

## Seybold Melbin;

OR,

### THE WORLD OF MARS.

By *Walter H. Smith.*

"World of Mars:  
Lives there a human brotherhood on thee  
Without the sins and errors of mankind."

#### CHAPTER XII.

##### A DECREE OF EXTERMINATION.

Happy indeed are those not so bound! Not that I would wish them to undergo my experiences, which have had much more of the bitter than the sweet in them; but because, whenever man succeeds in shaking off the trammels of custom and revelling in the natural, he approaches nearer the Infinite. It is only then that he hears and sees:

"Sermons in stones, books in running brooks,  
And good in everything."

At least I found it so. The farther I got from the world of fashion, conventionality and folly, the nearer I drew to nature and truth and my life became happier and more worth the living. For you must not suppose that utter loneliness possessed me when on earth. True it is that I, like the sound sleeper and adventurous dreamer spoken of by Lytton, lived a real life in my sleeping, and an artificial life in my waking moments—being now a part of Mars rather than a portion of the earth—yet, for all this, I was not out of tune with nature. Her great heart-beats were still of essential interest to me, indeed I was fonder than ever of natural objects, being now better able to understand them.

That every starlit evening saw me in my observatory, focussing the ruddy planet, can readily be understood. Who, indeed, could have foregone my opportunities,—opportunities such as were never before enjoyed by mortal,—of roaming over another planet in company with so learned and accomplished an instructress as Myrina. I remember on one of my visits that I again alighted a considerable distance from the Am-ram mansion, and in proceeding thereto the thought struck me that I had, thus far, discovered no traces whatever of factories. There were granaries and store-houses in plenty, boats, cars and balloons to any number arriving and departing filled with crude products or manufactured articles, but no place where the latter were produced. My curiosity was aroused, and on arriving at the Am-Ram mansion almost the first question I put to Myrina that day was a request for an explanation.

"My best explanation would be to accompany you either to our Arctic or Antarctic regions, where the matter could be explained entirely to your satisfaction," was the strange answer made me.

"If so, I should like to visit your arctic regions, if possible," I replied.

"But that is impossible when your usual brief stay is taken into account," remarked Myrina. "Even supposing you descended on the country in question, the time at your disposal would, under the circumstances there obtaining, be too contracted."

"I not only wish to witness your manufactories, but to ascertain of what materials your thickest garments are made. This puzzles me somewhat, as, thus far, no living creature, except of the Martian human race, have I yet been able to discover. But perhaps you have herds of tame animals, similar to our sheep and alpaca goats, in other parts of your globe."

"No, we have not. There is scarcely a vestige of animal life left at present. As you know, we are not flesh-eating, and were not obliged to permit animal life to exist to secure food. As for our dress; supplied with plants whose fibres are warmer, when carefully woven, than any animal fur extant, we had no need to propagate animals in order to obtain clothing. But, nevertheless, ages ago, this planet teemed with varied forms of life, even as yours now does; for in those days Mars had a much warmer, much moister atmosphere, and room, as well as food, existed for all. But slowly, steadily, surely, the cold zone grew broader and broader, forcing habitation within less and less space, the possibilities of existence grew ever less and less, until our animals became burdensome, their daily consumption of food could not be spared and just what was best to be done became a serious question, debateable by the general council.

"In any crisis of grave import it is here customary to call a council or general representative assembly, not so much to decide on what shall be done, as almost everyone—as you know—is gifted with foresight, but to take the actual vote and discuss the various opinions on the subject in hand. Ruling, as we do, without kings, princes or high-priests, for each individual here is personally in direct relation with the Ruler of the Universe and needs no intermediary, it is, of course, impossible that all should join in a discussion of this kind. It is, therefore customary, Mars being divided into districts of almost equal population, to choose and send a delegate, even as you choose and return delegates to your councils, synods and assemblies on earth. Your parliaments and your congresses meet in your capitals. We discountenance the crowding of people into cities, and therefore have no capital city. But, as the Jews had their temple of Zion, the Egyptians their temple of Isis, the Greeks and Romans temples to Jove; even as your Mahomedans look to Mecca, and your Catholics to Rome, so we have one place consecrated above the rest, a holy temple, a meeting place for all, set

apart by nature as well as man from the rest of the world,—your astronomers know it, you must yourself have seen it in the telescope, standing out plain and distinct in the midst of De-la-Rue ocean."

"White Island?"

"The same. But more of that anon. The council of which I speak decided that a law of utter extermination against animals was the one thing needful. The law was enacted, the council dispersed, and a thorough destruction of animal life systematically began. Not only were the wild animals, from the least to the greatest, from the smallest insect to the greatest aquatic mammal destroyed, but those termed 'domestic' also. Of course, many a subterfuge was resorted to by people to preserve the lives of their pets, but in the end, the clearance proved successful and thorough."

"But it must have taken a long time," I remarked.

"Why so?"

"That is, if you killed everything, insects, reptiles, fish, etc."

"Everything living but mankind was destroyed, and it did not take very long. A month or so probably."\*

I was astonished and showed it.

"Why," I said, "we could not so much as commence a general war of extermination on the earth in so short a time. It would take a couple of years to gather a general council together from all civilized countries, much less to decide and act as well."

"I dare say, but we are one people and act as such, not as five hundred nationalities, all jealous of the rest. Besides you have not the approved appliances for destruction that we have. Why a dozen neuters here, under the direction of a competent captain, and all armed with electrical staves, could destroy more things in a week, animate or inanimate, than a fleet of your heaviest armed warships in a month. Suppose, for instance, a drove of antelopes was seen, say twenty miles off, and our company of twelve neuters and a captain wished to destroy it. The animals would first be mesmerized, that is, forced to approach their destroyers, even against their will. When sufficiently close, they would be made to halt, and one touch with an electric staff would tumble the beasts over. Small fry, such as ants, spiders, winged and other insects, were magnetized in a similar way, we took no pains to find them, but willed that they come to us. There was no need to hunt anything to death. As for the denizens of the ocean, we arranged numberless batteries beneath the surface, and by continuous electrical discharges from vessels sent into all parts, pretty nearly everything mortal was destroyed."

\* A Martian Month, it should be remembered, is nearly twice as long as a month on earth.

(To be Continued.)