanny speed of its growth, nor have our primitive life-forms the ability to subsist on inorganic matter to quite the extent that it has," again absently drumming on his chair.

He relapsed into brooding thought. Standish looked at his friend, but forbore to say anything. When Cameron was on the verge of something brilliant, he always drummed. So the astronomer waited.

The break was not long in coming. Douglas' brow suddenly cleared—a look of triumph in his eye.

"By George, I have it!" he almost shouted. "I believe your fantastic story, old man, and I'm going to rid the world of this menace. Listen to me for a moment."

"You have my closest attention."

"Suppose we assume the truth of your hypothesis. Then this living world, moving in the Andromeda universe, shining by its own luminosity, separated by unthinkable distances from any hot gaseous star, would naturally be accustomed only to the faint starlight of the heavens. No such blaze of light as even our ordinary sunlight ever came within its ken. Now you've heard of phototropism?"

Standish nodded his head, but his friend went on heedlessly, absorbed in the plan maturing in his mind.

"It's the reaction of protoplasm to light," he explained. "If you take any unicellular animal like the amoeba, and expose it to a strong light, it will shrink away from the source of the light, and try to get out of its path. If you use a powerful ray of concentrated ultraviolet light—the reaction will be much more apparent—the amoeba will literally run for its life—and if exposed long enough to the rays, will die.

"Now if we can obtain such drastic results with life forms inured and habituated by constant exposure to the sun's rays continually beating on our planet, what about this alien protoplasmic mass, unaccustomed to strong light of any kind, and no doubt feeling irritable even during our normal sunshine?"

Standish sat up excitedly. He was beginning to catch the drift of Cameron's reasoning.

Douglas went on. "My plan is this. Have the nations of the world concentrate their technicians and engineers in the power plants and factories most remote from the menace. Construct huge searchlights of the utmost candle power; and

machines for casting enormous beams of ultra-violet light. In the meantime have the people of the areas endangered by the billowing march of the monster retreat to the mountain fastnesses. That can be done fairly easily—its progress from all reports is approximately ten to fifteen miles a day. When all is in readiness, mount our machines on tractors, and drive them in front of the encroaching fiend. When it comes within striking distance, turn on the juice full blast. The power will come by tuned radio waves from the power plants operating in the hinterland. If our theories are correct, on the impact of our rays, the viscid mass will react much more violently than an amoeba or paramecium would. Retreat would be all it would think of, and the more exposed masses would be killed off. In that way, we could get rid of the menace, or at least drive it back into the ocean, by following it steadily all the way."

Standish got up in enthusiasm, and wrung Cameron's hand. "Boy, you're a wizard! That's a marvelous scheme! You'll be the savior of the world!"

"Hold on a moment," Douglas smiled protestingly, "it may work and it may not. Remember, I'm basing my scheme on your hypothesis."

"It'll work all right," returned Donald confidently, "and now I know I'm right, too."

"Don't run away so fast," warned the bacteriologist. "Remember, at the best, we shall only have managed to drive it back into the ocean. Once there, we can do no more. There, in the vast depths of the sea, with what we know of the rapidity of its procreation, it will once more overwhelm the world."

Donald groaned. "There you go—get me all excited, and then you let me down. I forgot that part. So what's the good of your swell scheme?"

"Ah! but I have something else up my sleeve," grinned his companion. "You know, of course, that I've been working my head off trying to find a cure for cancer. I haven't succeeded as yet—though the outlook is promising. But in the course of my researches, I've invented a technique for excising cancer growths from the living organism, and growing them independently in special culture media. I have also discovered a method of activating them so that when replaced in living tissues they will multiply with unbelievable rapidity. At present, I have on hand here in the laboratory about fifty pounds of activated cancer cultures, and that is sufficient for my purpose."

