

The MYSTERY of the TWILIGHT BELT

SEE
INSIDE

Scooped

STORIES of the WONDER-WORLD of TOMORROW



FLAMING FRONTIER AMAZING STORY OF INTER-PLANETARY TRAVEL INSIDE



The Great Six of Mars looked up at the huge bulk of Mollheimer. "Where is your Companion?" one of them addressed him in English.

★ MEN OF MARS

VOID of all animal life, the Earth continued its eternal journey round the sun.

Man had come and gone, but still the great orb moved in its cycle. War, followed by plague, had made barren the Earth, and on Mars was the remnant of humanity that had managed to escape from the wreckage. These folk had built great space ships and had left behind the war-mad people.

Sixteen years had passed, and on Mars had grown four cities, populated by people from the Earth. New London, capital city of Mars, Paris 2, Great York, and Martia.

Head of the city of New London was Martin Raymer, one of the first men to come to Mars. He had come with Havard in the first rocket ship to make a successful journey to another planet. There had been seven to make that fateful journey—Havard, the inventor of the space ship; Mary Lammear, his assistant; Martin Raymer and his sister Doris; Garstang, an astronomer; Mollheimer, recorder of the journey; and, lastly, Motier, half-crazed scientist who had boarded the ship by a trick.

The seven had met with diverse fates. Man-eating plants had devoured Motier. Havard and Mary Lammear had met their death in inter-planetary space. Garstang and Mollheimer had been lost in the caverns of

the Martians. Martin and Doris Raymer alone had come through unscathed.

The Earthmen had found that the Martians were an intelligent race ruled over by a government of six. They had harnessed electric power and had built a great city underground.

To the Earthmen the Martians were queer in appearance. Instead of possessing a head their bodies were in two parts, in the upper of which were two eyes set far apart. They had a vague suggestion of a nose and had a mouth. Attached to the lower part of the body were two thin legs, and a little higher than these, corresponding to Earthmen's arms, were two short stumps, at the ends of which were two divisions like those on the limb of a crab.

In the sixteen years that had elapsed since the coming to Mars of the Earthmen there had been many fights against the inhabitants of this world, who were all hostile to the Earthmen.

But the only real intelligence pitted against man had been the Martians. There had been many raids by snakes and many unwary people had been snatched and devoured by them. The great birds of Mars, too, had claimed victims.

Despite these adverse conditions, the population had grown from 3,000 to 8,000 in those sixteen years.

It was just after this length of time had passed that the Earthmen first heard of the

CITY

A sequel to one of the most popular stories we have ever published—"Cataclysm." From a dead world, the last survivors of mankind have come to Mars, and this is the epic story of the colonisation of the Red Planet, of war with the Martians, and of the great peace that came to the world.

By W. P.
COCKROFT

war that was being planned against them by the Martians. From a welter of guesswork we have to try to find as much truth as we can, and what Kris the Martian tells us we shall have to take for fact, and upon it we shall have to base most of the story. Let us go back to the capture of Garstang and Mollheimer, where commenced the events that led up to the great war of Martian Year 16.

★ IN THE UNDERGROUND CITY

GARSTANG awoke with an aching head, and remembrance came back to him slowly. He knew he had stumbled in the passage, and the eager hands of the Martians had pulled him back into the caves. Yes, he was in the Martians' power.

He looked around him, but there was nothing to see except the shining walls of the cave. Carefully he raised himself up from the floor and searched for an exit, but there was none. He was not fastened in any way, but he did not doubt the fact that there would be no chance of escape. For a few moments he paced the room, then he saw one wall go dark.

Two Martians entered, and Garstang saw that they were armed with short instruments which resembled electric torches. Any doubts as to their nature were quickly dispelled when one of the Martians pointed his torch at Garstang and pressed a stud on the side of it. A paralysing feeling stole over Garstang. The Martian switched it off again, and it was evident to the Earthman that the creature was only giving a demonstration of his power. One came into the room and stood behind Garstang while the other turned into the passage they had entered by. Evidently Garstang was expected to follow that one, so without hesitation the astronomer did so.

For a long time the Earthman was led through a labyrinth of passages from which he knew that, if the time came, he would have great difficulty in escaping. As he was led onwards he thought about his companions and wondered where they were. He wondered if they had managed to escape from the Martians, or if they had died fighting. Or if they were prisoners. . . .

Closely followed by one Martian and led by the other, Garstang came at last to a guarded door, which opened at a word of command, disclosing to the Earthman a large hall full of Martians. At one end was a platform on which six Martians were seated.

Some conversation followed between his guards and the six, the result of which was that Garstang was led forward for their examination. Happily for him the examination was only a scrutiny; none of them laid hands on him. The examination finished, Garstang was led away again and into a

of MARS

small room at the side. For about twenty minutes he was left alone with his thoughts, which were not very cheerful. Then the same Martians, who had evidently been made his guards, returned and he was led out into the hall. There, to his surprise, was Mollheimer.

"What! Have they got you, too? And the others?" he asked.

"No, not the others," smiled Mollheimer, as cool as ever. "They caught me through my own fault."

"What do they intend to do with us?"

"How should I know?" said the other, shrugging his shoulders.

Further talk was cut short by the approach of two more Martians, who exchanged a few words with Garstang's guards. Then they approached the Earthmen and ordered them—in their own queer way—to follow. Again the two passed through a bewildering maze of passages and halls, and it was a relief to both when a halt was called. Garstang wearily lowered himself to the floor of the small room into which they had been shown. It is difficult to call them caves, as they bore no resemblance to caves, owing to the lighting and panelled walls.

Mollheimer pointed to his mouth and made noises suggestive of wanting to eat. The Martians quickly nodded comprehension and went out, to return in a short while with two large bowls which contained some strange food. These bowls they put down at the front of their captives.

"What is it? We do not know whether it is poison or not," demurred Garstang.

"Shall have to risk it," said Mollheimer, smacking his lips.

The German commenced eating, and apparently he enjoyed it, for he never ceased eating until the bowl was empty. Garstang held back for a while, but when he saw how Mollheimer was enjoying it he also commenced to eat. The Martians stood by, watching and wondering.

