

Journey to the Moon

"After all, to go into outer space is not so much worse, if at all, than a polar expedition. Men go on polar expeditions."

NOWADAYS we are so used to space travel—in fiction, anyway—that a trip to the moon has become just about as commonplace as popping in to see the next-door neighbour, but 50 years or so ago, when H. G. Wells started writing about it, it was not so much the done thing. Wells, as one of his more serious critics has remarked, had a remarkably smooth way of winning suspension of disbelief in his scientific fantasies. Take the beginning of *The First Men in the Moon*. "As I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of

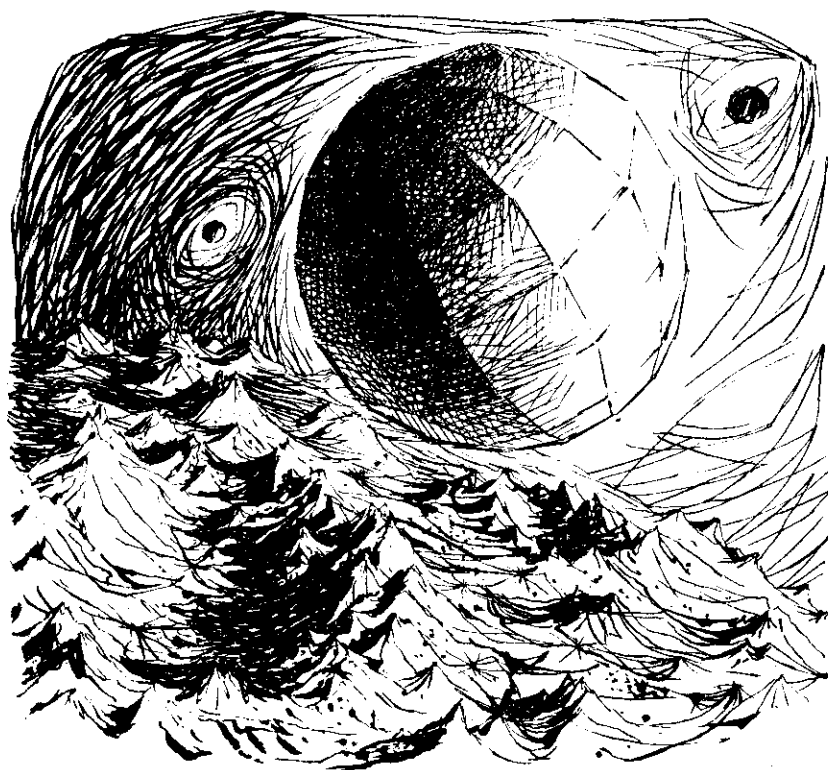


H. G. WELLS

"The impact of the Genuine Article"

Southern Italy, it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident. It might have been anyone. . . . And—come to think of it—that was another point about Wells: he could write, where so many, though not all, of our latter-day space travellers, can't. Those who haven't read him may be inclined to think of him as a bit of a has-been where science fiction is concerned. Well, Lance Sieveking, who adapted his *First Men in the Moon* for broadcasting, thinks otherwise. "Owing to H. G. Wells's still unique position as the outstanding genius of scientific fiction," he says, "*The First Men in the Moon* will, I believe, strike listeners with the same impact as it did their grandparents: the impact of the Genuine Article." If you haven't read Wells but doubt Mr. Sieveking's word, you will have a chance to find out for yourself when this famous story is broadcast as a 12-part serial from 2YA, starting on Monday, August 16, at 3.0 p.m. Later it will be heard from other NZBS stations.

It was Cavor who made that remark about going into outer space being not much worse than a polar expedition—Cavor, whom Bedford met at, of all places, Lympne, which you've probably never even heard of. Cavor was an odd figure in cricket cap, overcoat, cycling knickerbockers and stockings, who gesticulated with his hands and arms, jerked his head about, and buzzed—"zuzzoo, zuzzoo"—something like that. But Cavor was no fool. He was already well on with his experiments with Cavorite when Bedford met him, and since Bedford was a business man who had come "an ugly cropper" his interest was understandable. Cavorite was a substance which would cut off the pull of gravi-



tation. Imagine, then, a spherical space ship with a Cavorite exterior consisting of blinds which can be opened and shut by the persons travelling inside. You see? When they're all shut gravitation would have no effect on the inside of the sphere, and it would simply fly through space. But open a blind and at once you're subject to the attraction of any heavy body—the moon, for instance—which happens to be in that direction.

Mr. Sieveking thinks that, listening to *The First Men in the Moon*, some

people will raise their eyebrows now and then as they detect the numerous pilferings of later writers—the ideas that have been blandly handed out as original, about the scenery, the atmosphere, the endless biological and geological surprises waiting for visitors to the moon. And what may trouble those who have read the book are the extra characters he has introduced. One of these, Adams, a mathematician, has been brought in to make dialogue with Bedford and Cavor possible when these two become separated on the moon. He has also imported a woman, Mabel Davenport, not to go to the moon, but to represent female jealousy of men's independence of women and cause complications at the beginning and end of the serial. Players who will be heard in this BBC production are Gordon Davies as Bedford, Cecil Truncer as Cavor, Virginia Winter as Mabel Davenport, and Derek Hart as Adams. The producer is David H. Godfrey.

(Solution to No. 707)

F	E	S	T	O	O	N		T	U	C	K	S
I	Q	C		I	O	H		L				
B	L	U	S	H		G	A	R	B	A	G	E
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I			S	K	Y	E						
S	T	R	A	P		E	S	P	A	R	T	O
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E	N	T	H	R	A	L		V	E	N	U	E
R	E	E										
N	O	S	E	S								

Clues Across

1. Substitute an "o" for an "s" and change the position of 2 letters, and you will have what you might be wise to wear when the sky is this.
5. Achilles's weak point?
9. It ran into a means of conveyance.
10. Theft.
11. Serve as a motive.
12. "—, —, burning bright
In the forests of the night" (Blake).
13. "Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild
— flying" (Tennyson).
15. Humiliated
18. A man of letters (sic). This is fundamental.

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

19. Scrapes by adding one letter to 15 across and re-arranging.
21. Rending (anag.).
22. Found in at least one grocer's shop.
23. "Famine is in thy cheeks,
— and oppression starveth in
thyne eyes" ("Romeo and Juliet,"
Act 5, Scene 1).
24. One trail leads to
an Eastern conclusion.
8. This swelling apparently starts in
favour of the potato.
14. The soil becomes inimical.
16. Plunder.
17. Andrew is disposed to stray.
18. Found in cube ginger.
20. Archaically clad.

No. 708 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

1		2		3		4		5	6		7
9						10					
11								12			
13		14						15			16
18						17					
								19		20	
21										22	
23						24					

Clues Down

1. This gross offence
sounds like the exorcism of anger.
2. Out of the beginning of 11 across?
This is strictly accurate.
3. Study the valley and
in the end you get
the perfume. You're
evidently getting
better!
4. "Just for a handful
of — he left us"
(Browning, "The
Lost Leader").
6. Comes out.
7. Early bird?



BBC photograph

GORDON DAVIES, who plays the part of Bedford in the BBC version of "The First Men in the Moon"

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 13, 1954.