CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THERE WERE GIANTS IN THE EARTH

Deimos proved to be, as we had expected, about six miles in diameter. Its mean density is not very great so that the acceleration of gravity did not exceed one-two-thousandths of the earth's. Consequently the weight of a man turning the scales at 150 pounds at home was here only about one ounce.

The result was that we could move about with greater ease than on the golden asteroid, and some of the scientific men eagerly resumed their interrupted experiments.

But the attraction of this little satellite was so slight that we had to be very careful not to move too swiftly in going about lest we should involuntarily leave the ground and sail out into space, as, it will be remembered, happened to the fugitives from the fight on the asteroid.

Not only would such an adventure have been an uncomfortable experience, but it might have endangered the success of our scheme. Our present distance from the surface of Mars did not exceed 12,500 miles, and we had reasons to believe the Martians possessed telescopes powerful enough to enable them not merely to see the electrical ships at such a distance, but to also catch sight of us individually. Although the cloud

curtain still rested on the planet it was probable that the Martians would send some of their airships up to its surface in order to determine what our fate had been. From that point of vantage with their exceedingly powerful glasses, we feared that they might be able to detect anything unusual upon or in the neighborhood of Deimos.

Accordingly strict orders were given, not only that the ships should be moored on that side of the satellite which is perpetually turned away from Mars, but that, without orders, no one should venture around on the other side of the little globe or even on the edge of it, where he might be seen in profile against the sky.

Still, of course, it was essential that we, on our part, should keep a close watch, and so a number of sentinels were selected, whose duty it was to place themselves at the edge of Deimos, where they could peep over the horizon, so to speak, and catch sight of the globe of our enemies.

The distance of Mars from us was only about three times its own diameter, consequently it shut off a large part of the sky, as viewed from our position.

But in order to see its whole surface it was necessary to go a little beyond the edge of the satellite, on that side which faced Mars. At the suggestion of Colonel Smith, who had so frequently stalked Indians that devices of this kind readily occurred to his mind, the sentinels all

wore garments corresponding in color to that of the soil of the asteroid, which was of a dark, reddish brown hue. This would tend to conceal them from the prying eyes of the Martians.

The commander himself frequently went around the edge of the planet in order to take a look at Mars, and I often accompanied him.

I shall never forget one occasion, when, lying flat on the ground, and cautiously worming our way around on the side toward Mars, we had just begun to observe it with our telescopes, when I perceived, against the vast curtain of smoke, a small, glinting object, which I instantly suspected to be an airship.

I called Mr. Edison's attention to it, and we both agreed that it was, undoubtedly, one of the Martian's aerial vessels, probably on the lookout for us.

A short time afterward a large number of airships made their appearance at the upper surface of the clouds, moving to and fro, and although, with our glasses, we could only make out the general form of the ships, without being able to discern the Martians upon them, yet we had not the least doubt but they were sweeping the sky in every direction in order to determine whether we had been completely destroyed or had retreated to a distance from the planet.

Even when that side of Mars on which we were looking had passed into

night, we could still see the guardships circling above the clouds, their presence being betrayed by the faint twinkling of the electric lights that they bore.

Finally, after about a week had passed, the Martians evidently made up their minds that they had annihilated us, and that there was no longer danger to be feared. Convincing evidence that they believed we should not be heard from again was furnished when the withdrawal of the great curtain of cloud began.

This phenomenon first manifested itself by a gradual thinning of the vaporous shield, until, at length, we began to perceive the red surface of the planet dimly shining through it. Thinner and rarer it became, and, after the lapse of about eighteen hours, it had completely disappeared, and the huge globe shone out again, reflecting the light of the sun from its continents and oceans with a brightness that, in contrast with the all-enveloping night to which we had so long been subjected, seemed unbearable to our eyes.

Indeed, so brilliant was the illumination which fell upon the surface of Deimos that the number of persons who had been permitted to pass around on the exposed side of the satellite was carefully restricted. In the blaze of light which had been suddenly poured upon us we felt somewhat like malefactors unexpectedly enveloped in the illumination of a policeman's dark lantern.

