



THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF LULU

BY

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ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERIC DORR STEELE

I

WHEN the old man rented Uncle Theodore's disused laboratory with the blacksmith-shop attachment, he told my sister that he could not pay much rent at present but that he would be in a position to pay, and would pay gladly, a very handsome sum for its use during the next summer.

"I might deceive you," he said, "instead of telling you frankly that I am not in a position to pay at present. But it is immaterial to me what rent you ask me. At the expiration of the lease I shall be a millionaire."

Lulu, who is somewhat sentimental anyway, said this reminded her so forcibly of Uncle Theodore that she felt as though the man had some sort of right to the laboratory. Uncle Theodore worked for

thirty years on a perpetual motion machine, and died the day before he put in the last wheel which would have made it go; and although he had spent long hours explaining it to all the family, and left hundreds of careful drawings, not one of us knew anything about it when he was dead, or had sufficient wit to take up his work where he left it off and put in that wheel.

The laboratory stood there with its complicated and costly workshop, going to destruction for lack of intelligent use. Lulu was the only person at home when Professor Card called, and she realized that it would be a good thing to have the place used, as she is almost practical at times; but she gave the excuse to me that the Professor appeared to be a reincarnation of Uncle Theodore.

Professor Card was a kindly old man with seedy clothes, whose only baggage, so far as visible, consisted of one of those wire

hair-brushes which are, I believe, supposed to perform the offices of a comb and brush combined. He had no teeth. He slept in the laboratory, and lived upon a pulp made of whole wheat, and upon nuts and apples. He used to boast daily of the wonderful strength and bounding health that was the reward of this diet, and would point to his infantile complexion and manly endurance as proof. He generally lectured upon this subject while he was complimenting Lulu by eating the heavy soups, minced chicken, potatoes, and pudding which she carried to the laboratory every day. So convincing were his remarks upon this subject that for whole weeks my sister would go about nibbling at nuts like a squirrel.

It was during these daily visits that Lulu learned the source of the coming millions. The Professor was making a substance which would float in the air exactly as wood floats in water.

"You can see its importance for yourself," Lulu said. "You can make boats of it just as you make boats of wood, and then you can put machinery in them and move them about just as you do ships on the ocean."

"But that is merely a balloon," I ventured to say. "A great many people have made balloons. There's Santos-Dumont and Montgolfier, besides the Italians with the red ones."

"You are so silly," my sister remarked. "This isn't a bag of gas. This is an invention."

"Oh," I said, "I didn't know the difference." After which she declined to go into further detail. But when Walter Baker came over that evening, she told him more about it, out on the veranda. I could hear her from where I sat in the library.

Walter Baker has about as much sense as anybody. He is twenty-four and is studying law with his father when he isn't playing with Lulu. But to hear him assent to everything my sister says and even encourage her in her nonsense shows him in quite another light. He sat for hours and talked about

this "new substance" which was "being perfected" in Uncle Theodore's shop, and which was going to revolutionize the world.

"Just think," Lulu said, "you can go anywhere then. Savages, bad climate, mountains, are as nothing. You just float," and she moved her hand airily. Airiness becomes Lulu.

"And think of all the treasure hunting," Walter said earnestly. "You can float right

over the earth and see what you want and swoop right down and take it — and away! It will be like living in the fourth dimension."

"But," my sister said doubtfully, "of course that wouldn't be right."

"Might is right," said Mr. Baker sententiously.

"I don't think Professor Card will allow anybody who is not perfectly responsible to have any of it. He said he would confine it very strictly to the United States, and that will make us invincible in war."

I was allowed on the veranda a little later to have something cold to drink and a sandwich, but the conversation was shifted to the new golf club.

It was a week later that Lulu came into the library in great excitement, swinging something tied to a string. I had a momentary sense of shock, for it had the appearance of a small grey toad. As she came closer, I thought that it was a bit of papery hornet's nest. As she evidently had brought it in for my inspection, I asked what it was.

"It's it," said my sister lucidly. She let it fall to the end of the string apparently, for it stopped about six inches from the floor, and when she ran it followed like a small boy's spent kite or a bit of paper. "The Professor let me have it. Of course, this is just a scrap of an experiment."

"That paper was to hold up people and machinery, is it?"

"It isn't paper. That shows all you know." I took the thing and examined it. It looked, on inspection, like a bit of furnace slag which you sometimes see full of bubbles of air. Lulu explained that the material was aluminum "and something," and that it was blown full of bubbles of "some



PROFESSOR CARD

kind" of gas, very much lighter than air. "The bubbles are sealed in the melted stuff so that they can never escape. There are millions of them, and if you broke it into scraps each little bit would float."

"But it doesn't float."

