

# PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE  
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

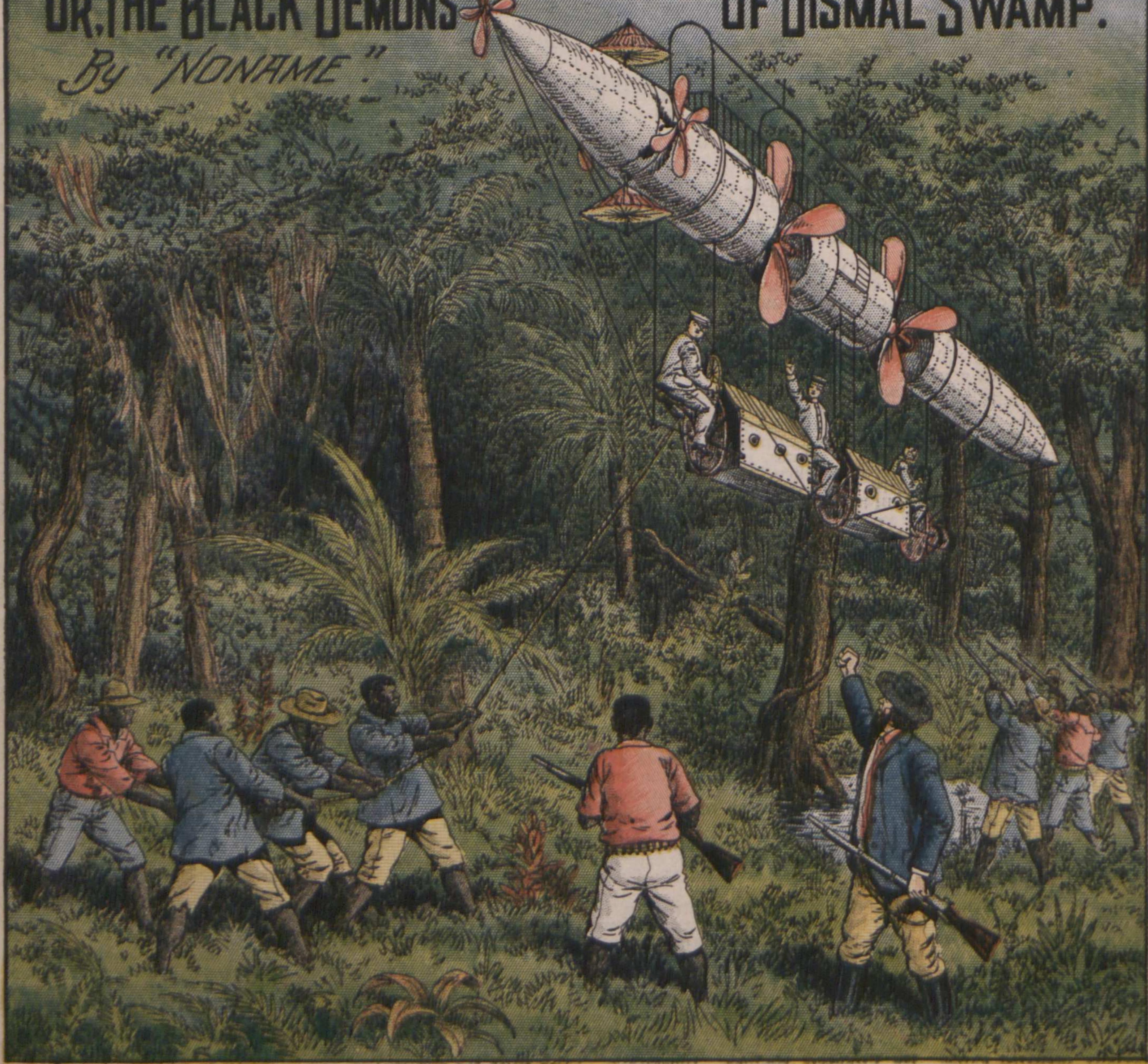
No. 278.

NEW YORK. SEPTEMBER 30, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

## JACK WRIGHT'S FLYING TORPEDO; OR, THE BLACK DEMONS OF DISMAL SWAMP.

By "NONAME"



Their weapons were pointed up at the three friends. "Don't fire!" shouted the young inventor.  
"Surrender, then!" "We give in." "Haul away on that rope, boys!" The negroes pulled the grapnel-line, and the Torpedo began to descend.

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## Complete Stories of Adventure.

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 30, 1903.

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# Jack Wright's Flying Torpedo; OR, The Black Demons of Dismal Swamp.

By "NONAME,"

### CHAPTER I.

#### A GIGANTIC FAILURE.

A terrible fire had swept through the village of D—, and the inhabitants barely had time to escape with their lives.

Most of the people were poor, but the fire having destroyed everything they had in the world, left them utterly destitute.

Then the kind-hearted people of the fisher village of Wrightstown, near the sea coast, gave them shelter and food.

Various kinds of benefits were given, the proceeds of which went to the unfortunates, to relieve their pressing wants.

The most generous giver was a young inventor named Jack Wright, who was very rich and talented.

He lived in a mansion in the fisher village and devoted his attention to building mechanical inventions.

Jack was then a high-spirited young fellow of a kind and generous disposition, whose electrical contrivances had made him famous.

He was a well-built athlete of extraordinary strength, not very good-looking, as his features were rather thin and bony, but his dark eyes betrayed a dauntless nature, and his black hair clustered about a white forehead exhibiting a rare intellect.

As the amount obtained for the sufferers was not sufficient for all hands, the young inventor had a number of circulars printed in the following manner, and distributed through the surrounding country:

#### "BENEFIT FOR THE FIRE SUFFERERS.

"On Saturday afternoon at three o'clock, an aerial ascension will be made from the inclosure in Wrightstown for the benefit of the villagers of D—, whose homes were recently destroyed by fire.

"Mr. Jack Wright, the inventor, having finished the construction of a peculiar airship, has consented to make a public ascension for this worthy cause.

"He will be accompanied by his two old traveling companions, Tim Topstay, the sailor, and Fritz Schneider, the expert electrician, both of whom have always accompanied the in-

ventor on his journeys with the various contrivances they have constructed in the past.

"You are earnestly requested to be present and swell the fund for the destitute families, who have no means of sustenance."

On the day named in the foregoing announcement hundreds of people came flocking to Wrightstown from every direction.

They came afoot, in trains, wagons, carriages and on horseback, all eager to contribute their mite, and everyone anxious to see the singular invention Jack Wright had brought out.

The village fairly swarmed with strangers.

Shops were closed, holiday attire was worn, flags were flying, bunting tossed in the wind, bands were playing lively tunes, and a scene of intense excitement began to rage.

Long before the hour appointed for the ascension the inclosure was packed to suffocation with eager spectators, and people were turned away for want of room.

But they took up positions outside the fence from where they could obtain a view of what was going on.

The trees swarmed with boys, the housetops were covered by men and women, and everyone struggled for favorable positions.

About ten thousand dollars was taken in at the gate of the inclosure.

The man in the box office was a volunteer named Alfred Davenport, who hailed from North Carolina, and had been a colonel in the Southern army.

He had been a small hotel proprietor in D—, and had been burnt out.

The colonel was a tall, thin man, clad in black, and wore a very long gray beard; he had keen, deep sunken eyes, a sharp nose, and coupled a military bearing with the most polished politeness.

When the gates were closed against the people who could not find standing-room inside the inclosure, the colonel counted the receipts and carefully packed the money in a valise.

While so engaged the door opened and Jack entered the box office.

"Well, colonel," he cried, cheerily, "it looks as if we had made money for your friends."

"More than \$10,000, sir," responded the colonel, darting a keen, searching glance at the young inventor. "I have just locked it up in this valise."

"Good! It is more than I expected. When the people leave a committee will call upon you and a meeting will be held to devise a proper distribution of the funds," said Jack, glancing at his gold watch.

"Very good, sir. I shall await their pleasure, sir," politely answered the colonel. "It is pretty near three o'clock, I see."

"Yes; the men are uncovering the Flying Torpedo now."

At this juncture Tim came stumping in, for he had a wooden leg.

The old sailor wore a nautical costume and a glass eye, a sandy beard fringed his sunburned face, and he carried a quid of tobacco in his cheek.

He was a brave old seadog, devoted to Jack, and had a strong penchant for reeling off the most furious lies ever invented.

"Gee whiz! wot a crowd!" he panted. "Blast me if I could hardly git in. Lordy! lordy! Sich a xcited crowd. Jack, my lad, you've done more fer them 'ere poor miserable people nor anybody. I've come in ter see if yer hev everything in ship-shape aboard o' ther airship."

"Nothing more to do," replied the young inventor, smilingly. "She is inflated and the ropes and machinery are in perfect order."

"Ay, ay. So far, so good. But—"

"But what?"

"Are yer sure she'll operate?"

"You know that the model did."

"True fer you. I'll allow as I'm a bit narvous."

The door went open with a crash, and Fritz waddled in!

He was a fat young Dutchman with a high temper, and wore a costume that came from the old country, his round, chubby face was as smooth as a girl's, he had yellow hair, and watery blue eyes.

Fritz was noted for his culinary talent, and his musical ability, for he could play on the accordeon with a master hand.

He hated Tim's yarns, and the sailor abhorred his music, but withal there existed a deep-rooted affection between the two.

"Shiminey Christmas!" he roared, as he mopped the sweat from his face, "vhere der doost yer vos been keebin' yourself alretty. Der airshibs vos brebared to go oop, und der beobles vos gettin' ficheatty. Vhy yer don'd coom oud, und make dot ascensions?"

"You're getting more impatient than the spectators," laughed Jack.

He saw that the audience was getting restless.

They were clapping, shouting and creating a furore.

It was plain to be seen that there were many of the men present who had filled themselves with liquor.

The liquor excited them and made them act in such a disorderly manner that the local constables could not handle them.

Foreseeing that the only way to quell the disturbance was to start off in the airship at once, Jack turned to his companions and said:

"Come—time's up! Let's go!"

They left the box office and filed through a narrow roped passage through the crowd to an arena in the middle of the inclosure.

No sooner were they gone, when Colonel Alfred Davenport seized the valise containing the money and hastily left the place.

He proceeded to the railroad depot, boarded a train, and was swiftly carried away from Wrightstown.

It was one of the meanest robberies on record.

Meantime, Jack and his two friends hastened toward the airship, and a thunder of cheers pealed from every throat when they were seen.

Many skeptical individuals had made bets that the Flying Torpedo was an impracticable machine.

It was certainly an odd affair.

The cylinder was made of aluminum, in three sections, the front and back being filled with a non-expansive gas of Jack's invention.

In the middle section there was an electrical machine worked by a powerful battery, which operated a small motor to which the big driving screws were geared.

The horizontal screws were connected with it, and were used to drive the airship earthward, or hold her stationary at any desired height.

At the end were three more screws for steering, for by putting the one on the right-hand side in motion, the stern was pushed to the left, causing the torpedo to curve to the right.

The other screw acted in the contrary manner, while the one underneath, by pushing the stern upward, caused the bow to go down, and by pulling the stern down, caused the bow to go up.

From three hangers were suspended three bicycle-wheel seats for the aeronauts, and between them two boxes for carrying equipments.

By operating these wheels it was possible to drive the screws in event of the battery giving out unexpectedly.

They were geared to smaller wheels by endless chain-belts.

A number of levers in front of the middle wheel gave entire control of the machine to the rider who sat there.

The torpedo was anchored to the ground when Jack and his friends reached the arena, and everyone was staring at it curiously, and craning their necks to catch a glimpse of the three daring aeronauts.

Jack closely examined everything.

The machine seemed to be in perfect condition.

"Get aboard, boys!" was his order.

Tim took the front seat, Jack the middle, and Fritz the rear.

A man stood ready to cut the anchor rope.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Jack.

The next moment the rope was severed.

The torpedo drifted upward.

But she was scarcely more than twenty feet from the ground when there sounded a tremendous gushing sound.

The airship paused.

She then fell heavily to the ground.

A fearful shock ensued.

A grinding and crashing was heard, as the posts were broken, bent and twisted, a snapping of the stays rang out like pistol shots as they parted, and there came a bang that made the ground shake as the cylinder landed upon her side.

From the enormous crowd a yell of horror ascended that could have been heard a mile away.

Women fainted, children screamed, and men turned pale as death.

A grim silence followed the first outcry.

It was quietness that was appalling.

In the midst of it Jack, Tim and Fritz emerged almost un-hurt from the wreck.

They were extremely fortunate that the machine had come down on its side, for had the descent been perpendicular they would have been killed.

Beyond a tremendous shaking and sundry cuts and bruises they were not seriously injured.

At first everybody was solicitous about them.

Upon seeing that they were comparatively uninjured, a revulsion occurred.

The spectators began to imagine they had been imposed upon a gigantic swindle to gain their entrance fee.

Men who had lost their bets about the ability of the machine to fly were furious, miserly people were frantic, and the rum-soaked element became enraged at Jack and his companions.

"Fraud! Fraud!" they yelled.

Then the cries resounded on all sides.

"Cheat!"

"Swindle!"

"Humbug!"

"Imposition!"

"Give us back our money!"

A rush was made for the box office.

But the absconding treasurer had foiled them.

It incensed them all the more to find him gone.

Unable to get their money back, they turned excitedly to our friends.

"The man is gone with our money!" yelled one.

"Let us have satisfaction!" howled another.

"Smash the fake flying machine to pieces!"

The latter cries were taken up and repeated by hundreds, and a wild rush was made for the arena.

Jack and his friends, pale but resolute, confronted them.

They drew their revolvers and, facing the crowd, Jack shouted sternly:

"Mad men! Back with you! I'll shoot the first one who lays a hand on this machine!"

## CHAPTER II.

### AFTER THE RIOT.

For a moment the excited crowd was brought to a pause by the resolute appearance of the three friends.

They saw that Jack and his two plucky companions were fully determined to resent an attack upon the fallen torpedo.

But the lull was only momentary.

Their anger broke out afresh, and a sullen shout arose.

"Down with them!"

"Smash the machine!"

"Revenge for the swindle!"

Then the crowd surged forward again.

It was like the rushing billows of an angry sea.

Hundreds of excited men were opposed to the three.

Full of sublime courage none of them flinched an iota.

On came the people, and several of them stealing up behind the trio, seized their arms from behind.

The moment Jack and his friends were rendered harmless the people in front attacked them.

Struggling furiously, they made every effort to tear themselves free, but found their exertions to be in vain.

They were knocked down, and a score of men at each one soon mastered them so they could do nothing.

On went the rest of the crowd to the arena.

Here they fell upon the fallen airship with savage fury.

Rocks were hurled at it, they pounded it with posts and joists torn from the fences, and in a short time the entire machine was bent, broken and destroyed.

Not then was the crowd satisfied.

The more peacefully inclined people left the inclosure before the riot began, and a regiment of the National Guard of Wrightstown was called out.

A sound of drums and fifes reached the ears of the furious mob when they had finished destroying the airship.

The local justice of the peace came marching into the inclosure at the head of the soldiers.

"Stop!" he shouted to the crowd. "Unless you desist your rioting and leave Mr. Wright and his friends be, I shall have you shot!"

This threat brought the mob to its senses.

They fled across the inclosure and headed for a breach in the fence.

Here they swarmed out into the street.

Jack, Tim and Fritz were released.

Getting upon their feet they saw the crowd fly.

"By heavens!" exclaimed Jack. "This was a bad piece of business."

"Vot make dot airshib fall down?" demanded Fritz.

"I heerd ther gas arushin' out o' her cylinder," Tim exclaimed.

Jack strode over to the wreck of the Flying Torpedo.

It was so badly demolished that not much of it was left.

He knew that there was only one way for the gas to get out and went around to the top of the cylinder.

Here he found an exhaust valve.

It was wide open.

The spring that kept it closed was broken.

Here was the reason of her fall.

Once the spring had broken the gas escaped.

Her fall was the natural result.

Jack showed it to his friends.

"Couldt ve rebair dot machines?"

"No, she is a complete wreck!"

"Cuss them blasted scoundrels!" growled Tim.

It was a bitter disappointment to them, for it had taken a long time to build the torpedo, the amount of money and labor expended upon her construction was enormous, and now everything was spoiled.

They did not even have time to try the machine ere she was destroyed.

Had the infuriated crowd left her alone Jack could have easily repaired her; now, however, it was impossible.

"Mr. Wright!" said the justice.

"Well, sir?" replied the inventor.

"Do you know that we have been robbed?"

"Robbed! How do you mean, sir?"

"Davenport has run away with the box receipts."

"What! Is it possible?"

"Yes. That's what made the mob so furious. They thought it was a put-up job to rob and swindle them."

"Ah! Now I understand it. But I should have thought that my name would have been a sufficient guarantee of good faith. I would gladly have refunded every dollar they lost rather than have had them destroy my airship."

"Recollect, sir, that the people who committed this outrage were not residents of Wrightstown. They were the fellows who came from the surrounding country towns and the big cities."

"I believe you. Everyone in Wrightstown is aware that I am no fraud. I intend to prove it."

"How?" asked the judge.

"By paying the fire sufferers \$10,000 out of my own pocket so they will lose nothing by the rascality of the treasurer of this exhibition."

"It is just like your generous disposition!"

"I also intend to rebuild the Flying Torpedo. The reason this one came down was because the valve spring broke and let out the gas. When I duplicate this machine I shall give a free exhibition of her ascent to the people who now call me a humbug."

"That is certainly an excellent way to vindicate yourself."

Jack then gave the workmen instructions to take the torpedo apart and convey her back to the shop.

This done, he left the inclosure and made his way to police headquarters, where he apprised the captain of what had occurred.

"I'll put a detective on Davenport's trail," said the captain, "and we will try to bring him back."

"Just the plan," eagerly assented Jack. "If we can recover the stolen money I shall lose nothing in the end, save the flying machine. If I get that thief into my hands I'll make him pay dearly for his mean action."

Jack thereupon returned home.

He resided on the suburbs in a fine dwelling.

It was surrounded by a large, handsome garden.

At the back of the grounds flowed a creek.

The inventor's workshop stood on the shore of this stream.

When Jack went into the building he saw that the Flying Torpedo had been carried to the shop under the direction of Tim and Fritz.

It now lay in the middle of the big room.

"Makes me sick ter look at it, my lad," sorrowfully said the old sailor. "But mebbe we kin use some parts of it."

"Perhaps," replied Jack. "At any rate, I shall duplicate every part of her I have to have made over, and as we have everything specified properly now, in a short time I'll have a new machine ready."

The three friends then went over the wreck.

Having found out just what they wanted, their orders were sent out to the foundry and factory, and they went into the house.

Here a delicious supper awaited them.

At the conclusion of the meal the three friends repaired to Jack's library, and the young inventor made out a check for \$10,000 for the fire sufferers and sent it to the committee.

"They shall lose nothing through the rascality of the thief," said he.

"Are yer sure as ye kin trust ther committee?" dubiously asked Tim.

"Yes—they are all honest men. But why do you ask?"

"'Cause I once got roped in by a man wot I trusted."

"When was that?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"At ther time I wuz aboard o' ther ole frigate Wabash in ther navy."

"Mein Gott! He vos goin' ter vork vun ohf his lies on us, Shack."

"Awast, thar, yer Dutch lubber!" growled Tim, his solitary good eye snapping fire, as he took a chew of navy plug and glared at Fritz in an unfriendly manner. "I'm a-spinnin' this 'ere yarn ter Jack—not you. As I was a-sayin', my lad, it happened this way: Yer see, ther ole frigate was a-bowlin' along in a pipin' gale one night, when Dick Deadeye, one o' my messmates, wuz aloft in ther mizzen top a-furlin' a sail. Waal, sir, ther ship gave a lurch an' chucked him overboard. He didn't know how ter swim, so I thought I'd better jump in an' save him afore he got drownded—"

"Quite a heroic resolve," commented Jack, smilingly.

