

LETTERS FROM THE PLANETS.

BY OUR ROVING COMMISSIONER.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.
A DISCOVERY.

NE fine morning, not being pressed with business, I resolved on a walk on Penmor to see some archæological remains which had been recently discovered there, and which, though I had already once visited, yet I had never properly inspected. It was a fine,

cheery May morn. The dew was on the heather; the golden gorse looked bright in the glowing sunshine.

As I left the last cottage and granite hedge, and pushed out into wild nature, I do not know how it was, but thoughts did come before my mind of that stranger from another world who once on that very moorland had shown himself to me, and told me strange things that seemed still as a dream. Where was he? Had he remembered me? The letter I had received, that he had last been seen in Switzerland (on his second visit in 1883), on the Jungfrau, was in my pocket. I read it over. It was manifestly no mere delusion of mine, but there had been a visit not only of one, but of three visitors from a sister world to our planet.* I wonder if three people could be deceived into a common fancy that they had talked with beings not of the earth earthy, and yet not spirits, but of material bodies, and in some degree human.

As I walked on in the bright sunlight, other thoughts came on me, and I began to turn my mind to the subject of my search, the newly-discovered cromlech. I need not detain my readers with the account of the cromlech, a description of which is to be given in a paper in a London archæological society. All I will say is that it was very interesting, and deserved my walk.

As the day was very pleasant, I resolved to go on further to the Nine Maidens, a circle which old antiquaries used to call Druidical, but which it is now the fashion to consider as the border of an antique sepulchral barrow. I mounted the ridge on which it stood, and looked for a moment on the glorious view of sea and moorland. Then stepping up to the circle, I was struck by the fact that the eastern stone—a huge, flat, granite block—had been broken in two, and in part pulverised by some tremendous force, like the explosion of dynamite, or the blow from a heavy cannon-ball.

“What a mischievous age this is!” I cried aloud—“Even these granite blocks are not safe. Some wretched miner has blown up the slab with dynamite.” But on examination it hardly looked like an explosion, but the blow from some powerful projectile that had smashed the slab.

I was going away disheartened at the mischievous propensities of our age, which are destroying some of our most valuable ancient Cornish monuments, when I noticed a few yards off a small slanting tunnel (in the ground, and apparently cutting into the solid granite rock) of a few inches diameter. I approached it, and pushed into it with my stick as far as I could, but in vain; I could feel no bottom; then I tried to look into it, but it was all gloom. Could it be connected with the smashed slab? I took the measures. It was exactly such as a projectile striking the slab would pierce into the earth. What could it be? Could it by any means be connected with the mysterious friend I had met on the moor? I was burning with curiosity, but alone could do nothing, so unwillingly I had to return home to think over this curious discovery.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

A STRANGE LETTER-BOX.

AFTER dinner I resolved to go down to the village and seek the aid of Thomas Tremeer, an intelligent miner, to work out the problem with me. I found Tremeer at home.

“Do you know,” I asked, “that the east stone of the Nine Maidens is smashed up?”

“Don’t you say so, sir! It must have been a hard job to them as did it; but you can’t tell what chaps will do with dynamite nowadays.”

“But the odd thing is that it looks as if it was hit off—not blown off.”

“You don’t say so, sir! What can it be?”

“Well, Tom,” I said, “suppose you and I go up and see for ourselves; you take a pick and a couple of dynamite cartridges, and we’ll see into it.”

Tom promised to go with me on the search.

I had a sleepless night, wondering over my discovery.

The morning came at length, and after breakfast I found Tom in the kitchen ready for the trip, with his pick, borer, and, I presumed, cartridges. We started for the walk, chatting over the little gossip of the village; but as we approached Penmor, I grew more and more anxious and interested, and found a difficulty in talking of anything. We seemed to get on so slowly over the surface granite. In time, however, we were there. Tom examined the place. To his practised eye it was clear that no dynamite explosion had done the damage, but that it was the work of some projectile which had embedded itself in the rock. Without discussing the possibility of such a theory (as I suppose on some philosophers’ principles we ought to have done), we set to work to open up the mysterious little adit or tunnel. It was tough work, for beyond a thin layer of turf there was solid granite. The dynamite cartridges had to be used, and I with Tom got

* See “Aleriel; or, a Voyage to Other Worlds,” pp. 203—213.

under a projecting rock some yards distant for the explosions. At length the tunnel was opened out for about three yards, and then Tom, with his borer, released from the rock a curious conical bolt of steel, on which, to my utter astonishment, I saw deeply indented, in clear Roman letters, my name and address.

Tom read them. "It is for you, sir, certainly," he said, "but who can have put it here?"

I told him whom I suspected, and the wonderful story of Aleriel and his visit to our parts. He looked amazed and somewhat frightened, but I told him it was no witchcraft, for my singular friend was not at all wicked, but seemingly very good and pious, though certainly in a strange way. However, I took the bolt, and looked over it for an opening. The thicker part had a sort of red seal of lead upon it. This, I thought, was the opening. With the aid of the pick we pulled it off, and then inside we found a crystal cone, of about three inches diameter, embedded in the steel projectile. This cone I pulled out, and in the crystal I noticed two folded letters separately buried in it. I did not like to break the crystal at once, so I resolved to take it home and examine it.

I came home and examined the crystal carefully. It was evidently a solid block of something like glass, into which the letters had been placed when in a molten state, and they, therefore, could not possibly be reached without breaking the crystal into pieces. After some scruples I broke it with a bar of iron, and the letters fell at my feet, and I found each of them addressed to me, and the word *Aleriel* written across each address.

I opened the first. It contained a curious tale, which I here give: an account of an ancient lunar city.

LETTER THE FIRST.

A RUINED CITY IN THE MOON.

Central Cone of Mount Aristarchus.

