

The VOICE from the INNER WORLD By A. Hyatt Verrill

Author of "The Plague of the Living Dead," "Through the Crater's Rim," etc.



. . . And it was evident that the others were equally afraid of me . . . they stood regarding me with an odd mixture of wonder and terror on their huge faces.

SECOND HONORABLE MENTION IN THE \$500 PRIZE COVER CONTEST

Awarded to A. Hyatt Verrill, New York City, for "A Voice from the Inner World."

ON the eighteenth of October, the New York papers reported the appearance of a remarkable meteor which had been seen in mid-Pacific, and the far more startling announcement that it was feared that the amazing celestial visitor had struck and destroyed a steamship.

"At eleven-fifteen last evening," read the account in the *Herald*, "the Panama-Hawaiian Line steamship *Chiriqui* reported by radio the appearance of an immense meteor which suddenly appeared above the horizon to the southeast, and which increased rapidly in size and brilliance. Within ten minutes from the time the phenomenon was first sighted, it appeared as a huge greenish sphere of dazzling brilliance high in the sky, and heading, apparently, directly for the *Chiriqui*. Almost at the same time as reported by the *Chiriqui*, several other ships, among them the Miners and Merchants Line *Vulcan*, and the Japanese liner *Fujiama Maru* also reported the meteorite, although they were more than one thousand miles apart and equidistant from the position of the *Chiriqui*.

"In the midst of a sentence describing the appearance of the rapidly approaching meteor, the *Chiriqui's* wireless message came to an abrupt end, and all attempts to get into further communication with her operator failed. The other vessels reported that a scintillating flash, like an explosion, was followed by the meteor's disappearance, and it is feared that the immense aerolite may have struck the *Chiriqui*, and utterly destroyed her with all on board. As no SOS has been received, and as the ship's radio broke off with the words: 'It is very close and the sea is as bright as day. Below the immense mass of green fire are two smaller spheres of intense red. It is so near we can hear it roaring like a

terrific wind. It is headed—' It is probable that the vessel, if struck, was instantly destroyed. It has been suggested, however, that it is possible that the meteor or meteors were accompanied by electrical phenomena which may have put the *Chiriqui's* wireless apparatus out of commission and that the ship may be safe."

Later editions of the press announced that no word had been received from the *Chiriqui*, that other ships had reported the meteor, and that two of these had radioed that the aerolite, instead of exploding, had been seen to continue on its way and gradually disappear beyond the horizon. These reports somewhat allayed the fears that the *Chiriqui* had been struck by the meteor, and prominent scientists expressed the opinion that the supposed explosion had been merely an optical illusion caused by its passage through some dense or cloudy layer of air. They also quoted numerous cases of immense meteors having been seen by observers over immense distances, and declared their belief that the aerolite had not reached the earth, but had merely passed through the outer atmosphere. When asked regarding the possibility of the meteor having affected the ship's wireless apparatus, experts stated that such might have been the case, although, hitherto, severe electrical disturbances had never been associated with the passage of meteors. Moreover, they declared that even if the wireless had been injured, it could have been repaired in a few hours, and that they could not explain the continued silence of the *Chiriqui*. Word also came from Panama that the naval commandant at Balboa had despatched a destroyer to search for the *Chiriqui*, or any survivors of the catastrophe if the ship had been destroyed.

A few hours later, despatches were received from various points in Central and South America, reporting the meteor of the previous night. All of these agreed that the fiery mass had swept across the heavens in a wide arc and had vanished in the east beyond the summits of the Andes.

It was, therefore, fairly certain that the *Chiriqui* had not been struck by the meteor, and in a few days the incident was by completely forgotten the public at large.

But when, ten days later, the warship reported that no sign of the missing ship could be found, and the officials of the Panama-Hawaiian Line admitted that the *Chiriqui* was four days overdue, interest was again aroused. Then came the startling news, featured in screaming headlines, that the meteor or its twin had been again reported by various ships in the Pacific, and that the U. S. S. *McCracken*, which had been scouring the seas for traces of the missing *Chiriqui*, had sent in a detailed report of the meteor's appearance, and that her wireless had gone "dead," exactly as had that of the *Chiriqui*. And when, after every effort, no communication could be established with the war vessel, and when two weeks had elapsed without word from her, it was generally conceded that both ships had been destroyed by the amazing celestial visitor. For a time the double catastrophe filled the papers to the exclusion of nearly everything else, and such everyday features as scandals and murder trials were crowded to the back pages of the dailies to make room for long articles on meteors and missing ships and interviews with scientists. But as no more meteors appeared, and as no more ships vanished, the subject gradually lost interest and was no longer news.

About three months after the first report of the green meteor appeared (on January fifteenth, to be exact) I was in Peru, visiting my daughter, when I received a communication of such an utterly amazing

character that it appeared incredible, and yet was so borne out by facts and details that it had all the earmarks of truth. So astounding was this communication that, despite the fact that it will unquestionably be scoffed at by the public, I feel that it should be given to the world. As soon as I had received the story I hurried with it to the American Minister in Lima, and related all that I had heard. He agreed with me that the authorities at Washington should be acquainted with the matter at once, and together we devoted many hours to coding the story which was cabled in the secret cipher of the State Department. The officials, however, were inclined to regard the matter as a hoax, and, as far as I am aware, no steps have yet been taken to follow out the suggestions contained in the communication which I received, and thus save humanity from a terrible fate. Personally, I am convinced that the amazing tale which came to me in such an astounding and unexpected manner is absolutely true, incredible as it may seem, but whether fact or fiction, my readers may decide for themselves.

