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March 25—17

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June 19—6m

## IN A BALLOON WITH A M. NIAC.

BY W. A. PETERS.

While I was preparing my great balloon, "The Occident," in San Francisco in 1872, for a voyage to New York, I boarded in a private house with rooms adjoining those of a middle-aged man, one of the "Argonauts" of '49, who, after the wave had receded, was left upon the barren beach, and like a sea-shell singing the song of its ocean home, would he, in melancholy voice, with cadence of the past, tell the tales of the mines, and of his fabulous wealth which came as if by the rubbing of Aladdin's lamp, and went as suddenly, when "new lamps were exchanged for old," at the gaming table. His history was a strange admixture of fortune and vicissitude, with sweetness in the cups and bitterness in the dregs; sorrows that chased his pleasures around the sharp corners of life; fears that held a check rein on his hopes, and fierce passions that drove the rowels deep. But the saddest chapter of his life was this:

He had struck a rich vein, and his fortune was made; the hope of his life was realized, and with that buoyant, life-bounding, pulsing shout of "home again!" he hastened to San Francisco to embark for home, and wife and every thing that made life dear in New York, the home of his youth and marriage. When he reached San Francisco he found a letter awaiting him, the handwriting was his wife's. Ah! how eagerly he tore it open to devour the contents of sweet and loving words; those tender sentiments that only a wife can write; those significant sentences that only a husband can understand, which make luminous in the soul the unwritten things of the inner temple that glitter like golden characters upon the heart. Glorious anticipation was on his face. He read the letter. Mark the change! He sprang up like a madman; his face grew black as a thunder cloud; he choked for utterance, and then strove to choke the black words down as, through the hours of that long night, he paced the floor of the dingy hotel room.

He tore the letter in pieces, then gathered it carefully up and put it together as if to retain it for evidence. That letter contained a deliberate statement from his wife that she had proven false to him, that long she had loved another, that she had sailed with him for Europe, and that, ere the letter reached him, she'd be basking in her lover's smile beneath the voluptuous sky of Italy. She calmly urged her husband to forget her, as she would try to forget him in the delicious joy of her new love.

And this was all of the past to him; the sweet smiles, the loving glances, the gentle tones, the fond caresses, to him as apples of Sodom, turned to ashes, or as gems upon the bosom, that were turned to lifeless stone. The serpent had glided into his Eden, and he went forth among the thorns and the brambles. What cared he for the fortune now he had toiled so hard to make for her. Well, he did as others have done; he went to the bar and the gaming table; and just as the old grave digger gathered the villagers in, so did the gamblers gather in his thousands, and then he went back to the mines as hopeless and reckless as an outcast. Fortune never smiled upon him any more, and if she had, he would have turned his back upon her, and taken up a poor claim; he seemed to seek poverty as earnestly as others sought wealth, and with the smallest results he seemed the best pleased. His grief was too deep to be broken in upon; it was a sealed book, but its contents had been surmised by many.

One by one the '49's disappeared; still he clung to the deserted hill sides, and then the very intensity of the desolation drove him off too, and he returned to San Francisco, where he became a book-keeper in a gloomy old warehouse, in which he was still employed when we met.

This was the man with whom I was to have the most fearful adventure of my life; the man with whom I was to contend in awful and deadly desperation, either to save both lives or to destroy his, while his maddened energies were put forth with the demonism of a maniac to destroy both in the most horrible death. Contend for the virtues of the most celebrated hair-dyes and praise them as you will, but a few moments of

intensified excitement and fear changed my glossy black hair to the untimely silver of age, without any renewal of the application.

We became warm friends in the boarding house, and he took a lively interest in matters of my profession; in fact, I found him so scientific in his theories of ballooning that I opened up all my plans to him, exhibited my models, and took him with me each day to note the progress of completion on my aerial ship. He was anxious to ascend with me and take the trip East, as he laughingly remarked, that it was about the only passage he was able to afford, and that he would be literally a steerage passenger, if I would allow him to handle the rudder occasionally by way of relief. I assured him that I would be glad of his company and of his scientific assistance; thus it was arranged that he was to accompany me.