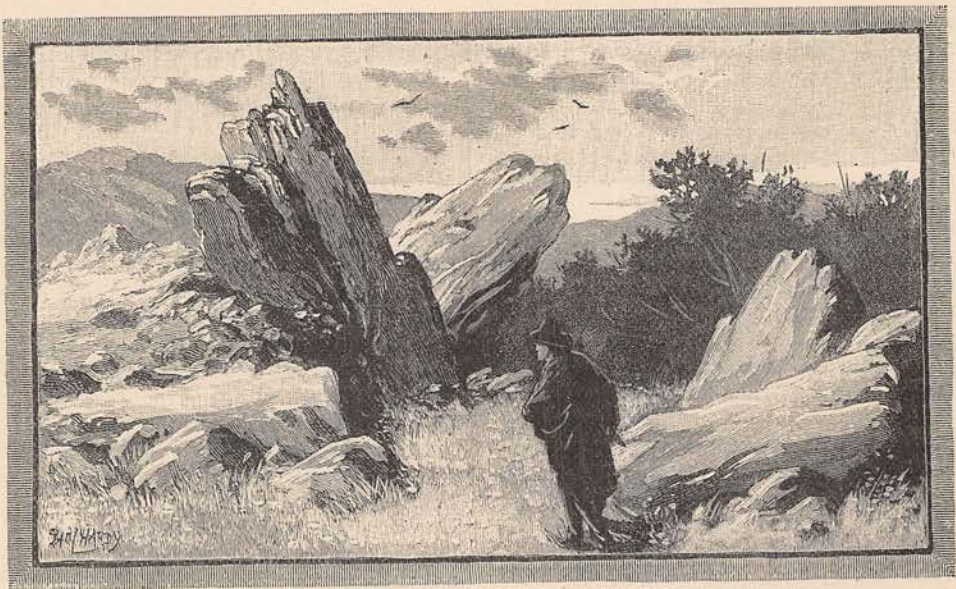
AS we approached your satellite, the moon, we selected the ring-mountain Arzachel, in the Great Crater Chain, for our landing-place. It was a grand and awful scene of desolation; my companions were struck by its still grandeur. It was night, and the stars shone like brilliant points in the black sky; while the earth moved as a majestic globe, shining with its pale earth-light on the terrific precipices and cliffs and peaks of Arzachel. We waited here an earth-day, and then suddenly the glorious sun lighted up one of the loftiest peaks of Ptolemæus in sight in the distance; then peak on peak was illumined. The intense cold of that worse than Arctic night was succeeded by burning heat. The mighty sun soon blazed upon the awful gorges and clefts of the mountain, and it was day.

We looked around us and walked from our ether-car down the rugged slopes of Arzachel. Suddenly a block of stone perfectly squared caught my attention.

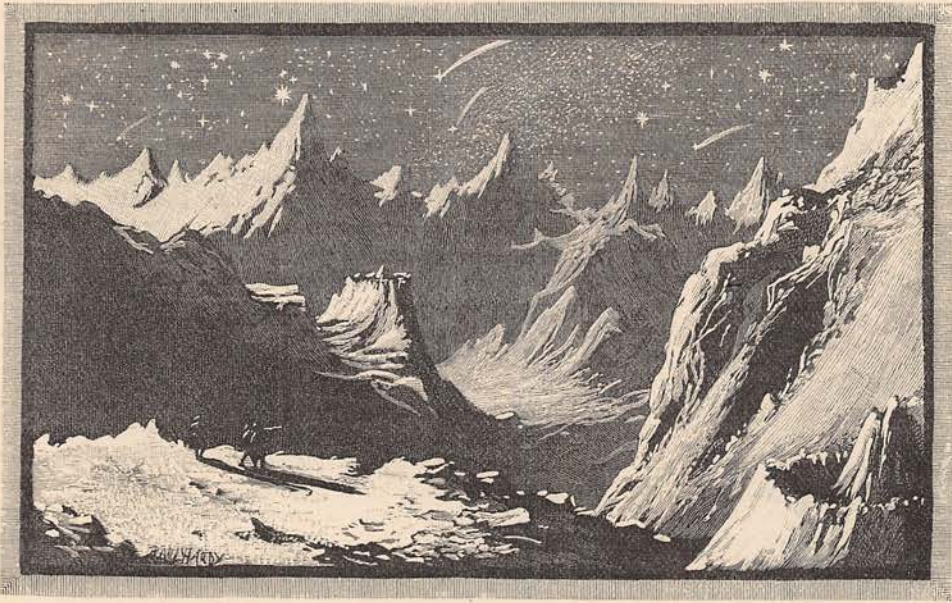
"Can that be a work of nature?" I said. "It looks wrought by industry."

Ezariel examined it and said, "It may be true, then, as our sages suppose, that this dead world has once been the abode of intelligent immortal spirits enshrined in corporeal bodies. Is it only a used-up, a ruined, a destroyed world? Are these vast and terrible mountain ranges only memorials of the vast convulsions that once destroyed life here?"

We agreed to search, if not for living beings (for none such even of a low type seemed to survive upon the lunar surface), at least for remains of intelligences that once may have dwelt there. We searched Arzachel for about three earth-days, but found nothing. It was terrible to walk on a world that one had thought had



THE POST-OFFICE.



A MOONSCAPE.

never known life, but still more awful to traverse one where life had been, but had become extinct.

Finding nothing more on Arzachel, we agreed to proceed to Ptolemæus. But in vain; there were no signs of life having existed there. So we went thence over the Sinus Æstuum to the great circle of Copernicus.

At length, here, near the central cone of Copernicus, I noticed a massive rock, which seemed smoothed by something more than the volcano or the earthquake. I drew near it. It was the opening of a cavern. I entered it, and, causing light to shine around me, followed by my companions, I pierced its depths. Along the wall we traced on either side quaint and curious figures, evidently chiselled and not the work of nature, and strange hieroglyphs cut into the rock. I cannot describe to you these lunar caverns and their sculptures. They had apparently been saved from the great catastrophe. They were very quaint and unearthly, but perhaps depicting scenes on the lunar surface when seas and continents existed there, and living beings dwelt upon the moon. They showed intelligence, but were inferior to your better and more civilised works on earth. If I could liken them to anything I have seen on earth, it would be to the buried cities of Yucatan or the vestiges of the Peruvians.

Those American remains also were records of lost nations, but these of a lost race—a race that had died out or been extinguished on this now dead world.

