

# EARTH LETTER OF A MARTIAN

NEW YORK, January 15, 1906.



URSUANT to my promise that if I should reach Earth I would send some account of my adventures to the *Martian Recorder*, I write this letter and send it back by the aeroplane that brought me. First let me apprise you of the fact that Earthians are as like us as two peas, as the saying is. They dress differently, but not being a woman, their fashions do not interest me enough to cause me to write about them. They have different laws, but law is a dry subject at best, and when all's said and done, I do not care to write of anything save what teases my pen, so let us leave the configuration of the land, the aspect of the cities and many kindred subjects to later letters. And let us hope that the series will stop before I reach them, for there is enough else to write about.

I landed in the sea, was picked up by a steamer (yes, they have steam and electricity and some things that we have not, while we better them at some points) and was landed at New York, which is the Metropolis of the Western Division of Earth's surface. It will surprise Martians to learn that Earthians in this part of the place speak our language. It will also surprise them to know that there are dozens of languages in use on Earth, owing to an accident at a place called Babel, the rights of which I have not been able to get at. They call this New York language "English," because it came originally from a place called England. Just how we happen to speak a common language would be worth finding out, but it indicates beyond doubt that communication between Mars and Earth was effected long ago and the means of transit forgotten. Whether it was first spoken in Mars or whether one of the Englanders came to Mars with it I cannot ascertain. And, indeed, my time has been so taken up since I arrived in being "entertained"—that is, hospitably dealt with and not necessarily amused—

that I have had no time for study. I am taking in things as they come along, and my letters must perforce be more or less desultory. In fact, those of my readers who are familiar with my "Letters by a Butterfly" will know better than to look for anything very heavy.

Yesterday I went to my first "reception"; that is, a gathering of men and women, who were packed into a smallish room and who were received by a woman who was probably called the receiver, following the logic of our language. But of this I cannot say surely. She shook each one by the hand as he came in, and then, to drop into Martian slang, she "shook him."

When I arrived there were already so many in the room that it was difficult to move about, and the air was distressingly hot, and yet the utmost good nature prevailed. Such close proximity of Martians would have resulted in a riot. But people continued to arrive even after the events of the affair were under way.

I noticed a very intellectual looking man near me, and I purposed engaging him in conversation, to the end that I should be instructed in the customs of Earthians, but just as I squirmed to his side and opened my mouth to speak a young man with very long hair sat down to a blackish looking box mounted on carved legs and began to run his hands horizontally up and down some forty or fifty black and white sticks that were so arranged that they were depressed a quarter of an inch whenever he touched them. This tapping of the sticks resulted in a queer sound that issued from the interior of the box, and which they called "music." I cannot describe it, as we have nothing like it in Mars, but it did not seem to worry the mob of people at all, for most of them went on talking. This struck me as being rude, because the young man had evidently been asked to exercise his fingers on the blocks of wood, that they might notice the way in which he did it. There were some, however, who stopped talking and seemed much impressed by what they

heard and saw, and when he stopped, nearly all in the room brought their hands together smartly, as if one should try to spank his right hand with his left. The noise was unpleasant, but no worse than the performance on the box had been. This spanking evidently had the effect of making the young man engage in more digital manifestations.

It annoyed me, as I wished to talk, and the noise was what we call weird. When he began the second bit of noise, the chattering, which had never entirely ceased, increased in power, and I thought I would get a chance to ask the intellectual gentleman some questions, but it was not to be so. The piece was short, and when it was ended another young man who had been clenching his hands with impatience in a corner of the room came forward and asked every one in the room to crowd into an even smaller space, as he wanted to "recite." That is what he called it, and I think I liked it less than the striking of the box, because it was merely the utterance of words in a most unusual way, with many strange glances and raisings of the voice and lowerings of the same and stampings and mouthings and the most curious succession of facial contortions that I ever saw.

His deliverance seemed to affect different people in various ways. Some of them uttered short grunts that seemed to indicate that they were disturbed, but others, more especially the women, patted their gloved hands together and said, "Tcharming."

Just as the young man was going to deliver himself of another torrent of words I heard a lady say to the "receiver," "I have brought Mrs. X. with me especially to hear Miss Hiller. She is very rich and a great deal may come of it, but she can't wait much longer, as she lives out of town. Can't Miss Hiller begin at once?" The young man was clearing his throat and looking at every one in the room in turn, to compel silence, I suppose, but at this point a very large and elderly lady with a huge amount of clothing of all sorts upon her came waddling up to the "receiver" and said, "If you want me to hear that 'boy violinist,' please have him play at once, as I

am due at the Dysant's at five o'clock, and it is almost that now."

