WAR OF THE WORLDS

{ILLUSTRATED}

BY

H. G. WELLS

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ABOUT AUTHOR



Wells, some time before 1916

Herbert George "H. G." Wells (21 September 1866 – 13 August 1946) was an English writer, now best known for his work in the science fiction genre. He was also a prolific writer in many other genres, including contemporary novels, history, politics and social commentary, even writing textbooks and

rules for war games. Wells is sometimes called "The Father of Science Fiction", as are Jules Verne and Hugo Gernsback. His most notable science fiction works include *The War of the Worlds*, *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.

Wells's earliest specialised training was in biology, and his thinking on ethical matters took place in a specifically and fundamentally Darwinian context. He was also from an early date an outspoken socialist, often (but not always, as at the beginning of the First World War) sympathising with pacifist views. His later works became increasingly political and didactic, and he sometimes indicated on official documents that his profession was that of "Journalist." Most of his later novels were not science fiction. Some described lower-middle class life (*Kipps*; *The History of Mr Polly*), leading him to be touted as a worthy successor to Charles Dickens, but Wells described a range of social strata and even attempted, in *Tono-Bungay* (1909), a diagnosis of English society as a whole.

Early life:

Herbert George Wells was born at Atlas House, 46 High Street, Bromley, in the county of Kent, on 21 September 1866. Called "Bertie" in the family, he was the fourth and last child of Joseph Wells (a former domestic gardener, and at the time a shopkeeper and professional cricketer) and his wife Sarah Neal (a former domestic servant). An inheritance had allowed the family to acquire a shop in which they sold china and sporting

goods, although it failed to prosper: the stock was old and worn out, and the location was poor. Joseph Wells managed to earn a meagre income, but little of it came from the shop and he received an unsteady amount of money from playing professional cricket for the Kent county team. Payment for skilled bowlers and batsmen came from voluntary donations afterwards, or from small payments from the clubs where matches were played.

A defining incident of young Wells's life was an accident in 1874 that left him bedridden with a broken leg. To pass the time he started reading books from the local library, brought to him by his father. He soon became devoted to the other worlds and lives to which books gave him access; they also stimulated his desire to write. Later that year he entered Thomas Morley's Commercial Academy, a private school founded in 1849 following the bankruptcy of Morley's earlier school. The teaching was erratic, the curriculum mostly focused, Wells later said, on producing copperplate handwriting and doing the sort of sums useful to tradesmen. Wells continued at Morley's Academy until 1880. In 1877, his father, Joseph Wells, fractured his thigh. The accident effectively put an end to Joseph's career as a cricketer, and his subsequent earnings as a shopkeeper were not enough to compensate for the loss of the primary source of family income.

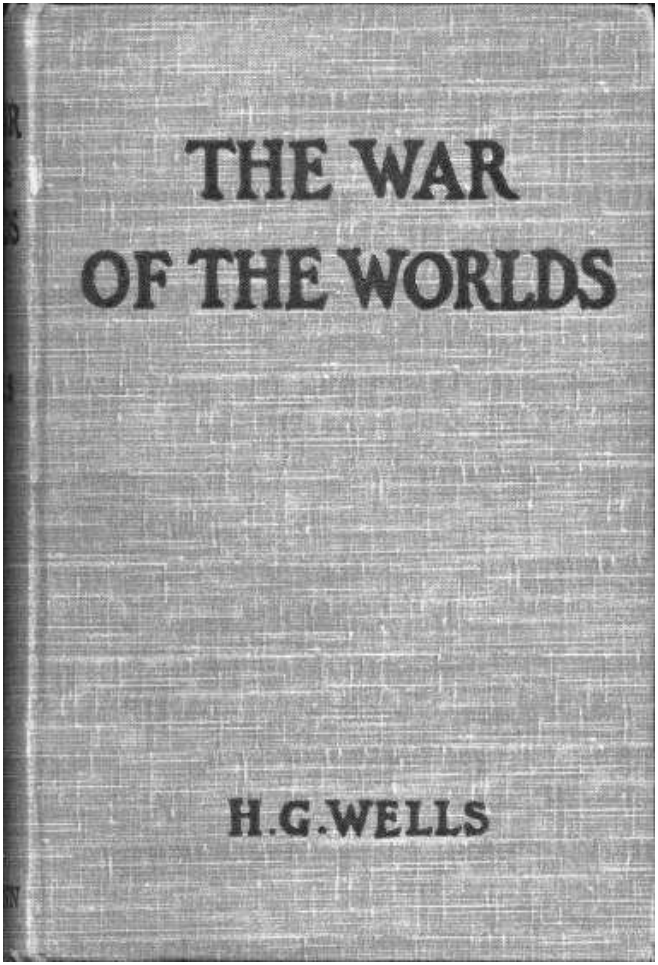
No longer able to support themselves financially, the family instead sought to place their sons as apprentices in various occupations. From 1880 to 1883, Wells had an unhappy apprenticeship as a draper at the Southsea Drapery Emporium,