My son-in-law was intensely interested in radio, and devoted all of his spare time to devising and constructing receiving sets, and in his home in the delightful residential suburb of Miraflores, were a number of receiving sets of both conventional and original design. Having been closely in touch with the subject for several years, I was deeply interested in Frank's experiments, and especially in a new type of hook-up which had given most remarkable results in selectivity and distance. Practically every broadcasting station in America, and many in Europe, had been logged by the little set, and on several occasions faint signals had been heard which, although recognizable as English, evidently emanated from a most remote station. These, oddly enough, had come in at the same hour each night, and each time had continued for exactly the same length of time.

We were discussing this, and trying to again pick up the unintelligible and unidentified signals on that memorable January evening, when, without warning, and as clearly as though sent from the station at Buenos Ayres, came the most astounding communication which ever greeted human ears, and which, almost verbatim, was as follows:^[1]

“LISTEN! For God’s sake, I implore all who may hear my words to listen! And believe what I say no matter how unbelievable it may seem, for the fate of thousands of human beings, the fate of the human race may depend upon you who by chance may hear this message from another world. My name is James Berry, my home is Butte, Montana, my profession a mining engineer, and I am speaking through the short wave transmitter of the steamship *Chiriqui* on which I was a passenger when the terrible, the incredible events occurred which I am about to relate. On the evening of October sixteenth^[2] the *Chiriqui* was steaming across the Pacific in calm weather when our attention was attracted by what appeared to be an unusually brilliant meteor of a peculiar greenish color. It first appeared above the horizon to the southeast,

and very rapidly increased in size and brilliancy. At the time I was particularly struck by the fact that it left no trail of light or fire behind it, as is usual with large meteorites, but so rapidly did it approach that I had little time to wonder at this. Within a few moments from the time that it was first seen, the immense sphere of green incandescence had grown to the size of the moon, and the entire sea for miles about our ship was illuminated by a sickly green light. It appeared to be headed directly towards our ship, and, standing as I was on the bridge-deck near the wheel-house, I heard the chief officer cry out: ‘My God, it will strike us!’ By now the mass of fire had altered in appearance, and a short distance below the central green mass could be seen two smaller spheres of blinding red, like huge globes of molten metal. By now, too, the noise made by the meteor was plainly audible, sounding like the roar of surf or the sound of a tornado.

“Everyone aboard the ship was panic-stricken; women screamed, men cursed and shouted, and the crew rushed to man the boats, as everyone felt that the *Chirique* was doomed. What happened next I can scarcely describe, so rapidly did the events occur. As the meteor seemed about to hurl itself upon the ship, there was a blinding flash of light, a terrific detonation, and I saw men and women falling to the decks as if struck down by shell fire. The next instant the meteor vanished completely, and intense blackness followed the blinding glare. At the same moment, I was aware of a peculiar pungent, suffocating odor which, perhaps owing to my long experience with deadly gases in mining work, I at once recognized as some noxious gas. Almost involuntarily, and dully realizing that by some miracle the ship had escaped destruction, I dashed below and reached my cabin almost overcome by the fumes which now penetrated every portion of the ship. Among my possessions was a new type of gas-mask

¹ The message as it came in, was halting, and interrupted, with many unintelligible words and repetition, as if the sender were laboring under the intense strain or was an amateur. For the sake of clarity and continuity, the communication has been edited and filled in, but not altered in any detail.

² The metropolitan papers reported the meteor on the eighteenth and stated it was observed by those on the *Chiriqui* on the evening of the seventeenth, but it must be remembered that the *Chiriqui* was in the western Pacific and hence had gained a day in time.

which had been especially designed for mine work, and my idea was to don this, for I felt sure that the meteor had exploded close to the ship and had released vast quantities of poisonous gases which might hang about for a long time.

“Although almost overcome by the choking fumes, I managed to find and put on the apparatus, for one of its greatest advantages was the rapidity and ease with which it could be adjusted, it having been designed for emergency use. But before it was fairly in place over my face, the electric light in my room went out and I was in complete darkness. Also, the ship seemed strangely still, and as I groped my way to the stateroom door it suddenly dawned upon me that the engines had stopped, that there was no longer the whirr of dynamos from the depths of the hull. Not a light glimmered in the passageway, and twice, as I felt my way towards the social hall, I stumbled over the sprawled bodies of men, while in the saloon itself I several times stepped upon the soft and yielding flesh of passengers who lay where they had been struck down by the poisonous gas. In all probability, I thought, I was the sole survivor aboard the ship, unless some of the firemen and engineers survived, and I wondered how I would manage to escape, if the vessel should be sighted by some other ship, or if it should be my gruesome task to search the *Chiriqui* from stem to stern, drag the bodies of the dead to the deck and cast them into the sea, and remain—perhaps for weeks—alone upon the ship until rescued by some passing vessel. But as I reached the door and stepped upon the deck all such thoughts were driven from my brain as I blinked my eyes and stared about in dumfounded amazement. I had stepped from Stygian darkness into dazzling light. Blinded for the moment, I closed my eyes, and when I again opened them I reeled to the rail with a cry of terror. Poised above the ship’s masts, and so enormous that it appeared to shut out

half the sky, was the stupendous meteor like a gigantic globe of green fire, and seemingly less than one hundred feet above me. Still nearer, and hanging but a few yards above the bow and stern of the ship, were the two smaller spheres of glowing red. Cowering against the rail, expecting to be shriveled into a charred cinder at any instant, I gazed transfixed and paralyzed at the titanic masses of flaming light above the ship.

“Then reason came back to me. My only chance to escape was to leap into the sea, and I half clambered upon the rail prepared to take the plunge. A scream, like that of a madman, came from my lips. Below me was no sign of the waves, but a limitless void, while, immeasurably distant beneath the ship, I could dimly see the crinkled surface of the sea. The *Chiriqui* was floating in space!