I felt sorry for the "receiver." She had planned this reception out of the goodness of her heart, I dare say, but she looked half badgered to death, and she seldom got a chance to say more than a word to any one, the interruptions of all sorts were so incessant. She could not stop the young man just then, but she nodded and smiled at the warmly clad old lady and also to the one with a friend, and then the young man began to release many words enunciated in a manner different from ordinary language. I heard some one say it was excellent "Irish dialect," but that conveyed nothing very clear to my mind, and I could not see where any excellence came in. The words he used seemed to have been pent up in his brain in a certain order, and they were very evidently not said for the first time, because they had an undefinably worn air about them, and were unlike anything I had ever heard in Mars, but the people seemed to like this last very much, as they all laughed heartily, and one man said, "That's something like," although, as I say, I could not see that it was like anything.

At different times I heard four people say in an undertone that could not escape a Martian's ears, "Oh, I wish I was out of this. I've got to go to another, and I'll be late."

Now, will some kind Martian please tell me why they should be in a hurry to go to another torture chamber if they were sorry they had come to this one? Logic does not seem to be a strong point with these Earthians.

But now the young man was through, and I was curious to see which would come out next, the boy violinist (of him later) or the young girl. I did not wish to have the rich lady go away, for I have already learned that the rich can be of great help to "struggling artists." They seldom are of any help (so I am told), but they *can* be.

First a word as to "artists." As near as I can make out, it is a word that is used to denote the people who interrupt conversation at these receptions. Nothing could be more different than the method employed by the one who talked

so strangely and the one who ran his fingers over the articulated sticks in the box, and only the former was entirely successful in stopping conversation, but both were called artists and both had long hair. I met a "plainsman" (one who lives on the big meadows) on the street, and his hair flowed to his shoulders, and I asked if he were an artist, but found that he was "an altogether different order of feline," as Sakalana would say.

But "to get back to our sheep." The Miss Hiller stepped up alongside the mounted box and stood there and the people came out of their cramped positions and stopped their talk to listen to her. Another young woman came forth and sat down in front of the box, and again those dreadful sounds issued from it, and Miss Hiller opened her mouth and spoke—and yet she did not speak. That is, I could not make out a single word that she was saying, although she moved her lips and her tongue, and all the while there issued from her throat such sounds as one hears when domestic animals are bereft of their young. It set my teeth to aching, but it pleased everybody in the room except the rich lady, who left with her friend in a hurry. I heard afterward that she had to "catch a train," although what she intended doing with it after she had caught it I did not know. I hope that she did something for Miss Hiller, for she was in need of speedy aid. I have since learned that Miss Hiller talks this inarticulate language and makes these dire sounds in order to raise money, and that people pay her to come and do it—but not if they can get her for nothing.

The much clothed lady was still "waiting patiently about," as Sakalana has it, and after Miss Hiller had become inarticulate again to the accompaniment of rhythmic thuds from the black box, the "boy violinist" came out.

A violinist is one who performs on a "violin," which is another box, only a small one, across which a stick is drawn, and the result is another interruption to conversation strangely like that which came from the throat of Miss Hiller, and even more effectual.

The boy was what we would call a weakling. He had curly hair quite long

enough to make an artist of him and blue eyes and a little mouth and slender arms and legs, and he did not look as if he would ever be strong enough to do his share of fighting. Altogether, the sort who would be placed in one of our gymnasiums until he should acquire plenty of brawn. But how they liked him! He did not have to open his mouth at all, as the box contained all the noises he needed, but as soon as he made his appearance the much-clothed lady said, "The darling! I must have him at my reception next Wednesday" (the same as our Waralana). And every one in the room said something that ended in a sort of purr.

You should have heard the noises *he* produced. I wished for the box of sticks or even Miss Hiller before he was half through. It was awful, or, to express it in the words of a woman who stood next to me, "It was divinely beautiful. So poetic, so full of temperament."

And that reminds me that "temperament," the exact meaning of which no one can tell me, is a thing that every artist must have if he is desirous of being successful. Whether it relates to his appearance or the quality of diabolism appertaining to the sounds he produces, or whether it means his general expression, I cannot tell, but every artist at the reception had it "to incinerate," as Sakalana would say. And the boy was saturated with it. Every one said so. He would rub the box with the stick, and groans and squeals would issue from it, and they would all sigh and say, "Such temperament!" And when he finally got tired of making a noise, those people made a rush for him, and I thought at first that I had misjudged their feelings, and that they were going to ill-treat him, as bullies hector slender, curly-headed boys in dear old Mars, but they wanted to hug him. Every woman and every girl in that room kissed him and hugged him until I was sure he had been reduced to pulp. The men let him alone, and I heard one say, "Now, if it had been Miss Hiller it would be different."

