

## CHAPTER XIX

### TO PARIS UNDER THE SEA

De Beauxchamps accepted Cosmo Versál's invitation to bring his companions with him into the Ark. The submersible was safely moored alongside, where she rode easily in company with the larger vessel, and all mounted the companion-ladder. The Frenchman's six companions were dressed, like himself, in the uniform of the army.

"Curious," muttered Captain Arms in Cosmo's ear, "that these soldiers should be the only ones to get off--and in a vessel, too. What were the seamen about?"

"What were our seamen about?" returned Cosmo. "How many of them got off? I warned them that ships would not do. But it was a bright idea of this De Beauxchamps and his friends to build a submersible. It didn't occur to me, or I would have advised their construction everywhere for small parties. But it would never have done for us. A submersible would not have been capacious enough for the party I wanted to take."

By this time the visitors were aboard, and Cosmo and the others who could get near enough to grasp them by the hand greeted them effusively. King Richard received De Beauxchamps with emotion, and thanked him again and again for having saved his life; but, in the end, he covered his

face and said in a broken voice:

"M. De Beauxchamps, my gratitude to you is very deep--but, oh, the queen--the queen--and the children! I should have done better to perish with them."

Cosmo and De Beauxchamps soothed him as well as they could, and the former led the way into the grand saloon, in order that as many as possible might see and greet their visitors, who had come so mysteriously up out of the sea.

All of the Frenchmen were as affable as their leader, and he presented them in turn. De Beauxchamps conversed almost gaily with such of the ladies as had sufficient command of their feelings to join the throng that pressed about him and his companions. He was deeply touched by the story of the recent rescue of his countrymen from the Pyrenees, and he went among them, trying to cheer them up, with the élan that no misfortune can eradicate from the Gallic nature.

At length Cosmo reminded him that he had said that he had some interesting news to communicate.

"Yes," said De Beauxchamps, "I have just come from a visit to Paris."

Exclamations of amazement and incredulity were heard on all sides.

"It is true," resumed the Frenchman, though now his voice lost all its gayety. "I had conceived the project of such a visit before I met the Ark and transferred His Majesty, the King of England, to your care. As soon as that was done I set out to make the attempt."

"But tell me first," interrupted Cosmo, "how you succeeded in finding the Ark again."

"That was not very difficult," replied De Beauxchamps, smiling. "Of course, it was to some extent accidental, for I didn't know that you would be here, navigating over France; but I had an idea that you might come this way if you had an intention of seeing what had happened to Europe. It is my regular custom to rise frequently to the surface to take a look around and make sure of my bearings, and you know that the Ark makes a pretty large point on the waters. I saw it long before you caught sight of me."

"Very well," said Cosmo. "Please go on with your story. It must, indeed, be an extraordinary one."

"I was particularly desirous of seeing Paris again, deep as I knew her to lie under the waves," resumed De Beauxchamps, "because it was my home, and I had a house in the Champs Elysées. You cannot divorce the heart of a Frenchman from his home, though you should bury it under twenty oceans."

"Your family were lost?"

"Thank God, I had no family. If I had had they would be with me. My companions are all like myself in that respect. We have lost many friends, but no near relatives. As I was saying, I started for France, poor drowned France, as soon as I left you. With the powerful searchlight of the Jules Verne I could feel confident of avoiding obstructions; and, besides, I knew very closely the height to which the flood had risen, and having the topography of my country at my fingers' ends, as does every officer of the army, I was able to calculate the depth at which we should run in order to avoid the hilltops."

"But surely," said Cosmo, "it is impossible--at least, it seems so to me--that you can descend to any great depth--the pressure must be tremendous a few hundred feet down, to say nothing of possible thousands."

"All that," replied the Frenchman, "has been provided for. You probably do not know to what extent we had carried experiments in France on the deep submersion of submarines before their general abandonment when they were prohibited by international agreement in war. I was myself perhaps the leader in those investigations, and in the construction of the Jules Verne I took pains to improve on all that had hitherto been done.

"Without going into any description of my devices, I may simply remind

you nature has pointed out ways of avoiding the consequences of the inconceivable pressures which calculation indicates at depths of a kilometer, or more, in her construction of the deep-sea fishes. It was by a study of them that I arrived at the secret of both penetrating to depths that would theoretically have seemed entirely impossible and of remaining at such depths."

"Marvelous!" exclaimed Cosmo; "marvelous beyond belief!"

"I may add," continued De Beauxchamps, smiling at the effect that his words had had upon the mind of the renowned Cosmo Versál, "that the peculiar properties of levium, which you so wisely chose for your Ark, aided me in quite a different way. But I must return to my story.

"We passed over the coast of France near the point where I knew lay the mouth of the Loire. I could have found my way by means of the compass sufficiently well; but since the sky was clear I frequently came to the surface in order, for greater certainty, to obtain sights of the sun and stars.

