I never cease admiring the French Enlightenment; all in all I consider it the peak of human history, greater even than Periclean Greece, or Augustan Rome, or Medicean Italy. Never had men thought so bravely, spoken so brilliantly, or lifted themselves to a greater height of culture and courtesy. "Alas!" said Louis XVI, standing in his Temple prison before the books of Voltaire and Rousseau, "these are the men that have destroyed France." Yes, they had destroyed one France, but they had liberated another, not to speak of freeing America through their disciples, Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson.

This is the best I can do, far off here in the Pacific, between two hemispheres and two ages. I look back to the Orient and wonder how a Confucian scholar or a Hindu Brahman would smile at my dates. The one would inquire courteously where the T'ang Dynasty entered into my list — an age as great in China as the Enlightenment in France. The other would ask about Akbar or Asoka, and I could only answer that Asoka belongs to Buddha, and Akbar to Mohammed.

I know how partial and provincial any such list must be. We are all born within frontiers of space and time and, struggle as we will, we never escape from our boxes. To us, civilization means Europe and America; and the Orient, which considers us barbaric, seems barbarous.

Let the reader, then, make his own list, helping himself to what he likes in mine. Let him try to build for himself another perspective and unity that shall clarify human development for him. And let him remember the words which Napoleon bequeathed to the Duke of Reichstadt at St. Helena: "May my son study history, for it is the only true psychology, and the only true philosophy."

$500 for Dead Men's Bones

THE FORUM for September contained Hendrik Willem van Loon's list of the twelve most important dates in history. Will Durant has just submitted his choices, and the similar selections of H. G. Wells will be published next month. The Editor now invites you to collaborate with these distinguished gentlemen by preparing your own list of the twelve greatest dates *which they omitted*. If you did not see the last number of THE FORUM, you can look it up in any library, and if you prefer, you can read all three articles in the same way, for the contest is not restricted to subscribers. Five hundred dollars in cash prizes will be divided between the three contestants who send in the best papers. Will *you* be one of them?

Read the following rules carefully:

1. Three cash prizes will be awarded: a first prize of $250, a second prize of $150, and a third prize of $100. If there should be a tie for any of the prizes, the full amount of the prize will be awarded to each contestant.

2. The prize-winning papers will be published in THE FORUM.

3. The contest is open to everyone — non-subscribers as well as subscribers — except employees of THE FORUM and their families.

4. Each contestant must list twelve dates which are *not* among those chosen by van Loon, Durant, and Wells, and state briefly why each date is important. The papers will be judged equally upon the dates chosen and the reasons given for their choice.

5. Papers must not exceed 1200 words in length.

6. Since H. G. Wells' article will not be published until November, no paper can be considered which is sent in before the November issue appears.

7. The contest will close at midnight on Monday, December 1, 1930.

8. Papers should be either typewritten or penned in legible handwriting, and must bear the name and address of the contestant. Mail them to the Contest Editor.

9. THE FORUM will not return papers submitted in the contest, and will not enter into correspondence about them.

10. Anybody may enter as many papers as he pleases.

11. The Editor of THE FORUM will be the sole judge of the contest.

12. The submission of a paper in the contest will be understood to mean that the contestant accepts the rules here given and will abide by the judgment of the Editor.

ROCKET SHIPS

And a Visit to Mars

Drawings by Thomas Benrimo

by **WALDEMAR KAEMPFFERT**

THE ANNALS of invention are full of impossibilities which have somehow come to pass. The steam engine, the iron ship, the airplane, the phonograph, the incandescent lamp — all were once considered incredible. Astronautics, a coined word meaning "methods of navigating space," is still among the unproved sciences, but because its stirring implications make the transatlantic flights of our boldest aviators seem puerile and inconsequential in comparison, it will always be a tempting field for the engineer, the physicist, and the dreamer.

To leave the Earth in some strange, hermetically sealed vessel; to rush through space, from star to star, at velocities never before achieved by man; to see with one's own eyes the features of that other face of the Moon which is forever turned from the Earth; to settle once and for all by personal inspection the real nature of those mysterious "canals" on Mars, which Lowell thought were irrigation ditches dug on a planetary scale by a race of intelligent beings struggling to stave off extinction by husbanding the water of the melting polar snows; to pierce the wall of Venus and discover what lies beyond — surely the technical imagination is capable of no more magnificent flight.

What is it that prevents us from voyaging to the Moon and the more distant planets? Primarily the Earth's gravitation as manifested by weight. To escape into space we must overcome our weight and the weight of our vehicle — overwhelm one force with another. Every boy who has ever pitched a baseball has acquired an elementary knowledge of the Earth's power. He throws the ball up into the air. It takes a measureable time in which to return — a longer time when it is thrown with greater force — and during part of that time it actually defies gravitation. Now, clearly, if there were a pitching machine powerful enough, it would be theoretically possible to throw a ball any distance, even to the Moon. By applying Newton's law, it develops that gravitation could be overcome by a body having the velocity of at least seven miles a second. Seven miles a second! And the fastest bullet has a muzzle velocity of less than three thousand feet a second.

In *From the Earth to the Moon* Jules Verne shoots men into space in a luxuriously furnished shell from a colossal cannon buried in the earth. The tale possesses the illusion of scientific reality, but when abler men than Verne began to discuss voyages into the cosmos, they discovered that for all its plausibility