When we had copied these strange designs by photography, we emerged from the cavern into the bright sunlight. Then around the cavern I thought I could trace terraces and Cyclopean rocks piled into the walls of an ancient city of this lunar race which had passed away for ever.

“Thus,” I cried, “perchance in ages to come may travellers in space, visitors from another planet, wander over the earth, and wonder at the ruins of London or of Paris and the remnant of being man could have been when he lived upon the earth, and what sort of world the earth could have been in the ages when it was fit for supporting life.”

There they stood, those massive walls of the Copernican city, rent and torn by physical forces of destruction, yet showing that once even in that wild region intelligent life had been.

After we had examined these remains, we proceeded to the grand mountain Aristarchus, glowing in the sunlight with its huge white cliffs. We have searched this region also. In a gorge of Aristarchus, perched on a ledge in the rock, I traced the relics of another city, in a better condition than the first: long walls of white stone, terraces well built, but broken in many places, the débris of ruined towers, streets upon streets vaguely marked in ruins, squares, Cyclopean edifices could dimly be traced. Amid the fractured stones were curious pieces of wrought stone quaintly cut, which might have been ornaments of the Lunarians.

“Here, even here,” I cried, “once has been life. It is a dead world now—a desolate realm of death, but it is only a world in which life has been extinguished. Who were the Lunarians? what was their form? were they like men, or of what class and order in creation?” No answer could I find to these questions. The shadows of the lunar night suddenly closed in. The white peaks turned black, the earth shone forth in the starry sky, and intense frost bound all things. The lunar night had begun. Farewell!

ALERIEL.

LETTERS FROM THE PLANETS.

LETTER THE SECOND.
IN THE ANTARCTIC REGIONS OF MARS.

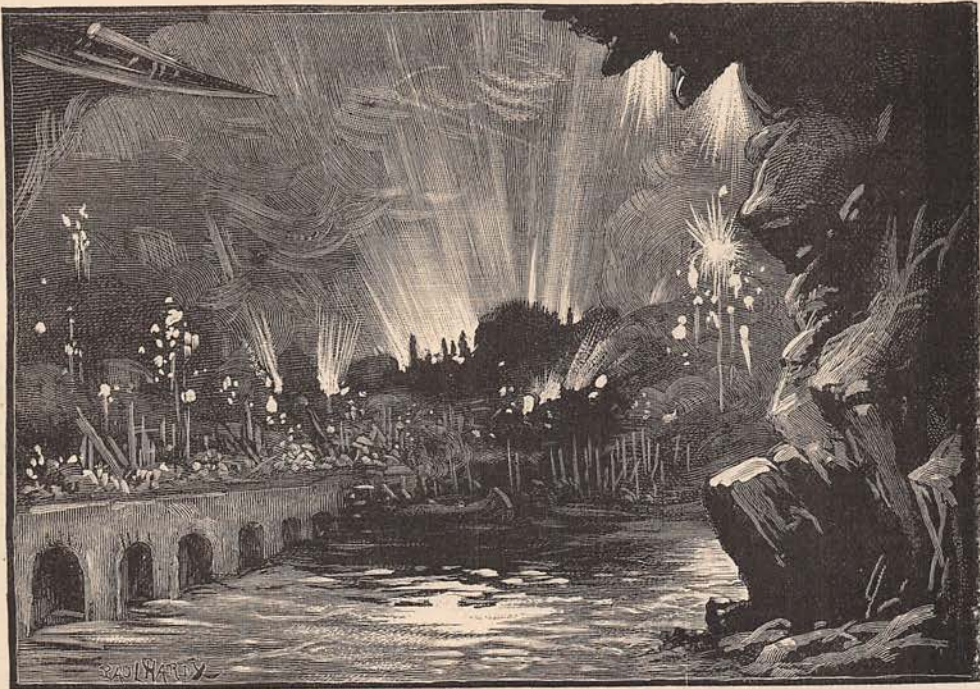
*Mount Aristarchus
on the Moon.*



DEAR FRIEND,—I have thought of mentioning to you one of the sights I saw on Mars, which may interest you, and be of use as suggesting what man might effect if only he learnt wisdom. Your Arctic regions are useless; left to the Polar bear, or the whale and walrus. Man's dominion does not extend to them, even to those realms nearest to the most cultured lands of Europe. As for your Antarctic regions, you actually know less of them than of the Antarctic realms of Mars, for these you can see in your most powerful

Antarctic zone of Mars, I was struck with the vast scene of icy desolation there—very like the mountain regions of Greenland, only that the sea around was green, and not blue. After traversing some hundreds of miles of their snowy peaks and cliffs, and magnificent wild Arctic scenery (not unlike the Arctic scenery of earth), I was suddenly struck with the sight of a trail of rich red vegetation of several miles in the midst of the eternal snows. I approached with curiosity this oasis in the frozen desert. As I approached I felt the air suddenly grow less icy, or rather the icy blasts were relieved by warmer air currents, and these currents seemed to rise from what appeared to be a huge crater of a volcano (very like the volcanoes of earth or the extinct ring mountains of the moon, and, on a smaller scale, like our ring mountains). "Surely," I thought, "here is volcanic action." Still I noticed no eruption, nor geysers, nor lava current.

The night came on. The Martian moon Phoibos was dimly visible near the horizon. All else was dark



"I CAME TO A GIGANTIC CAVERN" (p. 312).

telescopes—you can at least discern the outlines of land and sea. But of the Antarctic realms of the earth no man can tell whether they are land or sea, whether the Antarctic continent is a fable or a fact, though probably it is the former.

When I arrived at the Mitchell Mountains, in the

and calm, save the stars above. From an opening in the mountain, in the very centre of the warmer oasis, a light issued; but not the ruddy light of molten lava, nor sulphurous flickering flame, but the calm white electric light. It appeared issuing from the ground. I approached, and then I saw it came from a vast

chasm, which, however, was not opened perpendicularly down into the depths, but seemingly sloped downwards into an angle. As I drew near, I noticed some hundreds of Martians busy about the opening.

It was difficult to enter the chasm without being perceived, but as I noticed the electric light only illuminated well the lower part of the slope—*i.e.*, that near the ground—and that the overhanging rocks were at a great height in comparative darkness, I resolved to make the attempt.

