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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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"A flash of purple flame leaps from the mechanism, and the thud of a mighty concussion smote my ears."



The Planet of Peace

By ARLTON EADIE

The strange story of a man from Earth on a planet which was inhabited solely by women

TELL a man that there is a region, a bare fifty miles from London's teeming millions, where it is possible to tramp from dawn to dusk of a long summer day without coming face to face with a single human being, and if

your hearer refuses to credit the statement you may be sure that he doesn't know the great Chalk Downs of Sussex.

From Petersfield on the west to Beachy Head on the east, a distance of more than seventy miles, the skyline of these vast

rolling uplands is unbroken by human habitation of any kind; for even the smallest farmhouse requires a supply of water, and this huge escarpment, reared like a rampart between the lower lands bordering the sea, and the plain of the Weald, has been carved by nature's chisel from one massive block of chalk as dry as the proverbial bone. There are no springs; wells would need to be sunk fully eight hundred feet before they reached even the surface of the plain below. Such villages and scattered farmsteads as exist nestle amid the foothills, near the streams, leaving the summits to the gulls and curlews, and—in the case of one lofty crest—to me.

I had taken up my residence in a house that had evidently been built by some optimist who was a stranger to the district. Situated but a score of yards below the windswept ridge, its windows commanded a view that was superb.

But the water supply was, in sober, literal truth, prehistoric. It consisted of a "dew-pond" or "dew-pan" such as the ancient Britons used to slake their thirsts ages before Cæsar's legions first sighted the white cliffs of Albion. It was simply a large, shallow, circular depression scooped in the chalk. In theory it was supposed to collect all the rain, dew and other moisture that might be in the air. In actual practise it collected other things as well. Any naturalist interested in pond-life would have been delighted with a glassful of that water before it had been boiled and filtered.

I had come to the Downs in search of solitude and inspiration for a novel that I contemplated writing. I got the solitude all right. It was five miles by the shortest practicable path to the nearest village, though only about three as the crow flies; and, save for an obviously new bungalow at the end of the straggling High Street

and the tip of the church spire, the village lay as if it were shrinking coyly out of sight behind a fold in the lower slopes.

When the first novelty of my Crusoe-like existence had worn off I began to take a great interest in that little bungalow. I had a pair of very excellent field-glasses that had once formed part of the equipment of a German infantry officer (now deceased), and by their aid I was able to get a mild form of diversion by observing the activities of a man who sat for the greater part of the day at a kind of work-table set in the bay window.

His appearance was such as might have attracted notice even in a crowd. His figure was short and inclined to stoutness—decidedly not the type of figure that is seen to its best advantage when attired in a pair of very baggy "plus-fours" and a woolen "pull-over" bearing a startling thunder-and-lightning pattern in red and green on a cinnamon-brown ground. Yet that was the fashion of his raiment, and never subsequently did I see him dressed otherwise.

His features were more difficult to make out at that distance; but I could see that he was clean-shaven, with a large, pale face surmounted by the shining dome of a head entirely bald except for a fringe of black hair which began and ended about level with his ears.

The windows of the bungalow were destitute of curtains, and from my post of vantage I could see a segment of the room in which he was accustomed to work. It appeared to be a kind of compromise between a chemical laboratory and an optical instrument-maker's workshop. Ranged on shelves against the one wall visible to me were enough bottles to stock a chemist's shop; a lathe stood near the center of the room; a large vise was clamped to the bench in the window; and the bench itself was usually littered with a bewildering assortment of brass tubes, wheels, levers and

other pieces of mechanism. But, try as I might, I could not divine the nature of the machine that he was constructing. But I was soon enlightened on that point in a startlingly dramatic manner.

TOWARD sundown one evening, while waiting for the "inspiration" that stubbornly refused to materialize, I idly took up the glasses and focused them on my unknown distant friend. At the first glance it was apparent that he was as interested in me as I was in him. But his curiosity had gone to greater lengths—literally as well as figuratively—for he had his eyes glued to what looked like a large brass telescope pointing straight in my direction.

For a moment I felt rather rattled at being caught snooping; but, realizing that he could probably see me better than I could see him, I did not lower the field-glasses until I had carelessly swept my gaze round the landscape and stared for a good minute at the faint, blue-gray rim of the distant sea. Having, I hoped, thus given the impression that I was merely engaged in admiring the beauties of nature, I laid down the glasses, lighted a cigarette with as detached an air as I could assume, and again waited for my "inspiration."

Something else came instead.

Into my thoughts there obtruded the sound of a faint, deep-toned humming note; a chair behind me was suddenly and violently overturned, and a voice, apparently charged with the explosive force of intense exasperation, uttered one low but unmistakable word:

"Damn!"

I started to my feet and swung round. With a shock of stupefied amazement I saw, standing less than a yard from me, the figure of the little bald-headed man whom I had seen five minutes since sit-

ting at the window of the distant bungalow!

There could be not the slightest doubt as to his identity. He wore the same baggy plus-fours, the same outrageous pull-over with the red-and-green design; he had the same high, bald head; the same fat, pallid features—which, I noticed, now bore an expression of mingled bewilderment and annoyance. Yet, even as my eyes noted these details, my reason was telling me that it could not be the same man. Even with the aid of an airplane it would have been smart work for him to take off, fly three miles, land, and enter my house unseen all within five minutes.

"How on earth——" I began, and at the sound of my voice he stopped rubbing his shin, which had evidently come into forcible contact with the overturned chair, and glanced round, as if for the first time aware of my presence.

"Oh," he said in a tone of apology. "Sorry . . . I didn't know . . . had no idea . . . a little miscalculation on my part . . ."

And forthwith his figure became hazy and indistinct, shimmered unsteadily for an instant like an object viewed through heated air—then vanished completely!

IT IS useless for me to try to record my sensations at that moment. Fully awake, dead sober, and in complete possession of my faculties, I had witnessed the impossible. A living man, substantial enough to talk and to bark his shins against a chair, had dissolved like a puff of smoke before my eyes.