"Well, it almost does, and never in my life did I see anybody so deaf and blind to science." She spoke as one who had had a long life in the sceptical world instead of eighteen years in the trusting country. But the American woman seems to have been born with the reflected light of the experiences of all her varied ancestry. She rebuked me with such dramatic effect that I felt sure she had heard from the Professor of others who had been similarly blind. "The Professor has given me some stock in it," Lulu said, "and I shall be rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and the first lady to ride in an air-boat. I shall wear a white dress and kiss my hand to the multitude," and she went through the pantomime of bowing and smiling as she floated by.

The Professor never came up to the house, nor did he ever invite me to the laboratory after the first time. I felt sorry for the poor old chap, and I offered to get him some regular work. He told Lulu that I had no imagination. It isn't exactly necessary that I should have. Lulu has enough for a family of two — or even of five, to which ours stretches when my elder sister, her husband, and baby come to make us their annual visit. Clara's husband is a writer of novels of the variety known as "popular." He buys every quart of ink with the feeling of a man who is investing in a lottery ticket, he once told me. "In these days you never can tell when some simple little story is going to make you rich and famous." Lulu says that our brother-in-law writes triangular stories. At one angle is a beautiful girl, and at another is a strong young man. Fate draws each of them to the third angle, where a clergyman stands and waits.

It was in August that Clara and the baby arrived. This was little Pendragon's second visit to us. For the first visit, the year before, he had come from heaven, I had heard his mother say, and surely she ought to know.

Cecil, Clara's husband, was in New York working very hard to get his publishers to contract to give him thirty per cent royalties after "The Sword of His Majesty" reached a sale of two hundred thousand copies. It seemed rather a waste of time, as he had never sold over four thousand copies of any of his works, but neither my brother-in-law nor the firm wished "to take any chances in these times."

For the first few days Lulu was so taken up with the baby that she paid little attention to anything else. Cecil's publishers had never paid him enough to justify his employing a nurse for his son, but Walter Baker seemed perfectly willing to qualify for that position.

When the third day came and no word from Lulu about the Professor, I grew curious and asked about him.

"Oh, he has gone."

"Gone!" I exclaimed, "given it up? Now, that proves that he is no real inventor. I always had my doubts —"

"He has gone to Washington to get his patents." Triumph crimsoned Lulu's cheeks.

"Oh, is that all?" I was more disappointed than I should have liked to acknowledge. "I always thought that they applied for their patents the first thing." And then I had an idea. "Did you lend him any money?" I looked at my sister's last year's muslin.

"It is none of your business," said my sister politely. And although I asked how far and high the thing could float now, I received only the coldest silence. Clara, having been brought up in the days of Uncle Theodore, took no interest whatever in inventions, and I am sure never asked to be taken to see the laboratory, although Lulu carried the key conspicuously on her chatelaine.



LULU

Clara's enjoyment of the old place was almost pathetic. She and Cecil lived in a tiny Harlem flat. When they were first married they spoke enthusiastically of its coziness and hominess — although to save my life I couldn't see anything homelike in sleeping in the parlor on a folding bed. They smiled at me with pity in those days and told me that I didn't understand because I was an old bachelor.

Cecil let his voice tremble at the grief they were going to feel when "The Fair Allaire" went to two hundred thousand, and they would find it best to leave their little nest.

On their walks they would look at Fifth Avenue houses and try to decide which they would choose when the returns from the dramatization came in. But "The Fair Allaire" and all of her successors failed to push them from the home of their first love.

Nowadays, Clara hopes that out of some book at some time they may get enough to buy a little place in the country and keep a cow. Out here she fairly lives in the fields. I go to my office in the county town on my bicycle for the day, and the girls make their midday meal into a movable feast which moves all around the place.

On the afternoon of Saturday, August the eighth, they went out to the other side of the orchard where the wheat field ended, and had a long afternoon with cake and tea-
lemonade and such trash as appeals to a girl.

The wheat had been threshed here, and the straw piled up into a great rick. As Clara told it afterwards, she and Lulu remembered how, when they were children, they had waited upon the threshers with impatient hearts for the time when they could have the ecstatic pleasure of sliding down the stack. What the first heavy snow is to the Canadian child with a new toboggan such is the threshing to a farm child who has once shot down a slippery golden cone to alight on a springy bed of sweetness at the bottom.

Like two madcaps the girls had pulled at the carefully built rick, which had been made tight and cattle-proof from the ground for a

distance of seven or eight feet before it bulged out into softness, until they had torn down a pathway to the top. Then they climbed up and slid down until they had a pile of straw at the bottom. Little Pen-dragon sat in his cart and screamed with joy at the undignified behavior of his nearest of kin. They sat down on the shady side of the stack at last, and put the child to sleep. Pen-dragon always slept without rocking in the daytime, making up for lost time at night.

