

Extraordinary Balloon Voyage— 130 Miles an hour for Fifteen Hours.

The balloon voyage, contemplated by Professor Wise, across the Atlantic, is attracting very general attention. If successful it will be the most daring and remarkable trip of the kind ever accomplished, and will probably inaugurate a more generally useful era in aerial navigation. At this juncture the following account of an extraordinary voyage by balloon, which was accomplished during the siege of Paris by the Prussians, will be interesting. It is translated from a recent number of the *Courier des Etats Unis*.

During the siege of Paris great service was rendered to the French government by means of balloon voyages, many of which were successfully accomplished, the most exciting and perilous of all being the one, the particulars of which we now present to our readers.

It was the 24th of November, 1870. The governor of Paris wished to send to the Government at Tours a despatch regarding a plan to effect a union between the army of Paris and that of the Loire. But every avenue to and from the city of Paris was commanded by the guns of the besiegers, and any attempt to pass beyond the ill-fated city was certain death, or seizure by the enemy, to him who was foolish enough to make it. The only hope of the governor, therefore, for the successful transmission of the message was by balloon, and orders were issued to have one in readiness by 10 o'clock at night, Captain Paul Rolier being chosen as aeronaut to carry the important message.

The hour of eleven has just sounded, the balloon, "City of Orleans," twenty-two metres high, eighteen in diameter, and containing two thousand cubic metres of gas, is in readiness. It contains, besides the requisite number of bags filled with sand for ballast, about sixty pounds weight of letters, a cage with six carrier pigeons, a package of government dispatches, and the provisions for the journey. Captain Rolier is to have for company a soldier, a member of the corps of Franc-tireurs. The two men enter the car attached to the balloon, the word, "Let her go," is given and at a rapid rate the balloon rises into the air, amid cries from the beholders of, "Vive la France."

A favorable breeze was blowing, but the night was dark, and a light snow was falling. In a few minutes the balloon had reached a height of about a thousand yards, and as it was then passing through a stratum of very dense air several of the ballast bags were thrown out. They fell, it was supposed, into the Prussian camp, for several shots were immediately fired, but the aeronauts were beyond the reach of the enemy's guns, and quickly reached an altitude of 27,000 metres—over three thousand yards. This height was maintained for several hours, the towns and villages below being distinguished occasionally by their twinkling lights, in the intervals between the clouds through which the balloon was most of the time traveling.

About half-past three the next morning, four and a half hours after leaving Paris, the travellers were rather startled by a continued and very audible noise, like a distant murmur, which they for some time fancied proceeded from a railway train on one of the northern lines. This became more audible as they continued their journey, and perplexed them not a little, as they listened in vain for the whistle, the invariable accompaniment of railway trains in France as well as in America.

With the dawn of the day the travellers perceived below them a light fog in every direction. Captain Rolier resolved to descend and take a view of the situation, and discover, if possible, the cause of the unaccountable noise, which was still heard. A considerable descent was effected, and when through the fog, all below them looked like deep darkness, but as they were still far too high to accurately distinguish anything on the surface of the earth, they imagined they were over a large and dense forest. With eyes strained almost to bursting, they noticed all around below, as far as they could see, small white patches or spots, which

they suppose to be half melted snow. But it was not yet sufficiently light for them to be sure what they were. Slowly they descended, still hearing the murmuring noise, which had now become so loud as to cause them a good deal of anxiety. Still watching the white spots or patches, one or both of them finally discovered that they were continually moving, and then the truth flashed across their minds that instead of being partially melted patches of snow, they were foam on the billows of the ocean. Then the noise was accounted for—it was the murmuring of the ever surging waters, and for several hours they had been floating over the German Ocean.

When the sun had dispersed the fog the inmates of the balloon saw what they fancied to be indications of land at a very long distance to the east. The situation was a terrible one. The barometer showed that they were but a little more than five hundred yards high. A considerable amount of their gas was used, and the lower part of the balloon was in a semi-collapsed condition, while beneath them, in every direction, stretching beyond their range of vision was a wild waste of waters.