The appearance and behavior of the man had been so commonplace, not to say absurd, that it never even occurred to me to set him down as being a ghostly apparition. If I regarded his arrival and departure as supernatural, it was only in the sense that it was something entirely outside the usual course of natural happen-

ings. I simply could not imagine a ghost wearing tweed plus-fours and red-and-green pull-over, and my common sense jibbed at the idea of a wandering disembodied spirit barging into a piece of furniture and afterward murmuring apologies after the manner of a too-festive reveller who had strayed into the wrong house by mistake. Dimly, and without any logical sequence of thought, the words "fourth dimension" intruded themselves into my bewildered brain. It was by no means clear to me how a fourth dimension—or even a fifth—could explain the transportation of a living man over three miles of hilly country at a speed of something like a mile a minute; but the words had a sane, scientific ring about them that was rather comforting to my then state of mind. No man likes to admit, even to himself, that he has been "seeing things."

Moved by a sudden impulse, I caught up the field-glasses and focused them on the window of the distant bungalow. By the faint light of the dying sun I saw the little bald-headed man fiddling about with his brass telescope as unconcernedly as ever, apparently in no way affected by his rapid double transit through space.

"I flatter myself that I am not unduly inquisitive," I muttered aloud as I laid down the glasses and caught up my hat and walking-stick, "but I think I am justified in looking into this matter a little deeper."

Five minutes later I was picking my way through the gathering dusk down the steep hillside path which led to the village.

IT WAS quite dark long before I reached my destination. The night was clear and moonless, with myriad stars twinkling with steely brightness against the velvety sky above the wide sweep of the rolling hills. Most of the houses in the

village were in darkness, but I noted with satisfaction that a light burned in the window of the bungalow, and as I drew nearer I could see the shadow of my mysterious visitor pass and repass as he busied himself at some task.

The absence of bell or knocker on the front door seemed to hint that callers were not encouraged, but without hesitation I raised my stick and tapped sharply on the panel. For a few minutes there was no response, and I was just on the point of repeating the summons more violently, when the door suddenly opened.

My attitude, with upraised stick, must have appeared threatening, for the little bald-headed man shrank back and raised his hands as though to ward off a blow.

"I know what you've come for," he cried, without giving me time to put in a word. "My unwarrantable intrusion this afternoon . . . all a mistake . . . I can explain everything. I never intended to frighten you."

"You didn't frighten me," I answered, "but you made me mighty curious to know how the trick was done."

"Trick?" he blinked his little round eyes as he repeated the word. "You think that what you witnessed was just a conjuring trick?"

"What else could it have been?" I shrugged.

For a moment he continued to blink at me in silence.

"Come inside," he said suddenly, and almost dragged me into the room that I had already partly examined by the aid of my field-glasses.

I immediately saw that the object I had thought to be a telescope was in reality something much more complicated. Instead of the usual single eyepiece, it had no less than three smaller brass tubes converging into the main focal cylinder. Two were fitted with lenses, but the third

terminated in a narrow adjustable metal band which, by its size and position, seemed intended to be fastened to the forehead of the observer. From various points of this strange instrument numerous insulated wires ran to an intricate and elaborate machine situated immediately behind the observer's chair. It was evident that this machine had but recently emerged from the experimental stage, for some of its component parts were held in position merely by huge blobs of red sealing-wax and others by common tin-tacks driven into the top of the table on which it stood. The only details that my non-scientific mind could recognize were several powerful storage batteries and what appeared to be an ordinary "magic lantern" of oxidized metal.

"You see, my little 'conjuring trick,' as you call it, requires quite a lot of apparatus," smiled the bald-headed man as he waved his hand toward the maze of gleaming brass. "I may as well confess that when I constructed all this I had a very different object in view from emulating the exploits of a stage magician. My—er—little intrusion into your privacy was quite accidental, I assure you. I was aiming for the hilltop above your house; but the tube must have shifted slightly, and I was as much surprized as you were to find myself in your study. But it might have happened worse," he went on, thoughtfully stroking his plump chin. "It would have been distinctly embarrassing, for instance, if I had found myself in the presence of a highly-strung, nervous female."

His casual, almost apologetic manner robbed his explanation of much of its impressiveness; it was only by marshaling the facts in my own mind that I could grasp the staggering significance of what I had heard and seen.

"Do you mean to say that you are able

to transport yourself bodily through space?" I cried, my voice jerky with excitement.

"*Bodily?*" he emphasized the word as he repeated it, shaking his head dubiously the while. "Ah, there you place me in a difficulty. You must understand that I live and work entirely alone, and I have no one to observe what takes place in this room when I project my conscious ego elsewhere. Tell me, did I seem to be a solid, physical body when I appeared to you?"

"You were solid enough to knock over a chair and swear when you barked your shin." I laughed as an idea occurred to me. "You had better let me test that point for you. Waft me into the strongroom of the nearest bank, and I'll see if my fingers are material enough to grab a few souvenirs!"

He shook his head quite seriously at my joking suggestion.

"Quite apart from the questionable honesty of such an experiment, I fear it would be foredoomed to failure. My Ego-Projector has its limits. The rays of energy which emanate from it are powerless to penetrate any solid obstacle which lies between the point of departure and the point desired to be attained. If you will take your mind back, you will remember that the large French window of your room was wide open when I arrived this afternoon. If I could find means of endowing my Ray with the same penetrative power as the ordinary wireless waves, my invention would be perfect."

"It's marvellous enough as it is," I cried with enthusiasm. "Imagine our country at war—with one of your machines in the front line, every detail at the back of the enemy's positions could be reported by ghostly spies!"

TO MY disappointment this eccentric inventor appeared to be annoyed at this suggestion.

"I have no intention of devoting my invention to the purposes of war," he returned curtly.

"No, no, of course not," I hastened to add. "But think of its possibilities in times of peace. Think of how it will cheapen and speed up travelling. With a few relays of your machines a party of hustling tourists could be wafted round Europe in less time than it takes to cross the Channel. And you need not confine your scope to this old world of ours. Think of the sensation that would be caused by an advertisement something like this: *"Five Minutes on the Moon—heating apparatus and supply of oxygen provided."*

"Doubtless it would greatly interest the Lunacy Commissioners!" he returned dryly. "But why pick on a dead, sterile satellite like the Moon? Why not the planet Mars, which possesses water, an atmosphere, and—if the astronomers have rightly interpreted its periodic change of color—a vegetation that flourishes and decays at the Martian seasons corresponding to our earthly spring and autumn?"

"You think that there is life on Mars?" I queried.