Hyde's. His experiences at Hyde's, where he worked a thirteen-hour day and slept in a dormitory with other apprentices, later inspired his novels *The Wheels of Chance* and *Kipps*, which portray the life of a draper's apprentice as well as providing a critique of society's distribution of wealth.

Wells's parents had a turbulent marriage, due primarily to his mother being a Protestant and his father a freethinker. When his mother returned to work as a lady's maid (at Uppark, a country house in Sussex), one of the conditions of work was that she would not be permitted to have living space for her husband and children. Thereafter, she and Joseph lived separate lives, though they never divorced and remained faithful to each other. As a consequence, Herbert's personal troubles increased as he subsequently failed as a draper and also, later, as a chemist's assistant. After each failure, he would arrive at Uppark—"the bad shilling back again!" as he said—and stay there until a fresh start could be arranged for him. Fortunately for Herbert, Uppark had a magnificent library in which he immersed himself, reading many classic works, including Plato's *Republic*, and More's *Utopia*. This would be the beginning of Herbert George Wells's venture into literature.

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PREFACE (ABOUT THE BOOK)



The War of the Worlds is a military science fiction novel by H. G. Wells. It first appeared in serialized form in 1897, published simultaneously in *Pearson's Magazine* in the UK and

Cosmopolitan magazine in the US. The first appearance in book form was published by William Heinemann of London in 1898. It is the first-person narrative of the adventures of an unnamed protagonist and his brother in Surrey and London as Earth is invaded by Martians. Written between 1895 and 1897, it is one of the earliest stories that detail a conflict between mankind and an extraterrestrial race. The novel is one of the most commented-on works in the science fiction canon.

The War of the Worlds has two parts, *Book One: The Coming of the Martians* and *Book Two: The Earth under the Martians*. The narrator, a philosophically-inclined author, struggles to return to his wife while seeing the Martians lay waste to southern England. Book One also imparts the experience of his brother, also unnamed, who describes events in the capital and escapes the Martians by boarding a ship near Tillingham, on the Essex coast.

The plot has been related to invasion literature of the time. The novel has been variously interpreted as a commentary on evolutionary theory, British Imperialism, and generally Victorian superstitions, fears and prejudices. At the time of publication it was classified as a scientific romance, like his earlier novel *The Time Machine*. *The War of the Worlds* has been both popular (having never gone out of print) and influential, spawning half a dozen feature films, radio dramas, a record album, various comic book adaptations, a television series, and sequels or parallel stories by other authors. It has even influenced the work of scientists, notably Robert Hutchings Goddard.

