



THE  
VISITATION  
Cyril G. Wates



## **The Visitation**

**Cyril G. Wates**

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## About Wates:

Cyril G. Wates (18 Jul 1883 – 2 Feb 1946) was born in Brixton, England, and immigrated to Edmonton, Canada, in 1909 where he worked for City of Edmonton Municipal Telephone System as an engineer. He joined the Alpine Club of Canada in 1916 and would go on to climb more than fifty peaks. He was the first to ascend Mt. Geikie in the Canadian Rockies, responsible for the Alpine Club's book "Songs for Canadian Climbers," and named Mt. Minotaur located in British Columbia, south of Geikie Creek. Wates was an accomplished amateur astronomer. He served as president of Edmonton Center of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. He also wrote for academic journals and magazines such as *Scientific American* and the *Royal Astronomical Society of Canada Journal* and was awarded the Chant Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada "for outstanding amateur contribution to astronomy in Canada" through his work in 1943. The year before, Wates had built a 12.5 inch reflector telescope that he donated to the University of Alberta for their future observatory. The University now offers the Cyril G. Wates Memorial Prize and Scholarship for mathematics. With a passion for science, it is little surprise that Wates' interests lent themselves to his writing. His first story, "The Visitation", was published in June 1927 in *Amazing Stories* magazine as winner of the \$250 first prize of the magazine's "\$500 Cover Prize Contest", being the top selection of the editors among 360 submitted stories. Although his last published piece appeared in 1930, it is evident that his interest in the budding genre of science fiction remained as his letters appeared in the magazine until 1935. His eulogy in *Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada*, Vol. 40, p.69, by J. W. Campbell, says that Wates was in good health and vigor until 1939, when he began to suffer from a heart condition which ultimately caused his death on 2 February 1946. (References: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyril\\_G.\\_Wates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyril_G._Wates); <http://articles.adsabs.harvard.edu//full/1946JRASC..40...69C/0000069.000.html>, <http://archive.org/details/AmazingStoriesVolume02Number03>)

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## Preface

This story was the winner of the \$250 first prize awarded by *Amazing Stories* magazine and was published in the June 1927 issue, having been selected from over 360 stories submitted for the Cover Prize Contest. The editor, Hugo Gernsback, praised the previously unknown author for his writing style and for his incorporation of excellent science into the story. The editor explained the contest as follows:

I N finally announcing the prize winners in the \$500 Prize Contest, an interesting chapter in the young life of "AMAZING STORIES" has been brought to a successful close. To those of our readers who have not seen or heard about this prize contest, let us briefly state that, on our December, 1926, cover a picture was shown, around which a story of not more than 10,000 words was to be written. The picture was purely fanciful and you will find it reproduced herewith. Not only was it highly fanciful, but fantastic as well, and our readers were asked to base upon it suitable story that would be not only plausible but possible. The story was to be of the scientifiction type, and was to contain correct scientific facts to make it appear plausible and within the realm of present-day knowledge of science. The contest may be said to have been a very successful one. Some 360 stories were actually received by the editors and our readers may rest assured that it was not a simple matter to come to a decision, because many worthwhile stories were submitted. There were to be three prizes, totaling \$500, as follows: First Prize, \$250. Second Prize, \$150, Third Prize. \$100. The prize winning stories were:  
First Prize, "The Visitation," by Cyril G. Wates, ... , Edmonton, Alta, Canada.  
Second Prize, "The Electronic Wall," by Geo. R. Fox, ... , Three Oaks, Michigan.  
Third Prize, "The Fate of the Poseidonia," by Mrs. F. C. Harris, ... , Lakewood, Ohio.

The three stories mentioned above are printed complete in this issue, while four further stories which received honorable mention will be published in future issues:

First Honorable Mention—"The Ether Ship of Oltor," by S. Maxwell Coder, ... , Philadelphia, Pa.

Second Honorable Mention—"The Voice from World," by A. Hyatt Verrill... . , New York City.

Third Honorable Mention—"The Lost Continent," by Cecil B. White, ... , Foul Bay, Victoria, B. C., Canada.

Fourth Honorable Mention—"The Gravitomobile," D. B. McRae, ... , San Bernardino, California.

You might think that seven stories inspired by the same picture would of necessity be alike. We were very much astonished to find that such was not the case, and you will be delighted, as were the editors, to find the wide divergence of interest in the seven stories. They certainly could not be more totally unlike if we had specified that as one of the prize-winning requirements. Of course in each story there is the suspended ship and the ball-like space flyer, but that is about all they have in common. Furthermore, the treatment in each case is different for no two authors treated even this subject alike. In the three stories you will find not only good fiction, that keeps your interest, but good science as well. You will find that the authors have given careful thought to the smallest details and particularly to the vital scientific parts.

The inset panel of the winning story gave the following introduction:

**I**n introducing the new author of the prize story of our cover contest, we believe you will agree with us that Mr. Wates not only knows how to write interestingly and convincingly, but he also keeps your interest from beginning to end. Nor does he allow you to guess what it is all about until the end. Selected from over 300 stories, you may be sure that it must be good. The Board of Judges have awarded the first prize to a previously unknown author. The story not only is good fiction,

but contains excellent science. We predict that we shall hear more from Mr. Wates. He seems to have the knack that only a few people have, for writing scientificion.

The winning story, including its Foreword and Afterword, follows.

## Foreword

**T**HIS is the narrative of the last voyage of the *S.S. Shah of Iran*, to which voyage the greatest transformation the world has ever witnessed was directly due—the voyage which resulted in that epoch-making year, universally known as "The Year of the Visitation."

Who I, the writer, may be, is of little importance and yet my name is not entirely unfamiliar to the countless millions who will read this story and will rejoice that the silence of nearly ninety years has at last been broken and all the world may know the events which took place on that extraordinary voyage—events which have hitherto been wrapped in mystery—at the request of those strange beings who called themselves "The Deelathon," but who are better known to us today as "The Visitants."

I am Benedict Clinton and I am the great-grandson of Charles Clinton, who was Captain of the *Shah of Iran*. Captain Clinton, my great-grandfather, died yesterday at the age of nearly one hundred and twenty-six years, and his death unseals my lips and releases me from the promise I made to him, a year ago, on his birthday.

Although, as I have stated, my own personality is of no importance in this narrative, it affords me a certain amused satisfaction to realize that I am perhaps the last historian of the human race. Owing to the changed conditions under which we live, the professional historian has become almost as obsolete as the lawyer or the alchemist of past ages. There is an old saying that "Happy is the nation which has no history," and that proverb is as true today as in the past, except that for the word "nation" we must substitute "planet." History is rightly defined as the record of the sufferings of mankind. Without suffering, there is nothing deemed worthy of record.

During the past century the world has been passing through the most extraordinary phase of transition which ever has been, or ever will be known. Prior to the year 1950—the Year of the Visitation—Humanity was divided by innumerable lines, largely artificial, into hundreds of races and nations. Since that date man has known only



two divisions; those who were living at the time of the Visitation and those who were born afterwards. We have adopted the two Deelathon words, "Zykof" and "Epzykof" (immortal and mortal), in referring to these two subdivisions of mankind and the names convey a fairly clear picture of human society of today. We of the new generation, the Zykofs, having been born to a knowledge of the Thon, glory in the prospect of a life which, while certainly not eternal, is infinitely richer and happier and more extended than that which our forefathers knew, but sometimes we are saddened by the sight of those who are nearest and dearest to us growing older and dying before our very eyes. Our friends the Epzykofs, who saw the great events which transpired nearly a century ago and even, as in my great-grandfather's case, were directly responsible for bringing about the Visitation, have only an acquired and not an inborn knowledge of the Thon and therefore are not fated to share with us, for long, the innumerable benefits it brings.

A year ago today I left my little workshop in the palm groves of Florida, where I carve and decorate the polar bosses for pleasure Zeeths, and before evening I set foot on the pine-clad shores of Vancouver Island. I had come, with many of my relatives and friends, to pay honor to Captain Clinton on his one hundred and twenty-fifth birthday. From all parts of the world we came and as I alighted from my Zeeth, I was greeted by several old friends who had just arrived from Japan. Together we walked up the winding pathway through the forest, until we saw the gleam of white marble and emerged upon a wide lawn, upon the farther side of which, half hidden in a group of graceful cedar trees, was Capt. Clinton's home, with its fluted columns and ellipsoidal roof. The Captain was seated upon the steps, his white hair shining like a beacon light in the last rays of the setting sun, and gathered around him was a group of our relatives in animated conversation.

As we approached, Captain Clinton rose and came forward to greet us, his fine figure still erect and his eyes bright with youth in spite of his (for an Epzykof) great age. For each he had a word of welcome, but it seemed that his handclasp to me was especially cordial.

"I am glad, very glad that you have come, Benedict," he said heartily. "I have a task for you to perform, a very important task, not without its responsibilities, and I hope that you will not refuse the request of an old man."

"That is a hope which will be realized as soon as your request is made known," I replied. "As for the responsibility involved, the fact that you have selected me, when all mankind delights to serve you, will give me strength to perform whatever task you set me."

"Thank you, Benedict," answered the Captain, simply, and turning to the others, he said, "In this happy world, where perfect candor is universal, I have the doubtful honor of being the only man with a secret. As you all know, I am the last survivor of the crew of the *Shah of Iran* and soon I shall go to join my shipmates. Tomorrow I will tell Benedict the story of my last voyage, a story which was to be kept secret until the last of us had sailed for the home port. When I am gone, Benedict will write it out for all the world to read."

We surrounded him with loving words and tender caresses. Not because he was the most famous man in the world for nearly a hundred years, but because of his simple nobility, we loved this fine old sea captain of a past age. Thelma, his eldest daughter, who with her companion, John Adair, had come from their home in Spain that day, slipped her arm around her father's neck and cried:

"You must not leave us yet, Father dear! You have a hundred years of life in that big body of yours still. I believe you can beat me in a swimming match even now!" For Thelma was a famous swimmer.

"That remains to be proven, my dear," said the Captain with a little laugh, half gay, half sad.

"Prove it! Prove it, Thelma!" we cried and soon we were all running down the path to the shore, where we plunged into the warm waters of the Pacific.

Thelma beat her father by a length, her white body flashing through the water like an ivory Zeeth cleaving the air. We remained sporting in the bay until the daylight died and the big moon rose.

As we loitered up the hill, my great-grandfather drew me back from the gay crowd.

"I should like you to climb the Shah with me in the morning, Benedict," he said. "I want to watch the sun rise—who knows, it may be for the last time—and then I will tell you the story of my last voyage and the Visitation of the Deelathon. Will you come?"

The half light of dawn was just touching the snow-capped peaks in the east when Capt. Clinton and I started our ascent of the Shah, the little mountain just behind his home, to which he had attached the name of his old ship. We tiptoed down the steps in order not to disturb the sleeping guests, whose white forms lay—

"Star-scattered on the grass"

—as old Omar puts it. Soon we were high up among the rocky buttresses of the Shah. An hour of exhilarating climbing brought us to the summit and we sat on a flat boulder to watch the ever-new miracle of the Dawn.

To the East shone the placid waters of Queen Charlotte Sound, sparkling like molten gold in the radiance of the rising sun. Beyond towered the mountains of the mainland, lifting their snowy heads above their mantle of green. To the West, the waters of the Pacific widened to an unbroken horizon.

