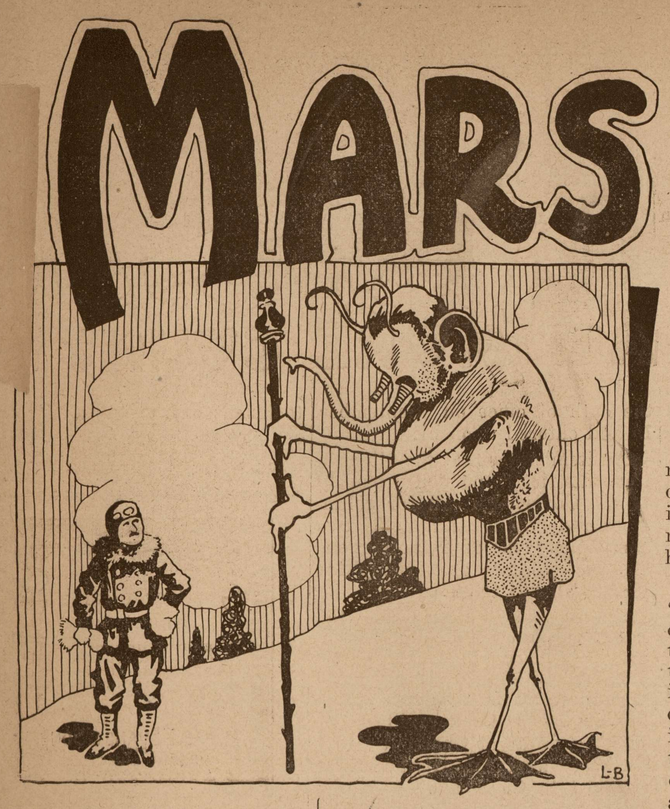
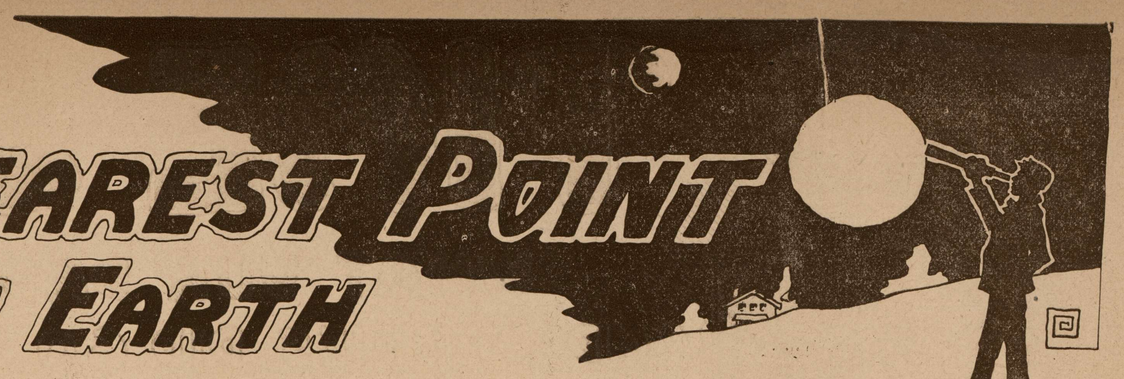
MARS NOW NEAREST POINT TO EARTH





WILL WE EVER LOOK LIKE INHABITANTS OF RED PLANET?

As the planet of Mars is now at its nearest point to our earth, thirty-five million miles away, scientists are busy making all the observations possible, photographing the planet and formulating new theories about its topography and possible habitation. One scientist has evolved a complete description of the possible inhabitants of the red planet that is at this moment our "neighbor." A huge head and brain and slim, almost unused legs are some of the features that mark this imaginative being, and it has been suggested the human race may in two million years or so approach a similar shape, a change no more remarkable than the evolution of man in the last few millions of years from his anthropoidal ancestors. In addition to speculating on the probable forms of life oon Mars scientists expect to learn more about the "canals" there, and some even consider the possibility of radio communication with that distant planet.

As the planet of Mars at this moment is spinning nearer to the earth than at any other time in its course, astronomers are training their telescopes upon that distant world, photographs are being taken to prove various theories about its lands and seas, imaginative minds are speculating upon the chances for radio communication with the red planet, scientists are giving their conceptions on what sort of beings the Maritans are, if there are any living being there, and some suggestions have even been made that the people of the earth may yet become like these weird creatures that are supposed to dwell so many million miles away.

Mars is approximately 35,000,000 miles distant from us just now, while at other times hundreds of millions of miles separate the two planets in their course about the sun. This position of Mars to the earth is known as an "opposition near perihelion," and occurs only once in several years. Hence, the Lowell Observatory, the Yerkes Observatory, the Mt. Wilson Observatory, and others are being used by the most learned astronomical experts of the world in an attempt to glimpse something that will furnish them with a definite clue as to the form of the land of Mars and the existence or non-existence of people there.

The principal reason advanced for the belief in the presence of living, thinking creatures upon Mars is the fact that some scientists have discovered a great network of canals across the entire planet. There is some dispute about these canals, some calling them natural channels and others denying their evistence entirely. Prof. Percival Lowell is the chief advocate of the theory that the very indistinct lines detected on the planet are artificial canals, thus proving the existence of intelligent beings there. He claims to have discovered several hundred of these waterways from his observatory at Flagstaff, Arizona, but his theories are disputed by many.

However. is such canals do exist, some one must have constructed them, and Mars would, therefore, be an inhabited planet. The question of what sort of creatures these possible dwellers on the distant world may be has already became a subject for interesting speculation and remarkable theories on the part of many scientific minds. H. G. Wells, in his "War of the Worlds,' sees them as nothing but creatures with an enormous brain and tentacles for hands.

