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Beyond the Ether.

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A STORY OF WONDROUS ADVENTURES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HIGHEST HEAVENS."

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Beyond the Ether.

A SPECULATIVE AND ORIGINAL STORY,

— BY —

W. CAIRNS JOHNSTON.

“There’s a fount about to stream.”

ANDOVER, MAINE:
W. C. JOHNSTON, PUBLISHER.
1896.

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PROEM.

This little book was written in the summer of 1893. It was the author's purpose to create something radically original, something the like of which was never before written. Your pardon if we have the egotism to say that we think the departure, as far as originality goes, is a success. We leave it to the public to say whether it is interesting or uninteresting.

Thine implicitly and sincerely,

W. CAIRNS JOHNSTON.

Beyond the Ether.

CHAPTER I.

'Twas on one July morning,
Four vanished years ago,
Beneath the gladsome dawning,
When tides of daylight flow.

FLASHES of purple fire are bursting from yonder horison, and the Eastern firmament is laved anon in seas of liquid amber.

The peaceful city of Portland, glowing in peerless radiance, lies wrapt in exhilarating fragrance, and the joyous birds are voicing a dulcet symphony. The July zephyrs glide sylph-like through the streets, enrobing the higher senses of man in a gauze of placid enchantment.

See! A door opens: a door of a—— street mansion. Two lithe and agile forms appear, and, passing along the gravel walk to the gate, are soon lost in the labyrinth of structures.

Who were those handsome, athletic fellows, and where are they bound?

Ralph Horton and Anthony Cameron, aged respectively twenty-three and twenty-four, who graduated from Harvard University but a fortnight since, are now on pleasure and discovery bent.

Ralph Horton, a broad-shouldered, sinewy mortal, stands five feet and nine inches with his feet washed and non-attired, (we have reference to nude feet, pure and simple,) while his complexion is a sort of *chestnut*. His complexion being light— not over 3½ lbs. avoirdupois— thou canst not greatly marvel should I liken his optics unto the shade of the azure heavens. He wears but a sandy moustache—stay! he sometimes dons a suit of blackish worsted, and, if I err not, he is arrayed this selfsame morning in the said superb habilliments.

Anthony Cameron, unlike his friend and colleague, is of a somewhat swarthy hue; black eyes, black hair, with moustache and goatee of similar shade. His physique is slightly attenuated, though supple and staunch as the form of a panther, his brisk and springy step denoting vast resources of muscular ability.

We change our point of view and the interior of the Grand Trunk Depot is revealed. Our heroes take tickets for Bryant Pond, a small station situated on the Grand Trunk line, about sixty miles distant.

The brazen notes of a clanging bell peal out their timely warning. The line of coaches, receiving a gradual impetus, are soon bowling along the glistening rails like the aerial van of a Goddess.

At the expiration of little more than a brace of hours, the resonant voice of the conductor announces:

“Bryant Pond! Bryant Pond!!”

As the train slows up and suddenly comes to rest at the dreary, unpretentious station, our friends seize hastily upon various articles of baggage and alight from the close, depressing air of the railway carriage.

At the opposite side of the platform stands a six-horse Concord coach, which plys daily between the pensive village of Andover and the sleepy, uninteresting town before mentioned.

The jocund fellows produce their checks, and, after seeing that their trunks and other miscellaneous articles of baggage are properly transferred to the waiting stage, they climb atop the swaying vehicle. All preparations are quickly executed by the bustling driver; the steeds plunge forward, and the rumbling coach is whirled away: then—Heavenward floats a loitering cloud of dust.

CHAPTER II.

THE coach dashes on amid the jests and laughter of passengers and driver. In a few minutes the most diminutive of hamlets is reached, where a mail-sack is thrown at the unoffending pate of a hayseed postmaster, who, in essaying to catch the flying missile, looses his tattered straw hat, and also his equilibrium, collapsing in an inglorious heap on the greensward, amid the smothered mirth of the occupants of the fast departing stage-coach.

Onward flies the jovial party, till Milton, a small village two leagues farther on, presents itself to view, where the mail bag bombardment is repeated, this time with less disaster than on the previous occasion.

Four miles more and we arrive at Rumford Corner, which terminates the first division of the mail route. A halt of thirty minutes ensues, during which time a change of horses is effected, and the passengers, if so inclined, have partaken refreshments.

The conveyance rattles away with renewed vigor, but is suddenly brought to a full stop by the arbitrary waters of the Androscoggin river.

At this place the only means of transportation is a cable ferry, constructed from the most primitive model and manned by a single individual, who indulges in the most exquisite growls when interrogated. Yet, the succinct sail athwart the surging waters imparts a charm to the novice, guiding his dreams through vistas of strange and delightful romance.

Rapidly climbing the river bank the stage draws up at the door of a mail repository, which, in dimensions, would unfavorably compare with a fair-sized dog kennel. A mail pouch is discharged at the palatial edifice, the concussion of which overturns the building leaving half a dozen pairs of feet sticking out of what had formerly constituted its base. But the driver cracks his whip and settles back in his seat as unconcernedly as if such spectacles were of daily occurrence in that section of the country.

Four miles up the Ellis river another pouch is hurled at a solitary farm-house bearing the home-made sign, "POST OFFICE," over its front door, and in which a cigar box, divided into compartments, is utilized for pidgeon-holes when the distribution of letters is manipulated.

After traversing another four miles of steep descents and toil-some acclivities, the cross-roads at South Andover appear, and at the junction of which stands a towering pile, comprising a postoffice, several agencies, grocery and dry goods store, and the domicile of two families. This, remember, is a genuine two-story building. Another sack of mail-matter is ejected along with a pocket express package. Then on for one league more, when the coach rolls triumphal into Andover—Andover Corner, the terminus of the stage line.

The lash detonates, and the rumbling wheels dash up at the front of a home-like tavern, where the remaining travelers disembark to seek rest and refection within.

Nine o'clock P. M., is striking.

CHAPTER III.

THE trip of twenty-one miles from Bryant Pond to Andover had presented Messrs. Horton and Cameron with appetites of unchristian voracity, and they devoured the viands set before them, asking no questions.

Finally, when the fangs of hunger were successfully repulsed, our friends adjourned to the office, (that super-familiar appendage of the rural wayside inn,) to revel in the sensual bliss of tobaccoic teats.

Having surfeited that fleshly lust, they sought the apartment assigned them, where they were presently engrossed in elaborating plans for the future.

These brilliant young men, as you are by this time aware, are connected by ties of mutual friendship, which had taken root in the good old days of childhood, when they regarded each other's property after the manner of socialists. They had entered college together, and, also, simultaneously graduated. Horton had been strongly attracted to the study of geology and astronomy, while Cameron manifested a preference for mineralogy and chemistry.

They had come to this seemingly out-of-the-way place to recreate and pursue their favorite branches of erudition.

"I say, Anthony", interrogated Horton, as they sallied forth next morning to reconnoitre, "how does this strike you?"

"Oh, I daresay we shall not go wholly unrewarded for our trouble. What do you say, Ralph, to a trip to old 'Bald Pate', as they call it?"

"Just the kind of stock for dividends! Put me down for one share, and a controlling interest," answered Ralph.

"Let us see. Today is Tuesday. We can easily arrange to start Thursday morning," mused Anthony.

"Yes," supplemented Ralph, "and we could camp on the mountain a few days in order to make a thorough exploration."

"I have been thinking of that, Ralph, but it will require a tent, cooking utensils, stock of provisions and a guide."

“Let’s hunt out a guide the first thing. There are doubtless plenty of fellows about here who would, for a consideration, officiate in that capacity.”

Referring the matter to the hotel proprietor, they were informed that they could, in all probability, secure the services of Harry Babcock and John D. Harte, who bore the reputation of remarkable efficiency. So, loosing no time, they applied to Harry Babcock, who, though somewhat occupied with ditch digging, consented to accomodate the gentlemen for the nominal sum of two dollars per day. To their enquiries as to the present whereabouts of John D. Harte, they were informed by Mr. Babcock that the aforesaid had gone to Rumford that day, but was expected to return, sometime during the evening, at which time he would personally interview said Harte and enlist his services in their behalf; adding that, in case of failure, which he did not deem likely, he could procure Jack Smart as a substitute.

Mr. Harte, on being informed of the project, readily complied with their request, and the details were duly elaborated.

The guides acquainted the gentlemen with the fact that a trout stream existed on the mountain hereinbefore mentioned, and with the abundant supply of fresh trout comparatively few rations were requisite.

During the day the guides were employed in collecting the necessary appliances; and when a small tent, culinary apparatus, pork, pilot-bread and potatoes, corn meal, sugar, coffee and sundry edibles in the way of canned goods were obtained, the party was equipped and in readiness to procede on that memorable expedition.

CHAPTER IV.

THURSDAY morning was breaking in shimmering lustre on the hills when the party gathered on the hotel veranda to await the advent of the buckboard which was to convey them to the base of the mountain, from which they were to set out on foot, following the serpentine path leading to the summit of Bald Pate.

Arriving at the point where the path conjoined with the carriage road, they bade adieu to the buckboard and its garrulous owner, proceeding leisurely up the trail. Considering the eight miles of actual climbing which lay before them, and the abominably fatiguing packs they sported, it was decided to make but one-half the distance on the first day out. While the tourists were examining the mineralogical and geological phase of the country, the guides would busy themselves in adjusting the canvas, preparing the meals, and replenishing the larder with brook trout.

It was eleven o'clock A. M., when they reached the half-way point and, not unwillingly, halted. While Babcock and Harte were putting things in order, Cameron and Horton spread their blankets on the fragrant, plush-like moss, and lying supine in the shade of the mighty forest, were soon dreaming of fountains of nectar, where beautiful Goddesses bathed and sang in a halo of rapturous sunbeams.

They were awakened an hour later by the guides, who, having in the mean time prepared a most palatable repast, aroused them to partake of the bounty. The mountain air and woodland odors, combined with the morning's exertion, had given them appetites of paramount excellence, and the crisp-fried trout, with the potatoes and sweet corn, completed a rare and delectable symposium.

"Ho, Anthony! The Gods are good-humored to-day; success may yet await us. Reveal, O Gods, that latent knowledge which shall revolutionize this poor, benighted spheroid, illuminating the darksome shades in oceans of shimmering radiance!"

"If you go on at that rate you'll soon enjoy the charms of a benighted mind, methinks," was the brief but caustic reply.

"Don't you think the geological conditions about here indicate natural gas?" queried Ralph.

"Yes; the minerals in this region seem to favor the hypothesis, but I think it would require deep drilling to elicit the phenomenal substance."

"You wait till we find a thin crust and we'll bore through it—providing it doesn't exceed fifteen or twenty miles in thickness—and insert a ten inch pipe, attach a steam pump, and extract a few hogsheads of golden liquid. We can afford to dispense the baser metals in charitable munificence."

Having delivered himself of the above logic, Ralph Horton camped on a mossy knoll and proceeded to charge his pipe.

With the bowl filled and the weed incinerated, he lay back and smoked for a time in silence. The quavering notes of a neighboring rill were blending in dulcet cadence with the impassioned strains of the woodland songster, which, swelling in rapt and thrilling inflection, created an euphony unmatched by the lyres of heavenly Eden.

Not more than twenty minutes had elapsed when Babcock, who had been inspecting the parcels, exclaimed:

"I'll be goll cussed if I aint the biggest ——— son of a skunk that ever wore cowhide boots! I bought four plugs of B. L., terbacker, and I hope to be shot at with a cannon loaded with brass kittles if I didn't cum erway and leave 'em on Hayseed's d——d old counter. I'd pay some poor cuss good wages to pound me on the head with a cook-stove till my hair stuck out through the bottoms of my boot soles. What in h—I I'm goin' ter dew now is beyend th' serlushun of er Byron bob cat."

Before Babcock could continue his eloquent harangue he was irreverently interrupted by Horton, who enquired if he was wholly destitute of the solace. To which, Babcock replied:

"No; not whot yer might call right out and out starin' destitoot. I've gut three cuts left; but that wunt last me more'n terday and termorrer, an' then I guess I shall be flush-fired, ripperty roarin' destitoot an' no mistake about it!"

"O generation of helots! Who hath warned you to flee from the dearth to come? Cast out the grief from within thee, for the famin shall be stayed."

Having rid himself of the foregoing effervescence, Ralph proposed to Anthony that they explore a deep ravine lying a short distance to the left of their camp ground.

Taking the instruments which were to be used in scientific research, they set out for the sombre locality, which was reached after much scrambling about over jagged ledges embellished in boulders of ponderous magnitude.

The two friends, absorbed in scanning the wild and rugged topography, and in minute and painstaking examination of the external formation, had gradually widened the distance between them until each had strayed beyond the other's vision.

Thus for a while they strolled, each intent on acquiring knowledge in some special branch of study.

Anthony, becoming conscious of a slight weariness, and an intense longing to smoke, seated himself on a salient shelf of stone. As he did so, a seam in the ledge caught his eye.

The object of attraction was a large, transparent quartz crystal which lay embedded in the seam of the rock. He placed his chisel at the base of the crystal, striking a sharp blow with his prospecting hammer, effecting a dislodgment of the coveted object.

Unnoticed by him, the chisel had opened a thin and scarcely perceptible crack in the seam at the point where the specimen was extracted.

Reseating himself in proximity to the crack, he drew from his pocket a match-safe, and selecting a pine fragment tipped with the crimson mixture, he drew it swiftly along the leg of his nether garment, then holds it still for a moment to enable the wood to kindle. The flickering blaze subsides to a steady glow, and he is about to carry it to the bowl of his pipe when, lo! A hiss! a flash! and the shelf is wrapped in a blinding sheet of fire!

CHAPTER V.

GREATLY startled, and somewhat dazed by the sudden prodigy, he lost no time in beating a rapid retreat, escaping without injury save a slight scorching about the hand and face. He had seated himself in proximity to a crack in the ledge, which, though less than a tenth of an inch in width, extended downward to a great and unknown depth, and through which a small jet of gas was emitted. The gas had become inflamed by coming in contact with the blaze of the match, hence the phenomenal occurrence.

In wondering awe the student gazed as the dazzling shaft of fire leaped upward toward the heavens.

"Ah!" cried Anthony, in a transport of empyreal ecstasy, "we have it now; but won't Ralph more than open his safety-valve of grandiloquence when he becomes cognizant of the fact. I'm sorry, though, that the infernal stuff caught fire, for the supply may be exhausted ere the destroying element can be eliminated. I wonder where Ralph is. Haven't seen him for more than an hour and he may be at the top of Mount Washington by this time. I'll try to hunt him up, anyhow."

Thereupon his soliloquy abruptly ended, and Anthony started in quest of his errant comrade.

The first half hour was expended in futile calls and arduous climbing about over debris in the chaotic mountain fastness.

At last, weary and disheartened, and when about to return to camp, his ear caught the sound of a distant halloo, which came floating down the ravine in a faint, magniloquent murmur, awakening in his down-cast soul bright rays of hopeful gladness.