"Good," remarked Mollheimer.

"Good," echoed another voice.

The Earthmen looked up in surprise.

"Good," repeated the voice of one of the Martians, pointing at the empty bowl.

Mollheimer grinned. "You bet it was good, old boy."

The Martian appeared surprised at this flow of words. He turned to his companion and whispered.

"They are cute," said Garstang.

"Yes," agreed Mollheimer thoughtfully.

"I believe they want to learn our language."

"Yours or mine?" asked Garstang, laughing.

"The one we are talking in, of course. They will not know that we have more than one."

"What do they want to learn our language for? They will only kill us eventually," said Garstang moodily.

"That remains to be seen," commented his companion.

For a fortnight the captives were kept in this cave, well fed and looked after, while every day the two Martians interrogated them, and in that fortnight had gained a good smattering of the English language.

From them Garstang learnt that they had been engaged by "the Great Six" to find the meaning of the strange men's language.

"The Great Six" were the rulers of the Martians. Always there were six, the Earthman learnt. When one died another was instantly elected to take his place. There were no resignations, even when a Martian was in a state of advanced senility

he still continued to hold office until death deprived him of it.

Mollheimer had christened the two Martians in his own peculiar way, and the Martians learnt to acknowledge the names. One he named Kris and the other Carl. They became very friendly with the Earthmen.

After one attempt to get to know from where the Earthmen had originated, the Martians had given it up. Their thoughts had never turned to the study of the stars, for astronomy had never appealed to the Martians as being of any use. But at electricity Mollheimer found they were artists.

All the walls of the caves were a maze of electric fittings. In the front of these were fixed large translucent panels of some material akin to glass. When a door was slid open in a wall it threw the whole wall into darkness, as the electricity was prevented from continuing its circuit.

Owing to this fact the Earthmen realised that escape would be impossible from a room when the walls were illuminated.

One day they were taken by Kris and Carl for a kind of sight-seeing tour. It was a great event, for they now had their first opportunity of seeing in full the whole city and its wonders.

The Martians led them down a long sloping passage, and so they came to the city of homes—a strange "dormitory" where the Martians slept. They were large, and the floors were covered with a kind of grass, while the temperature of the rooms was the same equable temperature as that of the rooms and passages of the city. The ventilation arrangements were perfect.

Having examined that level to their satisfaction and at their leisure, the Earthmen allowed themselves to be led to a still lower level. The Martians prepared to take them lower. Mollheimer halted. "Are there no rooms on this level?" he asked their guides.

Kris hesitated. "Yes, but we cannot show them to you."

"Why?"

"They are the mothers' quarters."

Mollheimer made no comment. He had wondered what methods these people had, as he had seen none bearing any approach to femininity. Apparently the female sex were kept well to the rear in Mars.

Gradually, as they descended lower, a hum began to become perceptible. Until at last they entered a hall that was greater than any they had seen before. The floor shook to the drone of the giant machine which almost entirely filled the hall. Kris stood back with an air of pride, and indicated it. The Earthmen went nearer, keenly interested in it. Around, over, under, and everywhere about the machine were hundreds of Martians, apparently engaged in seeing that the functioning of it was perfect.

"This machine," said Mollheimer; "does it work the lights and the ventilation?"

"Lights, yes," Kris looked puzzled.

Mollheimer saw the reason. "Ventilation" was a word the Martians had not heard before. "Fresh air," he said, breathing deeply.

The Martian's face cleared. "Yes, work everything there is," he said.

Their tour finished, they were returned again to their room.

For many weeks they were incarcerated with dread ennui gnawing at them; the inactivity was threatening to drive them mad. Their only occupation was the instructing of the Martians in the English language, and this they did with all the zeal they could.

Garstang had wanted to learn the Martian language, and had said as much to Kris, but

it was apparent that the Martians did not want the Earthmen to learn their language. When Garstang thought the matter over, he realised what a sensible course they had taken. The Martians had the advantage of knowing the Earthmen's language, while the Earthmen did not know theirs, and the two guards conversed in Martian when they did not wish their captives to know what they were saying.

However, Garstang had picked up a smattering of German, and in this language he could talk privately to Mollheimer. This puzzled the Martians very much, as they thought it was part of the same language as English, and they wanted to know the meaning of the words.

With difficulty Mollheimer explained. Then, the Martians were unable to understand why the Earthmen should have two languages. One had always been enough for them.

"Are there any more Martians besides those who live here?" the German asked them one day.

Kris gestured. "Millions and millions."

"Do they all live underground?"

"Yes."

It appeared to the Earthmen that their captors did not know what to do with them. They were now reconciled to their life underground, but they would have been more satisfied with an occupation.

★ WORK FOR THE EARTHMEN

"KRIS," remarked Mollheimer, "you will have to give us something to do, or we shall die of boredom."

Kris put his head on one side and scrutinised them thoughtfully.

"What do you intend doing with us?" asked Garstang.

"It is undecided," explained Kris. "Two of the Great Six want you to be killed and taken to the experimental chambers."

Mollheimer made a wry face. "Anatomical research," he said to Garstang.

He turned again to the Martians. "What do the other four of the Great Six want to do with us?"

Kris weighed his words carefully. "A search party has gone out to find your companions. The other four want to wait until they return before it is decided what to do with you."

"How long have they been away?"

"Three weeks."

"Three weeks!" echoed Mollheimer incredulously. "Why all that time? Are they scouring Mars for them?"

"They dare not return without certain knowledge," replied the Martian. "They will be killed if they do not bring back your companions alive, or else their bones."

"Then they are taking some finding," said Garstang, with conviction.

"Perhaps our companions have killed the members of your search party."

"Perhaps so. To-morrow another search party departs. There will be twice as many in the party, and they will be armed with more deadly pistols."

Garstang remembered the pistols which the Martians had once turned on them.

"Are they electrical?"

"Yes. There are two kinds. Those which merely paralyse, not having enough current to do anything worse, and the strong pistols which will burn to death whatever they encounter."

