

mizora

a prophecy



Mary E. Bradley Lane

Texto original

Mizora: A Prophecy

A Mss. Found Among the Private Papers
of the Princess Vera Zarovitch

*Being a true and faithful account of her Journey
to the Interior of the Earth, with a careful description of the Country
and its Inhabitants, their Customs, Manners and Government*

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[TOTAL WORDS: 2693]

III

I have been thus explicit in detailing the circumstances of my entrance into the land of Mizora, or, in other words, the interior of the earth, lest some incredulous person might doubt the veracity of this narrative.

It does seem a little astonishing that a woman should have fallen by accident, and without intention or desire, upon a discovery that explorers and scientists had for years searched for in vain. But such was the fact, and, in generosity, I have endeavored to make my accident as serviceable to the world in general, and Science in particular, as I could, by taking observations of the country, its climate and products, and especially its people.

I met with the greatest difficulty in acquiring their language. Accustomed to the harsh dialect of the North, my voice was almost intractable in obtaining their melodious accentuation. It was, therefore, many months before I mastered the difficulty sufficiently to converse without embarrassment, or to make myself clearly understood. The construction of their language was simple and easily understood, and in a short time I was able to read it with ease, and to listen to it with enjoyment. Yet, before this was accomplished, I had mingled among them for months, listening to a musical jargon of conversation, that I could neither participate in, nor understand. All that I could therefore discover about them during this time, was by observation. This soon taught me that I was not in a seminary—in our acceptance of the term—but in a College of Experimental Science. The ladies—girls I had supposed them to be—were, in fact, women and mothers, and had reached an age that with us would be associated with decrepitude, wrinkles and imbecility. They were all practical chemists, and their work was the preparation of food from the elements. No wonder that they possessed the suppleness and bloom of eternal youth, when the earthy matter and impurities that are ever present in our food, were unknown to theirs.

I also discovered that they obtained rain artificially when needed, by discharging vast quantities of electricity in the air. I discovered that they kept no cattle, nor animals of any kind for food or labor. I observed a universal practice of outdoor exercising; the aim seeming to be to develop the greatest capacity of lung or muscle. It was astonishing the amount of air a Mizora lady could draw into her lungs. They called it their brain stimulant, and said that their faculties were more active after such exercise. In my country, a cup of strong coffee, or some other agreeable beverage, is usually taken into the stomach to invigorate or excite the mind.

One thing I remarked as unusual among a people of such cultured taste, and that was the size of the ladies' waists. Of all that I measured not one was less than thirty inches in circumference, and it was rare to meet with one that small. At first I thought a waist that tapered from the arm pits would be an added beauty, if only these ladies would be taught how to acquire it. But I lived long enough among them to look upon a tapering waist as a disgusting deformity. They considered a large waist a mark of beauty, as it gave a greater capacity of lung power; and they laid the greatest stress upon the size and health of the lungs. One little lady, not above five feet in height, I saw draw into her lungs two hundred and twenty-five cubic inches of air, and smile proudly when she accomplished it. I measured five feet and five inches in height, and with the greatest effort I could not make my lungs receive more than two hundred cubic inches of air. In my own country I had been called an unusually robust girl, and knew, by comparison, that I had a much larger and fuller chest than the average among women.

I noticed with greater surprise than anything else had excited in me, the marked absence of men. I wandered about the magnificent building without hindrance or surveillance. There was not a lock or bolt on any door in it. I frequented a vast gallery filled with paintings and statues of women, noble looking, beautiful women, but still—nothing but women. The fact that they were all blondes, singular as it might appear, did not so much impress me. Strangers came and went, but among the multitude of faces I met, I never saw a man's.

