

CHAPTER X. THE RETREAT OF THEODORE.

HE first day Theodore sent orders for the shipment of the engines and began to provide better equipment for the He brought as a companion house.

for Miss Suarez an elderly widow. Mrs. Stott, who was addicted to the writing of poems of a lovelorn nature Virginia's opinion of her new uncle's worldly wisdom rose at this provision for chaperonage. But she gave him too much credit. He merely thought of Virginia's becoming lonely.

He could not depart until sure that "Miss Virginia" would not feel slighted should he nush on. Craighead's telegrams came in from

the east, still Delphic in significance. One reported that New York was practically "surrounded." another that the country would soon be "gridironed." Theodore was deaf to voices from the outer world. A letter from Harrod, proving that the news of his return had reached the cabin in the dunes, lay on the old escritoire one morning. Theodore inserted a paper knife in the envelope, half cut it open-and saw Virginia's dress glimmering outside. The half opened letter fell to the desk, and Uncle Theodore leaped out on the veranda.

"Morning, uncle!" said she. "Have you slept well?" "Fine."

"You don't look it." said she. "Your eyes look dull. You devote too much time to business while your family is asleep, don't you?"

"Uncle" thought of the unopened letter, the unanswered telegrams, the neglected business, Mr. Waddy's money, the uncompleted aeronef, the sleepless nights, tormented by-not business at all, not business! Decidedly not!

"I slept too soundly," said he. They spent most of their time out of doors. Theodore ate wolfishly each day and drank great quantities of coffee to show that he was in fine fettlequite unable to pick up his end of the conversation. It was youth and spring and sweet fellowship, though the table talk. He wanted the river and Psyche, knowing that he ought to go and leave her. Every night he vowed to go next morning-and laid plans for another day with her Early one morning they started out on a berry picking expedition. The girl trod in a hollow and fell in a heap on the Bermuda grass. Theodore found her with her ankle gripped in her hands and her lips tight to hold back a cry, A hurried question, a cheery reply cut in two with a twinge of pain, and he picked her up. She threw her arms about his neck to ease the burden. Alas, it made it heavier! The fervor of his embrace did the ankle no good and nearly crushed poor Virginia. The color rose slowly to her brow as he set her down on the veranda and stood over her, breathing hard. She rose on the sound foot and tried the other carefully.



SHE THREW HER ARMS ABOUT HIS NECK TO EASE THE BURDEN.

Carson brother of hundreds of years ago and the ownership of this plantanoring landscape and seascape, devot tion, was weakly allowed to assume ed himself to the study of sand tracks kinship from the place and name and of all sorts-tracks of foxes examinnever thought of sitting down with ing the beach for turtles' eggs, months Theodore and tracing the thing out. ahead of time; talon marks of opossums and raccoons prowling about for She wondered just what the relationcrabs, mice and birds' eggs; hoof ship was anyhow. Chloe said that marks of wild hogs, etc. Trails of men Cahsonses were Cahsonses, and she there were along the sparsely travnever bothered about different kinds. eled highway of the strand and the He couldn't be a real uncle. Virginia

footprints of one in particular attracted him. Tracks in the sand were to of General Carson by a second wife. Harrod book, newspaper, telegraph He was the head of the family anyand circulating library. He knew sev- how. She must be satisfied with that. eral things that this man might be-Of his invention, save that it was in a deserter from the fort, perhaps, or the mysterious shed, chosen because it might be some one connected with of its remoteness and its unobstructed the revenue service. His cabin was beach, she really knew nothing. She "Harrod's fishing camp"-nothing more. began to wonder now whether he What had revenue officers to do with was a world's genius or only the such humble piscatorial headquarters crude product of a country college, with nothing to command a second as these? They should not care about Theodore's hidden invention. glance except his sinewy erectness,

Reagan answered slowly:

CHAPTER XI.

THE AERONEF VIRGINIA.

