IN MID-AIR

PROF. KINGSLEY, the aeronaut, had been my chum at college. Fifteen years had passed since then. He had made rapid strides in his chosen field of science; I had entered the army and become an officer of the Royal Engineers. Circumstances had now brought me into his neighborhood and I decided to visit him.

I found him in a state of enthusiasm over a new invention of his own to enable human beings to breathe the rarefied air of high altitudes. I was made acquainted with the details and learned that arrangements were about completed for a balloon ascent, by which a practical test of the invention was to be made. He was confident that it would eclipse all previous air voyages in practical results. Despite my ignorance of the practical details of the invention, I was invited to become the professor's companion on this voyage through space, and for the novelty of the thing—I had never been in a balloon—accepted the invitation and consented to act as amateur assistant.

One morning a few weeks later I found myself at the side of Prof. Kingsley standing in the midst of an admiring crowd, who were eagerly waiting for the ascension of the great airship, which, fastened to the ground by a network of ropes, plunged and strained like some living animal. Five minutes later we had embarked in the car, and in another minute there was a sudden shout. Without for a moment understanding the reason, I found that the people and the place had somehow slipped away from us and disappeared. It was the most singular sensation I had ever felt, and as I looked over the edge of the car I was astonished to observe that in one minute, or less as it appeared to me, the trees and surging crowd of upturned faces had grown so amazingly small and distant. The motion was almost imperceptible; indeed, it took some time to grow accustomed to the idea that we were moving at all. Yet there could be no doubt about the fact that we were moving, and moving at a surprising rate of progress, too.

Up, up—and as we rose we were traveling to the eastward. Towns, villages, country—the broad silver stripe of the widening Thames, dotted here and there with quivering specks which we knew to be sails, and flecked with little coiling wreaths of darkness which must have represented steamers; and then the great silver shield of the channel, glittering in the blaze of the sun, passed under our eyes in one vast moving diorama, the details of which grew fainter and fainter yet as we ascended.

Then Kingsley began to talk. He was always a brilliant talker, but now he seemed to to talk more brilliantly than ever. I felt a sense of exhilaration myself that was new to me—a sort of wild sense of freedom—a lightness of body and mind that had the effect of strong wine on the nerves. But in spite of

"YOU MUST GO OUT."

this I was surprised at its effect on my companion. He talked like a man inspired, in a strain of exaggerated eloquence—a rhapsody of science made poetry which struck me as the finest thing of the kind I had ever heard. Yet I found myself glancing at him from time to time a little uneasily. It seemed to me, excited as I was, a little extravagant, and for the moment I wasn't quite sure how far the excited nervous condition might be consistent with the safe traveling of our balloon. I was wrong, however, for I soon observed that the professor kept a wary eye upon the movements of the balloon, and was noting each change in the condition of his delicate instruments that were fixed to the sides of the car beside him.

On, on, and upward still, and now when I ventured to look below I could see the great panorama of land and sea like the tracings on a globe and showing something like the same gently rounded surface. And all the time Kingsley talked on. Sometimes, indeed, he would pause for an instant to impart some practical information, and almost at once go back to his declamation and his theories.

"Five thousand feet," he announced. "Ah! now we have risen above the puny mountain tops of our little island."

After a time he announced 10,000 feet, and then 15,000. I looked below, and it seemed to me that the slender thread of twisting silver, darkened on both sides by puny excrescences that might be buildings, must represent Paris and the Seine. There was hardly any wind, yet it was growing colder, and I felt some little oppression in breathing. I said this to the professor. He smiled, and, stooping, threw out two of our sandbags that served for ballast. My eye followed them, and I wondered where they would fall. I even asked my companion if it wasn't dangerous—he didn't answer me, but I stooped and threw another over. We were now rising rapidly.

"Twenty thousand feet," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together. "Ha! What are the Alps? Mere molehills dignified with the name of mountain."

This was all very well, but now I began to find that breathing was momentarily becoming more and more a labor, and that the cold was increasing every minute. I asked Kingsley if it was not time to try his new apparatus.

"Not yet!" he exclaimed. "Not yet! I must see how high we can go without it first."

