

VISITOR FROM SPACE

(When the Martian stepped into the school-room, it didn't matter to Dicky McGuire if he passed that exam or not.)

Dicky McGuire wasn't a dumb kid—not by a long shot. But somehow or other it didn't seem very important to him whether the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought in 1775—or 76—or 77, just so long as the right side won. Anyway it didn't seem important on a June day when the sun was shining warm and golden on the swimming pool and he could hear the noise of the chalker marking up the tennis



courts just below the school window.

He was just looking at the long list of names and dates and deciding to match them by the old, infallible method of "eenie, meenie, minie, moe", when he stopped short and shook his head, like a puppy wriggling out of the water. Then he looked around to see if the kids had heard it—the strange buzzing sound. Heads popped up from all the desks and the teacher told them to disregard the noise and get back to work—that it prob-

ably had something to do with air-conditioning.

But the tingling feeling of anticipation that raced through Dickey's veins had nothing to do with the air-conditioning system. He had a wonderful feeling that something was about to HAPPEN!

He bent his head once more over his work, but suddenly, a quick flashing movement above him brought it up again with a jerk. A figure had leapt thru the open window and was standing by Dick's side. A figure so dazzling—so brightly colored in a magnificent uniform of blazing metals that he had to blink his eyes hard before he could look straight at it.

The teacher shrieked and backed up against the blackboard. The other children yelled and shouted in amazement. Some of them even cried with the shock. But Dicky just stared.

It was as though he had seen a dream come true.

The man, for there must have been a man under the strange mask that fell from the plumaged helmet, stood quietly waiting for the excitement to die down. Then he spoke. And to Dicky's surprise he spoke directly to him. Not to anyone else in the classroom but Dick McGuire!

"If you'll come along with

me, Earth boy McGuire, you won't have to finish that examination paper. And you'll learn a thousand times as much."

"Come along?" gasped Dick. "W-where, mister?"

"To Mars." the stranger said it just as casually as though he meant the corner drugstore.

Dicky didn't even bother to ask any more questions. He just stood up, put his books under his desk and announced that he was ready to go. The dazzling man from Mars took his arm and turned toward the window.

The teacher, by this time had regained some of her senses and ran to them. "But you can't do this—it's against the school regulations!"

The stranger bowed politely. "I fully realize that, Madam, and apologize for doing so, but I will take full responsibility and promise to return the boy safely and with a greater fund of knowledge than you can ever provide."

And with these words he whisked Dicky through the window and straight up to the clouds, and through the clouds, and on and on till the Earth was lost to view and all around them was a black, black emptiness.

"Don't you use a rocket ship or something to get to

Mars?" asked Dick when he at last found his voice that seemed to have left him entirely at first.

"No, we're traveling on an Elemental Wave. The Martians are the only ones who have learned how to use it. There are several thousand Elemental Waves in the universe but we have only been able to tune in on this one leading from Mars to Earth. For other interplanetary travel, we use Atomic Propulsion ships."

As the Martian was explaining this a violent jolt rocked the two speeding figures with a wild convulsion and sent them flying in a tangent through the void. Dicky held tightly to the metal clad hand and held his breath in fear.

"The Mercurians are after us," shouted his companion as they tumbled together in space. "Now we'll have a terrible time getting back on the Wave—if we ever do get back. Those Mercurians have discovered how to destroy our wave but not how to use it. They always bombard it somewhere along the line in hope of catching an important Martian official. We often travel to Earth to explore and study its people—but we come in invisible cloaks. I was taking you back so that our children could study you—but now, if the Mercurians get us first—"

