

FICTION IN H. G. WELLS, RUDYARD KIPLING
THIS NUMBER: MORGAN ROBERTSON, S. R. CROCKETT

THE COSMOPOLITAN

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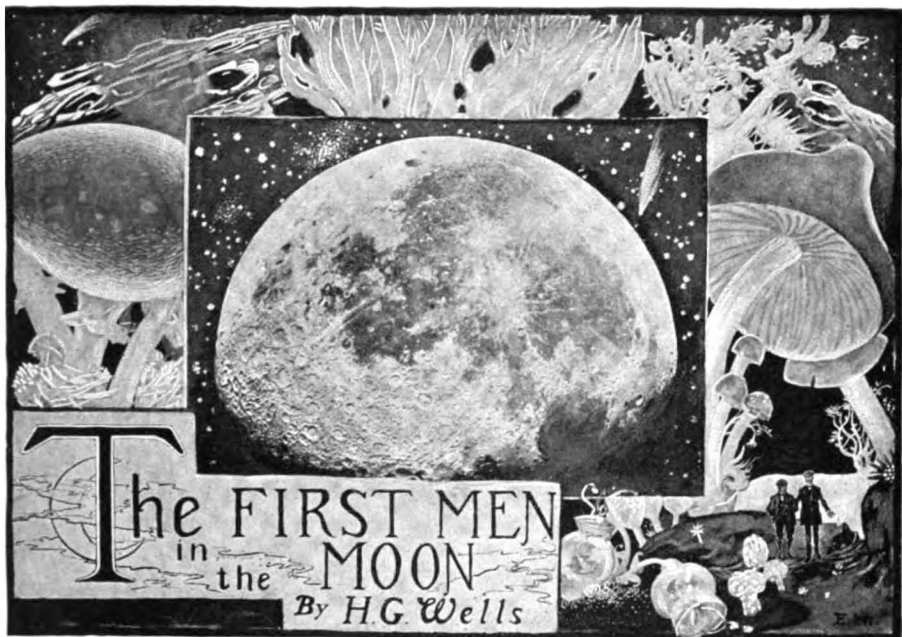
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Drawn by E. Herbig.

"MENIPPUS: Three thousand stadia from the earth to the moon. . . . Marvel not, my comrade, if I appear talking to you on superterrestrial and aerial topics. The long and short of the matter is that I am running over the order of a journey I have lately made."—*Lucian's Icaromenippus.*

I.

MR. BEDFORD MEETS MR. CAVOR AT LYMPNE.

AS I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy, it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident. It might, I admit, have been any one. I fell into these things at a time when I thought myself removed from the slightest possibility of disturbing experiences. I had gone to Lympne because I had imagined it the most uneventful place in the world. "Here, at any rate," said I, "I shall find peace and a chance to work!" And this narrative is the sequel.

I may perhaps mention here that very recently I had come an ugly cropper in certain business enterprises. Sitting now surrounded by all the circumstances of wealth, there is a luxury in admitting my extremity. It is scarcely necessary to go into the details of the speculations that landed me at Lympne. Nowadays even about business transactions there is a strong

spice of adventure. I took risks. In these things there is invariably a certain amount of give and take, and it fell to me finally to do the giving. Reluctantly enough. Even when I had got out of everything, one cantankerous creditor saw fit to be malignant. It seemed to me at last that there was nothing for it but to write a play, unless I wanted to drudge for my living as a clerk. I had always had an idea that I was equal to writing a play. I knew there is nothing a man can do outside legitimate business transactions that has such opulent possibilities, and I had got into the habit of regarding this unwritten drama as a convenient little reserve put by for a rainy day. That rainy day had come and so I set to work.

I soon discovered that writing a play was a longer business than I had supposed—at first I had reckoned ten days for it—and it was to have a pied-à-terre while it was in hand that I came to Lympne. I reckoned myself lucky in getting that little bungalow. I got it on a three years' agreement. I put in a few sticks of furniture, and while the play was in hand I did my own cooking. My cooking would have

shocked Mrs. Bond. I had a coffee-pot, a saucepan for eggs and one for potatoes, and a frying-pan for sausages and bacon. Such was the simple apparatus of my comfort. For the rest, I laid in an eighteen-gallon cask of beer on credit, and a trustful baker came each day. I have had worse times.

Certainly, if any one wants solitude, the place is Lympne. It is in the clay part of Kent, and my bungalow stood on the edge of an old sea-cliff and stared across the flats of Romney Marsh at the sea. In very wet weather the place is almost inaccessible, and I have heard that at times the postman used to traverse the more suctorial portions of his route with boards upon his feet. Outside the doors of the few cottages and houses that make up the present village, big birch besoms are stuck to wipe off the worst of the clay, which will give some idea of the texture of the district. I doubt if the place would be there at all if it were not a fading memory of things gone forever. It was the big port of England in Roman times, *Portus Lemanus*, and now the sea is four miles away. All down the steep hill are boulders and masses of Roman brickwork, and from it old Watling Street, still paved in places, starts like an arrow to the north. I used to stand on the hill and think of it all, the galleys and legions, the captives and officials, the women and traders, all the swarm and tumult that came clanking in and out of the harbor. And now just a few lumps of rubble on a grassy slope and a sheep or two—and me! And where the port had been were the levels of the marsh, sweeping round in a broad curve to distant Dungeness and dotted here and there with tree clumps and the church towers of old medieval towns that are following *Lemanus* now toward extinction.

That outlook on the marsh was indeed one of the finest views I have ever seen. I suppose Dungeness was fifteen miles away; it lay like a raft on the sea, and farther westward were the hills by Hastings under the setting sun. Sometimes they hung close and clear, sometimes they were faded and low, and often the drift of the weather took them clean out of sight. And all the nearer parts of the marsh were laced and lit by ditches and canals.

The window at which I worked looked

over the sky-line of this crest, and it was from this window that I first set eyes on Cavor. It was just as I was struggling with my scenario, holding down my mind to the sheer hard work of it, and so naturally enough he arrested my attention.

The sun had set, the sky was a vivid tranquillity of green and yellow, and against that he came out black, the oddest little figure.

He was a short, round-bodied, thin-legged little man, with a jerky quality in his motions; he wore a cricket cap, an overcoat, and cycling knickerbockers and stockings. He gesticulated with his hands and arms and jerked his head about and buzzed. He buzzed like something electric. You never heard such buzzing. And ever and again he cleared his throat with a most extraordinary noise.

There had been rain, and that spasmodic walk of his was enhanced by the extreme slipperiness of the footpath. Exactly as he came against the sun he stopped, pulled out a watch, hesitated. Then, with a sort of convulsive gesture, he turned and retreated with every manifestation of haste, no longer gesticulating, but going with ample strides that showed his feet—they were, I remember, grotesquely exaggerated in size by adhesive clay—to the best possible advantage.

This occurred on the first day of my sojourn, when my play-writing energy was at its height, and I regarded the incident simply as an annoying distraction—the waste of five minutes. I returned to my scenario. But when next evening the apparition was repeated with remarkable precision, and again the next evening, and indeed every evening when rain was not falling, concentration upon the scenario became a considerable effort. "Confound the man," said I; "one would think he was learning to be a marionette!" and for several evenings I cursed him pretty heartily.

Then my annoyance gave way to amazement and curiosity. Why on earth should a man do this thing? On the fourteenth evening I could stand it no longer, and so soon as he appeared I opened the French window, crossed the veranda, and directed myself to the point where he invariably stopped.

He had his watch out as I came up to him. He had a chubby, rubicund face, with reddish-brown eyes—previously I had seen him only against the light. "One moment, sir," said I, as he turned.

He stared. "One moment," he said, "certainly. Or if you wish to speak to me for longer, and it is not asking too much—your moment is up—would it trouble you to accompany me——?"

"Not in the least," said I, placing myself beside him.

"My habits are regular. My time for intercourse limited."

"This, I presume, is your time for exercise?"

"It is. I come here to enjoy the sunset."

"You never look at it."

"Never look at it?"

"No. I've watched you thirteen nights and not once have you looked at the sunset. Not once."

He knitted his brows like one who encounters a problem.

"Well, I enjoy the sunlight—the atmosphere. I go along this path, through that gate"—he jerked his head over his shoulder—"and round——"

"You don't. You never have been. It's all nonsense. There isn't a way. To-night, for instance——"

"Oh! to-night! Let me see. Ah! I just glanced at my watch, saw that I had already been out just three minutes over the precise half-hour, decided there was not time to go round, turned——"

"You always do."

He looked at me, reflected. "Perhaps I do—now I come to think of it. But what was it you wanted to speak to me about?"

"Why—*this*!"

"This?"

"Yes. Why do you do it? Every night you come making a noise——"

"Making a noise?"

"Like this." I imitated his buzzing noise.

He looked at me and it was evident that the buzzing awakened distaste. "Do I do that?" he asked.

"Every blessed evening."

He stopped dead. He regarded me gravely. "Can it be," he said, "that I have formed a Habit?"

"Well, it looks like it. Doesn't it?"

He pulled down his lower lip between finger and thumb. He regarded a puddle at his feet.

"My mind is much occupied," he said.

"And you want to know *why*? Well, sir, I can assure you that not only do I not know why I do these things, but I did not even know I did them. Come to think, it is just as you say; I never *have* been beyond that field. And these things annoy you?"

For some reason I was beginning to relent toward him. "Not *annoy*," I said.

"But—imagine yourself writing a play!"

"I couldn't."

"Well, anything that needs concentration."

"Ah," he said, "of course," and meditated. His expression became so eloquent of distress that I relented still more. After all, there is a touch of aggression in demanding of a man you don't know, why he hums on a public footpath.

"You see," he said, weakly, "it's a habit. I must stop it."

"But not if it puts you out. After all, I had no business. It's something of a liberty."

"Not at all, sir," he said, "not at all. I am greatly indebted to you. I should guard myself against these things. In future I will. Could I trouble you—once again?—that noise?"

"Something like this," I said—"Zuz-zoo, zuzzoo. But really, you know——"

"I am greatly obliged to you. In fact—I know—I am getting absurdly absent-minded. You are quite justified, sir—perfectly justified. Indeed, I am indebted to you. The thing shall end. And now, sir, I have already brought you farther than I should have done."

"I do hope my impertinence——"

"Not at all, sir, not at all."

We regarded each other for a moment. I raised my hat and wished him a good-evening. He responded convulsively, and so we went our ways.

At the stile I looked back at his receding figure. His bearing had changed remarkably; he seemed limp, shrunken. The contrast with his former gesticulating, zuzzooing self took me in some absurd way as pathetic. I watched him out of sight.

Then, wishing very heartily I had kept to my own business, I returned to my bungalow and my play.

The next evening I saw nothing of him, nor the next. But he was very much in my mind, and it had occurred to me that as a sentimental comic character he might serve a useful purpose in the development of my plot. The third day he called.

For a time I was puzzled to think what had brought him—he made indifferent conversation in the most formal way—then abruptly he came to business. He wanted to buy me out of my bungalow.

"You see," he said, "I don't blame you in the least, but you've destroyed a habit and it disorganizes my day. I've walked past here for years—years. No doubt I've hummed—you've made all that impossible!"

I suggested he might try some other direction.

"No. There is no other direction. This is the only one. I've inquired. And now every afternoon at four—I come to a dead wall."

"But, my dear sir, if the thing is so important to you——"

"It's vital! You see I'm—I'm an investigator—I am engaged in a scientific research. I live"—he paused and appeared to think—"just over there," he said, and suddenly pointed dangerously near my eye. "The house with white chimneys you see just over the trees. I am on the point of completing one of the most important demonstrations, I can assure you, one of *the most important* demonstrations that have ever been made. It requires constant thought, constant mental ease and activity. And the afternoon was my brightest time!—effervescing with new ideas—new points of view."

"But why not come by still?"

"It would be all different. I should be self-conscious. I should think of you at your play—watching me, irritated! No! I must have the bungalow."

I meditated. Naturally I wanted to think the matter over thoroughly before anything decisive was said. I am generally ready enough for business, but in the first place it was not my bungalow, and even if I sold it to him at a good price I might get squeezed about delivery if the current

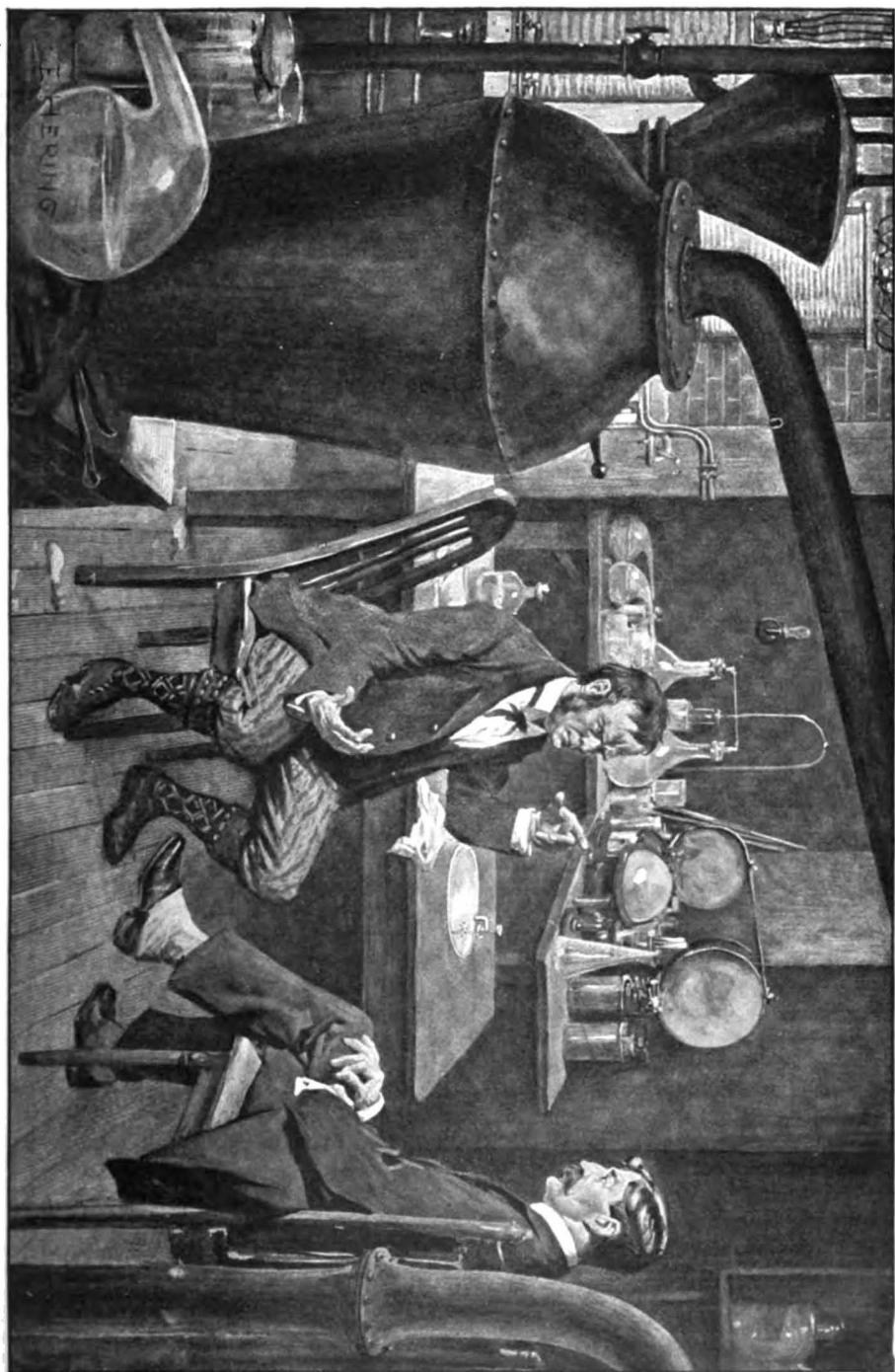
owner got wind of the transaction, and in the second I was, well—undischarged. Moreover, the possibility of his being in pursuit of some valuable invention also appealed to me as an opening. It occurred to me that I should like to know more of this research. I threw out feelers.

He was quite willing to supply information. Indeed, once he was fairly under way the conversation became a monologue. He talked like a man long pent up, who has had it over with himself again and again. He talked for nearly an hour, and I must confess I found it a pretty stiff bit of listening. During that first interview I gathered very little of the drift of his work. Half his words were technicalities entirely strange to me, and he illustrated one or two points with what he was pleased to call elementary mathematics, computing on an envelope with a copying-ink pencil, in a manner that made it hard even to seem to understand. "Yes," I said. "Yes. Go on!" Nevertheless, I made out enough to convince me that he was no mere crank playing at discoveries. Whatever it was, it was a thing with mechanical possibilities. He told me of a workshop he had, and of three assistants, originally jobbing carpenters, whom he had trained. Now, from the workshop to the patent-office is clearly only one step. He invited me to see these things. I accepted readily, and took care by a remark or so to underline my acceptance. The bungalow remained very conveniently in suspense.

At last he rose to depart, with an apology for the length of his call. Talking over his work was, he said, a pleasure enjoyed only too rarely. It was not often he found such an intelligent listener as myself.

"So much pettiness," he explained, "so much intrigue! And really when one has an idea—a novel, fertilizing, stealable idea——"

I am a man who believes in impulses. I made what was perhaps a rash, and certainly an impudent, proposition. "Why not," said I, "make this your new habit? In the place of the one I spoiled. At least, until we can settle about the bungalow. What you want is to turn over your work in your mind. That you have always done during your afternoon walk. Unfortunately that's over—you can't get things



“RADIANT ENERGY,” HE MADE ME UNDERSTAND, WAS ANYTHING LIKE LIGHT OR HEAT OR THOSE KONTIEN SAYS THERE WAS SO MUCH TALK ABOUT A YEAR OR SO AGO.”

back as they were. But why not come and talk about your work to me—use me as a sort of wall against which you may throw your thoughts and catch them again? It's certain I don't know enough to steal your ideas, and I know no scientific men."

I stopped. He was considering. Evidently the thing attracted him. "But I'm afraid I should bore you," he said.

"Oh, no; you've interested me immensely this afternoon."

"Of course, it *would* be a great help to me. Nothing clears up one's ideas so much as explaining them. Hitherto——"

"My dear sir, say no more."

"But really, can you spare the time?"

"There is no rest like change of occupation."

The affair was over. On my veranda steps he turned. "I am already greatly indebted to you," he said.

I made an interrogative noise.

"You have completely cured me of that ridiculous habit of humming," he explained.

I think I said I was glad to be of any service to him, and he turned away.

Immediately the train of thought that our conversation had suggested must have resumed its way. His arms began to wave in their former fashion. The faint echo of "zuzzoo" came back to me on the breeze.

Well—after all that was not my affair.

He came the next day, and again the next day after that, and delivered two lectures on physics to our mutual satisfaction. He talked with an air of being extremely lucid about the "ether" and "tubes of force" and "gravitational potential" and things like that, and I sat in my other folding-chair and said "Yes," "Go on," "I follow you," to keep him going. It was tremendously difficult stuff, but I do not think he ever suspected how much I did not understand him. Now and then things gleamed on me clearly for a space, only to vanish just when I thought I had hold of them. Sometimes my attention failed altogether, and I would give it up and sit and stare at him, wondering whether after all it would be better to use him as a central figure in a good farce and let all this other stuff slide. Then perhaps I would catch on again for a bit.

At the earliest opportunity I went to see his house. It was large and carelessly furnished. There were no servants other than his three assistants, and his dietary and private life were characterized by a philosophical simplicity. He was a water-drinker, a vegetarian, and all those logical, disciplinary things. But the sight of his equipment settled my doubts. It looked like business from cellar to attic—an amazing little place to find in an out-of-the-way village. The ground-floor rooms contained benches and apparatus, the bake-house and scullery boiler had developed into respectable furnaces, dynamos occupied the cellar, and there was a gasometer in the garden. He showed it to me with all the confiding zest of a man who has been living too much alone. His seclusion was overflowing now in an excess of confidence, and I had the good luck to be the recipient.

The three assistants were creditable specimens of the class of "handy men" from which they came—conscientious if unintelligent, strong, civil and willing. One, Spargus, who did the cooking and all the metal work, had been a sailor; a second, Gibbs, was a joiner; and the third was an ex-jobbing-gardener and now general assistant. They were the merest laborers; all the intelligent work was done by Cavor. Theirs was the darkest ignorance compared even with my muddled impression.

I am no scientific expert, and if I were to attempt to set forth in the highly scientific language of Mr. Cavor the aim to which his experiments tended, I am afraid I should confuse not only the reader but myself, and almost certainly I should make some blunder that would bring upon me the mockery of every up-to-date student of mathematical physics in the country. The best thing I can do, therefore, is, I think, to give my impressions in my own inexact language without any attempt to wear a garment of knowledge to which I have no claim.

The object of Mr. Cavor's search was a substance that should be "opaque"—he used some other word I have forgotten, but "opaque" conveys the idea—to "all forms of radiant energy." "Radiant energy," he made me understand, was anything like

light or heat or those Röntgen rays there was so much talk about a year or so ago, or the electric waves of Marconi, or gravitation. All these things, he said, *radiate* out from centers and act on bodies at a distance, whence comes the term "radiant energy." Now, almost all substances are opaque to some form or other of radiant energy. Glass, for example, is transparent to light, but much less so to heat, so that it is useful as a fire-screen; and alum is transparent to light but blocks heat completely. A solution of iodine in carbon bisulphide, on the other hand, completely blocks light, but is quite transparent to heat. It will hide a fire from you, but permit all its warmth to reach you. Metals are not only opaque to light and heat, but also to electrical energy, which passes through both iodine solution and glass almost as though they were not interposed.

Now, all known substances are "transparent" to gravitation. You can use screens of various sorts to cut off the light or heat or electrical influence of the sun, or the warmth of the earth, from anything; you can screen things by metal sheets from Marconi's rays; but nothing will cut off the gravitational attraction of the sun or the gravitational attraction of the earth. Yet why there should be nothing is hard to say. Cavor did not see why such a substance should not exist, and certainly I could not tell him. I had never thought of such a possibility before. He showed me by calculations on paper—which Lord Kelvin, no doubt, or Professor Lodge or Professor Karl Pearson, or any of those great scientific people, might have understood, but which simply reduced me to a hopeless muddle—that not only was such a substance possible, but that it must satisfy certain conditions. It was an amazing piece of reasoning. Much as it amazed and exercised me at the time, it would be impossible to reproduce it here. "Yes," I said to it all, "yes. Go on!" Suffice it for this story that he believed he might be able to manufacture this possible substance opaque to gravitation out of a complicated alloy of metals and something new—a new element, I fancy—called, I believe, *helium*, which was sent to him from London in sealed stone jars. Doubt has been thrown upon this detail, but I am

almost certain it was *helium* he had sent him in sealed stone jars. It was certainly something very gaseous and thin.

If only I had taken notes!

But then how was I to foresee the necessity of taking notes!

Any one with the merest germ of an imagination will understand the extraordinary possibilities of such a substance, and will sympathize a little with the emotion I felt as this understanding emerged from the haze of abstruse phrases in which Cavor expressed himself. Comic relief in a play indeed! It was some time before I would believe that I had interpreted him aright, and I was very careful not to ask questions that would have enabled him to gage the profundity of misunderstanding into which he dropped his daily exposition. But no one reading the story of it here will sympathize fully, because from my barren narrative it will be impossible to gather the strength of my conviction that this astonishing substance was positively going to be made.

I do not recall that I gave my play an hour's consecutive work at any time after my visit to his house. My imagination had other things to do. There seemed no limit to the possibilities of the stuff. Whichever way I tried, I came on miracles and revolutions. For example, if one wanted to lift a weight, however enormous, one had only to get a sheet of this substance beneath it and one might lift it with a straw. My first natural impulse was to apply this principle to guns and ironclads and all the material and methods of war, and from that to shipping, locomotion, building, every conceivable form of human industry. The chance that had brought me into the very birth-chamber of this new time—it was an epoch, no less—was one of those chances that come once in a thousand years. The thing unrolled, it expanded and expanded. I saw a parent company and daughter companies, applications to right of us, applications to left, rings and trusts, privileges and concessions, until one vast, stupendous Cavorite company ran and ruled the world. And I was in it!

I took my line straight away. I knew I was staking everything, but I jumped there and then.

"We're on absolutely the biggest thing

that has ever been invented," I said, and put the accent on "we." "If you want to keep me out of this, you'll have to do it with a gun. I'm coming down to be your fourth laborer to-morrow."

He seemed surprised at my enthusiasm, but not a bit suspicious or hostile. Rather he was self-depreciatory.

He looked at me doubtfully. "But do you really think——?" he said. "And your play! How about that play?"

"It's vanished!" I cried. "My dear sir, don't you see what you've got? Don't you see what you're going to do?"

And positively he didn't! At first I could not believe it. He had not had the beginning of the inkling of an idea! This astonishing little man had been working on purely theoretical grounds the whole time! When he said it was "the most important" research the world had ever seen, he simply meant it squared up so many theories, settled so much that was in doubt; he had troubled no more about the application of the stuff he was going to turn out than if he had been a machine that makes guns. This was a possible substance, and he was going to make it! *V'la tout*, as the Frenchman says.

Beyond that he was childish! If he made it, it would go down to posterity as Cavorite or Cavorine, and he would be made an F.R.S. and his portrait given away as a scientific worthy with "Nature," and things like that. And that was all he saw! He would have dropped this bombshell into the world as though he had discovered a new species of gnat, if it had not happened that I had come along. And there it would have lain and fizzled!

When I realized this, it was I did the talking and Cavor who said "Go on!" I jumped up. I paced the room, gesticulating like a boy of twenty. I tried to make him understand his duties and responsibilities in the matter—*our* duties and responsibilities in the matter. I assured him we might make wealth enough to work any sort of social revolution we fancied; we might own and order the whole world. I told him of companies and patents and the case for secret processes. All these things seemed to take him much as his mathematics had taken me. A look of perplexity came into his ruddy little face. He

stammered something about indifference to wealth, but I brushed all that aside. He had got to be rich and it was no good his stammering. I gave him to understand the sort of man I was, and that I had had very considerable business experience. I did not tell him I was an undischarged bankrupt at the time, because that was temporary, but I think I reconciled my evident poverty with my financial claims. And quite insensibly, in the way such projects grow, the understanding of a Cavorite monopoly grew up between us. He was to make the stuff and I was to make the boom.

I stuck like a leech to the "we"—"you" and "I" didn't exist for me.

His idea was that the profits I spoke of might go to endow research, but that of course was a matter we had to settle later. The great point, as I insisted, was to get the thing done.

"Here is a substance," I cried, "no home, no factory, no fortress, no ship, can dare to be without—more universally applicable even than a patent medicine! There isn't a solitary aspect of it, not one of its ten thousand possible uses, that will not make us rich, Cavor, beyond the dreams of avarice!"

"No!" he said. "I begin to see. It's extraordinary how one gets new points of view by talking over things!"

"And as it happens, you have just talked to the right man!"

"I suppose no one," he said, "is absolutely *arere* to enormous wealth. Of course, there is one thing——"

He paused. I stood still.

"It is just possible, you know, that we may not be able to make it after all!"

II.

THE FIRST MAKING OF CAVORITE.

But on the 14th of October, 1898, this incredible substance was made.

Oddly enough, it was made at last by accident, when Mr. Cavor least expected it. He had fused together a number of metals and certain other things—I wish I knew the particulars now—and he intended to leave the mixture a week and then allow it to cool slowly. Unless he had miscalculated, the last stage in the combination would occur when the stuff sank

to a temperature of sixty degrees Fahrenheit. But it chanced that, unknown to Cavor, dissension had arisen among the men about the furnace-tending. Gibbs, who had previously seen to this, had suddenly attempted to shift it to the man who had been a gardener, on the score that coal was soil, being dug, and therefore could not possibly fall within the province of a joiner; the man who had been a jobbing gardener alleged, however, that coal was a metallic or ore-like substance, let alone that he was cook. But Spargus insisted on Gibbs doing the coaling, seeing that he was a joiner and that coal is notoriously fossil wood. Consequently Gibbs ceased to replenish the furnace and no one else did so, and Cavor was too much immersed in certain interesting problems concerning a Cavorite flying-machine (neglecting the resistance of the air and one or two other points) to perceive that anything was wrong. And the premature birth of his invention took place just as he was coming across the field to my bungalow for our afternoon talk and tea.

I remember the occasion with extreme vividness. The water was boiling and everything was prepared and the sound of his "zuzzoo" had brought me out upon the veranda. His active little figure was black against the autumnal sunset, and to the right the chimneys of his house just rose above a gloriously tinted group of trees. Remoter rose the Wealden Hills, faint and blue, while to the left the hazy marsh spread out spacious and serene. And then——!

The chimneys jerked heavenward, smashing into a string of bricks as they rose, and the roof and a miscellany of furniture followed. Then overtaking them came a huge white flame. The trees about the building awayed and whirled and tore themselves to pieces that sprang toward the flame. My ears were smitten with a clap of thunder that left me deaf on one side for life, and all about me windows smashed unheeded.

I took three steps from the veranda toward Cavor's house, and even as I did so came the wind.

Instantly my coat-tails were over my head and I was progressing in great leaps and bounds, and quite against my will,

toward him. In the same moment the discoverer was seized, whirled about, and shot through the screaming air. I saw one of my chimney-pots hit the ground within six yards of me, leap a score of feet, and so hurry in great strides toward the focus of the disturbance. Cavor, kicking and flapping, came down again, rolled over and over on the ground for a space, struggled up and was lifted and borne forward at an enormous velocity, vanishing at last among the laboring, lashing trees that writhed about his house.

A mass of smoke and ashes and a square of bluish, shining substance rushed up toward the zenith. A large fragment of fencing came sailing past me, dropped edgewise, hit the ground and fell flat, and then the worst was over. The aerial commotion fell swiftly until it was a mere strong gale, and I became once more aware that I had breath and feet. By leaning back against the wind I managed to stop, and could collect such wits as still remained to me.

In that instant the whole face of the world had changed. The tranquil sunset had vanished, the sky was dark with scurrying clouds, everything was flattened and swaying with the gale. I glanced back to see if my bungalow was still, in a general way, standing, then staggered forward toward the trees among which Cavor had vanished and through whose tall and leaf-denuded branches shone the flames of his burning house.

I entered the copse, dashing from one tree to another and clinging to them, and for a space I sought him in vain. Then, amidst a heap of smashed branches and fencing that had banked itself against a portion of his garden wall, I perceived something stir. I made a run for this, but before I reached it a brown object separated itself, rose on two muddy legs and protruded two drooping, bleeding hands. Some tattered ends of garments fluttered out from its middle portion and streamed before the wind.

For a moment I did not recognize this earthy lump, and then I saw that it was Cavor, caked in the mud in which he had rolled. He leaned against the wind, rubbing the dirt from his eyes and mouth.

He extended a muddy lump of hand,

and staggered a pace toward me. His face worked with emotion; little lumps of mud kept falling from it. He looked as damaged and pitiful as any living creature I have ever seen, and his remark, therefore, amazed me exceeding. "Gratulate me," he gasped; "gratulate me!"

"Congratulate you!" said I. "Good heavens! What for?"

"I've done it."

"You *have*. What on earth caused that explosion?"

A gust of wind blew his words away. I understood him to say that it wasn't an explosion at all. The wind hurled me into collision with him, and we stood clinging to one another.

"Try and get back to my bungalow," I bawled in his ear. He did not hear me, and shouted something about "three martyrs—science," and also something about "not much good." At the time he labored under the impression that his three attendants had perished in the whirlwind. Happily, this was incorrect. Directly he had left for my bungalow, they had gone off to the public house in Lympne, to discuss the question of the furnaces over some trivial refreshment.

I repeated my suggestion of getting back to my bungalow, and this time he understood. We clung arm in arm and started, and managed at last to reach the shelter of as much roof as was left to me. For a space we sat in arm-chairs and panted. All the windows were broken and the lighter articles of furniture were in great disorder, but no irrevocable damage was done. Happily, the kitchen door had stood the pressure upon it, so that all my crockery and cooking materials had survived. The oil-stove was still burning and I put on the water to boil again for tea. And that prepared, I could turn on Cavor for his explanation.

"Quite correct," he insisted; "quite correct. I've done it, and it's all right."

"But——" I protested. "All right! Why, there can't be a rick standing, or a fence or a thatched roof undamaged for twenty miles round."

"It's all right—*really*. I didn't, of course, foresee this little upset. My mind was occupied with another problem——"

"My dear sir," I cried, "don't you see

you've done thousands of pounds' worth of damage?"

"There, I throw myself on your discretion. I'm not a practical man, of course, but don't you think they will regard it as a cyclone——"

"But the explosion——"

"It was *not* an explosion. It's perfectly simple. Only, as I say, I'm apt to overlook these little things. It's that zuzzoo business on a larger scale. Inadvertently I made this substance of mine, this Cavorite, in a thin wide sheet."

He paused. "You are quite clear that the stuff is opaque to gravitation, that it cuts off things from gravitating toward each other?"

"Yes," said I. "Yes?"

"Well, so soon as it reached a temperature of sixty degrees Fahrenheit and the process of its manufacture was complete, the air above it, the portions of roof and ceiling and floor above it, ceased to have weight. I suppose you know—everybody knows nowadays—that, as a usual thing, the air *has* weight, that it presses on everything at the surface of the earth, presses in all directions, with a pressure of fourteen pounds to the inch. You see, over our Cavorite this ceased to be so, the air there ceased to exert pressure, and the air round it, and not over the Cavorite, was exerting a pressure of fourteen pounds to the square inch upon this suddenly weightless air. Ah! you begin to see! The air all about the Cavorite crushed in upon the air above it with irresistible force. The air above the Cavorite was forced upward violently, the air that rushed in to replace it immediately lost weight, ceased to exert any pressure, followed suit, blew the ceiling through and the roof off.

"You perceive," he said, "it formed a sort of atmospheric fountain, a kind of chimney in the atmosphere. And if the Cavorite itself hadn't been loose and so got sucked up the chimney, does it occur to you what would have happened?"

I thought. "I suppose," I said, "the air would be rushing up and up over that infernal piece of stuff now."

"Precisely," he said. "A huge fountain!"

"Spouting into space! Good heavens! Why, it would have squirted all the

atmosphere of the earth away! It would have robbed the world of air! It would have been the death of all mankind! That little lump of stuff!"

"Not exactly into space," said Cavor, "but as good as. It would have whipped the air off the world as one peels a banana, and flung it thousands of miles. It would have dropped back again, of course, but on an asphyxiated world! From our point of view, very little better than if it never came back!"

I stared. As yet I was too amazed to realize how all my expectations had been upset. "What do you mean to do now?" I asked.

"In the first place, if I may borrow a garden trowel I will remove some of this earth with which I am incased, and then, if I may avail myself of your domestic conveniences, I will have a bath. This done, we will converse more at leisure. It will be wise, I think"—he laid a muddy hand on my arm—"if nothing were said of this affair beyond ourselves. I know I have caused great damage—probably even dwelling-houses may be ruined here and there upon the countryside. But on the other hand, I cannot possibly pay for the damage I have done, and if the real cause of this is published it will lead only to heartburning and obstruction of my work. I cannot add the burden of practical considerations to my theorizing. Later on, when you have come in with your practical mind, and Cavorite is floated—floated is the word, isn't it?—and it has realized all you anticipate for it, we may set matters right with people. But not now—not now. If no other explanation is offered, people, in the present unsatisfactory state of meteorological science, will ascribe all this to a cyclone; there might be a public subscription, and as my house has collapsed and been burnt I should, in that case, receive a considerable share in the compensation, which would be extremely helpful to the prosecution of our researches. But if it is known that *I* caused this, there will be no public subscription, and everybody will be put out. Practically, I shall never get a chance of working in peace again. My three assistants may or may not have perished. That is a detail. If they have, it is no great loss; they were

more zealous than able, and this premature event must be largely due to their joint neglect of the furnace. If they have not perished, I doubt if they have the intelligence to explain the affair. They will accept the cyclone story. And if, during the temporary unfitness of my house for occupation, I may lodge in one of the unoccupied rooms of this bungalow of yours——"

He paused and regarded me.