"It would indeed be surprising if there were not," he answered emphatically. "When you consider the abundance of vitality which exists on our own planet, and realize that there is scarcely a single square yard, from the parched deserts of the Saharas to the eternal ice of the poles—including the abysmal depths of the ocean, where the pressure reaches the enormous total of three and three-quarters tons to the square inch—that is not without some form of life, however lowly, it would be more logical to doubt the *absence* of life on our sister-planet than its

presence! What reasoning man doubts that the whole of our solar system had a common origin? And, having a common origin, it naturally follows that all the planets must be composed of the same elements, and this conclusion is supported by the evidence of the spectroscope. Now, it may surprize you to know that living protoplasm, the basic molecule of all life, is made up of six simple elements—oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, phosphorus and sulfur. If Mars has these elements, it has all the fundamentals that on Earth resulted in the generation of what we call life."

"But intelligent life is another matter," I objected. "Your hypothetical Martians are scarcely likely to be highly developed creatures like ourselves."

"On the contrary, my dogmatic young friend, the dominant type there may be higher than it is here. On Earth the lowest forms of living organisms are found in the ocean; the highest, culminating in man, on land. Mars is nearly all land. It is an older planet, too, inasmuch as, being smaller, it has cooled much more rapidly. Probably it was habitable when our own planet was yet a molten mass, as giant Jupiter is at the present time, and thus the Martians may be millions of years ahead of us in the evolutionary race."

"But surely they would not be of a human type?" I cried.

"Why not, pray?" he returned, with a smiling shrug. "Have you ever paused to consider how nature is content to keep to broad generic lines when fashioning the most diverse animals? Disregarding the highly specialized order of reptiles commonly called 'snakes,' can you name a single air-breathing vertebrate that possesses more or less limbs than four? more or less eyes than two? more nostrils than a single pair? more mouths than one? From the smallest lizard to the largest ele-

phant, the vital processes of life are identical. If creatures of such widely different habitat have so many points in common, why should not the dominant creature of another planet have developed along similar lines to the dominant creature on Earth? Judging by the evidences of their handiwork, we can at least be sure that their mental processes are the same as ours."

"How?" I demanded incredulously.

INSTEAD of answering immediately, my self-appointed mentor sat down at the desk and drew a rough circle on the blotting-pad.

"Let this represent the planet Mars, and let us assume that the more progressive and intelligent nations of the human race had been transported there *en masse* and, in order to survive, were forced to contend with the conditions which prevail. They would find themselves on a globe very different from the one they had quitted. On Earth, deep oceans cover nearly three-quarters of the surface; on Mars the only water is found at the north and south poles, the remainder of the surface being a flat, waterless desert. Throughout the Martian winter, which lasts twice as long as ours, this water is useless as an irrigating agent, for it is frozen into a solid mass of ice which is plainly visible through our telescopes. But in the spring this water melts, and the problem which would confront our hypothetical human pioneers would be to conduct this life-giving fluid to the more temperate zones, where it could be used to water the crops necessary for the support of animal life. If you were in their place, how would you solve that problem?"

"By a system of pipes and pumping-machinery," I answered promptly.

He shook his head almost sadly.

"Allow me to remind you that a water-pipe does not *irrigate* the soil through

which it passes, nor is it easy to conceive pipes large enough to supply the needs of a parched hemisphere. Nothing but the construction of *canals* would meet the situation. Broad, straight, lined on either bank with a belt of cultivated land, and spread like a network over the whole surface of the planet—only thus could the problem of continued existence under Martian conditions be solved. And when this gigantic irrigation scheme had been perfected, how would its operation appear to an observer on the Earth? At the approach of the Martian spring he would see the polar caps gradually shrink in size as the frozen water melted. Then a narrow band of faint blue would appear at the edges of the dwindling patch of white—a visible result of the thaw. Then, after a pause long enough to allow for sprouting, he would see, starting from the border of the polar cap and slowly creeping down toward the equator, a network of faint dark lines—the vegetation of the field-bordered canals, which has been quickened into life by the released water. And that is precisely what our astronomers see every year. They can not see the inhabitants of Mars, it is true, but they can, and do, observe the results of their intelligent handiwork."

I could not help smiling at the deadly earnestness with which he aired his theory. "As you're so keen on the matter," I said flippantly, "why don't you take a trip to Mars and have a look round?"

"Such is my intention," came his answer, swift as an echo. "Unfortunately, however, I have no one capable of controlling my Ego-Projector and thus ensuring my safe return."

"Can I be of any assistance?" I asked, and to my surprize he nodded eagerly.

"You can, by undertaking the journey for me."

I've often wondered since what my face

must have looked like when he made this cool proposal, but if my thoughts were reflected on my features I must have worn a pretty complicated expression. For a moment or two my mind was in a whirl. I did not know whether to laugh or be angry.

"Thanks," I said, finally deciding to fall in with the humor of what must be a joke on his part. "But I didn't intend taking quite such a long stroll when I set out this evening. A matter of thirty or forty millions of miles, is it not?"

"At the present time Mars is about 40,500,000 miles distant from the Earth."

"Is that so?" I queried with a laugh. "Well, a few hundreds of thousands of miles don't matter much one way or the other in a little jump like that!"

But my satire was entirely wasted on him.

"Of course not," he agreed quite seriously. "If my theory is correct you will arrive at your objective almost instantly."

"But if your theory does *not* happen to be correct, I suppose I shall spend the next few centuries wandering about in the inky black nowhere of outer space!" I cried with some show of indignation. "Life is too short for trial trips into the ether."

He looked quite disappointed at my refusal to avail myself of his highly scientific mode of suicide.

"Sure you wouldn't care for a little trip to the moon?" he asked coaxingly. "It's a mere hop by comparison, only 240,000 miles or so——"

I shook my head firmly and reached for my hat, more than half convinced that I was in the presence of a lunatic.

"The only hop that I am going to do tonight will be in the direction of home," I said hastily, and began to edge toward the door.

"What about a little drink before you go?"

His suggestion made me pause and glance back at him. At that moment he appeared eminently sane and normal.

"All right," I said, little suspecting the treachery that lay behind his hospitable offer. "Mix me a Martian cocktail."

He took me at my word. The instant I had swallowed the stuff I knew that something was wrong. A deadly mist seemed to swirl up and envelop my brain, rendering it dazed and numb.

"You perfidious devil!" I tried to shout. "You've drugged me!"

