

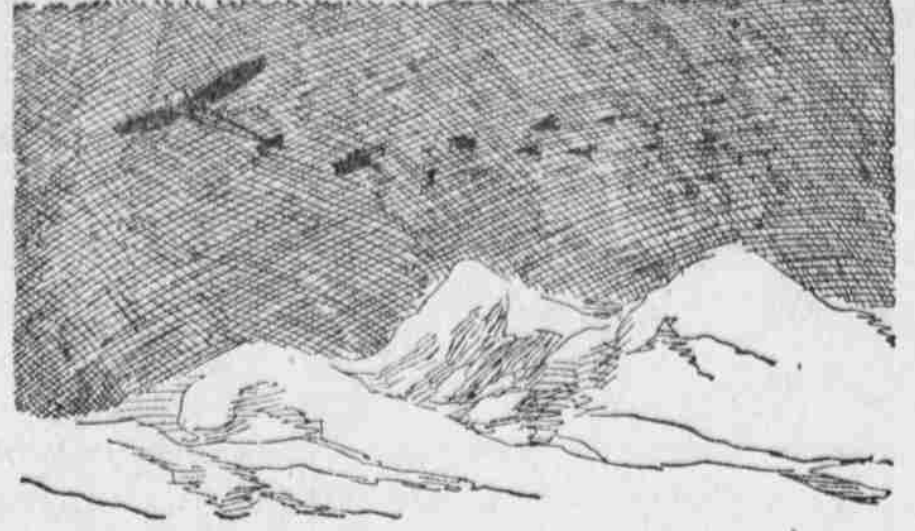


# The Flying Man

by Harry Irving Greene

Author of "The Lash of Circumstance," "Barbara of the Snows"

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**SYNOPSIS.**

Professor Desmond of the Peak observatory causes a great sensation throughout the country by announcing that what appears to be a satellite is approaching at terrific speed. Destruction of the earth is feared. Panic prevails everywhere. The satellite barely misses the earth. The atmospheric disturbance knocks people unconscious, but does no damage. A leaf bearing a cabalistic design flutters down among the guests at a lawn party. It is identical in design with a curious ornament worn by Doris Fulton. A hideous manlike being with huge wings descends in the midst of the guests. He notices Doris' ornament and starts toward her. The men fear he intends some harm to Doris and a fierce battle ensues, in which Tolliver and March, suitors of Doris, and Professor Desmond are injured. The flying man is wounded by a shot from Tolliver, but escapes by flying away. A farmer reports that the flying man carried off his young daughter.

**CHAPTER V.—Continued.**

"I yelled for my wife to get down in the cellar and she went down there quicker'n a rat and closed the trap-door and yelled for me to keep an eye open for Sarah—that it was about time for her to be coming home from school. Well, I hadn't thought of that before and you bet it made me bristle. Hair on the back of my neck seemed to stand up like on a dog when he smells a wolf. I wasn't afraid any more—I was just bristlin' all over and ready to go out and fight the devil himself if he went fooling around my girl. Then I saw Sarah coming around a bend in the road a couple of hundred yards away and I opened the door quick and stepped out with the gun ready. That old sky devil was just coming down for another rock. I reckon—anyway he was coming down when he seen her, too, and made a sweep for her. I let out a yell and took after him, trying to shoot, but the gun wouldn't go off, so I threw it down and just went after him naked handed. Didn't hardly know what I was doing or I'd have kept the gun for a club. She hadn't seen him and was standing still there and wonderin' what made me act so when he dropped down upon her like a hawk on a sparrow and swept up again without slackening his speed, dangling her by the arm. My God, if you could have heard the scream she gave! It will haunt me to my dying day. It was awful, men, awful. I just raved and raced about and beat my chest until they were but a speck in the sky and headin' for the mountains, then I tore back to the house. I just hollered to my wife to stay where she was until somebody called her by name and not to pay any attention to any noises she might hear above on the floor—not darin' to tell her what had happened—and then run out to the barn and saddled up the horse and run her all the way in. This's all."

He fell upon his knees at that point and became incoherent again in his appeals and prayers. Sympathetic and even horrified though the police were, they were unable to think of anything to do save notify the press, call up such farmers in the vicinity as had telephones and send out messengers to the others telling them of the horror and advising them to be watch-

ful and be sure and go about well armed. After that they managed to brace Jones up a little and sent him home accompanied by a special officer armed with a rifle to care for him and guard the house. The man had become absolutely irresponsible and threatened suicide.