But Hugo Garnsback, editor of "Science and Invention," has conceived an elaborate presentation of what he imagines to be the form of the Maritan. Starting from the basis that conditions on Mars in the earliest stages of its history were the same as upon the earth, he conjectures that the dominating intelligence has still a partly human shape. The vastly different conditions on Mars, though, would naturally make the evolution of this being entirely different from that of man.

Mars is a compact little sphere in comparison with our earth, its diameter being only 4,214 miles, while the distance from our North Pole to our South Pole is almost exactly 7,900 miles. As its axis has approximately the same inclination to the plane of its orbit as that of the earth, the seasons there must be like ours, but longer and with by no means similar temperatures.

The planet of the Maritans is half as far again from the sun as the earth and, hence, receives probably three-fifth as much light and heat from that body as we do. The temperature on Mars must be very low, and this is one of the arguments raised against the possibility of its habitation. J. H. Poynting has computed that the average temperature on Mars is below the freezing point of water, but Lowell and Prof. F. W. Very have concluded that, because of the rare atmosphere on the heat lost by reflection and several other factors previously overlooked the mean temperature must be about 48 degrees, not very much different from that of Chicago or Boston.

Even if the temperature would permit the presence of beings like ourselves, there still remains the problem of breathing. According to Dr. C. G. Abbot, of the Smithsonian Institute, the atmosphere of Mars has hardly one-fifth the density of the air of one of our highest mountain peaks on a cold, clear night, even lighter than the air of Mount Everest, where oxygen tanks are necessary. To live in this rarified atmosphere, the Maritan must have tremendous lungs and an enormous chest.

The small size of this sister planet and its consequent small mass or weight, together with a density less than that of the earth, make the force of gravity there only a little more than a third of the earth's gravitational pull. Thus a man who weighs 160 pounds here would weigh only 57 pounds on Mars. A Gourdin or a LeGendre who can jump 25 feet here could jump 65 feet were he in a Maritan olympic contest.

For this same reason, it is thought that the men of Mars must be to the human race as circus giants are to midgets.. "The Martian, if he exists," declares Gernback, "is probably much taller than the human being, possibly from fifteen to twenty feet tall.

From all this and other knowledge we have, Gernback has constructed his conception of the Martian—a two-footed being over fifteen feet in height, with a chest of probably 150 inches expanded, and a huge head and brain. Mental progress causes one to be disinclined toward bodily efforts, especially as machines replace the hands and legs—for Gernback has no doubts that Mars has every labor-saving device and transportation facility that we have, and pribably many more—and the Martians, therefore, are pictured as having extremely thin legs and arms, hardly more than bones and tiny muscles covered with skin.

In order to support such a tall body, however. such a being must have inordinately large feet, and the creature of Gernback's creation is given great webbed feet for this purpose. Difficulty to smell in such a rare atmosphere as Mars is believed to have would cause the evolution of a nose more like the trunk of an elephant, this scientist thinks, so that the Martian may go to the smell rather than the smell come to him. Similarly, huge ears would prabably be developed to catch sounds which must be very faint on that planet.

In all advancing civilization, the eyes have a tendency to become larger, and the imaginary Martian has been provided with flexible, stalk-like eyes, some-

(Continued on Back Page)

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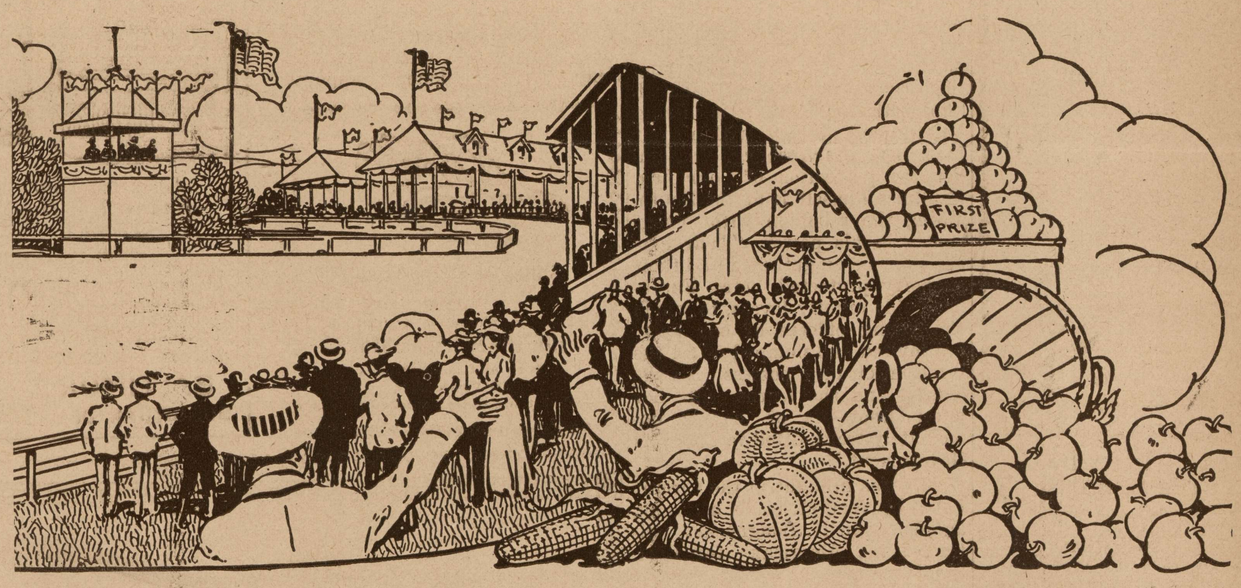

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