Rallying my failing strength, I staggered to my feet and lurched toward him. But the floor of the room seemed to reel and sway like the deck of a storm-tossed ship. I stumbled—fell—and as I touched the floor the last vestiges of consciousness slipped from me.

OUT of an oblivion that might have lasted seconds or centuries, dawning consciousness stole back to my brain. I was seated in a chair which I instinctively knew to be the seat connected with the Ego-Projector, although the main portion of the machinery of the devilish contrivance was out of sight behind me. My arms were firmly lashed to the side-rests of the chair; my ankles were similarly fastened to the chair-legs; around my neck was a metal band which, while loose enough to allow me to breathe freely, was yet sufficiently tight to prevent my moving my head more than a fraction of an inch on either side. Before me, poised at an angle on its heavy iron tripod, was the gleaming tube of the huge telescope. With a heart-chilling sense of helplessness I realized I was a passive plaything in the hands of a man who could not be otherwise than insane.

"I am sorry I had to resort to drastic measures," said a smooth voice at my elbow, "but I can assure you that the unique experience you are about to undergo will

amply compensate you for any little temporary inconvenience."

Slewing my eyes round, I saw the pallid face of my captor creased in a satisfied smile. But what interested me most at that moment was the fact that he held an open razor in his hand. He must have seen my expression of horror, for his smile broadened and he patted me reassuringly on the shoulder.

"Have no fear, my young friend. I have not inveigled you here in order to obtain a human subject for dissection. I have already done all I intend to do with this razor." He wiped it carefully and slipped it into its case as he continued coolly. "The trifling and bloodless capillary amputation that I have just performed on you will leave no traces after a week or two has elapsed. I have merely taken the liberty of shaving the top of your head."

I had been vaguely conscious of an unusual sensation of draftiness about the region of my occiput, but I had thought it due to my excited imagination. Now I realized that the crown of my head was as bare as his own.

"Perhaps it was not absolutely necessary to remove the hair," he went on thoughtfully. "In my own case nature has done that very effectively for me already; but now that you are about to test my invention, I did not wish to leave the slightest obstacle that might mar the successful working of my Ray, for it is just possible that the experiment may not be repeated. You have, of course, heard of the Pineal Gland?"

"Yes," I answered promptly, hoping to switch the conversation into something less personal than my own anatomy. "But I had mine removed seven years ago, so it's no earthly use your trying to interfere with something that isn't there. Let's talk

about politics. What is your candid opinion of the present government?"

Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have forgotten all about glands when invited to air their views on how a country should be run, but this lunatic refused to be side-tracked.

"Don't be foolish," he said indulgently. "The Pineal Gland is a small and obscure organ imbedded deep in the human brain. In many respects it resembles a primitive, undeveloped eye, and its position and general characteristics closely correspond with the so-called 'third eye' of a few living—and of many extinct—species of lizards. Now it is a curious fact that, in spite of the progress of modern science, no pathologist has succeeded in determining the exact function of this Pineal Gland."

"Then why worry about it?" I murmured soothingly, for I feared that his next announcement would be to the effect that he intended to gain the desired knowledge by an immediate experiment. "Perhaps the wretched thing hasn't got a function."

"On the contrary, my young friend, I have already proved it to be capable of exercising a most wonderful influence over the brain of which it forms a part. Although destined never to see the light of day, this primitive eye, when stimulated by a certain type of invisible yet penetrating ray, becomes endowed with the power of transporting the mental ego—the 'soul,' in the strictly non-religious sense of the word—to the point where that ray is directed. If you will glance through that telescope while I adjust the focus, you will see the sphere to which you are about to be transported."

IT WAS not wholly because I knew that resistance would be futile that I allowed him to adjust the metal band round my forehead. I was filled with an ex-

pectant curiosity that mastered my fear. If the man was crazed, he had at least some glimmering of method in his madness; if he was sane, I was about to undergo an experience such as had fallen to the lot of no man before.

Eagerly I gazed through the double eyepiece of the telescope, but for some seconds I could see only a confused blur of light. Soon, under the influence of the adjusted focus, this resolved itself into a tiny globe glowing with soft radiance as it hung poised amid the unfathomable blue of space. Its general color was pale yellow, slightly tinged with rose, but there were irregular darker areas where the tint approached the delicate blue of a bird's egg; at top and bottom were the dazzling white segments of the polar ice-caps.

"That is the planet which the ancients named after the God of War, but you may find it to be the Planet of Peace." He chuckled softly as he went on. "You may even find it to be the Planet of Too Much Peace!"

"How can a world have too much peace?" I asked. "Is war such a desirable thing that you should speak slightingly of peace?"

Again he chuckled softly, and this time there was an underlying note of grimness.

"War played its part—and no minor part, either—in shaping both the mental outlook and the bodily frame of the animal that we call man," he answered with quiet conviction. "I do not mean the war of modern trained armies, nor even the war of nation against nation, or of tribe against tribe. I mean the war of individual against individual, such as was once waged by primitive man and is even now being waged by the beasts of the jungle. Do you imagine that mankind would have developed along the lines it actually has if each individual man had but to lie on his back all day with an abundance of

the necessities and luxuries of life within easy reach? No, my impractical young theorist, man became what he is because he had to *fight!* He fought for the food he ate, for the cave that sheltered him, for possession of his mate; in short, he fought for his very existence. Those who were too mild or too weak to fight died very young, leaving it to their fiercer and more combative brothers to carry on the race and transmit their war-like instincts to the next generation. And men still fight one against the other, though now the battlefield has been transferred from the jungle to the town or city, and he uses his wits instead of a spear or ax of flint. And until recently the man who could not or would not fight (or 'work,' as we now call it) was exterminated as surely, though not as swiftly, as in ancient times. But during the last few years I have noted a growing tendency among the citizens of one powerful nation to prevent this natural process of elimination by protecting and succoring its individual members who either can not or will not take part in the modern struggle for existence. Forgetful of, or maybe ignorant of the prehistoric development of their own race, these tender-hearted dreamers seek to promote universal brotherhood and equality by doing away with the competition that is the mainspring of human progress. They proclaim an artificial peace where peace has never reigned since this Earth became habitable. If such a doctrine became universal it would be interesting to note its effect on the human race. You and I will be dust long before such a state of things can come into operation on this Earth of ours; but possibly you may see the ultimate result of such a system in the place you are going to."