Carson by no chain of descent save

the pathetic yearning in his eyes and And yet one day a slimy metal sea monster stuck a blunt nose out from the wonderful softness in his voice. the water at about the five fathom "Uncle Theodore," suggested Vircontour line, opened a rectangular ginia to Mrs. Stott, "has invited us to mouth and flicked a square red tongue visit him. And, do you know, I think like an angry snake until Captain Har- we'll go back with the captain if you can overcome your aversion to the warod on the highest dune opened a brilliant red handkerchief with a Chau- ter."

tauqua salute and wiped his nose elab-"Will the bay be rough?" asked Mrs. orately. Whereupon the sea monster Stott as if confident that the captain sank beneath the brine. What took served out the weather. place that night was concealed by "Dead ca'm, ma'am." darkness. If Captain Harrod was "We'll go," said Mrs. Stott. busy carrying packages ashore until The ladies burriedly packed their

morning he came by them honestly, no dunnage and embarked. They were a gay party. Virginia was full of laughdoubt. An examination of the popular nov- ter. Her color rose and her eyes dilat-

els or periodicals of the past-say of ed as they took the stream early posy. Caroline," said the old man. items made him sick of Mrs. Stort's the era of that president whose Chris- enough to let them through the new OUL THE ore bears-will be canal into the lagoon by dayinght. "Do you see any signs of a storm?" rewarded by a realization of prophecy gone wrong as to the influence on asked Mrs. Stott, noting his upward smuggling of aerial navigation. It giances, must bring free trade, they said. "No, ma'am," he returned. "Ab was Ships navigating the air could land sust tryin' to make out if Ah'd eve' their cargoes anywhere. Yet the airseen that craft befo' aloft thah." ships gave the custom house people The craft alluded to was a great sillittle trouble. Airships were so conver Condor, gleaming in the sun. spicuous; their loads were necessarily Virginia studied her absorbedly with so light; the system of reporting them her field glasses. by wireless from Canada, Mexico and "I think," said Virginia, "that she's the Roc. I'm sure of it." the islands was so efficient. "Yes, ma'am," replied Harrod. Very unexpectedly it was the sub-"She's lyin' to," said the captain. marine that drove the "revenues" wild "Thah goes hub lift down." and filled the law books with Draco nian statutes. No trade ever grew "Why," asked Virginia wonderingly, what can she want over there in the faster. The boat fish dived beneath the waves and rose on some lonely coast woods?" like this by appointment with some "She's jist about ove' yo' home, Captain Harrod sitting like a bewhisma'am," said Harrod. kered bit of wreckage on the dunes. Virginia grew pale and, asking for the glass, scanned the great aerostat Harrod was nervous about the footprints, and he persevered in a search with the lowered lift, like a nexus, to until he found their maker lying asleep the ground. "Can't you go a little faster?" said in a comfortable sleeping bag in a she, laying down the binoculars. nearby thicket. He recognized him as Wizner, inventor of the helicopter that "Aftah we clear Week's bay," said was blown out to sea. He waked Wizthe captain. ner, and the latter assailed Harrod in Once clear of the channel, they stood abuse which included the absent Carfor the south shore, the engines firing in continuous explosion. Suddenly SOD. "You let my helicopter go out to with a little scream vitatial leaned sea," he walled, "and it was worth a out to look upward past the awning. million dollars to me." In the water, instead of bird or sail or Harrod took pity on the inventor, cloud, ske had seen, coming up from and as a result Wizner stayed for | the depths under their rail, the Roc, under full speed, her great engines weeks, sleeping in his bag on the porch of the cabin, and, to the captain's inpurring like tiger cats, her screws tense anger, tried several times to visit shimmering, her giant hull a resplendthe shed where Carson's newly inventent bubble of steel. Looking up, Vired airship was in course of completion. ginia saw her overhead and cowered Finally Carson arrived. Theodore back into the boat, for peering over the rail and calling like an evil bird



the dubious one of the original third VIRGINIA STUDIED HER ABSORBEDLY WITH HER FIELD GLASSES.

> the aerostal. I have made a specialty of this. I know. The value of that cigar shaped craft up there as junk, deducted from her present value, is the measure of Mr. Finley Shayne's loss when our big show opens its ticket wagon. Seest thou?"