At last the Captain broke the silence and for an hour I sat spellbound, listening to his deep voice telling the story of that last voyage—the Voyage of the Visitation.

# Chapter 1

## The Meteor

**Y**OU must often have wondered (said Capt. Clinton) in common with the rest of the world, why no person among the crew or passengers of the *Shah of Iran* has ever revealed what took place on the last voyage of the old ship. The reason for this secrecy on the subject which is naturally of more than average interest to everyone, is quite simple.

When the Deelathon conceded to our request to make the Visitation, it was upon the express understanding that the location of their country should be concealed. They pointed out to us that it was impossible to foresee the outcome of the Visitation and they wanted to insure their own safety in any event.

This request was so entirely reasonable that we all unhesitatingly agreed to it. We realized that it was not possible to release into the world a tremendous force like the Thon, without producing a widespread upheaval, which might be beneficent or the reverse. We decided that the simplest way of preserving the secret was to make a pact among ourselves that the entire story of the voyage should remain untold until the last of us was dead. If it seemed wise, in the light of events which were still in the future, the last living member of the party was to tell the story to some dear friend, who would publish it after his death.

This, then, Benedict (continued the Captain), is the task I am asking you to undertake. Say nothing until I am gone and then publish what I am about to tell you, word for word as I shall tell it, as you may easily do by the aid of the Thon. I feel that my end is not far off. All possibility of danger to our friends and benefactors, the

Deelathon, has long passed away and the necessity for preserving their secret no longer exists. And now for my story!

**T**HE *Shah of Iran*, of which I was Captain, was one of a line of huge steamers which made the journey between Vancouver and Australia in the fifth decade of the twentieth century. These great vessels, which became obsolete with the introduction of the Zeeth, were magnificently equipped according to the strange standards of that time and were so powerful that, although they floated upon the surface of the water, they had little to fear from the worst storms they were likely to encounter. They carried a thousand passengers and a large crew, not only to handle the elaborate machinery and to navigate the vessel, but also to attend to the thousand and one wants of the thousand passengers!

On the seventeenth day of September, 1949, we sailed from Vancouver on a pleasure tour for which the *Shah of Iran* had been chartered. We were to touch at San Francisco, Manzanillo and Panama before striking across the Pacific for Sidney. The voyage was uneventful until we left the Isthmus and were three days' journey southwest of the Galapagos Islands. I was standing on the bridge with my chief officer, a fine fellow named Ian McFane, you knew him, Benedict.

The sun was rising. Ian and I were discussing some matter relating to the navigation of the ship, when a sailor came running up the steps and, touching his cap, as was the custom in those days, exclaimed:

"Beg pardon, Sir! There's something wrong with the sun!"

Ian McFane and I both looked to the East and both cried out in astonishment. Exactly in the centre of the golden disc was a round spot. This spot was perfectly black and about one-quarter the apparent diameter of the sun.

"What do you make of that, Mr. McFane?" I asked.

"Well, I hardly know, sir," replied the mate. "It's too big and black to be a sun-spot and, besides, it's moving!"

Sure enough, as we watched the spot, it crept slowly to the edge of the sun and in about ten minutes had left the disc altogether and vanished.

"It is some opaque object between us and the sun," I said.

"Some new kind of plane, maybe," suggested Ian.

"I doubt it, Mister," I replied. "It simply vanished when it left the solar disc and that would show that it's outside the atmosphere. More likely a big meteorite."

"If that was a meteorite and it hits the earth, we're going to know it!" said Ian.

"Well, don't start that idea circulating among the passengers," I replied. "We don't want a small sized panic on our hands and, anyway, we may be entirely wrong in supposing that it was a meteorite."

My warning proved to be useless, for when I descended to the promenade deck, I found many of the passengers gathered in groups, discussing the strange phenomenon, which had been seen by several early risers.

The news of the curious black spot on the sun spread like wild-fire and as soon as I made my appearance I was surrounded by a group of passengers, clamoring for an explanation.

"I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen," I said, "but I am as much at a loss to explain the spot as yourselves. I can only suggest that it may have been a small, very dense cloud."

"But that wouldn't explain why it vanished when it passed off the face of the sun," objected one of the ladies. "Oh! Here comes Professor Smithton! He'll be able to tell us all about it," and the group broke away from me and re-formed around the famous astronomer and physicist, who had just arrived on deck.

**O**F course, I knew that my theory of a dense cloud was ridiculous, but I was anxious to avoid any suggestion that might cause alarm among the passengers. A panic is a nasty thing to handle and would have reflected seriously upon my management and indirectly upon the shipping company.

I walked across the deck in time to hear the Professor giving his opinion in his best lecture-room style. He had not seen the spot himself, so he was obliged to base his judgment upon the descriptions of the few who had been on deck at the time. He listened to all carefully and then said, laughing:

"I have no doubt that this spot on the sun seems very mysterious to all of you, even you, Captain, but the explanation is, after all, extremely simple."

There was a murmur of surprise followed by demands for enlightenment.

"The spot you saw was simply a parachute descending from an aeroplane flying at a height so great that it was invisible. The spot was oval rather than round, was it not?"

Again there was a babble of voices, some saying that the spot was distinctly oval, others that it was quite round. When there was silence, the Professor continued, apparently quite deaf to any evidence that did not fit in with his preconceived theory.

"Ah! Quite so! Distinctively oval," he said. "Due to the angle of vision, of course," and rubbing his hands together with the air of a man who has cleared away all possible doubt, he disappeared into the saloon and was soon engrossed in a hearty breakfast, an excellent example which all the passengers followed.

"So that's that!" remarked Ian, who had come up during the discourse.

"Yes," I replied, dryly, "at least it would be if it had been a parachute! Fortunately for the professor's reputation for scientific infallibility, no one except ourselves seems to have noticed that the spot left the sun at its upper edge. If anyone has invented a rising parachute, I haven't heard of it!"

Throughout the day, the *Shah of Iran* continued to plough her way southward through an ocean as smooth as the proverbial sheet of glass. The weather was perfect, although the heat was oppressive, but that was to be expected during a calm just south of the equator.

In the late afternoon a slight swell manifested itself, getting gradually heavier until at sunset the steamer was perceptibly pitching, in spite of its gyroscopic stabilizers. The air was still motionless, the only breeze being due to the speed of the vessel, and the sky was absolutely cloudless.

I went to my cabin early and turned in, but could not sleep. An oppressive sense of impending disaster descended upon me like a pall, and resisted all my efforts to shake it off. At last I rose and dressed. I went out on the bridge, where I found Ian McFane talking

to the officer of the watch, Gordon Caswell, the third mate. Both were looking up at the sky, where the stars were sparkling with tropical brilliancy.

"I'm glad you came out, sir," said Ian, "but what is the trouble?"

"I couldn't sleep," I exclaimed. "The heat, I guess."

"It sure is hot, even for the tropics," said Caswell.

"What are you two looking at?" I queried.

"There's something funny about the stars," replied Caswell and he pointed up towards the West.

Following the direction of his finger, I saw the Galaxy or Milky Way, as it is commonly called, shining like a belt of silver spray across the velvety sky. About fifty degrees above the horizon appeared a perfectly circular patch approximately three times the diameter of the moon. Within this area, the stars of the Galaxy were blotted out, giving exactly the appearance of the Coal Sack, that curious vacant space which has been familiar to astronomers for centuries.

"What do you think it is, sir?" asked Ian. "The spot we saw this morning?"

"It looks unpleasantly like it," I said, "and it also looks as though my theory of a huge meteorite or a wandering asteroid were correct."

"If so, it must be moving with tremendous speed," said Caswell. "It has doubled in size during the half hour that Mr. McFane and I have been watching it."

"I don't like the looks of it!" I said. "If that thing hits the sea anywhere near the boat, there's going to be one gosh-awful explosion! Mr. McFane, will you kindly have all hands called on deck. And quietly, please. Tell the Chief Steward to post men in all doorways and corridors to keep the passengers below decks in case of accident. Tell them to use tact and avoid a panic at all costs."

In ten minutes my orders had been carried out and the entire crew were standing by, waiting for—we knew not what!

The swell of the afternoon had increased rapidly to huge proportions, but the waves were so long and unbroken that the *Shah* rode them with ease. McFane, Caswell and I stood on the bridge watching that ominous disc in the sky spreading until it had blotted out fully one-eighth of the stars in the southwestern quadrant.



Suddenly the edges of the black circle were surrounded by an awful halo of flame. Far quicker than I can describe it the whole surface of the meteor, if that was what it was, had turned to a white heat, so intense that we were blinded by the glare. As the visitor from interstellar space tore its furious way through the hundred miles of our atmosphere, the whole expanse of ocean became as light as day. Great streams of molten lava shot out in every direction and yet, most ghastly touch of all, absolute silence reigned.

The blazing meteor struck the sea exactly at the horizon, that is to say about twenty miles away. We had a momentary glimpse of a fearful column of boiling water, wreathed in clouds of steam, hurling itself towards the zenith and then—darkness!

In the breathless silence my voice rang out: "Hard a-starbo'd!" and the great ship began to swing around in order to place her stem towards the point from which I was sure the inevitable danger must come.

And then came the *NOISE!*

**N**O words of mine can hope to describe the frightful bellowing tumult of that explosion. First came the shrill shriek produced by the brief passage of the meteor through our atmosphere. Following this was a roar as if all the artillery of all the armies and navies of that unhappy old world of ours had been fired simultaneously and the sound multiplied a thousand-fold.

Every man whose position exposed him to the direct force of the blast was hurled to the deck and many were injured. Cries of pain from the deck and screams of fear from the staterooms were mingled with the continuous, soul-shattering blasts of noise as the white hot meteor uttered its indignant protests at being sunk in four miles of salt water.

And last came the storm!

As when a boy casts a pebble into a pond to watch the ripples spread, so when the hand of fate cast into the greatest pond on earth, a pebble forty miles in diameter, ripples fled out in all directions. But these ripples were walls of water a hundred feet in height and moving with incredible rapidity!

In a moment the vessel was caught up and hurled eastward with the speed of an express train. In vain her powerful screws beat the water in a brave endeavor to stem the force of a two hundred mile hurricane! We were helpless and could only trust in the mercy of God, the strength of steel plates and the knowledge that hundreds of miles of open sea lay between us and the coasts of South America.

You know, Benedict, that there has been a prevailing impression for the last ninety years that the Deelathon arrived from the realms of space upon the meteor, whose shattered fragments now form an island in the Pacific. We who could have contradicted that idea were pledged to silence, but no one who had witnessed that hellish globe descend from the heavens and the tempest that followed it, could have believed for a moment that any living being could have survived such a cataclysm.

For five hours we drove before the storm. The bellow of the cooling meteor had long since died away in the West, but was replaced by the tumult of the wind and waves. It would take too long to tell you all the terror of that awful night. A dozen times it seemed impossible that we could remain afloat another moment and a dozen times the impossible happened.

Just before four o'clock the waves died down as suddenly as they had arisen and the *Shah of Iran* rested on an even keel in smooth water.

The rain still poured down and the roar of the tempest could be heard, as it were, far overhead. The darkness was stygian and it was impossible to see more than a hundred yards in any direction, even with the aid of the *Shah's* powerful searchlight. I untied the rope with which I had lashed myself to the bridge rail and staggered over to McFane.

"It's pretty obvious that we have been driven by some miracle into a sheltered harbor on the South American Coast," I said.

"If that's so, sir," replied Ian, "it's a miracle indeed."