I looked anxiously at him, but I said no more. He went on talking by fits and starts, and I was relieved to see that the rarity of the air was affecting him, too. He must have suffered as I did, and yet he sat still looking from one of his instruments to another. I wrapped a heavy sealskin cloak around me and waited as well as I could. I began to feel half stupid, and it was with a start that I heard him say in a thick voice, "25,000 feet. Ah! That will do!" Then he put one of his new respirators into my hand, and as I looked at him half stupidly he added: "Now these will take us up to 50,000."

The professor's invention worked like magic. In two minutes I could breathe freely again. As the thought passed through my mind with a certain satisfaction the professor stooped and threw out another sandbag. The sun was still bright, but suddenly there was a faint crackling sound like the breaking of glass. I looked at my feet and saw that the floor was covered with small transparent icicles. I put my hand to my mouth and found that my mustache was bristling with ice. "Thirty thousand feet!" Kingsley announced in a voice that sounded muffled and distant. Thirty thousand! And yet the man talked of fifty. Ah, well, I could see that he would throw out one more sandbag. Even Kingsley by his enthusiasm couldn't overcome the laws of nature. He stooped and threw out our last bag as the thought passed through my mind. Again we rose rapidly. Like the professor himself, my eyes were fixed on the barometer. It was cold—deadly cold. After a pause he exclaimed:

"Thirty-five thousand. Ha! We have broken the record now."

I looked at Kingsley. His face was blue and pinched, but his eyes shone with a light that was new and alarming in its wild brilliancy.

"Haven't we gone high enough?" I managed to articulate, though with difficulty.

"Enough?" he returned in a strong voice; "enough? Are you crazy? Fifty thousand, or we don't go back, I tell you—50, man!"

The man's face had changed; his eyes glittered and sparkled with a strange shifting light—good God! He was going mad! After all, I thought, the last sandbag is gone; mad or sane he can't rise higher without lightening the balloon more. I glanced at the barometer—it was stationary. The professor's eyes were fixed on it, too—then he looked round him—then he glared at me!

"We don't rise," he muttered to himself; "but we must. We must!" He rose and made a step toward me. He laid his hand on my shoulder. He pointed to the barometer. "We don't rise," he repeated with a strange significance. I nodded. "Somebody must go," he said.

"Good God, man!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

He gripped me on the shoulder—he brought his face to the level of mine—he glared fiercely into my eyes.

"She won't rise," he muttered. "You must go out!"

I looked at him. The man was clearly mad—it was in his eyes and in his voice.

"No," I answered angrily, "no: Go yourself!"

He looked at me with a half questioning expression.

"You can't take the observations," he said.

I shook his hand from my shoulder angrily. Suddenly he looked at the barometer again. "Only 38,000!" he exclaimed in a despairing tone. "I promised 50,000." He turned away with a wild gesture. He gripped one of the ropes and swung himself on the seat of the car. By a supreme effort I managed to rouse myself.

"Stop!" I shouted. He looked around at me.

"Will you do it?" he said. "Somebody must, you know." He was in the very act of overbalancing himself when the terrible emergency seemed to restore some of my vigor. I seized him and dragged him back. He struggled wildly, and in his madness he was stronger than I. There was nothing else to be done—I raised my hand and struck with all my force. Kingsley fell senseless to the bottom of the car.

I staggered. I looked feebly around. I felt as if I were falling asleep. Something touched my hand and I grasped it—it was the string that opened the valve of the balloon. As I grasped it I grew unconscious. As I clung to it I sank on the senseless body of the professor.

I know nothing of what happened afterward. The next sounds I heard were the sounds of human voices; the next thing my eyes opened upon was the interior of a small cottage room. There was a poor French print of a Madonna on the wall opposite me—the

I SEIZED HIM AND DRAGGED HIM BACK.

voices that I heard spoke in the rough patois of French. I had been rescued by a miracle.

It was months before Kingsley recovered, and to this day I never see him without his introducing the subject of the balloon ascent we are to make together, when we will certainly reach 50,000 feet. Poor fellow! That ascension unbalanced his brilliant mind for life.—Utica Globe.

An Original "Ad."

Bicycle repairers are so numerous that startling advertisements are necessary to secure business. A handbill of this purport has been widely circulated within the last few days on the South Side:

"Bicycle surgery.