I flew in the shadow right into the tunnel. Then I felt the air was warmer, and as I went on, going onward and onward, it grew warmer and warmer still. I flew forward thus several miles, the tunnel manifestly sinking deeper and deeper by its decline in the slope. The light was less, and the electric lamps grew further and further apart. By them, however, I noticed cars of the Martians hurried forward into the tunnel, and descended by it deeper and deeper into the planet's interior. It was, in fact, like a huge adit of a colossal mine.

So I thought for a time that it might be, until having gone some ten miles into the huge tunnel, and I should think some three or four miles down into the depth of the planet, below the level of the Arctic Sea, I came to a gigantic cavern about a mile high, and the limits of which I could not see on any side. Before me was a huge lake of evidently half-boiling water, through which there flowed a stream of burning lava, or rather that liquid rock which in Mars represents the lava of the earth. Through this lake there was a huge causeway, on which the Martian cars were carried onwards with their living freight. I flew onwards over the lake, and here and there on its dark steaming waters were the electric ships of the Martians, while in certain places lighthouses were placed, which gave with the blaze of their electric lights a calm to a scene which otherwise might have been terrible. I followed the line of the causeway, and came at last to a shore, where was a well-illuminated city.

Here were hosts of factories, of vast machines, of smelting operations, of huge furnaces, deriving heat from the great lava streams issuing out of the depths of the planet. The air, instead of being cold, as on the surface above, was heated. Busy works were going on, and myriads of the Martians could be seen following in the city divers industries. It was a wonderful scene of activity.

When I looked at it, I thought, "Is not this more advanced planet representing to me what in future ages may be seen in the Arctic regions of the earth? Those realms are now cold, bound down, and frozen with intense eternal cold. They are useless to mankind. Yet if the surface be so frozen, it does not follow that the depths are so likewise. Nay, Hecla itself teaches how beneath frozen Iceland is a region of eternal fires of burning heat, such as might smelt all the metals of Birmingham.

"On earth man leaves these Arctic regions waste and barren, because he confines himself to the cold frozen surface; but the Martians are wiser—their

Arctic regions, indeed, are even colder than those on earth, but they can obtain heat beneath the surface. A few miles below Siberia or Labrador are regions hotter than man can bear. I have met miners on earth who, in latitudes north of 50° on earth, have told me that in the coldest winters, when the surface of the earth is frozen and covered with the white snows, they have been so hot that they have had to labour with their clothes off, almost naked, on account of the heat. Why not utilise these subterranean fires? Underneath Manchester or Glasgow, or far colder regions, are subterranean fires, more potent than all the coal of the Lancashire or Staffordshire coal measures could produce. Intense heat is to be found a mile or two beneath earth's surface. Why should that heat be all useless? How absurd of man to lament the chimerical trouble that the coal measures can be exhausted by human industry, when the earth's heat alone offers a greater heat than the burning up of all the coal measures of their world can produce; just as the force of the tides of earth's oceans, now utterly wasted, even in England itself, could produce a thousand times greater power (capable of being converted into the master-force of electricity) than all the steam-engines of earth could produce—a mighty, almost immeasurable force!"

In those regions not far from the Mitchell Mountains in the hilly country of Cassini Land, I saw another quaint scene no less wonderful, which may be regarded as the natural outcome of the immense power over nature (to mould it to their will) which the Martians possess, and which man may in time attain when mechanical arts are further advanced than they are now, should the instinct of mound-building ever revive on earth. I noticed in those more favoured regions of the Martian south temperate zone, as I approached Cassini Land over the green waves of the Zollner Sea, what looked like colossal statues of gigantic Martians, several hundred feet high. These enormous statues struck me as very singular. I approached them and saw that they were natural hills cut into shapes of gigantic size many times larger than the huge Colossus of Rhodes, or the figure of Liberty at New York. In one case, indeed, a gigantic crouching figure was so vast that its head was surmounted with a crown, within the border of which a little city had been erected. Another hill was cut into the form of one of the Martian trees, and on each leaf there stood a house, looking like a flower or bud. In another hill two projecting peaks had been fashioned into two hands, and in each hand a house was built. "Here," I thought, "is something of the state of things that might have even now occurred on earth, had the present civilised inhabitants shared the desire of moulding hills into the form of natural objects which once existed among the Mound-builders of Wisconsin and Ohio. Had those Mound-builders, instead of being exterminated by superior races, left descendants capable of carrying out their ideas and of utilising the steam-engine, and dynamite, and the various forces of civilisation, what a strange land of wonders the Western

States of America would have been! Almost as wonderful as Cassini Land in Mars. But the European builds for himself, as the ancient American tried to fashion natural objects to his own uses; the European having conquered, the American ideal has never had a chance of being carried out on earth."

I saw many wonderful engineering works on Mars—huge canals and causeways, and coasts rounded of their promontories (blown away by explosives)—such as I should think the astronomers of earth, if they have not yet seen them, must surely observe before very long.

ALERIEL.

TYNESIDE FOLK.



COAL TRIMMERS WAITING THEIR TURN.