"You know," continued the Martian conversationally, "you have thought of escape several times. If I was in your position, I should not try it. If you were able by impossible good fortune to find your way out, you would be killed before you had gone any farther. There are always guards at the entrances and they are armed to kill. They would shoot you first and ask questions after. That is what they have been ordered to do."

The Colonisation of Mars

"How, if the entrances are guarded, did our companions get away?"

"Through an old entrance that had fallen in due to the vibration of the machine. If it had been known that there was still a way where one could get through, we should have blocked it up entirely before the escape took place. Be assured that it is totally blocked up by now."

Garstang laughed. "You do make sure."
"Is it not the best way?" remarked Carl, gently.

"So you want an occupation?" asked Kris, after a short silence.

"You bet we do," said Mollheimer.
"I will see what the Great Six think." Kris departed.

After an interval of half an hour he returned.

"Come with me."
They followed him down into the depths to the room which housed the great machine. It seemed to the Earthmen that the floor trembled more than it had done before.

"Come this way," said the Martian.
They passed through the great room and along a passage which was more brilliantly lighted than any passage they had seen before. It was also much larger. For a distance of a quarter of a mile the Earthmen were led, then abruptly they came to a large hall. It was in partial darkness. When their eyes became accustomed to the comparative gloom, they could see that many Martians were working in it. At one end the Martians were at work apparently excavating. They were enlarging the hall.

In the centre of the room was a shaft which on further examination proved to be an elevator. The Martians were loading the dug-out rock into this. As they filled the cradle it was rapidly drawn up and replaced by an empty one. This happened continuously, so that the Martians were kept busy filling all the time.

"Are those being emptied on the surface?" asked Mollheimer.

Kris smiled. "Yes. What foolish questions you do ask. What else could happen to it?"

"What is all this for anyway?" Garstang questioned.

"It is a new machine room that we are creating. The other room vibrates too much and is dangerous, being under the city; only this week one passage collapsed and buried twenty people."

"And are you going to transfer the machine into this room?"

"Yes. One part at a time, so that the machine never ceases working."

The Martians worked skilfully and quickly, doing the maximum amount of work with the minimum of effort. The two Earthmen were intensely interested in the work that was going on.

"It will be a great deal better for us when this work is complete," said their guide. "You see," he continued to explain, "with the machine so far away from our homes we shall be safe from it, and the fate of Denui will never be ours."

"Denui? What is that?" asked Mollheimer.

"Denui was a great city, the greatest ever known. The machine that ran the city was colossal, unbelievable in size! But the vibration! It grew and threatened, but the inhabitants would not listen to the warning. Passages fell, but they did not heed. Until the time came when it was too late to heed! The whole city collapsed on the top of the machine, and everyone was buried with the exception of the guards stationed at the entrances. They fled, and came to our city, and so told us of their city's destruction."

"And that is why you are moving your machine?"

"Yes. We have carefully selected a site for the cavern, after much discussion on the part of our architects. And here it is."
"Now," he continued, "let me show you the work you may do. It is simple, and we let the children do it. Perhaps when you

become more efficient you can be employed to look after the machine, and that would be a great honour. If you are of some use the Great Six will not kill you! That is what the Martian lives for, the ambition of his life! The only greater position is to be one of the Great Six, and that is a position few can attain. One has to be very accomplished to reach that position."

"And in what way has one to be accomplished?"

"In what way? Everything! He has to be a master of everything. That is the only way in which one can get to be a master of Redui, this great city."

"It is a position which I would rather have than the work of looking after the machine. And even then I am not particularly keen on the idea," said Mollheimer.

The Martian looked incredulous. "It is impossible for you to think that," he cried. "It would be wonderful to be one of the Great Six! Oh, if I was one! It is my hope that I shall become a worker to the great machine. That is my ambition. I cannot hope to become one of the Great Six!"

The enthusiasm of Kris was very plain to see. He stopped suddenly as if he realised that he was saying too much.

"Come," he said. They followed the Martian to the entrance of the cavern again.

"Here you can help to fix these panels in position. They take a lot of lifting and must not be dropped, so be careful."

The Earthmen looked at the Martians who were at work. They were evidently the electricians, for as they watched more lights flashed on where they were working. Another group was fixing the panels at the front of the lighted portions.

Apparently the panels were held by some kind of suction, for the Earthmen did not see any fixtures. Kris said a few words to them, then departed. The Earthmen started work almost immediately. For hours they worked, and they were a very tired pair when Kris returned. That night they slept well (if it was night, for they had no means of telling) for the first time since the day they were taken prisoners.

Thus passed many days, and days drifted into weeks, and no word came to the two Earthmen from the outer world. They began to long again for the sunlight. Their colour went, leaving them with unnaturally pallid faces.

Months passed. . . .

★ EARTHMAN BETRAYS HIS RACE

ON the outer world, about three miles from the underground city, grew and flourished the first Earthmen's city of Mars.

The two Earthmen inside the caverns of Redui knew nothing of the great disaster that had overtaken the people of the Earth; they knew nothing of the great wars that had desolated the face of that world; nor of the ragged remnant of humanity that had escaped from that holocaust of destruction to the world of Mars and comparative safety.

Comparative safety, yes. For here in Mars the Earth-survivors had found plenty of enemies. The great snakes of Mars had attacked their first city many times, and had reduced the growing population. Six months had passed, and it was amazing how these survivors worked, building the city and enclosing it with walls to prevent the ravages of their enemies.

We must now pass over four years to another occurrence in the caverns of Redui. It is an incident which concerns an attempt at escape on the part of Garstang and Mollheimer.

Garstang and Mollheimer were alone. The great machine room was finished, and the work of transferring the great machine was over. It had taken three and a half years to transfer the machine, and now it was done. For the last three days the Earthmen had been working in one of the upper passages.

"To-morrow," said Garstang, "I intend to try to escape."

"Why?" asked Mollheimer. "You will not get away with it."

"But I am going to try," replied Garstang. "Don't you ever want to see the outer world again—the sunlight, the trees; don't you even want to see the Earth again? Are you content to stay in this hell all your days? This is not life; it is not even existence! It is not worth living! Let us get away—let us at least attempt it. At the worst we can only die, and I think that is preferable to this living death."