An hour later and the heart of the great electric system that from its center of the web pulsates the wires and cables that span the world, and the human heart pulsates the veins and arteries of the body, were again a throbbing with vibrant life, and this time

less laughter arose in response to the "Yankoo news." The British press modified its first comment to the statement that "It certainly begins to look as though there was a vein of truth after all in the wild west story of the American Flying Man." One French paper remarked in parenthesis that "Should America announce a flying submarine, France should not be surprised to see the announcement fulfilled, as one must be prepared to expect anything from America." From Latin Europe came the hope that their first comment was correct, while the stoic German said "We are still unconvinced. The whole thing is absolutely unscientific." But meanwhile throughout the civilized world there ran an undercurrent of horror and sympathy resulting from the tragedy which was alleged to have taken place upon the great western plateau. As for the father of the missing child, he raved night and day in the obsession that she would be dropped through the roof as the stone had been, while the bereft mother wandered about speechless and dumb and to all intents practically thoughtless.

But that an uncanny menace hung heavily over their heads those—at least those who abode near the scene of the tragedy no longer doubted. Their normal reasoning faculties once more controlled them and man to man, family to family and concourse to concourse they talked the matter over gravely. The probity of the eye witnesses of the first appearance of the apparition was not to be questioned nor their sanity disputed. Also, Farmer Jones was an intelligent, truthful man, his wife a Christian woman and the disappearance of their daughter inexplicable except one believed the story of the now practically insane father. The mayor and city council deemed it a matter of sufficient importance to summon all witnesses into their chamber, and before them there appeared in answer to the summons the persons who had seen him with their own eyes. One by one they corroborated each other with an earnestness and fidelity of detail that convinced all hearers that no hallucination—the only possible explanation of their story heretofore if one did not believe it—lay behind their steady eyes and voices. Cross-questioned by skilled lawyers both separately and in each other's presence, their answers were invariably the same. The Flying Man's wings had a spread of from twenty-five to thirty-five feet, the best judges of distance among the witnesses agreeing on about thirty feet. They were dark colored, filmy, batlike and folded up somewhat similar to a fan. The man himself was slender of body and sinewy of limbs rather than muscular. He was from six to eight feet tall—probably about seven—at any rate much taller than any of those who had fought him on the lawn. His eyes were twice the size of a human's and protruding, sometimes glowing like dim carriage lights in a mist and more or less changeful in hue. He was of a brown or reddish color, his features half manlike, but his lips and canine teeth were more those of a gorilla. And then when they were through with their questions, on top of all this mass of corroborative evidence Desmond quietly laid the blood analysis of the two experts who had made it before others of their profession. They remained unshaken in their conviction of its accuracy.

Beyond all question, not only was the particular community over which the Flying Man now hovered menaced as no city ever had been before, but the state itself, in fact the whole nation was threatened, since he could extend his operations as far as he chose in any direction. Nor could the extent of his capabilities to inflict damage be easily calculated, inasmuch as they did not know the power of his mentality beyond the fact that he certainly possessed an intelligence equal at least to the lower order of human beings—his dropping the stone proved that. Not only could he steal children, murder men and women and destroy property and life by bombardment from above, but far greater possibilities for destruction were within his power, should he avail himself of them. Scattered all over the land in mining camps, upon railroad construction, upon canal work, upon sewer work—in fact, in a thousand places throughout the country where excavating and blasting were going on, were great quantities of dynamite and other high explosives—enough to blow cities from the face of the earth and warships to the bottom of the sea. All he had to do was to soar about until he came upon such a scene of operations, watch his chance to pounce down upon a quantity of some explosive and then from on high begin his work of death and destruction. Warships would be futile against him, since he could either keep away from them or attack them in the darkness of midnight. Armies would be of no avail, for he could be here today and hundreds of miles away tomorrow, and inasmuch as he had the whole

