

A Retreating Artilleryman from *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells

This isn't a war. It never was a war, any more than there's war between man and ants. There's the ants builds their cities, live their lives, have wars, revolutions, until the men want them out of the way, and then they go out of the way. That's what we are now--just ants. After Weybridge I went south--thinking. I saw what was up. Here's intelligent things, and it seems they want us for food. First, they'll smash us up--ships, machines, guns, cities, all the order and organization. All that will go. So soon as they've settled all our guns and ships, and smashed our railways, and done all the things they are doing over there, they will begin catching us systematic, picking the best and storing us in cages and things. That's what they will start doing in a bit. Lord! They haven't begun on us yet. Don't you see that? Cities, nations, civilization, progress--it's all over. That game's up. We're beat. There won't be any more blessed concerts for a million years or so; there won't be any Royal Academy of Arts, and no nice little feeds at restaurants. They ain't no further use. Those who mean to escape their catching must get ready. I'm getting ready. I'm going on, under their feet. I've been thinking about the drains. Of course those who don't know drains think horrible things; but under this London are miles and miles--hundreds of miles--and a few days rain and London empty will leave them sweet and clean. The main drains are big enough and airy enough for anyone. Then there's cellars, vaults, stores, from which bolting passages may be made to the drains. And the railway tunnels and subways. Eh? You begin to see? .. No, we have to invent a sort of life where men can live and breed, and be sufficiently secure to bring the children up. We don't know enough. We've got to learn before we've got a chance. And we've got to live and keep independent while we learn. See! That's what has to be done. And when we do learn--Just imagine this: four or five of their fighting machines suddenly starting off—blasting right and left -- and not a Martian in 'em. Not a Martian in 'em, but men--men who have learned the way how.