Eagerly responding to the far-borne human cry, he was rewarded by an answering flow of sound waves, this time more audible and distinct than before. Following in the direction from which the sounds seemed to emanate, he soon came in sight of Ralph, who carried in one hand a bag of geological specimens, while the other was clutching hard at the waistband of his breeches to prevent the seat of that useful piece of vesture from trailing over the rocks in a most debasing fashion. He

had broken his braces while in search of specimens, and was now representing a veritable personification of unmitigated misfortune.

"What's the matter, Ralph; have you got the colic, or did you simply fall among thieves who attempted to dispoil you of your trousers?" queried Anthony, with affected concern, as soon as he could make himself heard.

"Colic? I should think not! Broke my braces back there"—indicating with a toss of the head a far from level bit of landscape—"and, as Babcock would express it, I hope to be fed for a month on hemlock bark if I could find so much as a raveling about me to duplicate the derelict harness. But what in the name of Joseph Smith has been afool of you? Should judge from the appearance of your hair and eyebrows that you had been trying to make a bon fire of yourself, and had found the material too green for combustion."

"Oh, never mind about that now. If you think you can convey your pants in safety, I should say it was time we struck out for camp," facetiously answered Anthony.

They reached camp shortly after sunset, and when they had bathed their fevered brows in a limpid pool of the brooklet, sat down to gormandize and recount their several adventures.

Ralph had made some valuable discoveries in the unstratified surface of the gulch; among which was the fossilized head of an iguanodon, the owner of which, when viable, could not have been less than one hundred feet in length. This petrified skull of the enormous and long extinct lizard was found by him in a cave that he had partly explored that afternoon, and measured twenty-one feet in diameter.

Anthony, the cool and cynical philosopher, became almost as enthusiastic as Ralph over this miraculous and wholly unexpected piece of good fortune and he quite forgot to mention the gas well until Ralph, whose ardour had cooled from a white heat to one of a crimson hue, besought him that he would condescend to entertain them with his own "bonfirish" escapades.

Anthony briefly related the history of the gas jet—or, at least, as much of its history as had come under his personal observation—add-

ing that he hoped the gas would not be wholly consumed by the ravaging conflagration.

"That's the winning card of the pack! vociferated Ralph, "let's go and interview the pillaging foe 'ere the robber hath gathered the spoil.' There will be a fine moon this evening, and it isn't far, after all. We can take the pail and camp kettle along with us, for there is a bare possibility that the fire is quenchable "

During the conversation Babcock and Harte sat gazing into the faces of the narrators with expressions of ponderous amazement depicted on their hirsute visages, and were frantic to set out at once for the shrine of the wonder of wonders.

The shades of vesper were falling when our friends left camp accompanied by Babcock and Harte, to repair to a scene of marvelous brilliancy, the reflection of which had already found its way to their temporary habitation.

As they emerged from a massive pile of boulders, a spectacle of incandescent beauty burst forth on their startled vision. A scimitar of fire streamed upward to the height of forty feet!

"Wall I vow, I do vum and declare for it! That there 'corn fire,' as Mr. Horton calls it, is a durned sight better 'fire than I ever see built out o' wood. It kinder keeps a whoopin' 'er right up, built out o' nothin' and a roarin' like a bull calf all the while. If old Cap'n Gool had seen that when he was alive he'd er bought it if he'd had ter mortgaged his lousy old skunk skin cap ter dew it!"

"O Babcock, fameless Babcock, the charms of thy canorous voice are ever wondrous pleasing! Soar onward to the flowery realms of unapproachable glory!"

Thus did Ralph Horton, in a surging avalanche of eulogy, expatiate on the elegance and volubility of poor, illiterate Babcock.

"Fill the pail and kettle at the brook and see what you folks can do at putting out the 'cornfire,'" commanded Anthony, with great gravity, when Horton's voice was hushed and soundless.

Having filled the vessels with aqueous fluid, the guides brought them as near the fire as the heat would permit (that being within about twenty feet) and threw their contents down the bluff directly into the

vent of the gas well. A terrific seething and sputtering ensued, while the blaze subsided to ominous and fitful flashings.

"Bring more water, quick! One more dose like that will fix it!" These were the rather excited exclamations of the inimitable Ralph.

The guides returned with the receptacles refilled and repeated the drenching process. Again there were frightful splutterings, this time much fiercer than before, causing the spectators to withdraw from the immediate locality and seek refuge from the rage of the spattering fury.

Scarcely had they ensconced themselves behind an adjacent pile of boulders when a thunderous explosion occurred, the detonation echoing and re-echoing far on that grim, majestic mountain.

The four persons behind the boulders, it is needless to state, were quite a little disconcerted, and several seconds elapsed after the final sounds had died away before any of them seemed to be conscious of possessing vocal organs.

Presently the excruciating silence was rended by Anthony:

"We should have been wiser than that, it was simply pure heedlessness on our part to attempt so hazardous an experiment. A moment of cool reflection will convince us of our consummate stupidity."

They quickly repaired to the spot where the eruption had taken place. All was shrouded in darkness, save for the faint beams of moonlight, which came straggling over the edge of the pit that had been so suddenly and rudely fashioned in the face of a solid ledge. All about them were scattered heaps of broken stone—a dreary, lonely sight.

"By the Great Screech Owls of Rangeley! I've ben livin' in this same extrawdnary world for a nigh on ter fifty year, an' I never saw nothin' nowhar that could quite come up to that hole in the rocks for pure, onsentimental cussedness."

This time Ralph was too occupied with his own thoughts to comment on the foregoing dissertation of Babcock. They gazed for a few minutes on the ruins of rifted rock, then silently wended their way to camp, there to discuss the strange events of the day, remaining awake until long in the black, nocturnal hours.

At daybreak next morning the human denizens of Bald Pate were astir. Breakfast was quickly dispatched, and the men seated them-

selves on a mossy hillock to imbibe the delights of tobacco. Having finished his commonplace pastime, Anthony announced his intention of revisiting the gas well.

"I do not think the æriform fluid has wholly disappeared, however much the vent may have been enlarged."

All were eager to accompany him, even the uncommunicative John D. Harte allowed that he "should like mighty well to have another look at the tarnal seat of witchcraft."

Upon viewing the orifice by light of day it was apparent that its dimensions had not been increased, though the depth of the crevice was diminished nearly four feet. This was owing to the fact that the top of the rock had been blown off, leaving a cavity in place of a rounded surface.

Anthony descended to examine the outlet, and found the gas still flowing. He obtained a bottleful to take back to the village for chemical analysis. Then they stopped the crack with leaves and wooden wedges in prevention of continued waste.

The task completed, they returned to camp and prepared for an early departure.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was one o'clock P. M., when they started down the mountain, following the beaten path by which they came. They traveled leisurely, stopping to angle for trout on the way, and it was nearly eight o'clock when they came out on the "Surplus Road," which intersects the village of Andover.

Thankfully discarding their packs at the nearest habitation, they endeavored to hire a team to convey them to the village.

The women folks explained how the men folks had "just gonter Corner," and, of course, taken the team with them; consequently they were obliged to jack their knees, and they continued jacking them till the hour of nine, when they tramped ingloriously into Andover.

The students entered the hotel, washed up, made a sweep at the supper table and retired to their room, then smoked and sought their restful couches.

When Ralph awoke next morning the sunshine was falling through the windows in fountains of soft-flowing fire.

"Well, Anth, old brooder, in what sort of a state of mind do you find yourself this morning, eh?" archly inquired Ralph, as soon as he was thoroughly awake.

"In the state of mind your own business," was the dry retort.

"But that State isn't governed by the same constitution that Maine is," drawled Ralph.

"No; that state, for a wonder, is governed by common sense," sentimentously quoth Anthony.

"Oh, I'll jacknowledge myself outlawyered; but, aren't you going to take nourishment? As for me and my house, we will have breakfast."

"Perhaps I shall get around to take a glass of water during the day; if not, you may bring me up an apple seed and a kernel of parched corn."

Breakfast over, they lit cigars and strolled fieldward, wandering lazily amid the green and fragrant meadows and the buttercups that bloom.

"I suppose you will analyze that pocketful of gas to-day, wo'nt you?" asked Ralph, as they lay in the shade of a wide-spreading elm.

"I did that this morning while you were beastially—I should have said peacefully—snoozing away your senses. I find it to be of a hitherto unknown species, and of a lightness that is marvelous in the extreme. One square foot of it posses double the buoying power of any other, in like quantity, known to exist."

"Exactly, precisely the identical Godsend! We'll have it yoked to a balloon, which shall be constructed after a new and improved model, and then we'll roam the heavens like the fairy queens of yore?"

"Rather ambitious, but not wholly a bad idea," assented Anthony. "The all-important question is, how are we going to transport a sufficient quantity of it to some civilized section where it can be utilized in constructing the air ship?"

"Oh, we must rig some sort of a trap to catch it in; then, when we have it right plump in the trap, simply spring the same, and thus you may carry away your catch enthralled in the engine of bondage. I must try and do some thinking to-day. I'm sure the plan is feasible."

That evening they exchanged schemes for the creation of a powerful air ship, conversing in low and earnest tones till far in the darksome watches. It was also decided to apprise the managers of the Smithsonian Institute of Washington, D. C., regarding the existence of the monstrous skull of the iguanodon, which Ralph had discovered in the mountain cavern.

Next morning they quietly boarded the stage, and at ten o'clock were pacing the platform at Bryant Pond station, from which point they departed by rail for the city of Portland, having previously obtained a promise of secrecy from the guides regarding the discoveries at Bald Pate.

About twelve o'clock m., the train slowed into the Grand Trunk Depot at Portland, where the heroes made exit, taking a hack for ——— street, the one into which we glanced on the morning when our story opens.

On that morning we saw two gentlemen, whom we now recognize as Ralph and Anthony, emerge from the luxurious home of the widow Cameron. Anthony was an only child of a widowed mother.

Ralph Horton was left an orphan at the tender age of nine years. So, being a cousin to Anthony, and a favorite with Mrs. Cameron, he was annexed to the family, in which he had since remained, except when attending the institutions of learning.

They were warmly welcomed by the kind old lady, who was versed to the highest perfection in the art of elysian home making.

During the afternoon the adventurers related to Mrs. Cameron the tale of their rural rambles; or, more grandiloquently speaking, their prospective perambulations. She was always interested in the pastimes of her two boys, as she still called them, but was not a little disturbed by the announcement of a projected aerial voyage.

Ralph and Anthony determined to procure some large, thick India rubber pouches in which to transport the gas from Bald Pate to that city, where the craft would be fashioned and builded. It was obvious that the pouches must be made to order, and from a design of their own devising. It was thus that six o'clock that evening found them at the ticket office of the steamer "John Brooks," plying from the Forest City to the Hub.

During the evening, in consequence of the moonlight and unusual mildness of the weather, they remained on deck, smoking and chatting and scheming, until at last they reluctantly went below, and awoke to find themselves in Boston.

Proceeding at an early hour to the factory of a renowned rubber company, they made known the desiderata and tendered their order to the functionary in charge, receiving the gratifying intelligence that the order would be filled in the course of three or four days. Thereupon they privately interviewed a gentleman who had spent several years in the study of aerial navigation, and who thoroughly understood the best methods of balloon construction.

It was arranged that the balloon expert should come to Portland the following week, and in the mean time, make all necessary preparations for equipping a workshop or laboratory.

The Portland oracles spent the days in excursions and visiting, and the evenings at the opera or theatre. The time passed swiftly with the

restless couple, and they soon received tidings that the pouches were completed.

Repairing at once to the rubber manufactory, and finding the receptacles to be fully up to their most sanguine expectations, they abrogated their indebtedness to the firm, returning with their prizes to Portland, and from thence to Andover, arriving at that village on the evening of Jul 17th.

They retired early and slept soundly until the morning of the 18th.

CHAPTER VII.

HAVING engaged a team the night before to take them to the mountain foot path, they were in readiness to start in an incredibly short time. The guides, Babcock and Harte, who had accompanied them on their former outing, were punctually at the hotel, armed and equipped as their patrons desired.

It was not later than six o'clock A. M., when they dismissed the team and began their toilsome ascent.

Reaching their old camping ground at ten, they concluded to rest until noon, being slightly overcome by the excessive heat and wearisome climb of the morning.

The guides served an excellent dinner, of which they partook with great gusto. Then, after a sweet and social smoke, they set out for the gas bearing region.

They had procured eight rubber pouches, each with a gas capacity of seven feet. The necks of the pouches were small, only two inches in diameter, and were fitted with tight stoppers which could easily be screwed on and off. They had also brought with them a gas pump with which to fill the pouches.

Arriving at the mysterious crevice, they extracted one of the wooden wedges which had been inserted to prevent the gas from escaping. When the plug was removed the gas gushed forth with increased velocity. As soon as one sack was filled the stopper was immediately applied before any material amount of the extract had deserted. In this manner the bags were soon filled. They required a heavy weight as ballast to assist the force of gravity, and then could be made the descent.

Carrying two pouches apiece they rapidly descended the mountain, reaching the turnpike at just five o'clock P. M., where a team awaited their coming.

Quite a crowd of countrymen were about the hotel when their grotesque coupe brought up at the front veranda, and they were immediately assailed by the hayseed throng with a hurtling shower of questions.

"Say, you fellers, what in the name of Judea have ye gut in them patent meal bags? Peers like as though they'd be good for goin' ter mill when it rains," was the delicate query of one farmer.

"Them's p'raps what they carry their consciences in," ventured one uncouth nrchin, in the way of a hypothetical solution.

"They are swellin' up like the devil, anyhow; guess they, re goin' ter bust 'fore long. Shouldn't advise ye ter git up theré too close, Punkin Seed!" cautioned another.

The crowd received little enlightenment regarding the gigantic bottles, and they were borne from the wagon to the apartments of the itinerants, where they were carefully guarded by Babcock and Harte while their employers were at supper.

With the breaking of the aurora on the following morning the magicians arose, breakfasted, and ordered the span that was to take them and their cargo of gas to the distant railway station.

Instead of returning to Portland via Bryant Pond, as they had done on the former trip, they hired the driver to take them to Locke's Mills, a small village equidistant from Andover, and situated three miles higher up the Grand Trunk Railway.

Reaching Portland at noon of the same day, they succeeded in getting the gas to the laboratory on Newbury Street without the shade of a single mishap. This laboratory, as you have already conjectured, has been fitted up by the Boston expert, a vacant building having been secured for the purpose.

Mr. Leighton, the balloon man, was occupied in directing a dozen workmen, whom he had engaged to construct the airy yacht, when Cameron and Horton arrived. The three conspirators held a brief conference, and then adjourned until evening, at which time Mr. Leighton was to call at the home of the students.

"What do you think of the gas, Leighton?" asked Anthony, as they were seated that evening in the library of the Cameron domicile.

"It infinitely excells all other gases, for balloon making, that have ever come under my observation," he replied.

"About how long a time, under favorable circumstances, do you estimate the building to require," continued Cameron.

"If I can secure sufficient and competent operatives, we can probably have her ready by the middle of the coming September. But there is no certainty in the matter, for a more intricate and bothersome piece of mechanism is seldom met with."

Thus the conversation continued throughout the evening, and when Leighton rose to go they had perfected their plans for the project.