"If we wait," said the German, "perhaps we shall be given a chance to go out into the world again."

"What is happening out there?" Garstang asked, wondering. "There is something happening on the surface that we do not know about. Why the strange reticence of Kris? He tells us nothing now, nothing at all of what has happened to Havard and the others. If they had gone to Earth they would have come back before now to seek us. What catastrophe has overtaken them? For I am convinced that something disastrous has occurred. The ship has met disaster in space, perhaps; certainly something unexpected. Why won't the Martians tell us? They may know what has happened. There must be something on the surface to make the Martians so reticent about our companions. We have made friends with about two score Martians. What do they say when we ask them about Havard? They whisper, 'The Great Six know,' and that is all we can get from them."

Mollheimer smiled. "All right. When you are ready to escape so am I."

Garstang was pleased. "Good. We will try to-morrow. The Martians let us roam about almost as much as we like now. They do not dream of us trying to escape."

"I wish we could bust up that machine before we go," said Mollheimer.

"Why?" asked Garstang, surprised. "They have not done so bad with us, I think, as to merit the treatment of having their machine wrecked."

"Perhaps you are right."

The next day they were at work at the passage on the high level again. Calmly, after about two hours' work, the two Earthmen left their work and walked down the passage. The other Martians did not take any notice of them. Kris and Carl were not there. At the turn of the passage they quickened their pace and took the uphill passage. They were all slopes in Redui; apparently steps were unknown to the Martians. With abruptness, after progressing for a few minutes, the Earthmen got their first glimpse of sunlight for four years. Dazzled, they stood hesitating. The doorway was inviting and showed no sign of guards.

Garstang edged along one wall, Mollheimer following close behind. Now Garstang could see a guard. He was standing a short distance away, looking across the valley below. With a start Garstang realised that they were high on the hillside—that they must have come out a lot higher than the opening they entered on the previous occasion. He stood staring out. There was something he could not quite make out on the plain below him. It appeared like a gigantic beetle. What was it? Like a flash he realised. It was a space ship, a space ship of great size! Astounded, he watched. But nothing moved. On looking closer he observed how deeply it was embedded in the ground.

"Good heavens!" Mollheimer breathed in his ear.

"Why, hundreds must have come to Mars," whispered Garstang.

"Look!" Garstang followed the direction of the German's pointing finger, and saw in the distance a haze of smoke and the vague suggestion of a city.

"Why," he said, "Earth must be colonising Mars!"

Garstang incautiously moved forward. Mollheimer instantly dodged back, and

The Great Six—Rulers of the Red World

picked up a stone. The sentry turned, and raised his electric-pistol on seeing Garstang. At the same instant Mollheimer flung the stone. Both aims were good. With a terrible shriek Garstang fell to the floor, and a sickening smell of burning passed Mollheimer. Garstang tottered forward and fell. The stone Mollheimer flung caught the unfortunate guard between his eyes, and sent him flying.

Mollheimer ran forward, and pulled up suddenly on seeing what was before him. It was a sheer drop of 200 feet to the forest. Crumpled and still, Garstang's body lay below. The guard moved. The German kicked him over the edge. Then he picked up the pistol, and looked for an avenue of escape. But there was no way down the cliff. It was a drop all the way round the ledge, and above it was as steep. There was no possibility of escape from the ledge.

He heard the voices of approaching Martians. Quickly he dashed inside again, and went along a passage. The Martians came up the other passage and went out on to the ledge. Their guttural voices exclaimed in surprise when there was no guard. They went to the edge and looked over. Mollheimer laughed maliciously, and pointed the ray pistol. The four Martians had no time to turn; they just crumpled where they stood, and fell over the ledge.

Mollheimer turned. There were many more Martians approaching. Too many to deal with. He debated on what to do with

the pistol, whether to fling it over the edge or to keep it. The latter thought prevailed, and he stealthily went along the passage as the Martians came out on the ledge.

The loss of his comrade did not trouble Mollheimer a great deal. He had lived in too many wild places and had known death too well for him to hold life anything but cheaply. There was only one person's life he would not like to lose, and that was his own.

He descended again, by another way. The rooms and passages all looked alike, so he had no idea where he was. Then he heard a voice calling to him: "Mollheimer, Mollheimer!"

It was Kris calling. He recognised the voice and went towards him, the ray pistol held forgetfully in his hand.

The Martian cried in surprise when he saw him.

"Where did you get that? Give it to me quickly, before anyone comes."

He snatched it from the Earthman's hands. "What have you been doing?" he asked.

Mollheimer laughed. "Not much."

"Where is the other man?"

"He is dead."

Kris thought about this for a full minute. Then he spoke again: "The emissaries of the Great Six are seeking you. They will kill you for this. You have attempted to escape, and your companion has escaped."

"He is dead," reiterated Mollheimer.

"I saw his body at the bottom of the cliff."

"How did it happen? What else have you done? Have you killed some people? Where did you get this pistol from?"

"Easy, easy. One question at a time."

"You may as well tell me all. I shall not betray you. And I shall be able to advise you how much to tell the Great Six."

"All right, I will," said the Earthman. Briefly he recounted the short fight on the ledge.

"You are mad?" The Martian whispered. "You must not tell them anything."

"Why are you so particular about me not escaping? Do you not want me to reach my people?"

"What, and have you telling them all about us and our lives?" the Martian retorted.

He motioned Mollheimer to follow, and the Earthman was taken to the hall of the Great Six again.

Mollheimer was astounded when they addressed him direct in English: "Where is your companion?"

"I do not know," he retorted.

"When did you last see him?"

"When we left the passage where we were working Garstang was in front of me, and left me a long way behind."

"You are lying! Do you think that we cannot tell?"

Mollheimer made no answer, so the one who seemed to be spokesman continued: "Did your companion escape?"



The stone flung from Mollheimer's hand and caught the Martian guard between the eyes even as the electric discharge burned through Garstang and sent him hurtling over the ledge.

War on the City of Mars

"No, he is dead."
"I think that it will be best if we kill you, too, before there is any more trouble."
"Do you think that will be wise?"
"Perhaps much wiser than letting you live."