broad land with its countless herds and flocks to prey upon his food supply was unlimited. Nor was dynamite the most formidable weapon he could use against them. Fire was still more to be dreaded, and should he use that in his war against them practically the whole nation would be at his mercy. And there would be absolutely no way of protecting themselves against the red scourge if he used caution and judgment. He could pick out any place of operations he chose and any night he chose. Sweeping down with a gale from the blackness above, he could start blazes that would wipe out a whole city, soar on to the next place north, south, east or west, repeat, and so on and on, leaving ruins and death behind him until the whole nation would be in a frenzy. His possibilities for property destruction were greater than those of a hostile army, and no city was so great and no fortress so strong that he could not humble it. As long as he remained free a million men under arms could do not more than make him cautious, and if his powers of flight were sufficient for him to cross the sea Europe would be as helpless as America. Unquestionably there was but one thing to do. Some way and somehow he must be either captured or killed regardless of cost to individual life or the expenditure of money. So greatly was Mayor Elkins impressed with the gravity of the situation that the examination of the witnesses was scarcely completed than he was on a fast train bound for the capital of the state. An hour after arriving there he was closely closeted with the governor.

Governor McNell, Spanish war officer and veteran of more than one fight, was not a man to be frightened at a shadow, but his face was very grave when Mayor Elkins had finished his recital. "All that you say is undoubtedly true, sir. We are in as great danger as though a hostile army had landed upon our shores. This Flying Man, if man he really is—and he certainly must be either that or an almost equally dangerous ape thing—must be rendered powerless to threaten us. He has already tasted our blood, observed our impotence, and no one can tell when he will take it into his head to commit wholesale crime. I think he is proceeding with cunning and seeking to draw out our full powers against him by committing single crimes—first the comparatively minor offense of dropping a stone through a roof and then under sudden impulse, child stealing. He will probably reason that if we have not the power to avenge such a crime as the latter he is safe in assuming that we are completely at his mercy, and having waited a little while to see what we will do, and finding that we can do nothing, he will give full vent to his desires. Now, he is already an outlaw by reason of what he has done and if the girl dies in his possession he may be made to suffer the death penalty if caught. Already we have enough evidence against him to warrant any citizen in killing him upon sight, and I will so state in a proclamation to the people. But we must do more than rely upon individuals. We must put the machinery of the whole state in motion and run him down if we have to follow him to the pole and spend a million dollars in doing it. Now you have thought about this matter more than I have, and what do you think we should do first, Mr. Mayor?"

Mayor Elkins passed his hand across his forehead. "So far I have been able to think of but one way which promises any hope of immediate success. We must run him down and meet him upon his own battlefield—in the air."

"You mean the flying machines?"

"I do. We must call upon the aeroplanes and hound him as wolves do a deer until he corner him and either force him to surrender or kill him outright as those present at the time think expedient—always bearing in mind that captured alive he would be of incalculable value to us from a scientific standpoint. Militiamen and cavalry will only be useful as guards and scouts, yet all our troops should at once be called to arms and distributed as you think best. But if we can get a squadron of aeroplanes after him we will have him upon the defensive at once." Governor McNell smote the table with his fist.

"And by the Great Horn Spoon we shall have the best aviators of the nation here as quick as an immense reward can get them. Within a week we will have a score of them scouring the mountain peaks for leagues about, with others arriving every day. I will at once issue a reward of two hundred thousand dollars for his dead body and two hundred and fifty thousand if he be brought in alive and not mortally wounded. I will go further. I will call upon the surrounding states to add to the prize and will also ask the United States government to grant us whatever assistance we may require. I will take the matter up this very hour and never leave it out

of my mind until this sky scourge is rendered powerless. I will order out the militia at once and issue a general warning and instruction to the people to be placarded throughout the territory within my jurisdiction. Every person in this state should be fully advised as to our peril as quickly as the telephone, the telegraph and the printing press can do it. If necessary I will call a special session of the legislature to consult upon further measures. Keep me fully advised as to your local situation. Good day, Mr. Mayor."

The next day the following proclamation appeared not only in every daily paper that was published in his state but universally throughout the union as well.

**Proclamation by the Governor.**

To All the People:

Whereas, it has come officially to my notice that there is abroad in our land a heretofore unknown flying creature of malicious mind and crimi-



His Face Was Grave When Mayor Elkins Had Finished.

nial tendencies who has already committed such crimes against certain citizens as to warrant my proclaiming him a menace to the whole People and an outlaw who must be rendered powerless to commit further evil, and who by reason of his power to inflict incalculable loss of life and money upon any community by means of fires, explosives and in other ways is a source of grave public danger; I hereby warn all citizens to be upon their guard and prepared to capture or if necessary kill the so-called Flying Man upon the first opportunity, hereby promising all men within this state that I as Governor will grant immunity from punishment to anyone so doing as a public benefactor.

