

ЛЕГКО ЧИТАЕМ ПО-АНГЛИЙСКИ

Herbert Wells
**THE WAR
OF THE WORLDS**

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ВОЙНА МИРОВ



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PART I THE COMING OF THE MARTIANS

CHAPTER 1 The eve of the war

No one believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that the intelligences greater than man's were watching this world keenly and closely. As I scarcely need to remind the reader, the planet Mars revolves about the sun at a distance of 140,000,000 miles. The light and heat it receives from the sun is barely half of that received by this world. It must be older than our world. Life upon its surface began its course long before this earth ceased to be molten. The fact that it is scarcely one seventh of the volume of the earth **accelerated its cooling**¹ to the temperature at which life began. Mars has air and water and all that is necessary for the support of animated existence.

The exhaustion of solar warmth has become a problem for the inhabitants of Mars. And it has brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts. They were looking across space with tools and intelligences such as we could scarcely dream of. They saw, at its nearest distance only 35,000,000 of miles sunward of them a morning star of hope. It was our own warm planet.

And we men, the creatures who inhabit this earth, were alien and lowly to them. To win that earth is, indeed, their only escape from the destruction that, generation after generation, had been creeping upon them.

¹ **accelerated its cooling** — ускорил процесс охлаждения

The Martians have calculated their descent with amazing subtlety. Their mathematical skills are evidently excellent. If our instruments permitted, we could see the trouble in the nineteenth century. It is odd that for countless centuries Mars has been the star of war. Astronomers watched the red planet, but failed to interpret the **fluctuating appearances of the markings**¹. All that time the Martians were preparing for the invasion.

In 1894 they saw a great light on the illuminated part of the disk — first at the Lick Observatory, then by Perrotin of Nice, and then other observers. English readers heard of it first in the issue of “Nature” dated August 2. I think that this blaze was the casting of the huge gun, in the vast pit of their planet.

The storm burst upon us six years ago. As Mars approached the Earth, Lavelle of Java told the scientists about a huge outbreak of incandescent gas upon the planet. It occurred towards midnight of the twelfth. The spectroscope indicated a mass of flaming gas, chiefly hydrogen. The mass was moving towards this earth. This jet of fire became invisible about a quarter past twelve. Lavelle compared it to a colossal puff of flame suddenly and violently squirted out of the planet, “as flaming gases rushed out of a gun.”

Yet the next day there was nothing of this in the papers except a little note in the “Daily Telegraph”. The world did not know about one of the gravest dangers that ever threatened the human race. But I met Ogilvy, the well-known astronomer, at Ottershaw. He was immensely excited at the news. He invited me to watch the red planet.

I remember that vigil very distinctly. The black and silent observatory, the lantern in the corner, the clockwork

¹ **fluctuating appearances of the markings** — периодически появляющиеся пятна

of the telescope, the little slit in the roof. Ogilvy moved about, invisible but audible. I looked through the telescope and saw a circle of deep blue and the little round planet which was swimming in the field. It seemed such a little thing, so bright and small and still, faintly marked with transverse stripes. It was very little and silvery warm — a pin's head of light!

The planet grew larger and smaller, but that was simply that my eye was tired. Forty millions of miles it was from us — more than forty millions of miles of void.

Near the planet, I remember, were three faint points of light, three stars, and all around it was the unfathomable darkness of empty space.

And invisible to me because it was so remote and small, came the Thing they were sending us. That Thing was bringing much struggle and calamity and death to the earth.

That night, too, there was another **jetting out of gas**¹ from the distant planet. I saw it. A reddish flash at the edge, just as the chronometer struck midnight. I told Ogilvy and he took my place. The night was warm and I was thirsty. I went to the little table where the siphon stood, while Ogilvy exclaimed. He saw the streamer of gas that came out towards us.

That night another invisible missile started on its way to the earth from Mars, almost twenty-four hours after the first one. I remember how I sat on the table there in the blackness. I did not suspect the meaning of the gleam. We lit the lantern and walked over to Ogilvy's house. Down below in the darkness were Ottershaw and Chertsey and all their hundreds of people. They were sleeping in peace.

¹ **jetting out of gas** — взрыв газа

Ogilvy was full of speculation that night about the condition of Mars. He scoffed at the vulgar idea of their signalling us. His idea was that meteorites were falling in a shower upon the planet, or that a huge volcanic explosion was in progress. He did not believe that life had evolved in the same way on both planets.