"Acute and chronic cases treated with assurance of success.

"Languid tires restored to health and vigor.

"Tires blown up without pain. Wind free.

"We understand the anatomy, physiology and hygiene of wheels and give homeopathic or allopathic treatment as individual cases require. Sure cure guaranteed.

"Testimonials:

"'My wheel had three ribs fractured and you cured it in one treatment.'

"'My tires were suffering with a case of acute aneurism which had been pronounced fatal by other bicycle doctors, but you cured the disorder and I did not lose a day of my tour.'

"'I was troubled with varicose tires, involving frequent ruptures and incontinence of wind. You cured me.'

"Thousands of testimonials like the above sent on application."—Chicago Record.

Charles Dickens' Fault.

A book might be written and doubtless much has been printed on the origin of certain slang phrases which drop from the lips of almost everybody as the cant expression becomes popular, says the Boston Globe. "A fine day, I don't think," says my friend who is quick to catch on and appropriate anything new in a line which distinguishes the vernacular of the day. Of course, somebody originated this semi-sarcastic and wholly ridiculous hyperbole of speech, and that person was no other than Charles Dickens. In "Martin Chuzzlewit," simple, trustful Tom Pinch ruminates: "I'm a nice man, I don't think, as John used to say," etc., which only goes to show that there is nothing so very new in certain of the popular slang phrases of the time after all.

Stranger—Do the people do much hunting around here? Native—They do, for a fact. Dead loads of it. Stranger—What do they hunt—deer and quail? Native—Nope. Money to meet their notes in bank with.—Florida Times-Union.

Clara—If Mr. Castleton succeeds in kissing a girl he tells all the rest of the men about it. Maude—That accounts for it. Clara—For what? Maude—The crowd of fellows that have called upon you lately.—New York Herald.

Curry—Carson seems to be very friendly with everybody all of a sudden. Vokes—Yes; he is going to get married soon, and he wants to have as many friends as he can to invite and get presents from.—Truth.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

"I know I lost this stud," said Marsden, very deliberately, "on that unlucky evening, and never could find it; but why should not the robber have picked it up, if he found it, as he most probably did, in the tent?"

"You are a brave man to face me as you do!" she exclaimed. "But I hold you in my hand," and she clinched it. "I will tell you who found it, and where! Your sweet, beloved fiancee, when paying me a private visit in my room, admiring my ball-dress, espied the glitter of that diamond among the lace on the body, where it had dropped when you struggled to stupefy me with your horrible cholorform. Me, the woman you have been making love to ten minutes before—who was ready to give you all she had—you base midnight thief!"

"Do not be so positive. Might it not have fallen among your lace as we danced together, or when I was assisting to lift you?"

"No, no, no," she cried, as if carried out of herself, and speaking with immense rapidity. "I saw it on your breast when you left me, and Nora, your Nora, told me you never touched me! It is useless denying your guilt. Waite, the detective, knows you. He saw you here, here with me, before he started to pursue you. He was with you at Amsterdam, in Paris, at Chanlaire, when you went to your sick friend, De Meudon. He tracked you, he can swear to you. I have paid hundreds to prove it, and I have you in my grasp!"

She stopped, panting.

Marsden rose slowly, his eyes fixed upon her. She was frightened by his silence, his desperate look. She, too, rose; but her fury seemed to evaporate.

"What are you going to do, Marsden?" she said, quivering. "You would not murder me?"

He laughed a strange, discordant laugh. "I am blackguard enough," he said; "but I would not hurt a hair of your head. No! It is useless to contradict your assertions. You have me, indeed, in your grasp, and there is but one way of escape."

He moved to the door, but she was too quick for him. Setting her back against it, she stretched out her arms to keep him off.

"You shall not kill yourself! I forbid you! You are bad, and base, but you belong to me—you belong to me! No, Marsden, you shall not leave me!"

"What is life to me?" said Marsden, with a calm despair. "A dishonoring shackle! The sooner I am rid of it the better. I cannot struggle with you. If you have any pity, let me go!"

