

CHAPTER XXVI

NEW AMERICA

There had been great excitement on the Ark when the first communication from the bell was received, announcing the arrival of the adventurers at the Metropolitan tower. The news spread everywhere in a few seconds, and the man in charge of the signaling apparatus and telephone would have been mobbed if Captain Arms had not rigorously shut off all communication with him, compelling the eager inquirers to be content with such information as he himself saw fit to give them. When the announcement was made that the bell had been cut loose, and the exploration begun, the excitement was intensified, and a Babel of voices resounded all over the great ship.

As hour after hour passed with no further communication from below the anxiety of the multitude became almost unbearable. Some declared that the adventurers would never be able to re-attach the bell to the cable, and the fear rapidly spread that they would never be seen again. Captain Arms strove in vain to reassure the excited passengers, but they grew every moment more demoralized, and he was nearly driven out of his senses by the insistent questioning to which he was subjected. It was almost a relief to him when the lookout announced an impending change of weather--although he well knew the peril which such a change might bring.

It came on more rapidly than anybody could have anticipated. The sky, in the middle of the afternoon, became clouded, the sun was quickly hidden, and a cold blast arose, quickly strengthening into a regular blow. The Ark began to drift as the rising waves assailed its vast flanks.

"Pay out the cable!" roared Captain Arms through his trumpet.

If he had not been instantly obeyed it is probable that the cable would have been dragged from its precarious fastening below. Then he instantly set the engines at work, and strove to turn the Ark so as to keep it near the point of descent. At first they succeeded very well, but the captain knew that the wind was swiftly increasing in force, and that he could not long continue to hold his place. It was a terrible emergency, but he proved himself equal to it.

"We must float the cable," he shouted to his first assistant. "Over with the big buoy."

This buoy of levium had been prepared for other possible emergencies. It was flat, presenting little surface to the wind, and when, working with feverish speed, aided by an electric launch, they had attached the cable to it, it sank so low that its place on the sea was indicated only by the short mast, capped with a streamer, which rose above it.

When this work was completed a sigh of relief whistled through Captain Arms's huge whiskers.

"May Davy Jones hold that cable tight!" he exclaimed. "Now for navigating the Ark. If I had my old Maria Jane under my feet I'd defy Boreas himself to blow me away from here--but this whale!"

The wind increased fast, and in spite of every effort the Ark was driven farther and farther toward the southwest, until the captain's telescope no longer showed the least glimpse of the streamer on the buoy. Then night came on, and yet the wind continued to blow. The captain compelled all the passengers to go to their rooms. It would be useless to undertake to describe the terror and despair of that night. When the sun rose again the captain found that they had been driven seventy-five miles from the site of New York, and yet, although the sky had now partly cleared, the violence of the wind had not diminished.

Captain Arms had the passengers' breakfast served in their rooms, simply sending them word that all would be well in the end. But in his secret heart he doubted if he could find the buoy again. He feared that it would be torn loose with the cable.

About noon the wind lulled, and at last the Ark could be effectively driven in the direction of the buoy. But their progress was slow, and night came on once more. During the hours of darkness the wind ceased entirely, and the sea became calm. With the sunrise the search for the buoy was begun in earnest. The passengers were now allowed to go upon some of the decks, and to assemble in the grand saloon, but no

interference was permitted with the navigators of the Ark. Never had Captain Arms so fully exhibited his qualities as a seaman.

"We'll find that porpoise if it's still afloat," he declared.

About half after eight o'clock a cry ran through the ship, bringing everybody out on the decks.

The captain had discovered the buoy through his glass!

It lay away to the nor'ard, about a mile, and as they approached all could see the streamer, hanging down its pole, a red streak in the sunshine.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" The Ark echoed with glad cries from stem to stern. A thousand questions were shouted at the captain on his bridge, but he was imperturbable. He only glanced at his watch, and then said, in an undertone, to Joseph Smith, who stood beside him:

"Forty-seven hours and twenty minutes. By the time we can get the cable back on the drum it will be full forty-eight hours since they started, and the air in the bell could be kept in condition no longer than that. It may take as much as two hours more to draw it up."

