

The Lost Continent

By

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Chapter 1

Since earliest childhood I have been strangely fascinated by the mystery surrounding the history of the last days of twentieth century Europe. My interest is keenest, perhaps, not so much in relation to known facts as to speculation upon the unknowable of the two centuries that have rolled by since human intercourse between the Western and Eastern Hemispheres ceased--the mystery of Europe's state following the termination of the Great War--provided, of course, that the war had been terminated.

From out of the meagerness of our censored histories we learned that for fifteen years after the cessation of diplomatic relations between the United States of North America and the belligerent nations of the Old World, news of more or less doubtful authenticity filtered, from time to time, into the Western Hemisphere from the Eastern.

Then came the fruition of that historic propaganda which is best described by its own slogan: "The East for the East--the West for the West," and all further intercourse was stopped by statute.

Even prior to this, transoceanic commerce had practically ceased, owing to the perils and hazards of the mine-strewn waters of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Just when submarine activities ended we do not know but the last vessel of this type sighted by a Pan-American merchantman was the huge Q 138, which discharged twenty-nine torpedoes at a Brazilian tank steamer off the Bermudas in the fall of 1972. A heavy sea and the excellent seamanship of the master of the Brazilian permitted the Pan-American to escape and report this last of a long series of outrages upon our commerce. God alone knows how many hundreds of our ancient ships fell prey to the roving steel sharks of blood-frenzied Europe. Countless were the vessels and men that passed over our eastern and western horizons never to return; but whether they met their fates before the belching tubes of submarines or among the aimlessly drifting mine fields, no man lived to tell.

And then came the great Pan-American Federation which linked the Western Hemisphere from pole to pole under a single flag, which joined the navies of the New World into the mightiest fighting force that ever sailed the seven seas--the greatest argument for peace the world had ever known.

Since that day peace had reigned from the western shores of the Azores to the western shores of the Hawaiian Islands, nor has any man of either hemisphere

dared cross 30dW. or 175dW. From 30d to 175d is ours--from 30d to 175d is peace, prosperity and happiness.

Beyond was the great unknown. Even the geographies of my boyhood showed nothing beyond. We were taught of nothing beyond. Speculation was discouraged. For two hundred years the Eastern Hemisphere had been wiped from the maps and histories of Pan-America. Its mention in fiction, even, was forbidden.

Our ships of peace patrol thirty and one hundred seventy-five. What ships from beyond they have warned only the secret archives of government show; but, a naval officer myself, I have gathered from the traditions of the service that it has been fully two hundred years since smoke or sail has been sighted east of 30d or west of 175d. The fate of the relinquished provinces which lay beyond the dead lines we could only speculate upon. That they were taken by the military power, which rose so suddenly in China after the fall of the republic, and which wrested Manchuria and Korea from Russia and Japan, and also absorbed the Philippines, is quite within the range of possibility.

It was the commander of a Chinese man-of-war who received a copy of the edict of 1972 from the hand of my illustrious ancestor, Admiral Turck, on one hundred seventy-five, two hundred and six years ago, and from the yellowed pages of the admiral's diary I learned that the fate of the Philippines was even then presaged by these Chinese naval officers.

Yes, for over two hundred years no man crossed 30d to 175d and lived to tell his story--not until chance drew me across and back again, and public opinion, revolting at last against the drastic regulations of our long-dead forbears, demanded that my story be given to the world, and that the narrow interdict which commanded peace, prosperity, and happiness to halt at 30d and 175d be removed forever.

I am glad that it was given to me to be an instrument in the hands of Providence for the uplifting of benighted Europe, and the amelioration of the suffering, degradation, and abysmal ignorance in which I found her.

I shall not live to see the complete regeneration of the savage hordes of the Eastern Hemisphere--that is a work which will require many generations, perhaps ages, so complete has been their reversion to savagery; but I know that the work has been started, and I am proud of the share in it which my generous countrymen have placed in my hands.

The government already possesses a complete official report of my adventures beyond thirty. In the narrative I purpose telling my story in a less formal, and I

hope, a more entertaining, style; though, being only a naval officer and without claim to the slightest literary ability, I shall most certainly fall far short of the possibilities which are inherent in my subject. That I have passed through the most wondrous adventures that have befallen a civilized man during the past two centuries encourages me in the belief that, however ill the telling, the facts themselves will command your interest to the final page.

