



**An
Earthman
on Venus**

RALPH MILNE FARLEY

**AN
EARTHMAN
ON VENUS**

{Originally titled "THE RADIO MAN"}

**by
RALPH MILNE FARLEY**

On the planet *VENUS* you will meet—

THIS EARTHMAN

MYLES CABOT, a good-looking young Boston radio experimenter, who accidentally broadcast himself bodily to another world.

THESE GIANT ANTS

QUEEN FORMIS, a twelve-foot-high monster, who ruled a world from an egg-laying couch, and could conceive of no mercy for her human slaves.

DOGGO, who became Myles Cabot's friend through a curious accident and who first showed Myles the ropes on that queer planet.

SATAN, who was given that name by Myles for the unpleasant reason that he deserved it—and who lived up to it.

THESE VENUSIAN PEOPLE

PRINCESS LILLA, the lovely girl with the Kewpie wings, who held the key to the throne of Venus and the key to Myles' heart simultaneously.

YURI, the suave scoundrel who wouldn't hesitate to sell out his whole race to get Lilla's hand by force.

TORON, who tipped Myles off to Lilla's private intentions in order to save himself from slavery.

BTHUH, the beautiful lady who conspired to win Myles for herself, though she had to help his deadliest enemies to do it.

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1

the message in the meteor

Never had I been so frightened in all my life! It was a warm evening late in August, and I was sitting on the kitchen steps of my Chappaquiddick Island farmhouse, discussing the drought with one of the farm hands. Suddenly there appeared in the sky over our heads a flaming fiery mass, rushing straight downward toward us.

“Here’s where a shooting star gets me,” I thought, as I instinctively ducked my head, just as though such a feeble move as ducking one’s head could afford any possible protection from the flaming terror. The next instant there came a dull crash, followed by silence, which in turn was broken by the hired man dryly remarking: “I reckon she struck over to Cow Hill.” Cow Hill was the slight elevation just back of our farmhouse.

So the meteor hadn’t been aimed exactly at *me*, after all.

If that thing had hit me, some one else would be giving to the world this story.

We did nothing further about the meteor that night, being pretty well shaken up by the occurrence. But next morning, as soon as the chores were done, the hired man and I hastened to the top of Cow Hill to look for signs of last night’s fiery visitor.

And, sure enough, there were plenty of signs. Every spear of grass was singed from the top of the hill; the big rock on the summit showed marks of a collision; and several splinters of some black igneous material were lying strewn around. Leading from the big rock there ran down the steep side of the hill a gradually deepening furrow, ending in a sort of caved-in hole.

We could not let slip such a good opportunity to get some newspaper publicity for our farm. And so on the following Friday a full account of the meteoric visitation appeared in the *Vineyard Gazette*, with the result that

quite a number of summer folks walked across the island from the bathing beach to look at the hole.

And there was another result, for early the following week I received a letter from Professor Gerrish, of the Harvard Observatory, stating that he had read about the meteor in the paper, and requesting that I send him a small piece—or, if possible, the whole meteor—by express, collect, for purposes of analysis.

Anything for dear old Harvard! Unfortunately all the black splinters had been carried away by tourists. So I set the men to work digging out the main body. Quite a hole was dug before we came to the meteor, a black pear-shaped object about the size of a barrel. With rock tongs, chains and my pair of Percherons, we dragged this out onto the level. I had hoped that it would be small enough so that I could send the whole thing up to Harvard and perhaps have it set up in front of the Agassiz Museum, marked with a bronze plate bearing my name; but its size precluded this.

My wife, who was present when we hauled it out, remarked: “It looks just like a huge black teardrop or raindrop.”

And sure enough it did. But why not? If raindrops take on a streamline form in falling, why might not a more solid meteor do so as well? But I had never heard of one doing so before. This new idea prompted me to take careful measurements and to submit them to Professor O. D. Kellogg, of the Harvard mathematics department, who was summering at West Chop near by. He reported to me that the form was as perfectly streamlined as it was possible to conceive, but that my surmise as to how it had become so was absurd.