"I dropped down at Tours and at Blois, and we plainly saw the walls of the old châteaux in the gleam of the searchlight below us. There were monsters of the deep, such as the eye of man never beheld, swimming slowly about them, many of them throwing a strange luminosity into the water from their phosphorescent organs, as if they were inspecting these novelties of the sea-bottom.

"Arrived over Orleans, we turned in the direction of Paris. As we approached the site of the city I sank the submersible until we almost touched the higher hills. My searchlight is so arranged that it can be directed almost every way--up, down, to this side, and to that--and we swept it round us in every direction.

"The light readily penetrated the water and revealed sights which I have no power to describe, and some--reminders of the immense population of human beings which had there met its end--which I would not describe if I could. To see a drowned face suddenly appear outside the window, almost within touch--ah, that was too horrible!

"We passed over Versailles, with the old palace still almost intact; over Sèvres, with its porcelain manufactory yet in part standing--the tidal waves that had come up the river from the sea evidently caused much destruction just before the downpour began--and finally we 'entered' Paris.

"We could see the embankments of the Seine beneath us as we passed up its course from the Point du Jour. From the site of the Champ de Mars I turned northward in search of the older part of the Champs Élysées, where my house was, and we came upon the great Arc de Triomphe, which, you remember, dates from the time of Napoleon.

"It was apparently uninjured, even the huge bronze groups remaining in

their places, and the searchlight, traversing its face, fell upon the heroic group on the east façade of the Marseillaise. You must have seen that, M. Versál?"

"Yes, many a time," Cosmo replied. "The fury in the face of the female figure representing the spirit of war, chanting the 'Marseillaise,' and, sword in hand, sweeping over the heads of the soldiers, is the most terrible thing of human making that I ever looked upon."

"It was not so terrible as another thing that our startled eyes beheld there," said De Beauxchamps. "Coiled round the upper part of the arch, with its head resting directly upon that of the figure of which you speak, was a monstrous, ribbon-shaped creature, whose flat, reddish body, at least a meter in width and apparently thirty meters long, and bordered with a sort of floating frill of a pinkish color, undulated with a motion that turned us sick at heart.

"But the head was the most awful object that the fancy of a madman could conceive. There were two great round, projecting eyes, encircled with what I suppose must have been phosphorescent organs, which spread around in the water a green light that was absolutely horrifying.

"I turned away the searchlight, and the eyes of that creature stared straight at us with a dreadful, stony look; and then the effect of the phosphorescence, heightened by the absence of the greater light, became more terrible than before. We were unmanned, and I hardly had nerve

enough to turn the submersible away and hurry from the neighborhood."

"I had not supposed," said Cosmo, "that creatures of such a size could live in the deeper parts of the sea."

"I know," returned De Beauxchamps, "that many have thought that the abysmal creatures were generally of small size, but they knew nothing about it. What could one have expected to learn of the secrets of life in the ocean depths from the small creatures which alone the trawls brought to the surface? The great monsters could not be captured in that way. But we have seen them--seen them taking possession of beautiful, drowned Paris--and we know what they are."

The fascinated hearers who had crowded about to listen to the narrative of De Beauxchamps shuddered at this part of it, and some of the women turned away with exclamations of horror.

"I see that I am drawing my picture in too fearful colors," he said, "and I shall refrain from telling of the other inhabitants of the abyss that we found in possession of what I, as a Frenchman, must call the most splendid capital that the world contained.

"Oh, to think that all that beauty, all those great palaces filled with the master-works of art, all those proud architectural piles, all that scene of the most joyous life that the earth contained, is now become the dwelling-place of the terrible fauna of the deep, creatures that



never saw the sun; that never felt the transforming force of the evolution which had made the face of the globe so glorious; that never quitted their abysmal homes until this awful flood spread their empire over the whole earth!"

There was a period of profound silence while De Beauxchamps's face worked spasmodically under the influence of emotions, the sight of which would alone have sufficed to convince his hearers of the truth of what he had been telling. Finally Cosmo Versál, breaking the silence, asked:

"Did you find your home?"

"Yes. It was there. I found it out. I illuminated it with the searchlight. I gazed into the broken windows, trying to peer through the watery medium that filled and darkened the interior. The roof was broken, but the walls were intact. I thought of the happy, happy years that I had passed there when I had a family, and when Paris was an Eden, the sunshine of the world. And then I wished to see no more, and we rose out of the midst of that sunken city and sought the daylight far above.

"I had thought to tell you," he continued, after a pause, "of the condition in which we found the great monuments of the city--of the Pantheon, yet standing on its hill with its roof crushed in; of Nôtre Dame--a wreck, but the towers still standing proudly; of the old palace of the Louvre, through whose broken roofs and walls we caught glimpses

of the treasures washed by the water within--but I find that I have not courage to go on. I had imagined that it would be a relief to speak of these things, but I do not find it so."