The Earthman went nearer to them: "Listen. If you let me live think of the help I can give you regarding my race of people, those whom you are planning to destroy."

"Do you want them destroyed?"

Mollheimer drew himself erect. "I have no love for them. They have not attempted to find us. They have left us, for all they knew to the contrary, to die at your hands."

"Exactly what help can you give us?" asked the Martian.

"I can tell you of their habits, their methods of warfare, how best to counteract them, and how to fight them."

"We already know how to fight them."

"Perhaps you do, but I can help you all the same."

"Leave us while we consider," said the Martian, and with a wave of his hand to Kris: "Accompany him."

Mollheimer walked out with his guard at his heels. Outside they came to a halt, there to await the decision of the Six.

"So you taught them all to speak my language?"

"Yes," replied the Martian. "That was what I was engaged to do in the first place."

"What do you think their verdict will be?"

The Martian shook his head. "I do not know. Mo-tie, at least, will want you killed."

"Is Mo-tie the leader?"

"No, there is no leader, but Mo-tie is the oldest."

The opening of the door cut short all further conversation.

They went in.

"You can live," said the spokesman. "But you will have to give us all the help you can, and throw your very brain into the work of making weapons to use against them—your race."

Mollheimer nodded.

Thus began the building of the weapons that Mollheimer intended should obliterate from Mars all trace of the Earthmen, with the exception of himself. And thus drifted by twelve more years in which one or two minor battles took place, but in which no great attempt was made by the Martians to exterminate their enemies. This was due to the great research which was going on as a result of the revelations Mollheimer was making to the Martians. Research which did not confine itself mainly to the war on the Earthmen, but to many other aspects of Martian life.

Mollheimer proved to the Martians the benefits of sunlight and the fate that would be theirs if they kept to an underground life; they would never be rulers of their own world.

And in those twelve years the Martians adopted the English language, deciding that it was better than their own.

The German also taught them how to mobilise their armies, and how to attack an enemy, for it must be remembered that the Martians had not had an intelligent enemy to deal with before mankind came from Earth; they had only had the snakes to fight with. Under the rule of the Great Six, and with the aid of Mollheimer, the Martians of Redui planned to become masters of the whole of Mars and build on its surface great cities. First must come the obliterating of the Earthmen; then they would rid Mars of its snakes. Then, after that was done, they would bend the other cities of Mars to the will of the rulers of Redui, and the Great Six would rule the world.

Thus schemed the ambitious Six, led on in their plans by the unscrupulous Mollheimer, who planned to become one of the Six, and so, by devious ways, to the sole rulership of Mars.

For twelve years the Martians did not trust him out into the open world, he was too precious for them to risk losing now that they had found him.

★ THE BATTLE OF THE RED WORLD

OVER sixteen years had Mollheimer spent in the underground city of Redui, and at last it seemed as if he was going to see daylight—literally. The weapons for the big fight against the Earthmen were ready, and on that very ledge where Garstang had met his death the Martians planned to place a great electric gun. Under the direction of Mollheimer two of these had been made, and under his direction also they were to be fixed. Mollheimer would have been almost unrecognisable to his former associates. His face was pallid and his hair was grey. But beneath the altered exterior was the same Mollheimer; the same crafty and cunning individual who had won his way so often on wrongful paths on Earth.

It was a great day for him when he came out on the ledge again and saw the blessed daylight that had been barred to him all those years. As he stood on the ledge, enjoying the warm sunlight and directing the Martians in fixing the gun he little knew that he was being watched from what he presumed was a deserted space ship below. Through a keen pair of field-glasses Raymer was watching them fix the gun in position, and there was anxiety on every line of his face.

He turned to one of his companions. "Wulson, just take a look through these glasses. I do not like it. That thing that they are fixing appears to be a large gun. But who is that with them? It certainly is an Earthman. There is no possibility of confusing him with a Martian."

"It is an Earthman," remarked Wulson, looking through the glasses, "but where does he come in?"

"There are not many possibilities," said Raymer. "It may be an odd prisoner that they have captured from our city, when we have blamed the snakes. Or I wonder? Can it be Garstang and Mollheimer?"

"Garstang? Mollheimer? Those were two of the men who came with you in the first space ship, weren't they?"

"That's right. We lost them in caves—in the caves of the Martians."

"Well, that is not the worst," said Wulson. "The thing that I am most worried about is what they are erecting up there. When it is trained on our city they will perhaps be able to blow it off the face of Mars!"

"You are right," Raymer commented, soberly. "It looks a particularly nasty job."

"We shall have to prepare the city for war," he added. "It looks that way, and we ought to be ready."

"Cannot we destroy that thing in some way before they get it working?"

"I wish we could. Wait. Suppose we get over the top and then drop a bomb. Do you think we could, Wulson? Look through the glasses and see if the cliff overhangs or not."

"No, I do not think it does," Wulson replied, after a careful survey of the cliff.

"Then we shall have to move quickly before they get it in action. It is only half-way through the morning yet, and it looks as if they intend using it to-day."

On the desert behind the space ship were the bicycles on which they had come from the city, and hurriedly they mounted and sped back across the plain.

From the ledge Mollheimer watched them. "They've seen us," he muttered. "Now they are off to warn the city."

He plunged into the work of erecting the gun and took no more notice of the speeding figures.

At about one hour after noon the watchers from the city of New London observed a small knot of men on the top of the hill.

By wireless the news had been flashed to the other cities of Mars—to the nearby city of Paris 2, to the city of Great York, and to the city of Martia—the four cities of Mars, all comparatively near one another. As it was apparent that the Martians were concentrating on New London, all the women and children under twelve years of age were sent to Paris 2. From the direction of Paris 2 and from the other cities were coming men—the fighting men. Children, some of them between the ages of twelve and sixteen, were singing as if it was a picnic that awaited them instead of probable annihilation. It was not that they did not know what was awaiting them—they did know, for some not yet sixteen had had a taste of fighting the Martians before. In steady streams they neared the city of New London.

The sun shone on the electric gun, making it gleam brightly. Overhead, watching, was Raymer and the half-dozen men he had chosen to accompany him.