While making these measurements I was attracted by another feature of the meteor. At one place on the side, doubtless where it had struck the big rock, the black coating had been chipped away, disclosing a surface of yellow metal underneath. Also there was to be seen in this metal an absolutely straight crack, extending as far as the metal was exposed, in a sidewise direction.

At the time the crack did not attract me so much as the metal. I vaguely wondered if it might not be gold. But, being reminded of Professor Gerrish’s request for a sample of the meteor, I had one of the men start chiseling off some pieces.

The natural spot to begin was alongside of the place where the covering was already chipped. It was hard work, but finally he removed several pieces, and then we noticed that the crack continued around the waist of the meteor as far as had been chipped. This crack, from its absolute regularity, gave every indication of being man-made.

Our curiosity was aroused. Why the regularity of this crack? How far did it go? Could it possibly extend clear way around? Was it really a threaded joint? And if so, how could such a phenomenon occur on a meteorite dropped from the sky?

Forgotten was the second crop mowing we had planned to do that day. Hastily summoning the rest of the help, we set to work with cold chisels and sledges, to remove the black coating in a circle around the middle of the huge teardrop. It was a long and tedious task, for the black substance was harder than anything I had ever chipped before. We broke several drills and dented the yellow metal unmercifully, but not so much but what we could see that the threaded crack did actually persist.

The dinner hour passed, and still we worked, unmindful of the appeals of our womenfolk, who finally abandoned us with much shrugging of shoulders.

It was nearly night when we completed the chipping and applied two chain wrenches to try and screw the thing apart. But, after all our efforts, it would not budge. Just as we were about to drop the wrenches and start to chisel through the metal some one suggested that we try to unscrew it as a left-handed screw. Happy thought! For, in spite of all the dents which we had made, the two ends at last gradually untwisted.

What warrant did we have to suppose that there was anything inside it? I must confess, now it is all over, that we went through this whole day's performance in a sort of feverish trance, with no definite notion of what we were doing, or why; and yet impelled by a crazy fixed idea that we were on the verge of a great discovery.

And at last our efforts had met with success, and the huge teardrop lay before us in two neatly threaded parts. The inside was hollow and was entirely filled with something tightly swathed in silver colored felt tape.

Breathless, we unwound over three hundred feet of this silver tape, and

finally came to a gold cylinder about the size and shape of a gingersnap tin—that is to say, a foot long and three inches in diameter—chased all around with peculiar arabesque characters. By this time Mrs. Farley and my mother-in-law and the hired girl had joined us, attracted by the shouts which we gave when the teardrop had come apart.

One end of the cylinder easily unscrewed—also with a left-handed thread—and I drew forth a manuscript, plainly written in the English language, on some tissue-thin substance like parchment.

Everyone clustered around me, as I turned to the end to see who it was from, and read with astonishment the following signature: “Myles S. Cabot.”

But this name meant nothing to anyone present except myself.

I heard one of the hands remark to another:

“’Twarn’t no shootin’ star at all. Nothin’ but some friend of the boss shootin’ a letter to him out of one of these here long-range guns.”

“Maybe so,” said I to myself.

But Mrs. Farley was quivering with excitement.

“You must tell me all about it, Ralph,” said she. “Who *can* be sending you a message inside a meteor, I wonder?”

My reply was merely: “I think that there is a clipping in one of my scrapbooks up in the attic which will answer that question.”

There was! I found the scrapbook in a chest under the eaves, but did not open it until after chores and supper, during which meal I kept a provoking silence on the subject of our discovery.

When the dishes were finally all cleared away, I opened the book on the table and read to the assembled household the following four-year-old clipping from the *Boston Post*.

CITIZEN DISAPPEARS

Prominent Clubman Vanishes from Beacon Street Home

Myles S. Cabot of 162 Beacon Street, disappeared from his bachelor quarters late yesterday afternoon, under very mysterious circumstances.

He had been working all day in his radio laboratory on the top floor of his

house, and had refused to come down for lunch. When called to dinner, he made no reply: so his butler finally decided to break down the door, which was locked.

