

CHAPTER 21

THIS HOLLOW SPHERE

DR. CYRUS R. TEED was a skeptic.

Born in 1839 on a farm at a place where the road widened out, Teedville, New York (later Trout Creek), he took to the medical profession as soon as a country school education would let him, studied with an uncle, and began practice in Utica. The Civil War closed down upon him as upon thousands of others. He served as a surgeon in the Union armies and then returned to private practice.

Home from the batter and crash of war his own natural-born doubting instincts boiled and bubbled. Dr. Teed wanted to know. He wanted to find the answers for himself—answers that would satisfy.

Now, the Bible, for one thing. In the 1870's the Bible was a very definite and personal thing in the lives of many Americans. It was an intimate part of family life. Resting on the parlor center table it was a visible and physical reminder of the power of the Almighty and his

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direct interest in the affairs of every member of the family.

Teed began to doubt. He engaged in lengthy research, going deep into authorities which, dusty and dull as they may seem to us now, were primed with controversy as old as history. His search was for the Truth. Probing into the lore of the theologians, the Churchmen and the Schoolmen, he ran up against a problem of science—the Copernican System.

Wasn't it all based on guesswork, after all? he reasoned as he struggled with the problems that tumbled about him as he bored into the strong walls of the old Pole's philosophy.

Did Copernicus really prove anything? Was his hypothesis really subject to any greater degree of proof than those of a dozen other "scientists"?

Wasn't it simply that Copernicus had secured the doctor's nod at a time when politically, ecclesiastically, and economically it was a sound thing to give the weight of "authority" to the old Pole? Or wasn't it?

Teed worked hard on that one.

Struggling down the Copernican trail, Dr. Teed was bitten with another idea.

"All life develops from cellular forms or conditions," he said. "Nature is uniform, life in the aggregate must conform to the same general laws. The Universe must conform."

The Universe, thought the Doctor. The Universe; then the Earth. And then Dr. Teed made a discovery that to him—and to a goodly number of others—was conclusive. He became convinced by the chain of his own reasoning that the earth was a hollow globe—that the inhabitants of the earth did not live on the outside of the globe, held tidy and tight by the law of gravitation, but on the inside. He declared the earth to be a hollow globe of twenty-five thousand miles circumference, with the sun, the moon, and all the stars contained inside.

In 1896, near Naples, Florida, a geodetic expedition, organized and equipped by Dr. Teed, manned by disciples of the Doctor, took the apparatus required for his experiment. On the flat sands of the gulf beach, they conducted the experiments and proved the case—to their satisfaction.

The curvature of the earth, declared the Doctor, was up, not down.

But this simplification was only made later. During the years following the Doctor's discovery of "cellular cosmogony," and while he was still formulating the principle in his mind, he drifted into mental healing. He became a leader in the organization of mental healers. He opened offices; lectured throughout the country, established a magazine. And as he worked upon the theories of cellular cosmogony, and edited his magazine, Dr. Teed also took a look at the economic system. The

competitive system, he asserted, was an outgrowth of paganism, a "form of economic cannibalism." He foresaw world-wide revolution as a consequence. Human relations, he declared, must go back to the primitive base of the early Christian church where all goods were held in common. This belief in the need of a social system based upon collective ownership led to the organization of the Koreshan Unity, a group which was to work out these principles in daily life. The Unity was first located at College Place, Chicago, then it moved into the suburbs. But society in the up and competing Middle West was not friendly.

1893 was World's Fair year in Chicago. Many men from far places visited the city. Among them was a real-estate dealer from Fort Myers. He met Dr. Teed and described the Charlotte Harbor area so convincingly that Dr. Teed made the trip to the rail-head at Punta Gorda and took a sloop to Fort Myers. After an extensive investigation he accepted the proposal of a resident who agreed to deed a large tract near the gulf and drained by a stream, if he would establish a colony on the land. The first group of colonists, twenty-four of them, arrived in February, 1894, and began the heart-breaking labors inevitable to pioneers in virgin land. The grubbing of the palmettoes, clearing the underbrush and trees, fighting off the hordes of mosquitoes, midges, red bugs, sand flies and fleas, again and again almost broke down the little company's morale, but Teed's leadership

was still vital, his vision kept them going. A log house was finally erected, the fleas were routed, kitchens were built, and life began to come up to the dream. In December, 1896, Dr. Teed's geodetic expedition arrived. The time had come to put the Theory to test.

Upwards of a dozen men were in the party. The noon high sun beat down on the glittering sand shore. The surface of the gulf, level and undisturbed as a mirror, lay blue and green. To one side were piles of curious looking objects of wood. They looked like sections of a light fence. On closer examination they seemed to be double T-squares. They composed Dr. Teed's rectilineator. With them he expected to prove that the earth's surface was not convex and constantly falling away from any given point but, on the contrary, concave and rising upwards. The Doctor had reasoned it all out during the dark nights of the winter of 1869 and 1870, a quarter of a century before.