A man of such possibilities, I reflected, is no ordinary guest to entertain.

"Perhaps," said I, rising to my feet, "we had better begin by looking for a trowel," and I led the way to the scattered vestiges of the greenhouse.

And while he was having his bath I considered the entire question alone. It was clear there were drawbacks to Mr. Cavor's society I had not foreseen. The absent-mindedness that had just escaped depopulating the terrestrial globe might at any moment result in other grave inconvenience. On the other hand, I was young, my affairs were in a mess, and I was in just the mood for reckless adventure, with a chance of something good at the end of it. I had quite settled in my mind that I was to have half, at least, in that aspect of the affair. Fortunately I held my bungalow, as I have already explained, on a three years' agreement, without being responsible for repairs, and my furniture, such as there was of it, had been hastily purchased, was unpaid for, insured, and altogether devoid of associations. In the end I decided to keep on with him.

Certainly the aspect of things had changed very greatly. I no longer doubted at all the enormous possibilities of the substance.

We set to work at once to reconstruct his laboratory and proceed with our experiments. Cavor talked more on my level than he had ever done before, when it came to the question of how we should make the stuff next.

Even with my aid we found some little difficulty, and meanwhile we kept at work restoring the laboratory. There was plenty to do, before it was absolutely necessary to decide upon the precise form and method of our second attempt. Our only hitch was the strike of the laborers, who ob-

jected to my activity as a foreman. But that we compromised after two days' delay.

III.

THE BUILDING OF THE SPHERE.

I remember the occasion very distinctly when Cavor thought of the sphere. I fancy now that he must have had intimations of it before, but at the time, it seemed to come to him in a rush. We were returning to the bungalow for tea, and on the way he fell humming. Suddenly he shouted, "That's it!"

"What's it?"

"Space—anywhere! The moon!"

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Why—it must be a sphere! That's what I mean!"

I saw I was out of it, and for a time I let him talk in his own fashion. I hadn't the ghost of an idea, then, of his drift. But after he had taken tea, he made it clear.

"It's like this," he said. "Last time, I ran this stuff that cuts things off from gravitation into a flat tank with an overlap that held it down. And directly it had cooled and the manufacture was completed, all that uproar happened, nothing above it weighed anything, the air went squirting up, the house squirted up, and if the stuff itself hadn't squirted up, too, I don't know what would have happened! Suppose the substance is loose and quite free to go up?"

"It will go up at once!"

"Exactly. With no more disturbance than firing a big gun."

"But what good will that do?"

"I'm going up with it!"

I put down my tea-cup and stared.

"Imagine a sphere," he explained, "large enough to hold two people and their luggage. It will be made of steel, lined with thick glass; it will contain a proper store of solidified air, concentrated food, water, distilling apparatus and so forth, and enameled, as it were, on the outer steel with——"

"Cavorite?"

"Yes."

"But how will you get inside?"

"That's perfectly easy. An air-tight manhole is all that is needed. That, of course, will have to be a little complicated; there will have to be a valve, so

that things may be thrown out, if necessary, without much loss of air."

"Like Jules Verne's thing in 'A Trip to the Moon'?"

But Cavor was not a reader of fiction.

"I begin to see," I said, slowly. "And you could get in and screw yourself up while the Cavorite was warm, and as soon as it cooled it would become impervious to gravitation, and off you would fly——"

"At a tangent."

"You would go off in a straight line——" I stopped abruptly. "What is to prevent the thing traveling in a straight line into space forever?" I asked. "You're not safe to get anywhere, and if you do—how will you get back?"

"I've thought of that," said Cavor.

"The inner glass sphere can be air-tight and except for the manhole, continuous, and the steel sphere can be made in sections, each section capable of rolling up after the fashion of a roller blind. These can easily be worked by springs, released and checked by electricity conveyed by platinum wires fused through the glass. All that is merely a question of detail. So you see that except for the thickness of the blind rollers, the Cavorite exterior of the sphere will consist of windows, or blinds, whichever you like to call them. Well, when all these windows or blinds are shut, no light, no heat, no gravitation, no radiant energy of any sort, will get at the inside of the sphere; it will fly on through space in a straight line, as you say. But open a window—imagine one of the windows open! Then at once any heavy body that chances to be in that direction will attract us——"

"Oh, I see," I said.

"Practically we shall be able to tack about in space just as we wish. Get attracted by this and that."

"That's clear enough. Only I don't quite see what we shall do it for!"

"Surely! For example; one might go to the moon."

"And when one got there! What would you find?"

"We should see——! Oh! Consider the new knowledge!"

"Is there air there?"

"There may be."

I shook my head. "I don't like this

new development; it's not practical. I'd much rather try some of the other things first."

"They're out of the question—because of the air difficulty."

"Why not apply that idea of spring blinds—Cavorite blinds in strong steel cases—to lifting weights?"

"It wouldn't work," he insisted. "After all, this is not so much worse, if at all, than a Polar expedition. Men go on Polar expeditions."

"Not business men. It's all very well for you, but unless I'm to be a poor devil all the rest of my days, I shall have to fly round on earth for the next few years."

"Call it prospecting."

"You'll have to call it that." No! I did not like it. All my plans of companies and flotations crumbled into dust. Jumping off the world did not appeal to me; jumping on it was much more to my taste.

"I have no doubt there will be minerals," said Cavor.

"For example?"

"Oh! sulphur, ores, gold perhaps, possibly new elements."

"Cost of carriage," I said; "you know you're not a practical man. The moon's a quarter of a million miles away."

"It seems to me it wouldn't cost much to cart any weight anywhere if you packed it in a Cavorite case."

"Delivered free on head of purchaser, eh?" My imagination was recovering.

"It isn't as if we were confined to the moon. There's Mars—clear atmosphere, novel surroundings, exhilarating sense of lightness. It might be pleasant to go there."

"Is there air on Mars?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Seems as though you might run it as a sanitarium. By the way, how far is Mars?"

"Two hundred million miles at present," said Cavor, airily; "and you go close by the sun."

My imagination was picking itself up again. "After all," I said, "there's something in these things. There's travel —"

Extraordinary possibilities came rushing into my mind. I saw as in a vision the whole solar system threaded with Cavorite liners and spheres de luxe. "Rights of

preemption" came floating into my head—planetary rights of preemption. I recalled the old Spanish monopoly in American gold. It wasn't as though it was just this planet or that—it was all of them. I stared at Cavor's rubicund face and suddenly my imagination was leaping and dancing. I stood up, I walked up and down; my tongue was loosened.

"I'm beginning to take it in," I said, "I'm beginning to take it in." The transition from doubt to enthusiasm seemed to take scarcely any time at all. "But this is tremendous!" I cried; "this is Imperial! I haven't been dreaming of this sort of thing."

Once the chill of my opposition was removed, his own pent-up excitement had play. He too got up and paced. He too gesticulated and shouted. We behaved like men inspired. We were men inspired.

"We'll settle all that!" he said, in answer to some incidental difficulty that had pulled me up. "We'll soon settle all that. We'll start the drawings for moldings this very night."

"We'll start them now," I responded, and we hurried off to the laboratory to begin upon this work forthwith.

I was like a child in wonderland all that night. The dawn found us both still at work; we kept our electric light going heedless of the day. I remember now exactly how those drawings looked—I shaded and tinted while Cavor drew—smudged and haste-marked they were in every line, but wonderfully correct. We got out the orders for the steel blinds and frames we needed from that night's work, and the glass sphere was designed within a week. We gave up our afternoon conversations, and our old routine altogether. We worked, and we slept and ate when we could work no longer for hunger and fatigue. Our enthusiasm infected even our three men, though they had no idea what the sphere was for. Through those days the man Gibbs gave up walking and went everywhere, even across the room, at a sort of fussy run.

And it grew, the sphere. December passed, January—I spent a day with a broom sweeping a path through the snow from bungalow to laboratory—February, March. By the end of March the comple-

tion was in sight. In January had come a team of horses, a huge packing-case; we had our thick glass sphere now ready and in position, under the crane we had rigged to sling it into the steel shell. All the bars and blinds of the steel shell—it was not really a spherical shell, but polyhedral, with a roller-blind to each facet—had arrived by February, and the lower half was bolted together. The Cavorite was half made by March, the metallic paste had gone through two of the stages in its manufacture, and we had plastered quite half of it on to the steel bars and blinds. It was astonishing how closely we kept to the lines of Cavor's first inspiration in working out the scheme. When the bolting together of the sphere was finished, he proposed to remove the rough roof of the temporary laboratory in which the work was done and build a furnace about it. So the last stage of Cavorite-making, in which the paste is heated to a dull-red glow in a steam of helium, would be accomplished when it was already on the sphere.

And then we had to discuss and decide what provisions we were to take—compressed foods, concentrated essences, steel cylinders containing reserve oxygen, an arrangement for removing carbonic acid and waste from the air and restoring oxygen by means of sodium peroxide, water condensers, and so forth. I remember the little heap they made in the corner, tins and rolls and boxes—convincingly matter-of-fact. It was a strenuous time, with little chance of thinking. But one day, an odd mood came over me. I had been bricking up the furnace all the morning, and I sat down by these possessions, dead beat. Everything seemed dull and incredible.

"But look here, Cavor," I said. "After all! What's it all for?"

He smiled. "The thing now is to go."

"The moon," I reflected. "But what do you expect? I thought the moon was a dead world."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you expect?"

"We're going to see."

"Are we?" I said, and stared before me.

"You are tired," he remarked. "You'd better take a walk this afternoon."

"No," I said, obstinately; "I'm going to finish this brickwork."

And I did, and insured myself a night of insomnia.

I don't think I have ever had such a night. I had some bad times before my business collapse, but the very worst of those was sweet slumber compared with this infinity of aching wakefulness.

I do not remember thinking at all before that night of the risks we were running. Now they came like that army of specters that once beleaguered Prague, and camped around me. The strangeness of what we were about to do, the unearthliness of it, overwhelmed me. I was like a man awakened out of pleasant dreams to the most horrible surroundings. I lay, eyes wide open, and the sphere seemed to get more flimsy and feeble, and Cavor more unreal and fantastic, and the whole enterprise madder and madder, every moment.

I got out of bed and wandered about. I sat at the window and stared at the immensity of space. Between the stars was the void, the unfathomable darkness——! I tried to recall the fragmentary knowledge of astronomy I had gained in my irregular reading, but it was all too vague to furnish any idea of the things we might expect. At last I got back to bed and snatched some moments of sleep, moments of nightmare rather, in which I fell and fell and fell, forevermore, into the abyss of the sky. I astonished Cavor at breakfast. I told him, shortly, "I'm not coming with you in the sphere."

I met all his protests with a sullen persistence. "The thing's too mad," I said, "and I won't come."

I would not go with him to the laboratory. I fretted about my bungalow for a time, and then took hat and stick and set off alone, I knew not whither. It chanced to be a glorious morning; a warm wind and deep-blue sky, the first green of spring abroad and multitudes of birds singing. I lunched on beef and beer in a little public house near Elham, and started the landlord by remarking, apropos of the weather, "A man who leaves the world when days of this sort are about is a fool!"

"That's what I says when I heerd on it!" said the landlord, and I found that, for one poor soul at least, this world had

proved excessive and there had been a throat-cutting. I went on with a new twist to my thoughts.

In the afternoon I had a pleasant sleep in a sunny place, and went on my way refreshed.

I came to a comfortable-looking inn near Canterbury. It was bright with creepers, and the landlady was a clean old woman and took my eye. I found I had just enough money to pay for my lodging with her. I decided to stop the night there. She was a talkative body, and among many other particulars I learned she had never been to London. "Canterbury's as far as ever I been," she said. "I'm not one of your gadabout sort."

"How would you like to take a trip to the moon?" I cried.

"I never did hold with them balloons," she said, evidently under the impression that this was a common excursion enough. "I wouldn't go up in one—not for ever so."

This struck me as being funny. After I had supped I sat on a bench by the door of the inn and gossiped with two laborers about brickmaking and motor-cars and the cricket of last year. And in the sky a faint new crescent, blue and vague as a distant Alp, sank westward over the sun. The next day I returned to Cavor. "I am coming," I said. "I've been a little out of order—that's all."

That was the only time I felt any serious doubt of our enterprise. Nerves purely! After that I worked a little more carefully and took a trudge for an hour every day. And at last, save for the heating in the furnace, our labors were at an end.

IV.

INSIDE THE SPHERE.

"Go on," said Cavor, as I sat across the edge of the manhole and looked down into the black interior of the sphere. We two were alone. It was evening, the sun had set and the stillness of the twilight was upon everything.

I drew my other leg inside and slid down the smooth glass to the bottom of the sphere; then turned to take the cans of food and other impedimenta from Cavor. The interior was warm, the thermometer

stood at eighty, and as we should lose little or none of this by radiation, we were dressed in slippers and thin flannels. We had, however, a bundle of thick woollen clothing and several heavy blankets to guard against mischance. By Cavor's direction, I placed the packages, the cylinders of oxygen, and so forth, loosely about my feet, and soon we had everything in. He walked about the roofless shed for a time, seeking anything we had overlooked, and then crawled in after me.

I noted something in his hand.

"What have you there?" I asked.

"Haven't you brought anything to read?"

"Good Lord! No!"

"I forgot to tell you. There are uncertainties—The voyage may last—We may be weeks!"

"But——"

"We shall be floating in this sphere with absolutely no occupation."

"I wish I'd known——"

He peered out of the manhole. "Look!" he said. "There's something there!"

"Is there time?"

"We shall be an hour."

I looked out. It was an old number of "Tit-bits," that one of the men must have brought. Farther away in the corner I saw a torn "Lloyds' News." I scrambled back into the sphere with these things. "What have you got?" I said.

I took the book from his hand and read, "The Works of William Shakespeare."

He colored slightly. "My education has been so purely scientific——" he said, apologetically.

"Never read him?"

"Never."

"You're in for a treat," I said. It's the sort of thing one must say, though as a matter of fact I never read Shakespeare myself—much. I doubt if many people have.

I assisted him to screw in the glass cover of the manhole, and then he pressed a stud to close the corresponding blind in the outer case. The little oblong of twilight vanished. We were in darkness.

For a time neither of us spoke. Although our case would not be impervious to sound, everything was very still. I perceived there was nothing to grip when

the shock of our start should come, and I realized that I should be uncomfortable for want of a chair.

"Why have we no chairs?" I asked.

"I've settled all that," said Cavor.

"We shan't need them."

"Why not?"

"You will see," he said, in the tone of a man who refuses to talk.

I became silent. Suddenly it had come to me, clear and vivid, that I was a fool to be inside that sphere. Even now, I asked myself, is it too late to withdraw? The world outside the sphere, I knew, would be cold and inhospitable enough to me—for weeks I had been living on subsidies from Cavor—but after all, would it be as cold as the infinite zero, as inhospitable as empty space? If it had not been for the appearance of cowardice, I believe that, even then, I should have made him let me out. But I hesitated on that score and hesitated, and grew fretful and angry, and the time passed.

There came a little jerk, a noise like champagne being uncorked in another room, and a faint whistling sound. For just one instant I had a sense of enormous tension, a transient conviction that my feet were pressing downward with a force of countless tons. It lasted for an infinitesimal time.

But it stirred me to action. "Cavor!" I said into the darkness, "my nerve's in rags. I don't think——"

I stopped. He made no answer.

"Confound it!" I cried; "I'm a fool! What business have I here? I'm not coming, Cavor. The thing's too risky. I'm getting out."

"You can't," he said.

"Can't! We'll soon see about that!"

He made no answer for ten seconds.

"It's too late for us to quarrel now, Bedford," he said. "That little jerk was the start. Already we are flying as swiftly as a bullet up into the gulf of space."

"I——" I said, and then it didn't seem to matter what happened. For a time I was, as it were, stunned. I had nothing to say. It was just as if I had never heard of this idea of leaving the world before. Then I perceived an unaccountable change in my bodily sensations. It was a feeling

of lightness, of unreality. I heard a click, and a little glow-lamp came into being.

I saw Cavor's face, as white as I felt my own to be. We regarded one another in silence. The transparent blackness of the glass behind him made him seem as though he floated in a void.

"Well, we're committed," I said, at last.

"Yes," he said, "we're committed."

"Don't move," he exclaimed, at some suggestion of a gesture. "Let your muscles keep quite lax—as if you were in bed. We are in a little universe of our own. Look at those things!"

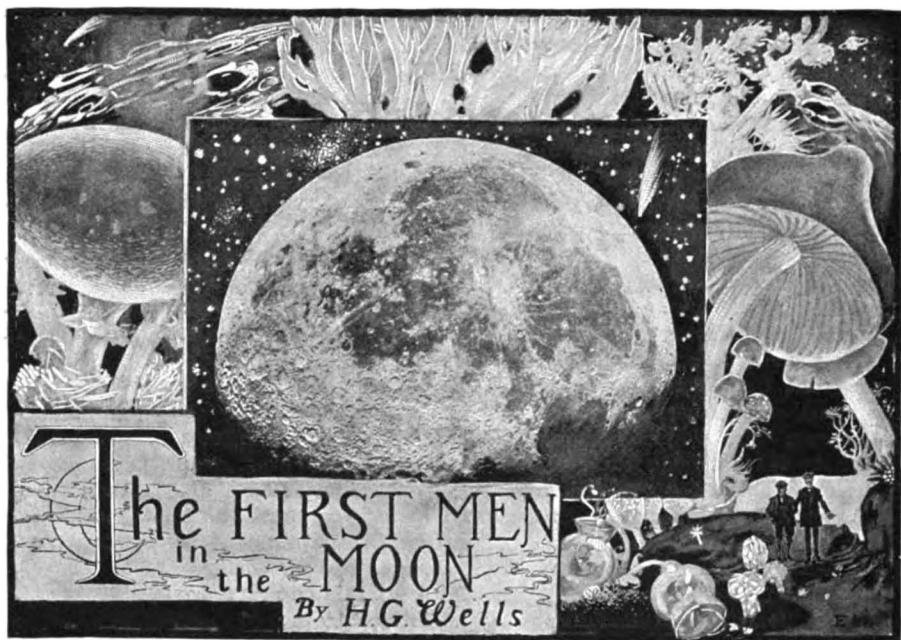
He pointed to the loose cases and bundles that had been lying on the blankets in the bottom of the sphere. I was astonished to see that they were floating now nearly a foot from the spherical wall. Then I saw from his shadow that Cavor was no longer leaning against the glass. I thrust out my hand behind me and found that I too was suspended in space, clear of the glass.

I did not cry out or gesticulate, but fear came upon me. It was like being held and lifted by something—you know not what. The mere touch of my hand against the glass moved me rapidly. I understood what had happened but that did not prevent my being afraid. We were cut off from all exterior gravitation—only the attraction of objects within our sphere had effect. Consequently everything that was not fixed to the glass was falling—slowly because of the slowness of our masses—toward the center of gravity of our little world, to the center of our sphere.

"We must turn round," said Cavor, "and float back to back, with the things between us."

It was the strangest sensation conceivable, floating thus loosely in space—at first, indeed, horribly strange, but when the horror passed, not disagreeable at all, exceedingly restful; indeed, the nearest thing in earthly experience to it that I know is lying on a very thick soft feather-bed. But the quality of utter detachment and independence! I had not reckoned on things like this. I had expected a violent jerk at starting, a giddy sense of speed. Instead I felt—as if I were disembodied. It was not like the beginning of a journey; it was like the beginning of a dream.

(To be continued.)



Drawing by E. Hovag

V.

THE JOURNEY TO THE MOON.

PRESENTLY Cavor extinguished the light. He said we had not overmuch energy stored and that what we had we must economize for reading. For a time, whether it was long or short I do not know, there was nothing but blank darkness.

A question floated up out of the void. "How are we pointing?" I asked. "What is our direction?"

"We are flying away from the earth at a tangent, and as the moon is near her third quarter, we are going somewhere toward her. I will open a blind——"

Came a click and then a window in the outer case yawned open. The sky outside was as black as the darkness within the sphere, but the shape of the open window was marked by an infinite number of stars. Those who have only seen the starry sky from the earth cannot imagine its appearance when the vague, half-luminous veil of our air has been withdrawn. The stars we see on earth are the mere scattered survivors that penetrate our misty atmosphere. But now at last I could realize the mean-

ing of "the hosts of heaven!" Stranger things we were presently to see, but that airless, star-dusted sky! Of all things, I think that will be one of the last I shall forget.

The little window vanished with a click, another beside it snapped open and instantly closed, and then a third, and for a moment I had to close my eyes because of the blinding splendor of the waning moon.

For a space I had to stare at Cavor and the white-lit things about me to season my eyes to light again, before I could turn them toward that pallid glare.

Four windows were open in order that the gravitation of the moon might act upon all the substances in our sphere. I found I was no longer floating freely in space, but that my feet were resting on the glass in the direction of the moon. The blankets and cases of provisions were also creeping slowly down the glass, and presently came to rest so as to block out a portion of the view. It seemed to me, of course, that I looked "down" when I looked at the moon. On earth "down" means earthward, the way things fall, and "up" the reverse direction. Now the pull of gravitation was toward the moon,

and for all I knew to the contrary our earth was overhead. And of course, when all the Favorite blinds were closed, "down" was toward the center of the sphere, and "up" toward its outer wall.

It was curiously unlike earthly experience, too, to have the light coming *up* to one. On earth light falls from above or comes slanting down sidewise, but here it came from beneath our feet, and to see our shadows we had to look up.

At first it gave me a sort of vertigo to stand only on this glass and look down upon the moon through hundreds of thousands of miles of vacant space. But this sickness passed very speedily. And then—the splendor of the sight!

The reader may imagine it best if he will lie on the ground some warm summer's night and look between his upraised feet at the moon; but for some reason, probably because the absence of air made it so much more luminous, the moon seemed already considerably larger than it does from the earth. The minutest details of its surface were acutely clear. And since we did not see it through air, its outline was bright and sharp; there was no glow or halo about it and the star-dust that covered the sky came right to its very margin and marked the outline of its unilluminated part. And as I stood and stared at the moon between my feet, that perception of the impossible that had been with me off and on ever since our start, returned again with tenfold conviction.

"Cavor," I said, "this takes me queerly. Those companies we were going to run, and all that about minerals——"

"Well?"

"I don't see 'em here."

"No," said Cavor, "but you'll get over all that."

"I suppose I'm made to turn right side up again. Still, *this*—— For a moment I could half believe there never was a world."

"That copy of 'Lloyds' News' might help you."

I stared at the paper for a moment, then held it above the level of my face and found I could read it quite easily. I struck a column of mean little advertisements. "A gentleman of private means is willing to lend money," I read. I knew

that gentleman. Then somebody eccentric wanted to sell a Cutaway bicycle, "quite new and cost fifteen pounds," for five pounds; and a lady in distress wished to dispose of some fish knives and forks, "a wedding present," at a great sacrifice. No doubt some simple soul was sagely examining those knives and forks, and another triumphantly riding off on that bicycle, and a third trustfully consulting that benevolent gentleman of means, even as I read. I laughed and let the paper drift from my hand.

"Are we visible from the earth?" I asked.

"Why?"

"I knew some one—who was rather interested in astronomy. It occurred to me that it would be rather odd if—my friend—chanced to be looking through some telescope."

"It would need the most powerful telescope on earth even now to see us as the minutest speck."

For a time I stared in silence at the moon.

"It's a world," I said; "one feels that infinitely more than one ever did on earth. People perhaps——"

"People!" he exclaimed. "No! Banish all that! Think yourself a sort of ultra arctic voyager exploring the desolate places of space. Look at it!"

He waved his hand at the shining whiteness below. "It's dead—dead! Vast extinct volcanoes, lava wildernesses, tumbled wastes of snow or frozen carbonic acid or frozen air, and everywhere landslips, seams and cracks and gulfs. Nothing happens. Men have watched this planet systematically with telescopes for over two hundred years. How much change do you think they have seen?"

"None."

"They have traced two indisputable landslips, a doubtful crack and one slight periodic change of color. And that's all."

"I didn't know they'd traced even that."

"Oh, yes. But as for people——!"

"By the way," I asked, "how small a thing will the biggest telescope show upon the moon?"

"One could see a fair-sized church. One could certainly see any towns or buildings or anything like the handiwork of men."

But we certainly shall find no men. There might perhaps be insects, something in the way of ants for example, so that they could hide in deep burrows from the lunar night. Or some new sort of creatures having no earthly parallel. That is the most probable thing if we are to find life there at all. Think of the difference in conditions! Life must fit itself to a day as long as fourteen earthly days, a cloudless sun-blaze of fourteen days, and then a night of equal length, growing ever colder and colder under these cold, sharp stars. In that night there must be cold, the ultimate cold, absolute zero, two hundred and seventy-three degrees C., below the earthly freezing-point. Whatever life there is must hibernate through *that*. And rise again each day."

He mused. "One can imagine something worm-like," he said, "taking its air solid as an earthworm swallows earth, or thick-skinned monsters——"

"Why didn't we bring a gun?"

He did not answer that question. "No," he concluded, "we just have to go. We shall see when we get there."

I remembered something. "Of course, there're my minerals anyhow," I said, "whatever the conditions may be."

Presently he told me he wished to alter our course a little by letting the earth tug at us for a moment. He was going to open one earthward blind for thirty seconds. He warned me that it would make my head swim, and advised me to extend my hands against the glass to break my fall. I did as he directed, and thrust my feet against the bales of food cases and air cylinders to prevent their falling upon me. Then with a click the window flew open. I fell clumsily upon hands and face and saw for a moment between my black, extended fingers our mother earth—a planet in a downward sky.

We were still very near—Cavor told me the distance was, perhaps, eight hundred miles—and the huge terrestrial disk filled all heaven. But already it was plain to see that the world was a globe. The land below us was in twilight and vague,

but westward the vast gray stretches of the Atlantic shone like molten silver under the receding day. I think I recognized the cloud-dimmed coast-lines of France and Spain, and the south of England, and then with a click the shutter closed again and I found myself in a state of extraordinary confusion, sliding slowly over the smooth glass.

When at last things settled themselves in my mind again, it seemed quite beyond question that the moon was "down" and under my feet, and that the earth was somewhere away on the level of the horizon—the earth that had been "down" to me and my kindred since the beginning of things.

So slight were the exertions required of us, so easy did the practical annihilation of our weight make all we had to do, that the necessity for taking refreshments did not occur to us for nearly six hours (by Cavor's chronometer) after our start. I was amazed at that lapse of time. Even then I was satisfied with very little. Cavor examined the apparatus for absorbing carbonic acid and water, and pronounced it to be in satisfactory order, our consumption of oxygen having been extraordinarily slight; and our talk being exhausted for the time, and there being nothing further for us to do, we gave way to a curious drowsiness that had come upon us, and spreading our blankets on the bottom of the sphere in such a manner as to shut out most of the moonlight, wished each other good-night, and almost immediately fell asleep.

And so, sleeping, and sometimes talking and reading a little, at times eating, though without any keenness of appetite,* but for the most part in a sort of quiescence that was neither waking nor slumber, we fell through a space of time that had neither night nor day in it, silently, softly and swiftly down toward the moon.

VI.

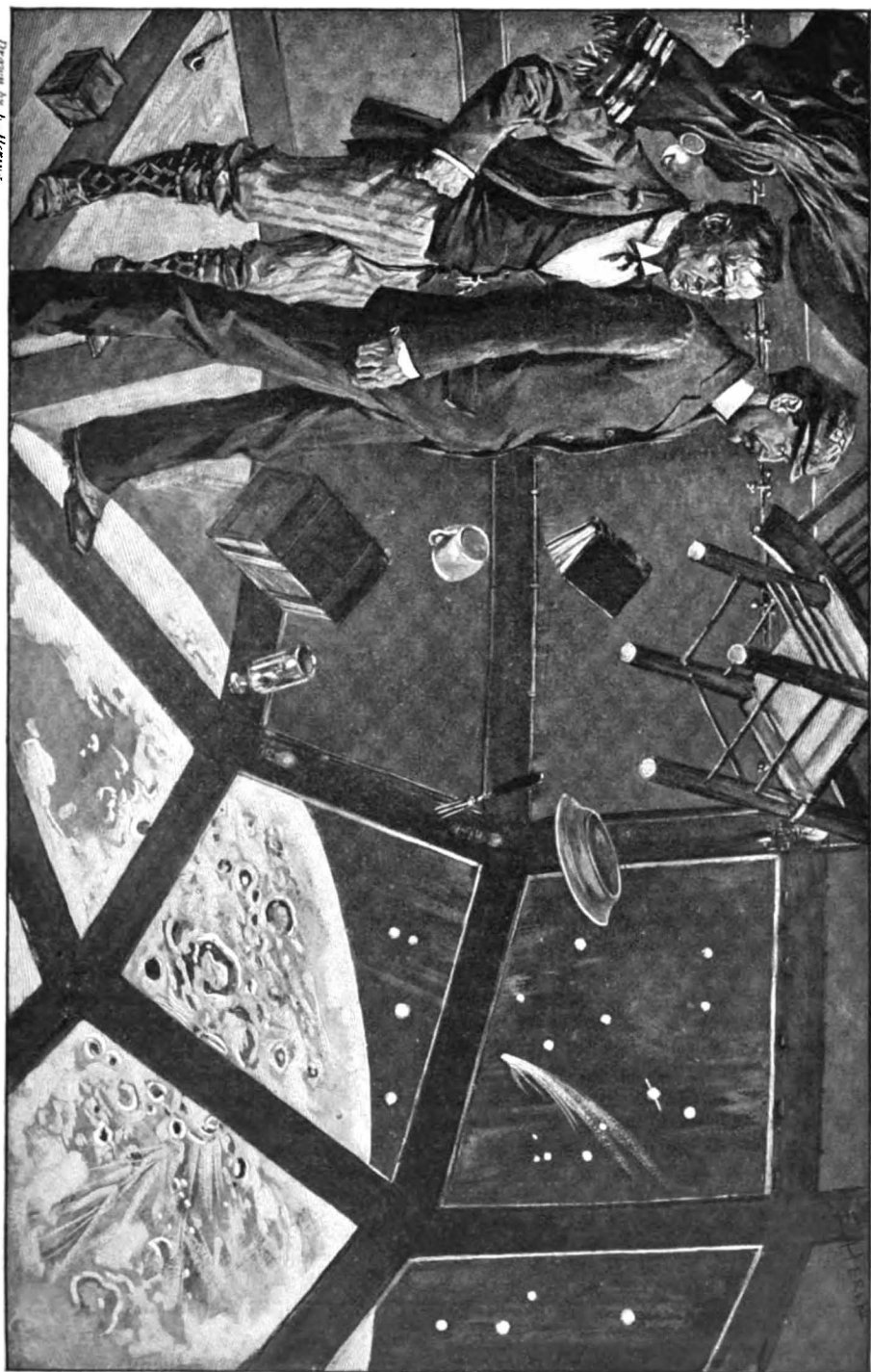
THE LANDING ON THE MOON.

I remember how one day Cavor suddenly opened six of our shutters, and blinded me so that I cried aloud at him. The whole

* It is a curious thing that while we were in the sphere we felt not the slightest desire for food, nor the want of it when we abstained. At first we forced our appetite, but afterward we fasted completely. We did not consume one twentieth part of the compressed provision we had brought with us. The amount of carbonic acid we exhaled was also unnaturally low, but why this was so I am quite unable to explain.

Drawn by A. Herpin.

"THE WHOLE AREA WAS MOON, A STUPENDOUS SIMILAR OF WHITE DAWN."



area was moon, a stupendous simitar of white dawn, with its edge hacked out by notches of darkness, the crescent shore of an ebbing tide of darkness, out of which peaks and pinnacles came climbing into the blaze of the sun. I take it the reader has seen pictures or photographs of the moon, so that I need not describe the broader features of that landscape, those spacious ringlike ranges, vaster than any terrestrial mountains, their summits shining in the day, their shadows harsh and deep, the gray, disordered plains, the ridges, hills and craterlets, all passing at last from a blazing illumination into a common mystery of black. Athwart this world we were flying, scarcely a hundred miles above its crests and pinnacles. And now we could see, what no eye on earth will ever see, that under the blaze of the day the harsh outlines of the rocks and ravines of the plains and crater floor grew gray and indistinct under a thickening haze; that the white of their lit surfaces broke into lumps and patches, and broke again and shrank and vanished, and that here and there strange tints of brown and olive grew and spread.

But little time we had for watching them, for now we had come to the real danger of our journey. We had to drop ever closer to the moon as we spun about it, to slacken our pace, and watch our chance until at last we could dare to drop upon its surface.

For Cavor that was a time of intense exertion; for me it was an anxious inactivity. I seemed perpetually to be getting out of his way. He leaped about the sphere from point to point with an agility that would have been impossible on earth. He was perpetually opening and closing the Cavorite windows, making calculations, consulting his chronometer by means of the glow-lamp during those last eventful hours. For a long time we had all our windows closed and hung silently in darkness, hurling through space.

Then he was feeling for the shutter-studs, and suddenly four windows were open. I staggered and covered my eyes, drenched and scorched and blinded by the unaccustomed splendor of the sun beneath my feet. Then again the shutters snapped, leaving my brain spinning in a darkness

that pressed against the eyes. And after that I floated in another vast black silence. Then Cavor switched on the electric light, and told me he proposed to bind all our luggage together, with the blankets about it, against the concussion of our descent. We did this with our windows closed, because in that way our goods arranged themselves naturally at the center of the sphere. That, too, was a strange business—we two men floating loose in that spherical space, and packing and pulling ropes. Imagine it if you can! No up nor down, and every effort resulting in unexpected movements. Now I would be pressed against the glass with the full force of Cavor's thrust, now I would be kicking helplessly in a void. Now the star of the electric light would be overhead, now underfoot. Now Cavor's feet would float up before my eyes, and now we would be crosswise to each other. But at last our goods were safely bound together in a big, soft bale, all except two blankets with head holes, that we were to wrap about ourselves.

Then for a flash Cavor opened a window moonward, and we saw that we were dropping toward a huge central crater with a number of minor craters grouped in a sort of cross about it. And then, again, Cavor flung our little sphere open to the scorching, blinding sun. I think he was using the sun's attraction as a brake. "Cover yourself with a blanket," he cried, thrusting himself from me, and for a moment I did not understand.

Then I hauled the blanket from beneath my feet and got it about me and over my head and eyes. Abruptly he closed the shutters again, snapped one open again and closed it, then suddenly began snapping them all open, each safely into its steel roller. There came a jar and then we were rolling over and over, bumping against the glass and against the big bale of our luggage and clutching at each other, and outside some white substance splashed as if we were rolling down a slope of snow.

Over, clutch, bump, clutch, bump, clutch, over——

Came a thud, and I was half buried under the bale of our possessions, and for a space everything was still. Then I could hear Cavor puffing and grunting, and the

snapping of a shutter in its sash. I made an effort, thrust back our blanket-wrapped luggage, and emerged from beneath it. Our open windows were just visible as a deeper black set with stars.

We were still alive, and we were lying in the darkness of the shadow of the wall of the great crater into which we had fallen.

We sat, getting our breath again, and feeling the bruises on our limbs. I don't think either of us had had a very clear expectation of such rough handling as we had received. I struggled painfully to my feet. "And now," said I, "to look at the landscape of the moon! But——! It's tremendously dark, Cavor!"

