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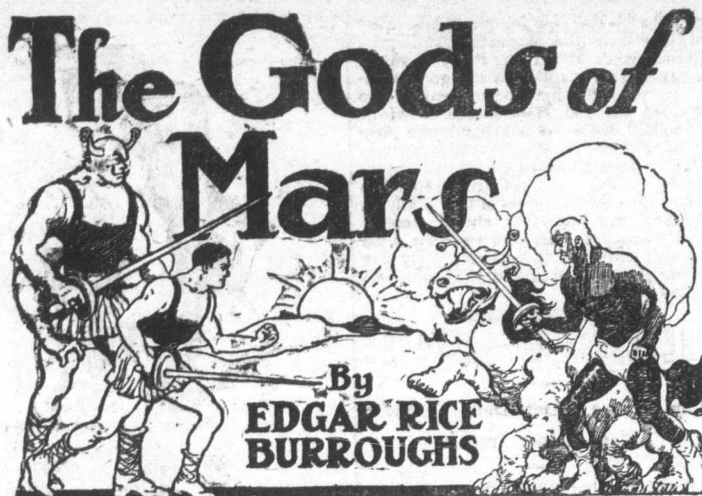
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Prologue.

There are a few venturesome authors gifted with vivid imaginations who, like Alexander, sigh for new worlds to conquer, and they do it. H. G. Wells is one of these, and Edgar Rice Burroughs is another.

In his most recent and most fascinating work, "The Gods of Mars," the author lifts his readers to that interesting planet with an earth born hero who is mysteriously translated there.

As Mr. Burroughs reveals the condition of that planet, Mars is well named, for there is continuous warfare going on there of a most extraordinary kind. Wonderful air battles and wonderful war machines are described, and wonderful adventures are related.

Every page is full of color and incident, and every page has its thrill. With a touch of genius akin to that of Jules Verne, an air of reality is given to the marvelous, for here indeed is a marvelous story, and yet it might all have happened in Mars.

Foreword.

TWELVE years had passed since I had laid the body of Captain John Carter of Virginia away from the sight of men in that strange mausoleum in the old cemetery at Richmond.

Often had I pondered on the odd instructions he had left me governing the construction of his mighty tomb, and especially those parts wherein he directed that he be laid in an open casket and that the ponderous mechanism which controlled the bolts of the vault's huge door be accessible only from the inside.

Twelve years had passed since I had read the remarkable manuscript of this remarkable man, this man who remembered no childhood and who could not even offer a vague guess as to his age, who was always young and yet who had—so he claimed—dandled my grandfather's great-grandfather upon his knee; this man who had spent ten years upon the planet Mars, who had fought for the green men of Barsoom and fought against them, who had fought for and against the red men and who had won the ever beautiful Dejah Thoris, princess of Hellum, for his wife and for nearly ten years had been a prince of the house of Tardos Mors, Jeddak of Hellum.

Twelve years had passed since his body had been found upon the bluff before his cottage overlooking the Hudson. Oftentimes during the long years I had wondered if John Carter were really dead or if he again roamed the dead sea bottoms of that dying planet. Had he returned to Barsoom to find that he had opened the frowning portals of the mighty atmosphere plant in time to save the countless millions who were dying of asphyxiation on that far gone day that had seen him hurtled ruthlessly through 48,000,000 miles of space back to earth once more?

I had wondered if he had found his black haired princess and the slender son he had dreamed was with her in the royal gardens of Tardos Mors awaiting his return.

Or had he found that he had been too late and thus gone back to living death upon a dead world, or was he really dead after all, never to return either to his Mother Earth or his beloved Mars?

Thus was I lost in useless speculation one sultry August evening when old Ben, my body servant, handed me a telegram. Tearing it open, I read: Meet me tomorrow hotel—Richmond.

JOHN CARTER.
Early the next morning I took the

first train for Richmond and within two hours was being ushered into the room occupied by John Carter.

As I entered he rose to greet me, his old time smile of welcome lighting his handsome face. Apparently he had not aged a minute, but was still the straight, clean limbed fighting man of thirty.

His keen gray eyes were undimmed, and the only lines upon his face were the lines of character and determination that always had been there since first I remembered him, nearly thirty-five years before.

"Well, nephew," he greeted me, "do you feel as though you were seeing a ghost or suffering from the effects of too many of Uncle Ben's juleps?"

"Juleps, I reckon," I replied, "for I certainly feel mighty good. But maybe it's just the sight of you again that affects me. You have been back to Mars? Tell me. And Dejah Thoris? You found her well and waiting you?"

"Yes, I have been to Barsoom again and—but it's a long story, too long to tell in the limited time I have before I must return. I have learned the secret, nephew, and I may traverse the trackless void at my will, coming and going between the countless planets as I wish. But my heart is always in Barsoom, and I doubt that I shall ever again leave the dying world that holds my dearest memories.

"I have come now because my affection for you prompted me to see you once more before you pass over forever into that other life that I shall never know and which, though I have died thrice and shall die again tonight, as you know death, I am as unable to fathom as are you.

"Even the wise and mysterious therns of Barsoom, that ancient cult which for countless ages has been credited with holding the secret of life and death in their impregnable fastnesses upon the higher slopes of the mountains of Otz, are as ignorant as we.