"Ay, now, that it wuz. Waal, sir, I grabbed a life-preserved an' in I plunged. Seizin' ther poor lubber jist as he wuz agoin' down fer ther last time, I struck out fer ther Wabash. Nobody hed seen wot happened, so of course ther ship had gone ahead. Poor Dick was powerful glad I came in fer him, but he got panic-struck an' hung on to me so's I couldn't swim, an' wot should we both do but begin ter go down. It wuz a struggle fer life atween us. I gripped him by the hair o' his head, an' it hurted him so, he ses ter me, 'Yer son of a gun, yer a-tryin' ter kill me!' Then he belted me in ther nose an' tored himself away. I began ter go down an' ther lubber swum arter ther ship, an' clumb aboard—"

"That's enough!"

"Hey?"

"Dick couldn't swim, so you dove in to save him. Then he swam back to the ship—"

"Oh, Lor!" gasped Tim, with a start, and a confused look.

"You had on a life preserver, and yet you sunk—"

"Gee whiz!"

"The ship was sailing away in a stiff wind, yet he caught it by swimming."

"Belay! Belay!"

"Tim, you old rascal, you're at it again with your lies—"

"Le' me explain—"

"Not a word, sir!"

Just then Fritz began to play his accordeon.

He might just as well have waved a red rag in a mad bull's face.

A roar pealed from Tim's lips and he charged on the Dutchman.

The music had given him a good pretext to escape from the predicament he was in with Jack and he was quick to take advantage of it.

"Keel haul me fer a pirate!" he bellowed. "Haven't I warned yer as I'd scuttle that blamed thing if yer ever played it near me again."

Fritz bolted out of the room, chuckling over the rage into which he had thrown the old sailor, and Tim went stumping out after him.

With a smile of amusement upon his face, Jack sat down at his desk and began to look over his plans of the torpedo.

He had not been so engaged more than a few moments, when he was suddenly startled by hearing a terrific yell out in the yard.

Jack sprung to his feet, uttering a startled exclamation.

He glared at the side window and listened.

Again the cry rang out in the tones of a man in deep distress.

The voice seemed to be that of a negro, and the next moment Jack heard him cry in frenzied, pleading tones:

"Don't hit me! Oh, golly, don't—please don't kill me!"

"You come along with me, you black hound!" snarled another man, "or by thunder I'll break your skull with this club!"

"No, no!" groaned the other. "I can't go back—"

"Then take that, curse you! I'll kill you, I say, before I'll let you get back into Dismal Swamp!"

Jack heard the cries repeated fast and furious.

He could not stand it.

Flinging open the door leading to the garden, he rushed out.

In the middle of the grass plot he saw two men struggling fiercely in the moonlight.

One of them was a negro attired in an old hat and a tattered suit of clothing.

The other was a short, wiry white man with decent-looking clothing on, and a brown mustache.

He carried a policeman's club.

Clutching the darky by the throat with one hand, he was beating the negro unmercifully with the club.

It looked to Jack as if he would kill the black man.

The young inventor dashed up to them.

Dealing the white man a terrific punch, that knocked him down, releasing the negro, Jack shouted angrily:

"Take that for your brutality, you wretch!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### HISTORY OF THE DEMONS.

The moment the negro saw what Jack had done for him, he shot a grateful glance at the young inventor.

In that momentary piercing look he had committed Jack's image to memory.

He then rushed across the garden and sped away into the street at a remarkably rapid pace.

The man whom Jack had knocked down now arose and aimed a blow at the young inventor's head with his club.

Adroitly dodging it, Jack caught the stranger by each wrist. His strength was tremendous.

Without the slightest apparent exertion he bent the clubber's forearm up to his shoulders, and so painful was the strain that the man relaxed his hold upon the club and went down on his knees.

His face was contorted with pain, and he gasped:

"For God's sake, stop! You're breaking my arms!"

"I ought to break your neck!" said Jack, angrily.

"Let up, will you? I was only doing my duty!"

"Is it your duty to murder niggers?"

"Don't you know I am a detective?"

"A detective?"

"Of course I am."

"Prove it."

"I shall."

"And the negro?"

"He is one of the black demons of Dismal Swamp."

"I do not understand you," said Jack, releasing him.

"What has become of the coon?"

"He has made his escape."

"Confound it! Now I'll be a long time finding him again."

"I demand an explanation of this affair!"

"You shall have it. Are you the boss of this place?"

"I am. My name is Jack Wright."

"And mine is Harry Howard."

"Will you come inside?"

"Yes—I may as well. There's no use in trying to collar the coon now, as he's a slippery customer and has got a long lead on me."

Jack led the man into the library.

His curiosity was aroused over the singular name of the black demons of Dismal Swamp, and he wanted to find out who they were.

When they passed into the library Harry Howard showed him that he certainly was a state detective from North Carolina.

They seated themselves at a table and Jack said:

"Tell me how you happened to be trying to take that negro here."

"Certainly," replied the detective. "As you are perhaps aware the great Dismal Swamp was a refuge for runaway negro slaves before the war. In time the place became filled with them. They had no form of government, save that of a principal leader, and as time went by they became wild and savage, for they were continually in fear of capture, and looked upon all white men as their enemies. They contracted the most vicious and lawless habits."

"The swamps were not capable of giving them food, so they gained a livelihood by stealing. Gradually, food became only a secondary matter, if they could steal anything else. The new generation born in the swamps have grown up worse than the aboriginal Africans from whom they descended. They have made themselves a terror to North Carolina and Virginia by the atrocities they commit, for they do not hesitate at murder. If pursued, they take refuge in the swamps. Familiar with it, they thus always escape. No white man has ever reached their settlement in the heart of the big swamp. It may be found some time, for there is a lake there to which a canal is to be built."

"Well," said Jack, as Howard paused. "How about the fellow you just attacked in my yard?"

"He was one of the Black Demons, as the natives call the

wretches who haunt the swamp. He attacked a farmer and nearly beat out his brains to rob him of a little money. I pursued the black rascal. By some means he learned that I was on his trail, and, finding that I had cut off his return to the swamps, he came northward. I tracked him into your garden, I might have put the bracelets on him if you hadn't interfered with me."

Jack vented a subdued whistle of surprise.

He saw that he was the victim of an error.

Still Harry Howard could not help admitting that the circumstances had warranted what he had done.

"So that's the way the case stands eh?" he asked.

"Exactly; but I don't blame you."

"I acted in good faith, Mr. Howard."

"Oh I could easily see that sir!"

"You must pardon me for what I did."

"Most readily. I hold no spite against you."

"Do you think it would be a good deed to rid your state of the black swamp dwellers?" asked Jack, thoughtfully.

"Why," replied the detective, emphatically, "if I were to tell you all the deviltry these scoundrels have cut up you would shudder with horror. Their record is frightful—frightful!"

"Suppose I were to drive them out of the swamp?"

"It is impossible to do that, but if you could I am sure you would do a deed of charity to the inhabitants of the two states which they would never forget. But few of the people there have failed to suffer at the hands of the black outlaws. They have even had the temerity to raid on towns and villages."

"Is there any manner of distinguishing these negroes from others who do not belong to their gang?"

"Of course there is. They all profess voodooism—a fanatical religion replete with superstition, strange ceremonials and belief in the virtue of charms, incantations, talismans and other nonsense. Among other things the novitiates are obliged to have their blood let by a circular gash around the arm near the wrist. When it heals a scar is left which proves to be a proof of membership in their brotherhood. You will therefore invariably find the Black Demons thus marked, and so easily distinguish them."

Jack questioned the man at some length further, and gained much valuable information about the swamp dwellers.

The reason of their security in the fastness of the dismal place was because the ground was such a quagmire that only one accustomed to it could penetrate the place without getting stuck in the mud or lost.

Many an unfortunate wretch had chased the negroes into the swamp in days gone by, and never came out alive.

Some were literally lost and perished of starvation.

Others had sunk in the mud and were held in its clutches till they died.

And last of all, it was strongly suspected that not a few had been met by the murderous, thieving negroes and were killed.

Harry Howard then took his departure to hunt for the coon.

When Tim and Fritz returned Jack told them what transpired.

They were very much surprised at the story.

At its conclusion the young inventor said to them:

"If I build another flying machine I am going to make good use of it. With such a means of getting into the great Dismal Swamp we could drop bombs down upon those black fellows and drive them out of their retreat into the hands of the police."

"Py shiminey, dot vos a goot ideas alretty!" said Fritz in tones of delight. "Ve didn'd vould hat some uses for dose flying machine when you hadn't tought ohf dot tings."

"D'yer s'pose yer could git ther consent o' ther state authorities fer ter do that?" asked Tim, in dubious tones.

"Decidedly. They would be delighted to have us rid the

community of such an obnoxious gang of murderous outlaws," Jack replied.

He thereupon framed a couple of letters and mailed them.

In these letters he asked to be invested with the right to carry out his plan.

Then all hands retired for the night.

During the ensuing week Jack began to receive the different parts of a flying machine exactly like the one that was destroyed.

Assisted by Tim and Fritz, he put it together.

At the expiration of three weeks the invention was completed.

It was exactly like the first one in every respect, except that there were no weak valve springs in it, and consequently no danger of a repetition of their first misfortune.

Jack then prepared it for flight.

He and his companions tried it that night.

It was now successful in every way!

To keep his resolve, he sent out an announcement that he had rebuilt a machine on the model of the first one, and was going to give a public exhibition of her ascent two days later.

Jack did this to vindicate himself with the people who did not know much about his past brilliant career as a successful inventor.

Moreover, he wanted to show them how great a wrong they did him.

That night he received replies to his letters.

Authority was conferred upon him to capture any of the denizens of the Dismal Swamp, dead or alive.

He was offered a large reward to exterminate them.

Jack declined the latter offer.

He was upon his mettle.

It was his resolve to not only show the people who wronged him that the machine could fly, but he was also determined to let them know that she could do more than that, by so maneuvering her over the swamp as to clear it of the rascals it harbored.

His mind was made up to let the people know that he was in no personal need of pecuniary recompense for doing the work, and that he had paid from his own purse the money they lost.

On the following day a man called on Jack.

He proved to be the detective who had been dispatched in pursuit of the fugitive, Colonel Alfred Davenport.

Jack met him in the parlor.

Having introduced himself, the detective said:

"Well, I can go no further after the absconder now, sir."

"Indeed!" replied Jack; "did you meet with any sort of success?"

"Oh, I found that he had left this village with the valise of money," answered the officer, "and I trailed him to New York."

"Well?" asked the inventor, as he paused.

"I caught him. But he escaped from my hands, leaving me lying senseless upon the ground from a blow on the head."

"That was bad."

"Yes—very. I got on his track. He had fled the city. I traced him down South. He reached the city of Suffolk, in Nansemond county, Virginia. There he gave me the slip. I traced him next day down to Cypress Chapel. Here he alighted, and I followed. He made for the swamps. Plunging into the frightful morass, he vanished. Although I watched the place for a week, I did not see him again. It is useless for me to look any further. So I've given up the job."

"What! Has he taken refuge in Dismal Swamp?"

"Yes," replied the detective, with a nod of assent.

"By thunder! How strange! Just the place I'm going to. I may meet the beggar myself. Ah, going? Well, good-day."

The detective departed.

When the time for the ascension came, the Flying Torpedo was anchored in the public square of the village.

Not only was the same crowd on hand who had been there before, but many hundreds besides.

Jack, Tim and Fritz were on hand promptly, the sailor carrying a pet monkey named Whiskers and the Dutchman having a green parrot called Bismarck.

Jack then made the assemblage a long speech detailing the treachery of Davenport, the cause of the last accident, his own generosity, his purpose in now going to Dismal Swamp, and so forth.

Everyone was amazed at what he said.

Those who ill-treated him were very much shamed.

Having made the impression he desired, Jack mounted the torpedo with his two friends amid a thunder of applause.

"Let her go!" he cried.

The man at the anchor cut the rope.

Everyone was watching with breathless interest.

Up into the air soared the torpedo like a bird, and up she continued amid round after round of cheers from the crowd till she vanished in the clouds.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### KINGS OF THE AIR.

When the earth was hidden from view beneath the vapory cloudbank beneath the torpedo, the young inventor pulled the horizontal-screw lever.

As the wheels spun around they prevented the cylinder from mounting any higher.

Becoming stationary, she hung in the sky as motionless as a balloon, just beyond a strong air current.

Her height was 1,900 feet from the sea level.

The gas in her cylinder would have gone on carrying her up until she was beyond the atmospheric envelope that inclosed the globe, as it was totally non-expansive.

From below sounds came up with startling clearness.

Our friends could hear the multitude cheering very plainly.

"At last!" exclaimed Jack, proudly, "I've shown those fools that my invention was practical after all their sneers and skepticism."

"But wot's more ter my way o' likin'," said Tim, with a grin, "ye hev turned out a machine wot's wonderfuller'n anything wot yer yet hev invented, my lad."

"Vell," said Fritz, from the sternmost wheel, "how ve go—by foots bower, oder by der elecdrics modor?"

"Work the screws ourselves," said Jack. "Then we can see how much control of her we have in a strong wind."

"Ay, ay, that's a good test," assented Tim.

"I vos retty," said Fritz. "Leaf her go!"

They began to work the treadles, for Tim had a socket for his wooden leg, and the big driving screws revolved.

A slight sound arose as they fanned the air, and the torpedo began to glide along across the course of the clouds.

It required very little exertion to keep her moving where there were no opposing currents.

Jack, however, wanted to find out what they could do where it was blowing strongly, so he increased the velocity of the horizontal screws and she went down in the cloud current.

Here the wind was contrary to her course.

It now became necessary to steer her by the sternmost side screws, and when they burst from behind the cloudbank the people down in Wrightstown at once saw her.

This they attested by a tremendous shout.

"Look!" cried Jack, "they see us now."

"Hear them lubbers yell."

"Dey deir dune vos shanged alretty."

Glancing down at the landscape below, our friends noticed that it now had the appearance of a huge oil painting.

The movements of men and beasts seemed to be very slow at that great height; indeed, human beings looked no bigger than pin-heads and horses no larger than mosquitoes.

Yet, as they were perfectly familiar with everything about the place, they had not much trouble to distinguish certain objects.

Beyond the now contracted confines of the village, the environs took on a green blur where the swards and forests were.

At the other side the Atlantic ocean stretched darkly away to the horizon in one vast sparkling sheet of somber hue, down upon which the declining sun sent its golden rays.

Distant villages were mere specks.

Distant mountains were mere ant hills.

And distant plains were mere patches.

The Flying Torpedo was booming along toward a large area of silvery white clouds that drifted in a strata of air crossing the one into which the machine was surging ahead.

She rapidly met it, and was swallowed up.

Here she vanished from the spectators again.

A foggy dampness moistened our friends and covered the machine with a white, hoar frost.

Great shafts of sunlight were darting off in all directions from the cloudbank.

It obscured the dazzling light of the luminary.

They were in a somber, gray twilight.

Below the earth faded from view, and above the azure sky disappeared.

The clouds were half a mile thick, and slowly drifting along in the same course as the Torpedo was taking.

Her screws flung the vapor wildly in all directions, much as if they were beating through a drift of the seafoam.

When she emerged from the clouds Wrightstown was out of sight astern, and a great river appeared below.

It was the beautiful Hudson.

"Vell, vot you tink apoud dot dorpedo, now?" asked Fritz.

"She will do," Jack replied. "Everything seems to work right."

"You're a liar!"

"What!" cried Jack, flushing angrily.

"I didn't spoken."

"You didn't?"

"Nein. Dot was de barrot."

"Oh," said Jack, laughing.

Bismarck was in a cage, hanging in front of Fritz.

He began to chuckle and shriek just then, and the monkey took up a number of nuts which he had been cracking open and let them drive one after another at the bird.

Whiskers hung in back of Tim.

He disliked the parrot.

As the monkey's aim was not very good, two out of every three of the missiles he let drive struck Fritz about the head and body.

"Hey!" yelled the Dutchman. "Stob a leedle! Vot you do? Py tam, you vant me to coom ower dere und gief you a swat in der snoot!"

"Soak him, Whiskers!" roared Tim, delightedly.

The monkey blinked and chattered.

He then fired a second bombardment.

Every time he hit Fritz he fairly howled as if he enjoyed it.

"Donner und blitzen!" raved the Dutchman, shaking his fist at the monkey. "You vant dot I proke me your necks vunct?"

Biff! came a hickory against Fritz's teeth.

The nut flew into his mouth and nearly choked him.

"Hurroar!" yelled Tim. "Bull's-eye!"

The Dutchman bounced up.

He was going to get over the boxes at the mischievous monkey.

Just then, however, Jack sung out:

"Keep your seat, Fritz!"

"But dot mongey vos——"

"Never mind him. We've got work to do."

"Vas iss den?"

"I'm going to lower the machine."

That settled the matter; Fritz kept his seat.

Jack started the bottom screw, the bow dipped down, and as she plunged along she began to descend at an angle.

Along she went toward the valley of the Hudson.

When she had reached a point within five hundred feet of the ground, Jack increased the speed of the horizontal screws and stopped the one that had driven her down.

She then maintained her equilibrium.

The sun went down and twilight fell upon the scene.

The clouds were above the airship now.

A whirring sound suddenly reached Jack's ears.

He glanced around, and an exclamation of surprise burst from his lips, as he caught sight of two big eagles flying through the air after the torpedo.

Both were enormous creatures.

They were coming along swiftly.

"See there!" exclaimed Jack, pointing back at them.

"Mein crashious! Dey vant to race mit us?" asked Fritz. "Ruther looks ter me as if they wants ter pick us off," said Tim.

"See if we can outspeed them, boys."

"Dey vos oferhaul us now."

"Put on ther battery!" said Tim.

More power could thus be gained, and Jack did it.

The driving screws began to whirl faster.

Along swept the machine more rapidly, but the big birds flew at an accelerated pace, and steadily gained on them.

"I don't believe we can get away from them!" laughed Jack.

"Ha' ye got full battery on?" asked the sailor.

"Every volt of electro motor force."

"Dey vos awful quick flyers, Shack!"

"Powerful! What can they be after?"

He learned a moment afterward.

The monkey and parrot began to howl with fright.

It was now clear that the eagles had sighted the two pets and were pursuing the torpedo for the purpose of capturing them.

A few moments afterward this was proven by one of the eagles suddenly darting forward at the parrot's cage.

An ear-splitting scream pealed from Bismarck, and he crouched back, with distended wings and open beak.

With a violent buzz of its pinions, the eagle reached the cage and dashed against it with a bang that made it sway.

Fritz uttered a cry of dismay.

He sprang from his saddle upon the box.

Here he aimed a terrific kick at the eagle.

His shoe struck the bird, and it flew away.

But only for a moment.

Making a vast circle, it shot back at the Dutchman.

Along it came like a thunderbolt, and Fritz drew his sheath-knife from his belt.

As the eagle came in arm's reach, he aimed a cut at it.

The fearless bird did not pause, but, plunging straight ahead at the young Dutchman, it dealt him a terrific blow with one of its strong wings.

A yell of terror pealed from Fritz.

He tottered back, flinging up his arms.

The next moment he fell reeling from the box.

Down toward the earth he plunged like a shot.

Luckily for him, the anchor was dangling below, and he struck one of the arms and seized it.

He caught it with his right hand.

Although it was bruised and pained, he did not let go, for he knew that his life depended upon maintaining himself there.

Had he gone all the way to the ground, his earthly career would have been brought to a sudden end.

The eagle darted away into space when it consummated the mischief.

Jack and Tim had seen what happened.

