

CHAPTER III

CHANGING OUR QUARTERS ON SHIPBOARD

MINDS may differ as to how man came into being on the good ship *Earth*. Some will see in man the last stage of evolution—the end of that great chain beginning with a spot of slime—the first tiny mass of protoplasm—and ending with us. Others will see in him a creature produced by a special creative act of God, and quite unrelated by heredity to his fellow beings in the world of life. It matters little to me. However it may be, this is sure, we have been formed in some way out of the dust of the earth—out of the planking of the decks of the ship on which we voyage.

Here we are! We must live. We must live *together*. We must win our subsistence out of the decks from which we have been formed. Our quarters on the ship must be found somewhere on her broad decks—those portions

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which rise out of the water, and which we call land. How shall we occupy it? What shall be our relations with one another? Shall we fight and quarrel for the best places, and eat one another up, as people have been known to do when cast away on other ships? Or shall we organize and place the matter under regulations? In fact have we not already apportioned among us this great original *Zeppelin* on which we career through space? If so, is the apportionment the best that could be made?

Is it permanent, or shall we—*can* we?—move about, as nations, changing our quarters on the ship—moving fore and aft and from starboard to port? In the nature of things, can any apportionment of the *Earth* among its tenants be permanent? Is there such a principle as right? If so, can it be applied to our earth-tenancy? Do we need to find and apply the principle, if it exists, or will it come into operation automatically—by some force outside ourselves, like the wireless control that guides our ship in her flight?

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Perhaps we shall be able to throw a little dim light on some of these matters. But first, what are the big facts as to our present quarters on the ship?

How many of us are there?

There are between a billion and a half and two billions of us. We are not very evenly distributed over our land-and-water *Zeppelin*. Many things tend to make us gather in dense communities in some places, and to scatter very sparsely in others. First, we are land animals, and the seventy-five per cent. of our good ship *Earth* which is below the water level, we can not inhabit. So we give it over to the amphibians, the fishes and the other swimmers. This must always be so, or at least it must be so until the water of the earth, like that of the moon, has all been absorbed into the body of the planet, and there shall be no more sea. This will sometime come to pass. Whether or not man will survive to see the day no one can with certainty say.

And even as to the solid surface of the ship, we find great areas of deck room upon which

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we can not live. The thing most decisive of this is temperature. Life could not appear on earth, until things had cooled down to the liquid point of water from its condition of steam. And life must first have appeared in the then coolest parts of the globe. These coolest spots were and are the poles; and at the poles—or one of them—life doubtless first came into being. Perhaps the first nations of men lived, and fought, and struggled with these problems, at the poles. Instead of being the discoverer of the pole, Peary merely returned to the ancient home of the race.

But the poles are now too cold for successful human life. So are the polar regions, reaching down a third of the way or more to the lands which lie amidships. Sometime, these arctic regions may grow warmer again—we shall speak of that hereafter—but now, man must abandon great portions of his ship's decks to the seal, the bear, the fox and their frost-defying fellows. These regions have cooled off so much as to spoil them as quarters for any very large numbers of passengers.

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So, too, as to the equatorial belt amidships, the temperature has prevented its being the quarters of very dense communities of people. There are some exceptions to this, but on the whole, the torrid zone is too hot for successful human life. The people there are lacking in both numbers and energy.

The best place on the ship is in that strip each side of the equator where it has cooled off to just the right temperature; and here, principally on the north side of the hot belt, the passengers are mostly found quartered. So dependent are the "lords of creation" on the mere matter of heat and cold!

But almost as powerful is the factor of moisture. Where it is too dry, the dead matter of the decks of the good ship *Earth* does not readily fuse into the protean shapes of life. The force which works through that mighty slime called protoplasm, works with water as a tool—and whole continents are in a measure unfitted by lack of moisture for the occupancy of man.

In fact, no limitation is more susceptible to

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accurate computation than the water limit to population. Living beings must take from the soil the matter for their bodies. Plants are the first agents in this, and without plants there could be no animals. The plant is a factory in which raw material for the making of animals is lifted half-way to animalhood. And plants are able to take their food from the soil only as it is dissolved in water. The amount of water required for the support of human life has been made by McGee the basis of a determination of the possibilities of the United States in the matter of population. He shows that the water falling on the land surface of the United States is sufficient to dilute plant food sufficient for the maintenance of the material basis of a thousand millions of people here.

Of course, this determination is subject to all sorts of modifications; but the principle must be admitted, that there is a relation between the water available for plants and the animal life capable of being supported on earth. The life—including human life—must

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be limited by the supply of water for the dilution of mineral plant food. All animal bodies are made up of soil elements dissolved in water. All plants require water to be transpired through their leaves in the process of growth, as well as to be retained in their tissues; and all animals are derived from plants. It is not, therefore, accidental that the word "desert" which really and fundamentally signifies any place which is deserted, has come in English speech to mean a spot or region waterless or poorly supplied with water. Temperature is the first requisite for life; mainly because it is only within a certain range of temperature that water can act as the universal solvent of the raw materials of plants, animals and man.

So man must ever be herded into those places where the tyrant spirits of heat and moisture allow him to live. His quarters on the ship are determined by them.

A third of us are crowded into Southern and Eastern Asia. Fifty millions of us are in the few small islands of Japan, because of the

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moisture and warmth of the climate. Three hundred millions more are in China, and swarms equally numerous are in India and her neighboring hives.

In the continent of Europe, there are well toward four hundred millions of us. And in North America, we have about a hundred millions. These and some islands are the densely populated places. Here are most of the passengers quartered.

No captain has sent men to these quarters, except Captain Necessity and Captain Power. They have fought like beasts for them, and the decks of the ship have run red with blood by reason of migrations of passengers from one part of the deck to another. In past ages these surgings back and forth have been blind and mostly unobserved save by those engaged in the fighting. But lately by reason of the very simple physical fact that we have found out how to put thoughts on paper and multiply the papers by machinery, and also send thoughts along wires in no time at all, and because we have found ways of traveling over

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the watery places on the decks, all these conglomeration of peoples called nations have come to know about one another, and to watch one another; and in some sort of way, to understand one another—though not very well.

And the wise ones among men are wondering how we, in the ages to come, shall occupy this land. They of the crowded spots want to move over into the places which are not crowded. Shall they be permitted to move? Have they the right? Who shall decide?

There are millions of acres of good land which is sparsely settled because of facts aside from its fertility. It was remote from the place in which the race had its first home; or it was in one of those hinterlands from which the old races were barred because they traveled mostly by water; or it was peopled by savages who were kept from multiplying and condemned to perpetual savagery by wars and ignorance of the use of tools; or it was across the ocean from the body of the human race. Now it is known to all men, and needed by millions—yet it is sparsely settled.

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They who abide in the sparser places do not like to have people of other religions, colors and languages coming among them in large numbers. Some nations are more intelligent than others—or think themselves so—and desire to keep out the “inferior races”. All, without exception, think themselves the best people in the world. So the nations stand in their various quarters of the globe, each armed to keep others from intruding, and so divided by color lines, lines of race, religion and language, that the good ship *Earth* is like a captainless vessel, the occupants of which are ready to fly at one another’s throats. And things—some slow, some quick—are happening which make it more and more difficult to keep the crowded nations cooped up where they are. Thus the future lowers dark with problems—and for the first time in world history, the people are wise enough to see the problems.

And to solve them? Perhaps. But if they solve them—they must do it by thinking about them. That is why this is written.