Meanwhile, the object which we had in view in retreating to the satellite was not lost sight of, and the services of the chief linguists of the expedition were again called into use for the purpose of acquiring a new language. The experiment was conducted in the flagship. The fact that this time it was not a monster belonging to an utterly alien race upon whom we were to experiment, but a beautiful daughter of our common Mother Eve, added zest and interest as well as the most confident hopes of success to the efforts of those who were striving to understand the accents of her tongue.

Still the difficulty was very great, notwithstanding the conviction of the professors that her language would turn out to be a form of the great Indo-European speech from which the many tongues of civilized men upon the earth had been derived.

The learned men, to tell the truth, gave the poor girl no rest. For hours at a time they would ply her with interrogations by voice and by gesture, until, at length, wearied beyond endurance, she would fall asleep before their faces.

Then she would be left undisturbed for a little while, but the moment her eyes opened again the merciless professors flocked about her once more, and resumed the tedious iteration of their experiments.

Our Heidelberg professor was the chief inquisitor, and he revealed himself to us in a new and entirely unexpected light. No one could have

anticipated the depth and variety of his resources. He placed himself in front of the girl and gestured and gesticulated, bowed, nodded, shrugged his shoulders, screwed his face into an infinite variety of expressions, smiled, laughed, scowled and accompanied all these dumb shows with posturings, exclamations, queries, only half expressed in words and cadences which, by some ingenious manipulation of the tones of the voice, he managed to make expressive of his desires.

He was a universal actor--comedian, tragedian, buffoon--all in one. There was no shade of human emotions to which he did not seem capable of giving expression.

His every attitude was a symbol, and all his features became in quick succession types of thought and exponents of hidden feelings, while his inquisitive nose stood forth in the midst of their ceaseless play like a perpetual interrogation point that would have electrified the Sphinx into life, and set its stone lips gabbling answers and explanations.

The girl looked on, partly astonished, partly amused, and partly comprehending. Sometimes she smiled, and then the beauty of her face became most captivating. Occasionally she burst into a cherry laugh when the professor was executing some of his extraordinary gyrations before her.

It was a marvelous exhibition of what the human intellect, when all its powers are concentrated upon a single object, is capable of achieving.

It seemed to me, as I looked at the performance, that if all the races of men, who had been stricken asunder at the foot of the Tower of Babel by the miracle which made the tongues of each to speak a language unknown to the others, could be brought together again at the foot of the same tower, with all the advantages which thousands of years of education had in the meantime imparted to them, they would be able, without any miracle, to make themselves mutually understood.

And it was evident that an understanding was actually growing between the girl and the professor. Their minds were plainly meeting, and when both had become focused upon the same point, it was perfectly certain that the object of the experiment would be attained.

Whenever the professor got from the girl an intelligent reply to his pantomimic inquiries, or whenever he believed that he got such a reply, it was immediately jotted down in the ever open note book which he carried in his hand.

And then he would turn to us standing by, and with one hand on his heart, and the other sweeping grandly through the air, would make a profound bow and say:

"The young lady and I great progress make already. I have her words comprehended. We shall wondrous mysteries solve. Jawohl! Wunderlich! Make yourselves gentlemen easy. Of the human race the ancestral stem have I here discovered."

Once I glanced over a page of his notebook and there I read this:

"Mars--Zahmor

"Copper--Hayez

"Sword--Anz

"I jump--Altesna

"I slay--Amoutha

"I cut off a head--Ksutaskofa

"I sleep--Zlcha

"I love--Levza"

When I saw this last entry I looked suspiciously at the professor.

Was he trying to make love without our knowing it to the beautiful captive from Mars?

If so, I felt certain that he would get himself into difficulty. She had made a deep impression upon every man in the flagship, and I knew that

there was more than one of the younger men who would promptly have called him to account if they had suspected him of trying to learn from those beautiful lips the words, "I love."

I pictured to myself the state of mind of Colonel Alonzo Jefferson Smith if, in my place, he had glanced over the notebook and read what I had read.

And then I thought of another handsome young fellow in the flagship--Sydney Phillips--who, if mere actions and looks could make him so, had become exceedingly devoted to this long lost and happily recovered daughter of Eve.

