

BRITAIN'S ONLY SCIENCE STORY WEEKLY

# SCOOPS

The **STORY**  
PAPER of  
TO-MORROW

**2d**

EVERY THURSDAY

The  
**HUMMING  
HORROR**  
*See Inside*

★ BOUND FOR MARS

JACQUES HAVARD looked at his completed rocket ship with a speculative eye. At last, after twenty years' hard work, it was ready for space.

In a sequestered little village in Southern France he had experimented during all those long years, and now his thoughts were of the great test, almost due, when he would leave the Earth for the planet Mars.

He was on the point of fulfilling a lifelong ambition. Not his desire was it to go to the Moon. He had studied that great golden orb, and had come to the inevitable conclusion that it was really a dead world. . . .

No air—no life. But Mars was, to him, full of promise. . . .

Someone entered his room and came softly towards him.

"Jacques. . . ."

"Mary!"

Pale and ethereal, she stood looking at him. She loved Jacques, but he was unresponsive—he loved his work with an all-consuming passion.

She had been fifteen years old when he had first met her, and for eleven years she had worked with him, helping in his experiments.

She was beautiful, but one thing alone marring that beauty—a scar across her brow, a memento of the terrible accident which had robbed her of her parents, when the aeroplane in which they had been travelling became a hurtling, tearing monster of destruction, and crashed to Earth in the erstwhile peaceful little village of Rondiac, in Southern France.

Rich Americans, they had been on holiday when the tragedy occurred. The girl's father had been an inventor, and had made his millions from mass-produced aeroplanes.

It was a strange twist

# CATASTROPHIC

**ARMAGEDDON! The World Goes Mad to the Brink of Destruction. Finally abroad and the End is Nigh. A gallant**

of fate that had dropped Mary Lammeur at the Havards' door, for the Havards had for three generations been inventors. The girl was the only survivor of the accident, and so Jacques' parents had adopted her.

After six months had passed, and the first harrowing agony had departed from Mary under the kindly and sympathetic care of the Havards, she had regained something of her former spirits, and had become the favoured confidante of Jacques in his ambitions and secrets.

Jacques was thirty-eight years old, but from the day that he had left school thoughts of the other sex had scarcely obtruded upon his consciousness.

Even Mary was unable to stir the instinct in him, although in her more romantic moods she had essayed it. . . . But it was useless, for he plunged all the harder into his work.

"Paris," said the girl, "is all agog with the news of your coming departure."

"And how did Paris look?"

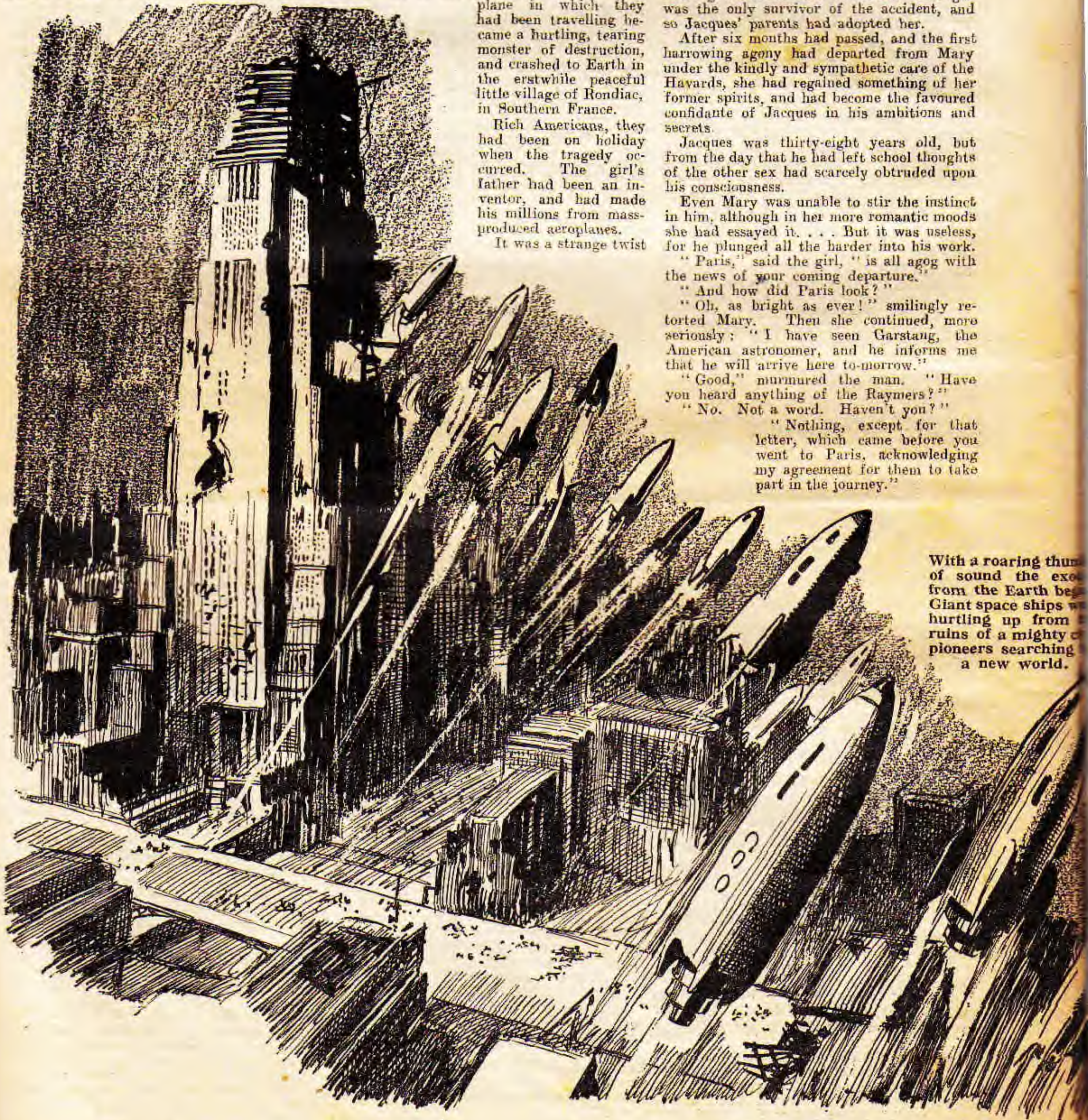
"Oh, as bright as ever!" smilingly retorted Mary. Then she continued, more seriously: "I have seen Garstang, the American astronomer, and he informs me that he will arrive here to-morrow."

"Good," murmured the man. "Have you heard anything of the Raymers?"

"No. Not a word. Haven't you?"

"Nothing, except for that letter, which came before you went to Paris, acknowledging my agreement for them to take part in the journey."

With a roaring thunder of sound the explosion from the Earth began. Giant space ships were hurtling up from the ruins of a mighty civilization, pioneers searching for a new world.



# LYSOM

Wars, Revolts, Lawlessness bring the Earth the Sinister Spectre of the Plague walks and sets out to Colonise the Planet Mars

"Do you think that they have backed out?"

"Them? *Mon Dieu!* No! You will not find them backing out after all the years they have spent in trying to make a rocket ship."

"True," agreed the girl.

"Mollheimer has arrived," the man announced. "Have you met him yet?"

"No," replied the girl.

"Come up to the house then, and I will introduce you."

They were silent as they walked towards the house. Then Mary broke in:

"Do you remember Motier?"

"Motier? Why, of course. The man who constructed a ship in which to travel to the Moon. The trip ended in disastrous failure and resulted in him going mad."

"Yes," said the girl. "Motier was confined to an asylum, but yesterday he escaped."

"Escaped? Do you think that he has heard of our intended trip to Mars?"

"I am sure he has."

"Then we shall have to watch out for stowaways."

Mary laughed musically.

"That is absurd. What chance have people of stowing away on the ship when it is guarded day and night?"

By this time they had entered the house, and in the hall stood a tall lean man of about thirty-five. It was the German, Mollheimer. "Mollheimer," announced Jacques, "this is my friend, Mary."

The German smiled and came forward with outstretched hand.

"Having heard so much about you from my host," he said in faultless English, "I have been looking forward to meeting you."

For all the man appeared so pleasant, Mary took an instinctive dislike to him. But she concealed it, and took his outstretched hand.

"And now, if you have the time to spare," said the German to his host, "I would be pleased if you would inform me about your work."

"Certainly," replied Jacques. "Come into the lounge."

He waited until they were all comfortably seated in the lounge, and then began to talk.

"As you are doubtless aware," he said, "this will be the third time that an attempt has been made to leave the Earth. The first two have ended in failure. Fifteen years ago Professor Murray built a ship. His, like mine, was rocket propelled. As the mighty forces tore at the ship to start it on its journey, a terrifying explosion took place which wrecked it utterly, and many people who had gathered to see its departure were killed.