Virginia looked attentively at the speaker, startled to hear her uncle's name mentioned almost in his presfelt sure of that. He might be a son ence. She saw a youngish man of medium height, thin habit of body and long, thick hair, who was gazing, with every appearance of interest, not at the airship, but at a lady of perhaps twenty-seven years, short, plump, admirably gowned in a sort of reduced half mourning, with her jolly little face turned toward the Roc, her brown hair tousled about her face, her prominent little chin carrying the facial angle forward and downward.

"That talk will do with me." said she, "but you've got to show papa something besides oratory pretty soon or there'll be trouble. He tells me that you and Mr. Carson are the first ever to sell him a gold brick, and he proposes to make an example of you. You're supposed to be in custody now. Why, here's papa!"

Mr. Waddy came down the wharf, combing his whiskers and mustache out in front of his nose with his fingers. As Harrod's boat glided within arm's length of the wharf the lift descended from the airship, filling Virginia with terror.

"I don't think I'll get you another "picking it to bits like that." "I'm trying my fortune," said she

"Why didn't he send it to the plantation?" asked Virginia,

"I gave him this address," said Theodore. "1-1 stayed there too-too long." He opened the gyroscope globe and began running the engines lightly, setting the heavy little wheels spinning. rocking the aeronef from side to side to note the operation of the balancing devices. Preserving their perpendicu-larity, as if of intelligent purpose, the gyroscopes moved the levers of the wing differentials which would accelerate the propeller wheels of the lowered wing and correspondingly slow the upper. Right or left, stern or bow. the depressed area would work the harder, the raised part slower, while powerful rudders co-operated, moving like a fish's fins, even now while the propeller rested. Theodore was getting past an awkward reference to his long stay at the plantation by a painstaking examination of the brain of his

airship. "See how it works, Virginia," he exclaimed. "It knows the levers to be moved. Why, if a puff starts to overturn her she'll strike with the lowered wings alone like a bird. And see the intelligence of those rudders! And Wizner said she'd turn turtle!"

"And Mr. Craighead doesn't get any report of all this! What must he think ?"

"I told him about it," said Theodore proudly. "And it was no time to telegraph apologies. It was a time to work."

Virginia opened another of Craighead's telegrams. It was addressed to Palmetto Beach, "or somewhere it is Craighead as very important. "My luck hath turned! It is Craighead Felix now," said he. "Have found a grants in no time; will cluch New York by Friday; Chicago already hemmed in. New thought-fee of roads in grangers everywhere. Will secure title except for road purposes. Shayne, thy sun sets apace! Whoop! Whoop! Whoopee! We've got 'em, we've got 'em! Caroline's dad ready to bust all eight banks to back scheme. You must make good, Theodorie. Answer for the sake of divine pity just one leetle teeney peep! Napoleon Bonaparte Hannibal Miltiades Craighead."

"What does he mean," asked Virginia, "by all this about grants, highways and fee simple? It's awfully queer."

"I don't know," replied Carson "Some visionary thing."

"And who is Caroline?" asked Virginia.

"Mrs. Graybill, Mr. Waddy's daughter. Now, listen, Virginia, and watch. She's ready to try."

He threw in the clutch, and the wings began whirring like great buzzes. Faster and faster the wing sections whirled until the aeronef strained upward on her lashings like a restive horse. Theodore tipped a lever, and she leaped forward, stretching the ropes at an angle of forty-five degrees.

we and our pirates are making way for the matchless, unsinkable, double acting, universal speed, direct drive, nonhalation, orthochromatic Carson aernoef. Don't forget our haughty southron coconspirator who will wing his way to lilinois by the time we return. Don't fall down and forget that." "Well, you'd better have him on hand," said Mr. Waddy, "as he promised, or I'll know why he took my good hard money."

It was on occasions of this sort that Mr. Craighead had sweated telegrams begging to know if Theodore really had any airship.

"But think, my dear sir," protested Mr. Craighead, "of the untold millions in the Broom idea-aerial monopoly. Even if Theodore should be only four clubs and a spade, we still hold the aces, my dear Mr. Waddy. Do not grind your teeth thus so long as the American Nitrates and Air Products company remains as the Archimedean lever with which to pry up and dump the world. We are ahead whatever happens to the aeronet end of the deal."