"On Mars?" I cried, vastly interested in the strange and bizarre theory that had just been expounded. "You think that universal peace reigns on Mars?"

He nodded his head slowly.

"Probably every species of dangerous animals has been exterminated there ages ago, and the mere existence of its worldwide system of water-bearing canals implies a united effort on the part of its inhabitants in which all racial and national differences would need to be sunk for the common good. I am convinced that the present state of Mars is closely analogous to the state of our Earth in ages yet to come, and it is your proud privilege to witness the dying phase of a once-powerful race before its final extinction."

He paused and laid his hand on a small vulcanite lever connected with the mechanism of the Projector.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Rather!" I exclaimed, moved by an enthusiasm that has since surprized me. "You have interested me to such an extent that I would go, even if I were not compelled."

He leaned over and patted my hand.

"Good lad," he said in a tone that at any rate sounded sincere. "I will give you six hours before I reverse this lever and bring your conscious Ego back to Earth. And I would give much to behold what you will behold during that space of time. But that is impossible, so it only remains for me to wish you a pleasant journey—and a safe return. For six hours, *au revoir!*"

There was a sharp click as the lever slid home—a faint humming noise—then darkness came like the shutting of an eye.

I HAVE often tried to analyze my sensations during the time which followed immediately after the pressing of the lever that sent my subjective Ego hurtling through space, but on every occasion I have failed. Physically I must have been as inert as if I had inhaled a dose of chloroform, and as oblivious of the pas-

sage of time. Indeed, I feel inclined to doubt if my journey through space did actually take any measurable amount of time at all. A ray of light, which travels at a velocity of 186,000 miles a second, could leap the intervening distance in something like five minutes, and at the most modest estimate I can not conceive the Projector-ray travelling more slowly. I might have settled the point definitely if I had thought to glance at my watch on my arrival, but when I next became conscious of my surroundings I found my attention fully occupied with the strange scene which greeted my eyes.

Forgetful of the fact that my flight had been directed toward the portion of the Martian disk that was reflecting the rays of the sun, and remembering only that I had departed from the Earth at night-time, I was for a moment astounded to find myself in broad daylight, with brilliant sunshine streaming from a point so high in the heavens that it could not have been far from its noonday zenith.

I was lying on the slope of a hillside of bare, yellowish rock which, had I encountered it on the Earth, I should have judged to be sandstone. Below me, and separated from my point of observation by a series of fantastic, swelling curves utterly destitute of trees or shrubs, or even the humblest form of vegetation, was a flat desert of what appeared to be sand, stretching unbroken to the furthest horizon. The sun appeared smaller than when we view it from the Earth, but its rays, undimmed by even the faintest film of cloud in the crystal-clear sky, illuminated every detail of the desolate scene with merciless distinctness.

Keyed up as I was with the expectation of beholding prodigies, I felt my heart sink as I gazed round that stark, forbidding waste of sand. My feelings were something like those of an earthly aviator who, heading for London or Paris, sud-

denly finds himself stranded in the midst of the Sahara.

"The Sahara!" My voice sounded thin and weak in the rarefied atmosphere as I repeated the words aloud. "The Earth has its deserts, but it has also its populous cities. May not Mars have its cities, too?"

Catching hope at the rebound, I turned and began to clamber up toward the rocky crest of the hill. The going was rough, but I seemed to make remarkably good progress. Leaping to clear a fissure about a yard wide, I found that I had overshot the farther edge by a good three yards. It was only then that I remembered that the pull that held me to the ground was much less than the terrestrial gravity to which I had been hitherto subject. But I soon accustomed my muscles to this novel state of affairs, and presently I was performing feats of agility that would turn an earthly champion high-jumper green with envy.

In an incredibly short time I reached the summit, and how different was the scene that burst on my view as I cleared the last rocky ridge! The desert was still there, it is true, but on this side it was reduced to a mere strip of barrenness three miles, at the most, in width. Beyond that were orderly fields of luxuriant crops, interlaced with narrow silver streams of water whose straightness and symmetry proclaimed their artificial origin. Beyond this belt of vegetation two broader bands of silver converged as they neared the farther horizon. They were twin canals, spanned at intervals by mighty bridges and lined on either bank with wide roads of gleaming white on which strangely shaped vehicles passed and repassed with amazing swiftness.

But for me all these evidences of intelligent handiwork paled into insignificance before the mass of building which rose tier on tier at a spot where a third, single canal intersected the other two. It was a

Martian city—and one of some importance, judging by its size and the splendor of its buildings. Its general shape was that of a flattened pyramid, but such a bald geometrical comparison conveys no adequate idea of its actual aspect; for the severe outline was broken and diversified by swelling domes, lofty towers, and intricately beautiful lace-like structures which soared into the sky like symmetrical cascades of water suddenly frozen into stone. Viewed from my pinnacle of sun-scorched barren rock, it seemed more like the fairy city of a dream than a structure planned and reared by material beings.

"If that is the dwelling-place of those who live in perpetual peace," I found myself murmuring, "what an object-lesson that beautiful city would be to the rival nations of the Earth!"

PAUSING only long enough to take my bearings by the position of the sun, I set off down the hillside in a series of nightmare leaps and bounds. There may be an excess of oxygen in the Martian atmosphere, or perhaps it was due merely to the diminished force of gravity, but I seemed like a man suddenly endowed with superhuman strength and energy. Nor was the change confined to my physical sensations. A sense of wild elation filled my brain. I have a dim memory of laughing aloud and singing senseless songs. Had I encountered any one at that moment I fear I should have conveyed to his mind a very sorry estimate of the mental equilibrium of the inhabitants of the Earth. It is fortunate that I let myself go just when I did, for my first outburst of exuberance had exhausted itself by the time I had crossed the stretch of sand and reached the cultivated fields.

I call them "fields" only because of their vast extent. "Gardens" would be a more fitting term, for they seemed to produce nothing but attractive-looking though

unfamiliar fruit trees, arranged in a manner similar to our ornamental flower-beds. Paved walks, with stone seats set at regular intervals, completed its resemblance to a great public park.

At first I thought it had been raining, for the air felt delightfully cool and moist after the parched heat of the desert; but presently I saw a thin jet of water spring from the ornamental border of one of the "fruit-beds," rising high in the air and falling on the trees in a thin artificial rain.