The glass was dewy, and as I spoke I wiped it with my blanket. "We're half an hour or so beyond the day," he said. "We must wait."

It was impossible to distinguish anything. We might have been in a sphere of steel for all that we could see. My rubbing with the blanket simply smeared the glass, and as fast as I wiped it, it became opaque again with freshly condensed moisture mixed with an increasing quantity of blanket hairs. Of course, I ought not to have used the blanket. In my efforts to clear the glass I slipped upon the damp surface and hurt my shin against one of the oxygen cylinders that protruded from our bale.

The thing was exasperating—it was absurd. Here we were, just arrived upon the moon, amidst we knew not what wonders, and all we could see was the gray and streaming wall of the bubble in which we had come.

"Confound it!" I said; "but at this rate we might have stopped at home!" I squatted on the bale and shivered and drew my blanket closer about me.

Abruptly the moisture turned to spangles and fronds of frost. "Can you reach the electric heater?" said Cavor. "Yes—that black knob. Or we shall freeze."

I did not wait to be told twice. "And now," said I, "what are we to do?"

"Wait," he said.

"Wait?"

"Of course. We shall have to wait until our air gets warm again and then this glass will clear. We can't do anything

till then. It's night here yet—we must wait for the day to overtake us. Meanwhile, don't you feel hungry?"

For a space I did not answer him, but sat fretting. I turned reluctantly from the smeared puzzle of the glass and stared at his face. "Yes," I said, "I am hungry. I feel somehow enormously disappointed. I had expected—— I don't know what I had expected, but not this."

I summoned my philosophy, and rearranging my blanket about me, sat down on the bale again and began my first meal on the moon. I don't think I finished it.

I forget. Presently, first in patches, then running rapidly together into wider spaces, came the clearing of the glass, came the drawing of the misty veil that hid the moon-world from our eyes.

We peered out upon the landscape of the moon.

VII.

SUNRISE ON THE MOON.

As we saw it first, it was the wildest and most desolate of scenes. We were in an enormous amphitheater, a vast circular plain, the floor of the giant crater. Its cliff-like walls closed us in on every side. From the westward the light of the unseen sun fell upon them, reaching to the very foot of the cliff, and showed a disordered escarpment of drab and grayish rock, lined here and there with banks and crevices of snow. This was perhaps a dozen miles away, but at first no intervening atmosphere diminished in the slightest the minutely detailed brilliancy with which these things glared at us. They stood out clear and dazzling against a background of starry blackness that seemed to our earthly eyes rather a gloriously spangled velvet curtain than the spaciousness of the sky.

The eastward cliff was at first merely a starless selva to the starry dome. No rosy flush, no creeping pallor, announced the commencing day. Only the corona, the zodiacal light, a huge, cone-shaped, luminous haze, pointing up toward the splendor of the morning star, warned us of the imminent nearness of the sun.

Whatever light was about us was reflected by the westward cliffs. It showed a huge undulating plain, cold, and colored a gray, a gray that deepened eastward into

the absolute raven darkness of the cliff shadow. Innumerable rounded gray summits, ghostly hummocks, billows of snowy substance, stretching crest beyond crest into the remote obscurity, gave us our first inkling of the distance of the crater wall. These hummocks looked like snow. At the time I thought they were snow. But they were not—they were mounds and masses of frozen air!

So it was at first—and then, sudden, swift and amazing, came the lunar day.

The sunlight had crept down the cliff, it touched the drifted masses at its base, and incontinently came striding with seven-leagued boots toward us. The distant cliff seemed to shift and quiver, and at the touch of the dawn a reek of gray vapor poured upward from the crater floor, whirls and puffs and drifting wraiths of gray, thicker and broader and denser, until at last the whole westward plain was steaming like a wet handkerchief held before the fire, and the westward cliffs were no more than a refracted glare beyond.

"It is air," said Cavor. "It must be air—or it would not rise like this—at the mere touch of a sunbeam. And at this pace——"

He peered upward. "Look!" he said.

"What?" I asked.

"In the sky. Already. On the blackness—a little touch of blue. See! The stars seem larger. And the little ones and all those dim nebulosities we saw in empty space—they are hidden!"

Swiftly, steadily, the day approached us. Gray summit after gray summit was overtaken by the blaze and turned to a smoking, white intensity. At last there was nothing to the west of us but a bank of surging fog, the tumultuous advance and ascent of cloudy haze. The distant cliff had receded farther and farther, had loomed and changed through the whirl, had foundered and vanished at last in its confusion.

Nearer came that steaming advance, nearer and nearer, coming as fast as the shadow of a cloud before the southwest wind. About us rose a thin and anticipatory haze.

Cavor gripped my arm.

"What?" I said.

"Look! The sunrise! the sun!"

He turned me about and pointed to the brow of the eastward cliff, looming above the haze about us, scarce lighter than the darkness of the sky. But now its line was marked by strange reddish shapes, tongues of vermilion flame that writhed and danced. I fancied it must be spirals of vapor that had caught the light and made this crest of fiery tongues against the sky, but indeed it was the solar prominences I saw, a crown of fire about the sun that is forever hidden from earthly eyes by our atmospheric veil. And then—the sun!

Steadily, inevitably, came a brilliant line, came a thin edge of intolerable effulgence that took a circular shape, became a bow, became a blazing scepter, and hurled a shaft of heat at us as though it was a spear. It seemed verily to stab my eyes! I cried aloud and turned about, blinded, groping for my blanket beneath the bale.

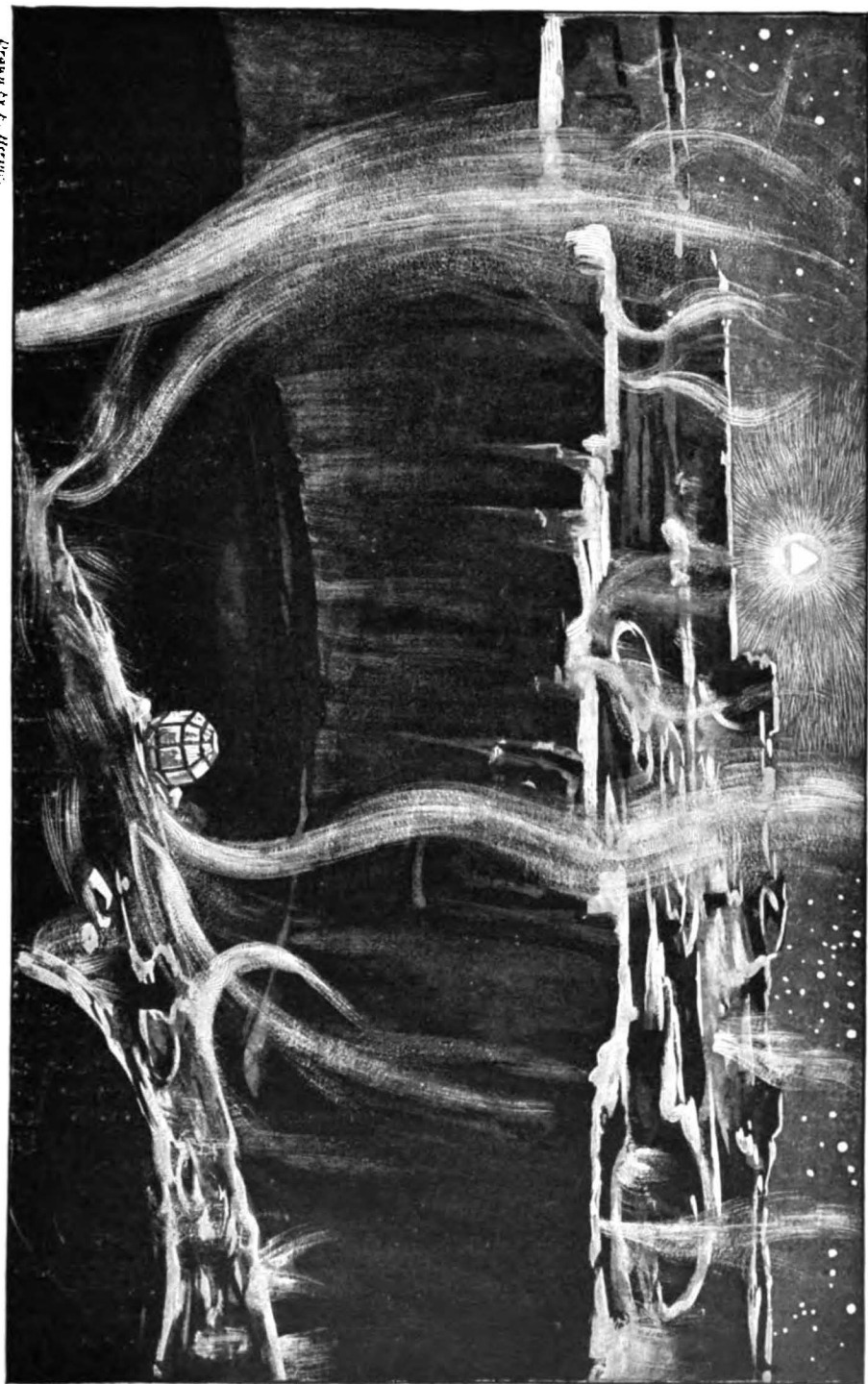
And with that incandescence came a sound, the first sound that had reached us from without since we left the earth, a hissing and rustling, the stormy trailing of the aerial garment of the advancing day. And with the coming of the sound and the light, the sphere lurched, and blinded and dazzled; we staggered helplessly against each other. It lurched again, and the hissing grew louder. I had shut my eyes perforce; I was making clumsy efforts to cover my head with my blanket, and this second lurch sent me helplessly off my feet. I fell against the bale, and opening my eyes, had a momentary glimpse of the air just outside our glass. It was running—it was boiling—like snow into which a white-hot rod is thrust. What had been solid air had suddenly, at the touch of the sun, become a paste, a mud, a slushy liquefaction, that hissed and bubbled into gas.

There came a still more violent whirl of the sphere, and we had clutched one another. In another moment we were spun about again. Round we went and over, and then I was on all fours. The lunar dawn had hold of us. It meant to show us little men what the moon could do with us.

I caught a second glimpse of things without, puffs of vapor, half liquid slush, excavated, sliding, falling, sliding. We dropped into darkness. I went down with Cavor's knees in my chest. Then he

Drawn by E. Herring.

"AT THE TOUCH OF THE DAWN A REEF OF GRAY VAPOR POURED UPWARD FROM THE CRATER FLOOR."



seemed to fly away from me and for a moment I lay with all the breath out of my body, staring upward. A huge landslip, as it were, of the melting stuff had splashed over us, buried us, and now it thinned and boiled off us. I saw the bubbles dancing on the glass above. I heard Cavor exclaiming feebly.

Then some huge landslip in the thawing air had caught us, and spluttering expostulation, we began to roll down a slope, rolling faster and faster, leaping crevasses and rebounding from blankets, faster and faster, westward into the white-hot boiling tumult of the lunar day.

Clutching at one another, we spun about, pitched this way and that, our bale of packages leaping at us, pounding at us. We collided, we gripped, we were torn asunder—our heads met and the whole universe burst into fiery darts and stars! On the earth we should have smashed one another a dozen times, but on the moon, luckily for us, our weight was only one-sixth of what it is terrestrially and we fell very mercifully. I recall a sensation of utter sickness, a feeling as if my brain were upside down within my skull, and then—

Something was at work upon my face, some thin feelers worried my ears. Then I discovered the brilliance of the landscape around was mitigated by blue spectacles. Cavor bent over me and I saw his face upside down, his eyes also protected by tinted goggles. His breath came irregularly and his lip was bleeding from a bruise. "Better?" he said, wiping the blood with the back of his hand.

Everything seemed swaying for a space, but that was simply my giddiness. I perceived that he had closed some of the shutters in the outer sphere to save me from the direct blaze of the sun. I was aware that everything about us was very brilliant.

"Lord!" I gasped. "But this——!"

I craned my neck to see. I perceived there was a blinding glare outside, an utter change from the gloomy darkness of our first impressions. "Have I been insensible long?" I asked.

"I don't know—the chronometer is broken. Some little time. My dear chap! I have been afraid——"

I lay for a space taking this in. I saw his face still bore evidence of emotion. For a while I said nothing. I passed an inquisitive hand over my contusions, and surveyed his face for similar damages. The back of my right hand had suffered most and was skinless and raw. My forehead was bruised and had bled. He handed me a little measure with some of the restorative—I forget the name of it—he had brought with us. After a time I felt a little better. I began to stretch my limbs carefully. Soon I could talk.

"It wouldn't have done," I said, as though there had been no interval.

"No! it *wouldn't*."

He thought, his hands hanging over his knees. He peered through the glass and then stared at me. "Good Lord!" he said, "*no!*"

"What has happened?" I asked, after a pause. "Have we jumped to the tropics?"

"It was as I expected. This air has evaporated. If it is air. At any rate, it has evaporated and the surface of the moon is showing. We are lying on a bank of earthly rock. Here and there bare soil is exposed. A queer sort of soil!"

It occurred to him that it was unnecessary to explain. He assisted me into a sitting position and I could see with my own eyes.

VIII.

A LUNAR MORNING.

The harsh emphasis, the pitiless black and white, of the scenery had altogether disappeared. The glare of the sun had taken upon itself a faint tinge of amber; the shadows upon the cliff of the crater wall were deeply purple. To the eastward a dark bank of fog still crouched and sheltered us from the sunrise, but to the westward the sky was blue and clear. I began to realize the length of my insensibility.

We were no longer in a void. An atmosphere had arisen about us. The outline of things had gained in character, had grown acute and varied; save for a shadowed space of white substance here and there, white substance that was no longer air, but snow, the arctic appearance had gone altogether. Everywhere broad, rusty-brown spaces of bare and tumbled earth

spread to the blaze of the sun. Here and there at the edge of the snow-drift were transient little pools and eddies of water, the only things stirring in that expanse of barrenness. The sunlight inundated the upper two-thirds of our sphere, and turned our climate to high summer, but our feet were still in shadow and the sphere was lying upon a drift of snow.

And scattered here and there upon the slope, and emphasized by little white threads of unthawed snow upon their shady sides, were shapes like sticks, dry, twisted sticks of the same rusty hue as the rock upon which they lay. That caught one's thoughts sharply. Sticks! On a lifeless world? Then as my eye grew more accustomed to the texture of their substance, I perceived that almost all this surface had a fibrous texture, like the carpet of brown needles one finds beneath the shade of pine-trees.

"Cavor!" I said.

"Yes."

"It may be a dead world now—but once——"

Something arrested my attention. I had discovered among these needles a number of little round objects. And it seemed to me that one of these had moved.

"Cavor," I whispered.

"What?"

But I did not answer at once. I stared, incredulous. For an instant I could not believe my eyes. I gave an inarticulate cry. I gripped his arm. I pointed. "Look!" I cried, finding my tongue. "There! Yes! And there!"

His eyes followed my pointing finger.

"Eh?" he said.

How can I describe the thing I saw? It is so petty a thing to state, and yet it seemed so wonderful, so pregnant with emotion. I have said that amidst the stick-like litter were these rounded bodies, these little oval bodies that might have passed as very small pebbles. And now first one and then another had stirred, had rolled over and cracked, and down the crack of each of them showed a minute line of yellowish-green, thrusting outward to meet the hot encouragement of the newly risen sun. For a moment that was all, and then there stirred and burst a third!

"It is a seed," said Cavor. And then

I heard him whisper very softly, "*Life! Life!*" And immediately it poured upon us that our vast journey had not been made in vain, that we had come to no arid waste of minerals, but to a world that lived and moved! We watched intensely. I remember I kept rubbing the glass before me with my sleeve, jealous of the faintest suspicion of mist.

The picture was clear and vivid only in the middle of the field. All about that center the dead fibers and seeds were magnified and distorted by the curvature of the glass. But we could see enough! One after another, all down the sunlit slope, these miraculous little brown bodies burst and gaped apart, like seed-pods, like the husks of fruits; opened eager mouths that drank in the heat and light pouring in a cascade from the newly risen sun.

Every moment more of these seed-coats ruptured, and even as they did so the swelling pioneers overflowed their rent-distended seed-case and passed into the second stage of growth. With a steady assurance, a swift deliberation, these amazing seeds thrust a rootlet downward to the earth and a queer little bundle-like bud into the air. In a little while the whole slope was dotted with minute plantlets standing at attention in the blaze of the sun.

They did not stand for long. The bundle-like buds swelled and strained and opened with a jerk, thrusting out a coronet of little sharp tips, spreading a whorl of tiny, spiky, brownish leaves, that lengthened rapidly, lengthened visibly, even as we watched. The movement was slower than any animal's, swifter than any plant's I have ever seen before. How can I suggest it to you—the way that growth went on! The leaf-tips grew so that they moved onward even while we looked at them. The brown seed-case shriveled and was absorbed with an equal rapidity. Have you ever on a cold day taken a thermometer into your warm hand and watched the little thread of mercury creep up the tube? These moon plants grew like that.

In a few minutes, as it seemed, the buds of the more forward of these plants had lengthened into a stem, and were even putting forth a second whorl of leaves, and all the slope that had seemed so re-

cently a lifeless stretch of litter was now dark with the stunted olive-green herbage of bristling spikes that swayed with the vigor of their growing.

I turned about, and behold! along the upper edge of a rock to the eastward, a similar fringe in a scarcely less forward condition swayed and bent, dark against the blinding glare of the sun. And beyond this fringe was the silhouette of a plant mass, branching clumsily like a cactus and swelling visibly, swelling like a bladder that fills with air.

Then to the westward, also, I discovered that another such distended form was rising over the scrub. But here the light fell upon its sleek sides and I could see that its color was a vivid orange hue. It rose as one watched it; if one looked away from it for a minute, and then back, its outline had changed. It thrust out blunt, congested branches until in a little time it rose, a coralline shape of many feet in height. Compared with such a growth, the terrestrial puffball, which will sometimes swell to a foot diameter in a single night, would be a hopeless laggard. And beyond, out of gullies and flats that had been hidden from us but not from the quickening sun, over reefs and banks of shining rock, a bristling beard of spiky and fleshy vegetation was straining into view, hurrying tumultuously to take advantage of the brief day in which it must flower and fruit and seed again and die. It was like a miracle, that growth. So, one must imagine, the trees and plants arose at the Creation and covered the desolation of the new-made earth.

Imagine it! Imagine that dawn! The resurrection of the frozen air, the stirring and quickening of the soil, and then this silent uprising of vegetation, this unearthly ascent of fleshliness and spikes. Conceive it all lit by a blaze that would make the intensest sunlight of earth seem watery and weak. And still amidst this stirring jungle, wherever there was shadow, lingered banks of bluish snow. And to have the picture of our impression complete, you must bear in mind that we saw it all through a thick, bent glass, distorting it as things are distorted by a lens, acute only in the center of the picture and very bright there, and toward the edge magnified and unreal.

IX.

PROSPECTING BEGINS.

We ceased to gaze. We turned to each other, the same thought, the same question, in our eyes. For these plants to grow, there must be some air, however attenuated, air that we also should be able to breathe.

"The manhole?" I said.

"Yes!" said Cavor, "if it is air we see!"

"In a little while," I said, "those plants will be as high as we are."

"Suppose," I added, "suppose, after all— Is it certain? How do you know that stuff is air? It may be nitrogen—it may be carbonic acid even!"

"That is easy," he said, and set about proving it. He produced a big piece of crumpled paper from the bale, lit it and thrust it hastily through the manhole valve. I bent forward and peered down through the thick glass for its appearance outside, that little flame on whose evidence depended so much!

I saw the paper drop out and lie lightly upon the snow. The pink flame of its burning vanished. For an instant it seemed to be extinguished, and then I saw a little blue tongue upon the edge of it that trembled and crept and spread!

Quietly the whole sheet, save where it lay in immediate contact with the snow, charred and shriveled and sent up a quivering thread of smoke. There was no doubt left to me: the atmosphere of the moon was either pure oxygen or air, and capable therefore—unless its tenuity was excessive—of supporting our alien life. We might emerge—and live!

I sat down with my legs on either side of the manhole and prepared to unscrew it, but Cavor stopped me. "There is first a little precaution," he said. He pointed out that although it was certainly an oxygenated atmosphere outside, it might still be so rarefied as to cause us grave injury. He reminded me of mountain sickness and of the bleeding that often afflicts aeronauts who have ascended too swiftly, and he spent some time in the preparation of a sickly-tasting drink which he insisted on my sharing. It made me feel a little numb, but otherwise had no effect on me.

Then he permitted me to begin unscrewing. Presently the glass stopper of the manhole was so far undone that the denser air within our sphere began to escape along the thread of the screw, singing as a kettle sings before it boils. Thereupon he made me desist. It speedily became evident that the pressure outside was very much less than it was within. How much less it was, we had no means of telling.

I sat grasping the stopper with both hands, ready to close it again if, in spite of our intense hope, the lunar atmosphere should after all prove too rarefied for us, and Cavor sat with a cylinder of compressed oxygen at hand to restore our pressure. We looked at one another in silence, and then at the fantastic vegetation that swayed and grew, visibly and noiselessly, without. And ever that shrill piping continued.

My blood-vessels began to throb in my ears, and the sound of Cavor's movements diminished. I noted how still everything had become, because of the thinning of the air.

As our air sizzled out from the screw, the moisture of it condensed in little puffs.

Presently I experienced a peculiar shortness of breath—that lasted indeed during the whole of the time of our exposure to the moon's exterior atmosphere—and a rather unpleasant sensation about the ears and finger-nails and the back of the throat grew upon my attention, and presently passed off again.

But then came vertigo and nausea that abruptly changed the quality of my courage. I gave the lid of the manhole half a turn and made a hasty explanation to Cavor, but now he was the more sanguine. He answered me in a voice that seemed extraordinarily small and remote because of the thinness of the air that carried the sound. He recommended a nip of brandy and set me the example, and presently I felt better. I turned the manhole stopper back again. The throbbing in my ears grew louder, and then I remarked that the piping note of the outrush had ceased. For a time I could not be sure that it had ceased.

"Well?" said Cavor, in the ghost of a voice.

"Well?" said I.

"Shall we go on?"

I thought. "Is this all?"

"If you can stand it."

By way of answer I went on unscrewing.

I lifted the circular operculum from its place and laid it carefully on the bale. A flake or so of snow whirled and vanished as that thin and unfamiliar air took possession of our sphere. I knelt and then seated myself at the edge of the manhole, peering over. Beneath, within a yard of my face, lay the untrodden snow of the moon.

There was a little pause. Our eyes met.

"It doesn't distress your lungs too much?" said Cavor.

"No," I said. "I can stand this."

He stretched out his hand for his blanket, thrust his head through its central hole and wrapped it about him. He sat down on the edge of the manhole, he let his feet drop until they were within six inches of the lunar snow. He hesitated for a moment, then thrust himself forward, dropped these intervening inches, and stood upon the untrodden soil of the moon.

As he stepped forward, he was refracted grotesquely by the edge of the glass. He stood for a moment looking this way and that. Then he made a leap.

The glass distorted everything, but it seemed to me even then to be an extremely big leap. He had at one bound become remote. He seemed twenty or thirty feet off. He was standing high upon a rocky mass and gesticulating back to me. Perhaps he was shouting—but the sound did not reach me. But how the deuce had he done this? I felt like a man who had just seen a new conjuring trick.

Still in a puzzled state of mind, I too dropped through the manhole. I stood up. Just in front of me the snow-drift had fallen away and made a sort of ditch. I made a step and jumped.

I found myself flying through the air, saw the rock on which he stood coming to meet me, clutched it, and clung to it.

I gasped a painful laugh. I was tremendously confused. Cavor bent down and shouted for me to be careful.

I had forgotten that on the smaller moon, with only an eighth part of the earth's mass and a quarter of its diameter, my weight was barely a sixth what it was on earth. But now that fact insisted on being remembered.

"We are out of Mother Earth's leading-strings now," he said.

With a guarded effort, I raised myself to the top, and, moving as cautiously as a rheumatic patient, stood up beside him under the blaze of the sun. The sphere lay behind us on its dwindling snow-drift thirty feet away.

As far as the eye could see over the enormous disorder of rocks that formed the crater floor, the same bristling scrub that surrounded us was starting into life, diversified here and there by bulging masses of a cactus form, and scarlet and purple lichens that grew so fast they seemed to crawl over the rocks. The whole area of the crater seemed to me then to be one similar wilderness up to the very foot of the surrounding cliff.

This cliff was apparently bare of vegetation save at its base, and with buttresses and terraces and platforms that did not very greatly attract our attention at the time. It was many miles away from us in every direction; we seemed to be almost at the center of the crater, and we saw it before a certain haziness that drove before the wind. For there was even a wind now in the thin air, a swift yet weak wind that chilled exceedingly but exerted little pressure. It was blowing round the crater, as it seemed, from the hot, illuminated side, to the foggy darkness under the sunward wall. It was difficult to look into this eastward fog; we had to peer with half-closed eyes beneath the shade of our hands, because of the fierce intensity of the motionless sun. "It seems to be deserted," said Cavor, "absolutely desolate."

I looked about me again. I retained even then a clinging hope of some quasi-human evidence, some pinnacle of building, some house or engine, but everywhere one looked spread the tumbled rocks in peaks and crests and the darting scrub and those bulging cacti that swelled and swelled.

"It looks as though these plants had it to themselves," I said. "I see no trace of any other creature."

"If there was—what would they do in the night? No. There's just these plants alone."

I shaded my eyes with my hand. "It's

like the landscape of a dream. Look at that yonder! One might imagine it a lizard changed into a plant. And the glare!"

"This is only the fresh morning," said Cavor.

"This is no world for men," he said. "And yet in a way—it appeals."

He became silent for a time, then commenced his meditative humming.

I started at a gentle touch and found a thin sheet of livid lichen lapping over my shoe. I kicked at it, and it fell to powder and each speck began to grow.

I heard Cavor exclaim sharply, and perceived that one of the fixed bayonets of the scrub had pricked him.

He hesitated; his eyes sought among the rocks about us. A sudden blaze of pink had crept up a ragged pillar of crag. It was a most extraordinary pink, a livid magenta.

"Look!" said I, turning—and behold, Cavor had vanished!

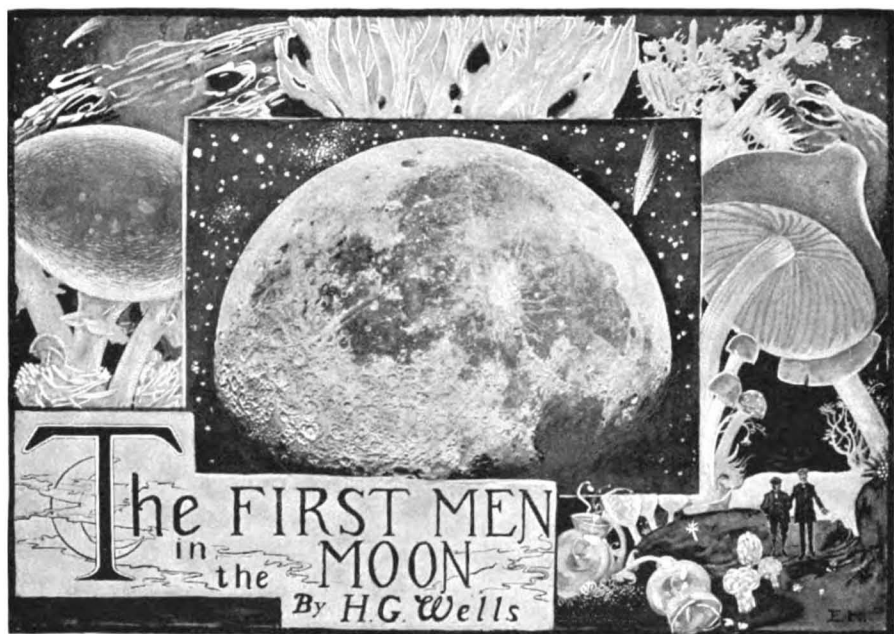
For an instant I stood transfixed. Then I made a hasty step to look over the verge of the rock. But in my surprise at his disappearance, I forgot once more that we were on the moon. The thrust of my foot that I made in striding would have carried me a yard on earth; on the moon it carried me six—a good five yards over the edge. For the moment the thing had something of the effect of those nightmares when one falls and falls. For while one falls sixteen feet in the first second of a fall on earth, on the moon one falls two, and with only a sixth of one's weight. I fell, or rather I jumped down, about ten yards, I suppose. It seemed to take quite a long time, five or six seconds I should think. I floated through the air and fell like a feather, knee-deep in a snow-drift in the bottom of a gully of blue-gray, white-veined rock.

I looked about me. "Cavor!" I cried, but no Cavor was visible.

"Cavor!" I cried, louder, and the rocks echoed me.

I turned fiercely to the rocks and clamored to the summit of them. "Cavor!" I cried. My voice sounded like the voice of a lost lamb.

The sphere, too, was not in sight, and for a moment a horrible feeling of desolation pinched my heart.



Drawn by E. Herdog.

X.

LOST MEN IN THE MOON.

THEN I saw him. He was laughing and gesticulating to attract my attention. He was on a bare patch of rock twenty or thirty yards away. I could not hear his voice, but "Jump!" said his gestures. I hesitated; the distance seemed enormous. Yet I reflected that surely I must be able to clear a greater distance than Cavor.

I made a step back, gathered myself together, and leaped with all my might. I seemed to shoot right up in the air as though I should never come down.

It was horrible, and delightful, and as wild as a nightmare, to go flying off in this fashion. I realized that my leap had been altogether too violent. I flew clean over Cavor's head, and beheld a spiky confusion in a gully spreading to meet my fall. I put out my hands and straightened my legs.

I hit a huge fungoid bulk that burst all about me, scattering a mass of orange spores in every direction, and covering me with orange powder. I rolled over, spluttering, and came to rest convulsed with breathless laughter.

I became aware of Cavor's little round face peering over a bristling hedge. He shouted some faded inquiry. "Eh?" I tried to shout but could not do so for want of breath. He made his way toward me, coming gingerly among the bushes.

"We've got to be careful," he said. "This moon has no discipline. She'll let us smash ourselves."

He helped me to my feet. "You exerted yourself too much," he said, dabbing at the yellow stuff with his hand to remove it from my garments.

I stood passive and panting, allowing him to beat off the jelly from my knees and elbows and lecture me upon my misfortunes. "We don't quite allow for the gravitation. Our muscles are scarcely educated yet. We must practise a little—when you have got your breath."

I pulled two or three little thorns out of my hand and sat for a time on a boulder of rock. My muscles were quivering, and I had that feeling of personal disillusionment that comes at the first fall to the learner of cycling on earth.

It suddenly occurred to Cavor that the cold air in the gully, after the brightness of the sun, might give me a fever. So we

clambered back into the sunlight. We found that, beyond a few abrasions, I had received no injuries from my tumble, and at Cavor's suggestion we were presently looking round for some safe and easy landing-place for my next leap. We chose a rocky slab some ten yards off, separated from us by a little thicket of olive-green spikes.

"Imagine it there!" said Cavor, who was assuming the airs of a trainer, and he pointed to a spot about four feet from my toes. This leap I managed without difficulty, and I must confess I found a certain satisfaction in Cavor's falling short by a foot or so and tasting the spikes of the scrub. "One has to be careful, you see," he said, pulling out his thorns, and with that he ceased to be my mentor and became my fellow-learner in the art of lunar locomotion.

We chose a still easier jump and did it without difficulty, and then leaped back again and to and fro several times, accustoming our muscles to the new standard. I could never have believed, had I not experienced it, how rapid that adaptation would be. In a very little time indeed, certainly after fewer than thirty leaps, we could judge the effort necessary for a distance with almost terrestrial assurance.

And all this time the lunar plants were growing around us, higher and denser and more entangled, every moment thicker and taller—spiked plants, green cactus masses, fungi, fleshy and lichenous things, strangest radiate and sinuous shapes. But we were so intent upon our leaping that for a time we gave no heed to their unfaltering expansion.

An extraordinary elation had taken possession of us. Partly I think it was our sense of release from the confinement of the sphere; mainly, however, the thin sweetness of the air, which I am certain contained a much larger proportion of oxygen than our terrestrial atmosphere. In spite of the strange quality of all about us, I felt as adventurous and experimental as a cockney would, placed for the first time among mountains; and I do not think it occurred to either of us, face to face though we were with the Unknown, to be very greatly afraid.

We were bitten by a spirit of enterprise.

We selected a lichenous kopje perhaps some fifteen yards away, and landed neatly on its summit one after the other. "Good!" we cried to each other, "good!" and Cavor made three steps and went off to a tempting slope of snow some twenty yards and more beyond. I stood for a moment struck by the grotesque effect of his soaring figure—his dirty cricket-cap and spiky hair, his little round body, his arms and his knickerbockered legs tucked up tightly—against the weird spaciousness of the lunar scene. A gust of laughter seized me and then I stepped off to follow. Plump! I dropped beside him.

We made a few Gargantuan strides, leaped three or four times more, and sat down at last in a lichenous hollow. Our lungs were painful. We sat holding our sides and recovering our breath, looking appreciation at one another. Cavor panted something about "amazing sensations." And then came a thought into my head. For the moment it did not seem a particularly appalling thought, simply a natural question arising out of the situation.

"By the way," I said, "where exactly is the sphere?"

Cavor looked at me. "Eh?"

The full meaning of what we were saying struck me sharply.

"Cavor!" I cried, laying a hand on his arm, "where is the sphere?"

His face caught something of my dismay. He stood up and stared about him at the scrub that fenced us in and rose about us, straining upward in a passion of growth. He put a dubious hand to his lips. He spoke with a sudden lack of assurance.

"I think," he said slowly, "we left it somewhere about *there*." He pointed a hesitating finger that wavered in an arc. "I'm not sure." His look of consternation deepened. "Anyhow," he said, with his eyes on me, "it can't be far."

We had both stood up. We made broken, unmeaning ejaculations; our eyes sought in the twining, thickening jungle round about us.

All about us on the sunlit slopes frothed and swayed the darting, spiky shrubs, the swelling cactus, the creeping lichens, and wherever the shade remained, the shrinking snow-drifts lingered. North, south, east and west spread an identical monotony of

unfamiliar forms. And somewhere buried already among this tangled confusion was our sphere, our home, our only provision, our only hope of escape from this fantastic wilderness of ephemeral growths into which we had come.

"I think, after all," he said, pointing suddenly, "it might be over there."

"No," I said. "We have turned in a curve. See! here is the mark of my heels. It's clear the thing must be more to the eastward, much more. No—the sphere must be over there."

"I think," said Cavor, "I kept the sun upon my right all the time."

"Every leap it seems to me," I said, "my shadow flew before me."

We stared into one another's eyes. The area of the crater had become enormously vast, the growing thickets already impenetrably dense.

"Good heavens! What fools we have been!"

"It's evident that we must find it again," said Cavor, "and that soon. The sun grows stronger. We should be fainting with the heat already if it wasn't so dry. And I'm hungry."

I stared at him. I had not suspected this aspect of the matter before. But it came to me at once—a positive craving. "Yes," I said, with emphasis. "I am hungry, too."

He stood up with a look of active resolution. "Certainly we must find the sphere."

As calmly as possible we surveyed the interminable reefs and thickets that formed the floor of the crater, each of us weighing in silence the chances of our finding the sphere before we were overtaken by heat and hunger.

"It can't be fifty yards from here," said Cavor, with indecisive gestures. "The only thing is to beat round about until we come upon it."

"That is all we can do," I said, without any alacrity to begin our hunt. "I wish this confounded spike bush did not grow so fast!"

"That's just it," said Cavor. "But it was lying on a bank of snow."