"I will not! I cannot! Oh! Marsden, how I have hated you! You have been so unspeakably false. To rob me, that you might shake me off and marry my rival. Yet," and her eyes softened as they rested on his fine face, so rigid in its despair, on his attitude, grand even in its expressive abandonment, "with all, I cannot let you destroy yourself! If I could hope that gratitude would awaken anything like affection, tenderness!"

"I am not worth saving," interrupted Marsden, speaking more collectedly. He began to calculate chances. "I know I have done a dastardly deed. I never saw its full baseness till I was found out." He smiled a bitter, cynical smile. "That does not show much of a moral nature to work upon; but I have so much decency left that it is torture to be under your eye, to hear your just reproaches. I do not ask for mercy. If you choose to call a policeman, do so. You will be in your right. I will not resist."

He folded his arms and stood quite still.

"And do you not know I should tear my own heart to pieces if I injured you?" she cried, in a passion of anger and love. "Oh! I can save you! I will save you! if you promise to give me the love I long for! Can I not win you by such service as man never had offered him before? I can save more than your life."

"I have no love to give!" said Marsden, in a low tone. "I have done with love and friendship; and, however generous you may be, how can you silence your detective?"

"I have bound up his interest with his discretion," she said, eagerly, still keeping between Marsden and the door.

"I tell you, your bitterest revenge is to prevent my escaping life and its intolerable pangs."

"And I tell you," she cried, hardening again, "that if you kill yourself I will blazon the story of your felony, your shame, to the whole world! I will myself describe to Nora L'Estrange your disguises, your creeping to and fro to sell your plunder."

"Silence!" interrupted Marsden, fiercely, making a step forward, then recovering himself. "It is not probable I can do anything to atone, to compensate. If I can——" he broke off.

Mrs. Ruthven paused and clasped her hands tightly together.

"If I hold my tongue none need ever know of your—infamy," she said, slowly. "It will be a secret between our two selves. Ought not that to be an indissoluble bond of union? There is not a breath of suspicon against you. Waite's interest is distinctly to be silent. If I choose to submit to so great a loss, that is my affair."

"Is is a tremendous if," said Marsden. "How am I to repay so huge a debt?"

"By giving me your life," she returned in quickly resolute tones, "by giving me your name."

"Do you remember that I am not only in love with Nora, but openly engaged to her?"

"I do, and breaking with her will be a considerable part of your atonement. I know men tolerably well; you are quite capable of loving two."

"You are right! My love for Nora is—I cannot speak of it to you—it has hitherto been the most, the only, spiritualised passion I ever knew; there has been no time as yet for it to become incarnate. Now there is in you an undertone of devilry that always attracted me."

"Will you break with Nora for my sake?" demanded Mrs. Ruthven, imperiously.

"It could be managed," he returned, thoughtfully, remembering his last interview with her. "Be that as it may, I shall never marry her now!"

"And my great sacrifice, will it not draw your heart to me!" she cried. "Oh! I have been wild with love and hate for you and I feel how madly foolish and despicable I am to act so! I do!" She burst into a passionate fit of sobbing.

The light came back to Marsden's eyes.

"You are a woman any man might love," he said, "and as you wisely admit that men can love two or more (we are generally broader than women, some women), you shall have all the love left in me, of my life-long gratitude you may be sure. You are making a sorry bargain, I warn you. I shall never be the same again, but if you care to be Mrs. Marsden of Evesleigh, so be it!"

"Ah! you are simply selling yourself! And what a price I pay!"

"No! by heaven! I am grateful, and I always admired you! Even that night, when I unclasped your necklace I felt inclined to kiss the pretty white throat that was so velvety soft to my sacrilegious touch!"

"And why did you not? Had you brought back consciousness by kisses and confided your difficulties to me, all would have been well!" cried the infatuated woman, throwing herself into his arms.

What could a criminal so respited do but pay the tribute demanded with liberal lips?

For the moment Marsden was moved and really grateful, though a bitter sense of being sold into slavery tinged his feelings of relief.

"How could you be so fascinated by Nora L'Estrange?" asked Mrs. Ruthven, still leaning against him and looking up in his face. "She never could understand you as I do, she never could share your feelings as I can."

"She is what she is," said he, shortly, "and has been an infinite misfortune to me."