When Leighton had taken his leave and the two were alone with their musings, Ralph suddenly exclaimed :

To-day is the 19th of July! Two months, at least, must elapse ere the final elaboration,—what do you say to a trip somewhere?"

"I should think we had been taking trips with a vengeance for the past three or four weeks. Still, we shall recuperate in a day or two, and then I suppose the time will hang rather heavy on our impatience."

"But where shall it be—Bar Harbor, Vinalhaven or the White Mountains?"

"Deliver me from all summer resorts and I will gladly take an outing in the central sections of the sunburnt sands of shriveling, soul-seducing Sahara!" and the hands of Anthony were raised entreatingly.

"I don't wish to compliment your impassioned flights of rhapsody, but you do actually put me in mind of Babcock," archly insinuated Horton.

"No great marvel if mental distortion ensues from habitual association with lunatics," composedly returned the object of Ralph's irony.

"I motion we pass over the present article and see if the town will vote to go trout fishing for a few days," yawned Ralph.

"The motion has been moved and seconded that we go to—the devil on a trouting expedition," sarcastically announced the auditor.

"No, I think I will go to bed in lieu of His Majesty's fish preserves," and Ralph vanished through the open doorway.

Little more than two days transpired ere life in the Forest City became monotonous; consequently the gas harvesters were on the qui vive for a change. They finally resolved to do the Rangeley Lakes by way of spicing the insipidity. So, on the 22nd, they departed for Rangeley, via the M. C. R. R., to Farmington, and the narrow gauged road to Rangeley.

Passing the night at Farmington, and the next day continuing their journey, they passed through vistas of changing scenery, and arrived without ennui, at Phillips, which lies nestled among the hills between the lake region and the grave old town of Farmington.

Leaving Phillips behind, the tourists were now gliding along the narrow road bed in the wild perennial wild-wood.

Suddenly there comes a deafning crash! The car is crushed asunder; a tremendous and overwhelming shock ensues, then—all is dark oblivion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Up in the sylvan shadows,
Where the mountain torrents roar,
Sad dirges the breezes are crooning
O'er corpses that welter in gore.

WE will ascend to an eminence on the western border of Maine and gaze on the sights beneath us. One-fourth of a mile to the left the eye falls on a notch in the hills. This was not fashioned by the hand of Nature, but was the outcome of persevering toil with the modern facilities of man, and now constitutes the foundation of two bristling lines of steel.

The length of this artificial gulch is about one half mile, and is overhung midway between the openings by an almost perpendicular bluff. Thirty-five feet from the brink stood a huge rock maple, far exceeding all others, in height and diameter, to be found in that whole vast wilderness. When standing in all its robust majesty it reached skyward to a distance of ninety feet, and for sixty feet from its base was entirely devoid of branches. The limbs, reaching out to an unusual length, rendered the forest patriarch exceedingly top-heavy. This tree, at its base, measured seven feet and three inches in diameter, and was absolutely unaffected by seams or rottenness. It had a slight, though hardly noticable inclination, tending directly toward the edge of the bluff over the road bed.

The wild land about there was owned by a resident of the neighboring settlement, who had conceived the idea of converting the maple into lumber.

There being no wind on the morning in question, he considered it an auspicious time for deposing the monarch. Repairing to the spot with eight sturdy woodsmen, they laid seige at the rough, fibrous trunk.

At six o'clock A. M., the chopping was inchoate, two men chopping at a scarp on opposite sides of the tree, spelling one another every half hour.

Working away with muscular vigor they thought to accomplish their laborious task before the 11-30 passenger train should have passed the

cut. But, after chopping incessantly for an hour or more, they were convinced that their job was greater than they had anticipated. Still, nothing daunted, the blows of their axes continued, and but two feet of the uncut wood remained when the hour of eleven approached.

The sky now became overcast, a slight breeze sprung up, a shower seemed imminent. The choppers ceased work to await developments.

Gradually the heavens darkened, and as gradually the breeze freshened, until, when the hour of train time arrived, a violent shower swept down from the North, borne on the wings of a gale.

Onward came the storm, and nearer and more near rushed the train.

Seeing that nothing could be done to avert the danger, the woodsmen hastily took to flight.

Only a moment more and a furious tornado bursts madly along the ridge, followed by a frightful and far-echoing crash! "Tis like allied peals of paralyzing thunder! Behold! that towering and stupendous monarch is hurled from his pedestal, falling with concussion dire, shaking the hill with an appalling boom!! It shakes those ponderous piles of stone from lowest base to apex!

The monstrous top of the maple causes it to turn a summersault as it goes over the bluff, while the cyclopean trunk cuts through the hindmost of the passenger coaches, grinding four mortals to a lifeless, shapeless pulp.

The train had broken apart; i. e., the rear car was detached from the others by the falling of the maple, one half being literally pulverized, while the other was dashed violently against the opposite ledge.

* * * * *

Ralph was stunned for a few moments; but presently he became conscious of hot breath on his cheek, and opening his eyes, was astonished to see one of his fellow-passengers, in the person of a beautiful young lady, lying prostrate and unconscious at his side.

He raised himself upon his knees, feeling faint and giddy at first. But the sensation rapidly disappeared and he immediately rose to his feet, looking wonderingly about him.

The remainder of the car in which he had chosen to ride was now lying upon its side with the trucks against the ledge.

Turning his eyes from the open end of the wreck, his gaze again fell upon the upturned face of his unfortunate traveling companion, who had occupied a seat directly across the aisle from his since leaving the station at Phillips.

He stooped and raised her head upon his knee. She breathed regularly and was not, apparently, severely injured.

Bethinking himself at once of the flask of brandy that he had placed in his traveling bag, he fell to searching for the lost portmanteau.

Finding it between the seats at the broken end of the wreck, he again raised the head of the unfortunate young lady, holding the flask to her pallid lips.

A spoonful of the liquid produced a marked effect. She revived speedily, and opening her eyes, fixed a look of questioning and undisguised amazement on the face of her gallant protector.

"I'm very glad you're getting better. Were you much hurt?" anxiously enquired Ralph.

"N—o;" she answered slowly, "at least I do not think so. My left arm is injured; but, if you will kindly assist me, I think I may venture to rise now."

"Certainly! but it won't do to overtax your strength. I think you had better remain quiet for a short time. I will rearrange these cushions and make you as comfortable as possible."

"Thank you. I will abide by your counsel in this case. How did it all happen? Did the train leave the track? Oh, this is horrible! Was everybody else killed?"

She was at this moment interrupted in her questionings by a voice from the open air.

"Ralph! Ralph!" called a voice, which appeared to emanate from the immediate vicinity of the opening.

"Hello! Is that you, Anth?" gleefully answered Horton.

"Yes; partly. What isn't me is the remains of a mammoth hardwood forest. Come here and lift this limb, so I can disengage myself from its loving and tender embrace, and I'll tell you all about the courtship."

When Ralph emerged from the opening he was startled to see Anthony lying supine with a ponderous limb of the maple across his chest.

He seized the smaller end with his hands, but was unable to raise it sufficiently to permit of Cameron's escape. He glanced about him to see if haply he might discover a lever of some sort to facilitate the emancipation.

Fortunately his search was rewarded by spying an iron rod upon the ground, it having been torn from the bottom of the car at the moment of the calamity.

With this he succeeded in prying up the limb enough to release the comfortless, but uncomplaining victim.

"Are you hurt, Anth?" enquired Ralph, as soon as the disenthralment was effected.

"A little bruised, though nothing alarming. My chest feels a bit compressed, and my head a little sore; still, that will not materially discommode me."

At this juncture the young lady, who was left in the wreck, appeared on the scene, looking rather pale, but otherwise quite restored.

It is needless to say that Anthony was taken by surprise, and he stared for a few seconds at the lovely apparition.

Ralph came bravely to the rescue by saying:

"Allow me to present my friend Mr. Cameron, Miss—ahem, I beg your pardon, Miss or Mrs. whatever you call yourself."

"Lennox; Lillian Lennox," prompted the young lady, blushing.

"Mr. Anthony Cameron, Miss Lillian Lennox. Miss Lillian Lennox Mr. Anthony Cameron. Regarding the cognomen of your humble servant, he signs himself in the autograph of plain, unembellished Ralph Horton."

That portion of the car which remained intact, and in which the aforesaid trio had been seated, was thrown twenty feet from the track, while the other portion was crushed on the rails. Anthony had spilled out at the open end when the wreck pitched over; and, as the tree had turned a summersault and slightly rolled after it reached the ground, he was caught by one of its massive arms midway between its extremities.

Their excitement having slowly subsided, they suddenly bethought themselves of the other four passengers who had occupied the forward end of the railway carriage.

Anthony, after taking half a dozen steps toward the track, abruptly halted, standing transfixed with horror. His eye had caught the crushed remains of one of the luckless victims.

"You folks stay where you are and I'll be back in a moment," he managed to articulate with remarkable composure.

A cursory examination of the place left no doubt as to the fate of their neighbors. He turned back to where Ralph and Miss Lennox were standing, and taking Ralph aside, acquainted him with the shocking intelligence.

While they were thus busied with their thoughts, the tones of a distant bell were borne to their ears, and a moment later the rear end of a train appeared, backing cautiously up to the scene of carnage.

The train stopped when within a few yards of the place of catastrophe; and when Ralph and Anthony had prevailed on Miss Lennox to enter one of the coaches, they joined the party of men who had returned with the train hands, and willingly tendered their assistance.

The wood-choppers, descrying the wreck from the bluff, supposed that all the passengers had perished, having noticed the flattened remains on the track, and, stupefied by the sudden and awful calamity, stood staring with dilated eyes, and conversing in awe-struck whispers.

The wreck in which we found Ralph and Miss Lennox was concealed from their view by the prostrate maple, hence they were not cognizant of the surviving party until Anthony appeared; then they hastened to proffer aid in case that any was needed. Not being able to descend by the bluff, they were obliged to make a detour to the right to avoid the perpendicular ledges. Therefore they were unable to reach the track until the train had returned.

The unrecognizable cadavers of the four beings were speedily transferred to the train. Then, leaving behind a deobstruent faction, the signal was given, the drivers began to rotate, and the survivors departed for Phillips, not a little depressed by the day's tragedy.

The Portland gentlemen joined Miss Lennox in the forward car and accompanied her back to Phillips where her friends resided.

On the way, they learned that she had left home that morning to visit friends in Rangeley, unsuspecting of the scenes she had witnessed.

Before they reached their destination the poor girl was stricken with alarming illness, manifesting symptoms of hysteria, superinduced by a shock of the nervous system.

Ralph performed the offices of nurse with admirable tact and gentleness, bathing her fevered temples with her tiny cambric handkerchief, which he had moistened in a basin of ice water. He had previously bandaged her arm with a silk scarf saturated in *eau-de-vie*.

Her father, receiving an epitome of the sad events, and anticipating her return by train, had driven over in the carryall to meet her.

Mr. Lennox came forward just as Ralph was assisting his daughter to alight, and was greatly disquieted by her appearance, putting query after query with impatient rapidity.

Upon learning that the daughter was not seriously hurt, although suffering from a transient attack of neurotic prostration, the expression of paternal anxiety upon the face of the father gave place to one of calm gravity.

Mr. Lennox thanked the gentlemen for their kindness, and insisted on taking them home, saying that he would endeavor to extend to them a hospitality as comfortable and gracious as that of the local landlord. They accepted the invitation, and hastily gathering up their portmantaus, entered the carryall and were driven rapidly away.

Mr. Lennox, a "well to do" citizen of Phillips, sojourned in an excellent structure near the outskirts of the village, and the guests received the most solicitous courtesy and attention from the grateful family, who possessed characteristics of the highest intellectual refinement. Though a small family, consisting of only the father, mother and daughter, it lacked not the genial, warming rays of domestic sunshine.

Mrs. Lennox, a motherly, sympathetic soul, imparted to those around her a cheerful glow of happiness, receiving, in return, the homage of their profoundest respect.

Miss Lennox, when ensconced in the quiet of her home, speedily recovered from the enervating ordeal through which she had passed, and by evening had so far regained her normal spirits as to be able to join the company in the parlor.

Ralph was on the *qui vive* for a *tete-a-tete* with the fascinating, though sensible, young lady. But, to his great discomfort, she was now more shy and reserved than during the excitement of the preceding hours. Still, she was not wanting in due appreciation of his previous attentions and kindness, for those eyes of unfathomable azure were empowered of a mystic magnetism, capable of transmitting to the minds of others messages from the depths of a soul enkindled by flames of impassioned fervor.

The evening was quickly passed in conversing upon general topics.

The clock proclaimed the hour of eleven. So, bidding good night to their peerless hosts, the heroes retired to their *chambre-de-lit*, to repose and review the strange happenings of a day.

CHAPTER IX.

At earliest matin, the King of Day, mounting his mirroring chariot, wheeled up the burnished Oriental piazza, pouring forth his entrancing effluence in oceans of glimmering and re-shimmering radiance!!

"Whither shall we roam?" asked Ralph, after breakfast, as they were going for a few moments walk. "Shall we return to Portland, or shall we continue the trip at all hazards?"

"I cannot say that I have become enamoured of such as yesterday's diversions. Yet, there is probably no more danger in continuing our course than would be incurred in retracing the distance to Portland," philosophized Anthony.

"All right. Suppose we take the P. M., train for Rangeley, and see if old Nemesis is still on the war path?"

"I have no objections to interpose; though perhaps it would be as well not to challenge His blood-thirsty Godship, for he might not take it benignly."

"Oh, never stand on hypothesis; the realistic and substantial is sufficient."

"Yes. But by the way, you seem to have fallen prey to the charms of the virgin. A sad, sad parting that will be."

"Don't needlessly distress yourself, for you might induce appoplexy, in which event I should never forgive myself the atrocity."

"Very good. Thou hast a great soul, by the faith! yea; my heart goes out to you in loving admiration," contemptuously mimiced his comrade.

When Ralph, in parting, clasped the hand of Lillian Lennox, he felt that the "flowers of love were blooming in the garden of his heart." He realized, also, that some subtle gloom was falling, closing one by one the sacred blossoms in that greenery of elysian inflorescence. Few were the words they uttered—he spake never to her of love—yet the pulsations of two thrilling hearts were throbbing in measured unison.

During the trip to Rangeley the young men were silent and medita-

tive. But the thoughts of the two men were wholly without similitude, inasmuch as one was engaged in schemes of scientific evolution, while the other was, for the time being, entirely given over to new and delectable musings.

Remaining that night in Rangeley, and proceeding up the lake next day, the anglers arrived at the popular fishing grounds.

About three weeks were passed at Rangeley and Richardson lakes. What repose is embodied in the lot of the fisherman! He drifteth far away from all bitterness of sorrow and the burden of all care.

Toward the middle of August, our friends decided to take in Lake Parmachene on their route. This beautiful expanse of water lies partly within the boundary of the United States, and partly within the domains of Canada. Surrounded by scenery of rugged and imposing grandeur, it is the ideal haven for those seeking rest and forgetfulness.