The daily papers wrote about volcanoes upon Mars. But those missiles from Mars drew earthward.

CHAPTER 2

The Falling Star

Then came the night of the first falling star. We saw it early in the morning, it was rushing over Winchester eastward, a line of flame high in the atmosphere.

I was at home at that hour. I was writing in my study. Poor Ogilvy rose very early. He wanted to find the meteorite. And he found it, soon after dawn, and **not far from the sand-pits**¹. The sand and gravel around the enormous hole formed heaps visible a mile and a half away. The heather was on fire eastward, and a thin blue smoke rose against the dawn.

The Thing itself lay in sand, amidst the splinters of a fir tree. The uncovered part had the appearance of a huge cylinder. It had a diameter of about thirty yards. Ogilvy approached the mass, surprised at the size and more so at the shape. It was a cylinder, still very hot from its flight through the air. Ogilvy heard a stirring noise within it and realised that the cylinder was hollow. And then he saw that, very slowly, the circular top of the cylinder started rotating on its body. The muffled sound was still coming from inside it.

¹ **not far from the sand-pits** – недалеко от песочного карьера

“**Good heavens!**”¹ said Ogilvy. “There’s a man in it! And he tries to escape!”

He linked the Thing with the flash upon Mars.

He went forward to the cylinder. He stood irresolute for a moment, then turned, scrambled out of the pit, and ran away wildly into Woking. It was about six o’clock.

Ogilvy met a wagoner and tried to tell him everything. But the man simply drove away. That sobered Ogilvy a little. When he saw Henderson, the London journalist, in his garden, he **called over the palings**².

“Henderson,” he called, “you saw that shooting star last night? It’s out on Horsell Common now.”

“Good Lord!” said Henderson. “A meteorite! That’s good.”

“But it’s something more than a meteorite. It’s a cylinder — an artificial cylinder! And there’s something inside.”

“What’s that?” Henderson asked.

Ogilvy told him all. Henderson came out into the road. The two men hurried back at once to the cylinder. The cylinder was still lying in the same position. But the sounds inside ceased, and a thin circle of bright metal showed between the top and the body of the cylinder.

They listened and rapped on the metal with a stick. They got no response. So they both concluded the man or men inside were dead.

They went off back to the town again to get help. They were covered with sand and excited. Henderson went to the railway station at once, in order to telegraph the news to London.

By eight o’clock many boys and unemployed men already started to talk about the “dead men from Mars.” I

¹ **Good heavens!** — Боже мой!

² **called over the palings** — обратился через забор

went out and across the Ottershaw bridge to the sand-pits.

CHAPTER 3

The Cylinder

I found a little crowd of perhaps twenty people. The cylinder lay in the huge hole. The turf and gravel about it were charred. Henderson and Ogilvy were not there.

There were four or five boys on the edge of the Pit. They were throwing stones at the giant mass until I stopped them.

When I got close to it, the strangeness of this object was evident to me. It looked like a rusty **gas float**¹. But the yellowish-white metal that gleamed in the crack between the lid and the cylinder had an unfamiliar hue.

The Thing came from the planet Mars. But I did not think it contained any living creature. I thought the unscrewing was automatic. About eleven, as nothing happened, I walked back to my home in Maybury.

The evening papers startled London with enormous headlines:

“A MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM MARS.”

“REMARKABLE STORY FROM WOKING,”

and so forth. In addition, Ogilvy’s **wire to the Astronomical Exchange**² provoked curiosity.

There were **half a dozen flies**³ or more from the Woking station in the road by the sand-pits, a basket-chaise from Chobham, and a lordly carriage. Besides that, there were many bicycles there. In addition, a large number of

¹ **gas float** — газовый резервуар

² **wire to the Astronomical Exchange** — телеграмма в Астрономическое общество

³ **half a dozen flies** — полдюжины пролёток

people walked, in spite of the heat of the day, from Woking and Chertsey, so that there was quite a considerable crowd.

It was very hot. Not a cloud in the sky nor a breath of wind. The only shadow was near pine-trees. A clever salesman in the Chobham Road sent up his son to sell green apples and ginger beer.