After the weakling had brought more noises out of the violin and the women had exhausted themselves and him with ejaculations and huggings, everything

stopped except the talk, so that the people might eat and drink. A maiden brought a tray on which was a steaming yellow liquid in cups. It was slightly astringent and somewhat sweet, but it had no perceptible after effect, so I do not know why the people drank it. I would have liked to see them drink something that would call out their real natures, but I and the rest had to be content with this "tea," as they called it, and with little slabs of a dry, powdery stuff that choked me before I learned how to take it into my throat. It was called "crackers," or "biscuit." Some called it crackers, and others more modish called it biscuit. It seemed to be an acquired taste; so, too, I fancy, is the music. I do not intend to acquire them.

But the best, or I should say the worst, was yet to come. Among those present was a lady of commanding presence and whose hair was long, although I have noticed that many of the commanding looking ladies in New York have short hair. Of course, they are not artists, but they have their own way of quelling conversation—and that without the use of the box of the violin; but of that later.

This lady was a professional performer on the "piano," which is a technical name for the black box on legs. I am told that it means "soft," but I fancy that that is an Earthian joke. A professional is one who does things for money that he couldn't be hired to do for love. When it became noised abroad that this pianist was in the room, many of those present were wild to hear her play on the box, because ordinarily one has to pay admission before she will strike a single stick. Now, I happen to know that the lady who was giving the reception was very proud of her black box. She thought that the sounds which issued from it were much less awful than those which issued from the boxes of other makers, or, as she would have put it, "her piano had an unusually fine tone." But when she, egged on by various people, asked this "Signora Pianella" (for such was her odd name) to play something the piano hitter snorted and said:

"What, on *that*? Do you think I don't value my reputation?"

And at this the "receiver" coloured, but she kept her temper and said something about Signora Pianella being able to make a fine instrument out of the poorest, a remark the gist of which escaped me. Then others of those present urged her whenever they got a chance between the different tortures, and notably while they were disseminating the "tea," so at last she consented to do one "little thing." And she hoped they would remember that she was used to a "grand stoneway," whatever that meant.

Oh, if you could have seen the things that had to be done before she was ready. First the box had to be pushed about until the light fell on the parallel sticks. Then she declared that it was really outrageous to ask her to "play" on such an apology for a "piano" as that; that it would make her lose caste; that it would debase her style; that it might get into the papers, and she did hope there were no reporters present, but if there were she hoped they'd be sure to come to her after the performance that her name might not be misspelled. Then she sat down on the queer little chair, the seat of which could be raised or lowered by twirling it, the stem of it being a screw. But she found that she could not twirl it high enough to suit the length of her legs, so they brought her books to sit on, and then she found that the light fell the wrong way after all, and they had to move the huge thing once more. And when she was finally seated in front of it she audibly wished that there were no gentlemen present so that she might remove her waist, as it always made her perspire to perform in a small room. And when some of the men made as if they would leave, she begged them to remain, as the more there were in the room the better she could play.

For me, I felt that some one should administer corporal punishment, but an old gentleman told me that this was merely the freakishness of genius, and that she was one of the finest box hitters on earth. I still stick to my own terminology, but I ought to say that "piano player" or "pianist" is the correct term.

Finally she let her fingers chase one another up and down the corduroy road, and then she sank into herself and

groaned that it was a sin against one's artistic conscience to have anything to do with such a rattle box—and she did well to call it that. Then she called for some one to open a window, because she knew she would faint if she took violent exercise in such a small, close room. And indeed it was stewingly hot, and I thought it spoke wonders for the good nature and high breeding of the ladies and gentlemen that I heard no oaths. Martians would have sworn like the tow boys on the twin canals under like conditions.

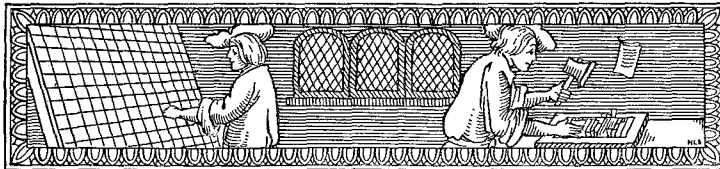
When she at last began, she gave the path of sticks no rest from her finger-falls. Up and down she scampered and pounded and dug and ramped and clawed, and as she had caused the cover of the box to be raised there was no attempt at concealment, but the noises came forth undisguised. It made me feel faint, and I was glad when she had made an end.