"I am glad you see it." Mrs. Ruthven sat down on the sofa and signed to him to sit beside her. "Can I trust you, Marsden?" looking intently into his face.

"I think so. Dictate your own terms—settle everything on yourself—everything of mine that is available. I shall never feel more than a dependent on your charity."

"You must not say that. You will see that, together, we shall command society."

"Tell me," resumed Marsden, after a moment's pause, "before we drop this accursed subject forever, how did that detective fellow see me?"

"Do you remember an engineer, a Mr. Colville, calling here and speaking to me of his having a little girl, who was my god-daughter?"

"Yes. Shirley was here."

"That man was Waite. I wanted him to see you. I wanted to test the completeness of his disguise by defying Shirley's recognition. Shirley found him for me."

"Good God, has Shirley any suspicion?"

"Not the faintest. Do not doubt; I took every precaution to shield the name I might possibly bear. I waited, oh, how impatiently! hoping you would avow your love and difficulties to me, then I should have hidden my knowledge even from you; but when I found you were going to marry Nora L'Estrange, to expose me to the contemptuous pity of all your world and mine, I was on the verge of getting a warrant of committal against you. My relapse saved you. Ay, and saved me. Does not Nora love you intensely?" with keen curiosity.

Marsden understood the drift of the question.

"It would be unchivalrous to boast," said he, with a significant smile.

A look of delight in the knowledge she hoped to inflict gleamed in Mrs. Ruthven's large dark eyes.

"I must let you go, dearest," she said, laying her hand caressingly on his shoulder, yet he fancied with a touch of proprietorship. "But you will be sure to return to dinner, and be sure you do not go to the L'Estrange's. A letter will do much better than an interview."

"An interview? God forbid!" he exclaimed, with unmistakable sincerity.

"How pleased Lady Dorrington will be," said Mrs. Ruthven, meditatively.

"Oh, charmed," returned Marsden, while he thought how cruel fate had been in permitting his affectionate interlocutor to leave Chedworth alive. "I must leave you now," he said. "I feel I must be alone. I am still dizzy and unhinged with—with the sense of your great goodness."

"But you will come back? You will not do yourself any harm?"—anxiously.

"No. I don't think I have pluck enough left to blow my brains out, or rather you have given me a fresh zest for life. You are looking awfully exhausted. You must lie down and rest."

"Do you care enough for me to wish I should rest?"

"How can you doubt? Good-by for the present." A little further tribute, and he fled from her, half mad with rage, despair and self-contempt.

His ruling motive for the last few minutes had been to escape from Mrs. Ruthven, to be alone with his crushing sense of discovery and defeat. He had been utterly out-witted, he was at the mercy of a deeply injured woman—a woman from whom he shrunk revolted, all the more because he had injured her.

The force of degradation could no further go, and he had been such a doubly damned fool as to believe himself safe! That he could defy this keen, subtle, tenacious woman, and hug himself in the belief that by so base, so shabby a crime, he could secure an adorable creature like Nora! He had said truly that failure, detection, showed him the depth of shame into which he had fallen. Had he succeeded, it would not have occurred to him to repent.

Still aglow with the passion Nora had inspired, it was torture to give her up; yet he had so much sense of right left, or rather restored, that he felt it would be equally torture to meet her eyes, to hear her voice, knowing he was a despicable outcast, from whom, was she but aware of his true character, she would turn with scorn and loathing. Why, if he had murdered a man in anger, he thought, as he paced his room, or sat with locked doors, his head buried in his hands, he could face the world with comparative boldness, and yet, how unjust opinon is! What real harm had he done Mrs. Ruthven? Only deprived her of a few baubles she looked quite as well without. He had not robbed her of any comfort or necessity, or of money or lands. Why had he been so unlucky as to have taken such an overpowering fancy to a girl like Nora, unapproachable save by the tremendous sacrifice of marriage? This was really the mainspring of his misfortunes.