The second attempt took place three years

later. Ralph Motier, in the *Moonbird*, rose to a height of twenty-four miles before dropping to Earth again. Motier alone was alive when the doors were forced open. His two companions, their bodies horribly contorted, lay where they had been hurled across the ship. Motier was insane, gabbling incoherent words to his rescuers. He was confined to an asylum, from which he escaped yesterday. . . .

"Two years after that attempt Durofium was invented, or rather discovered. Durofium, the metal which possesses the hardness of steel and yet is very light. The metal was discovered in strange circumstances.

"A terrific eruption took place in Italy, and from the bowels of the Earth came this strange substance which was so light and yet so adamant. It may appear strange to you that a substance so light should be so deep in the Earth, but nature has shown us stranger things. . . .

"I saw possibilities in the material, and resolved to use it. There will be no need of tremendous explosions to start the ship on its journey. That is the fact that I am depending upon for the success of my flight to Mars. . . . Four more days, and the thing is a reality, Herr Mollheimer."

The German smiled.

"Four more days," he repeated.

"At the present time," continued Jacques, "Mars is at a distance of approximately 40,000,000 miles. To reach our objective we shall have to attain a speed of 25,000 miles per hour. At that speed we shall reach Mars in sixty-seven days. In stocking the ship with the necessary provisions, I have managed to pack enough to last seven persons for a period of one hundred and fifty days. That allows us sixteen days on Mars."

"And that should be enough," murmured Mollheimer.

"Yes. It will give us the necessary opportunity to see what we want. There is always a doubt about the air, though. But I am sure that it will be quite breatheable, although it is certain to be much rarer than ours."

Mollheimer studied the inventor while he talked. Evidently the old, old desire of man for fresh worlds to conquer was in Havard. Earth was mastered—every nook and cranny of it had succumbed to the searchings of a civilisation that was fast becoming bored with itself.

Even as the German studied Havard, so Mary studied Mollheimer. She tried to find out why she did not like him, but could not. The dislike was purely instinctive.

Havard rose and gazed out of the window to where, in the distance across the fields, he could see the dim shape of the space ship, surrounded by the massive framework which was to assist it into the void.

The faint light from a crescent Moon illuminated the scene, and all was wrapped in a pervading silence. But Havard knew that nearby were four armed guards. He was taking no chances with the dreaded souvenir hunters.

Disinterestedly, he glanced up at the Moon. Clouds were creeping up from the horizon, ready to overwhelm it.

Mollheimer rose and yawned.

"I feel like retiring, if you do not mind," he said.

Jacques looked at his guest. "Yes, do, if you are tired."

Silently the German left the room.

"I think I'll go to bed, too," said Mary. "I want to be ready early to meet the guests."

"All right. Good-night, Mary."

"Good-night, Jacques. . . ."

Long after the girl had gone, Jacques stood gazing at the ship and the long, gleaming rails up which she would glide, until at last the threatening shadows reached the Moon, and the outer world was wrapped in darkness. Then he turned away.

"Four more days," he whispered to a grotesque little idol that grinned and winked at him from a corner of the window recess.

## ★ "PROGRESSIA" GOES UP

IT was four days later, and gathered together under the roof of the Havards were some of the most distinguished scientists the world has ever known.

The house resounded to the soft music of France's most famous dance band, playing at the farewell party.

Jacques was dividing his attention alternately between Garstang and the reporter for *The World News*. Occasionally he would look at the clock. . . . Mary was dancing. . . . Mollheimer stood silent and alone, watching her dance.

She danced beautifully, he noticed. He dare not ask her for a dance, for he was afraid of being snubbed—he could sense her dislike of him. Now she was dancing with Raymer, the American.

Yes, it was a gathering of notables, Mollheimer thought to himself, his mind taking another trend. He picked out his fellow-voyagers.

Jacques, the king-pin of the whole affair, on whom all their lives would depend in the ensuing weeks. Garstang, the famous American astronomer, who had dashed from America to go on this journey.

America was well represented. Garstang, Mary and the Raymer pair—Martin and Doris, brother and sister, both of whom had spent years building their space ship (though neither was yet thirty), only to meet with bankruptcy when the ship was half-complete.

In the far corner of the room, alone, stood Henri, the man who had worked with Jacques for the last eight years. Before that he had worked in the Lynn Engineering Company, the biggest engineering firm in France, and prior to that he had helped Motier. Though now almost sixty years of age, he carried himself like a young man.

That completed the ship's staff, with the exception of himself. He, Mollheimer, was to act as recorder on this expedition. He was famous the world over for his intrepid explorations of the last outposts. . . . It was said that he could stand any amount of heat.

Sardonic people, who knew his reputation, called him "The Devil." It was a name of which he was proud. He was never more pleased than when someone thus named him to his face.

The hands of the clock crept inexorably round. Havard's glances at it became more frequent. Finally he looked at it, then signalled to the conductor.

The wail of the dance music died to silence. Then the crashing finale of the "New World Symphony". . . .

PICTURE the scene at that quiet little village of Rondiac, in Southern France—the scene at the field from which the flight was to take place.

Swaying multitudes of people which threatened to break the fence which had been erected to keep them back, and who shattered the silence by the singing of old ballads; the space ship gleaming silvery, with the name *Progressia* in large letters across its side; the large framework which surrounded it, and the long, shining rails with their upward turn at the end; the huge arc lamps shedding their rays over all; and, lastly, the little group of figures which comprised the chief actors in the drama which was now being unrolled.

Havard, quiet and unemotional, save for the gleam in his eyes which hinted at suppressed excitement; Henri, the old Frenchman who was not known by any other name, and who had no other interest in life than the machine, save, perhaps, a fondness for his master; Garstang, the American astronomer, betraying a slightly nervous excitement; Mollheimer, suave and smiling, and obviously unaffected by the preparations for departure, even though within the next thirty minutes he might be dead; Mary, looking wonderingly at Henri, for whom she had

## A Madman Found in the Space Ship

suddenly conceived an aversion; Martin Raymer, quiet and business-like; his sister, Doris, laughing and talking like a child going on holiday; and the others who stood having a final word with them before they departed.

The signal for time was at last given, and one by one the party of seven entered the ship. The others dropped back to the safety-line as the doors were closed.

Three minutes passed—an eternity of time to the watching multitudes. The world was hushed, waiting. . . . A hysterical woman screamed. . . . The tense crowd relaxed. . . .

Suddenly a wail was heard—a thin note that rose to a piercing crescendo of sound as the ship commenced to glide slowly along the rails. With a gasp of expectation the crowd leaned forward.

Faster. . . . Faster. . . . Now it had reached the top of the incline. . . . Simultaneously the staccato sound of the exploding rockets was heard. . . .

Steadily, but with ever-increasing speed, the machine rose into the air to become but a speck and then to disappear from sight.

A roar burst from the crowd, a cry of acclamation. Noisily they left, the arc lights died out, and all was darkness, and silence. . . . Silence, save for the yells and curses of one man who staggered along the road and shook his fists impotently at the sky.

It was Henri, and yet Henri was in the ship with the others. . . .

### ★ THE JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE

THIS is the official statement written out by Mollheimer, recorder to the expedition:

On leaving the Earth, I, for one, was much astonished by the speed we soon picked up. We had expected a terrible feeling as we fought against the Earth's gravitation. The pressure became awful, and I could barely raise my head to look at the speedometer in front of which Havard sat, as if carved out of stone.

Already the gauge registered 24,000 miles per hour! As I watched, it steadily increased to 25,000 miles per hour. The space ship seemed as if it were being torn apart. The metal groaned and creaked with the immense strain until I thought it would burst and flatten out, then drop to Earth again.

Suddenly the pressure eased, and was gone. I do not suppose that the matter had taken a few moments to occur, but it had seemed an eternity. With a great sensation of relief the crushing feeling passed, to be succeeded by lassitude. With the departure of pressure, the pointer of the gauge had leapt forward to 30,000 miles per hour!

But even as I looked, Havard threw over a lever, and the sound of the rockets died out. Gradually, very gradually, the speed diminished. The panting of hearts was audible with the silencing of the rockets—I do not doubt that my own was beating fast at the time.

I think that Raymer was the first to attempt to rise and walk about. His absurd appearance as he floundered about the room caused me to be shaken out of my calm, and laugh loudly and heartily. This so surprised Mary that she turned fearful eyes on me, as if she thought I was doing something desperate.

It was then I noticed the silence of Henri. The pallor of his face showed that all was not well with him. I had spent five years in the study of Anatomy, so I went across to him to see what was wrong. It was the strain that had affected him.

"Get me some water," I cried to Mary, who was watching closely.

