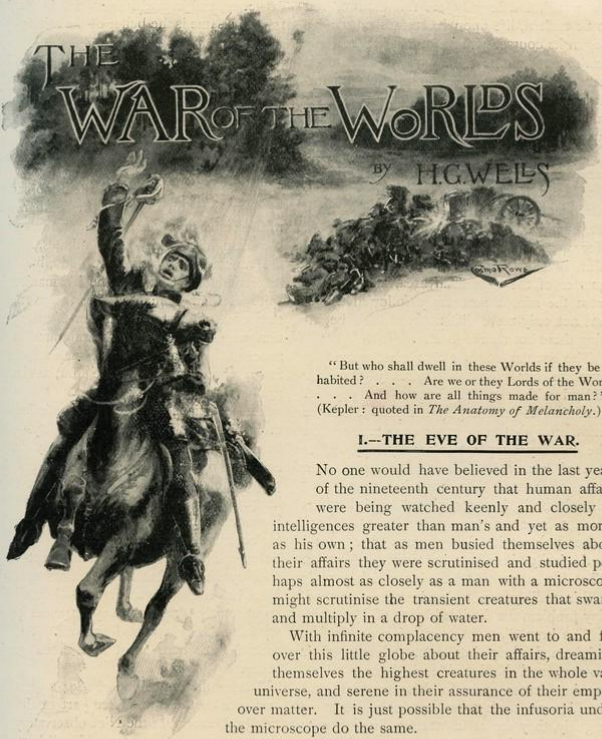
PEARSON'S MAGAZINE



"But who shall dwell in these Worlds if they be inhabited? . . . Are we or they Lords of the World? . . . And how are all things made for man?"—(Kepler: quoted in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.)

I.—THE EVE OF THE WAR.

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that human affairs were being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their affairs they were scrutinised and studied perhaps almost as closely as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water.

With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this little globe about their affairs, dreaming themselves the highest creatures in the whole vast universe, and serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is just possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same.

No one gave a thought to the Older Worlds of Space, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. At most, terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, probably inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew up their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.

The planet Mars, I may remind the reader, revolves about the sun at a mean distance of 140,000,000 miles, and the light and heat it receives from the sun is scarcely half of that received by this world. It must be, if the nebular hypothesis has any truth, older than

our world, and long before this earth ceased to be molten, life upon its surface must have begun its course. The fact that it is scarcely one seventh of the volume of the earth must have accelerated its cooling to the temperature at which life could begin. It has air and water, and all that is necessary for the support of animated existence.

Yet so vain is man, and so blinded by his vanity, that no writer up to the very end of the nineteenth century expressed any idea that intelligent life might have developed there, far, or indeed at all, beyond its earthly level. Nor was it generally understood that since Mars is older than our earth, with scarcely a quarter of the superficial area, and remoter from the sun, it necessarily followed that it was not only more distant from life's beginning there but nearer its end.

The secular cooling that must some day overtake our planet has already gone far indeed with our neighbour. Its physical condition is still largely a mystery, but we know now that even in its equatorial region the midday temperature barely approaches that of our coolest winter. Its air is much more attenuated than ours, its oceans have shrunk until they cover but a third of its surface, huge snowcaps gather and melt about either pole as its slow seasons change, and periodically inundate its temperate zones. That last stage of exhaustion which to us is still incredibly remote, has become a present-day problem for the inhabitants of Mars.

The immediate pressure of necessity has brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts. And looking across space, with instruments and intelligences such as we can only dream of vaguely, they see at its nearest distance, only 35,000,000 of miles sunward of them, a morning star of hope, our own warmer planet, green with vegetation and grey with water, with a cloudy atmosphere eloquent of fertility, with glimpses through its drifting cloud wisps, of broad stretches of populous country and narrow navy-crowded seas.

And we men, the creatures who inhabit this earth, must be to them at least as alien and as lowly as are the monkeys and lemurs to us. The intellectual side of man already admits that life is an incessant struggle for existence, and it would seem that in the final issue the same is the belief of the minds upon Mars.

Their world is far gone in its cooling, and this world is still palpitating and crowded with life, but crowded only with what they regard as inferior animals. To carry warfare sunward is their only escape from the destruction that generation by generation creeps upon them.

And before we judge of them too harshly in their invasion we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians turned against us?

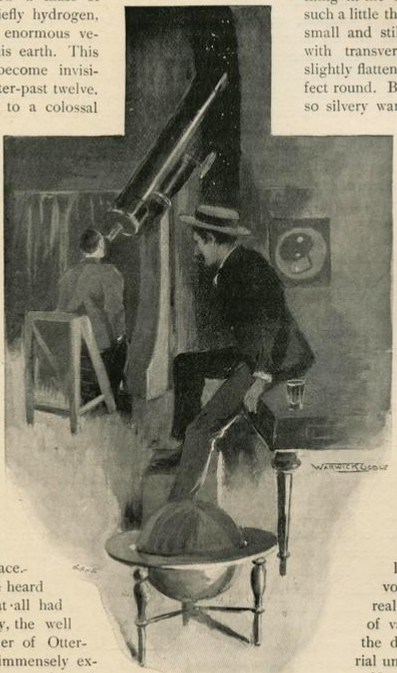
The Martians seemed to have calculated their descent with amazing subtlety—their mathematical learning is evidently far in excess of ours—and to have carried out their preparations with a well-nigh perfect unanimity. Had our instruments only permitted it we might have seen the gathering trouble far back in the nineteenth century. Men like Schiaparelli watched the red planet—it is odd, by the bye, that for countless centuries Mars has been the star of War—but failed to interpret the fluctuating appearances of the markings they mapped so well. All that time the Martians must have been getting ready.

During the opposition of 1894 a great light was seen on the illuminated part of the disc, first by Perrotin, of the Nice observatory, and then by other observers. English readers heard of it first in the issue of *Nature* dated August 2nd. I am inclined to think that the appearance may have been the casting of the huge gun, the vast pit sunk into their planet, from which their shots were fired at us. Peculiar markings, as yet unexplained, were seen near the site of that outbreak during the next two oppositions.

The storm burst upon us six years ago now. As Mars approached opposition, Lavelle of Java set the wires of the as-

tronomical exchange palpitating with the amazing intelligence of a huge outbreak of incandescent gas upon the planet. It had occurred towards midnight of the twelfth, and the spectroscope to which he had at once resorted indicated a mass of flaming gas, chiefly hydrogen, moving at an enormous velocity towards this earth. This jet of fire had become invisible about a quarter-past twelve. He compared it to a colossal puff of flame, suddenly and violently squirted out of the planet, "as flaming gas rushes out of a gun."

A singularly appropriate phrase it proved. Yet the next day there was nothing of this in the papers, except a little note in the *Daily Telegraph*, and the world went in ignorance of one of the gravest dangers that ever threatened the human race. I might not have heard of the eruption at all had I not met Ogilvy, the well known astronomer of Ottershaw. He was immensely excited at the news, and in the excess of his feelings invited me up to take a turn with him that night in a scrutiny of the red planet.



I still remember that vigil very distinctly.

In spite of all that has happened since, I still remember that vigil very distinctly, the black and silent observatory, the shadowed lantern, throwing a feeble glow upon the floor in the corner, the steady ticking of the clockwork of the telescope, the little slit in the roof, an oblong of blue profundity with the star dust streaked across it. Ogilvy moved about, invisible but audible. Looking through the telescope, one saw a circle of deep blue and the little round planet swimming in the field. It seemed such a little thing, so bright and small and still, faintly marked with transverse stripes, and slightly flattened from the perfect round. But so little it was, so silvery warm, a pin's head of light. It was as if it quivered a little, but really this was the telescope vibrating with the activity of the clock-work that kept the planet in view.

As I watched, the little star seemed to grow larger and smaller and to advance and recede, but that was simply that my eye was tired. Forty millions of miles it was from us, more than forty millions of miles of void. Few people realise the immensity of vacancy in which the dust of the material universe swims.

Near it in the field, I remember, were three little points of light, three telescopic stars infinitely remote, and all around it was the unfathomable darkness of empty space. You know how that blackness looks on a frosty starlight night. In a telescope it seems far profounder. And invisible to me because it was so remote and small,

flying swiftly and steadily towards me across that incredible distance, drawing nearer every minute by so many thousands of miles, came the Thing they were sending us, the Thing that was to bring so much struggle and calamity and death to the earth. I never dreamt of it then as I watched; no one on earth dreamt of that unerring missile.

That night, too, there was another jetting out of gas from the distant planet. I saw it. A reddish flash at the edge, the slightest projection of the outline, just as the chronometer struck midnight, and at that I told Ogilvy and he took my place. I went, stretching my legs clumsily, and feeling my way in the darkness, to the little table where the syphon stood, for the night was warm and I was thirsty, while Ogilvy exclaimed at the streamer of gas that came out towards us.

That night another invisible missile started on its way to the earth from Mars, just a second or so under twenty-four hours after the first one. I remember how I sat on the table there in the blackness, with patches of green and crimson swimming before my eyes. I wished I had a light to smoke by, little suspecting the meaning of the minute gleam I had seen and all that it would presently bring me. Ogilvy watched until one, and then gave it up, and we lit the lanterns and walked over to his house. Down below in the darkness were Ottershaw and Chertsey and all their hundreds of people, sleeping in peace.

He was full of speculation that night about the condition of Mars, and scoffed at the vulgar idea of its having inhabitants who were signalling us. His idea was that meteorites might be falling in a heavy shower upon the planet, or that a huge volcanic explosion was in progress. He pointed out to me how unlikely it was that organic evolution had taken the same direction in the two adjacent planets—the chances against anything man-like on Mars are a million to one, he said.

Hundreds of observers saw the flame that night and the night after about midnight, and again the night after, and so for ten nights, a flame each night. Why the shots ceased after the tenth no one on earth has attempted to explain. Dense clouds of smoke or dust, too, visible through a powerful telescope on earth as little, grey, fluctuating patches, spread through the clearness of the planet's atmosphere and obscured its more familiar features.

Even the daily papers woke up to the disturbances at last, and popular notes appeared here, there, and everywhere concerning the volcanoes upon Mars. The serio-comic periodical *Punch*, I remember, made a happy use of it in the political cartoon. And, all unsuspected, those missiles the Martians had fired at us drew earthward, rushing now at a pace of many miles a second through the empty gulf of space, hour by hour and day by day, nearer and nearer.

It seems to me now almost incredibly wonderful that with that swift fate hanging over us men could go about their petty concerns as they did. I remember how jubilant Markham was at securing a new photograph of the planet for the illustrated paper he edited in those days.

People in these latter times scarcely realise the abundance and enterprise of our nineteenth century papers. For my own part I was much occupied in learning to ride the bicycle, and busy upon a series of papers discussing the probable developments of moral ideas as civilisation progressed.

One night (the Thing then could scarcely have been ten million miles away) I went for a walk with my wife. It was starlight, and I explained the Signs of the Zodiac to her, and pointed out Mars, a bright dot of light creeping zenith-ward, towards which so many telescopes were pointed. For in those days there was no terror for men among the stars.

It was a warm night. Coming home, a party of excursionists from Chertsey or Isleworth passed us singing and playing music. There were lights in the upper windows of the houses as the people went to bed. From the railway station in the distance came the sound of shunting trains, ringing and rumbling, softened almost into melody by the distance. My wife pointed out to me the brightness of the red, green and yellow signal lights, hanging in a framework against the sky. It had all seemed so safe and tranquil.

II.—THE FALLING STAR.

THEN came the night of the first falling star. It was seen early in the morning rushing over

Winchester eastward, a line of flame, high in the atmosphere. Hundreds must have seen it and taken it for an ordinary falling star. Albin described it as leaving a greenish streak behind it that glowed for some seconds. Denning, our greatest authority on meteorites, stated that the height of its first appearance was about 90 or 100 miles. It seemed to him that it fell to earth about a hundred miles east of him.

I was at home at that hour and writing in my study, and although my French windows face towards Ottershaw and the blind was up (for I loved in those days to look up at the night sky), I saw nothing of it. Yet this strangest of all things that ever came to earth from outer space must have fallen while I was sitting there, visible to me had I only looked up as it passed. Some of those who saw its flight say it travelled with a hissing sound. I myself heard nothing of that. Many people in Berkshire, Surrey, and Middlesex must have seen the fall of it, and, at most, have thought that another meteorite had descended. No one seems to have troubled to look for the fallen mass that night.

But very early in the morning poor Ogilvy, who had seen the shooting star, and who was persuaded that a meteorite lay somewhere on the common between Horsell, Ottershaw and Woking, rose early with the idea of finding it. Find it he did soon after dawn and not far from the sand-pits. An enormous hole had been made by the impact of the projectile, and the sand and gravel had been flung violently in every direction over the heath and heather. They formed heaps visible a mile and a half away. The heather was on fire eastward, and a thin blue smoke arose against the dawn.

The Thing itself lay almost entirely buried in sand, amidst the scattered splinters of a fir tree it had shivered to fragments in its descent. The uncovered part had the appearance of a huge cylinder, caked over and its outline softened by a thick scaly dun-coloured incrustation. It had a diameter of about thirty yards. He approached the mass, surprised at the size and more so at the shape,

Find it he did soon after dawn.

since most meteorites are rounded more or less completely. It was, however, still so hot from its flight through the air as to forbid his near approach. A stirring noise within the cylinder he ascribed to the unequal cooling of its substance. For at that time it had not occurred to him that it might be hollow.

He remained standing at the edge of the pit that the Thing had made for itself, staring at its strange appearance, astonished chiefly at its unusual shape and colour, and dimly perceiving even then some evidence of design in its arrival. The early morning was wonderfully still, and the sun, just clearing the pine trees towards Weybridge, was already warm. He did not remember hearing any birds that morning, there was certainly no breeze stirring, and the only sounds were the faint movements from within the cindery cylinder. He was all alone on the common.

The dull radiation arrested him.

Then suddenly he noticed with a start that some of the grey clinker, the ashy incrustation that covered the meteorite, was falling off the circular edge of the end. It was dropping off in flakes, and raining down upon the sand. A large piece suddenly came off and fell with a sharp noise that brought his heart into his mouth.

For a minute he scarcely realised what this meant, and, although the heat was excessive, he clambered down into the pit close to the bulk to see the thing more clearly. He fancied even then that the cooling of the body might account for this, but what disturbed that idea was the fact that the ash was falling only from the end of the cylinder.

And then he perceived that very slowly the circular top of the cylinder was rotating on its body. It was such a gradual movement, that he saw that it was so only through noticing that a black mark that had been near him five minutes ago, was now at the other side of the circumference. Even then, he scarcely understood what this indicated until he heard a muffled grating sound and saw the black mark jerk forward an inch or so. Then the thing came upon him in a flash. The cylinder was artificial—hollow—with an end that screwed out! Something within the cylinder was unscrewing the top!

"Good Heavens!" said Ogilvy. "There's a man in it—men in it! Half roasted to death! Trying to escape!" At once with a quick mental leap he linked the thing with the flash upon Mars!

The thought of the confined creature was so dreadful to him that he forgot the heat, and went forward to the cylinder to help turn. But luckily the dull radiation arrested him

before he could burn his hands on the still glowing metal. At that, he stood irresolute for a moment, then turned, scrambled out of the pit, and set off running wildly into Woking. The time then must have been somewhere about six o'clock. He met a waggoner and tried to make him understand, but the tale he told and his appearance were so wild—his hat had fallen off in the pit—that the man simply drove on. He was equally unsuccessful with the potman who was just unlocking the doors of the public house by Horsell Bridge. The fellow thought he was a lunatic at large, and made an unsuccessful attempt to shut him into the taproom. That sobered him a little, and when he saw Henderson, the London journalist, in his garden, he called over the palings and made himself understood.

"Henderson," he called; "you saw that shooting star last night?"

"Well?" said Henderson.

"It's out on Horsell Common now."

"Good Lord!" said Henderson. "Fallen meteorite! That's good."

"But it's something more than a meteorite. It's a cylinder—an artificial cylinder, man! And there's something inside."

Henderson stood up with his spade in his hand. "What's that?" he said. He is deaf in one ear. Ogilvy told him all that he had seen. Henderson was a minute or so taking it in. Then he dropped his spade, snatched at his jacket and came out into the road. The two men hurried back at once to the common, and found the cylinder still lying in the same position. But now the sounds inside had ceased, and a thin circle of bright metal showed between the top and the body of the cylinder. Air was either entering or escaping at the rim with a thin, sizzling sound.

They listened, rapped on the scale with a stick, and meeting with no response, they both concluded the man or men inside must be insensible or dead.

Of course the two were quite unable to do anything. They shouted consolation and promises, and went off back to the town again to get help. One can imagine them, covered with sand, excited and disordered, running up the little street in the bright sunlight, just as the shop folks were taking down their shutters, and people were opening their bedroom windows. Henderson went into the railway station at once, in order to persuade the officials to telegraph the news to London. The newspaper articles had prepared men's minds for the reception of the idea.

By eight o'clock, a number of boys and unemployed men had already started for the common to see the "dead men from Mars." That was the form the story took. I heard of it first from my newspaper boy, about a quarter to nine, when I went out to get my *Daily News*. I was naturally startled, and lost no time in going out and across the Ottershaw bridge to the sand-pits.

III.—ON HORSELL COMMON.

I FOUND a little crowd of perhaps twenty people surrounding the huge hole in which the cylinder lay. I have already described the appearance of that colossal bulk, imbedded in the ground. The turf and gravel about it seemed charred as if by a sudden explosion. No doubt its impact had caused a flash of fire. Henderson and Ogilvy were not there. I think they perceived that nothing was to be done for the present, and had gone away to breakfast at Henderson's house.

There were four or five boys sitting on the edge of the pit with their feet dangling, and amusing themselves—until I stopped them—by throwing stones at the giant mass. After I had spoken to them about it, they began playing at "touch" in and out of the group of bystanders.

Among these were a couple of cyclists, a jobbing gardener I employed sometimes, a girl carrying a baby, Gregg the butcher and his little boy, and two or three loafers and golf caddies who were accustomed to hang about the railway station. There was very little talking. Few of the common people in England had anything but the vaguest astronomical ideas in those days. Most of them were staring quietly at the big table-like end of the cylinder, which was still as Henderson and Ogilvy had left it. I fancy the popular expectation of a heap of charred corpses was disappointed by this inanimate bulk. Some

went away while I was there, and other people came. I clambered into the pit and fancied I heard a faint movement under my feet. The top had certainly ceased to rotate.

It was only when I got thus close to it that the strangeness of this object was at all evident to me. At the first glance it was really no more exciting than an overturned carriage or a tree blown across the road. Not so much so, indeed. It looked like a rusty gas float half buried, more than anything else in the world. It required a certain amount of scientific education to perceive that the grey scale on the thing was no common oxide, that the yellowish white metal that gleamed in the crack between the lid and the cylinder had an unfamiliar hue. "Extra-terrestrial" had no meaning for most of the onlookers.

At that time it was quite clear in my own mind that the Thing had come from the planet Mars, but I judged it improbable that it contained any living creature. I thought the unscrewing might be automatic. In spite of Ogilvy I still believed that there were men in Mars. My mind ran fancifully on the possibilites of its containing manuscript, on the difficulties in translation that might arise, whether we should find coins and models in it, and so forth. Yet it was a little too large for assurance on this idea. I felt an impatience to see it opened. About eleven, as nothing seemed happening, I walked back, full of such thoughts, to my home in Maybury. But I found it difficult to get to work upon my abstract investigations.

In the afternoon the appearance of the common had altered very much. The early editions of the evening papers had startled London with enormous headlines: "A MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM MARS," "Remarkable Story from Woking," and so forth. In addition, Ogilvy's wire to the Astronomical Exchange had roused every observatory in the three kingdoms.

There were half-a-dozen flys or more from the Woking station standing in the road by the sand-pits, a basket chaise from Chobham and a rather lordly carriage. Besides that there was quite a heap of bicycles. In addition a large number of people must have walked, in spite of the heat of the day, from Woking and Chertsey. So that there was altogether quite a considerable crowd—one or two gaily dressed ladies among the others.

It was glaringly hot, not a cloud in the sky, nor a breath of wind, and the only shadow was that of the few scattered pine trees. The burning heather had been extinguished, but the level ground towards Ottershaw was blackened as far as one could see, and still giving off vertical streamers of smoke. An enterprising sweetstuff dealer in the Chobham road had sent up his son with a barrow-load of green apples and ginger beer.

Going to the edge of the pit I found it occupied by a group of about half-a-dozen men, Henderson, Ogilvy, and a tall fair-haired man, that I afterwards learnt was Stent, the Astronomer Royal, with several workmen wielding spades and pickaxes. Stent was giving directions in a clear, high-pitched voice. He was standing on the cylinder, which was now evidently much cooler; his face was crimson, and streaming with perspiration, and something seemed to have irritated him.

A large portion of the cylinder had been uncovered, though its lower end was still imbedded. As soon as Ogilvy saw me among the staring crowd on the edge of the pit, he called to me to come down, and asked me if I would mind going over to see Lord Hilton, the lord of Horsell Manor. The growing crowd, he said, was becoming a serious impediment to their excavations, especially the boys. They wanted a light railing put up, and help to keep the people back. He told me that a faint stirring was occasionally still audible within the case, but that the workmen had failed to unscrew the top, as it afforded no grip to them. The case appeared to be enormously thick, and it was possible that the faint sounds we heard represented a noisy tumult in the interior.

I was very glad to do as he asked, and so become one of the privileged spectators within the contemplated inclosure. I failed to find Lord Hilton at his house, but I was told he was expected from London by the six o'clock train from Waterloo, and as it was then about a quarter past five I went home and had some tea, and walked up to the station to waylay him.

IV.—THE CYLINDER UNSCREWS.

When I returned to the common the sun was setting. Scattered groups were hurrying from the direction of Woking, and one or two persons were returning. The crowd about the pit had increased, and stood out black against the lemon yellow of the sky—a couple of hundred people perhaps. There were a number of voices raised, and some sort of struggle appeared to be going on about the pit. Strange imaginings passed through my mind. As I drew nearer I heard Stent's voice: "Keep back—keep back!" A boy came running towards me. "It's a-movin'," he said to me as he passed.

I ran slantingly and stumbling.

"A-screwin' and a-screwin' out. I don't like it. I'm a-goin' 'ome, I am." I went on to the crowd.

There were really, I should think, two or three hundred people, elbowing and jostling one another, the one or two ladies there being by no means the least active.

"He's fallen in the pit!" cried some one. "Keep back!" said several. The crowd swayed a little, and I elbowed my way through.

Everyone seemed greatly excited. I heard a peculiar humming sound from the pit. "I say!" said Ogilvy; "help keep these idiots back. We don't know what's in the confounded thing, you know!" I saw a young man, a shop assistant in Woking, I believe he was, standing on the cylinder and trying to scramble out of the hole again. The crowd had pushed him in.

The end of the cylinder was being screwed out from within. Nearly two feet of shining screw projected. Somebody blundered against me and I narrowly missed being pitched on to the top of the screw. I turned, and as I did so the screw must have come

out, and the lid of the cylinder fell upon the gravel with a ringing concussion. I struck my elbow into the person behind and turned my head towards the Thing again. For a moment that circular cavity seemed perfectly black. I had the sunset in my eyes.

I think everyone expected to see a man emerge—possibly something a little unlike us terrestrial men, but in all essentials a man. I know I did. But looking, I presently saw something stirring within the shadow, greyish billowy movements, one above another, and then two luminous discs like eyes. Then something resembling a little grey snake, about the thickness of a walking stick, coiled up out of the writhing middle, and wriggled in the air towards me. And then another.

A sudden chill came upon me. There was a loud shriek from a woman behind. I half turned, keeping my eyes fixed upon the cylinder still, from which other tentacles were now projecting, and began pushing my way back from the edge of the pit. I saw astonishment giving place to horror on the faces of the people about me. I heard inarticulate exclamations on all sides. There was a general movement backward. I saw the shopman struggling still on the edge of the pit. I found myself alone, and saw the people on the other side of the pit running off, Stent among them. I looked again at the cylinder, and ungovernable terror gripped me. I stood petrified and staring.

A big greyish rounded bulk, the size perhaps of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light, it glistened like wet leather. Two large dark-coloured eyes were regarding me steadfastly. It was rounded and had—one might say—a face. There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva. The body heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air.

You who have only seen the dead monsters in spirit in the Natural History Museum, shrivelled brown bulks, can scarcely imagine the strange horror of their appearance. The peculiar V-shaped mouth, with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedge-like lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon circlet of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere, the evident heaviness and painfulness of movement, due to the greater gravitational energy of the earth—above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes, culminated in an effect akin to nausea. There was something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of their tedious movements unspeakably terrible. Even at this first encounter, this first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread.

Suddenly the monster vanished. It had toppled over the brim of the cylinder, and fallen into the pit, with a thud like the fall of a great mass of leather. I heard it give a peculiar, thick cry, and forthwith another of these creatures appeared darkly in the deep shadow of the aperture.

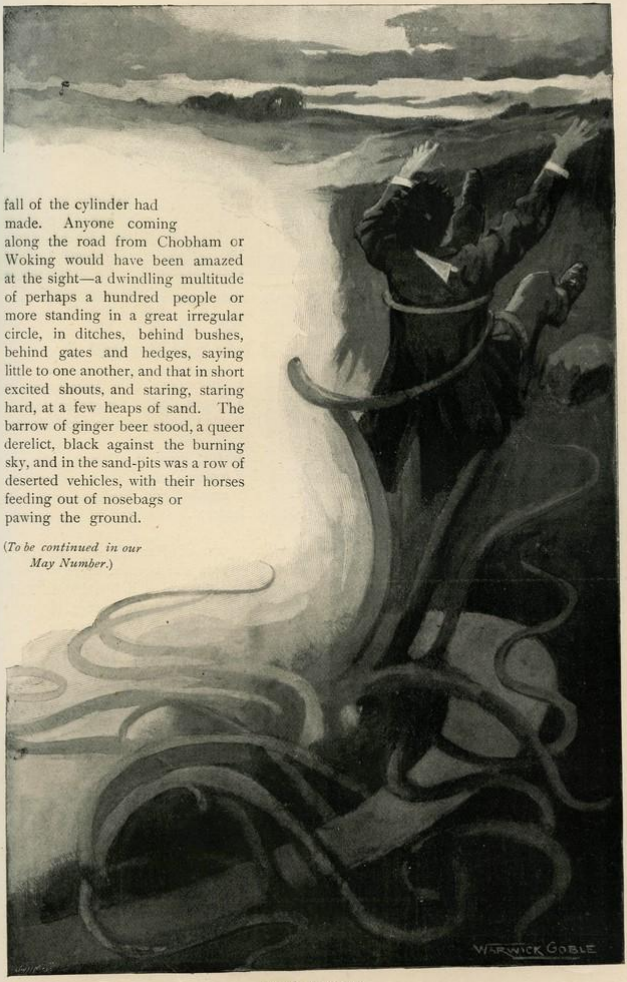
At that my rigour of terror passed away. I turned, and, running madly, made for the first group of trees perhaps a hundred yards away. But I ran slantingly and stumbling, for I could not avert my face from these things.

There, among some young pine trees and furze bushes, I stopped, panting, and waited for further developments. The common round the sand-pits was dotted with people, standing like myself in a half fascinated terror, staring at these creatures, or rather at the heaped gravel at the edge of the pit in which they lay. And then, with a renewed horror, I saw a round black object bobbing up and down on the edge of the pit. It was the head of the shopman who had fallen in, but showing as a little black object against the hot western sky. Now he got his shoulder and knee up, and again he seemed to slip back until only his head was visible. Suddenly he vanished, and I could have fancied a faint shriek had reached me. I had a momentary impulse to go back and help him, that my fears overruled.

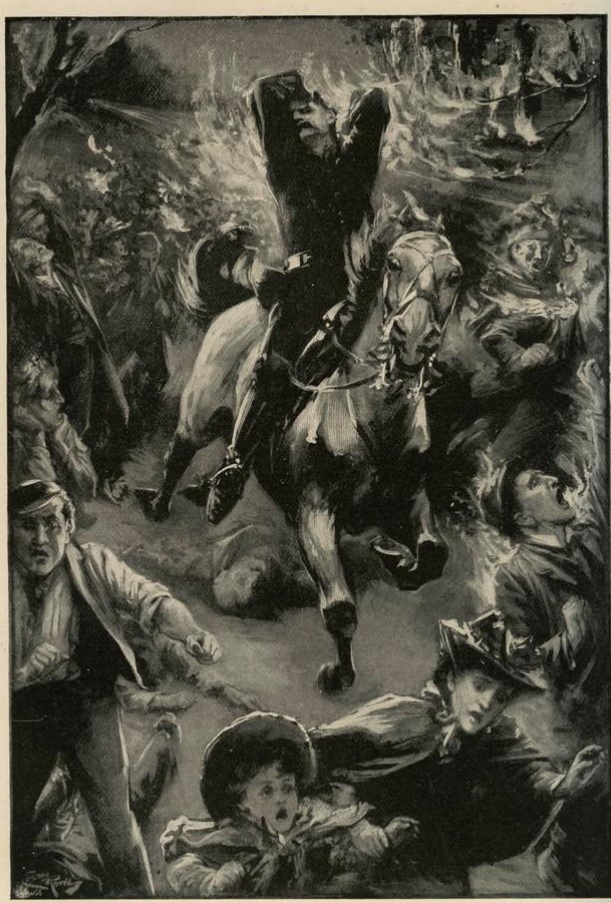
Everything was then quite invisible, hidden by the deep pit and the heap of sand that the

fall of the cylinder had made. Anyone coming along the road from Chobham or Woking would have been amazed at the sight—a dwindling multitude of perhaps a hundred people or more standing in a great irregular circle, in ditches, behind bushes, behind gates and hedges, saying little to one another, and that in short excited shouts, and staring, staring hard, at a few heaps of sand. The barrow of ginger beer stood, a queer derelict, black against the burning sky, and in the sand-pits was a row of deserted vehicles, with their horses feeding out of nosebags or pawing the ground.

(*To be continued in our May Number.*)



Suddenly he vanished.



The mounted policeman came galloping through the confusion with his hands clasped over his head.

(See page 492.)

By H. G. Wells.

SUMMARY.

The first indication of the invasion of the earth by the inhabitants of Mars is the falling of a cylinder on the common between Horsell, Ottershaw, and Woking. Many persons, including the narrator of the story, go to inspect the cylinder. They notice that it is being very slowly unscrewed from the inside. At length the top comes off and a fearful-looking monster emerges, and then another. Everyone beats a hasty retreat.

V.—THE HEAT RAY.

After the glimpse I had had of the Martians emerging from the cylinder in which they had come to the earth from their planet, a kind of fascination paralysed my actions. I remained standing knee-deep in the heather staring at the mound that hid them. I was a battle ground of fear and curiosity.

I did not dare to go back towards the pit, but I felt a passionate longing to peer into it. I began walking, therefore, in a big curve, seeking some point of vantage, and continually looking at the sand heaps that hid these new comers to our earth. Once a leash of thin black whips like the arms of an octopus flashed across the sunset and was immediately withdrawn, and afterwards a thin rod rose up, joint by joint, bearing at its apex a circular disc that spun with a wobbling motion. What could be going on there?

Most of the spectators had gathered in one or two groups, one a little crowd towards Woking, the other a knot of people in the direction of Chobham. Evidently they shared my mental conflict. There were few near me. One man I approached—he was, I perceived, a neighbour of mine, though I did not know his name—and accosted. But it was scarcely a time for articulate conversation. "What ugly *brutes!*" he said. "Good God! What Ugly Brutes!" He repeated this over and over again.

"Did you see a man in the pit?" I said; but he made me no answer to that. We became silent, and stood watching for a time side by side, deriving, I fancy, a certain comfort in one another's company. Then I shifted my position to a little knoll that gave me the advantage of a yard or more of elevation, and when I looked for him presently he was walking towards Woking.

The sunset faded to twilight before anything further happened. The crowd far away on the left towards Woking seemed to grow, and I heard now a faint murmur from it. The little knot of people towards Chobham dispersed. There was scarcely an intimation of movement from the pit.

It was this, as much as anything, that gave people courage, and I suppose the new arrivals from Woking also helped to raise confidence again. At any rate, as the dusk

came on, a slow, intermittent movement upon the sand pits began, that seemed to gather force as the stillness of the evening about the cylinder remained unbroken. Vertical black figures in twos and threes would advance, stop, watch, and advance again, spreading out as they did so in a thin, irregular crescent that promised to inclose the pit in its attenuated horns. I, too, on my side began to move towards the pit.