"Aye, and that's not the only miracle," said Caswell's voice. "We were three hundred miles off the coast when the meteor struck and that means we've been travelling over sixty miles an hour!"

"I'd be willing to believe you," said Ian, "if you told me it was a hundred!"

"Well, thank God it's over!" I said. "Mr. McFane, please have a sounding made and if we're in shallow water, as I suspect, drop anchor. We don't want to drift on the rocks."

By the time these instructions had been carried out, the storm outside had somewhat abated, but as the tumult of the wind became less, I noticed a continuous roar which at first I attributed to breakers on the rocks outside the harbor. On glancing at the compass, I was surprised to find that the sound came from the west; the probable direction of the land.

In about an hour, the noise of the wind had died to a whisper and then the roar from the west became very noticeable. Caswell, who had remained on the bridge, called my attention to the fact that the sound was practically steady and therefore could not be breakers.

"Well, we shall have to wait for daylight to see what it is," I said. "I'm going down now to see how the passengers have stood the racket. Call me if you see or hear anything unusual."

I found the passengers huddled in the main saloon, most of them showing evidence of the severe strain to which they had been exposed, but the ship's doctor reported that aside from one broken arm and a few bruises, there were no injuries.

"We've certainly got to hand it to Professor Smithton, sir," said the Doctor. "He did more than any of us to keep the crowd under control. He was as cool as if he were in his class room."

Having given orders for coffee and biscuits to be served as soon as possible, I was going from one group to another with assurances that all danger was now past, when the fourth officer came hurriedly down the stairs and told me that Mr. Caswell wanted me on deck at once.

**A**S I reached the deck I saw that dawn was breaking. The curtain of rain had been withdrawn and I was able to take in at a glance the extraordinary chance to which we all owed our lives.

The *Shah* was lying peacefully at anchor in a little bay surrounded by sheer, black cliffs which seemed, in the dim light, to tower to a height of at least a thousand feet on all sides. The harbor was shaped like a pear, with the narrow part—the stem—towards the open sea.

The steady roaring sound still continued and seemed to come from a point in the cliffs directly opposite the entrance to the bay, which was about a mile across at its broadest part. The width of the "stem" was certainly not above a quarter of a mile and you will understand my feelings, Benedict, when I tell you that the sight of that narrow gap in the beetling cliffs literally turned me sick! We had all been under too great a strain all night, to realize our plight clearly, but the thought of what would have happened if we had missed that narrow opening.

I went up on the bridge and joined Caswell. I began to make some remark on the providential chance which had brought us safely into the harbor, when I saw that he was paying no attention to me, but was gazing intently to the westward.

"What's the trouble, Mr. Caswell?" I asked.

"Well, sir, I don't know if the light of that meteor has affected my eyesight, but would you mind telling me how we got in here?"

# Chapter 2

## Imprisoned

**S**TARTLED at Gordon Caswell's strange question, I followed the direction of his gaze and saw with amazement that the entire breadth of the harbor mouth was bridged by a natural breakwater, against which the waves from the open Pacific were bursting in columns of spray. No opening was visible in the reef and I was completely at a loss to answer Caswell's question as to how we had crossed it. A steamer of thirty thousand tons does not fly and even allowing for the height of the waves, it was hardly conceivable that we could have been washed over the reef without grounding.

"There must be an opening somewhere, Mr. Caswell," I said. "When you have had breakfast and it's lighter, please take number three launch and explore the reef."

While the second officer was away, the passengers began to throng the decks and many were the expressions of wonder at the remarkable harbor into which we had so providentially been carried. The black cliffs, which lost none of their height with the increasing light, were not smooth but broken by vertical seams at regular intervals. The whole scene reminded me of some picture I had seen, I could not tell where. It was Ian McFane, whose birthplace was in northern Scotland, who remarked on the close resemblance between these cliffs and the basaltic formation of the famous Fingall's Cave in the Hebrides. The vertical clefts we observed were indeed the spaces between huge hexagonal columns extending from the surface of the water to the top of the cliffs without a break, giving the semblance of a gigantic temple built for some ghastly cult of devil worship.

The water was almost without a ripple and the tier of thousand foot columns unbroken, except at the point from which the thundering roar still came. Here appeared a gap, forming a narrow gorge, and the mirror-like surface of the sea was broken by a considerable stream which cascaded over broken blocks of basalt. It was apparent that the roar we heard came from a huge waterfall, hidden from our sight in the recesses of the canyon.

Caswell returned at noon. His report only served to increase our bewilderment. With three of the men, he had landed at the base of the cliffs where the southern end of the reef abutted against them. Ordering the launch to follow them at some distance from the rocks, they had walked northward along the broken tops of basaltic columns similar to those of which the cliffs were composed.

About half way along the reef they were stopped by a torrent of water flowing across the barrier into the open sea, and were obliged to signal to the launch to pick them up.

Landing again at the northern end of the reef, they walked back to the central stream without finding any trace of an opening. The stream was too narrow to permit the passage of such a vessel as the *Shah*, even had the water been sufficiently deep, which was obviously not the case.

They crossed the reef, which was about two hundred yards in width, and looked out upon the open Pacific, still heaving in long rollers; the aftermath of the storm of the previous night. They returned to the *Shah* completely nonplussed.

Having listened to Caswell's report, I thought it best to take the passengers into our confidence. Mounting the orchestra platform in the grand saloon, I made a short speech in which I stated that the *Shah of Iran* was imprisoned in a land-locked harbor. How she got there I could not explain, but it was impossible to get her out with anything short of dynamite, which naturally we did not possess.

"There is no possible cause for alarm, ladies and gentlemen," I said. "The *Shah* is provisioned for a long voyage and is perfectly safe in this bay. As soon as the necessary arrangements can be made, I will send an expedition inland to the nearest settlement which affords telegraphic or radio facilities. Our own radio is, unfortunately, damaged beyond possibility of repair. In a few weeks

at the latest, a relief boat will arrive, bringing the necessary explosive to release the *Shah*, and I think I can promise you all some entertainment when the blasting begins. In the meantime I hope everyone will make the best of a bad job."

There was some applause and when it subsided, Professor Smithton arose and asked for permission to question the Second Officer.

"Will you kindly describe the nature of the beach along the barrier reef, Mr. Caswell," said the Professor.

"The fact is," said Caswell, "there is no beach of any kind on either side of the reef. The rocks go straight down into the water."

"One more question," said the Professor. "Do the ends of the reef lie conformably against the cliffs? I mean," he explained, smiling at Caswell's evident bewilderment, "do the rocks fit closely together?"

"No, sir, they do not," he replied. "They are very much broken up at both ends."

"Ah! Quite so!" ejaculated the Professor with satisfaction. "I think I can explain the mystery of our arrival, even if I did make a slight, though perfectly excusable mistake about the parachute," and he smiled blandly at his audience. "When the *Shah* entered the harbor, the reef was not there!"

"Not there?" I exclaimed.

"Quite so. The absence of beaches and the unconformable—excuse me, I should say broken condition of the ends of the reef show that it was recently raised above the water. The parachute—beg pardon, the meteor was apparently about forty miles in diameter, judging by the area of sky it obscured when it touched our atmosphere. If its composition were similar to that of most meteors, it would weigh in the neighborhood of fifty million million tons. It is hardly to be expected that such a missile could strike the earth at a velocity of perhaps three hundred thousand miles per hour, without causing widespread seismic disturbances, which would flow through the solid globe in ripples from the point of impact. It is these ripples which were mainly responsible for the storm, which may be regarded as a series of tidal waves, and it was these ripples, or rather one of them, which raised the barrier reef and cut us off from the ocean—fortunately, after we entered the bay!"

The Professor was going on to enlarge on his subject when the Quartermaster entered the room and came up to where I was standing.

"Beg pardon, sir. Mr. McFane told me to tell you that the ship is sinking."

**F**OR the second time we came very near having a serious panic. I rushed on deck but could see no signs of anything to give basis for Ian's message. In reply to my questions he informed me that he had gone down into the launch, which was still floating alongside, to get some specimens of basalt which Caswell had brought from the reef. While there, he noticed that the *Shah* was floating nearly a foot deeper than when she left port. He had given orders to have all compartments examined for a leak before reporting to me, but could find nothing.

Meanwhile the excitement among the passengers was fast getting beyond control when the Professor began waving his arms and shouting for silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen! There is no cause for alarm. The *Shah* is perfectly safe, as I hope to prove in a few minutes. Captain, will you kindly have one of your men draw a bucket of sea water."

I nodded to Ian to have the request carried out and the Professor disappeared into his stateroom, returning in a few moments with a wooden case from which he took a thin glass tube with a bulb at one end. He dropped this into the bucket of water, where it floated upright. Having examined it carefully, he straightened up and said:

"Ah! Quite so! It is not the ship that is responsible for this unwarranted alarm, but the sea. The normal specific gravity of water is, of course 1.00, while that of sea water is about 1.031. Now the specific gravity of this water is only 1.014, so naturally the ship has settled."

"But what could possibly cause such a state of affairs, Professor?" I demanded.

"Ah! Quite simple, Captain. The sea water has been cut off by the reef, leaving the shallow harbor land-locked. There is a tremendous amount of freshwater running into the bay from that canyon at the western end and it is forcing out the salt water over the reef, as Mr.



Caswell told us. Naturally the ship is settling and will continue to do so—" and he made a dramatic pause. "—for about six inches further, when the water will be entirely fresh."

Needless to say, the Professor's stock, which had slumped after the "parachute" fiasco and made a quick recovery during the meeting in the saloon, went sky high as the result of this second example of scientific acumen. Indeed, I was so much impressed with Prof. Smithton's versatility, common sense and unfailing good nature, that I invited him to attend a conference of the officers to be held that afternoon for the purpose of laying definite plans for sending out a relief party.

At the Professor's suggestion, I also asked two young men named Alderson and FitzGerald; athletic young fellows, both members of the English and American Alpine Clubs, who were enroute to New Zealand to attempt the ascent of an unclimbed peak in the Southern Alps.

When these three passengers and the officers were gathered in the smoking room, I made a brief outline of the situation and asked for suggestions, explaining that the important thing was to get in touch with civilization as soon as possible.

The Professor rose and asked if I could state the approximate location of the Shaft and whether it would not be better to send out a relief party by sea, rather than by land.

"I am afraid that it is impossible to give a satisfactory answer to your first question, Professor. We have no way of determining how far North or South we were carried by the storm and the heavy pall of clouds makes an observation out of the question."

"Ah! Quite so! The clouds are undoubtedly the result of the immense amount of steam produced by contact between the meteor and the ocean. I venture to predict that, on account of the great size of the meteor, which would preclude more than a small portion being immersed, these clouds will continue for a long period of time."

"With regard to sending out a party by sea," I continued, "I had thought of that possibility, but aside from the great difficulty of transporting one of the launches across the reef, there are two serious objections to that plan. One is that the sea is too rough for a small craft to navigate in safety and the other is that all our launches

are electric and intended for short trips. The storage batteries would not last for over a couple of days at the outside."

"Ah! Quite so!" said the Professor. "Then I venture to suggest, Captain, that you send a party on shore at the mouth of the river, tomorrow, and determine the feasibility of reaching the top of the cliffs. I foresee that the presence of a waterfall might prove a serious obstruction. Here is where the mountaineering skill of our two young friends, Mr. Alderson and Mr. FitzGerald, will be invaluable. If the cliffs are successfully surmounted, you can then arrange the personnel of your party and the necessary outfit of provisions."