Raymer leant over and looked closely at the man below. At length he recognised him as Mollheimer, for all his altered appearance. The gun seemed now almost ready for action. Mollheimer was shouting instructions to the Martians, who were swinging it round to point towards New London. Anxiously, Raymer looked at Wulson, who was trying to open the box which contained the bombs. The lid had jammed.

"Hurry —"

A sudden noise from beneath, a slight hiss, caused him to swing quickly round. The great electric gun was going into action. The space ship down below disintegrated and became a cloud of whirling atoms. There was a dull roar echoed back on the wind.

Now the gun was pointing at the city, directly at it. Mollheimer was about to press the button that controlled it when Raymer took aim with his rifle and fired. With a cry Mollheimer fell by the gun. The Martians crowded round and quickly took him out of sight into the caves. Others stood looking about, perplexedly seeking the source of the shot.

Mollheimer must have given some word to the Martians, for another came out and took his place at the gun. For one brief instant as Wulson prepared to drop the bomb the electric gun was in action, cutting a road through the city of New London. A great cloud of dust filled the air over the place.

The bomb was flung. There was a terrible roar and pieces of metal flew high in the air. When these had dropped to the ground Raymer ventured another look over the edge. There were no Martians in sight; no ledge was left. Raymer looked at the stricken city. "Another moment," he murmured, "and there would have been no city."

"Come," he said to his half-dozen men, "before the Martians seek us."

But there was no way. The Martians were massing their forces at the bottom of the hill, on the side facing New London.

Something loomed up against the sky. "What is that?" asked Wulson. They went nearer, to find a large erection—of the inevitable red wood. It was on the edge of the hill, and beneath it all down the hillside was broken rock that had been tipped there. Raymer inspected it closer. "It looks to me like an elevator of some kind."

"Yes, they have been excavating below, and brought up the dug-out rock by means of it."

"The Martians alone know how deep these caverns of theirs go," added Wulson.

He was wrong. Even the Martians did not know that.

They commenced to descend the hill on the farthest side.

"Mollheimer will know what has happened to the electric gun and why it has happened," remarked Raymer, "and he will come seeking us. Our best way is to go in—"

England to Continent Post Rocket

side their caves. They will never expect to find us in there, but will search everywhere outside. Also we may be able to do some harm to their city."

"You think Mollheimer is still alive then?" asked Wulson.

Raymer laughed. "Yes. Trust him to avoid death."

They descended the hill, warily.

"Look," whispered Wulson.

There was an entrance directly ahead of them. Two Martians stood on guard, pistols held ready.

Raymer and Wulson took careful aim.

Crack! The two shots sounded as one, and the two Martians fell dead.

Wulson laughed grimly. "That is two less."

Cautiously they entered the mouth of the cavern. Raymer, of course, had seen the illuminated caverns before, but to his men they were new, and they uttered amazed cries.

"Hush!" whispered Raymer.

They crept forward, weapons held ready. Raymer had picked up the two electric pistols that had previously belonged to the Martians. One of these he handed to Wulson and the other he kept ready for his own use. He and Wulson led the way into the maze of passages. But the caverns seemed empty; no one came forward to dispute their progress.

"I wonder if I did get Mollheimer?" whispered Raymer.

They began descending. Not knowing the secret of the doors, they were forced to keep to the passages, and, as they went downhill all the time, they eventually came to the old machine room. Opposite to them was the passage that led to the new one. Raymer, closely followed by the others, went along this passage. Soon they could hear the drone of the machinery. Louder it came, and then they were at the tunnel end. They gasped at the sight of the vast monster that filled the great hall. It was bathed in the light from the myriad panels, the strong, yet soft, glow that seemed to shine on every part of the machine. Around it the Martians were working in their hundreds.

"Back, before they see us!"

The Earthmen turned and went back along the passage.

"That machine has some great purpose," whispered Wulson. "I wonder what it is?"

"It probably runs the entire city," Raymer replied.

"Yes; that is what I think it will do. Something will be needed to keep the air clean in these passages, and also to illuminate these panels.

They commenced ascending again, and came to a fairly large cave. Raymer looked puzzled. "I seem to remember being in here before," he remarked.

For in the centre of the cave was a great pit, and Raymer had fought once against the Martians in a cave that had a great pit in the centre of the floor.

The difference was the panelled walls, but then, Raymer reflected it was possible for the Martians to have fixed panels since he had been there before. Apparently the Martians had panelled all the passages and rooms. On the last occasion he had been here some of the passages and rooms had been dark.

"What's that?" asked Wulson, pointing.

On the opposite side of the cave a door was closing. They rushed forward, but before they had reached it the door was closed.

"We're in a trap!" ejaculated Raymer. "Come on!"

They ran for the door by which they had entered, but before they had reached that it closed also.

The Earthmen threw their combined weight against it, but it remained immovable.

"They have us now," panted Wulson.

"Rubbish," said Raymer. "Stand back."

They stood away from the door and Raymer directed the ray pistol at it. He pressed the switch. There was a hiss as the



An Up-to-the-minute News Feature on Matters Inter-Planetary

By P. E. CLEATOR

(President of the British Inter-Planetary Society.)

Herr Zucker's Rocket

I RECENTLY returned from a visit to London, where, in the company of Professor A. M. Low, D.Sc., and several other members of the British Inter-Planetary Society, I interviewed Herr Gerhard Zucker, the German rocket experimenter who hopes to shoot his postal rocket here in England.

At the time of our visit no definite arrangements had been made, but we learned that the prospects of the experiment taking place in the near future appeared promising. Because these notes are published some little time after they are written, it is possible that by the time these words appear in print the rocket will have been shot. Should this be the case, SCOOPS readers will probably have learned all about the experiment; firstly, from the newspapers and, later, from the news-reel films.

But Herr Zucker has other ambitious plans for the future, in the event of his first attempt being successful. He is planning to construct a much larger rocket here in England, with a view to establishing a regular rocket postal service between England and the Continent. This accomplished, he envisions the formation of a company for the purpose of postal rocket manufacture.

Everything, however, depends on the result of his first experiment.

ray of electricity met the door, but nothing else happened.

