

MADNESS AND DEATH ADD TO THE MYSTERY OF KORESH'S TOMB

Men Meet Strange Fate

Trying to Ascertain If This Alleged Messiah Has Risen From the Dead as He Promised.

ONE of the most singular dramas this country has seen for a long time is being enacted in a small community in Southern Florida. It deserves to be closely watched, for it involves curious problems of human nature. Notice of it was given to the world in a small press dispatch this week, which said briefly that the Koreshean colony at Estero, Fla., was awaiting the rising from the dead of their leader, Koresh, who died two years ago, and that two men attempting to unseal the grave, had lost their reason.

Sufficiently singular was this dispatch, and singular is the story behind it. Koresh was known "in the world" as Cyrus R. Teed of New York State, the founder of a religious colony. Koresh was the incarnation of the divinity, sinless and all-knowing. He could not, therefore, die. His body would be changed by what we call death, but it would rise again, transfigured and glorified, to inaugurate the rule of heaven on earth. This is what the Koresheans, his followers, believed, because he told them so, and they believed all the perfect one said. So when he died (as we say in mortal parlance) they waited for him to come from the grave.

The story of Dr. Teed's death and of what befell while ten thousand faithful waited, in suspense and gloom, for the Messiah to prove his truth and come forth, is told by Harry D. Silverfriend, Vice-President of the Koreshean University of the United States. Dr. Teed died, Mr. Silverfriend says, from a disease caused by a blow on the head received some two years before during a riot at Fort Myers, Fla. The death occurred Dec. 22, 1908.

"I watched his body," said Silverfriend to a Times representative in Bristol, Tenn., where Koreshean interests took him. "during the week that he lay unburied, and I was sure that I observed the expected transformation in progress through the change of color in our Messiah's wrists. I, and others, observed strong passions of the body. Some of our party doubted if Dr. Teed was dead. Our local physician declared positively he was not dead but only in a coma. We sent to Chicago for a physician, who declared that our Messiah was really dead.

"After days of suspense and waiting we decided to bury the body, not at Estero but on Estero Island, in the Gulf. We placed the body in a zinc box in which he took his baths. This was in the form of a coffin, with handles on the sides. It was made at his direction and he had ordered that when he died it should be his coffin.

"The tomb was of concrete. It was built in a prophetic manner. Some concrete blocks had been brought to the island on another purpose, and one day the Messiah said to W. Ross Wallace, who had charge of the concrete work for the Unity:

"Ross, I guess I will have you build me a house."

"What kind of a house shall I build?" asked Ross.

"A house with one room," responded the Messiah.

"The tomb was made for Dr. Teed was built out of these same blocks of concrete and there, in the presence of hundreds of our faith, we buried our Messiah and hermetically sealed the tomb. Hundreds of believers came to Estero to await the resurrection.

The loss of our Messiah left us in the deepest gloom. A strange spirit came over the Unity. Three factions were formed. One that Dr. Teed was dead and would never rise again. Another took the view that Teed had failed in his estimate of himself as the Messiah. The third faction believed he would fulfill all he said and rise glorified. They believed the tomb was like his alchemic laboratory and that he was transforming his mortality into immortality. When his corruptible body had become incorruptible they held that he would come forth and establish his kingdom of heaven on earth.

"The strain of waiting was very great and many of our faith became utterly hopeless. At length Emil Fisher, a German member of the Unity, believed that since two years had elapsed since the death of Teed and nothing had come as a revelation from him, it would be right to look into the tomb. He felt that we had been too long hoping against hope that Dr. Teed would break through the concrete tomb and show himself in the splendor of a Christ resurrected.

"Fisher went to the island and approached the tomb. He had no sooner laid hands on it than he swooned and fell. Several persons had accompanied him at a distance. When they hastened toward him he rose and came at them, a raving maniac. It was necessary to bind him.

