

BEYOND *The* POLE

~ *By A. Hyatt Verrill* ~

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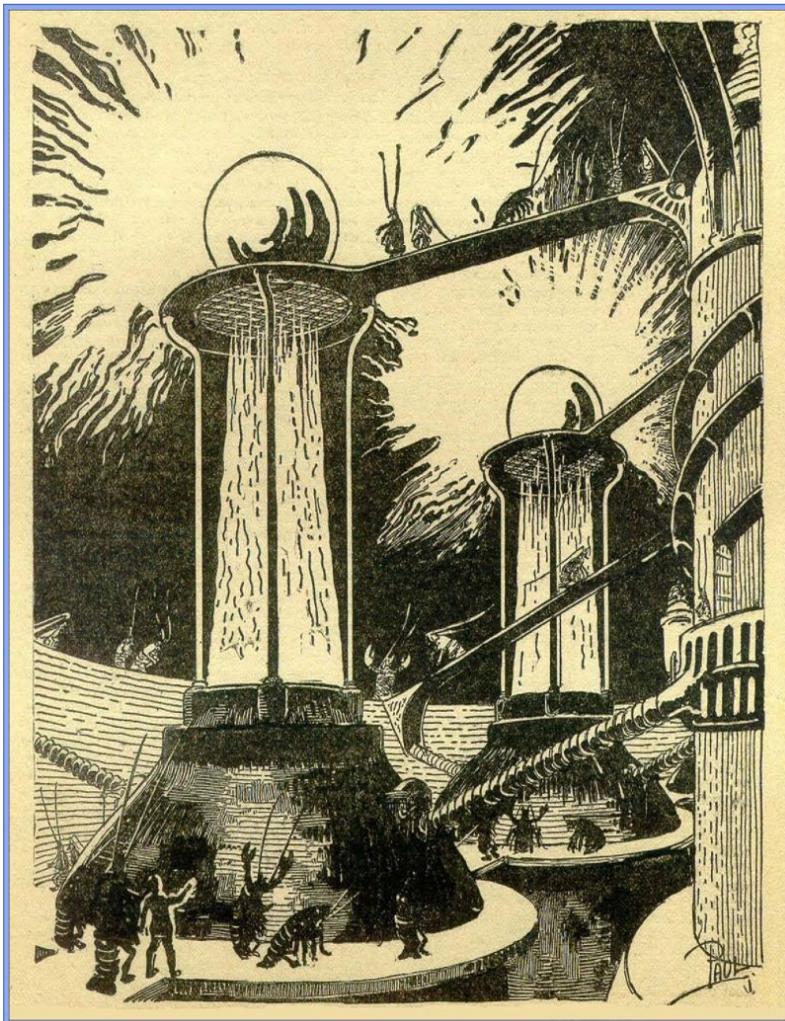
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Instantly, I was aware of a peculiar, vibrating, humming sound and noticed that my companion's feelers or antennae had risen erect above his head and were moving slowly, gracefully back and forth, as were the feelers of the two other creatures; but no word or sound that could be thought speech issued from any of the three. . . . A moment later we were beside the great, cylindrical object.

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Introductory note by Dr. Abbott E. Lyman

Before giving this really marvelous tale to the world, I feel that it is important to offer a few lines of explanation, as well as a brief sketch or synopsis of the events that led to my discovery of the manuscript relating the incredible adventures of this writer.

As a naturalist specializing in ornithology, I had long been attracted to the regions of the little known Antarctic as a rich field for my studies. Very largely, perhaps, my interest in Antarctic ornithology was due to the fact that I resided in New Bedford, a town famous in former years for the number of its whaling vessels, many of which sailed annually for the southern oceans in search of sea-elephant oil. From the officers of these vessels I obtained many specimens of birds' skins and eggs brought back by the obliging whalers. Such specimens were, however, more or less unsatisfactory for scientific study, and I at last made up my mind to visit the Antarctic in person in order to observe and study that avifauna in its own habitat.

It thus happened that I secured passage upon a whaleship bound for the South Atlantic and South Indian oceans, and, after an uneventful voyage of several months, I found myself gazing from the bark's deck at the frowning mountain peaks of Kerguelen, or as it is also called, Desolation Island.

Here, in company with some ten of the bark's crew, I was landed, and, having been amply supplied with provisions, tools and implements of the whalers' trade, we saw the vessel sail away for South Georgia, there to land other parties, which, like our own, would remain upon the barren bits of land until the bark's return the following year.

I need not enter into a description of the wonderful fauna and flora of the island, nor need I dilate upon the rare and interesting specimens which rewarded my daily tramps over the bare basaltic hills or through the thick scrub and rank grass of the valleys, although to me those days were filled

with fascination and all the naturalist's enthusiasm at treading new fields of study.

Suffice it to state that on one misty morning, having penetrated far into the interior of the island in search of a new rookery of albatross, I was attracted by the strange behavior of one of these great birds.

He appeared unable to rise from the ground, although he repeatedly spread his immense wings and flapped upward for a few inches. But each time he fell back and struggled awkwardly about upon the earth.

My nearer approach disclosed the fact that the bird's leg was entangled in some object among the rocks, and, walking to within a few yards of the albatross, I was surprised to find that a cord or line was attached to the bird's leg, while the other extremity of the cord was fastened to an object that glittered curiously in the light.

Consumed with curiosity, for I knew that no human beings had recently visited the spot, I cautiously approached the albatross, and, throwing my coat over its head, I stooped and endeavored to disengage the line from the bird's leg. I found however, that the cord, which was of a most unusual metallic lustre, was spliced or woven about the leg.

I therefore drew my sailor's sheath knife and strove to cut the line which was scarcely larger than twine. Imagine if you can my surprise when the keen-edged blade slipped uselessly along the cord as though the knife had been of wood and the line of steel!

Judging that the affair was some form of wire rope, I then placed it across a small rock and hammered it with another stone, but without avail. Bending it rapidly back and forth was equally futile, and I therefore turned my attention to the object to which the cord was attached, and which appeared to be a thin glass cylinder some two inches in diameter and approximately six inches in length. Through the crystal I could discern a roll of some material resembling paper, and, feeling sure that this was a message of some sort, I struck the bottle-like receptacle a smart blow with a bit of rock. I remember that, even as I did so, I was mentally wondering how such a fragile receptacle had escaped annihilation during the rough usage to which it must have been subjected by its winged carrier, but even this vague thought did not prepare me for the result of my blow. Indeed, I cannot adequately transcribe my utter amazement as the stone rebounded from the glass container without leaving so much as a scratch or a crack upon the surface!

I was in fact, absolutely dumbfounded. Eagerly I stooped, and examined the strange object more closely and minutely. I discovered a small catch or button near one end of the cylinder, and as I pressed upon this, the cord was suddenly released.

With the cylinder now in my possession I gave no further heed to the albatross, which immediately flew off, a most regrettable incident as he carried with him the remarkable ligature which, had I secured it, would have proved of inestimable scientific value. But my attention was focussed completely upon the container which I found was remarkably light, about the weight of aluminum, I judged. But, despite its apparently fragile character I could not succeed in either breaking or denting the remarkable material, try as I might.

My curiosity was now at fever heat, for I knew of a certainty that no such material was known to civilized man, and that any message or communication enclosed within it must be of the utmost importance and interest. In order to examine it more closely I opened my pocket lens and commenced most carefully and painstakingly to go over the smooth surface of the astonishing receptacle.

In so doing I inadvertently brought a point of light to a focus upon the cylinder. All that had gone before was as nothing to the astounding result of this accidental procedure. Instantly the material commenced to melt and run like wax! In a few brief moments I had melted a space completely encircling the cylinder, and, from the aperture thus made I drew forth the roll of manuscript—for such the contents proved to be, and, spreading the pages commenced to read the incredible story written thereon. Certain passages, names and references assured me that the story was no fiction nor the work of a disordered mind, for many of the incidents mentioned as well as names referred to, were familiar to me. I clearly remembered the departure of the bark *Endeavor*, her failure to return, and the various newspaper accounts of her disappearance, with the published lists of her personnel. These facts, as I have stated, would alone have convinced me even had I not felt assured, from the character of the receptacle chosen to hold the manuscript, that the tale was true, for the material could not have been obtained or prepared in any known country or by any known race of men.

Deeply have I regretted, since that time, the fact that my engrossment with the manuscript swept all thoughts of the cylinder from my mind. I had carelessly dropped it as I secured the contents, and when, having read and reread the astounding tale from beginning to end, I looked for the receptacle, it could not be found. My closest and most painstaking search failed to

reveal it. Whether it had rolled into some crevice or hole in the volcanic rock or whether some curious albatross, attracted by the glitter of the cylinder, had surreptitiously approached and swallowed it, I shall never know.

But even without the cylinder and its attendant cord as corroborative evidence as to the truth of the story I so strangely obtained, the tale itself is so manifestly fact, and is of such incalculable value to the world that I have not the slightest hesitation in publishing it.

The manuscript, quite unaltered, is reproduced in the following pages, and my readers may judge for themselves as to the veracity of the author and the importance of its revelations which are now made public for the first time. The narrative, written legibly in some dark colored medium upon a peculiar parchment-like and exceedingly tough though light material, covered many sheets, and was as follows:

Here is one of the most gripping stories that it has ever been our good fortune to read. At the same time, it is one of the best scientifiiction works of the modern school that we have lately seen. It is easily the best scientifiiction story of this year.

The author, in choosing a civilization of lobster-like people, should not be accused of sketching an impossibility. Indeed, it is impossible to say, at this moment, in what form an intelligent reasoning creature might or might not exist. Just because we have never met a reasoning creature different from a human being tells nothing, and we certainly should not be so arrogant as to think that intelligence, as we know it, combined with reasoning, exists solely in the human type.

So far we have not been able to penetrate the secrets of ant life, or of the bee life, despite our so-called "intelligence," so we should not judge too harshly what is and what is not possible, when it comes to reasoning intelligence.

In nature we know that everything is repeated—not only once, but thousands of times. Why should reasoning intelligence be represented only in one species?

At any rate, we know that somehow you will feel that "Beyond the Pole" is a real story, where real facts are given to you for what they are worth. It is an engrossing story that cannot fail to grip you from start to finish.

BEYOND THE POLE

By A. HYATT VERRILL

CHAPTER I.

TO whosoever finds this message:—I entreat that you will read, and after reading will either notify the relatives and friends of myself and my comrades of the crew of the bark *Endeavor* of New Bedford, in the State of Massachusetts, U. S. A., of the fate of that vessel and her men, or failing in this, will give this writing to some reliable newspaper in order that it may be published for the benefit and peace of mind of all who have an interest in the fate of the bark which set sail from New Bedford on the fourteenth day of August, 1917.

My name is Franklin Bishop and I was born and resided at Fairhaven, Mass., across the harbor from New Bedford. For many years I followed the sea as a whaler, until in 1917 I shipped as first mate on the bark *Endeavor*, Captain Ranklin, bound for the South Shetland Islands in search of sea-elephant oil, the price of oil having greatly increased owing to the war. The bark carried a crew of sixteen men, six of whom were Portugese boat-steerers shipped at Funchal.

I cannot now recall the names or homes of the crew, if indeed I ever knew them, for a large number were greenies—human derelicts, and were known aboard ship only by their Christian or their nicknames. The skipper was George Rankin of New London, Ct. The second mate was Jacob Marten of Noank, Ct. The cooper was Nicholas Chester of Mystic, Ct., and the carpenter was a huge, raw boned Scandinavian named Olaf Johnson. But the names matter little, for I have no doubt that even after six years the bark's owners of the New Bedford shipping lists of 1917 can supply the names of all hands with the exception of the Portugese, and I mention the above merely to prove the truth of my tale and to induce whoever finds it to make known the fate of the bark and of her crew.^[1]

Our voyage, after leaving Funchal, was pleasant and with favorable winds and good weather we made a quick run until south of Tristan da Cunha when we ran into heavy weather with a northeast gale that forced us to shorten sail to almost bare poles. Even then the old bark wallowed heavily and made such bad weather of the sharp irregular seas that we at last were forced to heave to and even to use oil over the bows. This made the ship ride

easier but our drift was tremendous and when, on the fifth day, we managed to take sights we found ourselves far off our course and in latitude about 45° south and longitude 11° west. The exact figures I do not remember.

We had scarcely made sail and gotten on our course when another and even harder gale bore down upon us from the northwest, and under bare poles we scudded before it for sixty hours, when, by the hardest work, we managed to set a patch of sail and heaved the bark to.

Hour after hour the storm howled through the rigging, while with aching backs and straining arms we toiled at the pumps day and night.

Gradually the wind died down and intense cold followed, with murky, leaden skies and occasional squalls of snow, while between these puffs the wind fell flat and we drifted helplessly about at the will of the strong and unknown currents of the region. For five long, weary days we drifted, the sky becoming more and more sullen, and with no gleam of sunlight to enable us to make an observation.

On the sixth day, long, oily rollers came running in from the west with a weight that told of wind to follow, and sails were close reefed in readiness for the expected blow. At last, upon the horizon, we saw a streak of white, gleaming against the inky murk, and hardly had we grasped rails and rigging when the hurricane and blinding sleet and snow struck us. Over the old bark went until it seemed as if her yards would trip in the mountainous seas that rushed past her bulwarks. Then gradually she righted, and bearing off before the wind, tore through the huge seas like a mad thing. For ten hours the gale screeched and howled with undiminished fury and every effort to bring the bark into the wind was useless. Moreover the hail and snow was so thick that we could see barely a cable's length from the ship, while rigging and spars were loaded with tons of ice and to handle ropes was like hauling on steel bars. Then, suddenly from aloft, came the piercing cry "Ice ahead! Port your helm! For God's sake, hard a port!"

Springing to the wheel I threw all my weight upon it, but even with the two men already there, we were unable to swing the bark half a point and a second later, with a grinding crash, we struck the berg.

So great was the shock that all hands were thrown flat upon the deck, and with a splintering roar, the fore- and mainmasts went over the side, dragging the port bulwarks with them and staving a gaping hole in the bark's side as the jagged butts lurched up on the next sea.

Instantly all was confusion. The Portugese rushed to the boats, only to find that all but two were staved in, and tried to cut away the falls. Luckily the ropes were so sheathed in ice that for a moment they could not lower the boats and in this brief space of time the captain and myself, with the other officers, managed to drive the crazed fellows from the boats and to restore some sort of order.

Provisions and water were thrown into the boats, but the bark was settling so rapidly that before the craft were half provisioned Captain Rankin decided it would be certain death to wait longer. Accordingly the boats were lowered away at once, but as I looked at the huge seas and felt the sweep of the icy gale I turned back and chose to risk going down with the ship rather than add my weight to the overburdened boats that I judged would scarcely live an hour in the terrific welter of sea and wind.

In this decision I was joined by Olaf, the carpenter, and standing upon the rapidly sinking hulk we saw the two tiny whaleboats shove off and disappear in the sleet and snow to leeward. We momentarily expected the bark to sink beneath us and our only hope was that we might have time to build some sort of makeshift raft before the vessel went down. With this idea we at once commenced to gather what materials we could. But long before we had secured even a small part of what we required the bark had settled until the deck was only a few inches above the water. Then suddenly she lurched to port, rolled over on her beam ends and with a slight shudder remained motionless except for a slight rising and falling on the waves. For a moment we were amazed and puzzled and could not understand the matter, for I knew hundreds of fathoms of water lay under our keel. Presently, however, we came to grasp the situation. Evidently the berg on which we struck projected far under water, like a huge shelf, and our ship, passing over this before she struck, had now settled until she rested on the submerged ice shelf. For the time we were safe and although the bark rested in such a slanting position that we were obliged to crawl rather than walk the decks, yet we thanked God that we were there, instead of tossing about in small boats at the mercy of the tempest.