I hereby further order all the militiamen of this state to immediately report at their respective quarters for duty under arms, and I shall expect that all state firearms, cannon and mortars be immediately put in condition for instant use.

I further call to the attention of the aviators of this country the fact that outside of the great reward below offered it is their duty as citizens to join in this war against a national menace.

THEREFORE, by reason of the above mentioned facts and by virtue of my authority as Governor of this State, as well as by virtue of the authority conferred upon me by the Governors of other and surrounding States, I do hereby offer and promise a reward of FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS for the capture, dead or alive, of the above named Flying Man, with an additional reward of ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS if he be captured alive and without mortal injury.

(Signed) ALEXANDER McNELL, Governor. War had been declared.

**CHAPTER VI.**

The Duel in the Air.

Two days later a fireman stationed upon the top of a tall building in the central part of the city, where a lookout station had been temporarily erected, picked up his field glasses and once more swept the mountains and the sky. Around the horizon his glass slowly swung until he faced the southeast, when of a sudden he became as rigid as a setter who points his covey. Far away, miles distant and as yet invisible to the unassisted eye, a mote floated, a speck which rapidly grew larger until there could be no mistake as to its character. With an exclamation of relief the watcher dropped his lenses and hurried to the

telephone within the little nearby shelter that had been constructed for his protection in case of storm. He picked up the receiver, "Main 600," he called into it. For a moment he awaited his reply, then began speaking rather hurriedly.

"Is this the chief? Well, this is Johnson, stationed on the Commerce building lookout. There is an aeroplane off to the southeast and coming like the wind. It is several miles away as yet, but ought to be here in five minutes. That is all, sir. No, sir, no signs of the Flying Man. Goodbye, sir." He hung up the receiver.

And five minutes later, speeding like an express train, his propeller clacking loudly Putnam, aviator nearest to the scene when the proclamation was made and first of the squadron of aerial craft which, attracted by the huge reward, was already rushing at the rate of a mile a minute toward the field, arrived. Putnam was an aviator with an international reputation for two things, first, great skill in the management of his machine, and, second, a recklessness that often bordered close upon if not actually reaching the limit of foolhardiness. He already held several world's records and never let an opportunity slip by to try and capture others. He had flown higher than any other man by a thousand feet, had broken all records for heavy-weather flying, and his plunges and spirals never failed to bring cheers to the backs and cheers from the throats of his audiences. His skill was marvelous, his nerves of chilled steel and his recklessness ever a matter of joy and horror to the on-lookers. Night or day, blow high or blow low, fair weather or foul were all the same to him, and of all the hundreds of airmen in the land there was none better qualified for the desperate feat upon which he had embarked than "Little Put of the Charmed Life." And for a chance at a reward such as the one now in sight he would have guaranteed to fly straight into the mouth of hades and engage the Evil One himself single handed and alone if any one would have agreed to show him the opening.

He circled the central part of the city at a height of several hundred feet as he peered down in search of an alighting place. Below him, and notified of his coming by the shrilling blades of his great propeller, people by the thousands were staring upward and pointing or running in solid streams to the large square that lay near the center of the business district. Putnam had never been at this place before, but he knew that a crowd in one city was very like a crowd in another, and knowing crowds as he did he followed them, satisfied that they were leading him to the place where he was expected to alight. Once above it, he swept it in a swift circle as he made his calculations, balanced, proucted and dipped out of a sheer good natured desire to give those below a thrill, skimmed the top of a high building perilously close and then dove unexpectedly. Down the biplane shot like a hawk and a sharp cry of fear arose from those below accompanied by a riotous scuffling for safety, as it seemed to them that he must come hurtling upon their very heads, but within a score of feet of the ground he elevated his planes and the machine shooting forward dropped lightly upon the earth and went skimming over it like a gull that barely touches the surface of the water. A little way further on, tired of frightening them in this manner, he suddenly stopped and stepped carelessly upon the ground.