"Can you do it so rapidly as that?" asked Smith, his voice trembling.

"I'll do it or bust," returned the captain. "Perhaps they may yet be alive."

Smith turned his eyes upward and clasped his hands. The Ark was put to its utmost speed, and within the time estimated by the captain the cable was once more on the great drum. Before starting it the captain attached the telephone and shouted down. There was no reply.

"Start gently, and then, if she draws, drive for your lubberly lives," he said to the men in charge of the big donkey engine.

The moment it began to turn he inspected the indicator.

"Hurrah!" he exclaimed. "She pulls; the bell is attached."

The crowded decks broke into a cheer. In a few minutes the Ark was vibrating with the strokes of the engine. Within five minutes the strong, slender cable was issuing out of the depths at the rate of 250 feet a minute. But there were six miles of it! The engineer controlling the drum shook his head.

"We may break the cable," he said.

"Go on!" shouted Captain Arms. "It's their only chance. Every second of delay means sure death."

Within forty minutes the cable was coming up 300 feet a minute. The speed increased as the bell rose out of the depths. It was just one hour and forty-five minutes after the drum began to revolve when the anxious watchers were thrown into a furore of excitement by the appearance of a shining blue point deep beneath. It was the bell! Again there broke forth a tempest of cheers.

Rapidly the rising bell grew larger under their eyes, until at last it burst the surface of the sea. The engine had been skillfully slowed at the last moment, and the rescued bell stopped at the level of the deck open to receive it. With mad haste it was drawn aboard and the hermetic door was opened. Those who were near enough glanced inside and turned pale. Tumbled in a heap at the bottom lay the six men, with yellow faces and blank, staring eyes. In an instant they were lifted out and two doctors sprang to the side of each. Were they dead? Could any skill revive them? A hush as of death spread over the great vessel.

They were not dead. The skill of the physicians brought them, one after another, slowly back to consciousness. But it was two full days before they could rise from their beds, and three before they could begin to tell their story--the story of the wonders they had seen, and of the dreadful struggle for breath in the imprisoned bell before they had sunk into unconsciousness. Not a word was ever spoken about the strange outbreak of Blank at the sight of the gold, although the others all recorded it in their notebooks. He himself never referred to it, and it seemed to have faded from his mind.

As soon as it was evident that the rescued men would recover, Captain Arms, acting on his own responsibility, had started the Ark on its westward course. It was a long and tedious journey that they had yet before them, but the monotony was broken by the undying interest in the marvelous story of the adventures of the bell.

Three weeks after they left the vicinity of New York, the observations showed that they must be nearing the eastern border of the Colorado plateau. Then one day a bird alighted on the railing of the bridge, close beside Cosmo and Captain Arms.

"A bird!" cried Cosmo. "But it is incredible that a bird should be here! How can it ever have kept itself afloat? It surely could not have remained in the air all this time, and it could not have rested on the waves during the downpour from the sky! Its presence here is absolutely miraculous!"

The poor bird, evidently exhausted by a long journey, remained upon the rail, and permitted Cosmo to approach closely before taking flight to another part of the Ark. Cosmo at first thought that it might have escaped from his aviary below.

But close inspection satisfied him that it was of a different species from any that he had taken into the Ark, and the more he thought of the strangeness of its appearance here the greater was his bewilderment.

While he was puzzling over the subject the bird was seen by many of the passengers, flitting from one part of the vessel to another, and they were as much astonished as Cosmo had been, and all sorts of conjectures were made to account for the little creature's escape from the flood.

But within an hour or two Cosmo and the captain, who were now much oftener alone upon the bridge than they had been during their passage over the eastern continents, had another, and an incomparably greater, surprise.

It was the call of "Land, ho!" from the lookout.

"Land!" exclaimed Cosmo. "Land! How can there be any land?"

Captain Arms was no less incredulous, and he called the lookout down, accused him of having mistaken a sleeping whale for a landfall, and sent another man aloft in his place. But in a few minutes the same call of "Land, ho!" was repeated.

The captain got the bearings of the mysterious object this time, and the Ark was sent for it at her highest speed. It rose steadily out of the water until there could be no possibility of not recognizing it as the top of a mountain.

