

with birds of prey. Great was the excitement caused by the arrival of these pretty couriers. No sooner was a pigeon seen in the air than the whole city was roused, and remained in a state of intense anxiety till the news was delivered. A contemporary engraving represents Paris as a woman in mourning, anxiously awaiting, like Noah's imprisoned family, the return of the dove.

The greatest difficulty in air voyaging is that of giving direction to the balloon; to make it travel through, not with the air. Gifford's balloon, spindle-shaped, one hundred and fifty feet long and forty feet in diameter, took up a three horse-power engine, weighing three hundred pounds, which turned a fan-armed screw one hundred and ten revolutions in a minute. To avoid the danger of exploding the gas in the balloon the chimney was turned downward, and the draught was caused by the steam-blast. This sailed against the wind seven miles an hour and steered well. The aeronaut was thus able to choose his place of descent, and to avoid that dragging with the wind which is so often the cause of the fatal termination of balloon voyages.

The following is a graphic account of a balloon ascension which took place in St. Louis, in June, 1837, and is illustrated in our cuts:

"A little before midnight of June 16th, the balloon was made ready for filling. At 1 p.m., the hour set for sailing, the huge yellow cloth dome was less than three-quarters full. In the strong wind it now and then tore away, as if about to fly to cloud-land without its crew. To the netting were fixed a hundred bags of sand—some of them more than eighty pounds in weight; and added thereto were hundreds of stout men. The bags swung in the air like mere tassels; and the men were often brought upon tip-toe as they grimly held on. The lifting power of the balloon was equal to three tons. Its four passengers, provisions, and fully three-quarters of a ton of paper and sand, also camera and plate-cases, and other traps, made a total weight of two and a quarter tons.

"Now! Let go!" As the aeronaut shouts this, the men release the car. Like a huge bird our ship rises from the ground. We have no sense of going up,—no, not at all. All things else go down, down. The crowds as they cheer and swing their hats, it is they who fall away below us, and fast fade into a mass of tiny specks of life and colour, until the whole city is but a spot upon the wide view of the earth. The last sound to reach us, as we were about a mile high, was the sharp shriek of a locomotive. I saw one express train as we soared above its tiny track, and it looked like a mere toy train a few inches long, which did not seem to move faster than a snail; yet we knew that it was on its way with its usual speed—thirty miles an hour at least. A mile and a half high, and still going up!

"Higher and higher, the earth seems bigger and bigger, as the circular line it makes with the sky grows larger and larger. With two and a quarter tons' weight, still our bird mounts rapidly upward—now two miles, now two and a half. Rivers are mere white threads; and lakes are patches of silver set in a carpet of many hues. The forest trees are bushes, that look as if a small scythe might easily mow them down. The thin air and our rapid upward flight make my head roar, as if with the sounds of noisy drums; I feel dizzy—like one about to faint away. From the discomforts of 96 degrees of heat in the shade when we left the earth, we have come to the chilly comfort of 37 degrees—a drop of nearly 60 degrees in less than an hour. Very soon our ship touches nearly 18,000 feet, a point which is said to be above that ever made by any other balloon this side of Europe.

"An instant later the balloon begins to descend at the rate of fifteen feet per second, which is only one foot less than the distance a heavy stone falls the first second. A few seconds more, and our ship drops so fast that the car seems to fall away from us. Our captain shouts, 'Over with the ballast! Quick!' I gaze over the car. The earth seems to fly toward us—up, it comes; the fields and woods grow large, and hamlets and cities spring into sight on every hand. At last, after nearly a quarter of a ton of weight is thrown out, our rate of descent slows a little; a third of our drag-ropes trails among the tall forest trees, and we are distant from the earth but 400 feet! And now our balloon comes at last to a pause, and we are safe! It goes up again lazily, a mile high, then descends to less than half a mile, and rises again, falling as the gas escapes and rising as the sand is thrown out. Moore casts out the anchor, or grapnel; with its four sharp prongs of bright steel, it truly has an ugly, hungry look. "Now look out! The sharp anchor

catches hold for the first time. With its greedy prongs it grips the turf, lets go, bounds twenty feet in the air, and lands again. A dozen farm hands chase us for a mile. At last a German farmer's wife, as we sail past her house, gives the long drag-ropes a quick turn about the trunk of a stout apple-tree in her door-yard. This fetches us up with a jerk, and nearly spills us out of the car. Here, tied fast to the tree, we are still two hours in coming to the ground, although aided by a crowd of strong, active men.