She brought me a small jugful, and I bathed Henri's face. Then a strange thing occurred. His moustache washed off! My exclamation attracted the attention of Havard, and he came and looked.

"That is not Henri!" he cried in astonishment.

"Then who is it?" I asked.

No one answered this, but the girl Mary turned a look of understanding to Havard.

The man who was not Henri opened his eyes.

"Are we on the journey?" he asked.

"We are," I replied. "Who are you?"

The man laughed wildly.

"I have done it! You could not fool me! I am Motier!"

"Motier!"

"Yes. That is my name. Doubtless you have heard of me." He turned his head to Havard. "So you are the man who has made a ship which is to travel through space? Fool! Fool!"

"Why am I a fool?" asked Havard.

"A fool for attempting to travel to Mars! Do you not know the distance? Compared with the distance to Mars, the distance to the Moon is nothing!"

"Yes, but there is no life on the Moon."

"Life! What do you want with life? What is life? Nothing! A mirage!"

"Where is Henri?" asked Havard, angrily. "What have you done with him?"

"Your friend is quite safe," Motier chuckled. "I left him tied up in a barn. He will be free now, and no doubt cursing at his lost opportunity."

Havard turned away. He could see that it was no use arguing with this man.

I asked Motier: "What do you think there is on the Moon?"

"Strange things!" he whispered, knowingly: "strange things, and gold!"

Gold! The word leapt from his lips with the full propulsion of inward excitement behind it. Gold. . . . I looked at the others.

"What makes you think that there is gold in the Moon?" I asked Motier.

"Fool! I know! I have studied the Moon long enough, ay, even when I was in that place where they locked me and told me that I was insane! I know there is gold in it!"

I turned to Havard, who was busy making calculations.

"Havard, is there gold on the Moon?"

"How should I know?" he cried.

I was at a loss now. Suddenly an exclamation from the girl startled me. Raymer had slid the Durefium panels from the windows in the rear, and looking through them, we could see the Earth blackly silhouetted against the Sun. At first it was a thin line, then the rays illuminated the ship and made the artificial light seem as nothing in comparison.

But what a feeling it caused in the pit of my stomach. We were out in uncharted space, in a small world of our own, with nothing solid beneath our feet! Each movement was awkward, and several loose things were drifting about the floor.

The dazzling light of the Sun was almost unbearable, so Raymer closed the shutters. Even as he did so, Havard opened the front ones, and almost before us lay the Moon, in glorious splendour.

"The Moon!" cried Motier. "Turn the ship from Mars!"

"Impossible!" said Havard, coldly.

"This journey is calculated out, and there can be no turning aside! That would mean disaster."

"Do you think that I have just come from an elementary school? Do not try to fool me! I have built a ship like this. I know the you can steer it. What about the rockets? If you fire them at one side, you could turn the ship round, if need be!"

Havard was silent. I thought of possibilities. Would any of them back me up if I suggested turning to the Moon? Motier would for one. But he would not be fit to have control of the ship. I looked at the others. Garstang, perhaps? No. He was silent, gazing out at the stars and planets he was seeing clearly for the first time.

Reluctantly, I abandoned the project. And so we slid on through the vast gulfs of

space, monotonous waking period after waking period, with the silence of death around us and the insecurity that is only felt in space.

At one time alone the monotony was broken by our passing through a sheaf of meteorites which threatened to crash our little world to fragments.

It was a relief when we were finally through them. The things will ever be a menace to space travel.

To relieve the dull monotony which we had anticipated, we had taken a lot of books to read, and we also played cards. Thus we contrived to while away the tedious time.

Until at last the Red World began to loom close beneath us, and our speed increased as we encountered its gravitational pull. The planet grew closer, filling the entire view-plate with its bulk. Everything loose had now come to a standstill on what had been the front end of the ship. We ourselves were pulled to that part, and had to cling to the rails.

Havard threw his weight against a lever. Came a sudden roar from the front of the ship, and our speed slackened considerably. Another lever pulled, and another row of rockets whined as they were released. Even as they left the ship there came a violent crash, and we pitched head over heels on top of each other amidst a pile of wreckage.

I just noticed the exploding of the light bulb as something hit it in that fleeting moment, and then all was darkness, and for the time I knew no more. The journey had ended.

### ★ DREAD SNAKES OF MARS

MOLLHEIMER continues his narrative:

When I recovered consciousness I found myself lying with my feet to the front end of the ship.

Next to me lay Garstang, still unconscious. The others seemed in a similar predicament to myself. All except Havard, who was above us, reaching to a valve at the side.

Those around me who were awake, I noticed, were holding their heads in a way which suggested a bad headache. Instantly I realised that I had a bad headache, and that it was rapidly getting worse.

A sibilant hissing filled the ship, and I looked again at Havard. Air was either entering or leaving.

With a cry Havard turned to us.

"Pure air!" he shouted.

True enough, it was. Now we could feel it sweeping over us in waves. Like magic, my headache lifted.

Havard commenced unscrewing the door-locks.

"Just a minute," I gasped. "Is that safe? We do not know what there is to contend with on Mars."

Havard nodded, and gave his attention to the view-plates which adjoined the door. The rear ones, which were now directly overhead, had so far given us illumination. Apparently Havard had opened them when he recovered consciousness.

I joined Havard at the view-plates on the side, and we gazed out on an uninspiring vista of red sand. Not a sign of life visible anywhere.

"Are we going out?" I asked Havard.

He nodded.

"Yes, but we will arm ourselves first."

The others had all by now recovered, and were gazing out at the sand. Havard supplied all the men except Motier with rifles, and to the two women he gave revolvers.

Rifles ready, we opened the doors, and dropped out one by one on to Martian soil—soil that no Earthman had stepped on before.

It was a silent world we entered. Rain was falling gently, rain that dried almost as soon as it touched ground.

How lively we felt! After being cooped

## Strange Wonders of the Red World

up in the space ship all that time it was a relief to disembark. A shock was in store for us, however.

"Look!" screamed Mary.

Under the glare of a cold setting sun a sinuous object was creeping towards us. Its appearance was something similar to that of a centipede, save for the fact that it was about eight feet long and more snake-like. It was the most repulsive thing that I have ever seen. As far as I can remember it had twelve legs.

But at the time I did not feel like studying what manner of creature it was. The thing was too close for comfort. Its jaws were already beginning to snap as if in anticipation of a feast. As it moved the sand rustled, and in it was left a track such as a snail makes.

The Raymer girl raised her revolver and fired point-blank at its head. It did not even have time to yell before it died, assuming the thing could yell. We had no means of ascertaining.

Havard and Raymer went forward to investigate the body, but I cannot say that I was particularly interested in it.

Instead, I looked to see if there were any more of the things about. But all was still and silent under the cold sky.

Then I paid more attention to our surroundings. We were on the verge of a desert which stretched interminably into the distance. On our other side was a very high forest—a dense army of giant trees that were higher than any on Earth. The strange thing about them was their colour—the leaves were like copper.

Mingled with the trees was a peculiar yellowish-brown undergrowth—sickly-looking stuff.

A steady drumming made itself heard, which none of us could define. For a while we stood listening. At intervals we could hear a distant cry of "Laa-eeh! Laa-eeh!"

"Quick!" cried Raymer. "Back into the ship!"

Even as he spoke I saw the things approaching from the woods. The dread snakes of Mars! Hurriedly we scrambled into the ship.

Nice try, son! Even before we had made fast the doors the ship was surrounded with them. And the gloom of twilight lay over the world.

Evidently with the setting of the Sun a wind had sprung up, for we could see the sand eddying and lifting in places. Or was it some form of life that was raising itself from hibernation under the sand? We could not tell, for the shades of night swept the world, and we could no longer see anything, not even the snakes.

Havard stumbled round in the dark, seeking a bulb to replace the broken one. It was more pleasant when he at last succeeded in finding one.

With the gleam of it the things round the ship dispersed. We opened all the view-plates and were able to see a fair distance around us. Overhead the sky was liberally sprinkled with star-dust. All the old familiar constellations had gone, unrecognisable from this world.

A brilliant, though small object appeared above the horizon. "Deimos!" cried Garstang, rushing to the nearest view-plate. I am no astronomer, but his remark interested me.

"What is Deimos?" I asked.

"One of the two satellites of Mars," he replied. "Deimos and Phobos are the two moons of Mars."

"Where is Phobos?"

"It has not yet risen."

"Can you tell by them where we are on Mars?"

"Yes, and more than that. But look!" he cried, pointing through the opposite windows.

A brilliant object was rising, and rising fast, too.

"Is that Phobos?" I asked.

"Yes," answered Garstang. "Deimos



Mad with rage, Raymer swung his rifle and clubbed his way through the hideous Martians. The creatures fell like ninepins before his terrible onslaught.

rises in the East and Phobos rises in the West."