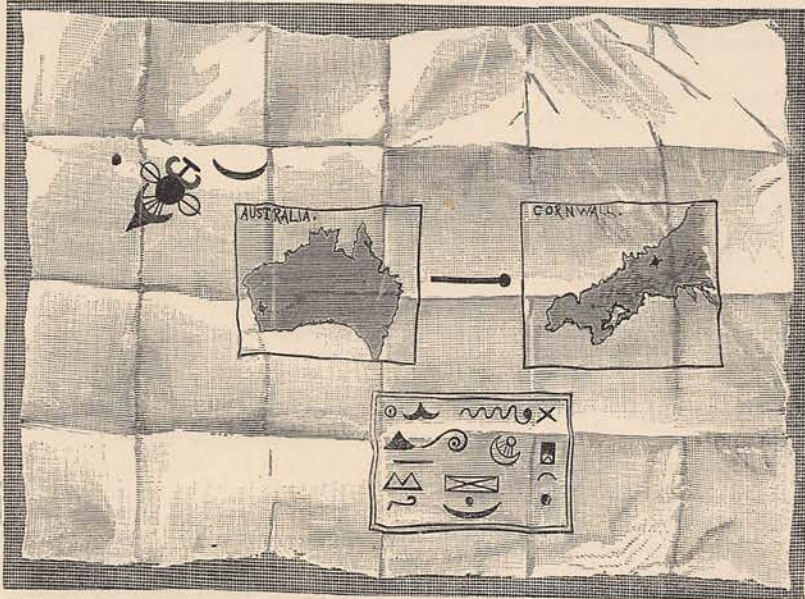
TYNESIDE is rich in interest, historic, industrial, and personal. From Wylam to the sea there is no dull mile in the prospect, and only few yards that have not associations that are picturesque. It was at Wylam that early locomotives were worked; at Throckley, George Stephenson was a "made man for life" when he earned twelve shillings a week; Bewick at Cherryburn; Robert Stephenson at Willington; and Collingwood, Eldon, and Stowell, are names associated in birth, adventure, and triumph with the Tyne. The work of the district, the dependence on mine and river and sea for bread, and the isolation of employment, have all induced in Tyneside folk strongly-marked individuality of character and dialect. The Tynesider is not so polished nor so ready-tongued as the southerner; he has had more to depend upon himself, more to

struggle upwards and against the tide; and he was rougher in exterior and in speech. Around his famous river the tide of battle had often rolled; the keep of the castle on the Tyne, the grand old wall of the Romans, and the little strongholds near it, told of ancient invaders and of former forays; and though the nations were united, long stretches of bleak moors and hills shut in the north and the west, and the Tynesider dug out his coal, rowed his keels, sailed his ships, and lived, as one of the poets of Pitland has phrased it, happy lives with "yel [ale] to cheer, and mirth to please."

To the coal trade Tyneside owes much of its greatness. Along its banks the earliest collieries were worked, and the villages and towns have names that

LETTERS FROM THE PLANETS.

FROM OUR ROVING CORRESPONDENT.



THE HIEROGLYPHICS.

WAITING FOR NEWS.



READ and re-read my strange letters. Should I ever hear more from my unearthly visitor? How could he again send to me, when he was some thirty millions of miles off in the planet Venus, or would his powers reach so far as to transmit to this little spot of

earth a bolt such as he had certainly been able to hurl from Mount Aristarchus on the Moon?

I was much interested in the matter, and often thought of my strange visitor and his still stranger letters from regions where the foot of man has never trod. Often also did I go on the moor and look at the curious post-office, the riven rock, and the *débris* we had caused round it by the explosion. I searched the neighbourhood attentively. I examined the rocks and the turf bogs and the cairns around, but in vain. No sign of change was apparent, no vestige of violent explosion, nor the launching of bolts with gigantic force, such as I had seen on the former memorable occasion.

Months passed and there was nothing to be seen. At length I gave up my visits to the moorlands. It was useless to search for what did not exist, and I gave up all hopes of hearing more from another world.

NEWS AT LAST.

I had given up all thought of hearing from my unearthly friend, although his memory often haunted me, and, indeed, will haunt me to my dying day.

Things went on as usual in our peaceful moorland parish. The great world troubled us not, and save for the news in the daily Plymouth paper, I heard little of it.

Suddenly a strange change came on my little home circle, and new vistas of the realms of space—tens of millions of miles off—opened on my dazzled eyes. It came in a most unexpected manner, and in a much more commonplace way apparently than before.

One morning the servant brought me a letter with the post-mark, "Perth, Western Australia."

The letter was not prepaid, so I had to pay the postage, but the strange handwriting, a graceful imitation of printing the Latin characters (as of one who did not know how to write, but imitated printed letters, yet a hand too refined and cultured to be mistaken for an ignorant person), was too striking to be mistaken. It was Aleriel's, manifestly.

I took it to my study and broke the seal with trembling hands. Inside, instead of the letter I expected, there was a beautifully painted sheet of hieroglyphs. They were rather puzzling and tantalising to one who knew but little of the celestial alphabet, as I did. I looked at and tried to decipher them. They were exquisitely painted on the delicate sheet of a tissue, such as I had never seen before.

Let us see if we can make them out.

THE HIEROGLYPHICS.

First, there is a most extraordinary compound symbol. I look at it again and again, but there is nothing earthly like it, so I have to give it up. It is

manifestly a combination of symbols ; perhaps it is a name, possibly of the sender.

Then next it is a little map of Australia ; a very good map, too ; and in it, near Perth, in Western Australia, is a red mark. I look at it ; perhaps there is the place from which the messenger has written.

Then there is a little map of Cornwall, neatly done, and a small red cross close to my neighbourhood. That must mean the place where I reside.

And between the two maps there is a deep, thick, red line, with a knob at the end towards the Cornish map. What can that mean ? Can it be—coming from Australia to England ? Is he coming, indeed ?

But there is more : a page drawn in outline, with small hieroglyphs roughly inscribed on it. What can it be ? Is it only a symbol of a letter, *i.e.*, a tablet containing hieroglyphs ?

I read and re-read, as best I could, these symbols. I held them up to the light, suffered the daylight to be transmitted through them, examined them even with my botanical microscope. The study was interesting, especially the last test. The tissue was exquisitely delicate. It might be the skin of some plant, if we may so call the vegetation of our sister-world. But there was nothing more to be learned about what I wanted to know of my strange friend.

At last the thought struck me of examining the envelope. I carefully tore it open, and there in a corner found, rolled into a very small space, such as could be put into a filbert-shell, a delicate little packet of a kind of tissue paper. I opened it with great care, not succeeding, however, in avoiding two or three rents in the tender, flimsy sheet. I unfolded it at last. It was written over with what looked like an imitation of Aleriel's handwriting, but not very well done, as if each letter had been imitated unintelligently. However, in spite of this and of the rents, I could make

out the following strange narrative, an evident continuation of the letters which I had received from Mount Aristarchus in our satellite.

LETTER THE THIRD.

THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY, OR PLANET OF LOVE.

OUR journey to our beloved home in Venus was a long and dreary one. As before, we got on one of the great meteoric systems for a part of the way, and then launched into space (a space now more illumined than before by the ceaseless blaze of the King of Day—the mighty Sun—far more brilliant in ether than he seems even at noon on Earth's tropics).