The Professor's suggestions met with unanimous approval. No sooner did the result of our conference become known than a number of the passengers asked my permission to accompany the proposed expedition. Thus it happened that a large and light-hearted party crossed the strip of smooth water that separated us from the shore and set foot on the narrow beach just north of the mouth of the river.

# Chapter 3

## The Coming of the Deelathon

**A**CCOMPANIED by the Professor and the two mountaineers, I led the way inland. Presently we approached the point where the river made its way through the wall of cliffs and turning sharply to the north, scrambled over masses of fallen rock into the entrance of the canyon, the roar of falling water growing louder as we advanced.

Above the fallen rock we turned to the right around a magnificent group of the hexagonal basalt columns and the words of some remark I was about to make, died on my lips in sheer wonderment. We were confronted with a sight which, for appalling grandeur is probably unequalled anywhere on earth.<sup>[1]</sup>

We stood on the edge of a vast, cup-like depression in the rock. On every side towered the pillars of basalt, as smooth and perfect as though they had been carved and polished by the hand of man. On the farther side of this huge theatre, the river descended from the brow of the cliffs in one mighty thousand-foot leap, to strike squarely on the edge of the great cup, which was filled to the brim with a churning mass of foam, while the deafening roar of the tortured waters echoed and re-echoed from the black walls.

So tremendous were the cliffs that we stood, as it were, at the bottom of a circular pit and the light that filtered down from above was but a dim similitude of day.

For a long time we stood transfixed with awe, while the other members of the party gradually joined us, their laughter quenched by the wonder of the sight that met their gaze. As our eyes became more accustomed to the half-light, we were able to see that it was only around the rocky margins of the pool that the water was beaten

into foam. The entire centre was occupied by a mass of water perfectly smooth and piled up like a dome of glass.

At first sight this central mass seemed motionless but we soon realized that its whole surface was the playground of titanic forces. The entire structure quivered as though it were in a state of the most delicate equilibrium, as indeed it was, and it seemed as though one had only to throw a pebble to see it dissolve in a slather of foam, like a giant bubble.

Presently the voice of the Professor broke the spell.

"I'm a old man, Captain, and in my time I've seen the glories of the starry heavens as perhaps few have done, but I thank God that He has spared me to see this!"

"I thought the great snow peaks were the most beautiful things in creation," said FitzGerald, "but this has got them all beat."

"And look at the light, Fred!" exclaimed his sister, who had joined us. "It's like all the opals in the world rolled into one. Or rather, like a soap bubble on the point of bursting, for these colors move."

Miss FitzGerald's exclamation brought us to the realization that this water was not like other water, but seemed to glow with an effulgence of its own. Streamers of light of every imaginable color darted here and there over the shining surface of the great dome, now blending into masses of rose or green or violet, now mingling in a glittering confusion of rainbow hues.

Of course, we knew that we were looking at some remarkable natural optical illusion, caused by the reflection of the light from above, but the effect was none the less impressive. The living, shining dome of color, set in its girdle of snowy foam; the silent cliffs with their ebony towers; the thundering column of water eternally descending from above; all combined into a dramatic whole whose overwhelming grandeur was foiled by a broad band of emerald green turf which framed the central cup and was dotted here and there with graceful palm trees, whose fronds glistened with diamond drops of spray.

At last I tore my eyes from that living opal and turned to the two mountaineers.

"Well, gentlemen, what do you think of our chances of getting out of this?"

"Hopeless!" replied Alderson.

"Absolutely!" agreed FitzGerald. "We're by way of being mountaineers, but we're not flies! There's not a handhold anywhere. But, good Lord! What's that!"

At his cry of surprise, we all looked up, to behold, poised in the air above the rim of the waterfall, a great ball like a gigantic soap bubble.

"Your parachute, I guess, Professor!" said Caswell slyly. "Look, it's coming down."

**V**ERY slowly the ball descended into the abyss and now we realized that it was far larger than we had at first supposed. It was apparently made of some transparent material like glass, except that it glittered with the same play of colors as that which appeared on the surface of the pool. Around the centre of the balloon, if balloon it was, was a broad band of some metal, such as copper or gold. This girdle formed the equator and at either pole was a projecting boss of the same metal, from which were suspended by cables, inverted cups which hung some distance below the globe.

As the strange aerial visitor drew nearer we saw that the equatorial band was studded at intervals with circular windows of the glassy material. From the centre of each of these projected a long needle, the purpose of which we could not guess unless they were for directing the course of the vessel—a theory which we afterwards found to be correct.

Very slowly the great ball sank until the two cups touched the grassy sward about three hundred yards from us. Still it sank, the cables from which the cups were suspended being withdrawn into the two metal bosses, until the lower edge of the central girdle was but a foot above the ground. Here the shining sphere hung, swaying gently in the wind that rose from the churning water.

A moment later one of the circular windows swung open and a figure stepped down upon the grass, followed by several others. They started to walk around the margin of the pool towards us and as they drew nearer the Professor exclaimed in surprise.

"Good Heavens! They're Indians! Look at the headdress!"

"Don't worry, Sir Charles," I said. "We're armed," and I drew my revolver from its holster, but as I did so I had a curious sensation that my warlike act was a gesture absolutely without meaning.

"Oh! I wasn't afraid," replied Sir Charles, "but they haven't got any—I mean, they're rather lightly clad for polite society, you know."

The group from the sphere were now near enough for me to see that Sir Charles was correct. There were five or six men and two women and each wore only a great headdress of what seemed to be white feathers. I also realized that these were no Indians. The color of the skin which had at a distance appeared coppery, was now revealed as rosy pink, not due to the presence of any coloring pigment, but as though the skin were so transparent and the health so abounding, that the blood literally shone through.

I began to agree with Sir Charles that it would be wise for the ladies to retire while we interviewed these strange inhabitants. I turned to make some such suggestion and caught sight of Margaret FitzGerald staring at the approaching party, her eyes shining with excitement.

There was a burst of admiration from the passengers, men and women joining in exclamations of delight at the physical perfection and nobility of countenance of these splendid beings who were now only a few yards from us.

The party came to a halt and one of the tallest of the men stepped forward and saluted us with a curious but graceful gesture. As he did so I realized with a distinct shock that what we had taken to be a feather headdress was not a headdress at all, but was a semi-transparent, membranous frill, actually growing upon the heads of these beings. This frill or "thonmelek" as we afterwards learned was their word for it, ran across the forehead just in front of the hair, down each side of the neck, over the shoulders and terminated just above the elbows, I know of nothing which it so much resembled as the fin of a flying fish, except that the "thonmelek" was infinitely more delicate, but it was supported upon blades of cartilage in much the same way. All this we absorbed at a glance and then the tall man, evidently the appointed spokesman of the party, addressed us.

"*Deelarana, Deelatkon zeloma ek tara!*" and raising their hands in the same graceful gesture, all the others echoed "*Zeloma!*"

"*Zeloma!*" exclaimed Sir Charles. "I say, Captain, it sounds as if they were giving us a salute of welcome."

"Yes, I agree with you," I replied, "and they all have the kindest smile I ever saw on human countenance. I am certain they mean us no harm."

I turned back to the tall stranger with the intention of trying to convey our friendliness to him, by means of signs, when his lips opened and he said in the most perfect English, without a trace of accent.

"Yes, I welcome you. Us, the Deelathon, mean no harm. Welcome!"

**O**F all the strange incidents of this strange voyage, I think this was the most astonishing. A thrill of excitement passed through the crowd. We, sophisticated citizens of the twentieth century, had discovered an unknown country, inhabited by an unknown race as beautiful as angels, who wore no clothes, grew a fringe on their foreheads, and—spoke English without an accent! True, they spoke it mechanically and not quite correctly, but it was English!

"You speak English, friend!" I exclaimed.

The tall man shook his head and smiled.

"But you understand it?"

He smiled again and said, "Yes!"

"Why, Captain," cried Miss FitzGerald, "this is like a romance out of a book!"

At these apparently innocent words our visitors, the Deelathon (for you will have guessed that it was they) showed their first sign of excitement and we saw that their frills or *thonmeleks*; which were normally pearly white, flashed with rainbow colors, like the surface of the Dome of Water. One of the girls stepped forward and spoke rapidly in their soft, musical language, several times repeating the word "book."

Now it happened that Miss FitzGerald had brought a volume of Emerson's essays with her, to read while her brother and Mr. Alderson were exploring the cliffs. She smiled and handed it to the lovely girl, saying:

"This is a book."

The two Deelathon examined the volume with great interest and then the man handed it back to Miss FitzGerald with a questioning look.

"It is a book," she said. "We read it."

At once the tall man caught up her words.

"Read it!" he exclaimed. "Read it."

Miss FitzGerald turned to me in surprise. "They say they can't speak English," she said, "and yet they keep on speaking it! I don't understand!"

"Don't you see?" replied her brother. "They just say the words we say—like parrots."

"No, I don't agree with you, Mr. FitzGerald," interrupted Prof. Smithton. "It is true that they repeat our words, but they combine them intelligently into new sentences, almost as though they could read our thoughts."

The tall man listened attentively to this discussion and then smiling, pointed to the book and repeated:

"Read!"

"Perhaps you had better do as they ask," I said to Miss FitzGerald.

And then took place one of the strangest scenes I have ever witnessed. At a gesture from their leader, the Deelathon seated themselves on the grass and we followed their example, for an hour, nothing but the boom of the waterfall and the soft, sweet voice of the American girl reading to those gods and goddesses, the words of the great American essayist, could be heard. At first she stopped at intervals and looked up, but the Deelathon would say softly, "Read!"

And she continued.

At last, when she had read fully half of the book, the tall man put up his hands to check her and rose to his feet.

"Friends from the sea," he said, "we, the people of the Thon, welcome you, the speakers of a strange, harsh language, until this moment unknown to us. We ask you to forgive our seeming inhospitality, but of course you realize that it was impossible for us to address you in your own language until we had heard it spoken. Therefore I asked this beautiful maiden to read from her record, which she calls a hook.



"But enough of this matter of speech which doubtless you already know, by the Thon. Now that we are able to talk freely, accept our welcome and hospitality and then tell us how we, the Deelathon, may serve you. I am Toron, maker of Zeeths, and this is my companion, Torona," and he laid his hand gently upon the head of the girl who had asked Miss FitzGerald for the book.

To say that we were dumfounded at this fluent address from a being who, only an hour previously, had said, "Us mean no harm," would be putting it very mildly. For a few moments we were too astonished to reply. The Professor was the first to regain his wits. He rose, bowed courteously, and said: "Strangers, who call yourselves the Deelathon, we thank you for your welcome. I am Professor Smithton and this is Captain Clinton. We, with many others, were driven into this harbor by the terrible storm, and escape has been cut off. Therefore we seek a way inland."

"But have you no Zeeths?" asked Torona,

"I am afraid not," replied the Professor smiling. "We do not even know what a Zeeth may be."

"You do not know?" exclaimed the Deelathon girl, her thonmelek rippling with color. "But does not the Thon tell you?"

"Again I must admit ignorance," replied Smith-ton. "I do not even know what you mean by the Thon."

At these words the Deelathon leaped to their feet in uncontrollable excitement. Their thonmeleks furled and unfurled, flashing with a hundred hues and we heard repeatedly the words "*Zed ephona Thon!*" ("They know not the Thon!")