Plot Summary

> Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us.
>
> — H. G. Wells (1898), *The War of the Worlds*

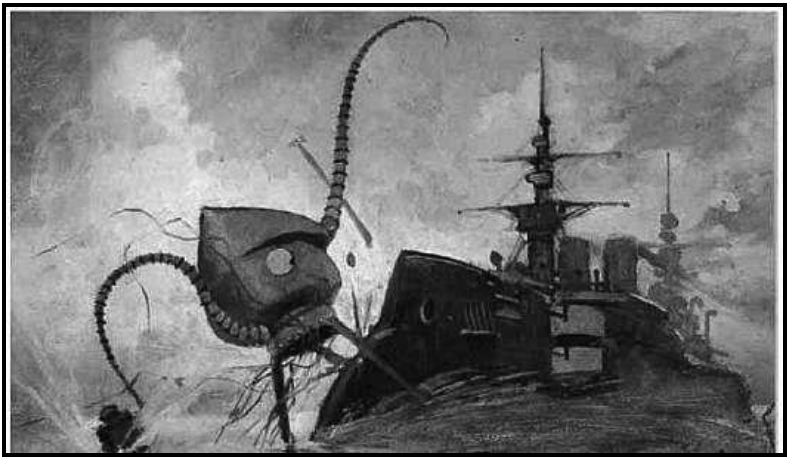
The Coming of the Martians

The narrative opens in an astronomical observatory at Ottershaw where explosions are seen on the surface of the planet Mars, creating much interest in the scientific community. Later a "meteor" lands on Horsell Common, near the narrator's home in Woking, Surrey. He is among the first to discover that the object is an artificial cylinder that opens, disgorging Martians who are "big" and "greyish" with "oily brown skin," "the size, perhaps, of a bear," with "two large dark-coloured eyes," and a lipless "V-shaped mouth" surrounded by "Gorgon groups of tentacles." The narrator finds them "at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous." They briefly emerge, have difficulty in coping with the Earth's atmosphere, and rapidly retreat into the cylinder. A human deputation (which includes the astronomer Ogilvy) approaches the cylinder

with a white flag, but the Martians incinerate them and others nearby with a heat-ray before beginning to assemble their machinery. Military forces arrive that night to surround the common, including Maxim guns. The population of Woking and the surrounding villages are reassured by the presence of the military. A tense day begins, with much anticipation of military action by the narrator.



An army of Martian fighting-machines destroying England.



A Martian fighting-machine battling with HMS *Thunder Child*

Towards dusk the Martians renew their offensive, and break through the defence-line of siege and field artillery centred on Richmond Hill and Kingston Hill by a widespread bombardment of the Black smoke, and a mass exodus of the population of London begins. This includes the narrator's brother, who flees to the Essex coast after the sudden, panicked predawn order to evacuate London is given by the authorities, a terrifying and harrowing journey of three days, amongst millions of similar refugees streaming from London. He encounters Mrs. Elphinstone and her younger sister-in-law, just in time to help them fend off a gang of ruffians who are trying to rob them. The three continue on together. Mrs. Elphinstone's husband is missing, and his fate is never learned. After a terrifying struggle through a mass of refugees on the road at Barnet, they head eastward. Two days later, at Chelmsford, their pony is confiscated for food by the local

Committee of Public Supply. They press on to Tillingham and the sea. There, they manage to buy passage to the Continent from a small Paddle steamer, part of a vast throng of shipping gathered off the Essex coast to evacuate refugees. The torpedo ram HMS *Thunder Child* destroys two attacking tripods before being sunk by the Martians, though this allows the evacuation fleet, including the ship carrying the narrator's brother and his two travelling companions, to escape to the continent. Shortly after, all organised resistance has ceased, and the Martians roam the shattered landscape unhindered.