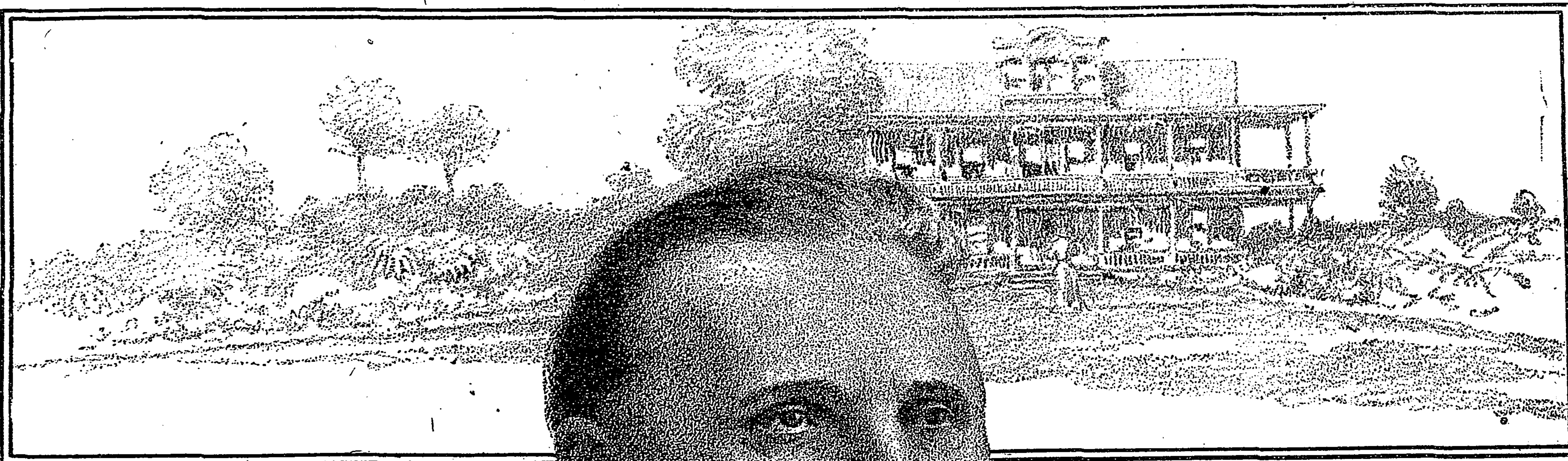
"We hurried him to Jacksonville in charge of the Sheriff of Lee County, but when they were preparing to leave Jacksonville for the asylum at Chateauponce, Fisher fell in a fit and died in agony.

"Prof. George Hussay, instructor to the colony, was not dismayed at Fisher's death, and determined to go to the tomb also. Hussay was a man of great intelligence and high education. He came from Oklahoma.

"Prof. Hussay wished to know if any change was taking place in the body of the Messiah, and he went to the island and began to unseal the tomb. He, too, was stricken with madness. We were able to get him as far as the asylum, but he had hardly been admitted before he died.

"The faith of the Unity was then largely restored by these manifestations. Everything about the tomb, too, has been marveled. For instance, the Koresh held himself to be a reincarnation of Cyru the Great. His tomb, we find, exactly resembles that of Cyru, only it is built of concrete instead of marble. And though the concrete blocks were not ordered for the tomb the number was just sufficient as if it had been previously planned.

"The strange spirit that came over our people following the death of Dr. Teed is due as we hold to obsession—that is possession by evil spirits. The insanity of Hussay and Fisher we construe as nothing more than this possession of them by evil spirits and their subsequent death was but the promise of destruction which these spirits set out to accomplish because these men had transgressed their faith and lost evidence in the power of the Messiah to rise from the dead.



Planetary Court, Home of "Koresh."

"Those of our faith who consider themselves faithful to the teachings of Dr. Teed, took his last words, 'Watch my body,' as a command and for a long time they watched the tomb with patience and care, but since the destruction of Hussay and Fisher by evil spirits, the guard has been removed from the tomb, as the faithful Koresheans hold that the evil spirits will consume any who may venture to disturb the tomb. And nearly every one believes that in due time the tomb will open of itself and that Dr. Teed will come forth and do what he taught he would.

"The deaths of Hussay and Fisher and the circumstances attending their passing will not only have the effect of preventing the tomb from further disturbances but will awaken the conscience of the entire Koreshean membership to a stronger faith and belief in the dead Messiah, who, even if he does not rise now, will at least be the first of the multiplied millions to be resurrected.

"And I believe that out of the consuming agony which ended the lives of Hussay and Fisher will come a new condition of faith among all of his people, transforming their almost two years of despairing gloom into the radiance of a new dawn, and that the day is not distant when the superiority of the Koreshean faith will have been established among a very large number of the American people."