In fact, I had already questioned within my own mind whether the peace would be strictly kept between Colonel Smith and Mr. Phillips, for the former had, to my knowledge, noticed the young fellow's adoring glances, and had begun to regard him out of the corners of his eyes as if he considered him no better than an Apache.

"But what," I asked myself, "would be the vengeance that Colonel Smith would take upon this skinny professor from Heidelberg if he thought that he, taking advantage of his linguistic powers, had stepped in between him and the damsel whom he had rescued?"

However, when I took a second look at the professor, I became convinced that he was innocent of any such amorous intentions, and that he had

learned, or believed he had learned, the word for "love" simply in pursuances of the method by which he meant to acquire the language of the girl.

There was one thing which gave some of us considerable misgivings, and that was the question whether, after all, the language the professor was acquiring was really the girl's own tongue or one that she had learned from the Martians.

But the professor bade us rest easy on that point. He assured us, in the first place, that this girl could not be the only human being living upon Mars, but that she must have friends and relatives there. That being so, they unquestionably had a language of their own, which they spoke when they were among themselves. Here finding herself among beings belonging to her own race, she would naturally speak her own tongue and not that which she had acquired from the Martians.

"Moreover, gentlemen," he added, "I have in her speech many roots of the great Aryan tongue already recognized."

We were greatly relieved by this explanation, which seemed to all of us perfectly satisfactory.

Yet, really, there was no reason why one language should be any better than the other for our present purpose. In fact, it might be more useful to us to know the language of the Martians themselves. Still, we all

felt that we should prefer to know her language rather than that of the monsters among whom she had lived.

Colonel Smith expressed what was in all our minds when, after listening to the reasoning of the Professor, he blurted out:

"Thank God, she doesn't speak any of their blamed lingo! By Jove, it would soil her pretty lips."

"But also that she speaks, too," said the man from Heidelberg, turning to Colonel Smith with a grin. "We shall both of them eventually learn."

Three entire weeks were passed in this manner. After the first week the girl herself materially assisted the linguists in their efforts to ac-quire her speech.

At length the task was so far advanced that we could, in a certain sense, regard it as practically completed. The Heidelberg professor declared that he had mastered the tongue of the ancient Aryans. His delight was unbounded. With prodigious industry he set to work, scarcely stopping to eat or sleep, to form a grammar of the language.

"You shall see," he said, "it will the speculations of my countrymen vindicate."

No doubt the Professor had an exaggerated opinion of the extent of his

acquirements, but the fact remained that enough had been learned of the girl's language to enable him and several others to converse with her quite as readily as a person of good capacity who has studied under the instructions of a native teacher during a period of six months can converse in a foreign tongue.

Immediately almost every man in the squadron set vigorously at work to learn the language of this fair creature for himself. Colonel Smith and Sydney Phillips were neck and neck in the linguistic race.

One of the first bits of information which the Professor had given out was the name of the girl.

It was Aina (pronounced Ah-ee-na).

This news was flashed throughout the squadron, and the name of our beautiful captive was on the lips of all.

After that came her story. It was a marvelous narrative. Translated into our tongue it ran as follows:

"The traditions of my fathers, handed down for generations so many that no one can number them, declare that the planet of Mars was not the place of our origin.

"Ages and ages ago our forefathers dwelt on another and distant world

that was nearer the sun than this one is, and enjoyed brighter daylight than we have here.

"They dwelt--as I have often heard the story from my father, who had learned it by heart from his father, and he from his--in a beautiful valley that was surrounded by enormous mountains towering into the clouds and white about their tops with snow that never melted. In the valley were lakes, around which clustered the dwellings of our race.

"It was, the traditions say, a land wonderful for its fertility, filled with all things that the heart could desire, splendid with flowers and rich with luscious fruits.

"It was a land of music, and the people who dwelt in it were very happy."

While the girl was telling this part of her story the Heidelberg professor became visibly more and more excited. Presently he could keep quiet no longer, and suddenly exclaimed, turning to us who were listening, as the words of the girl were interpreted for us by one of the other linguists:

"Gentlemen, it is the Vale of Cashmere! Has not my great countryman, Adelung, so declared? Has he not said that the Valley of Cashmere was the cradle of the human race already?"