As to the future, he shuddered to think of it. Why should he not escape it? As to his solemn promise to Mrs. Ruthven, that weighed but lightly on his soul. What stayed his hand was partly the demoralization which seemed to paralyze him, but chiefly his dread of being hopelessly disgraced in Nora's eyes. She had immense power over him, and he had said truly, that all of good in him was linked with his feelings for her. No! he might have had resolution to end his ruined life, had he not felt convinced that Mrs. Ruthven, furious at being robbed of her prey, would tell all and make the worst of all to Nora. No; the one shred of comfort in the hell he had created for himself, was to remain unblemished in Nora's eyes. He would affect to release her by noble effort of self-denial, and perhaps she would give him a kind thought; perhaps, when wearied of a monotonous life with Winton or some other prig, a regretful thought.

What a sham life was altogether! Was Nora as true, as real, as she seemed? Yes, now, he would swear, but how long would her truth last the wear and tear of the world?

Well, he had escaped detection, and for Nora's sake, for his sister's, his name's sake, he had better drift with the tide which seemed sitting in his favor. His only way of enduring existence was to forget there was a yesterday or a to-morrow.

But dine with that woman, who was his mistress in the cruelest sense, he could not—at least, to-day. No; to-day he must be alone; he must be free to swallow, unchecked, such an amount of burgundy, champagne, brandy, as might drown the intolerable rage and remorse that maddened him.

His incoherent note of excuse, however, only brought Nemesis upon him, in the shape of Mrs. Ruthven herself, wrapped in shawls and furs, who sent up an urgent message, and sat in her carriage at the hotel door till her captive joined her, and was taken off in triumph.

(To be continued.)

FATALITIES AT SEA.

Large Increase Shown by the Report of the Inspector General.

The records of the United States steamboat inspection service, which during the last nineteen years has been under the direction of Gen. Dumont as Inspector General, show that during the last fiscal year the number of lives lost on steam vessels was approximately 368. This was an increase over the average of the preceding eighteen years of 128. This great increase was caused by the large loss of life by the foundering of the steamship Colima, recently, off the Pacific coast. This makes the average for the last nineteen years 247. The highest previous annual loss was 586 in 1874. The lowest was 133, in 1886. Notwithstanding the great increase in the number of vessels since 1870—over 100 per cent.—there have been but 759 disasters to steam vessels, with a loss of but 5,057 lives, the number of passengers carried per annum having increased from 122,589,130, carried in 1870, to not less than 650,000,000, carried in 1892.

The average loss of life under the law of 1852 was one person to every 250,181 passengers carried, while under the act of 1871, which greatly improved the efficiency of the service, there was only one life lost in 2,708,333 passengers carried, or a reduction in the number of lives lost of nearly 11 to 1 in proportion to the number of passengers carried. The service consists of about 175 officers and clerks, one supervising inspector general, ten supervising inspectors of districts, under whom are local inspectors, divided among the various customs collection districts of the United States. One of the most striking instances of the benefits derived from the powers conferred upon inspectors under the law is the almost entire absence of intemperance at the present time upon the part of licensed officers.

An alleged defect in the laws, and one which has caused much criticism, is in the local inspectors' power to investigate the cause of boiler explosions and casualties to steam vessels, thus giving the inspectors the right to pass judgment upon their own acts. The present head of the inspection service, Gen. Dumont, shares in the opinion of the opponents of such power, and has, unsuccessfully however, endeavored to have the laws amended to correct the evil. As long ago as 1889 he called attention in his annual report to the matter, and suggested a remedy in the form of a bill, which, however, never became a law. The bill provided for a court of inquiry, to be appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury, to investigate acts of local inspectors in granting licenses, etc., such court to consist of three supervising inspectors of other districts than the one in which the inspector belongs. It is very likely that this matter will again be brought before Congress at the next session.

No Song, No Supper.

Those men that undertake to train birds how to sing the notes of musical instruments usually teach their pupils in classes—seven birds to a class, for instance. Girls and boys that have studied under the best of masters, at the best of schools, have an enviable time compared with the poor birds, who are shut up in a dark room to start with, and are, moreover, half starved if they are too long in beginning their task of imitation. On the other hand, if they get on nicely and are fairly "quick at the uptake," the light will be gradually admitted and their hunger will be partly relieved, to reward their efforts and encourage them to higher things. As soon as they come to find that a little light and food accompany song, in the long run they learn to sing of their own accord for these necessities of life. The flute is the chief instrument used in these bird classes.