And then the poor, packed people ejaculated loudly and patted their hands and said things in strange languages and begged her to bring out whatever combination of noises was left in the piano, and she shrugged her shoulders and said, "I hope that you have not thought

of the instrument, but only of my playing."

For me, I had thought of both, for I could not help it. But I well knew that since it had been so hard to get her to do one thing, nothing could induce her to resume relations with the box again. However, in that I showed my ignorance of Earthian nature. She who had been led so reluctantly to the devil's casket now could not have been torn from it, and again and again invented combinations of figures on the wooden slats that gave rise to many and varied disturbances within the case; yet at the end of each set of combinations there were those who patted their hands, but each time with less fervour, and I heard many speak of catching trains who did not look as if they were strong enough. These hurried out into the hallway, some shaking the hands of the "receiver" and some failing to do so. As for me, I felt that I could stand the crowd, the heat and the devilish noise no longer, so I went to the "receiver" and told her that while I did not know how to catch trains, I believed I would go outside and catch my breath, and so I left her, with the wooden slats still rattling and the artist steaming with ardour.

*Charles Battell Loomis.*



# THE BOOKMAN'S TABLE

CHITTENDEN'S "PHYSIOLOGICAL ECONOMY IN NUTRITION." By Professor Russell H. Chittenden. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company.

The universal delight in the pleasures of the table will always interfere with the proper application of the principles of dietetics. As "man is the only animal that drinks when it is not thirsty," so man is the only animal that takes food merely because it tickles his palate, stimulates a jaded appetite with spices, and then eats to repletion. Leaving out of consideration gluttons and the self-indulgent, there is an overwhelmingly large majority that eats improper food and overeats, honestly believing that it is pursuing a proper course. As time-honoured as the old method of counterpoising the grist with a stone is the belief that a large amount of animal food is requisite during any considerable physical exertion, during any activity needing staying power, or during any pressure from responsibility or worry. Former eminent authorities on diet and food have taken for granted as a standard the average amount of food naturally consumed by men who are really products of generations of high living. These dietetic experts have mastered the physiology of nutrition, and computed exactly the intake and output of various elementary components of food. But it has been reserved for Chittenden to show that the previous standards were faulty. The previously unquestioned dictum of Carl Voit, of Munich, was that a man of the average body weight of 70 to 75 kilos (150 to 165 lbs.), doing moderate physical work, requires daily 118 grams of proteid food (including meat, milk, eggs, fish, lobsters, brains, kidneys), of which 105 grams should be absorbable, 56 grams of fat, and 500 grams of carbohydrate (starches and sugars). This Voit standard has been commonly accepted. Many foreign observers have corroborated his statements; and our own Atwater has stated, after many observations upon the dietetic habits of different classes of people and under different conditions of life, that as liberal a daily allowance of proteid as 125 grams would seem desirable. On the other hand, experimental work done during the last four years has suggested the possibility that the real physiological needs of the body may be met by a much lower stand-

ard of diet. Professor Chittenden was led to doubt the almost universal belief in the efficacy of a rich and abundant diet to strengthen the body and increase mental vigour. Everyone agrees that proteid decomposition products are a constant menace to the well-being of the body. The baleful effects of uric acid in gout are admitted. Liver and kidneys undergo constant strain in their effort to rid the body of the nitrogenous waste-products resulting from an excess of proteid foods. In addition, there is the danger to the body from intestinal putrefaction and toxæmia, should it lose its ability to digest and absorb the excess of food consumed.

The results reached by Horace Fletcher, who spent several weeks under observation in the laboratory of Professor Chittenden, confirmed Professor Chittenden in his convictions; and he thereupon instituted a series of very instructive experiments, so planned as to show that body equilibrium and nitrogen equilibrium can be maintained for many months, or even years, on a low proteid diet, vigour being unabated and proper resistance to disease being secured. He pursued a series of experiments on each of three types of individuals, whom he describes as follows:

"First. A group of five men of varying ages, connected with Yale University as professors and instructors; men who while leading active lives have not engaged in very active muscular work. They were selected as representatives of the mental worker rather than the physical worker, although several of them in the performance of their daily duties had to be on their feet in the laboratory a good portion of the day.

"Second. A detail of thirteen men, volunteers from the Hospital Corps of the United States Army and representatives of the moderate worker; men who for a period of six months took each week-day a vigorous amount of systematic exercise in the gymnasium, in addition to the routine work connected with their daily life as members of the United States Hospital Corps. These men were of different nationalities, ages and temperaments.

"Third. A group of eight young men, students in Yale University, all thoroughly trained athletes, and some of them with exceptional records in athletic events."