Then I saw some cabmen and others had walked boldly into the sand pits, and heard the clatter of hoofs and the grind of wheels. A man ran forward and began wheeling off the barrow of apples. And then, within thirty yards of the pit, advancing from the direction of Horsell, I saw a little black knot of men, the foremost of whom was waving a white flag.

This was the Deputation. There had been a hasty consultation, and, since the Martians were evidently, in spite of their repulsive forms, intelligent creatures, it had been resolved to show them that we too were intelligent by approaching them with signals.

Flutter, flutter, went the flag, first to the right, then to the left. It was impossible to recognise anyone there, but afterwards I learnt that Ogilvy, Stent, and Henderson were with others in this attempt at communication. This little group had in its advance dragged inward, so to speak, the circumference of the now almost complete circle of people, and a number of dim, black figures followed it at more or less discreet distances.

Suddenly there was a flash of light, and a quantity of luminous, greenish smoke came out of the pit in three distinct puffs, which drove up, one after the other, straight into the still air. This smoke (or flame, perhaps, would be the better word for it) was so bright that the deep blue sky overhead, and the hazy stretches of brown common towards Chertsey, set with black pine trees, seemed to darken abruptly as these puffs arose, and to remain the darker after their dispersal. At the same time a faint hissing sound became audible.

Slowly a humped shape rose out of the pit.

Beyond the pit stood the little wedge of people with the white flag at its apex, arrested by the phenomenon, a little knot of small vertical black shapes upon the black ground. As the green smoke rose their faces flashed out pallid green and faded again as it vanished. And then something happened, so swift, so incredible, that for a time it left me dumfounded, not understanding at all the thing that I had seen. The hissing passed into a humming, into a long, loud droning noise.

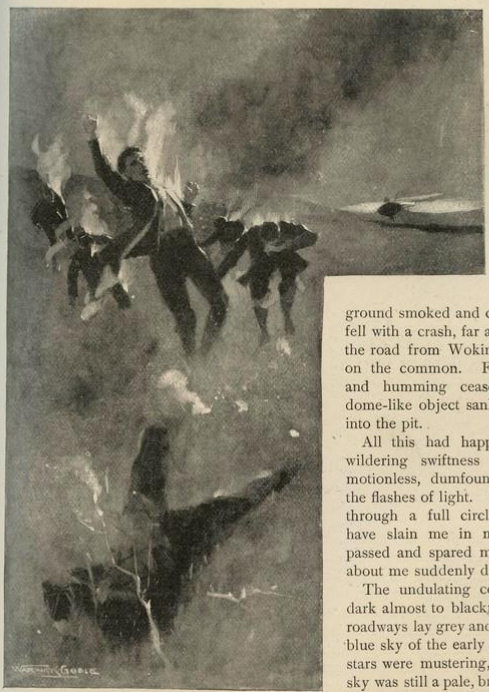
Slowly a humped shape rose out of the pit, and the ghost of a beam of light seemed to flicker out from it. Forthwith

flashes of actual flame, a bright glare leaping from one to another, sprung from the scattered group of men. It was as if some invisible jet impinged upon them and splashed into white flame. It was as if each man were suddenly and momentarily turned to fire.

Then by the light of their destruction I saw them staggering and falling, and their supporters half-turning to run. It was the occurrence of a second, this swift, unanticipated, inexplicable death.

I cannot describe the swiftness of the thing I saw. The death seemed leaping from man to man in the distant flying crowd. An almost noiseless and blinding flash of light and a man fell headlong and lay still, and as the unseen shaft of heat passed over them, pine trees burst into fire, and every dry furze bush with one dull thud became a mass of flames. And far away towards Knap Hill we saw the flashes of trees and hedges and wooden buildings suddenly set alight.

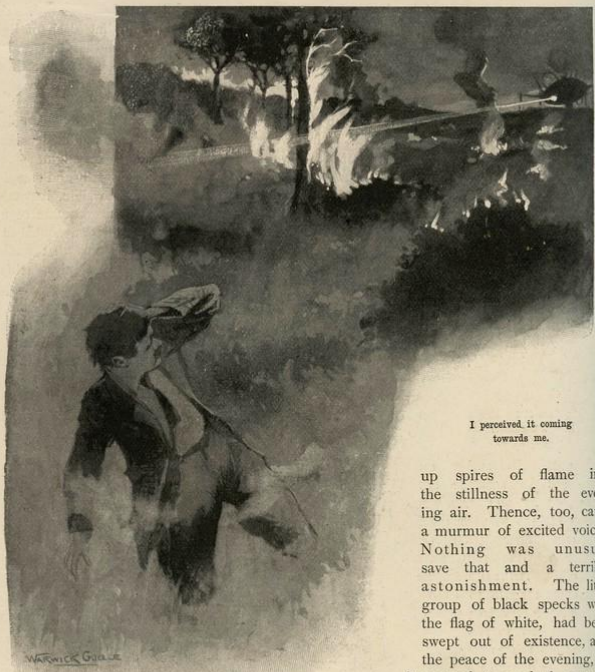
It was sweeping round swiftly and steadily, this flaming death, this invisible, inevitable sword of heat. I heard the crackle of fire in the sand pits and the sudden squeal of a horse that was as suddenly stilled. I perceived it coming towards me by the flashing bushes it touched, and was too terror-stricken and astounded to stir. Then it was as if an invisible yet intensely heated finger was drawn through the heather, and all along a curving line beyond the sand pits the dark ground smoked and crackled. Something fell with a crash, far away to the left where the road from Woking Station opens out on the common. Forthwith the hissing and humming ceased, and the black, dome-like object sank slowly out of sight into the pit.



The death seemed leaping from man to man.

All this had happened with such bewildering swiftness that I had stood motionless, dumfounded and dazzled by the flashes of light. Had the death swept through a full circle it must inevitably have slain me in my surprise. But it passed and spared me, and left the night about me suddenly dark and full of terror.

The undulating common seemed now dark almost to blackness except where its roadways lay grey and pale, under the deep blue sky of the early night. Overhead the stars were mustering, and in the west, the sky was still a pale, bright, almost greenish, blue. The tops of the pine trees and the



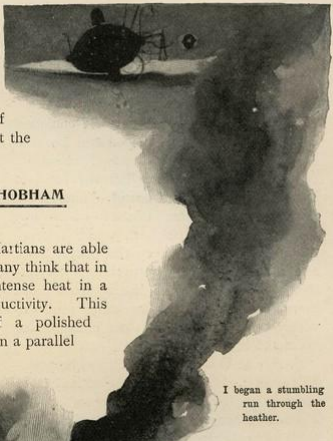
I perceived it coming towards me.

roofs of Horsell came out sharp and black against the western after-glow. The Martians were altogether invisible, save for one thin mast, upon which their restless mirror wobbled. The dead lay hidden, for the most part, among the dark heather. Nothing seemed unusual, save the patches of bush and the isolated trees here and there, that smoked and glowed still, and the trees towards Woking Station that were sending up spires of flame into the stillness of the evening air. Thence, too, came a murmur of excited voices. Nothing was unusual save that and a terrible astonishment. The little group of black specks with the flag of white, had been swept out of existence, and the peace of the evening, so it seemed to us, had scarcely been broken.

It came to me that I was upon the common, visible to these death dealing monsters, helpless, unprotected and alone. At any moment they might discover that a man was still near them. At any moment that black dome might creep over the verge of the pit again, and inexorable death smite me down! My momentary paralysis passed into active fear. I turned, and began a stumbling run through the heather, bowing myself almost double.

This new death seemed hovering over me, pursuing me, waiting to pounce upon me. Such an extraordinary effect in unmanning

me had this thing, that I ran along weeping, much as a child might do. Once I had turned I did not dare to look back. I had an extraordinary persuasion that I was being played with, that presently, when I was upon the very verge of safety, that strange death, as swift as the passage of light, would leap after me from the pit about the cylinder, and strike me down.



I began a stumbling run through the heather.

VI.—THE HEAT RAY IN THE CHOBHAM ROAD.

It is still a matter of wonder how the Martians are able to slay men so swiftly and so silently. Many think that in some way they are able to generate an intense heat in a chamber of practically absolute non-conductivity. This intense heat they project by means of a polished parabolic mirror of unknown composition, in a parallel beam against any object they choose, much as the parabolic mirror of a lighthouse projects a beam of light. But no one has absolutely proved these details. However it is done, it is certain that a beam of heat is the essence of the matter. Heat, and invisible, instead of visible light. Whatever is combustible flashes into flame at its touch, lead runs like water, it softens iron, cracks and melts glass, and when it falls upon water incontinently that explodes into steam. That night nearly forty people lay under the starlight about the pit, charred and distorted beyond recognition, and all night long the common from Horsell to Maybury was deserted, and brightly ablaze.

The news of the massacre probably reached Chobham, Woking, and Ottershaw about the same time. In Woking the shops had closed when the tragedy happened, and a number of people, shop-people and so forth, attracted by the stories they had heard, were walking over Horsell Bridge and along the road between the hedges that runs out at last upon the common. You may imagine the young people brushed up after the labours of the day, and making this novelty, as they would make any novelty, the excuse for walking together and enjoying a little innocent flirtation, you may figure to yourself the hum of voices along the road in the gloaming.

As yet, of course, few people in Woking even knew that the cylinder had opened, though poor Henderson had sent a messenger on a bicycle to the post office with a special wire to an evening paper.

As these folks came out upon the open by

twos and threes, however, they found little knots of people standing talking excitedly, and peering at the spinning mirror over the sand-pits, and the newcomers were soon infected by the strange excitement of the occasion.

By half-past eight, when the Deputation was destroyed, there may have been a crowd there of three hundred or more, besides those who had left the road to approach the Martians nearer. There were three policemen, too, one of whom was mounted, doing their best, under instructions from Stent, to keep the people back and deter them from approaching the cylinder. There was some booing from those more thoughtless and excitable souls to whom a crowd is always an occasion for noise and horseplay.

Stent and Ogilvy, anticipating some possibilities of a collision, had telegraphed from Horsell to the barracks as soon as the Martians emerged, for the help of a company of soldiers to protect these strange creatures from violence. After that it was they returned to lead that ill-fated advance. The description of their death as it was seen by the crowd tallies very closely with my own impressions: the three puffs of green smoke, the deep humming note, and the splashes of flame.

But that crowd of people had a far nearer escape than mine. Only the fact that a hummock of heathery sand intercepted the lower part of the Heat Ray saved them. Had the elevation of the parabolic mirror been a few yards higher none could have lived to tell the tale. They saw the flashes, and the men falling, and an invisible hand, as it were, lit the bushes as it hurried towards them through the twilight. Then with a whistling note mingling with the droning of the pit, the beam swung close over their heads, lighting the tops of the beech trees that line the road, and splitting the bricks, smashing the windows, firing the window-frames, and bringing down in crumbling ruin a portion of the gable of a house nearest the corner.

In the sudden thud and hiss and glare of the ignited trees, the panic-stricken crowd seems to have swayed hesitatingly for some moments. The unexpected burst of flame overhead, and the black shadows jumping about them must have been intensely disconcerting in themselves. There were shrieks and shouts, and the mounted policeman came galloping through the confusion with his hands clasped over his head and screaming.

Sparks and burning twigs began to fall into the road, and single leaves like puffs of flame, that never reached the ground. A girl's dress caught fire. Then came a crying from the common. "They're coming!" A woman shrieked, and incontinently everyone was turning and pushing at those behind, in order to clear their way to Woking again. Where the road grows narrow between the high banks the crowd jammed; a hideous struggle occurred, and two women and a little boy were crushed and left dying there amidst the terror and the darkness.

VII.—HOW I CAME HOME.

For my own part, I remember nothing of my flight except the stress of frantic exertion, and my agony of blundering against trees and tumbling through the heather. I ran into the road between the cross-roads and Horsell, and along this to the cross-roads. To think of it brings back very vividly the whooping of my panting breath as I ran. All about me gathered the invisible terrors of the Martians, that pitiless sword of heat seemed whirling to and fro, flourishing overhead before it descended and smote me out of life.

At last I could go no further; I was exhausted with the violence of my emotion and of my flight, my knees smote together and I staggered and fell by the wayside. That was near the bridge that crosses the canal by the gasworks. I fell and lay panting. I must have remained there some time.

I sat up, strangely perplexed. For a moment, perhaps, I could not clearly understand how I came there. My terror had fallen from me like a garment. My hat had gone, and my collar had burst away from its stud. A few minutes before, there had only been three real things before me—the immensity of the night and space and nature, my own feebleness and anguish, and the near approach of death. Now it was as if some-

thing turned over, and the point of view altered abruptly. There was no sensible transition from one state of mind to the other. I was immediately the self of every day again, a decent ordinary citizen. The silent common, the impulse of my flight, the starting flames, were as if it were a dream. I asked myself had these latter things indeed happened? I could not credit it.

I rose and walked unsteadily up the steep incline of the bridge. My mind was blank wonder. My knees, I found, were stiff; my muscles and nerves seemed drained of their strength. I daresay I staggered drunkenly. A head rose over the arch, and the figure of a workman carrying a basket appeared. Beside him ran a little boy. He passed me, wishing me good-night. I was minded to speak to him, and did not. I answered his greeting with a mumble, and went on over the bridge.

Over the Maybury arch a train, a billowing tumult of white, firelit smoke, and a long caterpillar of lighted windows, went flying south, clatter, clatter, clap, rap, and it had gone. A dim group of people talked at the gate of one of the houses in the pretty little row of gables that was called Oriental Terrace. It was all so real and so familiar. And that behind me! It was frantic, fantastic! Such things, I told myself, could not be.

Perhaps I am a man of exceptional moods. I do not know how far my experience is common. At times I suffer from the strangest sense of utter detachment from myself and the world about me; I seem to watch it all from the outside, from somewhere inconceivably remote, out of time, out of space, out of the stress and tragedy of it all. This feeling was very strong upon me that night. Here was another side to my dream.

But the trouble was the blank incongruity of this security and quiet, and the swift death flying yonder, not two miles away. There was a noise of business from the gasworks, and the electric lamps were all alight. I stopped at the group of people. "What news from the common?" said I.

There were two men and a woman at the gate. "Eigh?" said one of the men, turning.

"What news from the common?" I said.

"Ain't yer just *been* there?" asked the men.

"People seem fair silly about the Common," said the woman over the gate. "What's it all about?"

It seemed impossible to make these people grasp a terror upon which my mind even could not retain its grip of realisation.

"Haven't you heard of the Men from Mars?" said I.

"Quite enough," said the woman over the

I startled my wife at the doorway, so haggard and dishevelled was I.

gate. "Thenks," and all three of them laughed.

I felt foolish and angry. I could not tell them what I had seen. "You'll hear more yet," I gasped, and went on to my home. I startled my wife at the doorway, so haggard and dishevelled was I. I went into the dining-room, sat down and told her all that I had seen. The dinner, which was a cold one, had already been served and remained neglected on the table while I told my story.

"There is one thing," I said, to allay the fears I had aroused, "they are the most sluggish things I ever saw crawl. They may keep the pit and kill people who come near them, but they cannot get out of it. . . . . But the horror of them!"

"Don't, dear!" said my wife, knitting her brows and putting her hand on mine.

"Poor Ogilvy!" I said. "To think he may be lying dead there!"

My wife at least did not find my experience incredible. She ate scarcely a mouthful of dinner, and ever and again she shuddered at my too vivid story of the death of the flag-bearers. When I saw how deadly white her face was, I ceased describing. "They may come here," she said again and again. I pressed her to take wine, and tried to reassure her. "They can scarcely move," I said. I repeated all that Ogilvy had told me, of the impossibility of the Martians establishing themselves on the earth, at first for her comfort, and then I found for my own.

In particular I laid stress on the gravitation difficulty. On the surface of the earth, the force of gravity is three times what it is on the surface of Mars. A Martian, therefore, would weigh three times more than on Mars, albeit his muscular strength would be the same. His own body would be a cope of lead to him therefore. Both the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* repeated this consideration the next morning, and both overlooked two modifying influences. The atmosphere of the earth, we now know, contains far more oxygen or far less argon (whichever way one likes to put it), than does Mars. The invigorating influence of this excess of oxygen upon the Martians indisputably did much to counterbalance the increased weight of their bodies. And, in the second place, we all overlooked the fact that such mechanical intelligence as the Martian possessed, was quite able to dispense with muscular exertion at a pinch. But I did not consider these points at the time. With wine and food, the confidence of my own table, and the necessity of reassuring my wife, I grew, by insensible degrees, courageous.

"They have done a foolish thing," said I, fingering my wine-glass. "They are dangerous because no doubt they are mad with terror. Perhaps they expected to find no living things—certainly no intelligent living things.

"A shell in the pit," said I, "if the worst comes to the worst, will kill them all."

The intense excitement of the events had no doubt left my perceptive powers in a state of erethism. I remember that dinner table with extraordinary vividness even now. My dear wife's sweet anxious face peering at me from under the pink lamp shade, the white cloth, with its silver and glass table furniture—for in those days even philosophical writers had many little luxuries—the crimson purple wine in my glass, are photographically distinct. At the end of it I sat, tempering nuts with a cigarette, regretting Ogilvy's rashness, and denouncing the short-sighted timidity of the Martians.

So some respectable dodo in the Mauritius might have lorded it in his nest, and discussed the arrival of that shipful of pitiless sailors in want of animal food. "We will peck them to death to-morrow, my dear."

I did not know it, but that was the last civilised dinner I was to eat for very many strange and terrible days.

VIII.—FRIDAY NIGHT.

THE most extraordinary thing to my mind, of all the strange and wonderful things that happened upon that Friday, was the dovetailing of the commonplace habits of our social order with the first beginnings of the series of events that was to topple that social order headlong. If, on Friday night, you had taken a pair of compasses and drawn a circle with a radius of five miles round the Woking sand-pits, I doubt if you would have had one human being outside it, unless it was some relation of Stent, or the three or four cyclists or London people who lay dead on the Common, whose emotions or habits were at all affected by the newcomers. Many people had heard of the cylinder, of course, and talked about it in their leisure, but it certainly did not make the sensation an ultimatum to Germany would have done.

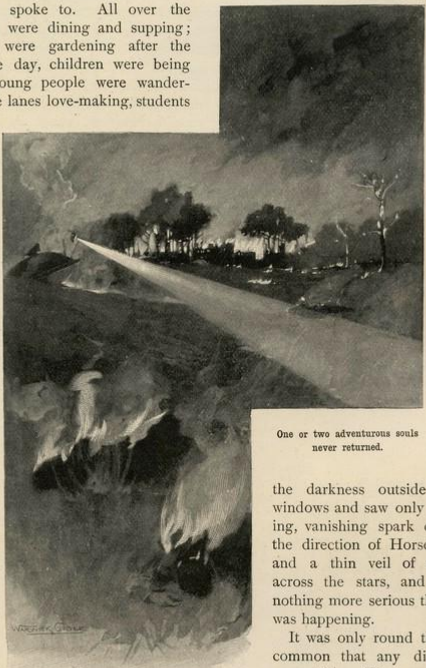
In London, that night, poor Henderson's telegram, describing the gradual unscrewing of the shot, was judged to be a *canard*, and his evening paper, after wiring for authenti-

cation from him and receiving no reply—the man was killed—decided not to print a special edition.

Within the five-mile circle, even, the great majority of people were inert. I have already described the behaviour of the man and woman I spoke to. All over the district people were dining and supping; working men were gardening after the labours of the day, children were being put to bed, young people were wandering through the lanes love-making, students sat over their books.

Maybe there was a murmur in the village streets, a novel and dominant topic in the public-houses, and here and there a messenger, or even an eye-witness of the later occurrences caused a whirl of excitement, a shouting and a running to and fro; but, for the most part, the daily routine of working, eating, drinking, sleeping, went on as it had done for countless years—as though no planet Mars existed in the sky. Even at Woking Station and Horsell and Chobham that was the case.

In Woking Junction, until a late hour, trains were stopping and going on, others were shunting on the sidings, passengers were alighting and waiting, and everything was proceeding in the most ordinary way. A boy from the town, trenching on Smith's monopoly, was selling papers with the afternoon's news. The ringing and impact of trucks, the sharp whistle of the engines from the junction, mingled with their shouts of "Men from Mars." Excited men came into the station with incredible tidings about nine o'clock, and caused no more disturbance than drunkards might have done. People rattling Londonwards peered into the darkness outside the carriage windows and saw only a rare, flickering, vanishing spark dance up from the direction of Horsell, a red glow and a thin veil of smoke driving across the stars, and thought that nothing more serious than a heath fire was happening.



One or two adventurous souls never returned.

It was only round the edge of the common that any disturbance was perceptible. There were half-a-dozen villas burning on the Woking border; there were lights in all the houses on the common side of the three villages, and the people there kept awake till dawn.

A curious crowd lingered restlessly, people coming and going, but the crowd remaining, both on the Chobham and Horsell bridges. One or two adventurous souls, it was afterwards found, went into the dark-

ness and crawled quite near the Martians, but they never returned, for now and again a light-ray, like the beam of a warship's search-light, swept the Common, and the Heat Ray was ready to follow. Save for such that big area of Common was silent and desolate, and the charred bodies lay about on it all night, under the stars, and all the next day.

A noise of hammering from the pit was heard by many people.

So you have the state of things on Friday night. In the centre, sticking into the skin of our old planet Earth, like a poisoned dart, was this cylinder. But the poison was scarcely working yet. Around it was a patch of silent Common, smouldering in places and with a few dark, dimly seen objects lying in contorted attitudes here and there. Here and there was a burning bush or tree. Beyond was a fringe of excitement, and further than that fringe the inflammation had not crept as yet. In the rest of the world the stream of life still flowed as it has flowed for immemorial years. The fever of war that would presently clog vein and artery, deaden nerve and destroy brain, had still to develop.

All night long the Martians were hammering and stirring, sleepless, indefatigable, at work upon the machines they were making ready, and ever and again a puff of greenish white smoke whirled up to the starlit sky.

About eleven a company of soldiers came through Horsell and deployed along the edge of the common to form a cordon. Later a second company marched through Chobham to deploy on the north side of the Common. Several officers from the Inkerman barracks had been on the Common earlier in the day, and one, Major Eden, was reported to be missing. The colonel of the regiment came on with them and was busy questioning the crowd at midnight. The military authorities were certainly early alive to the seriousness of the business. About eleven, the next morning's papers were able to say, a squadron of Hussars, two Maxims, and about four hundred men of the Cardigan regiment started from Aldershot.

A few seconds after midnight the crowd in the Chertsey road, Woking, saw a star fall from Heaven into the pine woods to the north-west. It fell with a greenish light, causing a flash of light like summer lightning. Soon after these pine woods and others about the Byfleet Golf Links were seen to be on fire.

(To be continued next month.)

LOVE'S QUARREL.

"I Love and I have quarrelled sore,
For lo! the stubborn boy will say,
That dainty Cloris I should wed,
And not the handsome Lady May.
And this tho' I have ofttimes told
How Lady May hath ample gold.

What time I praise the roses red,
That mantle on my Lady's cheek,
The saucy varlet still declares,
"The cause he finds not far to seek."
That "in the morn the bloom hath flown,
While Cloris' charms are all her own."

'Tis all in vain that I insist
On Lady May's high pedigree,
For love asserts that Cloris comes
Of Nature's own nobility.
And thus he praises without fear,
Nor will he aught of reason hear.

So Love and I have fallen out,
And I am left in sorry plight,
For if I but the truth confess
I'm bound to own that Love is right.
There's surely nought to do or say,
But wed sweet Cloris while I may.

G. E. Farrow.

"Wiped out!"

(See page 68.)

By H. G. Wells.

SUMMARY.

There fall near Woking certain flaming stars, which prove to be huge cylinders from Mars containing Martians. The cylinders open and the Martians come forth. Friendly advances are made to them, but they display a hostile disposition. At first they appear to be heavy, sluggish, soft-bodied creatures with tentacles. The story is told by an inhabitant of Woking.

IX.—THE FIGHTING BEGINS.

Saturday lives in my memory as a day of suspense. It was a day of lassitude, too, hot and close, with, I am told, a rapidly fluctuating barometer. I had slept but little, though my wife had succeeded in sleeping, and I rose early. I went into my garden before breakfast and stood listening, but towards the Common there was nothing stirring but a lark.

The milkman came as usual. I heard the rattle of his chariot, and I went round to the side gate to ask the latest news. He told me that during the night the Martians had been surrounded by troops, and that guns were expected. Then—a reassuring note—I heard a train running towards Woking. "They aren't to be killed," said the milkman, "if that can possibly be avoided."

I saw my neighbour gardening, chatted with him for a time, and then strolled in to breakfast. It was a most unexceptional morning. My neighbour was of opinion that the troops would be able to capture or to destroy the Martians during the day. "It's a pity they make themselves so unapproachable," he said. "It would be curious to learn how they live on another planet. We might learn a thing or two."

He came up to the fence and extended a handful of strawberries—for his gardening was as generous as it was enthusiastic. At the same time, he told me of the burning of the pine woods about the Byfleet Golf Links. "They say," said he, "that there's another of these blessed things fallen there—number two. But one's enough—surely. This lot 'll cost the insurance people a pretty penny, before everything's settled." He laughed with an air of the greatest good humour, as he said this. The woods, he said, were still burning, and pointed out a haze of smoke to me. "They will be hot underfoot on account of the thick soil of pine needles and turf, for days," he said, and then grew serious over "Poor Ogilvy."

After breakfast, instead of working, I decided to walk down towards the Common. Under the railway bridge I found a group of soldiers, sappers I think, men in small round caps, dirty red jackets unbuttoned and showing their blue shirts, dark trousers and boots coming to the calf. They told me no one was allowed over the canal, and, looking along the road towards the bridge, I saw one of the Cardigan men standing sentinel there. I

talked with these soldiers for a time; I told them of my sight of the Martians on the previous evening. None of them had seen the Martians, and they had but the vaguest ideas of them, so that they plied me with questions. They said that they did not know who had authorised the movements of the troops; their idea was that a dispute had arisen at the Horse Guards. The ordinary sapper is a great deal better educated than the common soldier, and they discussed the peculiar conditions of the possible fight with some acuteness. I described the heat-ray to them, and they began to argue among themselves.

"Crawl up under cover and rush 'em, say I," said one.

"Get aht!" said another. "Wot's cover against this 'ere 'eat? Sticks to cook yer! What we got to do is to go as near as the ground'll let us and then drive a trench."

"Blow yer trenches! You always want trenches. You ought to ha' been born a rabbit, Snippy."

"Ain't they got any necks, then?" said a third, abruptly—a little, contemplative, dark man, smoking a pipe.

I repeated my description.

"Octupuses," said he; "that's what I calls 'em. Talk about fishers of men!—fighters of fish it is this time."

"It ain't no murder killin' beasts like that," said the first speaker.

"Why not shell the darned things strite off and finish 'em?" said the little dark man. "You carn tell what they might do."

"Where's your shells?" said the first speaker. "There ain't no time. Do it in a rush—that's my tip. And do it at once."

So they discussed it. After a while I left them and went on to the railway station to get as many morning papers as I could. But I will not weary the reader with a discussion of that long morning, and of the longer afternoon. I did not succeed in getting a glimpse of the Common, for even Horsell and Chobham church towers were in the hands of the military authorities. The soldiers I addressed didn't know anything; the officers were mysterious as well as busy. I found people in the town quite secure again in the presence of the military, and I heard for the first time from Marshall, the tobacconist, that his son was among the dead on the Common. The soldiers had made the people on the outskirts of Horsell lock up and leave their houses.

I got back to lunch about two, very tired, for as I have said, the day was extremely hot and dull, and, in order to refresh myself, I took a cold bath in the afternoon. About half past four I went up to the railway station to get an evening paper, for the morning papers had contained only a very inaccurate description of the killing of Stent, Henderson, Ogilvy and the others. But there was little I didn't know. The Martians did not show an inch of themselves. They seemed busy in their pit, and there was a sound now of digging, as well as hammering, and an almost continuous streamer of smoke. Apparently they were busy getting ready for a struggle. "Fresh attempts have been made to signal, but without success," was the stereotyped formula of the papers. A sapper told me it was done by a man in a ditch, with a flag on a long pole. The Martians took as much notice of such advances as we should of a lowing cow.

I must confess the sight of all this armament, all this preparation, greatly excited me. My imagination became belligerent, and defeated the invaders in a dozen striking ways; something of my schoolboy dreams of battle and heroism came back to me. They seemed so helpless in this pit of theirs.

About three o'clock there began the thud of a gun at measured intervals from Chertsey or Addlestone. I learnt that the smouldering pine wood into which the second cylinder had fallen was being shelled, in the hope of destroying that object before it opened. It was only about five, however, that a field gun reached Chobham for use against the first body of Martians.

About six in the evening, as I sat at tea with my wife in the summer house, talking vigorously about the battle that was lowering upon us, I heard a muffled detonation from the common, and immediately after a gust of firing. Close on the heels of that came a violent, rattling crash, quite close to us, that shook the ground; and, starting out upon the lawn, I saw the tops of the trees about the Oriental College burst into smoky red flame,

and the tower of the little church beside it slide down into ruin. The pinnacle of the mosque had vanished, and the roof line of the college itself looked as if a hundred-ton gun had been at work upon it. One of our chimneys cracked as though a shot had hit it, flew, and the piece of it came clattering down the tiles, and made a heap of broken red fragments upon the flower-bed by my study window.

I and my wife stood amazed. A moment before, peace, and then this earthquake and fire smiting out of the invisible, and black smoke streaming up all about us. Then I realised that the crest of Maybury Hill must be within range of the Martians' heat-ray, now that the college was cleared out of the way.

As soon as my astonishment would let me I gripped my wife's arm and ran her out into the road. Then I fetched out the servant, telling her I would go upstairs myself for the box she was clamouring for. "We can't possibly stay here," I said, and as I spoke, the firing re-opened for a moment upon the common.

Signalling with a flag on a long pole.

"But where are we to go?" said my wife in terror.

I thought perplexed. Then I remembered her cousins at Leatherhead.

"Leatherhead!" I shouted above the sudden noise. She looked away from me downhill. The people were coming out of their houses astonished.

"How am I to get to Leatherhead?" she said.

Down the hill I saw a bevy of hussars ride under the railway bridge. Three galloped through the open gates of the Oriental College; two others dismounted, and began running from house to house. The sun, shining through the smoke that drove up from the tops of the trees, seemed blood red, and threw an unfamiliar lurid light upon everything.

"Stop here," said I. "You are safe here," and I started off at once for the "Spotted Dog," for I knew the landlord had a horse and dog-cart. I ran, for I perceived that in a moment everyone upon this side of the hill would be moving. I found him in his bar, quite unaware of what was going on behind his house. A man stood with his back to me, talking to him.

"I must have a pound," said the landlord, "and I've no one to drive it."

"I'll give you two," said I, over the stranger's shoulder.

"What for?"

"And I'll bring it back by midnight," I said.

"Lord!" said the landlord, "what's the hurry? I'm selling my bit of a pig. Two pounds and you bring it back! What's going on now?"

I explained hastily that I had to leave my

home, and so secured the dog-cart. At the time it did not seem to me nearly so urgent that the landlord should leave his. I took care to have it there and then, drove it off down the road, and, leaving it in charge of my wife and servant, rushed into my house and packed a few valuables, such plate as we had, and so forth. The beech trees below the house were burning while I did this, and the palings up the hill glowed red. While I was occupied in this way, one of the dismounted hussars came running up. He was going from house to house, warning people to leave. He was going on as I came out of my front door, lugging my treasures done up in a table-cloth. I shouted after him: "What news?"

He turned, stared, bawled something about "crawling out in a thing like a dish cover," and ran on to the gate of the house at the crest. A sudden whirl of black smoke driving across the road, hid him for a moment. I ran to my neighbour's door, and rapped, to satisfy myself, what I already knew, that his wife had gone to London with him, and had locked up their house. I went in again for my servant's box, according to my promise, lugged it out, clapped it beside her on the tail of the dog-cart, and then caught the reins and jumped up into the driver's seat beside my wife. In another moment we were clear of the smoke and noise, and spanking down the opposite slope of Maybury Hill towards Old Woking.