For a moment they imagined that Fritz was a dead man, but when they saw his descent checked by the anchor their relief knew no bounds, and the inventor shouted:

"He's safe!"

"Oh, Lord, wot a escape!"

"Hey!" yelled Fritz. "Hisht me ub!"

"Yes! Yes! In one moment!"

"Hang on, yer blamed lubber."

Fritz was swaying at the end of the rope like a pendulum.

He had dropped his knife, and got his legs astride the anchor.

The two eagles now dashed toward him.

It was very evident that they designed to attack him, and when Jack and Tim observed this, they stopped the screws, and both made haste to get astern to the Dutchman's assistance.

Fritz saw the birds coming.

He had no weapon to defend himself now.

"Got avay!" he yelled at them. "Mutter ohf Moses, you tink I vos a vorm dot you could bick up and svaller me."

His cries did not divert the birds.

The largest one hovered over him for a moment, then pounced upon him with its sharp talons.

They fastened upon his shoulder, tore through his coat, and cut into his flesh like knives.

A howl of pain escaped from Fritz.

He had to hang onto the anchor, and fight off the eagle with the other hand.

No sooner had the first one assailed him in front, when its mate took up the attack in the rear.

He was caught between two fires.

## CHAPTER V.

### PLUNGED IN THE DEEP.

The two eagles were ferocious, for despite the blows Fritz dealt them with his fist, they returned to the attack again and again.

He was torn by their beaks, their talons ribboned his clothes and lacerated his flesh, their wings pounded him with blows that almost stunned him, and he was soon in a dreadful plight.

Bleeding from a dozen wounds, and half exhausted from the continued violence of his exertions, Fritz soon found that unless his friends helped him the birds would kill him.

The last thump he received almost deprived him of consciousness.

"Shack! Shack!" he cried, feebly.

"Brace up! We are coming!" replied the inventor.

"Ach Gott! I near vos det."

"Hang on a few moments longer, Fritz."

By this time the inventor and the sailor reached the top of the box and, being armed with repeating air-pistols, they leaned over the edge and opened fire upon the demoniacal eagles.

No reports came from the weapons.

The bullets were miniature bombs that exploded upon con-

tact, and thus created considerably more damage than ordinary shots.

The first shot Jack fired hit one of the birds.

An explosion ensued within the eagle's body, and a mass of flesh and feathers was blown in the air.

The bird fell earthward—dead.

Startled by what occurred, the other flew away.

Tim had his solitary eye fixed intently upon it.

He took rapid aim and fired.

Down went the bird to join its mate.

"Keno!" roared Tim. "I killed 'em both wi' one shot!"

"Help me hoist Fritz up—he's half fainting."

"Ay, ay!"

"Hurry up!"

The half-stunned Dutchman was in great peril.

Dazed as he was, he now stood a fair chance of falling to the ground after all.

Jack and Tim seized the anchor rope and began to hoist it up rapidly when they got the Dutchman upon the box.

Here he laid utterly helpless.

Within the boxes were numerous necessities.

They sponged poor Fritz with water, poured some whisky down his throat, and plastered up his wounds.

Under this treatment he rapidly began to revive.

In a few minutes he was feeling something like himself again.

"More shnapps!" he groaned.

"He's well!" commented Jack, smilingly.

"More shnapps, I dold yer!" said Fritz, angrily.

"Yer too late, my hearty, I've emptied ther bottle!" grinned Tim.

"Vhere vos dem eagles gone?"

"Lor! Didn't yer see me afightin' 'em?" asked Tim.

"Dit you killed 'em?"

"Did I? Waal, I reckon! Did yer ever see me tackle anything I couldn't do? Thar wuz fifty-six o' them 'ere eagles. I counted 'em. Waal, sir, as soon's I seen wot peril yer wuz in, wot should I do but flop down astraddle o' ther back o' one o' them. Away flewed ther lubber toward his messmates an' me ridin' him like a horse. I had a brace o' revolvers in my han', an' started in butcherin' 'em as fast as I could pull ther triggers——"

"Feefty-six!" said Fritz, in surprise. "Vhy, I ony seen two ohf dem."

"Wuzn't yer stunned?"

"Yah, fer sure I vos."

"Then how could yer count ther flock wot came along an' jined ther lonely two wot you wuz a-fightin'?"

"Dot vos so."

"As I wuz a-sayin'," continued Tim, warming up to his lie, "thar I wuz hangin' onter ther rope with a ax, choppin' off ther heads o' every one o' them birds, wot came flyin' towards yer tryin' ter pick yer eyes out——"

"Vot rope?" growled Fritz.

"Why—ther anchor rope, o' course."

"Yer shust set yer vos by der beck ohf vun ohf der eagles mit a pistols by eache hands——"

"Did I?" asked Tim, who had forgotten the thread of his narrative.

"Was I asleep when all this occurred, Tim?" blandly asked Jack.

"Oh, gee! I fergot as you wuz here."

"Den you vos stuffin' me alretty?" said Fritz, in disgust. Tim had no more to say.

He quietly stumped back to his saddle.

Jack and Fritz grinned at him and resumed their seats.

"He's the worst old liar I ever met," muttered Jack.

"Ach, he vos vorser as dot," added Fritz.

"How about supper, boys?"

"Dere vos some sandvitches und cold coffee in der knep-secks. Vhen our subber vos gone ve must hustle for our meals in future."

"Blast my hulk if I kin say I likes that," growled Tim. "We've allers had ther solid comfort o' havin' plenty ter eat an' drink aboard o' ther other inwentions wot yer've built."

"Very true, but this one carries only a limited amount of weight," said Jack. "Therefore I could not burden her down with pounds of food. Our limit is a small breaker of water."

"Und ve shleep on poard?"

"There are but two hammocks."

"Oh, one'll have to remain on watch," said Tim.

"But dere don't vos some brotections against der rain."

"Nothing but rubber clothing," laughed Jack.

Both the Dutchman and sailor pulled wry faces, for there was a great deal of solid discomfort staring them in the face.

The twilight deepened into darkness.

This gloom intensified after awhile into a stormy look, and the wind seemed to die away, when Jack commented:

"It looks as if we'll get a drenching before daylight."

"Ay, ay," assented Tim. "I've made a study o' their signs o' ther weather, an' ye kin keelhaul me if thar ain't a-goin' ter be a pretty stiff blow pretty soon. How's ther barometer?"

"The mercury is falling."

"Shouldt ve go aboaf der storm, Shack?"

"No, Fritz. I'm afraid we might get into the great solar current and get carried out to sea in this gloom."

Down below they observed a light streaking along the ground swiftly, and readily recognized it as the headlight of a locomotive.

They had reached the navigable part of the river now, for they caught sight of several lights on moving boats.

The glow from towns and villages arose to the sky and was reflected in place upon the low-hanging clouds like the ruddy flame of a conflagration.

"I'm going to start the searchlight," said Jack at last.

"It'll scare somebody ter see that foiry objick a-floatin' in ther sky," said Tim, with a grin.

Jack pulled a lever.

From the big reflector up in front there gushed a sheet of ghostly flame that darted a mile ahead in the air.

The light moved ahead as the Flying Torpedo advanced. It looked like an enormous comet.

People who saw it blazing in the sky thought it was.

Indeed, many astronomers caught a sight of it at once, and imagined it was something phenomenal, until their telescopes showed them the outlines of the airship.

The torpedo was riding as smoothly as a railway car, and our friends felt perfectly secure.

But as is most always the case, in the moment of their fancied security they were being menaced by their deadliest peril.

In front of Jack there was a small compass.

He turned the current into its binnacle lamp and steered by it.

The machine then seemed to be heading southwest.

By following this course the young inventor felt sure of keeping over the land, but he had made no allowance for the strong leeway the torpedo might make when the opposing air currents occasionally struck her.

Consequently, while he thought he was then navigating over the land, the machine, in reality, was drifting above the sea.

Following the course Jack laid, she pursued the coast line at a distance of two leagues from the shore.

In a short time the torpedo encountered a current going in the same direction she pursued, carrying a dense mass of clouds along with it.

The wind increased her speed.

Yet they did not feel it as they went with the wind. By eight o'clock the gloom had reached its greatest depth. Had Jack slanted the searchlight downward, he would have very easily seen the ocean's billows beneath him.

No sound came up from the deep but the splash and roll of the surges, and this was so slight that it was not heard.

Tim and Fritz had lapsed into silence.

Both the parrot and monkey had gone asleep.

Presently a low distant hum reached Jack's ears.

It came from the northwest, and he listened intently.

The sound gradually kept increasing until a low whistling swelled into a dull howl.

Then a gust of wind struck the Flying Torpedo a-broadside. She was dashed away to the eastward.

In a moment more the howl had turned into a wild, steady shriek, as the gale reached the machine.

Then it began to blow furiously.

As the wind tore through the rigging of the torpedo, the shrill howls became so loud as to half deafen her occupants.

"The storm!" shouted Jack.

His cry awakened the rest into activity.

"How's it a-catchin' us?" demanded Tim, quickly.

"On the broadside."

"Then we're a-makin' leeway."

"I'm afraid so. I'll try to turn the torpedo."

"She don't could run in der teeth ohf dis!" said Fritz.

"I'll try her!"

Around she swung the next moment.

But the head winds were baffling.

Careening like a ship at sea the torpedo fought gallantly.

Down upon her came a gust that drove her earthward.

Everyone instinctively grasped the supports to steady themselves.

Furious as the attack was, the machine struggled to oppose it.

Grasping one of the levers, Jack gave it a vigorous pull.

Hardly had he done so when the torpedo's bow curved upward.

In a moment more she regained her equilibrium.

Jack designed to get her above the gale if he could.

Knowing how the storm developed, he realized that there was no safety where he was.

Lie an arrow the machine cleft the boisterous air.

Mounting skyward a short distance a second gust struck her.

Never before had she encountered such a terrific blow.

Over she went on her side for a moment.

Pressed toward the sea with awful violence, she sunk like a stone.

Quelling a feeling of dismay, Jack slanted the light downward.

Right below the torpedo he saw the billows lashing in fury.

Startled by the sight he strove to send her up again.

The effort proved to be futile.

Under the spot where she was descending there floated a big ship.

Veering before the gale, her bare poles caught the torpedo's rigging.

Within a moment the machine was hopelessly tangled up in the masts.

Exerted by the wind she snapped the main topmost off.

Yawning below as she fell was the black waste of waters.

Zealous as Jack and his companions were to prevent her taking the dangerous plunge then threatening they could do nothing to prevent the catastrophe.

A fearful splash ensued.

The torpedo had gone into the sea.

A shout of alarm escaped our friends as the waters wildly

dashed up over them, and they heard an answering yell from the deck of the ship.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HUNTING FOR FOOD.

"Help! Help! Help!"

"Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!"

"Fling us a rope!"

Thus screamed the three friends.

On board the ship the crew crowded to the rail.

Peering over at the flying machine, they saw that she was being held down by the rigging of the ship in which she was entangled.

One of the sailors hurled a rope and Jack caught it.

Making it fast to the torpedo, he said something to his two friends and rapidly made his way on to the vessel's deck.

Here he was met by the crew.

Their friendly, willing hands assisted him over the bulwarks.

"In heaven's name, what is that thing?" asked the captain.

"A flying machine," Jack replied.

"How is she caught?"

"By your broken top-rigging, sir."

"Can't you cut her free?"

"I came aboard to do so."

"Will she go up again?"

"Yes, as soon as I liberate her."

"Good! I'll get my men to help you."

He gave the order, and the sailors began cutting away the ropes.

The wind was slamming the torpedo up and down like a huge rubber ball.

Waves were bursting over her continually.

They breached over the staggering ship, and the drag now formed by the balloon ship held her up in the wind's eye.

In a few moments the broken rigging was cut away, and the Flying Torpedo bounced up into the air.

Nothing held her but the rope by which Jack had reached the ship a few moments before.

"She's free!" cried the captain.

"Thank heaven for that! I was afraid the seas would engulf her," said Jack, fervently.

"How are you going to get back aboard of her?"

"By climbing up the rope," Jack replied, as he seized it.

The next moment he began to shin up the line toward the torpedo.

But half the distance had been climbed, when the ship gave a heavy lurch, the rope parted above Jack's hands and he fell in the sea.

The torpedo shot up in the air like a rocket.

Down plunged the young inventor, losing his grip on the rope and in a moment he vanished under the sea.

The storm blew the ship along and she vanished in the gloom.

Jack descended some distance.

His body then shot toward the surface again.

He was a good swimmer, and easily kept afloat, although the waters were raging furiously.

Glancing skyward, he beheld the torpedo's searchlight blazing like a meteor overhead.

Watching intently, he soon observed that his friends were driving her down earthward rapidly.

In a few moments she was hovering directly above the spot where Jack swam, and the searchlight swept down on the sea.

"Help! Save me!" shouted the young inventor.

"Ahoy thar!" roared Tim's voice up above. "Whar are yer?"

"This way!" screamed Jack.

He waved one hand above the water.

The light kept sweeping around, missing him in a most tantalizing manner for some time.

But finally it shed its glow upon him.

He was then seen by Tim and Fritz.

They shouted to let him know it.

Down came the machine toward him.

Then the bicycle wheels touched the sea, and he grasped the frame.

It only occupied him a moment to hoist himself up from the water and get safely astride the middle wheel saddle.

The screws were working furiously to keep her down, but Jack stopped them, and she began to mount skyward.

"Safe!" exclaimed Jack in relieved tones.

"How id habben dot yer vos by der sea?" asked Fritz.

Jack explained as the torpedo kept ascending.

When he finished, Tim said:

"An' ther machine wuzn't hurt a bit by her fall."

"That's good news. I feared that the ship's rigging or top-mast might have injured her," said Jack.

As they went up, the gale kept blowing them out to sea.

It was Jack's intention to get above the storm, and this was finally accomplished at a great height.

The scene changed wonderfully.

Below the torpedo there was a dark sea of gloom that hid the world from view, while above the moon and brilliant stars studded the clear, azure sky.

The storm was below.

It was very cold.

Wet as our friends were, they felt very uncomfortable.

"We will have to stand it awhile, boys," said Jack, as he stopped the ascent of the machine and drove her swiftly to the westward. "We must run away from the storm before we can venture down again."

"Ain't ve a-goin' agross der course ohf der dempest?" asked Fritz.

"Certain we is," said Tim, "an' I reckon we're easily makin' fifty knots a hour, too."

The parrot and monkey were safe, if their grumbling and howling was any criterion to go by.

Along through the sky shot the machine, and she finally came to a quarter where the earth was seen below.

But few fleecy clouds intervened.

"Here's where we can go down!" said Jack.

"Ay, ay—that's clear enough weather down thar, lad."

"Und ve vos left der oceans behind us alretty."

The torpedo descended toward the ground over a farm, and finally paused above an orchard, into one of the trees of which the grapnel caught and held her fast.

It was warm and pleasant near the earth, and our friends now had an opportunity of changing their clothes.

The hammocks were then slung under the cages, and Tim and Fritz turned in, while Jack remained on watch.

The rest of the night passed uneventfully by.

Next morning dawned bright and clear.

The disagreeable fact of having no food confronted our friends, and they were all very hungry.

"Now for the tug-of-war!" said Jack.

"Ach, vot ve do?" dismally asked the Dutchman.

"I reckon we'll have ter hunt fer our rations," said Tim.

"There's a woods about a league to the southward," said the young inventor. "Let's go for it. If any game is in the place we'll get it."

Tim and Fritz agreed with this plan.

Having loosened the grapnel and mounted their seats, our friends drove the torpedo toward the forest.

They kept close above the trees, and closely scanned the ground through the openings.

A wide brook was finally seen running through a glen, and as it seemed to be a favorable place, Jack sung out:

"Let her go down here, boys!"

The wheels were spun faster, and the machine descended.

Having anchored her, the three friends alighted.

They were armed, and, having arranged a plan of procedure, they separated along the stream after a good wash and drink.

Jack followed the glen to the southward.

He soon reached a rocky place where the stream fell in a beautiful cascade through a rift.

Climbing down the rocks into a gloomy ravine, into which the rippling waters fell, he found himself among the wildest masses of shrubbery, bushes and vines.

It was hard work to get through them, but he pushed along toward the water's edge amid a crackling of the bushes.

Upon reaching the water's edge, he caught sight of a pair of gray rabbits and fired at them.

The first shot brought both of them down.

Jack pushed through the bushes toward them, but he had scarcely reached the spot where they fell, when he heard a loud snuffing sound beside him.

The next moment something struck him such a terrific thump on the shoulder that he was knocked down with his left arm almost dislocated.

An exclamation of surprise escaped him.

Raising himself upon his elbow, he glanced around.

To his surprise he caught sight of a small black bear.

It was a lean, hungry-looking brute, with small, twinkling eyes, and would, ordinarily, have been an insignificant foe.

But Jack observed that the animal was in a half-starved condition and was evidently in a desperate mood else it would not have assaulted him so boldly.

He made an effort to get upon his feet to recover his rifle, which had fallen from his hands.

But his foot had become entangled so in the vines that no sooner did he attempt to hurry away when he was tripped, and fell with a crash again.

Never dreaming of any such trouble as this, he had not taken any arms with him but the rifle.

He grasped the vines to disentangle his ankle, but just then the bear charged on him.

Jack burst into a cold sweat.

He saw that the beast was dangerous.

He could expect no help from his friends, for he was far removed from them; they did not know where he was, and they could not reach him in time to be of service.

On came the bear, uttered a muffled growl, and Jack, unable to free himself in time to get away, was obliged to desist and face the brute.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FAILURE OF THE SCREWS.

The bear reached Jack with a few strides, and, plunging straight at him, its mouth agape, it made a snap at him.

Its white teeth closed on the arm it had struck with its paw.

A sharp pain darted through the inventor, as the teeth pierced his flesh, and he uttered a smothered cry.

Picking up a heavy stone with his disengaged hand, he brought it down with tremendous force upon the animal's head.

It released him instantly.

A gash was made in its skin.

With a roar, it recoiled several yards.

Jack was rendered desperate.

"If I remain here the beast will devour me!" he muttered.

By a mighty effort, and at the cost of considerable pain, he tore his foot free of the vine.

Then he made a dash for his rifle.

The bear came flying after him.

Just as he reached the weapon, the brute caught him.

It was furious and vindictive, for the blow Jack had dealt with the stone had fairly maddened it.

Its fangs closed upon the calf of the young inventor's leg, and it would have torn out a piece had he not quickly fired a shot into its body.

Again it released him.

Whining with agony, it beat a retreat into the bushes.

Instead of acting upon the defensive, Jack now became the aggressor and ran after it.

He caught sight of the bear in full retreat, and, raising his rifle to his shoulder, he took careful aim and fired.

Down went the beast upon its side.

Hastening up to it, Jack saw that the top of its head had been blown off by the explosive ball.

"Dead!" he cried, in delighted tones.

He did not expect to finish the animal so suddenly, but it gratified his anger to kill the brute after the painful wounds it had given him, and he lost no time bleeding it with a small pocketknife.

Slinging his rifle over his back, he took the two rabbits and returned to the flying machine.

Here he found Tim and Fritz with some birds.

They were plucking them beside a fire the Dutchman had built.

"Shiminey Christmas!" cried Fritz, staring at Jack's torn and bloody clothing in surprise. "Dem must haf been purdy gamey rabbits ter done dot by yer, Shack."

"An' it don't look as though yer hed much better luck'n we had, my lad," added Tim.

"I've killed a bear," said Jack, flinging down the hares.

"Vot!"

"Gee whiz!"

Both were amazed.

They bounded up, and Jack continued:

"Go and get some of the meat. I had no knife."

He told them where to find it and they hastened away.

When they were gone he boarded the torpedo, and, procuring some bandages and medicine, he went to the brook, washed his wounds and dressed them.