I stared about me in the vain hope of recognizing some knoll or shrub that had been near the sphere. But everywhere

was a confused sameness, everywhere the aspiring bushes, the distending fungi, the dwindling snow-banks, steadily and inevitably changed. The sun scorched and stung, the faintness of an unaccountable hunger mingled with our infinite perplexity. And even as we stood there, confused and lost amidst unprecedented things, we became aware for the first time of a sound upon the moon other than the stir of the growing plants, the faint sighing of the wind, or those that we ourselves had made.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

It came from beneath our feet, a sound in the earth. We seemed to hear it with our feet as much as with our ears. Its dull resonance was muffled by distance, thick with the quality of intervening substance. No sound that I can imagine could have astonished us more or have changed more completely the quality of things about us. For this sound, rich, slow and deliberate, seemed to us as though it could be nothing but the striking of some gigantic buried clock.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Sound suggestive of still cloisters, of sleepless nights in crowded cities, of vigils and the awaited hour, of all that is orderly and methodical in life, booming out pregnant and mysterious in this fantastic desert! To the eye everything was unchanged; the desolation of bushes and cacti waving silently in the wind, stretched unbroken to the distant cliffs; the still, dark sky was empty overhead, and the hot sun hung and burned. And over it all, a warning, a threat, throbbed this enigma of sound.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

We questioned one another in faint and faded voices. "A clock?"

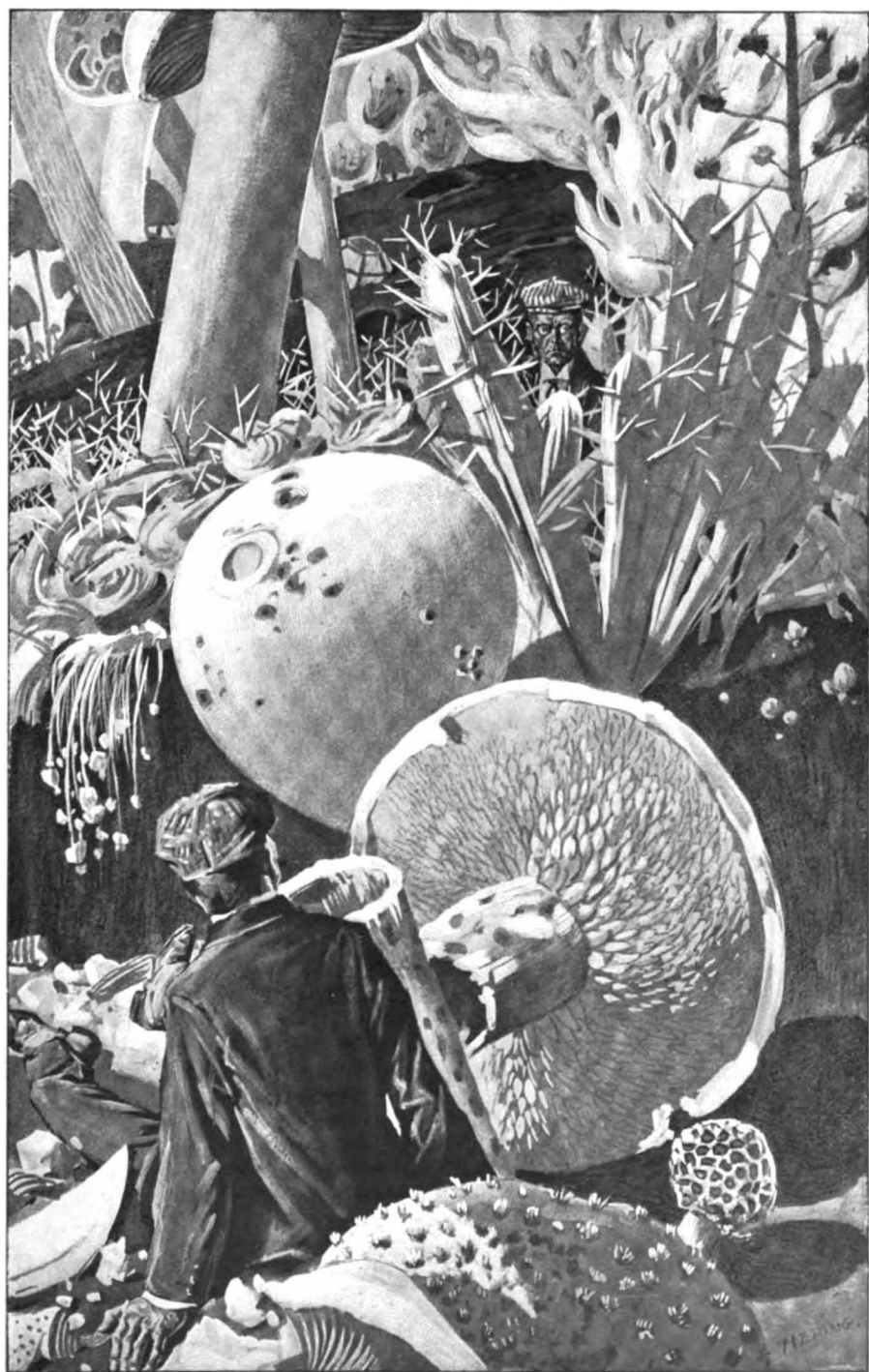
"Like a clock!"

"What is it?"

"What can it be?"

"Count," was Cavor's belated suggestion, and at that word the striking ceased. The silence, the rhythmic disappointment of the silence, came as a fresh shock. For a moment one could doubt whether one had ever heard a sound. Or whether it might not still be going on? Had I indeed heard a sound?

I felt the pressure of Cavor's hand upon my arm. He spoke in an undertone, as



Drawn by E. Heron

"I BECAME AWARE OF CAVOR'S LITTLE ROUND FACE PEEPRING OVER A BRISTLING HEDGE.

though he feared to wake some sleeping thing. "Let us keep together," he whispered, "and look for the sphere. We must get back to the sphere. This is beyond our understanding."

"Which way shall we go?"

He hesitated. An intense persuasion of presences, of unseen things about us and near us, dominated our minds. What could they be? Where could they be? Was this arid desolation, alternately frozen and scorched, only the outer rind and mask of some subterranean world? And if so, what sort of world? What sort of inhabitants might it not presently disgorge upon us?

And then stabbing the aching stillness, as vivid and sudden as an unexpected thunderclap, came a clang and rattle as though great gates of metal had suddenly been flung apart.

It arrested our steps. We stood gaping helplessly. Then Cavor stole toward me. "I do not understand!" he whispered, close to my face. He waved his hand vaguely skyward, the vague suggestion of still vaguer thoughts.

"A hiding place! If anything came —" I looked about us. I nodded my head in assent to him.

We started off, moving stealthily with the most exaggerated precautions against noise. We went toward a thicket of scrub. A clangor like hammers flung about a boiler, hastened our steps. "We must crawl," whispered Cavor.

The lower leaves of the bayonet plants, already overshadowed by the newer ones above, were beginning to wilt and shrivel so that we could thrust our way in among the thickening stems without any serious injury. A stab in the face or arm we did not heed. At the heart of the thicket I stopped and stared panting, into Cavor's face.

"Subterranean," he whispered; "below."

"They may come out."

"We must find the sphere."

"Yes," I said, "but how?"

"Crawl till we come to it."

"But if we don't?"

"Keep hidden. See what they are like."

"We will keep together," said I.

He thought. "Which way shall we go?"

"We must take our chance."

We peered this way and that. Then, very circumspectly, we began to crawl through the lower jungle, making, so far as we could judge, a circuit, halting now at every waving fungus, at every sound, intent only on the sphere from which we had so foolishly emerged. Ever and again from out of the earth beneath us came concussions; beatings; strange, inexplicable, mechanical sounds, and once and then again we thought we heard something, a faint rattle and tumult, borne to us through the air. But fearful as we were we dared essay no vantage point to survey the crater. For long we saw nothing of the beings whose sounds were so abundant and insistent. But for the faintness of our hunger and the drying of our throats, that crawling would have had the quality of a very vivid dream. It was so absolutely unreal. The only element with any touch of reality was these sounds.

Figure it to yourself! About us the dream-like jungle with the silent bayonet leaves darting overhead, and the silent, vivid, sun-splashed lichens under our hands and knees, waving with the vigor of their growth as a carpet waves when the wind gets beneath it. Ever and again one of the bladder fungi, bulging and distending under the sun, loomed upon us. Ever and again some novel shape in vivid color obtruded. The very cells that built up these plants were as large as my thumb, like beads of colored glass. And all these things were saturated in the unmitigated glare of the sun, were seen against a sky that was bluish black and spangled still, in spite of the sunlight, with a few surviving stars. Strange! The very forms and texture of the stones were strange. It was all strange; the feeling of one's body was unprecedented; every other movement ended in a surprise. The breath sucked thin in one's throat, the blood flowed through one's ears in a throbbing tide.

And ever and again came gusts of turmoil, hammering, the clanging and throb of machinery and presently the bellowing of great beasts!

Designed by F. Herring.

"I STOOD FOR A MOMENT STRUCK BY THE GROTESQUE EFFECT OF HIS SOAKING FIGURE."



XI.

THE MOONCALF PASTURES.

So we two, poor, terrestrial castaways, lost in that wild-growing moon jungle, crawled in terror before the sounds that had come upon us. We crawled, as it seemed, a long time before we saw either Selenite or mooncalf, though we heard the bellowing and gruntulous noises of these latter continually drawing nearer to us. We crawled through stony ravines, over snow slopes, amid fungi that ripped like thin bladders at our thrust emitting a watery humor, over a perfect pavement of things like puffballs and beneath interminable thickets of scrub. And ever more hopelessly our eyes sought for our abandoned sphere. The noise of the mooncalves would at times be a vast, flat, calf-like sound, at times it rose to an amazed and wrathful bellowing and again it would become a clogged bestial sound as though these unseen creatures had sought to eat and bellow at the same time.

Our first view was but an inadequate, transitory glimpse, yet none the less disturbing because it was incomplete. Cavor was crawling in front at the time and he first was aware of their proximity. He stopped dead, arresting me with a single gesture.

A crackling and smashing of the scrub appeared to be advancing directly upon us, and then, as we squatted close and endeavored to judge of the nearness and direction of this noise, there came a terrific bellow behind us, so close and vehement that the tops of the bayonet scrub bent before it and one felt the breath of it hot and warm. And turning about we saw indistinctly through a crowd of swaying stems the mooncalf's shining sides, and the long line of its back loomed out against the sky.

Of course it is hard for me now to say how much I saw at that time, because my impressions were corrected by subsequent observation. First of all impressions was its enormous size, the girth of its body was some four score feet, its length perhaps two hundred. Its sides rose and fell with its labored breathing. I perceived that its gigantic, flabby body lay along the ground, and that its skin was of a corrugated white, dappling into blackness along the back-

bone. But of its feet we saw nothing. I think also that we saw then the profile, at least, of the almost brainless head, with its fat-encumbered neck, its slobbering, omnivorous mouth, its little nostrils and tight-shut eyes. (For the mooncalf invariably shuts its eyes in the presence of the sun.) We had a glimpse of a vast red pit as it opened its mouth to bleat and bellow again; we had a breath from the pit, and then the monster heeled over like a ship, dragged forward along the ground, creaking all its leathery skin, rolled again and so wallowed past us, smashing a path amid the scrub, and was speedily hidden from our eyes by the dense interlacings beyond. Another appeared more distantly, and then another, and then, as though he was guiding these animated lumps of provender to their pasture, a Selenite came momentarily into ken. My grip upon Cavor's foot became convulsive at the sight of him, and we remained motionless and peering long after he had passed out of our range.

By contrast with the mooncalves he seemed a trivial being, a mere ant, scarcely five feet high. He was wearing garments of some leathery substance, so that no portion of his actual body appeared, but of this, of course, we were entirely ignorant. He presented himself therefore as a compact, bristling creature, having much of the quality of a complicated insect, with whip-like tentacles and a clanging arm projecting from his shining, cylindrical body case. The form of his head was hidden by his enormous, many-spiked helmet—we discovered afterward that he used the spikes for prodding refractory mooncalves—and a pair of goggles of darkened glass set very much at the side gave a bud-like quality to the metallic apparatus that covered his face. His arms did not project beyond his body case, and he carried himself upon short legs that, wrapped though they were in warm coverings, seemed to our terrestrial eyes inordinately flimsy. They had very short thighs and very long shanks and little feet.

In spite of his heavy-looking clothing he was progressing with what would be, from the terrestrial point of view, very considerable strides, and his clanging arm was busy. The quality of his motion during the instant of his passing suggested haste

and a certain anger, and soon after we had lost sight of him we heard the bellow of a mooncalf change abruptly into a short, sharp squeal, followed by the scuffle of its acceleration. And gradually that bellowing receded and then came abruptly to an end—as if the pastures sought had been attained.

We listened. For a space the moon world was still. But it was some time before we resumed our crawling search for the vanished sphere.

When next we saw mooncalves they were some little distance away from us in a place of tumbled rocks. The less vertical surfaces of the rocks were thick with a speckled green plant growing in dense, mossy clumps, upon which these creatures were browsing. We stopped at the edge of the reeds amid which we were crawling at the sight of them, peering out at them and looking round for a second glimpse of a Selenite. They lay against their food like stupendous slugs, huge, greasy hells, eating greedily and noisily, with a sort of sobbing avidity. They seemed monsters of mere fatness, clumsy and overwhelmed to a degree that would make a Smithfield ox seem a model of agility. Their busy, writhing, chewing mouths, and eyes closed together, with the appetizing sound of their munching, made up an effect of animal enjoyment that was singularly stimulating to our empty frames.

"Hogs!" said Cavor, with unusual passion; "disgusting hogs!" and after one glare of angry envy crawled off through the bushes to our right. I stayed long enough to see that the speckled plant was quite hopeless for human nourishment, then crawled after him, nibbling a quill of it between my teeth.

Presently we were arrested again by the proximity of a Selenite, and this time we were able to observe him more exactly. Now we could see that the Selenite covering was indeed clothing and not a sort of crustacean integument. He was quite similar in his costume to the former one we had glimpsed, except that ends of a sort of wadding were protruding from his neck, and he stood on a promontory of rock and moved his head this way and that as though he was surveying the crater. We lay quite still, fearing to attract his

attention if we moved, and after a time he turned about and disappeared.

We came upon another drove of mooncalves bellowing up a ravine, and then we passed over a place of sounds, sounds of beating machinery, as if some huge hall of industry came near the surface there. And while these sounds were still about us we came to the edge of a great, open space, perhaps two hundred yards in diameter and perfectly level. Save for a few lichens that advanced from its margin this space was bare, and presented a powdery surface of a dusty yellow color. We were afraid to strike out across this space, but as it presented less obstruction to our crawling than the scrub, we went down upon it and began very circumspectly to skirt its edge.

For a little while the noises from below ceased and everything, save for the faint stir of the growing vegetation, was very still. Then abruptly there began an uproar, louder, more vehement, and nearer than any we had so far heard. Of a certainty it came from below. Instinctively we crouched as flat as we could, ready for a prompt plunge into the thicket beside us. Each knock and throb seemed to vibrate through our bodies. Louder grew this throbbing and beating, and that irregular vibration increased until the whole moon world seemed to be jerking and pulsing.

"Cover," whispered Cavor, and I turned toward the bushes.

At that instant came the thud like the thud of a gun, and then a thing happened—it still haunts me in my dreams. I had turned my head to look at Cavor's face and thrust out my hand in front of me as I did so, and my hand met nothing! Plunged suddenly into a bottomless hole!

My chest hit something hard, and I found myself with my chin on the edge of an unfathomable abyss that had suddenly opened beneath me, my hand extended stiffly into the void. The whole of that flat, circular area was no more than a gigantic lid that was now sliding sideways from off the pit it had covered into a slot prepared for it.

Had it not been for Cavor I think I should have remained rigid, hanging over this margin and staring into the enormous gulf below until at last the edges of the slop

scraped me off and hurled me into its depths. But Cavor had not received the shock that had paralyzed me. He had been a little distance from the edge when the lid had first opened, and perceiving the peril that held me helpless, gripped my legs and pulled me backward. I came into a sitting position, crawled away from the edge for a space on all fours, then staggered up and ran after him across the thundering, quivering sheet of metal. It seemed to be swinging open with a steadily accelerated velocity and the bushes in front of me shifted sideways as I ran.

I was none too soon. Cavor's back vanished amid the bristling thicket, and as I scrambled up after him the monstrous valve came into its position with a clang. For a long time we lay panting, not daring to approach the pit.

But at last very cautiously, and bit by bit, we crept into a position from which we could peer down. The bushes about us creaked and waved with the force of a breeze that was blowing down the shaft. We could see nothing at first except smooth, vertical walls descending at last into an impenetrable black. And then very gradually we became aware of a number of very faint and little lights going to and fro.

For a time that stupendous gulf of mystery held us so that we forgot even our sphere. In time, as we grew more accustomed to the darkness, we could make out very small, dim, illusive shapes moving about among those needle-point illuminations. We peered, amazed and incredulous, understanding so little that we could find no words to say. We could distinguish nothing that would give us a clue to the meaning of the faint shapes we saw.

"What can it be?" I asked. "What can it be?"

"The engineering! They must live in these caverns during the night and come out during the day."

"Cavor!" I said. "Can they be—that—it was something like—men?"

"That was not a man."

"We dare risk nothing!"

"We dare do nothing until we find the sphere!"

"We *can* do nothing until we find the sphere." He assented with a groan and stirred himself to move. He stared about

him for a space, sighed, and indicated a direction. We struck out through the jungle. For a time we crawled resolutely, then with diminishing vigor. Presently among great shapes of flabby purple there came a noise of trampling and cries about us. We lay close and for a long time the sounds went to and fro and very near. But this time we saw nothing. I tried to whisper to Cavor that I could hardly go without food much longer, but my mouth had become too dry for whispering.

"Cavor," I said, "I must have food." He turned a face full of dismay toward me.

"It's a case for holding out," he said.

"But I *must*," I said, "and look at my lips!"

"I've been thirsty some time."

"If only some of that snow had remained!"

"It's clean gone! We're driving from arctic to tropical at the rate of a degree a minute."

I gnawed my hand.

"The sphere!" he said. "There is nothing for it but the sphere." We roused ourselves to another spurt of crawling. My mind ran entirely on edible things, on the hissing profundity of summer drinks, more particularly I craved for beer. I was haunted by the memory of a sixteen-gallon cask that had swaggered in my Lympne cellar. I thought of the adjacent larder, and especially of steak and kidney pie—tender steak and plenty of kidney and rich, thick gravy between. Ever and again I was seized with fits of hungry yawning.

We came to flat places overgrown with fleshy red things, monatrous coralline growths; as we pushed against them they snapped and broke. I noted the quality of the broken surfaces. The confounded stuff certainly looked of a bitable texture. Then it seemed to me that it smelt rather well.

I picked up a fragment and sniffed at it.

"Cavor," I said, in a hoarse undertone.

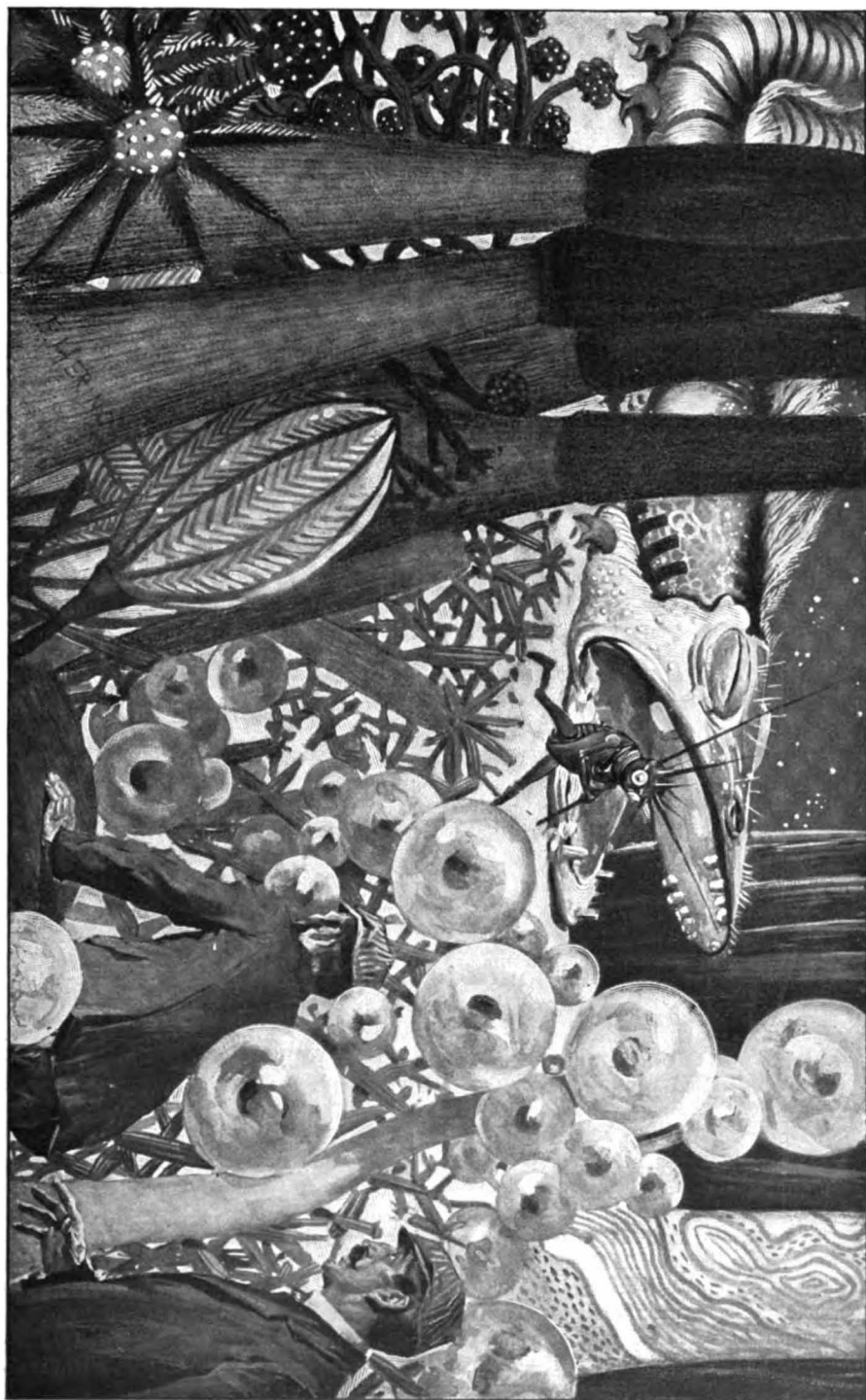
He glanced at me with his face screwed up. "Don't," he said. I put down the fragment, and we crawled on through this tempting fleshiness for a space.

"Cavor," I asked, "why *not*?"

"Poison," I heard him say, but he did not look round.

Drawn by E. Herzig

"BY CONTRAST WITH THE MOONCALVES HE SEEMED A TRIVIAL CREATURE, A MERE ANT, SCARCELY FIVE FEET HIGH."



We crawled some way before I decided.

"I'll chance it," said I.

He made a belated gesture to prevent me. I stuffed my mouth full. He crouched, watching my face, his own twisted into the oddest expression. "It's good," I said.

"Oh, Lord!" he cried.

He watched me munch, his face wrinkled with desire and disapproval, then suddenly succumbed to appetite and began to tear off huge mouthfuls. For a time we did nothing but eat.

The stuff was not unlike a terrestrial mushroom, only it was much laxer in texture, and as one swallowed it it warmed the throat. At first we experienced a mere mechanical satisfaction in eating. Then our blood began to run warmer and we tingled at the lips and fingers, and then new and slightly irrelevant ideas came bubbling up in our minds.

"It's good," said I. "Infernally good! What a home for our surplus population! Our poor, surplus population!" and I broke off another large portion.

It filled me with a curiously benevolent satisfaction that there was such good food in the moon. The depression of my hunger gave way to an irrational exhilaration. The dread and discomfort in which I had been living vanished entirely. I perceived the moon no longer as a planet from which I most earnestly desired a means of escape, but as a possible refuge for human destitution. I think I forgot the Selenites, the mooncalves, the lid and the noises completely as soon as I had eaten that fungus.

Cavor replied to the third repetition of my "surplus population" remark with similar words of approval. I felt that my head swam, but I put this down to the stimulating effect of food after a long fast. "Essential discovery, yours, Cavor," said I. "Se'nd on'y to the 'tato."

"Whajer mean?" asked Cavor. "Scov'ery of the moon se'nd on'y to the 'tato."

I looked at him, shocked at his suddenly hoarse voice and by the badness of his articulation. It occurred to me in a flash that he was intoxicated, possibly by the fungus. It also occurred to me that he erred in imagining that he had discovered the moon; he had not discovered it—he had only reached it. I tried to lay my hand

on his arm and explain this to him, but the issue was too subtle for his brain. It was also unexpectedly difficult to express. After a momentary attempt to understand me—I remember wondering if the fungus had made my eyes as fishy as his—he set off upon some observations on his own account.

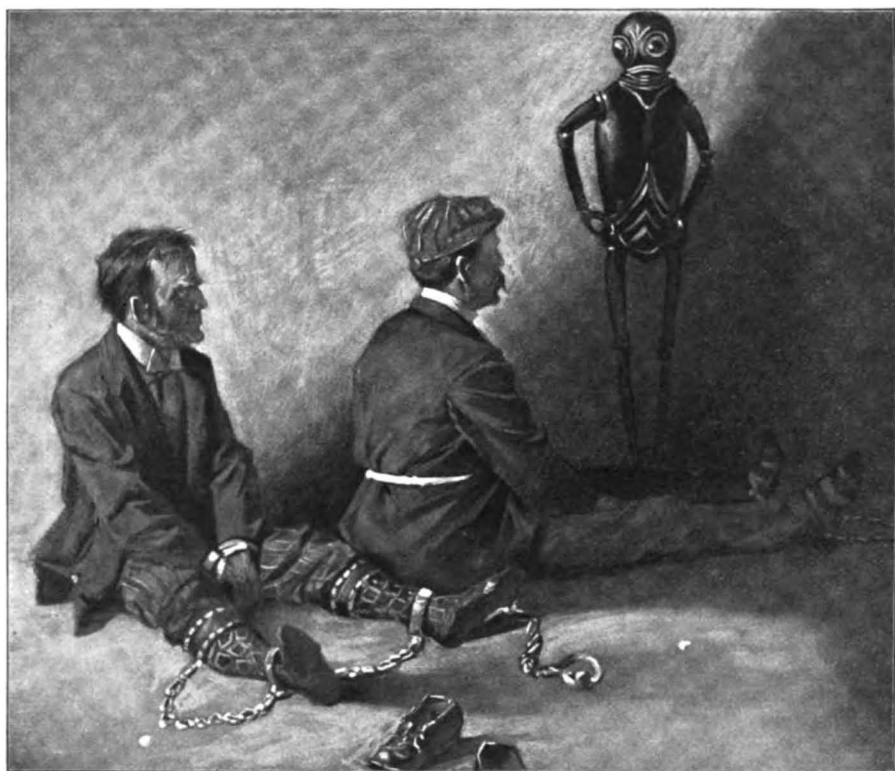
"We are," he announced, with a solemn hiccup, "the creashurs o' what we eat and drink."

He repeated this, and as I was now in one of my subtle moods I determined to dispute it. Possibly I wandered a little from the point. But Cavor certainly did not attend at all properly. He stood up as well as he could, putting a hand on my head to steady himself, and stood staring about him, quite devoid now of any fear of the moon beings.

I tried to point out that this was dangerous, for some reason that was not perfectly clear to me, but the word dangerous had somehow got mixed with indiscreet, and after an attempt to disentangle them I resumed my argument, addressing myself principally to the unfamiliar but attentive coralline growths on either side. I felt that it was necessary to clear up this confusion between the moon and a potato at once. I wandered into a long parenthesis on the importance of precision of definition in argument. I did my best to ignore the fact that my bodily sensations were no longer agreeable.

In some way that I have now forgotten my mind was led back to projects of colonization. "We must annex this moon," I said. "There must be no shilly-shally. This is part of the White Man's Burden. Cavor—we are—*hic*—*satap*—mean sat-raps! Nempire Caesar never dreamt. B'in all the newspapers. Cavorecia. Bedfordecia. Bedfordecia Limited."

Certainly I was intoxicated. I announced my intention of hoisting the Union Jack forthwith, and fell to deploring that we had not one with us. It occurred to me that the Union Jack was frequently incorrectly rendered without any quartering of the oblique stripes and also that there was a popular delusion that it was the English and not the Imperial flag. I tried to explain these points in a compact manner to Cavor.



Designed by J. H. R. H. H.

"I PERCEIVED HIM STANDING FACING US BOTH IN THE FULL LIGHT.

"S'matter of fact," I said, "English flag, only proper English flag—red cross on white. Union Schack much larger idea. No English, no Scotch, no Irish, no colonies—everybody." I found I had forgotten the line of argument I had intended to pursue and continued to repeat all this to fill up time.

From that point my memory of the action of that abominable fungus becomes confused. I remember vaguely that we declared our intention of standing no nonsense from any confounded insects, that we decided it ill became men to hide shamefully upon a mere satellite, that we equipped ourselves with huge armfuls of the fungus—whether for missile purposes or not I do not know—and heedless of the stabs of the bayonet shrub we started forth into the sunshine.

Almost immediately we must have come upon the Selenites. There were six of them and they were marching in single file over a rocky place, making the most re-

markable piping and whining sounds. They all seemed to become aware of us at once; all instantly became silent and motionless, with their faces turned toward us.

For a moment I was sobered.

"Insects," murmured Cavor, "insects! And they think I'm going to crawl about on my stomach—on my vertebrated stomach! Stomach," he repeated, slowly, as though he chewed the indignity.

Then suddenly with a shout of fury he made three vast strides and leaped toward them. He leaped badly; he made a series of somersaults in the air, whirled right over them and vanished with an enormous splash amidst the cactus bladders. What the Selenites made of this amazing and to my mind undignified irruption from another planet, I have no means of guessing. I seem to remember the sight of their backs as they ran in all directions, but I am not sure. All these last incidents before oblivion came are vague and faint in my mind. I know I made a step to follow

Cavor and tripped and fell headlong among the rocks. I was, I am certain, suddenly and vehemently ill. I seem to remember a violent struggle, and being gripped by metallic clasps.

My next clear recollection is that we were prisoners at we knew not what depth beneath the moon's surface; we were in darkness amid strange distracting noises, our bodies were covered with scratches and bruises and our heads racked with pain.

XII.

THE SELENITE'S FACE.

I found myself sitting crouched together in a tumultuous darkness. For a long time I could not understand where I was nor how I had come to this perplexity. I thought of the cupboard into which I had been thrust at times when I was a child, and then of a very dark and noisy bedroom in which I had slept during an illness. But these sounds about me were not the noises I had known, and there was a thin flavor in the air like the wind of a stable. Then I supposed we must still be at work upon the sphere and that somehow I had got into the cellar of Cavor's house. I remembered we had finished the sphere and fancied I must still be in it and traveling through space.

"Cavor," I said, "cannot we have some light?"

There came no answer.

"Cavor!" I insisted.

I was answered by a groan. "My head!" I heard him say, "My head!"

I attempted to press my hands to my brow, which ached, and discovered they were tied together. This startled me very much. I brought them up to my mouth and felt the cold smoothness of metal. They were chained together. I tried to separate my legs and made out they were similarly fastened, and also that I was fastened to the ground by a much thicker chain about the middle of my body.

I was more frightened than I had yet been by anything in all our strange experiences. For a time I tugged silently at my bonds. "Cavor!" I cried out sharply. "Why am I tied? Why have you tied me hand and foot?"

"I haven't tied you," he answered. "It's the Selenites."

The Selenites! My mind hung on that for a space. Then my memories came back to me, the snowy desolation, the thawing of the air, the growth of the plants, our strange hopping and crawling among the rocks and vegetation of the crater. All the distress of our frantic search for the sphere returned to me. Finally the opening of the great lid that covered the pit!

Then as I strained to trace our later movements down to our present plight, the pain in my head became intolerable. I came to an insurmountable barrier, an obstinate blank.

"Cavor!"

"Yes."

"Where are we?"

"How should I know?"

"Are we dead?"

"What nonsense!"

"They've got us then!"

He made no answer but a grunt. The lingering trace of the poison seemed to make him oddly irritable.

"What do you mean to do?"

"How should I know what to do?"

"Oh, very well," said I, and became silent. Presently I roused myself.

"Oh, *Lord!*" I cried, "I wish you'd stop that buzzing!"

We lapsed into silence again, listening to the dull confusion of noises, like the muffled sounds of a street or factory, that filled our ears. I could make nothing of it, my mind pursued first one rhythm and then another, and questioned it in vain. But after a long time I became aware of a new and sharper element, not mingling with the rest, but standing out, as it were, against that cloudy background of sound. It was a series of relatively very little, definite sounds, tappings and rubbings like a loose spray of ivy against a window or a bird moving about upon a box. We listened and peered about us, but the darkness was a velvet pall. There followed a noise like the subtle movement of the wards of a well-oiled lock. And then there appeared, hanging, as it seemed, in an immensity of black, a thin bright line.

"Look!" whispered Cavor, very softly.

We stared. The thin bright line be-

came a band and broader and paler. It took upon itself the quality of a bluish light falling upon a whitewashed wall. It ceased to be parallel sided; it developed a deep indentation on one side. I turned to remark this to Cavor and was amazed to see his ear in a brilliant illumination—all the rest of him in shadow. I twisted my head round as well as my bonds would permit. "Cavor," I said, "it's behind!"

Suddenly the crack that had been admitting the light broadened out and revealed itself as the space of an opening door. Beyond was a sapphire vista, and in the doorway stood a grotesque outline silhouetted against the glare.

My first impression was of some clumsy quadruped with lowered head. Then I perceived it was the slender, pinched body and short and extremely attenuated bandy-legs of a Selenite, with his head depressed between his shoulders.

He was without the helmet and body covering they wear upon the exterior.

He was a blank, black figure to us, but instinctively our imaginations supplied features to his very human outline. I at least took it instantly that he was somewhat hunchbacked with a high forehead and long features.

He came forward three steps and paused for a time. His movements seemed absolutely noiseless. Then he came forward again. He walked like a bird, his feet fell one in front of the other. He stepped out of the ray of light that came through the doorway, and it seemed as though he vanished altogether in the shadow.

For a moment my eyes sought him in the wrong place, and then I perceived him standing facing us both in the full light. Only the human features I had attributed to him were not there at all.

Of course I ought to have expected that, only I didn't. It came to me as an absolute, for a moment an overwhelming shock. It seemed as though it wasn't a face; as though it must needs be a mark, a horror, a deformity that would presently be disavowed or explained.

It was rather like a visored helmet. But I can't explain the thing. Have you ever seen the face of some insect greatly magnified? There was no nose, no expression; it was all shiny and hard and invariable,

with bulging eyes—at the side—in the silhouette I had supposed they were ears. There were no ears. I have tried to draw one of these heads but I cannot. The point one cannot get is the horrible want of expression, or rather the horrible want of change of expression. Every head and face a man meets with on earth in the usual way resorts to expression. This was like being stared at suddenly by an engine. There the thing was, looking at us.

But when I say there was a want of change of expression I do not mean that there was not a sort of set expression on the face, just as there is a sort of set expression about a coal-scuttle or a chimney-cowl or the ventilator of a steamship. There was a mouth, downwardly curved, like a human mouth in a face that stares ferociously.