“It was impossible, absolutely preposterous, and I felt convinced that I had gone mad, or that the small quantity of gas I had breathed had affected my brain and had induced the nightmarish vision. Perhaps, I thought, the meteors above the ship were also visionary, and I again stared upward. Then, I knew that I was insane. The spheres of green, and red light were rushing upward as I could see by the brilliant stars studding the sky, and the ship upon which I stood was following in their wake! Weak, limp as a rag, I slumped to the deck and lay staring at the great globes above me. But the insanely impossible events which had crowded upon my overwrought senses were as nothing to the amazing discovery I now made.

“As my eyes became accustomed to the glare of the immense green sphere, I saw that instead of being merely a ball of fire it had definite form. About its middle extended a broad band from which slender rods of light extended. Round or ovoid spots seemed placed in definite order about it, and from the extremities of its axes lines or cables, clearly outlined by the glare, extended downward to

the red spheres above the ship. By now, I was so firmly convinced that I was irrational, that these new and absolutely stunning discoveries did not excite or surprise me in the least, and as if in a particularly vivid dream, I lay there gazing upward, and dully, half consciously speculating on what it all meant. Gradually, too, it dawned upon me that the huge sphere with its encircling band of duller light was rotating. The circular markings, which I thought were marvelously like the ports of a ship, were certainly moving from top to bottom of the sphere, and I could distinctly hear a low, vibrant humming.

“The next second I jerked upright with a start and my scalp tingled. Reason had suddenly returned to me. The thing was no meteor, no celestial body, but some marvelous machine, some devilish invention of man, some gigantic form of airship which—God only knew why—had by some incredible means captured the *Chiriqui*, had lifted the twenty thousand ton ship into the air and was bearing her off with myself, the only survivor of all the ship’s company, witnessing the miraculous happening! It was the most insane thought that had yet entered my brain, but I knew now for a certainty that I was perfectly sane, and, oddly enough, now that I was convinced that the catastrophe which had overtaken the *Chiriqui* was the devilish work of human beings, I was no longer frightened and my former nightmarish terror of things unknown, gave place to the most intense anger and an inexpressible hatred of the fiends who, without warning or reason, had annihilated hundreds of men and women by means of this new and irresistible engine of destruction. But I was helpless. Alone upon the stolen and stricken ship I could do nothing. By what tremendous force the spherical airship was moving through space, by what unknown power it was lifting the ship and carrying it—slung like the gondola of a Zeppelin beneath the sphere—were matters beyond my

comprehension. Calmly, now that I felt assured that I was rational and was the victim of my fellow men—fiendish as they might be—I walked aft to where one red sphere hung a few yards above the ship’s deck.

“THERE seemed no visible connection between it and the vessel, but I noticed that everything movable upon the deck, the iron cable, the wire ropes, the coiled steel lines of the after derrick, all extended upward from the deck, as rigid as bars of metal, while crackling blue sparks like electrical discharges scintillated from the ship’s metal work below the red sphere. Evidently, I decided, the red mass was actuated by some form of electrical energy or magnetism, and I gave the area beneath it a wide berth. Retracing my way to the bow of the ship, I found similar conditions there. As I walked towards the waist of the ship again I mounted the steps to the bridge, hoping from that height to get a better view of the monstrous machine holding the *Chiriqui* captive. I knew that in the chart-house I would find powerful glasses with which to study the machine. Upon the bridge the bodies of the quartermaster, the first officer and an apprentice lay sprawled grotesquely, and across the chart-house door lay the captain. Reaching down I lifted him by the shoulders to move him to one side, and to my amazement I discovered that he was not dead. His heart beat, his pulse, though slow and faint, was plain, he was breathing and his face, still ruddy, was that of a sleeping man rather than of a corpse.

“A wild thought rushed through my brain, and hastily I rushed to the other bodies. There was no doubt of it. All were alive and merely unconscious. The gas had struck them down, but had not killed them, and it came to me as a surprise, though I should long before have realized it, that the fumes had been purposely discharged by the beings who had captured the vessel. Possibly, I mentally

decided, they had made a mistake and had failed in their intention to destroy the persons upon the ship, or again, was it not possible that they had intentionally rendered the ship's company unconscious, and had not intended to destroy their lives? Forgetting my original purpose in visiting the bridge, I worked feverishly to resuscitate the captain, but all to no purpose. Many gases, I knew, would render a man unconscious without actually injuring him, and I was also aware, that when under the influence of some of these, the victims could not be revived until the definite period of the gases' effect had passed. So, feeling certain that in due time the captain and the others would come to of their own accord, I entered the chart-room and, securing the skipper's binoculars, I again stepped upon the bridge. As I could not conveniently use the glasses with my gas-mask in place, and as I felt sure there was no longer any danger from the fumes, I started to remove the apparatus. But no sooner did a breath of the air enter my mouth than I hastily readjusted the contrivance, for the gas which had struck down everyone but myself was as strong as ever. Indeed, the mere whiff of the fumes made my head reel and swim, and I was forced to steady myself by grasping the bridge-rail until the dizzy spell passed.