By the time this was done, Tim and Fritz returned with the choicest parts of the bear.

Fritz then cooked a frugal meal of meat and coffee for them, during which Jack described his adventure.

"We are not having it quite so easy and pleasant on this journey as we have in the past," laughed the young inventor, when he had finished his recital.

"Couldn't ye ha' made ther torpedo different?" asked Tim.

"No. You see every ounce counts for a great deal in an aerostat," replied Jack. "With this model extreme lightness of freight was necessary to suit the buoyancy of a cylinder of the size of this one. Had I increased the size of the cylinder I could have carried an inclosed car and plenty provisions."

"Den why yer ditn't doon it?" asked Fritz.

"Because had I done so, it would have been impossible for me to have constructed the machine in my shop. This cylinder is the very largest size that could be made there."

"Ay now, that's so," said Tim. "Yer can't put a whale in a man's mouth. That reminds me o' a leetle yarn. When I wuz——"

"In der nafy," sarcastically supplemented Fritz.

"Aboard of the old frigate Wabash," laughed Jack.

"Ay, ay! That's it," said Tim. "How well yer guessed it. Waal, ter make a composite yarn o' it, I'll go on. We wuz

chasin' a Mexican pirate, an' we runned into a bay at high tide. Here ther pirates escaped ter shore in thar boats, an' we bombarded thar ship, an' blowed it ter pieces. Waal, sir, by that time ther tide had all runned out, an' left a sandbar in thar channel at ther mouth o' ther bay. We couldn't git out. It locked us in as if we wuz padlocked inter a prison cell."

"But you waited for the tide to rise again," began Jack.

"Wait an' yer'll see. Now our sitiuation wuz like a-buildin' a big flyin' machine in yer shop wot wouldn't go through thar hole in thar roof, wuzn't it—easy ter git in, but hard ter git out."

"Yes," assented Jack, with a laugh.

"Ter continue: Thar we wuz, an' wot should them Mexicans do but man thar forts wot surrounded thar bay, an' begin ter fire down at us from thar hills. We fired back, o' course, but wot could we do? Nuthin'. Why? 'Cause our shots couldn't go through thar breastworks. Wot did we do?"

"I subbose you didn'd done noddings alretty."

"Yes, we did. At least, my messmates turned ter me an' ast me if I'd git 'em out o' thar pickle. Did I do it? O' course I did. How? I'll tell yer. Ther fust thing ter be did wuz ter git rid o' thar Mexicans' ship. So I told thar gunners ter heave her a broadside, which they did. Thar wuz a lot o' thar lubbers on that ship, an' when our broadside smacked 'em——"

"How many times are you going to destroy the same ship, Tim?" asked Jack, quizzically.

"Wot d'yer mean by that?" growled the old sailor.

"Didn't you blow the ship to pieces when you chased her into the bay first?" demanded Jack, tartly.

"Oh, Lordy, so we did! I fergot that. Let it pass. As I wuz a-tellin' yer, them guns on thar forts wuz pourin' hot shot down on us, an' I knowed as if we stayed thar we'd get smashed inter toothpicks. So I grabs thar wheel, an', puttin' thar Wabash afore thar wind, away we scuddled fer thar sea, surrounded by a reg'lar storm o' cannon balls. An', strange ter say, none o' them hit us. Because why? 'Cause we outsailed 'em—runned plum away from 'em, an' they fell inter thar water astarn o' us. In a few moments we got out inter the sea, an', standin' twenty miles off thar coast, we began ter bombard them 'ere forts."

"How did you sail over the sandbar at the entrance of the bay at low tide?"

"I ain't a-goner answer no silly questions," growled Tim, with a guilty start. "Suffice it that we hit them forts every shot, an' blowed 'em ter pieces in less'n——"

"There you're off again."

"Hey?"

"Before—when you was in the bay at short range your gunshots couldn't pierce their breastworks, and now you go off twenty miles to sea and blow them to——"

But Tim bolted just then.

He did not have the nerve to wait and hear any more.

He was caught badly.

It confused and mortified him.

Jack and Fritz laughed.

Just as he plunged into the bushes, Jack shouted:

"Come back here, Tim, we've got to start off."

The old sailor reluctantly obeyed.

Some of the bear's meat was packed in one of the store-boxes, a small breaker was filled with fresh water, and our friends mounted their seats and cut the anchor rope.

The torpedo shot up into the air.

Away she soared higher and higher every moment.

"When d'yer spect ter reach thar swamp, Jack?" queried the sailor.

"Tomorrow morning," replied the inventor. "If we were to make a bee-line for the place we might reach it by tonight. But no reliance can be placed upon the weather, you know."

"Wot are yer goin' up so high fer?"

"To try to strike a south-flowing air current."

In a few moments the torpedo reached a cloud and went up through it like a great bird.

It was over a thousand feet in thickness.

She finally emerged on top of it, bursting from the gloomy, damp mist into an effulgence of brilliant and dazzling sunshine that made her gleam like a firebrand.

Here it became colder.

The spirits of wine in the thermometer rapidly fell.

Still she continued to ascend, and the earth became a dull blurred landscape below.

"Three thousand feet!" exclaimed Jack, at length, "and here's the current I'm looking for."

"Fer thar Lord's sake, stop her or I'll freeze!" cried Tim.

"Here vos der ofergoats und gloafs," said Fritz, handing them out.

Jack pulled the wheel lever and put on his coat.

The machine continued to ascend, however.

A look of surprise mantled Jack's face when he noticed this, and he pulled the lever again.

Although he now had it all the way over, the screws failed to respond.

"Good heavens, what has happened to the electric machine?" muttered Jack, in startled tones. "The screws don't seem to work. We are going up yet!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DOWN SIX THOUSAND FEET.

"Vot's der medder mit der wheels, Shack?"

"There is something out of order. They won't revolve."

"Better go up thar ladder an' see," warned Tim.

"If I don't we will perish!" Jack answered in grim tones.

Their fur-lined gloves and coats warmed them, but at the rate the torpedo was shooting up in the sky, it would soon bring them to a point where these garments would be of little service.

Jack left the saddle.

Getting upon the box, he ascended the ladder.

It led him to the top of the central cylinder in which the electric apparatus was confined.

In the side a trapdoor opened.

He unfastened it and peered inside.

The motor was not moving.

Going to the top of the cylinder, he tried the screws.

They revolved easily.

"It's evident that they are in order," he muttered.

He returned to the trapdoor and examined the motor.

The bar on which the armatures spun around was all right and the windings of the induction coils seemed to be in order.

All the connections were right and the lubrication perfect.

Following the conducting wires to the battery, Jack next looked that over and detected the seat of the trouble.

The battery was all in one huge cell.

It was operated by a powerful chemical of Jack's invention.

This solution became weakened from use and required replenishing, and Jack hastened down to the box.

"It's the battery!" he announced.

"Want more gemicals?" asked Fritz, anxiously.

"Exactly."

"Dey vos in dot box you vos on."

"All right! I'll get it. Thunder, how cold it is."

He opened the box and began to look for the compound.

A thick frost now covered everything and the thermometer indicated twenty degrees below zero.

The machine was flying along with the air current into which Jack wanted her to drift.

But all the while she continued to mount upward and threatened soon to get out of the strata.

Jack found the package of chemicals, but no sooner did he pick it up when it fell to pieces.

"Good heaven!" he gasped.

"Anything gone wrong?" queried Tim.

"You know when we fell in the sea?"

"Ay, ay! Wot of it?"

"The water must have got at the chemical—"

"Well?"

"And spoiled it."

"Don't yer vos got more?"

"No."

"Mein Gott!"

"How kin ye fix ther battery, Jack?"

"I can't."

"Then, how'll we git down?"

"There's only one way, boys."

"Und dot?"

"To open the cylinders and let out the gas."

Fritz and the sailor were overwhelmed with dismay.

Both realized that they were in a terribly desperate situation.

They had no means of generating a new supply of gas, provided they let escape what they had in the cylinders.

Yet, unless this was done, they would continue to go up.

That meant certain destruction.

The gas that raised them was not expansive.

It could easily carry the machine up into the rarefied air where it would be impossible for a man to breathe.

Here the cold collapse of their lungs would insure their death in a very few moments.

Already they were plunging into an atmosphere that made them gasp stentoriously.

The bitter cold pierced their garments as if they were made of the veriest tissue paper.

A dull, sleepy feeling began to assail them.

Jack saw that only the promptest activity could save them.

He dared not waste a moment.

Grasping the valve lines, he pulled them.

It was useless.

The traps failed to open.

They were frozen fast.

"Fritz! Tim!" he cried.

His companions aroused themselves.

"Vos iss?" sleepily asked the Dutchman.

"You both must get up on the cylinders."

"Ay, ay!" drowsily answered Tim.

"Come here—quick!"

They complied.

Jack poured some liquor from a flask down their throats. It warmed them and revived their flagging energies.

"Go up and force open the traps!"

"Yah, yah!" eagerly cried Fritz.

"Look out for the gas!"

"Trust us, lad!"

Away went the two up the ladder.

Bismarck and Whiskers had fallen to the bottom of their cages.

Jack returned to the saddle, and began to furiously work the pedals to keep his blood circulating.

Glancing at the barometer, he saw that they were six thousand feet above the sea level.

Then he cast his glance up at his two friends.

Both had reached the top of the cylinders and were cautiously creeping over to the valves in the top.

Presently they reached them.

They pounded the fastenings.

Finally they forced them open.

As the gas began to pour out they recoiled.

Tim got out of the way in time, but Fritz began to cough.

He had inhaled some of the gas and it choked him.

The poor fellow fought desperately to prevent it overcoming him, but was inadequate to the task.

His brain reeled, and he lost all control of himself.

In a moment more he felt himself slipping from the top of the cylinder, and a faint, hoarse cry escaped him.

He strove feebly to check himself.

But he could not do anything.

Tim was too far away to be of any assistance, but Jack saw his peril and sprang upon the box.

Down fell the fat fellow like a log.

Jack braced himself underneath and caught him.

The shock knocked the young inventor down, and a yell of intense horror escaped Tim.

But the young inventor clung to the Dutchman.

Over he rolled toward the edge of the box, but one of the stays saved him from falling off.

For a moment Tim was wild.

He could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyesight when he saw that Jack had saved Fritz from destruction.

Yet there they were upon the box.

The gas was gushing out all around the old sailor, and he was glad to clamber down from the cylinder.

"Safe—safe, by thunder!" he roared.

"Yes, he is reserved for a worse fate!" laughed Jack, arising.

"A wuss fate!"

"He is doomed to hear more of your yarns!"

Tim could not help laughing outright at this allusion.

Relieved of the gas, Fritz now began to revive, for he had a constitution like an ox.

"Donner und blitzen! Where I vos?" he roared when he recovered.

"Floating earthward," said Jack, cheerily.

"Oh, I caught you on the fly."

The torpedo was descending swiftly now.

Long before they would reach the earth, Jack realized that all the gas would be out of the cylinder.

To save themselves from too swift a descent, he hastened over to his wheel and tried the valve cords.

All the ice had been knocked from the traps by Tim and Fritz, and he easily closed them again.

The torpedo continued her rapid descent until she was within 500 feet of the ground.

Here she neared her equilibrium.

The speed of her descent began to diminish.

But she went all the way to the ground.

"Tim—jump off!" cried Jack.

"Ay, ay!" said the sailor, and away he went.

Relieved of his weight, the machine bounded up in the air to a height of two hundred feet, and the breeze carried her along.

Then she began to descend again.

Down to the earth she dropped rapidly.

"Fritz—go!"

"Fer sure!"

And off went the Dutchman.

Once more she leaped upward.

This time she did not go so high.

As she drifted along and began to fall a second time Jack let the grapnel go.

It dragged and hitched over the ground until finally it caught in a fence and held fast.

The torpedo was now going down on her side, and the mo-

ment she arrived within two yards of the ground, Jack sprang off and she fell heavily.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DISMAL SWAMP.

"Well, we're wrecked."

Such was Jack's remark when Tim and Fritz reached him.

The Flying Torpedo laid upon her side near the fence to which she was anchored, and the parrot and monkey had revived and were yelling at the top of their voices in the cages.

It was an old rail fence surrounding an old ruined mill beside a stream that the grapnel had caught.

No sign of a human habitation was to be seen anywhere near, and the three friends looked very much disgusted.

"Can't sail on now, hey?" asked Tim.

"Not an inch until I fill the cylinder with gas."

"Vhere der doost ve god id?" groaned Fritz, blankly.

"I'll have to reach a big city to procure the materials."

"Did ye see one anywhar near here when we wuz aloft?"

"No. Nor do I know how I'll find one."

"Himmel und kummel!" gasped the Dutchman. "Vot a bincs!"

Jack examined the machine.

She was uninjured by the fall, as the landing was easy.

But she was devoid of gas, and there were no chemicals to recharge the battery and work the screws.

While Jack was looking over his invention with a very glum look upon his face, he heard the distant toot of a whistle, and listened to locate it.

The breeze carried the sound from the southwest.

A few moments later the sound became nearer and clearer.

A smile, full of relief, crossed Jack's face, and he asked Tim:

"Did you hear that?"

"O' course I did. A factory whistle——"

"No, a locomotive whistle."

"D'yer think so?"

"I'm sure of it. That whistle shows a way to get out of this."

"How d'yer mean, Jack?"

"Why, I'll find that railroad, get on a train, go to the nearest city and get what I need to make the torpedo work."

"Hurroar. That's ther way!" cried Tim, delightedly.

Jack then held a brief conversation with them, and then hastened away in the direction the whistle came from.

In a few moments he was lost to view behind a clump of trees on a hillside.

When he was gone the fat fellow and the sailor attended to their pets, and, finding them uninjured, they repaired two of the braces and went into the mill to await Jack's return.

Here they released the monkey and parrot from their cages, and whiled away the time by getting up a fight between Bismarck and Whiskers, and betting on the result.

Several hours thus passed by.

They then made a luncheon off the remainder of the food, and Fritz took his accordeon from the box and began to play.

Tim lost his temper as soon as he heard it.

"Haul to thar!" he growled. "Can't yer stop that blamed wheezin'."

"Got oud!" replied Fritz. "If mine moosics yer don'd like yourself, yust stuck your fingers by your ears in alretty."

"I don't wanter hear it, yer pot-bellied pirate!"

"Den don'd listen to id."

"Fritz, if yer don't stop thar's goin' ter be a corpse aplayin' that tune."

"Iss dot so? Vos you goin' ter die det, Dim?" grinned Fritz, as he played away harder than ever.

The old sailor gnashed his teeth and spit.

He had a riled look in his eye.

Then he stumped up to the Dutchman.

Raising his wooden leg and giving it a swing, he aimed a terrible kick at the accordeon.

Biff! went his peg up in the air, but the Dutchman nimbly skipped out of the way.

So powerful was the kick that Tim let drive that when his walking member encountered nothing but wind it carried him off his good leg and he landed on his back.

For fully one minute there issued a round of swearing from his lips that rightfully should have given the air a sulphuric odor.

Then he gingerly picked himself up.

"Shiminey Christmas, vot a high kicker!" chuckled Fritz.

"You're a dead man!" announced Tim, with a scowl.

"By shingo-nettys, I vouldn't a believed it ohf you ditn't tol me so."

"Come here, till I paralyze yer!"

"Do you py mine eye seen some creen?"

"Werry well, I'll go arter ye. If I don't lay yer out cold, I can't eat my rations ternight. Watch me massacre the lubber!"

And with a whoop like a wild Indian, Tim made a dive for the Dutchman, who turned tail and fled.

Unfortunately for Fritz, the floor of the mill was old and rotten, and as such floors were not calculated to hold up such heavy weights as the Dutchman, his foot went through.

His accordeon flew across the room, his hat popped in the air, and his hands and stomach came down with a smack that echoed through the ruin like a pistol shot.

"Got yer!" roared Tim, delightedly.

And the next moment he wound his fingers in the fat fellow's yellow hair, Fritz clinched him and they began to struggle.

Over and over they rolled, punching, pounding, biting and scratching like a pair of old women at an Irish fair.

By the time they separated they were so winded by the violence of their exertions that they couldn't lift a hand to do any more damage.

So they separated and sat facing each other, panting and puffing, with never a smile on their faces, and a most beautiful feeling in their minds to murder each other.

"You vait!" puffed Fritz.

"Come on!" panted Tim.

Then they breathed like a pair of steam engines a little more, and, getting up, they solemnly shook hands, and while the Dutchman lit his pipe, Tim took a chew of navy plug.

Often as they quarreled and fought, they never did each other any serious damage, and soon became fast friends again.

At this juncture the monkey began to hop up and down and rush to the door and back again in an excited manner.

Bismarck then began to yell:

"Cheese it—a cop! Cheese it—a cop!"

The Dutchman and the sailor concluded that they had seen something outside to frighten them.

Going to the door, they peered out.

To their surprise they caught sight of a farm wagon near the fallen torpedo, filled with barrels.

On top of the load sat the owner and beside him Jack.

"Waal, blast my figgerhead!" gasped Tim.

"It vos Shack, back again!" cried Fritz, running out.

They hastened over to the wagon, and Jack met them with a cheerful smile and the encouraging remark:

"Well, boys, I've got everything I started out for."

"Fer ther lan' sakes—whar did ye git 'em?" asked Tim.

"Well, I found the railroad, boarded a train, went to the

nearest city, made my purchases, came back with them on a freight car, and, meeting this farmer, hired him to carry the things here.

The barrels were unloaded with sundry other packages, and the farmer was paid and drove away.

Jack joined the covered barrels with tubes.

He then connected them with the cylinder, and, having put his chemicals and some water in the barrels, the work of filling the torpedo begun rapidly.

While this was going on Jack opened another parcel and took out a large water-tight can containing the battery compound.

With this he replenished the exhausted battery.

"Und vot's by dis puddle?" asked Fritz, picking up the last one.

"Open it and you'll see," laughed Jack.

The fat fellow did so, and a cry of joy escaped him.

Within the package was enough food for their supper and breakfast—a most tasteful and delicious repast in every respect.

They all made a good meal, and at its conclusion found the torpedo rising from the ground.

Ropes were then secured to her to keep her down while the process of inflation continued.

Jack attached an instrument to her for measuring the quantity of gas she contained.

He was thus enabled to see when she was filled.

The darkness of night fell by the time she was ready, and Jack then detached the gas generator.

In order to prevent anyone from discovering the secret of his process, he destroyed the apparatus.

"We have lost nearly a day," said he to his friends, when the torpedo was tied down by a line and the grapnel stowed aboard. "I think we had better travel all night now, boys."

"Ay, ay! That's easy enough done, as one lad kin work her while ther rest turns in," said Tim.

They then boarded the airship.

Jack tried the wheels.

They worked properly, and he cut the rope.

She soared upward to a height of 250 feet ere he started the screws revolving to check her ascent.

Then he put the driving wheels in motion, and she flew ahead swiftly through the air.

During the night the watch was changed, and she kept on her journey until daylight.

Breakfast was partaken of in the clouds.

An hour afterward Jack pointed down at a large black tract below the machine and exclaimed:

"There's the great Dismal Swamp now, boys!"

"Pully!" said Fritz. "Den ve soon see vot ve could doon mit der plack temons vot haunts dot blaces alretty."

"Ay," added Tim, "an' if Alfred Davenport is a-hidin' in that 'ere place wi' ther money wot he hooked from them poor fire sufferers ther Lord help him should I sot my eye on his blasted hulk!"

## CHAPTER X.

### SAVING A MAN'S LIFE.

The scene below the crew of the torpedo was a most gloomy one, for the great swamp was about forty miles long by twenty-five broad, with a large lake in the middle, and had a dark appearance.

It lay in the peninsula between the James river and Albemarle Sound, partly in Virginia and partly in North Carolina.