"I'll tell you," Lulu said, when the baby was reduced to a limp white bundle, "let's put him on top of the rick out of harm's way and go over in the orchard and see if the Pound Royals are getting ripe."

"But he might awaken and roll off," his mother protested, weakly.

"He has to have some sleep," his aunt remarked, "and he can never get

out of the nest I will make for him."

And so it was. Those two irresponsible creatures left the poor child as if he had been one of the dolls of their childhood, and wandered off apple hunting.

What happened after they left nobody knows. Clara thinks a tramp; Lulu thinks the baby's bottle acting as a sun-glass; Cecil has hinted of a malicious enemy of his house; while I incline toward a match in the teabasket. At any rate when they next saw the rick it was merrily blazing, the flames licking their way up the path they had made to the nest where the baby lay.

Cecil had suspended negotiations with his publisher and come out that afternoon to spend Sunday with his family. He had passed Walter Baker in the village, and that young man felt it necessary to accompany him home. I met them in the lane and we went on together. The maid left in possession of the house told us where to find the family; and we arrived in time to see the rick blazing away in the sunshine, with a white heap, which we did not recognize as Clara in a dead faint, lying on the grass at the edge of the orchard. But at what was coming out of the big door of the laboratory across the field, we were so astounded that



WALTER BAKER

we felt, if I judge the others by myself, like men in a dream. Straight from the laboratory came a boat, with a whizzing tail out behind, and my sister Lulu sitting up in it guiding it by a steering wheel as though she were doing the most usual thing in the world. It was twenty-five feet in the air!

It went with some wobbling straight over the rick, slipping a little as it touched the straw. We saw Lulu pick up a white bundle from the very midst of the flames and start the thing again.

"My God," Cecil said, "it's the baby!" and in our horror we all made a run at the rick. It was impossible for us to understand if the baby had been there on that blazing pyre that it had gone up into the air. Miracles are unbelievable.

"Get away," Lulu's voice called down to us. "You'll burn up. I have the baby. See after Clara." She pointed to the spot of white by the orchard bank. She was almost over our heads.

"Come down," we called to her. "I am trying to," she called back.

We could see that there was a mass of straw caught in the machinery and as she turned the steering wheel it seemed to wrap tighter around the rods and wheels underneath the boat. Cecil had gone to his wife, and was shouting to her in his excitement that the baby was all right, although he hardly had a warrant for saying so. As Lulu gave a convulsive turn to the wheel, the boat shot up in a slanting direction until it was fully fifty feet above us, and there it stopped and swung.

"Where is the fool who made the thing?" Walter Baker shouted with a disregard of the palpable facts which may be forgiven him under the circumstances. He started on a run toward the laboratory.

"He's gone," I bawled as I ran after him. "He's gone to Washington." I was running because I didn't know what else to do, and I drew up at the laboratory door.

"Maybe there's another one of the things," Walter shouted at the top of his voice. Unconsciously, we all seemed to be trying to include Lulu in the conversation. But there wasn't. The Professor had tidied up the place and we could see where his precious machine had lain on the table.

"Telegraph to Washington," he said, and we both started toward the village before I realized that I did not know where the Professor was to be found in Washington, and

in any case he could not reach us for twenty-four hours at least. It was Saturday evening, and the Patent Office which might have the Professor's address would be closed by now. Anyway, suppose he came? What could he do? He couldn't make another machine in an hour. I walked back and called up to Lulu. "Ravel out your stockings and throw the cord down, and we will send up a rope and pull you down." And I ran for a rope.

By this time Clara had recovered, and she and Cecil ran wildly over the field following



"'It's it,' said my sister lucidly'"

the boat as it rocked and swayed in the breezes up there. Clara was first thanking heaven that her child had been saved from the flames (the rick was in ashes now), blaming herself for having left him for an instant, hysterical over her fears that he would fall, and asking why she had ever brought her babe from his safe home in Harlem.

By the time I had found a rope to be drawn up by Lulu's unraveled stockings, it was sunset and the matter was growing serious. Lulu had heard my instructions and appeared to be trying to obey me, but at the least movement the boat swayed as though it were in danger of turning over, and each disturbance sent it a little higher. The wind

up there was stronger than below, and as darkness came on a cloud swept up and looked like rain. Walter would not listen to my explanations as to why I had not telegraphed to Washington, and he took my

line attached to the bullet. There was no necessity for vetoing anything — the villagers had to take our word for there being even a boat, for the wind preceding the storm, swept the air-boat with its occupants ahead of it and Lulu and the baby, riding the storm like a leaf, were swept out of sight in the darkness.