In front was a quiet sunny landscape, a wheat field ahead on either side of the road, and the "Maybury Inn," with its swinging sign. At the bottom of the hill I turned my head to look at the hillside I was leaving. Thick streamers of black smoke shot with threads of red fire were driving up into the still air, and throwing dark shadows upon the green tree tops eastward. The smoke already extended far away to the east and west, to the Byfleet pine woods eastward, and to Woking on the west. And very faint now, but very distinct through the hot quiet air, one heard the whirr of a machine gun, that was presently stilled, and an intermittent cracking of rifles.

Apparently the Martians were setting fire to everything within range of their heat ray. I am an inexpert driver, and I had immediately to turn my head to the horse again. But that strange sight of the swift confusion and destruction of war, the first real glimpse of warfare that had ever come into my life, was photographed in an instant upon my memory. When I looked back again the second hill had hidden the black smoke. I slashed the horse with the whip, and gave him a loose rein until Woking and Send lay between us and that quivering tumult.

X.—IN THE STORM.

Leatherhead is about twelve miles from Maybury Hill. We got there without misadventure about nine o'clock, and the horse had an hour's rest while I took supper with my cousins, and commended my wife to their care. The evening had been a pleasant one, a little hot and close perhaps at first, but the rapid drive had made an artificial breeze for us. The scent of hay was in the air through the lush meadows beyond Pyrford, and the hedges on either side were sweet and gay with multitudes of dog roses. The heavy firing that had broken out while we were driving down Maybury Hill ceased as abruptly as it began, leaving the evening very peaceful and still.

My wife was curiously silent throughout the drive, and seemed oppressed with forebodings of evil. I talked to her reassuringly, pointing out that the Martians were tied to the pit by sheer heaviness, and, at the utmost, could but crawl a little out of it, but she answered only in monosyllables. Had it not been for my promise to the innkeeper she would, I think, have urged me to stay in Leatherhead. Her face, I remember, was very white as we parted. For my own part I had been feverishly excited all day. Something very like the war-fever, that occasionally runs through a civilised community, had got into my blood, and in my heart I was not so very sorry that I had to return to Maybury that night. I was even afraid that last fusillade I had heard might mean the extermination of our invaders from Mars. I wanted to be in at the death.

It was nearly eleven when I started to return. The night was unexpectedly dark; to me, walking out of the lighted passage of

my cousin's house, it seemed indeed black, and it was as hot and close as the day. Overhead the clouds were driving fast, albeit not a breath stirred the shrubs about us. My cousin's man lit both lamps. Happily I knew the road intimately. My wife stood in the light of the doorway and watched me until I jumped up into the dog-cart. Then abruptly she turned and went in, leaving my cousins side by side wishing me good hap.

I was a little depressed at first with the contagion of my wife's fears, but very soon my thoughts reverted to the Martians. At that time I was absolutely in the dark as to the course of the evening's fighting. I did not know even the circumstances that had precipitated the conflict. As I came through Ockham (for that was the way I returned, and not through Send and Old Woking), I saw along the western horizon a blood-red glow, which, as I drew nearer, crept slowly up the sky. The driving clouds of the gathering thunderstorm mingled there with masses of black and red smoke.

Ripley Street was deserted, and except for a lighted window or so the village showed not a sign of life, but I narrowly escaped an accident at the corner of the road to Pyrford, where a knot of people stood with their backs to me.

They said nothing to me as I passed. I do not know what they knew of the things happening beyond the hill, nor do I know if the silent houses I passed on my way were sleeping securely, or deserted and empty, or harrassed and watching against the terror of the night. Until I came through Pyrford, I was in the valley of the Wey, and the red glare was hidden from me. As I ascended the little hill beyond Pyrford church, the glare came into view again, and the trees about me shivered with the first intimation of the storm that was upon me. Then I heard midnight pealing out from Pyrford church behind me, and then came the clear sight of Maybury Hill with its treetops and roofs black and sharp against the red.

Even as I beheld this a lurid green glare lit the road about me, and showed the distant woods towards Addlestone. I felt a tug at the reins. I saw, only with half an eye, that the driving clouds had been pierced as it were by a thread of green fire, suddenly lighting their confusion, and falling into the fields to my left. It was the Third Falling Star. Close on its apparition, and blindingly violet by contrast, danced out the first lightning of the gathering storm, and the thunder burst like a rocket overhead.

The horse took the bit between his teeth and bolted. I gripped the reins, and we went whirling along between the hedges, and emerged in a minute or so upon the open common. A moderate incline runs down towards the foot of Maybury Hill, and down this we clattered. Once the lightning had begun it went on in as rapid a succession of flashes as I have ever seen. The thunder claps, treading one on the heels of another, and with a strange crackling accompaniment, sounded more like the working of a gigantic electric machine than the usual detonating reverberations. The flickering light was blinding and confusing, and a thin hail smote in gusts at my face as I drove down the slope.

At first I regarded little but the road before me, and then abruptly my attention was arrested by something that was moving rapidly down the opposite slope of Maybury Hill. At first I took it for the wet roof of a house, but one flash following another showed it to be in swift rolling movement. It was an elusive vision; a moment bewildering darkness, and then a flash like daylight, the red masses of the Orphanage, near the crest of the hill, and the green tops of the pine trees coming out clear and sharp and bright.

And this Thing! How can I describe it? A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its wallowing career: a walking engine of glittering metal, reeling now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder. A flash, and it came out vividly, heeling over one way with two feet in the air, to vanish and reappear almost instantly as it seemed, with the next flash, a hundred yards nearer. Can you imagine a milking stool tilted and bowled violently along the ground? But instead of a milking

stool, imagine it a great thing of metal, like the body of a colossal steam engine on a tripod stand.

Then suddenly the trees in the pine wood ahead of me were parted, as brittle reeds are parted by a man thrusting through them; they were snapped off and driven headlong, and a second huge tripod appeared, rushing as it seemed headlong towards me. And I was galloping hard to meet it! At the sight of the second monster my nerve went altogether. Not stopping to look again I wrenched the horse's head hard round to the right, and in another moment the

Suddenly the trees in the pinewood were parted.

dog-cart had heeled over upon the horse; the shafts smashed noisily, and I was flung sideways and fell heavily into a shallow pool of water.

I crawled out almost immediately and crouched, my feet still in the water, under a clump of furze. The horse lay motionless (his neck was broken, poor brute!) and by the lightning flashes I saw the black bulk of the over-turned dog-cart, and the silhouette of the wheel still spinning slowly. In another moment the colossal mechanism went striding by me, and passed uphill towards Pyrford.

Seen nearer, the Thing was incredibly strange. For it was no mere insensate machine driving on its way. Machine it was, with a ringing metallic pace, and long flexible glittering tentacles (one of which gripped a young pine tree) swinging and rattling about its strange body. It picked its road as it went striding along, and the brazen hood that surmounted it moved to and fro with the inevitable suggestion of a head looking about it.

In this was the Martian. Behind the body was a huge thing of white metal, like a gigantic fisherman's basket, and puffs of green smoke squirted out from the joints of the limbs as the monster swept by me. So much I saw then, all vaguely for the flickering of the lightning, in blinding high lights and dense black shadow.

As it passed, it set up an exultant deafening howl, that drowned the thunder, "aloo, aloo," and in another minute it was with the other, half a mile away, stooping over something in the fields. I made no doubt this thing in the field, was the third of the ten cylinders they had fired at us from Mars.

For some minutes I lay there simply stupefied, watching, by the intermittent light, these monstrous beings of metal moving about in the distance over the hedge tops. A thin hail was now beginning, and as it came and went, their figures grew misty and then flashed into clearness again. Now and then came a gap in the lightning, and the night swallowed them up. I was soaked with hail above and puddle water below. It was some time before my blank astonishment would let me struggle

up the bank to a drier position, or think at all of my imminent peril.

Not far from me, was a little one-roomed squatter's hut of wood, surrounded by a patch of potato garden. I struggled to my feet at last, and, crouching and making use of every chance of cover, I made a run for this. I hammered at the door, but I could not make the people hear (if there were any people inside), and after a time I desisted, and, availing myself of a ditch for the greater part of the way, succeeded in crawling, unobserved by these monstrous machines, into the pine wood towards Maybury.

Under cover of this I pushed on, wet and shivering now, towards my own house. I walked among the trees trying to find the footpath. It was very dark indeed in the wood, for the lightning was now becoming infrequent, and the hail, which was pouring down in a torrent, fell in columns through the gaps in the heavy foliage. The steaming air was full of a hot resinous smell.

If I had fully realised the meaning of all the things I had seen I should have immediately worked my way round through Byfleet to Street Chobham and so gone back to rejoin my wife at Leatherhead. But that night the strangeness of things about me and my physical wretchedness prevented me, for I was bruised, weary, and wet to the skin, deafened and blinded by the storm. I had a vague idea of going on to my own house, and that was as much motive as I had. I staggered through the trees, fell into a ditch and bruised my knees against a plank, and finally splashed out into the lane that ran down from the "College Arms." I say splashed, for the storm water was sweeping the sand down the hill in a muddy torrent. There in the darkness, a man blundered into me and sent me reeling back.

He gave a cry of terror, sprung sideways, and rushed on before I could gather my wits together sufficiently to speak to him. So heavy was the stress of the storm just at this place, that I had the hardest task to win my way up the hill. I went close up to the fence on the left, and worked my way along its palings.

Near the top, I stumbled upon something soft, and, by a flash of lightning, saw between my feet a heap of black broadcloth and a pair of boots. Before I could distinguish clearly how the man lay, the flicker of light had passed. I stood over him waiting for the next flash. When it came, I saw that he was a sturdy man, cheaply but not shabbily dressed; his head was bent under his body, and he lay crumpled up close to the fence, as though he had been flung violently against it.

Overcoming the repugnance natural to one who had never before touched a dead body, I stooped and turned him over to feel for his heart. He was quite dead. Apparently his neck had been broken. The lightning flashed for a third time, and his face leapt upon me. I sprang to my feet. It was the landlord of the "Spotted Dog," whose conveyance I had taken.

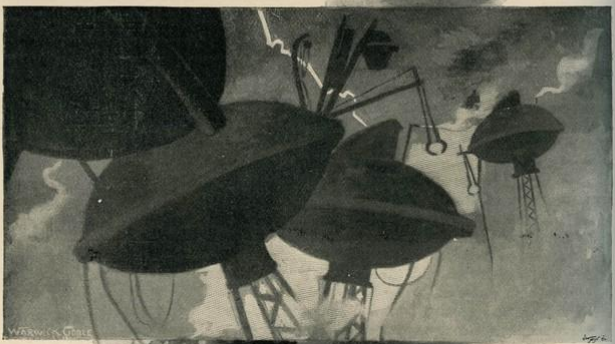
I stepped over him gingerly and pushed on up the hill. I made my way by the police station and the "College Arms" towards my own house. Nothing was burning on the hillside, though from the common there still came a red glare and a rolling tumult of ruddy smoke beating up against the drenching hail. So far as I could see by the two or three distant flashes, the houses about me were mostly uninjured. By the "College Arms" a dark heap lay in the road, but I did not care to examine it.

Down the road towards Maybury Bridge there were voices and the sound of feet, but I had not the courage to shout or to go to them. I saw nothing unusual in my garden that night, though the gate was off its hinges, and the shrubs seemed trampled. I let myself in with my latchkey, closed, locked, and bolted the door, staggered to the foot of the staircase, and sat down. My strength and courage seemed absolutely exhausted. A great horror of this darkness and desolation about me came upon me. My imagination was full of those striding metallic monsters, and of the dead body smashed against the fence. I felt like a rat in a corner. I crouched at the foot of the staircase, with my back to the wall, shivering violently.

XI.—AT THE WINDOW.

I HAVE said already that my storms of emotion have a trick of exhausting themselves. I seem to remember noting that I

was cold and wet, and with little pools of water about me on the stair carpet. I got up almost mechanically, went into the dining room and drank some whisky, and then I was moved to change my clothes. After I had done that I went upstairs to my study, but why I did so I do not know. The window of my study looks over the trees and the railway towards Horsell Common. In the hurry



of our departure this window had been left open. The passage was dark, and by contrast with the picture the window frame inclosed, that side of the room seemed impenetrably dark. I stopped in the doorway, staring.

The thunderstorm had passed. The towers of the Oriental College and the pine trees about it had gone, and very far away, lit by a vivid red glare, the common about the sand pits was visible. Across the light, huge black shapes, grotesque and strange, moved busily to and fro. The light itself came from Chobham.

It seemed, indeed, as if the whole country in that direction was on fire, a broad hillside set with minute tongues of flame, swaying and writhing with the gusts of the dying storm, and throwing a red reflection upon the cloud scud above. Every now and then a haze of smoke from some nearer conflagration drove across the window and hid the Martian shapes. I could not see what they were doing

Huge, black shapes moved busily to and fro.

nor the clear form of them, nor recognise the black objects they were busied upon. Neither could I see the nearer fire, though the reflections of it danced on the wall and ceiling of the study. A sharp resinous twang of burning was in the air.

I closed the door noiselessly and crept towards the window. As I did so the view opened out until on the one hand it reached to the houses about Woking station, and on the other to the charred and blackened pine woods of Byfleet. There was a light down below the hill, on the railway near the arch, and several of the houses along the Maybury road, and the streets near the station were glowing ruins. The light upon the railway puzzled me at first; there was a black heap and a vivid glare, and to the right of that a row of yellow oblongs. Then I perceived this was a wrecked train, the forepart smashed and on fire, the hinder carriages still upon the rails.

Between these three main centres of light, the houses, the train, and the burning country towards Chobham, stretched irregular patches of dark country, broken here and there by intervals of dimly glowing and smoking ground. It was the strangest spectacle, that black expanse set with fire. It reminded me, more than anything else, of the potteries seen at night. People, at first I could distinguish none, though I peered intently for them. Later I saw, against the light of Woking station, a number of black figures hurrying one after the other across the line.

And this was the little world in which I had been living securely for years, this fiery chaos! What had happened in the last seven hours, I still did not know, nor did I know, though I was beginning to guess, the relation between these mechanical Colossi and the sluggish lumps I had seen disgorged from the cylinder. With a queer feeling of impersonal interest, I turned my desk chair to the window, sat down, and stared at the blackened country, and particularly at the three gigantic black things that were going to and fro in the glare about the sand pits. They seemed amazingly busy. I began to ask myself what they could be. Were they intelligent mechanisms? Was such a thing possible? Or did a Martian sit within each, ruling, directing, using, much as a man's brain sits and rules in his body?

Later I was to learn that this was the case. That with incredible rapidity these bodiless brains, these limbless intelligences, had built up these monstrous structures since their arrival, and, no longer sluggish and inert, were now able to go to and fro, destroying and irresistible.

The storm had left the sky clear, and over the smoke of the burning land the little fading pin point of Mars was dropping into the west, when the soldier came into my garden. I heard a slight scraping at the fence, and rousing myself from the lethargy that had fallen upon me, and looking down, I saw him dimly, clambering over the palings. I was so delighted at the sight of another human being, that my torpor passed, and I leant out of the window eagerly.

"Hist!" said I in a whisper.

He stopped, astride of the fence, in doubt.

Then he came over and across the lawn to the corner of the house. He bent down and stepped softly.

"Who's there?" he said (also whispering), standing under the window and peering up.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"God knows."

"Are you trying to hide?"

"That's it."

"Come into the house," I said.

I went down, unfastened the door, and let him in, and locked the door again. I could not see his face. He was hatless, and his coat was unbuttoned.

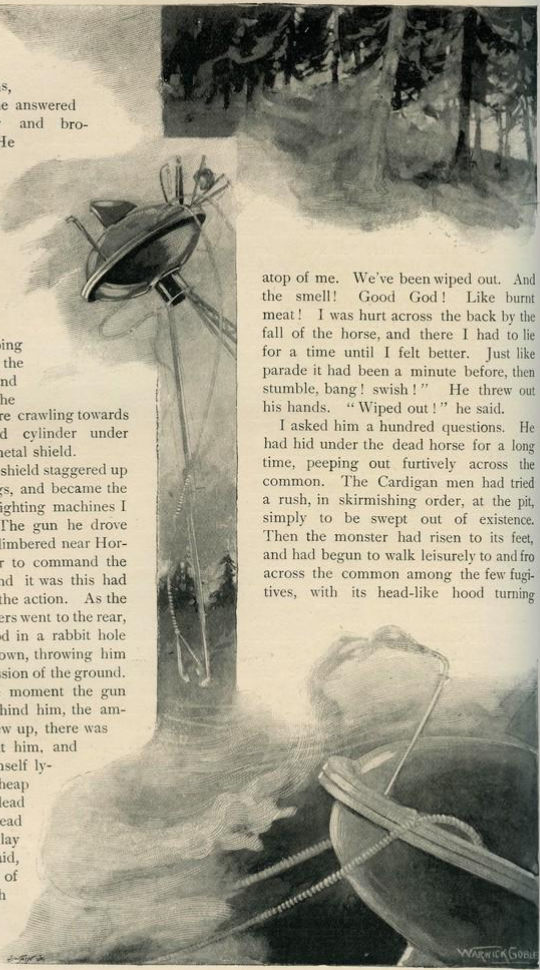
"My God!" he said as I drew him in.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"What hasn't?" In the obscurity I could see he made a gesture of despair. "They wiped us out: simply wiped us out," he repeated again and again. He followed me almost mechanically into the dining room.

"Take some whisky," I said, pouring out a stiff dose. He drank it. Then abruptly he sat down before the table, put his head on his arms, and began to sob and weep like a little boy, in a perfect passion of emotion, while I, with a curious forgetfulness of my own recent despair, stood beside him wondering.

It was a long time before he could steady



A second glittering Titan built itself up out of the pit.

his nerves to answer my questions, and then he answered perplexingly and brokenly. He was a driver in the Artillery, and had only come into action about seven. At that time firing was going on across the common, and it was said the Martians were crawling towards their second cylinder under cover of a metal shield.

Later this shield staggered up on tripod legs, and became the first of the fighting machines I had seen. The gun he drove had been unlimbered near Horsell in order to command the sand pits, and it was this had precipitated the action. As the limber gunners went to the rear, his horse trod in a rabbit hole and came down, throwing him into a depression of the ground. At the same moment the gun exploded behind him, the ammunition blew up, there was fire all about him, and he found himself lying under a heap of charred dead men and dead horses. "I lay still," he said, "scared out of my wits, with the forequarter of a horse atop of me. We've been wiped out. And the smell! Good God! Like burnt meat! I was hurt across the back by the fall of the horse, and there I had to lie for a time until I felt better. Just like parade it had been a minute before, then stumble, bang! swish!" He threw out his hands. "Wiped out!" he said.

I asked him a hundred questions. He had hid under the dead horse for a long time, peeping out furtively across the common. The Cardigan men had tried a rush, in skirmishing order, at the pit, simply to be swept out of existence. Then the monster had risen to its feet, and had begun to walk leisurely to and fro across the common among the few fugitives, with its head-like hood turning

about exactly like the head of a cowled human being. A kind of arm carried a thing like a huge photographic camera, and out of the eye of this there smote the Heat Ray.

In a few minutes there was, so far as the soldier could see, not a living thing left upon the common, and every bush and tree upon it that was not already a blackened skeleton was burning. The Hussars had been on the road beyond the curvature of the ground and he saw nothing of them. He heard the Maxims rattle for a time and then become still. The giant saved Woking Station and its cluster of houses until last. Then in a moment the Heat Ray was brought to bear and the town became a heap of fiery ruins. Then the thing shut off the Heat Ray and, turning its back upon the artilleryman, began to waddle away towards the smouldering pinewoods that sheltered the second cylinder. As it did so a second glittering Titan built itself up out of the pit.

The second monster followed the first, and at that the artilleryman began to crawl very cautiously across the hot heather ash towards Horsell. He managed to get alive into the ditch along by the side of the road, and so escaped to Woking. There his story became ejaculatory. The place was impassable. It seems there were a few people alive there, frantic for the most part. He was turned aside by the fire, and hid among some almost scorching heaps of broken wall, as one of the Martian giants returned. He saw this one pursue a man, catch him up in one of its steely tentacles and knock his head against the trunk of a pine tree. At last, after night-

He saw this one pursue a man and catch him up in one of its steely tentacles.

fall, the artilleryman made a rush for it, and got over the railway embankment.

Since then he had been skulking along towards Maybury, in the hope of getting out of danger Londonward. People were hiding in trenches and cellars, and many of the survivors had made off towards Woking village and Send. He had been consumed with thirst until he found one of the water mains near the railway arch smashed, and the water bubbling out like a spring upon the road.

That was the story I won from him bit by bit. He grew calmer telling me, and trying to make me see the things he had seen. He had eaten no food since midday he told me early in his narrative, and I found some mutton and bread in the pantry and brought it into the room. We lit no lamp for fear of attracting the Martians, and ever and again our hands would touch upon bread or meat. As he talked, things about us came darkly out of the darkness, and the trampled bushes and broken rose-trees outside the window grew distinct. It would seem that a number of men or animals had rushed across the lawn. I began to see his face, blackened and haggard, as no doubt mine was also.

When we had finished eating we went softly upstairs to my study, and I looked again out of the open window.

In one night the valley had become a valley of ashes. The fires had dwindled now. Where flames had been there were now streamers of smoke, but the countless ruins of shattered and gutted houses and blasted and blackened trees that the night had hidden stood out now, gaunt and terrible, in the pitiless light of dawn. Yet here and there some object had had the luck to escape—a white railway signal here, the end of a greenhouse there, white and fresh amidst the wreckage. Never before in the history of warfare had destruction been so indiscriminate and so universal. And, shining with the growing light of the east, three of the metallic giants stood about the pit, their cowls rotating as though they were surveying the desolation they had made.

Three of the metallic giants stood about the pit.

It seemed to me that the pit had been enlarged, and ever and again puffs of vivid green vapour streamed up out of it towards the brightening dawn—streamed up, coiled, whirled, broke, and vanished. Beyond them were the pillars of fire about Chobham. They became pillars of bloodshot smoke at the first touch of day.

(To be continued in our July Number).

By H. G. Wells.

SUMMARY.

The inhabitants of Mars invade the earth, descending at Woking. They are sluggish creatures with tentacles, but they possess huge fighting machines, by means of which they destroy the troops sent to encircle them. The story is told by an inhabitant of Woking. At the outbreak of hostilities he takes his wife to Leatherhead for safety, and returns to find his house deserted and partly destroyed. The only human being he meets is an artilleryman hiding in his garden.

XII.—WHAT I SAW OF THE DESTRUCTION OF WEYBRIDGE AND SHEPPERTON.

As the dawn grew brighter we withdrew ourselves from the window, from which we had watched the Martians, and went very quietly downstairs.

The artilleryman agreed with me that the house was no place to stay in. He proposed, he said, to make his way Londonward, and thence rejoin his battery — No. 12, of the Horse Artillery. My plan was to return at once to Leatherhead, and, so greatly had the strength of the Martians impressed me, that I had determined to take my wife to Newhaven and out of the country forthwith.

I perceived clearly that the country about London must inevitably be the scene of an unparalleled struggle before such creatures as these, constantly reinforced as it seemed they were by fresh falling meteors, could be destroyed. Between us and Leatherhead, however, lay the Third Cylinder with its guarding giants, and so I resolved to go with the artilleryman, under cover of the woods, northward as far as Street Chobham before I parted with him. Thence I would make a big detour by Epsom to reach Leatherhead.

I should have started at once, but my companion had been in active service, and he knew better than that. He made me ransack the house for a flask, which he filled with whisky; and we lined every available pocket with packets of biscuits and slices of meat. Then we crept out of the house, and ran as quickly as we could down the ill-made road by which I had come overnight. The houses seemed deserted. In the road lay a group of three charred bodies close together, struck dead by the Heat Ray, and here and there were things that the people had dropped, a clock, a slipper, in one place a worn silver spoon, and so forth. At the corner turning up towards the post office, a little cart, filled with boxes and furniture, and horseless, heeled over on a broken wheel. A cash box had been hastily smashed open, and thrown under the *débris*.

Except the lodge of the Orphanage, which was still on fire, none of the houses had suffered very greatly here. The Heat Ray had shaved the chimney tops and passed. Yet,

save ourselves, there did not seem to be a living soul on Maybury Hill. The majority of the inhabitants had escaped, I suppose, by way of the Old Woking road—the road I had taken when I drove to Leatherhead; or they had hidden.

We went down the lane by the body of the man in black, sodden now from the overnight hail, and broke into the woods at the foot of the hill. We pushed through these towards the railway, without meeting a soul. The woods across the line were but the scarred and blackened ruins of woods; for the most part the trees had fallen, but a certain proportion still stood, dismal grey stems with dark brown foliage instead of green.

On our side, the fire had done no more than scorch the nearer trees; it had failed to secure its footing. In one place, the woodmen had been at work on Saturday; trees, felled and freshly trimmed, lay in a clearing, with heaps of sawdust, by the sawing machine and its engine. Hard by was a temporary hut, deserted. There was not a breath of wind this morning, and everything was strangely still. Even the birds were hushed, and as we hurried along, I and the artilleryman talked in whispers, and looked now and again over our shoulders. Once or twice we stopped to listen.

After a time, we drew near the road, and as we did so, we heard the clatter of hoofs, and saw through the tree stems, three cavalry soldiers riding slowly towards Woking. We hailed them, and they halted while we hurried towards them. It was a lieutenant and a couple of privates of the Eighth Hussars, with a stand like a theodolite, which the artilleryman told me was a heliograph. "You are the first men I've seen coming this way this morning," said the lieutenant. "What's brewing?" His voice and face were eager. The men behind him stared curiously. The artilleryman jumped down the bank into the road and saluted. "Gun destroyed last night, Sir. Have been hiding. Trying to rejoin battery, Sir. You'll come in sight of the Martians I expect about half a mile along this road."

"What the dickens are they like?" asked the lieutenant.

"Giants in armour, Sir. Hundred feet high. Three legs and a body like 'luminium, with a mighty great head in a hood, Sir."

"Get out!" said the lieutenant. "What confounded nonsense!"

"You'll see, Sir. They carry a kind of box, Sir, that shoots fire and strikes you dead."

"What d'ye mean—a gun?"

"No, Sir," and the artilleryman began a vivid account of the Heat Ray. Halfway through the lieutenant interrupted him and looked up at me. I was still standing on the bank by the side of the road. "Did you see it?" said the lieutenant.

"It's perfectly true," I said.

"Well," said the lieutenant, "I suppose it's my business to see it too. Look here,"—to the artilleryman, "we're detailed here clearing people out of their houses. You'd better go along and report yourself to Brigadier-General Marvin, and tell him all you know. He's at Weybridge. Know the way?"

"I do," I said; and he turned his horse southward again. "Half a mile, you say?" said he. "At most," I answered, and pointed over the tree tops southward. He thanked me and rode on, and we saw them no more.

Farther along we came upon a group of three women and two children in the road, busy clearing out a labourer's cottage. They had got hold of a kind of hand-truck, and were piling it up with unclean-looking bundles and shabby furniture. They were all too assiduously engaged to talk to us as we passed.

By Byfleet station we emerged from the pine trees, and found the country calm and peaceful under the morning sunlight. We were far beyond the range of the Heat Ray there, and had it not been for the silent desertion of some of the houses, the stirring movement of packing in others, and the knot of soldiers standing on the bridge over the railway and staring down the line towards Woking, the day would have seemed very like any other Sunday.

Several farm waggons and carts were moving creakily along the road to Addlestone, and suddenly through the gate of a field we saw, across a stretch of flat

meadow, six twelve-pounders, standing neatly at equal distances and pointing towards Woking. The gunners stood by the guns waiting, and the ammunition waggons were at a business-like distance. The men stood almost as if under inspection.

"That's good!" said I. "They will get one fair shot at any rate." The artilleryman hesitated at the gate. "I shall go on," he said. Farther on towards Weybridge, just over the bridge, there were a number of men in white fatigue jackets throwing up a long rampart, and more guns behind. "It's bows and arrows against the lightning, anyhow," said the artilleryman. "They 'aven't seen that fire beam yet." The officers who were not actively engaged stood and stared over the tree-tops south-westward, and the men digging would stop every now and again to stare in the same direction.

Byfleet was in a tumult, people packing, and a score of hussars perhaps hunting them about, some of them dismounted, some on horseback. Three or four black Government waggons, with crosses in white circles, and an old omnibus, among other vehicles, were being loaded in the village street. There were scores of people, most of them sufficiently Sabbatical to have assumed their best clothes. The soldiers were having the greatest difficulty in making them realise the gravity of their position. We saw one shrivelled old fellow with a huge box and a score or more of flower-pots containing orchids, angrily expostulating with the corporal who would leave them behind. I stopped, and gripped his arm. "Do you know what's over there?" I said, pointing at the pine-tops that hid the Martians.

"Eh?" said he, turning. "I was explainin' these is vallyble."

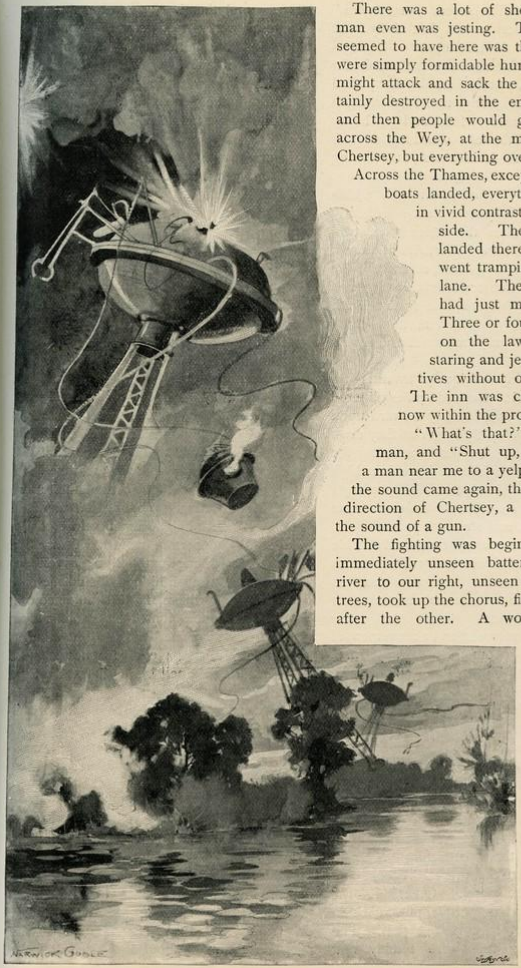
"Death!" I shouted. "Death is coming! Death!" and, leaving him to digest that if he could, I hurried on after the artilleryman. At the corner I looked back. The soldier had left him, and he was still standing by his box with the pots of orchids on the lid of it and staring vaguely over the trees.

No one in Weybridge could tell us where the headquarters were established, the whole place was in such confusion as I had never seen in any town before. Carts, carriages everywhere, the most astonishing miscellany of conveyances and horseflesh. The respectable inhabitants of the place, men in golf and boating costumes, wives prettily dressed, were packing, riverside loafers energetically helping, children excited, and, for the most part, highly delighted at this astonishing variation of their Sunday experiences. In the midst of it all the worthy vicar was very pluckily holding an early celebration, and his bell was jangling out above the excitement.

I and the artilleryman, seated on the step of the drinking fountain, made a very passable meal upon what we had brought with us. Patrols of soldiers—here no longer hussars but grenadiers in white—were warning people to move now or to take refuge in their cellars as soon as the firing began. We saw as we crossed the railway bridge that a growing crowd of people had assembled in and about the railway station, and the swarming platform was piled with boxes and packages. The ordinary traffic had been stopped, I believe, in order to allow of the passage of troops and guns to Chertsey, and I have heard since that a savage struggle occurred for places in the special trains that were put on at a later hour.

We remained in Weybridge until midday, and at that hour we found ourselves at the place near Shepperton Lock, where the Wey and Thames join. Part of the time we spent helping two old women to pack a little cart. The Wey has a treble mouth, and at this point boats are to be hired, and there was a ferry across the river. On the Shepperton side was an inn, with a lawn, and beyond that the tower of Shepperton church—it has been replaced by a spire—rose above the trees.

Here we found an excited and noisy crowd of fugitives. As yet the flight had not grown to a panic, but there were already far more people than all the boats going to and fro could enable to cross. Quite respectable people came panting along under heavy burdens; one decent husband and wife were even carrying a small outhouse door between them, with some of their household goods piled thereon. One man told us he meant to try to get away from Shepperton station.



"Hit!" shouted I.