"Once more myself, I focused the glasses as best I could upon the whirling sphere above the ship. But I could make out little more than by my naked eyes. The band about the center or equator of the globular thing was, I could now see, divided into segments, each of which bore a round, slightly convex, eye-like object from the centers of which extended slender rods which vibrated with incalculable speed. Indeed, the whole affair reminded me of the glass models of protozoans which I had seen in the American Museum of Natural History. These minute marine organisms I knew, moved with great rapidity by means of vibrating, hair-

like appendages or cilia, and I wondered if the enormous spherical machine at which I was gazing, might not move through space in a similar manner by means of vibrating rods moving with such incredible speed that, slender as they were, they produced enormous propulsive power. Also, I could now see that the two extremities of the sphere, or as I may better express it, the axes, were equipped with projecting bosses or shafts to which the cables supporting the red spheres were attached. And as I peered through the glasses at the thing, the huge green sphere, which had been hitherto traveling on an even keel, or, in other words, with the central band vertical, now shifted its position and one end swung sharply upward, throwing the band about the center at an acute angle. Involuntarily I grasped the rail of the bridge expecting to be thrown from my feet by the abrupt uptilting of the ship. But to my utter amazement the *Chiriqui* remained on an even plane and I then saw that as the sphere tilted, the cable at the uppermost axis ran rapidly out so that the two red spheres, which evidently supported the captive ship, remained in their original relative horizontal position. No sign of life was visible upon the machine above me, and I surmised that whoever might be handling the thing was within the sphere.

"Wondering how high we had risen above the sea, I stepped to the starboard end of the bridge and glanced down, and an involuntary exclamation escaped my lips. Far beneath the ship and clearly visible through the captain's glasses was land! I could distinguish the white line marking surf breaking on a rocky shore, and ahead I could make out the cloud-topped, serried summits of a mighty range of mountains. Not until then did I realize the terrific speed at which the machine and captive vessel were traveling. I had been subconsciously aware that a gale had been blowing, but I had not stopped to realize that this was no ordinary wind, but was the rush of air caused by the rapidity of motion.

But as I peered at the mountains through the binoculars, and saw the distant surface of the earth whizzing backward far beneath the *Chiriqui's* keel, I knew that we were hurtling onward with the speed of the fastest scout airplane.

“Even as I gazed, the mountains seemed to rush towards me until, in a few minutes after I had first seen them, they appeared almost directly under the ship. Then the gigantic machine above me suddenly altered its course, it veered sharply to one side and swept along the range of summits far beneath. For some reason, just why I cannot explain, I dashed to the binnacle and saw that we were traveling to the south, and it flashed across my mind, that I had a dim recollection of noticing, when I first realized the nature of the machine which had been mistaken for a meteor, that by the stars, we were moving eastward. In that case, my suddenly alert mind told me, the land below must be some portion of America, and if so, judging by the altitude of the mountains, that they must be the Andes. All of this rushed through my brain instantly, and in the brief lapse of time in which I sprang to the binnacle and back to my observation point at the bridge-rail.

“Now, I saw, we were rapidly descending, and focusing my glasses upon the mountains, I made out an immense conical peak in the top of which was a gigantic black opening. Without doubt it was the crater of some stupendous extinct volcano, and, with a shock, I realized that the machine and the ship were headed directly for the yawning opening in the crater. The next instant we were dropping with lightning speed towards it, and so terrified and dumfounded had I become that I could not move from where I stood. Even before I could grasp the fact, the *Chiriqui* was enclosed by towering, rocky walls, inky blackness surrounded me, there was an upward breath-taking rush of air, a roar as of a thousand hurricanes. The *Chiriqui* rocked and pitched beneath my feet,

as if in a heavy sea; I clung desperately to the bridge-rail for support and I felt sure that the ship had been dropped into the abysmal crater, that the next instant the vessel would crash into fragments as it struck bottom, or worse, that it would sink into the molten incandescent lava which might fill the depths of the volcano. For what seemed hours, the awful fall continued, though like as not the terrible suspense lasted for only a few minutes, and then, without warning, so abruptly that I lost my balance and was flung to the bridge, the ship ceased falling, an indescribable blue light succeeded the blackness, and unable to believe my senses I found the ship floating motionless, still suspended from the giant mechanism overhead, above a marvelous landscape.

“ON every hand, as far as I could see, stretched jagged rocks, immense cliffs, stupendous crags and rugged knife-ridged hills of the most dazzling reds, yellows and purples. Mile-deep cañons cut the forbidding plains, which here and there showed patches of dull green, and in one spot I saw a stream of emerald-hued water pouring in a foaming cataract into a fathomless rift in the rock. But I gave little attention to these sights at the time. My gaze was riveted upon a strange, weird city which capped the cliffs close to the waterfall, and almost directly beneath the *Chiriqui*. Slowly we were dropping towards it, and I could see that the buildings which at first sight had appeared of immense height and tower-like form, were in reality gigantic basaltic columns capped with superimposed edifices of gleaming yellow.

“The next second the glasses dropped from my shaking, nerveless hands. Gathered on an open space of greenish plain were hundreds of human beings! But were they human? In form and features, as nearly as I could judge at that distance, they were human, but in color they were scarlet, and

surmounting the head and extending along the arms to the elbows on every individual was a whitish, membranous frill, which at first sight reminded me of an Indian's war bonnet. The beings appeared to be of average height, but as the *Chiriqui's* keel touched solid ground and, keeling to one side, she rested upon one of her bilges, I saw with a shock, that the scarlet creatures were of gigantic size, fully thirty feet in height, and that, without exception, all were females! All were stark naked; but despite the frills upon their heads and shoulders despite their bizarre scarlet skins, despite their gigantic proportions, they were unquestionably human beings, women without doubt, and of the most perfect proportions, the most graceful forms and the most regular and even handsome features. Beside the stranded ship, they loomed as giants; but against the stupendous proportions of their land and city, they appeared no larger than ordinary mortals. By now they were streaming from their houses and even in the surprise and excitement of that moment I noticed that the giant rocky columns were perforated by windows and doors, and had obviously been hollowed out to form dwellings. Meantime, too, the huge machine which had captured the *Chiriqui*, had descended and was lying at rest, and no longer emitting its green light, upon a cradle erected near the waterfall, and from openings in its central band several of the scarlet, giant Amazons were emerging. How long, I wondered, would I remain undiscovered? How long would it be before one of the female giants spied me? And then, what would be my fate? Why had they captured the ship? Where was I? What was this strange land reached through a crater?