As nothing was to be gained by remaining on deck we entered the cabin and secured food and drink and succeeded in belaying the cabin stove so that we could light a fire, which proved most grateful to our chilled and numbed bodies. Here we sat and smoked for uncounted hours, while dimly the sound of storm and waves came to us or the grating of the bark's keel upon the ice beneath gave us momentary frights. Gradually the storm waned and the waves broke less heavily against our crippled ship. Towards

daybreak we both fell asleep and did not awaken until aroused by the cold which became terrific as the fire died down. We kindled a new fire, and wrapping ourselves in heavy coats and oilskins, went on deck. The sun was shining brightly close to the horizon, but as far as eye could see there was nothing but gleaming ice floes broken by narrow, open lanes of dark water and lofty bergs. By watching certain spots we soon found that we were drifting rapidly southward and I went below to secure my sextant and take an observation. To my chagrin I found that the captain had taken the instruments with him and we were without means to learn our position except by guess-work. By careful calculation of our drift, and assuming that we had been drifting at the same speed and in the same direction since striking the ice, and allowing for our progress since taking the last observation, I decided that our latitude and longitude must be about 70° south and 10° east. The cold was now so intense that we descended to the cabin, only occasionally venturing on deck to meet with the same weary, drifting, broken ice. Our case seemed hopeless indeed, for we well knew that we were far beyond the tracks of any ships and that unless some miracle occurred we were doomed to spend the rest of our days upon the helpless wreck, to perish miserably of starvation. With such thoughts we turned in at night and for six days our existence was but a repetition of the first.

On the morning of the seventh day we were startled by a roaring, grinding noise and the sudden violent lurching of the bark. Rushing on deck and fearing the worst, we were thunderstruck to behold—barely a cable's length away—a rocky, ice-capped shore, behind which rose lofty mountains with their summits hidden in clouds. Much to our surprise also we found that the weather had greatly moderated and several big mollymokes were wheeling about the ship while seals and sea-leopards basked on the rocks above the surf. Our ice cradle prevented the bark taking the ground, but in the course of a few moments we managed to scramble over the intervening broken ice and soon stepped upon the shingle. Then, with ropes and hawsers, we succeeded in making our wreck fast to the shore. We were now reasonably sure that the ship would not go adrift, and even if a storm came up and forced us to desert our quarters on board, we could no doubt salvage enough from the wreck to build some manner of craft in which to make our escape from this forbidding and uncharted land.

During the next two or three weeks we busied ourselves carrying ashore fuel and provisions and in constructing a little hut or shelter in which to store the goods or to seek refuge in case of disaster to the bark.

There was no lack of fresh meat, for penguins, albatross, mollymokes and Cape pigeons were thick. Also, we laid in a fine supply of seal skins and oil in preparation for the long and dreary winter which we knew we should be forced to face, for we had no intentions of trusting ourselves to any frail craft we might be able to build until all chances of whaleships reaching us had passed with the summer. Although this work kept us busy and left us little time to think of our plight, yet often, during meals or when done with the day's work, we talked over the probable fates of our comrades and were grateful at our own salvation, even in such an inhospitable land.^[2]

[1] (Foot note by Dr. Lyman)

The following is a clipping from the New Bedford "Mercury" of August 14th, 1917: "Sailed: Bark 'Endeavor', Rankin, for Gough, South Georgia and South Shetland Islands via Funchal. It is with pleasure that we note the sailing of the old whaleship 'Endeavor'. This is the first of New Bedford's once great fleet of whalers to set sail for the South Atlantic in many years, and we trust that it signifies an awakening of the long dormant industry which once made the name of New Bedford familiar in every corner of the world. It is a direct outcome of the Great War and the consequent advance in the price of oil and while the latter may be and no doubt is only temporary, our still serviceable old ships may yet reap golden harvests while high prices continue. The 'Endeavor's' officers are well known and experienced men and we wish them and the owners every success and a 'greasy v'yage'. The 'Endeavor's' officers are as follows: Captain, George Rankin of New London. First mate, Frank Bishop, Fairhaven. Second, Jacob Marten, Noank. Cooper, Nicholas Chester, Mystic. Carpenter, and blacksmith, Olaf Johnson, Christiana, Sweden. Cook, Wm. Outerbridge, Hamilton, Bermuda. Boatsteerers, Jake Hildebrand, Nantucket. Henry Fogarty, Martha's Vineyard. Michael Mendoza, Cape Verde Island."—A. E. L.

[2] (Foot note by Dr. Lyman)

"Evidently Mr. Bishop did not consider the possibility of any member of the bark's crew having reached land or safety. The following is a clipping from the 'New Bedford Mercury' of July 2d, 1919:

"The schooner Petrel, Archibald, arrived yesterday with 600 bbls. of sea-elephant oil; 300 seal skins; 200 bbls. sperm oil; 15 casks spermaceti and 16 lbs. ambergris from the South Atlantic and South Indian oceans.

Captain Archibald brought with him the survivors of the ill fated bark 'Endeavor' of this port which sailed for the Antarctic on August 14th, 1917. The 'Endeavor' struck a berg and foundered near the Bouvets Islands after being driven far off her course by a series of gales. The survivors who have both our heartiest sympathies and our most sincere congratulations, are as follows: Jacob Marten, Noank. Nicholas Chester, Mystic. Michael Mendoza, Cape Verde Island. Henry Fogarty, Martha's Vineyard. Jose Rodriguez, Funchal. Mr. Marten, the second mate of the 'Endeavor,' states that only two boats were lowered, the others having been stove by falling spars. The other boat contained Captain Rankin and eight men and was lost to sight a few moments after leaving the bark's side. Franklin Bishop, the first mate, and Olaf Johnson, the carpenter, refused to leave the vessel and trust to the boats. After terrible hardships Mr. Marten's boat reached the Bouvets and after three months on those desolate rocks the men were picked up by the Petrel. There can be little doubt that those in the Captain's boat, as well as Mr. Bishop and the carpenter, perished."—A. E. L.

CHAPTER II.

As winter approached, however, Olaf became very sullen and morose, often talking to himself and wandering about the rocks, gesticulating and acting strangely.

I became afraid that the poor fellow would lose his mind completely, and, as on many occasions he turned upon me savagely, I was constantly on the alert to protect myself. He had been a wonderful help, for his skill with tools had enabled us to build a comfortable house and without him I would have fared badly indeed.

It was several months after landing that in one of his fits of wandering he fell among slippery rocks and broke his thigh. I did not find him until several hours after the accident, and twixt loss of blood and the pain and the piercing cold, he was past all human help and quite unconscious.

I carried him to the hut and did all in my power for my suffering shipmate, but it was useless. Early the following morning he died, and with heavy heart at the loss of my only companion, I carried his body to a crevice in the hillside and covered it well with stones and gravel, and over it placed a small wooden cross on which I carved his name and the date of his death.

I now became most despondent, for I knew that alone I could never hope to complete the boat we had been working on, and that even if that were possible I would be powerless to handle or navigate it. I could see nothing but the endless winter and utter loneliness before me, with ultimate death through accident or madness, unless by some remote chance a sail hove in sight.

In my calmer moments I held to this slender hope and tried to conjure up all the tales I had heard of castaways living for years alone and yet being rescued in the end. I had little fear of meeting with an accident as long as I kept my mind, and I realized that my greatest danger lay in going mad as Olaf had done. To avoid this as much as possible and to prevent my thoughts from dwelling on my plight, I commenced taking long trips across the hills in search of game, carrying a supply of ammunition and a haversack filled with biscuit or dried meat. On one of these tramps I had wandered several

miles from the hut and had reached the summit of a good-sized hill, from which I had a wide view of the sea. Far down the shore I noticed some object about which great flocks of sea fowl were gathering, and thinking it a stranded whale or sea elephant, I turned my steps towards the spot. As I rounded a point of rocks and came within plain sight of the object, I almost dropped in my tracks from sheer amazement. Upon the beach before me was a ship's boat!

I broke into a run, and panting, reached the craft from which hundreds of mollymokes and other birds rose screaming. Gaining the boat's side I peered within and recoiled in horror. Stretched upon the thwarts and bottom were the bodies of six men, their faces torn and mutilated by the sea birds. But even in their ghastly state I knew them for Captain Rankin and my former shipmates of the *Endeavor*. I reeled away, for the sight was sickening and stunning, and seized with insane and unreasoning fright, I dropped my gun and dashed off across the rocks and hills, striving with might and main to get as far from the gruesome boat as possible.

At last I dropped from sheer exhaustion among the rocks, but even then the shock was so great that I hid my face and screamed and raved like a madman until consciousness left me.

How long I remained in that condition I cannot say, for when at last I awoke to a knowledge of my surroundings, I found myself wandering about amid thick and thorny scrub on a steep hillside I had never seen before. I was ravenously hungry and thrust my hand into my haversack in search of food, only to find it empty save for a few crumbs of ship's bread. Seating myself on a nearby rock I munched these eagerly and tried to collect my thoughts and reason. I soon came to the conclusion that I had been delirious for a long time, and during my period of temporary madness, had wandered far, for my haversack had been full when I first sighted the boat and was now empty, and I reasoned that I must have devoured my food during my unconscious wanderings. My watch had stopped, but this mattered little, as for months I had been able merely to guess at the time. A search of my pockets failed to reveal my compass but I felt this was no great loss at the time, for I had no doubt that, by climbing a neighboring hill, I could make out the sea and so find my way back to the hut, although I confess that the mere thought of again approaching the ghastly remains of my shipmates filled me with most awful dread and caused me to shudder violently.

My tongue and throat were parched and dry and the hard crumbs of biscuit added to my thirst, so I at once commenced to push my way up the hillside through the shrubbery. As I reached the top and looked about, no

gleaming bit of sea greeted my eyes. On every side stretched rolling, round-topped hills, each and all clothed in dull, brownish-gray scrub, save just behind me, where the more distant landscape was hidden from view by a higher range of small mountains. Although my thirst was now unbearable yet I knew that my one hope of finding my way was to ascend the higher hills, and with sinking heart and lagging footsteps, I started for them. Slowly and painfully I climbed their rough and rocky slopes, stopping often to rest and regain my failing breath, but at last I stood upon their crest and gazed anxiously about the horizon. For a moment my head swam and a mist floated before my eyes. Then my vision cleared and I saw before me a long, sloping hillside covered with scattered shrubs, while below and stretching far towards the horizon, was a green and pleasant valley on whose farther edge rose high and rugged mountains misty with distance. But though no water gladdened my eyes, yet near at hand I saw a number of great birds resembling penguins, and towards these I rapidly made my way. They were stupid and fearless and in a moment I had killed the first one I reached and greedily drank its rich warm blood. This refreshed me greatly, but feeling still hungry, I gathered a quantity of eggs, which I ate raw, and feeling drowsy made my way to a sheltered nook among the rocks and fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

I awoke feeling strong but half famished, and at once fell to on the helpless birds and their eggs. I now considered my next step and as there evidently was nothing to be gained by retracing my way I decided to travel towards the valley where I judged perhaps water might be found, for although the blood and raw eggs had somewhat quenched my thirst, yet the desire for water was overpowering. As I did not know if I would find more birds farther on, I laid in a good supply of flesh and eggs, and as I noticed that my shoes were almost worn out, I wrapped birds' skins about my feet, binding them in place with strips of the skin.

I now noticed that these birds were not penguins, as I had at first thought, nor in fact anything like any birds I had even before seen. I judged therefore that I was far from the coast, but I was wholly without means of ascertaining the direction of the sea or my position, for I had seen nothing of the sun since finding the boat, although the days were bright enough. As I thought on this its strangeness came to me and I also marveled that I was not suffering from the cold. The more I thought of these matters the more I wondered, for now that I came to think of it, the weather was quite warm and I had seen no snow or ice, even among the crevices of the rocks. But I had other things to occupy my attention, for my thirst for water and my desire to escape from my surroundings filled my head to the exclusion of all

less pressing matters, as for hour after hour I tramped on across the valley. From the hilltop it had appeared clothed in soft grass, but when I reached it I found to my sorrow that the vegetation was thorny, pointed-leaf shrubs whose tangled branches formed an almost impenetrable jungle which made my progress painful and slow beyond belief. I soon lost all sense of time or direction, but toiled on towards the distant mountains, eating the birds' flesh and eggs when hungry and at last sinking down to sleep when my tired and torn flesh refused to carry me farther on my way. Only by looking at the hills behind me could I see that I had made any progress towards the mountains, which seemed as distant as ever. But gradually the hills grew dim in the distance, while ahead, the mountains became more distinct and great seams and patches of vegetation appeared upon their slopes. It was well for me that I had laid in a supply of meat and eggs, for I saw no sign of life on the dreary plain, except one great beast that appeared like a gigantic lizard or iguana. In fact, so monstrous was the creature, that I feared my brain had gone adrift again and that it was but a vision of delirium. The beast appeared more afraid of me than I of him, however, and so little interest did I have in anything save the desire for water and to reach the farther side of the valley that I doubt if I would have turned aside or would have fled even though the devil himself had confronted me. Certain it is that the presence of this huge creature—I would say he was forty feet in length—did not prevent me from dropping off to sleep as usual that night.

At last my provisions became perilously low and when finally I reached the bases of the mountains I was reduced to two eggs, while my makeshift boots were gone entirely and my garments were merely a few dirty rags and shreds. To climb those rugged mountains seemed utterly beyond my power, but I noticed a sort of cut or ravine a half mile or so distant, and thinking this might be a pass through the mountains, I dragged myself toward it. It was a deep fissure and extended far up the mountain side and while it made the climb a bit easier I soon found that the task was far greater than I had expected, and only by the utmost efforts could I force my way upward. But some unknown force or instinct seemed to drag me on, and even when my last egg had been devoured I did not despair, but struggled and found my way, foot by foot, over the rocks and boulders and through patches of low scrub, until almost fainting from hunger and thirst, I came to another colony of the strange birds. On these I feasted until satisfied, and while resting and tying more of the bird-skins on my bruised and swollen feet, I found time to give some thought to my surroundings.

I had often heard of the theory of a vast Antarctic continent, and although I of course knew that Shackleton had found the South Pole, still I

was now convinced that I had passed the pole and was on this unknown land.

But the fact that the weather was warm puzzled me immensely, while quite beyond my understanding was the fact that I had seen no glimpse of the sun on my long tramp across the plain. No theory, however wild and impossible, would account for this, for it was not dark but as bright as any Antarctic day, and neither could I understand how, especially without the sun, I could feel comfortably warm. At last, giving up the puzzle in despair, I gathered up my load of birds and eggs and once more started on.

And here it may be well to explain why I was able to think upon such matters, which are usually beyond the mind of a sailor, and how, as will be seen later, I happened to have a knowledge of many matters, such as science, mechanics and similar things of which the sailor or whalerman, as a rule, knows nothing. For several years I had been an officer on one of the ships of the United States Fish Commission, and from the scientists engaged in deep sea research I had learned a great deal about natural history which interested me always, and learning for the first time that specimens of animal life, minerals and plants had a cash value, I secured a commission from one of the museums to collect specimens on my whaling voyages to distant parts of the world. This led me to study works on science, and through long Arctic nights, I filled my brain with all manner of knowledge relating to geology, zoölogy, botany and other similar matters.

Also, I had always been fond of mechanics, and as the whaling industry waned and the demand for sailors decreased in the merchant service, I bent my energies to acquiring a knowledge of machinery so that I might secure a berth on some steam or motor-propelled craft. In doing this I became absorbed in the matter and found vast interest in reading all manner of books and magazines treating of the latest inventions and discoveries in the mechanical world. Of course I had little practical knowledge of these things, but the theories were fixed in my mind, and as it proved later, were of great value to me.

But to resume my narrative. Long and weary as my tramp across the plain had been, tenfold worse was the never ending upward climb towards the cloud-piercing summits of the mountains. My days were measured only by my waking moments, for the light never ceased, and my labor was only marked by long periods of panting, heartbreaking toil and periods of deep sleep, and while, to keep some sort of track of the hours, I had started my watch, yet this gave me no real time, but merely served to let me know how long I slept and how long I toiled upwards. Five days of this labor had again

worn my makeshift footgear to pieces and had reduced my provisions to my last egg, when I reached the summit of the mountains, and falling exhausted upon the bare and wind-swept rocks, looked down upon the farther side.

At my first glance my heart gave a great throb of joy and I thanked heaven that I had been led on to the summit. Spreading from the base of the mountains was a wide level plain covered with rich and verdant green, while far away, gleaming like silver in the bright light, stretched a vast expanse of water.

