

Pellucidar Lost: Or the Decline and Fall of the Inner-World Empire of David Innes.

In *Tarzan Alive* Phillip Jose Farmer traces Tarzan's life from his birth in 1888 to 1946, and he ends his chronology of the ape man with a question mark. The book's final chapter traces Tarzan's life in the early fifties when a series of disillusionments occurred. The Mau Mau uprising in Kenya (1952-1956), post-colonial Africa in general, and the contradictions of his eternal youth made it harder and harder for Tarzan to continue as the Big Bwana. The wilds of his youth were disappearing rapidly and the last of the Mangani were dying. The Oparians were extinct and their city in danger of discovery and destruction. We know from *Time's Last Gift* that Tarzan would go on to fund a time-travel expedition and move to 12,000 BC to become the ultimate founder of the Wold-Newton universe and the Oparian archer god, Sakhindar. He survived on Earth until 2140 when he and Jane boarded a star ship to lead the first interplanetary expedition outside the solar system.

What happened to Tarzan between 1946 and the early fifties?

We know part of the story. In *Tarzan: The Lost Adventure*, Joe Lansdale, working from Burroughs' last manuscript, shows that Tarzan disappeared into the bowels of the Earth, abandoning Jane and the civilized world for Pellucidar where "his kind were timeless and forever king" (Lansdale 257). If Pellucidar were the cure for his homesickness for the savage life, why did he return to the surface after just a few years? If he returned for Jane, why not take his wife back to the inner world?

The answer lies in what he found in Pellucidar. Although what follows is supposition and is not based on a Wold-Newton informant or source, the events put forward seem highly plausible. Tarzan found David Innes, but not the one he had left at the Earth's core years before. The final inner Earth novel, *Savage Pellucidar*, ends with David Innes in peaceful command of his empire and Abner Perry beginning work on a submarine. It seems reasonable to suppose that things in the empire continued on in a similar way for a while, but they never really advanced the way Innes and Perry wanted them to.

The idea of education and college showed some promise initially, but the majority of the people just never took to it. *Pellucidar* ends with one naked native hunched over a book, which Innes sees as the nucleus around which to build a great system of schools and colleges. But the Pellucidarians were never given to hard study or delayed gratification. The regular people couldn't figure out why they needed to learn stuff they had always existed without, and there was resistance--as there was in ancient Greece--to moving from an oral to a literate culture. In general the resistance to Innes' idea came from the Pellucidarians' lack of the idea of progress, which requires a concept of the passage of time and of positive change. The only change that occurs in their lives that is worth remarking on is death, so naturally they view change in a negative way. Whenever David tried to explain progress to them, they viewed it as change, which they equated with death. David never had a deep

understanding of where his beliefs came from, having been a dilettante at college, and so was not able to explain things well.

Problems would have occurred all at once and compounded each other. First of all there must have been cave-ins at the coal mines. For several years Perry had directed the mining of coal, but it was all near the surface. When they had to dig deeper tunnels, Perry would have tried to accomplish this digging in his trial-and-error method, supplemented by the books Innes had retrieved from the outside world. It didn't work, as can be seen by looking at Perry's lack of initial success with every other invention.

If there were several cave-ins in a short period, each would have made the others worse. The Pellucidarians would have refused to go down in the ground after only a few mine disasters. We must remember that they had never experienced any time in the dark and were frightened by it. The Pellucidarians must have been hesitant to go into the mines in the first place. In Pellucidarian religion the ground is viewed as the path to the underworld of Melop Az, the Sea of Fire. Even the dead are not buried for fear that demons will seize them and take them to the Melop Az.

They would have refused to continue mining coal after a few such disasters. Innes and Perry would not have been able to get more miners to go down into the mines. If Innes attempted to order the army to force the miners back to work, the army would have deserted him. Pellucidarians did not force each other to do things, as they were organized more along the lines of the Native Americans than the Europeans.¹ The kings Innes established would not have been willing or able to order their fellow citizens down into the mines. In fact, the whole idea of kingship would have frayed by this time. Innes instituted this idea of monarchy and nobility, which the Pellucidarians adapted. The chiefs Innes made into kings would have only regarded their kingship as Innes' interpretation of their chieftainship, not along Innes' vision of absolute sovereignty. As Europeans had when dealing with Native Americans, David tended to pick war chiefs or political chiefs (chiefs who engaged in diplomacy between tribes or who mediated political disputes within the tribe). These chiefs would never considered themselves to be in authority over others. Some tribes were ruled by strong men in a manner similar to the kingship Innes envisioned, but these were small tribes. Most tribes operated on the non-coercive system the Native Americans developed.

Without volunteers, Innes would have no miners. Innes would have had no prisoners or slave he could force into the mines, having taken the policy position of returning prisoners of war and of outlawing slavery. He also had no convicts, death or banishment being the only two criminal penalties. Industrial production would have ceased. While some people would have left the city for their tribal homes after the mining cave-ins, most people probably would have stayed, due to their confidence in Innes and Perry. But this confidence would have been sorely tested.

