

wonder they do not take him at his word and give him a volley.

These sounds grow fainter as the balloon cleaves the atmosphere and mounts upward. Besides, they get the benefit of the strong south westerly breeze that follows in the wake of the storm.

This is so violent that Captain Tom concludes to seek a milder sphere, and allows a balloon to continue rising.

When the instrument indicates a height of two miles they find themselves in a gentle wind that seems to bear them in the direction desired. Satisfied, they float on.

Sounds from below have long since ceased to reach their ears, and all that can be heard is the vibration of some cord attached to the balloon. A strange sensation it is truly, this floating above the world, but Captain Tom grows accustomed to a novelty very soon, and to see him manage the airship one would readily believe him to be an experienced aeronaut.

The atmosphere is clear below them, and they can see clusters of lights now and then that indicate the presence of some town. They do not seem to care much for sleep, at least hours pass by while they drift, and neither has as yet expressed a desire for slumber.

The soldier is studying the situation, watching the air currents, and noting how his ship is carried along. He is overjoyed when, by the aid of the stars, he makes out that they are heading almost directly for the German capital. Truly, it is better to be born lucky than rich.

His thoughts naturally roam ahead—he wonders where Linda and her charge may be. Will he follow them to Berlin? What a strange freak of fortune that has thrown this chance in his way, and yet, after all, how naturally it all comes about.

Finally he feels his life get heavy, and leaving Mickey in charge, with positive instructions to arouse him should anything out of the common run transpire, he settles down for a few hours' nap. The balloon has hardly a motion—such easy travelling Captain Tom has never experienced on land or sea, and he speculates upon the good time coming, when all travellers may sail by airships. Thus he falls asleep.

At the proper time Mickey arouses him and gets a bit of a nap himself before dawn comes.

The first thing that greets their eyes upon looking down at the earth is a river—it is rather tortuous in its course, and presents a remarkably picturesque appearance, even when seen with snow upon the ground.

'The historic Rhine,' remarks Tom, who has in time past floated for scores of miles upon the bosom of this same river, from Strasbourg to Cologne.

With its palaces, castles, picture-que inns, monasteries, and cottages embowered in shrubbery, the Rhine has no equal in the world for scenery. Its memory lingers on the traveller wherever he roams, and however weary he may be with picture-galleries, churches, and such sights, the thought of the storied Rhine always comes to him like an inspiring breath of air.

They drift across. It is indeed a strange journey to take, from Paris to Berlin by balloon, and especially so in war times, when railroad travel is almost impossible except one is armed with potent passes from the powers that be.

Their slow drifting, that has only carried them a hundred miles in ten hours, becomes a thing of the past, for with the rising of the sun they seem to reach a current of air that drives them on with the speed of an express train.

How exhilarating it all is. The panorama spread out below them like a great map is constantly changing.

After crossing the Rhine they see a few towns and villages. Then comes a dense forest, dark and forbidding. Captain Tom thinks of the fabled Hartz Mountains and the B ack Forest, about which so many German legends have been woven.

It is about an hour before noon when Mickey calls his attention to the sun glinting upon the water of another river. This must be the Weser. They make fine progress, and Captain's Tom's heart beats high with hope. He has always made it a point to succeed in everything he undertakes, and begins to have high hopes of saving the girl he loves. At the same time he frankly admits that much credit must be due the favouring winds that have wafted them on their way. About two o'clock they find themselves nearer the earth than before. This does not come from any dropping of the balloon, which steadily sails on.

It is because the nature of the ground has changed, and they are now really above the famous Hartz Mountains. Captain Tom has one fear—some hunter may put a bullet through the great silk bag above, and once the gas finds even a minute outlet, it will rush to escape, with the result that a fearful split follows, and then—well, they will go into eternity with light ing speed.

He dares not take no risk in this thing, so out goes a few more sand bags and the balloon rises. They know the Elbe River lies not more than thirty or forty miles

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beyond, and hence keep on the outlook for this broad stream, beyond which is Berlin.

