

BOOKS

EXPLORING MARS

by Robert S. Richardson
McGraw-Hill, 1955

\$4.00

WHEN INTERPLANETARY TRAVEL becomes a reality, our first objective will naturally be the moon. But the moon doesn't hold a great many surprises for us; we have a good idea of what's there already. So the moon will just be a stepping-stone to other, more distant worlds. As we look across space, Mars seems by far the most exciting planet for exploration. As the planet closest to the earth, and as the only planet where life as we know it may be possible. Mars has a special fascination for us all.

Every couple of years the earth swings past Mars and, for several months, the planet is close enough so that its surface can be studied. The average distance of Mars on these occasions is about 50 million

miles—though it may be as much as 63 million miles. At intervals of 15 to 17 years, however, the distance between the two planets is shortened. In September, 1956—for the first time in 30 years—Mars will be only 35 million miles away from us.

Though astronomers are inclined to work in what Dr. Richardson refers to as "splendid isolation," a "Mars Committee" has now been organized, and in September, 1956, astronomers will cooperate with geologists, chemists and representatives of a dozen or more other sciences to find out all they can about Mars.

In the meantime, in this book, Dr. Richardson has collected just about all the pertinent information we have on Mars already. For good measure, he includes information on some other planets, discusses the possibilities of interplanetary travel, describes an imaginary trip to the moon, and offers some basic advice on how anyone can observe objects

in the sky without using a telescope.

As a staff member of the Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories since 1931, Dr. Richardson is an old hand at producing technical papers. This is not one of them. Neither is it another piece of the science fiction he turns out sporadically—and sometimes surreptitiously. It is a straightforward, non-technical account of some of the other worlds in the universe, written in a bright, informal style, with plenty of wry good humor.

"As a youngster," Dr. Richardson says in his preface, "I was intensely interested in astronomy, especially in the planets and Mars. In our little public library there were a few books on astronomy which contained brief descriptions of the planets, but what I wanted was a book that would tell me more about the planets and the possibility of finding life upon them. I also was curious about the men who had devoted their lives to a study of worlds beyond the earth.

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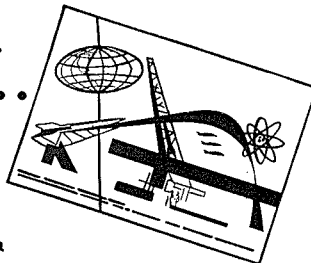
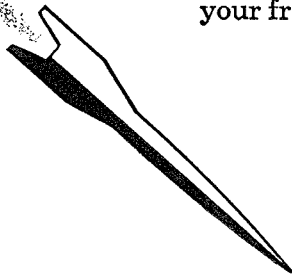
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Surely they must be strange creatures, far removed from the commonplace people around me. But on this point I could find no information whatever.

"*Exploring Mars* is the type of book I would have liked to own, then and later. I hope it will interest readers of all ages to whom the world is a perpetual source of delight and enchantment."

It will.

SCIENCE IN OUR LIVES

by Ritchie Calder

New American Library—

Signet Key Book

\$.35

THE CASE for science is presented by the man who is science editor of the London *News Chronicle* and chairman of the British Association of Science Writers.

It is Mr. Calder's thesis that science belongs to the humanities—and he proves it very neatly. In doing so, he gives a popular account of some of the great scientific discoveries, discusses what science means, describes its thought processes, and some of its social effects.

By the time he's finished, Mr. Calder has gone a long way towards explaining science for the benefit of some of the people he mentions in the opening chapter of his book:

"The preacher who complains that material advances in science are outstripping moral responsibilities piously says that he knows nothing of science. Statesmen, who boast their ignorance of science, nevertheless think themselves competent to legislate for the atomic bomb. The man in the saloon-bar, who ribs the . . . "egg heads" of science, and blames them when a new device threatens his job or a new weapon threatens his home, does not bother to understand what science is about, and treats it as gadgeteering or escapes with it to planets in a cartoon strip. He neither asks, 'What makes a scientist tick?' nor, in alternating between fear and jeer, treats him as a life-sized individual, whose training has given him certain qualifications. People of this kind and the scientist are the victims of that kind of journalism which treats any scientific discovery as a miraculous revelation and every scientist as a genius."

Mr. Calder's journalism is quite a different matter, and—meaning no offense—he writes rings around most of his American colleagues.