Slight as the detail was in itself, it gave me my first real insight into the Martian mind. I could not help admiring the ingenious manner in which they had converted an apparently insurmountable climatic drawback into a positive advantage. By applying a regulated amount of moisture just when and where it was needed, they had placed themselves in a far better condition than that of depending on the erratic movements of wind-driven rain-clouds which discharge their contents on field and city indiscriminately. I thought of the devastating droughts and the floods that bring death and destruction to whole regions of our earth, and I decided that the Martians were to be envied, rather than pitied, for the physical conditions which prevail on their planet.

Meditating thus, I turned a sharp angle of the path and found myself face to face with one of the inhabitants of Mars.

IN SPITE of the professor's words, I had fully expected to find the Martians strange creatures of fearsome aspect. But the individual before me was very human-looking indeed, and not an uncomely specimen, either.

Of medium height, with a smooth, delicately tinted face and a slender figure elegantly draped in a saffron-colored garment cut on lines strongly reminiscent of the costume of the ancient Greeks, it might equally well have been a girl or a

good-looking boy in his teens. The single, very abbreviated garment left legs and arms completely bare, and its general effect made me wonder if I had encountered a Martian swimming enthusiast on the way to an afternoon dip.

For a moment we stared at each other in silence. I put up my hand to raise my hat, but finding that I had come away bareheaded, I executed what was intended for a graceful bow.

"Good afternoon," I said politely.

Of course I didn't expect to be understood, but I trusted to my tone of voice and facial expression to convey that my intentions were peaceable. I must have appeared harmless enough, for the Martian smiled back at me and said something which sounded like a friendly greeting.

"I am a messenger from the planet Earth," I went on impressively.

I didn't expect that to be understood, either, but to my amazement the pretty creature seemed to catch my drift.

"Earth—world," it said in very tolerable English, and pointed to the sky with much the same gesture that we should use in drawing attention to a familiar star.

To say that I was puzzled would be to describe my actual feelings very faintly. I knew that in uttering the word "Earth" the Martian might have merely repeated parrot-like the word I had just used. But I had certainly not mentioned "world," yet the two words had been correlated as naturally as if the fellow had been familiar with the English language all his life.

"Do you understand English?" I asked hopefully, and my bewilderment increased when I got a string of friendly but totally incomprehensible words in reply.

"Earth," I prompted, pointing to the sky.

"Earth—world—globe," said the Mar-

tian, with an air of a child proudly displaying its knowledge.

Here was another English word that I had not imported into Mars. Evidently my young friend was well acquainted with the usual synonyms for "Earth" and at the same time quite ignorant of colloquial English. This was interesting, but it did not seem likely to prove very instructive. I felt as a tourist in Paris would feel if he asked a Frenchman the way to the railway station and was treated to a quotation from Shakespeare instead. I gave up the problem with a shrug and turned with the intention of proceeding on my way to the city. It was then that I discovered we were not alone.

Five Martians, dressed in garments of various colors but in every other respect similar to that worn by the one with whom I was conversing, had silently approached and were regarding me with much the same excited wonder as a group of village children exhibit at the sight of a dancing bear or a monkey on an organ. My doubts as to the sex of the first Martian were set at rest by the appearance of these newcomers, for their style of dress was the same and they were undoubtedly women. I began to wonder if I had wandered into the grounds of a young ladies' finishing-school which specialized in physical culture on classical lines.

The girl in the saffron-hued robe said something to the others in which I distinctly caught the word "Earth," whereupon they crowded round me, subjecting my clothes, and finally myself, to a scrutiny that was distinctly embarrassing to a bashful man. I had neglected to shave that morning, and my stubbly beard was the star turn of the show. One after the other, and sometimes two at the same time, they insisted on stroking my cheeks and chin with their hands in a manner not usually indulged in—at least not in public

—on the planet I had recently quitted. The shaven patch on the top of my head came in for its share of attention, though it did not appear to excite the same degree of wonder as my beard. I began to feel like a pet poodle at a dog show, and when another dozen or so Martian maidens came running up, evidently no less eager with curiosity, I thought it was time I made a move.

Frowning a dignified and majestic disapproval of further investigations into my physical aspect, I pointed to the distant city and intimated by signs that it was my intention to make my way there without delay. I must have made my meaning plain, for the girl in saffron, who seemed to have assumed a proprietary interest in me on the childrens' principle "I found it first," now took me by the hand and conducted me in the desired direction.

I have since gained considerable amusement by trying to picture what I must have looked like stalking at the head of that procession of near-Greek damsels. My solitary mode of life on the Sussex Downs had made me rather careless in the matter of attire. If I had known what was in store for me I would have come arrayed in the most regal vestment that a theatrical costumer could supply. As it was, I wore a pair of flannel trousers, picturesquely bagged at the knees and fringed at the bottoms, and a tweed sports coat that had seen better days—a good many better days—to say the honest truth. Altogether I must have presented a spectacle far more curious than beautiful.

But the Martian populace were easily pleased. They flocked toward me from every side, and by the time I had reached one of the broader thoroughfares my advance had become a sort of triumphal progress along the center of the way, with a densely packed mass of people on either side.

There were several points about that crowd which struck me as being curious. There were no police or other officials to keep order; no one Martian seemed to have any more authority than the others; and, though I scanned their faces and figures as narrowly as I could, I could not detect a single member of that immense throng that belonged to the male sex.

Slowly but surely the staggering conviction was forced on my mind. *Mars was a planet inhabited solely by women.*

MY ARRIVAL at what for want of a better name I must call the Headquarters of the City was marked with much excitement but with a total absence of ceremony. Led by the saffron-robed girl, I mounted the steps and entered the open door of the immense central building with as little ceremony as I should have entered a public library on earth.

I caught a fleeting glimpse of a large hall, well proportioned and imposing, though not oppressively so; then my guide steered me along a corridor and up a staircase, and presently we passed beneath a low arch and entered a smaller room. I may here place on record the fact that never once during my stay did I see a door that was capable of being closed.

The room was very sparsely furnished, yet it was so well-proportioned and tastefully decorated that it appeared far from bare. At first I was much puzzled by the fact that, although it had no windows, the light with which it was flooded was almost as strong as in the open air. Presently, however, I perceived that the gleaming white stone of which it was constructed was in itself semi-transparent, so that the sunlight actually penetrated the walls and ceiling.