One day when Horton and Cameron had wandered a long way from the lake, and were climbing a mountain of almost tangible solitude, they were attracted by a plant of unique formation, surmounted by a blossom of matchless brilliancy. Neither Ralph nor Anthony were botanists, but this wild and unfamiliar herb was very dissimilar to anything they had yet witnessed, and they had examined excellent and exhaustive herbariums.

Finding nearly a dozen stalks of the herb within a radius of a few rods, they carefully gathered them, root and stem, for the purpose of future examination.

Having secured intact their botanical prizes, they carried them to camp, or more grandiloquently speaking, the hotel on Parmachene.

The roots were then severed from the stalks and wrapped in paper, while the blossoms and leaves were arranged and pressed as in a hortus siccus.

Remaining at Parmachene till the 12th of August, the chums put the days to flight with reading, boating, angling, and in vain endeavors to seduce the wife of their landlord, to wit; by their geological and astronomical confabulations and elucidations.

"Really, this region renders recuperative rustication redundantly remunerative," gleefully exclaimed Ralph, when he one day found several fossil remains of rare and valuable species.

“Very good indeed,” acquiesced Anthony, who had, during that week, become greatly interested in acquiring specimens in the mineralogical line. “But we must get back to Portland and see what progress friend Leighton is making. I hope he has met with no serious impediments, for I am waxing more and more enthusiastic as I dream of the lofty enterprise.”

But Ralph’s ardor seemed to have been kept upon ice; he vouchsafed no reply. A face of youthful beauty appeared before his vision. It was a face which, for him, was the possessor of charms unspeakable, and which had entirely usurped the place of the ærial voyage. Now that the hazardous project was again foisted upon his attention he began to experience sentiments of aversion for what had, at one time, engrossed his entire meditation.

CHAPTER X.

Two days later the tourists "folded their tent, like the Arabs, and as silently stole away." Shaping their course for Errol, N. H., they passed Magalloway, and continued down Umbagog Lake to what is known as Errol Dam, situated at the source of the Androscoggin river, the outlet of said lake.

From Errol they took stage to Berlin Falls on the Grand Trunk Railway, and approached the shore of Casco Bay August 21st, 1888.

Mr. Leighton, anticipating their advent, came down to the depot to meet them.

"How fares the phoenix craft, kind sir?" eagerly enquired Horton, as his feet touched the platform pavement, and he cordially extended his sunburnt hand to the Boston genius.

"Superb to the highest degree!" replied the artist, as he shook the hand of the student.

"I declare!" said Ralph. I believe my flagging zeal is regenerated. I am all haired out with curiosity to see the modern miracle."

When will she be in readiness for launching? We must make a trial trip in order to test her," suggested Cameron, while they strode briskly up India street in the direction of the mysterious work shop.

"Well, you see, with the exception of 'setting up,' she is just on the point of completion. We were obliged to remove about half of the second floor to obtain the requisite amount of space. We can take the machine out into the country some pleasant day to attach the lines and car and effect the final elaboration."

When the trio reached the shop it seemed to the tourists as if some preternatural contrivance had been created. They were utterly oblivious to the flight of time, the afternoon being far spent ere the ravenous refugees hastened homeward.

"Mrs. Cameron was a trifle concerned at their tardiness, supposing they had not arrived by the noon train, which, they stated in their last letter would undoubtedly bring them home.

That evening, when Anthony was unpacking his portmanteau, he found the peculiar herbs, discovered in the lake region, to be in a perfect state of preservation. When dry, the leaves gave forth an aromatic odor, which, when constantly breathed for a few moments, produced a drowsy sensation upon the inhaler. These he analyzed to ascertain whether they contained any virulent poison.

The analysis demonstrated that the plant contained no deadly element, though composed of ingredients of a poisonous nature. He then steeped a few of the leaves in a gill dipper for the purpose of trying experiments. The liquid was allowed to boil nearly an hour. The decoction was then removed from the stove that it might cool in the chill refrigerator.

When the process was ended, a cat was forced to swallow a few drops of the liquid, which immediately produced a lethargic state, from which it could not be roused. Its heart no longer palpitated, and it was obvious that respiration had ceased. The only indication that life still lingered was that the body retained its normal heat.

When Anthony retired that night, he placed the cat on a rug at the foot of his bed, securing the doors and windows of the apartment.

Next morning found the cat in the same condition, the body still warm, but no other signs of life were perceptible. She remained in that condition until about noon of the third day, when she began to manifest symptoms of resuscitation, and at the end of an hour, was fully restored to her former sprightliness.

Seeing that his feline patient received no ill affects from the sleep-giving potion, he began to experiment on his own system, commencing with one drop of the narcotic and increasing the dose until it should produce narcosis. He soon imbibed a sufficient quantity of the soporific to induce narcotism, and gradually sank into somnolence.

Anthony remained in a state of the most pronounced insensibility for the period of twenty-one days; then, greatly to the relief of his friends, reanimation was evinced.

No injurious consequences ensued from his protracted siesta, and Anthony sat down to supper with a good, and not, as our fancy would suggest, voracious appetite.

The balloon had now for two weeks been ready for the trial voyage, which was procrastinated in consequence of Cameron's comatose condition.

Early in the morning of September 29th, Messrs. Horton, Cameron and Leighton departed on an out-bound freight for Falmouth, where the trial ascension was intended to take place. A paltry amount of gas was taken thither along with the balloon and fixtures. Two and one-half hours sufficed for the preparations and all was ready for the Heavenward flight.

The car of this traveling device contained an electric motor, designed for driving the propellers which were placed on opposite sides of the car. The gas would furnish the buoying power, while the propellers and rudder would shape the air ship's course.

At 1-30 P. M., the balloon was seen rising slowly and queenly above the hilltops, and continued her ascent until an altitude of fifteen thousand feet was attained. She then occupied herself for over an hour in cruising above the neighboring towns which lay impassive below.

The aeronauts remained aloft until satisfied of the feasibility of a more extended tour, and then, opening the escape valve of the gas repository, slowly and safely descended to earth.

The balloon was still sufficiently charged with gas to sustain its own weight in the air, and was towed bodily to Portland in the rear of a team drawn by a span of powerful horses.

The balloon was stored in a superannuated fane in the vicinity, and the aeronauts returned to their respective abodes to meditate on plans for the future.

Amid the passing moments of the next few days, and sometimes in the stillness of nocturnal hours, Anthony was occupied in making further experimental examinations of the unique herb.

Finally, he induced a resident of the city, who was then in the last stages of consumption, to swallow a considerably larger dose of the extract than he had himself taken.

Inasmuch as cold weather was rapidly approaching, and the imperative-ness of observing the result of the soporific drug, it was decided to postpone the aerial voyage until the coming spring.

The winter was now gliding fleetly by, and still the patient manifested no indications of returning animation, and Anthony began to greatly marvel at the prolonged period of insensibility.

At last, on the 23rd day of March, 1889, the pseudo-corpse appeared to be reviving, and a single drop of the drug was administered.

The subject of experiment sank back to a state of incessant stupor and remained in that condition until the fourth day of the ensuing month of May, when he was permitted to assume anew life's weary, dreary routine.

But what was the greatest prodigy of all was that his pulmonary organs had, for some time, ceased their decomposition and were now diurnally healing, and being speedily restored to a sound and healthy condition.

Now, Anthony reasoned in this manner. If a few drops would, in his accustomed atmosphere, render a man viable for six months without breathing, a like proportion of the narcotic would render him capable of surviving a similar period in much lighter air, or even in ether. Hence, if their celestial yacht came into a potent supernal current when at an appallingly high elevation, the frail craft must be wafted through space with incomprehensible velocity, and would, in this event, be transferred to one of the planets.

This was, indeed, an unpromising supposition, and to undertake such an experiment would appear pre-eminently foolhardy; yet such were the plans of Horton and Cameron.

Annuling, to a certain extent, their obligations to Leighton—who returned at once to the Hub, the aeronauts set about preparing for a long, long cruise, the ending of which lay shrouded in dark and ominous uncertainty.

Early in the forenoon, on the 6th of June, the balloon was towed out to Cape Elizabeth by a truckman who had been hired for that purpose.

When the hands upon the clock dials should point to eleven, and the bells should sonorously chime the hour, the craft would be loosed from her moorings, and then would the memorable ascension take place.

As the index hand was nearing the hour, a wondering throng surged over the Cape ; but a solemn, oppressive stillness pervaded the sultry air. And now, behold ! only five minutes are wanting.

Two daring and determined men approach, and vaulting into the basket, they signal the man at the windlass, who pays out the cable till the air ship reaches a height of forty or fifty feet. The rope is made fast, and the awed but cheering multitude await the parting speech of Ralph Alpheus Harrison Horton.

The speaker rises, and with one hand resting upon the railing of the car, addresses that vast concourse as follows :

“Friends, Citizens, and Fellows of this Mundane Orb :—It is my **privilege** and pleasure, when about to embark on a perilous and untried voyage, to greet you and bid you a touching farewell.

“Not in all the annals, which date from the pristine days of Babylon to the unprecedented epoch of the present day, is there found recorded a single instance where man has ever found a pathway that led to those mighty realms beyond ! Man thirsts and yearns for that latent knowledge which must one day revolutionize our globe ! He seeks for a medium through which to surmount the difficulties, and effect a means of intercourse with the hosts of neighboring worlds. In all the branches of erudition which our modern universities have unfolded, there is no loftier, grander or sublimer study than that of this infinite, wondrous and awe-inspiring macrocosm ! Life is but the merest atom when weighed in the ballance with this all important problem ! The die is cast, and we propose, as did the great old Colon, to proceede until the enterprise is accomplished, or, as perchance may be our luckless fate, to perish ingloriously in the bold attempt.

“When drifting mid the lonely waste of ether, where ruin waves an evil, coal-black hand, may the good wishes of our country's people pilot us in safety to some peaceful planet land. And if, from out that solemn, trackless desert, we ere return, with tidings glad to tell, live lustre shall impart perennial glory to the, e kind friends, whom we now bid farewell !”

The speaker's voice died away amid the mournful swash of the wavelets—no sound of human utterance was heard. The cable is immediately detached, and the balloon mounts rapidly upward, bearing two human souls away whose destiny lies beyond the mists. The future no man knoweth.

Beyond the Ether.

PART SECOND.

SUPERMUNDANE.

CHAPTER I.

“Men of thought! be up and stirring night and day; .

Sow the seed—withdraw the curtain—clear the way.

Men of action, aid and cheer them, as ye may!

There's a fount about to stream,

There's a light about to beam,

There's a warmth about to glow,

There's a flower about to blow;

There's a midnight blackness changing into gray.

Men of thought and men of action, clear the way!”

THE æronauts had prepared and fortified their constitutions for a rarefied atmosphere, and so were enabled to ascend to a height of nearly thirty thousand feet before fatal consequences were imminent.

When they had attained to this altitude they came into a supernal current, which rapidly increased in velocity as they were borne along its course. This current, at the time, tended directly Northward, and, to all appearances, augmented in fleetness upon approaching the bounds of pure ether.

“Oh!” murmured Ralph, in a scarcely audible whisper, “five minutes more and all will be over.”

Anthony, with great effort, now drew from his vest pocket a phial of the sleep-giving fluid, and with a hand that feebly faltered, offered it to Ralph, saying: “Drink this, if you wish to make the venture; it is our only chance.”

Rousing all his remaining energies, Ralph seized the phial, eagerly swallowed its entire contents, and fell back at once insensible, while his skin was cracking open and the blood flowing profusely from his nostrils. At the same moment, Anthony had performed a like feat with another phial of the soporific, and he, also, was unconscious anon.

Thus lay the entranced explorers, calmly oblivious to the awful distance which lay between them and the land they had bidden a sorrowful adieu.

In a few minutes the balloon reached an elevation of about fifty miles, coming into the region of unmixed ether, and into which the supernal current passed, increasing in swiftness until an overwhelming velocity was attained.

For months this fragile craft was borne along the lone ethereal stream, passing many a minor star in its mad, impetuous flight, traversing daily an average distance of no less than 30,000 miles.

The drug had thoroughly done its work; a profound, unnatural sleep continued, like that eternal hush from which no waking comes.

At the end of about thirty-seven months—when 33,750,000 miles had been passed with lightening rapidity—the adventurers were one day awakening from that long, miraculous, unprecedentedly-prodigious sleep!

Slowly the process of reanimation went on, until the paralyzed senses of two daring mortals were straying back to reason, like the impotent insect when it bursts the gauzy chrysalis and issues forth to the light of an unfamiliar sphere.

Anthony Cameron lay in the closed car of the air ship until the hour of ten A. M., July 7th, 1892.

Gradually his faculties came back from the ebon court of Morpheus, and he presently arose to a sitting posture, gazing vacantly through the window into space. With laggard step strange memory now returns, and he heaves a sigh of unutterable anguish as he touches the cold and lifeless hand of his comrade, crying from the very depths of a soul inwrought with sorrow, "Kind friend, thou art no more!"

CHAPTER II.

WE have hereinbefore stated that the balloon was equipped with an electric motor, attached for the purpose of propulsion, built of aluminum, and actuating twin propellers, which were capable, in an atmosphere of mediocre clemency, of driving the ship at a mean rate of forty miles per hour. The car contained a considerable supply of edibles. These were placed there as a safeguard in the event of an emergency.

When Anthony's hand came in contact with that of his friend, he was convinced that Ralph Horton was dead; for during the few moments since his resurrection, sufficient time had not elapsed for him to regain his original reasoning acumen.

However, he soon perceived that Ralph's body was not wholly cold; but, owing to the chilliness of the temperature—although they were in the closed chamber above the basket—the animal heat of his person was not perceptible at first touch.

Upon ascertaining that life was not extinct, Anthony's joy was unbounded, and he made haste to resuscitate his partner.

Taking from a small case a phial of brownish liquid, he poured a few drops on the tongue of his patient, and was quickly compensated by signs of returning animation.

At the expiration of fifteen or twenty minutes, Ralph passed his left hand across his eyes in a drowsy, bewildered manner, murmured a few inarticulate words, and presently opened his eyes to behold the familiar phiz of his colleague.

"Did you get those canned oysters?" asked Ralph, dreamily, when returned recognition revived him.

"Yes indeed!" responded Cameron with stoical gravity, "and they threw in a codfish to boot."

Ralph sighed and remained silent for a few moments. Presently he soliloquized faintly:

"I never knew before that it was customary to put codfish in oyster stews. Can't understand it nohow, but presume it makes them richer in case the oysters are tainted."

"Undoubtedly. Raw oysters are usually served with fried lobster shells in this luxuriant country."

"Ah! I see now; we have come to life again. When did you wake up?"

"Scarcely an hour ago," answered Cameron,

"What sort of an atmosphere is this? We are not going back to Earth, are we?"

"No. I think not; though I haven't had opportunity to make any observations yet."

"This is certainly of about the same density as the mountain summits of the Andes. That would seem to favor our calculations. The unsolved problem is, where does the pure ether terminate and the denser elements begin? And for how great a distance does the atmosphere of the planets really extend?"

"Well, if we keep up this rate of speed—which is 1,250 miles an hour—we shall probably get somewhere or nowhere in the process of eight or ten cycles."

"As there are no guide-boards, I can make no positive assertions regarding stellar distances; but of one thing I am palpably sure, namely, of a vacuum in the region of my digestive ventricle."