When it had risen still higher, until its form seemed gigantic against

the horizon, Captain Arms, throwing away his tobacco with an emphatic gesture, and striking his palm on the rail, fairly shouted:

"The Pike! By--the old Pike! There she blows!"

"Do you mean Pike's Peak?" demanded Cosmo.

"Do I mean Pike's Peak?" cried the captain, whose excitement had become uncontrollable. "Yes, I mean Pike's Peak, and the deuce to him! Wasn't I born at his foot? Didn't I play ball in the Garden of the Gods? And look at him, Mr. Versál! There he stands! No water-squirting pirate of a nebula could down the old Pike!"

The excitement of everybody else was almost equal to the captain's, when the grand mass of the mountain, with its characteristic profile, came into view from the promenade-decks.

De Beauxchamps, King Richard, and Amos Blank hurried to the bridge, which they were still privileged to invade, and the two former in particular asked questions faster than they could be answered. Meanwhile, they were swiftly approaching the mountain.

King Richard seemed to be under the impression that they had completed the circuit of the world ahead of time, and his first remark was to the effect that Mount Everest appeared to be rising faster than they had anticipated.

"That's none of your pagodas!" exclaimed the captain disdainfully; "that's old Pike; and if you can find a better crown for the world, I'd like to see it."

The king looked puzzled, and Cosmo explained that they were still near the center of the American continent, and that the great peak before them was the sentinel of the Rocky Mountains.

"But," replied the king, "I understood you that the whole world was covered, and that the Himalayas would be the first to emerge."

"That's what I believed," said Cosmo, "but the facts are against me."

"So you thought you were going to run over the Rockies!" exclaimed the captain gleefully. "They're no Gaurisankars, hey, M. De Beauxchamps?"

"Vive les Rockies! Vive le Pike!" cried the Frenchman, catching the captain's enthusiasm.

"But how do you explain it?" asked King Richard.

"It's the batholite," responded Cosmo, using exactly the same phrase that Professor Pludder had employed some months before.

"And pray explain to me what is a batholite?"

Before Cosmo Versál could reply there was a terrific crash, and the Ark, for the third time in her brief career, had made an unexpected landing. But this time the accident was disastrous.

All on the bridge, including Captain Arms, who should surely have known the lay of the land about his childhood's home, had been so interested in their talk that before they were aware of the danger the great vessel had run her nose upon a projecting buttress of the mountain.

She was going at full speed, too. Not a person aboard but was thrown from his feet, and several were severely injured.

The prow of the Ark was driven high upon a sloping surface of rock, and the tearing sounds showed only too clearly that this time both bottoms had been penetrated, and that there could be no hope of saving the huge ship or getting her off.

Perhaps at no time in all their adventures had the passengers of the Ark been so completely terrorized and demoralized, and many members of the crew were in no better state. Cosmo and the captain shouted orders, and ran down into the hold to see the extent of the damage. Water was pouring in through the big rents in torrents.

There was plainly nothing to be done but to get everybody out of the vessel and upon the rocks as rapidly as possible.

The forward parts of the promenade-deck directly overhung the rock upon which the Ark had forced itself, and it was possible for many to be let down that way. At the same time boats were set afloat, and dozens got ashore in them.

While everybody was thus occupied with things immediately concerning their safety, nobody paid any attention to the approach of a boat, which had set out from a kind of bight in the face of the mountain.

Cosmo was at the head of the accommodation-ladder that was being let down on the starboard side, when he heard a shout, and, lifting his eyes from his work, was startled to see a boat containing, beside the rowers, two men whom he instantly recognized--they were President Samson and Professor Pludder.

Their sudden appearance here astonished him as much as that of Pike's Peak itself had done. He dropped his hands and stared at them as their boat swiftly approached. The ladder had just been got ready, and the moment the boat touched its foot Professor Pludder mounted to the deck of the Ark as rapidly as his great weight would permit.

He stretched out his hand as his foot met the deck, and smilingly said:

"Versál, you were right about the nebula."

"Pludder," responded Cosmo, immediately recovering his aplomb, and taking the extended hand of the professor, "you certainly know the truth when you see it."