"Well, the aeronef end," said Mr. Waddy, "had better come to the center or I'll see what law there is for getting money by false pretenses."

The two men were the best of trav-eling companions. Mr. Waddy insisted on going in the smoker. Mr. Craighead took the stateroom while his money lasted and then borrowed of Mr. Waddy.

Mr. Craighead had advertised for people to organize a rapid business campaign covering the civilized world to meet him in West Twenty-third hoped," and seemed to be regarded by street at the studio of an acquaintance to whom he had neglected to impart any knowledge of the tryst with the specialists. Waddy and Craighead argang of grafters organized to get us rived somewhat late on account of the time consumed in adjusting Mr. Craighead's aura and found a crush of peo-ple entirely allen to the fine arts, filling the studio and the hall outside. Craighead's sculptor friend, with a lady model, escaped the angry mob into the scaffolding of an equestrian group ren-

> resenting an Indian maiden in a stampede of buffaloes. The model had been osing for something-an Indian maiden perhaps-and had feathers in her bair.

Craighead broke through by impersonating an officer, shouting "Make way for the policel" and uppercutting the crowd with his elbows.

"Hello, De Land!" said he, nodding to the sculptor. "Most beauteous princess of the Apaches, how?"

"That you, Craig?" called down the sculptor. "What, not sober? Go after the police. Turn these people out, please, Craig!"

"Friends of mine," said Craighead. "I advertised for 'em. Hope you baven't been incommoded, old man." "Not at ail!" replied the sculptor sar-

ustically. "But get them out so Mine Brown and I can descend."

Craighead's manner of disposing of the crowd commanded Mr. Waddy's sincere respect. He went about with ward, as might an eagle repulsed by a marvelous rapidity, sending away those whose nonutility was unquestionable and making engagements with others at "our Wall street office," the name wing," said he, "and see if you can tip of which made everybody more respectful. The dinner to which Mr. Craighead took Mr. De Land, Miss Brown and Mr. Waddy was the first of a series which reduced Mr. Waddy to torper. The old gentleman, in his long frock coat which buttoned to a surtout, his frowsy face and his evident attachment to Mr. Craighead, was remembered in certain ultra bohemian circles for his surreptitious slinking into the dimmest corners of cafes and roof madons. He had a dark secret, Mr. Cr head said, which, he did not explain originated in Mr. Waddy's agrees with the lady in goggies that the whole situation was improper. He felt obliged to keep with Craighead because of a suspicion that the seronef was a figment of two Slattery Institute inaginations, and he did not purpose to let any guilty man escape. So he providently engaged a detective to shadow both himself and Mr. Crainhead, the unremitting presence of whom in very plain clothes made Mr. Waddy feel and look guilty and fugi-

"It isn't bad at all," said she.

Taking off the shoe, she held the little foot in her hand, examining the ankle critically.

"Do you think it's swelling?" she asked.

Theodore tenderly squeezed the shapely ankle and rose to his feet. "I don't know," said he. "1-F#ginia"-

He had seized her hand and was looking at her with none of the impersonality of the surgeon or physician. She did not take her hand away. He dropped it and ran-rantoward the river.

Theodore was absent at dinner without apology, and the women were in bed before he stale to his room and lay tossing again. Desperate, he rose and went to the library, lighted a lamp, saw the still sealed letter from Captain Harrod and slashed it open as if it had been the breast of his mortal foe. It ran:

I hear that you are back south, I hope you can come right soon. The en-gincs is here for ten days. The man that lost the flying thing the young lady come in is back. He is right crazy, Mr. Theo dore, from losing his machine. He keep trying to git into the shed and yells he They is a lot of letters and is rooned. telegrams at Palmetto Beach.

Theodore struck himself on the breast and started to his feet determined to flee to his work and from

the romantic dangers of his unclehood Trembling with excitement, he attempted a note to Virginia. Wizner at the cabin, messages at the beach, meant danger and disgrace if he neglected his task longer, infamy if he toyed on with temptation. He told Chloe through her door that he had been called away and that she must explain to the ladies. He hastily packed a bag, ran down and unmoored the launch and fled down the river.