"From the Valley of Cashmere to the planet Mars--what a romance!" exclaimed one of the bystanders.

Colonel Smith appeared to be particularly moved, and I heard him humming under his breath, greatly to my astonishment, for this rough soldier was not much given to poetry or music:

"Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere,
With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave;
Its temples, its grottoes, its fountains as clear,
As the love-lighted eyes that hang 'oer the wave."

Mr. Sydney Phillips, standing by, and also catching the murmur of Colonel Smith's words, showed in his handsome countenance some indications of distress, as if he wished he had thought of those lines himself.

The girl resumed her narrative:

"Suddenly there dropped down out of the sky strange gigantic enemies, armed with mysterious weapons, and began to slay and burn and make desolate. Our forefathers could not withstand them. They seemed like demons, who had been sent from the abodes of evil to destroy our race.

"Some of the wise men said that this thing had come upon our people because they had been very wicked, and the Gods in Heaven were angry.

Some said they came from the moon, and some from the far-away stars. But of these things my forefathers knew nothing for a certainty.

"The destroyers showed no mercy to the inhabitants of the beautiful valley. Not content with making it a desert, they swept over other parts of the earth.

"The tradition says that they carried off from the valley, which was our native land, a large number of our people, taking them first into a strange country, where there were oceans of sand, but where a great river, flowing through the midst of the sands, created a narrow land of fertility. Here, after having slain and driven out the native inhabitants, they remained for many years, keeping our people, whom they had carried into captivity, as slaves.

"And in this Land of Sand, it is said, they did many wonderful works.

"They had been astonished at the sight of the great mountains which surrounded our valley, for on Mars there are no mountains, and after they came into the Land of Sand they built there, with huge blocks of stone, mountains in imitation of what they had seen, and used them for purposes my people did not understand.

"Then, too, it is said they left there at the foot of these mountains that they had made a gigantic image of the great chief who led them in their conquest of our world."

At this point in the story the Heidelberg professor again broke in, fairly trembling with excitement:

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," he cried, "is it that you do not understand? This Land of Sand and of a wonderful fertilizing river--what can it be? Gentleman, it is Egypt! These mountains of rock that the Martians have erected, what are they? Gentlemen, they are the great mystery of the land of the Nile, the Pyramids. The gigantic statue of their leader that they at the foot of their artificial mountains have set up--gentlemen, what is that? It is the Sphinx!"

The professor's agitation was so great that he could not go on further. And indeed there was not one of us who did not fully share his excitement. To think that we should have come to the planet Mars to solve one of the standing mysteries of the earth, which had puzzled mankind and defied all their efforts at solution for so many centuries! Here, then, was the explanation of how those gigantic blocks that constitute the great Pyramid of Cheops had been swung to their lofty elevation. It was not the work of puny man, as many an engineer had declared that it could not be, but the work of these giants of Mars.

At length, our traditions say, a great pestilence broke out in the Land of Sand, and a partial vengeance was granted to us in the destruction of the larger number of our enemies. At last the giants who remained, fleeing before this scourge of the gods, used the mysterious means at

their command, and, carrying our ancestors with them, returned to their own world, in which we have ever since lived.

"Then there are more of your people in Mars?" said one of the professors.

"Alas, no," replied Aina, her eyes filling with tears, "I alone am left."

For a few minutes she was unable to speak. Then she continued:

"What fury possessed them I do not know, but not long ago an expedition departed from the planet, the purpose of which, as it was noised about over Mars, was the conquest of a distant world. After a time a few survivors of that expedition returned. The story they told caused great excitement among our masters. They had been successful in their battles with the inhabitants of the world they had invaded, but as in the days of our forefathers, in the Land of Sand, a pestilence smote them, and but few survivors escaped.

"Not long after that, you, with your mysterious ships, appeared in the sky of Mars. Our masters studied you with their telescopes, and those who had returned from the unfortunate expedition declared that you were inhabitants of the world which they had invaded, come, doubtless, to take vengeance upon them.