As the torpedo began to settle down toward it, Jack saw

that the greater part of its area was covered with a thick, spongy vegetable soil.

It supported a luxuriant growth of aquatic plants, brushwood and timber, the prevailing trees being cypress, juniper and white cedar, while on the higher ridges were beech and oak.

By a curious arrangement the surface of the swamp was actually higher in some parts as much as twelve feet than the surrounding country.

On the western side it received some small streams, but in all other places the water flowed outward from it.

Drummond's Lake, in the center, was six miles long and three wide, with perpendicular banks and an extreme depth of fifteen feet.

The water was clear and abounded with fish.

"A good harbor for runaway negroes in slavery days," Jack commented, as he watched the gloomy place. "Ordinarily it would be as bad as hunting for a needle in a haystack to find a refugee in that dismal hole. But with this machine to ride above the treetops and look down through the openings, I think we will fare much easier."

"Jack, cast yer weather eye over thar ter ther wind'ard," said Tim, pointing to the right. "Ain't that a city?"

Jack glanced in the direction indicated.

Within an elevated clearing among the jungle of tangled vines and dense bushes, he saw a large collection of houses.

The young inventor leveled a powerful field glass at them and observed that they were built of stone.

Swarming about them were numbers of negroes, all of whom seemed to be hastening toward a central point.

As Jack directed his attention toward the point in question, he caught sight of a white man tied to a post.

A heap of fagots was piled around his body, and a number of blacks, bearing flaming torches in their hands, were rushing around and around the post, waving the firebrands furiously, and acting as if engaged in some wild, aboriginal dance.

When the torpedo drew nearer he could see that the people standing around the dancers were beating time with sticks on the ground.

They were pounding tom-toms, and ever and anon the dancers burst into loud yells, and increased the speed and the violence of their movements until they were going around furiously.

It was a custom of the Manyuema tribe of Africa.

Among them a number of old hags were circulating, their heads tied up in fancy colored cloths, their arms gesticulating wildly, and their bent figures ever and anon whirling around like those of the Eastern dervishes.

"Shiminey! Vot dey doon dot for?" asked Fritz, in amazement.

"It's the Manyuema death-dance," said Jack. "These revolting wretches have retained many of their native African customs, no doubt, and that man is their victim."

"D'yer s'pose they're agoin' ter kill him?" asked Tim.

"Of course they are. The tribe I mention are cannibals—"

"Holy smokes!" gasped Fritz, his eyes bulging. "Dem plack son-ohf-a-sea-gooks eat dot feller?"

"Probably," assented Jack, nodding.

"They wuz well named as 'demons,' my lad," shuddered Tim.

"Arm yourselves," said the young inventor.

"You vos goin' to fire by dem?"

"Unless we can rende' that poor wretch some assistance," said Jack, "they will probably kill him."

Tim and Fritz unslung their rifles from their backs.

Hardly had this been done, when the men with the firebrands touched the fagots surrounding the prisoner with their torches, and the dry wood was kindled to a blaze.

"Lieber Himmel! Dey vos roast him!" gasped Fritz.

"Fire! Scatter them! I'll manage the torpedo!" Jack exclaimed.

While he was causing the aerostat to settle down toward the victim of the negroes, the sailor and the Dutchman opened fire upon the swamp dwellers.

Loud reports came from the bursting bullets.

Several of the blacks were wounded.

Having their attention attracted upward in the direction whence the shots came they saw the flying machine.

It filled them with superstitious alarm.

Yells, loud and mournful, ripped from their throats and they recovered from their shock of surprise and made a wild rush for the bushes.

Away they dashed in all directions.

In a moment more not one of them remained.

They all disappeared in the shrubbery.

No one was left but the unfortunate man in the midst of the burning fagot heap.

"Help! Help!" he was screaming.

Down shot the torpedo with startling rapidity.

In a moment she paused within a yard of the ground, and Jack leaped from his wheel and rushed for the man.

He was gasping, strangling and burning.

Kicking the fiery embers right and left, Jack scattered them all over, tore off his coat and wrapped it around the victim of the black demons.

He wore a hunting suit of canvas and it was on fire.

Ripping out his knife when he had smothered the flames in the man's burning garments, Jack cut him free.

Dragging him away from the fire, he laid the poor fellow down upon the cool, damp ground upon his back.

The man had been badly scorched.

His skin was blistered and red, his hair, beard and eyebrows were singed, and he was half fainting.

He recovered after a few moments, and, glancing up at Jack with a look of intense agony upon his face, he groaned:

"Oh, my God, what misery I am in!"

"You might have roasted to death," said Jack.

"True! I owe you a good deal, sir."

"Wait, and I'll see if I can't stop that pain."

"If something isn't done I'll die. Oh, I can't endure this much longer!"

Jack hastened over to the torpedo.

Opening one of the boxes, he took out a small medicine chest.

Selecting a certain bottle, he returned to the injured man and bathed his burns in the yellow liquid.

For a brief space it smarted so that he screamed.

But the pain quickly subsided, and finally it all left him.

Instead of the feverish heat his parched skin was suffering, a grateful coolness pervaded him.

The look of pain left his face.

The expression of calm contentment that was substituted was intense, and he cried in tones of fervent gratitude:

"Oh, this is heaven—heaven!"

"I knew it would make you feel easier."

"Can I get out of this terrible place?"

"We will carry you away."

Jack went over to the flying machine.

He let all the drinking water run away and flung out all such articles as they could dispense with.

In this manner he relieved the torpedo of about eighty pounds of ballast, and then returned to the sufferer.

"Can you walk?" he asked the man.

"Yes, yes!" was the eager reply.

He got upon his feet, and, although he felt weak and giddy, with Jack's assistance he managed to reach the flying machine

and get on the box in front of his rescuer. Mounting his wheel, Jack stopped the screws.

The torpedo slowly mounted in the air to a height of fifty feet.

With the injured man aboard she carried more ballast than she should have taken, but proved to be navigable.

Working the foot pedals, Jack started her off to the westward.

"This is an amazing conquest of the air!" said the hunter.

"Quite surprising," assented Jack. "How did you get in trouble?"

"Why, I started out with gun and dogs to enjoy a few days' sport bird shooting," the man replied. "I was going along the swamp and a band of negroes pounced on me. I shot one of them ere they captured me. They relieved me of the valuables I carried and dragged me into the swamp. Out of revenge for the ball I gave the nigger I mentioned, they tried to burn me up."

"You know who they are?"

"Oh, I've heard of them as the Black Demons."

"Who is the chief of the gang—do you know?"

"Yes. A new member. They called him Colonel Davenport."

Jack, Tim and Fritz were amazed to hear this.

The absconder had evidently joined these rascals in order to keep himself secure from arrest.

After some further conversation they reached the other side of the swamp, and, meeting a farmer bound for the city from whence the man came, they put him in the farm wagon.

The torpedo was then supplied with water from a spring, and, mounting the air, she sped back toward the swamp.

Jack was glad that he had made such good use of her so far as to save the life of a fellow creature.

As the machine went skimming along a few yards above the treetops there suddenly sounded a volley of rifle shots from down among the shrubbery below.

A dozen bullets struck the torpedo and glanced off.

The shock hurled her up in the air.

She came down again suddenly and plunged among the trees.

Before she could mount to her equilibrium the tree branches caught her and held her down where she was.

A tremendous yell was heard below the entangled machine.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DOOMED TO DEATH.

It required but very little extra weight or pressure to hold the flying machine from mounting up to her equilibrium, for she acted very much like an ordinary balloon.

The tree branches had bent before her descent, and when she passed under them they sprang back in place above her.

The weight of her descent had more power than her ascensive strength, consequently she was unable to mount again.

She paused thirty feet from the swamp bed, much the same as a toy balloon stops at the ceiling of a room.

Jack glanced down below.

It was dark and gloomy under the trees.

But he caught sight of a number of men there.

They were all poorly clad negroes, and to the chagrin of the young inventor, he saw that they had hold of the grapnel rope, which had been hanging down a distance of twenty-five feet.

It was evident these men had discharged the volley of rifle shots that brought the machine down, for several of them were armed.

Their weapons were pointed up at the three friends.

"Don't fire!" shouted the young inventor.

"Surrender then!"

"We give in."

"Haul away on that rope, boys!"

The negroes pulled the grapnel line and the torpedo began to descend.

Something in the tone of that voice caused Jack to peer down sharply at the speaker and he gave a slight start as he recognized the man to be Alfred Davenport.

"By jingo! There's the absconder now!" gasped Jack.

"Whar's the lubber?" growled Tim, savagely.

"Right below us among the crowd."

"Blast him! I'm agoin' ter heave a shot through his hulk!"

"No, no, don't fire. It will seal your doom. We are at their mercy."

"Donner and blitzen! Must ve gief in?"

"There's no help for it, Fritz!"

"Ach du lieber Gott! Don't it vos awful!"

The blacks had the drop on them.

It would have been sheer madness to resist them.

So the three reconciled themselves to their fate and Jack arranged the levers in a certain way to protect the torpedo.

Down to the ground they were hauled, and when they were amongst the ugly-looking gang of black ruffians, Davenport cried:

"Seize and bind them!"

Half a dozen men got at each of our friends.

As soon as they were secured Davenport continued authoritatively:

"Fasten the rope of that machine to a tree!"

This was done.

But one of the coons asked wistfully:

"Ain't yer goner let us see what's in 'er?"

"No! Not now!"

"We will!"

"Go on, then!"

A rush was made for the machine.

No sooner did the darkies lay hands upon it, though, when they received an electric shock that almost knocked them down.

In arranging the levers, Jack had turned the current of the battery into the metal work.

He could not have chosen a safer protection for the torpedo.

A general outcry arose from the electrified coons.

It horrified them.

They recoiled from the machine.

"What's the matter with you?" roared Davenport.

"Dunno!" answered one of the negroes.

"I'll tell you," said Jack, quietly. "The whole machine must be electrified. It's as much as their lives are worth to keep their hands upon it a consecutive second. Hark! Don't you hear the buzzing of the battery?"

"Did you do it on purpose?" growled the colonel.

"Of course, I did!" replied Jack. "But never mind about that. I have a word to say to you. Is it possible your flight from Wrightstown was the result of a premeditated robbery, Colonel Davenport?"

The absconder gave a slight start.

He pondered a moment, and then blurted out:

"You have seen the evidence, sir; what's the use asking?"

"Answer my question."

"Yes, then."

"Do you realize what you did?"

"Made myself richer by \$10,000."

"And is this the way you have to enjoy it?"

"Curse the luck, I might have had a good time with that money in civilization, if it wasn't for the detectives who

dogged me like a sleuth hound, and finally ran me into this swamp. I had to divide the money among these niggers when they caught me."

"Foolish man! See what you have doomed yourself to, all on account of those paltry dollars."

"Regrets are useless now."

"With you, yes. For the moment you are caught outside of this terrible open-air dungeon, you will go to prison."

"I've made up my mind to that long ago. Therefore I don't intend to venture away from here. Knowing that every man's hand is turned against me, I mean to treat you all as enemies."

"Why have you taken us prisoners?"

"Because, in the first place, I know you are the one I have most to fear. And in the second place, you have seriously wounded several of my niggers, stolen away one of their prisoners, and they want to avenge themselves upon you."

Jack's position was defined.

He knew how to regard these people.

A sigh escaped him, and he said:

"Very well. Since I know upon what terms we are here, you will find a bitter and implacable enemy in me, Alfred Davenport. I shall exterminate you and your followers."

"You? Why—ha, ha, ha, you fool! You won't live to harm a fly now. These men are determined to have your lives. How in thunder do you expect to escape them? You are bound so that you can't move your arms. Can't you understand your position?"

Jack smiled confidently.

He had but little fear about his fate.

"Do you think for a moment that I expect to perish?" he asked.

"If you expect to escape with your life you must be confident," said the colonel. "Your doom is sealed, Jack Wright."

The young inventor shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

Davenport then said something to his followers, and strode away toward the center of the swamp by a narrow, slightly defined path.

The negroes seized their three prisoners and compelled them to follow after the defaulter.

A march of ten minutes brought them to the perpendicular bank of the big lake.

Here they paused.

The sun was fast declining.

All the negroes had a fixed purpose in view.

Reaching the margin of the lake, they skirted the shore and made their way toward the western side.

Here they encountered a broad stream which ran from the lake into the woods.

This stream was wide, but the water was only a few inches in depth, and the shores were overgrown with dense masses of shrubbery.

Continuing along the embankment until they reached the most gloomy section of the woods, the blacks came to a pause with the prisoners.

One of them had a whispered conversation with the colonel, pointed out at the stream, and Davenport nodded and hastened away.

Several of the coons then cut down three thick saplings and secured one to the back of each of our friends.

Others of the darkies had cut down a large number of young cedars and began to form a path out into the stream with them.

When this was done two men got at each of our friends, picked them up bodily and rushed out on the cedar path. Far out in the stream they paused.

Standing the three upon their feet in the stream, so that the saplings at their backs held them up, they rushed ashore again.

No sooner had they reached the embankment when the path sunk beneath the oozy black mud and vanished.

Jack noticed that they began to rapidly sink.

They were not in quicksand.

It was worse, for it was a bed of slime.

The mud gripped them and held on more tenaciously than ordinary quicksand would have done.

On shore the Demons of the Swamp stood narrowly watching them to see that they did not get away.

They roved in and out of the shrubbery for some time, keeping a keen surveillance of our friends.

But presently a distant whistle blast was heard.

It proved to be a signal to them.

One by one they slunk away into the deep gloom of the trees and bushes, until at last but one had vanished.

This individual seemed to have remained voluntarily behind to watch their victims expire.

He remained upon the embankment until all his companions had disappeared.

Then he stole away toward a huge tree, the branches of which reached out over the stream toward Jack.

Here he, too, disappeared.

Our friends were then unguarded.

But they could not budge an inch.

All three had by this time sunk to their knees in the mud. With a despairing look Jack muttered:

"I'm afraid, after all, that my doom is sealed!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND.

The cold, shallow stream of water flowing over the muddy bed of the stream laved the hips of Jack, and Fritz, and Tim.

It kept the soil moist and treacherous, for the ooze had swallowed the limbs of the three and clutched them tightly.

"Jack, my lad, is this the end o' us?" mournfully asked Tim.

"We ain't dead yet, old fellow," cheerily answered the inventor.

"Ach! Ve might's vell be," Fritz growled. "I don't seen some hopes."

The prospect for salvation certainly looked slim.

Already they were half buried, and it was only a question of time when the rest of their bodies would go under.

The afternoon waned.

In the midst of that gloomy morass, with its croaking frogs, rustling reeds and dense undergrowth, the gloom intensified.

All kinds of bugs were flipping about, rasping and scraping and raising a monotonous concert which was echoed by the chirping and fluttering of birds in the trees.

From the stagnant, green slime-covered pools there arose a malarious odor that was nauseating.

Water trickled over the soggy ground, making it spongy and muddy, and huge trailing vines wound among the trees, binding them together in places in impenetrable jungles.

The dreary prospect had a very depressing effect upon the spirits of our friends.

A sullen silence ensued among them for awhile, each one occupied with very miserable thoughts.

Then Jack spoke again:

"What could that signal have been for which drew the coons away from here awhile ago?"

"More o' thar rascality, I reckon!" Tim growled.

"Dem von't bodder dot dorpedo," said Fritz, in satisfied tones, "'cause dot elecdricity keep dem avay by a respectful distances."

Just then Jack caught sight of the negro who had been last seen on the shore of the stream.

He was up in the tree, that stretched its massive branches out toward where the three were so rapidly sinking.

Watching him curiously, Jack saw him make his way out on the branch slowly and carefully.

He got as far out toward the end as he could, and then tied the end of a rope to the bough.

In his belt he carried a murderous-looking knife.

As soon as he had the line secured he dropped the other end into the stream and slid down.

He then began to sway himself back and forth.

Having oscillated his body rapidly a few moments, he suddenly slid down, and, while retaining his hold on the line, let himself land on his feet.

He paused in arm's reach of Jack.

Drawing his knife from his belt, he looked for a moment as if he was going to stab the young inventor.

Jack stared hard at him a moment.

"Haven't I seen you before somewhere?" he asked.

"Yassah. In Wrightstown. I'm de coon Harry Howard was beatin' when you saved me."

"Ah—yes—so you are."

"I ain't forgot your kindness."

"And now wish to repay it?"

"Yassah. I'll cut you free."

He severed the inventor's bonds as he spoke.

Then he liberated Tim and Fritz.

Still they were stuck in the mud.

The darky was sinking fast.

He could not tarry.

So he pulled on the rope and dragged himself over under the tree branch, climbed up the line and got astride the branch.

Hastily coiling up the line, he flung it to Jack.

"Coch dot!" he cried.

"I've got it," replied the inventor.

"You pull an' I'll pull."

By their united efforts Jack dragged himself from the mire. Once on the surface, he quickly got over to the tree and hoisted himself up to where the negro sat.

The line was then flung to Tim.

With two to pull he was hauled out.

Fritz followed.

Then they made their way to the ground.

The four were plastered with mud and panting from their violent exertions, but were delighted over their success.

As soon as they recovered Jack shook the negro's hand.

"You have grandly repaid your obligation!" he cried.

"I'se glad of that, sah," replied the coon with a grin.

"Now one good turn deserves another. Let me give you a warning."

"What am dot?"

"Leave this swamp."

"Wha' fo'?"

"Every nigger in it is doomed."

"Is dat so?"

"Yes. If they are not killed they'll be arrested."

"Oh, Lordy, dat's drefful!"

"Will you do as I say?"

"Ob course I will, boss."

"Now tell us how to return to the airship."

"Foller dat paff yander. An' say——"

"Well?"

"Don't yer tell on me what I done."

"Certainly not."

"If yo' do I'se a dead man."

"You can trust me."

"Den I leabe yo' here."

And so saying the negro plunged into the bushes. He disappeared and Jack turned to his friends, saying: "You see, it always pays to do a man a good turn." "If you hadn't winned his gratitude we'd a been dead men," said Tim.

"Vos yer got some weapons?" asked Fritz. "Nothing but the coon's knife," Jack replied. "Dot vos besser as noddings." They followed the slight path the darky had pointed out. It brought them back to the lake shore, and here they were forced to exercise the utmost caution, for fear of accidentally meeting with any of the roving denizens of the swamp.

Their escape from what seemed positive destruction was to them an extraordinary occurrence.

Jack located the road back to the torpedo.

They were glad when they plunged among the bushes again.

Here there was less chance of meeting with the demons than they incurred in the open ground bordering the lake at that spot.

Along they went, Jack in the lead, bent far over toward the ground to discern the trail left in the soft soil.

In this manner they had gone along half the distance back to the flying machine, when a sudden crashing in the bushes was heard on each side of them.

The next moment a number of the negroes burst from the underbrush and saw them.

They were accustomed to the gloom of the swamp, and therefore had no difficulty in distinguishing the fugitives.

A wild yell of surprise escaped them.

They could not understand how Jack's party escaped from the river.

"Discovered!" gasped the inventor.

"Oh! if I only had a gun!" groaned Tim.

"Run like der doost," Fritz advised.

This suggestion was carried out at once.

Away they sped like deers.

Although Jack suffered from the wounds in his arm and leg inflicted by the bear, he did not hesitate to use the injured members to save his life.

The black men recovered from their shock of surprise and came racing along in pursuit of them.

They screamed in a peculiar manner at the tops of their voices to attract the attention of their friends to the spot.

Fleet as they were, they could not gain very fast upon our friends, for Jack and Fritz assisted the wooden-legged old sailor along as much as they could.

In a few minutes our friends heard the sound of voices and flying footsteps splashing through the swamp and crashing through the shrubbery upon all sides.

