

## A FRIGHT IN MIDAIR

Going Up in a Balloon and Coming Down in a Parachute.

### THE AGONY OF A FIRST TRIP

Experience and Sensations of an Acrobat Who Took the Place of a Professional Aeronaut in an Emergency. The Dash Through Space.

I once went up in a balloon and came down in a parachute. Something went wrong, and all the money in the world doubled would not induce me to make the experiment again.

One grows strangely accustomed to dangers as an acrobat, and when it was suggested that I should earn \$25 in as many minutes by taking the place of a parachutist who had fallen ill at the last minute I jumped at the chance.

It was at a large country fair. The laughing crowd had probably never seen a balloon go up. As the great silk bag gradually swelled a silence fell upon the onlookers.

The sick parachutist's manager patted me on the back and said it was money easily earned. I agreed—then.

"Keep cool," he said, "and whatever you do, don't look down except to judge your distance from the earth. You see that tower? It is about a thousand yards away. When you are that distance up pull the check string and shut your eyes."

A dull murmur rose as the ropes were cast off and I felt my feet leave the ground. The upward movement was gentle, and a great cheer came up to me until the band drowned it.

I hardly heard the cheering or the band. The involuntary murmur still rang in my ears. Perhaps my nerves were upset, possibly it was intuition, but from the moment I was drawn up from the ground I felt the conviction that grim trouble lay ahead.

Ignoring the oft repeated instructions, I looked down. How slowly the balloon went up! Could it be possible that I had not gone more than a hundred yards? The giant overhead became a living thing, intent on torturing the puny mortal who had trusted his life to it. I knew I dared not leap before I was high enough, for the parachute takes 100 feet sometimes to open.

I shut my eyes and tried to count to kill time, but the figures became jumbled, and I looked down again. A swallow skimmed past underneath. Far below there was a sea of upturned faces, and the music floated up distinctly. The balloon seemed to have stopped rising, and for an eternity I tried to gauge the height.

Again the band stopped, and I was in a silent world. The crowd of breathless specks far beneath was getting full value for its money. The only noise I heard was the beating of the blood through my head. I was afraid. It was the first real fear I had ever felt in my work.

When the supreme moment came I pulled the string without realizing what I was doing. What years I lived in those next few seconds. An appalling nausea and a wild desire to live came with the first terrible rush, and my heart stood still as I looked eagerly aloft. The ropes of the parachute had twisted, and I was falling to instant death.

Grasping the ropes in a clutch of steel, I shook them frantically. Half the huge parachute belled out with a noise like a pistol shot, and the speed of the fall was lessened with a jar.

Again I shook the death trap. The ropes were sliding at a snail's pace, and bit by bit the parachute was opening. Still I fell far too fast. I could not breathe, and my hands seemed to be refusing to hold on.

Bang! The last fold had opened out, and I was saved. Dizzy and numb with fear, I held on tightly, wondering whether I should faint before I touched the ground. That, and that only, was my thought as I sailed through the space. I had almost lost consciousness when my feet touched the ground gently. And then I collapsed.—Buffalo Times.

#### A Drawback.

"My" exclaimed little Billy as he gazed at the lithograph. "I'd like to be a giraffe. Just think how easily you could 'rubber' over the baseball fence."

"That's all right," replied Tommy, "but there is another time when you wouldn't want to have a neck like a giraffe."

"When is that?"

"Why, in the mornings when your ma begins to scrub your neck with soap and water."—Chicago News.

#### Objectionable.

"I don't see why Goodley should be so unpopular with you all. He never speaks ill of any one."

"No, but he's one of those very smug fellows who can say 'Oh, yes, Jones seemed very happy when I saw him last,' and say it in such a way as to give the impression that Jones was horribly drunk."—Philadelphia Press.

#### A Spoiled Compliment.

Little Elmer—Mamma says you are a duck of a doctor. Pompous M. D. (greatly pleased)—Indeed! How did she come to say that? Little Elmer—Oh, she didn't say it just that way, but I heard her tell papa you were a quack.—Chicago News.

Ruskin's injunction to his servants: "Call me from my study whenever there is a beautiful sunset or any unusual appearance in the sky or landscape."

## THE PYGMY EARTH.

Vast Dimensions of the Sun as Compared With the World.