At the farther end of the room a woman was seated at a bronze desk-like arrangement of fantastic design. On our

entry she was engaged in listening attentively to a stream of words in the Martian language that issued from a trumpet-mouth which formed part of the desk. As we came forward she stretched out her hand to a lever and the voice abruptly ceased. I strongly suspect that the voice had been informing her of my advent, for she showed no surprize when she turned and looked at me. I on my part was busy taking in every detail of her dress and appearance.

Judged by earthly standards her age appeared to be about thirty, but maybe it was the tranquil majesty of her expression, rather than any actual indications of the passage of time, that made her seem so old. During my progress through the city I had been struck by the fact that the standard of personal beauty among the Martians was unusually high, but the loveliness of this regal creature easily surpassed any I had hitherto seen. Her height was a little above the medium, and her figure, lightly draped in a robe of shimmering wine-color that deepened to a rich purple in its folds, was slender and exquisitely molded. The only indication of her rank was the narrow fillet of gold which encircled her short, dark hair. But she needed no diadem to proclaim her queenly status, for her carriage and expression betokened one born to command.

For perhaps a minute she stood eyeing me in silence, a slight smile playing about the curves of her full, red lips. Then came a thing so incredible that I hesitate to set it down lest it should impugn the veracity of this plain statement of facts.

"Good afternoon, everybody," she said in the carefully enunciated Oxford accent of a radio announcer. "The Queen of Mars calling the Messenger from Earth. Are you from 2LO or 5XX? I should be glad to hear your News Bulletin-copy-right - by - Reuter - Press - Association -

and-Central News." She pronounced the final ten words as though they were one.

Now, I've met with a few knockdown surprises in my life, but never have I experienced such a shock as when I heard that radiant, queenly creature begin to talk after the manner of a two-valve receiving-set.

"You understand our Earthly language?" I cried in amazement.

The Martian queen nodded her shapely head and laughed.

"I'll say I do. We've been trying to communicate with your planet for years and years, but either your instruments are not sensitive enough to receive our signals, or else you have set them down to some amateur wireless joker trying to pull your leg. But we have listened to your radio broadcasts all the time, and by degrees we have compiled a vocabulary and grammar of your language."

My heart sank and I felt myself going red all over. If this divine creature had based her estimate of earthly intelligence on *some* wireless programs that I had heard put over, she must inevitably look upon me as belonging to a race of moribund half-wits.

Gently but firmly I explained to her that the apex of human aspirations was not represented by the mentality of the British Broadcasting Company. She appeared to grasp my point with surprising quickness.

"I understand," she said, nodding and regarding me more kindly. "The stuff we have been listening to is merely intended for those of your race who are not sufficiently intelligent to read a book."

I WAS in no mood for long, involved explanations, so I did not attempt to contradict her. I was more anxious to learn about the conditions of life on Mars than to waste time in trying to gage the mental make-up of the average radio fan. I put a

few pertinent questions, and found her by no means unwilling to talk. Bidding me be seated, she told me many surprising things. Taken on the whole, her English was very clear and concise, but now and again I had to help her out with a word or suggestion, especially toward the end of her explanation.

The recorded history of Mars, I learnt, covered a period of nearly two million years. In some of its earlier phases it formed a striking parallel to the history of our own planet. There were the same alternate periods of warfare and peaceful progress; the same succession of nations dominant for a while, then decaying and sinking into oblivion as each in turn was conquered. At first they fought merely for the sake of plunder; then for aggrandizement and love of power; but in the end their wars were waged for possession of the dwindling water supply as the shallow Martian seas had shrunk and finally disappeared. Gradually the nature of the warfare changed with the changing conditions. Hitherto it had been a struggle of nation against nation, but when the only remaining bodies of water were those locked up for the greater part of the year in the polar ice-fields, it became a life-and-death struggle of the whole population against drought.

Long before the dawn of our own history—maybe long before the first terrestrial man had chipped his first rude implement of flint—the Martian engineers had planned and constructed the gigantic system of canals capable of tapping the polar ice-caps as they melted every year, and conveying the precious fluid to the more temperate regions where, directly and indirectly, it could be turned to account to render the otherwise arid deserts capable of supporting life. This war against natural forces was the greatest, the most prolonged, and the most desper-

ate war that the Martians ever waged. They were fighting for their very existence as a race, and they knew it. It was indeed "a war to end war" in a much truer sense than was the empty slogan with which our earthly ears have been tickled within recent years. And when in the end they had triumphed, they found to their surprise that the last Martian war had been fought.

The more backward races of the planet had been exterminated in the struggle for continued existence; the more enlightened had co-operated and fused during their exertions for the common good. They had conquered their bitterest, their most implacable enemy, Death; and henceforth they were at peace.

And for untold ages peace reigned on that happy planet. Generation after generation saw the light and passed away not knowing the meaning of the word "struggle," for in that artificial Utopia they had not even to struggle to live. Brain power took the place of brute strength as a deciding factor in the march of progress; the female no longer needed the combative male to provide her with the necessities of life. From a servile slave or a pampered plaything, woman became to all intents and purposes the effective equal of man.

Then indeed did it seem as if the acme of Martian bliss had been reached. The desert blossomed like a rose in literal truth, and there was enough for all with a minimum of effort. The fortunate people of these ages revelled in a paradise of plenty.

But nature, ever patient, ever watchful, was but biding her time for a great crushing revenge on those who flouted her immutable laws. Not for mere caprice had the fighting male been called into existence; not by mere chance is it decreed that his numbers shall increase in proportion to the female population when the need

for him is greatest, and dwindle when the community no longer needs his protecting presence. On Earth the birth statistics during the recent Great War led to this fact being dimly recognized, though not completely understood. And the law of gravitation is not more universal or far-reaching than the law of utility. An organism, be it mammoth or microbe, that no longer fulfills its intended purpose is no longer perpetuated or even tolerated in the economy of nature. Fallen from his high estate, man had disappeared from Mars as completely as the mammoth and dinosaur had disappeared from the surface of the Earth.