There he shone in that region of eternal day, blazing forth in the cloudless and pure ether into infinite space, with his burning rays of intense light. Nearer and nearer we went, brighter and brighter shone the King of Day.

At length the brilliant orb of our beautiful world grew larger than the sun himself. Then it spread over space as a mighty and gorgeous globe. The seas and the continents opened up in their soft or brilliant tints of blue and silver, the table-lands with dazzling brightness from their crystal surface reflected the intense sunlight.*

Nearer and nearer we went. Soon the mountain-peaks, with their serrated ridges, were in sight, the ring mountains mottled the surface almost like that of the mountains of the moon, only the clouds and mists gave a certain earth-look to the scene.

Down, down to the alpine regions of the Antarctic continent we flew, down homeward.

* The intense brilliancy of some spots of the surface of Venus are among the problems of planetary astronomy ; are they caused by vast surfaces of crystals or metals ?



THE ASSEMBLY.

We descended into the great ring-chain of the Simerian Mountains, in the centre of which is a lovely lake in which, upon a mountain raised over its fair surface, is the city of Simeria: Our approach was noticed immediately. The silver-covered towers and spires of Simeria glistened in the sunlight, and as we drew nearer, blazed forth in every hue of banners, in welcome to us on our coming. Then, over the placid lake there boomed the sound of explosives—not used by us, any more than on Mars (in the present enlightened state of that grand world), for destruction of life (as upon the Earth), but simply for engineering operations, for signals and rejoicings. So the explosions boomed from the silver towers and echoed over the lake to the great wall of mighty mountains, some fifteen, some twenty miles high, which formed the circle of Simeria.

At length we drew near one of the temple spires, and on its summit yoked our ether car. Then we descended into the great Garden of Simeria, where already the chiefs of the city were gathering to welcome us.

We descended, and once more touched the surface of our beloved world. The Simerians welcomed us with songs of greeting. The loud song of triumph burst from a thousand lips. We were conducted to the great temple of the city, where we offered our thanksgivings to God who had preserved us through our long journey.

Then we had a hearty and kindly welcome from our friends, and the chiefs of the city consulted what should be done in honour of our arrival.

It was arranged that we should narrate our adventures publicly to a general assembly not only of the Simerians, but of those of the neighbouring nations who chose to attend and were interested in the subject of our sister-worlds. The place where the assembly was to be held was a gorge of the Simerian Mountains, where the assemblies of that nation are usually held. A day was given for us to rest and prepare, and also for those from afar to come to hear us. The electric flash had already communicated to all our lands our arrival, and the aerial cars bore thousands from distant spots to welcome us home and hear the news we had to bring from distant worlds of space.

Let me explain the object of these assembly-places, which in our world each nation has for itself. The idea of representative government is a transitional form of rule suited to the present condition of the Earth, but is not the most natural, and therefore not the most perfect. The ancient ideal of antique Europe, of the Greek cities where the demos gathered in the agora, or in wilder nations where the whole tribe gathered on important occasions, is far truer,

though unsuited to a transitional state like yours. No man can fairly represent another. Minorities are not really represented on earth. The ideal of perfect liberty is that of the antique world of democratic Greece, where each citizen represents himself, or at least his family. But as time went on, of course, on Earth, this became impracticable. Assemblies were too large, journeys were involved when means of locomotion were imperfect. So representation became desirable, and assemblies of citizens delegated their powers to chosen representatives, and oligarchies took the place of popular government, or popular government assumed the form of an oligarchy. But this is by no means necessary in highly-civilised communities. Where passions are controlled, quarrels are unlikely, or will be wisely suppressed. As rational beings obtain control over natural forces, locomotion becomes easy and rapid. The microphone and telephone convey sound. So really the need of representation ceases. Smaller business may be handed to chosen committees of specialists, but on important matters each citizen may personally give his vote. This is our mode of government; a simpler and more natural, and, therefore, a truer one than representation, but one only suited to small or else to highly-cultured societies.

So we went (accompanied in triumph by the princes of the nation) to the assembly-place of the Simerians. It was a magnificent ring-circle inserted in a gorge of the Simerian Mountains. About four millions of our compatriots were assembled, ranged along the slopes or on the rock-terraces (improved by art) of the amphitheatre of the mountains. The scene was impressive, with waving banners and symbols and the millions of brightly-attired listeners. We stood with the chiefs of Simeria on a rocky peak in the centre, whence telephones and microphones communicated all we had to say to the most distant limit of the vast amphitheatre.

At length the Prince of Simeria signed for silence to the assembly. Then he spoke thus:—

“Simerians and Friends,—Our comrades have returned from their long journey over planetary space. They have seen other worlds than ours, and come to unveil to us the wonders of the great Creator’s works. Who can but wish to hear them tell what they have seen and where they have been? Let us ask them to narrate their story. First, what they saw of Earth, then of Mars, then Jupiter, then Saturn.”

The multitude applauded with loud applause, and then were hushed.

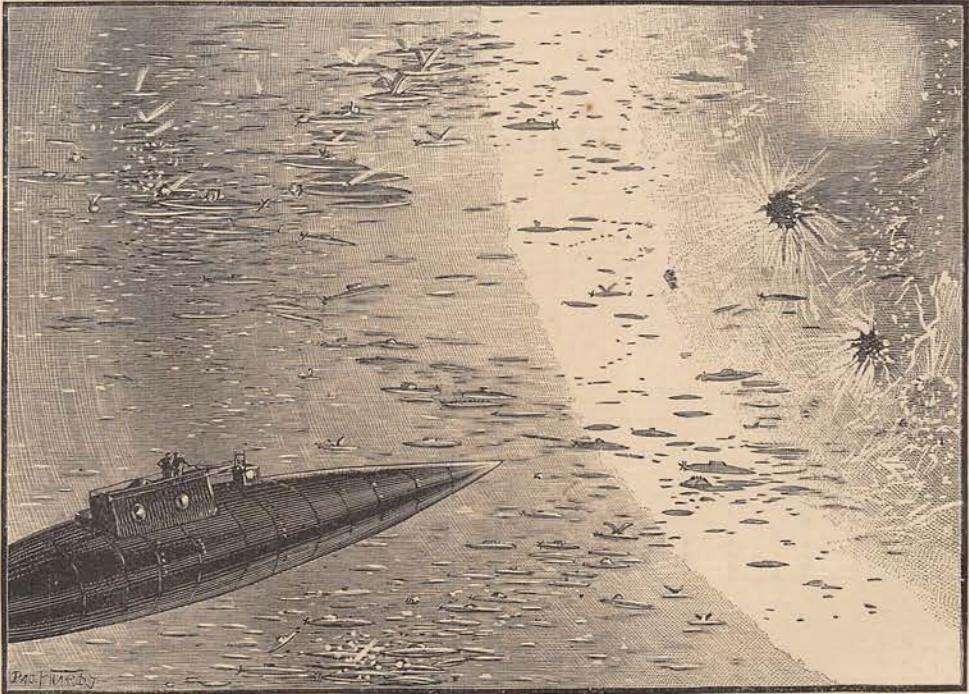
ALERIEL.

