

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

VISITORS OF OTHER WORLDS

Writer Cites Collected Data Indicating That More Than Meteors Come to Us From the Sky—Calls Them Messengers From Inhabited Space

To the Editor of The New York Times:

If it were not for the sense of humor which afflicts so many of us, it is possible that life upon this earth would have been civilized long ago. Of course, most of us do not want to be civilized. But a great deal that might have been found out long ago has been delayed by "humorousness." Suppose that almost immediately a great many minds, in the early days of the steam engine, had perceived something besides humor in the idea of the steam engine. One supposes that development would have been quicker. But see early issues of Punch. Engines of railroad trains were cartooned as tea kettles on wheels.

In THE NEW YORK TIMES of June 17, 1883, is told a story. It may be that nobody but myself would take it seriously. Maybe I am so far in advance of the times that I have virtually lost such a barbaric quality as a sense of humor. However, I am still so primitive as to try to be logical, and, as if in human minds there were really an ability to reason, I point out that if upon this earth there has been considerable interest in the idea of firing projectiles to the moon, or to other planets, there may be in other worlds some such enterprising notions relative to this earth.

Strange substances, presumably from other fertile, habitable worlds, have often reached this earth. It seems well to mention a few of the many data, with the idea of expressing that the firing of projectiles from world to world may not be magnificently futile, because the doctrine of enormous interplanetary distances may be something else to unlearn after leaving school.

For a record of an unknown, glue-like substance which fell from the sky at Sart, Belgium, June 8, 1901, according to a Belgian scientist who watched the shower, see "Ciel et Terre," 22-198. Large lumps of a woolly substance ("La Nature," 1883, 342); tremendous quantity of seeds, unknown to persons who saw them fall from the sky, some scientists then identifying them, but other scientists dissenting ("Bull. des Sci." math., astro., &c.—1-1-298); a purple red substance which, according to a member of the Astronomical Society of Wales, fell from the sky at Llanelly, Wales, Sept. 7, 1905 ("Cambrian Natural Observer," 1905-30); enormous fall of a material like charred paper (Kirkwood, "Meteoric Astronomy," page 66); a buff-colored substance covered with something like cloth ("Amer. Jour. Sci.," 2-335); unknown lavender-colored substance ("Bull. Soc. Met. de France," 1904-124).

One of the best-detailed of the accounts, by Carl G. Gowman of Detroit, Mich., is published in The Literary Digest, Sept. 2, 1921; a tremendous fall of an unknown red substance, which resembled blood, and was not red sand, because in subsequent rainfalls spots of it did not dissolve, fell in Southwestern China, Nov. 17, 1920.

The indications are that, whether they be the visible planets or not, there are fertile, habitable lands in the sky, presumably not millions of miles away, or

great volumes of substances, unknown upon this earth, could never be wafted through space from one of them without being dispersed into imperceptibility.

If the indications are that there may be other worlds, only a few thousand, or a few tens of thousands of miles away, the idea that often projectiles, with messages inscribed upon them, may have been fired to this earth is losing its preposterousness. One is preparing for the news that such a projectile, so inscribed, may have been found somewhere upon this earth.

That often enormous numbers of living things have arrived upon this earth from other worlds is as clear to me as is anything else that I know of in the statistics of migrations. I have records of more than one hundred instances of falls from the sky of little frogs, of larvae, some of them unknown upon this earth, and of living fishes. In not one of the instances have these arrivals been traced to origin upon this earth. If anybody would like to search meteorological records and try to find data of whirlwinds or of waterspouts, by which such seeming migrations from other worlds, perhaps only a few thousand miles away, might be explained in terms of terrestrial circumstances, I take up space with a few of the many references:

"Comptes Rendus," 3-54; "Notes and Queries," 8-6-104 and 100; "Scientific American," July 12, 1873; "English Mechanic," 94-62; "Cosmos," n. s., 20-143; "Zoologist," 1859-6493; "Amer. Jour. Sci.," 32-199; "Wernerian Nat. Hist." trans., 5-575; "Lin. Soc. Trans.," 16-764; "Nature," Sept. 19, 1918; "Science Gossip," 1886-238; "Das Wetter," December, 1892; "Monthly Weather Review," January, 1877; "L'Astronomie," 1889-353.

Of course, if it could be accepted that living things have often reached this earth from other worlds, one does not think of them as having traveled millions of miles.

The story in THE NEW YORK TIMES is of a manufactured object, which may have been fired to this earth from some other world. I have data of other such occurrences or alleged occurrences. For an account of the little carved stone which fell from the sky at Tarbes, France, June 20, 1887, its fall from the sky accepted by the French Academy of Science, see "Comptes Rendus," 1887-182, and "La Nature" and "L'Année Scientifique," of the year 1887.

The little carved stone was covered with ice. That it did fall from the sky was accepted; then, without one datum for so thinking, it was explained that this object must have been caught up in a whirlwind from some other part of this earth's surface and cast down at Tarbes. But it fell alone, or unaccompanied by any such debris as a whirlwind, which might catch up a little carved object, would carry along with it. Such an exclusive or fastidious selection by a big, rough atmospheric disturbance is either exquisite or incredible.

From THE NEW YORK TIMES June 17, 1883, I take:

That early in the morning of April 17, 1883, while Dr. T. O. Keator was riding along a bank of the Rondout Creek, Ulster County, N. Y., he saw a luminous object fall from the sky into the creek. The next morning he told the owner of the adjoining land, Daniel D. Bell, who searched but found nothing. Mr. Bell's son, aged 16, continued to search, and upon May 7 he found, in the creek, an object like a two-handled sword, about five feet and ten inches long, weighing seventeen pounds. The lower part of the object was covered with hieroglyphics, with a general appearance like an outline drawing of the map of Greece. There were other symbols, characters, geometric shapes, and some "meaningless lines."

The object was taken to New York City. At the request of a TIMES reporter it was examined by an antiquarian. In his opinion it was a hoax. But the interesting point is that he seems not to have considered its supposed fall from the sky, and thought that some one had forged an imitation of an ancient sword of this earth. He said it had been made by some one who had never seen a real, ancient, two-handled sword. Of course, exactly therein is the interest.

It seems that in my notes I have not the full story. I think there were mentioned persons whose names were probably in the New York Directory, and who may be traced. It is likely that even to this day somebody may have this object; that it may be found; that upon it there may be a message from some other world, and that the message may be deciphered. If there be readers of this newspaper who can send information to me, at my present address, 39 Marchmont Street, Russell Square, London, England, there is no knowing what developments may follow. I point out that, though it cannot be said that this object must have been the object that Dr. Keator saw falling from the sky, many of the meteorites now in museums were found later than their falls, having been similarly searched for.

CHARLES FORT.

London, England, Aug. 14, 1924.