"What will you have?" patronizingly inquired Anthony, "roast beef, frogs hind legs or fried bananas?"

"Never concern yourself with so smpile a matter. A bowl of kumiss and a venison steak will fill the order. I'm not at all precise about the menu nowadays."

The voyagers made a very fair meal on canned lobster, boiled eggs, soda crackers and port wine. The eggs were kept in an air-tight can since leaving their own sublunar spheroid. Although their paraphernalia comprised an oil stove, they were too hungry to wait the steeping of coffee.

With their stomachs supplied with nutriment, they began to feel like their former selves, and devoted several hours to observation and calculation.

All that was visible to the naked eye was the dazzling brightness of the sunlight. It seemed actually to flow from the shrine of the Holy

Ghost. No night was there ; the solar beams were incessant. Thus it was that they were unable to ascertain, with any degree of accuracy, their position in that untraveled, tedious sky.

One day another sun was discerned, and which gradually increased in brilliancy as the myriads of miles were traversed.

“How long will the provisions last if we continue the consumption as we have begun?” enquired Ralph a few days later, as they sat smoking in the basket beneath the enclosed chamber.

Anthony, who had been making calculations on a piece of paper, looked up as he answered ;

“About three months, at the longest, according to these figures. The crackers and canned milk were a lucky hit, but the preserved meats are not far in the rear. Six barrels of crackers, 50 quarts of milk and 100 pounds of preserved meats contain very nearly as much nourishment as can be found in other species of food in similar weight and bulk.”

“We ought to be as prudent of the stock as we comfortably can, for it is eminently uncertain as to when we shall reach port,” observed Horton.

The days dragged slowly by, and still no signs of terra firma. Yet the voyagers were enabled to compute the passage of time by means of a small, but wonderful clock, invented and perfected by a Parisian genius. This clock was so constructed that it would run for twelve years without the aid of the slightest attentions. It was adjusted to heat, cold and position, and marked the days of the month as well as the hours of the day. So steadily ticked the time piece in the same monotonous routine, that only the utter lack of diversion prevented its sound from becoming insufferable.

On the 20th of September, when only a few morsels of food remained, and the æronauts were despairing, a darkness slowly gathered in the heavens, deepening into a dense and murky blackness.

After the coming of evening shadows, three satellites appeared in the vast immensity, pouring their streams of purest radiance on the wan and weary watchers. Myriads of stars, of awful magnitude and unspeakable brilliancy, seemed to burst from the fiery heavens ! While

far in the East, directly in the course of the air ship, lay a ponderous circle of total darkness, filling the whole celestial concave of the Orient.

At first, owing to what seemed the wholly unnatural position of the planets, and the coming into view of new and formerly unknown bodies, Ralph felt that all his sedulous study had been for naught. But, notwithstanding the disappearance of many of the heavenly bodies which had hitherto stood out in cardinal prominence from his mundane points of gazing, he finally succeeded in locating several familiar spheres, and ere the hours of night-time vanished, was convinced that the enormous silhouette, toward which they were fleetly flying, was nothing less than the wonderful world of Mars.

But a day succeeded this unique night—which was of about six hours and forty minutes duration—ekeing itself out to the length of an earthly fortnight; and all this time the adventurers sustained life with only two crackers and two cups of coffee apiece in every interval of twenty-four hours—their reckonings had been fallacious when estimating the length of their viands.

At seven o'clock of what would here be designated morning, and the 3rd of October, a most memorable happening came to pass. The worn and famished wanderers had, in their exhaustion, both fallen asleep, and for over ten hours the soothing hand of oblivion was cooling the fiery brain.

Awakening at the hour mentioned, the first thought was to glance in the direction of the darksome East, and toward which they had lately been fleeing.

As they did so, a sight met their gaze whose stupendous and all-inspiring grandeur can never be described by pen of fragile mortal!

Two hundred miles in the lucent distance lay a world of exuberant splendor—unparalleled in richness and rapturous beauty.

Continents, formed like stars and diamonds, spread out as far as the eye could reach, which, when viewed through a small, but powerful, telescope, seemed nothing short of an actual paradise.

The speed of the balloon had, for the last three weeks of its journeying, greatly and gradually decreased, and was now diminished to a rate of three hundred miles per hour.

Suddenly, a few minutes later, the craft abruptly slackened its velocity—the end of the supernal current was reached. The balloon, for a few miles, retained its course, then diverged and drifted to the Southward.

Summoning all their remaining strength, the æronauts started the electric motor and steered for the Land of Promise. They were propelled thirty miles each hour, and by half past eleven only fifty miles lay between them and the haven of refuge.

Lakes of sequestered serenity, violet and emerald hued, environed by beaches of rubies, stretched away in the dreamy distance, and blending with blossoming shrubs, gorgeous foliage and paramount architecture, completed a panorama of elysian resplendence.

Sailing at an altitude of forty thousand feet above terraqueous matter, the force of gravity became perceptible, and was demonstrated by dropping from the basket a quart bottle, which, at first, moved slowly downward and Southward, but gradually quickening its motion, soon passed from the watchers' vision.

Although a world was looming in their pathway, and beings, formed like unto man, were moving on its surface, the wanderers knew not what would be their welcome. Might they not—after all the perils and sufferings through which they had passed—be rewarded with barbarous treatment, or ignominious death?

A feeling of trepidation arises in the breasts of the æronauts while scanning a distant city, whose overpowering grandeur far exceeds the vividest of supernatural imagery! Palaces, which boundlessly surpass the grandest of the olden Grecians, stand out in potent prominence, their glittering golden domes, and majestic terraces, reflect the brightest and softest of sunshine, and the glinting waters of the spheroid beam like a massive opal!

Streets are paved in rubies; castles are wrought in blazing sapphire, crowned by domes of burnished gold. Balconies are inlaid with purest pearl, while the walls of those glorious mansions are studded with myriads of diamonds!

Stately spires of amethyst are outlined against the clarified horizon! Obelisks and pyramids of imposing splendor were fashioned in turquoise and topaz—monuments of never ending greatness!

Away in the background lie shadows of perennial forests, inwoven with colossal trees, whose height, in cubits, are of the thousands, towering bold and gigantic in forever-during greenness !

Cliffs and crags in the mountainous region seem to have been hewn from huge masses of crystal, sardius, emerald and jasper, unmatched in superbest exquisiteness ! ay, sublime of all sublimity ! !

Kite-shaped equippages were gliding above the domes with fairy-like swiftness, laded, apparently, with beings of imponderable sapience. Groups of illustrious bipeds were gathered in magnolia bowers, listening to strains of heavenly melody, swelling in canorous symphony, and welling on the peaceful air supremely, yea, enravishing !

Temples and mosques and fanes were everywhere visible, interspersed with cathedrals of dazzling magnificence—ponderous in the extreme.

Virgins of angelic pulchritude were flitting hither and thither, arrayed in immaculate vesture, translucent in the wavering zephyrs.

Flowers there were in profusion, aurated, purple, crimson, pink, violet and azure hued, bringing vividly to mind a strophe of Longfellow's measures :

"Spake full well, in language quaint and olden,
One who dwelleth by the castled Rhine,
When he called the flowers, so blue and golden,
Stars, which in earth's firmament do shine."

These beings, from their quiet pastimes, would seem to emphacise the accents of the museful British bard, who penned, in lines mellifluous, those words of ringing eloquence ; for in that placid world no births are known, neither is there death :—

"There is pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar ;
I love not man the less, but nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal."

Know ye not, O mortals, that the words of Pope are true? This is the land of the dead. Changed are the higher creatures of this earth, when their mundane stay is ended, and they drift out on that silent, solemn and unearthly pilgrimage.

“Vital spark of heavenly flame,
Quit, oh, quit this mortal frame;
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying—
Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!
Cease, fond Nature, cease thy strife
And let me languish into life!”

CHAPTER III.

SHORTLY after one o'clock, the balloon reached a point directly over a towering and extensive forest. This, the æronauts opined to be the most auspicious district for approaching the strange land, as they were still in quondary as to the characteristics of its denizens.

Ralph grasped the cord attached to the escape valve, and drawing it taught, unclosed the vent and allowed a large quantity of the gas to escape.

Slowly and steadily the air ship descended until within thirty thousand feet of terra firma, when it dropped into a dense mass of clouds, and a wind of dire impetuosity.

The adventurers were violently tossed about, and it was only by clinging to the rigging with a death-grip that instantaneous dislodgment was averted. This jeopardy dured for nearly twenty minutes, and then the atmosphere assumed a more clement condition.

We have stated that the sky had previously been clear, and the topography strikingly conspicuous. The sudden formation of clouds is peculiar to that section of the universe, and they disappear as quickly as they generate. Seldom are dark clouds discernable from the surface of Mars.

Continuing their descent, they reached the flowering and odiferous forest. But, as they lit on the top of a lofty tree, a large rent was torn in the silk casing, and they were forcibly precipitated downward, falling, falling, falling to a river's rolling waters, one thousand feet below!

During their rapid descent, the æronauts were spilled from the basket, and were fleetly nearing the river's surface when they were caught in the mammoth nest of a monstrous eagle, inwoven among the branches of a low, wide-spreading tree. Although the nest was torn from its hangings, it served to break the fall of the ship-wrecked party, doubtlessly snatching them from the yawning jaws of death.

Some may marvel that, upon gaining ingress to this spirit world, the adventurers were not endowed with the wonderful powers of its inhabitants. But such was not the destined lot of this impotent couple—Providence had otherwise decreed.

When the nest containing our friends reached the waters, there stood by the shining shore the presence of a transformed patriarch; and stretching forth his hand, he spake in an unknown tongue, commanding the nest to draw nigh to him. And immediately the nest of the eagle, and its occupants, was mysteriously lifted from its resting place and silently borne to the shore, falling gently at the feet of the holy magician.

Saluting them in the unknown tongue—the accents of which were strangely dulcet in the ears of these uncouth mortals—the patriarch gave utterance to a saintly welcome, obviously closing with some interrogatory sentence incomprehensible to his strange auditors.

Perceiving that they understood not the language of the realm, the patriarch—whose long, snowy beard, and waving, silvery tresses enkindled a halo in that mellow sea of sunlight—addressed them in the nomenclature of their nativity, saying:

“Thou nomads in the vastness of the Great Jehova! Why art thou downcast and disconsolate? Wherefore quail ye in this haven of purity? Permit not thy hearts to anguish. Ye have passed beyond the bourne of woe, herein the wicked trouble not—peace be unto thy souls.”

The spirit being was formed like unto man of the inferior worlds, but moulded from a model more seraphic and beautiful, a glow of inspiring holiness illuminating his countenance. He was arrayed in white, flowing robes, the textile fabric of which was vastly superior to the finest satin, and was woven by hands unknown.

As they stood by the river's brink, the sound of a thousand harps, blending with the joyful swell of accompanying hosts of voices, was borne to the ears of the aliens. Higher and clearer rose the chanting, while harmonious quavers filled the chaste refrain.

“'Tis a song of celestial anthems the sacred souls are singing,” quoth the patriarch, in subdued and reverent accents, responding to the perplexed expressions on the faces of his visitors.

“Prithee, ye brothers of the clay, let us enter the Gardens Celestial, for therein shalt thou behold wondrous works of the Omnific Deity, whose omnipresence pervadeth all things.”

Guided by the holy seer, the privileged mortals walked, as he who falls in a trance, dazed and dumb amidst the copious flora, evergreen foliage and sweet-scented sward, along the labyrinthine vistas leading to the heaven-canopied pantheon, ornate in shrubs of racemiferous inflorescence.

Entering the Gardens Celestial, they came unto the Holy of Holies, a cyclopean bower, somewhat Romanesque, and in the likeness of a sanctimonious colosseum, where rose the far-resounding sonnets. Behold! Angelic hands do smite the lyres, and draw from their sonorous chords soft, circean sounds of solace.

Sitting, reclining, standing were the individuals of this consecrated community. Countless pillows, outrivalling the superfine of eider-down, adorned luxurious couches, which remained for all time beneath the lustrous welkin. Never falleth rain in this delightful domain. A moisture arises from the interior of the sphere, similar to the dew of Earth, though gradually and continuously, and not in sufficient volume to stand in drops on the verdure.

The suns, albeit they shine with paramount brightness, disseminate rays of cool, unwithering effulgence, and naught of darkness shades their landscapes; for, as there are three solar bodies in attendance, two of them linger for aye.

CHAPTER IV.

The reader will remember that the æronauts were slowly dying of starvation when they awoke to behold the planet in her hope-perpetuating adjacency. But an eagle had brought in her talons two clusters of grape-like fruit. This came to pass but a few moments previous to their descent. Laying hold upon the fruit with their molars, the hunger anon was appeased, and their bodies reinvigorated.

The patriarch was apprised in a vision of the coming of the mundane exiles, and had sent them the fruit-manna. But the exalted inhabitants partake no potations, neither have they want of food.

As the last waves of melody were waning, the patriarch spake in stentorian tones to the phantom congregation, each of which had permeated transfiguration.

“Beloved of the Most High, hearken to his mandates; for it is the will of your Creator that these, our incarnate brothers, should sojourn among you for the space of eight years, peradventure they pervert not their steps. During the era of their abiding, their wants shall be administered to. Moreover, they shall eat of the land’s bounteous fruitage, dwelling in purity and peace, receiving blessings and grace, and the comforting presence of our saints. Verily hath ye charity.”

The universe, composed of worlds of inconceivable infinity, constitutes the arena of Almighty God; and in a modicum of this abstruse tenet of transcendentalism, the events of our chronicle transpired.

The macrocosm, being made up of innumerable constellations, comprising orbs of varying magnificence, is the scene of spirit transitions, overawing and marvelous beyond conception. From the inferior worlds to the most splendid, in that stupendous curriculum of souls, are spirits constantly passing; and with each of these vicissitudes, the beings are transformed anew.

Yet, not all may tread these hallowed paths; many are crossing the channels of erebus, and going down, down, down to the wailing worlds of hell!

Nevertheless, it is not all in creed and outward form of supplication, that shapes man’s never-ending destiny.

“Each form of worship that hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master-key of knowledge, *reverence*,
Infolds some germs of goodness and of right.”

When the patriarch had done speaking to the spirit congregation, there arose, clear and resounding, the gladsome, fervent cry :

“Glory to the God Transcendent, ever, forever and evermore! Thy mercy doth illumine creation. Thy wrath doth wreck the worlds! Amen.”

The thrilling flight of hosannas subsided, leaving a glow of pensive serenity in the minds of the reverential mortals. Immediately they were approached by a Demi-seraph, who made known unto them that they should tarry for a time at the place of his Seraphic Hoiness.

Departing the galaxy, they entered the chariot of the Demi,—one of the kite-shaped equippages, embellished in elegant garniture, the seats of which were arranged in a semi-circle, and draped with brocade and satin, and were borne, as upon the wings of a heron, swiftly and safely and silently to the beautiful city of bliss. Gliding above the minarets and spires, they swept into Temple Boulevard, alighting at the imposing front of a palace.