The neck on which the head was poised was jointed in three places, almost like the short joints in the leg of a crab. The jointing of the limbs I could not see because of the puttec-like straps in which they were swathed, and which formed the only clothing these beings wore.

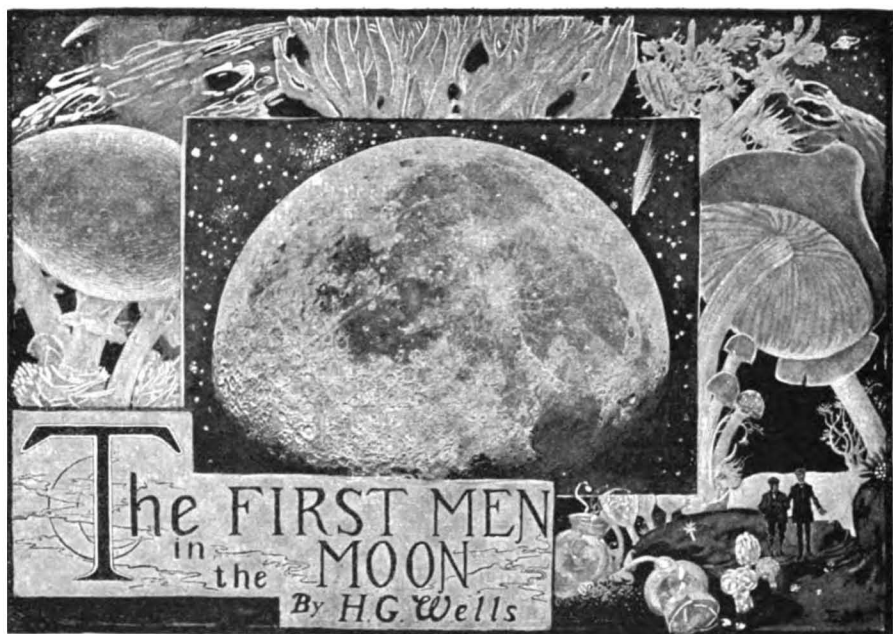
We did at least know what had brought about this meeting of incompatible creatures. But conceive how it would seem to decent Londoners, for example, to come upon a couple of living things as big as men and absolutely unlike any other earthly animals, careering about among the sheep in Hyde Park. Suddenly acute and vivid would come that question: Whence? That question which underlies all things, but which is latent and forgotten.

Figure us! We were bound hand and foot, fagged and filthy; our beards two inches long, our faces scratched and bloody. Our jackets were unbuttoned and our shoes had been taken off and lay at our feet. And we were sitting with our backs to this queer light, peering at such a monster as Durer might have invented.

Cavor broke the silence, started to speak, went hoarse and cleared his throat. Outside began a terrific bellowing as if a moon-calf was in trouble. It ended in a shriek, and everything was still again.

Presently the Selenite turned about, flickered into the shadow, stood for a moment retrospective at the door, and then closed it on us.

(To be continued.)



Drawn by E. Herling.

XIII.

SEARCHING FOR A COMMON BASIS.

FOR a time neither of us spoke. To focus together all the things we had brought upon ourselves, seemed beyond my mental powers.

"They've got us," I said, at last.

"It was that fungus."

"Well, if I hadn't taken it we should have fainted and starved."

"We might have found the sphere."

I lost my temper at his persistence and swore to myself. For a time we hated one another in silence. I drummed with my fingers on the floor between my knees and gritted the links of my fetters together. Presently I was forced to talk again.

"What do you make of it, anyhow?" I asked, humbly.

"They are reasonable creatures—they can make things and do things—those lights we saw——"

He stopped. It was clear he could make nothing of it. "We are some way in," he said, presently. "I mean—perhaps a couple of thousand feet or more."

"Why?"

"It's cooler; and our voices are so much

louder. That faded quality—it has altogether gone. And the feeling in one's ears and throat."

I had not noted that, but I did now.

"The air is denser. We must be some depth—a mile, even, we may be—inside the moon."

"We never thought of a world inside the moon."

"No."

"How could we?"

"We might have done so; only—one gets into habits of mind."

He thought for a time.

"Now," he said, "it seems such an obvious thing."

"Of course! The moon must be enormously cavernous, with an atmosphere within, and at the center of its caverns a sea."

"One knew that the moon had a lower specific gravity than the earth; one knew that it had little air or water outside; one knew, too, that it was sister planet to the earth, and that it was unaccountable that it should be different. And yet one never saw it as a fact. Kepler, of course——"

His voice had the interest now of a man

who has discovered a pretty sequence of reasoning.

"Yea," he said, "Kepler, with his Sub-Volvani, was right after all."

"I wish you had taken the trouble to find that out before we came," I said. He buzzed very softly. My temper was going. "What do you think has become of the sphere, anyhow?" I asked.

"Lost," he said, like a man who answers an uninteresting question.

"Among those plants?"

"Unless they find it."

"And then?"

"How can I tell?"

"Cavor," I said, with a sort of hysterical bitterness, "things look bright for my company——"

He made no answer.

"Good Lord," I exclaimed; "just think of all the trouble we took to get into this pickle! What did we come for? What are we after? What was the moon to us or we to the moon? We wanted too much; we tried too much. We ought to have started the little things first. It was you proposed the moon. Those Cavorite spring blinds. I am certain we could have worked them for terrestrial purposes. Certain! Did you really understand what I proposed? A steel cylinder——"

"Rubbish!" said Cavor.

We ceased to converse. For a time Cavor kept up a broken monologue without much help from me.

"If they find it," he began, "if they find it, what will they do with it? Well, that's a question. It may be that's the question. They won't understand it, anyhow. If they understood that sort of thing they would have come long since to the earth. No! But they will examine it. Clearly, they are intelligent and inquisitive. They will examine it—get inside it—trifle with the studs. Off! That would mean the moon for us for all the rest of our lives. Strange creatures, strange knowledge."

"Curse your strange knowledge!" said I.

"Look here, Mr. Bedford," said Cavor, "you came on this expedition of your own free will. Anyhow, it's no use your quarrelling with me now. These creatures—these Selenites or Sub-Volvani—or whatever we choose to call them, have got us tied hand

and foot. Whatever temper you choose to go through with it in, you will have to go through with it. And we have experiences before us that will need all our coolness."

He paused as if he required my assent.

But I sat sulking.

"The problem is, communication. Gestures, I fear, will be different—pointing, for example. No creatures but men and monkeys point."

That was too obviously wrong for me.

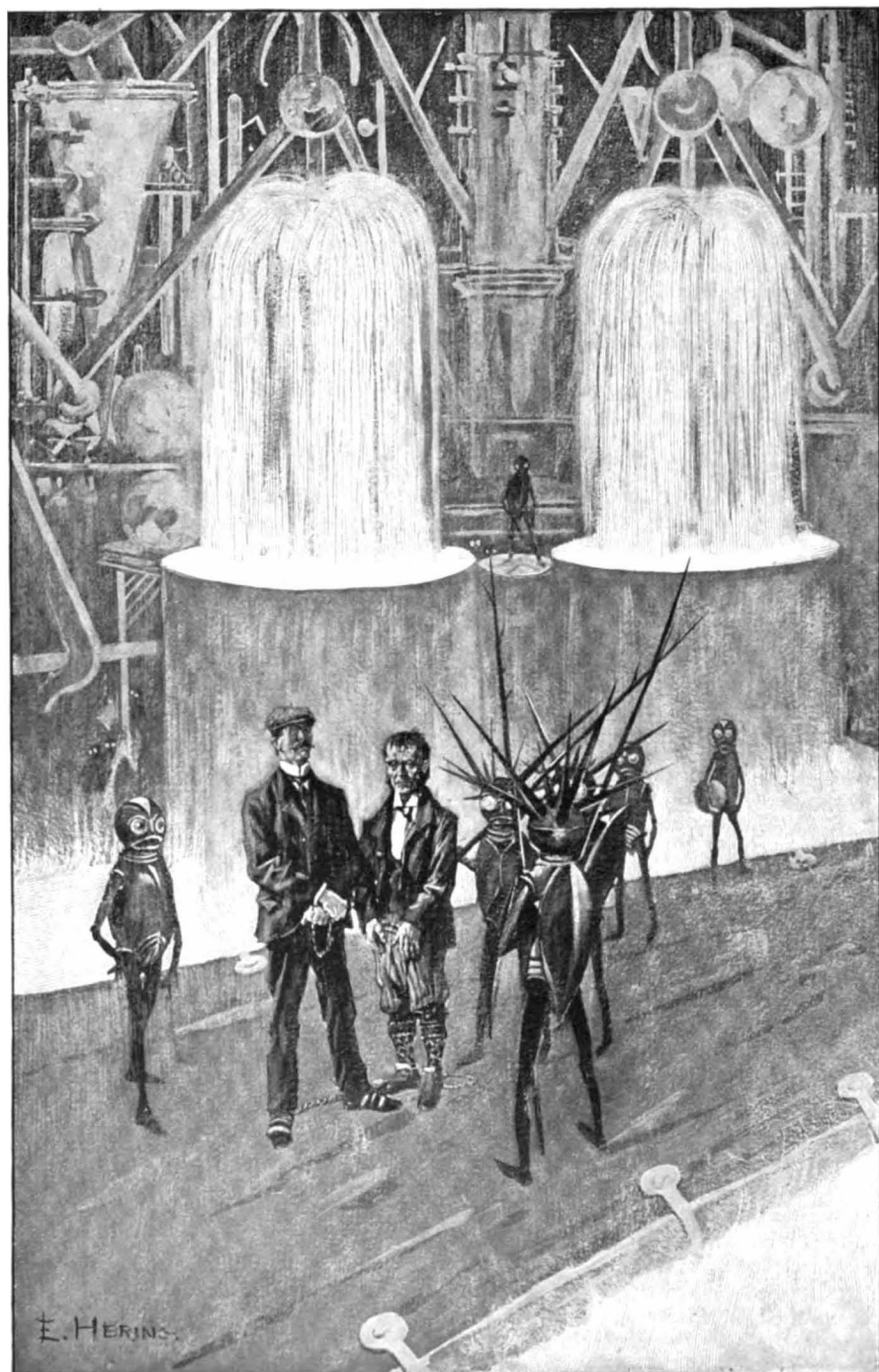
"Pretty nearly every animal," I cried, "points with its eyes or nose."

Cavor meditated over that. "Yea," he said, at last, "and we don't. There are such differences—such differences!"

"One might—but how can I tell? There is speech. The sounds they make, a sort of fluting and piping. I don't see how we are to imitate that. Is it their speech, that sort of thing? They may have different senses, different means of communication. Of course, they are minds and we are minds; there must be something in common. Who knows how far we may not get to an understanding?"

"I remember reading once a paper by the late Professor Galton, on the possibility of communication between the planets. Unhappily, at that time it did not seem probable that that would be of any material benefit to me, and I fear I did not give it the attention I should have—in view of this state of affairs. Yet—now let me see."

"His idea was to begin with those broad truths that must underlie all conceivable mental existences and establish a basis on those. The great principles of geometry, to begin with. He proposed to take some leading proposition of Euclid's and show by construction that its truth was known to us, to demonstrate, for example, that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and that if the equal sides be produced, the angles on the other side of the base are equal also; or that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the two other sides. By demonstrating our knowledge of these things we should prove our possession of a reasonable intelligence. Now suppose I—I might draw the geometrical figure with a wet finger or even trace it in the air——"



Drawn by E. Herings.

"OUT OF THE TOP OF THE VERTICAL CYLINDER CAME POURING THIS INCANDESCENT SUBSTANCE THAT LIT THE PLACE."

He fell to buzzing. I sat meditating his words. For a time his wild hope of communication, of interpretation, with these weird beings held me. Then that angry despair that was a part of my exhaustion and physical misery resumed its sway. I perceived with a sudden novel vividness the extraordinary folly of everything I had ever done.

"Ass!" I said. "Oh, ass, unutterable ass! I seem to exist only to go about doing preposterous things. Why did we ever leave the thing? Hopping about looking for patents and concessions in the craters of the moon! If only we had had the sense to fasten a handkerchief to a stick, to show where we had left the sphere!"

I subsided, fuming.

"It is clear," meditated Cavor, "they are intelligent. One can hypotheticate certain things. As they have not killed us at once they must have ideas of mercy, possibly of intercourse. They may meet us. And this apartment, and the glimpses we had of its furnishing. These fetters. A high degree of intelligence——"

"I wish to heaven," cried I, "I'd thought even twice. Plunge after plunge. First one fluky start, and then another. It was my confidence in you. Why didn't I stick to my play? That was what I was equal to. That was my world and the life I was made for. I could have finished that play. I'm certain it was a good play. I had the scenario as good as done. Then, conceive it, leaping to the moon! Practically, I've thrown my life away."

I looked up and stopped in mid-sentence. The darkness had given place to that bluish light again. The door was opening, and several noiseless Selenites were coming into the chamber. I became quite still, staring at the chitinous impassiveness of their faces.

Then suddenly my sense of disagreeable strangeness changed to interest. I perceived that the foremost and second carried bowls. One elemental need, at least, our minds could understand in common. They were bowls of some metal that, like our fetters, looked dark in that bluish light; and each contained a number of whitish fragments. All the cloudy pain and misery that oppressed me, rushed together and took the shape of hunger. I eyed

these bowls wolfishly, and, though it returned to me in dreams, at that time it seemed a small matter that at the end of the arms that lowered one toward me were not hands, but a sort of flap and thumb, like the end of an elephant's trunk.

The stuff in the bowl was loose in texture and whitish-brown in color—rather like lumps of some cold soufflé, and it smelt faintly like mushrooms. From a partially divided carcass of a mooncalf that we presently saw, I am inclined to believe it must have been mooncalf flesh.

My hands were so tightly chained that I could barely contrive to reach the bowl; but when they saw the effort I made, two of them dexterously released one of the turns about my wrist. Their tentacle-hands were soft and cold to my skin. I immediately seized a mouthful of the food. It had the same laxness in texture that all organic structures seemed to have upon the moon; it tasted rather like a gauffre or a damp meringue, but in no way was it disagreeable. I took two other mouthfuls.

For a time we ate with an utter absence of self-consciousness. We ate, and presently drank, like tramps in a soup kitchen. Never before nor since have I been hungry to the ravenous pitch, and save that I have had this very experience, I could never have believed that a quarter of a million of miles out of our proper world, in utter perplexity of soul, surrounded, watched, touched by beings more grotesque and inhuman than the worst creations of a nightmare, it would be possible for me to eat in utter forgetfulness of all these things. They stood about us, watching us and ever and again making a slight elusive twittering that stood them, I suppose, in the stead of speech. I did not even shiver at their touch. And when the first zeal of my feeding was over, I could note that Cavor, too, had been eating with the same shameless abandon.

XIV.

EXPERIMENTS IN INTERCOURSE.

When at last we had made an end of eating, the Selenites linked our hands closely together again, and then untwisted the chains about our feet and rebound them, so as to give us a limited freedom of movement. Then they unfastened the

chains about our waists. To do all this they had to handle us freely, and ever and again one of their queer heads came down close to my face or a soft tentacle-hand touched my head or neck. I don't remember that I was afraid then, or repelled, by their proximity. I think that our incurable anthropomorphism made us imagine these were human heads inside those crustacean masks. The skin, like everything else, looked bluish; but that was on account of the light, and it was hard and shiny, quite in the beetle-wing fashion, not soft nor moist nor hairy as a vertebrated animal's would be. Along the crest of the head was a low ridge of whitish spines running from back to front, and a much larger ridge curved on either side over the eyes. The Selenite who untied me used his mouth to help his hands.

"They seem to be releasing us," said Cavor. "Remember we are on the moon. Make no sudden movements."

We remained passive, and the Selenites, having finished their arrangements, stood back from us, and seemed to be looking at us. I say, seemed to be, because as their eyes were at the sides and not in front, one had the same difficulty in determining the direction in which they were looking as one has in the case of a hen or a fish. They conversed with one another in their reedy tones that seemed to me impossible to imitate or define. The door behind us opened wider, and glancing over my shoulder I saw a vague, large space beyond, in which quite a little crowd of Selenites were standing.

"It seems to me that they are trying to make us understand something," I said.

"I can't make anything of their gestures. Do you notice this one, who is worrying with his head like a man with an uncomfortable collar."

"Let us shake our heads at him."

We did that, and finding it ineffectual, attempted an imitation of the Selenites' movements. That seemed to interest them. At any rate they all set up the same movement. But as that seemed to lead to nothing, we desisted at last, and so did they, and fell into a piping argument among themselves. Then one of them, a little shorter and thicker than the others, and with a particularly wide mouth, squatted

down suddenly beside Cavor, and put his hands and feet in the same posture as Cavor's were bound, and then, by a dexterous movement, stood up.

"Cavor," I shouted, "they want us to get up!"

He stared, open-mouthed. "That's it!" he said. And with much heaving and grunting, because our hands were tied together, we contrived to struggle to our feet. The Selenites made way for our elephantine heavings, and seemed to twitter more volubly. As soon as we were on our feet the thick-set Selenite came and patted each of our faces with his tentacles and walked toward the open doorway. That also was plain enough, and we followed him. We saw that four of the Selenites standing in the doorway were taller than the others and clothed in the same manner as those we had seen in the crater, namely, with spiked, round helmets and cylindrical body cases; and that each of the four carried a goad with spike and guard made of that same dull-looking metal as the bowls. These four closed about us, one on either side of each of us, as we emerged from our chamber into the cavern from which the light had come.

We did not get our impression of that cavern all at once. Our attention was taken up by the movements and attitudes of the Selenites immediately about us, and by the necessity of controlling our motion lest we should startle and alarm them and ourselves by some excessive stride. In front of us was the short, thick-set being who had solved the problem of asking us to get up, moving with gestures that seemed, almost all of them, intelligible to us, inviting us to follow him. His spout-like face turned from one of us to the other with a quickness that was clearly interrogative.

But at last the great place that formed a background to our movements asserted itself. It became apparent that the source of much, at least, of the tumult of sounds which had filled our ears ever since we had recovered from the stupefaction of the fungus, was a vast mass of machinery in active movement, whose flying and whirling parts were visible indistinctly over the heads and between the bodies of the Selenites who walked about us. And not only

did the web of sounds that filled the air proceed from this mechanism, but also the peculiar blue light that irradiated the whole place. We had taken it as a natural thing that a subterranean cavern should be artificially lit, and even now, though the fact was patent to my eyes, I did not really grasp its import until presently the darkness came. The meaning and structure of this huge apparatus we saw I cannot explain, because we neither of us learned what it was for or how it worked. One after another, big shafts of metal flung out and up from its center, their heads traveling in what seemed to me to be a parabolic path; each dropped a sort of dangling arm as it rose toward the apex of its flight and plunged down into a vertical cylinder, forcing this down before it. And as each of these arms plunged down, there was a clank, and then a roaring, and out of the top of the vertical cylinder came pouring this incandescent substance that lit the place and ran over, as milk runs over a boiling pot, and dripped luminously into a tank of light below. It was a cold, blue light, a sort of phosphorescent glow, but infinitely brighter; and from the tanks into which it fell it ran in conduits athwart the cavern. Thud, thud, thud, thud! came the sweeping arms of this unintelligible apparatus, and the light substance hissed and poured; and at first the thing seemed only reasonably large and near to us, and then I saw how exceedingly little the Selenites upon it seemed, and I realized the full immensity of cavern and machine. I looked from this tremendous affair to the faces of the Selenites with a new respect. I stopped, and Cavor stopped and stared at this thunderous engine.

"But this is stupendous!" I said. "What can it be for?"

Cavor's blue-lit face was full of an intelligent respect. "I can't dream! Surely these beings—men could not make a thing like that. Look at those arms, are they on connecting-rods?"

The thick-set Selenite had gone some paces unheeded. He came back and stood between us and the great machine. I avoided seeing him, because I guessed somehow that his idea was to beckon us onward. He walked away in the direction he wished us to go, and turned and came

back, and flicked our faces to attract our attention.

Cavor and I looked at one another.

"Cannot we show him we are interested in the machine?" I said.

"Yes," said Cavor. "We'll try that." He turned to our guide and smiled and pointed to the machine, and pointed again, and then to his head, and then to the machine. By some defect of reasoning he seemed to imagine that broken English might help these gestures. "Me look 'im," he said; "me think 'im very much."

His behavior seemed to check the Selenites in their desire for our progress, for a moment. They faced one another; their queer heads moved; the twittering voices came quick and liquid. Then one of them, a lean, tall creature, with a sort of mantle added to the puttee in which the others were dressed, twisted his elephant trunk of a hand about Cavor's waist and pulled him gently to follow our guide, who again went on ahead.

Cavor resisted. "We may just as well begin explaining ourselves now. They may think we are new animals, a new sort of mooncalf, perhaps." He began to shake his head violently. "No, no," he said, "me not come on one minute. Me look at 'im."

"Isn't there some geometrical point you might bring in apropos of that affair?" I suggested, as the Selenites conferred again.

"Possibly a parabolic——" he began, and then yelled loudly and leaped six feet or more.

One of the four armed moon-men had pricked him with a goad.

I turned on the goad bearer behind me with a swift, threatening gesture and he started back. This and Cavor's sudden shout and leap clearly astonished all the Selenites. They receded hastily, facing us with their stupid, unchanging stare. For one of those moments that seem to last forever we stood in angry protest, with a scattered semicircle of these inhuman beings about us.

"He pricked me," said Cavor, with a catching of the voice.

"I saw him," I answered.

"Confound it," I said, to the Selenites. "we're not going to stand that! What on earth do you take us for?"

I glanced quickly right and left. Far away across the blue wilderness of cavern I saw a number of other Selenites running toward us. The cavern spread wide and low and receded in every direction into darkness. Its roof, I remember, seemed to bulge down as if with the weight of the vast thickness of rocks that imprisoned us. Above, below, in every direction, was the unknown. And these inhuman creatures with goads and gestures confronting us, and we two, unsupported men!

XV.

THE GIDDY BRIDGE.

Just for a moment that hostile pause endured. I suppose that both we and the Selenites did some very rapid thinking. My clearest impression was that there was nothing to put my back against, and that we were bound to be surrounded and killed.

Cavor came to my side and laid his hand on my arm. His pale and terrified face was ghastly in the blue light.

"We can't do anything," he said. "It's a mistake. They don't understand. We must go as they want us to."

I looked down at him, and then at the fresh Selenites who were coming to help their fellows. "If I had my hands free —"

"It's no use," he panted.

And he turned about and led the way in the direction that had been indicated for us. I followed, trying to look as subdued as possible and feeling at the chains about my wrists. My blood was boiling. I noted nothing more of that cavern, though it seemed to take a long time before we had marched across it; or if I noted anything I forgot it as I saw it. My thoughts were concentrated, I think, upon



Drawn by F. Hering.

"WE SEEMED TO BE MARCHING DOWN THAT TUNNEL FOR A LONG TIME."

my chains and the Selenites, and particularly upon the helmeted ones with the goads. At first they marched parallel with us and at a respectful distance, but presently they were overtaken by three others, and then they drew nearer until they were within arm's length. The shorter, thicker Selenite marched at first on our right flank, but presently came in front of us again.

How well the picture of that grouping has bitten into my brain: the back of Cavor's downcast head just in front of me, and the dejected droop of his shoulders, and our guide's gaping visage, perpetually jerking about him, and the goad-bearers on either side, watchful yet open-mouthed—a blue monochrome! And after all, I do remember one other thing besides the purely personal affair, which is, that a sort of gutter came presently across the floor of

the cavern and then ran along by the side of the path of rock we followed. And it was full of that same bright-blue luminous stuff that flowed out of the great machine. I walked close beside it, and I can testify it radiated not a particle of heat. It was brightly shining, and yet it was neither warmer nor colder than anything else in the cavern.

Clang, clang, clang! we passed right under the thumping levers of another vast machine, and so came at last to a wide tunnel, in which we could even hear our footfalls and which, save for the trickling thread of blue to the right of us, was quite unlit. The shadows made gigantic travesties of our shapes, and those of the Selenites, on the irregular wall and roof of the tunnel. Ever and again crystals in the walls of the tunnel scintillated like gems; ever and again the tunnel expanded into a stalactitic cavern, or gave off branches that vanished into darkness.

We seemed to be marching down that tunnel for a long time. Trickle, trickle, went the flowing light very softly, and our footfalls and their echoes made an irregular paddle, paddle. My mind settled down to the question of my chains. If I were to slip off one turn *so*, and then to twist it *so*! If I tried to do it very gradually, would they see I was slipping my wrist out of the looser turn? If they did, what would they do?

"Bedford," said Cavor, "it goes down. It keeps on going down."

His remark roused me from my sullen preoccupation.

"If they wanted to kill us," he said, dropping back to come level with me. "there is no reason why they should not have done it."

"No," I admitted; "that's true."

"They don't understand us," he said. "They think we are merely strange animals, some wild sort of mooncalf. It will be only when they have observed us better that they will begin to think we have minds——"

"When you trace those geometrical problems?" said I.

"It may be that."

We tramped on for a space.

"You see," said Cavor, "these may be Selenites of a lower class."

"The infernal fools!" said I, viciously, glancing at their exasperating faces.

"If we endure what they do to us——"

"We've got to endure it," said I.

"There may be others less stupid. This is the mere outer fringe of their world. It must go down and down, cavern, passage, tunnel, down at last to the sea—hundreds of miles below."

His words made me think of the mile or so of rock and tunnel that might be over our heads already. It was like a weight dropping on my shoulders. "Away from the sun and air," I said, "even a mine half a mile deep is stuffy."

"This is not—anyhow. It's probable—ventilation! The air would blow from the dark side of the moon to the sunlit, and all the carbonic acid would well out there and feed those plants. Up this tunnel, for example, there is quite a breeze. And what a world it must be! The earnest we have in that shaft, and those machines——"

"And the goad," I said.

He walked a little in front of me for a time.

"Even that goad," he said.

"Well?"

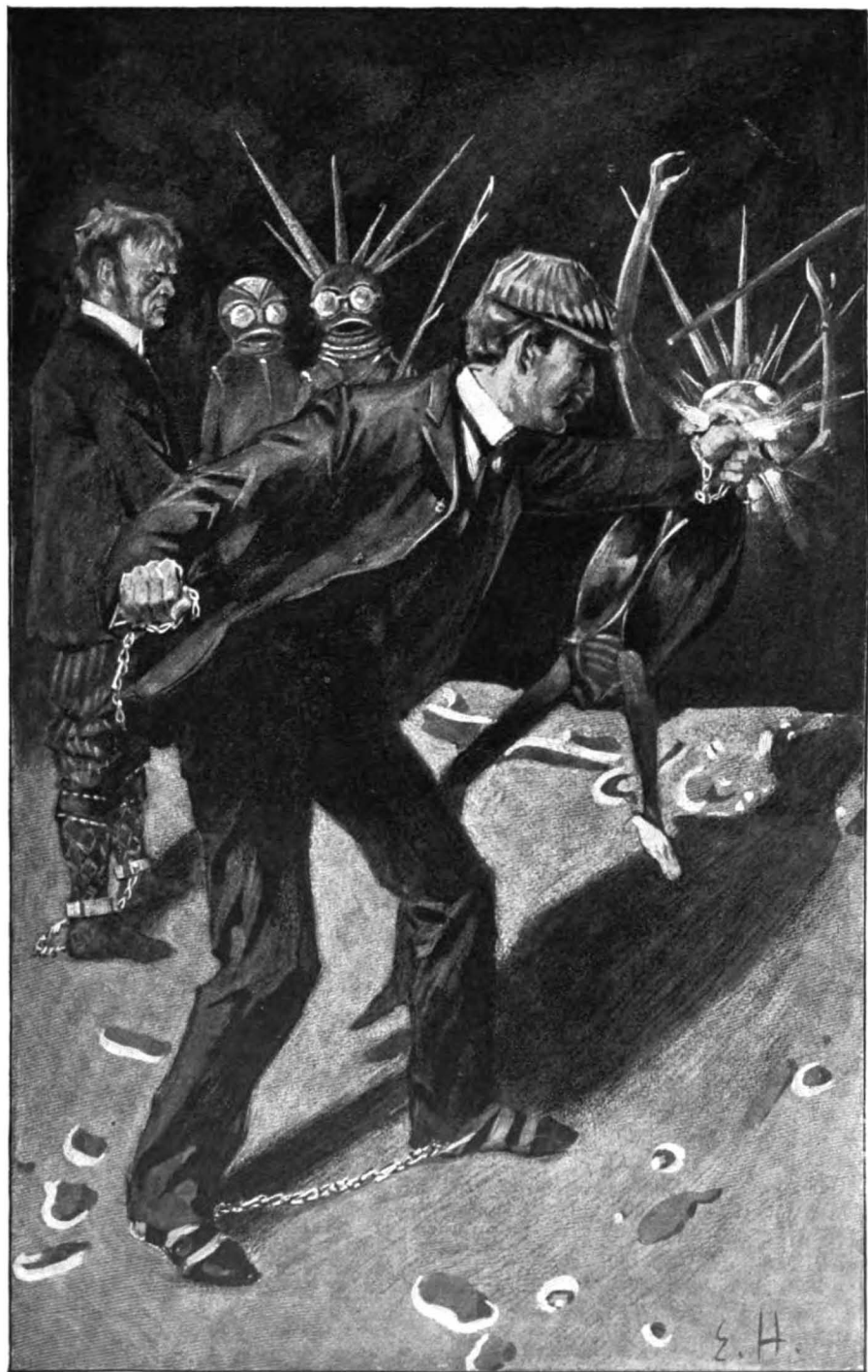
"I was angry at the time. But it was perhaps necessary we should get on. They have different skins and probably different nerves. They may not understand our objection. Just as a being from Mars might not like our earthly habit of nudging."

"They'd better be careful how they nudge *me*."

"And about that geometry. After all, their way is a way of understanding, too. They begin with the elements of life and not of thought. Food. Compulsion. Pain. They strike at fundamentals."

"There's no doubt about that," I said.

He went on to talk of the enormous and wonderful world into which we were being taken. I realized slowly from his tone that even now he was not absolutely in despair at the prospect of going ever deeper into this inhuman planet-burrow. His mind ran on machines and invention, to the exclusion of a thousand dark things that beset me. It wasn't that he intended to make any use of these things; he simply wanted to know them.



Drawn by F. Herring

"HE SMASHED LIKE AN EGG."

"Some rare sort of animal," I said, "might comfort himself in that way while they were bringing him to the Zoo. It doesn't follow that we are going to be shown all these things."

"When they find we have reasonable minds," said Cavor, "they will want to learn about the earth. Even if they have no generous emotions they will teach in order to learn. And the things they must know! The unanticipated things!"

He went on to speculate on the possibility of their knowing things he had never hoped to learn on earth, speculating in that way with a raw wound from that goad, already in his skin. Much that he said I forgot, for my attention was drawn to the fact that the tunnel along which we had been marching was opening out wider and wider. We seemed, from the feeling of the air, to be going out into a huge space. But how big the space might really be we could not tell, because it was unlit. Our little stream of light ran in a dwindling thread and vanished far ahead. Presently the rocky walls had vanished altogether on either hand. There was nothing to be seen but the path in front of us and the trickling, hurrying rivulet of blue phosphorescence. The figures of Cavor and the guiding Selenite marched before me; the sides of their legs and heads that were toward the rivulet were clear and bright blue, their darkened sides, now that the reflection of the tunnel wall no longer lit them, merged indistinguishably in the darkness beyond.

And soon I perceived that we were approaching a declivity of some sort, because the little blue stream dipped suddenly out of sight.

In another moment, as it seemed, we had reached the edge. The shining stream gave one meander of hesitation and then rushed over. It fell to a depth at which the sound of its descent was absolutely lost to us. And the darkness it dropped out of became utterly void and black, save that a thing like a plank projected from the edge of the cliff and stretched out and faded, and vanished altogether.

For a moment Cavor and I stood as near the edge as we dared, peering into an inky profundity. And then our guide was pulling at my arm.

Then he left me and walked to the end of that plank and stepped upon it, looking back. When he perceived we watched him, he turned about and went on along it, walking as surely as though he was on firm earth. For a moment his form was distinct, then he became a blue blur and vanished into the obscurity.

There was a pause. "Surely—!" said Cavor.

One of the other Selenites walked a few paces out upon the plank and turned and looked back at us unconcernedly. Our guide's expectant gape reappeared. He was returning to see why we had not advanced.

"I could not go three steps on it," said Cavor.

We looked at each other's drawn face in blank consternation.

"They can't know what it is to be giddy," said Cavor.

"It's quite impossible for us to walk that plank."

"I don't believe they see as we do. I've been watching them. I wonder if they know this is simply blackness for us."

I think we said these things with a vague half-hope that the Selenites might somehow understand. I knew quite clearly that all that was needed was an explanation. Then, as I saw their blank faces, I slipped my wrist very quickly out of the coil of chain that was loose, and began to twist my wrists in opposite directions. I was standing nearest to the bridge, and as I did this two of the Selenites laid hold of me and pulled me gently toward it.

I shook my head violently.

Another Selenite added his compulsion.

I was forced to step forward.

"Look here!" I exclaimed. "Steady now! It's all very well for you——"

I burst out into curses, for one of the armed Selenites had stabbed me behind with his goad.

I wrenched my wrists free from the little tentacles that held them. I turned on the goad bearer. "Confound you!" I cried. "I've warned you of that. What on earth do you think I'm made of, to stick that into me? If you touch me again——!"

By way of answer he pricked me again.

I heard Cavor's voice in alarm and entreaty. Even then I think he wanted to compromise with these creatures. But the sting of that second stab seemed to set free some pent-up reserve of energy in my being. Instantly the link of the golden chain snapped, and with it snapped all considerations that had held us unresisting in the hands of these moon creatures. For that second, at least, I was mad with fear and anger. I took no thought of consequences. I hit straight out, at the face of the thing with the goad. The chain was twisted round my fist.

My mailed hand seemed to go clean through him. He smashed like an egg. It was like hitting one of those hard sweets that have liquid inside. It broke right in, and the flimsy body went spinning a dozen yards and fell with a flabby impact. I was astonished. It was incredulous that any living thing could be so flimsy. For an instant I could have believed the whole thing a dream.

Then it had become real and imminent again. Neither Cavor nor the other Selenites seemed to have done anything from the time when I had turned about, to the time when the dead Selenite hit the ground. Every one stood back from us two, every one alert. The arrest seemed to last at least a second after the Selenite was down. Every one must have been taking the thing in. I seem to remember myself standing with my arm half retracted, trying also to take it in. "What next?" clamored my brain; "what next?"

Then I perceived we must get our chains loose, and that before we could do this, these Selenites had to be beaten off. I faced toward a group of three goad bearers. Instantly one threw his goad at me. It swished over my head and I suppose went flying into the abyss behind. I leaped right at him with all my might as the goad flew over me. He turned to run as I jumped, and I bore him to the ground, came down right upon him, and slipped upon his smashed body and fell.

I came into a sitting position, and on every hand the blue backs of the Selenites were receding into the darkness. I bent a link by main force and untwisted the chain that had hampered me about the

ankles, and sprang to my feet, with the chain in my hand. Another goad, flung javelin-wise, whistled by me, and I made a rush toward the darkness out of which it had come. Then I turned back toward Cavor, who was still standing near the gulf, in the light of the rivulet, convulsively busy with his wrists.

"Come on!" I cried.

"My hands!" he answered.

Then, realizing that I dared not run back to him because my ill-calculated steps might carry me over the edge, he came shuffling toward me, with his hands held out before him.

I gripped his chains at once to unfasten them.

"Where are they?" he panted.

"Run away. They'll come back. They're throwing things! Which way shall we go?"

"By the light. To that tunnel. Eh!"

"Yes," said I, and his hands were free.