In my own country I had been accustomed to regard man as a vital necessity. He occupied all governmental offices, and was the arbitrator of domestic life. It seemed, therefore, impossible to me for a country or government to survive without his assistance and advice. Besides, it was a country over which the heart

of any man must yearn, however insensible he might be to beauty or female loveliness. Wealth was everywhere and abundant. The climate as delightful as the most fastidious could desire. The products of the orchards and gardens surpassed description. Bread came from the laboratory, and not from the soil by the sweat of the brow. Toil was unknown; the toil that we know, menial, degrading and harassing. Science had been the magician that had done away all that. Science, so formidable and austere to our untutored minds, had been gracious to these fair beings and opened the door to nature's most occult secrets. The beauty of those women it is not in my power to describe. The Greeks, in their highest art, never rivalled it, for here was a beauty of mind that no art can represent. They enhanced their physical charms with attractive costumes, often of extreme elegance. They wore gems that flashed a fortune as they passed. The rarest was of a pale rose color, translucent as the clearest water, and of a brilliancy exceeding the finest diamond. Their voices, in song, could only be equaled by a celestial choir. No dryad queen ever floated through the leafy aisles of her forest with more grace than they displayed in every movement. And all this was for feminine eyes alone—and they of the most enchanting loveliness.

Among all the women that I met during my stay in Mizora—comprising a period of fifteen years—I saw not one homely face or ungraceful form. In my own land the voice of flattery had whispered in my ear praises of face and figure, but I felt ill-formed and uncouth beside the perfect symmetry and grace of these lovely beings. Their chief beauty appeared in a mobility of expression. It was the divine fire of Thought that illumined every feature, which, while gazing upon the Aphrodite of Praxitiles, we must think was all that the matchless marble lacked. Emotion passed over their features like ripples over a stream. Their eyes were limpid wells of loveliness, where every impulse of their natures were betrayed without reserve.

"It would be a paradise for man."

I made this observation to myself, and as secretly would I propound the question:

"Why is he not here in lordly possession?"

In my world man was regarded, or he had made himself regarded, as a superior being. He had constituted himself the Government, the Law, Judge, Jury and Executioner. He doled out reward or punishment as his conscience or

judgment dictated. He was active and belligerent always in obtaining and keeping every good thing for himself. He was indispensable. Yet here was a nation of fair, exceedingly fair women doing without him, and practising the arts and sciences far beyond the imagined pale of human knowledge and skill.

Of their progress in science I will give some accounts hereafter.

It is impossible to describe the feeling that took possession of me as months rolled by, and I saw the active employments of a prosperous people move smoothly and quietly along in the absence of masculine intelligence and wisdom. Cut off from all inquiry by my ignorance of their language, the singular absence of the male sex began to prey upon my imagination as a mystery. The more so after visiting a town at some distance, composed exclusively of schools and colleges for the youth of the country. Here I saw hundreds of children—and all of them were girls. Is it to be wondered at that the first inquiry I made, was:

"Where are the men?"

IV

To facilitate my progress in the language of Mizora I was sent to their National College. It was the greatest favor they could have conferred upon me, as it opened to me a wide field of knowledge. Their educational system was a peculiar one, and, as it was the chief interest of the country. I shall describe it before proceeding farther with this narrative.

All institutions for instruction were public, as were, also, the books and other accessories. The State was the beneficent mother who furnished everything, and required of her children only their time and application. Each pupil was compelled to attain a certain degree of excellence that I thought unreasonably high, after which she selected the science or vocation she felt most competent to master, and to that she then devoted herself.

The salaries of teachers were larger than those of any other public position. The Principal of the National College had an income that exceeded any royal one I had ever heard of; but, as education was the paramount interest of Mizora, I was not surprised at it. Their desire was to secure the finest talent for educational purposes, and as the highest honors and emoluments belonged to such a position, it could not be otherwise. To be a teacher in Mizora was to be a person of consequence. They were its aristocracy.

Every State had a free college provided for out of the State funds. In these colleges every department of Science, Art, or Mechanics was furnished with all the facilities for thorough instruction. All the expenses of a pupil, including board, clothing, and the necessary traveling fares, were defrayed by the State. I may here remark that all railroads are owned and controlled by the General Government. The rates of transportation were fixed by law, and were uniform throughout the country.