"Now to get back to your theory again. If this visitation is in truth from an alien world, it is highly improbable that it was ever exposed to the disease of cancer. If that is so, then it lacks whatever immunity our life has obtained through constant exposure, and the cancer cells will spread like wildfire through the whole vast organism—and this malign influence will be eradicated from the face of the earth."

"Man, I repeat—you're a wizard!" The astronomer pumped his hand violently. Then an idea struck him. "But why not spray it with cancer immediately—why bother with ultra-violet light to drive it into the depths of the sea."

"Because," explained Douglas patiently, "cancer is no respecter of persons, and once let loose on land, it is liable to spread to all forms of earth life, and we shall only have succeeded in destroying ourselves too. In the ocean, however, the range is sharply limited—we shall instruct the people of the earth to remain inland until the danger is passed. Once killed, the whole mass will descend to the floors of the seas and there the cold and pressure will destroy the cancerous tissues."

"You've thought of everything," was the admiring retort.

"Now to get into immediate communication with the conference chairman and unfold our plan."

"Right—there's not a moment to lose. The fate of the world is in the balance."

In a few minutes, the radio transmitter was sputtering out the code call signal of the conference. A lapse of five minutes and word came back. "Radio Emergency Conference talking—what is it?"

"Standish sending from the laboratory of Cameron in Colorado. Plan for combating menace has been evolved. Please connect me with the chairman." Then, for a solid hour across the ether vibrated the saving word.

Back came the answer. "Sounds all right. Our last hope anyway. Broadcasting immediately to all the nations to mobilize tractor, searchlights, ultra-violet apparatus. United States will mobilize on eastern length of Appalachian within twenty-four hours. Both of you report for service immediately at Allentown, Pa. Last reports show inundation extended as far as Scranton. Signing off."

"We need some sleep—let's snatch a few hours—and start," suggested Standish.

"Righto, we can get there in fifteen hours. We'll need only an hour or two for assembling our material here. That gives us plenty of time for a snooze."

Almost instantaneously, both were sleeping—drugged.

WHEN they awoke, it was dusk. Mary was still asleep—a peaceful smile flitting over her lips. Donald looked at her tenderly.

"Let's not disturb her. Poor girl—she has been through hell." He brushed her forehead lightly with his lips, and the smile grew into ecstasy, but still she did not awaken.

"Now to work!"

They hurried into the laboratory. Cameron opened the door of a huge glass-lined oven, thermostatically controlled at blood heat. In the interior were twenty or more glass dishes, each containing a mass of tissue floating in culture media.

"These are my cancer growths," he explained. "They will live indefinitely in the cultures. Now to activate them so that when we cast them into the protoplasmic horror, they will grow and proliferate with extreme rapidity."

He turned to a row of glass stoppered bottles on his laboratory shelf, and took one down. It was filled with a pale green liquid. Carefully, with a pipette, he dropped five drops into each dish. A slight bubbling ensued—and then ceased.

"Bring that cabinet in the corner over here," he ordered, "and all the cotton wool you find in the end cupboards."

The cabinet was opened—a layer of cotton placed on the bottom—the cancer dishes placed carefully between layers of the soft material, and then the whole affair hermetically sealed.

"Now we're ready to go."

The two men quickly and silently donned their flying suits, and in short order the plane was trundled out of the hangar; the cabinet was carefully lifted into the cockpit, and they took their seats. The motor roared; and the plane took off on its flight across the continent.

Next morning, as the first rays of dawn appeared over the serried tops of the Alleghany Mts., the haggard, wearied travelers descended stiffly from their plane after landing on the airfield outside Allentown.

For a moment they gazed about them in dazed astonishment. The place was seething with activity. Hundreds of planes were landing on all sides; tractors were lumbering and roaring over the field, soldiers and vast crowds of workmen swarmed in organized disorder.

"Where is the commander?" asked Donald of a big burly sergeant actively engaged in expending a stream of profanity at a company of men unpacking a huge searchlight.