I dropped on my knees and fell to work on his ankle bonds. Whack! came something—I know not what—and splashed the livid streamlet into drops about us. Far away on our right a piping and a whistling began.

I whipped the chain off his feet and put it in his hand. "Hit with that!" I said, and without waiting for an answer, set off in big bounds along the path by which we had come. I heard the impact of his leaps come following me.

We ran in vast strides. But that running, you must understand, was an altogether different thing from any running on earth. On earth, one leaps, and almost instantly hits the ground again; but on the moon, because of its weaker pull, one shoots through the air for several seconds before one comes to earth. In spite of our violent hurry, this gave an effect of long pauses; pauses in which one might have counted seven or eight. Step, and one soared off. All sorts of questions ran through my mind. Where were the Selenites? What would they do? Should we ever get to the tunnel? Was Cavor far behind? Were they likely to cut him off? Then whack! stride! and off again for another step.

I saw a Selenite running in front of me, his legs going exactly as a man's would go on earth; saw him glance over his

shoulder, and heard him shriek as he ran aside out of my way into the darkness. He was, I think, our guide, but I am not sure. Then, in another vast stride, walls of rock had come into view on either hand, and in two more strides I was in the tunnel and tempering my pace to its low roof. I went on to a bend, then stopped and turned back and—plug, plug, plug, Cavor came into view, splashing into the stream of blue light at every stride, and grew larger and blundered into me. We stood clutching each other. For a moment, at least, we had shaken off our captors and were alone.

We were both very much out of breath. We spoke in panting, broken sentences.

"What are we to do?"

"Hide."

"Where?"

"Up one of these side caverns."

"And then?"

"Think."

We strode on, and presently came to a radiating, dark cavern. Cavor was in front. He hesitated and chose a black mouth that seemed to promise good hiding. He went toward it and turned.

"It's dark," he said.

"Your legs and feet will light us. You are all wet with that luminous stuff."

"But——"

A tumult of sounds, and in particular a sound like a clanging gong advancing up the main tunnel, became audible. It was horribly suggestive of a tumultuous pursuit. We made a bolt for the unlit side cavern forthwith. As we ran along it our way was lit by the irradiation of Cavor's legs.

"It's lucky," I panted, "they took off our boots or we should fill this place with clatter." On we rushed, taking as small steps as we could to avoid striking the roof of the cavern. After a time we seemed to be gaining on the uproar. It became muffled, it dwindled, it died away.

I stopped and looked back, and I heard the pad, pad, of Cavor's feet, receding. Then he stopped also.

"Bedford," he whispered, "there's a sort of light in front of us."

I looked, and at first could see nothing.

Then I perceived his head and shoulders dimly outlined against a fainter darkness.

I saw, also, that this mitigation of the

darkness was not blue as all the other light in the moon had been, but a pallid gray, a very vague, faint white. Cavor noted this difference as soon as, or sooner, than I did, and I think, too, that it filled him with much the same wild hope.

"Bedford," he whispered, and his voice trembled. "That light—is it possible——"

He did not dare to say the thing he hoped.

XVI.

POINTS OF VIEW.

That pallid light grew stronger as we advanced. In a little time it was nearly as strong as the phosphorescence on Cavor's legs. We perceived that our tunnel was expanding into a cavern, and that this new light was at the further end of this space. I perceived something that set my hopes leaping and bounding.

"Cavor," I said, "it comes from above. I am certain it comes from above."

He made no answer, but hurried on.

Indisputably it was a gray light, a silvery light.

In another moment we were beneath it. It filtered down through a chink in the walls of the cavern, and as I stared up, drip, a drop of water had hit me in the face. I started and stood aside, drip, fell another drop quite audibly on the rocky floor.

"Cavor," I said, "if one of us lifts the other, he can reach that crack."

"I'll lift you," he said, and incontinently hoisted me as though I was a baby. I thrust an arm into the crack and just at my finger-tips found a little ledge by which I could hold. I could see the white light was very much brighter now. I pulled myself up, reached to a still higher corner of rock and so got my feet on the ledge.

I stood up and searched up the rocks with my fingers; the cleft broadened out upward. "It's climbable," I said. "Can you jump up to my hand if I hold it down to you?"

I wedged myself between the sides of the cleft, rested knee and foot on the ledge and extended a hand. I could not see Cavor, but I could hear the rustle of his movements as he crouched to spring. Then, whack, and he was hanging to my arm—and no heavier than a kitten. I

lugged him up until he had a hand on my ledge, and could release me.

"Confound it!" I said, "any one could be a mountaineer on the moon," and so set myself in earnest to the climbing. For a few minutes I clambered steadily and then I looked up again. The cleft opened out gradually and the light was brighter. Only——

It was not daylight after all!

In another moment I could see what it was, and after the sight I could have sworn with disappointment, for I beheld simply an irregularly sloping, open space, and all over its slanting floor stood a forest of little club-shaped fungi, each shining gloriously with that pinkish, silvery light. For a moment I stared at their soft radiance, then sprang forward and upward among them. I plucked up half a dozen and flung them against the rocks and then sat down, laughing bitterly, as Cavor's ruddy face came into view.

"It's phosphorescence again!" I said.

"No need to hurry. Sit down and make yourself at home." And as he spluttered over our disappointment I began to lob more of these growths into the cleft.

"I thought it was daylight," he said.

"Daylight!" cried I. "Daybreak, sunset, clouds and windy skies! Shall we ever see such things again?"

As I spoke, a little picture of our world seemed to rise before me, bright and little and clear, like the background of some Italian picture. "The sky that changes, and the sea that changes, and the hills and the green trees and the towns and cities shining in the sun. Think of a wet roof at sunset, Cavor! Think of the windows of a westward house!"

He made no answer.

"Here we are burrowing in this beastly world that isn't a world, with its inky ocean hidden in some abominable blackness below, and outside, that torrid day and that death stillness of night. And all those things are chasing us now, beastly men of leather—insect men, that come out of a nightmare! For all we know the whole planet is up and after us already. In a minute we may hear them whimpering, and their gongs going. What are we to do?"

I resumed my destruction of the fungi. Then suddenly I saw something.

"Cavor," I said, "these chains are of gold!"

He was sitting, thinking intently, with his hands gripping his cheeks. He turned his head slowly and stared at me, and when I had repeated my words, at the twisted chain about his right hand. "So they are," he said, "so they are." His face lost its transitory interest even as he looked. He hesitated for a moment, then went on with his interrupted meditation. I sat for a space puzzling over the fact that I had only just observed this, until I considered the blue light in which we had been and which had taken all the color out of the metal. And from that discovery I also started upon a train of thought that carried me wide and far.

It was Cavor who spoke first. "It seems to me that there are two courses open to us.

"Either we can attempt to make our way—fight our way, if necessary—out to the exterior again, and then hunt for our sphere until either we find it or the cold of the night comes to kill us, or else——"

He paused. "Yes?" I said.

"We might attempt once more to establish some sort of understanding with the minds of the people in the moon."

"So far as I'm concerned—it's the first."

"I doubt."

"I don't."

"You see," said Cavor, "I do not think we can judge the Selenites by what we have seen of them. Their central world, their civilized world, will be far below in the profounder caverns about their sea. This region of the crust in which we are, is an outlying district, a pastoral region. At any rate, that is my interpretation. These Selenites we have seen may be only the equivalent of cowboys and engine tenders. Their use of goads—in all probability mooncalf goads—the lack of imagination they show in expecting us to be able to do just what they can do; their indisputable brutality, all seem to point to something of that sort. But if we endured——"

"Neither of us could endure a six-inch plank across the bottomless pit for very long."

"No," said Cavor, "that's true."

He discovered a new line of possibilities. "Suppose we got ourselves into some corner, where we could defend ourselves against these hinds and laborers. If, for example, we could hold out for a week or so, it is probable that the news of our appearance would filter down to the more intelligent and populous parts——"

"If they exist."

"They must exist, or whence came those tremendous machines?"

I took up a new thread of thought. "After all," I said, "I suppose you don't think these Selenites so infinitely wiser than men?"

"They must know a lot more—or at least a lot of different things."

"Yes, but——" I hesitated.

"I think you'll quite admit, Cavor, that you're rather an exceptional man."

"How?"

"Well, you—you're a rather lonely man, have been, that is. You haven't married."

"Never wanted to. But why——?"

"And you never grew richer than you happened to be?"

"Never wanted that, either."

"You've just rooted after knowledge."

"Well, a certain curiosity is natural——"

"You think so. That's just it. You think every other mind wants to *know*. I remember once when I asked you why you conducted all these researches, you said you wanted your F. R. S. and to have the stuff called Cavorite and things like that. You know perfectly well you didn't do it for that; but at the time, my question took you by surprise, and you felt you ought to have something to look like a motive. Really, you conducted researches because you *had* to. It's your twist."

"Perhaps it is——"

"It isn't one man in a million has that twist. Most men want—well, various things; but very few want knowledge for its own sake. I don't. I know perfectly well. Now these Selenites seem to be driving, busy sort of beings, but how do you know that even the most intelligent will take an interest in us or our world? I don't believe they'll even know we have a world. They never come out at night; they'd freeze if they did. They've probably never seen any heavenly body except

the blazing sun. How are they to know there *is* another world? What does it matter to them if they do? Well, even if they *have* had a glimpse of a few stars or even of the earth crescent, what of that? Why should people living *inside* a planet trouble to observe that sort of thing? Men wouldn't have done it except for the seasons and sailing; why should the moon people? Well, suppose there are a few philosophers like yourself? They are just the very Selenites who'll never hear of our existence. Suppose a Selenite had dropped on the earth when you were at Lympe? You'd have been the last man in the world to hear he had come. You see, the chances are against you. Well, it's for these chances we're sitting here doing nothing while precious time is flying. I tell you, we've got into a fix. We're come unarmed; we've lost our sphere; we've shown ourselves to the Selenites and made them think we're strange, strong, dangerous animals, and unless these Selenites are perfect fools they'll set about now and hunt us till they find us; and when they find us they'll try and take us if they can, and kill us if they can't; and that's the end of the matter. After we're done for they may discuss us, perhaps, but we shan't get much fun out of that."

"Go on."

"On the other hand, here's gold knocking about like cast-iron at home. If only we can get some of it back; if only we can find our sphere again before they do, and get back, then——"

"Yes?"

"We might put the thing on a sounder footing. Come back in a bigger sphere with guns."

"Good Lord!" cried Cavor, as though that was horrible.

I shied another luminous fungus down the cleft.

"Look here, Cavor," I said; "I've half the voting power, anyhow, in this affair, and this is a case for a practical man. I'm a practical man and you are not. I'm not going to trust to Selenites and geometrical diagrams again, if I can help it. That's all."

He reflected. "When I came to the moon," he said, "I ought to have come alone."

"The question before the meeting," I said, "is how to get back to the sphere."

For a time we nursed our knees in silence. Then he seemed to incline to my views.

"I think," he said, "one can get data. It is clear that while the sun is on this side of the moon the air will be blowing through this planet sponge from the dark side hither. On this side, at any rate, the air will be blowing out of the moon. Very well, there's a draft here."

"So there is."

"And that means that this is not a dead end; somewhere behind us this cleft goes on and up. The draft is blowing up, so that is the way we have to go. If we try and get up any sort of chimney or gully there is, we shall not only get out of these passages where they are hunting for us——"

"Ssh!" I said, suddenly; "what's that?"

We listened. At first it was an indistinct murmur, and then we picked out the clang of a gong. "They must think we are mooncalves," said I, "to be frightened at that."

"They're coming along this passage," said Cavor. "They'll not think of the cleft. They'll go past."

I listened again for a space. "This

time," I whispered, "they're likely to have some sort of weapon."

Then suddenly I sprang to my feet. "Good heavens, Cavor!" I cried. "But they *will*. They'll see the fungi I have been pitching down. They'll——"

I didn't finish my sentence. I turned about and made a leap over the fungus tops toward the upper end of the cavity. I saw that the space turned upward and became a drafty cleft again, ascending to impenetrable darkness. I was about to clamber up into this and then, with a happy inspiration, turned back.

"What are you——?" asked Cavor.

"Go on!" said I, and went back and got two of the shining fungi; and putting one into a breast-pocket of my flannel jacket so that it stuck out to light our climbing, went back with the other for Cavor. The noise of the Sele-

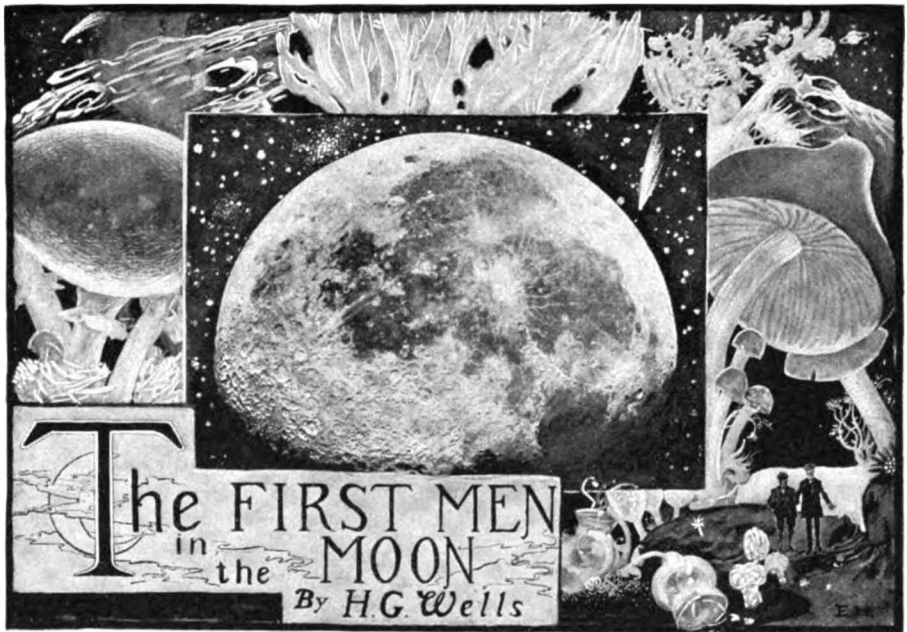
nites was now so loud that it seemed they must be already beneath the cleft. But it might be they would have difficulty in clambering into it, or might hesitate to ascend it against our possible resistance. In another minute I was clambering with gigantic vigor after Cavor's blue-lit heels.

(To be continued.)



Drawn by E. Hering.

"IN ANOTHER MINUTE I WAS CLAMBERING WITH GIGANTIC VIGOR AFTER CAVOR'S BLUE-LIT HEELS."



Drawn by E. Herzig.

XVII.

THE FIGHT IN THE CAVE OF THE MOON BUTCHERS.

I DO not know how far we clambered before we came to the grating. It may be we ascended only a few hundred feet, but at the time it seemed to me we might have hauled and jammed and hopped and wedged ourselves through a mile or more of vertical ascent. Whenever I recall that time there comes into my head the heavy clank of our golden chains that followed every movement. Very soon my knuckles and knees were raw and I had a bruise on one cheek. After a time, the first violence of our efforts diminished and our movements became more deliberate and less painful. The noise of the pursuing Selenites had died away altogether. It seemed almost as though they had not traced us up the crack after all, in spite of the telltale heap of broken fungi that must have lain beneath it. At times, the cleft narrowed so much that we could scarcely squeeze up it; at others, it expanded into great drusy cavities studded with prickly crystals, or thickly beset with dull, shining fungoid pimples. Sometimes

it twisted spirally, and at other times slanted down nearly to the horizontal direction. Once or twice it seemed to us that small living things had rustled out of our reach, but what they were we never saw. And at last, far above, came the familiar bluish light again, and then we saw that it filtered through a grating that barred our way.

We whispered as we pointed this out to one another, and became more and more cautious in our ascent. Presently we were close under the grating, and by pressing my face against its bars I could see a limited portion of the cavern beyond. It was clearly a large space, and lit, no doubt, by some rivulet of the same blue light that we had seen flow from the beating machinery. An intermittent trickle of water dropped ever and again between the bars near my face.

My first endeavor was naturally to see what might be upon the floor of the cavern, but our grating lay in a depression whose rim hid all this from our eyes. My foiled attention then fell back upon the suggestion of various sounds we heard, and presently caught a number of faint shadows that played across the dim roof far overhead.

Indisputably there were several Selenites, perhaps a considerable number, in this space, for we could hear the noises of their intercourse, and faint sounds that I identified as their footfalls. There was also a succession of regularly repeated sounds—"chid, chid, chid"—which began and ceased, suggestive of a knife or spade hacking at some soft substance. Then came a clank as if of chains, a whistle and a rumble as of a truck running over a hollowed place, and then again that "chid, chid, chid," resumed. The shadows told of shapes that moved quickly and rhythmically in agreement with that regular sound, and rested when it ceased.

We put our heads close together and began to discuss these things in noiseless whispers.

"They are occupied," I said—"they are occupied in some way."

"Yes."

"They're not seeking us or thinking of us."

"Perhaps they have not heard of us."

"Those others are hunting about below. If suddenly we appeared here——"

We looked at one another.

"There might be a chance to parley," said Cavor.

I looked at the grating. "It's flimsy," I said. "We might bend two of the bars and crawl through."

We wasted a little time in vague discussion. Then I took one of the bars in both hands, and got my feet up against the rock until they were almost on a level with my head, and so thrust against the bar. It bent so suddenly that I almost slipped. I clambered about and bent the adjacent bar in the opposite direction, and then took the luminous fungus from my pocket and dropped it down the fissure.

"Don't do anything hastily," whispered Cavor, as I twisted myself up through the opening I had enlarged. I had a glimpse of busy figures as I came through the grating, and immediately bent down so that the rim of the depression in which the grating lay, hid me from their eyes, and so lay flat, signaling advice to Cavor as he also prepared to come through. Presently

we were side by side in the depression, peering over the edge of the cavern and its occupants.

It was a much larger cavern than we had supposed from our first glimpse of it, and we looked up from the lowest portion of its sloping floor. It widened out as it receded from us, and its roof came down and hid the remoter portion altogether. And lying in a line along its length, vanishing at last far away in that tremendous perspective, were a number of huge shapes, great pallid hulls upon which the Selenites were so busy. At first they seemed to me big white cylinders of vague import. Then I noted the heads upon them lying toward us, eyeless and skinless like the heads of sheep at a butcher's, and perceived they were the carcasses of moon-calves being cut up, much as a moored whale might be cut up by the crew of a whaler. They were cutting off the flesh in strips, and on some of the farther trunks the white ribs were showing. It was the sound of their hatchets that made that "chid, chid." Some way off, a thing like a trolley cable drawn and loaded with chunks of lax meat, was running up the slope of the cavern floor.

It seemed to me at first that the Selenites must be standing on trestle-supported planks,* and then I saw that the planks and supports and their hatchets were really of the same leaden hue as my fetters had seemed before white light came to bear on them. A number of very thick-looking crowbars lay about the floor and had apparently assisted to turn the dead mooncalf over on its side. The whole place was lit by three transverse streams of the blue fluid.

We lay for a long time noting these things in silence. "Well?" said Cavor at last.

I crouched lower and turned to him. "Unless they lowered those bodies by a crane," I said, "we must be near the surface."

"Why?"

"The mooncalf doesn't hop and it hasn't got wings."

He peered over the edge of the hollow

* I do not remember seeing any wooden things on the moon. Doors, tables, everything corresponding to our terrestrial joinery, were made of metal, and I believe for the most part of gold, which as a metal would of course naturally recommend itself—other things being equal—on account of the ease in working it and its toughness and durability.

again. "I wonder now——" he began.

I stopped him by a grip on his arm. I had heard a noise from the cleft below us. We twisted ourselves about and lay as still as death, with every sense alert. In a little while I did not doubt that something was quietly ascending the cleft. Very slowly and quite noiselessly I assured myself of a good grip on my chain and waited for that something to appear.

"Just look at those chaps with the hatchets again," I said.

"They're all right," said Cavor.

I took a sort of provisional aim at the gap in the grating. I could hear now quite distinctly the soft twittering of the ascending Selenites, the dab of their hands against the rock and the falling of dust from their grip.

Then I could see that there was something moving dimly in the blackness below the grating, but what it might be I could not distinguish. The whole thing seemed to hang fire just for a moment; then, smash! I had sprung to my feet, struck savagely at something that had flashed out at me. It was the keen point of a spear. I have thought since that its length in the narrowness of the cleft must have prevented its being sloped to reach me. Anyway, it shot out from the grating like the tongue of a snake, and missed, and flew back, and flashed again. But the second time, I snatched and caught it, and wrenched it away, but not before another had darted ineffectually at me.

I shouted with triumph as I felt the hold of the Selenite resist my pull for a moment and give, and then I was jabbing down through the bars, amidst squeals from the darkness, and Cavor had snapped off the other spear, and was leaping and flourishing it beside me and making inefficient jabs. "Clang, clang," came up through the grating, and then an ax hurled through the air and whacked against the rocks beyond to remind me of the fletchers at the carcasses up the cavern. I turned, and they were all coming toward us in open order, waving their axes. If they had not heard of us before, they must have realized the situation with incredible swiftness. I stared at them for a moment, spear in hand. "Guard that grating, Cavor," I cried, and howled

to intimidate them and rushed to meet them. Two of them missed with their hatchets, and the rest fled incontinently.

Then the two also were sprinting away up the cavern, with hands clenched and heads down. I never saw men run like them.

I knew the spear I had was no good for me. It was thin and flimsy, effectual only for a thrust, and too long for a quick recover. So I only chased the Selenites as far as the first carcass, and stopped there and picked up one of the crowbars that were lying about. It felt comfortably heavy, and equal to smashing any number of Selenites. I threw away my spear, and picked up a second crowbar for the other hand. I felt five times better than I had with the spear. I shook the two threateningly at the Selenites who had come to a halt out of throwing distance far away up the cavern, and then turned about to look at Cavor.

He was leaping from side to side of the grating, making threatening jabs with his broken spear. That was all right. It would keep the Selenites down—for a time, at any rate. I looked up the cavern again. What on earth were we going to do now?

We were cornered in a sort of way already. But these butchers and fletchers up the cavern had been surprised, they were probably scared, and they had no special weapons, only those little hatchets of theirs. And that way lay escape. Their sturdy little forms—for most of them were shorter and thicker than the mooncalf herds—were scattered up the slope in a way that was eloquent of indecision. Those Selenites down the cleft had certainly some infernally long spears. It might be they had other surprises for us. But, confound it! if we charged up the cave we should let them up behind us, and if we didn't, those little brutes up the cave would probably get reinforced. Heaven alone knew what tremendous engines of warfare, guns, bombs, lunar torpedoes, this unknown world below our feet, this vaster world of which we had only pricked the outer cuticle, might not presently send up to our destruction. It became clear that the only thing to do was to charge. It became clearer as the legs

of a number of fresh Selenites appeared running down the cavern toward us.

"Bedford!" cried Cavor, and behold! he was halfway between me and the grating.

"Go back!" I cried. "What are you doing——"

"They've got—it's like a gun!"

And struggling in the grating between those defensive spears appeared the head and shoulders of a Selenite bearing some complicated apparatus.

I realized Cavor's utter incapacity for the fight we had in hand. For a moment I hesitated. Then I rushed past him, whirling my crowbars, and shouting to confound the aim of the Selenite. He was aiming in the queerest way with the thing against his stomach. "Chuzz!" The thing wasn't a gun; it went off like a crossbow more, and dropped me in the middle of a leap.

I didn't fall down; I simply came down a little shorter than I should have done if I hadn't been hit, and from the feel of my shoulder the thing might have tapped me and glanced off. Then my left hand hit against the shaft, and I perceived there was a sort of spear sticking half through my shoulder. The moment after, I got home with the crowbar in my right hand and hit the Selenite fair and square. Hitting those Selenites was like hitting dry sunflower canes with a rod of iron. He collapsed, he broke into pieces.

I dropped a crowbar, pulled the spear out of my shoulder, and began to jab it down the grating into the darkness. At each jab came a shriek and twitter. Finally I hurled the spear down upon them with all my strength, leaped up, picked up the crowbar again and started for the multitude up the cavern.

"Bedford!" cried Cavor, "Bedford!" as I flew past him.

I seem to remember his footsteps coming on behind me.

Step, leap—whack, step, leap—Each leap seemed to last ages. With each, the cave opened out and the number of Selenites visible increased. At first, they seemed all running about like ants in a disturbed ant-hill, one or two waving hatchets and coming to meet me, more running away, some bolting sidewise into

the avenue of carcasses; then presently, others came in sight carrying spears, and then others. The cavern grew darker farther up. "Flick!" something flew over my head. "Flick!" As I soared in mid-stride I saw a spear hit and quiver in one of the carcasses to my left. Then I came down, one hit the ground before me and I heard the remote "Chuzz!" with which their things were fired. "Flick!" "Flick!" for a moment it was a shower. They were volleying!

I stopped dead.

I don't believe I thought clearly then. I seem to remember a kind of stereotyped phrase running through my mind: "Zone of fire, seek cover!" I know I made a dash for the space between two of the carcasses and stood there panting and feeling very wicked.

I looked around for Cavor, and for a moment it seemed as if he had vanished from the world. Then he came up out of the darkness, between the row of the carcasses and the rocky wall of the cavern. I saw his little face, dark and blue, and shining with perspiration and emotion.

He was saying something, but what it was I did not heed. I had realized that we might work from mooncalf to mooncalf up the cave until we were near enough to charge home. "Come on!" I said, and led the way.

"Bedford!" he cried, unavailingly.

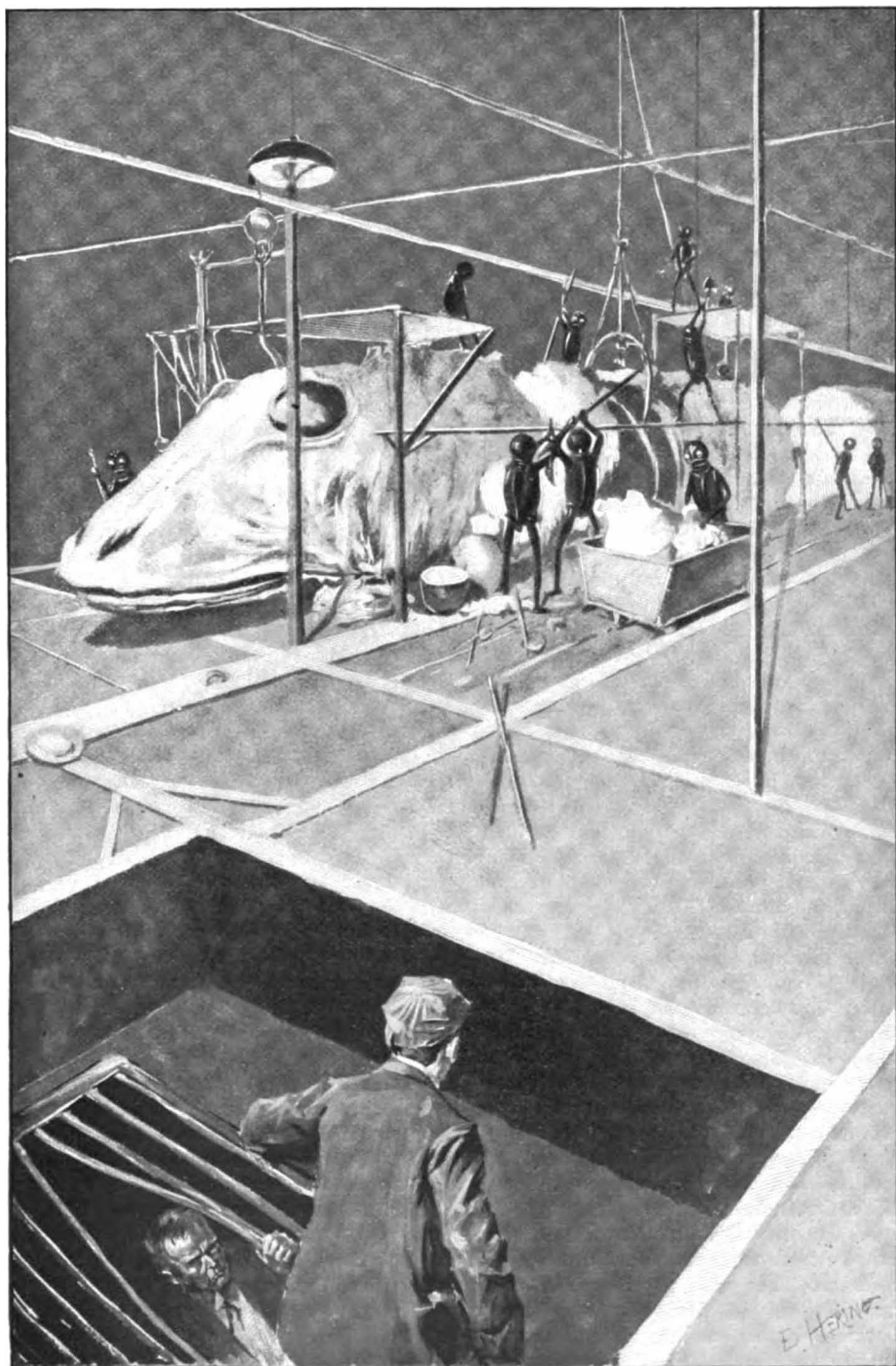
My mind was busy as we went up that narrow alley between the dead bodies and the wall of the cavern. The rocks curved about—they could not enfilade us. Though in that narrow space we could not leap, yet with our earth-born strength we were still able to go very much faster than the Selenites. I reckoned we should presently come right among them. Once we were on them, they would be hardly so formidable as black beetles. Only—there would first of all be a volley. I whipped off my flannel jacket as I ran.

"Bedford!" panted Cavor, behind me.

I glanced back. "What?" said I.

He was pointing upward over the carcasses. "White light!" he said.

I looked, and it was even so—a faint white ghost of twilight in the remoter cavern roof. That seemed to give me double strength.



Drawn by E. Herring.

"I . . . PERCEIVED THEY WERE THE CARCASSES OF MOONCALVES BEING CUT UP, MUCH AS A MOORED WHALE MIGHT BE CUT UP BY THE CREW OF A WHALER."

"Keep close," I said. A Selenite dashed out of the darkness and squealed and fled. I halted, and stopped Cavor with my hand. I hung my jacket over my crowbar, ducked round the next carcass, dropped jacket and crowbar, showed myself and darted back.

"Chuzz—flick!" just one arrow came. We were close on the Selenites, and they were standing in a crowd, with a little battery of their shooting implements pointing down the cave. Three or four other arrows followed the first, and then their fire ceased.

I stuck out my head, and escaped by a hair's-breadth. This time I drew a dozen shots or more, and heard the Selenites shouting and twittering as if with excitement as they shot. I picked up jacket and crowbar again.

"Now!" said I, and thrust out the jacket.

"Chuzz-zz-zz-zz! Chuzz!" In an instant my jacket had grown a thick beard of arrows, and they were quivering all over the carcass behind us. Instantly I slipped the crowbar out of the jacket, dropped the jacket—for all I know to the contrary, it is lying there now—and rushed out upon them.

For a minute, perhaps, it was massacre. I was too fierce to discriminate, and the Selenites were probably too scared to fight. At any rate, they made no sort of fight against me. I saw scarlet, as the saying is. I remember I seemed to be wading among those insect helmets as a man wades through tall grass, mowing and hitting first right, then left—smash, smash. Little drops of moisture flew about. I trod on things that crushed and piped and went slippery. The crowd seemed to open and close and flow like water. There were spears flew about me; I was grazed over the ear by one. I was stabbed once in the arm and once in the cheek, but I found that out only afterward when the blood had had time to run and cool and feel wet. What Cavor did, I do not know. For a space it seemed that this fighting had lasted for an age and must needs go on forever. Then suddenly it was all over, and there was nothing to be seen but the backs of heads bobbing up and down as their owners ran in all directions. I seemed altogether unhurt. I ran forward

some paces, shouting, then turned about. I was amazed.

I looked down the cavern and in that direction there was not a Selenite in sight.

I felt an enormous astonishment at the evaporation of the great fight into which I had hurled myself, and not a little of exultation. It did not seem to me that I had discovered the Selenites to be unexpectedly flimsy, but that I was unexpectedly strong. I laughed stupidly. This fantastic moon!

I leaped over the smashed and writhing bodies that were scattered about the cavern floor, and hurried on after Cavor.

XVIII.

IN THE SUNLIGHT.

Presently we saw that the cavern before us opened on a hazy void. In another moment we had emerged upon a sort of slanting gallery, that projected into a vast circular space, a huge cylindrical pit running vertically up and down. Round this pit the slanting gallery ran without any parapet or protection for a turn and a half, and then plunged high above into the rock again. Somehow it reminded me then of one of those spiral turns of the railway through the St. Gothard. It was all tremendously huge. I can scarcely hope to convey to you the titanic proportion of all that place, the titanic effect of it. Our eyes followed up the vast declivity of the pit wall, and overhead and far above we beheld a round opening set with faint stars, and half of the lip about it well-nigh blinding with the white light of the sun. At that we cried aloud simultaneously.

"Come on!" I said, leading the way.

"But there?" said Cavor, and very carefully stepped nearer the edge of the gallery. I followed his example and craned forward and looked down, but I was dazzled by that gleam of light above and I could see only a bottomless darkness with spectral patches of crimson and purple floating therein. Yet if I could not see I could hear. Out of this darkness came a sound, a sound like the angry hum one can hear if one puts one's ear outside a hive of bees, a sound out of that enormous hollow, it might be four miles beneath our feet.

I listened, then tightened my grip on my crowbar and led the way up the gallery.

"This must be the shaft we looked down upon," said Cavor. "Under that lid."

"And below there, is where we saw the lights."

"The lights!" said he. "Yes—the lights of the world that now we shall never see."

"We'll come back," I said, for now

we had escaped so much. I was rashly sanguine that we should recover the sphere. His answer I did not catch.

"Eh?" I asked.

"It doesn't matter," he answered, and we hurried on in silence.

I suppose that slanting lateral way was four or five miles long, allowing for its curvature, and it ascended at a slope which would have made it almost impossibly steep on earth, but which one strode up easily under lunar conditions. We saw only two Selenites during all that portion of our flight and directly when they became aware of us they ran headlong. It was clear that the knowledge of our strength and violence had reached them. Our way to the exterior was unexpectedly plain. The spiral gallery straightened into a steeply ascending tunnel, its floor bearing abundant traces of the mooncalves, and so straight and short in proportion to its vast arch that no part of it was absolutely dark.

Almost immediately it began to lighten, and then, far off and high up, and quite blindingly brilliant, appeared its opening on the exterior, a slope of Alpine steepness surmounted by a crest of bayonet shrub, tall and broken down now and dry and dead, in spiky silhouette against the sun.

And it is strange that we men to whom this very vegetation had seemed so weird and horrible a little time ago, should now behold it with the emotion a home-coming exile might feel at sight of his native land. We welcomed even the rareness of the air which made us pant as we ran and which rendered speaking no longer the easy thing it had been but an effort to make oneself heard. Larger grew the sunlit circle above us and larger, and all the nearer tunnel sank into a rim of indistinguishable black. We saw the dead bayonet shrub no longer with any touch of green in it, but brown and dry and thick, and the shadow of its upper branches high out of sight made a densely interlaced pattern upon the tumbled rocks. And at the immediate mouth of the tunnel was a wide trampled space where the mooncalves had come and gone.



E. H. Drawn by E. Hering.

"FOR A MINUTE, PERHAPS, IT WAS MASSACRE. . .
I TROD ON THINGS THAT CRUSHED AND PIPED
AND WENT SLIPPERY."