"It seems to be moving fast."

"It is. Phobos travels round Mars in just over seven and a half hours. I can tell you something more of our position when it is higher in the heavens."

"How can you do that?" asked Mary.

"This way. The satellites of Mars revolve over the equator, therefore, being as low in the sky as they are, we are not above 68½ degrees from the equator or we would not be able to see Phobos."

"Oh, I see," said Mary. "And when it is overhead you will be able to tell how near we are to the equator."

"Yes," said Garstang. "At most, it will only be visible for five and a half hours."

I yawned.

"We ought to be able to get some sleep, ready for to-morrow. Can't we make the ship more comfortable?"

"Just what I was going to suggest doing," remarked Havard. "You will all have to hang on to something, because I shall have to fire a rocket."

"All right, then. Fire away."

There was a sudden concussion under the sand, and the ship gave a convulsive leap, then levelled amid a spray of disturbed sand.

Its position was hardly ideal even then, but it would have to do. We made ourselves as comfortable as possible, with the exception of Garstang, who was preparing himself for an evening's star-gazing.

Havard switched off the light, and silence enfolded the ship, broken only by the snores of Motier and the occasional movements of Garstang.

Occupied with thoughts of this strange world into which we had ventured, it was a long time before I could sleep. Even when I did so, I was haunted by nightmares in which the Martian snakes pursued us over an endless desert.

### ★ MAN-EATING FLOWERS

MOLLHEIMER'S story continues: When I awoke the Martian dawn was breaking.

Garstang had fallen asleep, his telescope on the floor beside him. The others still slept. I did not know if the girls were awake, for they occupied a different section of the ship, of course.

## Grim Jests of Nature on the Red Planet

I dressed leisurely, and then looked out of the windows. It struck me afterwards as strange that I did not look out of the windows before dressing. I rubbed my eyes to make sure that I was not dreaming. The entire desert seemed to be alive and moving!

Indeed, it *was* alive and moving! Even as I watched, and the sun rose higher, I saw things coming up out of the sand.

Imagine my excitement as I waited to see what they were! I turned and called to the others, and they, too, rubbed sleepy eyes and stared.

I was conscious of a noise outside, but could not define what it was, so I opened the door-locks, first making sure that no snakes were near. I flung the doors wide open, and instantly the air was full of a strange rustling.

At first I was puzzled as to its cause, then I noticed that the things coming up from the ground were responsible for it. I bent to look at one near by, and saw that it was a plant.

The whole plain was undergoing a startling change. Buds unfolded and reached higher. The plants were of the same coppery hue, which was evidently the primary colour of Mars.

I turned round to speak to the others, and found that the women had come out, and Mary Lammour stood behind me. She looked as fresh as a morning rose, and my interest in Mars waned as I gazed at her. My look she returned icily. Certainly she did not give me much encouragement. My reputation must have reached her ears.

I decided to have a walk round the ship. It was surprising how fresh I felt. That was due, no doubt, to the smaller gravitation on Mars. The air was intensely rarefied, too. It was like being very high in the mountains, only I had seen no mountains on Mars yet.

I climbed on to the top of the ship, and from that vantage point surveyed the world. But there was not much more to be seen from there. I could see that the desert still seemed to be limitless.

Then something caught my eye, a gleam that bespoke the presence of water, and that was what we wanted if we were to stay any length of time.

Havard called out: "See anything?"  
"Pass me the glasses," I said. "There is something."

Havard vanished, to reappear a moment later with the glasses.

Seen through the glasses, I could make out a wide expanse of water.

"Water!" I cried.  
"Good!" replied Havard, and came scrambling up the side of the ship.

I noticed Garstang had come out. "Did you get our position?" I asked him.

He nodded. "Yes. I should say that we are about five hundred and fifty miles from the equator. We are 10 degrees away from it, and I work it out to that distance in miles."

"Well, how about exploring?" asked Havard.

"Yes," agreed Raymer. "But someone will have to remain behind to guard the ship."

"I will remain behind," said Garstang.

At length it was decided to leave Garstang and Doris Raymer in charge of the ship. I would not have minded staying behind in Garstang's place to keep her company, but I could see that her brother would not have agreed to that.

Havard did not want the other girl to go either, but she had a will of her own. It was obvious to me that she was head over heels in love with "her Jacques," but I do not think that he reciprocated the affection.

No one seemed to bother much about Motier, who was browsing around on his own.

I signalled to Havard. "Is he going with us?"

"No. I think that it would be better to leave him here."

"These things," said Raymer, nodding at

the plants, "are going to be a nuisance if they grow much higher."

Half an hour later we were ready. Motier would not hear of remaining behind. For a start we decided to head for the water. We intended to gather some in a bottle and take it back for a test in the ship.

It was not long before we reached the water and found it was a huge pond, the farther side of which we could not see. On one side, to its very edge, stretched the jungle, and on the opposite side stretched the plain covered with fast-growing vegetation.

As we were examining the surface of the water for insect life a terrible screaming broke out. We jumped in alarm, and looked up.

High over our heads circled a huge bird of great size and ugliness. Again it screamed, a devilish scream, and came swooping down towards us. By common thought we all fired together, and with a splash the monstrous thing fell into the lake.

An extraordinary quick change on the part of the vegetation drew our attention. The plants had begun to flower with large orange-coloured blossoms. They were glorious, and we stood watching for some time, until a strange smell began to pervade the atmosphere.

It is impossible to describe the odour, as it was like nothing on Earth. Evidently the flowers were responsible, so we made our way into the jungle, slightly dizzy.

The interior of the jungle was very gloomy, but we found walking was easier than it had been on the plain.

We entered the forest with some trepidation, for even the bravest would have had some fear at venturing into an unknown forest in an unknown world.

A faint whisper came from somewhere, as if something was moving in its sleep. . . . And yet not a breath of air stirred.

Some bushes claimed our attention, and awoke in us a ravenous hunger. They were covered with a fruit which resembled an orange, but more gorgeous, fuller, more luscious-looking than an orange.

Without a word Motier sprang forward and seized one. Before we had divined his intention he had his teeth in it, biting in a very frenzy of avidity.

Havard tore it out of his hand. "You fool!" he cried. "They might be poisonous!"

Motier said nothing. He just stood looking at Havard. Then he laughed weirdly.

"Poison! Are they hell!" he cried.

That prosaic exclamation made me laugh, and soon the whole company of us were laughing. There was something exceedingly funny about Motier's appearance—something very grotesque. He tore another fruit off the tree and commenced eating that.

Oh! But the sensation of standing there watching him eat that luscious fruit, with the ravenous pangs of hunger tearing at me! It was too much, and I seized one.

The others followed my example, and for a short while we munched in silence. Then the peculiar behaviour of Motier caused me to stop eating, and so did Havard. Motier was rocking on his heels.

I had a sensation of extreme light-headedness, and an insane desire to laugh at the top of my voice. A realisation of our peril came to me, and I cried: "Stop! They are intoxicating!"

The others looked at each other, then threw down the fruit.

"You are right," Havard said.

Raymer, I noticed, was beginning to look a bit foolish, and Motier started laughing.

"Quiet!" cried Havard. "Do you want all the inhabitants of this world after us?"

"Are there a lot?" asked Motier, and screamed with laughter. There was nothing we could do but gag him, and this we did.

"If ever Mars is colonised by the Earth," remarked Havard, "this fruit will be a great danger."

So we left the bushes with their poisonous

fruit behind and marched on through the jungle.

This new world was full of wonders. There seemed to be all sorts of conceivable and inconceivable plant life growing—a vast and abundant variety. One species had a great blood-red fruit growing on each branch—fruit that was as large as a football.

The part of the forest which we were now entering seemed to be devoted almost entirely to this type of plant. It was these plants that were the cause of the strange rustling that we had heard—the fruit rustled within itself.

Boon!  
Like a miniature explosion one of the things burst and flung a thousand seeds far and wide. Some of the seeds hit us, and they stung like insects. This was alarming, for if any hit us in the eyes we would be blinded.

We made haste to leave that part of the forest. Quite often the things burst around us, and all the time the air was full of that strange rustling.

It became increasingly evident that it was getting late in the Martian day, and we decided to go back to the ship. It was as we reached this decision that we came to yet a new kind of plant life.

We had seen nothing of the snakes all day, for which we were thankful. And now, as we were circling back, subtly, the character of the forest began to change. The trees thinned out a bit, and it was rather lighter. In the near distance we could see a vivid patch of crimson and gold. We ventured nearer, and found they were flowers. My heart beat with excitement, for the things swayed rhythmically, and there was not a breath of air! Then I realised the impossible—the absurd truth.

