

EDISON'S CONQUEST OF MARS
BY GARRETT P. SERVISS
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CHAPTER III.

The day appointed for the assembling of the nations in Washington opened bright and beautiful. Arrangements had been made for the reception of the distinguished guests at the capitol. No time was to be wasted, and, having assembled in the senate chamber, the business that had called them together was to be immediately begun. The scene in Pennsylvania avenue when the procession of dignitaries and royalties passed up toward the capitol was one never to be forgotten. Bands were playing, magnificent equipages flashed in the morning sunlight, the flags of every nation on the earth fluttered in the breeze. Queen Victoria, with the Prince of Wales escorting her, and riding in an open carriage, was greeted with roars of cheers; the Emperor William, following in another carriage with Empress Victoria at his side, condescended to bow and smile in response to the greetings of a free people.

Each of the other monarchs was received in a similar manner. The czar of Russia proved to be an especial favorite with the multitude on account of the ancient friendship of his house for America. But the greatest applause of all came when the president of France, followed by the president of Switzerland and the first syndic of the little republic of Andorra, made their appearance. Equally warm were the greetings extended to the representatives of Mexico and the South American states.

The crowd apparently hardly knew at first how to receive the sultan of Turkey, but the universal good feeling was in his favor, and finally rounds of hand clapping and cheers greeted his progress along the splendid avenue.

A happy idea had apparently occurred to the emperor of China and the mikado of Japan, for, attended by their intermingled suits, they rode together in a single carriage. This object lesson in the unity of international feeling immensely pleased the spectators.

The scene in the senate chamber stirred every one profoundly. That it was brilliant and magnificent goes without saying, but there was a seriousness, an intense feeling of expectancy, pervading both those who looked on and those who were to do the work for which these magnates of the earth had assembled which produced an ineradicable impression. The president of the United States, of course, presided. Representatives of the greater powers occupied the front seats, and some of them were honored with special chairs near the president.

No time was wasted in preliminaries. The president made a brief speech.

"We have come together," he said, "to consider a question that equally interests the whole earth. I need not remind you that unexpectedly and without provocation on our part the people—the monsters, I should rather say—of Mars recently came down upon the earth, attacked us in our homes and spread desolation around them. Having the advantage of ages of evolution, which for us are yet in the future, they brought with them engines of death and of destruction against which we found it impossible to contend. It is within the memory of every one in reach of my voice that it was through the entirely unexpected succor which Providence sent us that we were suddenly and effectually freed from the invaders. By our own efforts we could have done nothing.

"But, as you all know, the first feeling of relief which followed the death of our foes was quickly succeeded by the fearful news which came to us from the observatories that the Martians were undoubtedly preparing for a second invasion of our planet. Against this we should have had no recourse and no hope but for the genius of one of my countrymen, who, as you are all aware, has perfected means which may enable us not only to withstand the attack of those awful enemies, but to meet them, and, let us hope, to conquer them on their own ground.

"Mr. Edison is here to explain to you what those means are. But we have also another object. Whether we send a fleet of interplanetary ships to invade Mars or whether we simply confine our attention to works of defense, in either case it will be necessary to raise a very large sum of money. None of us has yet recovered from the effects of the recent invasion. The earth is poor today compared with its condition a few years ago, yet we cannot allow our poverty to

stand in the way. The money, the means, must be had. It will be part of our business here to raise a gigantic war fund by the aid of which we can construct the equipment and machinery that we shall require. This, I think, is all I need to say. Let us proceed to business."

"Where is Mr. Edison?" cried a voice.

"Will Mr. Edison please step forward?" said the president.

There was a stir in the assembly, and the iron gray head of the great inventor was seen moving through the crowd. In his hand he carried one of his marvelous disintegrators. He was requested to explain and illustrate its operation. Mr. Edison smiled.

"I can explain its details," he said, "to Lord Kelvin, for instance, but if their majesties will excuse me, I doubt whether I could make it plain to the crowned heads."

The Emperor William smiled superciliously. Apparently he thought that another assault had been committed on the divine right of kings. But the Czar Nicholas appeared to be amused, and the emperor of China, who had been studying English, laughed in his sleeve, as if he suspected that a joke had been perpetrated.

"I think," said one of the deputies, "that a simple exhibition of the powers of the instrument, without a technical explanation of its method of working, will suffice for our purpose."

This suggestion was immediately approved. In response to it, Mr. Edison, by a few simple experiments, showed how he could quickly and certainly shatter into its constituent atoms any object upon which the vibratory force of the disintegrator should be directed. In this manner he caused an inkstand to disappear under the very nose of the Emperor William without a spot of ink being scattered upon his sacred person, but evidently the odor of the disintegrated atoms was not agreeable to the nostrils of the kaiser.