The manuscript here ended. It was evidently but the first page.



LETTERS FROM THE PLANETS.—IV.

FROM OUR ROVING CORRESPONDENT.



"WE PERCEIVED THE CARS OF THE MERCURIANS FLOATING IN SPACE" (p. 690).

THE MESSENGER.



WEEK elapsed after the receipt of this strange letter. On the Saturday night after, I was sitting in my study writing. My study, I should say, was an attic, under the gable, which I had chosen for its quietude. As I was writing, suddenly I was startled by a tap at the window.

I got up and looked out into the starlit landscape. There was nothing visible. "It must be fancy," I thought, so I sat down and began to write again. As I had just settled to my work again the tap came clearer than before. Again I arose and looked out. There was nothing visible, except that I thought I saw something dark floating in the air near the house, over the trees of the avenue. The thought struck me—"Had the mysterious messenger arrived? Was my reading of the hieroglyph correct?"

I resolved what to do in case my mysterious visitant should really be at hand. I opened the window and waited. Suddenly there passed into the room a form robed in a dark floating garment. I saw before me an intelligence like Aleriel—a being of another world—unearthly yet not supernatural.

I was moved deeply. For a moment I did not know what to say. He stood and looked at me, and then made a wave with his hand, which I conjectured was a salutation. Then he drew from his robe a

scroll marked with the hieroglyph of Aleriel's name. It was his credential from another world. I looked at it and said, "Welcome to our world! You are the messenger from whom I received the letter?"

A soft, sweet, musical voice, sounding as if from far away, answered in English, "I am."

"Welcome, then, to earth! Welcome for our friend's sake and your own!"

He drew from his robe a packet. In it I found two letters, which I give here.

LETTER THE FOURTH.

THE CAR.

I NEED not relate our speeches—you know already the summary of our journeys. We gave a day to the description of each world we had visited. The first day we gave to the Earth, as the world nearest to us, when my comrades told their impressions of Earth and of mankind, as far as they could judge in their hasty visit. Then, on the second day, we spoke of the ruddy planet Mars. I detailed my journey through his divers seas in the electric ship, and they their travels around his ruddy globe, and the strange cities and wondrous spectacles of gorgeous grandeur they had seen; and, finally, we spoke of the moon, Phoibos, where we had rested a while. On the third we spoke of Jupiter, that giant world, and of his many wonders. The fourth, and last day, we spoke of Saturn and his

rings and satellites, and the many wondrous things we had beheld in that far-off ringed world.

When the great congress was ended, we proceeded to the City of the Stars, where we held a great consultation of many days with the learned, who wished to know all that we had seen in the other worlds of our solar system. Thence we went to other cities and addressed divers assemblies, and told them of what we had seen of God's wondrous creation in those far-off worlds which He had made and we had visited. Wonder and admiration was excited. The things we had brought with us from the distant planets were examined and discussed. The conclusion we all came to was that throughout the solar system there was an integral unity of design, and yet an infinite variety of manifestations of the wisdom and power of the Divine Creator of the Universe.

As now we found that we had the power of traversing the realms of space from world to world, and that science had so advanced our control over nature that the millions of miles of ether were no insuperable obstacle to our passing from world to world, the thirst for knowledge naturally grew by the tasting of the fresh wonders revealed to our race of the creatures of the Most High. A council was held, at the City of the Stars, of the greatest astronomers and engineers (or "nature-subduers," as we call them) of our world, and the question opened in what direction a fresh expedition should be taken into space. The answer was simple, for but one reply was obvious, and Akasion, the prince of the City of the Stars, briefly put it to us thus:—"As yet we have only gone outwards. The realms of Uranus and Neptune are so distant that it may be doubted whether our powers, with safety, can be used to attain such distant planets, at least until we have tried further experiments. But in the inner realm of the solar system we have as yet done nothing. The region of greatest wonders is at hand, not so far off as Mars and the Asteroids. There, then, let us send our next exploration—to our sister world, Mercury, and to the mighty king of day—the glorious Sun."

To this Arnorion, the great "nature-subduer," replied:—"The truth is, that there is a nobler prize to obtain by a journey inward than outward, but the difficulties are greater. In going outwards from the Sun we only went to realms of darkness and cold, and indeed in the worlds to which we sent we found that the cold was relieved by the heat of their internal fires; but in going inwards towards the Sun we go to a region of tremendous and terrible heat, and of light unutterably intense. New precautions will be needed. Greater power will be required also to contend against the mighty gravitation of the Sun, which is more than one million times larger than our world."

Both points were considered. We agreed that the journey to the Sun was most desirable, but was full of difficulties, such as would need new discoveries and new inventions. Still the "nature-subduers" agreed that they would try experiments to see if they could increase the anti-gravitating force sufficiently to con-

tend with the power of the Sun, and also search for means to contend against his intense and tremendous heat.

These experiments took some time. Meanwhile we travelled to many more of the cities of our planet, and told the story of our journeys, and showed the strange things we had brought from Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, and Earth, and from your satellite, the Moon.