Passing under the arch of the Grand Entrance, they came to the Salon of the Saints, hung with paintings enshrined in untarnishable glory. Among these our friends recognized the saintly portraits of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, Dr. Livingstone, Daniel Webster, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and hundreds of others made illustrious in the spirit world by their sterling integrity and noble charity while on earth.

Leaving the Salon of the Saints, they passed into Crystal Lavatory, accoutred with lavas of nacre and glistening baths of beryl, wherein the rites of purification were duly and delectably performed. From thence they came to the Hall of the Muses.

In that sanctuary were gathered the bards of righteousness, who rendered, with divine power and melodious modulation, the sublimest gems of empyrean poetry. Herein they beheld the kingly form of Shakspeare, and the blessed face of Milton, whose eyes, so long time

closed and sightless, have opened to be shrouded never more! In a niche, beside the genius Virgil, stands a statue of immortal Homer, while a likeness of the stern old Dante now beams from yonder wall. Miniatures of Britannic Cowper, Burns, Browning, Shelly, Southey, Bacon, Goldsmith, Coleridge, Hood, Wordsworth, and thus *ad finem*, lent lambent light to all. And luminous amid the lucent were the artistic counterparts of Gray, Emerson, Haleck, Bryant, Lowell, and endless others. *Pendant que les peintures des celebres francais, tel que Boileau, Moilere, Racine, La Fontain, Hugo and Chenier, surpassent tout le mondain eclat!*

Sweetest of all was the Gallery of Euphony, where Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Bach, Arnold, Handel, Schubert, Strauss, Schuman,—but the list is too long for enumeration—unspeakably embellished the rest. Emblems of the great and just of all nations and kindreds filled that esthetic temple.

In palaces and peaceful castles, were mementos of Athenian, Roman, Babylonian and Egyptian philosophers and astrologers, and general magi of the Oriental kingdoms.

Evanescent were the weeks to the wanderers, ensconced as they were among these beings of fraternal fellowship and love, and their whole beings were ennobled while listening to the soothing, soul-inspiring songs.

Hours were tranquilly passed in excursions, by ærial chariot, to distant parts of the orb.

Away in the opposite extremity, thundering in awful majesty, were the foaming waters of a monstrous cataract, greater, an hundredfold, than the falls of Niagara! Raging in frightful fierceness undefined its oceans of heaving waters shook the land! leaving impressions upon the minds of mortals that could never be effaced.

Placid lakes of hyaline reflection, inwrought with garlands of islets, and bordered in glowing hyacinth, rejoiceth the hearts of beholders.

And on these isles are gleaming stones, more precious than the hoard of many earthly cities.

It was a land of affluence and rest; made opulent to enhance her charms, for a realm of comeliness is she. They that dwelt therein were blest of contented minds, and lived Godly, peparing themselves for the better worlds to come.

CHAPTER V.

Those first three years in the land of the Spirits was like a happy dream. The pilgrims demeaned themselves with the strictest human propriety, abiding in reverence and grace.

But the evil to which the flesh is heir could not remain dormant forever, and eventually its presence was evinced.

Notwithstanding the influence of quiescence which pervaded the hallowed place, the exiles became restless, and did seek after strange pastimes. They made themselves bows and arrows, and slew much of the meek-eyed deer. A deal of the sprightly fish in the streamlets did they destroy. With batons they fell upon a mammoth and harmless eagle, putting her to death. With the virgin saints of the realm they attempted flirtations. So obnoxious did they become to the consecrated commonwealth that the souls of its denizens waxed sad. Hence prayed they the patriarch that he would remonstrate with the evil-doers for their perversity.

Ere long, while in the midst of frowardness, the benign presence of the seer appeared. Raising his hand he commanded silence, and spake unto the multitude with solemn stress of utterance :

“List, ye Souls of Eternity, and give ear unto immutable decrees. Verily it was the will of Providence that the children of the dust might abide with us—while as yet their sojourn should dure—in purity and peace. Now, know ye, that inasmuch as they have gone astray, and seek to defile the kingdom, it is decreed that they be cast out from among us and carried to a spot of never ending darkness. Amen.”

While thus he spake, there fell upon the exiles a deep, mysterious sleep.

Then commanded the patriarch that the offenders be placed in a chariot, which lay hard by, and floated at her moorings. Therefore took they up the bodies of the wicked and cast them into the chariot. Moreover put they therein an abundance of fruit, and puncheons of limpid water together with the fruit gave they to the fallen beings. And when all was now ready they did loose the bonds of the chariot—so they sent them away.

* * * * *

In the seventh month of their wanderings in the wilderness of space, guided, in some occult manner, by powers unseen, the heros awoke from a troubled sleep. A woeful blackness was upon all, for darkness covered their vision. From out of the midst of the darkness came sounds as of muffled voices—the voices of strangers in a strange land.

Then arose they from off the couches upon which they lay, and did grope in the darkness, like one who is stricken blind.

Departing out of the chariot, the feet of the mortals trod upon earth. But they erred and stumbled, being hurled violently into pits and smoking grottos. Their hearts were heavy and their souls groaned within them.

Sudden the gray lips parted
 With wild, far-echoing cries!
 Anguished and broken-hearted,
 Shrieks frightful disrupt the skies!

While creeping cautiously over terrestrial chaos, and searching with outstretched hands for a firm and even footing, they were suddenly transfixed with horror. They have fallen into the den of a million serpents! The air is filled with the most appallingly-frightful hissings, and the nauseous venom of their putrid breaths!

And it came to pass, when they lifted up their voices and cried out, that there appeared by the mouth of the stygian pit, the villainous and phosphorescent faces of two-score dwellers—demons of blood-curdling hideousness!

Lo! When the evil spirits beheld them in torment, they began to mock them, and chuckled in fiendish glee. Neither would they stretch forth so much as a finger to succor, but continued to jeer and harass them, saying:

“Come out, ye curs’d and God-forsaken beings! Wouldst thou flee from the seething tongues of the scorpions? Ha! What doth thy boasted science boot thee now? Thou art lost! lost!! lost forever!!!”

The loathsome land of murk and torture, to which the fallen beings had been doomed, was the fragment of a world once prosperous and beautiful. But long, long centuries ago, that sphere of passing lov-

liness had been wrecked and dashed in pieces. Dismal and desolate it lies, palled, at one pole, in rayless and unremitting darkness. At no time is there sun nor moon nor stars discerned from this tartarean region. To this portion of an asteroid, which was then unknown to man, the wayward folks were banished.

The asteroid was eighty miles in diameter, and occupied a position at a point between the planets Jupiter and Mars, and was 300,000 miles distant from the former.

The scorpions and serpents of various species, by some miraculous ordinance, did not inflict mortal wounds upon their victims, but did torture and mutilate their bodies. With their murderous fangs they laniated the flesh, perpetrating lacerations that were sickening to behold.

Erelong the prey of the reptiles were overcome by suffering and fright, and sank fainting to the floor of their dungeon.

Seeing the torpid condition of the fated couple, the demons quickly sought their disenthralment.

With cord and grapple they clutched the senseless bodies and drew them to the opening of the pit, gloating with dire and fiendish malice all the while.

After the torn and bleeding sufferers were drawn to the isolated rocks, the demons gathered around them, and when consciousness returned, sprinkled salt in their wounds, laughing in hellish exultation at the terrible agony of their victims.

Several hours, protracted beyond words, eked themselves out ere the human exiles were relieved of a torture of much more than far-exceeding intensity. But the endurance of humanity is not without limit, and, after a time, they succumbed to the dreadful ordeal.

The woeful mortals were removed to a neighboring cavern, their wounds cleansed and saturated with a curious healing balm, then they were lain on rude couches of moss and allowed to recuperate.

An evil-visaged crone attended them—a female fiend, of which this branch perdition has its quota. Scores of phosphorescent devils danced around them, howling like the heralds of Belzebub!

These nefarious apparitions eat no food. They exist in flagrant atrocity. Their presence caused the exiles to shudder with abhorrence.

Three weeks later, their wounds nearly healed, they opined to make their escape. Most of the demons, a day or two previous, had gone on a tour to the City of Destruction—situated many leagues from the cavern—leaving the unfortunates in the custody of two hags and three or four demons of the masculine gender.

The attention of the demons was engrossed in some exterior machination, and with which the hags seemed infatuated, as they would flit to the mouth of the cavern and remain for some minutes peering steadily into the blackness.

Nevertheless, the hags watched them closely, casting furtive glances upon them whilst watching the outward proceedings.

Finally, seeming to have no apprehension of their intended departure, the crones made exit from the cavern.

The captives waited a few minutes in breathless suspense, then cautiously crawled to the entrance. All was dark and silent.

Emerging from the den of their captivity, they felt a gust of humid wind on their faces, filling them with a sense of freedom in that dank and inky clime.

Creeping over jagged rocks, and barely saving themselves from falling into yawning chasms, they slowly forced their flight. Faint lights, resembling will-'o-the-wisps, were flickering mid the sable gloom— weirdly and fitfully they wavered.

Now have the refugees gained more even stretch of ledges, and their respiration growing normal, when, alas! deafning and piercing yells assail them, cleaving the humid atmosphere; fierce, doleful knells of terror!! The demons are in pursuit.

With admirable presence of mind, the efforts of the oppressed are redoubled, and they scramble hurriedly along the dismal waste of stone.

Louder and nearer grow the yells of the demons, and now their fiery visages are outlined with terrifying distinctness in that blackest of all black darkness!

The pursued mechanically rise to their feet, tearing headlong over chaos, never pausing to look back in their wild and frenzied flight. A fearful boding takes possession of them—all reason now has fled. See how they dash their mangled feet against the cruel stones! Torn and bleeding, yet they carry them. On, on they rush, like fawns before the baying hounds. Hold! Alack! Oh, stygian horror!!

CHAPTER VI.

How nourished the wanderers their bodies while convalescing in the cavern? It was by the fruits which had been placed in the ærial chariot when they were banished from the realm of the blessed. The fruits were brought to their bastile by the diabolical inhabitants.

* * * * *

The demons had nearly overtaken the hunted mortals when a pair of huge, ferocious eyes flashed out from the night eternal.

Too late had come the ghastly warning; the baneful eyes of a dragon were upon them, and opening his ponderous jaws he seized the helpless outcasts!

As vanished the wretched mortals in the cavernous mouth of the dragon, there arose among the fiend horde a wailing of baffled rage, and they followed after the dragon, pursuing him with great fleetness.

It came to pass, when the dragon had lain hold upon the bipeds, that with his wings he smote the air and soared upward in the midst of the murk. And the demons, when they saw what was done, hurled after the dragon and his prey the direst maledictions and damnation, ceasing not their overland pursuit.

High in the clouds of erebus they could still discern the scintillant wake of the dragon, while he furiously winged his flight. Nor did he diminish his velocity until the uttermost parts of hades burst in view.

Grim, hideous dragon that thou wert, didst one base reptile of fair eden's bowers transmit to thee, O loathsome, dreadful monster, that evil which didst blight the world?

Now, when the opposite pole of the asteroid was reached, the speed of the dragon was slackened, and he swooped downward to a cove of leafless desolation.

Alighting on a barren range of crags, the monstrous serpent, whose length was a thousand and two cubits, coiled himself in the attitude of repose.

Not yet had he swallowed his prey, the human beings were still in the reptiles mouth, which had remained partly open, allowing access of sufficient air for breathing.

Shortly after the dragon came to rest in the region of the desolate thicket, the captives were aroused from their stupor by oppressive and painful sensations in the region of their nether appendages; slowly but surely were they being swallowed.

Presently Ralph Horton had adequately recovered from his torpor to realize his horrible position. Then it was that he abruptly conceived a means of escape.

Taking from his pocket a large clasp-knife—one he had brought from his native world—he vigorously stabbed the tongue of the dragon, which kindness caused the serpent to disgorge, with alacrity, his mouthful of living viands.

So the dragon spewed them out, glaring fiercely, and striking at them with his powerful wings, and so perilous was their situation that straightway would they have been dashed in pieces had not a strange event transpired.

A peal of crashing thunder quakes the heavens, followed by blazing sheets of lightning, smiting prostrate the shocked and trembling mortals!

From out of the calm that followed came the groans of the dying dragon. The lightning had literally torn him in pieces.

The dazed and bewildered wanderers soon woke to the joy of deliverance, gazing about them with an air of fervent gratitude.

Ho! What change appears within the firmament! From the rayless murk of yonder pole to a welkin dight in twinkling stellar sparkles; from a smoking suffocating hell to a cooler, clearer waste of desolation. The exiles sight familiar planets, and gaze with wondering fascination. They behold the earth in her luminous glory, a star of beaming magnitude.

Seldom do demons approach this pole, as they are filled with agonizing envy on beholding these lustrous symbols of the brighter and happier realms.

For hours the lonely students pondered, pondered the far ethereal candles and their own despairing plight.

Hark! A terrible commotion rages; by intuition have demons found them out. And now a chorus of exulting yells reverberate,

shocking and knell-like they echo, chilling the blood of the exiles.

Onward rush the infuriated demons, and are rapidly nearing the paralyzed beings, when, lo! An angel appears in the starlight, sitting upon the head of a colossal swan.

And the angel drew nigh to the anguished mortals and touched them gently, saying:

“Fear not, thou broken-hearted beings, for peace and blessings shall this day be thine. Great has been thy chastening, but the depth of thy suffering is naught but a shadow compared with the rapture that thou shalt know.”

It came to pass, when the angel was done speaking, that he took the wanderers by the hands and sat them upon the swan’s downy plumage, bidding them be of good cheer.

Immediately did the surface of hades seem to sink beneath them, and they were borne aloft with exceeding fleetness, while a peaceful influence settled round them, soothing and blissful, causing them to supine in the snowy down of the swan and be wrapped in solacing slumber.

The angel, whose wings were like the shimmering of a sun-lit snow-drift, had gone before to prepare for them the way.

How long the rescued beings slumbered was not, at that time, known to them; but for many days their sleep was unremitting, and after were they carried by wings that never wearied.

Gently the hand of consciousness arouses them, and anon they rise and look away to scenes of acme-prodigy. The sights which the happy wanderers saw, turn our thoughts to an opal stanza:

“O love, that’s so true and unailing,
 That guides our weak footsteps below,
 When thou all life’s mystery unveiling,
 We shall know as no mortal can know:
 Then eyes that have peered through the darkness,
 Through the densely dark shadows of night,
 May awake in the brightness of heaven,
 And clothed, as the lily, in white.”

The wanderers lifted up their eyes to behold a world of unmeasured and stupendous vastness. A world that boundlessly surpasses

Mars in her indescribable splendor! A realm on which the beams of highest Heaven shed their lustre! sheen of the golden-glinting flame!!

Eternal halos wreath their grandeur
O'er blooming fragrance scattered wide,
And blazoned on the walls of jasper,
Enkindl'd glory doth abide.—AUTHOR.

IMMACULATE AMID THE SPOTLESS—BRILLIANT AMID ALL BRILLIANCE, IS THE SUPEREMINENT TRANSCENDENCY OF ITS UNSPEAKABLE SUBLIMITY!!!

Ah, favored beings of the dust. The wings of the swan did waft thee, waft thee to havens of holiness.