. . . . Captain Harrod, dignified, barefooted, soft voiced, unkempt, kept his lonely vigil on the white straight edge through with us?" of beach that lay from Fort Morgan

ordered the spying man away, and an altercation ensued in which Wizner was roughly handled. At last he took his leave, vowing vengeance on Carson and the airship, which, he said, was worthless. He had made rough drawings of the airship, as he had managed secretly to elude Harrod's watchful-

At the ingoon he took a boat and rowed to the north shore. The boat from the submarine that had signaled Harrod had brought her crew ashore. He addressed one of the men as Fnville and learned that the Stickleback, the submarine, was offshore for some unknown purpose. Reagan, the Stickleback's captain, came lazily up, and Wizner informed him that he (Wizner) was going on board her. The captain, amazed, asked for what reason.

"I'm goin' to use her." "The d-l you are!"

"Well, if not I'll show you up to the authorities as a smuggler, Reagan -vou an' Harrod."

Reagan's face paled. He hastily drew a revolver from his pocket, then thrust it back.

"How do we know," said Reagan, "that you won't peach after you get

"If I make the play I expect to," reto Perdido bay. Captain Harrod, ig plied Wizner, "I'll be in a d-d alab

was Silberberg. "Shall Ah answer the hail, miss?"

asked the captain. "No!" whispered Virginia. "Take

no notice, I beg of you, captain!" The Roc swept on like a meteor. leaving the launch behind. Virginia asked the captain if he supposed she had been recognized.

"Ah reckon not, miss," said he. "Jist a chance meetin', Ab reckon. She's come to, raght ove' the inn," said the captain.

Virginia sat under the middle of the awning, quite in a tremble. The boat slowly threaded the shelly entrance to the bayou and passed the wharf of the inn. The people on the quay were craning their necks at the descent of the passengers from the Roc.

"Hurry, captain, hurry!" urged Virginia. "Ah cain't, ma'am," said he, "Ah'll hey to lie to a minute foh that boat.

Neve' fear, miss; yo' all raght with me!" "Here you see," said a voice from the wharf, "two soon to be discarded

modes of navigation-the boat displacing water and the aerostat floating in the air upheld by gas. The hydroplane must replace the boat; the aeronef.

with a little embarrassed laugh. "Humph!" said her father.

The younger man, seemingly recovered from his perplexity, was touching the row of buttons one by one, and as he launch gathered way Virginia heard him say to button after button: "She loves me! She loves me not! She loves me! Hooray!"

The shout greeted the favorable answer of the oracle. The lady, as if feeling the fingers in her curls, turned and gently slapped the gentleman's ears. The launch shot into the canal and out of sight. The ladies were made sole owners of Carson's cabin, and the men slept with the aeronef by night, while by day Captain Harrod stood by to aid Theodore, slipping away to the top of the dunes at times to scan the offing for the slimy nosed Stickleback.

inexplicably reappearing with her oval deck just awash, her thin, semi-invisible periscope in air. Having arranged with Reagan for a cessation of the contraband business until the aeronef was off the stocks, the captain was worried. He waved the Chautauqua salute one day, whereupon the submarine sounded like a gallied rorqual The captain's ingenuity was not equal to the task of developing a theory to

account for her presence or her alarm. Carson suddenly became possessed of an unremitting energy that commanded Virginia's admiration. As he told ginia!" her again of his struggles, his experiments, his falling into the garden of Dr. Witherspoon, his meeting with Craighead, the financial enlistment of Mr. Waddy and of the puzzling messages he had received she became an enthusiast too.

"I'd like to meet Mr. Craighead." said she. "I'd like to feel sure that he can secure a monopoly of the navigation of the air."

"You might form an opinion of him," said he, "by reading his telegrams." "Of whom?" inquired Virginia, evidently thinking of something else.