The Earth Under the Martians

At the beginning of Book Two, the narrator and the curate are plundering houses in search of food. During this excursion, the men witness a Martian fighting-machine enter Kew and use neither its heat-ray nor the Black Smoke, instead picking up any person it finds and tossing them into a "great metallic carrier which projected behind him, much as a workman's basket hangs over his shoulder." It is at this moment that the narrator first realises that the Martian invaders may have a purpose other than destruction, as all previous encounters with the aliens and the ensuing mass destruction would suggest. While hiding at a house in Sheen to allow the curate to rest, "a blinding glare of green light" and a loud concussion signal the arrival of the fifth Martian cylinder. The cylinder smashes into the house in which the men hide, and both are trapped beneath the ruins for nearly two weeks. The curate, traumatised by the

invasion, sees the Martian creatures as heralding the advent of the Apocalypse. The narrator's relations with the curate deteriorate, and he eventually knocks him unconscious to prevent his loud ranting. The curate has already been overheard by a Martian, who captures him with a prehensile tentacle and, the reader is led to believe, drains him of his blood, blood transfusion being the Martians' form of nourishment. The narrator escapes detection by hiding in the coal-cellar.

The Martians eventually abandon the much excavated cylinder crater, and the narrator is able to head towards West London. He finds abundant growth of red weed, a Martian form of vegetation, spreading with extraordinary rapidity over the landscape wherever there is abundant water. On Putney Heath, he once again encounters the artilleryman, who briefly persuades him to cooperate in a grandiose plan to rebuild civilisation underground. But after a few hours the narrator perceives the lunacy of this plan and the overall laziness of his companion and abandons the artilleryman to his delusions. Heading into a deserted London, he is at the point of despair and attempts to commit suicide by openly approaching a stationary war machine, when he discovers that the invaders have died from microbial infections to which they had no immunity, since "there are no bacteria in Mars." The narrator realises with joy that the threat has been vanquished. The narrator suffers a brief but complete nervous breakdown of which he remembers nothing. He is nursed back to health by a kind family, and returns home to find his wife, whom he had given up for dead. The last chapter, entitled "Epilogue," reflects

on the significance of the invasion and the "abiding sense of doubt and insecurity" that it has left in the narrator's mind.

Style

The War of the Worlds presents itself as a factual account of the Martian invasion. The narrator is a middle-class writer of philosophical papers, somewhat reminiscent of Doctor Kemp in *The Invisible Man*, with characteristics similar to Wells's at the time of writing. The reader learns very little about the background of the narrator or indeed of anyone else in the novel; characterisation is unimportant. In fact, none of the principal characters are named.

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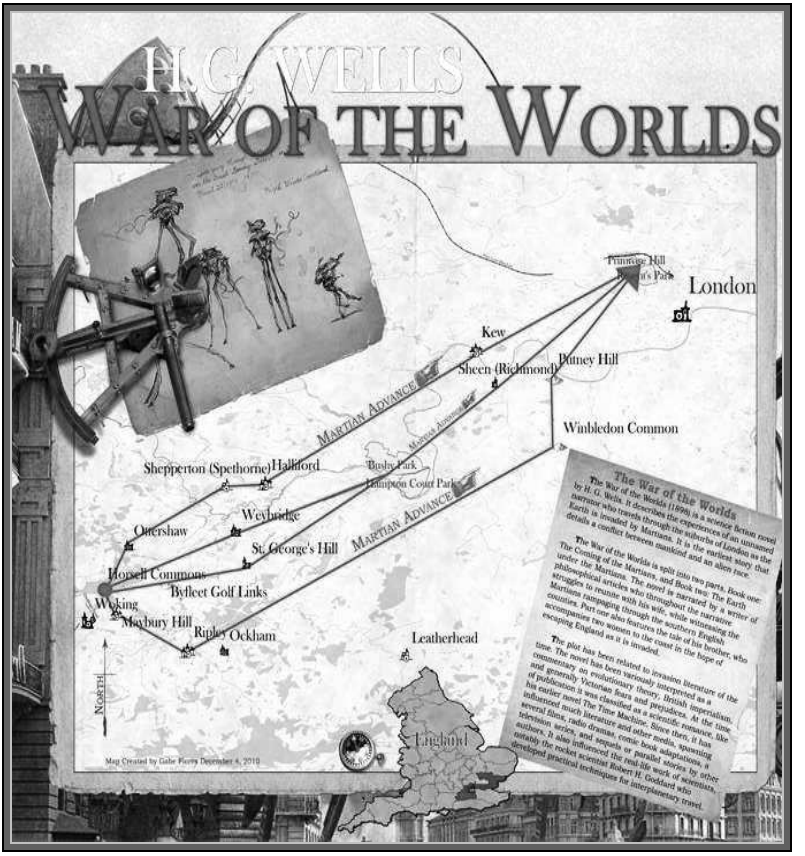
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THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