Beyond thirty! Romance, adventure, strange peoples, fearsome beasts--all the excitement and scurry of the lives of the twentieth century ancients that have been denied us in these dull days of peace and prosaic prosperity--all, all lay beyond thirty, the invisible barrier between the stupid, commercial present and the carefree, barbarous past.

What boy has not sighed for the good old days of wars, revolutions, and riots; how I used to pore over the chronicles of those old days, those dear old days, when workmen went armed to their labors; when they fell upon one another with gun and bomb and dagger, and the streets ran red with blood! Ah, but those were the times when life was worth the living; when a man who went out by night knew not at which dark corner a "footpad" might leap upon and slay him; when wild beasts roamed the forest and the jungles, and there were savage men, and countries yet unexplored.

Now, in all the Western Hemisphere dwells no man who may not find a school house within walking distance of his home, or at least within flying distance.

The wildest beast that roams our waste places lairs in the frozen north or the frozen south within a government reserve, where the curious may view him and feed him bread crusts from the hand with perfect impunity.

But beyond thirty! And I have gone there, and come back; and now you may go there, for no longer is it high treason, punishable by disgrace or death, to cross 30d or 175d.

My name is Jefferson Turck. I am a lieutenant in the navy--in the great Pan-American navy, the only navy which now exists in all the world.

I was born in Arizona, in the United States of North America, in the year of our Lord 2116. Therefore, I am twenty-one years old.

In early boyhood I tired of the teeming cities and overcrowded rural districts of Arizona. Every generation of Turcks for over two centuries has been represented in the navy. The navy called to me, as did the free, wide, unpeopled spaces of the mighty oceans. And so I joined the navy, coming up from the ranks, as we all must, learning our craft as we advance. My promotion was rapid, for my family

seems to inherit naval lore. We are born officers, and I reserve to myself no special credit for an early advancement in the service.

At twenty I found myself a lieutenant in command of the aero-submarine Coldwater, of the SS-96 class. The Coldwater was one of the first of the air and underwater craft which have been so greatly improved since its launching, and was possessed of innumerable weaknesses which, fortunately, have been eliminated in more recent vessels of similar type.

Even when I took command, she was fit only for the junk pile; but the world-old parsimony of government retained her in active service, and sent two hundred men to sea in her, with myself, a mere boy, in command of her, to patrol thirty from Iceland to the Azores.

Much of my service had been spent aboard the great merchantmen-of-war. These are the utility naval vessels that have transformed the navies of old, which burdened the peoples with taxes for their support, into the present day fleets of self-supporting ships that find ample time for target practice and gun drill while they bear freight and the mails from the continents to the far-scattered island of Pan-America.

This change in service was most welcome to me, especially as it brought with it coveted responsibilities of sole command, and I was prone to overlook the deficiencies of the Coldwater in the natural pride I felt in my first ship.

The Coldwater was fully equipped for two months' patrolling--the ordinary length of assignment to this service--and a month had already passed, its monotony entirely unrelieved by sight of another craft, when the first of our misfortunes befell.

We had been riding out a storm at an altitude of about three thousand feet. All night we had hovered above the tossing billows of the moonlight clouds. The detonation of the thunder and the glare of lightning through an occasional rift in the vaporous wall proclaimed the continued fury of the tempest upon the surface of the sea; but we, far above it all, rode in comparative ease upon the upper gale. With the coming of dawn the clouds beneath us became a glorious sea of gold and silver, soft and beautiful; but they could not deceive us as to the blackness and the terrors of the storm-lashed ocean which they hid.

I was at breakfast when my chief engineer entered and saluted. His face was grave, and I thought he was even a trifle paler than usual.

"Well?" I asked.

He drew the back of his forefinger nervously across his brow in a gesture that was habitual with him in moments of mental stress.

"The gravitation-screen generators, sir," he said. "Number one went to the bad about an hour and a half ago. We have been working upon it steadily since; but I have to report, sir, that it is beyond repair."

"Number two will keep us supplied," I answered. "In the meantime we will send a wireless for relief."

"But that is the trouble, sir," he went on. "Number two has stopped. I knew it would come, sir. I made a report on these generators three years ago. I advised then that they both be scrapped. Their principle is entirely wrong. They're done for." And, with a grim smile, "I shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing my report was accurate."

"Have we sufficient reserve screen to permit us to make land, or, at least, meet our relief halfway?" I asked.

"No, sir," he replied gravely; "we are sinking now."

"Have you anything further to report?" I asked.

"No, sir," he said.