The flowers were *dancing* to music! Of all the weird things we had so far encountered on this strange planet, surely this was the weirdest!

The nearest approach on Earth to this music we heard was the Æolian harp. We realised then that the plants themselves were making the noise, chanting and swaying in unison! In the middle of a note they halted, as if they had heard something.

Holding our breath, we went nearer, and the heads of the flowers leaned towards us. A sickly-sweet smell—not unlike chloroform—exhaled from them. I then knew that we might be making a fatal error.

"Back!" I cried

We leapt back, but the things seemed to go on and to follow us. Motier, who was still very stupid as a result of the fruit he had eaten, moved but slowly.

A flower attached itself to his leg, and with a howl he fell. We stopped and attacked the thing, which had seized him, hacking desperately. In a moment we were fighting half a dozen or more of the plants, and Motier was being drawn back. We fought fiercely, for the day was fast passing.

Havard gasped: "We cannot save Motier. Try to get free yourselves!"

One of the flowers secured a grip on my leg, pressing itself against it and drawing blood. I hit it viciously with my rifle, but the tendril was tough, and the weapon slid off.

The pain was terrific, but I tore my leg from its grip, leaving a piece of skin on the flower's centre.

I looked at the others, and found them standing breathless out of reach. Motier was silent, a hundred flowers devouring him, after they had dragged him into the middle of the flower-patch.

The foiled flowers from which we had made our escape hastily retracted their sinuous stems and fought with the others over the body of Motier. At least, they seemed to be fighting.

Mary stood with her hands covering her eyes. She could not bear to look at the ghastly sight.

A sense of incongruity struck me; a sense, nay, a belief that all this was very silly and

## Men and Women Lost on Mars

Impossible; that the whole affair was nothing but a dream and that I should waken to find myself in the space ship. But it was no dream; it was stark reality and high time that we were out of this forest. With a look at the others I led the way, and soon we were crashing blindly through the jungle, luckily in the right direction, and we never halted until we were outside.

Then we paused aghast. The plants had long since passed their flowering, and were scattering their seeds. The whole plain was covered with a tangled mass of vegetation; a confused jumble of dying and dead plants. Their stems were falling as they finished seeding.

About a hundred yards away lay the space ship, and never voyager at last in sight of home was more pleased than we were when we saw the ship.

"What are we going to do?" he asked.

"We cannot do anything until to-morrow," replied Havard, pointing at the sinking sun.

Mary indicated the dancing flames, creeping nearer.

At the sight of that, we were galvanised into activity. The next ten or fifteen minutes we spent tearing up the plants, and throwing them as far as we could. The air grew very hot as the flames crept nearer. But by the time they reached us we had cleared a large tract all round the ship. We entered it and fastened the doors as the smoke eddied round us.

Soon it was impossible to see out for the smoke. For about twenty minutes this lasted, then a wind seemed to spring up, for the smoke whirled violently, and finally was blown away.

The dead ashes on the ground were swept

So we armed and equipped ourselves ready for a few days' stay, if necessary.

It was decided to leave no one in charge of the ship; our party was too small to divide up again. We would lock the ship.

This we did, and eventually we set off on the trail of the missing ones. I was a bit puzzled as to where the snakes had gone, but I guessed that they must be nocturnal in their habits, and sleep during the day.

We struck the trail the instant we entered the forest, for there was no mistaking the meaning of the crushed undergrowth. After following the trail for about half a mile, we got our first glimpse of a Martian.

It did not surprise us that there should be Martians, because it was obvious that some intelligence had captured our companions, and we expected that intelligence to walk on two legs and look something like a man.

But the thing we now looked upon was like a man, yet at the same time it was a grotesque travesty of one.

Imagine the thing we saw. It had no head, but its body was in two parts, the upper of which was slightly smaller than the lower part. In the upper part were a pair of eyes set very distant from each other—almost where a man's ears are.

Attached to the lower part of the body were two legs, very thin and spidery. Just above these were a couple of—stumps is the only word that will describe them. They were not arms. In length they were about a foot, and at the ends were split into two parts. Instead of hands there were just

these two divisions, similar to the claws of a crab.

Leaving death and destruction behind, the last space ship left the earth and vanished into the void.

And that was the thing that faced us, the while it emitted a noise like "Ghu-ghu."

We made a move to seize it, but instantly it divined our intention and sped away. I cannot say that it ran or walked—the thing did neither. It just "hopped." There is no other way of describing the peculiar side-ways movement these Martians made, and the queer leap that accompanied each move. I imagine that the reason it ran side-ways was for it to enable vision both before and behind.

The path we had been following now turned into a beaten track, and rather cautiously we went down this, our rifles ready. Presently we

saw more of the Martians looking between the trees at us. It was strange to feel that alien intelligence watching, and I wondered exactly what kind of weapons they had.

Abruptly we came to an open space, and I was filled with a sense of approaching danger, but could see nothing to cause it. Then, while we were crossing this clearing, a brilliant light played over us. Came a devastating roar as with appalling suddenness an electric storm burst over us.

A black haze swept the sky, yellow scalding rain began to fall, growing heavier and heavier in volume.

White streaks of lightning seared our sight, and we hurried for the comparative shelter of the trees.

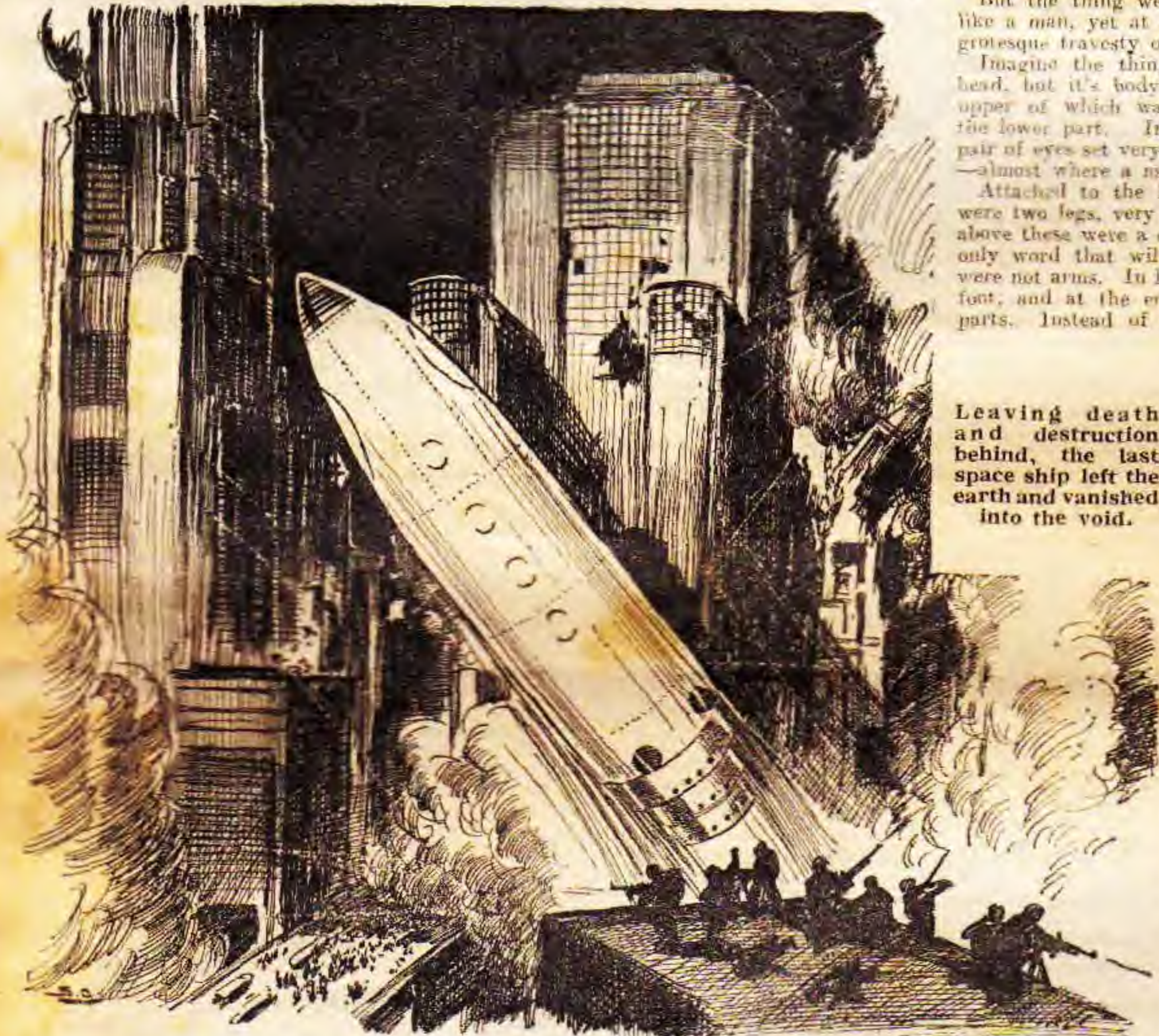
"It appears as if we might have to stay on Mars," said Havard.