BY

H. G. WELLS [1898]

{Illustrated}

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

Murat UKRAY {e-Kitap Projesi}

BOOK ONE

THE COMING OF THE MARTIANS

But who shall dwell in these worlds if they be inhabited?

Are we or they Lords of the World?

--And how are all things made for man?--

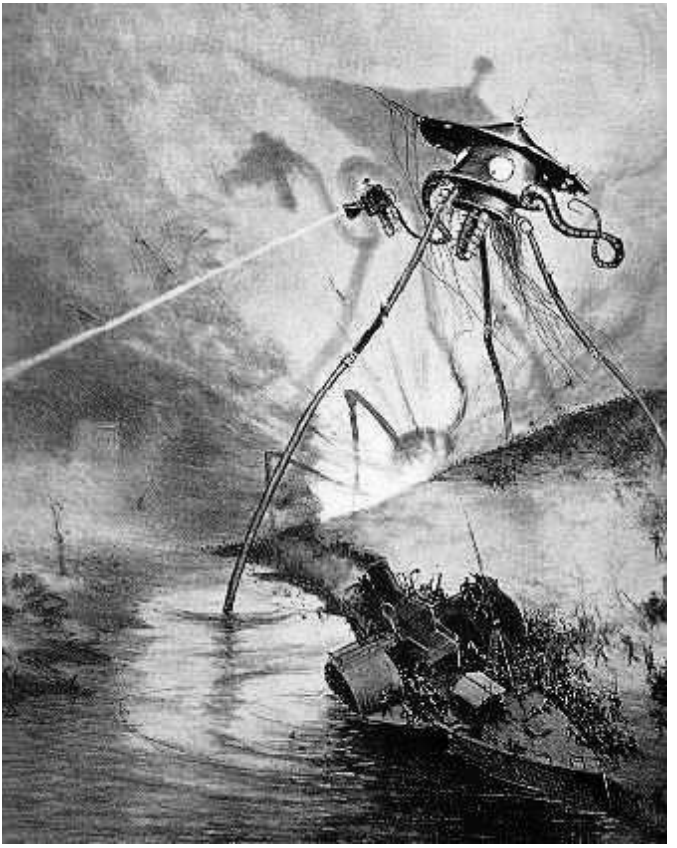
KEPLER

(Quoted in "*The Anatomy of Melancholy*")

CHAPTER ONE

THE EVE OF THE WAR

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter.



It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts

that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.

The planet Mars, I scarcely need remind the reader, revolves about the sun at a mean distance of 140,000,000 miles, and the light and heat it receives from the sun is barely half of that received by this world. It must be, if the nebular hypothesis has any truth, older than our world; and long before this earth ceased to be molten, life upon its surface must have begun its course. The fact that it is scarcely one seventh of the volume of the earth must have accelerated its cooling to the temperature at which life could begin. It has air and water and all that is necessary for the support of animated existence.

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

The secular cooling that must someday overtake our planet has already gone far indeed with our neighbour. Its physical condition is still largely a mystery, but we know now that even in its equatorial region the midday temperature barely approaches that of our coldest winter. Its air is much more

attenuated than ours, its oceans have shrunk until they cover but a third of its surface, and as its slow seasons change huge snowcaps gather and melt about either pole and periodically inundate its temperate zones. That last stage of exhaustion, which to us is still incredibly remote, has become a present-day problem for the inhabitants of Mars. The immediate pressure of necessity has brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts. And looking across space with instruments, and intelligences such as we have scarcely dreamed of, they see, at its nearest distance only 35,000,000 of miles sunward of them, a morning star of hope, our own warmer planet, green with vegetation and grey with water, with a cloudy atmosphere eloquent of fertility, with glimpses through its drifting cloud wisps of broad stretches of populous country and narrow, navy-crowded seas.