There was a lot of shouting, and one man even was jesting. The idea people seemed to have here was that the Martians were simply formidable human beings, who might attack and sack the town, to be certainly destroyed in the end. Every now and then people would glance nervously across the Wey, at the meadows towards Chertsey, but everything over there was still.

Across the Thames, except just where the boats landed, everything was quiet, in vivid contrast with the Surrey side. The people who landed there from the boats went tramping off down the lane. The big ferry boat had just made a journey. Three or four soldiers stood on the lawn of the inn, staring and jesting at the fugitives without offering to help. The inn was closed, as it was now within the prohibited hours.

"What's that?" cried a boatman, and "Shut up, you fool," said a man near me to a yelping dog. Then the sound came again, this time from the direction of Chertsey, a muffled thud—the sound of a gun.

The fighting was beginning. Almost immediately unseen batteries across the river to our right, unseen because of the trees, took up the chorus, firing heavily one after the other. A woman screamed. Everyone stood arrested by the sudden stir of battle, near us and yet invisible to us. Nothing was to be seen save flat meadows, cows for the most part feeding unconcernedly, and silvery pollard willows motionless in the

warm sunlight. "The sojers 'll stop 'em," said a woman beside me doubtfully. A haziness rose over the tree tops.

Then suddenly we saw a rush of smoke far away up the river, a puff of smoke that jerked up into the air, and hung, and forthwith the ground heaved under foot and a heavy explosion shook the air, smashing two or three windows in the houses near, and leaving us astonished.

"Here they are!" shouted a man in a blue jersey. "Yonder. D' yer see them? Yonder."

Quickly, one after the other, one, two, three, four of the armed Martians appeared, far away over the little trees, across the flat meadows that stretch towards Chertsey, and striding hurriedly towards the river. Little cowled figures they seemed at first, going with a rolling motion, and as fast as flying birds.

Then, advancing obliquely towards us, came a fifth. Their armoured bodies glittered in the sun, as they swept swiftly forward upon the guns, growing rapidly larger as they drew nearer. One on the extreme left, the remotest that is, flourished a huge box high in the air, and the ghostly terrible Heat Ray I had already seen on Friday night smote towards Chertsey, and struck the town.

At sight of these strange, swift, and terrible creatures, the crowd along by the water's edge seemed to me to be for a moment horrorstruck. There was no screaming or shouting but a silence.

Then a hoarse murmur and a movement of feet. A splashing from the water. A man, too frightened to drop the portmanteau he carried on his shoulder, swung round and sent me staggering with a blow from the corner of his burden. A woman thrust at me with her hand, and rushed past me. I turned too, with the rush of people all about me. But I was not too terrified for thought. The terrible Heat Ray was in my mind. To get under water! That was it! "Get under water," I shouted. I faced about again, and rushed towards the approaching Martian, rushed right down the gravelly beach, and headlong into the water. Others did the same. A boatload of people, putting back, came leaping out as I rushed past. The stones under my feet were muddy and slippery, and the river was so low that I ran perhaps twenty feet scarcely waist-deep. Then, as the Martian towered overhead scarcely a couple of hundred yards away, I flung myself forward under the surface. The splashes of the people in the boats leaping into the river sounded like thunderclaps in my ears.

In my convulsive excitement I took no heed of the artilleryman behind me, and to this day I do not know what became of him. I never set eyes on him again. People were landing hastily on both sides of the river.

But the Martian machine took no more notice for the moment of the people running this way and that, than a man would of the confusion of ants in a nest against which his foot has kicked. When, half suffocated, I raised my head above water—there were dripping faces all about me—the Martian's hood pointed at the batteries that were still firing far away across the river, and as it advanced it swung loose what must have been the generator of the Heat Ray.

In another moment it was on the bank, and in a stride wading halfway across. The knees of its foremost legs bent at the further bank, and in another moment it had raised itself to its full height again, close to the village of Shepperton. Forthwith the six guns which, unknown to all of us on the right bank, had been hidden behind the outskirts of that village, fired simultaneously. The sudden concussions, the last close upon the first, made my heart jump. The monster was already raising the case generating the Heat Ray, as the shell burst six yards above the hood.

I gave a cry of astonishment. I saw and thought nothing of the other four Martian monsters; my attention was riveted upon this nearer incident. Simultaneously two other shells burst in the air near the body as the hood twisted round in time to receive, but not in time to dodge, the fourth shell.

The shell burst clean in the face of the thing. The hood bulged, flashed, was whirled off in a dozen tattered fragments of red flesh and glittering metal. "Hit!" shouted I, with something between a scream and a cheer. I heard answering shouts from the people in the water about me. I could have

leaped out of the water with that momentary exultation.

The decapitated colossus reeled like a drunken giant. But it did not go over. It recovered its balance by a miracle, and, no longer heeding its steps, and with the camera that fired the Heat Ray now rigidly upheld, it marched swiftly towards Shepperton. The living intelligence, the Martian within the hood, was slain and splashed to the four winds of heaven; and the thing was now but a mere intricate device of metal driving mechanically to destruction. It reeled along in a straight line, incapable of guidance. It struck the tower of Shepperton church, smashing it down as the impact of a battering ram might have done, staggered pitifully like a wounded man, swerved aside, blundered on, and collapsed into the river, out of my sight.

As the camera of the Heat Ray hit the water.

A violent explosion shook the air, and a spout of water, steam, mud, and shattered metal shot far up into the sky. As the camera of the Heat Ray hit the water, the latter had incontinently flashed into steam. In another moment a huge wave like a muddy tidal bore, but almost scaldingly hot, came sweeping round the bend up stream. I heard people struggling shorewards, and screaming and shouting.

I was so excited by this tremendous disaster, that for the moment I heeded nothing of the heat, forgot the patent need of self-preservation. I splashed through the tumultuous water, pushing aside a man in black to do so, until I could see round the bend. Half-a-dozen deserted boats pitched aimlessly upon the confusion of waves. The fallen Martian came into sight, lying across the water, and for the most part submerged.

Thick clouds of steam were pouring off the boiling water, and through the tumultuously whirling whisps of it I could see, intermittently and vaguely, the gigantic limbs churning the water and flinging a black spray of mud and water into the air. The tentacles swayed like living arms, and, save for the helpless purposelessness of these movements, it was exactly like some sensitive wounded thing struggling for its life amidst the waves. To add to the resemblance, enormous quantities of a ruddy brown fluid were spirting up out of the machine.

My attention was diverted from their struggles by the sudden outbreak of a furious yelling, like that of the thing called a siren in our manufacturing towns. A man knee-deep near the towing path shouted to me and pointed. Looking back I saw the other Martians advancing with gigantic strides down the river bank from the direction of Chertsey. The Shepperton guns spoke again unavailingly. At that I ducked at once under water, and, holding my breath until movement was an agony, blundered painfully along under the surface as long as I could. The water was in a tumult about me, and rapidly growing hotter.

When for a moment I raised my head to take breath, and throw the hair and water from my eyes, the steam was rising all round me in a whirling white fog that at first hid the Martians altogether. Then I saw them dimly, colossal figures of grey, magnified by the mist. They had passed by me, and two were stooping over the frothing tumultuous ruins of their comrade. The third and fourth stood beside him in the water, one perhaps two hundred yards from me, the other towards Laleham. The generators of the Heat Rays waved high, and the hissing beam smote down this way and that.

The air was full of sound, a deafening and confusing conflict of noises, the clangorous din of the Martians, the crash of falling houses, the thud of trees, fences, sheds, flashing into flame, and the crackling and roaring of fire. Dense, black smoke was leaping up to mingle with the steam from the river, and as the Heat Ray went to and fro over Weybridge, its impact was marked by flashes of incandescent white, that gave place at once to a smoky dance of lurid flame. The nearer houses still stood intact, awaiting their fate, shadowy, faint and pallid in the mist, with the fire behind them going to and fro.

The tentacles swayed like living arms.

For a moment, perhaps, I stood there, breast high in the almost boiling water, dumfounded at my position, hopeless of escape. Through the reek I could see the people who had been with me in the river scrambling out of the water through the reeds like little frogs hurrying through grass from the advance of a man, or running to

The four carrying the *débris* of their comrade between them.

and fro in utter dismay on the towing path.

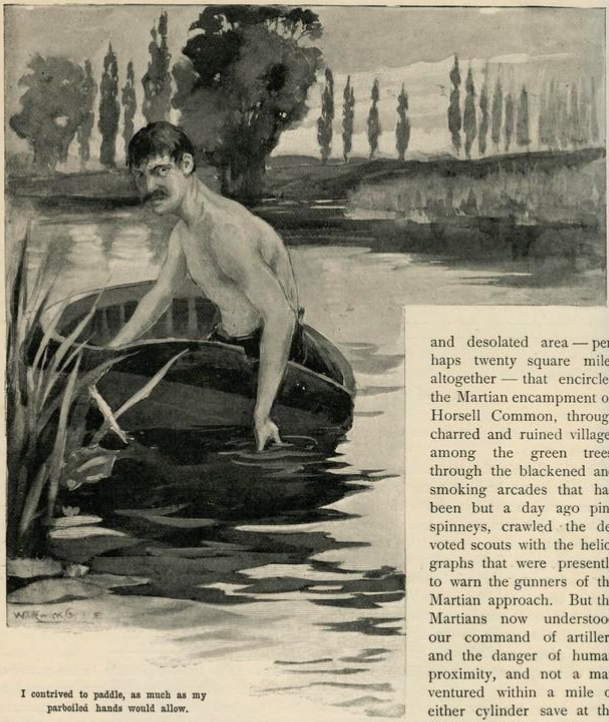
Then suddenly the white flashes of the Heat Ray came leaping towards me. The houses caved in as they dissolved at its touch, and darted out flames; the trees changed to fire with a roar. It flickered up and down the towing path, licking off the people who ran this way and that, and came down to the water's edge not fifty yards from where I stood. It swept across the river to Shepperton, and the water in its track rose in a boiling wheal crested with steam. I lost sight of everything in a whirling torrent of steam.

In another moment the huge wave, well-nigh at the boiling point, had rushed upon me. I screamed aloud, turned to run as it leapt at my face, and, scalded, half blinded, agonised, I staggered through the hissing, leaping water towards the shore. Had my foot stumbled it would have been the end. I fell helplessly in full sight of the Martians, upon the broad, bare gravelly spit that runs down to mark the angle of the Wey and Thames. I expected nothing but death.

I have a dim memory of the foot of a Martian coming down within a yard of my head, driving straight into the loose gravel, whirling it this way and that, and lifting again; of a long suspense, and then of the four carrying the *débris* of their comrade between them, now clear, and then presently faint through a veil of smoke, receding interminably, as it seemed to me, across a vast space of river and meadow. And then very slowly I realised that by a miracle of chance I had escaped.

XIII.—HOW I FELL IN WITH THE CURATE.

After this sudden lesson in the power of terrestrial weapons, the Martians retreated to their original position upon Horsell Common, and in their haste and incumbered with the *débris* of their smashed companion, they no doubt overlooked many such a stray and unnecessary victim as myself. Had they left their comrade and pushed on forthwith, there was nothing at that time between them and London but batteries of twelve-pounder guns, and they would certainly have reached the capital in advance of the tidings of their approach,—as sudden, dreadful and destructive their advent would have been as the earthquake that destroyed Lisbon a century ago.



I contrived to paddle, as much as my parboiled hands would allow.

But they were in no hurry. Cylinder followed cylinder in its interplanetary flight; every twenty-four hours brought them reinforcement. And meanwhile the military and naval authorities now fully alive to the tremendous power of their antagonists, worked with furious energy. Every minute a fresh gun came into position, until, before twilight, every copse, every row of suburban villas on the hilly slopes about Kingston and Richmond, masked an expectant black muzzle. And through the charred and desolated area — perhaps twenty square miles altogether — that encircled the Martian encampment on Horsell Common, through charred and ruined villages among the green trees, through the blackened and smoking arcades that had been but a day ago pine spinneys, crawled the devoted scouts with the heliographs that were presently to warn the gunners of the Martian approach. But the Martians now understood our command of artillery and the danger of human proximity, and not a man ventured within a mile of either cylinder save at the price of his life.

It would seem these giants spent the earlier part of the afternoon in going to and fro, transferring everything from the second and third cylinders—the second in Addlestone Golf Links and the third at Pyrford—to their original pit on Horsell Common. Over that, one stood sentinel above the blackened heather and ruined buildings that stretched far and wide, while the rest abandoned their vast fighting machines and descended into the pit. They were hard at work there far into the night, and the towering pillar of

dense green smoke that rose thencefrom, could be seen from the hills about Merrow, and even, it is said, from Banstead and Epsom Downs.

And while the Martians behind me were thus preparing for their next sally, and in front of me Humanity gathered for the battle, I made my way with infinite pains and labour from the fire and smoke of burning Weybridge towards London. When I realised that the Martians had passed I struggled to my feet, giddy and smarting from the scalding I received, and for a space I stood sick and helpless between the drifting steam and the suffocating, burning, and smouldering behind.

Presently, through a gap in the thinning steam, I saw an abandoned boat, very small and remote, drifting down stream, and throwing off the most of my sodden and blackened clothes, I went after it, gained it, and so escaped out of that destruction. There were no oars in the boat, but I contrived to paddle, as much as my parboiled hands would allow, down the river towards Halliford and Walton, going very tediously, and continually looking behind me, as you may well understand.

The hot water from the Martian's overthrow drifted down stream with me, so that for the best part of a mile I could see little of either bank. Once, however, I made out a string of black figures hurrying across the meadows from the direction of Weybridge. Halliford, it seemed, was quite deserted, and several of the houses facing the river were afire. It was strange to see the place quite tranquil, quite desolate, under the hot blue sky, with the smoke and little threads of flame going straight up into the heat of the afternoon. Never before had I seen houses burning without the accompaniment of an inconvenient crowd. A little further on the dry reeds up the bank were smoking and glowing, and a line of fire inland was marching steadily across a late field of hay.

For a long time I drifted, so painful and weary was I after the violence I had been through, and so intense the heat upon the water. Then my fears got the better of me again, and I resumed my paddling. The sun scorched my bare back. At last, as the bridge at Walton was coming into sight round the bend, my fever and faintness overcame my fears, and I landed on the Middlesex bank, and lay down, deadly sick, amidst the long grass. I suppose the time was then about four or five o'clock. I got up presently, walked perhaps half a mile without meeting a soul, and then lay down again in the shadow of a hedge. I seem to remember talking wanderingly to myself during that last spurt. I was also very thirsty, and bitterly regretful I had drunk no more water.

I do not clearly remember the arrival of the curate, so that I probably dozed. I became aware of him as a seated figure in soot-smudged shirt sleeves, and with his upturned clean-shaven face, staring at a faint flickering that danced over the sky. The sky was what is called a mackerel sky, rows and rows of faint down-plumes of cloud, just tinted with the midsummer sunset.

I sat up, and, at the rustle of my motion, he looked at me quickly. "Have you any water?" I asked abruptly.

He shook his head. "You have been asking for water for the last hour," he said unsympathetically.

For a moment we were silent, taking stock of one another. I daresay he found me a strange enough figure, naked save for my water-soaked trousers and socks, scalded, and my face and shoulders blackened from the smoke. His face was a dead white, his eyes were pale grey, and blankly staring. He spoke abruptly, looking vacantly away from me.

"What does it mean?" he said. "What do these things mean?"

I stared at him and made him no answer.

He extended a thin, white hand and spoke in almost a complaining tone. "Why are these things permitted? What sins have we done? The morning service was over, I was walking through the roads to clear my brain for the afternoon's catechism, and then comes fire, earthquake, Death! As if it were Sodom and Gomorrah! All our work undone, all the work and the lives of hundreds of men. . . . . Does God care? What are these Martians?"

"What are we?" I answered, clearing my throat.

He gripped his knees and turned to look at me again. For half a minute, perhaps, he stared silently. "Aye!" he said; "what are we?" He relapsed into silence, with his chin now sunken almost to his knees.

"Poor worms," he began, waving his hand rhetorically, "creatures of a day. We have lived in peace and security for a couple of hundred years, neither war, nor pestilence, nor famine, nor earthquake, nor flood, has touched the land — neither war, nor pestilence, nor famine, nor earthquake, nor flood — and we have come to think ourselves kings, lords of it all. Religion! Minister of religion! I have been nothing but human self-complacency in a cassock and gown. Social work! Bazaars! —Folly! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—the *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Another pause, and he broke out again like one demented. "The smoke of her burning goeth up for ever and ever," he shouted, and pointed in the direction of Weybridge.

"The smoke of her burning goeth up for ever and ever."

By this time I was beginning to take his measure. The tremendous tragedy in which he had been involved—it was evident he was a fugitive from Weybridge—had driven him to the very verge of religious mania. "Are we far from Sunbury?" I said, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"What are we to do?" he asked. "Are these creatures everywhere? Has the earth been given over to them?"

"Are we far from Sunbury?"

"Only this morning I officiated at early celebration. . ."

"Things have changed," I said quietly. "You must keep your head. These monsters are not everywhere. There is still hope. They are only in this part of the world, unless I am much mistaken."

"But how are you to know that?"

I told him of the shots I had seen fired from Mars. He listened at first, but as I spoke briefly and drily of what I had seen, the interest in his eyes faded slowly to dejection, and he stared before him again.

"Don't you think," he said, interrupting me, "that this may be the beginning of the end? The end! The great and terrible Day of the Lord. When men shall call upon the

mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and hide them—hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the Throne?"

I stared blankly by way of answer, then rose painfully to my feet and, standing over him, laid my hand on his shoulder. "Drop that Book of Revelations," said I, "and be a man. You are scared out of your wits. After all, this is the way of Nature. What good is religion if it collapses at calamity? Think of what earthquakes and floods, wars and volcanoes, have done before to men. Did you think God had exempted Weybridge on your account? One would think, to hear you, that He had made you a special promise—and broken it. . . . . God is not an insurance agent, man."

"But how can we escape?" he asked more quietly. "They are invulnerable, they are pitiless."

"Neither the one nor perhaps the other," I answered. "And the mightier they are the more sane and wary should we be. One of them was killed yonder not three hours ago.

"I saw it happen," I said, and told him. "We have chanced to come in for the thick of it, and that is all."

"What is that flicker in the sky?" he said abruptly.

I told him it was simply the heliograph signalling. A cockchafer came droning over the hedge and past us. High in the west the crescent moon hung faint and pale, above the smoke of Weybridge and Shepperton and the hot splendour of the sunset.

"We are in the midst of it," I said, "quiet as it is. That flicker in the sky tells of the gathering storm. Yonder, I take it, are the Martians, and Londonward where those hills rise about Richmond and Kingston, and the trees give cover, earthworks are being thrown up and guns are being laid. Presently the Martians will be coming this way again. . ."

And even as I spoke, he sprang to his feet and stopped me by a gesture. "Listen!" he said. And from far away from beyond the low hills across the water, came the dull resonance of guns and a remote, weird crying.

"We had better follow this path," I said, "northward."

(To be continued next month.)

HE PHANTOM KISS.

ONE night in my room, still and beamless,
With will and with thought in eclipse,
I rested in sleep that was dreamless;
When softly there fell on my lips

A touch, as of lips that were pressing
Mine own with the message of bliss—
A sudden, soft, fleeting caressing,
A breath like a maiden's first kiss.

I woke—and the scoffer may doubt me—
I peered in surprise through the gloom;
But nothing and none were about me,
And I was alone in my room.

Perhaps 'twas the wind that caressed me
And touched me with dew-laden breath;
Or, maybe, close-sweeping, there passed me
The low-winging Angel of Death.

Some sceptic may choose to disdain it,
Or one feign to read it aright;
Or wisdom may seek to explain it—
This mystical kiss in the night.

But rather let fancy thus clear it:
That, thinking of me here alone,
The miles were made naught, and, in spirit,
Thy lips, love, were laid on mine own.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR.

By H. G. Wells.

SUMMARY.

The Martians, the inhabitants of Mars, invade the earth by means of huge cylinders shot across the intervening space. The first cylinder descends at Woking. The narrator of the story describes its arrival, the emergence of the Martians, and their hostility to men. Fighting begins on Friday. He narrowly escapes from a great battle at Weybridge, and falls in with a curate near Sunbury.

XIV.—IN LONDON.

My younger brother was in London when the Martians fell at Woking. He was a medical student working for an imminent examination, and he heard nothing of the arrival until Saturday morning. The morning papers on Saturday contained, in addition to lengthy special articles on the planet Mars, on life in the planets, and so forth, a brief and vaguely worded telegram, all the more striking for its brevity.

The Martians, alarmed by the approach of a crowd, had killed a number of people with a quick-firing gun, so the story ran. The telegram concluded with the words: "Formidable as they seem to be, the Martians "have not moved from the pit into which "they have fallen, and indeed seem incapable of doing so. Probably this is due "to the relative strength of the Earth's gravitational energy." On that last text, their leader-writer expanded very comfortingly.

Of course, all the students in the crammer's biology class, to which my brother went that day, were intensely interested, but there were no signs of any unusual excitement in the streets. The afternoon papers puffed scraps of news under big headlines. They had nothing to tell beyond the movements of troops about the common, and the burning of the pine woods between Woking and Weybridge, until eight. Then the *St. James' Gazette*, in an extra special edition, announced the bare fact of the interruption of telegraphic communication. This was thought to be due to the falling of burning pine trees across the line. Nothing more of the fighting was known that night, the night of my drive to Leatherhead and back again.

My brother felt no anxiety about us, as he knew from the description of the papers that the shot was a good two miles from my house. He made up his mind to run down that night to me in order, as he says, to see the things before they were killed. He dispatched a telegram (which never reached me) about four o'clock and spent the evening at a music-hall.

In London also on Saturday night there was a thunderstorm, and my brother reached Waterloo in a cab. On the platform from which the midnight train usually starts he

He was a medical student.

learnt, after some waiting, that an accident prevented trains from reaching Woking that night. The nature of the accident he could not ascertain. Indeed the railway authorities did not clearly know at that time. There was very little excitement in the station, as the officials, failing to realise that anything further than a breakdown between Byfleet and Woking Junction had occurred, were running the theatre trains which usually passed through Woking round by Virginia Water or Guildford. They were busy making the necessary arrangements to alter the route of the Southampton and Portsmouth Sunday League Excursions. A nocturnal newspaper reporter, mistaking my brother for the traffic manager, whom he does to a slight extent resemble, waylaid and tried to interview him. Few people, excepting the railway officials, connected the breakdown with the Martians.

I have read in another account of these events that on Sunday morning "all London was electrified by the news from Woking." As a matter of fact there was nothing to justify that very extravagant phrase. Plenty of people in London did not hear of the Martians until the panic of Monday morning. Those who did took some time to realise all that the hastily worded telegrams in the Sunday papers conveyed. The majority of people in London do not read Sunday papers.

The habit of personal security, moreover, is so deeply fixed in the Londoner's mind, and startling intelligence so much a matter of course in the papers, that they could read without any personal tremors :— "About seven o'clock last night the Martians came out of the cylinder, and, moving about under an armour of metallic shields, have completely wrecked Woking station with the adjacent houses, and massacred an entire battalion of the Cardigan Regiment. No details are known. Maxims have been absolutely useless against their armour. The field guns have been disabled by them. Flying Hussars have been galloping into Chertsey. The Martians appear to be moving slowly towards Chertsey or Windsor. Great anxiety prevails in West Surrey, and earthworks are being thrown up to check the advance Londonward." That was how the *Sunday Sun* put it, and a clever, and remarkably prompt "hand-book" article in the *Referee*, compared the affair to a menagerie suddenly let loose in a village.

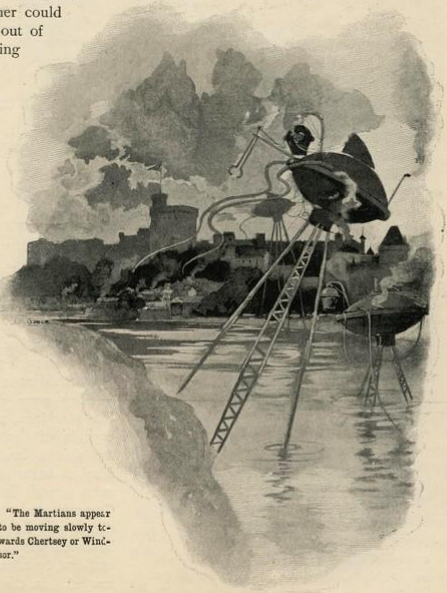
No one in London knew positively of the nature of the armoured Martians, and there was also a fixed idea that these monsters must be sluggish—"crawling," "creeping painfully," such expressions occurred in almost all the earlier reports. None of the telegrams could have been written by an eye-witness of their advance. The Sunday papers printed separate editions as further news came to hand, some even in default of it. But there was practically nothing more to tell people until late in the afternoon, when the authorities gave the press agents the news in their possession. It was stated that the people of Walton and Weybridge, and all that district, were pouring along the roads Londonward, and that was all.

My brother went to church at the Foundling Hospital in the morning, still in ignorance of what had happened on the previous night. There he heard allusions made to the invasion, and a special prayer for peace. Coming out he bought a *Referee*. He became alarmed at the news in this, and went again to Waterloo station, to find out if communication were restored. The omnibuses, carriages, cyclists, and innumerable people walking in their best clothes, seemed scarcely affected by the strange intelligence that the newsvendors were disseminating. People were interested, or if alarmed, alarmed only on account of the local residents. At the station he heard for the first time that the Windsor and Chertsey lines were now interrupted. The porters told him that several remarkable telegrams had been received in the morning from Byfleet and Chertsey stations, but that these had abruptly ceased. My brother could get very little precise detail out of them. "There's fighting going on about Weybridge," was the extent of their information.

The train service was now very much disorganised. Quite a number of people who had been expecting friends from places on the South-Western network were standing about the station. One grey-headed old gentleman came and abused the South-Western Company bitterly to my brother. "It wants showing up," he said.

One or two trains came in from Richmond, Putney, and Kingston, containing people who had gone out for a day's boating and found the locks closed and a feeling of panic in the air. A man in a blue and white blazer addressed my brother, full of strange tidings. "There's hosts of people driving into Kingston in traps and carts and things, with boxes of valuables and all that," he said. "They come from Molesey and Weybridge and Walton, and they say there's been guns heard at Chertsey, heavy firing, and that mounted soldiers have told them to get off at once because the Martians are coming. *We* heard guns firing at Hampton Court station, but we thought it was thunder. What the dickins does it all mean? The Martians can't get out of their pit, can they?" My brother could not tell him.

Afterwards he found that the vague feeling of alarm had spread to the clients of the underground railway, and that the Sunday excursionists began to return from all the South-Western "lungs," Barnes, Wimbledon, Richmond Park, Kew, and so forth, at unnaturally early hours. But not a soul had

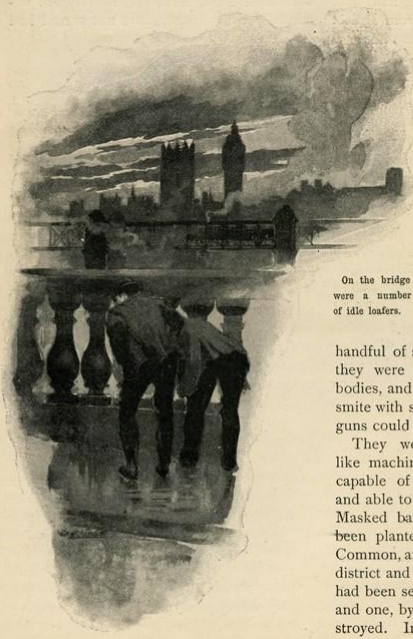


"The Martians appear to be moving slowly towards Chertsey or Windsor."

anything but vague hearsay to tell of. Every one connected with the terminus seemed ill-tempered.

About five o'clock the gathering crowd in the station was immensely excited by the opening of the line of communication (which is almost invariably closed) between the South-Eastern and South-Western stations, and the passage of carriage-trucks bearing huge guns and carriages crammed with soldiers. These were the guns that were brought up from Woolwich and Chatham to cover Kingston. There was an exchange of pleasantries: "You'll get eaten!" "We're the beast tamers!" and so forth. A little while after that a squad of police came into the station and began to clear the public off the platforms, and my brother went out into the street again.

The church bells were ringing for evensong, and a squad of the Salvation Army lasses came singing down Waterloo Road. On the bridge a number of idle loafers were watching a curious brown scum that came drifting down the stream in patches. The sun was just setting, and the Clock Tower and the Houses of Parliament rose against one of the most peaceful skies it is possible to imagine, a sky of gold barred with long transverse stripes of reddish purple cloud. There was talk of a floating body. One of the men there, a reservist he said he was, told my brother he had seen the heliograph flickering in the west.



On the bridge were a number of idle loafers.

In Wellington Street my brother met a couple of sturdy roughs who had just rushed out of Fleet Street with still wet newspapers and staring placards. "Dreadful Catastrophe," they bawled one to the other down Wellington Street. "Fighting at Weybridge. Full description. Repulse of the Martians. London said to be in danger!" He had to give threepence for a copy of that paper.

Then it was and then only that he realised something of the full power and terror of these monsters. He learnt that they were not merely a handful of small sluggish creatures, but that they were minds swaying vast mechanical bodies, and that they could move swiftly and smite with such power that even the mightiest guns could not stand against them.

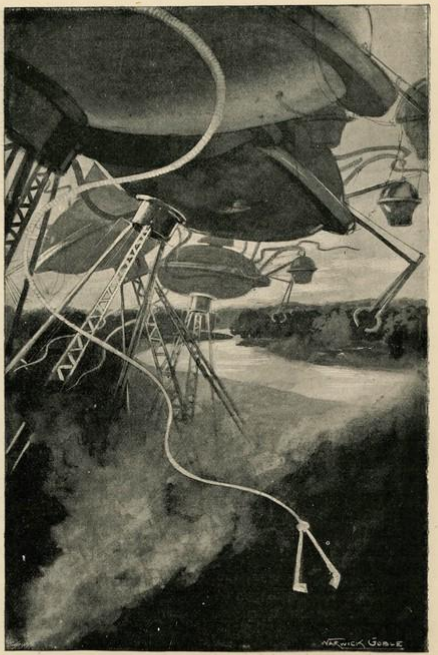
They were described as "vast spider-like machines, nearly a hundred feet high, capable of the speed of an express train and able to shoot out a beam of intense heat." Masked batteries, chiefly of field guns, had been planted in the country about Horsell Common, and especially between the Woking district and London. Five of the machines had been seen moving towards the Thames, and one, by a freak of chance, had been destroyed. In the other cases the shells had

missed, and the batteries had been at once annihilated by the Heat Rays. Heavy losses of soldiers were mentioned, but the tone of the dispatch was optimistic.

The Martians had been repulsed; they were not invulnerable. They had retreated to their triangle of cylinders again, in the circle about Woking. Signallers with heliographs were pushing forward upon them from all sides. Guns were in rapid transit from Windsor, Portsmouth, Aldershot, Woolwich, even from the north. Among others, long wire guns of 95 tons from Woolwich. Altogether one hundred and sixteen were in position or being hastily laid, chiefly covering London. Never before in England had there been such a vast or rapid concentration of military material.

Any further cylinders that fell, it was hoped, could be destroyed at once by high explosives, which were being rapidly manufactured and distributed. No doubt, ran the report, the situation was of the strangest and gravest description, but the public was exhorted to avoid and discourage panic. No doubt the Martians were strange and powerful, and their warfare terrible in the extreme, but at the outside, there could not be more than twenty of them against our millions.

The authorities had reason to suppose, from the size of the cylinders, that at the outside there could not be more than five in each cylinder—fifteen altogether. And one, at least, was disposed of, perhaps more. The public would be fairly warned of the approach of danger, and elaborate measures were being taken for the protection of the people in the threatened south-western suburbs. And so, with reiterated assurances of the safety of London, and the confidence of the authorities to cope with the difficulty, this *quasi* proclamation closed.



Five of the machines had been seen moving towards the Thames.

This was printed in enormous type, so fresh that the paper was wet still, and there had been no time to add a word of comment. It was curious, my brother said, to see how ruthlessly the other contents of the paper had been hacked and taken out, to give this place.

All down Wellington Street, people could be seen fluttering out the pink sheets,

and reading, and the Strand was suddenly noisy with the voices of an army of hawkers following these pioneers. Men came scrambling off 'buses to secure copies. Certainly this news excited people intensely, whatever their previous apathy. The shutters of a map shop in the Strand were being taken down, my brother said, and a man in his Sunday raiment, lemon yellow gloves even, was visible inside the window, hastily fastening maps of Surrey to the glass.