Forgetting my sore, torn feet and my utter exhaustion, I rose and dashed forward down the slope. Stumbling over boulders, tripped by vines and shrubs, falling, sliding and scrambling, I reached the bottom in a few hours and dashed into the luxuriant grass that rose higher than my head. Here my strength failed me, and falling upon the earth, I felt utterly unable to rise again.

Presently I heard a slight rustling sound in the grass near me, and glancing up, beheld a strange animal staring at me in wonder, but evidently without the least fear. Thinking only to secure something to eat I managed to stagger to my feet and started towards the animal. I had no weapon except my knife, but the beast stood his ground until I was within a few feet when, by a sudden spring, I reached his side, and driving my knife into his throat, brought him down. In my famished state his blood and raw, warm meat were as welcome as the daintiest food, and having satisfied myself, I fell asleep beside his partially devoured carcass.

Several hours later I awoke, feeling much stronger, and looked more closely at the beast whose fortunate appearance had saved my life. I found him to be a sort of huge rat or mouse—although I had at first mistaken him for a small deer—and my stomach turned a bit at the thought that I had actually eaten his flesh. I now became conscious of a peculiar quality in the air that I had not noticed before. At first I was puzzled to account for it, but gradually I realized that the light had become intensely blue instead of white or yellow. It was like looking through a blue-tinted glass, and for the first time I noticed that my hands and knife and even the face of my watch, appeared bluish and strange. My longing for water, however, was too great to allow me to give much thought to the matter and turning from the dead animal—for hungry as I was I could not force myself to eat more of him—I started on in the direction of the water I had seen from the mountain top. The grass grew close and was very dry and gave off a dusty, choking material or pollen which filled my eyes, nose and mouth and each moment increased my thirst and dried and blistered my aching, parched throat. But

gradually the grass became thinner and now and then I caught glimpses of small creatures and birds that fled before me, while the ground under my feet became less dry and parched, until presently, the damp, sweet smell of water reached me. A moment later I burst through the last of the grass and saw before me a sandy beach lapped by tiny waves whose sound was the most welcome thing I had ever heard. Rushing across the beach, I threw myself face down at the water's edge with a sickening fear that the water might be salt. But my first taste reassured me, and burying my face and hands in the waves, I drank until I felt sick and nauseated, when, crawling up the beach on all fours, I drew myself into the shelter of the grass and lost consciousness.

CHAPTER III.

SLOWLY I opened my eyes and as I did so I screamed aloud with terror and wonder. Standing over me was a fearsome, terrible creature. That he was not a man I knew at my first glance, and yet, there was something that resembled a man about him, but so terribly monstrous, weird and incredible, so utterly inhuman, that I felt sure I must be dreaming or out of my senses. He or it was fully eight feet in height, standing on two legs like a man, and seemingly clad from head to foot in some soft, downy material that glistened with a thousand colors, like the throat of a humming bird or the tints on a soap bubble. Above the shoulders was a large, elongated, pointed head with a wide mouth and a long, pointed snout. From the forehead projected long stalks or horns and on the tip of each of these was an unwinking, gleaming eye like the eyes of a crab. In place of eyebrows two long, slender, jointed, fleshy tentacles drooped down over the creature's shoulders, while the ears were long, soft and pendulous like those of a hound. There was no hair upon the head, but instead, a number of brilliant, shining scales or plates, lapping one over the other from the forehead to the nape of the neck.

No wonder I was horrified and startled at this apparition and as I gazed upon the thing and saw that it possessed three pairs of long, many-jointed arms, I shrieked again at the monstrosity of it. At my cry and my terrified actions, the creature raised one hand in a reassuring gesture and I was further horrified to see that in place of fingers the arm ended in a mass of delicate various-shaped appendages of several sizes, that reminded me of the soft legs on the belly of a crawfish or shrimp. I shrank away as far as possible, but the being seemed to smile, his stalked eyes drew back into his head and he uttered some strange sounds in a low, soft tone which I judge were words of greeting or reassurance, although to my ears they meant nothing.

Finding I did not respond—for I was still too dazed and frightened to utter a sound—the thing stooped and extended a small object towards me. It resembled a ship's biscuit in form and size and as I hesitated to take it the creature pointed to his own mouth and nodded, evidently meaning I was to

eat it. I had no difficulty in grasping this meaning and famished as I was, rather hesitatingly took the object and greedily devoured it. In taste it was slightly sweet with a rather pleasant aromatic flavor and I at once signed my desire for more. My weird friend, for I now knew that despite his fearful appearance the creature was well disposed towards me, handed me two more of the biscuits and as he did so I had a chance to look more closely at his hands. They were truly remarkable. Each of the dozen or more finger-like digits was of a distinct form and size. Some were large, strong and blunt; others slender and pointed; others with pincer-like tips, while still others were divided at the extremities into several filaments almost as fine as hairs. Marvelous and repulsive as they seemed, yet I could not help realizing even then what wonderful work such hands might accomplish if they were controlled by intelligence and muscles as perfect as man's, and yet my wildest ideas of such things fell far short of the reality.

Seating himself, or I might say, sprawling himself, beside me, the thing watched me munch the biscuit and I in turn gazed at him with the utmost curiosity, as I had now partially overcome my dread. I now saw that what I had mistaken for clothing was in reality a growth upon the skin, a material something like wool and yet something like feathers. The feet, too, I found were as strange as the rest of the body or the hands, for in place of toes, they bore round-tipped digits covered with saucer-shaped suckers like those upon the tentacles of an octopus or squid.

Undoubtedly I was as great a marvel to him as he was to me, for I could see that his surprise at my appearance was tremendous. His long flexible feelers rose and fell about me—though not touching me for which I was thankful—his eyes turned and moved up and down as he looked me over from head to foot, and presently, realizing I no longer feared him, he extended one hand and very gently passed it over my clothing. I shuddered at the first touch, but as one of the appendages or fingers touched my flesh and I found it soft and warm and not cold or clammy as I had expected, my revulsion became less. Still the sensation of being handled or touched by the horribly formed thing was creepy and I had to use all my will to avoid drawing back. Evidently he was greatly surprised at the result of his examination and gazed at me more intently than ever, meanwhile uttering low, strange words or sounds that reminded me of the purring of a cat with a little of the rasping, metallic sound of a cricket.

Presently, seeing I had eaten the last of the biscuits, the creature rose to his two hind feet, folded two other pairs of limbs under his body, and beckoning with the fourth pair, or as I might call them, his arms, made me

understand that I was to follow him. Filled with curiosity to know what wonders lay before me, and feeling sure the creature was friendly and peaceable, I also rose and to my amazement found that all my health and strength had returned in a most miraculous manner. I was as refreshed, light hearted and free from aches, soreness or pain as ever in my life and as I walked with springy, buoyant steps after the weird being my mind was filled with wonder. Surely, I thought, the three small biscuits could not have stayed my ravenous appetite and given me such strength, and yet there was no other way to account for it. But whatever the reason, my troubles were over for the present. I had water in plenty before me, the creature leading the way across the beach could provide food, and whatever the future might hold or wherever I might be, I would not die of thirst or starvation, while the incredible giant was friendly and apparently wished to help me.

I had no doubt that he was leading me to some house or settlement, and I was filled with curiosity to see what manner of creatures dwelt in this strange land. That they would be most interesting I felt sure, for I knew that, hitherto, the Antarctic had been thought uninhabited by man, and I wondered if they would resemble Eskimos, Indians or South Sea Islanders. That they should have domesticated such strangely weird creatures as the being who was guiding me, proved not only that they were intelligent, but that I might expect other and perhaps even greater surprises, while the fact that this monstrosity was so kindly and well disposed assured me that his masters would treat me with consideration. It was all very dreamlike, and had it not been for my ragged garments, my thorn-torn and bruised flesh and my sore feet I should have felt sure that it was all a figment of my overwrought brain, for it was almost too incredible to be true. I had set out from the desolate, forbidding shores of the Antarctic within a few degrees of the South Pole, and here I was in a land as mild and pleasant as New England in June; the sea—or what I took to be the sea—was fresh pure water; the brilliant sunshine, which should not have existed at all in this spot, was pale blue instead of white; and before me strode a creature such as no mortal man had ever seen save in some nightmare or the delirium of fever or drink; while to me, at the time, the most incredible thing of all was the fact that after eating three small, dry biscuits I had regained all my strength and felt as fresh—with the exception of my blistered feet—as ever in my life.

We had walked along the beach for some time, and I was beginning to wonder how much farther we must travel, when we rounded a bend and I saw a peculiar object resting on the sand a few yards ahead of us. It was about fifty feet in length, about ten feet in diameter, cylindrical and with

pointed ends, resembling in a way a gigantic cigar. In the bluish light it shone with the brilliant lustre of metal, but with a peculiar purplish sheen that was unlike any metal I had ever seen. As we approached this object, I halted in my tracks with gaping mouth and staring, incredulous eyes. A door had opened in the affair, and from the aperture, two more of the weirdly horrible looking creatures had appeared. In every detail they were exactly like my guide, except that one was much smaller and was covered with a pale, pinkish coat of down or feathers, or whatever the material might be called. Instantly, I was aware of a peculiar, vibrating, humming sound and noticed that my companion's feelers or antennae had risen erect above his head and were moving slowly, gracefully back and forth, as were the feelers of the two other creatures; but no word or sound that could be thought speech issued from any of the three.

A moment later we were beside the great, cylindrical object and the two beings who had been within it were gazing at me with the greatest wonder and interest. Their stalked eyes were moving this way and that, studying me from head to foot; their feelers were vibrating with excitement; their lop-ears were waving like the ears of an elephant, and presently, with queer, low sounds from their lips, they stretched out their jointed limbs and rather hesitatingly and cautiously touched my garments with their many digitated hands or feet, whichever they might be called.

I was, I admit, most uneasy and not a little frightened and had a peculiar sense of repulsion as the creatures approached close to me and their tentacles played about my face and their soft finger-like extremities caressed my tattered clothing. But I knew that for the present at least I had no real cause for alarm, for they seemed really gentle creatures. But if my readers—provided this manuscript ever finds a reader—can imagine standing beside three immense crayfish larger than any giant of a dime museum, they can perhaps, in a measure, realize the sensations that went over me.

Even so I found myself wondering if the huge cylinder before me was the dwelling of these weird things, if it was a sort of shell-like house, and if the three were the only denizens of this unknown land, or if there were more of their kind. But I instantly dismissed the thought. They were merely strangely developed, remarkably intelligent beasts and it was inconceivable that they should have constructed the metallic affair from which they had emerged. In fact, the presence of this convinced me that there were human beings not far distant and that the creatures beside me were merely guarding the metallic object and awaiting their master's return. Moreover, the fact that this huge, metal, cigar-like thing was there proved beyond doubt that the

men who dwelt in the land were no primitive savages, but intelligent and civilized, although what the purpose of the thing was was quite beyond me. Possibly, I thought, it was some sort of boat—for it looked much like one of the floats to a metal life raft—perhaps a submarine; but there were no signs of rudders, fins, propellers or other external fittings on its smooth surface, and aside from the door or port from which the two creatures had emerged, no opening or aperture in the metal as far as I could see.

But, I had little time for thought on such matters. Their first curiosity satisfied, my guide gestured for me to follow, and entered the big cylinder with the other two following in my footsteps. Scarcely knowing what to expect, I passed through the door and glanced about. I was in a long room or hallway illuminated by a strange luminous glow and an exclamation of the utmost amazement escaped my lips as I discovered that the walls of the cylinder were as transparent as glass. Standing there, I could see the beach, the stretch of water, the green fringe of grass and bushes, as clearly as though I were in the open air and yet from without, the interior of the contrivance had been utterly invisible.

This was astounding enough, but before I could fully appreciate the wonder of it, there were more bewildering matters to fill my brain. The interior held no machinery, the only fittings in sight being couch-like benches, rugs or carpets and an affair at one end which at first glance I took to be a buffet or bar, for it bore a number of shining metallic and glass-like utensils. Above and behind it was a panel or rectangle covered with strange dials and instruments, and as we entered and the door closed behind us with a slight metallic clink, the creature who had first found me approached this buffet-like arrangement. Reaching out his arms, he moved certain things upon the panel, with his other limbs he touched the utensils on the piece of furniture before him. Instantly, there was a strange musical humming which rose swiftly to a whirring sound, like the muffled noise of machinery and glancing through the transparent sides of the cylinder, I was dumbfounded to see the beach and the water swiftly dropping from beneath us. For a moment I could not understand and then, with a shock at the discovery, I realized that we were mounting upward with incredible speed. Within the space of a few seconds we were several hundred feet above the beach and the next instant my bewildered senses grasped the fact that we were hurtling through the air like a bullet from a rifle.

Almost before I knew it the beach and the grassy plain beyond it were dim in the distance, the faintly outlined waves upon the water seemed to rush backward and yet there was not the least movement appreciable within

the transparent cylinder, and although I could see the entire interior from where I stood, there was no sign of machinery, no hint of engines, of whirring wheels or shafts. It was absolutely impossible and incredible. Within a cigar-shaped cylinder, which even if made of aluminum would have weighed tons, I was being hurled through space by invisible means controlled by the indescribably strange creatures beside me.

I peered ahead, for I knew that we must be bound for some definite goal, and saw land rising rapidly into view upon the horizon. Each second it became clearer, a low shore backed by hills deliciously green and bathed in the blue light that flooded everything. And as the land grew rapidly more distinct, bright, shining dots appeared among the greenery and presently, above the water's edge, an immense town or city lay spread. At the speed at which we were traveling we would be there within fifteen minutes, and as I glanced to right and left, I saw a score of craft similar to the one I was in, all rushing through the air like monstrous, gleaming cannon shells. Like streaks of light they crossed our path above or below us; to right and left they passed. Some were tiny things scarcely ten feet in length; others gigantic affairs several hundred feet in length, but all moving noiselessly, with incredible speed, driven by some unseen, incomprehensible, terrific power. Below us, now, the water was dotted with the strange vessels, their shimmering hulls, if such I may call them, resting on the surface or skittering along slowly and leaving foamy wakes across the little waves. Then we were dropping, descending as lightly as a bit of thistle down, and almost under my feet I saw the outlying buildings of the town. So rapidly did we drop that at the time I had no chance to note the form or details of the buildings, except to see that they were of strange design and color, but even in our swift fall, in that space of a few seconds, I saw that the inhabitants, the beings who thronged the streets, were no humans, but one and all the same grotesque, monstrous creatures as those beside me.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOCKED as I was at this discovery I saw that our arrival had been noticed, and that from every side, hurrying down the streets, swarming out of buildings, the creatures were rushing in a close packed mass towards a clear, open space like a broad level field which I judged was our landing place. The next moment our strange airship was at rest, and filled with unreasoning dread, trembling at thought of facing that horde of monsters, I followed my guides or captors, which ever they were, through the door and stepped upon the firm earth once more. All about the borders of the field, which I now saw was covered with cradle-like structures like the one in which our craft rested, the stalk-eyed, misshapen beings had gathered, a maze of swaying, undulating antennae, of tall, pointed, scale-covered heads and iridescent bodies; but not one attempted to approach or to pass within the boundaries of the landing place.

Hardly had I noticed this, and wondered at it, when from one side a group of the monsters stepped out. At first glance they seemed no different from the others, but as they drew close I saw that they were of a totally different color, being a peculiar violet-blue, and that two pairs of their limbs or arms ended in enormous, vicious-looking claws or nippers like those of a lobster. Even as I noticed this they reached us and I shuddered as I thought of how easily the creatures could crush and tear me to bits with those fearful pincers with their serrated teeth.

But for the present the claws were at rest and closed and their owners made no hostile movement. Forming on either side of my guides and myself, they marched beside us, and before them the crowd fell back, leaving an open lane through which we passed.