Finally Toron turned to us and said:

"You will forgive our unseemly emotion, Smithton, and you, Clinton. We were surprised at your apparent inability to understand us when we spoke our own language. We are doubly astonished that you are surprised at our fluent English. But we are astounded at your statement that you do not know the Thon and can only suppose two things: either that you and your friends are very unhappy or that you say the thing which is Ephona—or as you would express it, untrue."

"I can only assure you, friend Toron," said the Professor earnestly, "that we are not guilty of falsehood when we say we do not know this

Thon, neither are we especially unhappy, though what connection that has with the Thon I do not understand."

"And are there many like you in the world?" asked one of the Deelathon men, wonderingly. "People who know not the Thon and who have lost their thonmeleks?" and he passed his hand upward over that glittering appendage.

"There are countless millions," replied the Professor.

"What you tell us," said Toron, "fills us with sorrow. True, we of the Deelathon have a legend that a people existed upon the face of the earth, who knew not the wonderful benefits which are constantly showered upon us by the Thon-ta-Zheena, but we did not believe it possible. It seemed like a story of fish flying through the air, or birds who lived under water. The news you tell us we must carefully consider. We will return to our people and I will call a conference of the Klendeela. In the meantime, return to your Zeeth-that-floats-on-the-water and at sunset I will visit you."

The Deelathon raised their hands in salutation, folded their thonmeleks and returned to the crystal globe which presently rose steadily into the air and disappeared over the brink of the waterfall.

**A**S soon as we set foot once more on the deck of *Shah of Iran* I left the passengers to narrate to their friends who had remained on board, the strange events through which we had passed, and beckoning to Professor Smithton, conducted him to my cabin and closed the door.

When we had lighted our cigars, I said:

"Well, Professor, what do you make of it?"

"Candidly, Captain, there are a good many things I don't understand at all."

"This 'Thon' they talked about so much, for example," I said, "and how they were able to talk English so fluently."

"Well, no," said Smithton, thoughtfully, "I think I begin to have a hazy idea of what they were driving at."

"That's more than I have," I said.

"No, the things I can't fathom," the Professor went on, "are what supports that dome of water and why it shines like a fire-opal and what holds up that crystal balloon of theirs and why they have frills

on their heads and a few other things like that. But the Thon— Didn't you notice how that word kept on creeping up in their language? Deelathon—people of the Thon. Thonmelek—that frill of theirs. Do they name themselves for their natural headdress?"

"That would hardly explain their tremendous excitement when they discovered we didn't know this Thon of theirs," I objected, "and why they regarded us as so unhappy because we didn't have frilly things on our heads."

"Ah! Quite so!" mused the Professor, "but they also said 'Epthona' and translated it as 'untrue.' I believe I've got it!" and he jumped up and began to pace the cabin excitedly. "Thon means truth. They worship some god or fetish which stands for truth and naturally they think we're a benighted race because we don't follow their religion."

"But that doesn't explain their sudden command of English," I objected.

"Quite so!" said the professor.

There was a knock at my door and Miss FitzGerald peeped in.

"Am I intruding on a conference?"

"Not at all," I said. "Please come in and see if your intuition can solve what to our more masculine reason, is as black as ink."

"What is the problem, Captain?" she asked, seating herself on the edge of my desk. I explained that the Professor and I had been discussing the strange inhabitants of the mainland and trying to decide what they meant by "Thon."

Margaret FitzGerald looked first at me and then at the Professor, her eyes twinkling.

"Honestly, I don't know any more about it than you do, but I think I can guess."

"What is it?" I exclaimed.

"Why, you said it when I came in," she said.

"Ah! Truth," said Smithton.

"No, not exactly. I was thinking of what the Captain said. He asked me to use my supposed intuition. That's it. Intuition. Thon."

"By heaven! You're right!" cried the Professor. "Some highly developed sense of intuition, combined with marvelous memories, and reasoning powers which enabled them to understand our language after hearing the words once! Marvellous! They're mental

prodigies! That explains their idea that we are so miserable because we haven't got their 'Thon'."

"I don't think it explains everything, Professor," I replied. "I feel that there is some deeper meaning underlying that simple word 'Thon'. There's something about those people that makes me say, that if this Thon of theirs could make me like them— like them not only physically but mentally and morally—I'd never rest until I solved the mystery."

"I felt the same way, Captain," said Miss FitzGerald. "When I was reading aloud to them I had the strangest sensation as though some loving, comforting power were folding me in its arms and it seemed to emanate from the Deelathon. Oh! I know it sounds foolish, but I felt just as if my soul were in a warm bath!"

"Perhaps my chosen profession renders me less susceptible to subconscious impression than you and Captain Clinton," said the astronomer, "nevertheless, I must admit that I feel complete confidence in these Deelathon and their kindly intentions. We can only wait for the return of our friend Toron at sunset."

"Right!" I said, rising, "and now, Miss FitzGerald and Professor, what do you say to lunch?"

# Chapter 4

## The Klendeela

**T**HROUGHOUT the long afternoon until the sun approached and touched the narrow sea-horizon visible in the gap to the west, eager eyes were incessantly turned to the crest of the landward cliffs, watching for the return of the friendly Deelathon.

Suddenly there was a cry: "They're coming!" and a moment later we saw a crystal globe travelling through the air just above the level of the plateau. It was much smaller than the one we had seen in the ravine but it glittered with the same flux of prismatic hues and was equipped with the same equatorial band and polar bosses of reddish metal, which Toron afterwards told us was an alloy of gold, copper and selenium.

For a few seconds the Zeeth (for this was the name by which the Deelathon called their strange aerial vessels) hovered motionless above the cliff-edge, and then with a suddenness which made me gasp it shot out towards the ship with tremendous velocity, as though hurled from some invisible cannon. In less than ten seconds the Zeeth was hovering above the deck, having come to a dead stop in its headlong flight, as suddenly as it had started. Then it descended with infinite care until its suspended cups rested on the after promenade deck where a space was cleared by the passengers for its reception.

One of the crystal windows swung inward and next moment Toron stepped upon the deck, followed by the girl Torona, whom he had called his companion.

They raised their hands in the Deelathon greeting and smiling at the amazed throng of men and women with that peculiarly radiant

smile which is so characteristic of all these people, they cried: "*Zeloma!* Welcome!"

Now, as you doubtless know, Benedict (said Captain Clinton) in the ages before the Visitation, the people of the world and especially of the so-called civilized areas, were governed in their actions not so much by reason or intelligence as by custom. It was regarded as a sign of the most depraved savagery to wear clothing for the purpose for which it was designed, namely, warmth, and people wore the most extraordinary garments, oftentimes hideously ugly, simply because they were, as we used to say, "the fashion." Early in the twentieth century there was evident a healthy tendency to get away from this bondage of fashion and return to the sensible use of clothing for warmth alone, but it proved to be simply another phase in the cycle of unreasoning custom and by the year 1940 the pendulum had swung to the other extreme, with the result that people were again loading themselves with unnecessary garments as cumbersome and ugly as those of the Victorian Era. The natural outcome of this practice was an extraordinary attitude of false shame with regard to the human body, which is quite incomprehensible to us today. Nor was this modesty without its basis in reason, for the imperfections of the average human body illustrated the meaning of the old Greek saying that it was forbidden to walk the streets of Athens naked, not because it was indecent but because it was ugly!

You will easily understand, therefore, that the eight hundred or more passengers who had not previously seen the Deelathon, regarded our story of a god-like people who wore no clothes, with mingled feelings of curiosity and disgust. The ladies, especially, listened with raised eyebrows to Miss FitzGerald's enthusiastic descriptions of the physical perfections of the Deelathon.

Having due regard to this state of mind I had some doubt as to the sort of welcome which would be accorded to the visitors.

My misgivings were soon dissipated. No sooner had the Deelathon uttered their words of greeting, than old Lady Gibson, mother of Sir Charles and the very epitome of British respectability, stepped forward and slipping her arm around Torona's waist, kissed her on both cheeks.

"My dear, you are very welcome to the *Shah of Iran* and you too, Sir," and the little old lady looked up nodding and smiling into the radiant face of the tall Deelathon.

Lady Gibson's impulsive action broke the ice and in a moment Toron and Torona were surrounded with passengers vying with each other to do honor to the beautiful visitors.

Presently Torona raised her head for silence. "My dear companion, Toron," she said, "has been in consultation with the Klendeela and he has a message for you. But first I want to thank you all for your greeting. You Deela Rana, or as you would say, People of the Sea, are very strange to us with your unhappy faces and your burden of clothes— though perhaps that is why you are unhappy. I am sure it would make me so! But I know we of the Deelathon must also seem strange to you, and so we thank you for your friendliness. The Thon tells us that great goodness is hidden behind your tired, unhappy faces, and therefore I love you all and especially this fair maiden, Margaret, whose book made it possible for us to learn your language." And she threw her arm around Miss FitzGerald and kissed her.

They stood there side by side, the American girl and the Deelathon maiden. The passengers must have been hard put to decide which was the fairer. For myself I had not a moment of doubt. Beautiful as was Torona, with a beauty almost unearthly, Margaret was more lovely in my eyes. As you will have guessed, Benedict, Margaret FitzGerald was she who afterwards became your great-grandmother.

**A**ND then Toron spoke. "Friends," he said, "Torona, my companion, has told you that you seem strange to us, and this is true, for it is almost beyond belief that any beings exist who know not the Thon. I have been in consultation with the Klendeela, which is our council, and this is the message they have sent to you. The Klendeela understands that you are imprisoned by the barrier reef which sank and rose during the earthquake. Since your Zeeth-which-floats-on-the-sea, will not float in the air, like our Zeeths, we want to tell you that with the greatest of our Zeeths we can raise your vessel into the air and transport it across the reef at any time you desire.

The Klendeela thinks, however, that you should not leave us until we have entertained you and, if the Thon permits, made known to you the meaning of that Thon which seems so mysterious to you. To this end they have commanded me to ask some few of you to return with me, Smithton, and you Clinton and the maiden with the book, and her brother and some few others whom you may select."

"You bring us good news, Toron," I replied, "and we accept the invitation of your council. At least, the others will doubtless do so, but as for me, I am in command here, and it is not our custom for the captain to leave his ship for any length of time."

Toron nodded his understanding and then engaged in a brief discussion with Torona. At last he addressed me again.

"We understand and honor your custom, Clinton and are prepared to overcome the difficulty. In the morning I will return with our greatest Zeeth and will transport your ship above the cliffs to a lake which is in the midst of our houses. There you can remain as long as seems fit to you, visiting us at your pleasure and returning to your ship each night. When you desire to leave us, we will lift your ship into the sea and you can return whence you came."

The idea of lifting thirty thousand tons of steel plates and girders bodily into the air might well have caused more than a qualm of doubt in our minds, but such was the complete confidence with which the Deelathon inspired us that I assented to this amazing proposal without hesitation. The tremendous speed of which the Zeeth was capable and the perfect control with which it was handled removed all doubt that we might have felt of the ability of the Deelathon to carry out this titanic engineering feat.

Having arranged the time at which they would return in the morning, Toron and Torona saluted us and entered their Zeeth, which rose from the deck and travelling in a tremendous parabola, disappeared behind the black columns of basalt.

There was little sleep that night for any one. The insomnia was produced not at all by alarm at the prospects of the morrow, but by the fact that everyone was speculating on the meaning of these strange events. All felt that we stood on the brink of some great adventure which was to have a permanent effect upon our lives.