"All these thoughts rushed through my brain as I peered cautiously down at the giant women who swarmed about the ship. But I had not long to wait for an answer to my first mental question. With a sudden spring, one of

the women leaped to the *Chiriqui's* anchor, with a second bound she was on the fore deck, and close at her heels came a score of others. Standing upon the deck with her head fringed by its erect vibrating membrane level with the boat-deck, she gazed about for an instant. Then, catching sight of the form of a sailor sprawled upon the deck, she uttered a shrill, piercing cry, leaped forward, and, before my unbelieving, horror-stricken eyes, tore the still living, palpitating body to pieces and ravenously devoured it.

"Unable to stir through the very repulsiveness of the scene, realizing that my turn might be next, I gazed fascinated. But the giant cannibal female was not to feast in peace. As her companions reached the deck, they rushed upon her and fought viciously for a portion of the reeking flesh. The struggle of these awful giants, as smeared with human blood, scratching and clawing, uttering shrill cries of rage, they rolled and fought on the deck, was indescribably terrible and disgusting. But it came to an abrupt end. With a bound, a giantess of giantesses, a powerfully-muscled female, appeared, and like cowed beasts, the others drew aside, licking their chops, the membranes on their heads rising and falling in excitement, like the frills on an iguana lizard, and watching the newly-arrived giantess with furtive eyes. Evidently she was the leader or chieftainess, and in curt but strangely shrill and, of course, to me, utterly unintelligible words, she gave orders to the others. Instantly, the horde of women began swarming over the ship, searching every nook and corner, and, wherever they discovered the inert bodies of the ship's company, dragged them on deck and piled them in heaps. Shaking with abject terror, I crouched back of the bridge, and racked my brains for thought of some safe spot in which to bide. But before I could make up my mind, one of the terrifying, monstrous females sprang upon the bridge and rushed

towards me. With a maniacal scream, I turned and fled. Then, before me, blocking my way, there appeared another of the creatures. And then a most marvelous and surprising thing happened. Instead of falling upon me as I expected her to do, the giantess turned, and with a scream that equalled my own, leaped over the rail and fled to the uttermost extremity of the deck.

“I forgot my terror in my amazement. Why should this giant, cannibal woman fear me? Why should she run from me when, a few moments before, she had been fighting over a meal of an unconscious sailor? And it was evident that the others were equally afraid of me, for at her cry, and my appearance, all had rushed as far from me as possible, and stood regarding me with an odd mixture of wonder and terror on their huge faces. And then it occurred to me that their fear was, perhaps, due to my gas-mask, to the apparatus that transformed me from a human being to a weird-looking monster. At any rate, I was evidently safe from molestation for the time being, and thanking my lucky stars that I had on the mask, I descended from the bridge, the giantesses retreating as I advanced. I entered the captain’s cabin and locked the door.

“Here I breathed more freely, for even if the women overcame their fear of me and attempted to capture me, the steel doors and walls of the cabin would be impregnable defenses. Moreover, upon the wall above the bunk, was a rifle, in a drawer of the dresser was a loaded revolver, and a short search revealed a plentiful supply of cartridges. Yes, if I were attacked, I could give a good account of myself, and I determined, if worst came to the worst, that I would blow out my brains rather than fall a victim to the female cannibal horde.

“Dully, through the thick walls of the cabin, I could hear the sounds of the women on the deck, but I had no desire to witness what was going on, and seated upon the

captain’s chair, I thought over the events which had transpired during the past few hours and tried to find a reasonable solution to the incredible happenings.

“That I was within the earth seemed certain, though utterly fantastic, but who the giant women were, why they had captured the *Chiriqui* or by what unknown, tremendous power their marvelous airship was operated, were all utterly beyond my comprehension. But I must hurry on and relate the more important matters, for my time is limited and the important thing is to let the world know how the human race may be saved from the terrible fate which has befallen me and all those upon the *Chiriqui*, and upon the destroyer *McCracken*, for that vessel, too, has fallen a victim to these horrible cannibalistic giantesses here within the center of the earth.

“HUNGER and thirst drove me at last from my refuge in the captain’s cabin, and armed with the loaded rifle and revolver, I cautiously peered out and stepped upon the deck. Only one woman was in sight, and instantly, at sight of me, she fled away. Not a body of the hundreds of men and women aboard the ship was visible, and feeling relieved that I was for a time safe, I stepped to the ship’s rail and peered over. Scores of the women were carrying the inert forms of the unconscious men and women towards the nearby city. Stealthily I hurried below in search of food and drink. Fears assailed me that the women had, in all probability, preceded me and carried off everything edible. But I need not have worried about food. I was yet to learn the horrible truth and the gruesome habits of these red giantesses. The saloon, the corridors, the staterooms, everything, had been searched, and every person upon the vessel removed. In the pantry I found an abundance of food, and quickly satisfied my hunger and thirst. I pondered on my next move. The skipper’s cabin seemed my safest refuge. I placed a

supply of provisions within it, and locked myself in the little room again. For several days nothing of great importance occurred. I say days, but there are no days in this terrible place. There is no sun, no moon, no stars and no darkness. The whole place is illuminated by a brilliant, greenish light that issues from a distant mountain range, and which seems to be of the same character as that which emanated from the spherical air machine. Fortunately I had presence of mind enough to keep my watch going, as well as the captain's chronometer, for otherwise I would have had no knowledge of the passage of time. Once or twice the scarlet women visited the ship, but seemed nervous and wary, and made no effort to approach or molest me, merely gazed about as if searching for something—perhaps for me—and then retiring. Several times, too, I ventured on deck, and peered over the ship's side, but saw none of the giantesses, although with the glasses I could see crowds of the beings about the city in the distance.