For a few moments he kept the ray of electricity directed on the door, without result.

"Let us try our guns," suggested Wulson. "They may shatter the door."

The cave boomed and echoed as they shot at the door. The wall died into darkness. Raymer went forward to see if they had succeeded. There were the holes where the bullets had penetrated, but the bulk of the door was as firm as ever.

"Prisoners," said the leader of the expedition. "We shall have to wait now until the Martians come. But for goodness sake keep your eyes on that dark wall. There will be no warning if they come that way."

Wulson was thoughtful. "Remember that elevator thing we saw at the top of the hill? I wonder if it is directly over that machine. We could hear the hum of something coming from it. If it is, why not chance dropping a bomb down it? It will wreck this city of theirs, wreck it utterly. The lights will go out and the air will rapidly become foul. The Martians will flee."

"We are not out of here yet," remarked Raymer. "If we do manage to get out of here your suggestion will be worth following. That is, if—"

The rest of his sentence was lost and destined never to be heard. For while he was speaking the lights in all the walls died out. In the blackness now shone the mouth of the pit with a weird phosphorescent light.

"Ready, men?" whispered Raymer. "Then look out!"

There was a rush of advancing feet. The electric guns came into action, obliterating a stream of the Martians. Raymer's men produced their guns, and the cave thudded to the hollow boom of their shots.

Two of the Earthmen went down, screaming in agony that was short-lived as the rays of electricity burnt them.

"Cataclysm"

ONE of the latest productions of Andrew Lenard, of Budapest, who is a leading member of the Amateur Film Society, is a film entitled "Cataclysm," which concerns a journey to the Moon.

All the details of the journey through space, and the actual landing on the Moon, conform exactly with the requirements of such a journey as demanded by the scientific knowledge of to-day. Thus, unlike films of a similar kind, where the presence of an atmosphere on our satellite has been conveniently assumed, the adventurers in "Cataclysm" wear real space suits while on the Moon!

Herr Ley to Visit England?

ON behalf of the British Inter-Planetary Society, I have invited Herr Willy Ley, one of the world's foremost authorities on rocketry, to England. At the moment he is uncertain whether he will be able to spare the time for the visit this year.

Although he speaks English fluently (and French and Russian, too!), he has never been to England, and when I met him in Berlin in the early part of this year he expressed a keen desire to visit this country. Hence my invitation.

I must also add that Herr Ley also speaks American! Several of the leading members of the American Inter-Planetary Society visited him in Berlin a few years ago. And even to this day he not infrequently ejaculates, "I guess so!"

And while writing of invitations and of America, I must mention that I, too, have received an invitation. It comes from Mr. G. Edward Pendray, a leading member of the American Inter-Planetary Society, who has very kindly invited me to stay with him at his home in Crestwood, New York. Unfortunately, I cannot possibly make the trip this year, but I am hoping to do so next.

Raymer, conscious of great pain in his left arm, continued firing at the Martians. They turned and fled, leaving numbers of their comrades dead and wounded on the floor.

Raymer sighed with relief. "I wonder how long these things last?" he murmured, looking at his electric pistol.

Wulson, nursing an injured arm, peered at him in the half-light.

"Me, yes. They just singed my arm a little. And you?"

"The same. We have lost two of our men, though."

Raymer frowned. "The Martians shall pay for that."

The light came stronger, as a wall leapt into illumination.

Suddenly Raymer was running, running as he had never run before. He had seen the door on the opposite side just closing to. He thrust his gun into the narrow opening. There was a click as the door came against it. There were vague noises from the other walls suggestive of closing doors, but no more walls lit up. Raymer guessed why. Their shots had punctured them in vulnerable places.

"Here, men!" he called.

The others rushed forward to him. "All get your hands down this edge and pull like blazes!" They did as he commanded, and very slowly the door gave to their combined efforts. At last it was back to the wall. With a click it automatically fell into position.

"Rush out, quick!" Raymer ordered.

The Earthmen hurried along the silent passages, luckily in the right direction, and came out at the same entrance as that by which they had entered.

They climbed up the hillside so that they could see what was happening on the plain. In the distance they could see a great fight taking place; the Martians were encountering the resistance of the men from New London who had come out to meet them.

Silently the little party watched the bloody battle that was in progress. The Martians were gaining, their electric pistols rapidly striking down the Earthmen.

"When I get hold of that fiend Mollheimer —" whispered Raymer, clenching his fists.

"What is that?" asked Wulson, pointing.

A silvery object was rising into the air from New London. Raymer gasped. It was the only aeroplane on Mars that was rising, and it was his sister's machine. Raymer noted its erratic behaviour.

"What fuel are they using?"

"Alcoholic extract from those intoxicating plants probably," Wulson answered. "There is no petrol on Mars."

Suddenly the Earthmen below were running back to the city. The Martians commenced following, as the aeroplane hovered above them. A small object dropped from it, and there was a boom as it fell in the Martian ranks, scattering their bodies right and left. Again a bomb dropped, continuing the work of massacre. The Earthmen had by now reached the city, and were watching from the walls.

The Martians turned and ran.

From below the hill a shaft of light sprang out for a second and touched the aeroplane. It crumpled and fell to the ground in atomic dust.

"Come!" Raymer yelled. "They have another electric gun down there!"

Breathlessly, they tumbled and slid down the mountainside. Now they could see the big gun. By it stood Mollheimer. With a cry Raymer leapt the remaining ten feet on to the top of him, and the two rolled over and over in the red vegetation, hands clawing at each other's throats. Headlong, they fell another fifteen feet, then rolled out of sight of the Earthmen.

"Come with me," said Wulson to his men. "We have still something to do."

They followed him round the hillside and to the wooden erection. From it came the steady buzz of the machine.

Wulson bent down at the side of it and picked up one of the bombs that he had concealed in the grass at the side, and turned to his three companions. "Help me on to your shoulders," he ordered the tallest of them.

From this vantage point he was able to see over the edge of the erection, for it was boarded all round for about ten feet up. He stood for a moment. "Pick those bombs up, you two men, and go down the hillside with them. If you see Raymer is safe drop one of them on that electric gun, then run to the bottom of the hill and wait for us."

