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"THE WHITE ROSE" LEAVES LEEDS

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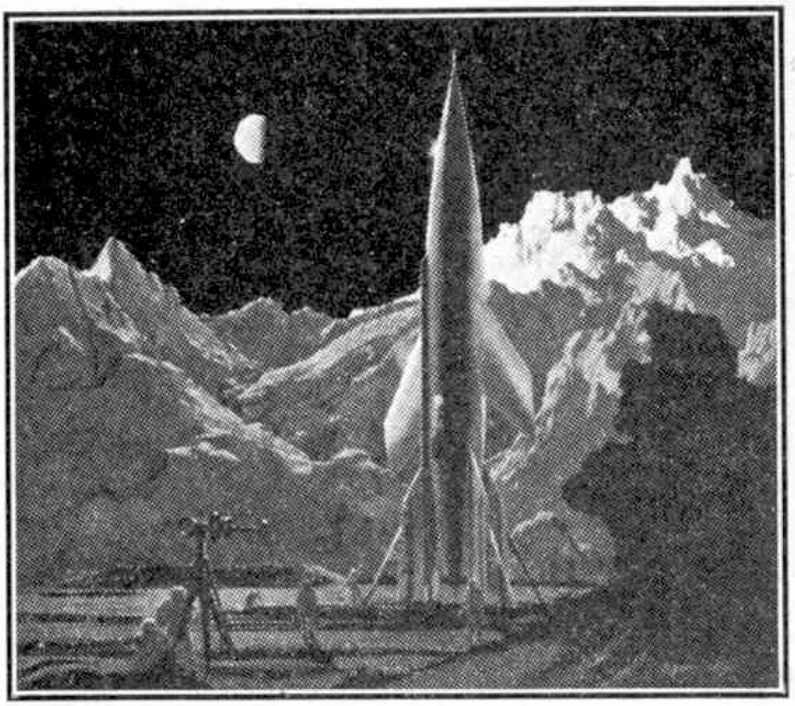
Rocket to the Moon

By John W. R. Taylor



On the Moon. The rocket ship, having landed on its tail, will take off from this position for the return to Earth. This illustration is from the book "The Conquest of Space" referred to on this page, and is reproduced by courtesy of Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd.

FOR hundreds of years men have dreamed of flying to the Moon. Scores of books have been written on the subject, most of them fantastic and entirely lacking in scientific fact. But they represented the sum total of constructive thought on interplanetary flight until, in the years between the two World Wars, small groups of scientists and enthusiastic would-be space-flyers began to tackle its problems on scientific, practical lines.

We experienced one unpleasant result of their research in 1944–45 in the form of the German V.2 war rocket, which, in one jump, lifted space-flight out of the Buck Rogers comics and made it seem merely a matter of time before we should indeed fly to the Moon. Of course V.2 was a comparatively short-range rocket, but it can be compared in significance with the Wright biplane of 1903. It was the prototype that proved the practicability of controlled rocket flight, just as the Wright biplane had proved the practicability of powered aeroplane flight.

Development of the rocket has been slow since the war, but plenty of capable, clear-thinking people believe that before the next 40 years have passed the Man-in-the-Moon will no longer be a figment of the imagination.

The theory of the whole business of space-flight has already been solved, checked and double-checked. All we need to make interplanetary flight a fact is an engine or fuel of tremendous power to drive a manned rocket out of our atmosphere into space. Atomic energy may well supply the answer to this, to bring the Moon within four days of the Earth, and make Mars, Venus and the other planets our near neighbours.

But the problem of getting there is only the start of our troubles; just as difficult will be to find means of surviving once we have arrived. Apart from its lack of oxygen, the Moon presents few hazards, and we could probably exist for a while on Mars if suitably equipped with heated pressure-suits and oxygen equipment. The same is by no means true of the other planets. Take Jupiter for instance, whose surface is believed to consist of mountains of ice, rising from lakes of liquid ammonia. Hydrogen flames and "lava" pour from the tops of the mountains, under an atmosphere of methane and ammonia gas, causing "hydrogen bomb" explosions over the whole surface of the planet. Hardly the place for a picnic, and certainly not the home of "Flying Saucers"!

It will probably be many years before we start reading in *"Air News"* of the latest adventures of "astronauts" in their Moon-rockets. But we can get a good idea of what they will see when they get there from a new book called *"Conquest of Space"* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 18/–), just published in this country. It contains remarkable paintings, by a young American named Chesley Bonestell, of landscapes on the other planets of our solar system, and of the Earth and planets as they would appear from a space-ship and from other "worlds." The accompanying text by rocket expert Willy Ley describes in a simple, very readable manner how we may one day fly to the planets and what we shall find there.

"Conquest of Space" is based on the latest scientific research and cannot fail to fascinate even the most sceptical reader, for it presents a preview of the greatest adventure still awaiting mankind.

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