"This is not a very pleasant way of travelling, or, at least, of stopping. But we must not, however, despair that the ingenuity of man will yet discover a mode of controlling balloons, which will make sailing through the air one of the safest as well as one of the swiftest and pleasantest kinds of locomotion."

The present writer's only balloon experience was in the city of Paris, in 1879. My last view of this beautiful city, the evening before I left it, was a bird's-eye view from the car of the balloon "Geant," which ascended from the Place des Tuilleries. The French manage this sort of thing admirably. A large space was enclosed by a high fence, above which the monster form of the balloon could be seen, tugging like a new Prometheus at his chains. Indeed, the huge swaying mass, over a hundred feet high, was a conspicuous object far and near. On paying a small admission fee, one enters the enclosure, where an excellent band discourses choice music. Those who wish to make the ascent purchase tickets—price two dollars—at an office. These tickets are all numbered consecutively, and one may enter the car only in the order in which his number is called. I had the pleasure of waiting a couple of hours for my turn. I came within three of getting a place, but had to wait for the next ascent.

The same rule holds good for omnibuses. As soon as twelve persons enter an omnibus, a placard marked "Complet" is exhibited, and no one need seek admission. An enterprising tourist, not quite perfect in the language, complained that he went to every place in Paris except to Complet, as the omnibuses for that place were always full.

The balloon was tethered to the earth by a strong cable, as thick as a man's arm, which was coiled on a huge drum, turned by two engines of three hundred horse-power. Its diameter was thirty-six yards, and its contents of gas 25,000 cubic yards. It ascended about 1,800 feet, and took up fifty persons at a time. The cable was carried from the drum underground, to the centre of a large sunk space, or pit in the ground, into which the car descended. A gangway was run out from the edge of the pit to the car, by which one went on board. The car and the strong rope that tethered it to the earth are shown in cut on first page.

The strangest sensation about the ascent was, to use a Hibernian privilege, the utter absence of all sensation. The car seemed to be absolutely motionless, without the least jar or tremor,* but the earth seemed silently to sink and sink, "as if the bottom had fallen out of everything," as some one expressed it. The horizon gradually rose higher and higher, and the city sank, till it looked like a great shallow saucer, rising to the level of the eye on every side. I had been taught that the earth was convex, but if I would believe the testimony of my eyes, I would be sure that it was a great concave disc. I suppose I did not go high enough to perceive its true convexity.

But what tongue or pen could describe the beauty of the scene! It was about an hour before sunset, and the mellow light bathed every object in a flood of pale gold. The grand avenue of the Champs Elysees, stretching for more than a mile, was thronged with carriages, and with gaily-dressed promenaders, and the fountains flashed like diamonds in the sun.

Higher and higher we rose, till the city lay spread out like a map beneath the feet. It looked like a toy city, or like the models of the French seaports and arsenals, which are shown in the Musee de Marine, in the Louvre. Each street and square, the winding Seine with its quays and bridges; the old historic piles—the Palais Royal, the Tuilleries and Louvre, were directly beneath the eye. The view of the far-winding

* In being hauled down, however, the balloon tugs like a huge giant at his chains, and sways about in the wind. A few days after I ascended it fell over on its side, was caught by the wind, and badly torn, and was not afterwards used. As each passenger left the balloon, he was presented with an elegant gilt medal and ribbon as a souvenir of the ascent.

Seine, of the grand environment of the city, of the girdle of forts which seems almost impregnable to defend it, will not soon be forgotten.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, JUNE 5, 1897.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

JUNE 13, 1897.

Elijah fleeing from Ahab.—1 Kings 19. 1-8.

AHAB.

He was the king of Israel, but though he occupied a high and important position, he was a bad man, and was the cause of much suffering among the people, who were his subjects. You know the passage which says, "One sinner destroyeth much good," and the more influential his position, the greater will be the amount of evil which he will be the means of perpetrating. How important that we should secure good rulers!

JEZEBEL.

She was the wife of Ahab, and therefore was queen of the country, but she was by far the most wicked of the two. Between them, they had been the means of bringing God's wrath upon the nation. For three years and six months there had been such dearth in the land that the people and their cattle had perished, chiefly for want of water. Idolatry was established by royalty, which was the chief sin of the age. The prophets of Baal were hundreds in number, all of whom enjoyed not only the necessities but also the luxuries of the palace. They fared well, so far as the things of this world were concerned.

THE WONDERFUL TEST.