Before us were buildings, and for the first time, I obtained a clear view of the structures and gaped, almost as astonished at their appearance as I had been at the monstrous forms of their owners. From high in air they had seemed low, massive structures with nothing particularly remarkable about them, but now, close at hand I saw that they were unlike anything I had ever seen, although in a vague way they reminded me of gigantic igloos. Windowless they rose like domes of dull-gray above the earth, the only

apertures in their walls, dark, yawning, arched doorways towards one of which my guards were marching. As we entered the portal my passing glance showed me that the affairs were not of mud or clay as I had thought at first, but were constructed of small stones and pebbles cemented together with some hard tenacious material giving them the effect of being hewn from coarse pudding stone, or as I believe geologists call it, conglomerate rock.

The next instant we were within the entrance and were descending a steep incline. So sharp was the slope that the skin coverings on my feet slipped, my feet shot out from under me and with a startled cry I went sliding and rolling through the semi-darkness like a bale of cargo down a chute. How far I might have gone or where I might have brought up I cannot say, for with incredible agility, two of the monsters overtook me and with their weird limbs—which made me shudder as they touched me—brought me to a halt and helped me to my feet.

Despite the confusion and my predicament I had noticed that the creatures, when in a hurry, ran along on all fours, or rather I might say on all eights, and I realized that the sucker-like disks on their feet enabled them to navigate the steep passage without the least danger of slipping.

No doubt my mishap seemed very amusing to the strange beings, but no sounds of merriment came from them and to this moment I have never heard anything that remotely resembled a laugh or chuckle issue from the mouths of the creatures.

The whole affair, yes, everything that had occurred since I had seen the castaway boat with the corpses of my dead shipmates, was so dreamlike, so nightmarish that, try as I might, I could not convince myself that I was awake and that the strange events were actually taking place and that the beings,—intelligent, reasoning, possessing powers and mechanical devices beyond anything dreamed of by man, and yet mere beasts or creatures of a lower order—really existed and were not the creations of a disordered or wandering mind. But my fall was very real and as the creatures aided me to rise and I ruefully rubbed my bruised and barked limbs I knew that the tumble at least was no delirium. Indeed, I think that my mishap was the most convincing thing that had occurred. It is really strange how little, unimportant, every day matters are often of so much greater importance in our lives than great events, and all that I had undergone had failed to impress me as much, or to bring so vividly to my mind, the marvelous situation in which I found myself as that tumble on the steep incline leading through the darkness to the interior of some subterranean chamber.

At the time, however, I had little opportunity to give much thought to such matters. Before me a dull light shone, and a moment later, we emerged from the passage and entered a huge, round chamber. Although, at my first sight of the place, I did not take in the details, it may be as well to describe it at this point of my narrative. The floor was smooth, white and seemed made of some luminous material; the walls glowed with dull light, and the high, domed ceiling appeared as if of glass with brilliant bluish light streaming through it.

About the walls was a low bench or shelf-like arrangement covered with what appeared to be cushions; scattered about were curiously shaped chairs or stools, and in the centre, was a sort of raised dais or platform on which were several more seats and a desk-like arrangement covered with dials and instruments, much like the affair I had already seen in the airship and by means of which the creatures handled the craft. Upon the bench about the walls, and seated on the other stools, were several dozen of the beings to whom I was now becoming accustomed. In a general way they were precisely like my guards and the creature I had first met upon the distant beach, but in details they were different. In fact, no two were exactly alike, although it was not until long afterward that I learned to distinguish the various differences, some of which were very minute. They were of all colors, from white to nearly black, although all had the same peculiar metallic sheen I had already noted, and all likewise possessed eight limbs, the long-stalked eyes and the antennae. Already I had been impressed with the striking resemblance the creatures bore to giant crawfish, but now, as I gazed about the huge chamber, I had the feeling that I was surrounded by huge crustaceans possessed of intelligent, reasoning brains. Possibly I cannot convey to my readers—if by the will of God this narrative ever reaches human beings—the weirdly impossible, dreamlike and in a way, horrible sensations that swept over me as I stared at the scaly heads, the slowly moving stalked eyes, the waving, undulating antennae and the eight jointed limbs of these beings and realized that here in this strange land beyond the South Pole evolution had proceeded in a very amazing and very different manner to that which had taken place in the world of men. Years before I had read, among my other books, a work by Darwin on evolution and the survival of the fittest. Although I had never fully accepted the idea that mankind had descended or ascended from some monkey-like ancestor, still I could understand how it might be possible, and I had been convinced that man, as well as other members of the animal kingdom, had developed from other more primitive forms. And now, as I stood within the illuminated chamber, it suddenly dawned upon my mind that the creatures among whom

my lot had been cast actually proved Darwin's theory. Here before me and all about me were beings no whit less intelligent than human beings; creatures who had conquered space and time with incredible aircraft; beings who could converse without words and who, I later found, were far in advance of man, and yet who bore not the remotest resemblance to humans. To put the matter in a few words; just as men resemble highly developed and advanced apes, so these beings resembled crustaceans. If the human race had been evolved from some ape-like creature, then beyond the shadow of a doubt, these creatures had been evolved from some lobster-like ancestor. The discovery came to me as a shock. So accustomed are we to think that intelligent, reasoning, civilized beings must be moulded in human form that it rather dazed me to find that the mere form of body and limbs had nothing to do with it; that the mere chance that man's ancestors had been apes or ape-like had led to the physical appearance of human beings, and that, had some other form of life been the fittest to survive and had gone through ages of evolution, our world might have been peopled by insects, reptiles or any other creatures as progressive, intelligent and highly civilized as ourselves.

Here before me was the proof of this. Here evolution had proceeded from cold-blooded, spineless crustaceans, and the result was these shrimp-like giants, possessing powers beyond my own or those of mankind. Of course, at the time, the full significance of the matter did not come to me, but as time passed and I learned how immeasurably beyond man these creatures had advanced I became more and more convinced that the accident of the origin of the human race had been an unfortunate rather than a fortunate thing for the world and that, had we been evolved from ants, say, we would have been much farther along the road to highest attainments.

But I am digressing. At the time I was really more impressed by the curious discoveries I made than by thoughts on evolution. One of the first things I noticed, and which oddly enough had quite escaped me hitherto, was the fact that the creatures possessed tails. These were broad, flat affairs composed of overlapping plates or scales and which usually remained folded like fans. This no doubt was the reason they had escaped my notice, for being of the same color and texture as the rest of the bodies, I had taken them for ornamental pendant affairs, portions of the garments which I had thought the things wore, for I had not yet discovered that the feather-like covering of their bodies was a natural growth.

Now, however, I saw that when seated the tails stuck stiffly out behind the creatures, or in some cases were curled around to one side, and that they moved to and fro, opening and shutting in a most fascinating manner. Some

I noted also, were far larger than others, and, later, I learned to distinguish the males and females by the form and size of their tails.

Of course all this which has taken so much time to write down occupied but a few instants and my eyes, having swept about the chamber, turned to the dais in the center and the creatures who were seated upon it.

These were taller, more slender and more brilliant in color than the others. Their heads were higher, broader and rounder; their antennae were longer and their eyes, borne on long stalks like the others; seemed to me to have a more intelligent expression, if indeed, such hard, cold, unwinking orbs were capable of expression of any sort.

By intuition I knew that they were leaders or rulers and that I was being brought before them, and somehow this almost human procedure of being led by armed guards before a tribunal surrounded by a curious crowd struck me as both ludicrous and amazing.

That I was in danger never occurred to me. Possibly it was because I had been through so much that I was callous of danger, or perhaps it was because man instinctively looks down upon inferior races or creatures; but whatever the reason, although I was fully aware that I was at their mercy, I felt no fear but rather was filled with interest and curiosity as to what would occur. Indeed, I felt precisely as I have felt when, in dreams, I have been dragged before a court to be tried for my life on some ridiculous charge, and knowing I might be condemned to death, yet I felt no dread of the results, owing to a peculiar subconscious conviction that I would escape harm and would awaken before the actual execution took place.

Also, I was filled with a curiosity as to how the hearing was to be conducted, for while there was no doubt that the creatures could converse readily among themselves, their words, or whatever means they used, were inaudible to me, and when they uttered sounds, as they did at times, the almost metallic noises were utterly unintelligible.

But I had far underestimated the uncanny, incredible powers of the creatures. Suddenly I was aware, as one becomes aware of some unseen person gazing at one in a crowd, that I was being questioned. I cannot describe the sensation, cannot make it clear. There was no sound, nothing to tell me that my ears were receiving any message, and as a matter of fact they were not.

And yet my brain, or some unknown sense, was receiving a message, questions which, could they be put into words, might have been expressed as

“Who are you? Whence do you come? What is your purpose?”

Was I dreaming, losing my senses, going mad from my past hardships and my amazing adventures? And then, almost unconsciously, I found myself replying to the inaudible queries. I was trying to explain how I had been shipwrecked, how I had wandered across the mountains and had come to this land, and that my only purpose was, if possible, to return to my own country.

And as I thus responded to the uncanny questions entering my brain without audible sounds, I knew from the actions of the strange beings that my replies had been understood. Their antennae waved and trembled excitedly. They turned their stalked eyes and gazed at one another and at myself, and they even uttered the queer metallic sounds which always denoted great excitement.

It had been astounding enough to discover that the creatures could make themselves understood by some occult, uncanny power; but to find that I could make my thoughts clear to them was almost beyond reason. How had it been accomplished? How was it possible for me, a totally different being from another world, to understand these strange creatures? And what was still more astonishing, more inexplicable yet, how had I been able to transfer my thoughts to their brains? Was it some weird, undreamed-of method of mental telepathy, hypnotism or what? Even if they possessed some power, some unknown means of making me understand them, I certainly had no such power. And yet I was convinced that I had made myself clear to them, or at any rate had managed to reply in some fashion to their queries.

And the next instant my belief was confirmed. Once more, in my brain, questions were being registered, questions as intelligible as though I had heard the words spoken in English. I was being asked about “my world,” questioned as to details of my journey, as to whether there were more beings like myself and various other matters.

Almost before I realized it, I was replying and, as I could see by the manner of my strange hosts, my words were heard and understood. It is of no use to describe at length the entire interview that followed or to repeat it word for word. It is enough for my purpose to state that my story was as unbelievable and as impossible to them as they and their powers seemed to me. I had appeared from nowhere, a strange, and to them misshapen being, a creature unlike anything they had ever imagined, and I found myself trying to explain, floundering about, trying to make clear matters which to me were

most everyday and ordinary things, but to them were so far beyond their comprehension that they were utterly incapable of grasping them.

It was like trying to explain trigonometry or navigation to a small child or to make clear the principles and operation of some complicated machine to a savage. And yet this comparison is not the right one, for strange as it may seem, the creatures were quite capable of understanding the most intricate mechanical devices and scientific matters, although the fact that there were other intelligent beings in the world, or that for that matter there was any world except their own country, was utterly beyond them.

Of course I did not learn this and did not attempt to converse with them on such matters at this first interview. Our talk, for regardless of the fact that they did not speak I must call it a talk, was confined to the most simple matters. But as the weeks, months and years passed and I remained, as I still remain, among them, I tried to tell them of human life and the world I had known and of all manner of things which differed from their own strange ways and existence.

Gradually, too, I became adept at conversing with them by their uncanny means, which, I found later, was nothing supernatural, magical nor so very mysterious after all. It was accomplished in fact by vibrating waves sent through the air, something after the manner in which sound waves are sent, and which were produced by one pair of the creature's antennae and were caught and heard by another pair.^[3]

[3] (Note: by Dr. Lyman)

“Mr. Bishop had of course never heard of radio-telephony. I am of the opinion that the beings among whom he found himself had discovered and perfected some form of radio waves by means of which intelligible messages could be transmitted from mind to mind without audible sounds. In other words, the unspoken thoughts could be transmitted on high frequency waves or on some form of waves akin to electro-magnetic waves. As is well known today, scientists have reason to believe that the lower animals possess a somewhat similar power and can receive and understand certain waves of which we have no knowledge—perhaps the missing waves that in length lie between heat waves and radio waves. It is also believed by many scientists that it is by some such means that pigeons, dogs, cats and even toads find their way home across unknown spaces and for immense distances, and that migratory birds fly unerringly from place to place. Recent investigations have also led to the conclusion that insects and crustaceans converse or at least communicate with one another, by means of waves produced by and received by their antennae. If this be so, then the highly developed and specialized crustaceans who inhabit the strange land described by Mr. Bishop might well have possessed a similar power carried to the nth degree.

“Assuming this were so, then there would have been no mystery as to how they understood him or he them, for while spoken words vary with language the thoughts or brain impressions that words express must be identical regardless of spoken dialects or racial differences. Indeed, as will be seen later, Mr. Bishop’s discoveries, as he relates them, bear out this logical conclusion. It is also highly probable that all the mechanism of the airships and other contrivances of these strange beings were actuated by waves similar to our electro-magnetic waves.”—A. E. L.

CHAPTER V.

IT was soon evident to me that even if the weird creatures could not fully grasp or understand the tale I related, still they believed it, or at least considered that it explained my presence in their land. Possibly they thought me a harmless lunatic, or again they may have decided I was a supernatural being, or maybe I was such a curiosity or monstrosity in their eyes that I was regarded as a valuable specimen. At any rate, whatever the reason, they decided that I was not to be harmed, and in fact was to be well treated, for my armed guards were dispersed and I was given to understand, —I would say told but for the fact that no words were spoken—that the being who had first found me on the sand was to be my companion and that he would attend to all my wants. My first and most pressing want was food, for I was once more ravenously hungry and the council or court and onlookers having left the chamber, though lingering and gazing at me most curiously, I expressed my wishes to my strange companion. Immediately he led me through dark passageways to a smaller room and there left me for a moment, returning with a bowl-like vessel containing some liquid and a beautifully devised casket or box filled with the biscuits such as he had given me upon the beach.

I devoured three of these and was about to eat the fourth when the creature, who had been watching me intently, called a halt and by the same strange brain message method warned me that I must be satisfied and that to partake of more might lead to grave results. I confess I was greatly tempted to disregard his warning, for there seemed no more sustenance in the stuff than in a dry cracker, but I remembered what a miraculous effect those I had eaten on the beach had had, and reluctantly replacing the wafer I drank a deep draught of the liquid. It was as clear and colorless as water, for which I had taken it, but as it passed my lips I almost dropped the bowl in surprise, for the beverage was the most delightful and refreshing thing I had ever tasted. It was neither sweet nor sour, but had a taste absolutely impossible to describe. Indeed, there are many things in this strange land which I am at a loss to describe in such a way that those who have not seen or experienced them can understand my meaning. Colors existed which were quite different

from anything I had ever seen; there were sounds totally new to my ears and tastes that no words can describe.

Scarcely had the beverage passed my lips when I felt rejuvenated. No wine or liquor could have had such a remarkable effect. Not that it was heady or exhilarating like liquor, for my head remained perfectly clear, but I felt years younger. I seemed as strong and fresh as a youth of twenty and felt ready for anything. Then a delightful drowsiness came over me, and throwing myself on the couch, I instantly dropped off to a dreamless slumber.

I was aroused by the being who had me in charge as he entered the chamber bearing food and drink. As I munched the wafer-like biscuits, which were of a different character from those I had eaten the previous day, I tried my best to communicate with him. Or rather, I might say, to carry on a conversation, for he very evidently understood all that I said. Moreover, as on the preceding day, I was able to understand him. But the difficulty was that we had so little in common that it was almost impossible to converse at any length. However, he made it known that I was free to go and come as I pleased and that I was considered an honored guest from some other sphere, and I was vastly amused when he wished to know if I had dropped from the sky. Evidently the creatures knew nothing of a country beyond the mountain barrier, and in vain I endeavored to explain how I had come over the mountains and to tell of the world on the other side. To him such a thing was incredible, as unbelievable as his land would have been to me before I had seen it. Then, after much trouble, he told me—if I can use the word “told” when no sounds issued from him,—that no inhabitant of his country had ever passed those mountains, that beyond was nothingness and that his country comprised the entire world. This was most astounding to me, for I had come over the mountains without excessive difficulty, and with their marvelous airships I could see no reason why they should not have soared above the peaks. But when I questioned the fellow, and later talked with others, I learned to my amazement that the creatures perished miserably if they rose more than a few hundred feet above the earth. Their airships never attained a height of more than two hundred feet and I was informed that too-venturesome members of the community, who had attempted to traverse the mountains, had gasped and died long before they reached the summits. To them, strange as it may seem, an altitude of five hundred feet was as fatal as a dozen miles in air to human beings. Whether this was due to their physical peculiarities or to some peculiarity in their atmosphere I have never determined. I am of the opinion, however, that it is a little of both. Their air I am sure is far more rarefied than ours and thus of course would be unfit to

sustain life even at moderate heights, while being evolved from crustaceans—as I am positive they are—and with modified gills instead of lungs, they are naturally less adaptable to changes in the density of air than are human beings. Indeed, later, when I on one occasion tried to scale the mountains, I discovered that it was with the utmost difficulty that I could breathe, even when half way to the summits.