Spirits, having wings of glowing whiteness, received them on the soundless shore.

Silent, all silent at the portals of a world that knows no care, sickness, weariness and sorrow shadeth naught that dwelleth there. And along the countless ages, ever flowing, like the sea, purest love and rapt devotion tune the dulcet harmony. All amid the silvery moonbeams, blending with the heavenly light, are the holy, ransomed spirits, in the love of God bedight. Many, ah, many and many an hour, basking at the shrine of Bliss, float the beings of a dream-land that are never seen in this. Far athwart the Halls of Rapture, angels their reflection cast; there their sighs are hushed for ever, and their pains are overpast.

CHAPTER VII.

The beautiful paradise to which the pilgrims had been guided, was what is known to mundane dwellers as the planet Jupiter, and which, in thrilling magnificence, is second only to Saturn.

To Saturn, where lies the courts of Highest Heaven, the wanderers could not cross over.

They tarried for two years and a day in the land of the pure and blest. Of food did they not eat, nor imbibe of aught that is drunken. Their souls waxed peaceful within them, and were freed from the toils of temptation.

How, O how, shall this elysium be described? A mighty, vasty-spreading amphitheatre, wrought in empyrean refulgence, crystalline shimmering, and oceans of brightest amethyst, completing a land of hallowed immortality.

But whereunto shall we liken the feelings of tranquil bliss which filleth the souls of the blessed? It is like falling into calm and peaceful slumber, when the mind, absolved from care and turmoil, is drifting to the tides of oblivion.

Ever, as soars the dove upon the gentle breezes, roll the smooth currents of that never-ending joy!

All was quiet and reposing until, on the 14th of October, 1898, there flashed from the clear horizon a herald of Highest Heaven, carrying a scroll in his hand. And his voice resounded as the brazen blare of a million trumpets! He proclaimed to that immortal nation an ordinance of omnipotence, crying:

“Hail! faithful and abiding souls! Forsooth hath ordained the Great Jehova, from the throne of Supreme Ascendancy, that the spirits of the dust must return unto the land of their nativity. Forasmuch as their bodies are of the dust, unto dust shall they return. These words which I speak unto you were borne from the Realm of Light, and shall surely be fulfilled.”

When the herald had ceased speaking, there suddenly encompassed the wanderers a dazzling cloud of radiance—a maelstrom of purest fire, whirling them from that placid world out into the vast immensity.

* * * * *

Ten years have passed—ten years with their many changes—since two daring and adventurous mortals embarked on a perilous and unknown voyage. To-day, (the third of June, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine,) there stands upon the apex of Mount Washington an astronomical observatory, built of iron, and towering to the height of three hundred and fifty feet. This wondrous structure is anchored by ponderous iron cables to the massive ledge of the mountain. At the pinnacle of the tower is a dome, covered with thick plate-glass of the clearest transparency.

The glass-canopied apartment is equipped with the most modern and marvelous appliances for exploring the starry heavens, and among many other curious instruments of research, a telescope more powerful than the one bearing the appellation of "Lick." This telescope is put together in sections, and, when not in use, occupies a comparatively small space.

On the evening of the day in question, a party of astronomers were seated in the dome of the tower, discussing a technical problem.

Not long had they been thus seated when the sky abruptly darkened, and clouds, in dense and inky silhouettes, appeared along the Western firmament, darkening and intensifying momentarily, till the moon and all the stars were hidden.

Presently one of the group exclaimed :

"It's useless to remain here, and it shows every indication of a thunder storm. Let's evacuate."

"Correct," assented another. "This isn't much of a night for viewing the nebulæ; and, besides, there are safer places than this in which to revel while the elements take their choleric kick."

"But," interpolated a third, "mark thou well bard Lowell's gentle accents:"

"Behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above his own."

The aforesaid trio had now gained the elevator, and were just beginning the descent, when a jarring crash resounded, whelming each with dire apprehension!

For one second, and for one second only, did these mortals stand aghast, then sank unconscious to the elevator's floor. A blinding flash was all they saw ere oblivion closed upon them.

Meanwhile, the elevator was sinking rapidly, coming quickly to rest at the base of the solemn structure.

The man in charge of the conveyance was amazed at beholding three prostrate forms in lieu of the jovial trio, and ran at once for assistance.

Returning from an adjacent building, in company with three or four tourists, the said functionary forwarded the removal of the trio.

Being unaware of what had really transpired, he gave to the stricken scholars his undivided attention, and it did not occur to anyone, at the time, that a probable solution could be gained from inspecting the regions above.

It was found, upon approaching the bodies of the unconscious men, that they were potently charged with electricity; and to such an extent, that he whose hand came in contact with the unfortunates, became paralyzed and helpless.

But this difficulty was presently surmounted by laying in juxtaposition with the electrified bipeds a stretcher, and rolling them thereon with non-conducting levers. In this manner were they removed to an adjoining edifice, and lain on pallets of quilts. Yet the stunned, voltaic beings could not immediately be resuscitated, but remained during that night in a comatose condition.

In the course of an hour and a half the rain ceased, the wind subsided and the sky began to clear, and, shortly afterward, the moon reflected radiance. Then it was that the demolished condition was discovered by a denizen who was out for a late evening stroll.

Upon being apprised of the catastrophe, the transient dwellers turned out *en masse* for a closer examination. They repaired to the elevator and were quickly raised to the scene of disaster.

Behold! What strange phantasm greets the eye? Prone on a supernatural shield two human forms are lying! But the air is saturated with electric fluid, and the men perforce must descend with speed or be enthralled by the powerful agent.

The descent is made with celerity, and they gather at the base of the tower, conversing and gestulating excitedly. Finally they conclude to adjourn until the morning, after detailing two of their number to stand guard at the foot of the structure.

With the incipient glimmerings of the aurora, the whole mountain is astir, and they convene at the place of marvel. Moreover, when daylight dawns in its fulness, they project another ascension.

Upon reaching the landing in the dome, the exploring party are confronted by two wild and haggard faces—faces of immaculate humanity.

Although they are somewhat relieved by a salutation of sepulchral hollowness, they stare with astounded mien at the spectral forms before them.

“Prithee,” quoth one of the pseudo-spectres, “art thou inhabitants of the Earth, or is this but a foreign sphere in the vastness?”

“From whence comest thou, good people,” queried a member of the mountain group, “and what unique thing is that upon which thou sittest?” As he thus spake, he motioned with his hand toward an escutcheon, the sides of which were turned up, giving it somewhat the appearance of a cocked hat.

“’Tis a celestial craft which hath borne us through the desert wastes of ether, and which skippeth upon the air as doth the chamois upon the hilltops.”

“But *from whence are ye come?* Art thou not indeed of this world?”

“Yea; I trow that thou hast well spoken, for verily dost thou speak in the english tongue. Abide ye in the land of America?”

“Ay, in truth are we Americans, and this Mount to which thou camest is the cardinal peak of the White Mountain range.”

“Forsooth hath the guardian angel preserved us; but we return unto a land that is desolate. Our home is not within this sombre clime, but lies, in matchless glory, away in the Great Beyond. Your eyes now scan the fragile beings, who, in a year that is faded and gone, didst pass from out the Pine Tree district, and vanish within the ether.”

“How sayest thou? Do we look upon the long-lost æronauts who departed the Forest City in search of an ærial pathway that might lead to the far-off planets?”

"Thy recollections have served thee well ; we are the same."

"But by what miracle wast thou returned to this land of thy people, and by what medium wert thou transported?"

"The powers of the universe that be didst bear us in a cloud of flame to a wild electric sea, and from thence we were brought on the bosom of a lightning billow to the end of our destined pilgrimage. A mystic spell was upon us, and the details of our journey, since leaving the electric sea, is veiled in profound obscurity."

"Yet, why hast thou remained in this solitary place? Couldst thou not summon aid by thine outcries?"

"The spell, of which we spake, didst dure till the coming of the day, and we are but a short time risen from the lethe."

"But how is it that ye perished not when whirled amid the lightnings vortex?"

"The shield was wrought in properties which are potently repellant to the electric fluid, rendering the shield impervious, and our persons invulnerable to the subtle, deadly agent."

"We felicitate and welcome thee, kind sirs, in thy safe return to the sod of thy progenitors. The heros, so long time dead, have returned to the Earth, and to life. But grant pardon to your incivil fellows who have detained you thus inconsiderately, for exoteric is thy need of refection."

"Ay, we do, indeed, famish in this long continued abstinence. Happly the electrical surcharge, with which our bodies were impregnated, may have so far disappeared as to permit of a closer commingling without detriment to thy persons, for fain would we alleviate the languor which weigheth oppressive and drear."

Although a perceptible residue of the electricity remained, the entire party were able to descend, without mishap, via the spacious elevator.

The wanderers were hailed with effusive greetings in the parlor of the Astronomers' Inn. And the same day was heralded, by wire and cable, brief data of the wondrous tidings throughout all literate nations of the world!

Everywhere upon the American continent the event was celebrated by the clang of its myriad bells, and the deafning boom of her belching canon!

The day following their reception on the grand old peak of the White Hills, the pre-eminently renowned discoverers were escorted, by special train, and an honorable cortege of citizens, to their native city, midst flying banners and the roar of saluting guns.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ho! votaries of the science world! A prodigy is yet to be revealed! We have reserved until now a most phenomenal particular, which transpired in connection with the wanderers advent.

Two days subsequent to their arrival, when the artronomers revisited the dome, they were surprised by dscreyng a wire, very fine, and of exceedingly-miraculous strength, attached to the rearward part of the shield.

This wire—though not without much difficulty—they succeeded in detaching from the shield, then carelessly fastened it to a projecting lever of the machinery by winding it around the same.

Of this singular event the heros were apprised, receiving the intelligence one evening while conversing in the home of their childhood.

Upon learning this phenomenal fact, the conversation turned at once to the mysterious wire, and its probable portend.

Before closing the conference they decided to examine the wire for themselves, and ascertain, if possible, to what point in the universe it extended.

This wire was of remarkable toughness, being so compact and hard that it could not be severed with instruments ordinarily used for such purposes, and was composed of metals which are entirely foreign to this oblate spheroid.

We will now pause to say that the astronomers, who were overcome by lightning, were fully restored to their former vigor, having received only a severe shock from the sheet of electricity when it struck the dome of the tower.

In the forenoon of July 12th, the heros set out for the White Hills, arriving at Glen the same day, and stopping that night at the Glen House, they proceeded up the mountain next day, via the new mountain railway, which runs from Glen Station to the Summit.

Reaching the Summit, the heros immediately repaired to the tower, which they found pretty much in the same condition as when they were rescued from durance thereat, excepting it was cleared of the debris.

The heros examined the unique wire on the knob where it was hitched, it having been thus secured to prevent its being drawn, by its own weight, from the dome; for when it was loosed from the shield it flew from the hands of the astronomers, and would have escaped but for its timely catching in a crack of the machinery, where it was detained, not being drawn through the crack because of a knot near its end.

After carefully inspecting this slender cable, Messrs. Horton, Cameron and astronomers concurred in a scheme for determining the extent of the wire. Their plan was to connect telegraphic apparatus, and, if that proved futile, to wind in the metal thread by means of a powerful reel.

The telegraph was attached on the following day, and a great multitude gathered on the mountain, eager to learn the experiment's result.

At 3 o'clock P. M., July 14th, the following dispatch passed over the wire:

"Ho! land of beings esoteric! Is aught of the english language known to thy people? Canst thou send unto us a message that we may know if an intercommunication be established?"

This telegraphic machine was furnished with the old and obsolete paper ribon, attached for the purpose of registering the character combinations.

Patiently waited the studious scientists for an answering click on the instrument.

Three hours have slowly passed away, and still no answer comes. Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty—one, two, three minutes eke themselves out in silence.

Four hours and twenty minutes now have fled, when—hush! the lever vibrates. See! the paper creeps steadily along the table, while the ticking of the lever continues.

The oracles gather around the instrument, gazing intent and breathless at the quaint hieroglyphs before them.

Alas! they are illegible; naught but grotesque combinations greet the eye. The machine clicks on for a few minutes, then ceases and all is still.

Long do they ponder the problem, but no solution is found; the characters are as Greek to the uninitiated.

Several hours are expended in grave discussion, and then the persevering students assail the unknown folks anew.

An interval of several hours ensues before a second answer comes. But at last, when almost despairing of success, the lever is again in motion.

Huzza! The group of savants yell for joy! Along the slip of paper, and in fairly good characters of Morse's system, is being chronicled the following message:

"Hello! Of what world are you inhabitants? Are you not citizens of the Earth, and do you not dwell upon the surface of America or Great Britain?"

To these queries the succeeding reply was dispatched:

"We are dwellers of the Earth, and of American nationality. We abide, at present, on a lofty peak of the White Mountains. In what sphere dost thou have thy being, and whereby wast thou taught the nomenclature of Americans?"

It was eleven o'clock P. M., when the above telegram was sent, and yet not one of the party had thought of leaving the tower, but remained throughout the night, conversing in earnest and excited *sotto voce*.

A few minutes after five, on the following morning, a telegram of great length was received, and which ran in this manner:

"This is, indoubtably, the planet or asteroid Ceres. I who now address you am of American birth, and yclept Clinton Barington.

"In the summer of 1880, I embarked, at Sanfrancisco, on a voyage to Shanghai, by invitation of the Captain of a merchantman, with whom, since the days of my infancy, I had intimately been acquainted.

"On the 9th of August, when four hundred miles off the coast of China, and while cruising in the 16th degree of North latitude, we were struck by a terrific typhoon, which intensified until it arose to unprecedented violence. The masts were carried away, and the vessel careened on her beam ends. Captain Halstead ordered the boats launched. The smallest was first to be lowered, and the Captain's daughter and myself were uncerimoniously pushed in.

"At that moment a heavy sea broke over the disabled vessel, nearly righting it, when the hull suddenly split from stem to stern, precipitating into the foam-lashed billows the officers and entire crew.

"Meantime, we two in the boat had been carried for some distance from the fated vessel ere the horror of our situation was realized, then did the awful peril flash upon us with appalling vividness. But only for a few minutes were we tossed by the angry waters. A monstrous cyclone enveloped the skiff, whirling us skyward in a twinkling.

"Little more concerning our miraculous and tempestuous abduction can I narrate, except that after reaching a prodigious altitude, we probably came into a supernal current, which, flowing with lightning-like swiftmess, brought us to the bourne of this diminutive world.

"Upon coming into proximity with the sphere, we were mildly attracted by its gravity, and we sustained no greater shock when alighting than you, in your accustomed spheroid, would experience in descending a few feet.

"I only know that I came to myself a few moments previous to our arrival, and am inclined to believe that life was preserved, while borne on the current that permeated the ether, by a quantity of oxygen and nitrogen which the cavity of the boat contained when we came into the supermundane stream. The sides of the boat were turned to a vertical position, hence the portion of air that it contained was forced from its natural element and carried within the bounds of pure ether. We doubtless retained our position in the craft by pressure of the æriform matter against which we were driven while making that fleetest of journeys.

"As to how our bodies received their sustenance, I will not venture to assume; but presume—as we were evidently thrown in a trance—that, in those high and peculiar regions, nutriment was not essential to life.