The demons were coming from every direction.

It incited them to redouble their exertions.

Presently Jack cried:

"There's the airship now!"

"Shiminey Christmas, I vos glat ohf dot," panted Fritz.

"Haul her down and stop the current charging her."

"Ay, ay!" cried Tim.

"I'll try to hold those niggers off."

While Fritz and the sailor were pulling the torpedo down to the ground, Jack faced his pursuers.

Many of them had knives, but fortunately no firearms.

Up to Jack they rushed furiously.

He stood his ground.

In his hand he clutched the negro's knife.

The first one who came in arm's reach of him received a wound that sent him back yelling with pain.

The rest paused.

Then they recoiled.

A conference was held.

Their numbers momentarily increased.

Jack saw that there were a score opposed to him. "Hurry up, boys!" he cried. "Ay, ay!" shouted Tim. The negroes soon had their minds made up and again made a rush for the plucky young inventor. Jack saw that there were enough to overwhelm him.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### RUNNING AMUCK.

"Stan' aside, Jack, my lad!"

"All right, Tim; let them have it!"

Boom! Boom! roared two grenades.

Tim had reached the boxes of the torpedo.

Shutting off the electric current, he took out the bombs.

Letting them drive into the midst of the black horde menacing Jack, they burst with a roar like thunder.

Down went several of the scoundrels seriously wounded, and with screams of affright the rest scattered and rushed away.

After them several more bombs were hurled by the sailor, and they burst in different directions, tearing trees and bushes to pieces and ripping up the ground all around.

"Dash my ole binnacle, if I ain't put 'em under full sail!" the ancient mariner howled. "Come aloft, Jack! Come aloft!"

Fritz had procured a short-handled ax.

Going up to the top of the cylinders, he got astride of them, one after another, and began to chop away the branches that impeded the ascent of the torpedo.

Jack ascended to his saddle.

By the time he reached it Fritz had succeeded in opening a way for the aerostat to get through.

She soared up into the air at once.

"Hurrah!" yelled the Dutchman. "Ve vos on der ving!"

"Good for you, Fritz! Come down here and I'll manage her!" cried Jack.

The fat fellow descended.

Bismarck and Whiskers were yet in their cages yelling like fiends, and Tim closed the box and mounted his saddle, remarking:

"Ye kin keel haul me if this ain't a lucky escape!"

"Very," Jack assented. "We are safe now at an altitude of 400 feet."

He started the horizontal screws and the upward flight of the machine was suddenly checked.

Very little air was stirring up there.

They changed their clothes, and Jack dressed the bear wounds he had.

"Vot apoud someding to ead?" wistfully asked Fritz at length.

"There isn't a morsel of food on board," Jack replied.

"Oh, Lor', an' I'm half starved!" groaned Tim, in disgust.

"We'll have to hunt for it, then."

"Don't dere vos some seddlemends by here?"

"A good many miles away."

"S'posen we goes fer it, lad?"

"We may as well, for darkness is falling."

"Nopody could done anyding here in der nighd."

"That's true. Come! Let's work her to the southwest."

"Ain't ther battery in order? I'm tired nigh ter death."

"Yes. I'll use it."

Jack put the driving screws in motion.

The machine glided away, and Tim took a consoling chew. They passed over the swamp and darkness descended.

"Blest if I likes ther prospeck," said the old sailor after

awhile. "We ain't got a shot in ther locker, an' if we keeps on this way, all ther reefs we could take in our belts wouldn't do no good."

"The prospect certainly does look glum," laughed Jack.

"I s'pose I oughter complain, though."

"Why?"

"Cause I've seed wuss sitiations."

"How do you mean, Tim?"

"Why, when I wuz in ther navy."

"I never heard of the government starving its men before."

"No, it don't under or'nary cases," admitted Tim. "But in this ere case it wuz different. Yer see, we'd been on a long cruise ter Chiny an' our rations, owin' ter delays, runned mighty low. When we wuz in ther middle o' the Pacific we found as we only had jist enough ter last till we'd reach San Francisco. Waal, sir, wot d'yer think?"

"How do I know?"

"A heavy storm struck us, an' we fought it fer fifty days. At the end o' that time all our rations wuz gone, an' we found ourselves blowed all ther way back to ther coast o' Chiny again."

"How aggravating!" laughed Jack.

"Werry," assented Tim, solemnly. "Waal, we didn't know wot ter do. Thar we wuz hundreds o' miles from our port o' destination, an' all our pervisions gone. It wuz orful. Starvation stared us in ther face. But we wuz all brave men. Wot did we do? Why, sir, we sot sail again and trusted ter luck fer pervisions. On we sailed fer ten days, an' not one o' ther crew tasted a bite ter eat in all that time. We kep' a-bucklin' in our belts all ther time till we couldn't do it no more, but we braced up powerful on hopes."

"Well?" queried Jack, as the old liar paused to think.

"Again our hopes wuz dashed. A second storm riz and blowed us back," continued Tim. "By this time we wuz all so powerful hungry we looked at ther fattest men in ther crew, smacked our lips and secretly wondered wot kind o' jiblets they'd make. Still we didn't lose courage, an' off we sailed again fer San Francisco—no food aboard an' no means o' git-tin' any—"

"Say, Tim!"

"Wot?"

"Why didn't you get provisions in China? You was blown back there twice!" said Jack, with a laugh.

Tim didn't reply.

He couldn't.

A sheepish look crossed his face.

He had made an awful blunder in his yarn and now realized it.

A roar of laughter pealed from Jack and Fritz and their derision so mortified him that he was spurred into saying:

"How in blazes could we buy food in Chiny when we didn't have no heathen money?"

Again Jack and Fritz roared.

Tim saw that he must have made another error.

But he did not know what it was.

"Wot are yer laughin' at?" he growled.

"Didn't you have any U. S. currency with you?"

"O' course we did. But we couldn't pass that in Chiny."

"Are there no money exchanges in that country?"

"I dunno nuthin' about sich things," grumbled Tim. "All wot I knows is wot I ses, an' wot I ses I means."

At this juncture a number of glimmering lights were seen ahead, and Jack called the attention of his friends to them.

"There's a settlement!" he announced.

"Acht Gott! Den ve got subbers!" delightedly cried Fritz.

"Yes, we can easily purchase some food there."

"Lower avay der machines!"

Down she swooped toward the ground on the suburbs.

She reached the earth in a field intersected by a stone wall. The anchor caught in this and held her fast, and Jack and his companions alighted and secured her firmly.

The village was only a short distance away, and the spot at which they alighted was scarcely more than five miles from the swamp in a direct line.

"It won't do to bring the torpedo to the settlement," said Jack. "I'll go alone and get the food. You both remain here."

Tim and Fritz assented to this plan.

Jack then strode away.

He soon reached the village.

It was a small place and had one general store.

When Jack entered it he found the store thronged with men, all of whom were excitedly discussing the recent outrages that the Black Demons of the Swamp had penetrated.

A farmer had been waylaid on his way from market and he and his man had been dragged from their vehicle by a gang of lawless negroes.

They were beaten into a jelly, were robbed, the horses were cut loose from the wagon and were sold in an adjacent town, while the wagon had been smashed to pieces.

Jack ordered what he wanted.

"You seem to have trouble with the Black Demons hereabouts," he remarked, inquiringly, to the storekeeper.

"We suffer a great deal from their robberies," the man replied. "They are a bad lot. There's some talk of forming a law and order committee here to try and run them down."

"Could you handle them if they were driven from the swamp?"

"I believe we could with the aid of the militia, for there's an army of them buried in the Dismal. I'm speaking about the ones who run amuck now and then through this section."

"Before long you'll be called upon, perhaps."

"And we'll be eager and ready, sir."

Jack picked up his food and left the store.

He had hardly gained the street when he heard a confused babel of shouts far up the street.

A crowd of villagers was rushing toward him.

Hotly pursuing them was a gang of three score black ruffians, who were plundering houses and terrorizing the people with weapons as they came along.

Jack saw at a glance what was transpiring.

A gang of the black demons had come from the swamp, descended on the village, and were sweeping through it like a devastating flood, robbing everyone they could.

So savage and fierce was the rampage they were on that everyone fled before them in terror.

They looked like demons and acted like veritable fiends, for they had no regard for age, sex or condition, shooting, clubbing and injuring everyone who got in their way.

Jack only glanced at them once.

He then made a rush for the outskirts of the village, where he had left the flying machine.

Tim and Fritz saw him coming and realized by his actions that something of unusual importance had occurred.

Up to them rushed Jack.

"All aboard!" he cried, springing into the saddle and leaving his provisions on one of the boxes. "The black demons are running amuck through the town. To the rescue! To the rescue!"

Tim and Fritz mounted the machine and cut the anchor rope and the torpedo shot up in the air.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### RUNAWAY IN THE AIR.

At a height of fifty feet from the ground Jack stopped the ascent of the torpedo, and then started her for the village.

He gave Tim and Fritz a brief account of what was transpiring, and then added quickly:

"Arm yourself with bombs, Fritz!"

"Yah," replied the Dutchman, complying.

"Got your repeating rifle handy, Tim?"

"She's all loaded an' ready fer action, my hearty."

"Good! Here's the village below us now."

It was rather a dark night, for clouds were flying swiftly across the sky obscuring the face of the moon.

Jack had a brace of pistols at hand.

He turned on the searchlight, as the torpedo flew over the main street of the village, and the blinding glare gushed down ahead of the machine like the midday sun.

It slanted upon the marauders.

They were thronging along furiously, driving the people ahead of them, but paused in alarm when the light struck them.

"Fritz, drop your grenades among them!" cried Jack.

The fat fellow obeyed.

A blinding flash of light and a deafening report followed.

Up to the sky swelled a chorus of wild, frantic shrieks as many of the black men were hit.

Some of them fell and others ran away.

Several more bombs followed them in rapid succession, for Jack drove the machine in every direction after them.

It was easy to see the wretches by the searchlight, and every arm that went up bore the circle insignia of the voodoo brotherhood to which they belonged.

The villagers were startled as well as the negroes at thus suddenly seeing the singular airship above them, and to observe the destruction it was creating among their enemies.

Still, it did not take them long to realize that what was being done was of the greatest assistance to them.

A dozen of the black villains bit the dust and the rest ran and became so scattered that it was hard to chase them.

For every trip in a different direction made by the machine they brought down a man.

Not many such dashes could be made ere the ones who were left unmolested managed to escape.

Finally Jack gave it up.

"Enough!" he cried.

"No! No!" cried the pugnacious Fritz. "More! More!"

"Enough, I tell you! We've brought down fifteen."

"An' thar goes ther villagers arter 'em!" cried Tim.

"They can take care of the black villains."

"Vot ve vill doon?"

"Take a rest and have our supper."

The latter proposition was eagerly assented to, and our friends extinguished the searchlight and went down.

In a few moments they reached the ground close to a small copse of woodland and alighted.

Here they partook of the food Jack brought and they then turned into their hammocks for the night.

It was worse than camping out.

Swarms of ravenous mosquitoes attacked them, the buzz of insects in the woods set up a discordant concert that lasted all night, and their hammocks were not comfortable.

A heavy dew descended and saturated the blankets in which they slept, and a cold wind swept up at midnight that sent a chill to the very marrow of their bones from their damp clothes.

A miserable night was passed.

On the following morning they were aroused by a yell of:

"Murder, murder!"

"Heavens!" cried Jack, starting up. "What's that?"

"Help, police! You son-of-a-gun! Cheese it, you!"

It was the parrot.

Jack burst out laughing when he discovered this.

He glanced around and saw that Tim had fallen asleep while on watch, while Fritz, aroused by the cries, had arisen.

The old sailor was startled from a sound slumber.

He scrambled up, blinked his good eye, and roared:

"Whar is it? Wot's amiss? Who done it?"

Several men had come along and stood gaping at the flying machine in the most intense astonishment.

As Jack glanced up at them, he recognized one of them.

"Harry Howard, the detective!" he exclaimed.

"Eh? Who the deuce are you?" asked the officer, approaching Jack and peering hard at him.

"Don't you remember me?"

"I can't place you."

"My name is Jack Wright."

"Ah, yes! Now I remember you. How are you?"

He shook hands with the young inventor rather gingerly, for he had not forgotten the punch Jack had given him at the time he was pounding the black bandit.

Jack introduced the detective to Tim and Fritz.

"I'm here to exterminate the Black Demons of the Swamp," said the inventor. "I intend to rid the place of them."

"You can't do it!" emphatically said the detective.

"Can't I? You'll see. Cast your glance on that machine."

"What in thunder do you call the thing?"

"A flying machine."

"What! Can you navigate the air with it?"

"Of course. We came here from Wrightstown in her."

"That alters my opinion of your ability to rout those monsters from the swamp. By the way, that nigger whom I was after in Wrightstown gave me the slip and got back to the swamp."

"I know it, and I'm glad of it."

"Glad! Why—why—why——"

"If he hadn't we'd have been dead men."

"Explain yourself."

Jack complied in terse terms.

Then he said to the detective:

"I want to have the swamp surrounded by vigilantes, soldiers, constables, and in fact, a complete armed circle in both states. I will then bombard the denizens of the place from the clouds and drive them out."

"That's an excellent plan. I approve of it. You can easily get the sanction and aid of the governors of both states, if you like. I'll do all I can to aid you."

"Come on to the nearest settlement, then," said Jack, "and we will arrange the details of the scheme."

It was a gigantic undertaking.

Our friends had their breakfast while the detective and the men with him were examining the torpedo.

Jack then accompanied them to the town.

Here a plan on a tremendous scale was formed.

Letters were written and telegrams sent.

Jack's idea met with the approval of the authorities.

The governors of both states agreed to have the swamp encircled by armed men to shoot or take alive every one of the black rascals whom our friends drove out.

On the third day from then the fight was to begin at noon. As soon as everything was arranged, Jack returned to the Flying Torpedo and told his friends the news.

They eagerly assented to the plan.

At midday it began to drizzle.

Our friends mounted the torpedo and let her go up to get above the storm, and she finally passed through the leaden colored clouds.

They remained aloft until nightfall, studying the air currents, and when they finally descended they found the storm gone.

It was very dark, however.

Jack turned on the searchlight and flung its rays downward as they descended to see where they were going to land.

When the torpedo reached a spot within quarter of a mile of the ground, Jack seized the screw lever to put the propellers in motion and gave it a pull.

The wheels flew around and there came a sharp snap.

"Lord! the lever has broken!" gasped Jack.

"Holy Moses, und ve vos goin' full speeds!" Fritz cried.

"Can't yer stop her?" anxiously asked Tim.

"Not with the lever. But I can go aloft and cut the wires that feed the current from the battery into the wheel motors."

As Jack came to this conclusion he dismounted from his seat, and, opening the storebox, he took out a pair of nippers with rubber handles for insulation.

The machine was then going along through the air at full speed, and a yell pealed from Tim:

"We're a-nearin' ther ground!"

"It rises in hills ahead of us," replied Jack.

"Hadn't I better raise her afore we strikes?"

"Yes—yes, by all means!"

Jack started up the ladder to cut the wire, and Tim made his way over the young inventor's saddle.

Before he could find the proper lever, Fritz shouted:

"Loog oud! Ve vos runnin' into some drees."

This warning had hardly left his lips when there came a sudden whir below, and the machine struck.

Among the topmost branches she dashed, snapping them off, breaking some of her guy ropes, and almost sweeping the old sailor from his seat.

Then she bounded up in the air.

"Raise her!" shouted Jack, from up above.

"I can't find ther right lever!" gasped Tim, helplessly.

Down shot the machine again.

Straight ahead of her there was a hill.

She plunged into it, her lower braces tearing through the ground, and Tim and Fritz were knocked to the ground.

Relieved of their weight, the torpedo bounded in the air with Jack.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CHASING A BOAT.

Jack was clinging to the central cylinder when the torpedo flew up in the air again and hastily cut the battery wire.

No sooner was this done when the flying machine ceased to go ahead, as the wheels had stopped revolving.

She mounted straight up into the heavens, for she had been relieved of over three hundred pounds of ballast when Tim and Fritz left her.

Jack hastily made his way down to the wheel.

He pulled the horizontal screw lever over, and as soon as the wheels began to revolve, the airship began to go down.

The searchlight had been broken by her violent contact with the hillside, and Jack had no means of seeing below.

Down she went, until within a few feet of the ground, when Jack stopped the descent by decreasing the revolutions of the screws.

He then alighted, and, seeing a tree nearby, he pulled the torpedo over to it and fastened her there.

He then started off in search of his friends, half afraid that they had been killed by their fall.

Mounting a hilltop he observed the moon trying to break through the heavy banks of dark clouds.

It presently succeeded in getting through.

For a few moments it shed its silvery light down on the earth, and Jack glanced around.

He caught sight of Tim and Fritz some distance away.

They both laid prostrate where they had first fallen.

He rushed over to them.

Although the clouds then swept over the moon, obscuring its face, he discovered that both were breathing.

This was some consolation.

He strove to revive them.

In this he finally succeeded.

Then he told them what happened.

Both were badly bruised, but no bones were broken, and they proceeded back to the Flying Torpedo.

When the moon came out from behind the clouds they found that they were battered considerably.

Medicines and bandages were procured from one of the boxes, and they dressed their injuries.

Then they turned in.

The following day dawned clear and balmy.

The last of the food Jack procured was eaten, and, although our friends felt stiff and sore from the rough treatment they had undergone, their energy was not diminished.

"Waal," drawled Tim, as he took a bite of plug and gave a hitch at his pants, "wot's our course fer terday, my lad?"

"I am going to the swamp again," said Jack.

"Dit ve begin dot fighds today?" asked Fritz, who never was happy unless engaged in a scrimmage.

"Not until tomorrow," replied Jack, decisively. "Of course we will resent any attack upon us, though."

"Then ther swamp is ter be surrounded tomorrow?"

"Yes, that's the programme."

"Goot kernough," said Fritz, in pleased tones. "Dot seddle id alretty. Come on vunet, and got yourselluf apoard."

They loosened the anchor rope and went aboard.

Jack then slackened the horizontal screws until the torpedo was one hundred feet above the high ground.

Here her ascent paused.

They had repaired the searchlight, the broken braces, and, having put in a wooden lever, the cut wire was patched.

Now the torpedo worked as well as ever.

From his present altitude Jack could see the great swamp lying away upon the horizon.

Working the treadles and steering by the vertical screws, they sent the machine flying toward the distant swamp, and made rapid headway, as there was only a very slight breeze to interfere with them.

Upon leaving the high ground astern, they found their elevation to be nearly half a mile from the earth.

In a short time they reached the swamp.

The arrival of the machine at a lower altitude sent an enormous flock of wild ducks and pigeons up from the midst of the dismal solitude below.

A tremendous flapping and whirring of wings ensued, and for the space of a few moments the torpedo was fairly buried in the cloud of terrified birds.

Plunging ahead, however, the torpedo finally passed through the panic-stricken flock, the flying screw blades killing many of them as the birds came in range of the blows.

It was a relief to our friends to get out of the flock, for the birds flew so close to them that they received many a stinging thump in their faces from the flapping wings.

Heavens, what a vast number of the creatures!" muttered Jack, glancing back at them. "There were thousands."

"Do you call that many?" asked Tim, scornfully.

"I'll bet you never saw a bigger flock of birds."

"Don't yer do it, my lad, or you'll lose yer money."

"No humbugging, Tim."

"Oh, I mean it, lad."

"Where did you see them?"

"Off ther coast o' Greenlan'."

"When?"

"Durin' ther time I wuz in ther navy."

"Prove it."

"O' course I will."

"Proceed."

"Waal, ther ole frigate Wabash lay becalmed one day, an' we wuz left driftin' wi' ther current. We wuz after a whaler wot had a crew o' mutineers aboard. All at onct, wot d'yer think?"