Nothing could well be more extraordinary than the story Silverfriend tells so simply, yet it is in keeping with what is known of the strange sect of the Koresheans, and of Koresh the "Messiah." A more singular combination of sense and fantasy has not been shown since Joseph Smith "dug up" his tablets and made himself the leader of the Mormons.

The Koresheans also have a prosperous colony on the co-operative plan in Florida and are blessed with this world's goods, believe not only in the transmutation of metals, but in the change of matter into spirit, and hold that instead of living on the outside of a globe we are really on the inside. The world is concave, not convex.

Cyrus Teed, ("Koresh" is Hebrew for Cyru) was naturally a remarkable man; none other could have founded so strange a cult. Physically there was not much to note about him, until he began to speak. He was undersized and clean shaven; he might at first glance have been taken for any one of an innumerable multitude of mild-mannered clergy. But when his small dark eyes began to shine

as he talked, when he fixed his audience with an almost hypnotic stare, then it became evident that here was a man marked out from the common herd.

His power over people was enormous. It is told of him that once in California he rose to speak before an assembly not more than moderately well disposed toward him and his ideas, and that in the course of an hour he had collected from them no less than \$60,000. Among his followers he became the prophet. He got an audience and he started a paper setting forth his wonderful discoveries. People, mostly women, believed in him, and went to live in his "heaven." He moved a little way out of the city, and had quite an establishment, a large house for himself and seven cottages for the angelic host that followed him, to the number, then, of several hundred.

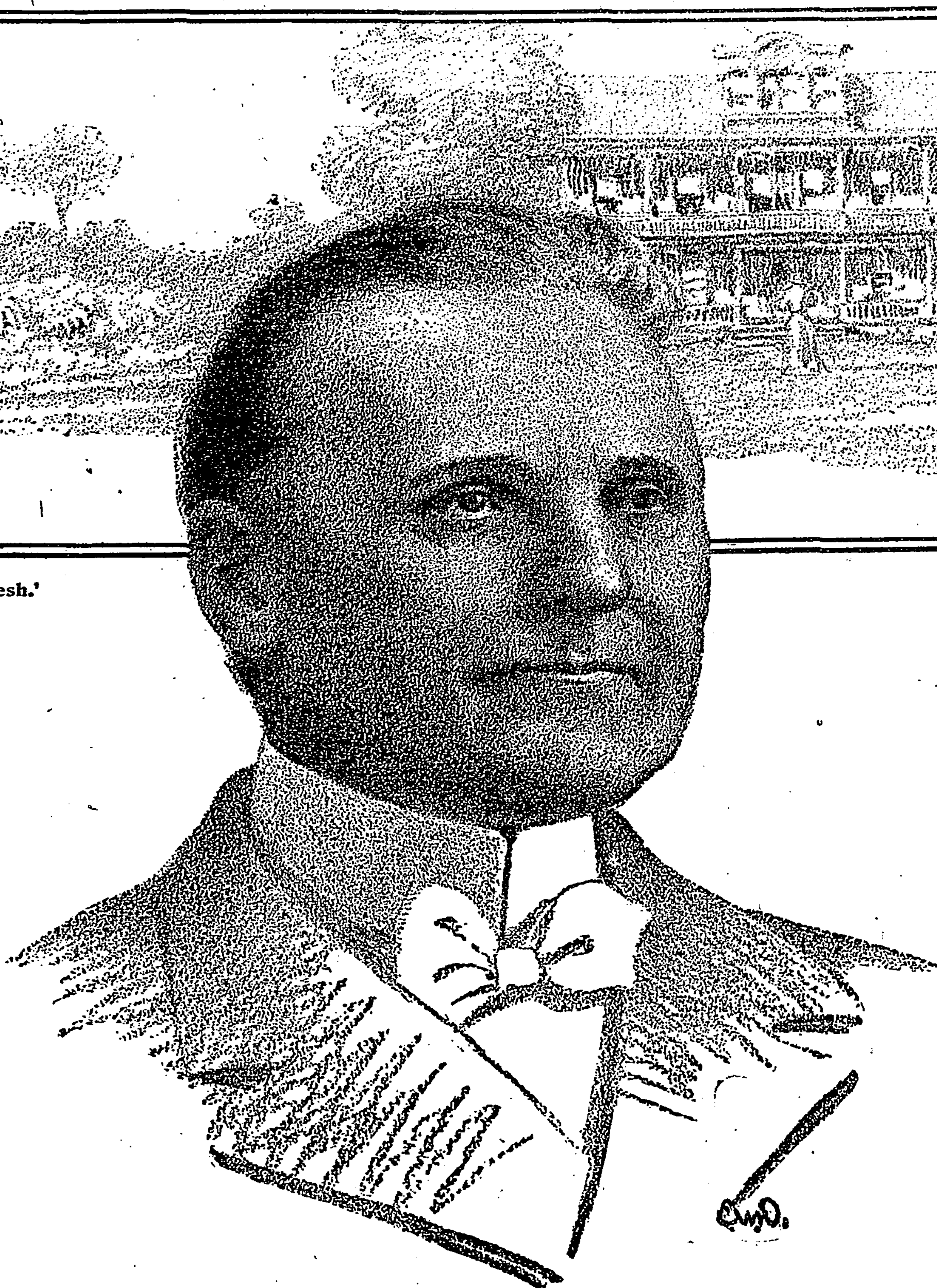
A wealthy German left him a tract of land in Florida, and somehow he became possessed of more land in Bristol, Tenn. Money was plentiful in "heaven" those

