

always keep in the one spot. For my part, as long as I can have the privilege of looking out of the window, I am willing to lease it for a hundred years. Ah! Barbican, that brings out one of your stony smiles. You think our lease may last longer than that! Our tenement may become our coffin, eh? Be it so. I prefer it anyway to Mahomet's; it may indeed float in the air, but it won't be motionless as a milestone!"

Barbican, having made sure by personal inspection that everything was in perfect order, consulted his chronometer, which he had carefully set a short time before with Chief Engineer Murphy's, who had been charged to fire off the Projectile.

"Friends," he said, "it is now twenty minutes past ten. At 10 46' 40", precisely, Murphy will send the electric current into the gun-cotton. We have, therefore, twenty-six minutes more to remain on earth."

"Twenty-six minutes and twenty seconds," observed Captain M'Nicholl, who always aimed at mathematical precision.

"Twenty-six minutes!" cried Ardan, gaily. "An age, a cycle, according to the use you make of them. In twenty-six minutes how much can be done! The weightiest questions of warfare, politics, morality, can be discussed, even decided, in twenty-six minutes. Twenty-six minutes well spent are infinitely more valuable than twenty-six lifetimes wasted! A few seconds even, employed by a Pascal, or a Newton, or a Barbican, or any other profoundly intellectual being

Whose thoughts wander through eternity--"

"As mad as Marston! Every bit!" muttered the Captain, half audibly.

"What do you conclude from this rigmarole of yours?" interrupted Barbican.

"I conclude that we have twenty-six good minutes still left--"

"Only twenty-four minutes, ten seconds," interrupted the Captain, watch in hand.

"Well, twenty-four minutes, Captain," Ardan went on; "now even in twenty-four minutes, I maintain--"

"Ardan," interrupted Barbican, "after a very little while we shall have plenty of time for philosophical disputations. Just now let us think of something