“Also, I noticed among them, several individuals who were much smaller than the rest, and who appeared to be men, although I could not be sure. I also discovered, and almost lost my life in the discovery, that the atmosphere of this place is unfit for human beings to breathe, and is thick with sulphurous fumes. Close to the ground these fumes are so dense that a person would succumb in a few moments, but at the height of the *Chiriqui's* decks, nearly seventy feet above the rocky bed on which she rests, the air is breathable, although it causes one to choke and cough after a few minutes. And I am sure that the houses of these giant beings have been built on the summits of the basalt columns in order to avoid the suffocating fumes of the lower levels. Later, too, I learned that the membrane-like frills upon these creatures are a sort of gills, or as I might say, natural gas-masks, which by some means enable the beings to breathe the sulphur-laden air. But

even with these, they avoid the lower areas where the fumes are the worst, and only visit them when necessity arises, which accounts for my being left in peace, with none of the horrible women near the ship, for days at a time. I discovered the presence of the sulphur gas on the first day when, attempting to eat, I removed my gas-mask. Suffocating as I found the fumes, I was compelled to endure them, and gradually I became slightly accustomed to them, so that now I have little trouble in breathing during the short time it takes me to eat my meals. At all other times I must wear the apparatus, and I thank God that this is so, for I know now that it is the gasmask which so far has preserved my life.

“On the tenth day after my arrival I noticed a number of the giantesses gathering about the huge, spherical airship which still rested on its cradle near the *Chiriqui*, but which, I have forgotten to state, ceased to emit its green or red lights after it had landed. Lying there it resembled nothing so much as a gigantic can-buoy or a floating mine, if one can imagine a buoy two hundred yards in diameter.

“On the day I mentioned, all interests seemed to be centered on the thing, and cautiously peering from the shelter of the deck-house, I watched the proceedings. Presently several of the women entered the sphere through an opening in its middle band; the aperture closed behind them, and immediately there was a low, humming sound as of machinery. As the sounds issued from the sphere, the cables to which were attached the smaller spheres (which glowed red when carrying the *Chiriqui* through the air) were drawn in until the two smaller spheres were resting in recesses at the axes of the large sphere, and where they appeared merely as hemi-spherical projections. Then, slowly at first, but with ever increasing speed, the slender rods about the large sphere began to move back and forth, or rather in an

oscillating manner, until they were vibrating with such rapidity that they appeared merely rays of light. Slowly, majestically, the immense globe rose from its cradle, and gathering headway, leaped upward to an immense height. Then, tilting at an angle, it passed over the city and headed for an immense pinnacle of rock, which, fully seven miles from where I stood, reminded me of a gigantic chimney or funnel.

“Although it was barely visible to the naked eye, I could see it distinctly through the glasses, and I watched it with the most intense and concentrated interest. For a few moments it remained, poised a hundred feet or so above the pinnacle. Then, from the towering, tapering rock, a terrific jet of steam roared forth, and striking the great spherical machine above it, hurled it upward and beyond my vision. Give close heed to these words, whoever may, by God’s grace, be listening to what I say, for upon them may hinge the fate of the human race. Only by this means, by being shot upward by this titanic jet of steam, can the airship leave this subterranean land and emerge through the crater by which it entered bearing the *Chiriqui*. Within this place it can sail at will; once above the crater opening it can travel anywhere, although it cannot land; but by some unknown force or magnetic attraction or freak of gravitation the machine cannot ascend through the crater, although, when over it, it will drop like a plummet through the opening. And herein—for the sake of humanity, listen to this and remember my words—lies a means of destroying the machine, for by surrounding the crater with powerful guns the sphere can be shelled as it emerges and utterly destroyed. To attempt to do so as it returns to the crater would be suicidal, for once in the outer air, it emanates vast quantities of most poisonous gas, and all living things within a radius of several miles would be struck down unconscious, as were my companions on the

Chiriqui. Even if gas-masks were worn, it would be most difficult to destroy the machine as it descended, for it travels with incredible speed in its descent and, moreover, the terrible creatures who man the thing would see that enemies lurked near and would find some means of destroying them, or by the mysterious magnet force they control, would draw even the heaviest cannon to the machine as an ordinary magnet draws needles or iron filings. So if the thing is to be destroyed, it must be done as the machine emerges from the crater. Would to God that I could tell where the crater is, but beyond feeling sure it is at the summit of an Andean peak, I have no means of locating it.

“But I was telling of what occurred on that tenth day when the spherical airship was projected from my sight by the blast of steam. As the machine vanished, the women who had watched its departure, returned to their city, and I swept the landscape with my glasses, wondering at the bleak, terrible scenery and bizarre colors.

“AS I focused the binoculars upon a level plateau, perhaps a mile from where the *Chiriqui* rested, I gasped in surprise. Clearly defined, lay the remnants of what had once been a steamship! Had I given the matter thought, I might have known that the *Chiriqui* was not the first vessel to have fallen a victim to these awful beings; but the sight of another ship’s skeleton came to me as a terrific shock. As nearly as I could judge, the vessel had been dismantled, for only the great steel frame remained, with the mighty boilers and other portions of the ship scattered about, and gruesomely like some mammoth creature lying disemboweled upon the earth.