The laboratory was found to be empty. All the windows were closed and locked, and the key was on the inside of the door. In a heap on the floor lay a peculiar collection of objects, consisting of Mr. Cabot's watch and chain, pocket knife, signet ring, cuff links and tie pin, some coins, a metal belt buckle, two sets of garter snaps, some safety pins, a gold pen point, a pen clip, a silver pencil, some steel buttons, and several miscellaneous bits of metal. There was a smell in the air like one notices in electric power houses. The fuses on the laboratory power line were all blown out.

The butler immediately phoned to police headquarters, and Detective Flynn was dispatched to the scene. He questioned all the servants thoroughly, and confirmed the foregoing facts.

The police are working on the case.

WAS PROMINENT RADIO ENTHUSIAST

Myles S. Cabot, whose mysterious disappearance yesterday has shocked Boston society, was the only son of the late Alden Cabot. His mother was a Sears of Southboro.

The younger Cabot since his graduation from Harvard had devoted himself to electrical experimenting. Although prominent in the social life of the city, and an active member of the Union, University, New York Yacht, and Middlesex Hunt Clubs, he nevertheless had found time to invent novel and useful radio devices, among the best known of which is the Indestructo Vacuum Tube.

He had established at his Beacon Street residence one of the best equipped radio laboratories in the city.

His most recent experiment, according to professional friends, had been with television.

Mr. Cabot substituted two circuits for the usual television circuit, one controlling the vertical lines of his sending and receiving screens, and the other the horizontal, thus enabling him to enlarge his screen considerably, and also to present a continuous picture instead of one made up of dots. The

effect of perspective he obtained by adding a third circuit.

The details of this invention had not been given out by Mr. Cabot prior to his disappearance.

His nearest relatives are cousins.

The last was a particularly gentle touch, it seemed to me. Well, his cousins hadn't yet inherited his property, although they had tried mighty hard; and perhaps this mysterious message from the void would prevent them from ever doing so. I hoped that this would be the case, for I liked Myles, and had never liked those cousins of his.

Myles had been a classmate of mine at Harvard, though later our paths drifted apart, his leading into Back Bay society and radio, and mine leading into the quiet pastoral life of a farm on Chappaquiddick Island off the coast of Massachusetts. I had heard little of him until I read the shocking account of his sudden disappearance.

The police had turned up no further clues, and the matter had quickly faded from the public sight. I had kept the *Post* clipping as a memento of my old college chum.

I was anxious to learn what had become of him these four years. So I opened the manuscript and proceeded to read aloud.

In the following chapters I shall give the story contained in that manuscript—a story so weird, and yet so convincingly simple, that it cannot fail to interest all those who knew Myles Cabot. It completely clears up the mystery surrounding his disappearance. Of course, there will be some who will refuse to believe that this story is the truth. But those of his classmates and friends who knew him well will find herein unmistakable internal evidence of Myles Cabot's hand in this narrative conveyed to me in the golden heart of a meteorite.

2

stranded in space

Thus wrote Myles Cabot:

My chief line of work, since graduating from Harvard, was on the subject of television. By simultaneously using three sending sets and three receiving sets, each corresponding to one of the three dimensions, any object which I placed within the framework of my transmitter could be seen within the framework of my receiver, just as though it stood there itself.

All that prevented the object from actually being made to stand there was the quite sufficient fact that no one had yet, so far as I was then aware, invented a means for dissolving matter into its well-known radiations, and then converting these radiations back into matter again.

But at just this time, by a remarkable coincidence, there came into my hands a copy of an unpublished paper on this subject by Rene Flambeau.

The prior experiments of De Gersdorff are well known; he had succeeded by means of radio waves, in isolating and distinguishing the electro-magnetic constituents of all the different chemical elements. Flambeau went one step further, and was able to transmit small formless quantities of matter itself, although for some reason certain metals, but not their salts, appeared to absorb the electrical energy employed by him, and thus be immune to transportation.

As I could already transmit a three-dimensional picture of an object, and as Flambeau had been able to transmit formless matter, then by combining our devices in a single apparatus I found I could transmit physical objects unchanged in form.