The economization of gas was their only hope of escape from death, and Captain Rolier, making a ladder of his companion's shoulders, mounted thence into the cordage of the balloon to close the escape pipe so as to prevent the unnecessary waste of gas. The balloon still descended, so more ballast was thrown out, but this time, instead of throwing away their sand bags, of which they might yet stand in great need, a packet of "proclamations to the Germans" was given to the fishes. Perceiving some ships at a great distance, M. Rolier resolved, if possible, to make a descent near to one of them, in the hope of being rescued. The balloon had been seen by some on board the ships, and a gun had been fired as a signal to the aerial voyagers. The descent was made with great rapidity, and almost before the aeronauts were aware of it, the balloon was only a few yards from the surface of the water, and contact with a lofty billow almost overturned the car containing the two men. Quick as thought, they endeavored to obtain possession of the guide rope, but they were unsuccessful. A furious wind tossed the balloon in every direction, and the men were covered with foam from the billows. In desperation, and with the hope of lightening the balloon a package of letters weighing 65 kilograms, and a number of bags of ballast, were thrown into the sea. This lightened the balloon, which now ascended with frightful rapidity, and bore them far beyond the reach of aid from those on board the vessels. The expansion of the gas also rendered danger imminent by explosion, but this was obviated by again opening the escape pipe. In a few minutes the balloon was floating, at an altitude of 5200 metres, in a very dense atmosphere. As soon as an observation could be made, it was found that a change in their course had taken place; the barometer also showed that the balloon was descending, which indicated a continued escape of gas. It was again necessary for M. Rolier to ascend into the shrouds, which he attempted, but found the task exceedingly difficult because of the intensity of the cold, which had thoroughly frozen the material of which the balloon was made, the thermometer standing at 39 deg. centigrade, below zero. The clothing of the unfortunate men was also frozen, their hair and beard covered with a heavy rime frost, and they were suffering from intense thirst, owing to the rarefaction of the air.

In spite of their efforts the gas continued to escape and the balloon to descend. The fog had by this time cleared away, and the travellers were struck with the singularly beautiful appearance presented by their aerial ship, which was entirely covered with diminutive needle-like formations of ice, which glistened in the rays of the sun, like an immense cluster of diamonds. They were soon again enveloped in another dense fog, accompanied by a sulphurous, suffocating odor, and a peculiar sound, which M. Rolier attributed to the whirling of a maelstrom. As the balloon descended the travellers noticed what they thought might be banks of sand, and hope again grew strong within them that they were beyond Neptune's domain, and were once

more floating over *terra firma*. A new alarm was now experienced by the rending of a portion of the frozen cloth of their balloon, caused by the expansion of gas. M. Rolier again ascended and opened the safety valve, to allow the gas to escape, for badly as he could afford to lose it, this seemed to be the only means of avoiding greater danger. Whilst he was so engaged his companion noticed a peculiar motion of the guide rope, the cause of which could not be explained on account of the heavy mist, but after a close examination for several minutes, the men were convinced that it had become entangled in some of the upper branches of a pine tree. Escape from death seemed all but certain now, for they were at no very great distance from mother earth, and preparations for an immediate descent were made. The escape valve was opened and the anchor cast, and in a few moments the car of the balloon rested in a deep snow bank. Captain Rolier jumped out, but the leg of the Franc-tireur had become entangled in the ropes and he could not get loose.

Lightened by the weight of one of its inmates the balloon began to ascend. M. Rolier, seeing the danger of his companion, sprang towards the balloon and succeeded in grasping a sand bag hanging from the car. He retained his hold on this, hoping by his weight and strength to prevent the balloon rising. In this he failed, but the ascent was much slower. By this time the Franc-tireur had got his leg free, and they instantly let go their hold of the still rising balloon, and dropped to the ground—a distance of forty or fifty feet. Luckily for them the snow was deep and they sustained no injury by the fall. Rolier sprang to his feet and seized the guide rope, still within reach, hoping to prevent the flight of the balloon. But his bruised and frozen hands were powerless to hold it, and, still containing the letters and dispatches, the cage of pigeons and, worse than all, the provisions of the travellers, it was soon lost sight of.