"Very good," I replied; and, as I dismissed him, I rang for my wireless operator. When he appeared, I gave him a message to the secretary of the navy, to whom all vessels in service on thirty and one hundred seventy-five report direct. I explained our predicament, and stated that with what screening force remained I should continue in the air, making as rapid headway toward St. Johns as possible, and that when we were forced to take to the water I should continue in the same direction.

The accident occurred directly over 30d and about 52d N. The surface wind was blowing a tempest from the west. To attempt to ride out such a storm upon the surface seemed suicidal, for the Coldwater was not designed for surface navigation except under fair weather conditions. Submerged, or in the air, she was tractable enough in any sort of weather when under control; but without her screen generators she was almost helpless, since she could not fly, and, if submerged, could not rise to the surface.

All these defects have been remedied in later models; but the knowledge did not help us any that day aboard the slowly settling Coldwater, with an angry sea roaring beneath, a tempest raging out of the west, and 30d only a few knots astern.

To cross thirty or one hundred seventy-five has been, as you know, the direst calamity that could befall a naval commander. Court-martial and degradation follow swiftly, unless as is often the case, the unfortunate man takes his own life before this unjust and heartless regulation can hold him up to public scorn.

There has been in the past no excuse, no circumstance, that could palliate the offense.

"He was in command, and he took his ship across thirty!" That was sufficient. It might not have been in any way his fault, as, in the case of the Coldwater, it could not possibly have been justly charged to my account that the gravitation-screen generators were worthless; but well I knew that should chance have it that we were blown across thirty today--as we might easily be before the terrific west wind that we could hear howling below us, the responsibility would fall upon my shoulders.

In a way, the regulation was a good one, for it certainly accomplished that for which it was intended. We all fought shy of 30d on the east and 175d on the west, and, though we had to skirt them pretty close, nothing but an act of God ever drew one of us across. You all are familiar with the naval tradition that a good officer could sense proximity to either line, and for my part, I am firmly convinced of the truth of this as I am that the compass finds the north without recourse to tedious processes of reasoning.

Old Admiral Sanchez was wont to maintain that he could smell thirty, and the men of the first ship in which I sailed claimed that Coburn, the navigating officer, knew by name every wave along thirty from 60dN. to 60dS. However, I'd hate to vouch for this.

Well, to get back to my narrative; we kept on dropping slowly toward the surface the while we bucked the west wind, clawing away from thirty as fast as we could. I was on the bridge, and as we dropped from the brilliant sunlight into the dense vapor of clouds and on down through them to the wild, dark storm strata beneath, it seemed that my spirits dropped with the falling ship, and the buoyancy of hope ran low in sympathy.

The waves were running to tremendous heights, and the Coldwater was not designed to meet such waves head on. Her elements were the blue ether, far above the raging storm, or the greater depths of ocean, which no storm could ruffle.

As I stood speculating upon our chances once we settled into the frightful Maelstrom beneath us and at the same time mentally computing the hours which must elapse before aid could reach us, the wireless operator clambered up the

ladder to the bridge, and, disheveled and breathless, stood before me at salute. It needed but a glance at him to assure me that something was amiss.

"What now?" I asked.

"The wireless, sir!" he cried. "My God, sir, I cannot send."

"But the emergency outfit?" I asked.

"I have tried everything, sir. I have exhausted every resource. We cannot send," and he drew himself up and saluted again.

I dismissed him with a few kind words, for I knew that it was through no fault of his that the mechanism was antiquated and worthless, in common with the balance of the Coldwater's equipment. There was no finer operator in Pan-America than he.

The failure of the wireless did not appear as momentous to me as to him, which is not unnatural, since it is but human to feel that when our own little cog slips, the entire universe must necessarily be put out of gear. I knew that if this storm were destined to blow us across thirty, or send us to the bottom of the ocean, no help could reach us in time to prevent it. I had ordered the message sent solely because regulations required it, and not with any particular hope that we could benefit by it in our present extremity.

I had little time to dwell upon the coincidence of the simultaneous failure of the wireless and the buoyancy generators, since very shortly after the Coldwater had dropped so low over the waters that all my attention was necessarily centered upon the delicate business of settling upon the waves without breaking my ship's back. With our buoyancy generators in commission it would have been a simple thing to enter the water, since then it would have been but a trifling matter of a forty-five degree dive into the base of a huge wave. We should have cut into the water like a hot knife through butter, and have been totally submerged with scarce a jar--I have done it a thousand times--but I did not dare submerge the Coldwater for fear that it would remain submerged to the end of time--a condition far from conducive to the longevity of commander or crew.