But this apparatus produced one unexpected phenomenon—namely, that whenever I employed excessive power, my sending set would transmit

objects placed slightly outside its normal range, and certain small quantities thereof would turn up in other portions of my laboratory than within my receiving set.

To test this phenomenon further, I secured some high voltage equipment and arranged with the Edison Company for its use.

On the afternoon when the installation was completed, I started to place a small blue china vase in position to send it. Something must have become short-circuited, for there came a blinding flash, and I knew no more.

How long the unconsciousness lasted, I have no means of telling. I was a long time regaining my senses, but when I had finally and fully recovered I found myself lying on a sandy beach, beside a calm and placid lake, and holding in my hand the small blue vase.

The atmosphere was warm, moist and fragrant, like that of a hothouse, and the lap-lapping of the waves gave forth such a pleasing musical sound that I lay where I was and dozed off and on, even after I had recovered consciousness.

I seemed to sense, rather than really to see, my surroundings. The sand was very white. The sky was completely overclouded at a far height, and yet the clouds shone with such a silvery radiance that the day was as bright as any which I had ever seen with full sunlight on earth, but with a difference, for here the light diffused from all quarters, giving the shadowless effect which one always notes in a photographer's studio.

To my right lay the lake, reflecting the silvery color of the sky. Before me stretched the beach, unbroken save for an occasional piece of driftwood. To my left was the upland, covered with a thicket of what at first appeared to be dead trees, but on closer scrutiny were seen to be some gigantic species of the well-known branched gray lichen with red tips, which I used to find on rocks and sticks in the woods as a child.

No birds were flying overhead, I suppose because there were no birds to fly. I fell to wondering, vaguely and pleasantly, where I was and how I got there; but for the moment I remained a victim of complete amnesia.

Suddenly, however, my ears were jarred by a familiar sound. At once my senses cleared and I listened intently to the distant purring of a motor. Yes,

there could be no mistake—an airplane was approaching. Now I could see it, a speck in the sky, far down the beach.

Nearer and nearer it came.

I sprang to my feet, and to my intense surprise found that the effort threw me quite a distance into the air. Instantly the thought flashed through my mind: “I must be on Mars!” But no, for my weight was not nearly enough lighter than my earthly weight to justify such a conclusion.

For some reason my belt buckle and most of the buttons which held my clothes together were missing, so that my clothing came to pieces as I arose, and I had to shed it rapidly in order to avoid impeding my movements. I wondered at the cause of this.

But my speculations were cut short by the alighting of the airplane a hundred yards down the beach. It seemed to land vertically, rather than run along the ground, but I could not be sure at that distance. What was my horror when out of it clambered not men but ants! Ants, six-footed and six feet high. Huge ants, four of them, running toward me over the glistening sands.

Gone was all my languor as I seized a piece of driftwood and prepared to defend myself as well as I could. The increase in my jumping ability, although slight, coupled with an added buoyancy, might enable me to prolong the unequal encounter.

The ants came slowly forward, four abreast, like a cavalry formation, while I awaited their onslaught, grasping the stick of driftwood firmly in my hand. When nearly upon me they executed right-by-troopers and started circling in an ever-narrowing circle.

Suddenly the ants wheeled and converged from all four points of the compass, clicking their mandibles savagely as they came. The whole movement had been executed with uncanny precision, without a single word of communication between the strange black creatures; in fact, without a single sound except the clicking of their mandibles and a slight rattling of their joints. How like a naval attack by a fleet of old-fashioned Ford cars, I thought.

When within about ten feet of me, they made a concerted rush; but I leaped to one side, at the same time giving one of my antagonists a crack with my club

as they crashed together in the center. This denouement seemed to confuse them, for they slowly extricated themselves from their tangle and withdrew for a short distance, where they again formed and stood glaring at me for a few minutes, clicking their jaws angrily.

Then they rushed again, this time in close formation, but again I jumped to one side, dealing another blow with my club. Whereupon the fighting became disorganized, the ants making individual rushes, and I leaping and whacking as best I could.