Not another word was exchanged between them for the time, and Professor Pludder instantly set to work aiding the passengers to descend the ladder. Cosmo waved his hand in greeting to the President, who remained in the boat, and politely lifted his tall, but sadly battered hat in response.

The Ark had become so firmly lodged that, after the passengers had all got ashore, Cosmo decided to open a way through the forward end of the vessel by removing some of the plates, so that the animals could be taken ashore direct from their deck by simply descending a slightly sloping gangway.

This was a work that required a whole day, and while it was going forward under Cosmo's directions the passengers, and such of the crew as were not needed, found their way, led by the professor and the President, round a bluff into a kind of mountain lap, where they were astonished to see many rough cottages, situated picturesquely among the rocks, and small cultivated spaces, with grass and flowers, surrounding them.

Here dwelt some hundreds of people, who received the shipwrecked company with Western hospitality, after the first effects of their astonishment

had worn off. It appears that, owing to its concealment by a projecting part of the mountain, the Ark had not been seen until just at the moment when it went ashore.

Although it was now the early part of September, the air was warm and balmy, and barn-yard fowls were clucking and scratching about the rather meager soil around the houses and outbuildings.

There was not room in this place for all the newcomers, but Professor Pludder assured them that in many of the neighboring hollows, which had formerly been mountain gorges, there were similar settlements, and that room would be found for all.

Parties were sent off under the lead of guides, and great was the amazement, and, it may be added, joy, with which they were received in the little communities that clustered about the flanks of the mountain.

About half of Cosmo's animals had perished, most of them during the terrible experiences attending the arrival of the nucleus, which have already been described, but those that remained were in fairly good condition, and with the possible exception of the elephants, they seemed glad to feel solid ground once more under their feet.

The elephants had considerable difficulty in making their way over the rocks to the little village, but finally all were got to a place of security. The great Californian cattle caused hardly less trouble than

the elephants, but the Astorian turtles appeared to feel themselves at home at once.

Cosmo, with King Richard, De Beauxchamps, Amos Blank, Captain Arms, and Joseph Smith, became the guests of Professor Pludder and the President in their modest dwellings, and as soon as a little order had been established explanations began. Professor Pludder was the first spokesman, the scene being the President's "parlor."

He told of their escape from Washington and of their arrival on the Colorado plateau.

"When the storm recommenced," he said, "I recognized the complete truth of your theory, Mr. Versál--I had partially recognized it before--and I made every preparation for the emergency.

"The downfall, upon the whole, was not as severe here as it had been during the earlier days of the deluge, but it must have been far more severe elsewhere.

"The sea around us began to rise, and then suddenly the rise ceased. After studying the matter I concluded that a batholite was rising under this region, and that there was a chance that we might escape submergence through its influence."

"Pardon me," interrupted King Richard, "but Mr. Versál has already

spoken of a 'batholite.' What does that mean?"

"I imagine," replied the professor, smiling, "that neither Mr. Versál nor I have used the term in a strictly technical sense. At least we have vastly extended and modified its meaning in order to meet the circumstances of our case.

"Batholite is a word of the old geology, derived, from a language which was once widely cultivated, Greek, and meaning, in substance, stone, or rock, 'from the depths.'

"The conception underlying it is that of an immense mass of plastic rock rising under the effects of pressure from the interior of the globe, forcing, and in part melting its way to the surface, or lifting up the superincumbent crust.

"Geologists had discovered the existence of many great batholites that had risen in former ages, and there were some gigantic ones known in this part of America."

"That," interposed Cosmo, "was the basis of my idea that the continents would rise again, only I supposed that the rise would first manifest itself in the Himalayan region.

"However, since it has resulted in the saving of so many lives here, I cannot say that my disappointment goes beyond the natural mortification

of a man of science upon discovering that he has been in error."

"I believe," said Professor Pludder, "that at least a million have survived here in the heart of the continent through the uprising of the crust. We have made explorations in many directions, and have found that through all the Coloradan region people have succeeded in escaping to the heights.

"Since the water, although it began to rise again after the first arrest of the advance of the sea, never attained a greater elevation than about 7,500 feet as measured from the old sea-level contours, there must be millions of acres, not to say square miles, that are still habitable.