Going on along the Strand to Trafalgar Square, the paper in his hand, my brother saw some of the fugitives from West Surrey. There was a man driving a cart such as greengrocers use, and his wife and two boys and some articles of furniture. He was driving from the direction of Westminster Bridge, and close behind him came a hay waggon with five or six respectable-looking people in it, and some boxes and bundles. The faces of these people were haggard, and their entire appearance contrasted conspicuously with the Sabbath-best appearance of the people on the omnibuses. People in fashionable clothing peeped at them out of cabs. They stopped at the Square as if undecided which way to take, and finally turned eastward along the Strand. Some way after these came a man in work-day clothes, riding one of those old-fashioned tricycles with a small front wheel. He was dirty and white in the face.

My brother turned down towards Victoria and met a number of such people. He had a vague idea that he might see something of me. He noticed an unusual number of police regulating the traffic. Some of the refugees were exchanging news with the people on the omnibuses. One was professing to have seen the Martians. "Boilers on stilts, I tell you, striding along like men." Most of them were excited and animated by this strange experience.

Beyond Victoria the public houses were doing a lively trade with these arrivals. At all the street corners groups of people were reading papers, talking excitedly, or staring at these unusual Sunday visitors. They seemed to increase as night drew on, until at last the roads, my brother says, were like the Sutton High Street on a Derby Day. My brother addressed several of these fugitives, and got unsatisfactory answers from most.

None of them could tell him any news of Woking, except one man, who assured him that Woking had been entirely destroyed on the previous night. "I come from Byfleet," he said; "a man on a bicycle came through the place in the early morning, and ran from door to door warning us to come away. Then came soldiers. We went out to look and there were clouds of smoke to the south—nothing but smoke, and not a soul coming that way. Then we heard the guns at Chertsey and folks coming from Weybridge. So I've locked up my house and come on." At that time there was a strong feeling in the streets that the authorities were to blame for their incapacity to dispose of the invaders without all this inconvenience.

About eight o'clock, a noise of heavy firing was distinctly audible all over the south of London. My brother could not hear it for the traffic in the main streets, but by striking through the quiet back streets to the river, he was able to distinguish it quite plainly.

He walked back from Westminster to his apartments near Regent's Park about two. He was now very anxious on my account, and disturbed at the evident magnitude of the trouble. His mind was inclined to run, even as mine had run on Saturday, in military details. He thought of all those silent, expectant guns, of the suddenly nomadic country side; he tried to imagine "boilers on stilts," a hundred feet high.

There were one or two cartloads of refugees passing along Oxford Street, and several in the Marylebone Road, but so slowly was the news spreading, that Regent Street and Portland Road were full of their usual Sunday night promenaders, albeit they talked in groups, and, along the edge of Regent's Park, there were as many silent couples "walking out" together under the scattered yellow gas-lamps, as ever there had been. The night was warm and still, and a little oppressive, the sound of guns continued intermittently, and after midnight, there seemed to be sheet lightning in the south.

He read and re-read the paper, fearing

the worst had happened to me. He was restless, and after supper prowled out again aimlessly. He returned and tried to divert his attention by his examination notes in vain. He went to bed a little after midnight and he was awakened out of some lurid dreams, in the small hours of Monday, by the sound of door knockers, feet running in the street, distant drumming and a clamour of bells. Red reflections danced on the ceiling. For a moment, he lay astonished, wondering whether day had come or the world had gone mad. Then he jumped out of bed, and ran to the window.

His room was an attic, and as he thrust his head out, up and down the street there were a dozen echoes to the noise of his window sash, and heads, in every kind of night disarray, appeared. Inquiries were being shouted. "They are coming," bawled a policeman, hammering at the door; "the Martians are coming!" and hurried to the next door.

The noise of drumming and trumpeting came from the Albany Street barracks, and every church within earshot was hard at work killing sleep with a vehement disorderly tocsin. There was a noise of doors opening, and window after window in the houses opposite flashed from darkness into yellow illumination.

Up the street came galloping a closed carriage, bursting abruptly into noise at the corner, rising to a clattering climax under the window, and dying away slowly in the distance. Close on the rear of this came a couple of cabs, the forerunners of a long procession of flying vehicles, going for the most part to Chalk Farm station, where the North-Western special trains were loading up, instead of coming down the gradient into Euston.

For a long time my brother stared out of the window in blank astonishment, watching the policemen hammering at door after door and delivering their incomprehensible message. Then the door behind him opened, and the man who lodged across the landing came in, dressed only in shirt, trousers and slippers, his braces loose about his waist, his hair disordered from his pillow. "What the devil is it?" he asked. "A fire? What a devil of a row!"

Then he jumped out of bed, and ran to the window.

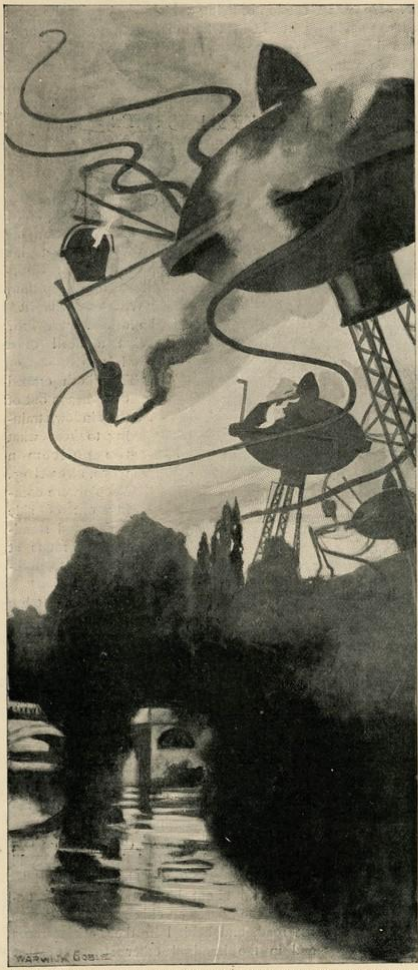
They both craned their heads out of the window, straining to hear what the policemen were shouting. People were coming out of side streets and standing in groups at the corners, talking.

"What the devil's it all about?" said my brother's fellow lodger.

My brother answered him vaguely and began to dress, running with each garment to the window, in order to miss nothing of the growing excitement of the streets. And presently men selling unnaturally early newspapers came bawling into the street:

"London in danger of suffocation! The Kingston and Richmond defences forced! Fearful massacres in the Thames Valley!"

And all about him—in the rooms below, in the houses on either side, and across the road, and behind in the Park terraces and in the hundred other streets of that



"The Martians are able to discharge enormous clouds of a black and poisonous vapour."

part of Marylebone, and in the Westbourne Park district and Saint Pancras, and westward and northward in Kilburn and St. John's Wood and Hampstead, and eastward in Shoreditch and Highbury and Haggerston and Hoxton, and indeed through all the vastness of London from Ealing to East Ham—people were rubbing their eyes, and opening windows to stare out and ask aimless questions, and dressing hastily as the first breath of the coming storm of Fear blew through the streets. It was the dawn of the great panic. London, which had gone to bed on Sunday night stupid and inert, was awakened in the small hours of Monday morning to a vivid sense of danger.

Unable, from his window, to learn what was happening, my brother went down and out into the street, just as the sky between the parapets of the houses grew pink with the early dawn. The flying people, on foot and in vehicles, grew more numerous every moment. "Black Smoke!" he heard people crying, and again, "Black Smoke!" The contagion of such a unanimous fear was inevitable. As my brother hesitated on the doorstep he saw another newsvendor approaching him, and got a copy forthwith. The man was running away with the rest, and selling his papers as he ran for a shilling each—a grotesque mingling of profit and panic.

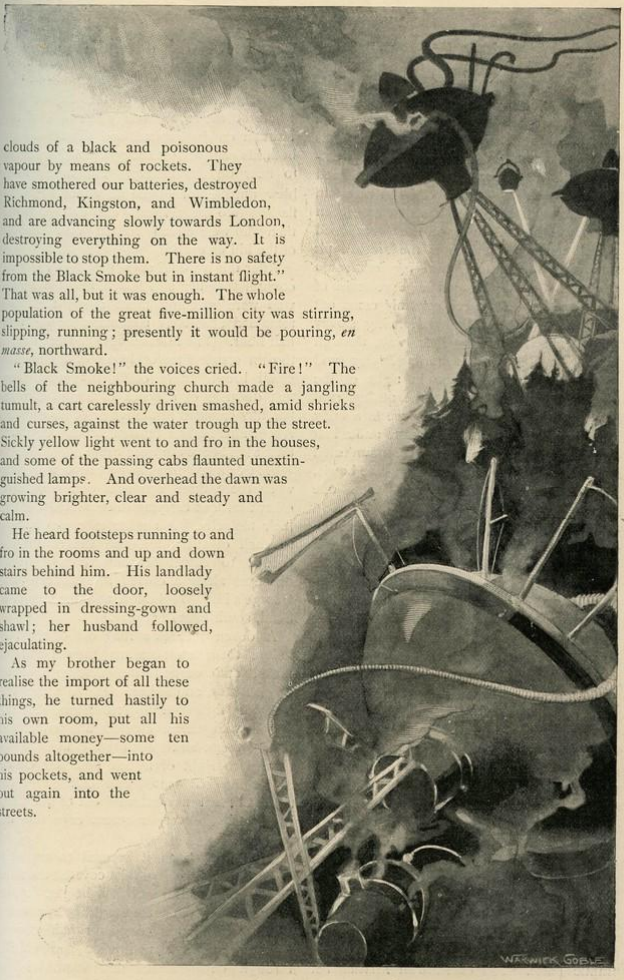
And from this paper my brother read that catastrophic dispatch of the Commander-in-Chief: "The Martians are able to discharge enormous

clouds of a black and poisonous vapour by means of rockets. They have smothered our batteries, destroyed Richmond, Kingston, and Wimbledon, and are advancing slowly towards London, destroying everything on the way. It is impossible to stop them. There is no safety from the Black Smoke but in instant flight." That was all, but it was enough. The whole population of the great five-million city was stirring, slipping, running; presently it would be pouring, *en masse*, northward.

"Black Smoke!" the voices cried. "Fire!" The bells of the neighbouring church made a jangling tumult, a cart carelessly driven smashed, amid shrieks and curses, against the water trough up the street. Sickly yellow light went to and fro in the houses, and some of the passing cabs flaunted unextinguished lamps. And overhead the dawn was growing brighter, clear and steady and calm.

He heard footsteps running to and fro in the rooms and up and down stairs behind him. His landlady came to the door, loosely wrapped in dressing-gown and shawl; her husband followed, ejaculating.

As my brother began to realise the import of all these things, he turned hastily to his own room, put all his available money—some ten pounds altogether—into his pockets, and went out again into the streets.



A leg of the tripod had been smashed.

XV.—WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN SURREY.

It was while I and the curate had sat and talked under the hedge in the flat meadows near Halliford, and while my brother was watching the fugitives stream over Westminster Bridge, that the Martians resumed the offensive. So far as one can ascertain from the conflicting accounts that have been put forth, the majority of them remained busied with preparations in the Horsell pit until nine that night, hurrying on some operation that disengaged huge volumes of green smoke. But three certainly came out about eight o'clock, and, advancing slowly and cautiously, made their way through Byfleet and Pyrford towards Ripley and Weybridge, and so came in sight of the expectant batteries against the setting sun. These Martians did not advance in a body but in a line, each perhaps a mile and a half from his nearest fellow. They communicated with each other by means of siren-like howls, running up and down the scale from one note to another.

It was this howling and the firing of the guns at Ripley and Saint George's Hill that we had heard at Upper Halliford. The Ripley gunners, unseasoned Artillery volunteers who ought never to have been placed in such a position, fired one wild, premature, ineffectual volley, and bolted on horse and foot through the deserted village, and the Martian walked over their guns serenely without using his Heat Ray, stepped gingerly among them, passed in front of them, and so came unexpectedly upon the guns in Painshill Park, which he destroyed. The St. George's Hill men, however, were better led or of a better mettle. Hidden by a pine wood as they were, they seem to have been quite unexpected by the Martian nearest to them. They laid their guns as deliberately as if they had been on parade, and fired at about a thousand yards range.

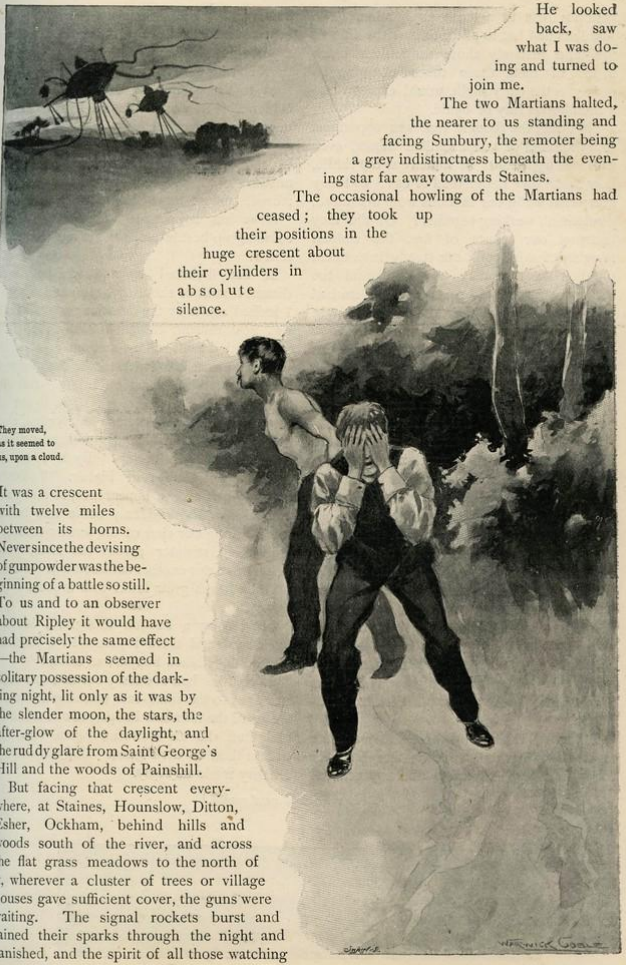
The shells flashed all round the Martian, and they saw him advance a few paces, stagger, and go down. Everybody yelled together, and the guns were reloaded in frantic haste. The overthrown Martian set up a prolonged ululation, and immediately a second glittering giant, answering him, appeared over the trees to the south. It would seem that a leg of the tripod had been smashed by one of the shells. The whole of the second volley flew wide of the Martian on the ground, and simultaneously both his companions brought their Heat Rays to bear on the battery. The ammunition blew up, the pine trees all about the guns flashed into fire, and only one or two of the men who were already running over the crest of the hill escaped.

After this it would seem that the three took counsel together and halted, and the scouts who were watching them report that they remained absolutely stationary for the next half hour. The Martian who had been overthrown crawled tediously out of his hood, a small brown figure oddly suggestive from that distance of a speck of blight, and apparently engaged in the repair of his support. About nine he had finished, for his cowl was then seen above the trees again.

It was a few minutes past nine that night when these three sentinels were joined by other Martians carrying thick black tubes in their tentacles. A similar tube was handed to each of the three, and the seven proceeded to distribute themselves at equal distances along a curved line between Saint George's Hill, Weybridge, and the village of Send, south-west of Ripley.

A dozen rockets sprang out of the hills before them so soon as they began to move, and warned the waiting batteries about Ditton and Esher. At the same time four of their fighting machines, similarly armed with tubes, crossed the river, and two of them, black against the western sky, came into sight of myself and the curate, as we hurried wearily and painfully along the road that runs northward out of Halliford, looking back every moment expecting this thing.

They moved, as it seemed to us, upon a cloud, for a milky mist covered the fields and rose to a third of their height. At the sight the curate shouted and began running, but I knew it was no good running from a Martian, and I turned aside and crawled through dewy nettles and brambles into the broad ditch by the side of the road.



They moved, as it seemed to us, upon a cloud.

He looked back, saw what I was doing and turned to join me.

The two Martians halted, the nearer to us standing and facing Sunbury, the remoter being a grey indistinctness beneath the evening star far away towards Staines.

The occasional howling of the Martians had ceased; they took up their positions in the huge crescent about their cylinders in absolute silence.

It was a crescent with twelve miles between its horns. Never since the devising of gunpowder was the beginning of a battle so still. To us and to an observer about Ripley it would have had precisely the same effect—the Martians seemed in solitary possession of the darkling night, lit only as it was by the slender moon, the stars, the after-glow of the daylight, and the ruddy glare from Saint George's Hill and the woods of Painshill.

But facing that crescent everywhere, at Staines, Hounslow, Ditton, Esher, Ockham, behind hills and woods south of the river, and across the flat grass meadows to the north of it, wherever a cluster of trees or village houses gave sufficient cover, the guns were waiting. The signal rockets burst and rained their sparks through the night and vanished, and the spirit of all those watching

batteries rose to a tense expectation. The Martians had but to advance into the line of fire, and instantly those motionless black forms of men, those tubes glittering so darkly in the early night, would explode into a thunderous fury of battle.

No doubt the thought that was uppermost in a thousand of those vigilant minds, even as it was uppermost in mine, was the riddle, how much they understood of us? Did they grasp that we in our millions were organised, disciplined, working together? Or did they interpret our spurts of fire, the sudden stinging of our shells, our steady investment of their encampment, as we should the furious unanimity of onslaught in a disturbed hive of bees? Did they dream they might exterminate us? (At that time no one knew what food they needed.) A hundred such questions struggled together in my mind as I watched that vast sentinel shape. And in the back of my mind was the sense of all the huge unknown and hidden forces Londonward. Had they prepared pitfalls? Were the powder mills at Hounslow ready as a snare? Would the Londoners have the heart and courage to make a greater Moscow of their mighty province of houses?

Then, after an interminable time as it seemed to us, crouching there and peering through the hedge, came the sound like the distant concussion of a gun. Another, nearer, and then another. And then the Martian beside us raised his tube on high and discharged it gunwise, with a heavy report that made the ground heave. The Martian towards Staines answered him. There was no flash, no smoke, simply that loaded detonation.

I was so excited by these heavy minute guns following one another, that I so far forgot my personal safety and my scalded hands as to clamber up into the hedge and stare towards Sunbury. As I did so a second report followed, and a big projectile hurtled overhead towards Hounslow. I expected at least to see smoke or fire or some such evidence of its work. But all I saw was the deep blue sky above, with one solitary star, and the white mist spreading wide and low beneath. And there had been no crash, no answering explosion. The silence was restored, the minute lengthened to three. "What has happened?" said the curate, standing up beside me. "Heaven knows!" said I.

A bat flickered by and vanished. A distant tumult of shouting began and ceased. I looked again at the Martian, and saw he was now moving eastward, along the river bank, with a swift rolling motion.

Every moment I expected the fire of some hidden battery to spring upon him. But the evening calm was unbroken. The figure of the Martian grew smaller as he receded, and presently the mist and the gathering night had swallowed him up. By a common impulse we clambered higher. Towards Sunbury was a dark appearance, as though a conical hill had suddenly come into being there, hiding our view of the further country. And then, remoter across the river, over Walton, we saw another such summit. These hill-like forms grew lower and broader even as we stared.

Moved by a sudden thought, I looked northward, and there I perceived a third of these cloudy black kopjes had arisen.

Everything had suddenly become very still. Far away to the south-east, marking the quiet, we heard the Martians hooting to one another, and then the air quivered again with the distant thud of their guns. But the earthly artillery made no reply.

(To be continued next month.)

For "THE EDITORIAL MIND," *see p.* 232A.

SUMMARY.

THE Martians, the inhabitants of Mars, invade the earth by means of huge cylinders, shot across the intervening space. The first cylinder descends at Woking. The narrator of the story describes its arrival, the emergence of the Martians, and their hostility to men. Fighting begins on Friday. He narrowly escapes from a great battle at Weybridge, and falls in with a curate near Sunbury.

XV.—WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN SURREY *(continued)*.

AND here I come upon the most obscure of all the problems that centre about the Martians, the riddle of the Black Gas. Each of the Martians standing in the great crescent I have described, seems, at some unknown signal, to have discharged by means of the gun-like tube he carried a huge canister over whatever hill, copse, cluster of houses, or other possible cover for guns chanced to be in front of him.

Some fired only one of them, some two, as in the case of the one we had seen; the one at Ripley is said to have discharged no fewer than five at that time. These canisters seemed to have smashed or exploded on striking the ground, and incontinently to have disengaged an enormous volume of a heavy inky vapour, coiling and pouring upwards in a huge and ebony cumulus cloud, a gaseous hill that sank and spread itself slowly over the surrounding country. And the touch of that vapour, the inhaling of its pungent wisps, was death to all that breathe.

It was heavy, this vapour, heavier than the densest smoke, so that after the first tumultuous uprush and outflow of its impact, it sank down through the air and poured over the ground in a manner rather liquid than gaseous, abandoning the hills and streaming into the valleys and ditches and water-courses, even as I have heard the carbonic acid gas that pours from volcanic clefts is wont to do. And where it came upon water some chemical action occurred, and the surface would be instantly covered with a powdery scum that sank slowly and made way for more. That scum was absolutely insoluble, and it is a strange thing, seeing the instant effect of the gas, that one could drink the water from which it had been strained without hurt.

The vapour did not diffuse as a true gas would do. It hung together in banks, flowing sluggishly down the slope of the land and driving reluctantly before the wind, and very slowly it combined with the mist and moisture of the air and sank to the earth in the form of dust.

Once the tumultuous upheaval of its dispersion was over, it clung so closely to the ground, even before this precipitation, that

fifty feet up in the air, on the roofs and upper storeys of high houses and on great trees, there was a chance of escaping its poison altogether, as was proved even that night at Street Chobham and Ditton. The man who escaped at the former place tells a wonderful story of the strangeness of its coiling flow, and how he looked down from the church spire and saw the houses of the village rising like ghosts out of its inky nothingness. For a day and a half he remained there, weary, starving and sun-scorched—the earth under the blue sky and against the prospect of the distant blue hills a velvet black expanse, with red roofs, green trees, and, later, black-veiled shrubs and gates, barns, outhouses and walls rising here and there into the sunlight.

But that was at Street Chobham, where the black vapour was allowed to remain until it sank of its own accord to the ground. As a rule, the Martians, when it had served its purpose, cleared the air of it again by wading into it and directing a jet of steam upon it.

That they did with the vapour banks near us, as we saw in the starlight from the window of a deserted house at Upper Halliford, whither we had returned. From there we could see the search lights on Richmond Hill and Kingston Hill going to and fro, and about eleven the window rattled, and we heard the sound of the huge siege guns that had been put in position there. These continued intermittently for the space of a quarter of an hour, sending chance shots at the invisible Martians at Hampton and Ditton, and then the pale beams of the electric light vanished, and were replaced by a bright red glow.

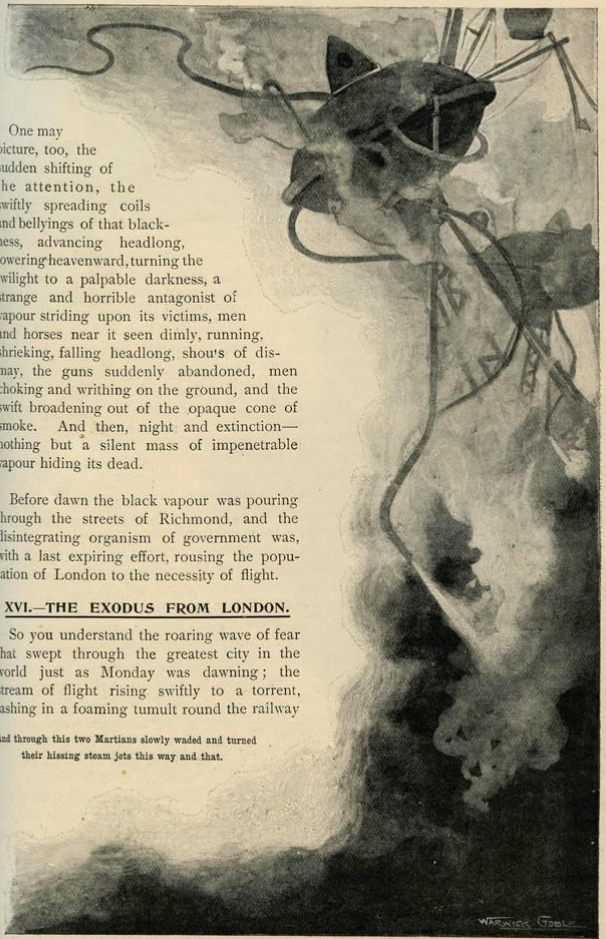
Then the fourth cylinder fell—a brilliant green meteor—as I learnt afterwards, in Bushey Park. Before the guns on the Richmond and Kingston line of hills began, there was a fitful cannonade far away in the south-west, due, I believe, to guns being fired haphazard before the black vapour could overwhelm the gunners.

So, setting about it as methodically as men might smoke out a wasp's nest, the Martians spread this strange stifling vapour over the London-ward country. The horns of the crescent slowly spread apart, until at last they formed a line from Hanwell to Coombe and Malden. All night through, their destructive tubes advanced. Never once, after the Martian at St. George's Hill was brought down, did they give the artillery the ghost of a chance against them. Wherever there was a possibility of guns being laid for them unseen, a fresh canister of the black vapour was discharged, and where the guns were openly displayed, the Heat Ray was brought to bear.

By midnight, the blazing trees along the slopes of Richmond Park, and the glare of Kingston Hill, threw their light upon a network of black smoke, blotting out the whole valley of the Thames and extending as far as the eye could reach. And through this two Martians slowly waded and turned their hissing steam jets this way and that.

The Martians were sparing of the Heat Ray that night, either because they had but a limited supply of material for its production, or because they did not wish to destroy the country, but only to crush and overawe the opposition they had aroused. In the latter aim they certainly succeeded. Sunday night was the end of the organised opposition to their movements. After that no body of men could stand against them, so hopeless was the enterprise. Even the crews of the torpedo boats and destroyers that had brought their quick-firers up the Thames, refused to stop, mutinied, and went down again. The only offensive operation men ventured upon after that night was the preparation of mines and pitfalls, and even in those, men's energies were frantic and spasmodic.

One has to imagine the fate of those batteries towards Esher waiting so tensely in the twilight, as well as one may. Survivors there were none. One may picture the orderly expectation, the officers alert and watchful, the gunners ready, the ammunition piled to hand, the limber gunners with their horses and waggons, the groups of civilian spectators standing as near as they were permitted, the evening stillness; the ambulances and hospital tents with the burnt and wounded from Weybridge; then the dull resonance of the shots the Martians fired, and the clumsy projectile whirling over the trees and houses, and smashing amidst the neighbouring fields.



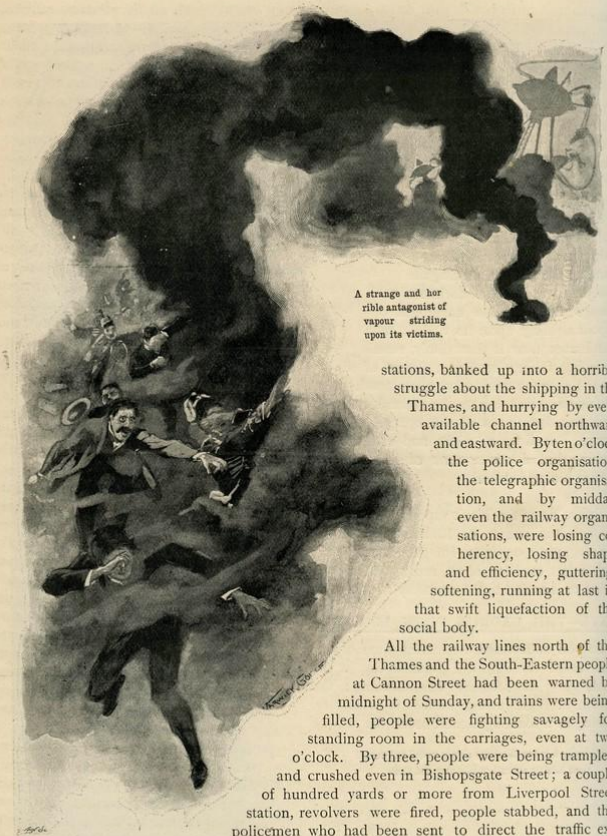
And through this two Martians slowly waded and turned their hissing steam jets this way and that.

One may picture, too, the sudden shifting of the attention, the swiftly spreading coils and bellyings of that blackness, advancing headlong, towering heavenward, turning the twilight to a palpable darkness, a strange and horrible antagonist of vapour striding upon its victims, men and horses near it seen dimly, running, shrieking, falling headlong, shouts of dismay, the guns suddenly abandoned, men choking and writhing on the ground, and the swift broadening out of the opaque cone of smoke. And then, night and extinction—nothing but a silent mass of impenetrable vapour hiding its dead.

Before dawn the black vapour was pouring through the streets of Richmond, and the disintegrating organism of government was, with a last expiring effort, rousing the population of London to the necessity of flight.

XVI.—THE EXODUS FROM LONDON.

So you understand the roaring wave of fear that swept through the greatest city in the world just as Monday was dawning; the stream of flight rising swiftly to a torrent, lashing in a foaming tumult round the railway



A strange and horrible antagonist of vapour striding upon its victims.

stations, banked up into a horrible struggle about the shipping in the Thames, and hurrying by every available channel northward and eastward. By ten o'clock the police organisation, the telegraphic organisation, and by midday even the railway organisations, were losing coherency, losing shape and efficiency, guttering, softening, running at last in that swift liquefaction of the social body.

All the railway lines north of the Thames and the South-Eastern people at Cannon Street had been warned by midnight of Sunday, and trains were being filled, people were fighting savagely for standing room in the carriages, even at two o'clock. By three, people were being trampled and crushed even in Bishopsgate Street; a couple of hundred yards or more from Liverpool Street station, revolvers were fired, people stabbed, and the policemen who had been sent to direct the traffic exhausted and infuriated, were breaking the heads of the people they were called out to protect.

And as the day advanced and the engine-drivers and stokers refused to return into London, the pressure of the flight drove the people in an ever thickening multitude away from the stations and along the northward running roads. By midday a Martian had been seen at Barnes, and a cloud of slowly sinking black vapour drove along the Thames and across the flats of Lambeth, cutting off all escape over the bridges in its sluggish advance. Another

bank drove over Ealing and surrounded a little island of survivors on Castle Hill, alive but unable to escape.

My brother has described the flight of the people through Chipping Barnet very vividly. And the account of his Monday morning may serve to give an idea how it was with the individuals in that pouring multitude. He himself was no longer alone when he came to Chipping Barnet. After a fruitless struggle to get aboard a North-Western train at Chalk Farm—the engines of the trains that had loaded in the goods yard there, *ploughed* through shrieking people, and a dozen stalwart men fought to keep the crowd from crushing the driver against his furnace—my brother emerged upon the Chalk Farm road, dodged across through a hurrying swarm of vehicles, and had the luck to be foremost in the sack of a cycle shop. The front tyre of the machine he got was punctured in dragging it through the window, but he got up and off notwithstanding, with no further injury than a cut wrist. The steep foot of Haverstock Hill was impassable owing to several overturned horses, and my brother struck into Belsize Road.

So he got out of the fury of the panic, and, skirting the Edgware Road, reached Edgware about seven, fasting and wearied but well ahead of the crowd. A mile from Edgware the rim of the bicycle broke, and the machine became unrideable. He trudged into the village. Here, as yet, the panic had scarcely arrived, and he succeeded in getting some food at an inn. There were shops half opened in the main street of the place, and people in the doorways and windows staring astonished at this extraordinary procession of fugitives that was beginning.

At Edgware the roads were crowded, but as yet far from congested. Most of the fugitives at that hour were mounted on cycles, but there were also motor cars, hansom cabs, and carriages hurrying along, and the dust hung in heavy clouds along the road to Saint Albans. It was perhaps a vague idea of making his way to Chelmsford, where some friends of his lived, that made my brother strike into a quiet lane running eastward. The torrent of people flowed on past him. For a few minutes he thought he had the lane to himself. And then he came upon two ladies, just in time to save them.

He heard their screams, and hurrying round the corner saw a couple of men struggling to drag them out of the little pony chaise in which they had been driving, while a third with difficulty held the frightened pony's head. One of the ladies, a short woman dressed in white, was simply screaming, the other, a dark slender figure, slashed at the man who gripped her arm with a whip she held in her disengaged hand. My brother immediately grasped the situation, shouted and hurried towards the struggle. One of the men desisted and turned towards him, and my brother, realising from his antagonist's face that a fight was unavoidable, and being an expert boxer, went into him forthwith and sent him down against the wheel of the chaise.