Shortly after the breakdown of the mines, there was likely a cholera epidemic. Perry had been pretty lucky with his civil engineering, but cholera would probably have broken out. Perry's trial and error method of construction

would have very likely led to a mixing of waste water, run off, and drinking water as was common in cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Cholera would have been only one of many diseases. Epidemics tend to weaken a population's immune system and make them vulnerable to other diseases. As so often happens in life, things seemed to hit a critical mass and all go wrong at once.

Slightly before the cholera outbreak, there was probably a rash of venereal diseases. Because people didn't live together in marriage any longer than they were happy (i.e. there was no social pressure for long-lasting monogamy), there was no system for divorce. In the small villages all Pellucidarians had lived in previously, sexual promiscuity was kept in check by the small number of available mates outside the taboo group of family members. In the city, though, many more possible mates existed and people slept with anyone they wanted to without worrying about the consequences. So there was also a rash of fatherless children--ones whose fathers would not admit paternity of and would not support (normally children would follow remain with their mother and move in with their mother's new partner). Eventually VD would have developed, probably including a variant of AIDS given the closeness to the jungle and the wide variety of primates the Pellucidarians come in contact with. Given the time frame from the building of the first city in the 1890s and the last recorded contact in the early 1940s, there would have been just the right incubation period for a pandemic of sexually-transmitted diseases. If cholera hit in the midst of these outbreaks and some version of AIDS became full blown at the same time, then tuberculosis, flu, and other highly communicable diseases would have spread too.

Innes' city would have disintegrated as Pellucidarians lost faith in Perry and Innes. People would have fled back to their tribes and the city would have become a ghost town with only Innes, Dian, Perry, and a few loyal retainers remaining. Perry probably would have died in the pandemics because of his advanced age and because he would have been out fighting the diseases.

David might have contacted the Barsoomians via the Gridley Wave in the hopes of getting some help from the technologically-advanced red men. But the Barsoomians could not have been of much help. They had no civil engineers, their cities all having been built millennia ago by another civilization. Their disease pool was stable because of the world-wide similarity of culture, and the lack of mammals to share diseases with. So they really would not have the medical knowledge to help as none of their medical personnel would have much knowledge of emerging diseases or outbreaks. Besides which, they have completely different diseases on Barsoom. John Carter did not bring any terrestrial diseases with him because his body stayed on Earth.

Dian probably died about the same time as Perry, maybe a little later, as part of the pandemic. Likely Innes became increasingly bitter and withdrawn. His great plans had come to naught and he could not return to the surface. He had lost contact with the outer world and a trip back into the river of time would mean his death in any case.² This is the Innes that Tarzan would have encountered. Very likely the strain of dealing with the pile of disasters and the death of his dream would have aged him quickly, or at least his true age would

have shown. Innes was born in about 1883, so he would have been in his late sixties when Tarzan found him

Tarzan would have been disgusted by what Innes' civilization had wrought in Pellucidar. The city would have become the city of the dead and largely taboo. Most of the country of Sari was wiped out as it took the brunt of the pandemic. Tarzan would not have been interested in helping Innes rebuild and he would have left Innes to live out his remaining years alone. Innes probably never recovered. When Dr. Chris West teleported to Pellucidar in 1970, as recounted by John Eric Holmes in *Mahars of Pellucidar*, no trace of the Innes empire exists. While Pellucidar is a vast world and West could have ended up far away from Sari, it is telling that Innes never comes up in the whole West 's adventures. It seems likely that the Mahars recaptured the territory they had lost to Innes and returned to the ruling status they held before the surface man appeared in their world.

Tarzan's disenchantment at finding a Pellucidar infected with the worst of civilization might well have caused him to seek a savage home as far from the modern world as possible. He sought it in the past.

1. In fact, it seems likely that the Pellucidarians are the ancestors of the Native Americans. Native American origin stories often focus on an emergence place where the ancient tribe came out of the ground. The Bering-Strait theory has been used to refute this mythology, but an inner-world origin would explain both the Native American creation stories and the Pellucidarians resemblance to the Indians.

2. The last chapter of the final Pellucidar novel, *Savage Pellucidar*, was published in magazine form in 1942. These events had to have occurred before 1942 for Burroughs to get his notes from Innes and write them up into story form. Innes and Perry had evidently lost contact with the outer world, as can be seen in their confusion over what year the events of *Savage Pellucidar* took place. David Innes meets an old man, called Dolly Dorcas (renamed Ah Gilak, or "Old Man"), whose age is determined to be 153 years, based on his coming to Pellucidar at about age 40. Innes and Abner Perry have figured his age wrong, since the last president he voted for, John Tyler (1841-1845), was elected in 1840. Dorcas would have had to have been born circa 1795-1800 to have voted for Tyler and left for Pellucidar at age 40. If he were 153, the novel would have been set in 1947-1953, which it clearly was not. Another piece of evidence demonstrating Innes and Perry's confusion over dates can be seen in the time span given by Dorcas. Dorcas names a ship the "John Tyler" after the president he claims to have voted for 118 years ago, which would place the date of the novel in 1958. This date confusion speaks to the confusion that Innes and Perry suffered in trying to keep track of time in a place where time did not seem to pass. It also speaks to Innes' isolation from the outside world. He had contact with Jason Gridley at earlier points, but this contact had evidently eroded as Gridley would have likely kept him posted on the correct year. Gridley married and perhaps domestic life took him away from interest in the Gridley wave and things adventurous.