I went to the edge of the pit. There I found a group of about half a dozen men. Henderson, Ogilvy, and a tall, fair-haired man were among them. It was Stent, the Astronomer. Stent was giving directions. He was standing on the cylinder. His face was crimson and streaming with perspiration. Something irritated him.

A large portion of the cylinder was uncovered, though its lower end was still stuck in earth. The workmen failed to unscrew the top. The case was enormously thick.

Ogilvy saw me and called to me to come down. He asked me to go over to see Lord Hilton, the lord of the manor. He could help to keep the crowd at a distance.

Lord Hilton was not at home. He was expected to return from London by the six o'clock train. I went home. I had some tea, and walked up to the station **to waylay him**¹.

CHAPTER 4

The Cylinder Opens

When I returned, the sun was setting. People were hurrying from the direction of Woking, and very few persons were returning. The crowd about the pit grew bigger, and stood out against the lemon yellow of the sky — a couple of hundred people, perhaps. As I drew nearer I heard Stent's voice:

¹ **to waylay him** — чтобы перехватить его

“Keep back! Keep back!”

“It’s moving,” a boy said to me; “screwing and screwing. I don’t like it. I’ll go home.”

I went on to the crowd. There were two or three hundred people there.

“He’s fallen in the pit!” cried someone.

“Keep back!”

Everyone was greatly excited. I heard a peculiar humming sound from the pit. I saw a young man, a shop assistant in Woking. He was standing on the cylinder and trying to get out of the hole. Suddenly the screw came out. For a moment the circular cavity seemed perfectly black.

A sudden chill came over me. There was a loud shriek from a woman behind. I saw horror on the faces of the people. The crowd moved backwards.

Tentacles were now projecting from the cylinder. The shopman was still on the edge of the pit. The people on the other side of the pit ran off. Stent was among them. I looked again at the cylinder in terror.

A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light, it glistened like wet leather.

The head of the thing was rounded and had a “face”. Two large dark-coloured eyes were regarding me steadfastly. There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim that dropped saliva. The whole creature heaved and pulsed convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder. Another swayed in the air.

Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine its strange and horrible appearance. The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the lower lip, the quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the evident heaviness and painfulness

of movement, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes — were vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous. There was something fungoid in the oily brown skin. Even at this first encounter, this first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread.

Suddenly the monster vanished. It toppled over the brim of the cylinder and fell into the pit. Soon another of these creatures appeared darkly in the deep shadow of the **aperture**¹.

I turned and ran madly to the trees. There, among some young pine-trees and bushes, I stopped. What will follow next? The people were standing like myself in terror, and staring at these creatures. And then I saw a round, black object. It was bobbing up and down on the edge of the pit. It was the head of the shopman. Now he got his shoulder and knee up, and again he slipped back until only his head was visible. Suddenly he vanished, and I heard a faint shriek. I had a momentary impulse to go back and help him.

The deep pit and the heap of sand hid the cylinder and we could not see what was going on.

CHAPTER 5

The Heat-Ray

The Martians were emerging from the cylinder, and a kind of fascination paralysed my actions. I was staring at the edge of the pit.

I did not dare to go back, but I wanted to peer into it. I began to look at the sand-heaps. Once a lash of thin black whips, like the arms of an octopus, flashed across. Afterwards a thin rod rose up. It was bearing at its apex a circular disk.

¹ **aperture** — проём

Most of the spectators gathered in one or two groups — one little crowd in direction of Woking, the other in the direction of Chobham. There were few people near me. One man was a neighbour of mine, though I did not know his name.

The sunset faded to twilight before anything further happened. It gave people courage. I suppose the new arrivals from Woking also helped to restore confidence. As the dusk came on, a slow movement upon the sand-pits began. I, too, on my side began to move towards the pit.

Suddenly there was a flash of light. Some luminous greenish smoke came out of the pit in three distinct puffs. They drove up, one after the other, straight into the air. This smoke (or flame, perhaps) was very bright. At the same time a faint hissing sound became audible.

Beyond the pit stood the little group of people with a white flag. As the green smoke arose, their faces flashed out pallid green, and faded again as it vanished. Then slowly the hissing passed into a long, loud noise. Slowly a humped shape rose out of the pit, and the ghost of a beam of light flickered out from it. A bright glare sprang from the scattered group of men. Each of them was suddenly and momentarily turned to fire.