For about three minutes after they had gone Wulson waited. Then he heard the detonation accompanying the explosion of the electric gun. With that he dropped the bomb down the shaft. Quickly he jumped to the ground. "Run!" he shouted to the other man. Helter-skelter they ran down the hillside. There was a terrific boom and the ground shook. Below ground the machine, directly underneath the shaft, was shattered to a thousand fragments. The lights died out in every panel in the catacombs. A rush of air swept along the passages. . . . With a roar like thunder passage collapsed on passage. . . . The whole hidden city of Redui collapsed. Still it went on, even the hilltop itself, with its million of burrows, collapsed.

At the bottom Wulson met the other men and Raymer.

"Get him?" he asked, breathlessly.

Raymer nodded. "Yes."

"Now," he continued. "Let us return to the city."

The Martians were not to be seen. As they reached the city the cycle of night blacked out the light, and the plain, with its dead, was invisible. . . .

New London was in a state of wreckage. Tattered and torn were the buildings that lined the path where the deadly ray had cut through. Many were missing that night in

the city. Outside on the plain the snakes of Mars feasted on the dead.

Indefatigably, all the night through, the Earthmen worked, building up the shattered walls of the city and preparing for the attack they expected on the morrow.

Raymer received the worst blow he had yet had. The aeroplane which had met disaster had been piloted by his sister. . . . He was now the only survivor of the original seven to come to Mars. . . .

★ THE LAST OF THE SEVEN

MORNING dawned, bright and sunny, without the threat of impending death. All the available forces of the Earthmen were concentrated in New London, awaiting the attack from the enemy. All the available weapons were ready for use, too. The Earthmen had found that the electric pistols gave out after a certain length of time, but they had about a hundred still usable. They possessed plenty of other weapons. But ammunition was getting scarce.

It was late afternoon before a move was made. From the direction of the forest came the Martians, grim and intent on killing, the thoughts of their dead comrades filling their minds with an unreasoning hatred

NEXT WEEK

Special features in next week's issue of Britain's only science story paper:—

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Captured by the Skeleton-men of Mercury. Imprisoned in the radium mines of Haldar, surrounded by rocks that radiate death. Exciting, tense. . . .

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In SCOOPS Next Week

of these men who had come usurping their lands. On the wall of the city Raymer had fixed up a great catapult that was to fling bombs at the approaching armies. It was crude in appearance, but it worked satisfactorily, and that was what mattered most. Now, as the Martians neared, Raymer prepared to fire it. Any slip, and there would be disaster to their own forces. Raymer placed the first bomb in position and drew back the catapult sling to its farthest extent. The bomb tore through the air, and dropped in the front of the oncoming forces. It detonated, and the Martians scattered.

Raymer laughed harshly. "Let's give them another, Wulson."

Again a bomb made its parabola through the air, but alighted too much in front of the Martians.

A fountain of soil and torn plants sprayed them. They circled round, out of range of the catapult.

Now the whole city was ready for them, fighting men lining the walls and waiting for the first onset. Raymer carefully distributed the electric pistols among his men, at strategic points.

The Martians halted a short distance away. Unwilling to make another move, the Earthmen waited.

One of the Martians came forward, his arm held high.

"We demand your surrender. On that condition we agree not to harm you."

A low murmur ran through the ranks of

Earthmen on hearing the Martian address them in English.

After a minute's thought, Raymer answered:

"If it is to be war, then we will fight against you to the last man. We will not surrender. We will agree to live peaceably side by side with your people, because we want no war with you."

"I am Mottie, one of the Great Six," announced the Martian, "and we cannot have insubordination against us, the rightful rulers of the world. Unless you acknowledge us now as your rulers, we will slaughter every one of you."

Raymer turned to the army of Earthmen. "What has it to be, men?"

"War!" came the answer.

The Martian bowed his head.

"All right. Then war it is."

He retreated to the army of Martians, and commenced issuing instructions.

"I believe they are going to attack on all sides at once," whispered Wulson. "Don't you think that it would be best to distribute the grenades at certain points all round the city?"

"Yes," replied Raymer. "Go and deliver them out."

Wulson went round with the small bombs, handing them out to men at intervals all round the walls.

Then the Martians attacked. With a cry they swooped down on one side of the city, to be met by a hail of grenades. Nothing could withstand that deadly hail, and they retreated.

Part of the army made a determined attack on the opposite side, to meet with the same greeting.

Again the Martians swooped from all sides at once. Some now gained a foothold on the wall, and gunfighting commenced. Rays of electricity flashed and men fell, singed and blackened, never to rise again. Raymer saw before him the Martian who had come forward to parley with them, and savagely they met. . . .

The battle waxed and waned all through that fatal evening. It seemed as if the Martians would get the upper hand; their number doubled that of the Earthmen.

But the Earthmen, knowing what was at stake—their lives and the lives of those whom they held dear—fought desperately.

And now a strange contretemps was taking place. For the ammunition had given out, the bombs had all been used, and there were few electric pistols in action. Hand-to-hand fighting was taking place along the walls.

With dramatic suddenness the end came. A Martian raised his arm. "Stop!" he cried.

The fight ended, and the men stood as they were, waiting to hear what the man had to say.

"I am the last of the Great Six," he said, "and as such I authorise the surrender of my people."

There was a hum of talk among the Martians.

A great cloud of smoke billowed up over their heads. New London was on fire.

In two crowds the survivors of the battle congregated.

Wulson, after looking for Raymer, stepped up to the Martian leader.

"We are prepared to let you live peacefully," he announced. "But now you must acknowledge us as the rulers. We shall not interfere with your activities, provided that they are not attempts on us. That is all."

The Martians agreed, and as the sun descended the streaked sky they departed back in the direction of their ruined city.

Wulson looked, a trifle sadly, at his remaining men.

"Raymer is no more, and New London is no more." He gestured at the blazing city. "Let us depart for Paris 2 before nightfall."

Wounded and weary, the Earthmen made their way to the city of Paris 2.

Night descended on Mars. Night and peace. . . .