A dime held at arm's length from the eye will much more than cover the entire disk of the sun. If it were placed at the exact point of coincidence and its diameter and distance from the eye accurately measured, it might be used as a means of determining the sun's diameter, his distance being known. The foremost philosophers of long ago would have been appalled at the true statement of both the sun's distance and its size.

The sun's diameter is about 866,000 miles. It is bewildering to be assured that it would take 1,300,000 earths to equal the sun in volume. If the interior of that truly gigantic globe were hollow and the earth were placed at its center with the moon revolving about it at its usual mean distance of nearly 240,000 miles, there would still exist a vacuity between the moon and the inclosing shell of the sun of nearly 200,000 miles. This is perhaps the most graphic and impressive illustration possible of the sun's colossal bulk. We must note, however, that the density of the sun is only about one-quarter that of the earth, so that it would weigh only as much as 330,000 earths in very round numbers the sun's weight may be stated at two octillion tons, which if expressed in figures would require almost as many ciphers as a newspaper line can accommodate.

A very comprehensive illustration of the pygmean dimensions of the earth as compared with the sun is to represent the latter by a globe two feet in diameter and the earth by a dainty pea. And yet the little pea weighs more than six quintillion tons. As to the solar surface, it is some 12,000 times that of our planet. Yet the sun when compared with its true peers, the stars, is not only of extraordinary size, but in all probability is only to be ranked among the medium self-luminous bodies which sparkle in "heaven's ebon vault." And because of its spottedness it has a place, although a humble one, among the "variable" stars.

## FATE AND A NAME.

John, When Borne by Royalty, Seems Linked With Misfortune.

It is interesting and somewhat curious to note the persistence with which misfortune has dogged the name of "John" when borne by royal persons, although no ill omen seems to attach to it in the case of ordinary citizens.

For instance, King John of England has always been regarded, whether altogether justly or not, as a most infamous prince. John of France was taken captive by the Black Prince, and John Balliol of Scotland was most thoroughly despised by his countrymen on account of his fawning attitude toward the English. Robert III. of Scotland changed his name from John, but this did not save him from his destiny. He himself was a cripple and died of a broken heart, the most tragic fates having overtaken all most dear to him.

John I. of Bohemia was blind. The Pope John I. was imprisoned by the king of the Goths, and Pope John X. was driven from Rome by the Duke of Tuscany. Pope John XI. was imprisoned by his brother and is supposed to have been poisoned, a fate similar to that of Pope John XIV. Pope John XV. was forced to flee from Rome and died of fever in Tuscany. John XVI. dubbed the "antipope," after a troubled career, was brutally tortured and consigned to a dungeon for the brief remainder of his life.

John I. of Constantinople was poisoned; John II. was killed while hunting wild boar, and John III. was dethroned, his eyes put out and left to die in prison. John I. of Castile was killed by a fall from his horse.

This is not by any means a complete list of the unlucky Johns, but it serves to show the fatality which seems to cling about the name in so far as royalty is concerned.—Chicago Record-Herald.

#### Dough.

Dough is made out of wheat, real estate, oil, literature and magazine articles. But dough made of wheat is no stickier than any other. Dough is the prior fact to bread, motor cars, steam yachts and collections of old books. It is the staff of high life. It imbitters matrimony and purveys the lovely scandals we read about. It gets girls sent off to college and fitted to be something more spectacular than mere wives and mothers. It curses them that go in for it, but not unto the third and fourth generations. We are too good spenders for that. It is from dough that the dowdy, the dull and the dotty derive distinction otherwise denied.—Puck.

#### An Orkney Prayer.

The brevity of the Orkney summer precluding the raising of hardly anything except oats ("alts") and barley, the elders had requested the minister to pray for good harvest weather. He complied as follows: "Lord, gie us braw weather and a wee bit saugh of a breeze that will dree the straw and will nae harm the heads, but if ye blaw us sic a bietherin', rivin', tearin' blast as we has been ha'in' ye'll play the vera mischief wi' the alts and fairly spoil a'!"

#### Ill Bred.

"Mamma, the scenery abroad must be very ill bred."

"Scenery ill bred, my child! What do you mean?"

"This book on Alpine climbing says, 'A terrible abyss yawned before them.'—London Tit-Bits.

We never find that the same soil produces delicacies and heroes.—Hesiod.