Most of my officers were older men than I. John Alvarez, my first officer, is twenty years my senior. He stood at my side on the bridge as the ship glided closer and closer to those stupendous waves. He watched my every move, but he was by far too fine an officer and gentleman to embarrass me by either comment or suggestion.

When I saw that we soon would touch, I ordered the ship brought around broadside to the wind, and there we hovered a moment until a huge wave reached up and seized us upon its crest, and then I gave the order that suddenly reversed the screening force, and let us into the ocean. Down into the trough we went, wallowing like the carcass of a dead whale, and then began the fight, with rudder and propellers, to force the Coldwater back into the teeth of the gale and drive her on and on, farther and farther from relentless thirty.

I think that we should have succeeded, even though the ship was wracked from stem to stern by the terrific buffetings she received, and though she were half submerged the greater part of the time, had no further accident befallen us.

We were making headway, though slowly, and it began to look as though we were going to pull through. Alvarez never left my side, though I all but ordered him below for much-needed rest. My second officer, Porfirio Johnson, was also often on the bridge. He was a good officer, but a man for whom I had conceived a rather unreasoning aversion almost at the first moment of meeting him, an aversion which was not lessened by the knowledge which I subsequently gained that he looked upon my rapid promotion with jealousy. He was ten years my senior both in years and service, and I rather think he could never forget the fact that he had been an officer when I was a green apprentice.

As it became more and more apparent that the Coldwater, under my seamanship, was weathering the tempest and giving promise of pulling through safely, I could have sworn that I perceived a shade of annoyance and disappointment growing upon his dark countenance. He left the bridge finally and went below. I do not know that he is directly responsible for what followed so shortly after; but I have always had my suspicions, and Alvarez is even more prone to place the blame upon him than I.

It was about six bells of the forenoon watch that Johnson returned to the bridge after an absence of some thirty minutes. He seemed nervous and ill at ease--a fact which made little impression on me at the time, but which both Alvarez and I recalled subsequently.

Not three minutes after his reappearance at my side the Coldwater suddenly commenced to lose headway. I seized the telephone at my elbow, pressing upon the button which would call the chief engineer to the instrument in the bowels of the ship, only to find him already at the receiver attempting to reach me.

"Numbers one, two, and five engines have broken down, sir," he called. "Shall we force the remaining three?"

"We can do nothing else," I bellowed into the transmitter.

"They won't stand the gaff, sir," he returned.

"Can you suggest a better plan?" I asked.

"No, sir," he replied.

"Then give them the gaff, lieutenant," I shouted back, and hung up the receiver.

For twenty minutes the Coldwater bucked the great seas with her three engines. I doubt if she advanced a foot; but it was enough to keep her nose in the wind, and, at least, we were not drifting toward thirty.

Johnson and Alvarez were at my side when, without warning, the bow swung swiftly around and the ship fell into the trough of the sea.

"The other three have gone," I said, and I happened to be looking at Johnson as I spoke. Was it the shadow of a satisfied smile that crossed his thin lips? I do not know; but at least he did not weep.

"You always have been curious, sir, about the great unknown beyond thirty," he said. "You are in a good way to have your curiosity satisfied." And then I could not mistake the slight sneer that curved his upper lip. There must have been a trace of disrespect in his tone or manner which escaped me, for Alvarez turned upon him like a flash.

"When Lieutenant Turck crosses thirty," he said, "we shall all cross with him, and God help the officer or the man who reproaches him!"

"I shall not be a party to high treason," snapped Johnson. "The regulations are explicit, and if the Coldwater crosses thirty it devolves upon you to place Lieutenant Turck under arrest and immediately exert every endeavor to bring the ship back into Pan-American waters."

"I shall not know," replied Alvarez, "that the Coldwater passes thirty; nor shall any other man aboard know it," and, with his words, he drew a revolver from his pocket, and before either I or Johnson could prevent it had put a bullet into every instrument upon the bridge, ruining them beyond repair.

And then he saluted me, and strode from the bridge, a martyr to loyalty and friendship, for, though no man might know that Lieutenant Jefferson Turck had taken his ship across thirty, every man aboard would know that the first officer had committed a crime that was punishable by both degradation and death. Johnson turned and eyed me narrowly.

"Shall I place him under arrest?" he asked.

"You shall not," I replied. "Nor shall anyone else."

"You become a party to his crime!" he cried angrily.

"You may go below, Mr. Johnson," I said, "and attend to the work of unpacking the extra instruments and having them properly set upon the bridge."