I scored several dents in the armor of my opponents, and finally succeeded by a lucky stroke in beheading one of them. But at this the other three came on with renewed vigor. Although each ant wore some sort of green weapon slung in a holster at its side, they fought only with their mandibles.

The slight difference in gravity from that to which I had been accustomed finally proved my undoing; for, although it increased my agility, it also rendered me a bit less sure on my feet, and this was enhanced by the rapid disintegration of the soles of my shoes. The result was that, at last I slipped and fell, and was immediately set upon and pinned down by my enemies. One of the ants at once deliberately nipped me in the side with his huge mandibles. An excruciating pain shot through my entire body; and then, for the second time that day, I lost consciousness.

When I came to, I found myself lying in the cockpit of an airplane, speeding through the sky. One of my ant captors was standing on a slight incline at the bow of the ship, operating the control levers with his front feet; and the other two were watching the scenery. The dead ant was nowhere to be seen. No one was paying any attention to me.

I was not bound, and yet I was unable to move. My senses were unusually keen, and yet my body was completely paralyzed. I had no idea as to what sort of country we were flying over, for I could not raise my head above the edge of the cockpit. I didn't know where I was going, but I certainly was on my way all right. And not so all right, at that.

Overhead was the same silvery glare, without a patch of blue sky. No sound came from my sinister, indifferent captors. The only noise was the throbbing of the motors.

As to the time of day, or how long I had been on board, I had no idea; and what was more, I didn't particularly care. Rather a pleasant sort of a jag, if it were not for the intense pain of licker-ing-up.

After a while the pleasant sensation wore off, and my throat began to feel dry. I tried to call to the ants, but of course could not, because of the paralysis; and finally desisted even the attempt, when I remembered that the ants were speechless and hence probably unable to hear.

By a coincidence, however, one of the creatures seemed to sense my needs, and brought me some water in a bowl, gently holding up my head with one of his forepaws so that I could drink. This action touched my heart, and also filled me with hope that the ants might not turn out to be such bad captors after all.

Then I fell to studying them. First of all, I noticed that each ant carried on the back of his thorax a line of peculiar white characters, somewhat like shorthand writing; and below it several rows of similar writing, only smaller in size.

The peculiar green-colored weapon, slung in a holster on the right-hand side of each ant, I had already noticed during the fight. But, apart from the white marks and the green weapons, my captors were absolutely naked; and so far as I could see they were exactly like the ordinary black ants to which I had been accustomed on earth, only of course magnified to an enormous size.

I studied the faces which the ants now occasionally turned toward me. These faces were sinister and terrifying. They recalled to my memory the fright which I had once had when, as a child, I attended an entomological movie and was suddenly confronted with a close-up of the head of some common insect.

But the ant who had brought me the water had a human look which relieved him of much of his terrible grimness. In fact, he struck me as vaguely familiar. Ah! Now I had it! A certain stolidity of movement, amounting almost to a mannerism, reminded me of one of my Harvard classmates, a homely good-hearted boy whom we had all known by the nickname of "Doggo." And so, from then on, I instinctively thought of that particular ant as named Doggo.

Then, for the first time, it struck me as strange that these ants, instead of scuttling aimlessly over the ground, or having wings of their own to fly with, as in the mating season on earth, were utilizing a carefully and scientifically built airplane, apparently of their own make. And it struck me as even more strange that I had not wondered about this before.

But then the events of that day had occurred with such startling rapidity—from the flash in my Beacon Street laboratory, through my awakening beside that strange lake, the approach of the airplane, my fight with the ants, and my second lapse from consciousness, down to my present predicament—that I was to be excused for not considering any particular phase of my adventures as being more extraordinary than any other.

Now, however, that I had had time to draw my breath and collect my thoughts, it dawned on me with more and more force that here I was, apparently on some strange planet of which the ruling race, apparently of human or superhuman intelligence, were not men. And they were not even some other mammal, but were insects—ants, to be more specific. For all that I knew, I was the only mammal—or perhaps even the only vertebrate—on this entire planet.