"Why?" I asked.

"If this lightning touches the ship. . ."

"Oh. It is not lightning proof, then?"

"No. Durofium cannot be made lightning-proof."



Across the waste we tramped, but never a sound from our goal reached us; no greeting at sight of our return.

But a smell of burning filled the air, and in the distance floated a blue haze of smoke.

"This stuff is burning!" cried Havard. "What about when it reaches the ship? We shall be smothered with the heat of it."

"We will clear a space so that it cannot approach near enough," answered Raymer. "That is about all that we can do."

We reached the ship, which somehow had the appearance of an empty house.

"I cannot understand it," Havard said. "They ought to have seen us by now."

Then we knew that something had happened in our absence, for all around the ship were marks of a struggle. The doors swung gaping open, eloquent of a hasty departure. Inside were signs of a hurried search and several things were missing. Our minds were filled with a fear of the death of Doris Raymer and Garstang. I stole a glance at her brother. His face was very white.

round in a vortex, and finally the setting sun shone on a desert which had no sign of life on it.

Tired out by our adventures, we soon fell asleep. All except Raymer, who was looking out of the window every time that I awoke during the night. From the noises outside I guessed that the snakes had come back, but I did not trouble to look.

### ★ CAPTURED BY THE MARTIANS

MOLLHEIMER goes on with his report: The next morning found us all up and about at sunrise, urged by a worried Raymer to start the search.

Methodically we planned our route. First, we would make for the forest at its nearest point to the ship. It was obvious that they would be in the forest, whether they were alive or dead. It was the only place they could have gone to or been taken to.

## The Fight with the Martian Devils

As abruptly as it had started, the storm ceased. The tumult died away, and the sky brightened. At the same time the Martians rushed towards us, too many to fight. It was a surprise attack, and the whole thing was over in a couple of minutes.

They picked us up and carried us away, their claws nipping into our flesh. I just had time to catch a glimpse of Raymer lying on the ground, very still and silent.

As we were carried, the sound of drums being beaten came louder and louder. The journey continued for a long time, and it was a relief when our captors dumped us down. I thought that we were at the end of our journey, but I was wrong. Our captors pointed to the mouth of a cave and motioned us to enter.

Having no choice, we did as we were bidden, and entered the dark opening. Goaded by the pinches and prods of the Martians, we were forced to continue along this tunnel. The faint light from the entrance died out, and we proceeded in total darkness.

Apparently the Martians had the faculty of seeing in the dark, or they were so used to the tunnel that they needed no light, for they kept us moving at a fair speed.

But everything ends, and we at length entered a large cave, which was faintly illuminated by what seemed to be a phosphorescent light.

In the centre of this cave was a pit, and it was from here that the light seemed to emanate. I looked over the edge, curious, even though my next moment might be my last.

It was so deep that I could not see the bottom, but from it rose that glow of light. A horrible smell rose from it also, and, nauseated, I turned away.

Our journey was not yet ended, for once again our captors urged us to another cave which led in the opposite direction. A dim light pervaded this tunnel along which we were now forced.

"Concealed lighting," whispered Havard.

The tunnel began to assume large proportions, and suddenly we were in a great hall. The walls shimmered with a strange iridescence.

With the pressing of a hidden switch by one of the Martians, a door slid open in one wall, and the light died out of it. That gave me the idea that the light was electrical, and when the door was opened the contact was broken. I was beginning to have a respect for the Martians. They were certainly very clever.

We were ushered through this wall, and I took note of its thickness. It was fully three feet thick. The door had entirely disappeared.

Then the room we entered claimed my attention. It had an area of about thirty feet, while it rose to an unascertainable height. I judged that there was some optical illusion about the height; one could not tell where the walls ended and the ceiling began.

All the walls of this room glowed with the concealed lighting except for the one through which we had just passed. The Martians closed the door, and the wall instantly sprung into light.

It struck me that there was not much chance of escaping—the extinguishing of the light would inform the Martians, even if we knew the position of the switches. I looked at the other Martians who were in this room—the ones who were not our captors.

There were seven of them, and they were seated on a kind of raised dais at one end of the room. Calmly they surveyed us. Our captors were talking to them now—evidently it was speech that passed between them—and this resulted in two of our captors going out.

As they were going, some more Martians entered, carrying our guns. I felt under my armpit and was thankful for the presence of my small revolver.

The seven held out their claws for the

rifles, and each one began to examine them carefully. What I expected happened. One fired, and a wall was plunged into darkness as the bullet hit it.

The sudden noise caused the Martians to scream with fear, and I noticed that they handled the guns very carefully now—so carefully that they put them down and studied them from a distance. Perplexed, they gazed at the blank wall.

My trend of thought was broken off by the entrance of the two Martians with Doris Raymer and Garstang. I was astonished that they were still alive. The others greeted them enthusiastically.

I stole a look at the Martians again. They were watching us intently, and conversing in low tones. At the finish of the conversation they came to some decision, for the ones who had captured us took us through another door.

We were led and followed into another room, and then the Martians went out, leaving us to our thoughts. They were not too cheerful, though we had something to be thankful for, and that is the fact that we are still alive.

And here I am, writing this, though I do not think that it will be read by anyone as I do not expect any of us will get away. If we do, I shall rewrite this more satisfactorily.

Here Mollheimer's narrative comes to an end.

### ★ THE FLIGHT FROM THE RED WORLD

RAYMER opened his eyes, aware of a vague discomfort in his back. It irritated him, so he turned over, and became conscious of his surroundings.

The Martian forest! It was a moment or two before recollection came. He looked at the object which had prodded his back, and was relieved to see that it was a rifle. A glance assured him that it was loaded, and he rose, feeling rather happier.

Evidently he had been knocked out and then left for dead. His friends had disappeared, he noticed. He felt an intolerable black rage against the Martians, and followed the crushed undergrowth to where it joined the path.

On he went, luck guiding him the right way, and murder in his heart. And so at length he came to the cave entrance. It was very dark inside, but to a man filled with a lust to kill that was nothing.

Undisturbed, he came to the pit, and reeled dizzily as the rank, vile smell from it reached him.

The illuminated passage opposite inevitably drew his attention, and he entered it. The noise of approaching Martians came towards him, and, filled with a savage and exultant glee, he gripped his rifle. Suddenly he met them. He just fired one shot, a shot that boomed and echoed from the walls, and ricocheted from one side to the other, and then he had swung his rifle round, and was clubbing his way through the Martians.

Under that desperate attack the creatures fell like ninepins, and in a moment he was alone, with the dead at his feet.

Exultant, he continued his career until he in turn reached the passage end. And so it was that he came upon his friends, with two Martians guarding them.

The startled Martians had barely time to turn around before their brains strewed the floor.

"Come!" cried Raymer. "The way is clear!"

The others, surprised at this apparition which had burst upon them, followed as he turned to go. They passed through the illuminated passage, and into the cave of the pit. And it was there that the big fight took place.

I would like to tell of this as an epic; of a saga of brave deeds; and invest the Earthmen with glorious characters; and tell a

story of bare fists against weapons. But it behoves me to tell the truth. When they reached the cave of the pit further progress was blocked by a mob of Martians. Immediately the place was a mêlée of fighting bodies.

Mollheimer, with parted lips, fought like a fiend. To Mary he looked the personification of the devil. The two girls stood by the wall, with the men in a semi-circle round them. And ever the Martians teemed out of the passages, and died. . . . It was obvious to the Earthmen that they could never get out, at least, not by the way they had entered.

Havard called out above the tumult: "Follow me!"

The others watched, and saw him dive for the entrance to another tunnel, and they ceased fighting to follow.

The way was surprisingly clear of Martians, which led the travellers to believe that it was a blind alley. But on it went until the exhausted travellers could hardly walk, and, in a cave that gleamed with phosphorescent light, they halted.

"Where is Garstang?" panted Raymer.

To Mary came a thought of the pit, a vision of a man falling down, and screaming as he fell. . . .

"I am certain that he was with us coming along this passage," said Mollheimer.

"It will be night outside," Havard remarked presently. "We shall have to stay here until dawn."

"How shall we know when it is dawn?" asked Raymer.

"We shall be able to form some idea."

There was silence for a while, the party listening for the footsteps of Garstang, footsteps that were silent. . . .

"Someone will have to guard while the others sleep," Havard said. "Well, let us do two-hour turns," Raymer suggested. "We can judge two hours near enough."