That the Deelathon meant us anything but good never entered our minds. As Lady Gibson remarked to Margaret:

"My dear, when that glorious creature Toron looked at me I felt as though I must tell the truth. If I had told even the tiniest white lie, I should have jumped in the sea and drowned myself to hide my shame!"

Next morning every passenger and member of the crew was on deck early. At the appointed time the Zeeth soared into view, and accustomed as we were becoming to marvels, the size of this tremendous sphere staggered us. It measured fully three thousand feet around the equator and from either pole hung huge cables of the same reddish metal that was used universally among the Deelathon for engineering purposes.

When the Zeeth was hovering above the Shah I ordered the anchors to be hauled in and we floated free. The Zeeth sank slowly until the inverted cups which terminated the cables hung suspended level with the mastheads.

I had anticipated that it would be necessary to spend several days rigging steel cables under the Shah in order to provide a cradle to support the immense weight of the vessel. I had mentioned this to Toron the previous day, but he had smiled and assured me that no preparations were necessary.

The great globe hung poised in the air above the ship and then a most amazing thing happened. A slight tremor passed through the vessel and it began to rise slowly towards those inverted cups. Inch by inch rose the great liner, the water cascading from her bottom plates, until the keel was clear of the surface and we hung in mid-air, supported by some invisible force.

The cups from which this force apparently emanated were still separated from the deck by fully a hundred feet and yet the Shah hung securely on a level keel, so that in the saloon, where dinner had been laid, not even a drop of water was spilled from the filled glasses.

Slowly we rose until we hung above the level of the cliffs and then the Zeeth with its enormous burden began to move towards the land.

As soon as we became accustomed to our strange situation, the rails were crowded with a throng eager to catch a first glimpse of the new land. We beheld a rolling park-like country, dotted here and there with groups of palms and other trees. In the far distance we could faintly discern another wall of black cliffs and beyond them rose range on range of snow-capped peaks which we rightly supposed were the mighty Andes. A wide river, like a silver ribbon, wound its way from the distant snow fields. In the centre of the level area, which might have been fifty miles in diameter, the river broadened into a gleaming lake and then continued on its placid way, amplified by numerous tributaries, until it plunged over the cliffs into the Pit of the Shining Pool.

As we drew nearer, we caught sight of innumerable buildings, not crowded together into towns, but scattered among the groves of trees. These buildings, which were of every imaginable size, were all of the same general design, consisting of an ellipsoidal roof of the same glassy crystal of which the Zeeth was constructed, supported on a circular colonnade of marble pillars. Hundreds of Zeeths of all sizes darted here and there through the air and as their occupants caught sight of us, flocked towards us and followed our course until we seemed to move in a cloud of fairy bubbles.

Many of the houses were built on the top of the basaltic columns bordering the river and we could see groups of the Deelathon standing or sitting on the verge of the cliff, watching our progress with absorbed interest.

As we drew nearer to the lake we observed, standing on a slight elevation, a very large building, which we rightly took to be the meeting place of the Klendeela or council. This was built on the same circular plan as the dwellings, but was of vastly greater size.

At last the *Shah of Iran* hung above the centre of the lake and the Zeeth gradually sank until the Shah was resting once more in her native element.

That afternoon a small Zeeth shot out from the shore and landed on the deck. It contained our friends Toron and Torona, bringing with them a splendid Deelathon whom Toron introduced to us as Rethmar, the head of the Klendeela.

"The Klendeela is assembled and would be honored by your presence," said Toron. "You, Clinton, and the wise man, Smithton, and the fair maiden, Margaret, and her brother, Fred."

"We answer the summons of the Klendeela gladly, Toron," I said, "because we fully trust you and are anxious to learn more of your country."

"That wish shall be granted," replied Toron. "In the meantime, while you are in consultation with the Klendeela, many of our people will come to your ship in pleasure Zeeths and take as many of your friends as care to go, to their homes; for all the Deelathon are delighted to offer hospitality to our visitors from the sea."

Torona explained that we were to cross the lake in their Zeeth and land on the farther shore, from which point we would walk to the assembly hall, in order that we might have an opportunity to see some of the country on our way.

Rethmar reentered the Zeeth, beckoning me with a smile to follow him. I approached the circular opening, not without trepidation, but I was hardly prepared for what took place. I set my foot on the edge of the door, while Rethmar extended a hand to help me. Next instant, I seemed to be falling. All sense of material existence vanished and in a whirl of confusion I seemed to be floating in space. Then I felt the reassuring clasp of Rethmar's hand and gradually I regained my composure, only to find to my astonishment that instead of resting on the bottom of the Zeeth, I was actually poised in space at the centre of the globe, without visible means of support.

Then Rethmar drew me to the side and, slipping a broad, flexible belt around my waist, fastened it with a catch of some sort.

I now perceived that there was one of these belts midway between each of the crystal windows attached to the metal band which encircled the equator.

And now another surprise awaited me. Although the Zeeth was made of some crystal, when viewed from without, the globe was quite opaque, so that it was impossible to see the occupants. When viewed from the interior, however, the glassy material was so perfectly transparent that it simply seemed non-existent and one was conscious only of the equatorial band and polar bosses, apparently suspended in air, without support.

Rethmar, having observed the state of mental aberration which possessed me upon my first entry, floated across the Zeeth to the open window and spoke to Toron in his own tongue, and I heard Toron warning the others not to be alarmed.

Professor Smithton was the next and I could hardly forbear laughing as the somewhat corpulent form of the astronomer floated lightly upwards under the guidance of Rethmar, who coolly passed one of the belts around the Professor, leaving him suspended horizontally above my head.

"Why! Good Heavens, Captain!" sputtered the Professor. "Wonders upon wonders! Do you realize what our extraordinary sensations indicate?"

"No, I can't say that I do, except that I feel as though I were having a nightmare and can't wake up!"

**W**ELL, well, well!" ejaculated the Professor. "These people are a thousand years ahead of us in science, as well as in mental development. They have overcome gravitation. This transparent substance of which the globe is composed is opaque to gravitation, with the result that it not only has no weight, but nothing within it—ourselves for example—has any weight either. Marvellous!"

Now the others entered the Zeeth, each of my shipmates expressing wonder at the unexpected sensation of floating in mid-air. When we were all secured in place by the equatorial straps. Toron and Torona stepped into the Zeeth. The girl sailed lightly across the globe and slipped one of the belts around her, but Toron remained floating in the air and closed the crystal window behind him.

I began to look around for some machinery by which the Zeeth could be moved, but could see nothing except a small handle in the centre of each window. Toron began to turn these handles, propelling himself from one to another by slight touches against the walls of the globe, and I perceived that the handles were connected to the long needles which projected from the centre of the windows.

There was a slight shock and I looked downward. The deck of the *Shah of Iran* was falling away with tremendous speed and the country opened out until we could see for many miles in every

direction. Toron manipulated some more of the handles and the Zeeth began to move rapidly towards the shore.

Now, of course, we were all accustomed to riding on the old-fashioned airplanes, which had been brought to great perfection during the second quarter of the twentieth century, but the sensation was no more comparable to that of riding in a Zeeth than falling downstairs is to be compared to sliding down a snow slope on skis. There was no roar or vibration of machinery, simply swift, effortless motion, and the absolute transparency of the globe and our own lack of weight added to the illusion that we were flying through space at our own volition.

As we flew towards the great building which we had seen that morning, Toron said:

"I heard your remark, Smithton, and you are quite right in your explanation of the cause for the Zeeth's lack of weight. The globe is composed of elathongar, an artificial crystal, which, as you say, is opaque to gravitation."

"Ah! Quite so!" said the Professor, "but I still fail to understand what force propels the Zeeth, since opacity to gravitation would simply cause it to rise upward from the earth's surface."

"The propelling force is contained or rather produced by the rods attached to these handles. They are acted upon by the Thon." replied Toron. "And by turning them on their axes the force is up, down, or in either direction, as we wish."

"The Thon again!" exclaimed the Professor. "What is this Thon, Toron?"

The Deelathon smiled gravely. "That I am not permitted to tell you—yet!" he replied.

Now we sank gently to a landing on a grassy plain near the shore of the lake. We alighted, and headed by Rethmar, started up a winding path. At first we were hampered by the sudden transition in weight from nothing to one hundred and sixty pounds or thereabouts, but the novelty soon wore off and we looked about us.

Everywhere we saw the simple and yet beautiful dwellings of the Deelathon and everywhere we saw the same ellipsoidal roof of elathongar supported by pillars of stone. Later, during our stay in this strange land, we received and accepted many invitations to visit the

homes of the Deelathon and we discovered that both floors and roof were universally made of this gravity-shielding crystal, thus reducing the effort required to accomplish any work to a minimum.

The force of gravity could be adjusted to any degree desired by means of a sliding panel arrangement, but during our social calls, these were generally kept closed so that we simply reclined in the air and talked! Some of the passengers spent the night in the Deelathon houses and after the perfect relaxation of literally "sleeping upon air," found difficulty in sleeping at all on an ordinary bed.

**P**RESENTLY we entered a great avenue of stately palms at the end of which gleamed the white pillars of the assembly hall. Guided by Rethmar we walked up a noble stairway, flanked by mighty columns and stood in the centre of a splendid amphitheatre surrounded by rows and rows of marble seats or couches. As we entered we were again conscious of loss of weight, so that we seemed to float rather than walk across the crystal pavement.

Hundreds of Deelathon, both men and women, reclined on the seats, but as we entered they all rose to their feet. There was a rustling sound and a ripple of colored light as their thonmeleks flashed erect upon their heads. Their hands rose in the Deelathon salute and there was a unanimous shout of:

*"Zeloma, Deelarana!"*

Rethmar led us to seats at one side of the huge auditorium and then floated to the centre and addressed the assemblage in his own language. When he resumed his seat, Toron rose and began to speak in English.

"Friends from across the sea," he said, "the Klendeela has asked me to speak for them because I alone can talk your language freely, thanks to the maiden Margaret. We have brought you here out of no idle curiosity, or merely to offer you our hearty welcome, but because we believe it lies in our power to do you great good. Not alone to you and those with you, but also to the countless millions like you, who, as you tell us, inhabit the world, to us unknown.

"But before offering you this priceless gift, known to us as the Thon, the Klendeela requests you to tell us more of that world in which you live. Tell us of its history, its present conditions, its science

and its religion. Thus will the Klendeela be able to judge if we are right in revealing to you the secret of the Thon.

"Fear not to speak in your own tongue, for all will understand you. Fear only to say that which is ephthona or false, for we shall know the thona from the ephthona."

Professor Smithton, who had, at my urgent request, agreed to act as spokesman for our party, rose to his feet and, steadying himself for a moment against his tendency to rise above the floor, said:

"Men of the Deelathon, the feeling of confidence with which you inspired us at our first meeting is made stronger by your welcome and your offer. We do not know what this gift of the Thon may portend, but we are agreed that if your self-evident health and happiness are due in any way to this Thon, we greatly desire to share the secret with you.

"We will willingly describe to you the world in which we live, but to do this completely, it would be necessary to combine the knowledge of many minds. Among the passengers and crew of our ship are persons from every walk of life. I suggest that you allow us to select some of these persons to deal with the various phases of the subject."