It is almost dark when they see the river far below them. Eagerly Tom looks to the north, and utters a cry of satisfaction.

'Do you see those lights, Mickey?' he asks.

'A city it is, sure.' Madgeburg on the Elbe. Old fellow, we've come from Paris almost as straight as the crow flies.'

'And whin do we reach Berlin?' 'A few hours more. Let me study my map. I don't want to make any mistake.'

Darkness falls, and finds them speeding on with their wonderful speed just as fresh as at the start.

Not a word is spoken now. Captain Tom stands and watches—he has allowed a small portion of gas to escape, and they have descended until they are now not more than half a mile above the earth, which lies there wrapped in mysterious darkness.

Thus far fortune has indeed been kind, and even the winds have been tempered to their necessity. In a sudden storm the inexperienced aeronaut might have done the wrong thing, and by a single mistake have sent himself and companion to a cruel death. Thank Heaven, such an emergency has not risen, and they are now nearing the end of the strangest journey on record, without an accident to mar its success.

The American is indeed grateful for the great favour shown. It gives him cause for hope that the future may also be favoured with success.

They draw near a city—lights gleam brightly ahead, and Tom gravely announces:

'All out for Potsdam!' 'Say, do we change cars here?' calls Mickey.

'Keep your seats for Berlin. All aboard!'

They rush over Potsdam, and on again into the darkness beyond.

CHAPTER. XX.

POOR FRANZ.

'Be the holy smoke, there goes a train. It's a race between us, so it is,' cries Mickey, calling the attention of his companion to a line of lights off to the left that seems to be moving in the same direction as themselves.

'I wonder,' says Tom, jokingly, 'whether that's the lightning express from Paris. It would be quite a joke if we beat it in.'

Many a truth is spoken in jest, and Captain Tom little suspects that the train whose lights he so carelessly watches bears a being very precious to him in one of the numerous compartments—the very girl for whose sake he is even now risking his own life in an invasion of hostile territory. Such are the freaks of fate.

'Look yonder,' calls out the aeronaut. 'I see more lights. Sure, it's a great city that lies beyond,' says Mickey, in some excitement.

'That is our destination, my boy—Berlin. All hands ready to make a landing.'

Captain Tom knows what danger lies before him, and he gives plain directions as to what shall be done. The sand-bags are held in readiness to go overboard, also the grappling-iron. Then he pulls the cord, as directed by the professor's wife.

Down goes the balloon with a rush—a hissing noise tells that the gas is escaping, and Captain Tom, feeling that their descent is rapid enough, allows the valve to close. Then he grasps a sandbag in one hand and the grapple in the other, straining his eyes to see what sort of region they are about to drop upon.

When he gives the word, Mickey relieves the balloon of much weight, so that the downward rush becomes a gentle settling. Then out goes the anchor, and speedily takes hold.

In less than five minutes they are upon the ground. Captain Tom has decided upon his course. A lamp cannot be hidden under a bushel, and if the balloon remains here, inflated, all Berlin will know by morning that strange voyagers are in their midst.

He under-takes a trick or two, and without delay allows all the gas to escape from the great bag, which, when collapsed, almost fits in the basket or car. If this can be executed now, all will be well, and the evidence of their arrival will not be apparent.

Tom leaves Mickey with the balloon, and starts upon a tour of investigation. He finds near by some raw stacks, and one of these promises an asylum for the air-ship. At present his sole idea is to hide it, for he does not dream he will ever again sail the azure skies as an aeronaut.

Back again to Mickey he hastens, and between them, by hard work, they manage to get the balloon to the straw stack.

Here an hour is spent in systematically securing their faithful air-ship, during which time they are annoyed by a little cur that persists in standing afar off and barking. Both feel the effect of their long fast, and

something to eat must be obtained before they can proceed to business. A light shines from a cabin near by, and thither the two daring invaders make their way.

'Leave it all with me,' says Captain Tom.

His object is to avoid doing anything that will bring them to the attention of the police. When upon the Western prairies of his own native country, Tom has more than once fought fire with fire. He believes in the remedy. To effectually prevent this

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