The first few moments after alighting from the balloon our travellers experienced a feeling of unalloyed pleasure, at what they considered their escape from death. Then they began to contemplate their new situation, which, after all, was anything but a comfortable one. They had been more than fourteen hours in their aerial chariot, sometimes above the clouds, at others in danger of being engulfed in the waves, and several times their lives being in great peril. Now, at about half-past two in the afternoon of the 25th of November, faint with hunger, and almost frozen with cold, they were in a mountain region, the snow very deep and no sign of human life or habitation. Before them, at a little distance, was a lofty mountain peak covered with ice and snow, and surrounding them in every direction was what seemed to be an enormous forest. They finally resolved to travel in a southerly direction, and they at once commenced their dreary journey.

The snow was falling fast, and at every step they took it reached to their knees. Their march was slow and painful, and shortly after commencing it they were startled by the appearance, at a few yards' distance, of three large wolves. The latter made no offensive demonstrations, but the sight of the beasts warned the travelers that they must adopt measures for their own safety before the darkness of night overtook them. After a three hours' march M. Rolier sank down upon the snow completely exhausted, he could proceed no further. The Franc-tireur, who had been half paralyzed with fear while in the balloon, had seemed to acquire renewed energy upon feeling the earth under his feet again, and when his companion gave out he set to with a will to make him as comfortable as the desperate nature of their circumstances would permit. He first made him a kind of litter of branches of the fir tree, upon which he laid him, now fast asleep. He then took a survey of the vicinity, and not far off discovered a deserted cabin. Part of the roof had given way under the weight of snow, but inside was a quantity of hay. Into the poor shelter thus afforded he helped his companion, and sheltered him as well as he was able in the hay. Rolier was suffering severely from hunger, and a strong fever had set in, but he finally sank to sleep, and for a few hours he became forgetful of present sorrows in its sweet oblivion, the

Franc-tireur keeping watch in the meanwhile. When Rolier awoke he turned sentry, while his companion *de voyage* slept.

The light of returning day saw them both ready to renew their journey. Their first care was to provide themselves with stout sticks with which to defend themselves, if occasion should require, against the attacks of wolves, numerous tracks of which they found on the snow in the neighborhood of the cabin they had sheltered in during the night. Again they directed their way southward. They had not travelled very far before they saw in the snow the track of a horse and the furrows made by a sledge. They followed this guide for three quarters of an hour, when, to their joy, they beheld a cabin half buried in the snow, before the door of which stood a sledge loaded with hay. As fast as their tired limbs would permit they made their way thither. They entered and found it a sorry place. A hole in the roof was the only chimney, and portions of the skins of beasts were nailed over the apertures where windows ought to have been. In one corner was a bed of hay enclosed with three or four boards and covered with a skin; in another some embers on the hearth, still burning, indicating that the occupants of the hut had but recently left. By the side of the fire were a pair of wooden shoes, and some shelves contained a few plates and dishes of coarse brown earthenware.

Other marks of civilization were a coffee pot, containing some lukewarm coffee, a dish in which were some cooked potatoes, and a pot of sour milk. The almost famished men ate a part only of the scanty and uninviting provisions of their unknown hosts, not daring to eat the whole for fear of incurring their anger. They replenished the fire, and, slightly refreshed by the food and warmth, they awaited with some anxiety the return of the owners of the hut. They had not to wait long, for in a few minutes they heard voices outside, and hastily opening the door of the cabin they saw two men approaching, leading a small horse harnessed to a sledge. Rolier advanced and saluted them, his salutation meeting with a kindly and respectful response. A conversation was attempted, but unfortunately neither party could understand a word that was said by the other. By signs and gestures, however, the Frenchmen finally seemed to make their hosts understand something about their situation, and the latter, evidently full of sympathy, quickly placed before the unfortunate strangers a plentiful supply of the best food they possessed, consisting of bacon, sausages, coffee, etc.

While the aeronauts were eating one of their hosts examined a pair of boots which M. Rolier had pulled off, and found thereon the address of the bootmaker in Paris, and he exclaimed, "Paris, Paris, French!" This discovery was followed by hearty hand shaking and greater cordiality than before. M. Rolier, next, by means of a sketch which he drew, made his hosts fully understand that he had travelled from France in a balloon, and our travellers finally discovered to their great astonishment that they were in Norway. Yes, their unmanageable conveyance had actually brought them 650 leagues, 1950 miles, from Paris in less than fifteen hours. They were then at Lidjfeld, in the province of Thilemarken, and at the foot of one of the most lofty mountains in Norway.