"Over there!" He jerked a thumb over his shoulder toward the hangar at one end of the field, without deigning to turn around; and with hardly a pause in his flow of lurid objurgations.

"Come on, Doug, let's report at once, and see what we can do."

At the door, they gave their names to the guard, and were ushered in immediately.

Seated at a rough pine board table, hastily built to function as a desk, was General Black, grizzled veteran of the World War, now commander-in-chief of all the American Armies! Officers dashed in—came to stiff salute—reported in staccato accents—received their orders even more crisply—and dashed out again. A field radio receiving set whined. The general put the phone to his ear. "What's that—only thirty miles away! All right—report every fifteen minutes on its progress."

Turning around, he saw the two scientists. "Yes, what is it? Make it snappy!"

They introduced themselves, and the general's attitude became more cordial.

"I hope your ideas are correct—if not, we're all doomed." He sighed. "Frankly, I'm not used to this sort of thing—out of my line. Artillery—machine guns—gas—yes! But not this new-fangled stuff.

"However, we'll soon find out," he continued grimly, "my air scouts report it as only thirty miles away. At the rate it is traveling, it will be here in forty-eight hours. We'll be ready for it in about thirty-six hours—and then—" he shrugged fatalistically. "In the meantime, I'll get some quarters for you, and you can make yourselves comfortable until we're ready to start." He turned to an orderly, and soon the scientists were installed in a barrack-like room—their plane with its precious freight wheeled into the hangar, and placed under guard.

The next thirty-six hours were filled with feverish activity. All through the day and night, tractors kept coming in—apparatus and the requisite machines were deposited from planes, railroads, automobiles, every conceivable method of transportation.

In the meantime the radio reports were becoming more and more alarming. Inexorably the living tide was moving forward—swallowing everything in its path. Twenty miles away—fifteen miles—activity becoming frantic—ten miles—five miles—the last feverish touches—and all was in readiness for the supreme effort.

As far as the eye could see, stretched serried ranks of tractors. Along the whole Appalachian range, thousands of tractors were ready to go at the signal of command. On each was perched a powerful searchlight or violet ray machine capable of casting directional beams over a ten-mile radius. The final orders were

given—everyone not directly concerned in the management of the apparatus was sent to the rear.

It was the zero hour!

Already in the distance, the horizon was glowing with the dreaded greenish light—the vast menace was flowing—flowing forward.

A hush fell on the embattled array. Could they stop it—was it victory or disaster? The bravest among them felt clammy hands clutching their hearts.

The radio command roared its voice along the far-flung line. The motors roared—the current snapped on—and a blaze of light—intense—penetrating—flared out up and down the line. Another command—and the tractors moved forward—slowly—steadily. A ten-mile zone of intense illumination—blinding in its glare—moved ahead. It approached the green luminescence. Still the monstrous life flowed forward.

Nerves tensed to the snapping points—blood pounded in thousands of hearts—God!—would it have no effect—the life of the planet hung on the next few moments.

The wall of light reached the oncoming wall of alien life—touched it—overlapped it—swung over the top and over its viscous waves. Only three miles separated the opposing forces!

Was it a delusion? Did they see aright? A rustling murmur grew on the scene—a confused Babel of voices—and then—a mighty shout blasted the air—a pean of deliverance—the world was saved!

The oncoming mass had definitely ceased moving—the front reared high into the air—writhing and twisting as though in agony—and then—recession—slow at first—then faster and faster—the monster was in full retreat—vainly seeking to escape the deadly rays.

Immediately the jubilant army moved forward—ever concentrating the dazzling light on the discomfited foe. Who thought of food—or sleep or stopping—back into the sea with the monster! For two days and a night, the front of war advanced—steadily the enemy was driven back—remorselessly as ever it had advanced—agonized, writhing before the avenging glare. Once more the face of the earth appeared—but strange, alien in aspect—more like some desolate moon aridly moving through space, than this fair, smiling world of ours. No trees—no houses—no verdure was left; the very surface of the earth was eroded away—pitted and scarred with deep holes and gullies, through which the tractors floundered and pitched.