"That is right," Mollheimer agreed: "I will do the first two hours, if you wish."

The others nodded.

"Awaken me next," Havard requested.

"I will," answered Mollheimer, taking out his pipe, and filling it from a very-depleted tobacco pouch. "I wish they grew tobacco here," he added.

No one answered. The others were already falling asleep.

Mollheimer hummed softly a few bars of "Liebestraum" while he gazed at the sleeping form of Mary.

A sudden noise distracted his attention from her, and soundlessly he arose, and hunted round the cave. . . .

HAVARD awoke, and rubbed his eyes. The next moment he sat up, and looked about him. Who was on guard? Where was Mollheimer? A gleam of light from aloft drew his attention. He felt convinced that it was daylight. Quickly he awoke the others.

"Where is Mollheimer?" asked Raymer.

"I do not know," replied Havard. "He should have awakened me after two hours, but he never did so."

"We cannot go searching for him, nor Garstang either. If the Martians have got them, they will certainly kill them this time."

Havard said: "Listen, here they come."

There was the noise of approaching Martians.

"But we cannot leave them in the lurch," protested Raymer.

"No, of course not. But do you not realise that Mollheimer has taken the only rifle, leaving us unarmed? We shall have to arm ourselves before we can do anything."

Raymer nodded.

"We cannot risk fighting with the girls with us," Havard continued, "and now we shall have to climb up there."

Raymer looked up. "Is it possible?" he asked.

"It will have to be, for the Martians are coming."



# Can it be DONE?

Ideas for Inventors

"Why not take that passage up there? If we follow it, we may eventually reach the surface."

"All right. We will try it. But I wonder where Mollheimer is?"

Rayner took a last look round the cave, and bent to pick something up from the floor.

"Mollheimer's notebook," he said.

The Martians were close now, so without wasting any more time the party began climbing the path.

"A good sign," whispered Rayner, "that we must be getting nearer the surface. It is steep."

Higher they climbed, and at last the daylight burst upon them. They found themselves in the jungle. But what caused them the most joy was the appearance of the pond, the identical one which they had first visited.

"I wonder if Mollheimer went back to look for Garstang?" suggested Mary.

"No, I hardly think that he would have done so without informing us," remarked Havard.

"Well, what do you think has happened to him?"

"That something drew his attention, and he went to see what it was."

"Perhaps he is lost somewhere in the passages."

"Or perhaps the Martians have him."

The girl shivered. "That will mean death."

"Yes. I am afraid that it will."

Now they were in sight of the space ship. Apparently it had not been tampered with.

"At least, we have the ship left," remarked Rayner.

"Our first duty is to arm ourselves and find our companions," said Havard. "But we shall have to eat something, or —"

He paused. The doors of the ship were open! With a look at the others he crept forward, and looked into the ship. But no sign of life greeted him.

Havard went in and scrutinised the ship carefully. The others entered, and he turned to them.

"We have a very intelligent race to fight against."

"What is wrong, Jacques?" asked the girl.

"Our rifles have been taken."

"Anything else?"

"No. At least, I do not think so. But wait a minute." He went and looked in the large cupboard where the food for the journey was stored. The stock was depleted. Someone had taken food from it. . . .

"Rayner," whispered the inventor, "it is doubtful if we have food enough to last the return journey."

"What?"

"I doubt if we have enough for four. Certainly not enough for five or six."

"Which means someone will have to stay."

"Just so."

"What do you suggest we do?"

"What I suggest savours of desertion of our comrades, but I see no other way."

"You mean that we should return at once to Earth?"

"Yes."

"But . . ."

"Listen. What can we do to help those two? We have no weapons, and we haven't much food. True, we can eat some of the fruit of Mars, but we might only poison ourselves with it. The only way is for us to leave the planet."

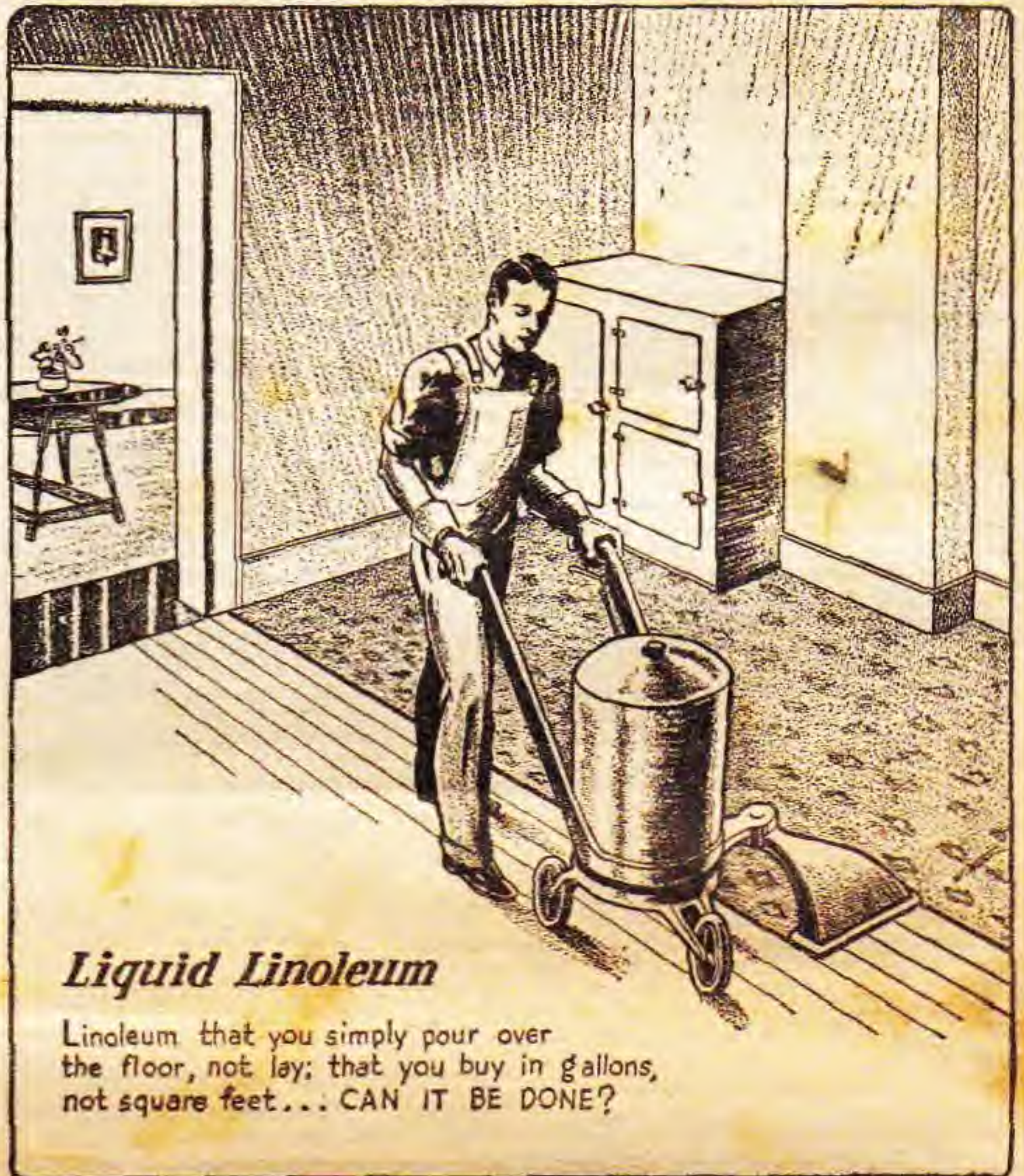
"And then come back again?"

"Of course. That is, assuming we reach Earth safely."

The others were silent. Outside the ship was a sudden noise. "Quick!" cried Havard to Rayner; "close the doors!"

Rayner did as he was directed, sliding the bolts into place. Havard slid open the view-plate by the door. Outside stood a group of Martians clamouring to get into the ship.

Havard went to the controls, and next moment the crowd of Martians were startled



## Liquid Linoleum

Linoleum that you simply pour over the floor, not lay; that you buy in gallons, not square feet . . . CAN IT BE DONE?

Linoleum is such a fiddle to lay. Imagine if you could buy it by the gallon and "spread" it on the floor where it would dry hard. If it were possible it would meet with instant success. Here is another idea that awaits an inventor. On page 365 we tell you how you can turn YOUR ideas into cash.

by the explosion of rockets and scattered in all directions.

The ship gave a violent lurch, rose a few yards, then fell again. Once more there was a commotion, and the ship moved about.

Then with a terrific roar it shot into the air, leaving a great mass of churning sand, and departed whence it had come.

The world of Mars was silent. . . .

### ★ THE WORLD GOES MAD

MOST of my readers will be unable to imagine the conditions which prevailed on Earth at the close of its terrible Twentieth Century.