"After leaving Paris, then you made no other explorations?" said Cosmo.

"None. I should have had no heart for more. I had seen enough. And yet I do not regret that I went there. I should never have been content not to have seen my beautiful city once more, even lying in her watery shroud. I loved her living; I have seen her dead. It is finished. What more is there, M. Versál?" With a sudden change of manner: "You have predicted all this, and perhaps you know more. Where do we go to die?"

"We shall not die," replied Cosmo Versál forcefully. "The Ark and your Jules Verne will save us."

"To what purpose?" demanded the Frenchman, his animation all gone. "Can there be any pleasure in floating upon or beneath the waves that cover a lost world? Is a brief prolongation of such a life worth the effort of grasping for?"

"Yes," said Cosmo with still greater energy. "We may still save the race. I have chosen most of my companions in the Ark for that purpose. Not only may we save the race of man, but we may lead it up upon a higher plane; we may apply the principles of eugenics as they have never yet been applied. You, M. De Beauxchamps, have shown that you are of the

stock that is required for the regeneration of the world."

"But where can the world be regenerated?" asked De Beauxchamps with a bitter laugh. "There is nothing left but mountain-tops."

"Even they will be covered," said Cosmo.

"Do you mean that the deluge has not yet reached its height?"

"Certainly it has not. We are in an open space in the enveloping nebula. After a little we shall enter the nucleus, and then will come the worst."

"And yet you talk of saving the race!" exclaimed the Frenchman with another bitter laugh.

"I do," replied Cosmo, "and it will be done."

"But how?"

"Through the re-emergence of land."

"That recalls our former conversation," put in Professor Abel Able. "It appears to me impossible that, when the earth is once covered with a universal ocean, it can ever disappear or materially lower its level. Geological ages would be required for the level of the water to be

lowered even a few feet by the escape of vapor into space."

"No," returned Cosmo Versál, "I have demonstrated that that idea is wrong. Under the immense pressure of an ocean rising six miles above the ancient sea level the water will rapidly be forced into the interstices of the crust, and thus a material reduction of level will be produced within a few years--five at the most. That will give us a foothold. I have no doubt that even now the water around us is slightly lowering through that cause.

"But in itself that will not be sufficient. I have gone all over this ground in my original calculations. The intrusion of the immense mass of ocean water into the interior of the crust of the earth will result in a grand geological upheaval. The lands will re-emerge above the new sea level as they emerged above the former one through the internal stresses of the globe."

The scientific men present listened with breathless interest, but some of them with many incredulous shakings of the head.

"You must be aware," continued Cosmo, addressing them particularly, "that it has been demonstrated that the continents and the great mountain ranges are buoyed up, and, as it were, are floating somewhat like slags on the internal magma. The mean density of the crust is less under the land and the mountains than under the old sea-beds. This is especially true of the Himalayan region.

"That uplift is probably the most recent of all, and it is there, where at present the highest land of the globe exists, that I expect that the new upheaval will be most strongly manifested. It is for that reason, and not merely because it is now the highest part of the earth, that I am going with the Ark to Asia."

"But," said Professor Jeremiah Moses, "the upheaval of which you speak may produce a complete revolution in the surface of the earth, and if new lands are upthrust they may appear at unexpected points."

"Not at all," returned Cosmo. "The tectonic features of the globe were fixed at the beginning. As Asia has hitherto been the highest and the greatest mass of land, it will continue to be so in the future. It is there, believe me, that we shall replant the seed of humanity."

"Do you not think," asked Professor Alexander Jones, "that there will be a tremendous outburst of volcanic energy, if such upheavals occur, and may not that render the re-emerging lands uninhabitable?"

"No doubt," Cosmo replied, "every form of plutonic energy will be immensely re-enforced. You remember the recent outburst of all the volcanoes when the sea burst over the borders of the continents. But these forces will be mainly expended in an effort of uplifting. Unquestionably there will be great volcanic spasms, but they will not prevent the occupation of the broadening areas of land which will not be

thus affected."

"Upon these lands," exclaimed Sir Wilfrid Athelstone, in a loud voice, "I will develop life from the barren minerals of the crust. The age of chemical parthenogenesis will then have dawned upon the earth, and man will have become a creator."

"Will the Sir Englishman give me room for a word!" cried Costaké Theriade, raising his tall form on his toes and agitating his arms in the air. "He will create not anything! It is I that will unloose the energies of the atoms of matter and make of the new man a new god."

Cosmo Versál quieted the incipient outbreak of his jealous "speculative geniuses," and the discussion of his theory was continued for some time. At length De Beauxchamps, shrugging his shoulders, exclaimed, with a return of his habitual gayety:

"Très bien! Vive the world of Cosmo Versál! I salute the new Eve that is to come!"