We came out upon this space at last, into a light and heat that hit and pressed upon us. We traversed the exposed area painfully, and clambered up a slope among the scrub stems, panting, into a high place beneath the shadow of a mass of twisted lava. Even in the shade the rock felt hot.

The air was intensely hot and we were in great physical discomfort, but for all that we were no longer in a nightmare. We seemed to have come to our own province again, beneath the stars. All the fear and stress of our flight through the dim passages and fissures below had fallen from us. That last fight had filled us with an enormous confidence in ourselves as far as the Selenites were concerned. We looked back almost incredulously at the black opening from which we had just emerged. Down there it was, in a blue glow which now in our memories seemed the next thing to absolute darkness, that we had met with things like mad mockeries of men, helmet-headed creatures, and had walked in fear before them and had submitted to them until we could submit no longer. And behold, they had smashed like wax and scattered like chaff, and fled and vanished like the creatures of a dream!

I rubbed my eyes, doubting whether we had not slept and dreamed these things by reason of the fungus we had eaten, and suddenly discovered the blood upon my face, and then that my shirt was sticking painfully to my shoulder and arm.

"Confound it!" I said, gaging my injuries with an investigatory hand, and suddenly that distant tunnel mouth became as it were a watching eye.

"Cavor!" I said, "what are they going to do now? And what are we going to do?"

He shook his head, with his eyes fixed upon the tunnel. "How can one tell what they will do?"

"It depends upon what they think of us, and I don't see how we can begin to guess that. And it depends upon what they have in reserve. It's as you say, Cavor; we have touched the merest outside of this world. They may have all sorts of things inside there. Even with those shooting things they might make it bad for us——"

"Yet, after all," I said, "even if we don't find the sphere at once, there is a

chance for us. We might hold out. Even through the night. We might go down there again and make a fight for it."

I stared about me with speculative eyes. The character of the scenery had altered altogether by reason of the enormous growth and subsequent drying of the scrub. The crest on which we were was high and commanded a wide prospect of the crater landscape, and we saw it now all sere and dry in the late autumn of the lunar afternoon. Rising one behind the other were long slopes and fields of trampled brown where the mooncalves had pastured, and far away in the full blaze of the sun a drove of them basked slumberously, scattered shapes, each with a blot of shadow against it, like sheep on the side of a down. But never a sign of Selenite was to be seen. Whether they had fled on our emerging from the interior passages, or whether they were accustomed to retire after driving out the mooncalves, I cannot guess. At the time, I believed the former was the case.

"If we were to set fire to all this stuff," I said, as we seated ourselves, "we might find the sphere among the ashes."

Cavor did not seem to hear me. He was peering under his hand at the stars, that still, in spite of the intense sunlight, were abundantly visible in the sky. "How long do you think we have been here?" he asked at last.

"Been where?"

"On the moon."

"Two days perhaps."

"More nearly ten. Do you know, the sun is past its zenith, and sinking in the west. In four days' time or less it will be night."

"But—we've eaten only once!"

"I know that. And—— But there are the stars!"

"But why should time seem different because we are on a smaller planet?"

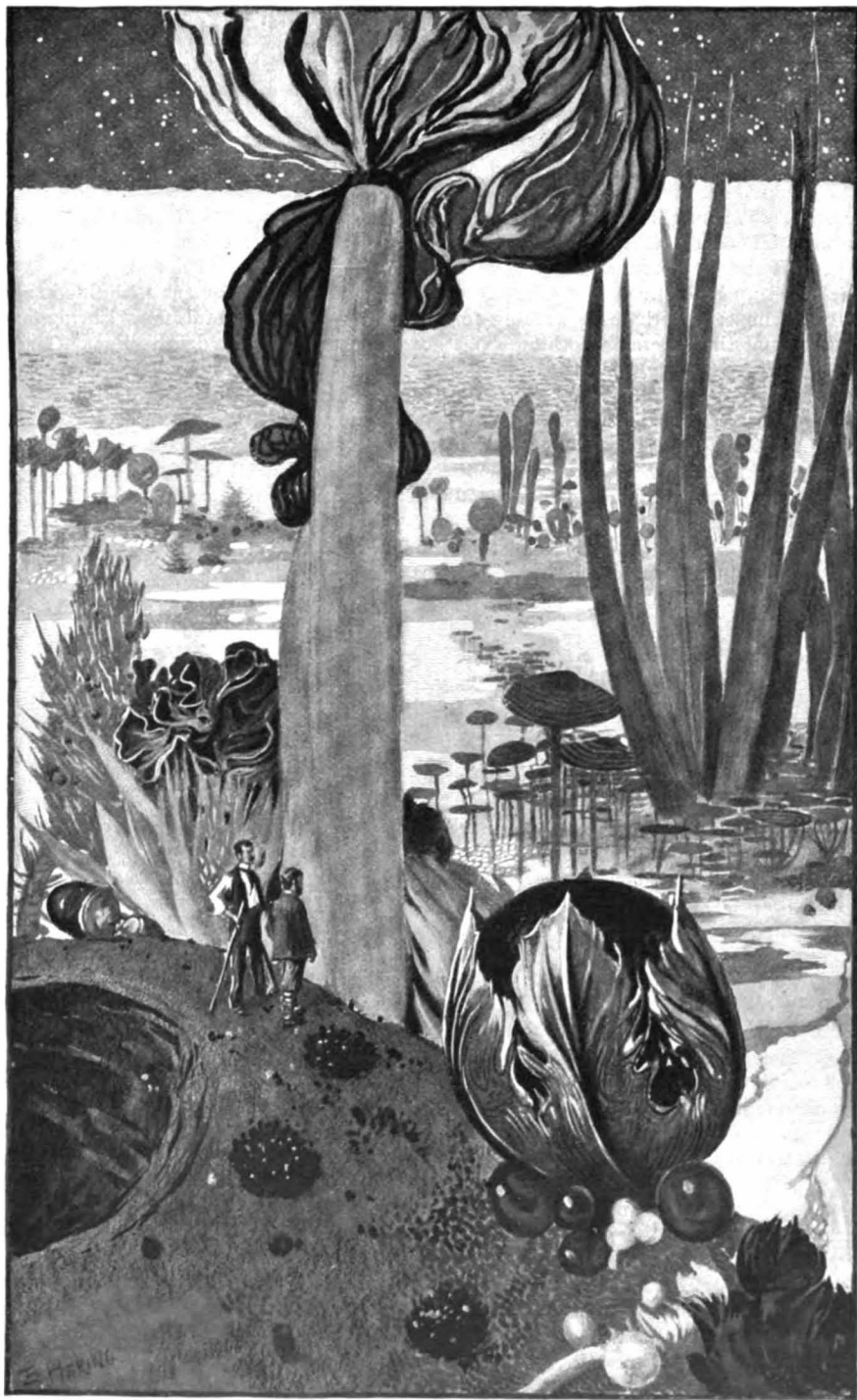
"I don't know. There it is!"

"How does one tell time?"

"Hunger—fatigue—all those things, are different. Everything is different. Everything. To me it seems that since first we came out of the sphere has been only a question of hours—long hours—at most."

"Ten days," I said; "that leaves——"

I looked up at the sun for a moment,



Drawn by E. Herring.

"THE CREST ON WHICH WE WERE WAS HIGH AND COMMANDED A WIDE PROSPECT OF THE CRATER LANDSCAPE."

and then saw that it was halfway from the zenith to the western edge of things. "Four days! Cavor, we mustn't sit here and dream. How do you think we may begin?"

I stood up.

"We must get a fixed point we can recognize. We might hoist a flag or a handkerchief or something, and quarter the ground and work round that."

He stood up beside me.

"Yes," he said, "there is nothing for it but to hunt the sphere. Nothing. We may find it—certainly we may find it. And if not——"

"We must keep on looking."

He looked this way and that, glanced up at the sky and down at the tunnel, and astonished me by a sudden gesture of impatience. "Oh, but we have done foolishly! To have come to this pass! Think how it might have been and the things we might have done!"

"We may do something yet."

"Never the thing we might have done. Here below our feet is a world. Think of what that world must be. Think of that machine we saw and the lid and the shaft. They were just remote outlying things, and those creatures we have seen and fought with, no more than ignorant peasants, dwellers in the outskirts, yokels and laborers half akin to brutes. Down below! Caverns beneath caverns, tunnels, structures, ways—— It must open out and be greater and wider and more populous as one descends. Assuredly. Right down at last to the central sea that washes round the core of the moon. Think of its inky waters under the spare lights. If indeed their eyes *neal* lights. Think of the cascading tributaries pouring down their channels to feed it. Think of the tides upon its surface and the rush and swirl of its ebb and flow. Perhaps they have ships that go out upon it, perhaps down there are mighty cities and swarming ways, and wisdom and order passing the wit of man. And we may die here upon it and never see the masters who *must* be—ruling over these things. We may freeze and die here and the air will freeze and thaw upon us, and then—— Then they will come upon us, come upon our stiff and silent bodies, and find

the sphere we cannot find, and they will understand at last, too late, all the thought and effort that ended here in vain!"

"But the darkness," I said.

"One might get over that."

"How?"

"I don't know. How am I to know? One might carry a torch, one might have a lamp—— The others—might understand."

He stood for a moment with his hands held down and a rueful face, staring out over the waste that defied him. Then, with a gesture of renunciation, he turned toward me with proposals for the systematic hunting of the sphere.

"We can return," I said.

He looked about him. "First of all we shall have to get to earth."

"We could bring back lamps to carry, and climbing-irons, and a hundred necessary things."

"Yes," he said.

"We can take back an earnest of success in this gold."

He looked at my golden crowbars, and said nothing for a space. He stood with his hands clasped behind his back, staring across the crater. At last he sighed and spoke. "It was *I* found the way here, but to find a way isn't always to be master of a way. If I take my secret back to earth what will happen? I do not see how I can keep my secret for a year, for even a part of a year. Sooner or later it must come out, even if other men rediscovered it. And then—— Governments and powers will struggle to get hither. They will fight against one another and against these moon-people. It will only spread warfare and multiply the occasions of war. In a little while, in a very little while if I tell my secret, this planet to its deepest galleries will be strewn with human dead. Other things are doubtful but that is certain. It is not as though men had any use for the moon. What good would the moon be to men? Even of their own planet what have they made but a battleground and theater of infinite folly? Small as his world is, and short as his time, man has still in his little life down there far more than he can do. No! Science has toiled too long forging weapons for fools to use. It is time she held her hand.

Let him find it out for himself again—in a thousand years' time."

"There are methods of secrecy," I said.

He looked up at me and smiled. "After all," he said, "why should one worry? There is little chance of our finding the sphere, and down below things are brewing. It's simply the human habit of hoping till we die, that makes us think of return. Our troubles are only beginning. We have shown these moon-folk violence, we have given them a taste of our quality, and our chances are about as good as a tiger's that has got loose and killed a man in Hyde Park. The news of us must be running down from gallery to gallery, down toward the central parts—No sane beings will ever let us take that sphere back to earth, after so much as they have seen of us."

"We aren't improving our chances," said I, "by sitting here."

We stood up side by side.

"After all," he said, "we must separate. We must stick up a handkerchief on these tall spikes here and fasten it firmly, and from this as a center we must work over the crater. You must go westward, moving out in semicircles to and fro toward the setting sun. You must move first with your shadow on your right until it is at right angles with the direction of your handkerchief, and then with your shadow on your left. And I will do the same to the east. We will look into every gully, examine every skerry of rocks—we will do all we can to find my sphere. If we see Selenites, we will hide from them as well as we can. For drink we must take snow, and if we feel the need of food we must kill a mooncalf if we can and eat such flesh as it has, raw; and each will go his own way."

"And if one of us comes upon the sphere?"

"He must come back to the white handkerchief and stand by it and signal to the other."

"And if neither——?"

Cavor glanced up at the sun. "We go on seeking until the night and cold overtake us."

"Suppose the Selenites have found the sphere and hidden it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Or if presently they come hunting us?"

He made no answer.

"You had better take a club," I said.

He shook his head, and stared away from me across the waste. "Let us start," he said.

But for a moment he did not start. He looked at me shyly, hesitated. "Au revoir," he said.

I felt an odd stab of emotion. I was on the point of asking him to shake hands—for that somehow was how I felt just then—when he put his feet together and leaped away from me toward the north. He seemed to drift through the air as a dead leaf would do, fell lightly, and leaped again. I stood for a moment watching him, then faced westward reluctantly, pulled myself together and, with something of the feeling of a man who leaps into icy water, selected a leaping-point and plunged forward to explore my solitary half of the moon-world. I dropped rather clumsily among rocks, stood up and looked about me, clambered onto a rocky slab and leaped again. When presently I looked for Cavor, he was hidden from my eyes, but the handkerchief showed out bravely on its headland, white in the blaze of the sun. I determined not to lose sight of that handkerchief, whatever might betide.

XIX.

MR. BEDFORD ALONE.

In a little while, it seemed to me as though I had always been alone on the moon. I hunted for a time with a certain intentness, but the heat was still very great, and the thinness of the air felt like a hoop about one's chest. I came presently into a hollow basin bristling with tall, brown, dry fronds about its edge, and I sat down under these to rest and cool. I intended to rest for only a little while. I put down my club beside me and sat resting my chin on my hands. I saw with a sort of colorless interest that the rocks of the basin, where here and there the crackling dry lichens had shrunk away to show them, were all veined and splattered with gold, that here and there bosses of rounded and wrinkled gold projected from among the

litter. What did that matter now? A sort of languor had possession of my limbs and mind. I did not believe for a moment that we should ever find the sphere in that vast desiccated wilderness. I seemed to lack a motive for effort until the Selenites should come. Then, I supposed, I should exert myself, obeying that unreasonable imperative which urges a man before all things to preserve and defend his life, albeit he may preserve it only to die more painfully in a little while.

"Why had we come to the moon?"

The thing presented itself to me as a perplexing problem. What is this spirit in man that urges him forever to depart from happiness and security, to toil, to place himself in danger, to risk even a reasonable certainty of death? It dawned upon me up there in the moon as a thing I ought always to have known, that man is not made simply to go about being safe and comfortable and well-fed and amused, and that man himself, if you put the thing to him not in words but in the shape of opportunities, will show that he knows that this is so. Sitting there in the midst of that useless moon-gold, amidst the things of another world, I took count of all my life. Assuming I was to die a cast-away upon the moon, I failed altogether to see what purpose I had served; I got no light on that point, but at any rate it was clearer to me than it had ever been in my life before that I was not serving my own purpose, that all my days I had in truth never served the purposes of my private life. I ceased to speculate on why we had come to the moon, and took a wider sweep. Why had I come to the earth? Why had I a private life at all? I lost myself at last in bottomless speculations——

My thoughts became vague and cloudy, no longer leading in definite directions. I had not felt heavy or weary—I cannot imagine one's doing so upon the moon—but I suppose I was greatly fatigued. At any rate, I slept.

Sleeping there rested me greatly, I think, and the sun was setting and the violence of the heat abating through all the time I slumbered. When at last I was roused from my slumbers by a remote clamor, I felt active and capable again. I

rubbed my eyes and stretched my arms. I rose to my feet—I was a little stiff—and at once prepared to resume my search. I shouldered my golden clubs, one on each shoulder, and went on out of the ravine of the gold-veined rocks.

The sun was certainly lower, much lower than it had been; the air was very much cooler. I perceived I must have slept some time. It seemed to me that a faint touch of misty blueness hung about the western cliff. I leaped to a little boss of rock and surveyed the crater. I could see no signs of mooncalves or Selenites, nor could I see Cavor, but I could see my handkerchief afar off spread out on its thicket of thorns. I looked about me, and then leaped forward to the next convenient viewpoint.

I beat my way round in a semicircle, and back again in a still remoter crescent. It was very fatiguing and hopeless. The air was really very much cooler, and it seemed to me that the shadow under the westward cliff was growing broad. Ever and again I stopped and reconnoitered, but there was no sign of Cavor, no sign of Selenites, and it seemed to me the mooncalves must have been driven into the interior again—I could see none of them. I became more and more desirous of seeing Cavor. The winged outline of the sun had sunk now until it was scarcely the distance of its diameter from the rim of the sky. I was oppressed by the idea that the Selenites would presently close their lids and valves and shut us out under the inexorable onrush of the lunar night. It seemed to me high time that he abandoned his search and that we took counsel together. We must decide soon. Once these valves were closed, we were lost men. We must get into the moon again, though we were slain in doing it. I had a vision of our freezing to death, and hammering with our last strength on the valve of the great pit.

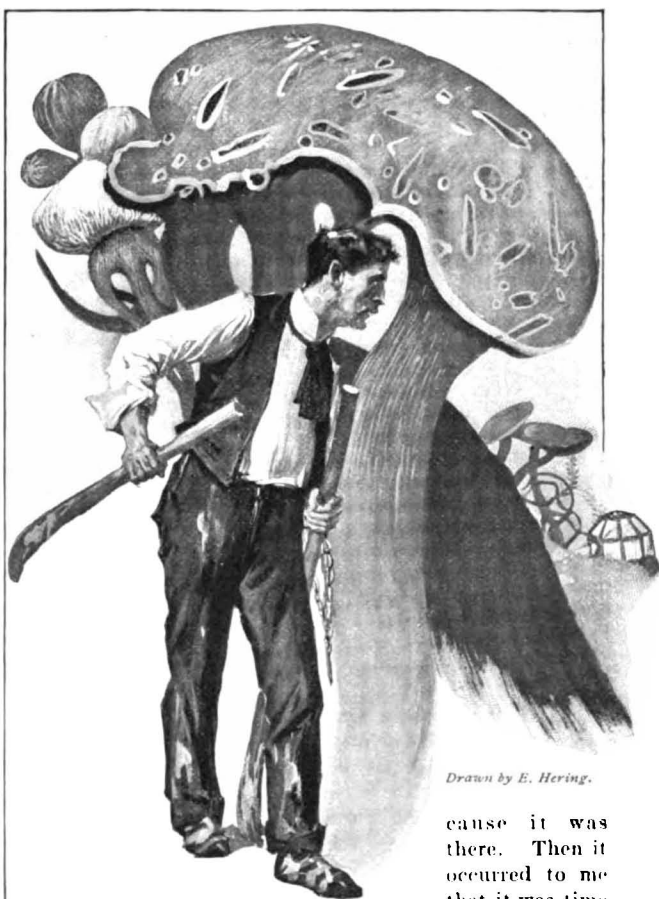
Indeed, I took no thought any more of the sphere. I thought only of finding Cavor again. I was weighing the advisability of a prompt return to our handkerchief, when suddenly——

I saw the sphere!

I did not find it so much as it found me. It was lying much farther to the

westward than I had come, and the sloping rays of the sinking sun reflected from its glass had suddenly proclaimed its presence in a dazzling beam. For an instant I thought this was some new device of the Selenites against us, and then I understood, and shouted a ghostly shout and set off in vast leaps toward it. I missed one of my leaps and dropped into a deep ravine and twisted my ankle, and after that I stumbled at almost every leap. I was in a state of hysterical agitation, trembling violently and quite breathless, long before I got to it. Three times, at least, I had to stop with my hands resting on my side, and spite of the thin dryness of the air the perspiration was wet upon my face.

I thought of nothing but the sphere until I reached it; I forgot even my trouble of Cavor's whereabouts. My last leap flung me with my hands hard upon its glass; then I lay against it panting and trying vainly to shout: "Cavor! Here is the sphere!" I peered through the thick glass and the things inside seemed tumbled. When at last I could move, I hoisted it over a little, and thrust my head through the manhole. The screw stopper was inside, and I could see now that nothing had been touched, nothing had suffered. It lay there as we had left it when we had dropped out amidst the snow. For a time I was wholly occupied in making and re-making this inventory. I was trembling violently, I found, when I came to handle one of the blankets. But it was good to see that familiar dark interior again! Presently I crept inside and sat down among the things. I packed up my gold clubs in the bale and took a little food, not so much because I wanted it but be-



Drawn by E. Hering.

"I SAW THE SPHERE!"

cause it was there. Then it occurred to me that it was time to go out and

signal for my fellow-explorer Cavor.

After all, everything was coming right. There would be still time for us to get more of the magic stone that gives one mastery over men. Away there, close handy, was gold for the picking up, and the sphere would travel as well half full of gold as though it were empty. We could go back now masters of ourselves and our world, and then——

I had an enormous vision of vast and dazzling possibilities that held me dreaming for a space. What monopolist, what emperor, that could compare for a moment with the men who owned the moon?

I roused myself, and it was time to fetch Cavor. No doubt he was toiling despairfully, away there to the east.

I clambered out of the sphere again at

last, and looked about me. The growth and decay of the vegetation had gone on apace, and the whole aspect of the rocks had changed, but still it was possible to make out the slope on which the seeds had germinated and the rocky mass from which we had taken our first view of the crater. But the spiky shrub on the slope stood brown and sere now and thirty feet high, and cast long shadows that stretched out of sight, and the little seeds that clustered in its upper branches were brown and ripe. Its work was done, and it was brittle and ready to fall and crumble under the freezing air so soon as the nightfall came. And the huge cacti that had swollen as we watched them had long since burst and scattered their spores to the four quarters of the moon. Amazing little corner in the universe—the landing-place of men! Some day I would have an inscription standing there right in the midst of the hollow. It came to me, if only this teeming world within knew of the full import of the moment, how furious its tumult would become! But as yet it could scarcely be dreaming of the significance of our coming. For if it did, the crater would surely be an uproar of pursuit instead of as still as death. I looked about for some place from which I might signal to Cavor, and saw that same patch of rock to which he had first leaped, still bare and barren in the sun. For a moment I hesitated at going so far from the sphere. Then, with a pang of shame at that hesitation, I leaped—

From this vantage-point I surveyed the crater again. Far away at the top of the enormous shadow I cast, was the little white handkerchief fluttering on the bushes. It seemed to me that by this time he ought to be looking for me. But he was nowhere to be seen.

I stood waiting and watching, hands shading my eyes, expecting every moment to distinguish him. Very probably I stood there for quite a long time. I tried to shout and was reminded of the thinness of the air. I made an undecided step back toward the sphere. But a lurking dread of the Selenites made me hesitate to signal my whereabouts by hoisting one of our sleeping-blankets on the adjacent scrub.

I searched the crater again.

It had an effect of bleak emptiness that chilled me. And it was still. Any sound of the Selenites, in the world beneath even, had died away. It was as still as death. Save for the faint stir of the shrub about me in the little breeze that was rising, there was no sound nor shadow of a sound. And it was not warm now; the breeze was even a little fresh.

Confound Cavor!

I took a deep breath. I put my hands to the sides of my mouth. "Cavor!" I bawled, and the sound was like some man-ikin shouting far away.

I looked at the handkerchief; I looked behind me at the broadening shadow of the westward cliff; I looked under my hand at the sun. It seemed to me that almost visibly it was creeping down the sky. I felt I must act instantly if I was to save Cavor. I whipped off my jacket and flung it as a mark on the sere bayonets of the shrubs behind me, and then set off in a straight line toward the handkerchief. Perhaps it was a couple of miles away—a matter of a few hundred leaps and strides. I have already told how one seemed to hang through those lunar leaps. In each suspense I sought Cavor, and marveled why he should be hidden. I tried to think of it only in that way, as if that were the only possibility.

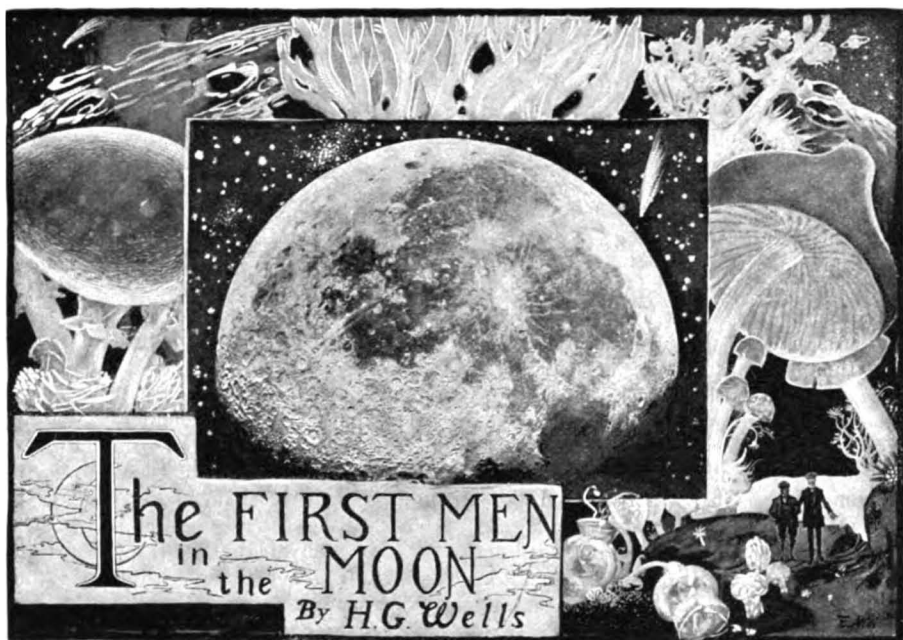
A last leap and I was in the depression below our handkerchief, a stride and I stood on our former vantage-point within arm's-reach of it. I stood up straight and scanned the world about me, between its lengthening bars of shadow. Far away, down a long declivity, was the opening of the tunnel up which we had fled, and my shadow reached toward it, stretched toward it and touched it like a finger of the night.

Not a sign of Cavor, not a sound in all the stillness, only that the stir and waving of the shrub and of the shadows increased. And suddenly and violently I shivered. "Cav—" I began, and realized once more the uselessness of the human voice in that thin air.

Silence. The silence of death.

Then it was my eye caught something—a little thing, lying perhaps fifty yards away down the slope amidst a litter of bent and broken branches. What was it? I knew, and yet for some reason I would not know.

(To be concluded.)



Drawn by F. Herbig.

XX.

MR. HEDFORD IN INFINITE SPACE.

I WENT nearer to it. It was the little cricket-cap Cavor had worn.

I saw then that the scattered branches about it had been forcibly smashed and trampled. I hesitated, stepped forward and picked it up.

I stood with Cavor's cap in my hand, staring at the trampled ground about me. On some of them were little smears of something dark, something that I dared not touch. A dozen yards away, perhaps, the rising breeze dragged something into view, something small and vividly white.

It was a little piece of paper, crumpled as though it had been clutched tightly. I picked it up, and on it were smears of red. My eye caught faint pencil-marks. I smoothed it out and saw uneven and broken writing, ending at last in a crooked streak upon the paper.

I set myself to decipher this.

"I have been injured about the knee, I think my knee-cap is smashed, and I cannot run or crawl," it began—pretty distinctly written.

Then, less legibly: "They have been chasing me for some time and it is only a question of"—the word "time" seemed to have been written here and erased in favor of something illegible—"before they get me. They are beating all about me."

Then the writing became convulsive. "I can hear them," I guessed the tracing meant, and then it was quite unreadable for a space. Then came a little string of words that were quite distinct: "a different sort of Selenite altogether, who appears to be directing the ——" The writing became a mere hasty confusion again.

"They have larger brain-cases, and are clothed, as I take it, in thin plates of gold. They make gentle noises and move with organized deliberation. And though I am wounded and helpless here, their appearance still gives me hope——" That was like Cavor. "They have not shot at me or attempted injury. I intend——"

Then came the sudden streak of the pencil across the paper, and on the back and edges—blood!

And as I stood there, stupid and perplexed, with this dumfounding relic in my hand, something very, very soft and

light and chill touched my hand for a moment and ceased to be, and then a thing, a little white speck, drifted athwart a shadow. It was a tiny snowflake, the first snowflake, the herald of the night.

I looked up with a start, and the sky had darkened almost to blackness and was thick with a gathering multitude of coldly watchful stars. I looked eastward, and the light of that shriveled world was touched with a somber bronze—westward, and the sun, robbed now by a thickening white mist of half its heat and splendor, was touching the crater rim, was sinking out of sight, and all the shrubs and jagged and tumbled rocks stood out against it in a bristling disorder of black shapes. Into the great lake of darkness westward, a vast wreath of mist was sinking. A cold wind set all the crater shivering. Suddenly, for a moment I was in a puff of falling snow and all the world about me gray and dim.

And then it was I heard, not loud and penetrating as at first, but faint and dim like a dying voice, that tolling, that same tolling that had welcomed the coming of the day, "Boom! Boom! Boom!" And suddenly the open mouth of the tunnel, down below there, shut like an eye and vanished out of sight.

Then indeed I was alone.

Over me, within me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer, was the Eternal, that which was before the beginning and that which triumphs over the end; that enormous void in which all light and life and being is but the thin and vanishing splendor of a falling-star, the cold, the stillness, the silence—the infinite and final Night of space.

"No!" I cried. "No! Not yet! Not yet! Wait! Wait! Oh, wait!" and, frantic and convulsive, shivering with cold and terror, I flung the crumpled paper from me, scrambled back to the creast to take my bearings, and then, with all the will that was in me, leaped out toward the mark I had left, dim and distant now in the very margin of the shadow.

Leap, leap, leap, and each leap was seven ages. Before me the pale serpent-girdled sector of the sun sank and sank, and the advancing shadow swept to seize the sphere before I could reach it. Once, and then again, my foot slipped on the

gathering snow as I leaped, and shortened my leap; once I fell short into bushes that crashed and smashed into dusty chips and nothingness, and once I stumbled as I dropped and rolled head over heels into a gully, and rose bruised and bleeding, and confused as to my direction. But such incidents were as nothing to the intervals, those awful pauses when one drifted through the air toward that pouring tide of night. "Shall I reach it? Oh, Heaven! shall I reach it?"—a thousand times repeated until it passed into a prayer, into a sort of litany. And with the barest margin of time I reached the sphere.

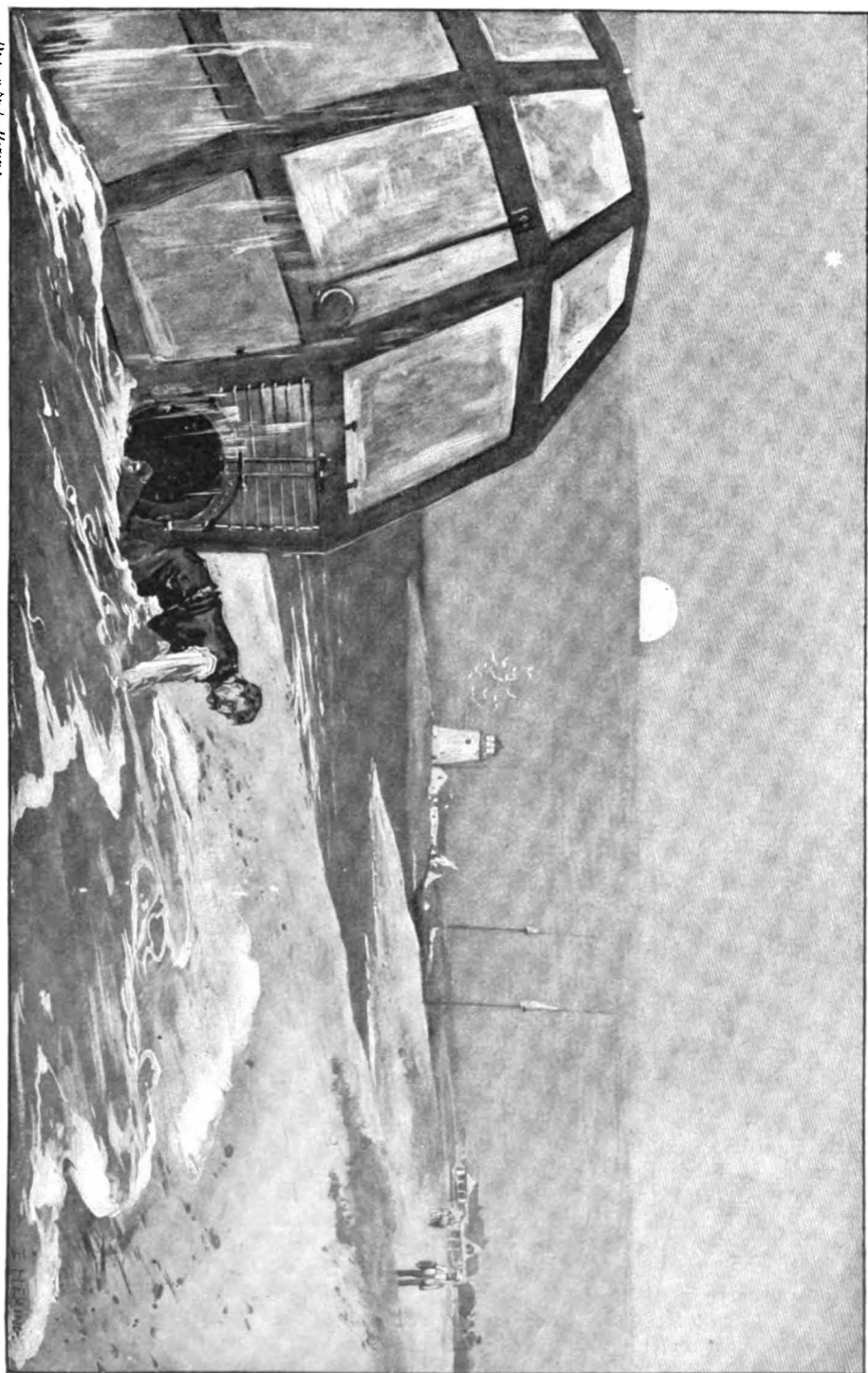
Already it had passed into the chill penumbra of the cold. Already the snow was thick upon it, and the cold reaching my marrow. But I reached it—the snow was already banking against it—and crept into its refuge with the snowflakes dancing in about me, as I tried with chilling hands to thrust the valve in, and spun it tight and hard. And then, with fingers that were already thick and clumsy, I turned to the shutter studs.

As I fumbled with the switches—for I had never controlled them before—I could see dimly, through the steaming glass, the blazing red streamers of the sinking sun dancing and flickering through the snow-storm, and the black forms of the scrub thickening and broadening and bending and breaking beneath the accumulating snow. Thicker whirled the snow and thicker, black against the light. What if even now the switches overcame me! Then something clicked under my hands and in an instant that last vision of the moon-world was hidden from my eyes. I was in the silence and darkness of the interplanetary sphere.

It was almost as though I had been killed. Indeed, I could imagine a man suddenly and violently killed would feel very much as I did. One moment, a passion of agonizing existence and fear; the next, darkness and stillness, neither light nor life, nor sun, moon or stars, the blank Infinite. Although the thing was done by my own act, although I had already tasted this very effect in Cavor's company, I felt astonished, dumfounded and overwhelmed. I seemed to be borne upward into an enormous darkness. My fingers

Drawn by J. Heron.

"I MANAGED TO CRAWL OUT UPON THE SAND, OVER WHICH THE RETREATING WAVES STILL CAME AND WENT."



floated off the studs, I hung as if I were annihilated, and at last very softly and gently I came against the bale and the golden chain and the crowbars, that had drifted to the middle of the sphere.

I do not know how long that drifting took. In the sphere, of course, even more than on the moon one's earthly time sense was ineffectual. At the touch of the bale it was as if I had awakened from a dreamless sleep. I immediately perceived that if I wanted to keep awake and alive, I must get a light or open a window so as to get a grip of something with my eyes. And besides, I was cold. I kicked off from the bale, therefore, clawed on to the thin cords within the glass, crawled along until I got to the manhole rim and so got my bearings for the light and blind studs, took a shove off, and flying once round the bale and getting a scare from something big and flimsy that was drifting loose, I got my hand on the cord quite close to the studs and reached them. I lit the little lamp first of all, to see what it was I had collided with, and discovered that old copy of "Lloyd's News," which had slipped its moorings and was adrift in the void. That brought me out of the Infinite to my own proper dimensions again. It made me laugh and pant for a time, and suggested the idea of a little oxygen from one of the cylinders. After that, I lit the heater until I felt warm, and then I took food. Then I set to work in a very gingerly fashion on the Cavorite blinds to see if I could guess by any means how the sphere was traveling.