"I ain't good at guessing riddles."

"A terrible breeze struck us. It wuz caused by ther flappin' o' ther wings o' a great big flock o' eider ducks, an' it blowed sich a terrible gale we wuz able ter tack arter ther fugitive an' catch ther lubber. Now I counted them 'ere birds."

"How many?"

"Seventy-nine billion, eight hundred million—"

"Heavens, Tim—hold on!"

"Oh, I'm a dandy reckoner."

"Yes, but if you had started in to count so many, do you know how long it would have taken you?"

"Didn't I do it in fifteen minutes?" indignantly asked Tim.

"No, nor in fifteen hours!" said Jack. "And do you think they'd remain quiet so you could do it?"

"O' course they did, but—"

"No buts about it! The idea of a flock of ducks flying by and raising enough wind with their wings to let you work your ship. Say, Tim, I can swallow an ordinary yarn, but when it comes to an old veteran with gray whiskers like that."

Jack paused, pulling a wry face, and pointed at his mouth.

"Wot d'ye mean?" roared Tim.

"It don't go down, old man."

"See here, Jack Wright—"

"What?"

"I ain't never agoin' ter spin you no more yarns."

"Shake!" fervently cried Jack. "I never expected to hear such good news."

Tim growled and grumbled awhile, and finally lapsed into a grim silence, and Jack and Fritz grinned.

The torpedo had reached the middle of the swamps by this time, and Jack glanced down at the lake.

It laid like a mirror.

The shore was bordered in places by the reflection on the glassy surface of the steep banks and overgrowing foliage.

Below them were the stone houses in which the black demons had been dwelling.

Not a soul was seen there.

Jack stopped the machine directly above the settlement.

Taking a bomb from one of the lockers, Jack dropped it down into the midst of the village.

A thunderous report ensued.

The roar echoed to the sky, and, like magic, the scene changed.

From every house in the settlement there swarmed innumerable men, women and children, who made the air resound with a chorus of terrified cries.

They glanced up and saw the flying machine.

That was enough for them.

A frantic rush was made for the fastness of the woods.

Like so many shadows they faded away and were lost to view among the dense swamp jungles.

Out on the lake a boat now appeared.

Jack directed a telescope at it.

He saw two negro oarsmen rowing the boat.

In the stern sheets sat a white man with a long, gray beard.

"It's Alfred Davenport!" cried Jack.

"Dey vos seed us now, und row avay!" shouted Fritz, excitedly.

"I'm going to chase them, boys, and try to capture him!"

"Ay, ay! Go ahead, lad!"

"Shiminey Christmas! Looker dem row!"

The oarsmen were pulling until the stout blades bent like bows, and the colonel seemed to be urging them to greater exertions.

Away flew the boat for the nearest shore.

Jack lowered the torpedo.

She paused a yard above the water.

Then he pulled the driving screw lever.

The big propellers fairly buzzed as they flew around.

Ahead darted the torpedo like a race horse the next moment.

Then an exciting race followed.

Although the boat had a long lead, and its occupants worked the oars furiously to escape, the torpedo rapidly overhauled the little craft.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE TORPEDO CAPTURED.

"Haul to there, Davenport, or I'll put a bullet in you!"

Jack's voice rang sternly over the lake, and the absconder cast a frightened glance back over his shoulder.

He caught sight of the Flying Torpedo swiftly bearing down upon him, and a look of anxious alarm crossed his thin face.

It was impossible, he observed, to get to the shore before the big flying machine would reach him.

Jack was aiming a revolver at him.

Davenport was in a desperate mood.

As long as he was not absolutely in Jack's power, he clung to the hope that he might yet escape the inventor.

Jack became impatient.

"Will you obey or not?" he shouted.

"No, sir!" roared the colonel.

"Very well. I'll trip you up!"

Jack fired at the boat.

The ball struck the gunwale.

Bursting with a loud report, it smashed the boat.

As the frail skiff went to pieces, the occupants were flung into the water, and the torpedo rushed up to them.

All three could swim.

They struck out for the shore.

The torpedo could not carry more than one more.

Jack allowed the two negroes to escape, and headed for the absconder, who was swimming vigorously.

Davenport was utterly at the inventor's mercy now.

Obliged to use his hands to swim, he could do absolutely nothing to defend himself.

Grinding the torpedo to hang over him, Jack reached down, caught Davenport by the collar and pulled a lever.

It slackened the speed of the horizontal screws, and the machine soared up in the air.

Davenport was unceremoniously hoisted up from the lake, the water running off him in streams.

He began to swear horribly upon finding himself captured.

"If you don't shut up," said Jack, "I'll let you drop."

"No! No! Don't kill me!" frantically pleaded the man.

"Then behave yourself! I thought you was a refined and cultivated gentleman. Now I see that your polish and politeness are all on the surface. After all, you are only a contemptible thief. Your coarse expressions just now show that you have a coarse mind."

"D'yer want any help wi' the lubber?" asked Tim.

"Get out two pairs of handcuffs and shackle him."

"Ay, ay," said Tim, leaving his saddle.

The torpedo had risen eighty-two feet and, having reached

her equilibrium with the quantity of weight she now carried, she suddenly came to a pause.

Davenport was dangling down by the collar of his coat which Jack grasped, and the villain looked very much frightened lest he might slip from Jack's hand and fall to earth again.

Inside of a minute the old sailor had bracelets out.

"Hold yer flippers astern o' yer!" he ordered.

Davenport obeyed.

He was then handcuffed.

"Haul him up on the box, Tim."

"Ay, Jack. But see—them coons is escapin'—"

"Let them go, as long as we have this rogue."

The old sailor pulled Davenport up on the box, and there fastened his ankles together with the other pair of handcuffs.

His capture made him frantic.

Glaring at Jack furiously, he growled:

"I suppose you are satisfied now!"

"Not quite," coolly answered the young inventor. "I came here particularly to capture you and punish you for robbing the poor people of D——, who were burnt out. But I have a secondary object in view. I wish to exterminate the black demons of this swamp, and I intend to do it."

"Let me make you an offer."

"What is it?"

"Give me my freedom and I'll return the \$10,000."

"I wouldn't release you for ten times that amount."

"You are vengeful, sir. I'll make you a better offer."

"Name it," said Jack, curiously.

"Release me and I'll put every nigger in the swamp in your power."

"What a traitor! I despise you more than ever now."

"Do you refuse?"

"Point blank! I'll drive them out without your aid."

Davenport looked chagrined.

He now realized that nothing would bribe his captors.

Scowling at Jack angrily, he exclaimed in passionate tones:

"Very well, sir—very well! You will gain nothing by rejecting my offer!"

"We'll see," significantly answered the inventor.

"Vill ve put him py der chail?" asked Fritz.

"Yes; his weight hampers the torpedo."

The colonel turned pale, for the bare mention of prison made him feel very nervous and terrified.

Jack steered the flying machine toward the nearest town.

A swift flight followed, and they finally landed in a small bush lot where the machine was not apt to be disturbed.

Here Jack and Fritz alighted with the prisoner.

They took the shackles off his ankles, and Jack drew his revolver and said to the prisoner:

"I intend to shoot you at the least sign of treachery, Davenport."

"Oh, you needn't fear me," replied the colonel.

"We don't fear you, but we are prepared for any friends of yours who may try to interfere with us."

Then he was marched away.

Reaching the town without any trouble, they finally lodged the rascal in jail, and he was locked up.

It was noontime when they got back to the torpedo, and as they had purchased some food, they made a hearty meal.

An examination of their weapons was made to prepare for their work the next day, and as everything was found to be in first-class order, they mounted their saddles and sent the torpedo up into the air like a rocket.

Bringing her to a pause at a height of eight hundred feet, our friends operated the treadles and returned to the swamp.

A tour was made of the entire tract.

Jack was amazed at the vast number of negroes he saw in the place, for there were numerous densely populated settle-

ments, and the woods and jungles swarmed with the black fellows.

They must have all known that the flying machine was opposed to them, for no sooner was it seen, when they fled and made every effort to conceal themselves.

"We have terrorized them already," laughed Jack. "See how they fly at our approach."

"Vill I trop dem a pomb?" asked Fritz.

"No. I am not intent upon destroying them. The only reason I have in bombarding them is to drive the wretches out into the hands of the people who are coming to capture them."

The torpedo skimmed along over the swamp and finally neared the northwestern part, when a wild cry was heard coming up from the gloom below.

Jack stopped her.

"What's that?" he muttered.

"Sounded like a woman's voice," said Tim.

"Und it coom from down dere," Fritz added.

He pointed to a sort of clearing among the trees a short distance ahead and Jack steered for it.

Down into a sort of glen dropped the torpedo, and in a few moments she was close to the ground.

A startling scene met the view of our friends.

In the middle of the glen a man was struggling furiously with a crowd of the swamp demons.

His wife tied to a tree at one side, was frantically trying to get loose to go to his aid.

The piercing shrieks she uttered were what had startled Jack.

As the machine paused near the ground, the young inventor unslung his rifle and began to fire at the negroes.

A chorus of yells arose from the crowd.

They scattered and ran.

For a moment the man who had been fighting them was released, and he rushed over to the tree and cut his wife free.

"Fritz! Tim! Fire at them!"

"Glear der drack!" roared the belligerent Dutchman, as he grasped a brace of pistols and sprang to the ground. "I vos mit yer, Shack!"

Bang! bang! bang! roared the bursting bullets.

Some of the negroes were armed and fired back.

None of our friends were hit, as their firing was wild.

"Thank God! help is at hand!" gasped the man.

"What was the trouble?" demanded Jack.

"They abducted my wife to hold her for ransom. I followed. You saw what happened when we met just now."

"Can you get her away to a place of safety?"

"Yes, if you can hold them in check."

"Then go! We can easily manage them."

"Shall I come back and help you?"

"No, the advantage is all on our side."

The man nodded and hastened away with the half-fainting woman, and Jack ran over to Tim and Fritz.

Both were sending shot after shot in among the trees, and now and then an answering report came back.

Ten minutes thus passed by.

Every charge in the weapons wielded by our friends was used up, and they started back for the torpedo to replenish their ammunition.

But to their dismay they saw that a number of the negroes had entered the glen behind their backs, and now had possession of the Flying Torpedo.

A cry of alarm escaped the three.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### RAIDING THE NEGROES.

There were a dozen of the negroes swarming around the flying machine, and they were pulling her along into the jungle.

A dangerous feature of the affair was that some of the rascals were armed with rifles, pistols and knives.

Defenseless as our friends now were, it looked very much as if their lives would pay for any interference they might attempt.

In fact, they were fairly at a loss what to do.

Jack rapidly turned the matter over in his mind.

A plan suggested itself to his mind, whereby he might get control of the torpedo again, despite the odds against him.

He hastily mentioned the scheme to his friends.

They endorsed the plan as the only available means of getting the machine back, and hastened away.

Jack was left alone.

He watched the coons dragging his invention through the jungle, and then plunged into the swamp.

He made a wide detour.

Through the mud he ran, sinking in the slimy, yielding swamp above his shoe tops, and spattering up showers of dirty water at every step he took.

Numerous tufts of coarse grass rose a few inches above the ooze, and by springing from one to another of these, he made more rapid progress.

Ahead of the blacks there was a collection of trees, and Jack headed for them as best he could.

The long blades of grass and sodden black vines that trailed among the decaying dead leaves tripped him.

He fell several times, but recovered his feet and pressed on.

Thorny bushes tore his clothing, jungles of reeds and rushes confused him and pools of stagnant water covered with black twigs, and sheets of leaves spread traps for him everywhere.

He did not flinch, but, overcoming every obstacle, he finally reached the trees for which he had been heading.

Making a selection, he climbed up into one of them.

Here he concealed himself among the foliage and patiently waited.

In a few moments he heard Tim yelling in the distance:

"Thar's ther niggers! Come fer 'em!"

"Stan' back, dar, or we shoot yo!" yelled one of the darknesses.

The rest took up his cry and added others.

Fritz was then heard to shout:

"Tri, dem avay among der drees! Fire at dem alretty!"

The negroes began to run, but they retained their grip on the torpedo.

Jack now saw the machine being dragged toward him.

His friends were carrying out his instructions nobly, for they were opposite of where he was, and somewhat behind the coons.

They thus forced the rascals toward the trees.

Presently they burst from the jungle pretty near the tree Jack was in, and he crept out on a branch to get nearer where they'd pass.

Fritz and Tim kept on yelling.

Several pistol shots were aimed at them.

As the reports rang out the engine reached a point within a few feet of where Jack was crouching.

Then he leaped for one of the boxes.

He landed with a bang that startled the negroes.

In a moment he had his pistols and opened fire on the blacks.

As soon as the shots rang out they scattered in all directions, some of them screaming from the wounds they received.

Shot after shot was discharged at them by the daring young inventor, and while they were plunging away, Tim and Fritz saw how successful Jack's plan had been.

They came rushing up to the machine and got aboard.

Jack then sent her up in the air to a safe altitude.

All were panting hard.

But presently they recovered.

"May I be scuttled fer a pirate, if this ain't good luck," roared Tim, boisterously. "By thunder, I wuz afear'd as ye couldn't do it, Jack. But thar's mettle in ye, lad. I oughter knowed as yer wuz bound ter win agin all odds."

"Not always, Tim," laughed the young inventor. "In this case I could not have succeeded if you and Fritz hadn't driven those villains over there to the tree in which I was waiting."

"I recollect when I wuz in ther navy——"

"Loog oud!" yelled Fritz, just then interrupting him.

"Wot fer?" gasped Tim, with a start, as he grasped his rifle.

"For shestnuts," grinned the Dutchman.

"Hey?"

"You vos goin' to vork off vun ohf your lies."

Jack laughed at the disgusted look that swept over Tim's face, and sent the torpedo flying along toward the clear ground beyond the swamp.

Nothing more was seen of the negroes with whom they had been fighting, and they soon left the swamp behind.

They remained about the vicinity of the swamp until the fall of night, and then observed enormous numbers of men come swarming toward the place from all directions.

Some were in the uniform of the national guard, others were civilians armed with rifles and small arms, and others were farmers from the surrounding districts.

A regular course of procedure had evidently been planned, for each party seemed to know just where to go.

By night the swamp was encircled by these men, everyone of whom was determined to root out the black demons in one grand coup, or perish fighting them.

The atrocities perpetrated by the rascals had gone so far that the strongest measures were necessary to stop it.

Jack and his companions had no food.

They lowered the machine near the ground and made a circuit of the swamp, arranging with everyone to begin operations at the break of the next day.

Pausing at one of the soldiers' encampments in response to an invitation, they had supper with the captain.

A complete circuit of the swamp had been made, and everyone had been apprised of the hour that work was to begin, so there could be no error in the matter.

Our friends anchored the torpedo.

Then they turned in.

It began to rain during the night.

The situation of the fighters was rendered very uncomfortable.

Our friends were obliged to rouse themselves in the dead hour of the night and put on their rubber clothing.

The mosquitoes tormented them dreadfully, and the noises of insects and frogs coming from the swamp made up a medley that precluded all possibility of sleep.

They were up next morning before daylight and went off foraging for breakfast.

The rain stopped, but everything was wet.

Even the monkey and parrot testified to the general discomfort by their howls.

A frugal repast was secured from some of the campers.

Then they mounted the torpedo and sent her up in the air. She was sent over the swamp just above the treetops.

Tim was armed with a telescope.

"You keep watch below," Jack said to him. "As soon as you see any sign of the coons let me know."

"Ay, ay! I'm ready," the sailor replied.

"Fritz, you take charge of the grenades."

"Mit bleasures," replied the Dutchman. "Yust leaf me seen dem plack ratskals, und py shaminey crickets ohf I don't sent dem to der hebbey hundin' crounds you could——"

"Hold on! Don't you get up a massacre all by yourself. I'll let you know when to fire."

"Yust as you please," assented the fat fellow.

Along glided the airship rapidly.

Presently Tim roared:

"Thar's one o' thar settlements now."

He pointed down below some distance ahead.

A collection of miserable huts was seen.

Jack steered the torpedo over it and stopped her.

"Now, Fritz," said he, "the object is to drive them out of here."

"Should I fire?"

"Yes—not to kill, but to drive them."

Down went one of the bombs with a roar.

It brought the inmates of the house out.

As soon as they saw the machine they dashed away.

It was Jack's plan to keep them bunched as much as possible and drive them before him.

He had a number of revolvers hanging in front of him, and at the first tendency the coons showed to scatter he fired on either side of them.

The torpedo at the same time pursued the blacks.

Every few minutes Fritz hurled a bomb down behind them to keep the crowd moving ahead.

The cries that ascended from the darkies were dreadful.

It was hard to keep them herded, but after a little practice Jack succeeded very well.

They were thus driven from the swamp into the arms of the cordon of vigilantes and soldiers, all of whom were apprised of what was occurring by the reports they heard.

All the rascals who surrendered were made prisoners, but there were many wild, lawless and desperate rascals among them who showed fight.

They were promptly shot down.

A large number of prisoners were thus taken.

"Good enough!" exclaimed Jack, upon seeing how successful they were. "At this rate we will soon clean out the whole swamp."

"Goin' back now?" queried Tim.

"Yes; I know where there's another settlement."

And so saying, Jack turned the torpedo around and steered her over the swamp for a second raid

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CAUGHT ON A LIVE WIRE.

By the time night had again fallen upon the great Dismal Swamp, Jack had driven out nine-tenths of its terrible population.

The jails of both states were crowded with them.

Men, women and children shared the same fate.

An army of the semi-barbaric people who had roamed the desolate swamps for years and made murderous expeditions to the surrounding country were captured.

The hospitals were crowded with the wounded and the ground was literally strewn with the dead.

It was a strange and terrible war.

Jack took every precaution to avoid hitting the half-savage wretches as they drove them from their coverts, but the men waiting around the swamp exercised stern martial law.

Some were sufferers from the depredations of the black demons, and therefore felt a deep-rooted hatred for them that gave no temper of mercy to their treatment.

A large number of the negroes remained in the swamp.

They were but the remnant of the once powerful colony, and were not considered dangerous.

These were the few who had succeeded in eluding Jack by hiding themselves in various places.

As soon as the attack was ended they all made haste to reach the lake in the middle of the swamp.

Having finished the task they had started in to accomplish our friends, fatigued and hungry, looked around for food.

They had not broken their fast since that morning.

"We have nothing further to do now," said Jack, as the shadows of twilight fell. "Let us get some food."

"Vhere?" asked Fritz, blankly.

"In the swamp. There are large numbers of birds there."

"Ay, now, that's ther easiest and quickest way," assented Tim. "Thar's plenty ammernition lef', an' I'm so hungry ye kin keelhaul me if I couldn't eat shoe leather."

Jack steered the torpedo for the trees.

Shortly afterward they were flying over the forbidden ground, and a number of birds were frightened from their roosts.

Jack brought down a dozen of them from a flock.

They fell among some bushes, and the torpedo was sent down after them.

She finally came to a pause and was anchored with a wire cable.

Leaving Tim to kindle a fire beside a small stream, Jack and Fritz went off to pick up the birds.

They soon returned with ten of them, and when they were plucked and dressed, Fritz broiled them.

There was nothing but water to go with them, but they were so hungry they were glad to get what they had.

When they had finished their supper, Tim asked:

"Now, as we're done here, wot yer goin' ter do, Jack?"

"Return to the town tomorrow," replied the young inventor. "We can then get Alfred Davenport and bring him to Wrightstown. I intend to prosecute the villain for the robbery he committed."

"If dot vos me vot vos his shudge," said Fritz, "I would took him oud by a parn, stood him oop mit der door und plo' me his prains by der ground oud alretty."

"Are yere agoin' ter camp in ther swamp tonight?"