Back—back through the ruin of what had once been New York—into the sea it was driven—and the world was temporarily saved from overwhelming disaster.

From all the endangered nations came the glad tidings of complete triumph. Everywhere the crawling life had been forced into the waters.

Wild celebrations took place among the people of the earth. The names of Cameron and Standish were broadcast to the joyful millions as the saviors of humanity.

But the menace was by no means over—though temporarily subdued. Orders were issued that no one was to approach within ten miles of the seaboard; and the armies of the world were placed on sentry duty to see that the orders were enforced.

At a conference at Pittsburgh, the temporary capital of the United States, Douglas Cameron told of his discoveries in cancer research; his activating principle; and outlined his plan of scattering the tissues of cancer into the floating masses of protoplasm. He was listened to with the most flattering attention. When he finished, President Adams arose, and grasped his hand and then that of his co-worker.

"Gentlemen," he said, his voice quivering with emotion, "you have already placed the world under an incalculable debt of gratitude to you; if you succeed in your present undertaking, and rid the earth of this frightful scourge, your names will go ringing down the ages as long as life exists on this planet. I have placed at your service a cruiser of our air fleet, fully manned and provisioned for a cruise of ten thousand miles. Go and God bless you!"

They bowed their thanks and left the meeting. In less than an hour they were seated in the cabin of the air cruiser, with their precious cabinet at their feet—the crew sprang smartly to their posts—and they took to the air.

The coast was reached in slightly over an hour, and they soon were winging their way out to sea.

The captain came into the cabin for instructions. "Drop to within five hundred feet of the water, and have your crew on the look-out for any traces of the beast. Have the first one to sight it sing it out."

"It shall be done," and he retired. The great plane glided down, and whirled over the surface of the ocean. All eyes were strained in eager search.

A shout from an excited lookout.

"The Thing's directly below, sir!" All hands rushed to the side. Sure enough—the surface of the ocean to the east was heaving, and tossing—a weird green light flickered and flared—the sea crawled with the shiny evil Thing.

Quickly Cameron opened his cabinet and gingerly removed one of the dishes. Carrying it to the side, with one quick scoop, he ladled out the contents and threw it overboard. Down it splattered into the jellied mass—scourge set to fight scourge.

For two days, the plane cruised over the broad Atlantic, dropping the seeds of destruction into the bosom of the visitation. When the last dishful had been dispatched on its errand, the cruiser turned homeward. Its work was done. The rest was in the lap of fate.

The people of the earth waited in deep anxiety. Men of science—great biologists—broadcast learned opinions to the listening multitudes.

Daily, clouds of speedy pursuit planes were flung over the broad bosom of the Atlantic to observe and report. Daily they reported no signs of disappearance. If anything, the areas of infestations seemed to be actually increasing. Once more fear reared its hideous head—if the cancerous growths proved ineffectual—it was only a question of time before the horrible Thing would once more approach the shores.

But, ten days later, an observation plane reported seeing hard fibrous growths, like huge warts, covering the surface in one area. Then, in quick succession, other reports came in. The cancer had commenced its deadly work. Within a month the ocean was covered with dead, cancerous masses—the menace was a thing of the past. Slowly they heaved on the ocean tides, and slowly they sank beneath the waves. The earth was free of its hideous nightmare. The race was saved.

ON a mild October morning a little group filed into the rustic church near the laboratory. A little group—but every broadcast receiver, every television screen was attuned to the waves which were carrying each sound and sight in that church to every corner of the globe. All the people of the earth joined in a prayer for the good fortune of the couple whose wedding rites were being celebrated there. And as Mary Cameron became Mary Standish, all the earth joined in the hymn which welled out in a mighty chorus of thanksgiving whose echoing vibrations must have been heard even in far distant Andromeda.