The National College which I entered belonged to the General Government. Here was taught the highest attainments in the arts and sciences, and all

industries practised in Mizora. It contained the very cream of learning. There the scientist, the philosopher and inventor found the means and appliances for study and investigation. There the artist and sculptor had their finest work, and often their studios. The principals and subordinate teachers and assistants were elected by popular vote. The State Colleges were free to those of another State who might desire to enter them, for Mizora was like one vast family. It was regarded as the duty of every citizen to lend all the aid and encouragement in her power to further the enlightenment of others, wisely knowing the benefits of such would accrue to her own and the general good. The National College was open to all applicants, irrespective of age, the only requirements being a previous training to enter upon so high a plane of mental culture. Every allurements was held out to the people to come and drink at the public fountain where the cup was inviting and the waters sweet. "For," said one of the leading instructors to me, "education is the foundation of our moral elevation, our government, our happiness. Let us relax our efforts, or curtail the means and inducements to become educated, and we relax into ignorance, and end in demoralization. We know the value of free education. It is frequently the case that the greatest minds are of slow development, and manifest in the primary schools no marked ability. They often leave the schools unnoticed; and when time has awakened them to their mental needs, all they have to do is to apply to the college, pass an examination, and be admitted. If not prepared to enter the college, they could again attend the common schools. We realize in its broadest sense the ennobling influence of universal education. The higher the culture of a people, the more secure is their government and happiness. A prosperous people is always an educated one; and the freer the education, the wealthier they become."

The Preceptress of the National College was the leading scientist of the country. Her position was more exalted than any that wealth could have given her. In fact, while wealth had acknowledged advantages, it held a subordinate place in the estimation of the people. I never heard the expression "very wealthy," used as a recommendation of a person. It was always: "She is a fine scholar, or mechanic, or artist, or musician. She excels in landscape gardening, or domestic work. She is a first-class chemist." But never "She is rich."

The idea of a Government assuming the responsibility of education, like a parent securing the interest of its children, was all so new to me; and yet, I

confessed to myself, the system might prove beneficial to other countries than Mizora. In that world, from whence I had so mysteriously emigrated, education was the privilege only of the rich. And in no country, however enlightened, was there a system of education that would reach all. Charitable institutions were restricted, and benefited only a few. My heart beat with enthusiasm when I thought of the mission before me. And then I reflected that the philosophers of my world were but as children in progress compared to these. Still traveling in grooves that had been worn and fixed for posterity by bygone ages of ignorance and narrow-mindedness, it would require courage and resolution, and more eloquence than I possessed, to persuade them out of these trodden paths. To be considered the privileged class was an active characteristic of human nature. Wealth, and the powerful grip upon the people which the organizations of society and governments gave, made it hereditary. Yet in this country, nothing was hereditary but the prosperity and happiness of the whole people.

It was not a surprise to me that astronomy was an unknown science in Mizora, as neither sun, moon, nor stars were visible there. "The moon's pale beams" never afford material for a blank line in poetry; neither do scientific discussions rage on the formation of Saturn's rings, or the spots on the sun. They knew they occupied a hollow sphere, bounded North and South by impassible oceans. Light was a property of the atmosphere. A circle of burning mist shot forth long streamers of light from the North, and a similar phenomena occurred in the South.

The recitation of my geography lesson would have astonished a pupil from the outer world. They taught that a powerful current of electricity existed in the upper regions of the atmosphere. It was the origin of their atmospheric heat and light, and their change of seasons. The latter appeared to me to coincide with those of the Arctic zone, in one particular. The light of the sun during the Arctic summer is reflected by the atmosphere, and produces that mellow, golden, rapturous light that hangs like a veil of enchantment over the land of Mizora for six months in the year. It was followed by six months of the shifting iridescence of the Aurora Borealis.

As the display of the Aurora Borealis originated, and was most brilliant at what appeared to me to be the terminus of the pole, I believed it was caused by the meeting at that point of the two great electric currents of the earth, the one on its surface, and the one known to the inhabitants of Mizora. The heat produced

by the meeting of two such powerful currents of electricity is, undoubtedly, the cause of the open Polar Sea. As the point of meeting is below the vision of the inhabitants of the Arctic regions, they see only the reflection of the Aurora. Its gorgeous, brilliant, indescribable splendor is known only to the inhabitants of Mizora.