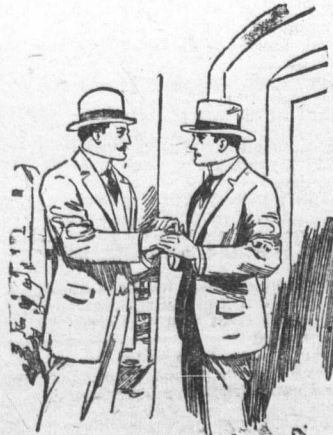
"I have proved it, though I nearly lost my life in the doing of it. But you shall read it all in the notes I have been making during the last three months that I have been back upon earth."

He patted a swelling portfolio that lay on the table at his elbow.

"I know that you are interested and that you believe, and I know that the world, too, is interested, though they will not believe for many years—yes for many ages—since they cannot understand. Earth men have not yet progressed to a point where they can comprehend the things that I have written in these notes.

"Give them what you wish of it, what you think will not harm them, but do not feel aggrieved if they laugh at you."

That night I walked down to the cemetery with him. At the door of



"Goodby, nephew," he said. "I may never see you again."

his vault he turned and pressed my hand.

"Goodby, nephew," he said. "I may never see you again."

He entered the vault. The great door swung slowly to. The ponderous bolts grated into place. The lock clicked.

I have never seen Captain John Carter of Virginia since.

But here is the story of his return to Mars on that other occasion as I have gleaned it from the great mass of notes which he left for me upon the table of his room in the hotel at Richmond.

There is much which I have left out; much which I have not dared to tell, but you will find the story of his search for Dejah Thoris, princess of Hellum, one of the most remarkable stories of adventure in strange lands and among strange people ever written. This story, as told by Captain John Carter of Virginia, is as follows:

CHAPTER I. The Plant Men.

AS I stood upon the bluff before my cottage on that clear, cold night in the early part of March, 1886, the noble Hudson flowing like the silent specter of a dead river below me, I felt again the strange, compelling influence of the mighty god of war, my beloved Mars, which for tea lonesome years I had implored with outstretched arms to carry me back to my lost love.

Not since that other March night in 1866, when I had stood without that Arizona cave in which my still and lifeless body lay wrapped in the similitude of earthly death, had I felt the irresistible attraction of the god of my profession.

With arms outstretched toward the red eye of the great star, I stood praying for a return of that strange power which twice had drawn me through the immensity of space, praying as I had prayed on a thousand nights before during the years that I had waited and hoped.

Suddenly a quail of nausea swept over me, my senses swam, my knees gave beneath me, and I pitched headlong to the ground upon the very verge of the dizzy bluff.

Instantly my brain cleared, and there swept back across the threshold of my memory the vivid picture of the horrors of that ghostly Arizona cave; again, as on that far gone night, my muscles refused to respond to my will, and again as though even here upon the banks of the placid Hudson I could hear the awful moans and rustling of the fearsome thing which had lurked and threatened me from the dark recesses of the cave.

I made the same mighty and superhuman effort to break the bonds of the strange anaesthesia which held me, and again came the sharp click as of the sudden parting of a taut wire, and I stood naked and free beside the staring, lifeless thing that had so recently pulsed with the warm lifeblood of John Carter.

With scarcely a parting glance I turned my eyes again toward Mars, lifted my hands toward his lurid rays and waited.

Nor did I have long to wait, for scarce had I turned ere I shot with the rapidity of thought into the awful void before me.

There was the same instant of unthinkable cold and utter darkness that I had experienced twenty years before, and then I opened my eyes in another world, beneath the burning rays of a hot sun, which beat through a tiny opening in the dome of the mighty forest in which I lay.

The scene that met my eyes was so unmartian that my heart sprang to my throat as the sudden fear swept through me that I had been aimlessly tossed upon some strange planet by a cruel fate.

I lay upon a close cropped sward of red grass-like vegetation, and about me stretched a grove of strange and beautiful trees, covered with huge and gorgeous blossoms and filled with brilliant, voiceless birds. I call them birds since they were winged, but mortal eye never rested on such unearthly shapes.

The vegetation was similar to that which covers the lawns of the red Martians of the great waterways, but the trees and birds were unlike anything that I had ever seen upon Mars, and then through the farther trees I could see that most unmartian of all sights—an open sea, its blue waters shimmering beneath the brazen sun.

As I rose to investigate further I experienced the same ridiculous catastrophe that had met my first attempt to walk under Martian conditions.

The lesser attraction of this smaller planet and the reduced air pressure of its greatly rarefied atmosphere afforded so little resistance to my earthly muscles that the ordinary exertion of the mere act of rising sent me several feet into the air and precipitated me upon my face in the soft and brilliant grass of this strange world.

This experience, however, gave me some slightly increased assurance that, after all, I might indeed be in some, to me, unknown corner of Mars, and this was very possible, since during my ten years' residence upon the planet I had explored but a comparatively tiny area of its vast expanse.

I rose again, laughing at my forgetfulness, and soon had mastered once more the art of attuning my earthly sinews to these changed conditions.

(Continued on Page 7)

Such a Change



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