"Some of my people who were permitted to look through the telescopes of the Martians, saw you also, and recognized you as members of their own race. There were several thousand of us all together, and we were kept by the Martians to serve them as slaves, and particularly to delight their ears with music, for our people have always been especially skillful in the playing of musical instruments, and in songs, and while the Martians have but little musical skill themselves, they are exceedingly fond of these things.

"Although Mars had completed not less than five thousand circuits about the sun since our ancestors were brought as prisoners to its surface, yet the memory of our distant home had never perished from the hearts of our race, and when we recognized you, as we believed, our own brothers, come to rescue us from long imprisonment, there was great rejoicing. The news spread from mouth to mouth, wherever we were in houses and families of our masters. We seemed to be powerless to aid you or to communicate with you in any manner. Yet our hearts went out to you, as in your ships you hung above the planet, and preparations were secretly made by all the members of our race for your reception when, as we believed, would occur, you should effect a landing upon the planet and destroy our enemies.

"But in some manner the fact that we had recognized you, and were preparing to welcome you, came to the ears of the Martians."

At this point the girl suddenly covered her eyes with her hands,

shuddering and falling back in her seat.

"Oh, you do not know them as I do!" at length she exclaimed. "The monsters! Their vengeance was too terrible! Instantly the order went forth that we should all be butchered, and that awful command was executed!"

"How, then, did you escape?" asked the Heidelberg professor.

Aina seemed unable to speak for a while. Finally mastering her emotion, she replied:

"One of the chief officers of the Martians wished me to remain alive. He, with his aides, carried me to one of the military depots of supplies, where I was found and rescued," and as she said this she turned toward Colonel Smith with a smile that reflected on his ruddy face and made it glow like a Chinese lantern.

"By God!" muttered Colonel Smith, "that was the fellow we blew into nothing! Blast him, he got off too easy!"

The remainder of Aina's story may be briefly told.

When Colonel Smith and I entered the mysterious building which, as it now proved, was not a storehouse belonging to a village, as we had supposed, but one of the military depots of the Martians, the girl, on

catching sight of us, immediately recognized us as belonging to the strange squadron in the sky. As such she felt that we must be her friends, and saw in us her only possible hope of escape. For that reason she had instantly thrown herself under our protection. This accounted for the singular confidence which she had manifested in us from the beginning.

Her wonderful story had so captivated our imaginations that for a long time after it was finished we could not recover from the spell. It was told over and over again, from mouth to mouth, and repeated from ship to ship, everywhere exciting the utmost astonishment.

Destiny seemed to have sent us on this expedition into space for the purpose of clearing off mysteries that had long puzzled the minds of men. When on the moon we had unexpectedly to ourselves settled the question that had been debated from the beginning of astronomical history of the former habitability of that globe.

Now, on Mars, we had put to rest no less mysterious questions relating to the past history of our own planet. Adelung, as the Heidelberg professor asserted, had named the Vale of Cashmere, as the probable site of the Garden of Eden, and the place of origin of the human race, but later investigators had taken issue with this opinion and the question where the Aryans originated on the earth had long been one of the most puzzling that science presented.

This question seemed now to have been settled.

Aina had said that Mars had completed 5,000 circuits about the sun since her people were brought to it as captives. One circuit of Mars occupies 687 days. More than 9000 years had therefore elapsed since the first invasion of the earth by the Martians.

Another great mystery--that of the origin of those gigantic and inexplicable monuments, the great pyramids and the Sphinx, on the banks of the Nile, had also apparently been solved by us, although these Egyptian wonders had been the furthest things from our thoughts when we set out for the planet Mars.

We had traveled more than thirty millions of miles in order to get answers to questions which could not be solved at home.

But from these speculations and retrospects we were recalled by the commander of the expedition.

"This is all very interesting and very romantic, gentlemen," he said, "but now let us get at the practical side of it. We have learned Aina's language and heard her story. Let us next ascertain whether she can not place in our hands some key which will place Mars at our mercy. Remember what we came here for, and remember that the earth expects every man of us to do his duty."

This Nelson-like summons again changed the current of our thoughts, and we instantly set to work to learn from Aina if Mars, like Achilles, had not some vulnerable point where a blow would be mortal.