We had many pleasant conversations after we had entered into this confidential arrangement, and he told me of his great grief and estrangement from all that had ever made life sweet to him; but, when I told him I had formerly been a resident of New York and knew many of the parties he had spoken of, he seemed to regret that he had unfolded so much to me of the things that had been sacredly hidden, and after that he appeared more distant; but I thought nothing of the change, merely attributing it to the revival of unhappy memories. When the day for our departure was ushered in with balmy air and glorious sunshine, he seemed in fine and unusual spirits, which the exhilarating anticipations of the upper air would naturally give one who was as fearless of the voyage as he appeared.

All things were ready—my huge ship of the air, "The Occident," swung gracefully as a thing of life to her mooring, and was as trim and beautiful as a blushing woman waiting for her lover; expectant thousands stood waiting for the men to cut the lines that moored my impatient beauty down. I shall never forget the shouts, the clapping of hands, the waving of handkerchiefs, and the God speed we received as we shot away like an arrow into the upper blue.

I need not write of the grandeur of the scene—it cannot be described by one who has witnessed it, it cannot be understood by one who has not; its effect was like intoxication upon my companion; it seemed as if his joys that had been held captive to grief had been set free like a bird from its cage. His eyes shone with an unusual brilliancy, his conversation sparkled with gems of wisdom and wit, and his mind seemed transcendental; but when we reached the higher latitudes of rarified air, a change came over him, and the inward pressure upon his brain seemed having a strange effect. The mirthful light of his eyes gave way to a ferocious glare, and his musical sentences were changed to words of hate and revenge, directed to some one he appeared to see in the air. Suddenly he sprang forward upon me with such force as to almost overturn the car of the balloon, and, brandishing a huge knife over me, I fully realized that I had to deal with insanity in its worst mood. He imagined that I was the destroyer of his happiness, the lover of his wife; and I then realized that his knowledge of my former residence in New York had shaped this idea in his fevered brain. It was a fearful moment? How was I to act?

"Ah, base demon, fiend from Hades!" he exclaimed. "Thou Pluto to my Prospero, I've met thee in mid air at last where you've spread your black wings in this hallowed atmosphere and polluted the presence of the gods with thy foul blot on nature. Back to the heads of Corobus I'll send you, and may they inflict upon you the eternal horrors of infernal hydrophobia!"

I was helpless in his grasp; I saw that he was preparing to plunge the knife into my throat, and that hasty action alone could save me.

"See Jupiter approaching!" I exclaimed, pointing upward with my hand. He hastily looked up, and for one moment paused in the downward stroke of the knife. In awful desperation I grasped his arm, and then the struggle began. His power seemed superhuman, and bid fair to overmatch me in a few moments of fierce struggle; then I knew I would either be lifted in his arms and thrown out of the car, or he would plunge the

sharp dagger into my quivering flesh. I roused to final desperation before despair, and the struggle was fearful, as we swayed the frail car until bidding fair to overturn us both in a swift and awful descent to the earth. He overpowered me and crushed me down beneath him, his hand upon my throat. He raised the knife to strike the fatal blow, and darkness came over me, when, fortunately, I grasped a bar of iron which my hand had touched. As quick almost as lightning, in the fearful emergency, I struck him a blow which knocked him backwards. This saved me for the present, for I brandished the bar with such desperate spirit, that even in his madness, he deemed caution the better part of valor.

I then tried to reason him into a realization of our situation, and of the danger as well as mine; and when he could again realize that we were in a balloon, a devilish idea of destruction entered his brain. He climbed up the ropes to the silk with the activity and fearlessness of a monkey, and said he would have a glorious revenge on me. He would rip open the balloon and die with me, just to witness my tortures in the other world, for the blight I had put upon his life.

I now saw that the situation was awful indeed, as I instantly contemplated the crashing fall of 5,000 feet. Not a moment was to be lost. I had the faculty of quick conception and action. On the instant I thought of a lasso which I had in the car firmly attached, and in the use of which I had become expert on the plains. I grasped it up and threw it into coil, and, just as his knife struck the first rent into the silk, I threw the lariat with desperate skill, and with a fearful jerk I dragged him from his hold on the ropes. With a shriek of despair he shot by the car at a terrible speed. There was a twang of the intensely strong lasso, a heavy jerk upon the balloon, a strain and quiver in every cord, and I was saved at an awful cost—the life of a human being, and that one formerly my most confiding friend.

