

Diemos—struck Sabrina, bursting it into a thousand fragments, whirling many of them away out of their old orbit. The meteors were nearly all impeded, and turned into planetoids themselves, or fused into portions of the disrupted world. A comparative few escaped, reached Mars, and the records of mischief done even by these stragglers is alarming. One, seven miles in diameter—composed principally of burning saltpetre—fell on one of our cities, buried it half a mile deep, and where that city existed, is to this day a salt, salt lake."

"Earth hath its counterpart in the Dead Sea and its tradition concerning Sodom and Gomorrah," I said.

"It has, but our disaster was much more serious than that, and occurred very many years before, ere the worst aërolites had been attracted out of space by the sun and larger planets."

"Your narrative," I said, "explains why our Astronomers are continually discovering new asteroids, 'pocket planets,' as some facetiously call them."

"Exactly," replied the mother of Myrina, "and will continue to discover so long as your world has an Astronomer. There are millions of those bodies, some of them not larger than an apple," (the Martian apples are almost as large as our water-melons,) "a few of the smaller are fragments of that dissipated world, but most of them are aërolites."

"Can you tell me whether or no that world at its dissolution was inhabited?"

"Alas! yes, but only partially. It was an infant world, and the sentient, thinking beings upon it comparatively few. Why, it is the fact of this catastrophe having occurred that has infused into every race in every inhabited world of the system, a nameless dread, accompanied by a terrible prediction, that the final scenes in the existence of each world are to be the result of an awful catastrophe."

"But how has the news spread from Mars to the Earth and other planets?"

"By wandering spirits."

"Then you consider our fears of a final conflagration and disruption ontirely without foundation?"

"Most certainly. The chances are not one in ten million for another such encounter in this system, and the death of your world will be similar to ours. It is destined to be frozen by degrees and its inhabitants starved. We die ages prior to you, however."

My spirit senses froze at the thought of such ghastly possibilities, but I replied not.

CHAPTER XI.

ERIEL NAVIGATION.

Deeply interested in such entertaining conversations, the meal—very abstemiously partaken of by all; I noticed—passed. The food of which I partook

was different to that of the rest, I being given specially prepared "Spirit Sustainance" such as is continually furnished to souls visiting Mars on their way to a final habitation. The food in question contained much electricity, that subtle fluid which some consider the basis of spiritual existence.

The Martians, not being carnivorous, live principally on grain and fruit, grain being the staple article in the North and South, and vegetables and fruit the common food nearer the tropics. Conversation, as will have been noticed, flowed freely, but notwithstanding its so doing, music, and that of the softest, sweetest nature, was permitted to diffuse itself through the apartment, not, however, with sufficient noise to distract attention from the questions under discussion. The melodies were changed at the will of our host, by his simply pressing various stops fixed at the side of the table near his hands. The table from which we dined, was in fact a musical one.

A short grace closed the meal. Myrina then suggested with a smile, that, as the day was waning it would be best for her to see me part of the way home."

"Willingly," I answered, "but how."

"Leave the means to me," she said, merrily; hastening at the same time from the room.

Having bowed my adieus to this interesting family, of whom I already felt almost a member, I began to exhibit premonitory symptoms of dissolution, when my fair Martian returned, clad in a different set of garments, selected, as I at once saw, for their combined warmth and lightness.

"Are you ready, Seybold?" I nodding my assent, she continued: "then let us go." We stepped out into the chill afternoon air and found before us an air-boat with steering apparatus, fixed to a moderate sized balloon, ready for unmooring. Two neuters were hauling on the cables. I stepped into the car, Myrina followed, and, bidding the servants let go the guy ropes, we waved our farewells, and, shooting upward, were soon a considerable distance above the ground. This not exactly suiting our wishes, my fair steerswoman, with a carefully timed manipulation of the gearing, caused her air-ship to cease rising. It then moved in a direction straight forward towards the sun, the place of our earth at the moment. Enchanted with such an easy mode of conveyance, I expressed my delight in a few words, when Myrina answered:

"All your attempts at aërial navigation on the Earth have hitherto failed, not so much on account of your excessive gravitation, but because of the strong wind currents in your atmosphere. Your world is not yet old enough for successful aërial work, and it will be centuries, probably ages, ere man will assert his

complete supremacy over the realms of air. Even here, on an inventive world *par excellence*, our mechanics and philosophers were for an immense time engaged in fashioning and deciding upon a perfect model of an air-boat such as this, to move at the desire of the aeronaut. Nor was it, indeed, until our air currents sufficiently stagnated, owing to the extreme age of our planet, that we were successful, in spite of all our toil. Even now, several days occur during the year when what you would consider but a moderate breeze obtains, yet we find it impossible to make ascents. But it is about time that we began to rise," she exclaimed, and, adjusting a respirator over her nostrils, to which an inflated air chamber was attached, my conductress gave our aërial steed its head, and we shot up to an enormous height. That is, an enormous height for Mars, but much lower than either Glaisher's or Tissandier's highest altitudes on Earth. At last, however, Myrina was reluctantly compelled to bid me farewell, and while my spirit sought the Earth, she, waving an adieu, directed her air-boat directly downward.

I reached the centre of attraction between the two worlds—felt myself rapidly falling, falling, until, with a sudden jerk—I awoke, and found myself once more in my observatory.

It now seemed about time for me to leave off doubting, and, as the affianced of one more than earthly, I walked about, filled with a joy that it were difficult to describe. I was like the dying saint, at the moment of dissolution, when he realized that even the most adventurous flights of his faith hitherto had but left him far short of the truth and the actual beatitude that accompany an approach to the realms of bliss.

I soon discovered that my ideas had become enlarged and improved, for I began to grieve over the many evils that I saw around, and strive to ameliorate them. But this, after a few attempts, only made me a subject for ridicule; my neighbors were not yet ready for Martian improvements, and the unlettered rustic inhabitants of Baconshire, very soon summed up the matter to their own satisfaction by whispering amongst themselves that the star-gazing "Maister Sobbold Melvin" was going crazy by reason of over study. This is usually the verdict passed upon the man that is ahead of his generation; the man that is not content to let other people do his thinking for him; who thinks for himself, and in so doing is prone to depart somewhat widely at times from the beaten track, whereon the multitude, tied hand and foot, hedged in by the bonds of custom, are compelled to traverse a monotonous dead-level of mediocre thought from the cradle to the grave.

(To be Continued.)