"Your excellent suggestion shall be carried out," replied Toron after a moment's consultation with Rethmar. "Return now to your ship and make all necessary arrangements with your friends. Each morning the Klendeela will assemble to hear your speakers. Each afternoon we of the Deelathon will welcome you to our homes or show you the beauties of our country on foot or in our Zeeths."

"Before we retire," said the Professor, "is it permitted to ask one question?"

"Any question will be answered freely, Smithton," replied Toron, "so long as it does not relate to the Thon."

"I wish to know," said the Professor, "why, with your Zeeths, incomparably superior to our finest means of transportation, you have not long ago visited this outer world in which we live."

"There are reasons which I cannot explain to you now," said Toron, "indeed, we do not fully understand them ourselves. This, however, I can tell you: The power of the crystal we call elathongar is in some way associated with the black rock that underlies our country. When

we attempt to pass far beyond this rock, our Zeeths sink to the ground.<sup>[2]</sup> Neither is it possible for us to leave our country on foot, for we are hemmed in on one side by the sea and on the other by several rows of unclimbable cliffs."

Toron escorted us back to the ship and left us. I called the passengers together and having told them of our meeting with the Klendeela, asked for volunteers to give the strangest course of lectures that has ever been delivered.

**N**EXT morning and day by day for a week we crossed the lake to the assembly hall where the Klendeela gathered to listen in a silence unbroken save by the voice of the lecturer and the rustling of those strange rainbow-tinted frills which seemed to respond to every emotion of the hearers.

Dr. Malone of Yale spoke on ancient history and Dr. Calthorp of Harvard on modern history and social conditions. Professor Smithton lectured on pure science and Fred FitzGerald on applied science and mechanics. Dr. Ronald, the ship's surgeon, gave an outline of medicine and I spoke briefly on navigation. General Thornton of the U. S. Army described the development of war from the days of the sword and crossbow to its present state of perfection. Dr. Maxwell of Leland Stanford spoke on psychology and Bishop Brander of Washington lectured on comparative religion.

Thus the days passed while those god-like creatures listened with absorbed attention to all. We had got over the wonder of their being able to understand us. We had become accustomed to the strange sensations incident to the use of the gravitation shields. But our amazement at the beauty and health and radiant happiness of these marvellous beings remained unabated. Could Carlyle have seen the Klendeela before writing his Sartor Resartus, he would have hesitated before ridiculing the picture of a Parliament without clothes!

Once only was there any interruption to the steady flow of words. It was during the latter part of Professor Smithton's lecture on physics. He was explaining some of the more recent discoveries of the scientists when there was a rustle of thonmeleks, a flash of color and the members of the Klendeela leaped to their feet amid a babble of voices. In the confusion we could hear the word "Thon" again and



again. The excitement subsided as quickly as it had arisen and after a few words of apology from Rethmar, the Professor proceeded with his discourse.

Margaret FitzGerald and I spent all the after noon with Toron and Torona, sometimes reclining in their Zeeth and watching the glorious landscape unfolding below us, sometimes wandering through groves of cinnamon and nutmeg trees, sometimes resting in the crystal dwelling of our Deelathon friends.

Toron talked freely on all subjects and willingly told us everything we asked relating to the social and economic life of the people. One subject alone he avoided, and that the thing we most desired to know—the nature and meaning of the Thon.

We were amazed at the perfection of the Deelathon government and their commercial arrangements, but we were astounded at the extreme simplicity of the social machinery by which all their activities were controlled. Early in our friendship I asked Toron if we were correct in supposing that Torona was his wife. Toron looked puzzled for an instant and then replied:

"Yes and no, Clinton. When I first met you I selected the word 'companion' as better suited to explain our relationship than 'wife.' I feel a meaning in your word which is entirely foreign to our word."

"But Torona is not related to you, Toron?" I asked.

"No, except as my companion."

"You have chosen each other as mates?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, placing his hand gently on Torona's.

"Then surely," I went on, "you have been united by some ceremony such as that which we call marriage."

"No. That is the difference!" exclaimed Toron. "We have no ceremonies of any kind. What you call a ceremony is a form of words designed to make the listeners believe a falsehood or else to impress upon them something they are not sure of. Therefore, of course, we need no ceremonies."

I did not quite see where the "of course" came in, but I let that go and followed another line of thought.

"Then there is nothing to prevent you from separating from your companions, as you call them, at any time?"

"Nothing at all!" replied Toron, smiling radiantly at Torona.

"Then divorce must be exceedingly common among you, Toron," I said.

Toron and Torona both burst out laughing.

"As common as it is for the rose to divorce itself voluntarily from the tree," said Torona, "or the silver pathway on the lake to divorce itself from the moon."

Toron laughed again at the blank expression on our faces and said:

"Don't you see, Clinton, and you, Margaret, that all your ceremonies and divorces are necessary because you are not sure of yourselves. We Deelathon never make a mistake in our choice of a companion. In fact, as you will learn later, it is impossible for us to make a mistake. Therefore, when we choose a companion, it is forever."

Another time, as we were hovering over the wooded country in Torona's little Zeeth, Margaret commented on the curious fact that we had never seen any sign of burial grounds nor indeed had we so much as heard the word "death" mentioned.

Again Toron looked puzzled and then, as was his custom, replied by asking a seemingly irrelevant question.

"How old are you, Clinton?"

"Thirty-six," I answered.

"Years?" was Toron's curious question.

"Of course," I replied.

"I understand Margaret's question now," said Toron, his face bearing an expression as near sadness as it ever could. "Friends, does it surprise you that I, Toron, have seen over eight hundred summers and Torona over six hundred and fifty!"

"Surely, you jest, Toron!" I exclaimed. "No man can ever live to such an age!"

"And why not?" asked Toron.

"Because—Oh! because it's contrary to nature. Sickness and old age sap the wells of life and death comes, generally before a hundred years have passed."

"And we wondered at their unhappy faces, Toron!" exclaimed Torona. "Why, Margaret, there are many among the Deelathon who have lived not eight hundred but eight thousand years. We know

what you mean by sickness, but no such thing exists among us. Neither have we anything which corresponds to your idea of old age. True, we leave our bodies, not because they are worn out, but because our appointed time has come. Oh friend! how can you do more than just taste the cup of life in so brief a space of time as one century?"

**A**ND then came the afternoon when we were summoned to meet the Klendeela for the last time. Our speakers had concluded their addresses and Professor Smithton summed up their lectures in an eloquent speech in which he extolled the glories of the civilization of which we were the representatives.

For a brief interval there was silence and then Rethmar rose.

"Friends, accept the thanks of the Klendeela for your kindness. We have decided that the gift of the Thon shall be extended to you and through you to all the world. Tomorrow, if it shall please you, we will take you and all your company, both men and women, to the Thontara and there, in the presence of that undying wonder, we will reveal to you the secret of the Thon, which makes us what we are."

# Chapter 5

## The Glory of the Thontara

I NEED not tell you in detail, Benedict, with what excitement we awaited the coming of the day upon which we were at last to learn the meaning of the mysterious Thon. Everyone on the *Shah of Iran* had come to love and admire these strange people with their gentle, courteous ways, their radiant, happy faces, their wonderful health and almost divine beauty.

The sun rose in a clear sky for the first time for a week, as though to celebrate the beginning of a new era for mankind. Hundreds of Zeeths soared up from among the trees on the lake-shore and hovered over the steamer. One by one they dropped to the deck and rose again with their quota of passengers.

At last the ship was deserted and the fleet of crystal spheres swooped away seaward, to land upon a grassy plain near the brink of the great waterfall. Rethmar led the way to the edge of the cliffs, at the point where the river gathered itself for the final plunge, and then we perceived a flight of steps cut in the solid rock.

We started down, each man or woman escorted by a friendly Deelathon; a company of over two thousand. Rethmar and the professor went first, then Margaret and Torona, followed by myself accompanied by Toron. As my turn came and I approached the top of the steps, I noticed that they did not terminate at the edge of the river, but entered instead, a hole in the rocks directly under the fall. I should have hesitated, but I caught sight of Margaret disappearing into the gloom and plucked up my courage to proceed.

A moment later I stood on a small platform. On my left was the cliff. On my right, and so close that I could have touched it, was a descending wall of water, thundering into the abyss.

The other four had disappeared and I looked questioningly at Toron. For answer, he took my hand and led me forward to the edge of the platform and then I realized with a thrill of horror that we stood on the top of one of the basalt columns and that the flight of steps continued spirally down it, being carved out of the solid rock. There was no railing of any kind and the idea of walking down that fearsome stairway with nothing but space and darkness below me and with millions of tons of water rushing by, turned me sick.

I glanced again at Toron and met his smile of encouragement. My fears departed and with his hand in mine, we started down. Round and round we circled, now passing close to the wall of water, whose roar grew ever louder as we descended; now passing through little tunnels which had been cut between the pillar and the cliff. Looking up, I could see a seemingly endless line of figures circling the mighty column and looking for all the world like the processional caterpillars on the trunk of a pine tree, and once when I glanced hurriedly downward, I caught a glimpse of Margaret's dark hair and the gleam of Torona's pink body in the gloom.

At last, with a sigh of relief, I stepped from the bottom of the column to the floor of a great cave, like the famous Cave of the Winds under Niagara Falls. Margaret and the Professor, with the two Deelathon men, were awaiting us and we stood watching that silent line of figures creeping slowly downward, until we were once more united in the great cavity under the waterfall.

I thought our ordeal was over and that this must be the Thontara of which Rethmar had spoken. I was wondering how it would be possible for him to reveal any secret to us in a place where the bellow of the waters would drown any attempt at speech. But as the thought entered my mind I saw Rethmar drawing the Professor forward and they began to descend another flight of steps, cut like the other in the solid rock.

Following Margaret and Torona, I found that this stairway ran sharply down into a tunnel which seemed to lead us directly under the fall. The passage was so low that I could touch the roof with my hand and feel the living rock trembling with the tremendous impact of the water.

Still we descended and I saw a faint flicker of light below me, growing ever brighter and brighter. A hundred more steps brought us to the bottom, and passing through an arched opening, we stood at last in the Thontara.

At the glory of the sight that met my eyes, I uttered an involuntary cry of amazement and delight. We stood on the edge of a great circular depression, which I judged to be about a thousand feet in diameter. Surrounding this depression was the broad shelf of black basalt on which we were standing, and filling the entire area within this shelf, was a mass of colored light which surged and rippled like a sea of rainbows. I have spoken of the varied hues which were visible on the surface of the crystal Zeeths. This was the same but intensified a thousand-fold.

As my eyes became accustomed to the light I realized that we were standing on the border of a vast circular floor of crystal, so exquisitely transparent that it was like gazing into a bottomless pit of lucent flame. It was long before I could turn my eyes from that sea of fire and look upward, but when at last I did so, I was greeted by a new wonder.

■ WAS looking at the under side of the great dome of water which occupied the centre of the pool below the waterfall! This living roof of liquid, seeming as frail as a bubble and yet weighing under normal conditions no one knows how many thousand tons, was bereft of its weight by the screening effect of the crystal and hung in midair, motionless and yet in constant motion under the tremendous force of the cataract, its under surface reflecting, as though in a mirror, the splendor of the sea of colored light below.

While I had been absorbing the beauty of this natural kaleidoscope, the rocky shelf had been filling with our great company until we were all assembled in the Thontara. Rethmar and the Professor had gone to the farther side and I saw the Deelathon raise his hand in salute and prepare to speak.