The people were staggering and falling down. The death was leaping from man to man in that little crowd. An almost noiseless flash of light — and a man fell headlong and lay still.

This flaming death, this invisible, inevitable sword of heat was coming towards me. But I was too astounded and stupefied to move. The dark ground smoked and crackled. Then the hissing and humming ceased, and the black, dome-like object sank slowly out of sight into the pit.

All this happened with such swiftness that I stood motionless, dumbfounded and dazzled by the flashes of

light. I was helpless, unprotected, and alone. With an effort I turned and began to run through the heather.

CHAPTER 6

The Heat-Ray In The Chobham Road

How can the Martians slay men so swiftly and so silently? It is a mystery. Many people think that the Martians are able to generate an intense heat. They project this intense heat in a parallel beam against any object they choose. Heat, and invisible, instead of visible, light. That night nearly forty people lay under the starlight about the pit. They were charred and distorted.

The news of the massacre reached Chobham, Woking, and Ottershaw. In Woking the shops closed. Many people were walking over the Horsell Bridge and along the road between the hedges.

Few people in Woking knew that the cylinder opened. People were talking excitedly and peering at the spinning mirror over the sand-pits.

By half past eight, there was a crowd of three hundred people or more at this place. There were three policemen too, they were trying, under instructions from Stent, to keep the people back and deter them from the cylinder.

As soon as the Martians emerged, Stent and Ogilvy telegraphed from Horsell to the barracks for help to protect these strange creatures from violence. After that they returned to the pit. Then we saw their death: three puffs of green smoke, the humming note, and the flashes of flame.

Only the heap of sand saved the other crowd of people. They saw the flashes and the invisible hand that lit the bushes. Then, with a whistling note, the beam swung over their heads. Sparks and burning twigs began to fall

into the road. Then came a crying. There were shrieks and shouts.

Everyone was trying to clear the way to Woking again. Where the road is narrow, the crowd jammed. Three persons at least, two women and a little boy, were crushed and trampled there. The crowd left them to die amid the terror and the darkness.

CHAPTER 7

How I Reached Home

I came into the road between the crossroads and Horsell, and ran along this to the crossroads. There I fell and remained still for some time.

Then I sat up, strangely perplexed. I did not clearly understand how I came there. A few minutes before, there were only three real things before me — the immensity of the night and space and nature, my own feebleness and anguish, and the near approach of death. Now something altered abruptly. The cylinder and the flames became a dream. Did these things indeed happen?

I rose and walked unsteadily up the bridge. My muscles and nerves lost their strength.

I startled my wife at the doorway. I went into the dining room. I sat down and told her everything.

“There is one thing,” I said; “they are very sluggish creatures. They may kill people who come near them!”

My wife put her hand on mine.

“Poor Ogilvy!” I said. “He is dead there!”

“They may come for us,” my wife said.

I tried to reassure her.

“They can scarcely move,” I said.

The Martians can't establish themselves on the earth. I talked about the gravitational difficulty. On the surface of the earth the force of gravity is three times more what

it is on the surface of Mars. A Martian, therefore, will weigh three times more than on Mars, albeit his muscular strength will be the same. The atmosphere of the earth contains far more oxygen or far less argon than does Mars'. I was reassuring my wife, and I was courageous.

"They have done a foolish thing," said I. "They are dangerous because, no doubt, they are mad with terror. **A shell in the pit**¹ will kill them all."

CHAPTER 8

Friday Night

In London, poor Henderson's telegram that was describing the gradual unscrewing of the shot **was judged to be a canard**². The newspaper wired for authentication from him and received no

reply — the man was killed — so they decided not to print a special edition.

Even within the five-mile circle the people were inert. All over the district people were dining and supping. Working men were gardening after the labours of the day. Children were going to bed. Young people were wandering through the lanes. Students sat over their books.

Maybe there was a murmur in the village streets, and somebody caused a whirl of excitement; but for the most part the daily routine of working, eating, drinking, sleeping, went on — as though no planet Mars existed in the sky. Even at Woking station and Horsell and Chobham nothing changed.

In Woking junction, trains were stopping and going on. Passengers were waiting, and everything was pro-

¹ **a shell in the pit** — снаряд по той яме

² **was judged to be a canard** — была принята за утку