Mr. Edison also explained in general terms the principle on which the in-



He was requested to explain and illustrate its operation.

strument worked. He was greeted with round after round of applause, and the spirit of the assembly rose high.

Next the workings of the electrical ship were explained, and it was announced that after the meeting had adjourned an exhibition of the flying powers of the ship would be given in the open air.

These experiments, together with the accompanying explanations, added to what had already been disseminated through the public press, were quite sufficient to convince all the representatives who had assembled in Washington that the problem of how to conquer the Martians had been solved. The means were plainly at hand. It only remained to apply them. For this purpose, as the president had pointed out, it would be necessary to raise a very large sum of money.

"How much will be needed?" asked one of the English representatives.

"At least \$10,000,000,000," replied the president.

"It would be safer," said a senator from the Pacific coast, "to make it \$25,000,000,000."

"I suggest," said the king of Italy, "that the nations be called in alphabetical order, and that the representatives of each name a sum which it is ready and able to contribute."

"We want the cash or its equivalent," shouted the Pacific coast senator.

"I shall not follow the alphabet strictly," said the president, "but shall begin with the larger nations first. Perhaps, under the circumstances, it is proper that the United States should lead the way. Mr. Secretary," he con-

tinued, turning to the secretary of the treasury, "how much can we stand?"

"At least \$1,000,000,000," replied the secretary of the treasury. A roar of applause that shook the room burst from the assembly. Even some of the monarchs threw up their hats. The Emperor Tsait'ien smiled from ear to ear. One of the roko tuis, or native chiefs, from Fiji sprang up and brandished a warclub.

The president then proceeded to call the other nations, beginning with Austria-Hungary and ending with Zanzibar, whose sultan, Hamoud bin Mahomed, had come to the congress in the escort of Queen Victoria. Each contributed liberally.

Germany, coming in alphabetical order just before Great Britain, had named, through its chancellor, the sum of \$500,000,000, but when the first lord of the British treasury, not wishing to be behind the United States, named double that sum as the contribution of the British empire, the Emperor William looked displeased. He spoke a word in the ear of the chancellor, who immediately raised his hand.

"We will give \$1,000,000,000," said the chancellor.

Queen Victoria seemed surprised, though not displeased. The first lord of the treasury met her eye, and then, rising in his place, said:

"Make it \$1,500,000,000 for Great Britain."

Emperor William consulted again with his chancellor, but evidently concluded not to increase his bid.

But, at any rate, the fund had benefited to the amount of \$1,000,000,000 by this little outburst of imperial rivalry.

The greatest surprise of all, however, came when the king of Siam was called upon for his contribution. He had not been given a foremost place in the congress, but when the name of his country was pronounced he rose by his chair, dressed in a gorgeous specimen of the peculiar attire of his country, then slowly pushed his way to the front, stepped up to the president's desk and deposited upon it a small box.

"This is our contribution," he said in broken English.

The cover was lifted, and there darted, shimmering in the half gloom of the chamber, a burst of iridescence from the box.

"My friends of the western world," continued the king of Siam, "will be interested in seeing this gem. Only once before has the eye of a European been blessed with a sight of it. Your books will tell you that in the seventeenth century a traveler, Tavernier, saw in India an unmatched diamond which afterward disappeared like a meteor and was thought to have been lost from the earth. You all know the name of that diamond and its history. It is the Great Mogul, and it lies before you. How it came into my possession I shall not explain. At any rate, it is honestly mine, and I freely contribute it here to aid in protecting my native planet against those enemies who appear determined to destroy it."

When the excitement which the appearance of this long lost treasure that had been the subject of so many romances and of such long and fruitless search had subsided, the president continued calling the list until he had completed it.

Upon taking the sum of the contributions (the Great Mogul was reckoned at \$3,000,000) it was found to be still \$1,000,000,000 short of the required amount.

The secretary of the treasury was instantly on his feet.

"Mr. President," he said, "I think we can stand that addition. Let it be added to the contribution of the United States of America."

When the cheers that greeted the conclusion of this business were over, the president announced that the next affair of the congress was to select a director who should have entire charge of the preparations for the war. It was the universal sentiment that no man could be so well suited for this post as Mr. Edison himself. He was accordingly selected by the unanimous and enthusiastic choice of the great assembly.

"How long a time do you require to put everything in readiness?" asked the president.

"Give me carte blanche," replied Mr. Edison, "and I believe I can have 100 electric ships and 3,000 disintegrators ready within six months."

A tremendous cheer greeted this announcement.

"Your powers are unlimited," said the president. "Draw on the fund for as much money as you need." Whereupon the treasurer of the United States was made the disbursing officer of the fund, and the meeting adjourned.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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