Elijah sent a message to the king, for all the prophets of Baal to meet him at Carmel, where it should be proved who was the true God. Of this wonderful occurrence you can read in the previous chapter. Read it again and again, until you have the incidents engraven on your memory. The God that answered by fire was to be the true God, as the people declared most truly. Elijah commanded the people to put the wicked prophets to death. The command was soon obeyed. No doubt the people felt indignant towards them, as they now saw that Baal, whose wicked prophets had led them astray, was no God, and therefore they soon put them to death. Jezebel sent forth her denunciations against Elijah, and threatened what she would do. Verse 2.

ELIJAH.

This prophet of the Lord, who had done so many heroic deeds, and whose character was untarnished by the least stain of moral impurity, seemed now to be filled with alarm, and fled for his life. You think it strange, that one who had distinguished himself in such a marvellous manner, should become so suddenly afraid. He was a man of like passions with us. Poor human nature is liable to err. Fits of melancholy sometimes come upon some of the best persons. These things are allowed to befall us for our good, and to teach us how much we need strong faith in God.

THE END.

Ahab and Jezebel died in disgrace, as they deserved to do, but see what an honourable career Elijah had. We would like all the members of our Leagues to become familiar with his honourable career and triumphant death. See how marvellously God took care of him. A poor widow was once his almoner; then ravens fed him with flesh and water, and now a miracle occurs on his behalf, under the juniper tree. Behold his grand ascension! He walked with God, and one day they walked into heaven. Elijah loved his home so well he never returned again to earth. So love God and he will care for you.

STORY OF THE QUEEN'S LIFE.

II.

WINDSOR AND OSBORNE.

Queen Victoria liked to wear the lovely swan's-down when she was young. When she was married and drove with Prince Albert to Windsor Castle, she wore a white satin pelisse profusely trimmed with swan's-down. She wore a white bonnet, too, trimmed with white plumes, and somebody says she looked like a white dove.

As the Queen and the Prince drove near to Windsor, who, do you think, came out to meet them?

"The Eton boys, to be sure!"

Eton is a school, a very old school, not far from Windsor Castle. And it was the most natural thing in the world for the boys to want to see and cheer their Queen and the Prince.

On they came, running, shouting, and waving their hats like mad!

The Queen liked it, for she tells in her journal how the boys "swarmed up the mound, and as the Queen and the Prince descended at the grand entrance, they made the old Castle ring again" with their cheers.

Windsor Castle is very old, and it is one of the Royal Homes of England. It is the property of the nation. When the Queen is there, the flag is kept flying from the great round tower, which you may always see in a picture of Windsor.

Windsor Castle is a huge place, but there are plenty of cosy rooms for a happy family to nestle into, and Queen Victoria's was a happy family. The Queen herself once said:

"We all have our trials and vexations, but if one's home is happy, then the rest is comparatively nothing."

We all understand that, I think. By-and-bye, the children "were as many as the days of the week," that was what they said themselves; and they had a little struggle as to who should be "Sunday." But at last the little royal brothers and sisters agreed that the baby should be "Sunday."

There were the Princess Royal, and the Prince of Wales, and Alice, Alfred, Helen, Louisa, and Arthur, who was the baby. Each one of them has a long list of names, which I cannot tell you, because it would take too much room. They had short pet names, too.

The Princess Royal, whose name is Victoria Adelaide Mary Louisa, was called "Vicky" and "Pussy."

The Prince of Wales (Albert Edward) was called "Bertie," and a very happy family of children these were. The little "Pussy" often said her lessons to her mamma; and wrote the Queen: "It is a hard case for me that my occupation prevents me from being with her when she says her prayers."

So you see a queen has an "occupation," just the same as other people; and if she performs her duties well, she has plenty to do.

After a few years the Queen and the Prince thought they would like a home of their very own. For as I told you, the English nation owns Windsor Castle, and Buckingham Palace. So they bought one in the lovely Isle of Wight.

This island lies south of England, in the English Channel. The house is called Osborne House. The estate comprises twenty-three hundred acres, and there is a beautiful beach, and groves where the nightingales sing early and late. Prince Albert used to whistle to the nightingales in their own note, and they would answer.

In recalling some instances of his childhood, Lord Macaulay once said, "When a boy, I began to read very earnestly, but at the foot of every page I stopped and obliged myself to give an account of what I had read on that page. At first I had to read it three or four times before I got my mind firmly fixed; but now, after I have read a book through once, I can almost recite it from beginning to end."