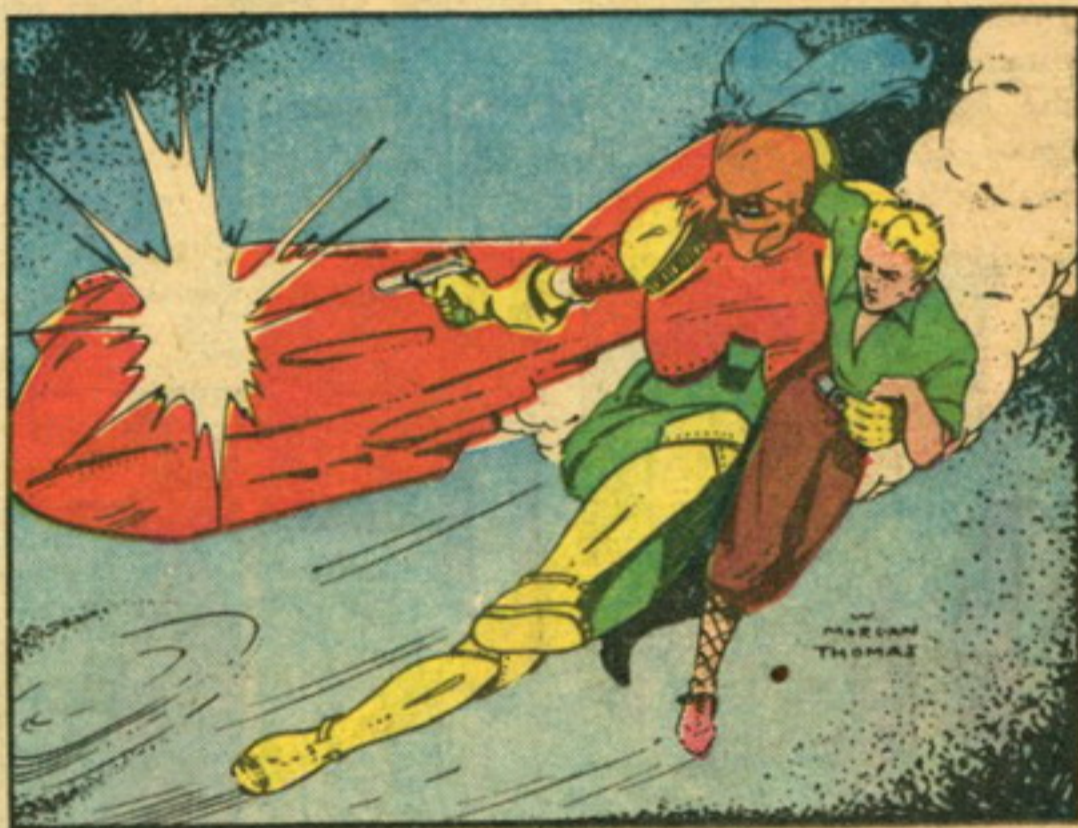
Dicky strained to see anything that might be a Mercurian in the inky nothingness around him. Suddenly something loomed so close that he almost bumped right into it.

"The Mercurian's ship! I can propel us away from it with my discharge gun!" As

they shot away from the huge gray hull, Dicky saw several figures scrambling about the slippery surface. Mercurians out to catch them as they floated by.

"You'll have to jump over if you expect to pick us up," cried the Martian. He didn't seem worried or concerned. Dicky began to feel that this was just a game. It was a good thing he couldn't see the grim expression that was cloaked by the mask.

The Mercurians jumped



and drifted toward them. Dick's friend floated limply till they came upon him, then he struck out, sudden as a cobra, and sent the first enemy flying miles away into the depths of the universe. A second blow split the rock-like skull of another Mercurian and as the rest surrounded him the Martian became a whirling tornado of smashing, driving fists and legs—unhampered by the pull of gravity his metal cased feet were a sure weapon. Dick began to wonder how long he could keep it up when he

heard a shouted order from the midst of the battle.

"Leap, Earth boy! Leap to your right with all the strength you can muster."

Dicky leapt and as he did so, he saw the Martian's figure spring from the clinging Mercurians and streak toward him.

Suddenly the Mercurians and their ship disappeared. Dick was once more speeding along arm in arm with his strange companion.

"W-where did they go?"

"They didn't. We are the

ones that moved. We're already thousands of miles away from them. You see, I had to hold them long enough for the pull of their ship to take us back to the Elemental Wave. As soon as my Detecting Belt caught the vibrations, I told you to leap—and here we are—once more on our way to Mars."

"How long will it take to get there?"

"We're almost there now, Earth boy. So keep your eyes open—there'll be a lot for you to see."