For some weeks previous to the beginning of the geodetic operations two fifteen-foot two-by-six-inch perpendicular stakes had been set out upon the beach. They marked the points along the line of the Koreshan community's first survey to determine to their satisfaction the true contour and ratio of curvature of the earth's surface. From the fixed stake on the approach to the Naples dock the stakes marked the direction of the meridian line. Standing in a long line were lesser stakes that indicated

shorter intervals of space. A survey had been made along the coast with the usual surveyors' instruments, and the line had been measured along which the rectilineator was to be moved section by section, in precise adjustments, for four and a half miles down the coast.

As the air line was to be straight and the shore line was irregular, excavations were necessary, and all obstructions were cleared away.

"The leveling of the first section was the point for the exercise and application of the greatest skill and accuracy," states the Koreshan booklet "The Cellular Cosmogony," which reports the test in detail. "The first section must be accurately leveled. For this purpose we obtained the finest and most sensitive spirit levels obtainable. In connection with this we had our twelve-foot mercurial geodetic level, invented specially for this survey. Being twelve feet in length it was susceptible of being used with great accuracy and precision. Applied to the first section the spirit and the mercurial levels agreed."

At 8:50 in the morning of March 18th, 1897, the leveling was concluded and pronounced perfect by the staff working on the problem. From then on the line was projected on the basis of the principles upon which the test was based.

Carefully and patiently for eight weeks the staff worked along the line south of the Naples dock, checking and cross-checking—careful, tedious and trying work.

At the end the staff believed that they had proved their case. The curvature of the earth's surface, they declared, was *up* not down. "Cellular Cosmogony" will give you all the mathematical details of the measurements, much too intricate for this slight review. But to the members of the Koreshan colony the test rendered their position impregnable.

"The Universe," the Koreshan Unity believe, "is an egg or shell, obtaining as a structure perpetually recreative and existent."

Within this shell there are "three distinct domains of stars and three distinct atmospheres." The stars, they say, are not worlds "but focal points of substance or centers of combustion." They do not believe the planets are inhabited.

Other experiments were tried in time. None so completely convinced Dr. Teed and his adherents as the four-mile survey.

Satisfied himself, Dr. Teed made no passionate effort to enforce his theory upon the world. The Koreshan community accepted it. The world could take its own time discovering the truth. The community meanwhile slowly grew; its saw-mill prospered and the earlier log houses gave way to well-built tropical houses.

Dealing like communists among themselves the Koreshanians dealt on a competitive basis with the outside world. They sold their lumber and fine nursery stock from their extensive gardens, vegetables, berries and

truck. The community was in no sense isolated. Its members took a keen interest in local affairs, and now and then injected themselves into county politics, and the solid vote of the Unity voters became a political weapon of real force. To protect their interests they established "The American Eagle," a weekly newspaper. Its editor today, A. H. Andrews, a pioneer in the colony, is recognized as one of the ablest editorial writers in Florida weekly journalism.

In December, 1908, at the age of sixty-nine, Dr. Teed died.

There were desertions after the founder's death, but the Unity went on. Its extensive land holdings rose in value. It added an electric light plant, a wood-working plant, machine shop, laundry and bakery to the list of its enterprises. A part of its beach land was developed and sold. New adherents were not so easy to get. Six months' probation is required during which the applicant must study and fully accept the Koreshan teachings. Whisky and tobacco are banned. Every applicant must prove his willingness to work. Those entering the community contribute what they have of this earth's goods—little or much—to the general treasury. In turn they receive the support of the combined resources of the Unity. They live quietly and at peace with their neighbors and the world. No member of the Koreshan sect ever burned an obdurate fellow-man at the stake for refusing to accept Dr. Teed's conclusions as to the hollow

nature of our allegedly whirling sphere. No howling group of gesticulating Koreshaners ever screamed about a bonfire made of books which do not concur in Dr. Teed's conclusions as to the inherent poison in the competitive system or the advantages of collective ownership. Perhaps tolerance is the key to their modest growth. New causes, they say, need strident screamers; bung-eyed fanatics, thick-necked, thick-waisted and thick-ankled adherents, who ask no reasons why but merely whom to strike and when. The gentleman from Nazareth took the quiet way. Most of His adherents took the other. Today the votes seem to show that the old Human Animal needs the stridency; the hotfoot, the club and the brass knuckles. Perhaps.

## CHAPTER 22

### SILVER-SIDES AND HAMMERHEADS

ALL Florida is undivided. Down both coasts and off Key West is one vast fishing camp. Few men are brave enough, or well informed enough to join in debate as to whether the East Coast or the West Coast has the better waters for non-commercial sporting fishing. True, the great Gulf Stream brings advantages to the East Coast—the sailfish, the bonito, the amberjack and the dolphin. But most of these are found on the West Coast too, besides, for the early winter fishing, grouper and the sea trout. Great schools of flashing king and Spanish mackerel arrive in the Gulf in March and April and furnish sport unequaled in its class in the world; and then in May and June come the tarpon!

Traditionally along the Mangrove Coast the tarpon season opens May 15th. There is no legal season for tarpon. Great schools of the giant silver-sides commence working north from the waters about Panama Bay and the Mosquito Coast early in January and within the month the first of the tarpon are being caught off the

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