"It seems patent that nearly three years were consumed in making this strange trip; for, according to my own calculations, we now exist in what would, in America be the 14th day of July, 1899. We have now dwelt in this far planet for an epoch of sixteen years.

"When first we came to this strange sphere our hearts were a prey to nostalgia and hypochondriacal hallucinations infested our cerebral systems. But gradually the dejection was eradicated, and we became, in a measure, resigned and of cheerful aspect. The language of these grotesque people was then unknown to us. But they were hospitable and sympathetic, and we soon acquired sufficient command of the dialect for ordinary conversational purposes. Then I began the study of its idioms, and was soon able to ensconce myself in comprehensive perusals of their scientific literature. Having lived for some years in the city of Chicago, and having read quite extensively the latest works on electrical science, it is not singular that I was strongly attracted to the same. Have devoted the greater part of my time, since mastering a reading knowledge of the language, to study and experiment in electro-magnetism. The people of this orb greatly excel those who inhabit the earth in their superior knowledge and higher mechanical attainments in this particular profession. But I cannot now describe the marvelous uses to which this factor is consigned, for there

are several matters of which I wish to speak before closing this bizarre and protracted telegram.

"For nearly two years a firm in the mountainous section was engaged in manufacturing a very fine and phenomenally tough metal thread. This wire was designed to be wound in circles, or spirally, about the globe, as a stupendous telephone was about to be constructed. This telephone was expected to attract sounds for a distance of many millions of miles. The wire was wound on a colossal reel in one continuous and unbroken thread, and was thousands upon thousands of leagues in length.

"One day, a number of months since, several learned men, desiring to try a certain experiment, and wishing to utilize several hundred feet of the wire, unreeled a portion of the same while its end was carried to the acme of a lofty spire and there fastened.

"The building, to which the spire was an appendage, was divers stories in height, and situated on the top of a high eminence. As I said, the end of the wire was attached to the spire, and that which was unwound still remained unsevered from that on the reel.

"Suddenly an electric wave passed over the country, while an indistinct object flashed through the air, to which, presumably, the wire became entangled, and was carried away in a twinkling. The ponderous reel spun round with alarming velocity, so rapid indeed that it was wholly invisible. The frame-work, in which the ends of the reel's axle were set, was securely anchored to the ledge of the hill, and, therefore, retained its original position. Little or no effort was made to impede its violent rotations, as all expedients were deemed futile. So, for some months, it performed incessant gyrations. But at last it was seen to slacken in swiftness, and anon all motion ceased.

"Alas for the mighty enterprise on which such ardent hopes were lavished! Only a few rods of the wire remained. The reel was disabled and could not be turned, else the residue would also have been drawn from it. The syndicate was at first disposed to sunder the wire, considering it a total loss, and the project a total failure; but, after reconsidering the matter, it was decided to attach telegraphic paraphernalia, and ascertain, if possible, whereat the other end reposed. The scheme was immediately promoted, and a message—composed in the characters of the local system—was flashed along the wire.

"For two days and nights close watch of the instrument was kept. Yet all to no purpose, no clicking response was returned.

"A few days later another telegram was dispatched, and still no answer came. After waiting three days, it was decided to remove the apparatus and abandon the chimerical venture.

"Just as they were about to do so the machine manifested a colloquial propensity, which penchant resulted in the reception of what I presume was your primordial communication.

"I was not here at the time of its arrival, consequently the combinations were not understood by those present. A reply was returned in their accustomed combinations; but it is safe, I think, to assume that it was incomprehensible to its recipients. Then came your second dispatch; but as that was likewise unintelligible to the aliens, a messenger was sent to our dwelling, requesting my presence at the council.

"Great was my surprise, and still greater my joy, upon recognizing the old, familiar characters, and I hastened to formulate this compendium of my peregrinations and mysterious exploits. I am operating more at length than I should, and this unique telegram has reached a very extraordinary limit; so I will merely add that the Captain's daughter and myself were conjoined at the altar of Hymen, receiving the customary nuptials of the country.

"Kindly forward a brief account of the existing state of affairs and present issues in the land of my fond recollections. Yours in pensive felicity,

CLINTON BARINGTON."

CHAPTER IX.

There was now a complete line of telegraph extending from the Earth to the far, far-distant Asteroid. The electric current traveled at the rate of 150,000 miles per second and transmitted a dispatch to Ceres—559,237,500 miles from the earth—in 1 hour, 2 minutes and $8\frac{1}{4}$ seconds.

The aforesaid distance, lying between the Earth and the said Asteroid, falls considerably under that given by modern astronomers; but this is, of course, owing to a miscalculation on their part.

Now that a medium of communication is established between our progressive world and one of the heavenly bodies, a new era has dawned in the mundane sphere of science, and the leading scientists of the day are looking forward to great and startling revelations!

Horton and Cameron remained a few days longer at Summit Tower, exchanging messages with Mr. Barington of Ceres, then returned to Portland, there to rest and mingle with kinsfolk and friends. Great had been their achievements, and they could now repose for a season on their laurels of never dying glory.

Several weeks after their return to the city, Ralph Horton announced his intention of taking a short trip in the country, but omitted to disclose the precise whereabouts of his visit.

Taking an early train, he set out for Phillips, reaching that place in the minor hours of post-meridian.

Alighting at the station, he sauntered carelessly along the busy streets, lightly swinging his traveling grip.

Ten years have come and gone—ten years that have vanished for ever! He now looks about him, hoping to scan the olden scenes, sweet emblems in memory's salon. Sad are the many changes that have robbed the scenes of their sweetness. Gone, all gone are the landmarks that were twined in his fondest remembrance. A chilling sensation creepeth o'er him, and, involuntarily, he quickens his steps.

The village, once small, and set in scattering structures, has swelled to a rising city, and it is with an air akin to perplexity that Ralph Horton threads his way

Coming into a street, which lies on the former suburbs, he halts at the front of a dwelling, pausing for some minutes irresolute. But anon he rouses from reverie and rings at the door of the mansion.

The door is opened by a comely matron, who, though somewhat past life's gemed meridian, still wears the garlands of her fading bloom.

"Does Mr. Lennox here abide?" enquired Ralph, when commonplace greetings were ended.

A puzzled expression appeared on the lady's face as she answered :

"No sir. My husband bought this place four years ago. I do not know anyone living about here by the name of Lennox."

"I beg your pardon, but may I ask of whom the estate was purchased?"

"The premises were bought at administrator's sale; the estate, I think, was insolvent."

"Can you recall the name of the deceased?" queried Horton.

"Oh yes; I remember now; the former owner was a Lennox. We have lived, until the present season, in New York, and I am not at all familiar with the town's history. Yes, it recurs to me now, the man's name *was* Lennox, and it seems to me that he died intestate."

"But surely there is some one of the family now living. Eleven years since, Mr. Lennox occupied the house, and he then had a wife and daughter."

"I have heard," said the lady, "that his consort's death occurred some three or four years prior to his own demise; but of the daughter I have heard nothing, save that she was endowed with great musical talent, and is now a teacher in the Boston Conservatory of Music. Still, I daresay Mrs. Burnside, just across the way, can furnish the desired intelligence."

"Thank you. Does the lady of whom you spoke reside in yon habitation?" indicating, with a motion of the hand, a stately cottage of brick.

"Yes, and I am certain you will find her at home, for I saw her return from shopping but a few moments ago."

Ralph now sought an interview with Mrs. Burnside, who rendered the desiderata, being so well versed in the biography of the Lennoxs

as to be able even to give the name of street, and number of Miss Lennox's retreat.

Horton, though much disappointed, returned in moderate spirits to Portland; and, on the day succeeding his return, embarked on the steamer for Boston.

Reaching Boston in the early hours, he remained on board until the morning's—not the girl's—bustle filled the streets, then debarked, and was driven to the house Vendome, where he engaged rooms and speedily ordered breakfast.

After breakfast he strolled out for a view of the sights in general, going first to the new zoological museum. He had stoutly determined to eschew the Conservatory throughout that day, and call on Miss Lennox in the evening.

His resolution failed him. The afternoon found him walking up and down in front of the Conservatory—that spacious casket, which contained, in the eyes of the long enamoured hero, a jewel of priceless value.

A hurrying throng streams through the lordly entrance, and he watches, unconscious of the passer's gaze, for a face ever constant in fancy.

Lo! A thrill of rapture quickens all his pulses! His eyes are gladdened and his heart rebounds; 'tis a face of wondrous beauty and a form of queenly grace. She trips lightly up the steps and is lost to view in the maze of meandering humanity, while Ralph stands gazing into vacancy, "o'ertaken as by some spell divine."

Ralph Horton walked slowly from the place; the flames of his love were rekindled; in his heart was a strange unrest. He spent the remaining hours of the afternoon in wandering aimlessly about the city, impatient for the eventide, when he might greet his idol.

The clocks were chiming the hour of eight when a carriage stopped at a — street dwelling. This street is in the elite of Boston, where reside a people of culture and of goodly store.

Mr. Horton descends from the carriage, and after requesting the driver to return at a specified hour, presents his card to the waiting domestic, who conducts him at once to the drawing-room.

The house was owned by a fashionable widow, who, though having lost much of affluence through financial adversity, is still in easy circumstances, and has generously shared her remaining luxuries with the refined and talented virgin.

Ralph had but a few minutes to wait, yet they were minutes protracted to an irksome length by the tantalizing hand of impatience.

The sound of light footsteps entranced him, and his beau-ideal appeared. The heart of the hero palpitated; yea, beat with an audible throbbing, and he arose, overjoyed and transported, to greet his long-lost love

A smile betokening the highest pleasure illumined the face of Miss Lennox as she cordially extended her hand; and in the eyes of the man and the woman a subtle light was gleaming—the beams of impassioned affection.

Now falls the curtain on scene first of the courtship—ay, falls on a blissful couple.

The cabman was obliged to wait an additional hour ere his patron returned to his lodgings; nevertheless he was liberally compensated.

For a week the happy lovers were absent at the sea-shore. The days were spent in quiet rambles about the cliffs and headlands, and so engrossed were they in their all-absorbing happiness that the hours came and fled unheeded. Life was filled with ever-flowing brightness.

By the murmuring sea they plighted their troth, in sight of the rolling surge, and the grave full moon looked down and smiled on the softly whispered word. They dream of solicitous Hymen, as each the nectar sips, and “their spirits rushed together with the touching of the lips.”

At the end of the week's outing, the betrothed returned to Boston. Miss Lennox tendered her resignation to the managers of the Conservatory, receiving their reluctant acceptance.

The wedding day was fixed, the evening of the coming Thanksgiving being the date when the ceremony was arranged to take place. The couple were effusively congratulated by their innumerable friends, and all of their leisure moments were passed in the fondest wooing. They dreamed of a glowing future, and planned for a beautiful home, not knowing that an evil hour was closing fast upon them, no sombre omens warned them of a near and awful doom.

Ah! stealthy, treacherous glamour! thou veilest the eyes of mortals, and the black hand that waves in frightful premonition is misty and unseen.

CHAPTER X.

Clinton Barington is constantly receiving tidings of his cherished native sphere, waiting patiently for succor, that he may return, and when done with the things of earth, be lain by the mould of his fathers.

It is an age of progression, and the day is not far distant when a line of transportation between the planets and our own beloved globe shall be given for the advancement of all people.

Professor Cameron is sharing in the renown of discovery, living quietly with his aged mother, who is now in feeble health, striving to brighten the shadows of her last, declining days.

Beauteous October has come again. The air is cool and bracing, and woodlands, robed in autumn guise, stand pensive in purple and gold. The flowers have faded and fallen—gone from the desolate sod. Cold vestals of autumn that didst linger, were ye not disconsolate and sad? Thy pale lamps were “halloween oblations at the last vespers of the summer world.”

* * * * *

It is evening. The streets are brilliantly illuminated, and the elite of Boston is astir. A stylish vehicle, drawn by a span of prancing bays, draws up at the — Theatre. A gentleman of noble bearing, accompanied by a beautiful lady, alights and enters the theatre.

“Do you know that fellow with the diamond badge and gold-bowed spectacles?” enquired a gentleman of his friend, as the couple passed on to their box.

“Why, certainly That’s the great Professor Horton. You know the papers announced that the house would be graced by his presence. That badge is the latest mark of honor bestowed by the sovereigns and nobility of the eastern hemisphere. It was presented by the Emperor of Austria. He has already received badges from England, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, Denmark, Switzland, Australia, etc., and wears this by way of acknowledgment.”

“Yes, I knew the Professor was expected, but thought he would’nt arrive until late; supposed he was already satiated with the world’s encomium.”

“Well, he *has* received the widest celebrity and greatest honors ever known on earth; and yet, he isn’t in the least vainglorious.”

The band breaks forth in swelling strains of euphony, and the tones of the gay colloquists are drowned in the flood of melody.

The lively air rolls on till the notes subside in cadence. The curtain rises apace. To-night the masterpiece of dramaturgy will be rendered. This *chef-d’oeuvre* is represented by the leading stars of America, and is wrought in profoundest pathos.

The middle of the play is reached—all eyes are held entranced.

Hark! A frightful, piercing cry re-echos! ’Tis the knell of impending doom.

“Fire! Fire!! Fire!!!” is shrieked from a thousand throats; a horrible panic rages! Cool-headed men become frenzied; women faint and are trampled to death; the fire spreads with a fleetness unknown to recorded history. All points of egress are barred by the crush of the maddened throng.

The theatrical managers had introduced a new feature in the way of artificial lightning, composed of bitumenous chemicals and a new-found species of electricity. This compound was of a very potent, subtle and penetrating nature, and an accidental miscarriage of the project had resulted in horrible catastrophe.

The whole building is instantly wrapped in flames, and so fierce was the destroying element that even the stones were incinerated.

Valliantly struggled the hero to rescue his cherished affianced, supporting the helpless form of Miss Lennox, and, by his superior strength, had nearly gained exit, when the walls were seen to topple and the blazing tophet fell!

Thus, in the height of his glory, and while clasping the gem of his treasures, perished the hero of heros, cremated in the awful conflagration!

* * * * *

“A velvet silence drapes the earth and sky,
As Twilight to her inner chamber goes ;
And the soft wind its flute-like welcome blows
To Night, who with her silver lamp draws nigh :
The snow-white clouds asleep above me lie
Like flocks afold in unafraid repose,
While, faint as perfume from the folding rose,
I hear the night bird’s far-off lullaby.”

Sometimes, on starlit summer evenings, a solitary figure may be seen in the Park, or along the Deering frescades, pacing listless and moody, with bowed head and slow, deliberate steps.

For a moment he pauses, and lifting his mournful eyes to the heavens, stands gazing on the arc of twinkling tapers, waiting till the time shall come when he, with his fated comrade, shall have passed beyond the shadows.

“When the dumb hour, clothed in black,
Brings the dreams about my bed,
Call me not so often back,
Silent Voices of the Dead,
Toward the lowland ways behind me,
And the sunlight that is gone !
Call me rather, silent Voices,
Forward to the starry track
Glimmering up the heights beyond me,
On, and always on !”

THE END.

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