Without loss of time M. Rolier hired his hosts, who he learned were brothers, to convey him and his friend to the nearest village, whence they departed for Christiania, going by sledges as far as Hongsund, and thence to the Norwegian capital by railway. Everywhere the rumor of their extraordinary journey and their almost miraculous escape from death preceded them, and the inhabitants, including the corporations of the various places through which they passed, accorded them the most hearty welcome, amounting almost to ovations. At Christiania the most prominent citizens, including the dignitaries of the army and navy and the heads of the public service, got up a fête in their honor, and a subscription for their benefit, to which were invited the French consul and all the French residents of the city.

Through all the dangers of his momentous fifteen hours' ride between earth and heaven, and afterwards from the peasants' hut

in the mountains to the Norwegian capital, M. Rolier had retained possession of the precious despatch from the governor of Paris to the government at Tours, and one of the first things he attended to after reaching Christiania was to send it thence in cipher by telegraph.

The balloon was found a hundred kilometres to the northwest of the place the travelers lost sight of it. M. Rolier presented it to the University at Christiania on condition that it should be exhibited for the benefit of those wounded in the war; for the same object he also authorized the sale of his portrait and a medal commemorative of his journey, the proceeds from all three amounting to 24,800 francs, which he subsequently placed at the disposal of the government.

In consideration of the dangers he had incurred, and the daring and fidelity he had exhibited in performing the task assigned him, M. Rolier was made a chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and an officer of the order of St. Olaf of Sweden.

— A New Orleans juryman was asked by the judge if he ever read the papers. He replied: "Yes, your Honor, but if you'll let me go this time, I'll never do so any more!"

— Dr. Mary Walker has passed through Havana, Ills., on her way to claim her Washington clerkship. She stopped at a grocery store for lunch and was surrounded by the natives, who gazed in wonder at her peculiar costume, and disputed as to whether she was Captain Jack or the Shah of Persia.

— An old negro woman in Georgia gives her views on making cotton. She tells Bill Stone: "De way day use to make cotton in my day was wid a plenty o' hick'ry. Dey didn't need no juanner den. An' if you will jest gib me a few niggers and a good hick'ry now, I kin make any ob dis land about here fetch good cotton, dat will beat any of yer juanner."

— Two amusing answers of the son of a Western Senator at West Point are recorded. On being asked into how many pieces a discharged spherical shot will burst, he replied, "Into two, at least, sir, I should think," and on being asked what were the uses of the vent in a piece of ordnance, replied, after mature consideration, that "it showed the upper side of the gun, and it was useful to spike it with."

— "Why," asks the *World*, "do we have our roofs badly mended, our houses badly built, our work badly done in fifty ways? Because Americans are too 'genteel' to be plumbers and journeyman mechanics at five dollars a day, though they will clerk for two dollars. Consequently, we have to put up with and pay enormously for bad work, by the inferior, half-taught foreign artisan, for the best class, having plenty of work at home, are loth to leave their country."

— It is well known that rubbing the body with hog's fat has the effect of reducing the temperature of the skin in scarlet fever. Fr. Keta, of Heilbronn, directs to incorporate one or two grammes of carbolic acid into a hundred grammes of lard, and with this to rub the whole body, excepting the head, two or three times a day, according to the intensity of inflammation characterising the case in hand. The effect of this kind of treatment is to produce a pleasant feeling of coolness, to keep the skin softer, and after each application the temperature of the skin falls somewhat. The carbolic acid operates to destroy the germs and spores of the disease.

— The days of summer grow longer as we go northward, and the days of winter shorter. At Ham burg the longest day has seventeen hours, and the shortest seven. At Stockholm the longest day has eighteen and a half hours, and the shortest five and a half. At St. Petersburg the longest day has nineteen, and the shortest five hours. At Finland the longest has twenty-one and a half, and the shortest two and a half hours. At Wandorbus, in Norway, the day lasts from the 22d of May to the 1st of July, the sun not getting below the horizon for the whole time, but skimming along very close to it in the north. At Spitzbergen the longest day lasts three months and a half.