

# HAVE MARTIANS VISITED US?

## British Observer Argues in the Affirmative and Seeks News Of Future Manifestations

To the Editor of The New York Times:

In a few weeks an old discussion will be renewed. The planet Mars will be in opposition, and the subject of communication between worlds will occupy much space, which, if it could be traversed instead of read, might enable some of us to ask the Martians what they mean by those strange lights of theirs, and what their intentions are.

Inasmuch as—according to data that I shall take up when I can get to them—Martians have probably often visited this earth, it is incredible that lights upon their planet have been attempts to communicate with terrestrials: more likely is it that astronomers of this earth have seen signals meant for exploring Martians, out somewhere far from home.

If explorers from other worlds, whether Mars or Venus or somewhere else, have often sailed to this earth, and have traveled back and forth in the sky, hours at a time, day after day, two questions arise. As to one of them there is no difficulty in answering.

The more perplexing of the problems is that if visitors from other worlds can sail to a region only a mile or so from this earth's surface, presumably they could land here. Then why have they not landed, say in Central Park, and had a big time of it—monstrous parade down Broadway, historic turn-out, eruptions of confetti from the skyscrapers? They may be austere, highly advanced creatures, with a dislike for sensationalism. However, that is not the only reason that I can think of. If I should sail to the moon and land there, and find myself among beings like myself, and when asked where I came from should point down, or up, to this earth, what kind of a reception would I have? The Martians may have thought that out. I can

think where I'd be put if I should appear in a lunar city and try to tell the wise men that I had come from this earth.

I can think of more reasons, and one of them is that for ages Martians may have been in communication with this earth and have, in some occult way, been in control of its inhabitants; or have, in some way that may eventually be found out, been exploiting them, and, though of course no especial precautions would be necessary, have not disclosed themselves except in openly patrolling the sky.

That leads the way to answering the other question, the easy one. If beings from other physical worlds have patrolled the skies, openly and conspicuously, even showing brilliant lights, why does not this whole earth know about it? Perhaps because one of the best ways to keep a secret is to proclaim it. Almost every great discovery has been final perception of the obvious. If it is not the conventional or respectable thing upon this earth to believe in visitors from other worlds, most of us could watch them a week and declare that they were something else, and likely enough make things disagreeable for anybody who thought otherwise.

Of many accounts of moving lights in the sky, of such duration and repetition that anything of a meteoric nature is excluded, and localized so that comets cannot be thought of, I pick out one succession, because it occurred in our own time and at a time when terrestrial aircraft were of small development.

According to dispatches published in the New York newspapers on Dec. 21, 1909, Inspector Hoe of Boston reported a bright light that had passed over Boston Harbor and had concluded that he had seen an airship of some kind. Two days later came news of a "mysterious airship" that had ap-

peared over the city of Worcester, Mass., "sweeping the heavens with a searchlight of tremendous power." It had come from the southeast, hovering a while over the city and then disappearing in the direction of Marlboro. Two hours later it returned. "Thousands thronged the streets, watching the mysterious visitor." Again it hovered, then moved away, heading first to the south and then to the east.

If anybody, to test how accurate I may be, should look up this subject in the newspapers of the time he would find the account confused by statements of a resident of Worcester that it was his "secret airship" that had been seen. This hoaxer need not be considered, because an investigator would find that later, when the light appeared, he was known to be in his home.

At 6 o'clock on the evening after the appearance at Worcester a brilliantly lighted object was seen in the sky at Boston. "As it flew away to the north, queries began to pour into the newspaper offices and the police stations regarding the remarkable visitation." An hour later the object was reported from Willimantic, Conn., where, it was said, dark outlines as well as a light were visible. From Lynn, Mass., came a description of a "long black object" that had moved in the direction of Salem and had then returned at high velocity. It was said that at Marlboro, Mass., the object, or the light, had been seen nine times since Dec. 14.

I point out that in December, 1909, somebody won a prize for sailing from the Eiffel Tower to St. Cyr, several miles from Paris, and back. There was no dirigible airship of this earth that had a greater range than that, and it was not until May, 1910, that Curtiss flew in an airplane from Albany to New York City, making one stop, however, in the 150 miles. Nevertheless, when I note also that an airship was reported from places so far south of New England that if it were the same object it could not have been an airship of this earth, I think of records of "collective hallucinations" and consider that people in other places, having probably heard of the appearances in New England, may have done some supposing. In the New York newspapers of Jan. 13 and 14, 1910, it was said that at 9 o'clock on the morning of Jan. 12 thousands of persons in Chattanooga, Tenn., had seen an airship. From Huntsville, Ala., came a dispatch that the object had been seen there. Upon two other occasions something in the sky that was supposed to be an airship was reported from Chattanooga.

On the night of Dec. 24, whatever it may have been that was in the sky, it was not seen in New England. But there is record of something that was seen somewhere else. If it were the same object, it could have been no airship of this earth, and it was reported by some one who, presumably, had not heard of the other reported appearances. In The English Mechanic, Vol. 104, P. 71, a correspondent, who signs himself "Rigel," tells of something that he saw at Limerick, Ireland. He is James Ferguson of Rossbrien, Limerick, a well-known writer who still contributes to The English Mechanic. At 8:30 o'clock on the night of Dec. 24 Mr. Ferguson saw a luminous object appear on the northeastern horizon. The light moved slowly southward for about twenty minutes. It turned and retraced, disappearing whence it had come at 9:02 o'clock.

I don't know of anything else to think about it. One night in Massachusetts, and the next night a similar thing traveling in the sky of Ireland. It looks like different observations upon a vessel of velocity high enough to traverse distances between planets.

It may be that next October there will be a similar series of appearances in the sky. One trouble is that there are more humorists in any one sizable part of the United States than in all the rest of the world put together. Hosts of ordinarily serious citizens might start sending up kites with lanterns tied to them. Nevertheless, in some of the other instances I have been able to weed out the hoaxers, and if anybody should see anything or hear of anything that seems to be worth investigating, I should be glad if he will let me know.

CHARLES FORT.

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