At length we were told that a "nature-subduer," Exalorion, had discovered a substance which could ward off the intensest heat. He himself, wrapped in this substance, had walked into a furnace heated to the highest degree; and even platinum, heated under electricity, had been wrapped around a robe of it and no effect whatever had been perceived. It was as utterly a non-conductor of heat as a thick sheet of iron was of light.

Okrastion also, another "nature-subduer," had found a means of immensely augmenting the anti-gravitating force on which our aerial cars depended.

On receiving this news I went again to the City of the Stars, and met my friend Ezariel there. We, together with the most eminent "nature-subduers" of our world, proceeded to construct a new car of much greater size and power than the former. We wrapped it within and without with the new non-conductor of heat; we fixed in it the mighty anti-gravitating machine, which inverted the force of gravitation, and repelled what otherwise would be a force of attraction.

It was shaped like a shuttle, with two sharp points, cased in the newly-discovered non-conducting medium. On the top rested the directing magnet, of enormous power, and the anti-gravitating force was rested in the body of the machine. Within was a small cabin of steel, filled with every needful appliance, in which we the five travellers made our journey. It was lighted by but two windows of oval shape, with crystals of various density, the thicker of which once fixed would only transmit the most intense light into the interior. We were prepared for intensest heat or bitterest cold, for darkness or for most brilliant light.

LETTER THE FIFTH.

MERCURY.

Mount Karan in Mercury.

At length we launched again into space in the mighty heat-protected car which we had constructed, but now not towards the region of darkness, but to the king of day, and the realms of eternal light that surround the mighty Sun. Our first stage was to be, as we had planned, to our fellow-planet, the bright world of Mercury. Hither we sped with vast rapidity, as soon as we got clear by our anti-gravitating force of Venus. On, on we flew. Mercury appeared first as a bright globe near the Sun, then as he rotated in his orb towards the point to which we were going, as a moon growing larger and larger in space, and at the same time narrowing his luminous disc. But he was not an airless moon like yours. He was intensely

bright, and around him were the double rings of his double atmosphere.*

"All the inner worlds," said Ezariel, "seem to have two envelopes on their surface. In Earth and Mars there is an outer atmosphere of air covering the whole surface, with an inner and partial one of water filling the ocean. Our world has its atmosphere and its oceans. In the Moon we saw a world the surface of which was bare to the ether. Here we have a world with a double envelope of the outer violet atmosphere, and of the inner bright one."

Meanwhile we were advancing towards this globe, on whose waving crescent of light the Sun shone. In the illumined part were to be seen huge mountains, almost as vast as ours, of ten miles or more in height, ranged in rings like the mountains of the Moon. On the dark part whole provinces, as large as several English counties, were illumined by the electric lights of the vast cities of the Mercurians.

As we approached the half-illumined globe we entered (about 500 miles from his surface) his outer violet atmosphere. Soon we perceived that not merely the surface of the planet, but the vast outer atmosphere itself, was peopled, and that the Mercurians were not restrained to the surface of their little

world, not so much larger than your Moon, but dwell in the atmospheric shells around him, and swarmed in the vast outer space, so that, though the solid planet appears so small, the true planet is not confined to it, but includes the atmospheres where we perceived the cars of the Mercurians floating in space, like gnats in a summer evening.

"Surely," said Ezariel to me, "this little planet has slight gravitating force, and so the Mercurians can with little effort float away in space as far as their atmosphere extends, even if they are not able to launch forth into the regions of space around their planet."

On, on we flew, carried forward by the gravitation of the planet which, weak though it relatively was, now, when the anti-gravitating force was removed, was potent enough. We swept past many a floating islet in space of the Mercurians (for they seem to a great degree to live in their atmosphere far from the planet) on into the lower atmosphere of their world. We saw a lofty mountain range, and here on a peak we rested, and from here I write you this letter. At length I have seen and rested on the surface of each of the planets of our solar system, inside the distant realms of far-off Uranus. My object is attained.

ALERIEL.

HOW CAPTAIN WILLIAMSON WON HIS BRIDE.

(THE CHRONICLES OF CARDEWE MANOR.)

BY LUCY FARMER.

CHAPTER THE FIRST. THE YEOMANRY SPORTS.

"HARLEY," said I, one morning pretty early, "do you know what the twenty-fifth of September is?"

"What it is?" he replied, quite careless-like. "What of it?"

"What of it, Charley?—Don't you know it's our wedding-day? The twenty-fifth of September we were married."

"I thought it was the twenty-ninth," says Charley, smiling; "it ought to have

been, if it wasn't. Well, Lucy, I won't contradict you, girl; and, as I said, what of it?"

A child could have founced me then. Our own seventh wedding-day, and he to say, "What of it?" I could ha' cried, only I wasn't goin' to let Charley see any such weakness. So I only said—

"If you're such a stupid as not to know you've been married seven years, Charley Farmer, perhaps you'll take my word for it."

I *was* put out; and no wonder! Any one with the feelings of a woman would have been. Charley is sometimes very provokin', too. This time he said, with a jeerin' kind of tone—what *he* calls "dry"—

"Oh, I know it well, Lucy; I don't deny the soft impeachment; but I was surprised, *greatly* surprised, when you said *seven* years, my dear! If you had said four or five——"

"What, Charley, and the boy just six! Get out with you! Well, *do* be sensible now for a minute. Listen to *me* for once." He smiled again, but I took no notice. "Charley," says I, very solemn, "the seventh year is a lucky year. The twenty-fifth is a lucky day, so old Rachael says. Mr. Martyn-Henry's overseer, Mr. Strong, has been here. You remember I thought him a policeman in the mystery surrounding the Martyn-Henrys.† Well, he has asked us to go and pay a visit to him and his wife—Polly Meek, you remember her; and I vote we go on the twenty-fifth, which is a Saturday, and remain until Monday or Tuesday, if Mrs. Cardewe will let us off."

"She'll let us off, right enough," said Charley. "Shall we bring the young uns?"

† See CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, April, 1886.



* In the transit of Mercury of 1878 two rings were observed enclosing the planet—an outer one of violet, an inner of a very bright character around the dark orb. The spectroscope leads us to think there is a watery envelope around Mercury, but the subject is obscure.