But this was not the reason why I was forced to remain in this land even to the present time as I shall explain later.

But to resume my narrative of my experiences. As soon as I had finished my breakfast I started out to see the sights. It was, however, some time before I reached the outer air, for I found many most astounding and interesting things to attract me in the underground residences of these strange creatures.

The means of lighting the place was a puzzle, for as I have said, the illumination was a sort of glow that appeared to issue from the walls, floors and ceilings, as if in fact they were made of translucent material with lights behind them. I examined the material carefully and found it was formed of one continuous unbroken surface, as if moulded or cast in place, as I found later it was. Also, I discovered that it was the same material of which the airships were made. Indeed, later on I found that it was the sole material these beings possessed for constructing anything—that is, aside from wood which was seldom used and was rather a curiosity than otherwise, and a tough grass which they considered of little value, but from which a thin, light and excellent parchment-like material is made,—the material in fact upon which this manuscript is written. But the amazing part of it is that the metallic-like substance so widely used can be so altered or modified that it is adaptable for every purpose.

It can be made opaque, transparent or translucent; as hard as steel or as soft and plastic as putty; as brittle as glass or as flexible as rubber. It can be beaten or hammered like gold or copper; it can be moulded by hand or machine and then hardened, or it can be melted and cast. Moreover, it can be colored or tinted at will; it can be woven like thread and it can be cut, bored or worked like timber. By certain processes, too, it can be made to emit light indefinitely, while the light may yet be turned off or on at will by means of some electrical or similar power. This same mysterious force serves these creatures in place of steam, heat and all other forms of power.

It was of course a long time before I learned all this, and I was still longer in learning the source of the remarkable substance. Then, to my utter

amazement I found it was sulphur! This statement may seem incredible, for sulphur is so well known and its properties so well understood that my fellow men will no doubt accuse me of telling a palpable falsehood. But the secret lies in the fact that these beings have discovered a property of sulphur of which humans are wholly ignorant. This is that sulphur is really a metal, the form known to us being only a salt or oxide, and it is the metallic sulphur which these weird creatures use for such a multitude of purposes.^[4]

It was, as I have said, a great surprise to me to discover this, and I could not help thinking what marvelous accomplishments might be ours if we possessed the knowledge of obtaining this metal. I had never dreamed that a metallic material could be obtained from sulphur, and at first it seemed unbelievable. But as I thought upon the matter, I realized that, after all, it was no more astonishing than that aluminum metal could be secured from the soft rock called bauxite, many cargoes of which had been carried in ships on which I had served. Later, too, I spent much time at the vast deposits of sulphur which seem to underlie the whole country. Although it has been used for countless ages, yet these beings have never had to do any mining, for there are hills and plains composed entirely of the yellow stuff. Indeed, I was not long in deciding that the whole place is nothing more than the interior of a huge volcano, or a series of volcanic craters, which might partly account for the warmth of the climate, for no doubt there is still volcanic activity and heat below the surface of the earth. The processes used for refining the sulphur and transforming it into metal were most interesting, but I am no chemist and the technicalities are far beyond my powers to describe. There are huge works that cover many square miles, and the workers are, I found, all of different types, forms and appearances from the other inhabitants. In fact each art, profession, trade, and class, of the beings is, I soon found, distinct and has been evolved or developed in such a way as to give the greatest efficiency and best results along the lines of endeavor to which each is bound for life. I have mentioned the huge pincer-like claws of the soldiers, or rather police. In the same way diggers have limbs, adapted to their labors; chemists possess appendages as delicate as the most accurately devised instruments, and so on.

But to return to the sulphur and its uses. Among other things that interested me greatly was the source of the marvelous power the creatures use. This was, I found, derived from a peculiar blackish and very heavy material which exists in vast quantities near the sulphur deposits. Of itself it is of little value, although it is slightly luminous and will cause sores like burns upon human skin as I discovered to my sorrow. But when combined with the metallic sulphur, or with certain by-products obtained in the

manufacture of the latter, it produces most astonishing results. By varying the combinations and the proportions of materials it can be made to emit blinding light which goes on continuously forever without in the least diminishing, or it can be made to explode with a force greater than dynamite, while by still other methods it may be made to produce invisible power which can be harnessed as readily as steam and yet can be transmitted to great distances through the air, like electricity, but without the use of wires. About one hundred miles from the chief city is an immense power house, if such it may be called, and from this, power or energy is sent broadcast over the whole country. Thus, by having machines adapted to the purpose, this source of power may be tapped and used for any purpose, such as driving airships, industrial work, turning on or off lights etc. But the remarkable part of it, to me, is the fact that no machines, as we know such things, are used. I have visited the plant several times and yet have never found a single wheel, shaft or crank in it. There are merely immense chambers or vats into which the various substances are run, and grid-like mazes of bars and sheets of metal. These are suspended over the vats and a ceaseless play of many-colored and strangely tinted lights and intense heat seems to rush upward from the tanks and to be absorbed by the odd apparatus overhead. From these it is led into a labyrinth of receptacles and a mystifying, to me, network of conduits, cables and huge wires and up-standing rods. These scintillate with flashing lights and emit a cracking sound and send the power in all directions. The strangest thing about it, to my mind, is the fact that the creatures are not injured by this power, even when close to it and while it is passing through their bodies. At first I was deathly afraid of it, for it seemed like terrific discharges of electricity; but I found that even I could stand beside the generators, or whatever they may be called, and that with the colored flashes all about me and enveloping my body, I felt no ill effects. Rather, it gave me a pleasant tingling sensation which left me exhilarated for several days thereafter.^[5]

Also, aside from the metal and the power, many other most valuable things are obtained from the sulphur and the black rock. A vast number of by-products result, and from these all or nearly all the wants of the inhabitants are obtained. Even the strange beverage I have mentioned was manufactured from a by-product, as are coloring materials, certain foods and many other things. Also, as I have said, wood is regarded as a curiosity. This is due to the fact that strangely enough there are practically no real trees in this strange land. By this I do not mean that trees do not exist, for there are great parks or gardens filled with them, but there are no wild trees, if I may use the expression. Ages ago, I understand, there were many, but these were

all utilized and exhausted and fearing that trees would become extinct they were preserved in parks as curiosities.

Only when they die is the wood available and the creatures prize this highly and treasure it as though it were a most precious substance, using it as we might use gold or silver. Most of the country is covered with a coarse, sedgy grass, but there are many forms of shrubs and plants and immense areas of bare land which at first puzzled me.

I had seen no cultivated plants or gardens—except park-like places like botanical gardens—and I imagined that the bare areas were fields being prepared for cultivation, as I saw many of the beings working in them. Imagine my wonder when I found that these bare patches of earth provided the inhabitants with their food. Countless years ago, I was informed, the beings had abandoned raising food plants. The plants, so they discovered, merely drew sustenance from the air and soil and transformed this to food fit to eat. And the creatures, reasoning that this process of nature was a roundabout method of making food, devised means of obtaining their provisions from the air and earth direct, doing away with the plants entirely.

From the edible materials thus obtained they make the wafer-like biscuit I have referred to and these, with their liquors and little pellets, form their entire diet. Each class or variety of wafer, I learned, contained different food values of a vegetable nature, while the pellets supplies the animal matter, and by choosing these any taste or need could be satisfied. Also, just as they secure provisions of a vegetable nature from the soil itself without the time and trouble involved in raising crops, so they manufacture the foods of an animal nature from the vegetable products. Animals, they say, merely transform the herbage they devour into meat, and such things, so why raise living creatures with great trouble and care and then slaughter them, when the same materials, or at least material containing the same nourishment and the same chemicals, can be made direct?

And a word in regard to the animal life of this strange country may be of interest to any humans who find this document. At certain seasons, vast numbers of birds visit the great lakes or seas, which are all of fresh water, and I have found a great deal of pleasure in watching these, for the albatrosses, mollymokes, gulls and other familiar birds come over the mountains from the world I once knew, and seem to me a bit like visitors and old friends from my home. It was, in fact, these periodical visits of the sea fowl that gave me the idea of sending out my manuscript, in the hope that some man might find it. But to return to the animals that dwell here. There are a number of the giant rat-like creatures, as large as kids, such as

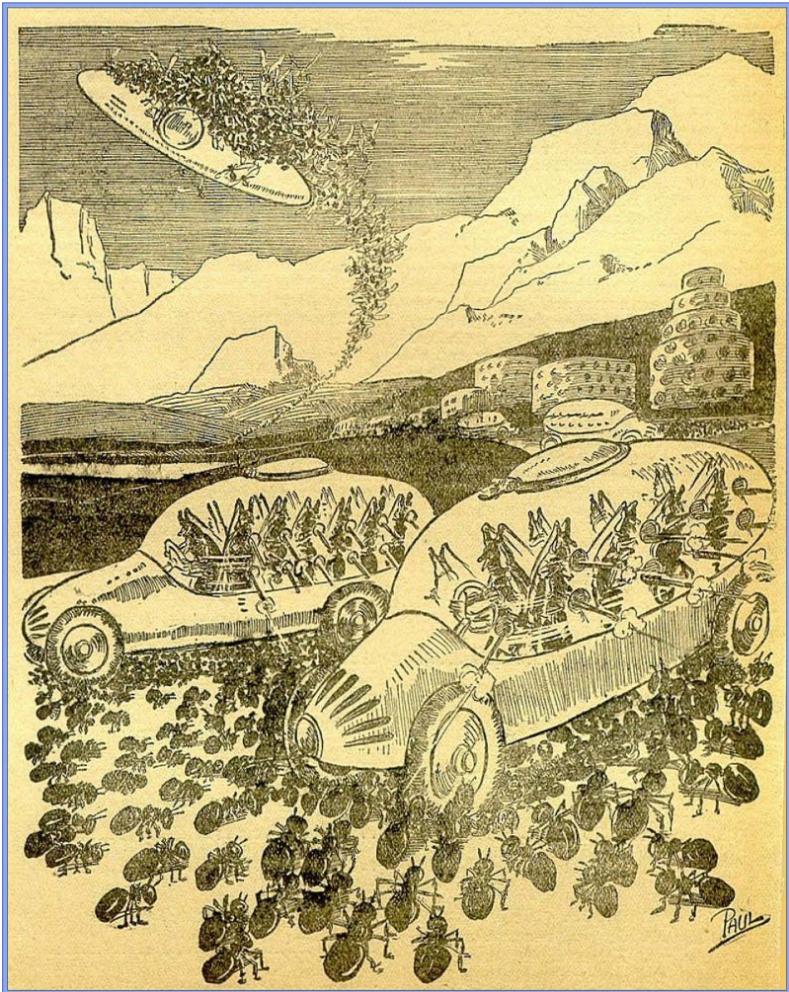
the one I killed and devoured when I first gained the base of the mountains, and there are many small birds, but aside from these, no living creatures exist in a wild state. In zoos or museums are many most wonderful creatures, some of which bear a resemblance to those on the other side of the world, but most of which are wholly different and many of which are so astoundingly weird, gigantic or grotesque as to be horrifying, or to make me think I am dreaming or delirious when I look at them.

Some of these are gigantic reptiles with immense scaly bodies and with heads covered with great bony plates and armed with huge horns. They are ferocious looking creatures nearly fifty feet in length, but quite docile and harmless and very stupid. Others resemble giant seals, but instead of being covered with fur, their bodies are smooth and slimy, like eels. There are also creatures with enormously long snake-like necks and great round bodies. These are water animals and should they be seen at sea they would be veritable sea-serpents. There are several great beasts too, which appear to be some sort of elephants, though vastly bigger than any I have ever seen, and there are a few rhinoceros-like animals, besides numbers of smaller things, such as deer, goats, beasts somewhat like ponies, and giant turtles. Of carnivorous beasts there are none and I find nothing that at all resembles an ox or sheep. All these I understand once roamed the country wild, but were destroyed by the strange inhabitants until only those in captivity remained. But perhaps the weirdest of all these creatures in the parks or zoos are the insects. There are butterflies whose wings spread a yard across, flies as big as turkeys, caterpillars with a girth greater than my body and immense spiders with six-foot, hairy legs and immense, staring, fiery red eyes. These always give me a feeling of dread and nausea as I look at them, and many a time I have awakened, screaming, from a nightmare wherein I thought myself being attacked by one of these horrible creatures. The natives, however, seem to have no fear of them and I have often seen the younger ones, or if I may so call them the children, feeding the monstrous spiders through the bars of their cages. These bars by the way are made of the transparent form of the sulphur metal, and looking at the creatures, the bars are all but invisible—as are the cages—so that one seems to see a horrible beast unconfined and ready to spring at one. But of all the insects, those which interest me most are the giant ants. These are as large as good-sized dogs and are kept in a vast pit-like enclosure. Here they hurry about, and labor ceaselessly, building huge mounds and digging tunnels, only to tear them down and start over again. They are the most ferocious of all the animals also, and if one of their number is injured or sick, the others, after carefully examining him, tear him to bits and devour his still moving body.

On one occasion a great lizard-like beast died and his carcass was thrown into the ant pit and I fairly shook with terror as I watched the creatures, gnawing him to bits and with incredible strength dragging the immense body here and there. Often, too, the ants seem to be drilling and they seem to possess intelligences almost human. Often I think what terrible havoc they would play should they escape from their den, but I am assured that this is impossible, as the frail looking fence that borders the pit is made of a material that is certain death to any ant that touches it. Indeed, I heard, if I may use that term, the story of these ants. It seems that ages ago,—these beings have no means of recording time by the way,—the ants roamed at large and destroyed the inhabitants everywhere. A constant war was waged between the two races and bloody battles were fought. In a way it was much like the Indian warfare at home, though far more merciless and cruel, for each side made slaves of their captives and gave no quarter.

Then the crustacean-like beings made a discovery. They found vast numbers of dead ants where an invading army had moved across a great pile of waste material from the sulphur works, and by testing this on captive ants they found that it was instant death to the creatures. This enabled them to exterminate their hereditary enemies, for the material was made in stupendous quantities and placed in a great wall or pile about the advancing host of the inhabitants. Thus guarded, the ants were powerless to harm them, and gradually all but a few of the ants were utterly destroyed. These few survivors were made prisoners and confined and it is the descendants of these that are in the pit today.

Since then, so I understand, there have been no wars or battles in the entire land and the soldiers or police are being done away with, as there is really no need for them. No more soldiers are bred and in a few years none of the old ones will remain alive.



. . . The airships are next to useless. Let an airship rise aloft and the swarming queen ants light upon it by hundreds and bear it to earth with their weight, but the wheeled vehicles, protected, transformed to miniature forts of metal and filled with armed beings carry terror and destruction among the ants, crushing them beneath the wheels while arrows and bullets strike them down.

[4] (Note by Dr. Lyman).

“Mr. Bishop was probably unaware that several chemists have declared their belief that the element sulphur is derived from a metallic base. Although no one has yet produced metallic sulphur, yet that does not prove the incorrectness of such an hypothesis. Soda, potash and many other common chemicals, which bear no resemblance to metals are merely salts or oxides of metals, although their metallic bases were formerly unknown. Modern chemistry, however, has, as is well known, produced metallic sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, etc.”—A. E. L.

[5] (Note by Dr. Lyman).