He saluted, and left me, and for some time I stood, gazing out upon the angry waters, my mind filled with unhappy reflections upon the unjust fate that had overtaken me, and the sorrow and disgrace that I had unwittingly brought down upon my house.

I rejoiced that I should leave neither wife nor child to bear the burden of my shame throughout their lives.

As I thought upon my misfortune, I considered more clearly than ever before the unrighteousness of the regulation which was to prove my doom, and in the natural revolt against its injustice my anger rose, and there mounted within me a feeling which I imagine must have paralleled that spirit that once was prevalent among the ancients called anarchy.

For the first time in my life I found my sentiments arraying themselves against custom, tradition, and even government. The wave of rebellion swept over me in an instant, beginning with an heretical doubt as to the sanctity of the established order of things--that fetish which has ruled Pan-Americans for two centuries, and which is based upon a blind faith in the infallibility of the prescience of the long-dead framers of the articles of Pan-American federation--and ending in an adamant determination to defend my honor and my life to the last ditch against the blind and senseless regulation which assumed the synonymy of misfortune and treason.

I would replace the destroyed instruments upon the bridge; every officer and man should know when we crossed thirty. But then I should assert the spirit which dominated me, I should resist arrest, and insist upon bringing my ship back across the dead line, remaining at my post until we had reached New York. Then I should make a full report, and with it a demand upon public opinion that the dead lines be wiped forever from the seas.

I knew that I was right. I knew that no more loyal officer wore the uniform of the navy. I knew that I was a good officer and sailor, and I didn't propose submitting to degradation and discharge because a lot of old, preglacial fossils had declared over two hundred years before that no man should cross thirty.

Even while these thoughts were passing through my mind I was busy with the details of my duties. I had seen to it that a sea anchor was rigged, and even now the men had completed their task, and the Coldwater was swinging around rapidly, her nose pointing once more into the wind, and the frightful rolling consequent upon her wallowing in the trough was happily diminishing.

It was then that Johnson came hurrying to the bridge. One of his eyes was swollen and already darkening, and his lip was cut and bleeding. Without even the formality of a salute, he burst upon me, white with fury.

"Lieutenant Alvarez attacked me!" he cried. "I demand that he be placed under arrest. I found him in the act of destroying the reserve instruments, and when I would have interfered to protect them he fell upon me and beat me. I demand that you arrest him!"

"You forget yourself, Mr. Johnson," I said. "You are not in command of the ship. I deplore the action of Lieutenant Alvarez, but I cannot expunge from my mind the loyalty and self-sacrificing friendship which has prompted him to his acts. Were I you, sir, I should profit by the example he has set. Further, Mr. Johnson, I intend retaining command of the ship, even though she crosses thirty, and I shall demand implicit obedience from every officer and man aboard until I am properly relieved from duty by a superior officer in the port of New York."

"You mean to say that you will cross thirty without submitting to arrest?" he almost shouted.

"I do, sir," I replied. "And now you may go below, and, when again you find it necessary to address me, you will please be so good as to bear in mind the fact that I am your commanding officer, and as such entitled to a salute."

He flushed, hesitated a moment, and then, saluting, turned upon his heel and left the bridge. Shortly after, Alvarez appeared. He was pale, and seemed to have aged ten years in the few brief minutes since I last had seen him. Saluting, he told me very simply what he had done, and asked that I place him under arrest.

I put my hand on his shoulder, and I guess that my voice trembled a trifle as, while reproving him for his act, I made it plain to him that my gratitude was no less potent a force than his loyalty to me. Then it was that I outlined to him my purpose to defy the regulation that had raised the dead lines, and to take my ship back to New York myself.

I did not ask him to share the responsibility with me. I merely stated that I should refuse to submit to arrest, and that I should demand of him and every

other officer and man implicit obedience to my every command until we docked at home.

His face brightened at my words, and he assured me that I would find him as ready to acknowledge my command upon the wrong side of thirty as upon the right, an assurance which I hastened to tell him I did not need.

The storm continued to rage for three days, and as far as the wind scarce varied a point during all that time, I knew that we must be far beyond thirty, drifting rapidly east by south. All this time it had been impossible to work upon the damaged engines or the gravity-screen generators; but we had a full set of instruments upon the bridge, for Alvarez, after discovering my intentions, had fetched the reserve instruments from his own cabin, where he had hidden them. Those which Johnson had seen him destroy had been a third set which only Alvarez had known was aboard the Coldwater.

We waited impatiently for the sun, that we might determine our exact location, and upon the fourth day our vigil was rewarded a few minutes before noon.