Then I remembered a remark by Professor Parker in Zoology 1 in my freshman year at Harvard: “The two peaks of development, in the chain of evolution from the amoeba upward, are the order of hymenoptera (bees, wasps and ants) among insects, and the order of primates (men and monkeys) among mammals. In any other world it is probable that evolution would produce a ruling race, in much the same way that man has been produced upon the earth; and it is a toss-up whether this ruling race would develop along the lines of the hymenoptera, or in a form similar to the mammals; but one or the other seems inevitable.”

“Well,” said I to myself, “old Parker is certainly vindicated, at least with respect to *one* planet.”

Thus I mused, as the airplane sped along. Then the purr of the motors lulled me to sleep, and for the third time that day I became unconscious.

When I awoke the sky was losing its luminous silver quality. On one side it was faintly pink, and on the other the silver color merged into a duller gray. The airship still sped along.

Doggo brought me another bowl of water, and I found, to my joy, that I could now lift my head enough to drink without any further assistance than to have Doggo hold the bowl. At this sign of recovery, one of the other ants advanced menacingly as if to bite me again. But Doggo jumped between us, and after much snapping of mandibles and quivering of antennae by both, the other ant desisted.

This event decided me that Doggo was a friend worth cultivating, but I was at a loss how to make advances which would be understood. Finally, however, I determined to attempt stroking the huge ant in a way which I had found to be very effective in making friends with animals.

Accordingly, when Doggo came near enough, by a great effort I overcame my paralysis sufficiently to reach up and touch him on the side of his head just behind one of his great jaws. Apparently this pleased the ant, for he submitted to the caress, and finally lifted me to a sitting position, so that the patting could be continued with greater ease.

I later learned that this patting, to which I had resorted purely by accident, is a universal custom of this planet, corresponding to shaking hands on earth, and signifying greetings, friendship, farewell, bargain binding, and the like.

The other ant-man occasionally would advance menacingly toward me with his head lowered, but each time Doggo would step between us, and lower his own head and agitate his antennae, at which the other would desist. I nicknamed the other Satan, because of his diabolical actions.

In my new sitting position I was now able to see over the side of the airship. We were passing above gray woods, with occasional silver-green fields, in which were grazing some sort of pale green animals, too far below to be easily distinguishable. Through the woods and fields ran what appeared to be roads, but as nothing was moving on them, I could not tell for sure.

Suddenly my attention was distracted from the view by the frantic action of the ant-man who was steering the ship. He seemed to be having difficulty with his controls. And then, so quickly that it gave us no warning, the ship reared up in the air and made a complete loop. That is, I merely suppose it made a complete one, for when the loop was half done, I dropped out and fell like a plummet.

I remember a momentary exultation at being free from my captors, and a certain spiteful joy at the thought that I should undoubtedly be dashed to pieces and thus rob them of their prey. Then I had just begun to wonder whether I shouldn't prefer captivity to death, when I struck—

And was *not* dashed to pieces.

I still lived, for I had been thrown slantwise into a net of some sort, and was now swaying gently back and forth like a slowing pendulum. Hooray! I was both free and safe.

But my joy was short lived, for I soon discovered that the fine silken strands of the net were covered with a substance like sticky fly paper, which held me firmly. The more I struggled, the more I drew other strands of the net toward me to entangle me. At last I paused for breath, and then the truth dawned on me: I was caught in a gigantic spider web! And sure enough, there came the spider toward me from one corner of the web.

He wasn't a very large spider. That is to say, judging by the size of my previous captors, I should have expected that the spiders of this world would be as big as the Eiffel Tower. He was quite large enough however, having a body about the size of my own, and legs fully ten feet long. I call him a "spider," for that is the earth word which comes closest to describing him.

With great assiduity he began wrapping me up into a cocoon, a process which he seemed to enjoy much more than I. But it did me no good to struggle, for any part of me which showed any indications of moving was immediately pinioned with a fresh strand of rope.

At last the job was finished, and I was completely enveloped with a layer of thick coarse sticky silk cloth, translucent but not transparent.