The roar of the waterfall was almost inaudible and was replaced by a soft hissing produced by the rapid movement of the liquid roof. As Rethmar began to speak, his voice penetrated to every corner of

the immense space, reflected from the dome by some strange acoustic effect like that sometimes heard in old cathedrals.

"Friends from beyond the sea," he said, "we have brought you to this place which we call the Thontara, because it seemed the most fitting spot in which to reveal to you the secret of the Thon. You cannot have failed to understand that this Thon, which is so mysterious to you, is regarded by us as the greatest gift in the possession of man. Our language alone would reveal this to you. We call ourselves the Deelathon, 'People of the Thon.' This living frill upon our heads is the Thonmelek, 'Mirror of the Thon.' And this glory that you behold is the Thontara, 'Place of the Thon.' Now, therefore, before revealing to you the meaning of this word, we ask you to tell us what you have guessed the Thon to be."

"Truly, we have wondered, Rethmar," said the Professor. "Some thought it was the god you worship. Miss FitzGerald imagined that it stood for Intuition and I guessed it might be Truth."

"In a measure you are all right," said Rethmar, "and yet you have but touched on the fringe of the matter. Listen and I will reveal to you all, the secret of this mystery. The Thon is the Power of Life. It is the essence which separates the living from the dead, the animate from the inanimate, the man from the animal and the plant from the stone. Through the Thon, we, the Deelathon, are what we are."

"We hear your words and they are good, Rethmar," said the Professor, "but we do not yet understand how the Thon can benefit us."

"Listen again," said Rethmar. "You have told us of the outer world in which you live and we are grieved at your story. You claim credit for the conquest of Nature, but it is Nature which has conquered you. You boast of the perfection of your civilization, but you are the slaves of that civilization you have created. There is hardly anything in science which you have told us that we have not known for centuries, but we use our knowledge instead of permitting our knowledge to use us. In spite of your fancied attainments, you are in bondage to three masters: sorrow, sickness and death, and yet the key to unlock your bonds is all around you. Nay, more. You, Smithton, have told us that you have known the Thon for forty years and have not recognized it for what it is!"

"I!" exclaimed the Professor. "I told you that?"

"You told us," repeated Rethmar, "at the third meeting of the Klendeela, that forty years ago one of your wise men<sup>[3]</sup> discovered a power that penetrated the densest metals, a power of which he could not discover the origin, a power which he called the Cosmic Ray. This, Friends, is the Thon!

"Make no mistake!" he went on. "We do not worship the Thon. One of you has told us how in ancient times men worshipped the Sun, the Source of Light. But we worship the one God, whom no man may know. As for the Thon, we know not whence it comes, we only know it fills all space and permeates all things. We know that it is a form of wave motion like light, but whereas light is reflected by material things, the Thon is reflected by the mind and spirit of all that lives. Therefore, I have called it the Power of Life.

"You have spoken with pride of your elaborate system of laws, your multiplex religions, your social ceremonials, your great battles in which millions grapple to the death. Friends, are you so blind that you cannot see that all these things are bred of misunderstanding, misunderstanding of yourselves, of each other, of the living universe of which you are a part? Can you conceive of fighting those you call your enemies if each side could see the other's viewpoint as clearly as his own?

"I HAVE said that the Thon is a form of vibration which responds to the life-form or spirit of living things. By virtue of the Thon, one mind beholds another, just as the material eye beholds other material bodies by virtue of reflected light. Thus it is that misunderstanding is impossible among us. Thus it is that we are able to understand you when you speak your own language. Thus it is that we need no such laws and ceremonies and social machinery as that of which you boast. And thus it is that we enjoy perfect health and happiness because we see, not only the outer shell as you do, but also the living mind that resides within the shell, as you would say."

"But tell us, Rethmar," said the Professor, "if you thus see the mind within the body, why is speech necessary, since your thoughts must be visible to one another?"



"First let me say, Smithton, that the mind is not within the body, but the body within the mind. As to your question, it is a reasonable one and we ourselves do not fully understand why it is not as you say. It seems, however, that the spoken word is necessary as the vehicle of thought, with us as with you. But note the difference; when you speak, your thought must go through many translations before reaching the mind of the hearer, losing some of its sense with each translation. First you must mentally select the words best fitted to express your idea. Then your organs of speech must convert those words into vibrations of sound, which in turn must act upon the ears of your hearer and be turned into the nerve-force which reacts upon the brain. Here the word-sounds must be converted into word-pictures.

"Is it any wonder that the thought of the speaker reaches the brain of the listener in a mangled condition? And it matters not whether the words be true or false, the hearer cannot distinguish between them. But with us, the spoken word is simply the means by which the speaker reveals his thought to the hearer. No matter how imperfectly the words may have been selected, the hearer sees by the reflected rays of the Thon, the actual thought of the speaker. I use the word 'sees,' but of course we do not see the Thon with the eye, but with an intangible organ of the mind."

"It comes to us as a great surprise," said the Professor, "that the Thon of which we have heard so much, should be the medium of a sixth sense and should be none other than the Cosmic Ray, with which we are familiar. We can easily realize that a people who live under such conditions must be the happiest people in the world. But when you offer us the gift of the Thon, Rethmar, you seem to forget that we lack this special faculty which enables you to visualize the mental images produced by the Thon. You may tell a blind man of the light, but you cannot make him see."

"Oh, Smithton! Smithton! Do you still fail to understand?" said Rethmar, and his voice rang out like a bugle call to every one of the great circle of listeners. "This special faculty, as you call it, is not the exclusive possession of the Deelathon. It is common to all mankind. It is a part of every living thing. It is inherent in Life itself. Oh! Friends from beyond the sea, you are not by nature blind to the Thon. For

countless generations you and all your race have lived and died like men who bandage their eyes that they may not see the light!

"For the last time, listen!"

And then, in words so simple that the humblest trimmer among the crew could understand, Rethmar revealed to us the secret which gave us full possession of that marvellous sixth sense: the consciousness of the Thon.

You, Benedict, and all your generation, were born with this sense fully developed and you can hardly realize what stupendous emotions convulsed us when, to use Rethmar's simile, the bandages were torn from the eyes of our minds and we saw ourselves and our friends and all living things, face to face in the light of the Thon. To you, your consciousness of the Thon is as natural and commonplace as your consciousness of light or sound, but to us it came as an overpowering revelation.

Speaking for myself, for a space my mind was dazzled as the eyes of a blind man are dazzled when he first receives his sight. When this temporary confusion passed, my first thought was of Margaret FitzGerald.

We had been drawn together in friendship during our strange adventures. I had thought her beautiful and womanly, but no word of love had passed my lips. Now, as her eyes met mine, I saw revealed a beauty of spirit and intellect such as I scarcely dreamed could exist. Her face was radiant with happiness but her soul was calm with the peace of eternity.

No word was spoken. No word was needed. The revealing rays of the Thon told us beyond the possibility of misunderstanding that we were Companions. A moment later our arms were around each other and in the presence of that great company we gave and received our first kiss.

And in the light of the Thon we realized the literal truth of the poet's words:

"Our Spirits rushed together,  
At the meeting of the lips."

**T**HERE is little more to be told. With her hand in mine I led Margaret across the great crystal floor, walking as though in a

sea of prismatic flame to where Rethmar stood.

"Rethmar and Toron. Men and Women of the Deelathon," I said, "Margaret, my dear Companion and I, thank you in the name of all this company for your great gift. Now we ask a further favor, knowing that it will be granted, that we may go back into our world and teach our unhappy fellow men to see. I even venture to beg that some few of your people will accompany us to lighten our task, for none can fail to understand the meaning of the Thon when the secret is revealed by a Deelathon."

Rethmar's face was but a faint reflection of the radiance of his spirit. Raising his hand in the Deelathon salute, he cried:

"You have heard the request of our friends, Clinton and Margaret, now Companions by the Thon. Who will go with them?"

And a thousand arms flashed up in the salute and a thousand voices rang out in the words now as intelligible to us as English:

*"Zo thana! —I will go!"*

"All cannot go," said Rethmar. "Toron and Torona shall, with a company of one hundred, go with you on your ship. One thing alone we ask; that the place of the Deelathon shall remain a secret until you are sure that no harm shall come to our country. You have a saying that it is foolish to cast pearls before swine. Who knows what might happen when the Thon is revealed to all men?"

And there, in the pulsing splendor of the Thontara, we, the passengers and crew of the *Shah of Iran*, swore the oath of secrecy which we have kept to this hour.

Three days later the great liner was lifted from the lake to the blue waters of the Pacific, outside the barrier reef. A whirling cloud of Zeeths hovered and darted above us as our screws began to churn the water. The equatorial windows were crowded with Deelathon waving a last salute to the brave hundred upon our decks who, alas! were destined never to return.

Presently we passed the boundaries of the basalt rock and the Zeeths were forced to turn back, having reached what was then the limit of their range. Our course was laid to the North and a pathway of foam fled in our wake as we commenced the last voyage which was to bring happiness and health and understanding to the World—the Voyage of the Visitation.



## Afterword

The sun was high in the heavens when Captain Clinton concluded his narrative. We rose from our seat on the bare summit of the Shah and without a word began our descent.

And now I, Benedict Clinton, have completed the task assigned to me by my great-grandfather a year ago. The story of the Year of the Visitation is known to all the world, even if its effects were not visible on every side today.

And yet a visitor from another planet could hardly have blamed the Deelathon for their caution lest the gift of the Thon should bring about a revolution which would convulse the world and overwhelm their tiny country in its flood.

Actually, nothing in the nature of a revolution took place. The new order was so entirely natural, so utterly sane, that the change took place everywhere, almost without our being aware of it.

There was no wholesale abolition of laws and governments. We simply ceased to use them as men discard a worn-out garment. There was no deliberate disarmament. Nations ceased to go to war because there were no nations any longer. Cruisers and battleships, armored cars and guns lay rotting and rusting where they had been abandoned. In the light of the new understanding, racial and national divisions ceased to have any meaning, although we have retained many of the geographical names for the sake of convenience.

People everywhere found a marvellous increase in health and happiness as the direct result of the knowledge of sane living, which was revealed by the Thon, but the seed of death was in them and they, the Epzykofs, are passing away from among us year by year. Not so with the generations yet unborn at the date of the Visitation. We, the Zykofs, enjoy the same perfection of bodily and mental well-being that my great-grandfather found among the Deelathon and we know of no limit to our lives, save the call of destiny.

And what of Toron and Torona and the hundred whom they led to our deliverance? They came forth voluntarily from a country of undying beauty, to bring the greatest of all natural gifts to the World, and in so doing, perished! Utterly unfitted physically to cope with the

misery and disease and death which they came to eradicate, they faded, sickened and died in the accomplishment of their great task. Before the year had passed away, not one of that splendid band was left!

**F**AR out in the Pacific is a barren island of magnetic iron oxide, the remnant of the great meteor and above its highest point towers a mighty spire of imperishable crystal. Its prismatic efflorescence is visible at night for many miles and upon its base is the inscription:

*"TO THE VISITANTS"*

**The End**

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Food for the mind



[1] Editor's note: The hexagonal basalt columns are similar to those at the Devil's Postpile National Monument in California. The cross-section of the "posts" is hexagonal, and the flat top resembles a bathroom floor tiled with grey hexagonal tiles. See <http://www.nps.gov/depo/index.htm> .

[2] During the Year of the Visitation this difficulty was overcome and Zeeths now travel over every part of the world.

[3] Dr. Robert A. Milliken.