days. The Koresheans established a wood-working plant on the Bristol property and conducted their affairs with a marked degree of worldly wisdom.

At the time of the death of Koresh the colony was negotiating to obtain concessions from the Government of Honduras and build up a business in rubber, turpentine, and cattle raising. The 300 acres left to the sect by their German fellow grew quickly to 1,000, and the Koresheans were not slow to see the possibilities of trade that would come with the opening of the Panama Canal. Large projects were on foot for the building of a city with extensive wharves and every convenience for the great trade that seemed bound to come that way.

So, wandering from the north to the middle south and then to the very end of the country, the Koresheans prospered materially, and, they said, morally. They were sure that the golden age was at hand, and they had anticipated its revelations.

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"Koresh"—Cyrus R. Teed.

Their ideas were held by them to be simplicity itself. To the outsider they seem at times rather opaque, but the main beliefs stand out clearly enough.

To begin with, there was the doctrine of the transmutations of minerals. That, said Cyrus the Koresh, was the foundation of everything. He did not explain just how he conducted the experiments that turned one metal into another with such ease and gave him the great idea that matter might be changed into spirit, but he convinced his followers that he had done it and could do it at any time. Probably so mighty a secret could be trusted only to the stainless one. In his own words he describes his wonderful discovery as follows:

"In 1870, while pursuing a chemical and electrical investigation in my laboratory, I made the discovery, probably aided by research and study in my profession, of the law of transmutation, a law underlying all chemical processes, by which elements entering into chemical combinations were interconvertible—gold could be changed into silver, mercury into copper, and so on. I further discovered that the basis of what has been denominated chemistry is not chemistry but alchemy, the mystical science of old.

"I discovered through repeated investigations that any atom of matter could be converted into corresponding energy, as zinc into zinc essence of zinc electricity, and by dint of the correlation of matter, gold into gold electricity, copper matter, gold into gold electricity, copper into copper electricity, &c., a process well known in alchemy. By submitting myself to tests of different kinds of electricity I could distinguish them, even when blindfolded, by the taste of the current, could tell whether it was gold electricity or silver electricity, and so forth.

"I recognized this law of transmutation and its correlation with the law of energy as a scientific fact, and I found that matter could be transmuted into energy and energy into spirit. This important new truth became the basis of my whole system, religious, scientific, and sociological. And the law of transmutation is what will produce a new race of men."

"Now, as a corollary to this, he established celibacy as the ideal order for men and women, with marriage permitted only to the very unspiritual. By conserving all possible bodily energy there would be left just so much more to turn into spirit. Incidentally it is curious to note that this man, blundering about with test tubes and what not, brought out his doctrine just a little before the great discoveries connected with radium that went to show that some form of transmutation

A Curious Religion Founded by an Extraordinary Man Again Comes Into Limelight Through Uncanny Happenings.

might soon be an accomplished fact. He only repeated the guesses of men through many centuries, but he repeated them at a singularly lucky moment, and he did so by reason of this good fortune acquired much merit in his followers' eyes.

Next Koresh formulated his famous doctrine that we are living not on a convex but on a concave surface. The earth is a globe, truly, but we are on the inside of the sphere.