“Probably the material described by Mr. Bishop is a very rich radioactive mineral akin to or identical with pitch-blende, and by combining this with derivatives of sulphur the marvelous powers of radium were harnessed. Just how the strange power was produced we cannot say, for Mr. Bishop was of course ignorant of technicalities, as he states. I should imagine, however, that the power was generated by breaking down atoms by means of radio activity and thus releasing the stupendous forces contained in them. This has long been a dream of scientists, for it is well known that a single atom of matter contains incalculable power or energy and that, if it were possible to break or explode atoms undreamed-of forces would be at man’s disposal. Unquestionably the power described by Mr. Bishop was transmitted by means of electro-magnetic or similar waves.”—A. E. L.

CHAPTER VI.

OF the inhabitants of this country, which I now feel sure is a continent or an immense island in the unexplored area beyond the south pole, I might write many pages. But this manuscript must not be too long, for even written as it is on this wonderfully thin and light material, yet I must have a care that it is not too heavy for the winged messenger to whom I intend to entrust it.

I have already described, to the best of my ability, the personal or physical appearance of the strange beings among whom, I fear, I am destined to remain for the rest of my life. Also, I have spoken of their means of communicating with one another and with myself, and here and there I have given short accounts of their habits and occupations and of their wonderful inventions and accomplishments. But as yet, I have said nothing of their social or family life, their thoughts, laws, codes, public institutions and many other matters which have proved vastly interesting to me, and may perhaps interest my fellow men if Fate wills that this manuscript ever reaches them.

There is so much to write that is strange, incredible and difficult to describe, that I hardly know where to begin. Many long months passed before I could carry on a thought conversation clearly enough to get an insight into many matters; but now that I have been here for over a year, as nearly as I can figure it out, I am able to make myself understood and to understand them as readily as if we spoke a common language.

First perhaps, I should mention that these creatures are comparatively short lived. They seldom reach an age which in my world would be forty years, but as they mature in an incredibly short time their lives are proportionately as long as our own. That is, these creatures become fully grown and with fully developed powers, both mentally and physically, in only a few weeks after emerging from their eggs, so that their life of full mental and physical power is about forty years, whereas human beings who require from twenty to thirty years to reach full mental and physical power, would have to live to sixty or seventy years in order to equal these beings. Moreover, their mental and physical powers remain unimpaired until death,

and age, as we know it, does not exist. Thus their full span of life is made available for their utmost endeavors. I have spoken of them as hatching from eggs and this was to me a most astounding thing when I discovered it. But after all it should not have surprised me, for being crustacean-like, there is no reason why they should not have crustacean-like traits of development and life. The eggs are deposited in places provided for the purposes and are there carefully watched over by beings whose lives are devoted to the purpose, and the young, when they emerge from the eggs, are separated into groups, each group or collection being destined for training, or I might say development, for special purposes. Thus one group will be destined for miners, another for chemists, others for artizans and so on. And the number of young selected for each group is decided by the demands for the specific trades or professions for which they are destined. Thus, if there are a normal number of healthy and able bodied miners and no necessity for more, none of the young of that particular time will be destined for that trade, whereas, if there are say two thousand artizans needed that many young will be set apart for development as artizans. Also, if the number of eggs exceeds the number which the rulers deem necessary, the surplus are destroyed before the young emerge. This is a matter determined by calculations as to the number of beings who are expected to die during the year, and the number of inhabitants who can be safely permitted to exist without danger of want or improper accommodations. As a result, there is no poverty, no want, no idleness and no suffering in the entire country and no surplus or lack of any trade or profession. To me it seemed a most barbarous and inhuman practice at first, but after all they are not human. And in many ways it is a most admirable idea and I cannot help comparing the extraordinary well-being and universal content of these creatures with the dissatisfaction, poverty and suffering of the human race. Moreover, there is no sickness or illness among them. Any member injured or ill is at once done away with, for, so they argue, to cure a sick or injured being necessitates the services of one or more others, even if the ill or injured creature survives and recovers, whereas, should he or she remain a cripple or unfit for duty, he or she is an impediment and may require the constant services of others, as well as the sustenance and support which might be better devoted to healthy, perfect individuals. It may seem a merciless system, but these beings have no sentiment, affection or love as we know them.

Their entire lives are devoted to the well being of the whole community and to performing the duties allotted them. But I do not mean by that they are lacking in pleasures or recreations or are ceaseless workers like the ants. They realize that ceaseless labor drains their powers and that change is a

necessity, and their hours of work and recreation are regulated. But their recreations are to me most strange. They consist largely of frolicking in the water, like genuine water creatures, or of racing madly about in a sort of dance until utterly exhausted. Also, they have queer games and athletic contests, and in these they are often so seriously injured as to result in their being done away with. Not that the loss of a limb or of several limbs amounts to much for these creatures can lose nearly all their exterior organs and be none the worse after a few weeks, for like lobsters and crabs, they grow new limbs or appendages readily, and after shedding their skins or shells, appear as whole as ever. This shedding process was of course an astounding thing to me at first, though quite natural, but it was, I am told, one of the greatest drawbacks to their development and well-being and in years long past was a terrific problem to solve. In those days thousands of the creatures shed their old skins at the same time, and for days thereafter, were soft, tender, almost helpless and unfit for duty, and thus the entire nation was at a standstill and was exposed to the attacks of their enemies,—the giant ants and other creatures. Gradually, however, by changing diet and regulating the development of eggs and young, the creatures managed to produce a race whose members did not shed all at once, but cast off their shells at various seasons, so that only a portion of their numbers were helpless at one time. Moreover, they found that garments or coverings could be devised to protect their tender bodies and permit them to perform certain duties.

Of course, though it was amazing to me at first, there are no real family ties and no such things as love or marriage. The males and females perform equal work and are on perfect equality and merely mate at the call of nature for the purpose of propagating the race. At one time, I understand, the beings mated for life and reared their own eggs and young, but the females gradually rebelled at being forced to take no part in the industries and being compelled to devote their time to domestic duties, and the rulers, finding that the race was dying out through neglect of eggs and young; and that countless numbers of the dissatisfied females produced no offspring, were compelled to accede to the females' demands and take over all eggs and young as government wards. This soon led to the females refusing to mate for any considerable length of time, and gradually all family relations were done away with. Also, this led to the necessity of the government predetermining the life and occupation of each young individual, and of destroying thousands of eggs each season. In the old days the young of an artisan or a miner became miners or artisans and inherited many of their parents' traits, while the fact that the females were obliged to rear their own

young resulted in limited numbers of progeny. But with the new order of things it was impossible to say who were the parents of the accumulated eggs, and released from all care the females produced far greater numbers of eggs than could be raised without overcrowding the country.

Also, I am told, the females in former times were quite distinct from the males both in physical and mental characters. They were smaller, weaker and more delicate and were quiet, docile and somewhat affectionate. But now I find that it is with the utmost difficulty that the two sexes can be distinguished and that if anything, the females are the larger, stronger and more hardy of the two. Indeed, I was amazed to find that most of the soldiers or police, as well as many of the miners and laborers were females, and, so I was told, whatever troubles or dissensions had arisen were always caused by the aggressive females.

Indeed, I was informed confidentially that the rulers had decided to limit the number of females and were surreptitiously destroying all female young not absolutely necessary for the propagation of the race. This was a most difficult matter, for several members of the government were females and they were anxious to increase the numbers of their sex until all power should be in female hands. To destroy a young creature after it had emerged from the egg unless it is malformed, is a most serious crime and hitherto no one had been able to distinguish a male from a female egg. But, so I was told, one of the greatest chemists or scientists had discovered a means of determining the egg sex and fortunately this scientist was a male. The secret had been assiduously kept from reaching the females and so when eggs were to be destroyed the males could select the female eggs for destruction.

Another rather astounding trait that I discovered was that these creatures are stone deaf when their skins are first shed and that their ears are quite useless until they have placed small pebbles within them.

Whether the presence of these stones enables them to communicate with one another, and with me, without sounds, I cannot say, but it is such a remarkable habit that I feel sure it must have some bearing on the matter (See foot note by Dr. Lyman)^[6].

This habit and their habit of shedding led to a most amusing incident soon after my arrival in this place. Feeling in need of a bath I made my way to the lake, and disrobing, plunged into the water. As I emerged I found a group of the creatures gathered about my ragged clothing and examining the garments with the greatest interest and evident excitement. Then they insisted upon feeling of my naked body and expressed the greatest

amazement that I had changed so greatly in appearance. But they were still more amazed when I again put on my clothes. Then one of the beings brought several pebbles which he—with kindly intentions no doubt—tried to insert in my ears. It was with the greatest difficulty that I prevented this and when the creatures found that I could hear without the bits of stone they were absolutely dumbfounded. Neither could they understand—and cannot to this day—why I should not be able to remain under water for hours and crawl about on the bottom as they do.

But to return to their lives and habits. The government, as I have called it, is not like anything on our part of the earth. There are to be sure certain members of the race to whom I have referred as rulers, but they are not rulers in the ordinary sense. The government, if such it may be called, consists of a great number of individuals chosen by the inhabitants to perform certain duties.

Thus one lot had charge of the eggs, another regulates the production of metal, another looks after the food supplies, another has charge of the buildings and so on. Each community appoints a certain number of the members of each of these groups, and those appointed cannot do anything nor make any rules or decisions without the knowledge and consent of the communities from which they are appointed.

Moreover, as these regulators or committeemen, as I may call them, are reared from the eggs with the sole purpose of fulfilling such duties, they have no other objects or purposes in life and carry out their duties honestly and to the best of their abilities.

Each one is delegated to his post for life, and if he or she fails to carry out his or her duties, or in any way disobeys the orders of the community, dire punishment results.

In former times this was death, but the beings, though so heartless and cold-blooded in many ways, have done away with the death penalty now and have hit upon a far more sensible plan which would be a credit to human beings. To destroy life, they argue, is, if the being is healthy and uninjured, a loss to the community and necessitates a vast amount of time and trouble in fitting another to take the place of the individual destroyed. So, instead of killing offenders, the violator of law or customs is sent to a far distant part of the country which is devoted entirely to such offenders, and there is forced to rely upon his or her own resources to live and succeed. It is in this way that all the communities are first established. These convict

colonies, as I might call them, are under the supervision of the chief settlement and each year are inspected.

If all is going well a certain number of the young of both sexes and different professions is allotted to them, while if matters are not being carried out satisfactorily the colony is broken up and the members divided among other new colonies in still more isolated parts of the land.

Moreover, any disturbances or troubles which may arise or any rebellions against the authorities, are quickly quelled without loss of life or bloodshed. This is done by simply turning off the power in the community where the trouble occurs, and, without the power from the great central station, the beings are utterly helpless. They cannot have light, cannot prepare food, cannot use their airships and cannot exist for any length of time.

I have spoken of the soldiers or police, and have said that as there is no further need for them they are being given up, and that no new members of the force are being raised. Wars among themselves are things of the distant past and the only use for the police today is to regulate sanitary and other rules and to act as escorts or guards and to prevent injuries in crowds or through accidents. But such things are now so rare and the beings are so well trained and so careful to follow out all rules and regulations, which they make themselves, that the police have little to do. Indeed, I was told that the occasion of my arrival was the first time that this body had been called out in more than twenty years.

I have so often spoken of things occurring in years past or of happenings ages ago that a word of explanation is necessary. There is, I found, a group of the creatures whose sole duty is to keep the history and records of the country and its denizens. These records are never written, but are retained in the minds of the historians. And, incredible as it may appear, so long have these beings been trained to this one duty that their power to remember the most minute details is simply amazing. They know nothing else to be sure, and are almost too helpless even to move or feed themselves, for every sense is devoted to storing away facts for future reference. Of course one would think that there must come a time when the historical facts would become so numerous that no brain could hold them, but this is overcome in a very clever manner.

No one member of the historian group is expected to remember more than a certain number of facts, or more than a certain number of different facts. Each member retains facts of his own particular class which cover a

certain period so that these beings are like a number of volumes. Each year the number of historians in each class is increased by two, or, as I might say, the living volumes of the nation's history are added to annually, one of the new members of each class absorbing and memorizing all the data of the oldest historian in his class, while the other new member of each class memorizes every event in his line which occurs during the year following his appointment. Thus the material known to the older members is always duplicated in a young new member and cannot be lost if the former dies or meets with an accident, while new events are recorded on fresh brains without adding to the burden on the older ones. At the present time there are approximately twenty-thousand of these living volumes of history and by means of calculations—which I found far more involved than working out a ship's position by stars—I found that the history thus available covers a period of about thirty-two thousand years, for in earlier days the new members were not appointed annually. Of course it is a rather difficult matter to look up any certain fact with such a mental history to refer to, but the fact that each class or line of incidents is in the mental charge of separate beings renders it more easy. Thus there are beings who know nothing of history with the exception of industrial events, others know only those occurrences related to politics, others to inventions, others to wars and still others whose minds are filled with facts and data regarding scientific matters.

But as I have said before there is no such time as years as we know them, all time being divided or calculated from generation to generation, but as the new broods of the creatures arrive very nearly a year apart—as nearly as I can figure it out—their computation of time corresponds roughly with our years. And now, while I think of it, let me mention a most remarkable thing which attracted my attention from the first, but which remained a mystery to me for a long time. I mentioned that when I first reached the land I noted an intense blue quality to the light, and after my first amazement at the strange inhabitants and my confusion at my surroundings had passed, I noticed that there was no night. At first I thought that I was mistaken in this and that I had merely slept the twenty-four hours through, but I soon discovered that darkness never descended on this land, and that bright light streamed steadily from the sky. I had thought this was most amazing and that the sun always shone. But I soon found that this was not the case, and that there were streamers of light like the aurora which, however, remained steadfast and like great bands of blinding flame constantly shedding their light upon the place. Moreover, these bands gave, as I have said, a blue or

rather violet light, but whether this was the actual color of the light itself or was due to some peculiarity in the atmosphere I have never learned.

I feel sure, however, that this ceaseless daylight and the fact that the warm and balmy climate never varies ten degrees, was the cause of all animal life growing to huge proportions, and also aided the strange crustacean-like beings to reach such a high state of development. It also accounted for their dwelling being underground, while the blue quality of the light was, I found, an important factor in many things. Later, as I shall explain, I discovered that without it many remarkable things were impossible. But I am digressing and must return to the subject of the inhabitants, although it was the fact that the light had a great influence on them that caused me to make a note of the double suns and the light at this point of my narrative.

I stated that each class of the inhabitants was distinct, and that the appendages of a miner, artizan, chemist, etc., were adapted to the duties of each, and yet I soon found that the newly hatched young were all identical. Moreover, they bore no slightest resemblance to the adults. They were, in fact, pulpy, soft, misshapen things with immense goggle eyes, spiny heads, and with slender, worm-like, naked bodies bearing ten little flipper-like appendages. A few hours after hatching out they shed their skins and altered in appearance, and every day or two thereafter, their shells were cast, and with each shedding they became more and more like the full grown creatures. But during this period between hatching and full development, they could be incredibly altered or changed by being fed with certain foods or chemicals and by being exposed to certain forces, or I might say rays, produced by combinations of the black mineral and sulphur compounds. Thus, if a batch of young is selected to be chemists they are specially treated as soon as hatched, and each time their skins are cast their appendages become more and more like those of the chemists, until when fully developed, they are perfectly adapted to their predestined trade.

I must not forget, too, to call attention to the fact that there are no rich or well-to-do members of the community, that is, in the way that we understand riches. Some of the beings have more luxurious homes than others, some seem more brilliantly garbed, and some possess airships while others do not. But anyone may if he or she desires, have as much as any of the others. It is all a matter of wishes and personal tastes, for the resources of the entire country are equally at the disposal of all. Not that any inhabitant can demand a luxurious home, magnificently colored garments and a huge airship. Whatever is allowed the being is his or her just dues as a pro-rata share of all

and if a taste runs to airships rather than luxuries at home, the individual can follow his or her taste in the matter. All power, light and sustenance are however equally divided and there is no such thing as money or trade. Services are the only values here, and as each trade or profession is predetermined, all services are accounted of equal value and there are no social cliques or lines and no aristocracy. A miner or laborer is equal in every way to one of the rulers or the guardians of the community, and is entitled to an equal share in everything needed.