"Craighead," replied Carson. "Here they are. What do you think of them?" The first was dated Charleston, W. Va. "Air products incorporated,"

It ran. "Immense sensation in trust incubator and brooder. Why don't I hear from illustrious co-conspirator? Craighead, the Pluce."

"Tries to be humorous," said Virginia. "Let's see the next."

The next date was dated, "En route to Cosmopolis from Incubator," and was unsigned. "To him who commands the winds, from him who winds the commands, greeting," it ran. "Be of good cheer. The train is laid, the gin is set, the dogs of war strain forward in the leash. But is there any aeronef? Broom end of pipe dream assumes terrifying concreteness. Noble, sir, assure me of thine! Just wire saying you are

you and there is an aeronef, collect!" "Did you answer this?" asked Virginia. Theodore shook his head:

"It was days and days before I got | Shayne and his pirates down and out

He reversed it, and she slacked backfoe. Virginia swung her hat and shout-

"Pull the line on the end of that her. Pull!"

Virginia walked gingerly forward. her dress firing, her hat whisked to the top of the room. Grasping the flying rope end, she pulled downward. The wings settled slightly, and then as the gyroscope brain felt the depression the lowered wings lifted as if consciously rising to a load. It was marvelous.

"Can't you pull harder?" cried Theodore, barebeaded, his hair flying. "Try."

"Aye, aye, sir," cried Virginia cheerfly. "Try it is."

Reaching up, she pulled herself clear of the floor, her strong little form swaying like a most charming pendulum. The enormous dragon fly, throwing its power into the depressing wing, rode level, with nine stone weight of solid American girl dangling from the tip of one wing-a mechanical paradox. The boat stood in air as level as a ship in a calm.

"Hurrah!" shouted Theodore, swinging his arms. "Never anything like it in the world. Curried you on one wing and kept level. Hurrah for the Vir-

He eased her down and stepped to where Virginia waited, hands outstretched, red from the rough rope.

hair blown abroad. "And are you going to name her that?" she cried. "Oh, how perfectly dear of you!"

Theodore held the chafed bands, triumph in his face. He opened the little red palms and kissed them over and over again. Mrs. Stott came in and saw him doing it.

"I hurt my hands," said Virginia. showing them. "And uncle is kissing them well."

"Very kind and self sacrificing, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Stott.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CRAIGHEAD IN CUSTODY.

HE money for the last touches to the airship was to be the extent of Mr. Waddy's new financial venture, and then

came Craighead with his new hatched plan for actually monopolizing the air. and Mr. Waddy, having submitted it to his local lawyer, hesitated and was lost.

"I'll go into it." he said. "We'll make everybody come and settle that wants a trip by airship. Hey?"

"Exactly," replied Craighead. "Jest as if the whole country was our farm." cried Mr. Waddy.

"It will be for circumambient pur poses." replied Craighead. "And, as you so well said, a farm's a cinch. And remember. Mr. Waddy, in putting

His second reason for becoming Mr. Craighead's double was his sense of duty of preventing that pupil of Dr. Witherspoon from breaking the vow of abstinence. So he drank most of the intoxicants served to Craighead, somewhat to the injury of his health, but much to the betterment of his reputation as a roisterer. Altogether it was a relief to get Craighead back home, where he installed him as a lodger and boarder, charging him well for his accommodation and lending him the money on his note to pay for it. On arrival he went to bed and turned Craighead over to Mrs. Graybill, with strict injunctions to telephone the sheriff's office if he was un-

tive.

accounted for for more than an hour. It was a situation with some unique aspects. Mr. Craighead began whiling away time with a work on the "Morphology of the Crawfish" and dips into De Quincey's "Spanish Nun." Looking from the library window, he saw Mrs. Graybill enter a summer house, leaving a red hat on the railing outside.

The "Morphology" grew uninteresting. Craighead stepped from the window, went into the summer house and started at finding Mrs. Graybill there, her hair tousled about her head, her little nose elevated in that comical resemblance to her father's, "Mr. Waddy informs me that the late Mr. Graybill was a minister of the gospel," he ventured.

"Yes," she replied, "he was." "And that he has been called," Craighead went on, "to a better life a year or more?"

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