IT WAS perhaps inevitable that there should occur several baffling and irritating gaps at this stage of the narrative. The stock of words at the disposal of my informant consisted only of those which had been gleaned from radio programs, and the vocabulary thus acquired, though sufficiently varied and flexible for the discussion of ordinary subjects, proved but a poor vehicle in which to convey the explanation of the several vital points that puzzled me. I was, for instance, very curious to know how the continuity of the Martian race had been effected after the last man had become extinct. But here my informant's vocabulary became tantalizingly meager and limited—which was not to be wondered at, considering that human biology is a subject not usually regarded with favor by the directors of radio programs. I hesitate to place on record a theory that may be due to misunderstanding on my part, but I gained the impression that on Mars synthetic chemistry has reached heights as yet only dimly glimpsed by the most daring of our own scientists.

But, quite apart from details that would be of interest only to professional biologists, the great fact remained that

Mars had paid dearly for her state of perpetual peace. Woman had grasped sovereignty only to find her prize turn to ashes in her hands. Undisputed queen though she was, her kingdom was pitifully barren of all save the material needs of life. The Planet of Peace had become a world devoid of human love. . . .

ALL this the queen of Mars told me, and maybe much more; for in the end my thoughts wandered and I found myself paying more attention to the speaker than to the halting phrases which fell from her lips.

Was it merely my conceited fancy, or was there really a subtle undertone of tenderness in her voice as she spoke of the starved affections, the thwarted yearnings of her loveless people? Hitherto I had been so engrossed in the purely scientific side of her epitome of Martian history that I had quite lost sight of its personal aspect. Now, with a thrill of keenest excitement, I realized for the first time the stupendous possibilities that lay within my grasp. However insignificant a member I might be of the community I had recently quitted, here the crown of an empire—nay, of the whole planet!—was mine for the taking. And as I looked into the beautiful face of the Martian queen, never did kingship seem so desirable a thing.

I spoke no word of love, but something of my emotion must have communicated itself to her; for gradually she fell silent, and sat, her rounded bosom lifting and falling rapidly, her frank eyes mutely questioning mine.

"I came here to seek knowledge of another world," I said, lamely enough, "but I have found something more." And I raised her unresisting hand to my lips.

The poet who extolled the external power of love wrote truer than he knew. To her the tender passion must have been

a thing as remote as were the circling orbs of space. Yet she did not even pretend to misunderstand my meaning.

Like the first flush of dawn in a sky that has been shrouded in eternal night, a wave of deep crimson crept up the ivory of her shapely throat until it dyed her cheeks with its glowing color. Like a proud lily bowing before the gale it was not fitted to withstand, her supple body swayed toward me. I felt her arms about me; her warm lips, trembling with an emotion that was not fear, on mine. . . .

Then, like a faulty cinema film which breaks off at the most engrossing part of the drama, the whole scene vanished into dense, impenetrable blackness.

WHEN next I opened my eyes I did not commit the usual solecism by asking "Where am I?" I knew the answer to that question only too well!

I was in the untidy workshop of the little bungalow at the end of the Sussex village street. The bungalow idiot with the bald head was just in the act of returning his watch to his pocket.

"Your six hours are up, my young friend," he said cheerfully. "I took care to switch you back to Earth right on the exact minute. Did you have an interesting experience?"

I fear my immediate reply was not much to the point. Presently I grew calmer. "I want to go back to Mars," I told him bluntly. "And I want to stay there for good."

"Do you?" He eyed me strangely as he stroked his chin. "May I be permitted to ask why you are so eager to take up your permanent abode there?"

Like a simpleton, I related everything that had happened, down to the smallest detail that I could remember.

"You strike me as being a remarkably quick worker, young man," he observed dryly when I had finished. "In six hours

you had won—or were on the point of winning—a kingdom and a beautiful bride. It is a destiny that any one might well envy you. King of a planet!—undisputed lord of an entire world!”

For a while he paced the room, softly muttering the last words to himself over and over again. If I had guessed what was in his mind I should have choked the life out of him there and then. But I was too much engrossed in my own rosy dreams to attempt to gage the possible effect that my revelation might have on another man. Even when he at length came to a halt and seated himself in the chair of the Ego-Projector, I had no suspicion of his intended treachery. Blind, doubly blind fool that I was!

“It would certainly seem, my young friend, that between us you and I have stumbled on a great thing,” he said, thoughtfully fingering the levers of the machine. “It has always been my idea that the greatest drawback of this world of ours is the lack of scope it offers to a man of real original genius. Yes, my friend, lack of scope,” he repeated the phrase, with a kind of savage gusto. “Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Napoleon, Tamerlane—in fact, every talented superman—had to win his way slowly and with infinite toil, through opposing armies before he made himself master of some insignificant part of the earth. Unlike them, the next man who visits Mars will, without striking a single blow, be master of a whole planet! Pray accept my sincere thanks for having demonstrated that fact so clearly, my young friend. And to those thanks it only remains for me to add one single word——” He paused, a grin of sardonic triumph creasing his pallid features; then shouted loudly, “Farewell!”

Then only did I sense his foul purpose. He was about to project himself to Mars and claim the prize that rightly should be mine.

Galvanized into action, I crossed the room at a single lunge.

“You cur!” I yelled in futile rage.

At my first sign of movement he had slid the starting-lever over to its fullest extent. The sound of a mocking laugh mingled with the now familiar humming note of the machine. One instant I caught a fleeting glimpse of his faint, ghost-like figure crouching in the chair. The next, my hands were vainly clutching at empty air.

Enraged almost to madness, I flung myself recklessly on the still faintly droning machine and tore at random at the intricate array of levers and switches, conscious only of a fixed desire to drag the traitor back to Earth and deal with him as he deserved. A voice, which I dimly recognized as my own, was uttering threats and curses.

“Once let me get to grips with him—man to man——”

A flash of vivid purple flame leapt from the mechanism at which I was blindly fumbling. The thud of a mighty concussion smote my ears. Impelled by what felt like a blow administered by the fist of a giant, I staggered back and fell headlong across the chaotic mass of twisted brass and fused and tangled wires which was all that remained of the Ego-Projector.

Slowly I rose to my feet and, steadying myself by grasping a leg of the overturned table, I looked out through the shattered window and groaned aloud in the bitterness of my hopeless disappointment.

Poised high in the heavens, aloof, majestic, and as yet undimmed by the blanching of the coming dawn, but glowing with the soft radiance of a rose-tinted jewel for ever beyond my reach, the Planet of Peace rode serenely on its appointed path, seeming to mock my misery across the now unpassable void of space.