It was no time for pugilistic chivalry, and my brother laid him quiet with a kick, and gripped the collar of the man who pulled at the slender lady's arm. He heard the clatter of hoofs, the whip stung across his face, a third antagonist struck him between the eyes, and the man he held wrenched himself free and made off down the lane in the direction from which he had come.

Partly stunned, he found himself facing the man who had held the horse's head, and became aware of the chaise receding from him down the lane, swaying from side to side and with the women in it looking back. The man before him, a burly rough, tried to close, and he stopped him with a blow in the face. Then realising that he was deserted, he dodged round and made off down the lane after the chaise, with the sturdy man close behind him, and the fugitive who had turned now, following remotely.

Suddenly he stumbled and fell, his immediate pursuer went headlong, and he rose to his feet to find himself with a couple of antagonists again. He would have had little chance against them had not the slender lady very pluckily pulled up and returned to his help. It seems she had had a revolver all this time, but it had been under the seat when she and her companions were attacked. She fired at six yards distance, narrowly missing my brother. The less courageous of the robbers made off, and his companion followed him cursing his cowardice. They both stopped in sight down the lane where the third man lay insensible.

"Take this!" said the slender lady, and gave my brother her revolver.

"Go back to the chaise," said my brother, wiping the blood from his split lip.

She turned without a word—they were both panting—and they went back to where the lady in white struggled to hold back the frightened pony. The robbers had evidently had enough of it. "I'll sit here," said my brother, "if I may," and he got upon the empty front seat. The lady looked over her shoulder. "Give me the reins," she said, and laid the whip along the pony's side. In another moment a bend in the road hid the three men from my brother's eyes.

She fired at six yards distance.

So, quite unexpectedly, my brother found himself, panting, with a cut mouth, a bruised jaw, and bloodstained knuckles, driving along an unknown lane with these two women. Such extraordinary introductions were by no means uncommon in those strange and wonderful days. These women had no idea where to go. They were wife and younger sister of a surgeon living at Stanmore, who had come in the small hours from a dangerous case at Pinner, and heard at some railway-station on his way of the Martian advance.

He had hurried home, roused the women—their servant had left them two days before—packed some provisions, put his revolver under the seat—luckily for my brother—and told them to drive on to Edgware, with the idea of their getting a train there. He stopped behind to tell the neighbours. He would overtake them, he said, at about half past four in the morning, and now it was nearly nine and they had seen nothing of him since. They could not stop in Edgware because of the growing traffic through the place, and so they had come into this side lane.

That was the story they told my brother in fragments when presently they stopped again, nearer to New Barnet. He promised to stay with them at least until they could determine what to do or until the missing man arrived, and professed to be an expert shot with the revolver—a weapon strange to him—in order to give them confidence. He told them of his own escape out of London, and all that he knew of these Martians and their ways. The sun crept higher in the sky, and after a time their talk died out and gave place to an uneasy state of anticipations.

"What is that murmur?" asked the stouter woman suddenly. They all listened and heard a sound like the droning of wheels in a distant factory, a murmurous sound, rising and falling. "If one did not know this was Middlesex," said my brother, "we might take that for the sound of the sea."

"Do you think George can possibly find us here?" asked the slender woman abruptly.

The man's wife was for returning to their house, but my brother urged a hundred

cogent reasons against that suicide. "We have money," said the slender woman, and hesitated. Her eyes met my brother's, and her hesitation ended. "So have I," said my brother. She explained that they had as much as thirty pounds in gold besides a five pound note, and suggested that with that, they might get upon a train at Saint Albans or New Barnet. My brother thought that was hopeless, seeing the fury of the Londoners to crowd upon the trains, and broached his own idea of striking across Essex towards Harwich. Mrs. Elphinstone—that was the name of the woman in white—would listen to no reasoning, and kept calling upon "George," but her sister-in-law was astonishingly quiet and deliberate; and at last agreed to my brother's suggestion. So they went on towards Barnet, my brother leading the pony to save it as much as possible.

As the sun crept up the sky, the day became excessively hot, and under foot a thick whitish sand grew burning and blinding, so that they travelled only very slowly. The hedges were grey with dust. And slowly as they advanced towards Barnet, the tumultuous murmuring grew stronger.

"That sound," said Miss Elphinstone presently, "is growing. It sounds now like the noise of a waterfall in the distance."

"Or that deep note one hears from a fire," said my brother. "It is the voice of a multitude of people. And very soon now we shall come upon the great North Road."

As they went up a little hill towards the cross roads they saw a woman approaching the road across some fields on their left, carrying a child, and with two other children, and then a man in dirty black, with a thick stick in one hand and a small portmanteau in the other passed them. Mrs. Elphinstone suddenly cried out at a number of tongues of smoky red flame leaping up above the houses against the hot blue sky. Then round the corner of the lane, from between the villas that guarded it at its confluence with the high road, came a little cart drawn by a sweating black pony and driven by a sallow youth in a bowler hat, grey with dust. There were three girls like East End factory girls, and a couple of little children, crowded in the cart.

"This'll tike us rahnd Edgware?" asked the driver, and when my brother told him it would if he turned to the left, he looked over his shoulder and remarked, "told yer so," to his following.

My brother noticed a pale grey smoke or haze rising among the houses in front of them, and veiling the white façade of a terrace beyond the road that appeared between the backs of the villas. Then, as the noise of the cartwheels died away behind the man, the tumultous noise before them asserted itself again, but stronger now and clearer, the disorderly mingling of many voices, the gride of many wheels, the creaking of waggons, and in another minute the cross roads were visible. The lane came round abruptly not fifty yards from the turning. "Good heavens!" cried Mrs. Elphinstone. "What is this you are driving us into?" My brother stopped. Then, fascinated by what he saw, led the pony into the very throat of the lane, and stood amazed.

For the main road was a boiling stream of people, a torrent of human beings rushing northward, one pressing on another. A great bank of dust, white and luminous in the blaze of the sun, made everything within twenty feet of the ground grey and indistinct, and was perpetually renewed by the hurrying feet of a dense crowd of horses and men and women on foot, and by the wheels of vehicles of every description. "Way!" my brother heard voices crying. "Make way." It was like riding into the smoke of a fire to approach the meeting point of the lane and road: the crowd roared like a fire, and the dust was hot and pungent. And, indeed, a little way up the road a villa was burning, and sending rolling masses of black smoke across the road to add to the confusion.

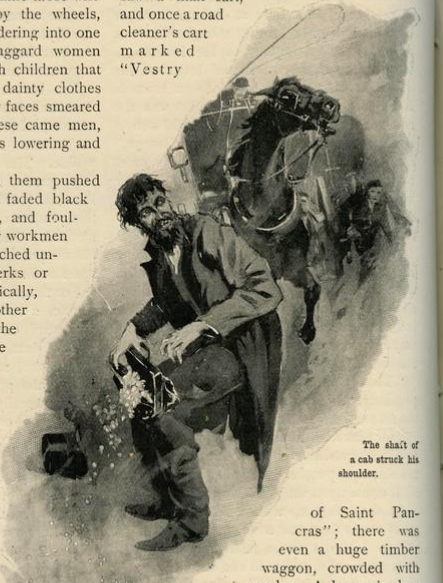
So much as they could see of the road Londonward between the houses to the right, was a tumultuous stream of dirty, hurrying people pent in between the villas on either side; the black heads, the crowded forms, grew into distinctness as they rushed towards the corner, hurried past and merged their individuality again in a receding multitude that was swallowed up at last in a cloud of dust. "Go on! Go on!" cried the voices. "Way! Way!" One man's hands pressed on the back of another.

Edgware had been a scene of confusion, Chalk Farm a riotous tumult, but this was a whole population in movement. It is hard to imagine that host. It had no character of its own. The figures poured out past the corner and receded with their backs to the group in the lane. Along the margin came those who were on foot, threatened by the wheels, stumbling in the ditches, blundering into one another. There were sad, haggard women rushing by, well dressed, with children that cried and stumbled, their dainty clothes smothered in dust, their weary faces smeared with tears. With many of these came men, sometimes helpful, sometimes lowering and savage.

Fighting side by side with them pushed some weary street outcast in faded black rags, wide-eyed, loud-voiced, and foul-mouthed. There were sturdy workmen thrusting their way along, wretched unkempt men clothed like clerks or shopmen, struggling spasmodically, a wounded soldier my brother noticed, men dressed in the clothes of railway porters, one wretched creature in a night-shirt with a coat thrown over it. The carts and carriages crowded close upon one another, making little way for those swifter and more impatient vehicles that darted forward every now and then when an opportunity showed itself of doing so, sending the people scattering against the fences and gates of the villas. "Push on!" was the cry. "Push on! they are coming."

In one cart stood a blind man in the uniform of the Salvation Army, gesticulating with his crooked fingers and bawling "Eternity! Eternity!" His voice was hoarse and very loud, so that my brother could hear him long after he was lost to sight in the southward dust. Some of the people who crowded in the carts, whipped stupidly at their horses and quarrelled with other drivers; some sat motionless, staring at nothing with miserable eyes, some gnawed their hands with thirst, or lay prostrate in the bottoms of their conveyances. The horses' bits were covered with foam, their eyes bloodshot.

There were cabs, carriages, shop carts, waggons, beyond counting; once my brother saw a mail cart, and once a road cleaner's cart marked "Vestry



The shaft of a cab struck his shoulder.

of Saint Pancras"; there was even a huge timber waggon, crowded with roughs. A brewer's dray rumbled by with its two near wheels splashed with recent blood. "Clear the way!" cried the voices. "Clear the way!" "Eter—nity! Eter—nity!" came echoing up the road.

But varied as its composition was, certain things all that host had in common. There was fear and pain on their faces, and fear behind them, a tumult up the road—a quarrel for a place in a waggon, sent the whole host of them quickening their pace, even as a man so scared and broken that his

knees bent under him was galvanised for a moment into renewed activity. The heat and dust had already been at work on this multitude. Their skins were dry, their lips black and cracked. They were all thirsty, weary and footsore. And amid the various cries one heard disputes, reproaches, groans of weariness and fatigue—the voices of most of them were hoarse and weak—through it all ran a refrain: "Way! Way! The Martians are coming."

Few stopped and came aside from that flow of men. The lane opened slantingly into the main road with a narrow opening, and had a delusive appearance of coming from the direction of London. Yet a kind of eddy of people drove into its mouth; weaklings elbowed out of the stream, who for the most part rested but a moment before plunging into it again. A little way down the lane with two friends bending over him lay a man with a bare leg, wrapped about with bloody rags. He was a lucky man to have friends.

A little old man with a grey military moustache, and a filthy black frock coat, limped out and sat down beside the trap, removed his boot—his sock was bloodstained—shook out a pebble and hobbled on again; and then a little girl of eight or nine, all alone, threw herself under the hedge close by my brother—weeping. "I can't go on. I can't go on."

My brother woke from his torpor of astonishment and lifted her up, speaking gently to her, and carried her to Miss Elphinstone. So soon as my brother touched her she became quite still as if frightened. "What does it all mean?" whispered Miss Elphinstone. "I don't know," said my brother. "But this poor child is dropping with fear and fatigue." "Ellen, Ellen!" shrieked a woman in the crowd, with tears in her voice, and the child suddenly dashed away from my brother, crying: "Mother!"

"They are coming," said a man on horseback riding past along the lane.

"Out of the way there!" bawled a coachman towering high, and my brother saw he was turning his carriage, a closed carriage such as doctors use, into the lane. The people crushed back on one another to avoid his horse. My brother pushed the pony and chaise back into the hedge, and he drove by and stopped at the turn of the way. It was a carriage for a pair of horses, but only one was in the shafts. From the chaise they saw dimly through the dust that two men were lifting out a man on a white stretcher, and putting him gently on the grass beneath the privet hedge. One of the men came running to my brother. "Where is there water?" he said. "He is dying fast and very thirsty. It is Lord Garrick."—"Lord Garrick!" said my brother, "the Chief Justice?"—"The water?" he said.—"There may be a tap," said my brother, "in some of the houses. We have no water. I dare not leave my people." The man pushed his way against the crowd towards the gate of the corner house. "Go on!" said the people thrusting at him. "They are coming. Go on!"

Then my brother's attention was distracted by a bearded eagle-faced man lugging a small handbag which split even as my brother's eyes rested on it and disgorged a mass of sovereigns that seemed to break up into separate coins as it struck the ground.

They rolled hither and thither among the struggling feet of men and horses. The Jew stopped and looked stupidly at the heap, and the shaft of a cab struck his shoulder and sent him reeling. He gave a shriek and dodged back, and a cartwheel shaved him narrowly. "Way!" cried the men all about him. "Make way!" So soon as the cab had passed, he flung himself, with both hands open, upon the heap of coins, and began clutching handfuls in his pocket; a horse rose close upon him, and in another moment he had half risen and had been borne down under the horse's hoofs. "Stop!" screamed my brother, and, pushing a woman out of his way, tried to clutch the bit of the horse.

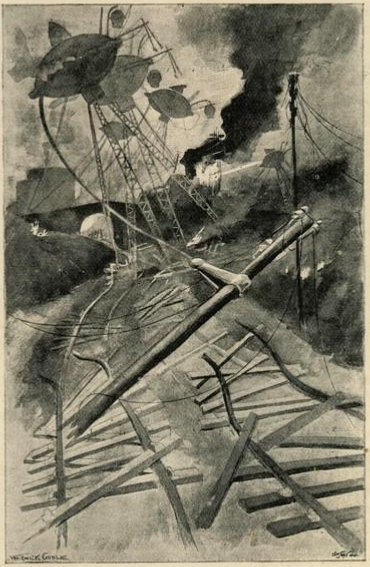
Before he could get to it, he heard a scream under the wheels and saw through the dust, the tire passing over the poor wretch's back. The driver of the cart slashed his whip at my brother, who ran round behind the cart. That multitudinous shouting dimmed and confused his ears. The man was writhing in the dust among his scattered money, unable to rise, for the wheel had

broken his back and his limbs lay limp and dead. My brother stood up and yelled at the next driver, and a man on a black horse came to his assistance.

"Get him out of the road," said he, and, clutching the Jew's collar with his free hand, my brother lugged him sideways. But he still clung to his money, and regarded my brother fiercely, hammering at his arm with a handful of gold. He thought they were robbing him, and he did not know as yet, what had happened to him. "Go on! Go on!" shouted angry voices behind. "Way! Way!"

My brother heard a smash, the pole of a carriage crashing into the cart that the man on horseback stopped. My brother looked up, and the man with the gold twisted his head round and bit the wrist that held his collar. There was a concussion and the black horse came staggering sideways, his hind hoof missing my brother's foot by a hair's breadth, and the cart horse pushed beside it. He released his grip on the fallen man and jumped back. He saw anger change to terror on the face of the poor wretch on the ground, and in a moment my brother was borne backward and carried past the entrance of the lane, and had to fight hard in the torrent to recover it.

He saw Miss Elphinstone covering her eyes, and a little child with all a child's want of sympathetic imagination, staring with dilated eyes at a dusty something that lay black and still, ground and crushed under the rolling wheels. "Let us go back!" shouted my brother and began turning the pony round. "We cannot cross this—hell," he said; and they went back a hundred yards the way they had come, until the fighting crowd was hidden. The two women sat silent; crouching in their seats and shivering. As they passed the bend in the lane my brother saw the face of the dying man in the ditch under the privet, deadly white and drawn, and shining with perspiration. . . .



They wrecked the railways.

So my brother describes one striking phase of the great flight out of London on the morning of Monday. So vividly did that scene at the corner of the lane impress him, so vividly did he describe it, that I can now see the details of it almost as distinctly as if I had been present at the time. I wish I had the skill to give the reader the effect of his description. And that was just *one drop* of the flow of the panic taken and magnified.

Not only along the road through Barnet, but also through Edgware and Waltham Abbey, and along the roads eastward to Southend and Shoeburyness, and south of the Thames to Deal and Broadstairs, poured

the same frantic rout. If one could have hung that June morning in a balloon in the blazing blue above London, every northward and eastward road running out of the infinite tangle of streets would have seemed stippled black with the streaming fugitives, each dot a human agony of terror and physical distress.

Never before in the history of the world had such a mass of human beings moved and suffered together. The legendary hosts of Goths and Huns, the hugest armies Asia has ever seen, would have been but a drop in that current. And this was no disciplined march, it was a stampede—a stampede gigantic and terrible, without order and without a goal, six million people unarmed and unprovisioned, driving headlong. It was the beginning of the route of civilisation, of the massacre of mankind.

Directly below him the balloonist would have seen the network of streets far and wide, houses, churches, squares, crescents, gardens —already empty and derelict—spread out like a huge map; and in the southward *blotted*. Over Ealing, Richmond, Wimbledon, it would have seemed as if some monstrous pen had flung ink upon the chart, and each black splash grew and spread, shooting out ramifications this way and that, now banking itself against rising ground, now pouring swiftly over a crest into a new found valley, very much as a gout of ink spreads itself upon blotting-paper.

And beyond, over the blue hills that rise southward of the river, the glittering Martians went to and fro, calmly and methodically, spreading their poison cloud over this patch of country, and then over that, laying it again with the steam jets when it had served its purpose, and then serenely taking possession of the conquered country. They do not seem to have aimed at extermination, so much as at complete demoralisation and the destruction of any opposition. They exploded any stores of powder they came upon, cut every telegraph, and wrecked the railways here and there. They seemed in no hurry to extend the field of their operations, and did not come beyond the central parts of London all that day.

Just after midnight the fifth cylinder fell, green and livid, crushing a house, as I shall presently tell in fuller detail, beside the road between Richmond and Barnes. The fifth cylinder—and there were five more yet to come!

(To be continued next month.)

LOVE THE WIZARD.

He comes to-night, he'll hear me sing,
The song he gave me long ago,
When first I learnt that Love is King,
Yet knew not how to tell him so.

Close by my side he'll surely stand,
Our eyes will meet, so long apart,
Then Love shall wave his magic wand,
And mesmerise my darling's heart.

If Love has eyes, as poets say,
He must have ears to aid his sight;
God grant the tender love-words may
Teach *him* to read my heart aright.

Philip Hemery.

XVII.—THE THUNDER-CHILD.

HAD the Martians aimed only at destruction they might on Monday have annihilated the entire population of London, as it spread itself slowly through the home counties. To a balloonist, I say, that exodus would have seemed a matter of little black dots running northward over green Essex as blight might move over a leaf. I have set forth at length in the last chapter my brother's account of the road through Chipping Barnet, in order that my reader may realise how that swarming of black dots appeared to one of those concerned, but I do not, of course, propose to give at equal length his subsequent experiences, to tell of the hot day, passed in attempts to strike the road higher up and struggle across it, of the gradual slackening of the haste in the crowded roads as the day wore on and no Martians appeared, of the leaking of the people out of the dusty ways into the dusty fields where they flung themselves down, exhausted and hungry and parched with thirst, of the multitudes of people drinking water from the New River, some kneeling, some face down to the water, others fighting to come at it, of the feeble endeavours of the local authorities to restore their demoralised police, and of the renewal of terror with the oncoming night. There was no properly organised news distribution, of course, but with the twilight came the report that the whole of London was under the black smoke.

It is possible that a very considerable number of people in London stuck to their houses through Monday morning. Certain it is that many died at home, suffocated by the Black Smoke.

Until about midday the Pool of London was an astonishing scene, steamboats and shipping of all sorts lay there, tempted by the enormous sums of money offered by fugitives, and it is said that many who swam out to these vessels were thrust off with boat-hooks and drowned.

About one o'clock in the afternoon, the thinning remnant of a cloud of the Black Vapour appeared between the arches of Blackfriars Bridge. At that the Pool became a scene of mad confusion, fighting and collision, and for some time a multitude of boats and barges jammed in the northern arch of the Tower Bridge, and the sailors and lightermen had to fight savagely against the people who swarmed upon them from the river front. People were actually clambering down the piers of the bridge from above. . . .

When, an hour later, a Martian appeared beyond the Clock Tower and waded down the river, nothing but wreckage floated above Limehouse.

On Monday night came the sixth star, and it fell at Wimbledon. My brother, keeping watch beside the women sleeping in the chaise in a meadow, saw the green flash of its fall beyond the hills. On Tuesday the little party, still set upon getting across the

sea, made its way through the swarming country towards Colchester. The news that the Martians were now in possession of the whole of London was confirmed. They had been seen at Highgate and even it was said at Neasden. But they did not come into my brother's view that day. That day the scattered multitudes began to realise the urgent need of provisions. As they grew hungry the rights of property ceased to be regarded.

Farmers were out to defend the cattle sheds, granaries, and ripening root crops, with arms in their hands. A number of people now, like my brother, had their faces eastward, and there were some desperate souls even going back towards London to get food. These were chiefly people from the northern suburbs, whose knowledge of the Black Smoke came by hearsay. He heard that about half the members of the Government had gathered at Birmingham, and that enormous quantities of high explosives were being prepared to be used in automatic mines across the Midland counties.

He was also told that the Midland Railway Company had replaced the desertions of the first day's panic, had resumed traffic, and were running northward trains from St. Albans to relieve the congestion of the home counties. There was also a placard in Chipping Ongar announcing that large stores of flour were available in the northern towns and that within twenty-four hours bread would be distributed among the starving people in the neighbourhood. But this intelligence did not deter him from the plan of escape he had formed, and the three pressed eastward all day, and saw no more of the bread distribution than this promise. Nor, as a matter of fact, did anyone else see more of it. That night fell the seventh star, falling upon Primrose Hill. It fell while Miss Elphinstone was watching, for she took that duty alternately with my brother. She saw it.

On Wednesday the three fugitives—they had passed the night in a field of unripe wheat—reached Chelmsford, and a body of the inhabitants calling itself the Committee of Public Supply, promptly seized the pony as provisions, and would give nothing in exchange for it but the promise of a share in it the next day. Here there were rumours of Martians at Epping, and news of the destruction of Waltham Abbey Powder Mills in a vain attempt to blow up one of the invaders.

People were watching for Martians here from the church towers. My brother, very luckily for him as it chanced, preferred to push on at once to the coast, rather than wait for food, although all three of them were very hungry. By midday they passed through Tillingham, which was, strangely enough, absolutely silent and deserted, save for a few plundering fugitives, who were hunting food: and so they came in sight of the sea, and the most amazing crowd of shipping of all sorts that it is possible to imagine.

For after the sailors could no longer come up the Thames, they came on to the Essex coast, to Harwich, and Walton, and Clacton, and afterwards to Foulness and Shoebury, to bring off the people. They lay in a huge sickle-shaped curve that vanished into mist at last towards the Naze. Close in shore was a multitude of fishing-smacks, English, Scotch, French, Dutch, and even Swedish; steam launches from the Thames, yachts, electric boats; and beyond were ships of larger burthen, a multitude of filthy colliers, trim merchantmen, cattle ships, passenger boats, petroleum tanks, ocean tramps, an old white transport even, neat white and grey liners from Southampton and Hamburg; and along the blue coast across the Blackwater my brother could make out dimly a dense swarm of boats chaffering with the people on the beach, a swarm which also extended up the Blackwater almost to Maldon.

About a couple of miles out lay an ironclad very low in the water, almost, to my brother's perception, like a water-logged ship. This was the ram *Thunder Child*. It was the only warship in sight, but far away to the right over the smooth surface of the sea—for that day there was a dead calm—lay a serpent of black smoke to mark the next ironclads of the Channel Fleet, which hovered in an extended line, steam up and ready for action, across the Thames estuary during the course of the Martian conquest, vigilant and yet powerless to prevent it.

At the sight of the sea Mrs. Elphinstone, in spite of the assurances of her sister-in-law, gave way to panic. She had never been out

of England before, she would rather die than trust herself friendless in a foreign country, and so forth. She seemed, poor woman, to imagine that the French and the Martians might prove very similar. She had been growing increasingly hysterical, fearful and depressed, during the two days' journeyings.

Her great idea was to return to Stanmore. Things had always been well and safe at Stanmore. They would find George at Stanmore. . . . It was with the greatest difficulty they could get her down to the beach, where presently my brother succeeded in attracting the attention of the men on a paddle-steamer out of the Thames. They sent a boat and drove a bargain for thirty-six pounds for the three. The steamer was going, these men said, to Ostend.

They were all stalking seaward.

It was about two o'clock when my brother, having paid their fares at the gangway, found himself safely aboard the steamboat with his charges. There was food aboard, albeit at exorbitant prices, and the three of them contrived to eat a meal on one of the seats forward.

There were already a couple of score of passengers aboard, some of whom had expended their last money in securing a passage, but the captain lay off the Blackwater until five in the afternoon, picking up passengers the whole time until the seated decks were even dangerously crowded. He would probably have remained longer, had it not been for the sound of guns that began about that hour in the south. As if in answer, the ironclad seaward fired a small gun and hoisted a string of flags. A jet of smoke sprang out of her funnels.

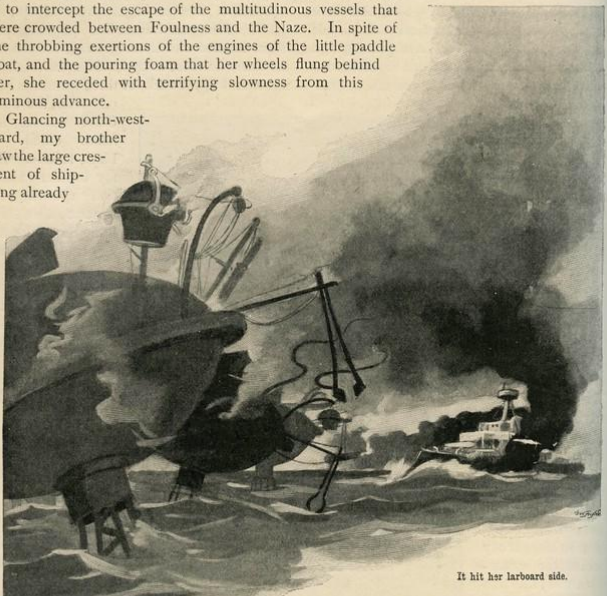
Some of the passengers were of opinion that this firing came from Shoeburyness, until it was noticed that it was growing louder. At the same time, far away in the south-east, the masts and upperworks of three ironclads rose one after the other out of the sea, beneath clouds of black smoke. But my brother's attention speedily reverted to the distant firing in the south. He fancied he saw a column of smoke rising out of the distant grey haze.

The little steamer was already flapping her way eastward of the big crescent of shipping, and the low Essex coast was growing blue and hazy, when a Martian appeared, small and faint in the remote distance, advancing along the muddy coast from the direction of Foulness. At that the captain on the bridge swore at the top of his voice with fear and anger at his own delay, and the paddles seemed infected with his terror. Every soul aboard stood at the bulwarks or on the seats of the steamer and stared at that distant shape, higher than the trees or church towers inland, and advancing with a leisurely parody of a human stride.

It was the first Martian my brother had seen, and he stood, more amazed than terrified, watching this Titan advancing deliberately

towards the shipping, wading farther and farther into the water as the coast fell away. Then, far away beyond the Crouch, came another striding over some stunted trees, and then yet another, still farther off, wading deeply through a shiny mudflat that seemed to hang halfway up between sea and sky. They were all stalking seaward, as if to intercept the escape of the multitudinous vessels that were crowded between Foulness and the Naze. In spite of the throbbing exertions of the engines of the little paddle boat, and the pouring foam that her wheels flung behind her, she receded with terrifying slowness from this ominous advance.

Glancing north-westward, my brother saw the large crescent of shipping already



It hit her larboard side.

writhing with the approaching terror; one ship passing behind another, another coming round from broadside to end on, steamships whistling and giving off volumes of steam, sails being let out, launches rushing hither and thither. He was so fascinated by this and by the creeping danger away to the left that he had no eyes for anything seaward. And then a swift movement of the steamboat (she had suddenly come about to escape being run down) flung him headlong from the seat upon which he was standing. There was a shouting all about him, a trampling of feet, and a cheer that seemed to be answered faintly. The steamboat lurched, and rolled him over upon his hands.

He sprang to his feet and saw to starboard, and not a hundred yards from their heeling, pitching boat, a vast iron bulk like the blade of a plough tearing through the water, tossing it on either side in huge waves of

foam that leapt towards the steamer, flinging her paddles helplessly in the air and then sucking her deck down almost to the water line.

A douche of spray blinded my brother for a moment. When his eyes were clear of that he saw the monster had passed and was rushing landward. Big iron upperworks rose out of this headlong structure, and from that twin funnels projected, and spat a smoking blast shot with fire into the air. It was the torpedo ram, *Thunder Child*, steaming headlong, coming to the rescue of the threatened shipping.

Keeping his footing on the heaving deck by clutching the bulwarks, my brother looked past this charging leviathan at the Martians again, and he saw the three of them now close together, and standing so far out to sea that their tripod supports were almost entirely submerged. Thus sunken, and seen in remote perspective, they appeared far less formidable than the huge iron bulk, in whose wake the steamer was pitching so helplessly. It would seem they were regarding this new antagonist with astonishment. To their intelligence, it may be, the giant was even such another as themselves. The *Thunder Child* fired no gun, but simply drove full speed towards them. It was probably her not firing that enabled her to get so near the enemy as she did. They did not know what to make of her. One shell, and they would have sent her to the bottom forthwith with the Heat Ray.

In another moment he was cut down.

She was steaming at such a pace that in a minute she seemed half way between the steamboat and the Martians, a diminishing black bulk against the receding horizontal expanse of the Essex coast.

Suddenly the foremost Martian lowered his tube, and discharged a canister of the black gas at the ironclad. It hit her larboard side and glanced off in an inky jet, that rolled away to seaward an unfolding torrent of black smoke, from which the ironclad drove clear. To the watchers from the steamer, low in the water and with the sun in their eyes, it seemed as though she was already among the Martians.

They saw the gaunt figures separating and rising out of the water as they retreated shoreward, and one of them raised the camera-like generator of the Heat Ray. He held it pointing obliquely downward, and a bank of steam sprang from the water at its touch. It

must have driven through the iron of the ship's side like a white-hot iron rod through paper.

A flicker of flame went up through the rising steam, and then the Martian reeled and staggered. In another moment he was cut down, and a great body of water and steam shot high in the air. The guns of the *Thunder Child* sounded through the reek going off one after the other, and one shot splashed the water high close by the steamer, ricocheted towards the other flying ships to the north and smashed a smack to matchwood.

But no one heeded that very much. At the sight of the Martian's collapse the captain on the bridge yelled inarticulately and all the crowding passengers on the steamer's stern shouted together. And then they yelled again. For surging out beyond the white tumult, drove something long and black, the flames streaming from its middle parts, its ventilators and funnels spouting fire.

She was alive still—the steering gear, it seems, was intact and her engines working. She headed straight for a second Martian, and was within a hundred yards of him when the Heat Ray came to bear. Then with a violent thud, a blinding flash, her decks, her funnels, leapt upward. The Martian staggered with the violence of her explosion, and in another moment the flaming wreckage, still driving forward with the impetus of its pace, had struck him and crumpled him up like a thing of cardboard. My brother shouted involuntarily. A boiling tumult of steam hid everything again.

"Two!" yelled the captain. Everyone was shouting—the whole steamer from end to end rang with frantic cheering that was taken up first by one and then by all in the crowding multitude of ships and boats that was driving out to sea.

The steam hung upon the water for many minutes, hiding the third Martian and the coast altogether. And all this time the boat was paddling steadily out to sea and away from the fight; and when at last the confusion cleared, the drifting bank of black vapour intervened, and nothing of the *Thunder Child* could be made out, nor could the third Martian be seen. But the ironclads to seaward were now quite close and standing in towards shore past the steamboat.

The little vessel continued to beat its way seaward, and the ironclads receded slowly towards the coast, which was hidden still by a marbled bank of vapour, part steam, part black gas eddying and combining in the strangest ways. The fleet of refugees was scattering to the north-east, several smacks were sailing between the ironclads and the steamboat. After a time, and before they reached the sinking cloud bank, the warships turned northward, and then abruptly went about and passed into the thickening haze of evening southward. The coast grew faint, and at last indistinguishable amidst the low banks of clouds that were gathering about the sinking sun.

