

AERENE OF MARS.

BY JOHN A. COPLAND.

I was copy-reader on *The Berger*.

Work was drawing to a close; the paper would soon be to press. Jack Davis dropped in from the office of our contemporary *The Curler*, his reportorial duties for the night all done, to walk home with me.

"Ha, Jack," said I, as I smoothed a "flimsy" despatch over the white pad on my desk to facilitate the reading of the faintly manifolded copy, "this interests us both."

Davis looked across.

"What is it?" he vouchsafed.

I read:—

"ST. PETERSBURG, June 2.—What is believed to be the largest aerolite ever known to have fallen is lying in the Caspian Sea, a short distance from the peninsula of Apsheron. In falling, the aerolite made a most terrific noise. It rushed through the air with incredible speed, and the white-hot mass made a light that illuminated the country and sea round about for a long distance. The people who saw it were struck dumb with consternation. When the aerolite struck the water thick clouds of steam arose, and the hissing could be heard for miles. Huge volumes of water were thrown up, and the sight to those people who were not in terror was most beautiful. So enormous is the aerolite that it projects twelve feet above the water, and its fused black crust gives it the appearance of having been varnished."

"Well?" was Jack's comment.

"Let us go and see it," added I.

Jack laughed.

"I'm in earnest, Jack," I continued.

"That fortune I have waited for so long has come at last. My uncle has left me \$60,000."

"Good!" Jack shouted; and he slapped my back until I roared.

On the way home we matured our plans.

My wife consented, for she was convinced the holiday would do me good. So I got leave of absence from the editor-in-chief; and in less than a week my wife, Jack Davis and myself were bound for Apsheron. The details of our journey are inconsequent. We reached the aerolite; and our fears that the despatch might have been a hoax were pleasurably expelled by the sight of that big bolide. Scientists had been already to see it, as proclaimed by the dints from enquiring hammers of geologists. Our boat floated beside the great meteorite.

"Where do you think it is from?" asked my wife.

"The bottom of the sea," said I sarcastically.

"No; from the sky," remarked Jack Davis.

"You are making fun of me," my wife reproached us.

"It is a projectile," Jack said; "but a gun with a capacity to fire that would require a power incapable of being comprehended by humans almost. It is my belief that this is a fragment from some volcano on earth. I do not mean that it was projected from the earth's surface recently. It may be thousands of years since that body left. Of course, you know, it would all depend on the primitive force of projection. Had it received enough impetus to retain a velocity of twenty or thirty miles a second after it had swept clear of our atmosphere, it would depart into ethereal space, or become a satellite of the sun. Should the latter possibility happen, it would always return at regular intervals to the point where it found its orbit, but our globe would not perhaps be there. Thus it would proceed on another trip around the sun; but in the course of time, after