

guide us in our choice of a resting-place. Let us vanish from this village as if we had never lived in it. Let us go and be forgotten."

He looked at me in astonishment, and replied in a joking way:—

"The only means I know of to carry out your wishes to the letter, would be a nocturnal departure, as I arrived—that is to say, in my balloon."

"Yes, Phillip, yes!" I exclaimed eagerly, "In your balloon, to-night, in your balloon!"

That night, in a field by the reservoir of the gas-works of Nettledene, the balloon was inflated, and the car loaded with stores for our journey to unknown lands. The great fabric swayed and struggled in the strong breeze that blew over the hills, and it was with some difficulty that Phillip and I took our seats. All was in readiness, when Phillip, searching the car with a lantern, discovered that we had left with us the bundle of rugs and wraps which I had got ready for carrying off.

"Keep her steady, boys!" he cried. "I must run back to the house." And he leapt from the car and disappeared in the darkness.

It was weird to crouch there alone, with the great balloon swaying over my head, each plunge threatening to dislodge me from the seat to which I clung, the cords and the wicker-work settling and creaking, and the swish of the silk sounding like the hiss of a hundred snakes. It was alarming in no small degree to know how little prevented me from shooting up solitary to take an indefinite place among the stars. I confess that I was nervous, but I only called to the men who were holding the car to please take care and not let me go without Mr. Rutley.

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when a man, whom we all thought was he, climbed into the car and hoarsely told them to let go. The order was obeyed and the earth seemed to drop away slowly beneath us as the balloon rose and drifted away before the wind.

"You haven't the rugs, after all!" I exclaimed to my companion. He turned and flung his arms about me, and the voice of Kenneth Moore it was that replied to me:—

"I have you. I swore I would have you, and I've got you at last!"

In an instant, as I perceived that I was being carried off from my husband by the very man I had been trying to escape, I seized the grapnel that lay handy and flung it over the side. It was attached to a long stout cord

which was fastened to the body of the car, and by the violent jerks that ensued I knew that I was not too late to snatch at an anchorage and the chance of a rescue. The balloon, heavily ballasted, was drifting along near the ground with the grappling-iron tearing through hedges, fences and trees right in the direction of our farm. How I prayed that it might again strike against the house as it did with Phillip and that he might be near to succor me!

As we swept along the fields the grapnel, taking here and there a secure hold for a moment or so, would bring the car side down to the earth, nearly jerking us out, but we both clung fast to the cordage, and then the grapnel would tear its way through and the balloon would rise like a great bird into the air.

It was in the moment that one of these checks occurred, when the balloon had heeled over to the wind until it lay almost horizontally upon the face of the ground, that I saw Phillip Rutley standing in the meadow beneath me. He cried to me as the car descended to him with me clinging to the ropes and framework for my life:—

"Courage, dearest! You're anchored. Hold on tight. You won't be hurt."

Down came the car sideways, and struck the ground violently, almost crushing him. As it rebounded he clung to the edge and held it down, shouting

for help. I did not dare let go my hold, as the balloon was struggling furiously, but I shrieked to Phillip that Kenneth Moore had tried to carry me off, and implored him to save me from that man. But before I could make myself understood, Kenneth, who like myself had been holding on for dear life, threw himself suddenly upon Phillip, who, to ward off a shower of savage blows, let go of the car.

There was a heavy gust of wind, a tearing sound, the car rose out of Phillip's reach, and we dragged our anchor once more. The ground flew beneath us and my husband was gone.

I screamed with all my might, and prepared to fling myself out when we came to the earth again, but my captor seizing each article that lay on the floor of the car, hurled forth, with the frenzy of a madman, ballast, stores, waterkeg, cooking apparatus, everything, indiscriminately. For a moment this unburdening of the balloon did not have the effect one would suppose—that of making us shoot swiftly up into the sky, and I trusted that Phillip and the men who had helped us at the gas-works had got hold of the grapnel line, and would haul us down; but, looking over the side, I perceived that we were flying along unfettered, and increasing each minute our distance from the earth.

We were off, then, Heaven alone could tell whither! I had lost the protection



THE LAST TRYST.—MRS. JOPLING, in the Grosvenor Gallery.