"I even hope that the uprising has extended far through the Rocky Mountain region."

Professor Pludder then went on to tell how they had escaped from the neighborhood of Colorado Springs when the readvance of the sea began, and how at last it became evident that the influence of the underlying "batholite" would save them from submergence.

In some places, he said, violent phenomena had been manifested, and severe earthquakes had been felt, but upon the whole, he thought, not many had perished through that cause.

As soon as some degree of confidence that they were, after all, to

escape the flood, had been established, they had begun to cultivate such soil as they could find, and now, after months of fair weather, they had become fairly established in their new homes.

When Cosmo, on his side, had told of the adventures of the Ark, and of the disappearance of the crown of the world in Asia, and when De Beauxchamps had entertained the wondering listeners with his account of the submarine explorations of the Jules Verne and the diving bell, the company at last broke up.

From this point--the arrival of the Ark in Colorado, and its wreck on Pike's Peak--the literature of our subject becomes abundant, but we cannot pause to review it in detail.

The re-emergence of the Colorado mountain region continued slowly, and without any disastrous convulsions, and the level of the water receded year by year as the land rose, and the sea lost by evaporation into space and by chemical absorption in the crust.

In some other parts of the Rockies, as Professor Pludder had anticipated, an uprising had occurred, and it was finally estimated that as many as three million persons survived the deluge.

It was not the selected band with which Cosmo Versál had intended to regenerate mankind, but from the Ark he spread a leaven which had its effect on the succeeding generations.

He taught his principles of eugenics, and implanted deep the germs of science, in which he was greatly aided by Professor Pludder, and, as all readers of this narrative know, we have every reason to believe that our new world, although its population has not yet grown to ten millions, is far superior, in every respect, to the old world that was drowned.

As the dry land spread wider extensive farms were developed, and for a long time there was almost no other occupation than that of cultivating the rich soil.

President Samson was, by unanimous vote, elected President of the republic of New America, and King Richard became his Secretary of State, an office, he declared, of which he was prouder than he had been of his kingship, when the sound of the British drumbeat accompanied the sun around the world.

Amos Blank, returning to his old methods, soon became the leading farmer, buying out the others until the government sternly interfered and compelled him to relinquish everything but five hundred acres of ground.

But on this Blank developed a most surprising collection of domestic animals, principally from the stocks that Cosmo had saved in the Ark.

The elephants died, and the Astorian turtles did not reproduce their

kind, but the gigantic turkeys and the big cattle and sheep did exceedingly well, and many other varieties previously unknown were gradually developed with the aid of Sir Wilfrid Athelstone, who found every opportunity to apply his theories in practice.

Of Costaké Theriade, and the inter-atomic force, it is only necessary to remind the reader that the marvelous mechanical powers which we possess to-day, and which we draw directly from the hidden stores of the electrons, trace their origin to the brain of the "speculative genius" from Roumania, whom Cosmo Versál had the insight to save from the great second deluge.

All of these actors long ago passed from the scene, President Samson being the last survivor, after winning by his able administration the title of the second father of his country. But to the last he showed his magnanimity by honoring Cosmo Versál, and upon the latter's death he caused to be carved, high on the brow of the great mountain on which his voyage ended, in gigantic letters, cut deep in the living rock, and covered with shining, incorrodible levium, an inscription that will transmit his fame to the remotest posterity:

HERE RESTED THE ARK OF

COSMO VERSAL!

He Foresaw and Prepared for the Second Deluge,

And Although Nature

Aided Him in Unexpected Ways,

Yet, but for Him, His Warnings, and His Example

The World of Man Would Have Ceased

To Exist.

It would be unjust to Mr. Samson to suppose that any ironical intention was in his mind when he composed this lofty inscription.

Postscriptum

While these words are being written, news comes of the return of an aero, driven by inter-atomic energy, from a voyage of exploration round the earth.

It appears that the Alps are yet deeply buried, but that Mount Everest now lifts its head more than ten thousand feet above the sea, and that some of the loftiest plains of Tibet are beginning to re-emerge.

Thus Cosmo Versál's prediction is fulfilled, though he has not lived to see it.