And we men, the creatures who inhabit this earth, must be to them at least as alien and lowly as are the monkeys and lemurs to us. The intellectual side of man already admits that life is an incessant struggle for existence, and it would seem that this too is the belief of the minds upon Mars. Their world is far gone in its cooling and this world is still crowded with life, but crowded only with what they regard as inferior animals. To carry warfare sunward is, indeed, their only escape from the destruction that, generation after generation, creeps upon them.

And before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its inferior races. The Tasmanians, in

spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?

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

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

The storm burst upon us six years ago now. As Mars approached opposition, Lavelle of Java set the wires of the astronomical exchange palpitating with the amazing intelligence of a huge outbreak of incandescent gas upon the planet. It had

occurred towards midnight of the twelfth; and the spectroscope, to which he had at once resorted, indicated a mass of flaming gas, chiefly hydrogen, moving with an enormous velocity towards this earth. This jet of fire had become invisible about a quarter past twelve. He compared it to a colossal puff of flame suddenly and violently squirted out of the planet, "as flaming gases rushed out of a gun."

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

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

vibrating with the activity of the clockwork that kept the planet in view.

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

Near it in the field, I remember, were three faint points of light, three telescopic stars infinitely remote, and all around it was the unfathomable darkness of empty space. You know how that blackness looks on a frosty starlight night. In a telescope it seems far profounder. And invisible to me because it was so remote and small, flying swiftly and steadily towards me across that incredible distance, drawing nearer every minute by so many thousands of miles, came the Thing they were sending us, the Thing that was to bring so much struggle and calamity and death to the earth. I never dreamed of it then as I watched; no one on earth dreamed of that unerring missile.

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

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

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

"The chances against anything manlike on Mars are a million to one," he said.

Hundreds of observers saw the flame that night and the night after about midnight, and again the night after; and so for ten nights, a flame each night. Why the shots ceased after the tenth no one on earth has attempted to explain. It may be the gases of the firing caused the Martians inconvenience. Dense clouds of smoke or dust, visible through a powerful telescope on earth as little grey, fluctuating patches, spread through the

clearness of the planet's atmosphere and obscured its more familiar features.

Even the daily papers woke up to the disturbances at last, and popular notes appeared here, there, and everywhere concerning the volcanoes upon Mars. The seriocomic periodical *Punch*, I remember, made a happy use of it in the political cartoon. And, all unsuspected, those missiles the Martians had fired at us drew earthward, rushing now at a pace of many miles a second through the empty gulf of space, hour by hour and day by day, nearer and nearer. It seems to me now almost incredibly wonderful that, with that swift fate hanging over us, men could go about their petty concerns as they did. I remember how jubilant Markham was at securing a new photograph of the planet for the illustrated paper he edited in those days. People in these latter times scarcely realise the abundance and enterprise of our nineteenth-century papers. For my own part, I was much occupied in learning to ride the bicycle, and busy upon a series of papers discussing the probable developments of moral ideas as civilisation progressed.

One night (the first missile then could scarcely have been 10,000,000 miles away) I went for a walk with my wife. It was starlight and I explained the Signs of the Zodiac to her, and pointed out Mars, a bright dot of light creeping zenithward, towards which so many telescopes were pointed. It was a warm night. Coming home, a party of excursionists from Chertsey or Isleworth passed us singing and playing music. There were lights in the upper windows of the houses as the people went to

bed. From the railway station in the distance came the sound of shunting trains, ringing and rumbling, softened almost into melody by the distance. My wife pointed out to me the brightness of the red, green, and yellow signal lights hanging in a framework against the sky. It seemed so safe and tranquil.