Every officer and man aboard was tense with nervous excitement as we awaited the result of the reading. The crew had known almost as soon as I that we were doomed to cross thirty, and I am inclined to believe that every man jack of them was tickled to death, for the spirits of adventure and romance still live in the hearts of men of the twenty-second century, even though there be little for them to feed upon between thirty and one hundred seventy-five.

The men carried none of the burdens of responsibility. They might cross thirty with impunity, and doubtless they would return to be heroes at home; but how different the home-coming of their commanding officer!

The wind had dropped to a steady blow, still from west by north, and the sea had gone down correspondingly. The crew, with the exception of those whose duties kept them below, were ranged on deck below the bridge. When our position was definitely fixed I personally announced it to the eager, waiting men.

"Men," I said, stepping forward to the handrail and looking down into their upturned, bronzed faces, "you are anxiously awaiting information as to the ship's position. It has been determined at latitude fifty degrees seven minutes north, longitude twenty degrees sixteen minutes west."

I paused and a buzz of animated comment ran through the massed men beneath me. "Beyond thirty. But there will be no change in commanding officers, in routine or in discipline, until after we have docked again in New York."

As I ceased speaking and stepped back from the rail there was a roar of applause from the deck such as I never before had heard aboard a ship of peace. It recalled to my mind tales that I had read of the good old days when naval vessels were built to fight, when ships of peace had been man-of-war, and guns had flashed in other than futile target practice, and decks had run red with blood.

With the subsistence of the sea, we were able to go to work upon the damaged engines to some effect, and I also set men to examining the gravitation-screen generators with a view to putting them in working order should it prove not beyond our resources.

For two weeks we labored at the engines, which indisputably showed evidence of having been tampered with. I appointed a board to investigate and report upon the disaster. But it accomplished nothing other than to convince me that there were several officers upon it who were in full sympathy with Johnson, for, though no charges had been preferred against him, the board went out of its way specifically to exonerate him in its findings.

All this time we were drifting almost due east. The work upon the engines had progressed to such an extent that within a few hours we might expect to be able to proceed under our own power westward in the direction of Pan-American waters.

To relieve the monotony I had taken to fishing, and early that morning I had departed from the Coldwater in one of the boats on such an excursion. A gentle west wind was blowing. The sea shimmered in the sunlight. A cloudless sky canopied the west for our sport, as I had made it a point never voluntarily to make an inch toward the east that I could avoid. At least, they should not be able to charge me with a willful violation of the dead lines regulation.

I had with me only the boat's ordinary complement of men--three in all, and more than enough to handle any small power boat. I had not asked any of my officers to accompany me, as I wished to be alone, and very glad am I now that I had not. My only regret is that, in view of what befell us, it had been necessary to bring the three brave fellows who manned the boat.

Our fishing, which proved excellent, carried us so far to the west that we no longer could see the Coldwater. The day wore on, until at last, about mid-afternoon, I gave the order to return to the ship.

We had proceeded but a short distance toward the east when one of the men gave an exclamation of excitement, at the same time pointing eastward. We all looked on in the direction he had indicated, and there, a short distance above the horizon, we saw the outlines of the Coldwater silhouetted against the sky.

"They've repaired the engines and the generators both," exclaimed one of the men.

It seemed impossible, but yet it had evidently been done. Only that morning, Lieutenant Johnson had told me that he feared that it would be impossible to repair the generators. I had put him in charge of this work, since he always had been accounted one of the best gravitation-screen men in the navy. He had invented several of the improvements that are incorporated in the later models of these generators, and I am convinced that he knows more concerning both the theory and the practice of screening gravitation than any living Pan-American.

At the sight of the Coldwater once more under control, the three men burst into a glad cheer. But, for some reason which I could not then account, I was strangely overcome by a premonition of personal misfortune. It was not that I now anticipated an early return to Pan-America and a board of inquiry, for I had rather looked forward to the fight that must follow my return. No, there was something else, something indefinable and vague that cast a strange gloom upon me as I saw my ship rising farther above the water and making straight in our direction.

I was not long in ascertaining a possible explanation of my depression, for, though we were plainly visible from the bridge of the aero-submarine and to the hundreds of men who swarmed her deck, the ship passed directly above us, not five hundred feet from the water, and sped directly westward.

We all shouted, and I fired my pistol to attract their attention, though I knew full well that all who cared to had observed us, but the ship moved steadily away, growing smaller and smaller to our view until at last she passed completely out of sight.