## NOT IN A HURRY.

A Royal Funeral and an Embarrassed Blundering Official.

The Comtesse de Boigne's memoirs contain an interesting account of the departure from life of Louis XVIII., an event which the king himself had long been anticipating:

"He was a great stickler for etiquette and gave the most minute instructions about his obsequies. All the ceremonials observed at the departure of the kings of France were to be respected, and as he had an extraordinary memory he settled the procedure down to the smallest details. At the last the royal almoner made a mistake in reading the prayers for those in extremis. Louis XVIII. interrupted him and corrected the mistake with a presence of mind and calmness which never left him for a moment. The family was assembled at the end of the room and was deeply affected. The doctors, the attendants on duty and the clergy were around the bed. The first gentleman of the chamber held the curtains. When the chief physician gave the sign that all was over, he let it fall and, turning around, bowed to the princes. Monsieur left the room sobbing, and madame prepared to follow him. Hitherto she had always taken precedence of her husband as the king's daughter. When she reached the door, she suddenly stopped, and through the heartfelt tears with which her face was streaming she said with difficulty, 'Take precedence, Dauphin!' He immediately obeyed without any hesitation or remark. The first gentleman announced 'the king,' and Charles X. reached his rooms.

"The master of ceremonies made some slight blunders over the royal funeral. Charles X. overlooked them and spoke kindly to the embarrassed official. 'Oh, sire, your majesty is very kind, but there were many defects. Next time we will do better. 'Thank you, Breze,' replied the king, with a smile, 'but I am not in a hurry.' Thereupon M. de Breze collapsed."

## TOMB OF THE MINGS.

It is a Risky Place For a Traveler to Visit Alone.

Every traveler in China goes to the tomb of the Mings if he stays more than a few days in Shanghai. The Chinese consider the Mings the greatest rulers of the ancient kingdom, and they rank second only to Confucius. The tomb is composed of two colossal figures facing each other and elaborately carved in the style affected by Chinese artists centuries ago. Seen in Central park or Versailles they would look grotesque enough, but standing as they do among bleak and lonely hills, outlined against the clear blue oriental sky, they have a rude grandeur and imposing simplicity which make them seem fit guardians of imperial dust.

It is not an easy journey the tourist must take if he wishes to pay his respects to the stone giants, nor is it a trip advisable for a woman to undertake, as it lies through a region where hatred of the "white devils" is considered as much a part of the Chinaman's religion as the worship of his ancestors. A donkey and a guide are necessary, and it is also wise to get a party of sightseers together for the excursion if possible and to go well armed, for once a foolhardy traveler started forth alone from the hotel on the Bubbling Well road, Shanghai, to visit the tomb of the Mings, and he was never heard of again. There are many places in the purlieus of Shanghai even where it is imprudent for a white man to venture alone in broad daylight. An extra donkey is also needed to carry provisions as well as the cameras, for most tourists want a picture of the towering luages which have so successfully withstood the wear of the centuries.—New York Press.

#### Odd North German Custom.

In northern Germany a familiar figure of the rural districts is a quaint old gentleman whose hat is very much decorated with flowers and particular ribbons and who carries a staff to the top of which is tied a huge bunch of real or artificial flowers knotted to it by long streamers of similar ribbons. According to the district, his costume also is old fashioned and unusual in other ways. He is the "hochzeitbitter," or person employed among the country folk to go from house to house and invite guests to attend a wedding. He delivers himself of a set speech in an old "Platt Deutsch" rhyme when he arrives at each place, accompanying it with wagging of the head and stamping of the staff, and is generally in rather a jovial condition by the time his day's labors are ended.

#### Milton's Retort.

John Milton was not a wit, yet he is reported to have made a crushing reply to a question from Charles II.

"Do you not think," said the king, "that your blindness is a judgment on you for having written in justification of my father's murder?"

"Sir," replied the poet, "it is true I have lost my eyesight, but if all the calamitous providences are to be regarded as divine judgments your majesty should remember that your father lost his head."

#### All That Didn't Sink.

"I suppose you have considerable floating population here?" inquired the visitor.

"Yep," replied the native of the little river town, "specially durin' the rainy season."—Puck.

#### Plenty of Advice.

"What are you doing for your cold?"

"Nothing. My friends are looking after it."—Harper's Weekly.

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