“I was consumed with a mad desire to visit that pathetic wreck, but I knew not to what dangers I would be exposed, once I left the security of my ship. Not a being was in sight, however, and carefully I studied the

land, visually measuring the relative distances between myself and the wreck, and between the city and the route I must traverse. Having already observed that the giantesses moved slowly and cumbrously on foot, I at last decided that even if they attempted to intercept me I could regain the *Chiriqui* before I was overtaken, so I threw caution to the winds and prepared to undertake my hazardous journey. Slinging the loaded rifle on my back, with the revolver at my belt, and still further arming myself with a keen-edged fire-axe, I hunted up the pilot's ladder, lowered it over the lowest side of the ship—which was also the side farthest from the city—and clambering down the *Chiriqui's* lofty sides, leaped down upon the ground. To my amazement, I landed in a dense jungle of dry, tough vegetation which rose to my shoulders. From the deck, looking directly downwards, I had thought this dull-green growth a short, wiry grass, and, of course, in its relative proportion to the gigantic women, it was no higher than ordinary grass to a normal human being. It was a wonderful example of the theory of relativity, but my mind was not interested in scientific matters at the time, and I merely gave thanks that the miniature jungle—which I saw was composed of giant lichens—would afford me cover through which I might sneak in safety, and with little chance of detection.

“Without much difficulty I made my way to the other vessel, and found her even more dissected than I had supposed. Why the denizens of the place had torn her to bits I did not then know, but certain portions of her machinery and fittings had been left intact, and, as I examined these, I made another and most astounding discovery. Deeply engraved upon a brass plate was the ship's name ‘*U. S. S. Cyclops!*’ For a space I stood staring, scarcely able to believe my eyes. Here then was the solution to that mystery of the sea, the disappearance of the collier, as laden with

manganese, she vanished without word or trace when off the Barbados during the World War. No doubt, I thought, many a mystery of the sea had been caused by the damnable work of these beings with their infernal machine. But why, for what reason, did they capture ships? Why did they carry off the unconscious persons upon the vessels? And why did they tear the vessels apart? It was all a mystery which, in all its horrible, gruesome, ghoulsh details I was soon to solve.

“There was nothing more to be learned from the remains of the Cyclops, and in safety I returned to the *Chiriqui* to find, to my surprise and terror, that a gang of the monstrous females had boarded the ship in my absence and were stripping her of everything. But as they caught sight of me, all threw down whatever they had and fled precipitately, leaving me once more in undisputed possession of the ship. I was relieved at this, for it was obvious that I had no need to fear the creatures. By now, too, I had formulated a theory to account for this strange dread of a being who was a puny, miserable thing compared to them. Unquestionably my gas-mask rendered me a most grotesque and unknown creature in their eyes. My remaining alive and active while all others upon the ship had succumbed to the noxious gas had probably caused them to think that I was a supernatural being. The fact that I could go about and breathe the sulphur-laden air would cause them to regard me with even greater wonder and superstition, and, as I found later, the fact that I was never seen to eat, confirmed their belief that I was some mysterious being against whom their gases and their deviltries were of no avail.

“I had not much time to devote to such matters, however. Soon after regaining the *Chiriqui* I heard excited cries from the land, and looking over the ship's rails, I found an immense crowd had gathered near the empty cradle of the airship, and that all were gazing

upward. Following their example, I stared into the greenish void and instantly understood. Descending rapidly towards the plain, came the great sphere, and, suspended below it, was the hull of another captive ship. And as I focused my glasses upon this, I rubbed my eyes and gaped. The dull gray color, the lines, the raking funnels, the barbets and gun muzzles left no room for doubt. Incredible as it seemed, the captive vessel was a warship! What hope then had my fellow men upon earth? What chance was there if these giant creatures could send forth their flaming machine, and by it, capture the fastest, most powerful war-vessels—all within the space of a few hours?

“Rapidly the machine and its burden approached, and presently descended gently dropping the war vessel close to the *Chiriqui*. My worst fears were confirmed. The vessel was an American destroyer, the *McCracken*, and I knew that scores of my countrymen must lie unconscious upon her, and in a few moments would be carried off to some unknown horrible fate. What that fate was I had already surmised. That first demonstration of the ferocious cannibalism of the giantesses upon the *Chiriqui*'s deck had been enough to make my blood run cold.

“But I had not yet guessed even a fraction of the true horror of it. Scarcely had the *McCracken* been dropped upon the earth, when the women swarmed upon her, and once more I saw the creatures gathering the inert forms of men and carrying them to the city. And rapidly, too, they commenced dismantling and tearing the destroyer into bits. How they had accomplished this with the *Cyclops* had puzzled me, but now I witnessed the process close at hand. From the vicinity of the waterfall, lines or pipes were led to the vessel's side; presently there was the roaring sound of steam; dense clouds of vapor arose from the cataract; the water ceased to flow, and from the extremities of the lines or tubes

twenty-foot jets of blinding flame shot out. As easily as though made of wax, the steel sides, the massive beams, the armored barbets of the warship melted and were cut by these jets, and as the pieces fell apart, the spherical airship took a position above the vessel, and by its magnetic power, lifted tons of the fragments, then sailing off, deposited them in some spot beyond the city. It was then, as I saw the ship rapidly dissolving before my eyes, that the inspiration came to me which may make it possible for me to communicate with the outside world and may, if God wills, serve to warn my fellow men of the fate which will overtake them if these terrible creatures are allowed to follow out their plans. As the jets of flame cut through the *McCracken*'s superstructure, and the radio antennae fell in a tangled mass across the deck, I forgot all else and rushed to the wireless room of the *Chiriqui*. Here was my chance. If the ship's radio transmitter was still in working order; if the auxilliary battery was still charged, I might send out messages which, small as the chances were, might reach the ears of some of the countless thousands of persons who listened each night at their receiving sets. I trembled with fear that I would find the transmitter injured or dismantled. I shook with dread that the battery might be dead. I felt faint with apprehension that the message, if sent, might never penetrate the sulphur-laden atmosphere or might never reach the outer world. And I realized, with a sickening sinking of my heart, that even if heard my communication might be regarded as a hoax, and no attention would be given it. But I would do my best. The radio set had not been molested. Everything was in working order, and I set myself the task of transmitting my story each night at the same hour, repeating it over and over again, until the storage batteries are exhausted, for to get up steam and start the dynamos is beyond my powers. Had I knowledge of Morse I would send my story by that code, but I have not, end

so—I must cease. For the love of your race and of your dear ones listen, I beseech you, until I can resume.”