For the first time I looked over the side of the car and a horrible sight greeted me. There was his ghastly head swinging in the lasso, severed from the body by the great force of the fall, while the body had crumpled away into the earth 5,000 feet below. I should have fainted at the sight in that high latitude, had I not have been recalled to a danger that would have made my fate as certain as his. The gas had escaped from the cut in the balloon until I was descending with a fearful velocity, that would have dashed me in pieces. I sprang to the sand bags and threw them over, not waiting to cut them, and a prayer escaped my lips that no one might be under them. This arrested the swift descent so that I came down in safety, although swifter than I had ever done before. I landed in a little frontier town, and the scene was so ludicrous that I almost forgot the sad and fatal experience I had just gone through. The people had seen the sand bags fall and thought it was the judgment day; my balloon they mistook for the angel Gabriel, and I never saw such speedy desolation of a town before in my life. Wagons rattled over the roads at a fearful drive; horses dashed by them like the wind, with great, swaggering desperadoes on them, white with fear, and teeth rattling like beans in a gourd. Others disappeared through the corn-fields, while those who were too badly scared to run, prayed, sang, cried, and did almost every imaginable thing. When they realized what it was, they hung their heads, as full of shame as school boys caught kissing their sweethearts, and those who had rushed on the roads came dodging in from day to day for a week afterward.

The whole town turned out with me to search for the body of my unfortunate companion. After several days we found it, buried almost out of sight in the earth, with the limbs driven up into the body by the fearful force of the fall. We buried the body with the head, and then bidding adieu to the little town, I started on my weary and mournful journey back to San Francisco with my balloon packed on an ox cart. That was my last voyage to the air. I returned to New York; and I have consented to make a voyage across the ocean, but I'll either go alone or have a sufficient number along to take care of the lunatics.

## "Can Ye Forgive a Feller."

One day, three or four weeks ago, a gamin, who seemed to have no friends in the world, was run over by a vehicle on Madison Avenue, and fatally injured. After he had been in the hospital for a week, a boy about his own size, and looking as friendless and forlorn, called to ask about him and leave an orange. He seemed much embarrassed and would answer no questions. After that he came daily, always bringing something, if no more than an apple. Last week, when the nurse told him that Billy had no chance to get well, the strange boy waited around longer than usual, and finally asked if he could go in. He had been invited many times before, but had always refused. Billy, pale and weak and emaciated, opened his eyes in wonder at the sight of the boy, and before he realized who it was, the stranger bent close to his face, and sobbed:

"Billy, can ye forgive a feller? We was allus fighting, and I allus too much for ye; but I'm sorry! 'Fore ye die won't ye tell me ye have n't any grudge agin me?"

The young lad, then almost in the shadow of death, reached up his thin, white arms, clasped them around the other's neck, and replied—

"Don't cry, Rob. Don't feel bad. I was ugly and mean, and I was heaving a stone at ye when the wagon hit me. If ye'll forgive me, I'll forgive you; and I'll pray for both of us."

Rob was half an hour late the morning Billy died. When the nurse took him to the shrouded corpse he kissed the pale face tenderly, and gasped—

"D—did he say anything about—about me?"

"He spoke of you before he died—asked if you were here," replied the nurse.

"And may I go—go to the funeral?" "You may!"

And he did go. He was the only mourner. His heart was the only one that ached. No tears were shed by others, and they left him sitting by the new made grave, with heart so big that he could not speak.—Independent.

## Correct Speaking.

We would advise all young people to acquire in early life the habit of correct speaking and writing, and to abandon as early as possible any use of slang words and phrases. The longer you live, the more difficult the acquirement of correct language will be; and if the golden age of youth, the proper season for the acquisition of language—be passed in its abuse, the unfortunate victim, if neglected, is very properly doomed to talk slang for life. Money is not necessary to procure this education. Every man has it in his power. He has merely to use the language which he reads instead of the slang which he hears, and to form his taste from the best speakers and poets in the country, to treasure up choice phrases in his memory and habituate himself to their use, avoiding at the same time that pedantic precision and bombast which show that weakness of vain ambition rather than the polish of an educated mind.

