

the land whence she comes," said Jack ;  
 "or she would not be wearing it."

That she was a perfect lady not a soul could controvert.

Surely she had guessed the drift of conversation, for she smiled at Jack and spoke some more delicious words.

"What a pity that we cannot understand," said Jack.

"Ah ; isn't it?" I chimed.

My wife frowned.

Our fair wonder signed to us that there was that inside the aerolite she would have out. We acted rapidly. Rowing to the metal ball, Jack scrambled in and passed out to me divers bags and boxes of provisions, kegs with drinking nectars in, and many curiously constructed instruments. Upon some were legends we could not read.

All ashore ; our carriage rolled us back to the hotel. The rumor that we had found a woman in the thunder-stone spread like a drop of coal-oil on a carpet, and a crowd of nondescripts kept up an incessant gaze at the windows of our rooms.

Our guest managed to convince us that she was called Aerene. Every endeavor was exerted by us to converse. I picked up a box we had taken from the aerolite. It bore this inscription :

Igwmmw Phwlamc zoq Xgaajvrn  
 izobyzvblcmcw ry lczumaacqw wbeeagmw  
 Vmcmw wlcmmi Nranazxmclrog.

I pride myself on my ability to decipher cryptograms, so as this somewhat resembled one I applied my talent. In an hour I had this "key" :

zxvqmykpgdnaiorehewlbufsjt.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz.

Thus the legend upon which I had started was :

"Misses Hustler & Billycock, manufacturers of travellers' supplies, Ceres street, Kolklabertoni."

Exultantly I whirled about on my chair, laid my note-book before Aerene, gave her a pencil, and motioned her to write. She did, and passed me this :

"G vrim ycri Vgohbw."

I interpreted the words :

"I come from Cinqus."

Good ! But where was Cinqus ? Aerene soon settled that. She pointed

to a golden-colored star which had but arisen in the southeast heavens. "Cinquus !" she rippled, the word trembling from her tongue as do dew-drops from a morning-glory bloom-cup.

"Why, that is Mars !" cried I.

We progressed dexterously. Soon we made out that it had taken Aerene merely ten days and ten hours to travel 36,000,000 miles. At the time of her start Mars was near perihelion and in opposition with the Earth and the Sun. Zizz-z-z-z-z-zip ! Talk of rapid transit. Imagine—3,456,000 miles a day, 144,000 miles an hour, 2,400 miles per minute, and 40 miles a second ! Aerene informed us that for many decades the Cinqus ladies had striven to communicate with Quatus, their designation for our earth. The Cinqus women were the dominant power. Aerene gave us to understand that the males on Mars wore petticoats, and also that societies for their elevation had been started. They wanted votes. Only women undertook such enterprises as flying to another planet. The men had not the courage, and if one chanced to show something of the kind he was promptly "sat on."

The wonderful scheme which had so successfully sent Aerene to Quatus was simply this : A volcano was erupting with a force that ejected lava masses so powerfully that many of these were shot off from Cinqus to find cometary orbits. The mathematical dames deduced that if a projectile from this crater fled with speed enough at a certain moment it would be sure to land on Quatus. The aerolite which we had seen was accordingly manufactured out of metal difficult to melt.

Aerene became a voluntary passenger. She was packed inside, along with machinery cunningly concocted to furnish oxygen and hydrogen automatically. Food was stowed in, beside medicated water which would be ever fresh and cool.

A strong shell filled with explosives was fastened outside the aerolite upon that part where was the entrance. Aerene, when she felt a stop, might explode this bombshell electrically from within, and thus clear away any obstacle to the outlet