War was an ever-present danger—no country could agree with the others. The world was divided into countless sections, each with a different Government and each with different laws.

And those laws were as if made to break. Corruption and bribery were evident everywhere. Those who should have been upholders of the law were paid large sums of money by the law-breakers so that they would not interfere with the activities of the law-breakers.

There gradually crept into life a sense of panic—a blind sense of unreality. Mobs stormed palaces and thrones fell to dust. In vain did a startled minority endeavour to control the people and prevent the disorganisation which was just but starting.

A madman gave notice to the Government of Great Britain that if they did not acknowledge him as the supreme ruler of their country he would blow the largest city in Britain off the map. The Government ignored him.

True to his word, half London was shattered by a powerful and unknown explosive. . . . Millions perished.

Again came the warning. The Government took no notice, though threatened by an angry populace. . . .

Birmingham was half erased. Then commenced a great evacuation from the largest cities by their frantic inhabitants. A reward of ten thousand pounds was offered for the capture of the lunatic, but no one claimed it. . . .

A third city was wrecked. Civil war broke out between the people and their rulers. After fifteen days of awful bloodshed, the Government resigned, and the handit was informed of the country's submission.

Triumphantly he came out into the open, and revealed himself as Marchett, a famous scientist.

For two days he ruled as unprecedented and unceremonious King of Britain; then he died suddenly and horribly. . . . His secret explosive died with him.

Blind unreasoning panic swept the country, and with songs of war on their lips neighbour fought neighbour.

## The Colonisation of the Red World

France, imbued with a lust for power, declared war on the disorganised England, and was in turn attacked by a vengeful Germany. . . .

India, ever smouldering under foreign rule, burst into a flame of rebellion.

Japan continued its age-long war with the neighbouring country of China. Russia and America joined the combat.

Some atom of reason came to the leaders, and for a while there was a calm. But underneath the exterior calm smouldered a lust to kill.

It was into this strange world that Havard's space ship from Mars dropped. . . .

It missed France and fell to Earth in the vicinity of the ruined city of London. The dazed travellers emerged, unable to credit what they saw. But from the sullen people that crowded round the dead city like vultures they could learn nothing. It was when they went to the city of Birmingham which was re-arising out of the ashes that they learnt something of what had occurred.

So, having learnt all, Havard decided to return to Mars on the chance of saving Garstaug and Mollheimer.

And ever as they worked, the world seethed like a hotbed of iniquity until at last it dawned on Havard that the world was on the verge of Armageddon—on the edge of the last war.

And what after that? The final crashing of civilisation was coming—the return to barbarianism. Once again would evolution have to make the upward climb.

And to other great men on the Earth came the vision of the crashing of everything. And they wondered. Then they read the reports of Havard regarding the planet Mars, and wondered again.

And so, by devious ways, these great men came to a decision, a decision that led them to Birmingham. This resulted in a conference in the new Government Buildings in the city, and a gathering of famous men took place.

Amongst them were present Lemuto, famous Japanese scientist—the Lemuto whose

name will go down history to the end of time; H. P. Rothwell, famous English novelist, whose fiction of the future has been shown practically to become fact; Reemaque, French savant; Carmelli, Italian scientist; Ambrose, American philosopher; and other famous men too numerous to name.

"Gentlemen," Havard began, "it is obvious that civilisation is breaking down. The Earth is like the top of a volcano. Nothing can avert the crash which is coming. In three years, at the most, civilisation will be wiped out. I will go even further and say that all humanity will be wiped out! Poison in the air you breathe, poison in your food, poison everywhere! Poison, pestilence, and famine will desolate the world!"

"And what can we do to stop it? Nothing! It is as inevitable as death, and as tangible as life! There is only one answer to the riddle of continuation of life, gentlemen, and I know that answer.

"Our neighbour in the skies—Mars! There alone can we perpetuate existence. I have been to Mars, and I know that it is fit for habitation. It is ready for all who have the nerve to go. It is the new land, and there we can found a new civilisation—a new world!"

"Gentlemen, what a prospect it is! Think of it! The colonisation of Mars! The answer to the riddle of continuation of life is Mars, once known as the planet of war!"

"Then let us commence building factories in every country; then let us build space ships in every country; let us send them from every country!"

"Let us build at once before it is too late, and take all who will go! With exceptions, of course. In the words of Robert Service, as applied to Mars: '*Send not your weak and your feeble, send me your strong and your sane.*'"

There was silence for a minute after Havard had concluded his speech; then a roar of applause.

Amid riotous scenes and general acclamation, the "Mars Colonisation Company" was floated, with a capital of £14,000,000.

### ★ DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH

SIX months passed away, and sixty space ships, built to the same design as the first, but larger, had already left the Earth. Each ship was capable of carrying forty passengers.

The name "Mars" was on every person's lips, in the music-halls "gags" were cracked about Mars in between patriotic tommy-rot.

It was thus, while the ships were being hastily built, that the final war began.

It started with a small quarrel between two small European States, but it was enough to set the whole world ablaze from end to end.

France joined the battle, to be followed by Germany, and very soon all the other European Powers were fighting. Japan stole Honolulu from America, and the Americans forgot their smaller differences and allied against their common enemy. . . .

In many countries the rulers blew up the space ship factories, and in others immigration to Mars was punishable by death if the offenders were caught attempting it.

And so we near the end of civilisation on Earth, and find the last outpost—the last place of departure for space ships on Earth.

Here the last ships were leaving, one by one vanishing into space. Here, in the coldness of Scotland in winter, Havard was at work. He would not leave before the end, he wanted to see that all his friends were able to depart from Earth.

It was at this time, when the last two space ships were ready for departure, that there came to the last few fugitives who had not left Earth the news of the plague that had broken out.

It commenced in India, and spread through

the nearby countries with great rapidity, and next it was in Europe. It was a disease born on the battlefields where the dead lay rotting—a disease similar to the Bubonic Plague.

The last two space ships left Earth together as the plague reached and ravaged Britain. Leaving death and desolation behind, the ships vanished into the void.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is a tragic story that now has to be recorded, and one which is mainly conjecture.

The last two ships that left Earth were in radio communication for some time, and the communications between the two ships, 903 and 904, give the facts of the case.

903 made the usual enquiry as to whether all was well on board 904, which was Havard's ship.

904 answered: "One of the men is ill."

903: "Can you diagnose the illness?"

904: "No, there is no doctor on the ship."

903: "What are the symptoms?"

904: "The eyes are red and sore. Man has difficulty in swallowing, and breath smells horrible."

903: "Fire more rockets and make all haste to reach Mars. Man has plague."

904: "In which case it would be better for us not to go to Mars, or we may take plague."

903: "We think you cannot do other but head for Mars. It is sheer suicide to do anything else."

The next development took place the following day when 904 reported: "Two more ill with plague and first man seems to be dying."

903: "Have you as much speed on as you can stand?"

904: "We do not intend to go to Mars now."

903: "Then what do you intend doing?"

The only answer received was a laugh. The final message came the following day, very faint: "Thirty are ill."

903: "Where are you heading for now?"

904: "We seem to be going directly towards the sun, but our speed is falling fast. The gauge registers only 10,000 miles per hour."

903: "Can you not fire more rockets?"

904: "Only the rockets on one side, that side which will force us on to the path to Mars again. The others have all been fired."

903: "Fire what you have, and make a last effort to reach Mars."

But 903 had heard the last message from 904. The most general assumption was that Havard let the ship continue its headlong flight to the Sun.

It is certain he never came to Mars; he preferred to die rather than take the plague to that world.

And Mary? What were her thoughts as she stood by the side of her loved one on the ship, agreeing with his decision not to go to Mars.

Perhaps in those last few days she would tell him of her love for him, and ask him if he, too, cared. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

WHAT I have to add is in the nature of an epilogue. It is sixteen years since Mars was colonised by the Earth; sixteen years of adaptation.

Three thousand only were saved from the fate that overlooked those who remained on Earth, but our population is now eight thousand, despite wars with the Martians and the snakes.

Of course, six thousand of these are young people under sixteen years old, but they are very strong and healthy for their age.

Of Garstaug and Mollheimer not a word has reached us. Whether the Martians have killed them or whether they are prisoners is not known. There has been too much to do in this world for us to seek them.

And so I pen these last few words in the shade of a copper-coloured tree half-way up the slope of Havard hill. I look to the top and salute that figure which has been erected to keep him in our minds for ever.

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| 20     | 3 in.     | 4 weeks  |
| 21     | 5 in.     | 5 m'ths  |
| 26 1/2 | 1 1/4 in. | 4 weeks  |
| 30     | 2 in.     | 4 weeks  |
| 40     | 1 1/4 in. | 6 weeks  |

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