Then suddenly out of the golden haze of the sunset came the vibration of guns, and a form of black shadows moving. Everyone struggled to the rail of the steamer and peered into the blinding furnace of the west, but nothing was to be distinguished clearly. A mass of smoke rose slantingly and barred the face of the sun.

The steamboat throbbed on its way through an interminable suspense. The sun sank into grey clouds, the sky flushed and darkened, the evening star trembled into sight.

It was deep twilight when the captain cried out and pointed. My brother strained his eyes. Something rushed up into the sky out of the greyness, rushed slantingly upward and very swiftly into the luminous clearness above the clouds in the western sky, something flat and broad and very large, that swept round in a vast curve, grew smaller, sank slowly, and vanished again into the grey mystery of the night. As it flew it rained down darkness upon the land.

XVIII.—LONDON UNDER THE MARTIANS.

My inexpertness as a story writer insists on appearing. I have wandered away from my own adventures to tell of the experiences of my brother, and for all these last chapters I and the curate have still been lurking in the

As it flew it rained down darkness upon the land.

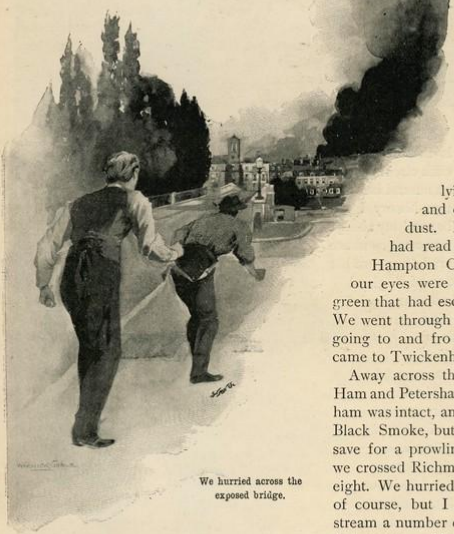
empty house at Halliford. Even in writing fiction I expect—since it is the commonest failure—it is hard to make each circumstance flow from its predecessors in a natural fashion, and to do so with the huge history I am sketching is certainly quite beyond my ability. I can fancy how some of our new romance writers would have pictured my brother escaping out of the destruction of England with the two women he had so strangely encountered, and what a fine figure they could have made of my sister-in-law—Miss Elphinstone that was, with her courage and resolution. But the Martians, their hissing Heat Ray, their strange machines, their torrents of Black Smoke, and the far reaching desolation and panic they created, trample across everything in my memory, and insist on being heroes, characters, plot, to the exclusion of every human interest, even as they trampled over the beaten world during that terrible June.

I know it would have been more picturesque if I could have told of the two standing side by side on the steamer, hand in hand, she with shining eyes and parted lips, watching that wonderful fight. I could imagine her grip tightening, I could imagine her enthusiasm rising, for she is not the type to be cowed by danger. And my brother's attention divided between her beauty and the war.

But the truth is the truth, and when the time came for us to meet again, and I asked my brother how she faced that last strange spectacle, hoping to find a touch of the true romantic colour, he answered prosaically: "I don't know. I didn't notice her. She was forward, I think, in the empty part of the boat, attending to Mrs. Elphinstone, who was hysterical. I'd offered to help but I didn't see anything

that I could do, so I went aft to watch the fight." So poor Romance, with its craving for situations, goes down under the pitiless heels of fact.

The curate and I stopped in our house at Upper Halliford all that Sunday night, and all the next day, the day of the panic, judging ourselves safest in that deserted spot. The Black Smoke drifted slowly riverward, all



We hurried across the exposed bridge.

through Monday morning, creeping nearer and nearer to us, driving at last along the roadway outside the house that hid us.

A Martian came across the fields about midday, laying the stuff with a jet of superheated steam that hissed against the walls, frightened us dreadfully, smashed all the windows it touched, and scalded the curate's hand. When we looked out again, the country northward was as though a black snowstorm had passed over it. Looking towards the river we were astonished to see an unaccountable redness mingling with the black of the scorched meadows.

I was for staying in the village indefinitely, for there we had provisions for weeks, if necessary, and only the remotest chance of capture, but the curate was insistent, and I could not find it in me to stop alone. So, all being quiet throughout the afternoon, we started along the blackened road to Sunbury about five. I had availed myself of a hat and a flannel shirt that I found in one of the Halliford rooms. In Sunbury, and at intervals along the road, were dead bodies lying in contorted attitudes, and covered thickly with black dust. It made me think of what I had read of Pompeii. We got to Hampton Court about six, and there our eyes were relieved to find a patch of green that had escaped the suffocating drift. We went through Bushey Park, with its deer going to and fro under the chestnuts, and came to Twickenham.

Away across the road the woods beyond Ham and Petersham were still afire. Twickenham was intact, and there were no signs of the Black Smoke, but it seemed quite deserted save for a prowling muzzled dog or so, and we crossed Richmond bridge about half-past eight. We hurried across the exposed bridge, of course, but I noticed floating down the stream a number of red masses, some many feet across. Here again on the Surrey side was black dust that had once been smoke, and dead bodies—a heap near the approach to the station—and never a sight of the Martians until we were some way towards Barnes. Up the hill Richmond town was burning briskly; outside the town of Richmond there was no trace of the Black Smoke.

Then suddenly, as we were going towards Kew, a Martian came in sight over the housetops, not a hundred yards away from us. We stood aghast at our danger, and had he looked down we must immediately have perished.

We were so terrified that we dared not go on, but turned aside and hid in a tool-shed in a garden. From Halliford to this place we must have tramped a dozen miles or more, and never a living man had we seen all that time except once at Richmond—a group of three people, with their backs to us, running down a side street towards the river.

In the twilight we ventured out again, and going through a shrubbery and along a passage beside a big house standing in its own grounds, we emerged upon the road towards Kew. But scarcely had we got to the road, before we saw a Martian far away across the meadows in the direction of Kew Lodge. We saw four or five little black figures hurrying across the green-grey of the field, and it was evident this Martian pursued them. In a stride or two he was among them, and they ran radiating from his feet in all directions. He used no Heat Ray to destroy them, but picked them up one by one. Apparently he tossed them into the great metallic carrier which projected behind him, much as a workman's basket hangs over his shoulder. It was the first time that I realised that the Martians might have any other purpose with humanity than destruction. This sight so appalled us, however, that we hastily clambered over a fence and got into a garden, and lay in a ditch there, scarcely daring to whisper to one another until the stars were out.

In a stride or two he was among them.

I suppose it was nearly eleven at night before we gathered courage to start again, no longer venturing into the road, but sneaking along hedgerows and through plantations, and watching keenly through the darkness, he on the right hand and I on the left, for the Martians, who seemed to be all about us. In one place we blundered upon a scorched and blackened area, now cooling and grey, and a number of scattered dead bodies of men, burnt horribly about the heads and bodies, but with their legs and boots mostly intact; and of dead horses, fifty feet, perhaps, behind a line of four ripped guns and smashed gun carriages. Sheen, it seemed, had escaped destruction, but the place was silent and deserted. But here we happened on no dead, though the night was too dark for us to see into the side roads of the place.

In Sheen my companion suddenly complained of faintness and thirst, and we decided to try one of the houses. The first house we entered, after a little difficulty with the window, was a small semi-detached villa, and I found nothing eatable left in the place but some mouldy cheese. There was, however, water to drink, and I took a hatchet which promised to be useful in our next housebreaking. We crossed the road to a place near the cross roads towards Mortlake, a white house within a walled garden, and in the pantry of this we found a store of food, two loaves of bread in a pan, an uncooked steak, and the half of a ham. I give this catalogue so precisely because, as it happened, we were destined to subsist upon this store for the next fortnight. Bottled beer stood under a shelf, and there were two bags of haricot beans and some limp lettuces. This pantry opened into a kind of wash-up kitchen, and in this was firewood, and a cup-

board in which we found nearly a dozen of Burgundy, tinned soups and salmon, and two tins of biscuits.

We sat in the adjacent kitchen—in the dark, for we dared not strike a light—and ate bread and ham and drank beer out of one bottle. The curate, who was still timorous and restless, was for pushing on, and I was urging him to keep up his strength by eating, when the thing that was to imprison us happened.

"It can't be midnight yet," I said, and then came a blinding glare of vivid green light. Everything in the kitchen leapt out clearly visible in green and black, and then vanished again. And then followed such a concussion as I have never heard before or since. So close on the heels of this as to seem instantaneous, came a thud behind me, a clash of glass, a crash and rattle of falling masonry all about us, and incontinently the plaster of the ceiling came down on us, smashing into a multitude of fragments upon our heads.

I was knocked headlong across the floor against the oven handle, and stunned. I was insensible for a long time, the curate told me, and when I came to we were in darkness again, and he, with a face wet, as I found afterwards, with blood from a cut forehead, was pouring water over me.

For some time I could not recollect what had happened. Then things came to me slowly. A bruise on my temple asserted itself. "Are you better?" asked the curate in a whisper again and again. At last I answered him. I sat up.

"Don't move," he said. "The floor is covered with smashed crockery from the dresser. You can't possibly move without making a noise, and I fancy *they* are outside."

We both sat quite silent, so that we could scarcely hear one another breathing. Everything seemed deadly still, though once something near us, some plaster or broken brickwork, slid down with a rumbling sound. Outside and very near was an intermittent, metallic rattle. "That!" said the curate when presently it happened again.

"Yes," I said, and then, with a flash of comprehension, "I have it!"

"What is it?"

"The fifth cylinder, the fifth shot from Mars, has struck this house!"

"God help us!" said the Curate.

Our situation was so strange and dangerous that for three or four hours, until the dawn came, we scarcely moved. And then the light filtered in, not through the window, which remained black, but through a triangular aperture in the wall behind us. The interior of the kitchen, which we now saw greyly for the first time, presented a strange appearance. The window had been burst in by a mass of garden mould, which flowed over the table upon which we had been sitting and lay about our feet. Outside the soil was banked high against the house. At the top of the window frame we could see an uprooted drainpipe. The floor was littered with smashed hardware. The end of the kitchen towards the house was broken into, and since the daylight shone in there it was evident the greater part of the house had collapsed. Contrasting vividly with this ruin was the neat dresser, stained a pleasant light green and with a number of burnished copper and tin vessels below it, the bright wall paper imitating blue and white tiles, and a couple of gay coloured supplements fluttering from the walls above the kitchen range.

We afterwards found the Fifth Cylinder had fallen just in front of the house, pulverising the garden wall and burying itself partly in the garden and partly in the road. The mass of the house and the displaced earth had—"splashed" is really the only possible word—over us, had behaved just like mud under the blow of a hammer. By a miracle the kitchen and scullery had stood the impact, and we were now imprisoned under an unknown quantity of soil and ruins. The scullery door was shut by tons of earth; we were shut in, in fact, in every direction except towards the cylinder. And there was a rough triangular aperture, between a beam and a heap of broken bricks, through which a dim light came, and through which we saw the body of a Martian standing sentinel, I suppose, over the still glowing cylinder.

At the sight of that we crawled as circumspectly as possible out of the twilight of the kitchen into the darkness of the scullery.

(To be continued next month.)

For "THE EDITORIAL MIND," *see p.* 456A. ☞

XIX.—WHAT WE SAW FROM THE RUINED HOUSE.

So it came about that I and the curate were imprisoned out of the sight of, and yet within sound of, the Martians, and by creeping up to the triangular hole in the broken wall, we could even lie (and to that our courage attained on the second day) peeping through a narrow crack between two masses of plaster at them. The dreadful thing that happened at last between myself and the curate, and how in the end I escaped from that house, I will defer telling in this chapter.

Here I will simply set down an account of what we could make out of the Martians by our observations, together with certain things that have since been learned concerning them. The period until our provisions ran short, and the trouble between myself and the curate arose, was, in all, ten days.

During that period we peeped often by night and day, notwithstanding that once a Martian came and peered into the kitchen through our hole. We had this in our favour, that the kitchen was very dark, and when any body stood across the triangular patch not a gleam of light could enter, while outside was the brightest sunlight. During the first few days the din of hammering, the thunderous roar and penetrating seething of their machinery left us free to talk and walk about without restraint, and afterwards, when a stillness came on the pit, and the number of Martians dwindled to one or two, we went to and fro so quietly, that until the tenth day they never suspected our existence.

At first the pit in which the cylinder lay was, like the pit on Horsell Common, simply the hole the thing had made in its fall. But very speedily, before the unscrewing in fact, this was rounded and enlarged, and a huge cavernous extension of perhaps a hundred yards radius on its floor, was made a little way under the house we were in, and more so in the opposite direction. Of the cylinder we could see nothing but the top, nor could we see anything of the cage in which they put the men and women they had caught.

This was placed overhead on the top of the mound of rubble in which we were entombed, so that we saw nothing of these wretched creatures, until they were killed, nor did we hear their voices very distinctly. We were quite unable to communicate with them. In fact, for some time we did not suspect their neighbourhood. We saw, however, all the upper works of the peculiar and still problematical machine from which the green vapour was disengaged. The vapour came hissing out of the stem of the pear-shaped part at the end, and invariably before it was given off, the pear-shaped part oscillated rapidly to and fro with a low, roaring note. We saw, too, very

distinctly the corner in which the Martians took nourishment.

It did not take me long to confirm my idea, that the metallic giants I had seen were mere machines, in which the real Martian sat, for the very first time I dared look out of the hole in the wall, I saw one swing out of his apparatus into the pit. The actual Martians were the most extraordinary creatures it is possible to conceive. They had huge round bodies—or rather heads—about four feet in diameter, with a peculiar face in the front of these.

The actual Martians were the most extraordinary creatures it is possible to conceive.

The face had no nostrils, indeed, the Martians do not seem to possess any sense of smell, but it had a pair of very large dark-coloured eyes, and just beneath this a kind of fleshy beak. In the back of the body was the ear, a single tight tympanic surface. In a crescent round the mouth were sixteen slender, almost whip-like, tentacles. The internal anatomy, dissection has shewn, is almost equally simple. The greater part of the structure is the brain, sending enormous nerves to the eyes, ear and tactile tentacles. Besides this are the complex lungs, into which the mouth opens, and the heart and its vessels. Strange as it may seem to a human being, all the complex apparatus of digestion which makes up the bulk of our bodies, does not exist in the Martians. They do not eat, much less digest. Instead, they take the fresh living blood of other creatures and *inject* it into their own veins. I have myself seen this being done, but, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue watching. Let it suffice, blood obtained from a still living animal—in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into the recipient vessel.

The bare idea of this is no doubt horribly repulsive to us, but at the same time I think that we should remember how repulsive our carnivorous habits would seem to an intelligent rabbit. I know it is the fashion to write of these Martians as being incredibly cruel, but for my own part I cannot see that we are justified in calling ourselves, as certain recent flatterers of humanity have called men, their Moral Superiors. The fact that in the pit at

Wimbledon (the pit made by the tenth Cylinder) the still living body of an eminent physician was found fixed so that he could not move, and horribly mutilated, does not seem to me to carry the point.

Let us clear our minds of cant. We are not justified in supposing that the Martians had been amusing themselves by torturing him. All the circumstances point to the view that they were satisfying their curiosity upon some structural point, and that afterwards, through interruption or inadvertency, they omitted to put him out of his misery. Man who vivisects the lower animals certainly has no claim to exemption when in his turn he becomes a lower animal. Certainly nothing else that we know of the Martians points to their being needlessly cruel. They did not, for the gratification of their personal vanity, tear out the hair of the living women they captured, in order to deck themselves with the spoils; nor did they, in my judgment, carry the sporting instinct quite so far as men.

In the Heat Ray matches they certainly held, every one of the men was killed outright, none escaped, charred and mutilated, to die in a slow agony after they had served their turn. Compared with the lot of the birds used in pigeon shooting, theirs was indisputably a fortunate one. And the aimless collecting spirit which encourages the systematic impalement of insects by children, is apparently absent altogether from the Martian mind.

Indisputably they inflicted enormous agonies; indisputably Martians and men cannot exist permanently upon the same planet; but that is no reason why we should tell lies upon ethical points. They fought for their kind and we for ours. But, as for right, I do not believe that there is any right in the world, save the sense of justice between man and man. All the rest, I hold, is physical law.

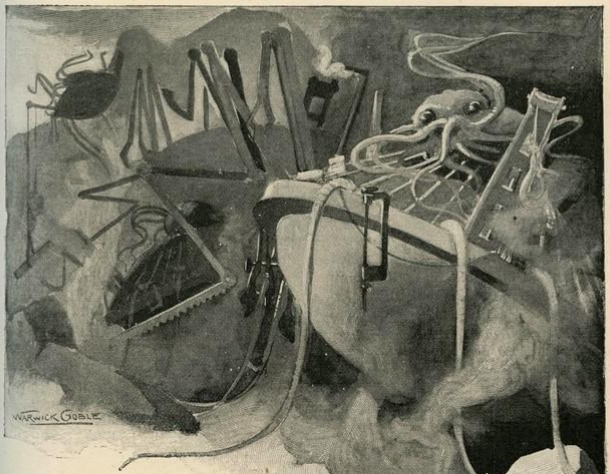
But I wander from my subject. The physiological advantage at any rate of this practice of injection is undeniable, if one thinks of the tremendous waste of human time and energy occasioned by eating and the digestive process. Our bodies are half made up of glands and tubes and organs, occupied in turning heterogeneous food into blood. The digestive processes and their reaction upon the nervous system, sap our strength, colour our minds. Men go miserable or happy as they have healthy or unhealthy livers, or sound gastric glands. But the Martians are lifted above all these organic fluctuations of mood and emotion.

Their undeniable preference for men as their source of nourishment, is partly explained by the nature of the remains of the victims they had brought with them as provisions from Mars. These creatures, to judge from the shrivelled remains that have fallen into human hands, were bipeds, with flimsy siliceous skeletons (almost like those of the siliceous sponges) and feeble musculature, standing about six feet high, and having round erect heads, and large eyes in flinty sockets. Two or three of these seem to have been brought in each cylinder, and all were killed before earth was reached. It was just as well for them, for the mere attempt to stand upright upon our planet would have crushed them.

In three other points the Martian physiology differs from ours. Their organisms do not sleep, any more than the heart of man sleeps. Since they have no extensive muscular mechanism to recuperate, that periodical extinction is unknown to them. In twenty-four hours they do twenty-four hours of work—as, even on earth is, perhaps, the case with the ants.

In the next place, wonderful as it seems in a sexual world, the Martians are absolutely without sex, and, therefore, free from the tumultuous emotions that arise from that difference among men. A young Martian was born upon earth during the war, and it was *budded* off just as young lily bulbs bud off, or the young animals in the fresh water polyp.

In man, in all the higher terrestrial animals, such a method of increase has disappeared, but even on this earth it was certainly the primitive method. Among the lower animals, up even to those first cousins of the vertebrated animals, the Tunicates, the two processes occur side by side, but finally the sexual method superseded its competitor altogether. On Mars, however, just the reverse has apparently been the case.



The Handling Machine.

The last point in which their systems differ from ours is in what one might have thought a very trivial particular. Micro-organisms, which cause so much disease and pain on earth, have either never appeared upon Mars, or Martian sanitary science eliminated them ages ago. But of that I will write more at length later.

But, speaking of the differences between the life on Mars and terrestrial life, I may allude here to the curious suggestions of the Red Weed. Apparently, the vegetable kingdom in Mars, instead of having green for a dominant colour, is of a vivid blood-red tint. At any rate, the seeds which the Martians (intentionally or accidentally) brought with them, in all cases, gave rise to red coloured growths. Only that now known popularly as the Red Weed, however, gained any footing in competition with terrestrial forms. For a time, the Red Weed grew with astonishing vigour and luxuriance. It spread up the sides of the pit, by the third or fourth day of our imprisonment, and its cactus-like branches formed a carmine fringe to the edges of our triangular window. And afterwards I found it broadcast throughout the county, and especially wherever there was a stream of water.

The Martians wore no clothing, their conceptions of ornament and decorum are necessarily different from ours, and not only were they evidently much less sensible of changes of temperature than we are, but changes of pressure do not seem to have affected their health at all seriously. But if they wore no clothing, yet it was in the other artificial additions to their bodily resources, certainly, that their great superiority over man lay.

We men, with our bicycles and road

skates, our Lilienthal soaring machines, our guns and sticks, and so forth, are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out. They have become mere brains, wearing different bodies according to their need, just as men wear suits of clothes and take a bicycle in a hurry or an umbrella in the wet. There was the gigantic marching, fighting body of metal, carrying the generator of the Heat Ray, which I have already described. At the pit, however, the Martian descended from this huge thing, leaving it to straddle motionless against his need, and assumed, as a rule, a machine body, which might perhaps be called the Handling Machine.

In this he sat unprotected amidst a two-score rayed star of many jointed arms and tentacles bearing a miscellany of gripping, hooking, hammering, and stabbing ends. These he played through the agency of a sort of key, and he certainly used them as swiftly, subtly and dexterously as a man his fingers.

It was hard when one saw a Handling Machine (as I have done) go clambering up a vertical bank of sand, and hold itself by one arm to the brow of the pit, while it caught bars of rock crystal flung up to it by two others, not to regard it as a living organism. But I suppose, after all, it was no more wonderful to me than a steam engine would be to a thoughtful ape.

We were able to see from our peephole the upper works of the green-vapour machine, the precipitous side of the pit to the north, and part of the westward slope down which the Martians came into the pit. And in the north-west corner of the pit were the shambles, where it was their custom to kill their prey. Only once did I see that done, and then only indistinctly, for I lay almost stunned with fear and repulsion. I heard suddenly a dismal crying and saw one of the many armed Handling Machines clambering crab-like down the slope, with a lad gripped in one of its flexible tentacles. It emitted a cheerful hooting as it did so, and immediately three of the round brown-bodied unarmed Martians gathered about it. . . . . I must admit it seemed a painless death.

XX.—THE DEATH OF THE CURATE.

Our life, pent up in the kitchen and scullery of the ruined house, was a strange one. During the earlier days we spent the greater part of our time sitting motionless in the scullery, scarcely exchanging a word with one another. The curate talked to himself in an undertone, seeming to be reasoning out some perplexing theological problem. He ate more than I did, and it was in vain that I pointed out that a time might presently come when we should need food. He ate and drank impulsively, in heavy meals at long intervals. He slept but little. As the days passed the peephole began to exercise a horrible fascination upon him. He would lie watching for hours together, eating nothing.

I was quite unused to seeing mental trouble, or I suppose I should have understood that from the first the swift tragedy that had burst upon the world had deranged his mind.

After the eighth day he began to talk aloud instead of whisper, and nothing I could do would moderate his speech. "It is just, O God!" he would say over and over again. "It is just. On me and mine be the punishment laid. We have sinned, we have fallen short. There was poverty, sorrow; the poor were trodden in the dust, and I held my peace. I preached acceptable folly — my God, what folly! — to fat stockbrokers, to landlords who drew their rent as though it came from God, to idle, foolish women, to cheating, over-reaching tradesmen, to braggart half-pay gentility, when I should have stood up, though I died for it, and called upon them to Repent, Repent. The brotherhood of man! To make the best of every child that comes into the world! . . How we have wasted our brothers! . . . . . Oppressors of the poor and needy. . . . The Wine Press of God!"

So he would talk with his voice rising slowly, through the greater part of the eighth and ninth days, a torrent of half sane and always frothy repentance for his vacant sham of God's service, such as made me pity him. Then he slept awhile, and began again with renewed strength, so loudly that I must needs make him desist. "Be still," I implored.

He rose to his knees—for he had been sitting in the darkness near the copper. "I have been still too long," he said, in a tone that must have reached the pit, "and now I must bear my witness! Woe unto this unfaithful city. Woe, woe! Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet. . . ."

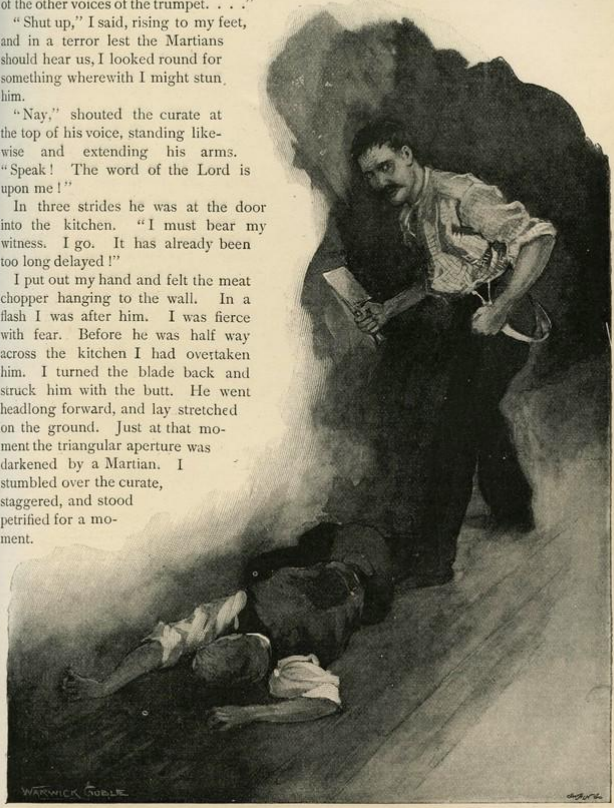
"Shut up," I said, rising to my feet, and in a terror lest the Martians should hear us, I looked round for something wherewith I might stun him.

"Nay," shouted the curate at the top of his voice, standing likewise and extending his arms. "Speak! The word of the Lord is upon me!"

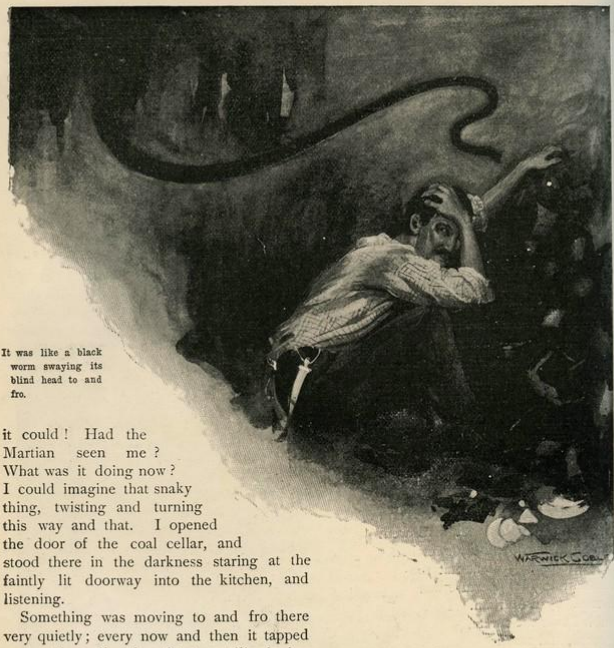
In three strides he was at the door into the kitchen. "I must bear my witness. I go. It has already been too long delayed!"

I put out my hand and felt the meat chopper hanging to the wall. In a flash I was after him. I was fierce with fear. Before he was half way across the kitchen I had overtaken him. I turned the blade back and struck him with the butt. He went headlong forward, and lay stretched on the ground. Just at that moment the triangular aperture was darkened by a Martian. I stumbled over the curate, staggered, and stood petrified for a moment.

Then I rushed to the door into the scullery. As I did so a long snake of metallic tentacle came feeling slowly through the hole. I went into the scullery and turned. I did not know how long their tentacles were, whether one could reach across the kitchen. Suppose



He lay stretched on the ground.



It was like a black worm swaying its blind head to and fro.

it could! Had the Martian seen me? What was it doing now? I could imagine that snaky thing, twisting and turning this way and that. I opened the door of the coal cellar, and stood there in the darkness staring at the faintly lit doorway into the kitchen, and listening.

Something was moving to and fro there very quietly; every now and then it tapped against the wall with a faint metallic ringing like the movement of keys on a split ring. Then the curate's insensible body was dragged across the floor of the kitchen towards the opening.

I crept to the door and peeped into the kitchen. In the triangle of bright outer sunlight I saw the Martian in its Briareus of a Handling Machine, scrutinising the curate's head. I thought at once that it would tell of my presence from the mark of the blow I had given him. I rushed back to the coal cellar, shut the door, and began to cover myself up as much as I could and as noiselessly as possible, in the darkness among the firewood and coal therein. Every now and then I paused rigid, to hear if the Martian had thrust its tentacle through the opening again.

Then the faint metallic jingle returned. I traced it slowly feeling over the kitchen. Presently I heard it nearer—in the scullery as I judged. It passed, scraping faintly, across the cellar door. An age of almost intolerable suspense intervened. Then I heard it fumbling at the latch. It had found the door! The Martian understood doors. It worried at the catch for a minute perhaps, and then the door opened.

In the darkness I could just see the thing—like an elephant's trunk more than anything else—waving towards me and touching and examining the wall, coals, wood and ceiling.

It was like a black worm swaying its blind head to and fro. Once even it touched my boot. At any moment the blind filament might discover me. I was on the verge of screaming—I bit my hand. For a time it was silent. I could have fancied it had been withdrawn. Presently with an abrupt click it gripped something—I thought it had me!—and seemed to go out of the cellar again. For a minute I was not sure. Apparently it had taken a lump of coal to examine.

I seized the opportunity of slightly shifting my position, which had become cramped, and listened. I whispered passionate prayers for safety. Then I heard the slow deliberate sound creeping towards me again. Slowly, slowly it drew near, scratching against walls and tapping furniture. While I was still doubtful it rapped suddenly against the cellar door. I heard it go into the pantry, and the biscuit tins rattled and a bottle smashed, and then came a heavy bump against the cellar door. Then silence, that passed into an infinity of suspense. Had it gone? At last I decided that it had.

A multitude of crows hopped and fought over the skeletons of the dead.

It came into the scullery no more. But I lay all the tenth day, in the close darkness, buried among coals and firewood, not daring even to crawl out for the drink for which I craved. It was the eleventh day before I ventured so far from my security. My first act, before I went into the pantry, was to fasten the door between kitchen and scullery. But the pantry was empty; every scrap of food had gone. Apparently the Martian had taken it all on the previous day. At that discovery I despaired for the first time.

I took no food and no drink either on the eleventh or the twelfth day. At first my mouth and throat were parched and my strength ebbed sensibly. I sat about in the darkness of the scullery, in a state of de-

spondent wretchedness. My mind ran on eating. I thought I had become deaf, for the noises of movement I had been accustomed to hear from the pit ceased absolutely. I did not feel strong enough to crawl noiselessly to the peephole, or I would have gone there. On the twelfth day, my throat was so painful that, taking the chance of alarming the Martians, I attacked the creaking rain water pump that stood by the sink, and got a couple of glassfuls of blackened and tainted rain water. I was greatly refreshed by this, and emboldened by the fact that no inquiring tentacle followed the noise of my pumping.

On the thirteenth day I drank some more water, and dozed and thought disjointedly of eating and of vague impossible plans of escape. Whenever I dozed I dreamt of sumptuous dinners, but, sleeping or awake, I felt a keen pain that urged me to drink again and again. On the fourteenth day I went into the kitchen, and I was surprised to find that the fronds of the Red Weed had grown right across the hole in the wall, turning the half-light of the place into a crimson coloured obscurity. It was early on the fifteenth day that I heard a curious familiar sequence of sounds in the kitchen, and listening, identified it as the snuffing and scratching of a dog. Going into the kitchen I saw a dog's nose peering in through a break among the ruddy fronds. This greatly surprised me. At the scent of me he barked shortly.

I thought if I could induce him to come into the place quietly I should be able perhaps to kill and eat him, and in any case it would be advisable to kill him, lest his actions attracted the attention of the Martians. I crept forward, saying "Good dog!" very softly. But he suddenly withdrew his head and disappeared. I listened—I was not deaf—but certainly the pit was still. I heard a sound like the flutter of a bird's wings, and a hoarse croaking, and that was all.

For a long while I lay close to our peephole, but not daring to move aside the red plants that obscured it. Once or twice I heard a faint pitter-patter like the feet of a dog going hither and thither on the sand far below me, and there were more bird-like sounds, but that was all. At length, encouraged by the silence, I looked out. Except in the corner, where a multitude of crows hopped and fought over the skeletons of the dead the Martians had consumed, there was not a living thing in the pit.

I stared about me, scarcely believing my eyes. All the machinery had gone. Save for a big mound of greyish blue powder in one place, certain broken bars of metal in another, the black birds and the skeletons of the killed, the place was merely an empty pit in the sand. I hesitated for some time, and then, with considerable exertion, I scrambled out of the hole and on to the top of the mound in which I had been buried so long. There I found empty and silent the big cage of white metal in which the victims had been confined.