## How Gen. Gordon Convinced Himself He was Alive.

At length a fifth ball struck Gordon full in the face, and entering his cheek, knocked him senseless. He fell, and for some time his prostrate form was wrapped in the smoke of battle. We hear from Gen. Gordon's own lips a story that, in a metaphysical point, is exceedingly interesting. He says that when he fell he was utterly incapable of moving. He gradually began to think of his condition, and this is the half dream half soliloquy that he carried on: "I have been struck in the head with a six-pound solid shot; it has carried away my head. On the left side there is a little piece of skull left, but the brain is entirely gone. And yet I am thinking. How can a man think with his head shot off? And if I am thinking I cannot be dead. And yet no man can live after his head is shot off. I may have my consciousness while dead but not motion. If I can lift my leg, then I am alive. I will try that. Can I? Yes, there it is; lifted up. I'm all right." The General says that every stage of this soliloquy is indelibly stamped on his mind, and that in his exhausted state the reasoning was carried on as logically as ever man reasoned at his

desk. Doubt succeeded argument a d argument displaced doubt just as logically as could be. He says he never will forget with what anxiety he made the test of lifting his leg—with what agony he waited to see whether or not it would move in response to his effort, and how he hesitated before trying it for fear it might fail and his death be thereby demonstrated.—Atlanta (Ga.) Constitution

## A Heroic Convict.

In Memphis, when the fever's deadly breath first smote the city, a man, a stranger, offered his services as a nurse. They were accepted, and he began his duties in the hospital. He was skillful, attentive, and unremitting in his care of the sufferers. It turned out later that this man had but recently been released from prison, where he had served out a sentence of ten years. Some of the physicians, upon learning this part of his history, regarded him a little suspiciously, and hinted that his attention to the sick was not without a questionable motive. They watched him sharply. Finally, from the funds sent by the North, he was paid for a month's service. It was enough to have taken him out of the fever stricken country, had he chosen to go. He was seen to go out of the hospital on the day he received the money, and a colored policeman followed him. He hurried along the streets until he came to the post-office. There was a box in which to deposit contributions to the fever fund. The ex-convict dropped in every dollar he had received for the month, and then returned to his post at the hospital. Two or three days later he was missed from his accustomed place, and it was not until the next week that his body was found with that of an old negro, in a miserable shanty. He had gone to nurse this negro who had been left to die alone, and so met his fate, being himself stricken with the fever. There was none to offer as much as a cup of cold water to him who had tenderly cared for more than a hundred of the fever's victims. This man had spent ten years behind prison bars. His crime is not told. Perhaps he was a thief, perhaps a forger, possibly a murderer. But however black his blot on life's page, let it be said that his death wiped them out. If living he trod only the paths of sin, his death at least was divine—for he died for others.

## Change of Life.

Change is the common feature of society—of life.

Ten years convert the population of schools into men and women, the young into fathers and matrons, make and marry fortunes, and bury the last generation but one.

Twenty years convert infants into lovers, fathers and mothers, decide men's fortunes and distinctions, convert active men and women into crawling drivelers, and bury all preceding generations.

Thirty years raise an active generation from nonentity, change fascinating buties into bearable old women, convert lovers into grandparents, and bury the active generation or reduce them to decrepitude or imbecility.

Forty years, alas! change the face of all society. Infants are growing old, the bloom of youth and beauty has passed away, two active generations have been swept from the stage of life, names once cherished are forgotten, unsuspected candidates for fame have started up from the exhaustless womb of nature.

And in fifty years—mature, ripe fifty years—half a century—what tremendous changes occur! How time writes her sublime wrinkles everywhere, in rock, river, forest, and cities, hamlets, villages, in the nature of men, and the destinies and aspects of all civilized society!

Let us pass on to eighty years—and what do we desire to see to comfort us in the world? Our parents are gone; our children have passed away from us into all parts of the world, to fight the grim and desperate battle of life. Our old friends—where are they? We behold a world of which we know nothing and to which we are unknown. We weep for generations long gone by—for lovers, for parents, for children, for friends in the grave. We see everything turned upside down by the hostile hand of fortune, and the absolute destiny of time. In a word, we behold the vanity of life, and are quite ready to lay down the poor burden and be gone.