The first blind I opened I shut at once, and hung for a time flattened and blinded by the sunlight that had hit me. After thinking a little, I started upon the windows at right angles to this one, and got the huge crescent moon and the little crescent earth behind it, the second time. I was amazed to find how far I was from the moon. I had reckoned not only that I should have little or none of the "kick-off" which the earth's atmosphere had given us at our start, but that the tangential "fly-off" of the moon's spin would be at least twenty-eight times less than the earth's. I had expected to discover myself hanging over our crater and on the edge of the night, but all that was now only a

part of the outline of the white crescent that filled the sky. And Cavor——?

He was already infinitesimal.

Under the inspiring touch of the drifting newspaper, I became very practical again for a while. It was quite clear to me that what I had to do was to get back to earth, but as far as I could see I was drifting away from it. Whatever had happened to Cavor, I was powerless to help him. There he was, living or dead behind the mantle of that rayless night, and there he must remain until I could summon our fellow-men to his assistance. That, briefly, was the plan I had in my mind: to come back to earth, and then, as maturer consideration might determine, either to show and explain the sphere to a few discreet persons and act with them, or else to keep my secret, sell my gold, obtain weapons, provisions and an assistant, and return with these advantages to deal on equal terms with the flimsy people of the moon, and either to rescue Cavor or to procure a sufficient supply of gold to place my subsequent proceedings on a firmer basis. All this was pretty clear and obvious, and I set myself to decide just exactly how the return to earth should be contrived.

I puzzled out at last that I must drop back toward the moon as near as I dared, to gather velocity, then shut my windows and fly behind it, and when I was past, open my earthward windows and so get off at a good pace homeward. But whether I should ever reach the earth by that device, or whether I might not simply find myself spinning about it in some hyperbolic or parabolic curve or other, I could not tell. Later I had a happy inspiration, and by opening certain windows to the moon, which had appeared in the sky in front of the earth, I turned my course aside so as to head off the earth, which it had become evident to me I must pass behind without some such expedient. I did a very great deal of complicated thinking over these problems—for I am no mathematician—and in the end I am certain it was much more my good luck than my reasoning that enabled me to hit the earth. Had I known then, as I know now, the mathematical chances that there were against me, I doubt if I should have troubled even to touch the studs to make any attempt.

And having puzzled out what I considered to be the thing to do, I opened all my moonward windows, and squatted down—the effort lifted me for a time some foot or so into the air and I hung there in the oddest way—and waited for the crescent to get bigger and bigger until I felt I was near enough for safety. Then I would shut the windows, fly past the moon with the velocity I had got from it—if I did not smash upon it—and so go on toward the earth.

A time came when this was done and I shut out the sight of the moon from my eyes, and in a state of mind singularly free from anxiety or any other distressful quality, I sat down to begin my vigil in that little speck of matter in Infinite Space that would last until I should strike the earth. The heater had made the sphere tolerably warm, the air had been refreshed by the oxygen, and I felt perfectly comfortable, for the first time indeed since I had left the earth. I had extinguished the light again, lest it should fail me in the end; I was in darkness save for the earthshine and the glitter of the stars below me. Everything was absolutely silent and still; I might indeed have been the only being in the Universe; and yet, strangely enough, I had no more feeling of loneliness or fear than if I had been lying in bed on earth. Yet during my last hours in the crater of the moon the sense of my utter loneliness had been an agony.

I remember that after I had been sitting in this manner for some days—though at the time they seemed no more than hours to me—I found myself thinking with a strange breadth and freedom of all that we had undergone and of all my life and motives and the secret issues of my being. I seemed to myself to grow greater and greater; all sense of movement passed from me, until I was floating amid the stars; and always the sense of earth's littleness, and the infinite littleness of my life upon it, increased.

I can't profess to explain the things that happened in my mind, though no doubt they could all be traced directly or indirectly to the curious physical conditions under which I was living, but I set them down here for what they are worth. One curious idea dominated me more and more

as these strange days of suspense followed one another, and that was an increasing doubt of my own identity. I became, if I may so express it, dissociated from Bedford; I looked down on Bedford as a trivial, incidental thing with which I chanced to be connected. I saw Bedford in many relations as an ass or as a poor beast, where I had hitherto been inclined to regard him with a quiet pride as a very spirited or rather forcible person. I saw him not only as an ass, but as the son of many generations of asses. I reviewed his school-days, and his early manhood, and his first encounter with love, very much as one might review the proceedings of an ant in the sand. Something of that period of lucidity, I regret, still hangs about me, and I doubt if I shall ever recover the full-bodied self-satisfaction of my early days. But at the time, the thing was not in the least painful, because I had that extraordinary persuasion that as a matter of fact I was no more Bedford than I was any one else, but only a mind floating in the still serenity of space. Why should I be disturbed about this Bedford's shortcomings? I was not responsible for him or them.

For a time I struggled against this really very grotesque delusion. I tried to summon the memory of vivid moments, of tender or intense emotions, to my assistance; I felt that if I could recall one genuine twinge of feeling the growing severance would be stopped. But I could not do it. I saw Bedford rushing down Chancery Lane, hat on the back of his head, coat-tails flying out, en route for his public examination. I saw him dodging, and bumping against, and even saluting, other similar little creatures in that swarming gutter of people. *Me?* I saw Bedford that same evening in the sitting-room of a certain lady, and his hat was on the table beside him and it wanted brushing badly, and he was in tears. *Me?* I saw him with a lady in various attitudes and emotions—I never felt so detached before. I saw him hurrying off to Lympne to write a play, and accosting Cavor, and in his shirt-sleeves working at the sphere, and walking out to Canterbury because he was afraid to come! *Me?* I did not believe it.

I still reasoned that all this was halluci-

nation, due to my solitude and the fact that I had lost all weight and sense of resistance. I endeavored to recover that sense by banging myself about the sphere, by pinching my hands and clasping them together. Among other things, I lit the light, captured that torn copy of "Lloyd's" and read those convincingly realistic advertisements again, about the Cutaway bicycle, and the gentleman of private means, and the lady in distress who was selling those "forks and spoons.". There was no doubt *they* existed surely enough, and said I: "This is your world, and you are Bedford, and you are going back to live among things like that for all the rest of your life." But the doubts within me could still argue: "It is not you that are reading, it is Bedford—but *you are not Bedford*, you know. That's just where the mistake comes in."

"Confound it!" I cried, "and if I am not Bedford, what *am* I?"

But in that direction no light was forthcoming, though the strangest fancies came drifting into my brain, queer remote suspicions like shadows seen from far away. Do you know, I had a sort of idea that really I was something quite outside of not only the world, but all worlds, and out of space and time, and that this poor Bedford was just a peephole through which I looked at life.

Enough of this remarkable phase of my experiences. I tell it here simply to show how one's isolation and departure from this planet touched not only the functions and feeling of every organ of the body, but indeed also the very fabric of the mind, with strange and un conjectured disturbances. All through the major portion of that vast space journey, I hung thinking of such immaterial things as these, hung dissociated and apathetic, a cloudy megalomaniac as it were, amidst the stars and planets in the void of space; and not only the world to which I was returning, but the blue-lit caverns of the Selenites, their helmet faces, their gigantic and wonderful machines, and the fate of Cavor, dropped helpless into that world, seemed infinitely minute and altogether trivial things to me.

Until at last I began to feel the pull of the earth upon my being, drawing me back again to the life that is real for men. And

then indeed it grew clearer and clearer to me that I was quite certainly Bedford after all, and returning after amazing adventures to this world of ours again, and with a life that I was very likely to lose in this return. I began to puzzle out the conditions under which I must fall to earth.

XXI.

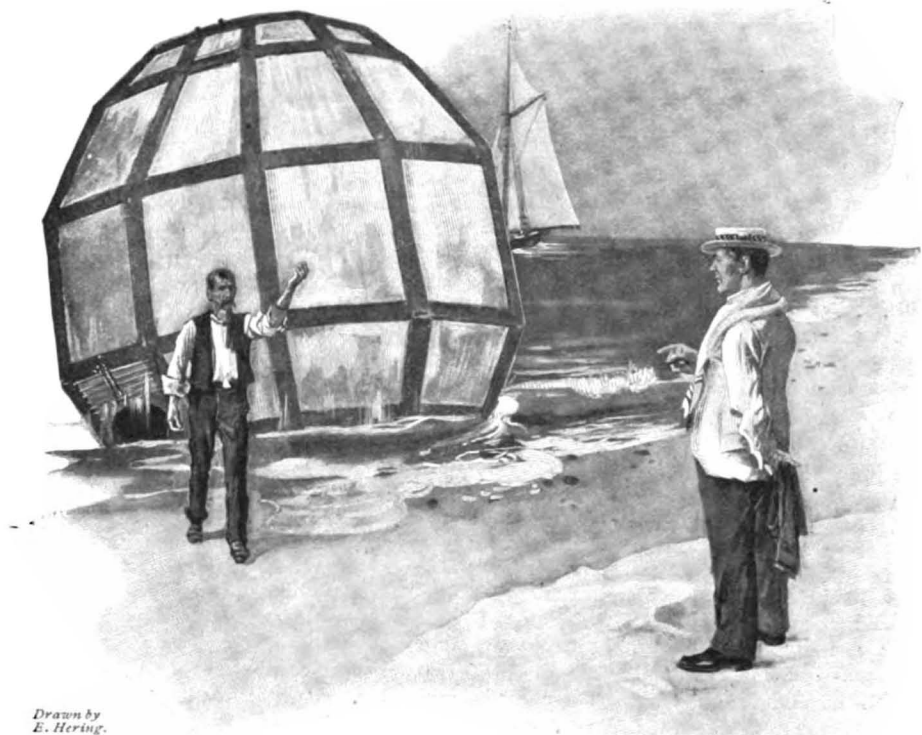
MR. BEDFORD AT LITTLESTONE.

My line of flight was about parallel with the surface as I came into the upper air. The temperature of the sphere began to rise forthwith. I knew it behooved me to drop at once. Far below me in a darkling twilight stretched a great expanse of sea. I opened every window I could and fell—out of sunshine into evening and out of evening into night. Vaster grew the earth and vaster, swallowing up the stars, and the silvery, translucent, starlit veil of cloud it wore spread out to catch me. At last the world seemed no longer a sphere, but flat, and then concave. It was no longer a planet in the sky, but the world of man. I shut all but an inch or so of earthward window and dropped with a slackening velocity. The broadening water, now so near that I could see the dark glitter of the waves, rushed up to meet me. I snapped the last strip of window and sat scowling and biting my knuckles waiting for the impact.

The sphere hit the water with a huge splash; it must have sent it fathoms high. At the splash I flung the Cavorite shutters open. Down I went, but slower and slower, and then I felt the sphere pressing against my feet and so drove up again as a bubble drives. And at the last I was floating and rocking upon the surface of the sea and my journey in space was at an end.

The night was dark and overcast. Two yellow pin-points far away showed the passing of a ship, and nearer was a red glare that came and went. Had not the electricity of my glow-lamp exhausted itself, I could have got picked up that night. In spite of the inordinate fatigue I was beginning to feel, I was excited now, and for a time hopeful in a feverish, impatient way that so my traveling might end.

But at last I ceased to move about, and



Drawn by
E. Hering.

"'WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT THING?' HE ASKED."

sat, wrists on knees, staring at a distant red light. It swayed up and down, rocking, rocking. My excitement passed. I realized I had yet to spend another night, at least, in the sphere. I perceived myself infinitely heavy and fatigued. And so I fell asleep.

A change in my rhythmic motion awakened me. I peered through the refracting glass and saw that I had come aground upon a huge shallow of sand. Far away I seemed to see houses and trees, and seaward a curved vague distortion of a ship hung between sea and sky.

I stood up and staggered. My one desire was to emerge. The manhole was upward and I wrestled with the screw. Slowly I opened the manhole. At last the air was singing in again as once it had sung out. But this time I did not wait until the pressure was adjusted. In another moment I had the weight of the window on my hands and I was open, wide open, to the old familiar sky of earth.

The air hit me on the chest so that I gasped. I dropped the glass screw. I cried out, put my hands to my chest and sat down. For a time I was in pain. Then I took deep breaths. At last I could rise and move about again.

I tried to thrust my head through the manhole, and the sphere rolled over. It was as though something had lugged my head down directly it emerged. I ducked back sharply or I should have been pinned face under water. After some wriggling and shoving I managed to crawl out upon the sand, over which the retreating waves still came and went.

I did not attempt to stand up. It seemed to me that my body must be suddenly changed to lead. Mother Earth had her grip on me now—no Cavorite intervening. I sat down heedless of the water that came over my feet.

It was dawn, a gray dawn, rather overcast but showing here and there a long patch of greenish-gray. Some way out,

a ship was lying at anchor, a pale silhouette of a ship with one yellow light. The water came rippling in in long, shallow waves. Away to the right curved the land, a shingle bank with little hovels, and at last a lighthouse, a sailing-mark and a point. Inland stretched a space of level sand, broken here and there by pools of water and ending, a mile away perhaps, in a low shore of scrub. To the northeast some isolate watering-place was visible, a row of gaunt lodging-houses, the tallest things that I could see on earth, dull dabs against the brightening sky. What strange men can have reared these vertical piles in such an amplitude of space, I do not know. There they are like pieces of Brighton lost in the waste.

For a long time I sat there, yawning and rubbing my face. At last I struggled to rise. It made me feel that I was lifting a weight. I stood up.

I stared at the distant houses. For the first time since our starvation in the crater I thought of earthly food. "Bacon," I whispered, "eggs. Good toast and good coffee.—And how the devil am I going to get all this stuff to Lympe?" I wondered where I was. It was an east shore anyway, and I had seen Europe before I dropped.

I heard footsteps scrunching in the sand, and a little round-faced, friendly-looking man in flannels, with a bathing-towel wrapped about his shoulders and his bathing-dress over his arm, appeared up the beach. I knew instantly that I must be in England. He was staring most intently at the sphere and me. He advanced staring. I dare say I looked a ferocious savage enough—dirty, unkempt, ragged to an indescribable degree—but it did not occur to me at the time. He stopped at a distance of twenty yards. "Hul-lo, my man!" he said, doubtfully.

"Hullo yourself!" said I.

He advanced, reassured by that. "What on earth is that thing?" he asked.

"Can you tell me where I am?" I asked.

"That's Littlestone," he said, pointing to the houses; "and that's Dungeness! Have you just landed? What's that thing you've got? Some sort of machine?"

"Yes."

"Have you floated ashore? Have you been wrecked or something? What is it?"

I meditated swiftly. I made an estimate of the little man's appearance as he drew nearer. "By Jove!" he said, "you've had a time of it! I thought you— Well— Where were you cast away? Is that thing a sort of floating thing for saving life?"

I decided to take that line for the present. I made a few vague affirmatives. "I want help," I said, hoarsely. "I want to get some stuff up the beach—stuff I can't very well leave about." I became aware of three other pleasant-looking young men with towels, blazers and straw hats coming down the sands toward me. Evidently the early bathing section of this Littlestone.

"Help?" said the young man; "rather!" He became vaguely active. "What particularly do you want done?" He turned round and gesticulated. The three young men accelerated their pace. In a minute they were about me, plying me with questions I was indisposed to answer. "I'll tell all that later," I said. "I'm dead beat. I'm a rag."

"Come up to the hotel," said the foremost little man. "We'll look after that thing there."

I hesitated. "I can't," I said. "In that sphere there are two big bars of gold."

They looked incredulously at one another, then at me with a new inquiry. I went to the sphere, stooped, crept in, and presently they had the Selenites' crowbars and the broken chain before them. If I had not been so horribly fagged, I could have laughed at them. It was like kittens round a beetle. They didn't know what to do with the stuff. The fat little man stooped and lifted the end of one of the bars and then dropped it with a grunt.

Then they all did.

"It's lead or gold!" said one.

"Oh, it's *gold*!" said another.

"Gold right enough," said the third.

Then they all stared at me, and then they all stared at the ship lying at anchor. "I say!" cried the little man, "but where did you get that?"

I was too tired to keep up a lie. "I got it in the moon."

I saw them stare at one another.

"Look here!" said I, "I'm not going to

argue now. Help me carry these lumps of gold up to the hotel—I guess with rests two of you can manage one, and I'll trail this chain thing—and I'll tell you more when I've had some food."

"And how about that thing?"

"It won't hurt there," I said. "Anyhow—confound it!—it must stop there now. If the tide comes up, it will float all right."

And in a state of enormous wonderment these young men most obediently hoisted my treasures on their shoulders, and with limbs that felt like lead I headed a sort of procession toward that distant fragment of sea-front. Half-way there we were reinforced by two awe-stricken little girls with spades, and later a lean little boy with a penetrating sniff appeared. He was, I remember, wheeling a bicycle, and he accompanied us at a distance of about a hundred yards on our right flank and then I suppose gave us up as uninteresting, mounted his bicycle and rode off over the level sands in the direction of the sphere.

I glanced back after him.

"He won't touch it," said the stout young man, reassuringly, and I was only too willing to be reassured.

At first, something of the gray of the morning was in my mind, but presently the sun disengaged itself from the level clouds of the horizon and lit the world and turned the leaden sea to glittering waters. My spirits rose. A sense of the vast importance of the things I had done and had yet to do came with the sunlight into my mind. I laughed aloud as the foremost man staggered under my gold. When indeed I took my place in the world, how amazed the world would be!

If it had not been for my inordinate fatigue, the landlord of the Littlestone hotel would have been amusing as he hesitated between my gold and my respectable company on one hand, and my filthy appearance on the other. But at last I found myself in a terrestrial bath-room once more, with warm water to wash myself in, and a change of raiment, preposterously small indeed, but anyway clean, that the genial little man had lent me. He lent me a razor, too, but I could not screw up my resolution to attack even the outposts of the bristling beard that covered my face.

I sat down to an English breakfast and ate with a sort of languid appetite, an appetite many weeks old and very decrepit, and stirred myself to answer the questions of the four young men. And I told them the truth.

"Well," said I, "as you press me—I got it in the moon."

"The moon?"

"Yes, the moon in the sky."

"But how do you mean?"

"What I say, confound it!"

"That you have just come from the moon?"

"Exactly! Through space—in that ball." And I took a delicious mouthful of egg. I made a private note that when I went back to find Cavor I would take a box of eggs.

I could see clearly that they did not believe one word of what I told them, but evidently they considered me the most respectable liar they had ever met. They glanced at one another and then concentrated the fire of their eyes on me. I fancy they expected a clue to me in the way I helped myself to salt. They seemed to find something significant in my peppering my egg. Those strangely shaped masses of gold they had staggered under held their minds. There the lumps lay in front of me, each worth thousands of pounds and as impossible for any one to steal as a house or a piece of land. As I looked at their curious faces over my coffee-cup, I realized something of the enormous wilderness of explanations into which I should have to wander to render myself comprehensible again.

"You don't *really* mean——" began the youngest young man, in the tone of one who speaks to an obstinate child.

"Just pass me that toast-rack," I said, and shut him up completely.

"But look here, I say," began one of the others. "We're not going to believe that, you know."

"Ah, well," said I, and shrugged my shoulders.

"He doesn't want to tell us," said the youngest young man, in a stage aside; and then, with an appearance of great sangfroid, "You don't mind if I take a cigarette?"

I waved him a cordial assent, and pro-

ceeded with my breakfast. Two of the others went and looked out of the farther window and talked inaudibly. I was struck by a thought. "The tide," I said, "is running out?"

There was a pause as to who should answer me. "It's near the ebb," said the fat little man.

"Well, anyway," I said, "it won't float far."

I decapitated my third egg and began a little speech. "Look here," I said. "Please don't imagine I'm surly or telling you uncivil lies or anything of that sort. I'm forced almost to be a little short and mysterious. I can quite understand this is as queer as it can be and that your imaginations must be going it. I can assure you, you're in at a memorable time. But I can't make it clear to you now—it's impossible. I give you my word of honor I've come from the moon, and that's all I can tell you.—All the same I'm tremendously obliged to you, you know, tremendously. I hope that my manner hasn't in any way given you offense."

"Oh, not in the least!" said the youngest young man, affably. "We can quite understand," and staring hard at me all the time, he heeled his chair back until it very nearly upset, and recovered with some exertion. "Not a bit of it," said my fat young man. "Don't you imagine *that*!" and they all got up, and dispersed, and walked about, and lit cigarettes, and generally tried to show they were perfectly amiable and disengaged and entirely free from the slightest curiosity about me and the sphere. "I'm going to keep an eye on that ship out there all the same," I heard one of them remarking in an undertone. If only they could have forced themselves to it, they would, I believe, even have gone out and left me. I went on with my third egg.

"The weather," the fat little man remarked presently, "has been immense, has it not? I don't know *when* we have had such a summer."

"Phoo-whizz!" Like a tremendous rocket!

And somewhere a window was broken.

"What's that?" cried I.

"It isn't——?" cried the little man, and rushed to the corner window.

All the others rushed to the window likewise. I sat staring at them.

Suddenly I leaped up, knocked over my third egg, and rushed for the window also. I had just thought of something. "Nothing to be seen there," cried the little man, rushing for the door.

"It's that boy!" I cried, bawling in hoarse fury; "it's that accursed boy!" and turning about I pushed the waiter aside—he was just bringing me some more toast—and rushed violently out of the room and down and out upon the queer little esplanade in front of the hotel.

The sea which had been smooth was rough now with hurrying cat's-paws, and all about where the sphere had been was tumbled water like the wake of a ship. Above, a little puff of cloud whirled like dispersing smoke, and the three or four people on the beach were staring up with interrogative faces toward the point of that unexpected report. And that was all! Boots and waiter and the four young men in blazers came rushing out behind me. Shouts came from windows and doors, and all sorts of worrying people came into sight, agape.

For a time I stood there, too overwhelmed by this new development to think of the people about me.

"There's Cavor," I said. "Up there! And no one knows anything of how to make the stuff—— Good Lord!"

I felt as though somebody was pouring funk out of a can down the back of my neck. My legs became feeble. Then there was that confounded boy—sky-high! I was utterly "left." There was the gold in the coffee-room—my only possession on earth. There were my creditors. Good heavens! How would it all work out? The general effect was of a gigantic, unmanageable confusion.

"I say," said the voice of the little man, behind. "I *say*, you know."

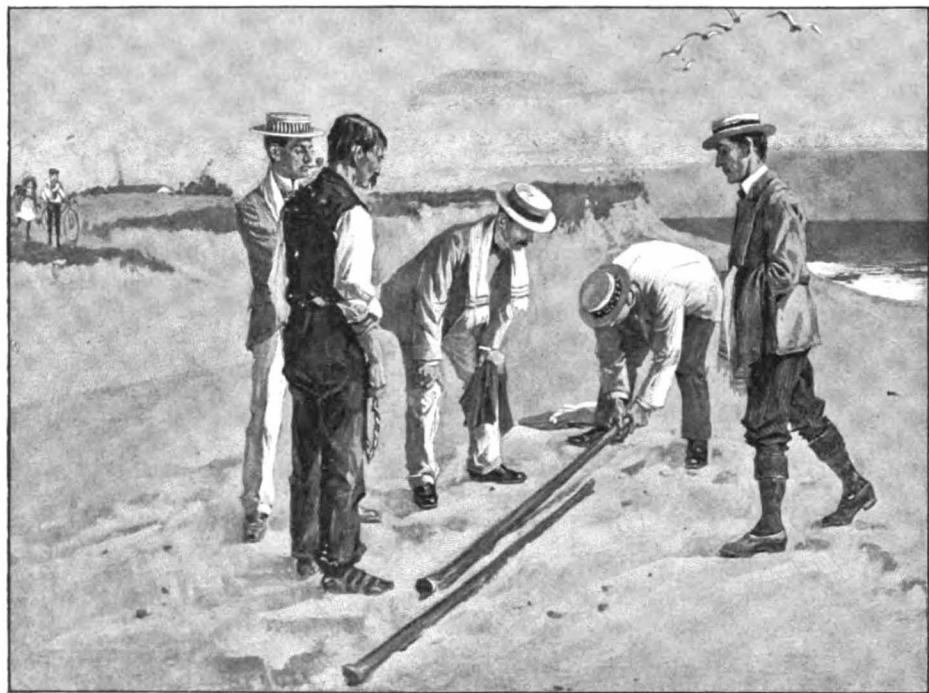
I wheeled about, and there were twenty or thirty people, a sort of irregular investment of people, all bombarding me with dumb interrogation, with infinite doubt and suspicion. I felt the compulsion of their eyes intolerably. I groaned aloud. "I *can't*," I shouted. "I tell you I *can't*! I'm not equal to it! You must puzzle and—and be damned to you!"

I gesticulated convulsively. He receded a step as though I had threatened him. I made a bolt through them into the hotel. I charged back into the coffee-room, rang the bell furiously. I gripped the waiter as he entered. "D'ye hear?" I shouted. "Get help and carry these bars up to my room right away."

He failed to understand me, and I shouted and raved at him. A scared-looking little old man in a green apron appeared, and further two of the young men in flannels. I made a dash at them and

bed and ring up the round-eyed waiter for a flannel nightshirt, a soda and whisky, and some good cigars. And these things being procured me, I locked the door again and proceeded very deliberately to look the entire situation in the face.

The net result of the great experiment presented itself as an absolute failure. It was a rout and I was the sole survivor. It was an absolute collapse and this was the final disaster. There was nothing for it but to save myself, and as much as I could in the way of prospects, from our débûcle.



Design by F. Hering.

"THE FAT LITTLE MAN STOOPED AND LIFTED THE END OF ONE OF THE BARS."

commandeered their services. As soon as the gold was in my room I felt free to quarrel. "Now get out," I shouted; "all of you get out if you don't want to see a man go mad before your eyes!" And I helped the waiter by the shoulder as he hesitated in the doorway. And then as soon as I had the door locked on them all, I tore off the little man's clothes again, shied them right and left, and got into bed forthwith. And there I lay swearing and panting and cooling for a very long time.

At last I was calm enough to get out of

At one fatal crowning blow, all my vague resolutions of return and recovery had vanished. My intention of going back to the moon, of rescuing Cavor, or at any rate of getting a sphereful of gold and afterward of having a fragment of Cavorite analyzed and so recovering his great secret—all these ideas vanished altogether.

I was the sole survivor and that was all.

I think that going to bed was one of the luckiest ideas I have ever had in an emergency. I really believe I should either

have got loose-headed or done some fatal indiscreet thing. But there, locked in and secure from all interruption, I could think out the position in all its bearings and make my arrangements at leisure.

Of course, it was quite clear to me what had happened to the boy. He had crawled into the sphere, meddled with the studs, shut the Cavorite windows and gone up. It was highly improbable he had screwed in the manhole stopper, and even if he had the chances were a thousand to one against his getting back. It was fairly evident that he would gravitate to the middle of the sphere and remain there and so cease to be a legitimate terrestrial interest, however remarkable he might seem to the inhabitants of some remote quarter of space. I very speedily convinced myself on that point. And as for any responsibility I might have in the matter, the more I reflected upon that, the clearer it became that if only I kept quiet about things, I need not trouble myself about that. If I was faced by sorrowing parents demanding their lost boy, I had merely to demand my lost sphere—or ask them what they meant. At first I had had a vision of weeping parents and guardians and all sorts of complications, but now I saw that I simply had to keep my mouth shut and nothing in that way could arise. And indeed, the more I lay and smoked and thought, the more evident became the wisdom of impenetrability. It is within the right of every British citizen, provided he does not commit damage or indecorum, to appear suddenly wherever he pleases and as ragged and filthy as he pleases and with whatever amount of virgin gold he sees fit to encumber himself with, and no one has any right at all to hinder and detain him in this procedure. I formulated that at last to myself, and repeated it over as a sort of private *Magna Charta* of my liberty.

Once I had put that issue on one side, I could take up and consider in an equable manner certain considerations I had scarcely dared to think of before, namely, those arising out of the circumstances of my bankruptcy. But now, looking at this matter calmly and at leisure, I could see that if only I suppressed my identity by a temporary assumption of some less well-known name and if I retained the two

months' beard that had grown upon me, the risks of any annoyance from the spiteful creditor to whom I have already alluded became very small indeed. From that to a definite course of rational worldly action, was plain sailing. It was all amazingly petty, no doubt, but what was there remaining for me to do?

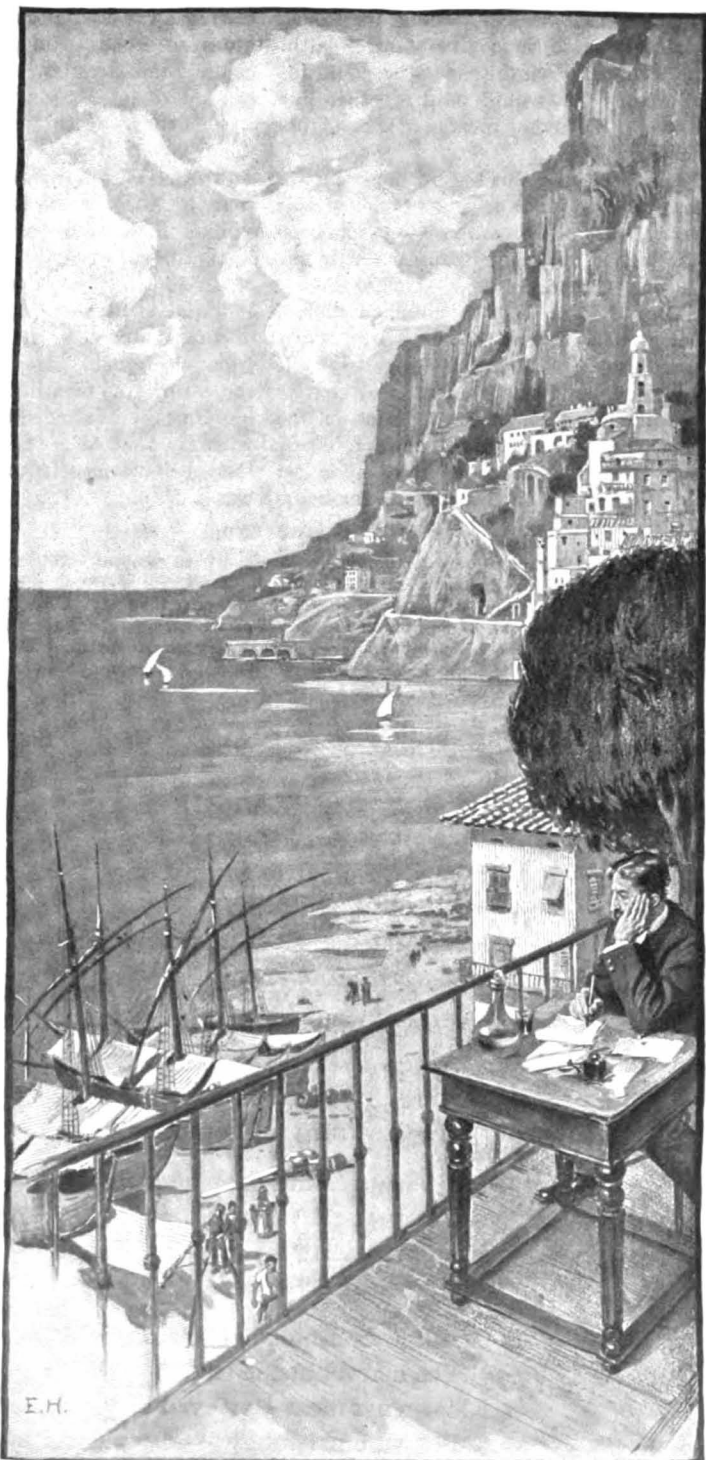
Whatever I did, I was resolved that I would keep myself level and right side up.

I ordered up writing-materials and addressed a letter to the New Romney bank—the nearest, the waiter informed me—telling the manager I wished to open an account with him and requesting him to send two trustworthy persons properly authenticated in a cab with a good horse to fetch some hundredweight of gold with which I happened to be encumbered. I signed the letter "Wells," which appeared to me to be a thoroughly respectable sort of name. This done, I got a Folkestone directory, picked out an outfitter, and asked him to send a cutter to measure me for a drab tweed suit, ordering at the same time a valise, dressing-bag, shirt, hats (to fit), and so forth, and from a watchmaker I also ordered a watch. And these letters being dispatched, I had up as good a lunch as the hotel could give, and then lay smoking a cigar, as calm and ordinary as possible, until, in accordance with my instructions, two duly authenticated clerks came from the bank and weighed and took away my gold. After which I pulled the clothes over my ears in order to drown any knocking, and went very comfortably to sleep.

I went to sleep. No doubt it was a prosaic thing for the first man back from the moon to do, and I can imagine that the young and imaginative reader will find my behavior disappointing. But I was horribly fatigued and bothered, and, confound it! what else was there to do? There clearly was not the remotest chance of my being believed if I had told my story then, and it would certainly have subjected me to intolerable annoyances. I went to sleep. When at last I woke up again, I was ready to face the world as I have always been accustomed to face it since I came to years of discretion. And so I got away to Italy and there it is I am writing this story. If the world will not

have it as fact, then the world may take it as fiction. It is no concern of mine.

And now that the account is finished, I am amazed to think how completely this adventure is gone and done with. Everybody believes that Cavor was a not very brilliant scientific experimenter who blew up his house and himself at Lympne, and folks explain the bang that followed my arrival at Littlestone by a reference to the experiments with explosives that are going on continually at the government establishment of Lydd, two miles away. I must confess that hitherto I have not acknowledged my share in the disappearance of Master Tommy Simmons, which was that little boy's name. That perhaps may prove a difficult item of corroboration to explain away. They account for my appearance in rags with two bars of indisputable gold upon the Littlestone beach, in various ingenious ways—it doesn't worry me what they think of me. They say I have strung all these



Drawn by E. Hering.

"I AM WORKING HERE AT AMALFI."

things together to avoid being questioned too closely as to the source of my wealth. I should like to see the man who could invent a story that would hold together like this one. Well, they must take it as fiction—there it is.

I have told my story—and now I suppose I have to take up the worries of this terrestrial life again. Even if one has been to the moon, one has still to earn a living. So I am working here at Amalfi on the scenario of that play I sketched before Cavor came walking into my world, and I am trying to piece my life together as it was before ever I saw him. I must confess that I find it hard to keep my mind on the play when the moonshine comes into my room. It is full moon here, and last night I was out on the pergola for hours

staring away at that shining blankness that hides so much. Imagine it!—tables, and chairs, and trestles, and bars, of gold. Confound it!—if only one could hit on that Cavorite again! But a thing like that doesn't come twice in a life. Here I am, a little better off than I was at Lympne and that is all. And Cavor has committed suicide in a more elaborate way than any human being ever did before. So the story closes as finally and completely as a dream. It fits in so little with all the other things of life, so much of it is so utterly remote from all human experience—the leaping, the eating, the breathing and those weightless times—that indeed there are moments when, in spite of my moon gold, I do more than believe myself that the whole thing was a dream.

(THE END.)

NOTE.—A most extraordinary communication has just been received. Unless we are being elaborately hoaxed, this story of Mr. Bedford's is not fiction at all. Mr. Cavor is alive in the moon and he is sending messages to the earth. For that we have no less an authority than Mr. Julius Wendigee, the great electrician. At present we know nothing of the nature of Mr. Cavor's communication, but we are sending our London agent at once to Mr. Wendigee's observatory on Monte Rosa in the Alps, and we have communicated with Mr. Bedford, who is in Algiers. We hope, therefore, to be in a position to satisfy the curiosity of our readers in our next issue.