The earth is only a shell, but a solid body. In the centre of this shell, exactly four thousand miles away, the sun, a luminous and half-solidified body, is set in the midst of ether.

As to the universe, there is none. The world and the sun are the only bodies that exist. The stars are mere optical illusions. They are really mere apocopes of light, reflected in the ether. This earth and man exist alone. Here only are all the purposes of creation wrought out.

In this case the "scientific" arguments are given. Koresheans did put forth such a doctrine without experiment. They used an instrument known as the rectilinearizer and set up a stake perpendicularly. From this stake they extended a "perfectly horizontal" line, and behold, the line struck the earth at a distance of four and a half miles. They admit, therefore, that the earth curves, only it curves upward. The fact that balloonists say they see the earth curving up like a cup is brought forward in support of this theory.

A writer on Koreshean cosmogony remarks, apropos of his doctrine: "After the wearisome and futile stretch of the imagination that was necessary in grappling with the old system this explanation is restful from its very definiteness." Certainly it is definite enough, and simple. Also the fact that the earth is stationary is restful. There is no belittling sense of mystery in the Koreshean cosmogony.

There may be more worlds some day, apparently, for Koresh applies to this globe the principles of the cellular development of life. All life is being formed here, just as organic life has its beginning in a cell. Koresh does not explain exactly what will happen, but presumably, just as cells in the body give birth to other cells, so will this world give birth to other worlds.

It will be remembered that when Huck Finn and Jim were on their raft, making their important journey down the Mississippi, they speculated on the origin of the stars, and Jim said "He 'loved the moon laid 'em." This simple explanation is in line with the Koreshean theory.

Another fact that guided Koresh in his formulation of the new religion is that Arlos in the physical heaven was passing out of the constellation Pleiades into Aquarius. In case the importance of this is not at once seen it should be stated that whenever this occurs there is battle, murder, and sudden death on the earth. It means a great revolution.

Two thousand years ago this change in the position of Arlos occurred, and the world saw the fall of the Roman Empire and the old religion. Similarly there is to be a change now. The old order, social and religious, is passing, and on its ruins will be built the heavenly kingdom of Koresh.

The rule of Koresh, it must be known, does not stop at a change of religious thought. Dr. Teed had small admiration for the social order and denounced it in good, strong terms. "The people have not yet been deprived of their constitutional liberties," he declared, "so far as the franchise is concerned, but beyond that they have lost their industrial, commercial, and executive powers through the machinations of the commercial pirates, who fortify themselves behind the iron-trenchments of predatory and accumulated wealth. If we are under the heel of a monopolistic oligarchy we have no one to blame for it but ourselves, for we live under and endorse a competitive system, which enriches the unscrupulous through that commercial superiority whose brilliancy and dishonesty combined enables the exploiters of industry to apply its proceeds to self-aggrandisement and encourages what all honest men denounce, engendering class hatred, which must ultimately reach its climax in its own overthrow."

Koresh paid his respects to Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Roosevelt, coupling them together as National Sloggers. They are "the two best living exponents of the competitive system; the one on the throne behind the throne, the other attempting to sway the balance of power between the classes and the masses. Both believe in the competitive system because they know no other."

In the Koreshean colony at Estero there was community of interests. It was a co-operative organization, and it worked, apparently, very well. Koresh, however, was not democratic in all respects. He was perhaps more of a benevolent despot than anything else.

He provided well for the material needs of his followers, and did not make the mistake of binding them with blue laws. He believed in the theatre, and said it would be the pulp of the future. He encouraged the colonists to give plays, and allowed them to dramatize Bible subjects for their religious instruction.

Altogether Koresh Teed was a shrewd and able person. He availed himself of the social unrest and of popular interest in science. Men of learning had discovered so many things that were startling and revolutionary that it was not hard for him, dealing with people of small education, to go a step further and be believed. Then the man who makes life easy for you always has a chance of making you believe anything, and he did well by his colonists.

How long will their belief last? How long will they await his rising from the dead?

It is an intensely interesting situation from the point of view of psychology. Will they believe him to have risen, unseen, and have gone about his business of regenerating the world in parts which never heard his gospel, or will they conclude that he will come again when he is needed, just as King Arthur and Barabbas sit patiently awaiting the day of their country's disaster, when they will come again and save?

A few scientists should go down to Estero, study this singular situation, and report to the world on the working of that strangest of all things, the human mind.