HERE the message broke off abruptly, and Frank and I sat staring at each other, fearing to speak lest we might interrupt or miss the words which might come, and listening with straining ears at the head-sets. For an hour we sat there and then, once more the voice spoke.

“The doom that I feared is approaching. I have been here for three months and this will, I know, be my final message. Oh that I could only be sure that someone has heard my words, that my fate has not been in vain but has served to warn my fellow beings. But I must hurry on. I have learned everything of importance. I have watched, studied and have even learned to understand much of the language of these beings. I found that there were men. They are puny beings compared to the women, though ten-foot giants compared to normal men, and they are cowed, abject, mere slaves of the females. Only enough male children are permitted to survive to propagate the race. All others are killed.

“As they reach manhood only those males of super-intelligence, strength and virility are permitted to live. The others are destroyed and—yes, horrible as it sounds, their bodies, like those of the murdered infants and of the aged, sick or infirm, are devoured. And as fast as the males attain middle age their lives are forfeited. Long ago these beings subsisted upon the few wild creatures which roamed their land; but long ago all these were exhausted and human flesh became the only meat. There is no vegetable food, and for a time the sacrificed surplus males, and the aged, provided food for the race. But gradually the male births decreased, female children preponderated, and with the increased population resulting, the males were too few to nourish the others. Then, through what

damnable accident or design I do not know, the creatures went forth in their airship and discovered the teeming millions of human beings on earth.

“But the bulk of humanity was and still is safe from them, at least until new means of attacking mankind are devised, for the globular airship cannot approach the land. The very power it uses to lift the greatest steamships and carry them off, draws the machine to the earth and holds it fast. But above water, which acts as an insulator apparently, the apparatus can operate at will. And they have a twofold purpose in capturing ships. All the available metal in this land was exhausted in constructing two of the spherical machines. One of these never returned from its first trip, and only the one remains. To construct more, these giant women plan to use the metal salvaged from captured ships, until a vast fleet of the infernal things is ready to go forth and wipe the seas clean of ships and human beings. And the bodies of the men and women, struck down by the gas, are to serve as food for these demons in human form.

“This is the most horrible, blood-curdling thing of all. Rendered unconscious by the gas, the victims remain in a state of suspended animation indefinitely, exactly as do grubs, spiders and insects when stung by certain species of wasps and placed in their nests to provide food for their young. Stacked in great storage vaults these breathing, living, but paralyzed human beings are kept, and as needed, are taken out.

“Already they have a supply on hand sufficient to last them for over a year. Some of the *Cyclops*’ company are still preserved; there are over three hundred from the *Chiriqui*, hundreds from other ships, and the entire crew of the *McCracken*.

“All these things I learned little by little, and mainly through a friend, for marvelous as it may seem, I have a friend—if friend he can be called, a miserable,

trembling, terrified male, who, doomed to death, sought to escape his fate and sought refuge with me, dreading my presence less than his doom, and hoping that such a feared and almost revered being as myself might protect him. For two months he has been my companion, but he cannot eat anything but meat and the supply of meat upon the ship is getting low, and sooner or later he must succumb. And the women, maddened at his escape from their clutches, though not yet daring to approach too closely to me, are getting bolder. Some time, at some unguarded moment, they will find the poor fellow alone and will fall upon him. And in his terror, in an effort to buy his life, he will, I know, reveal to them that I am but an ordinary mortal, a man who eats and drinks and who survived the gas by mechanical and not supernatural means. But I will not be taken alive by these fearful female cannibals. When the time comes, as I know it will, I will blow my brains out, and though they may devour my body they will not rend me alive. No more ships have been brought in here since the *McCracken* was captured. But this I know is due to the fact that all the energies of these creatures are being devoted to building additional air machines. This work goes on in a vast cavern beyond the city where tremendous forces, furnaces with heat beyond human conception and machines of which we know nothing, are controlled by the internal steam, the radiant energy and the magnetic powers of the earth's core.

“And now, again let me implore any and all who may hear my words to give close attention to what I say, for here again is a means by which humanity may combat and destroy these ghastly, gigantic cannibals. The spherical air-machines are helpless from

above. Their magnetic or electrical forces extend only downwards. The gasses they throw out are heavier than air and descend but cannot ascend, and by means of swift planes, huge bombs and machine guns, the things can be easily destroyed. And they cannot travel without throwing off the dazzling green light. Only when motionless are they dark. And so they will offer easy marks and can be readily detected. So, I beseech you who may hear, that the governments are notified and warned and that a fleet or many fleets of airplanes properly equipped patrol the seas, and at first sight of one of the green meteors rise above it and utterly destroy it without mercy.

“Wait! I hear a terrified scream. ... I am back again at the transmitter. It was the fellow who has been with me. Poor devil! He has met his fate, but after all it was the custom of his people, and, moreover, he would have starved to death in a few days. For that matter I, too, face starvation. The ship's stock is running low; all the food upon the *McCracken* was destroyed in cutting up that vessel, and unless another ship is captured I will have no food after two weeks more. What a strange thought! How terrible an idea! That the awful fate of hundreds of my fellows would be my salvation! But I will never live to die from hunger. I can hear the terrible screams of my late companion on the deck outside. God! It is the end! The fellow must have told the enraged females. His body has been torn to shreds. With bloody hands and reeking lips they are rushing towards the upper deck where I sit. They are here! This is my last word! God grant that I have been heard! I am about to—”

“Crashing in our ears came the report of a pistol.