"No, indeed. This gloomy place gives me the horrors. Besides, I must confess that we have suffered such discomfort on the Flying Torpedo that I shall be' glad when the voyage is over," said Jack, pulling a wry face.

"Vell, s'bosen ve got oud now?"

"Ay, ay—I'm ready."

"So am I. Come on, boys!"

They arose and started toward the machine.

Scarcely had they reached it, however, when they observed a number of the remaining negroes rushing through the bushes toward them, brandishing knives and clubs.

They were in a very bitter mood against our friends for what they had done that day.

"Loosen the anchor cable!" cried Jack.

Tim and Fritz obeyed with alacrity.

"Mount your saddles!" was the next order.

This was quickly done.

A shower of missiles were hurled at them by the coons. Bombarded all over, our friends could not dodge the shower. Jack sprang upon one of the boxes.

"Send her aloft!" gasped Tim.

"Wait a moment," coolly replied Jack.

"Mein cracious! Vot yer vaitin' fer?"

"You'll see presently."

There were a score of the black demons in the party.

Realizing that the torpedo could ascend, they all seized the cable by which she had been anchored to hold her down.

To cut it and rise was impossible, as it was made of wire.

Jack, however, had another object in view.

Seizing a copper wire that was connected with the battery, he attached it to the cable which the negroes held.

An electric shock flew into them.

They screamed and swore, danced and tried to get away, but the current contracted their muscles so that it was impossible.

Forced involuntarily to hang onto the live wire, they were as completely at Jack's mercy as if handcuffed.

"Hurrah!" he cried, delightedly; "I've trapped them!"

"Donner und blitzen, vot a choke!" howled Fritz.

"Jack, yer lubber, wot won't yer think of next!"

They roared with laughter at the antics cut up by the black rascals as the electric current flowed into them.

"Stop it!" one of the worst affected screamed. "Oh, oh, oh! This is awful! I'm a dead man—I'm a dead man!"

"Murder!" shrieked another.

"Help—help!" howled a third.

Then the whole gang yelled in unison.

A good idea flashed across Jack's mind.

"Say, boys, what's the matter with jailing them?" he asked.

"How yer goin' ter do it?" queried Tim, dubiously.

"Why, start the torpedo off. They'll have to go with her."

"Couldt yer got her troo der voods?"

"Don't you see there are a number of openings ahead?"

"Dot vos so. Let's dry id anyvay."

They began to work the treadles, and Jack shouted:

"If any of you refuse to come along we'll shoot you!"

"Don't fire!" yelled several, as he aimed a pistol at them.

"Then do as I order. I am in deadly earnest!"

"Stop this!" they implored frantically.

"I'll make it worse if you don't obey me!"

Groans and yells of utter misery greeted this speech, and as the machine glided along they had to follow her.

Jack now had the greatest difficulty to pick his way through the trees and shrubbery, for the machine was necessarily obliged to run along close to the ground.

The whole gang, clinging convulsively to the electrified wire, came stringing along behind.

Curses, groans and howls escaped them at every step, their eyes bulged and rolled, their muscles were drawn and kept twitching, and their kinky wool almost stood on end.

Bismarck and Whiskers kept up an incessant screaming at them, and Jack flashed his revolver at the horde every few moments to keep them intimidated.

Through the bogs they went, and a distance of five miles was thus covered, when they finally left the swamp.

Ahead there was a good road, and as the flying machine sped along at increased velocity, the mud-bespattered darkies were forced to run at the top of their speed.

They were an ugly, dirty, ragged and villainous-looking set, and they never stopped a moment begging Jack to shut off the current to relieve them of the electricity.

Although he pitied them, he dared not comply, as they would then have speedily made their escape.

Finally the village was reached.

It was thronged with people, although past midnight.

Everyone was excited over the stirring events of the day and a large number of the men who had been doing duty at the swamp were there.

The advent of the torpedo created a sensation.

When it was seen what she had in tow the excitement increased, and cheer after cheer for Jack and his friends pealed from every throat.

The streets were lined with people, and as the torpedo sped along between these rows of human beings the threats hurled at the captive negroes plainly gave them to understand that they had but little mercy to expect from the public.

Waving his cap to the spectators in acknowledgment of the ovation they gave him, Jack steered the torpedo along for the town prison.

Upon his arrival here, a number of constables surrounded

the captives as the machine came to a pause and relieved them of the weapons they carried.

They were then locked up.

Jack gave the people a brief account of what had transpired, and then asked the warden for Alfred Davenport, saying that he wished to take the man back to Wrightstown to answer to a charge of stealing \$10,000.

The warden passed into the jail to get the prisoner.

He had not been gone more than a few minutes when he came rushing out again, pale and breathless.

"Davenport has escaped!" he yelled.

Jack was very much startled.

"When?" he ased.

"I saw him in his cell ten minutes ago. A prisoner said he induced a constable to open his cell door. He then pulled the man in, knocked him senseless, swapped clothing with him, passed' out mingling with the crowd, and thus escaped unnoticed."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### RUN TO COVER.

Jack secured a description of the clothing taken from the constable.

It was a navy blue uniform and cap like a railroad conductor's suit, and fit the colonel very badly.

Armed with this information, the young inventor started off to discover in which direction the man had gone.

He did not proceed very far when he heard a man groaning, and found him lying on the ground with a wound on his forehead, which was bleeding profusely.

"What's the matter? Did you fall?" asked Jack.

"I was knocked down and robbed," replied the man, rising.

"By whom?"

"A man in a blue uniform."

"Ha! What did he steal?"

"My saddle horse."

"Was it a man with a long gray beard?"

"Yes—a fellow with a thin face and hollow eyes."

"What was you doing here with the horse?"

"I was one of the party guarding the swamp."

"Oh! I see. Where did the thief go with the animal?"

"He mounted the saddle and rode along this road rapidly."

"I'll follow him! He was Alfred Davenport."

"The leader of the Black Demons' gang?"

"Yes," answered Jack, and he dashed away.

Returning to the torpedo, he found Tim and Fritz sitting in their saddles in front of the jail talking to some men.

Jack swiftly mounted his seat.

"Ready!" he exclaimed.

His companions saw that something unusual was happening, and Tim asked him:

"Wot's up?"

"Davenport has escaped."

"Donnerwetter!"

"He stole a horse. I've found out the direction he has followed. We must catch him."

While Jack was talking, he sent the torpedo up in the air to a height of ninety-seven feet, and started the driving screws.

He then sent her along the road indicated as the one followed by the fugitive.

In a few moments the machine was buzzing along at the rate of fifty miles an hour with the wind.

The moon and stars shed a pale glow down upon the earth, and the rural scene was brilliantly illuminated.

Jack gave his companions a detailed account of all he had learned, and they all maintained a keen lookout for the fugitive as they sped along.

The absconder had probably five or ten miles lead, but his horse, although a good one, could not have made more than ten miles an hour for any considerable distance.

It was, therefore, safe to assume that they would soon overtake him with the flying machine.

The direction he had taken was down into Carolina southward, and they passed farms, woodland, small settlements and large tracts of uncultivated land.

Jack felt very much disgusted over Davenport's escape.

He had been congratulating himself that he had only to take the man from jail and carry him away.

Now, however, he found that he would be very fortunate if he could recapture the man at all.

A deep silence ensued among the three for some time.

Then Tim suddenly asked:

"D'yer reckon as he'd leave ther road?"

"Not as far as we've gone," Jack answered. "You see he can travel fast along this highway, as it is smooth and hard, whereas the country on either side is covered with rank grass and bushes that would make it difficult for his horse to make rapid headway."

"I tink so neider," Fritz remarked. "He vill sure shtay where he could get along der qwickest."

"Oh, that don't allers foller," said Tim. "I recollect when I wuz in ther navy we wuz arter a slaver. He hed a clear sea ahead, but instid o' keepin' to it wot should he do but steer his ship inter the dangerous riffles o' ther shoals off shore—"

"Dot veller must been grazy," dryly said Fritz.

"Not much," replied Tim. "He knowed his business, 'cause he reckoned we'd foller him, an' we did. Wot wuz the result? His craft had a flat bottom, an' he easily sailed over the shoals. Ourn had a deep keel, an' we runned aground."

"Dot showed vot fools yer vos ter foller him."

"How did we know as his vessel wuz flat bottomed?" Tim growled. "She looked as if she drawed as much water as our craft did. Anyway, we got out o' thar, thanks ter me."

"Ohf course der shib would abeen dere yet only fer you."

"Ay, ay. Yer right. Now how did I save her? I'll tell yer. Thar she wuz high an' dry, an' nobody knowed wot ter do but me. So I ups an' tells my messmates ter lower away ther boats an' git in 'em, which they did. That made the frigate so light she floated, an' I steers her out inter deep water again. Waal, sir, ther slaver had runned away, an' I tacked right arter her, an' runned her down. Flingin' ther grapnelin' irons over, I calls ter my messmates ter board her. Over the bulwarks we went—"

"Yust oxcuse me ohf you blease, Dim."

"Well, wot's ther matter now?"

"Dit you forgessen dot you left your messmades miles behind you in dot gwarter poats vot dey got in to lighten de shib."

Tim's face lengthened.

His yarn came to a sudden end.

Fritz and Jack roared, laughing at him.

Then the fat fellow drew his old accordion from the box and began to grind out such a fearfully doleful dirge that Tim's nerves were set on edge, and he roared:

"Haul to thar, yer lubber, d'yer take this fer a funeral?"

"Sure," chuckled Fritz. "Der funeral ohf dot lie. I killed it."

"Why, blast yer ugly mug, d'yer mean ter say I'm a liar?"

"Ach, mein cracious, no! It don't vos necessary dot I say it, 'cause eferypody know dot long ago."

"You're a insultin' wagabone, an' I've a mind ter go aft an' punch yer in ther nose!" snorted Tim, indignantly.

"Shiminey Christmas, olt veller, you vos gittin' real fierce. Do yer vant me to run avay?"

The scowl left Tim's rugged brow, and his face expanded into a good-natured grin over the preposterous remark.

"Wot's ther good growlin'?" he remarked. "You're the funniest hog I ever met. Belay that 'ere playin' now. S'posen we wuz ter meet ther colonel. Afore we could put a bullet in his hide he'd drop dead from that 'ere music."

"All righd, I shtop," replied Fritz, suiting the action to his words. "But I only doon dis for vun reason: I vant dot colonel to hear vun ohf your bick lies. I couldn't choose a vorser deat for him."

The torpedo swept around a bend in the road.

Some distance ahead there was a small woods, on the margin of which stood a little log cabin of the kind common in the South, which had once been occupied by a settler.

Midway between the torpedo and this hut a foam flecked horse was thundering along the road.

Alfred Davenport bestrode its back.

A yell of warning from Tim called his companion's attention to the flying fugitive as he hove in view.

"Thar's ther lubber now!"

"Riding like the wind, too!"

"Hey!" yelled Fritz, excitedly. "Holt off dere!"

Davenport heard the cry, and, glancing back over his shoulder, he beheld the torpedo chasing him.

He urged his steed on as fast as it could go, and leaned far over its neck as if to help it along.

"Fool!" muttered Jack, contemptuously. "Does he expect that animal to run away from this machine?"

"Ther pirate is aheadin' fer that log cabin," said Tim.

"Much good it will do him. One grenade dropped down on its roof will shatter the building to pieces."

"Yah, but ve don't got any grenades left," said Fritz.

"What! Were they all used up?"

"Efery vun ohf dem," asserted the Dutchman. "Der latest dime vot ve dackle dem nickers, ve use ub de whole subby alretty."

"That's too bad. Never mind. We can do without them."

"Be keerful, lads, he's agoin' ter shoot!" cried Tim.

Davenport had the constable's revolver in his hand, and was then aiming the weapon up at the aeronauts.

Bang! went the pistol.

The shot caused Tim to shout:

"I'm hit!"

He clapped his hand to his hip.

There was a wound there, but a rapid examination showed him that it was not serious.

It showed them that Davenport was an expert shot.

He aimed his pistol at Jack next and fired again.

The young inventor bounded upon the box just as the man pulled the trigger, and the ball crashed through the pointers of the wheel, cutting and bending several of them.

Fritz did not wait for his turn to get shot.

He drew a pneumatic revolver, and, aiming down at the man, he pulled the trigger.

The ball struck the horse, sunk in its back, exploded in its body, and the animal fell dead.

Davenport saved himself from being crushed under the fallen animal by springing to the ground.

He landed upon his feet and made a rush for the hut.

## CHAPTER XX.

### CONCLUSION.

Before Fritz could fire at Davenport again he dashed into the log cabin, slammed the door shut, and secured it inside.

The rascal was then safely under cover, but his flight was checked, for his stolen horse lay dead in the road.

Jack was satisfied with the result.

"He is safely cooped up now," he remarked, "and although we have no means of blowing up the hut from above, we can lay siege to the building."

"Can't we starve the lubber out?" asked Tim, thoughtfully.

"Don't you think we would starve before he would?" Jack laughed. "We haven't got a morsel for food, you know."

"Yah! Dot's der vorstest ohf dis drip," grumbled Fritz. "Ve ditn'd vos haf it so easy like ve dit mit dose odder drips vot ve make by your former inventions alretty."

"Well, let's lay a plan."

"I ain't even got a idee, my hip hurts so," groaned Tim.

"Don't be a baby, old fellow. Don't you suppose I've been in misery from the bites that bear gave me? Yet you never heard me complain. Get some medicine and bandages out of the box and dress your wounds."

"Let's carry a bick rock ub by de air on der dorbedo," suggested Fritz. "Den ve can trop it down by der roof ohf dot huts, und smesh in der blanks. Vot you tink?"

"Can't be done," said Jack, shaking his head.

"Vhy not?" asked the Dutchman, in surprise.

"Simply because the torpedo can't lift up a heavy weight."

"Couldn't me und Dim got off. Dot gief you tree hundert pound."

"I've got a better plan."

"Vos iss?"

"Burn him out."

"How yer done dot?"

"Ignite some fuel, and drop it."

"Goot kernough. Dot trive him oud."

Tim agreed to this plan and a landing was made.

They gathered a heap of fagots, loosely bound them together, and, sending the machine aloft, they steered her over to the hut.

Pausing above the old structure, Jack set fire to the fagots. He let the bundle fall down upon the roof of the house, and it there broke open, and the burning brands scattered all over.

There they burned fiercely.

The roof of the building was old and dry.

It quickly caught ablaze, and the wind fanned the flames until the entire superstructure was afire.

Tim had dressed his wound and resumed his seat.

He grasped a rifle in his hand and fixed an intent glare of his solitary eye upon the door of the hut.

His mind was made up to blow Davenport to pieces the moment he stuck his nose outside the door for having given him that painful wound on the hip.

Quarter of an hour passed by.

The fire raged furiously in the meantime.

Jack had sent the torpedo a short distance away from the hut and lowered her to within a few yards of the earth.

He saw the roof of the hut fall in.

The side walls were all ablaze down to the ground, and a cloud of dense smoke arose to the sky.

Yet Davenport did not make his appearance.

Surprised at this, Jack suddenly asked:

"Could he have preferred death to capture?"

"Ruther looks that way," grimly assented Tim.

"It don't seem possible dot a man would roast to death when he would only by chail go for vot he done," skeptically said Fritz.

This theory seemed plausible.

Death by burning seemed the most horrible form of taking off a man could choose, and it struck Jack that it was highly improbable that the man had deliberately consigned himself to the fire.

"Perhaps he has escaped unseen," he remarked.

"Vos dey a beck door in der huts troo which he could avented?"

"I don't know, but I'll see," replied Jack.

He drove the torpedo around the burning hut.

The twigs and dead leaves strewing the ground around the building had caught afire, and the wind drove the flames over to the trees of the woods, which then became ignited.

At the back of the cabin was a window.

It stood wide open.

Clearly then Davenport had got out this way, slipped into the woods, and disappeared before he was burnt.

This conviction was firmly implanted in Jack's mind, but he saw that the fugitive could not find refuge in the gloomy woods long, for the trees were all afire.

Sure, therefore, that the colonel would inevitably be driven from cover by the fire, Jack sent the torpedo up in the air.

He stopped her above the timber.

"Now, keep a sharp watch," said he to his friends. "If he is lurking among the trees, the fire will soon drive him out into view in the moonlight."

The land surrounding the timber was all open, and so flooded with moonlight that scarcely a dog could have left the shadowy woods without being seen.

Half an hour passed uneventfully by.

At the end of that time the entire woodland was in a roaring mass of crimson fire.

"There he goes! There he goes now, boys!" suddenly cried Jack.

He pointed to the eastern side of the woods, from whence a man had dashed and sped away.

It was the colonel.

He glanced up in affright and saw the torpedo come plunging down from the sky toward him.

Retaining the pistol in his hand, when he observed that they were after him, he turned and discharged several shots up at our friends.

But he was so nervous his firing was wild, and he failed to send the bullets anywhere near them.

The last time he tried to fire the pistol failed to respond.

He had used all the cartridges with which the weapon had been loaded, and, having no more ammunition left, he hurled the now useless pistol to the ground and took to his heels.

Away he sped like a deer.

The torpedo flew after him.

Tim fired a shot at his legs.

Down he tumbled, so wounded that he could not run any further.

Jack stopped the torpedo and alighted with a pair of handcuffs.

Rushing up to Davenport, he snapped the bracelets on his wrists.

"Caught at last!" he cried exultantly.

"May the fiend curse you!" howled the colonel, furiously.

"Hurroar!" roared Tim, joining the young inventor. "We've got him."

"Help me to put him aboard the torpedo, Tim."

"That I will, with pleasure," the old sailor answered.

"Heavens, what pain I'm in!" groaned the prisoner.

"Lordy now, it can't be wuss nor ther shot yer gave me."

"Then we are quits, sir! But confound you I'm sorry you didn't get that bullet in your head, sir."

Jack and Tim carried him aboard the torpedo.

He seemed to be in such pain that they attended to his wound, affording him considerable relief.

They then bound him to the flying machine.

Everything aboard of her with which they could dispense was thrown away, to lighten her enough to carry him.

Just as they were about to mount the torpedo, a number of

men came running along the road from the nearest village to learn the cause of the fire.

Harry Howard, the detective, was among them.

He was told what had happened, and seemed to be glad that the colonel was captured.

He assured Jack that he and many others would prosecute the Black Demons of Dismal Swamp to the fullest extent of the law.

Shaking hands with our friends, he bade them goodby, and they shot up into the air on the torpedo.

Next day they procured food at different places along their route home, and late in the succeeding night reached Wrightstown.

Here they alighted in Jack's grounds.

Alfred Davenport was put in jail.

Subsequently he was prosecuted, and was sentenced to a long term in prison for his misdeeds.

Our friends on the following day stored the Flying Torpedo and returned Bismarck and Whiskers to the house.

The newspapers soon contained an account of all Jack, Tim and Fritz did with the wonderful Flying Torpedo, and our friends were not only vindicated for their first failure, but were more highly esteemed than ever before.

The governors of the two states that had been so much benefited by the extermination of the Black Demons of Dismal Swamp warmly thanked our friends, and would willingly have given them a pecuniary compensation.

But they were rich and did not need it.

All had found entire gratification in their work, for it had proven a grand success.

There had been so many inconveniences attached to the torpedo, however, that Jack resolved never again to build a machine of that kind.

A most extraordinary plan for a new invention occurred to him while he was absent in the swamps, and he resolved to make the experiment of constructing another invention of this design.

Accordingly the work was soon begun.

So occupied we will leave the three friends, for the marvelous adventures they encountered with the machine will appear soon.

THE END.

Read "HIGH LADDER HARRY, THE YOUNG FIREMAN OF FREEPORT; OR, ALWAYS AT THE TOP," which will be the next number (279) of "Pluck and Luck."

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