But the large ships, such as the one in which I had traveled across the sea to the city, were I found community craft. They are, so to speak, government airships and constantly patrol the entire country, or are used in carrying workers to far distant places and distributing necessities and supplies among the inhabitants. They are the only means of transportation and I was amazed that these beings should have invented such marvelous craft and yet know nothing of railways, motor cars, or in fact any form of wheeled vehicle. But I discovered, a short time ago, why this is so, and my discovery was, in many ways, far more astonishing than anything I had learned since reaching this remarkable land.

[6] (Foot note by Dr. Lyman)

It is apparent that Mr. Bishop's studies along the lines of science and zoölogy had not brought to his attention the well known fact that many if not all crustaceans possess this same habit. Indeed, our common decapods—lobsters and crabs—are almost helpless and appear to lack the sense of direction and the power of definite movements and hearing until tiny grains of sand had been inserted in their ears.

Possibly, in the super-developed crustacean-like creatures Mr. Bishop describes, the pebbles in the ears have some bearing upon their strange means of inter-communication, acting possibly as sensitive detectors to vibratory waves or as sound amplifiers to make the waves audible. Mr. Bishop also forgot, or was not aware, that the higher vertebrates and even human beings possess small bones or bony objects in the ears. The exact use of these has never been definitely ascertained, although it is known that they control the sense of balance, but it is not impossible that they also serve to pick up inaudible waves and thus give human beings and other mammals a sense of direction or the "sixth sense" so much more developed in some individuals than others. It is even within the bounds of possibility that the inexplicable feats of mental telepathy and mind reading may depend upon the development or sensitiveness of these ear bones.—A. E. L.

CHAPTER VII.

I FIND, that for some reason, I have become greatly changed since reaching this strange country. I have become philosophical, or perhaps I might better say pessimistic, and I have spent many hours pondering on matters to which, hitherto, I gave no thought. I have wondered why these beings exist, why they toil and labor and progress, and what part they play in the scheme of this universe. When I have asked what object they had in view, why they strove, I have been told that it was for the good of the race, for the benefit of the nation, for the future of their kind. Exactly the same answers that I have heard to similar queries from humans. But what I have wondered, is that good, that benefit, that future? Meaningless words, I think. Here are these creatures, laboring that they may live, living that they may labor,—in an endless circle. To be sure they have advanced in some ways far beyond my fellow men, and no doubt will advance still more, but of what avail? They are but giant crustaceans after all, and they hatch from eggs, toil through life at the tasks to which they are trained, and come to their death and are forgotten after their brief span of life has been spent, and the world knows not even that they exist. And on the other side of the world, in the land of men, human beings are born, labor and die utterly unknown to these beings. What does it all mean; what place has it all in the scheme of the Universe, I wonder? And when I think on such matters I feel that after all my life is of little moment, that though I am here and my lot is cast among such weird beings, it makes no difference to the world or to the future, for I am but an atom of the whole, one of countless millions of cogs in the gigantic wheel of nature. And while I cannot fathom the riddle of life yet I feel that I must have my place in the whole, that Fate has seen fit to place me here and that, even if all the puny efforts of men and of these creatures seem to lead nowhere, yet must each one of us, and of them, be as essential to the machinery of the Universe as any cog in a real wheel, and without which the whole vast mechanism would jar and jolt and go wrong. So, instead of brooding upon my lot and spending my time vainly wishing to regain my fellow men, I have become resigned.

But I can find no affection, no liking, no fellow feeling for these beings. They have treated me kindly, my every want is provided for, and I occupy a

far more important place than ever I could have filled in my world. And in brains, in attainments and in many other ways these beings are even more human than human beings. Yet so strongly influenced are we by physical appearances that to me these creatures are still but beasts and I feel apart from them and with little in common. It is perhaps akin to the feeling that one race of human beings has for another, the same feeling that prevents the white and black races from thorough sympathy and understanding, and that creates prejudices and ill feelings in the nations of the world I knew.

And another thing. These beings, though so intelligent, so industrious, so far advanced, are such brainless, silly creatures! Though they toil and work feverishly and seem to have no idle moments to spare, yet they will cease all, will drop everything and gather in crowds for the most trivial reasons. Yes, even without a reason. Let one of the scurrying, hurrying workers stop and gaze about and instantly a crowd collects, all gazing in the same direction, though there is nothing unusual to be seen, and quite forgetting the tasks on which they were sent. And they are childish to a degree. The simplest, most nonsensical things will fascinate them to such an extent that everything is at a standstill.

Wishing to find exercise and recreation I devised a set of ninepins and a ball, and at sight of these, the throngs grew wildly excited. They gathered about, waving their antennae, turning their long-stalked eyes about, dropping everything, and for an entire day practically all work was abandoned while the beings amused themselves with my crude toys. Tossing a ball and catching it, spinning a top, and a score of other simple amusements, proved equally exciting and interesting to the beings, and the rulers begged me to confine my activities at such things to recreation hours for fear a great calamity might result.

But after all in such matters they are much like men and I wonder if the planets are inhabited and if their denizens also possess similar characteristics and peculiarities.

All this, however, is leading me from the course of my narrative. I have mentioned that I discovered why the beings had no vehicles, save airships, and why, though they were so far in advance of human science, they apparently knew nothing of many of our most useful and important every day matters and inventions.

It came about in this way.

I was seated upon the shores of the lake and gazing across its broad and tranquil surface towards the dim and distant mountain ranges. Sailor-like my

mind turned to boats. What a pleasure it would be, I thought, to have some good craft in which to sail those waters, to go where I willed and to explore the shores. I had traveled much in the beings' airships, but I could not handle the contraptions and I longed for the feel of a keel under my feet. And why shouldn't my desires be satisfied? To be sure, I knew that to secure wood to build a boat was out of the question; but there was the metal sulphur. This could be made in thin sheets and a metal boat could be constructed. But then, I thought, how would I manage to make the creatures understand what I wanted? And even if I did could they bend and form and rivet the plates? Then a brilliant idea came to me. Why shouldn't the boat be fashioned of one single piece, moulded or cast into form? It could be. And thus made it would be stronger and better in every way than if built up of plates. Strange that I had not thought of it sooner. The airships' hulls were thus formed and I had only to make a model of the craft I wished in order to have the creatures turn out a seamless metal boat of incredible lightness and strength. For a time, however, even the simple matter of the model puzzled me until it occurred to me to make this from a very thin sheet of metal which, after considerable trouble, I pounded and bent into the desired shape.

The result of my work, and my efforts to make the artizans grasp my ideas, was a boat about eighteen feet in length and five feet beam drawing about three feet aft. I cannot say the lines of the craft were beautiful and I had no expectation of finding her speedy, but she was staunch and buoyant and I thoroughly enjoyed fitting her up. Metal tubes were used for mast and spars, twisted fibre or yarns of the same material as the beings used for their textiles formed ropes and lines, and the sails were made of the same fabric. All the time I was working the creatures regarded my labors with intense interest, though at an entire loss to know what I was about. But of all things the tackle and blocks seemed to fascinate them the most. And when at last my craft was ready and I hoisted sails, and grasping the tiller, trimmed the sheets and sped off with a fresh breeze, the creatures went almost mad with excitement. Here, indeed, was a strange condition of affairs. Beings who had gone far beyond man's dreams in accomplishments, who had conquered the air and yet knew nothing of boats or of sails and had never even seen blocks and tackle.

Of my cruises in the craft I need say little. In her I navigated the chain of great lakes or inland seas, visiting out of the way spots and landing on the very place where I had first thrown myself upon the beach to drink the water after my terrible journey. Here I again attempted to scale the mountains as have already mentioned. But either the climate or the air had affected me, for before I had ascended half way to the summits of the ridge I was utterly

spent and was forced to retrace my steps. This was a great blow to me for I had hoped that sooner or later I would be able to make my way back over the mountains to the Antarctic and that I thus might rejoin my fellow men. The perils I knew were terrible and there was not one chance in a million of my succeeding, but even this slim chance was I felt better than to remain forever among the weird beings. Even when I found it impossible I was not utterly discouraged. Possibly, I thought, there might be lower spots in the mountain range, but in the end I found that the country was completely girded by towering mountains and that the spot where I had crossed was the only point where such a crossing had been possible. But all this is apart from what I was about to set down. On my explorations, however, I found that which had a direct bearing upon my discovery as to why most simple mechanical devices were unknown to the creatures. In one spot I discovered a vast deposit of coal, in another quantities of copper, and I also found iron, silver, gold and many other metals and minerals. Oddly enough, too, the ores seemed to have been mined, for there were yawning openings filled with debris which appeared to be old shafts and tunnels, and yet I knew the beings used none of the metals nor coal. But the discovery of the latter started a new train of thought in my mind. Could I not equip my craft with power and thus be able to cruise about more rapidly and without being dependent upon the wind? Of course I might have induced the creatures to supply me with the strange invisible power they utilized, but somehow, I longed for familiar things, for devices with which I was acquainted, and I cannot hope to express the great comfort and happiness I found in my little boat. Moreover, I felt the necessity of keeping hands and mind busy and so I at once decided to try my mechanical skill at designing and building a small steam engine. Of course my knowledge of machinery was limited, but I knew the principles of steam and steam engines, and after weeks of weary work and innumerable disappointments I managed to turn out a crude sort of affair which actually worked. To be sure it was far too cumbersome and heavy, not to mention its small power, for my craft, but once having mastered the affair I felt that a second attempt would prove far easier and more satisfactory than the first.

But the creatures, who had watched every step of the work, showed indescribable excitement as the smoke rose from the funnel and the steam hissed and the fly wheel revolved. From far and near they flocked, more excited than I had ever seen them, and I realized how Watt or Fulton or other great inventors must have felt when at last they proved that their theories were right and had demonstrated to a wondering multitude that steam could be harnessed and made to serve man.

And then came an astounding discovery. The rulers wished to take possession of my crude engine; not to operate it, but to place it in a special building, a sort of museum as I might say, as a prized treasure. This was, I considered, not unnatural, but when one of the historians—he who held the most ancient records of the race,—explained that in the dim history of the past the beings had made and used such things, I was absolutely dumbfounded. No one, he informed me, had ever seen the machines; they were merely tradition and were considered fabulous, and all unwittingly I had materialized something which by them was regarded very much as we regarded relics of the Pharaohs or of our prehistoric ancestors. Then the living volume of the nation's history went on to explain that legendary lore had it that the creatures' ancient forebears had possessed many other strange and unknown devices and I was asked if I could not also make some of these as fellow exhibits in the historical museum.

Here then I found myself suddenly transformed from a great inventor, proud of exhibiting my superior knowledge and mechanical ability, to a primitive being, a being out of the dim past, a member of a race whose greatest achievements had been known, used and discarded by these super-crustaceans so long ago that even history held no actual records of them. It was a great shock to my pride, but I was quite willing to busy myself at any work that would keep me occupied, even if it went only to prove how far behind the times I was, and soon I became vastly interested in the work and, by my efforts, reconstructing the forgotten past for the strange beings.

Among the first things that I built was a cart, and this amazed the creatures even more than the engine. To them wheels were most marvelous things, akin, I should say from their actions, to magic or witchcraft, and I racked my brains to puzzle out how it was that the wheel, which I had always considered man's most important mechanical invention, should have been discarded and forgotten by the lobster-like beings. Man cannot get on without the wheel. It is the foundation, the basis, of all industry, all machinery, all our most wonderful accomplishments. And yet, here was a nation of highly intelligent creatures, a race which had advanced immeasurably beyond humans in annihilating space and time, beings who had tapped the very source of nature's storehouse of power and who had made marvelous discoveries and never used a wheel in any form. To them the wheel was as obsolete and as useless as a stone axe or a flint knife to us, but instantly, as they saw wheels, they became fascinated with their uses and possibilities. Not that they were of any real benefit in their lives or occupations, but merely because they were strange, antique curiosities which afforded the beings new amusements and sports. Soon, carts or

wagons were everywhere, and being most adaptable creatures, the inhabitants were not long in fitting the vehicles with power receivers and were rattling and bumping about in crude motor cars, or rather motor wagons, as pleased as a lot of kids with new toys.

I could not help thinking how this same power applied to modern automobiles would revolutionize motor cars in our world, and I fell to work with a will striving to construct some sort of car which would be an improvement over the solid wheeled, uncomfortable things the creatures were using. I cannot say that the result of my labors and inventive powers would have been a worthy rival even of a tin Lizzie, but it had a greater vogue among the beings than even Ford's famous product had among humans, and motoring became the favorite sport of the entire country. Incredibly swift airships were abandoned, save for utility and business, and just as we human beings—or a large number of us—prefer sail boats or rowing, or even the primitive savage canoe, to the steam or power boat when it comes to recreation, or choose a slow-going horse and carriage rather than a railway train or a motor car for pleasure, so they preferred the crude vehicles bumping over the earth to the silent, smooth sailing, meteor-like airships. I cannot describe, cannot hope to give a picture of the ridiculous, grotesque appearance the creatures presented in their new toys. And accidents were innumerable. Indeed, I believe it is the danger, the risk in using land vehicles, that appeals most strongly to the creatures. They seem to delight in collisions, in broken limbs, and are reckless beyond words. No doubt the dangers are a relief, for their airships are so constructed that accidents are next to impossible and collisions cannot occur, for there are devices which operate in such a way that if two ships come dangerously close the mechanisms automatically operate to repel each other.

Few fatalities have, however, resulted from the use of wheeled vehicles, but beings lacking one or more appendages or even antennae are seen everywhere. And they are marvelously expert in avoiding mishaps by a hair's breadth. Never have I seen such mad driving and the worst traffic jams of New York's thoroughfares are nothing compared with the congestion here in this metropolis of this strange land. And the wheels are used for many other amusements too. There are contraptions for which I am responsible which might be called bicycles, and hoop-rolling is a sport over which the beings grow as excited and become as interested as human beings over golf or tennis.

And of course, having seen the wonderful results of my efforts and my, to them, prehistoric knowledge, I tried my hand at a thousand and one other

matters. Bows and arrows were most astounding things to these beings, and you can imagine my amazement when, not content with using a single bow, these weird creatures armed themselves with three bows at once and discharged a perfect hail of arrows at the targets. What warriors they would make, I thought. What unconquerable foes, with their ten appendages or limbs, eight of which could be used for handling weapons. Each in fact would equal eight men in one, and for the first time it dawned upon me that herein was largely the secret of their great achievements, that they had been able to accomplish eight times as much work as humans, and I wondered what the results would have been had Edison, Ford, Marconi or any of our great inventors and geniuses been equipped by nature to do eight times the work they have done.

Their aptitude with such primitive weapons as bows and arrows aroused my interest as to what they would do with firearms, and I bent my energies and inventive powers to the task of making such things. There was an abundance of sulphur, of course, saltpeter was to be had and charcoal was not an impossibility, but it was a long time before I succeeded in making a mixture that would do more than sputter and burn. But at last I had an apology for gunpowder and the rest was simple. I had a small cannon made, and having loaded it and placed a sheet metal target before it, I touched it off. My powder was poor, slow burning stuff, but it served to throw the ball and made a respectable detonation, but I was greatly disappointed at the effect upon the assembled creatures who had gathered to watch the demonstration. The noise and smoke did not surprise them in the least, but I might have foreseen this as they possessed an explosive far more powerful than powder or even dynamite. In fact it was altogether too powerful for use in firearms, as I discovered with almost fatal results to myself long before I tried my hand at powder making. They examined the ragged hole torn by the missile in the metal target and they showed some interest in this, but their greatest wonder appeared to be that an explosive capable of doing so much should have been confined in the metal barrel of the gun. Aside from this, however, the whole experiment failed to appeal to them. They had no use for such things as guns and powder, no need of offensive or defensive weapons, and their own explosive was a thousand times more valuable than powder for their purposes.

And scores of other things which I made, after endless failures and by dint of hardest work, were as useless to them as the cannon. And then at last it came to me that in this strange place man's greatest inventions, human beings' most marvelous labor-saving devices and our most prized luxuries and conveniences had no place. That here was a race or nation of beings

where there was no struggle for supremacy, no real industry for personal gain, no riches, no poverty, no competition; that conditions, life, everything, were totally unlike those of my world and that these creatures, ages before my arrival, had passed the stage of human civilization and that to them our customs, habits and mode of life would appear as barbarous and primitive as those of the prehistoric cave dwellers to us.

