

Mars is invisible, passing conjunction (behind) the sun on the 25th.

Mercury may be picked up before dawn in the eastern sky about the 17th.

The Moon is near Saturn on the 1st, Uranus on the 7th, Jupiter 8th, Mercury 10th, Mars 24th, Venus 26th and Saturn on the 29th.

## Erhard 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 I.

##### A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

Since the present narrative concerns other people more than myself, it will perhaps be a sufficient introduction if I state that I take a considerable interest in astronomy, and that having been at the time of which I write a commercial traveller for a wholesale firm in London, England, my occupation necessitated my travelling considerably.

It was on the morning of the nineteenth of August, 1877, that I found myself *en route* from Bristol to London, via the Great Western Railway. I had a whole compartment of the first class carriage in which I rode entirely to myself for a considerable distance. When the train drew up at Chippenham Junction, I hailed a newsboy who was crying the morning papers just received from London by the down mail, and in so hailing the boy I attracted the attention of two travellers, who entered my compartment as soon as I had paid for my *Daily Telegraph*.

One of the newcomers appeared an ordinary looking man enough, with a sort of half policeman in plain clothes and half gentleman's servant air about him, coupled with a deprecatory manner that seemed to say "do not notice me, I prefer oblivion." Although usually of a conciliatory turn when first thrown into the company of strangers, I felt intuitively that to speak to this shy looking man would be looked upon by him as little short of an insult, and I turned my gaze on his companion.

He, I saw, was not, and probably did not wish to be considered a nonentity. As to his exact age I verily believe it would have taken a jury of experts to come to anything more than a hazy guess or general conclusion that he was not young. Still, a youth would have hesitated ere he called him old. His garments were not of the newest cut or fashion, he being apparently one of those who care little for dress; thinking more of the inner life than the outward look.

His glances were keen, yet exceedingly restless—his eyes never resting long upon one spot—and his movements were nervous and quick. His face was long and narrow—a Shakespearian one—or at least recalling the stern, intellectual countenances of the Elizabethan era. He had a thin beard and high forehead; a little too high perhaps for the modern phrenologist, who would have declared that the ideal portions of that brain overbalanced to an extraordinary degree the real, as well as too lofty for the ancient astrologer, (a set of men who once held much the same place as our phrenologists) for the old reader of planetary lore would, without a doubt, have calculated for the Ascendant Virgo;—Saturn in conjunction with the Moon—and then have decided that the native was of an exceedingly melancholy temperament, as well as a believer in visions.

A peculiar man this, thought I, but at that moment my eyes fell on my *Daily Telegraph*. I at once unfolded it and began to read.

Being something of an astronomer, my surprise and delight may be imagined when I read the following cablegram:—

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 18.—Prof. Hall, of the U. S. Naval Observatory at this place to-night discovered a second satellite circling the planet Mars, now nearing opposition. This last discovery is smaller in size and nearer the primary than the one discovered two nights ago. The larger satellite is believed to be not more than ten miles in diameter. There is no doubt but that these newly found celestial bodies are the smallest known. The new twenty-six inch refractor was the instrument used.

An interjaulatory Ah! having escaped my lips, was immediately seized upon by my old-young looking fellow-traveller as an excuse to strike an acquaintance.

"Anything new, sir?" queried he, with a peculiar twitch of the lips, that told of an exceedingly nervous temperament, and sensibilities strung to a high pitch.

Well, I thought, you are strange both in speech and manner my old-young friend; but civility necessitating an answer, I replied "Yes," handing him the newspaper with my thumb upon the paragraph.

Expecting that he would be considerably surprised, I was much surprised myself when he, having read the paragraph, quietly handed the paper back to me, saying with a sigh:

"Yes, that is true, quite true, but I knew it long ago."

"Indeed," I replied, half jestingly, for I doubted the assertion, "then you, I presume were the first discoverer of the Martian moons; but why did you not prefer your claim?"

A melancholy expression came over his countenance as he answered "Tush, it would have been useless, the world was then, and is now for that matter, too wise in its own conceit to have believed what I should have told it."

"But you could have demonstrated the fact by pointing the telescope wherewith

you made the discovery up to the Martian satellites, and compelling an incredulous world to witness for itself what it doubted."

"Had it been as you imagine, nothing were easier, doubtless," said my new acquaintance, "but I did not discover Phobos and Deimos—as I believe the *savants* intend christening them—with any application of the invention of the Florentine. Ah no!" he exclaimed, with a sigh, and speaking more to himself than to me, "not with thy optic lenses, Galileo Galilei, but by actual presence and sight saw I those pretty discs of light, as they swept across the Martian heavens; Yea, would that I could behold them now, and that all things were as then."

But here he began to recover from his reverie, and apparently remembered that he had been previously addressing me, for he said, spreading out his hands with a quick, deprecatory motion:

"Pardon me, sir, doubtless you think me mad, but—I am not mad, I assure you—No."

Whilst hastening to convince him that no such thought had entered my head, I remembered afterwards that the third passenger shifted on his seat, and seemed as though he were about speaking, but he did not. Continuing silent, he simply turned away—after a look at my companion—and stolidly gazed out of the window.

"You doubtless take a great interest in Astronomy, sir," I said, after a silence of a few moments.

"As a mathematician, No; life were too important to waste it in figuring and hair-splitting; but as a watcher of the orbs of light and a seeker after the truths that the All-Wise has written on His scroll of heaven, Yes."

"As a brother in Astronomy, might I request you to relate to me the circumstances under which your prior discovery of the moons of Mars was made? I urge this request with considerable curiosity, I must own, because, from your manner a few moments since, I feel convinced that much interest attaches to your story."

Without seeming to notice what I asked, he said, "Provided you had lost that which had been held most dear, that of all things most to be loved, cherished, idolized and guarded as sacred, would you care to converse about your misfortune? Would you not rather act as the strong man usually acts, eat your heart in silence, afraid lest the worldling with his cunning greed for gain should hear so much as a whisper of that which you cherished, and when heard, seek to turn that affection into ridicule, or worse, barter your story for gold?"

A strange look, which almost frightened me, here came over his face, but passed off rapidly, he saying, with a smile, ere I had time to reply: "But I have studied physiognomy somewhat,