He answered the boisterously admiring throng which immediately closed in upon him with cool bonstfulness—for Putnam was one of the few absolutely fearless men who delight in extolling themselves. "Get him! You bet I will if I once set eyes on him. The 'Pet' can make eighty miles an hour and he will have to go some to throw any star dust in her eyes. If I can't go as high and as far as fast with her as any pinfeathered hobo, who is trying to beat his way around the universe by flipping worlds can flap on wings—well, I'll give up aviating and go to pushing a wheelbarrow. See that?" He tapped a heavy revolver which hung at his side. "Well, I've shot eagles upon the wing with it while going at full speed, and I ought to be able to hit a man who they tell me is as long as a telegraph pole. And if I can't hit his body I'll make those flappers of his look like the top of a pepper box. I'm going to take a scout around as soon as I get a bite to eat." He beckoned to a couple of policemen. "Here, Rooney and Hogan. Watch this machine while I'm gone and when I come back I'll bring you each a nice, red apple. I am going to start up inside of an hour." Not more than five feet tall, lithe as a wildcat, sinewy as one, he went swaggering off through the crowd, leaving them to stare after him and at his famous plane in chuckling admiration.

Promptly within the hour he was back and within his seat. With a glance ahead to see that his path was clear, he waved his hand at them. "And now, good people," he began. "All you have got to do is show me the dragon and I'll do the rest. I'll bring him back to you on a string with a ribbon around his neck. Now clear there, for I'm coming." He threw on the power and clutched the wheel.

Instantly the light machine leaped forward like a hare, the big air fan but a blur, first humming, then droning and lastly whistling shrilly as its speed revolutions ran to a height incomprehensible to the mind of man. Into the air it leaped as a swimmer leaps from a springboard, and with a spectacular sweep or two so close over their heads that they ducked in spite of themselves, straightened itself out and went speeding like a bird for the rugged crest of the mountains beyond. They gazed after him with admiration. The Flying Man had best look out for himself now, for Little Put was hot upon his trail. Enviously they thought of the great reward and Putnam's golden opportunity in being the first of the flyers to arrive. And what would they not give to see the duel when it occurred! But there could be no such luck that. In all probability it would take place in some lone quarter and all they would know about it would be Putnam's story in the papers.

From one of the nearer cliffs but a few miles away a black object arose and mounted upward with beating wings. The crowd gasped and strained its eyes. "Only an eagle," ran from lip to lip and they settled back to watch the already distant aviator. Then from a man who had raised a pair of binoculars to his eyes there burst a cry which caused every heart to leap like a wounded wild thing and set them to surging like a sea.

"My God! It is the Flying Man himself! Look! Look!"

In an instant pandemonium wild as a tornado burst over them and a vast roar boomed and reverberated down the streets in a rolling thunder. "The Flying Man! The Flying Man!" He has accepted the challenge. He is coming. In a dozen seconds every window was black with heads, while up to the roof tops humanity came swarming like ants, shouting, showing, wild with excitement to witness a combat beside which the gladiatorial battles of ancient Rome would have been puerile and tame. Cursing and shrieking, fighting and pleading for points of vantage, they swirled like a maelstrom in the madness of their desire to see. Then as another roar rose from the street, deeper toned than the first and carrying a fierceness in it that was almost leonine, they froze themselves into a motionless solid, craning and breathless. Then over all a great silence fell heavily.



"Swept Up Again, Without Slackening His Speed."

ful and be sure and go about well armed. After that they managed to brace Jones up a little and sent him home accompanied by a special officer armed with a rifle to care for him and guard the house. The man had become absolutely irresponsible and threatened suicide.

An hour later and the heart of the great electric system that from its center of the web pulsates the wires and cables that span the world, and the human heart pulsates the veins and arteries of the body, were again a throbbing with vibrant life, and this time



"My God! It is the Flying Man Himself!"

For Putnam had seen the enemy now and his plane careened on its beam ends as it wheeled towards where the other was mounting with tremendous leaps, darting through the air as a fish darts through the water, and up shot Putnam in pursuit straight as an arrow flies. And the Flying Man now seeming to be satisfied with his altitude, hovered as a king bird hovers over his enemy the crow, his body practically motionless, his wings beating a light tattoo upon the air as he awaited the ascent of this new and strange foe.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Why call a man a crank who has positive convictions? A crank is some thing that can be turned.—Judge.