There is no agriculture, so no demand for agricultural machinery. No vast transportation of foodstuffs and raw materials, for with power wherever required and food and all things needed—with the exception of sulphur—available anywhere, there is little to be carried and airships are all that are required. All resources are equally at the disposal of every member of the community and hence there is no struggle for existence or for wealth, and as every member of the nation is developed, trained and predestined, from the day of hatching, for some definite place in life, there is no ambition, no desire for advancement. In short these beings are mere automatons, machines endowed with life, intelligence and minds, and nothing more. They only differ from insensate mechanisms inasmuch as they have their times for rest and recreation, and I daily thank God that human beings have not yet come to such a pass.

Often, when among my fellow men, I have heard arguments and have read articles in favor of a communistic or socialistic life and government, and picturing the ideal Utopia that the earth would be if men could all be equal, if all wealth could be equally divided and there could be no class distinctions, no struggle for supremacy. Often, too, I have in the past felt that such a state would be desirable, and many a time, when fortune frowned upon me and I compared my lot as a sailor with the ease and luxury of wealthy passengers upon my ships, or with the rich ship owners, I have felt bitterness that some should be so favored and others forced to struggle through life in poverty. But now I realize what dire results would follow were these socialists' ideas fulfilled. Now I realize that there could be no ambition, no desire for betterment, no real happiness in life and no pride if such conditions prevailed. No, a thousand times no. Better dire poverty, unending toil, the abuses and vices, the wars and strife, all the wrongs and woes of mankind and civilization than to become the heartless, impersonal beings that such conditions would lead to. What would the world of men be without love, sentiment, art, music, affection, ambition? What would it be if the human race had no ideals beyond existence and the propagation of the species? What would it be if there was nothing to spur men on, to send them to sleep weary with the day's work but filled with dreams and visions of accomplishments on the morrow; to awaken them filled with determination

to succeed, to force their way to the top? What would life amount to if men had no aims, no ideals in life, no necessity to exert themselves, to prove superiority to their fellows, to force their individuality upon the world and to choose their path in life and to be independent, free, leading their own lives as they see fit and with no limit, save their own intelligences and their labors, to what they may accomplish?

It is this, this supposed idealistic sort of life of these beings that made me so heartily sick of my existence among them. Would that those who have found such fault with our civilization, who have endeavored to revolutionize human life and human ways, and to upset conditions that the Almighty in His infinite wisdom has established, might be here with me. Would that those socialistic agitators might be forced to exist here among these creatures.

Anything rather than this state of affairs. At times it seems as if I should go mad, and I find myself longing for something, anything, to upset this machine-like monotonous life about me. Anger, strife, battle—aye, even a war with all its horrors would be welcome.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LONG time has passed since I penned my lines. And now I know that beyond question I am doomed to spend all my days among these weird beings. Over and over again I have attempted to find a way out, to discover a means of scaling the mountains, for desperation drove me, and death upon the ice-covered wastes of the polar regions seemed preferable to life here. But though strong, healthy and as able-bodied as ever, yet, for some strange reason, I could not climb those cliffs. Perhaps it is the food or drink that has robbed me of the power to ascend even to moderate heights, perchance dwelling in this air with its unending blue light has had its effect, and like the creatures who dwell here, I cannot live where once I felt no ill effects. But whatever the reason, the fact remains that each time I have reached a height of a few hundred feet, my muscles have failed me, my strength has given out, and I have been forced to give up. I am as hopelessly caged here as though in a prison and yet the birds come and go at will and I envy them beyond words to express, as I watch the broad-winged albatrosses and great white mollymokes and screeching gulls and know on their pinions they can rise above the surrounding mountains and leave this side of the world for the other that I shall never see again; that no doubt they gaze upon my fellow men, upon the wide blue sea, and upon white sailed ships and great palatial steamships with the same expressionless eyes they turn upon me and upon the beings dwelling here in this undreamed-of land.

To one of these free winged creatures, these friends of old who come over the edge of the world each year, I shall soon entrust this narrative. Perchance it may never reach a human being. The bird may meet with disaster or it may never look on a civilized man. Or again, even though scores, hundreds, of my fellow men see the creatures, yet it may pass unnoticed and the message may not be read. But there is a chance that, with the metal cylinder, in which I shall place my story, dangling from its leg, the albatross will attract the attention of some one. Perhaps its nesting ground may be near some party of whalers, or even near a settlement, and it is this chance I cling to. I have no fear that the cylinder will become detached or even broken, despite the rough treatment it will no doubt receive, and

even if the bird is not found or the cylinder discovered for years, it and its contents will be intact. I have selected the toughest and hardest of the many varieties of metal for the cylinder, a metal which is far harder than steel and which can be opened or broken only by tremendous force or by a heat greater than fire, and I have used a transparent grade of the metal in order that any one finding it may see that it contains a manuscript, for I well know how curious human beings are to read any scrap of writing that is picked up in a floating or stranded bottle. The cylinder being air tight will preserve the manuscript, and the writing is done with a fluid I found among the waste or by-products of the sulphur factory. It is indelible and will not fade, while the cord by which I shall attach the cylinder to my bird messenger is of the toughest woven metal and cannot be severed by any ordinary means.

And what if my narrative is found and read? Will any mortal man believe it? Will the finder, if finder there be, credit such a story as will be disclosed? No, I suppose not. It is too incredible, too ridiculous to pass as anything more than fiction or the ramblings of a disordered mind. They will think the writer crazy, a madman who has set down the delusions of his brain, or will think some one is trying to perpetrate a gigantic hoax.

But again, perhaps, if God wills, my narrative may fall into the hands of some person who will be attracted by the strangeness of its container. The transparent metal cylinder will perhaps arouse curiosity, the material on which it is written may give credence to my tale. And if so, then will it be known beyond a doubt that it is no wild fancy, no product of a crazy man; for nowhere in the world of men are such materials known. Often I smile to myself to think what a sensation will be created when the newspapers print accounts of the discovery of the strange manuscript in a still more remarkable container. No doubt, in that case, my story will be read by thousands, perhaps millions of my fellow men. And yet, the cylinder in which I send it may prove of greater interest and value to the world than my story. I can picture the scientists' excitement as they analyze the metal and discussions grow hot as to its origin, while inventors strive to produce the same material for the benefit of mankind.

Such thoughts are a diversion and a comfort to me, and many hours I spend trying to picture in my mind the results of my story and its effect upon the world in case it ever reaches civilized men.

But I must cut short my imaginings, my hopes and fears, for it is all aside from my tale and I must confine myself to the story of my life here on this unknown, mountain-walled continent among these weird beings.

Since I last took up my manuscript to write, many events have occurred, but that which is of greatest importance, though the creatures here make little of it, is the escape of the captive ants from the zoo wherein they were confined.

To me there is something threatening in this, and I cannot rid myself of a feeling of a dire calamity impending. Always I had been fascinated by the gigantic insects, and hours after hours I have spent, watching them as they labored and rushed about, drilling, carrying on strange evolutions, marching and countermarching, seemingly aimlessly, within their fenced enclosure.

That they could escape, no one dreamed; for as I have said, they were hedged in by network of material fatal to them. But escape they did, and not an ant remains within the pen nor was there a dead ant to tell of the insects having touched the death dealing netting. No, they had been far too intelligent for that, and their apparently aimless labors had been but a clever ruse, a means of concealing their true purpose of tunnelling to great depths and, by means of an unsuspected subterranean passage, vanishing, no one knows where. And I feel sure that their constant drilling, their military-like actions, were no more purposeless than their work. To be sure they are few—not more than two hundred at most—and the inhabitants have no fears. They assure me that the ants will soon be recaptured, that in airships these beings can locate the fugitives and either take or destroy them, and that, even if such means fail, the ants may be destroyed by scattering the deadly compound about their haunts and by preventing them from securing food.

Moreover, they point out, the ants are few and are no menace unless in vast numbers, and that long before they can increase enough to be dangerous they will again be under control.

But I cannot put aside my fears, my premonitions. Who can say where the ants have gone? Who can say what their numbers may be? For all anyone knows they may have been increasing by thousands beneath the earth, may have been waiting for months or years until they had reared a horde of their kind in the dark, unseen passages underground. And their strength, activity and tirelessness, are prodigious. One of the great insects has the strength of a score of men or the muscular powers of several giant lobster-like beings. And they multiply with amazing rapidity. Even now they may number countless thousands, may be biding their time in some hidden subterranean lair, storing food, making plans, drilling; only waiting for the time when they will be ready and prepared to overwhelm the country with their armies. And the strangest part of it is that such thoughts should trouble me. Why should it matter to me whether these lobster-like beings or the

giant ants are in supremacy? Why should I care what takes place in this country in which I have no interest and which I have grown to hate and detest? It is not fear of personal injuries or death, but I shudder at the thought of being made captive or being destroyed by the ants, for death I feel, might prove better than a life among these creatures. I have tried to analyze my feelings, to fathom the cause of my worries and, though it sounds ridiculous, though even to me it seems impossible, yet I feel sure that it is due to a sense of patriotism.

Patriotism for a land that is my prison, for a race of beings with whom I have nothing in common! And yet it is so. Although I chafe at my enforced life here, although I long to be away from the country and its denizens, although their life, ways and personalities are all repugnant to me, yet such a strange thing is the human mind that I feel as greatly concerned over the impending danger as if these beings were of my own race and it was my own country.

Yes, and if it comes to battle, to a war between the ants and these supercrustaceans, I know in my heart that I shall find myself battling against the ants, using my every effort to aid these monstrous beings in overthrowing their hereditary enemies.

Little did I dream, when I wrote, months ago, that even war would be welcome, how soon my words were to be borne out, for war, bloody, merciless, relentless and horrible beyond words to express is, I feel sure, near at hand.

A month or more has passed since last I wrote, and, during that interval events have moved rapidly. The ants have been discovered. Scouts have found them, and my worst fears have been more than fulfilled. In incalculable thousands they are swarming on a vast uninhabited area in the north, drilling, gathering vast stores and evidently preparing for a campaign. And yet these beings are not disturbed, have no fears and have made little effort to repel or destroy their enemies. From airships quantities of the death dealing chemicals were dropped upon the ants but with little result. A few were killed but instantly the alarm was given the ants vanished like magic, seeking safe refuge in subterranean burrows. I have urged these creatures to set forth and attack, to take the offensive against the ants, to drop explosives from airships and thus shatter the burrows and destroy the occupants. And I have sought to induce them to surround themselves with barriers of the ant poison. But my words have been unheeded so far. So long have these

creatures lived in peace, so long have they been in complete control, and so many years have passed since they battled with the ants that they have forgotten the terrible power and resources of their enemies and underrate them. Too late, I fear, will they awaken.

But I have not been idle. With the aid of a few who have given ear to my advice I have taken what steps we can to protect the city. We have laid mines about it which can be exploded, and in two airships we have attempted to destroy the ants' retreats with explosive, but our puny efforts have been of little avail. Moreover, in our last assault, one of the airships was disabled by a premature explosion and fell to earth, and I shudder as I write when I think of the awful scene I witnessed when the ants rushed upon the occupants of the airship and with ravenous jaws tore them in pieces while still alive.

And if the ants are victorious that will be the fate of all, yes even of myself. But I have no mind to meet with such a fearful death. I have provisioned my boat and if worst comes to worst I shall flee in her. Across the water the ants cannot follow and miles distant I know of a large island where I shall seek safety—there to pass the remaining days of my life alone.

A week since I wrote those last lines. The ants are advancing now. Already they have overwhelmed two outlying towns and against them the poison and even the explosives seem useless. Slowly but inexorably they come, making their way by underground passages, scurrying to safe retreats far under the earth at first sight of an airship. It is terrible, nightmarish, this invisible, silent advance of the vast hordes of terrible creatures, and the inhabitants are now terror stricken.

Barriers of the poison have been passed by the ants tunnelling beneath them; hundreds of the inhabitants of the countryside have fallen victims to the relentless insects, and each day their numbers increase and they draw nearer to this metropolis.

They are within a few miles of the power plant and at any moment may take possession of the sulphur mines. And then the doom of the beings will be sealed. Without resources, without power, all will be helpless, doomed to perish miserably or become prisoners of the ants. And there is no retreat. The insects have overrun the land, have thrown out great encircling armies and our scouts report them on every side.

And now a new and more terrible thing has occurred. The ants are swarming. Their queens, winged and capable of flight, are filling the air, darkening the skies and dropping here, there, everywhere to establish new colonies. Hundreds of them have even dropped within the city and although

they have been destroyed yet their numbers seem undiminished. Unseen, they drop at night, hurrying to hidden spots they deposit their eggs, and ere their presence is suspected the warriors have emerged and fall upon the surprised inhabitants and tear them to bits. In their extremity the creatures have besought me to equip them with bows and arrows, guns, anything in the form of weapons. And these have helped. With their arrows, with the bullets from the crude firearms, they have managed to keep the ant army in check, for these are things new to the ants and they have no means of resisting them. Desperate as our case is, yet I have smiled to think how history repeats itself, how these beings have been forced to resort to prehistoric, primitive means to preserve their homes and lives, just as the armies of Europe, despite modern weapons, high explosives, poisonous gasses and every latest scientific device, were forced to resort to armor, grenades, medieval weapons and methods to combat the Germans.

And even the wagons, the motor vehicles, have been brought into play against the ants, for the airships are next to useless. Let an airship rise aloft and the swarming queen ants light upon it by hundreds and bear it to earth with their weight, but the wheeled vehicles, protected, transformed to miniature forts of metal and filled with armed beings, carry terror and destruction among the ants, crushing them beneath the wheels while arrows and bullets strike them down.

But despite all I feel that we are losing, that our efforts have been made too late and that at any moment the horde of insects will overwhelm the power plant and we will be incapable of making food, of producing light, of manufacturing anything, even of operating our vehicles. Long have I foreseen this and in preparation for the calamity I have had steam engines built, but these are all too few to serve all our wants. Would that these beings had but given heed to my words long ago and then all might have been well. Too long they waited and then panic stricken turned to me begging me to take charge, beseeching me to save them. The fate of the country, of the inhabitants depends upon me but I feel that no human efforts, nothing that these beings under my directions can accomplish, will do more than delay the end.

What I dreaded most has befallen. The ants are in possession of the power plant. Everything is at a standstill. Only the barest necessities of life can be produced with the puny, limited power of my machines, the ancient antiquated mechanisms discarded ages ago by these beings, but what now,

when all their marvelous inventions have failed them, are proving their salvation, their one hope.

And it is but a forlorn hope. We are besieged, encompassed, surrounded, and each day the encircling cordon is drawing irresistibly nearer.

I fear even to wait longer to entrust this manuscript to a bird. If I wait it may be too late, so tomorrow I shall enclose it in a metal cylinder and shall lash it to the leg of a great albatross I have captured.

And I am ready to flee, to take to my boat. Each day, each hour, the inhabitants are deserting the city. They are taking to the water, are reverting to the habits of their long forgotten ancestors, are becoming crustaceans once more, and forgetting all their great works, all their civilization, all their evolved mentalities, are seeking the depths of the lake and reverting to a submarine life. Perchance ere the city falls all the beings will have forsaken the life they have led for generations, and in the water and the slime beneath it, will have found safety and there will forget all and will degenerate to the lobsters from which they rose. 'Tis a strange, a bizarre thought, but man, in time of dire extremity, when overwhelmed and destroyed, has more than once reverted to savagery and every great nation has fallen, so perhaps 'tis but the law of nature, the working out of God's plan——.

I am about to close, to seal my manuscript to send it out to the world, and I must make haste. Scarcely a dozen of the inhabitants are left. All but these have deserted. Within the hour the ants will overwhelm the city. I must hurry to my boat and escape ere it is too late.

Yes, even now they are coming. They are in the outskirts. Their hordes will cut off my retreat if I do not close at once. It is the end. My narrative must be sealed and entrusted to the albatross which for many weeks I have held captive and awaiting this time. God grant that it may reach the hand of some fellow man.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Author's name "Verill" as used in the original magazine has been corrected to "Verrill".

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Book cover is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Beyond the Pole* by A. Hyatt Verrill]