XXI.—AFTER THE FIFTEEN DAYS.

I looked about me. When I had last seen this part of Sheen in the daylight, it had been a straggling street of comfortable white and red houses, interspersed with abundant shady trees. Now I stood by this cage on a mound of clay and gravel, over which spread a multitude of red cactus shaped plants, knee high, without a solitary terrestrial growth to dispute their footing. The trees near me were dead and brown, but further, a network of red threads scaled the still living stems.

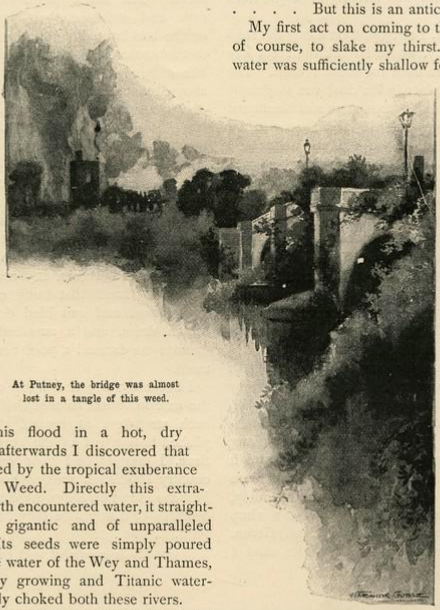
The neighbouring houses had all been wrecked, but none had been burned; their walls stood sometimes to the second storey, with smashed windows and shattered doors. The red weed grew tumultuously in their roofless rooms. Below me was the great pit, with the crows struggling for its refuse. A number of other birds hopped about among the ruins. Far away I saw a gaunt cat slink crouchingly along a wall, but traces of men there were none.

The day seemed, by contrast with my recent confinement, dazzlingly bright, the sky a glowing blue, and a gentle breeze kept the red weeds that had covered every scrap of unoccupied ground, gently swaying.

For a time I stood marvelling at the change that had come over the world. Then the fact of my insecurity came to mind, and, clambering past the empty cage, I crossed the summit of the mound and descended on the other side, away from the pit. I was of course

alert for food, and here was a patch of garden unburied. I found some young onions, a couple of gladiolus bulbs, and a quantity of immature carrots, all of which I secured, and, scrambling over a ruined wall, went on my way through the trees towards Kew, possessed with two ideas—to get more food, and to limp, as soon and as far as my strength permitted, out of the region of the pit. For I did not know when the Martians might return.

Some way further in a grassy place was a group of mushrooms which I also devoured, and then I came upon a brown sheet of flowing shallow water, where meadows used to be. At first I was surprised at this flood in a hot, dry summer, but afterwards I discovered that this was caused by the tropical exuberance of the Red Weed. Directly this extraordinary growth encountered water, it straightway became gigantic and of unparalleled fecundity. Its seeds were simply poured down into the water of the Wey and Thames, and its swiftly growing and Titanic water-fronds speedily choked both these rivers.



At Putney, the bridge was almost lost in a tangle of this weed.

At Putney, as I afterwards saw, the bridge was almost lost in a tangle of this weed; and at Richmond, too, the Thames water poured in a broad and shallow stream across the meadows of Hampton and Twickenham. As the waters spread, the weed followed them, until the ruined villas of the Thames valley were for a time lost in a red swamp, and much of the desolation the Martians had caused was concealed.

In the end the Red Weed succumbed almost as quickly as it spread. A cankering disease, due it is believed to the action of certain bacteria, presently seized upon it. The fronds became bleached, and then shrivelled and brittle. They broke off at the least touch, and the waters that had stimulated their early growth carried their last vestiges out to sea. . . . . But this is an anticipation.

My first act on coming to this water was, of course, to slake my thirst. I found the water was sufficiently shallow for me to wade securely, although the Red Weed impeded my feet a little, but it evidently got deeper towards the river, and I turned back to Mortlake.

I managed to make out the road by means of its villas and fences and lamps, and so presently got out of this spate, and made my way to the hill going up towards Roehampton, and came out on Putney Common. Here I hunted for food among the trees, finding nothing, and I also raided a couple of silent houses, but they had already been broken into and ransacked. I rested for the remainder of the daylight in a shrubbery, being, in my enfeebled condition, too fatigued to push on.

All this time I saw no human beings and

no signs of the Martians. I encountered a couple of hungry-looking dogs, but both hurried away from the advances I made them. Near Roehampton, I had seen two human skeletons—not bodies, but skeletons, picked clean, and in the wood by me, I found the crushed and scattered bones of several cats and rabbits, and the skull of a sheep. But though I gnawed parts of these in my mouth, there was nothing to be got from them.

After sunset, I struggled on along the road towards Putney, where I think the Heat Ray must have been used for some reason. The aspect of the place in the dusk was singularly desolate, blackened trees, stark and blackened ruins, and down the hill, the sheets of the flooded river, red-tinged with the weed; and over it all—silence. It filled me with terror to look at it all, and think how swiftly that desolating change had come. For a time I believed that all mankind had been swept out of existence, and that I stood there alone, the last man left alive.

I went down Putney High Street, and at the corner of the Upper Richmond Road came upon another skeleton, with the arms dislocated and removed several yards from the rest of the body.

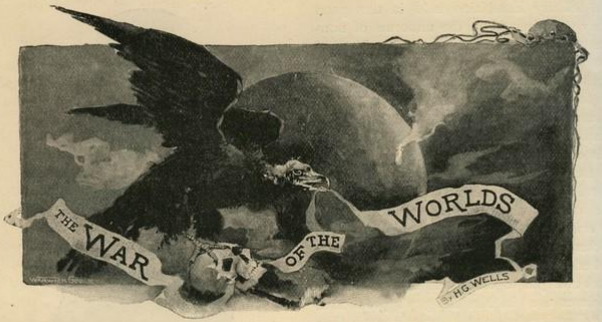
I crossed the bridge, and found a man at last, lying at the corner of the lane to Putney Bridge. He was as black as a sweep with the black dust, and helplessly and speechlessly drunk. There was black dust along the roadway from the bridge onwards, and it grew thicker in Fulham. The streets were horribly quiet. I got food, sour and mouldy, but still quite eatable, in a baker's shop here. Some way towards Walham Green, the streets became clear of powder, and I passed a white terrace of houses on fire—the noise of the burning was an absolute relief. Going on towards Brompton the streets were quiet again.

Here I came once more upon the black powder in the streets, and dead bodies. I saw altogether about a dozen in the length of the Fulham Road. They had been dead some days, so that I hurried quickly past them. The black powder covered them over and softened their outlines. One or two had been disturbed by dogs. Where there was no black powder, it was curiously like a Sunday in the City, with the closed shops, the houses locked up and the blinds drawn, the desertion and the stillness. In some places plunderers had been at work, but rarely at other than the provision and wine shops. A little jeweller's window had been broken open in one place, but apparently the thief had been disturbed, and a number of gold chains and a watch were scattered on the pavement. I did not trouble to touch them. Further on was a tattered woman in a heap on a doorstep; the hand that hung over her knee was gashed and had bled down her rusty brown dress, and a smashed magnum of champagne formed a pool across the pavement.

I became more and more convinced that the extermination of mankind was, save for such stragglers as myself, already accomplished in this part of the world. The Martians, I thought, had gone on, and left the country desolated, seeking food elsewhere. Perhaps even now they were destroying Berlin or Paris, or it might be they had gone northward. . . . .

(To be concluded next month).

For "THE EDITORIAL MIND," *see p.* 568*a*..



XXI.—AFTER THE FIFTEEN DAYS *(continued)*.

THE further I penetrated into London, the profounder grew the silence. But it was not so much the stillness of death, it was the stillness of suspense, of expectation. Somehow I felt that this was not the end. I had a sense of things still impending. Suppose the Martians were, after all, at hand. At any time the destruction that already singed the north-western borders of the Metropolis, and had annihilated Ealing and Kilburn, might strike among these houses and leave them smoking ruins. It was a city condemned and derelict. . . . That, at any rate, would be completion.

In South Kensington the streets were clear of dead and of black powder. It was near South Kensington that I first heard the howling. It crept almost imperceptibly upon my senses. It was a sobbing alternation of two notes, "*Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,*" keeping on perpetually. When I passed streets that ran northward it grew in volume, and houses and buildings seemed to deaden and cut it off again. It came in a full tide down Exhibition Road. I stopped staring towards Kensington Gardens, wondering at this strange remote wailing. It was as if that mighty desert of houses had found a voice for its fear and solitude.

"Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," wailed that superhuman note; great waves of sound sweeping down the broad, sunlit roadway, between the tall buildings on either side. I turned northward, marvelling, towards the iron gates of Eyde Park. I had half a mind to break into the Natural History Museum and find my way up to the summits of the towers, in order to see across the Park. But I decided to keep to the ground, where quick hiding was possible, and so went on up the Exhibition Road. All the large mansions on either side of the road were empty and still, and my footsteps echoed against the sides of the houses. At the top, near the park gate, I came upon a strange sight—a 'bus overturned, and the skeleton of a horse picked clean. I puzzled over this for a time, and then went on to the bridge over the Serpentine. The Voice grew stronger and stronger, though I could see nothing above the housetops on the north side of the park, save a haze of smoke to the north-west.

"Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," cried the voice, coming, as it seemed to me, from somewhere beyond Baker Street. The desolating cry worked upon my mind. The mood that had sustained me passed. The wailing took possession of me. I found I was intensely weary, footsore, and now again hungry and thirsty.

It was already past noon. Why was I wandering alone in this city of the dead? Why was I alone when all London was lying in state, and in its black shroud? I was intolerably lonely. My mind ran on old friends that I had forgotten for years. I

thought of the poisons in the chemists' shops, of the liquors the wine merchants stored, I recalled the two sodden creatures of despair who, so far as I knew, shared the city with myself . . . . We were the last of men.

I came into Oxford Street by the Marble Arch, and here again was black powder and several bodies, and an evil, ominous smell from the gratings of the cellars of some of the houses. I grew very thirsty after the heat of my long walk. With infinite trouble I managed to break into a public-house and get food and drink. I was weary after eating, and went into the parlour behind the bar and slept on a black horsehair sofa I found there.

I awoke to find that dismal howling still in my ears: "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla." It was now dusk, and after I had routed out some biscuits and a cheese in the bar—there was cold beef there also in a safe, but it was too bad to eat—I wandered on through the silent residential squares to Baker Street—Portman Square is the only one I can name—and so came out at last upon Regent's Park. And as I emerged from the top of Baker Street, I saw far away over the trees in the clearness of the sunset, the hood of the Martian giant from which this howling proceeded. I was not terrified. I came upon him as if it were a matter of course. I watched him for some time, but he did not move. He appeared to be standing and yelling, for no reason that I could discover.

I tried to formulate a plan of action. That perpetual sound of "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," confused my mind. Perhaps I was too tired to be very fearful. Certainly I was rather curious than afraid to know the reason of this monotonous crying. I turned back away from the park and struck into Park Road, intending to skirt the park, and went along under shelter of the terraces and got a view of this stationary howling Martian from the direction of St. John's Wood. A couple of hundred yards out of Baker Street I heard a yelping chorus, and saw, first, a dog with a piece of putrescent red meat in his jaws coming headlong towards me, and then a pack of starving mongrels in pursuit of him. He made a wide curve to avoid me, as though he feared I might prove a fresh competitor. As the yelping died away down the silent road, the wailing sound of "Ulla, ulla, ulla," reasserted itself.

I came upon the wrecked Handling Machine half way to St. John's Wood station. At first I thought that a house had fallen across the road. It was only as I clambered among the ruins that I saw, with a start, this mechanical Samson lying, with its tentacles bent and smashed and twisted, among the ruins it had made. The forepart was shattered. It seemed as if it had driven blindly straight at the house and had been overwhelmed in its overthrow. It seemed to me then that this might have happened by a Handling Machine escaping from the guidance of its Martian. I could not clamber among the ruins to see it, and the twilight was now so far advanced that the blood with which its seat was smeared and the gnawed gristle of the Martian that the dogs had left, was invisible to me.

Wondering still more at all that I had seen, I pushed on towards Primrose Hill. Far away, through a gap in the trees, I saw a second Martian, motionless as the first, standing in the park towards the Zoological Gardens, and silent. A little beyond the ruins about the smashed Handling Machine I came upon the Red Weed again, and found the Regent's Canal a spongy mass of dark red vegetation.

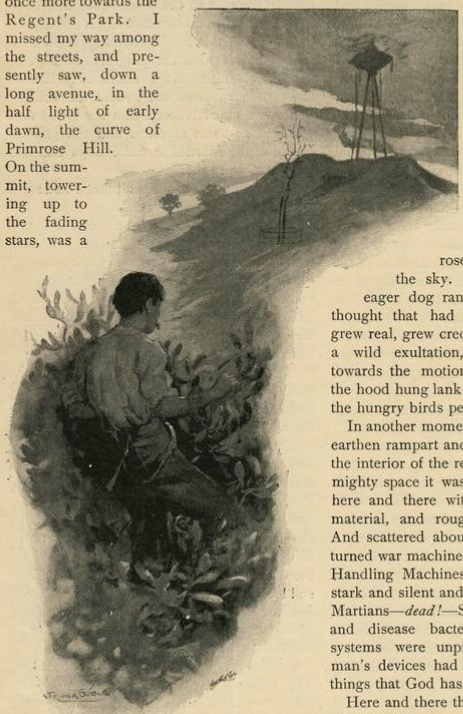
Abruptly, as I crossed the bridge, the sound of "Ulla, ulla, ulla," ceased. It was, as it were, cut off. The silence came like a thunderclap.

The dusky houses about me stood faint, and tall and dim, the trees towards the park were growing black. Night, the Mother of Fear and Mystery, was coming upon me. But while that voice sounded the solitude, the desolation had been endurable; by virtue of it London had still seemed alive, and the sense of life about me had upheld me. Then suddenly, a change, the passing of something—I knew not what—and then a stillness that could be felt. Nothing but this gaunt quiet of death!

London about me gazed at me spectrally. The windows in the white houses were like the eye-sockets of skulls. About me my imagination found a thousand noiseless enemies moving. Terror seized me, a horror

of my temerity. In front of me the road became pitchy black as though it was tarred, and I saw a contorted shape lying across the pathway. I could not bring myself to go on. I turned down St. John's Wood Road, and ran headlong from this unendurable stillness towards Kilburn. I hid from the night and the silence, until long after midnight, in a cabmen's shelter in the Harrow Road. But before the dawn my courage returned, and while the stars were still in the sky, I turned once more towards the Regent's Park. I missed my way among the streets, and presently saw, down a long avenue, in the half light of early dawn, the curve of Primrose Hill. On the summit, towering up to the fading stars, was a third Martian, erect and motionless like the others.

A strange insanity seized upon me. I would die and end it. And I would save myself even the trouble of killing myself. I marched on recklessly towards this Titan, and then, as I drew nearer and the light grew, I saw that a multitude of black birds was circling and clustering about the hood. At that my heart gave a bound, and I began running along the road. I hurried through the red weed that choked St. Edmund's Terrace (a torrent of water was rushing down from the waterworks towards the Albert Road) and emerged upon the grass before the rising of the sun. Great mounds had been heaped about the crest of the hill, making a huge redoubt of it, and from behind them rose a thin smoke against the sky. Against the skyline an eager dog ran and disappeared. The thought that had flashed into my mind, grew real, grew credible. I felt no fear, only a wild exultation, as I ran up the hill, towards the motionless monster. Out of the hood hung lank shreds of brown at which the hungry birds pecked and tore.



I hurried through the red weed.

In another moment I had scrambled up the earthen rampart and stood upon its crest, and the interior of the redoubt was below me. A mighty space it was, with gigantic machines here and there within it, huge mounds of material, and rough hewn shelter places. And scattered about it, some in their overturned war machines, some in the now rigid Handling Machines, and a dozen of them, stark and silent and laid in a row, were the Martians—*dead!*—Slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria, against which their systems were unprepared; slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God has put upon this earth.

Here and there they were scattered, nearly fifty altogether in that great gulf they had made, overtaken by a death that must have

Nearly fifty together in that great gulf.

seemed to them as incomprehensible as any death could be. But how they had died I did not know at this time. All I knew was, that these things that had been alive and so terrible to men, were dead. For a moment I believed that the destruction of Sennacherib had been repeated—that God had repented, that the Angel of Death had slain them in the night.

I stood staring into the pit, and my heart lightened gloriously, even as the rising sun struck the world to fire about me with his rays. The pit was still sunk in darkness, the mighty engines, so great and wonderful in their power and complexity, so unearthly in their tortuous forms, rose weird and strange out of the shadows. The dogs, I could hear, fought over the bodies that lay darkly in the depth of the pit, far below me. Then at the sound of a cawing overhead, I looked up at the huge Fighting Machine, that would fight no more for ever, at the tattered red shreds of flesh that dripped down upon the overturned seats on the summit of Primrose Hill.

I turned and looked down the slope of the hill, to where, enhaloed now in birds, stood those other two Martians that I had seen overnight, just as death had overtaken them. The one had died, even as it had been crying to its companions; perhaps it was the last to die, and its voice had gone on perpetually until the force of its machinery was exhausted. They glittered now, harmless tripod towers of shining metal, in the brightness of the rising sun. . . . . .

All about the pit, and saved as by a miracle from everlasting destruction, stretched the great Mother of Cities. Those who have only seen London veiled in her robes of smoke, can scarcely imagine the naked clearness and beauty of the silent wilderness of houses.

Eastward, over the blackened ruins of the Albert Terrace and the splintered spire of the church, the sun blazed dazzling in a clear sky, and here and there some facet in the great wilderness of roofs caught the light and glared with a white intensity. There is a round store place for wines by the Chalk Farm Station, and vast railway yards, marked once with a graining of black rails, but red lined now with the quick rusting of a fortnight's disuse. Northward, Kilburn and Hampstead rose blue and crowded with houses; westward, the great city was haze-

I extended my hands towards the sky.

dimmed; and southward, beyond the Martians, the green waves of Regent's Park, the Langham Hotel, the dome of the Albert Hall, the Imperial Institute, and the giant mansions of the Brompton Road came out clear and little in the sunrise with the jagged ruins of Westminster beyond. Far away the Surrey hills rose up, and the towers of the Crystal Palace glittered like two silver rods. The dome of St. Paul's was dark against the sunrise, and injured, I saw for the first time, by a huge gaping cavity on its westward side.

And, as I looked at this wide expanse of houses, and factories, and churches, silent and abandoned, as I thought of the multitudinous hopes and efforts, the innumerable hosts of lives that had gone to build this human reef, and of the swift and ruthless destruction that had hung over it all, when I realised that the shadow had been rolled back, and that men might still live in its streets, and this dear vast dead city of mine be once more alive and powerful, I felt a wave of emotion, that was near akin to tears.

The torment was over. Even that day, the healing would begin. The survivors of the people scattered over the country, leaderless, lawless, foodless, like sheep without a shepherd, the thousands who had fled by sea would begin to return; the pulse of life, growing stronger and stronger, would beat again in the empty streets, and pour across the vacant squares. Whatever destruction was done, the hand of the destroyer was stayed. All the gaunt wrecks, the blackened skeletons of houses that stared so dismally at the sunlit grass of the hill, would presently be echoing under the hammers of the restorers, and ringing with the tintinnabulations of the trowels. At the thought, I extended my hands towards the sky, and began thanking God. In a year, thought I,—in a year. . . . and then, with overwhelming force, came the thought of myself, of my wife, and the old life, that I had to imagine done with for ever.

XXII.—THE EPILOGUE.

But here the story that will interest the general reader, the story of the Martians, ends. The rest, the return, the Thanksgiving, has been written by a thousand pens. This is indeed no history, it is a mere clumsy narrative of my own personal adventures during this strange time, eked out by my brother's experience where the gaps were too great. Such narratives we must have first in abundance, and afterwards the history may be written. In the fact that I was among the first to see the Martians at their arrival, and the second man—indeed, I had fancied myself first—to discover them dead, I have presumed to think my impressions might be of value. And by an odd coincidence, of the four Martians killed by Man, I saw the death of one and my brother the overthrow of two others. But to tell of the torrent of people that presently flowed back into London, chiefly from the north—for the Martians had never gone further than forty miles in that direction—of the riots and plundering, and murders, of the restoration of government, of the terrific explosion of the Heat Ray powder that wrecked the north of London, hundreds are better qualified than I.

Nor have I any qualification to speak of the distresses in the home counties, the famine, the violence, even it is said, the cannibalism, the disappearance of all law and order during the fortnight of the war, and afterwards the struggle with the pestilence. It speaks eloquently for the lesson that humanity had learned that no attack was made on our stricken Empire during the months of reconstruction.

I plundered a grocer's shop in Camden Town for food, on the morning of my discovery, and afterwards tramped down to the docks with the idea of spreading the good news there. In Shoreditch I met people again, and told them what I had seen; and it was from the General Post Office, by a Jewess who had learned the trade of a telegraph operator, that the news was first flashed out of London, to Paris first, and then to certain English towns.

I remember that I laughed hysterically until I cried, when, after infinite trouble and muddling, we managed the telephone, and heard the French operator say, over and over again as though they were his only words: "Dead! *Nom de Dieu!* A Tousand Congratulation. You have kill dem? *Vive l'Angleterre!* Hooray!" Its kindly insipidity offered such an infinite contrast to the half dozen haggard yellow faced dirty and hungry people who crowded into the room. That night, I have heard since, Paris, by no set contrivance, but of its own impulsive emotion, was a fairy-land of blazing illuminations from end to end, and ten thousand thronged cities in Europe and Asia and America shouted aloud and held festival at the news of the world's release.

I lingered in London ten days, serving as a special constable. I dreaded to go back to my house, desolate among the ashes of Maybury Hill, the house in which I had hoped to live the best part of my days. I believed my wife was dead. I feared to find a solitude that should confirm my fears. But at last, I induced myself to resign my white badge and staff and return by one of the Government trains, by which people were taken back free of charge to their proper dwelling places. The Surrey country was pitifully scarred and blackened on either side, and every watercourse was scarlet with the red weed.

I descended at Byfleet Station, and took the road to Maybury, past the place where I and the artilleryman had talked to the hussars, and on by the spot where the Martian had appeared to me in the thunderstorm. Here I turned aside to find, among a tangle of red fronds, the warped and broken dog-cart with the whitened bones of the horse, scattered and gnawed. Then I returned through the pine wood, neck high with weed here and there, to find that the landlord of the 'Spotted Dog' had already found burial, and so home, past the College Arms. A man standing at an open cottage door greeted me by name as I passed.

I looked at my house with a quick flash of hope that faded immediately. The door had been forced; it was unfastened and was opening slowly as I approached. Then it slammed again. The curtains of my study fluttered out of the open window from which

I and the artilleryman had watched the dawn. No one had closed it since. The smashed bushes were just as I had left them nearly four weeks ago. I stumbled into the hall, and the house felt empty. The stair carpet was ruffled and discoloured where I had crouched, soaked to the skin from the thunderstorm, on the night of the catastrophe. Our muddy footsteps I saw still went up the stairs.

I went into the dining-room, and there was the mutton and the bread, both far gone now in decay, and a beer bottle overturned just as I and the artilleryman had left them. My home was desolate. I perceived the folly of the faint hope I had cherished so long. And then a strange thing occurred. "It is no use," said a voice. "The house is deserted. No one has been here these ten days. Do not stay here to torment yourself. No one escaped but you."

I was startled. Had I spoken my thought aloud? I turned, and the French window was open behind me. I made a step to it, and stood looking out. And there, amazed and afraid, even as I stood amazed and afraid, were my cousin and my wife. My wife, white and tearless. She gave a faint cry. "I came," she said. "I knew. Knew . . ." She put her hand to her throat—swayed. I dashed out and caught her in my arms.

I turned aside to find the warped and broken dog-cart with the whitened bones of the horse.

I cannot but regret now that I am concluding my story how little I am able to contribute to the discussion of the many debatable questions which are still unsettled. In one respect I shall certainly provoke criticism. My particular province is speculative philosophy; my knowledge of comparative physiology is confined to a book or two, but it seems to me that Carver's suggestions as to the reason of the rapid death of the Martians is so probable as to be regarded almost as a proven conclusion. I have assumed that in the body of my narrative.

At the very base of the vegetable kingdom in this world are those exceedingly minute and abundant things, the Bacteria. They will be better known, perhaps, to the unscientific reader as "Germs." Various species of them cause putrefaction and such diseases as Cholera, Anthrax, and Typhoid. Others are less mischievous, and some even beneficial. Multitudes of them occurring about the roots of trees are said to be absolutely necessary to the feeding of

these trees, and it has even been supposed that those always present in the stomach and intestines of men and animals are conducive to digestion and even essential.

They are everywhere, in the air we breathe, in the water we drink, in the dust, in our food, in our veins even. To guard us against the perpetual attacks of those that generate disease, there are in our blood a multitude of microscopic particles, the *leucocytes*, which have the property of consuming them. Our bodies, in fact, carry on a perpetual defensive warfare against these unseen activities; we have been drilled and disciplined and to a large extent inured against them. But on Mars, the development of life has been so far dissimilar from the development of life on Earth, that there do not seem to be any bacteria there at all. The Martians arrived here without any such resisting power as we possess, Carver supposes, and they must have begun to rot almost as soon as they arrived.

And there, amazed and afraid, were my cousin and my wife.

At any rate, in all the bodies of the Martians that were examined after the war, no bacteria except those already known as terrestrial species, were found. That they did not bury any of their dead, and the reckless slaughter they perpetrated, point also to an entire ignorance of the putrefactive process. But probable as this seems, it is by no means a proven conclusion.

Neither is the composition of the Black Smoke known, which the Martians used with such deadly effect, and the generator of the Heat Ray remains a puzzle. The terrible disasters at the Ealing and South Kensington laboratories have disinclined analysts for further investigations upon the latter. Spectrum analysis of the black powder points unmistakably to the presence of an unknown element with a brilliant group of three lines in the green and it is possible that it combines with argon to form a compound which acts at once with deadly effect upon some constituent in the blood. But such unproven speculations will scarcely be of interest to the general reader to whom this story is addressed. None of the brown scum that drifted down the Thames after the destruction of Shepperton was examined at the time, and none now is forthcoming.

The results of an anatomical examination of the Martians, so far as the prowling dogs had left such an examination possible, I have already given. But everyone is familiar with the magnificent and almost complete specimen in spirits at the Natural History Museum, and the countless drawings that

have been made from it; and beyond that the interest of the physiology and structure is purely scientific.

It has often been asked why the Martians did not fly immediately after their arrival. They certainly did use a flying apparatus for several days, but only for brief flights of a score or so of miles, in order to reconnoitre and spread their black powder. The framework found at Kilburn was certainly this flying machine. I never saw this thing flying myself, but my brother, as I have already told in its proper place, had just a glimpse of it. It is hard to believe, seeing their other power, that this was their limit in this direction.

Two things must have prevented the immediate resort to aeronautics. In the first place it must have been impossible to pack the necessary wings into the cylinder by which the Martians came, and in the next the problem of flying in our atmosphere was one they could scarcely calculate in detail upon Mars, since it would be almost impossible for them to estimate the density of our lower air, until they reached it. But these are of course merely suggestions. The fact remains, that they did not fly fifty miles from London all through the war. Had they done so, then the destruction they would have caused must have been infinitely greater than it was, though it could not have averted the end, of course, even by a day.

A question of graver and universal interest is the possibility of another attack from the Martians. I do not think that nearly enough attention has been given to this aspect of the matter. At present the planet Mars is in conjunction, but with every return to opposition I, for one, anticipate a renewal of their adventure. In any case we should be prepared. It seems to me that it should be possible to define the position of the gun from which the shots are discharged, to keep a sustained watch upon this part of the planet, and to anticipate the arrival of the next attack.

In that case the cylinder might be destroyed with dynamite or artillery before it was sufficiently cool for the Martians to emerge, or they might be butchered by means of guns so soon as the screw opened. It seems to me that they have lost a vast advantage in the failure of their first surprise. Possibly they see it in the same light.

Lessing had advanced excellent reasons for supposing that the Martians have actually succeeded in effecting a landing on the planet Venus. Seven months ago now Venus and Mars were in alignment with the sun, that is to say, Mars was in opposition from the point of view of an observer on Venus. Subsequently a peculiar luminous and sinuous marking appeared on the unillumined half of the inner planet, and almost simultaneously a faint dark mark of a similar sinuous character was detected upon a photograph of the Martian disc. One needs to see the drawings of these appearances in order to appreciate fully their remarkable resemblance in character. The photographs were reproduced in *Knowledge* in July of last year; Lessing's sketch of the luminous marks on Venus appeared in the corresponding column of *Nature* in the previous April.

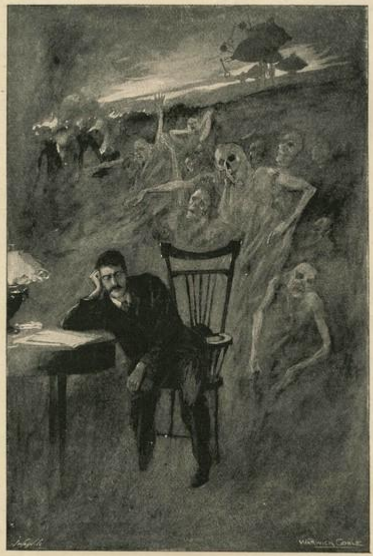
At any rate, whether we expect another invasion or not, our views of the human future must be greatly modified by these events. We have learned now that we cannot regard this planet as being fenced in and a secure abiding place for Man; we can never anticipate the unseen good or evil that may come upon us suddenly out of space. It may be that in the larger design of the universe this invasion from Mars is not without its ultimate benefit for men; it has robbed us of that serene confidence in the future which is the most fruitful source of decadence, and it has done much to promote the conception of the commonweal of mankind. It may be that across the immensity of space the Martians have watched the fate of these pioneers of theirs and learned their lesson, and that on the planet Venus they have found a securer settlement. Be that as it may, for many years yet there will certainly be no relaxation of the eager scrutiny of the Martian disc, and those fiery darts of the sky, the shooting stars, will bring with them as they fall an unavoidable apprehension to all the sons of men.

The broadening of men's views that has resulted can scarcely be exaggerated. Before the cylinder fell there was a general persuasion that through all the deep of space no

life existed beyond the petty surface of our minute sphere. Now we see further. If the Martians can reach Venus, there is no reason to suppose that the thing is impossible for men, and when the slow cooling of the sun makes, as it must do at last, this earth uninhabitable, it may be that the thread of life that has begun here will have streamed out and caught our sister planet within its toils. Should we conquer? Dim and wonderful is the vision I have conjured up in my mind of life spreading slowly from this little seed bed of the solar system throughout the inanimate vastness of sidereal space. But that is a remote dream. It may be, on the other hand, that the destruction of the Martians is only a reprieve. To them and not to us perhaps is the future ordained.

For my own part, the stress and danger of this time have left an abiding sense of doubt and insecurity in my mind. I sit in my study writing by lamplight, and suddenly I see again the healing valley below set with writhing flames, and feel the house behind and about me empty and desolate. I go out into the Byfleet Road and vehicles pass me, a butcher boy in a cart, a cabful of visitors, a workman on a bicycle, children going to school, and suddenly they become vague and unreal, and I hurry again with the artilleryman through the hot brooding silence. Of a night I see the black powder darkening the silent streets, and the contorted bodies shrouded in that layer; they rise upon me tattered and dog-bitten. They gibber and grow fiercer, paler, uglier, mad distortions of humanity at last, and I wake cold and wretched in the darkness of the night.

I go to London and see the busy multitudes in Fleet Street and the Strand, and it comes across my mind that they are but the ghosts of the past haunting the streets that I have seen silent and wretched, going to and fro, phantasms in a dead city, the mockery of life in a galvanised body. And strange, too, it is to stand on Primrose Hill, as I did but a day before writing this last chapter, to see the great province of houses, dim and blue through the haze of the smoke and mist, vanishing at last into the vague lower sky, to see the people walking to and fro among the flower beds on the hill, to see the sightseers about the Martian machine that stands there still, to hear the tumult of playing children, and to recall the time when I saw it all bright and clear cut, hard and silent, under the dawn of that last great day. . .



They gibber and grow fiercer.

And strangest of all is it to hold my wife's hand again, and to think that I have counted her and that she has counted me, among the dead.

THE END.