II

As Lulu felt the frail little craft being swept rapidly before the incoming storm, she drew the baby close to her, and she has since told us that she began to wonder when she would awaken. All her life she had dreamed of flying through the air, and now she was merely taking a longer flight than ever before. She felt as though she had no weight at all, and she feared that any moment the frail boat might be blown from under them, as she was too light to steady it. At least she says she feared it, but as a matter of fact she never enjoyed herself so much because she says she also felt sure that whatever happened, it couldn't be real.

She had sat in the air-boat while it rested on the laboratory table many times, and had assisted the Professor in all of his experiments; so the starting and stopping machinery had all been carefully explained to her. Indeed, she had little to learn on that subject, as automobiles are not unknown in our village, and Lulu had often been taken out by those who were anxious to instruct her. But for some reason (she knew nothing of the entangling straw) the machinery had stopped and she was at the mercy of the wind. The baby awakened and was delighted with the lovely motion. So far as he knew, air-boats had been in existence as long as perambulators.

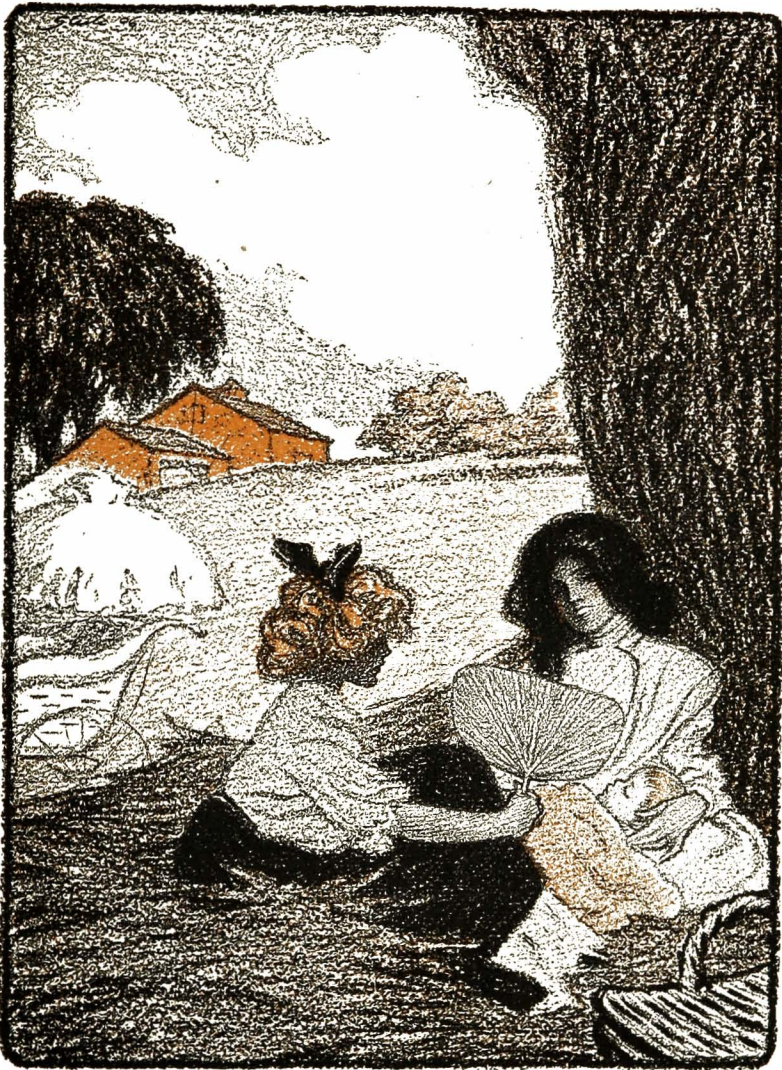
They seemed to be driving straight east, before the wind, going with incredible swiftness over fields and forests and towns where the lights of evening gleamed cozily. Had it been daylight they must have been seen by hundreds, who would have followed the strange thing over their heads; but now they were lost in the shadow of the coming storm-clouds.

All at once the lights seemed to multiply, and send up a great radiance to meet the sky; and Lulu realized that they were nearing New York, and for the first time the wonderful sense of excitement that had held her gave way to real fear. She was growing



"Clara's husband is a writer of novels of the variety known as 'popular.'"

bicycle and went to the village himself. When he returned he had at least a hundred people with him, boys with kites, and one man with a rifle. If the kites failed, some one suggested firing over the boat with a



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used to her position and was no longer submerged in its novelty. She was not high enough in the air to miss the high buildings and it would be almost a miracle if she did not come to grief against one of them, unless she escaped the city altogether. And then her vivid fancy told her she would be swept out to sea, and would ride there on the winds — she refused to think of it, and she hugged the baby closer to her.

"Bumba," said that young person. It was his sole contribution to the language,

and was supposed to be short-tongue rendering of "bread and butter." At any rate it answered the purpose.

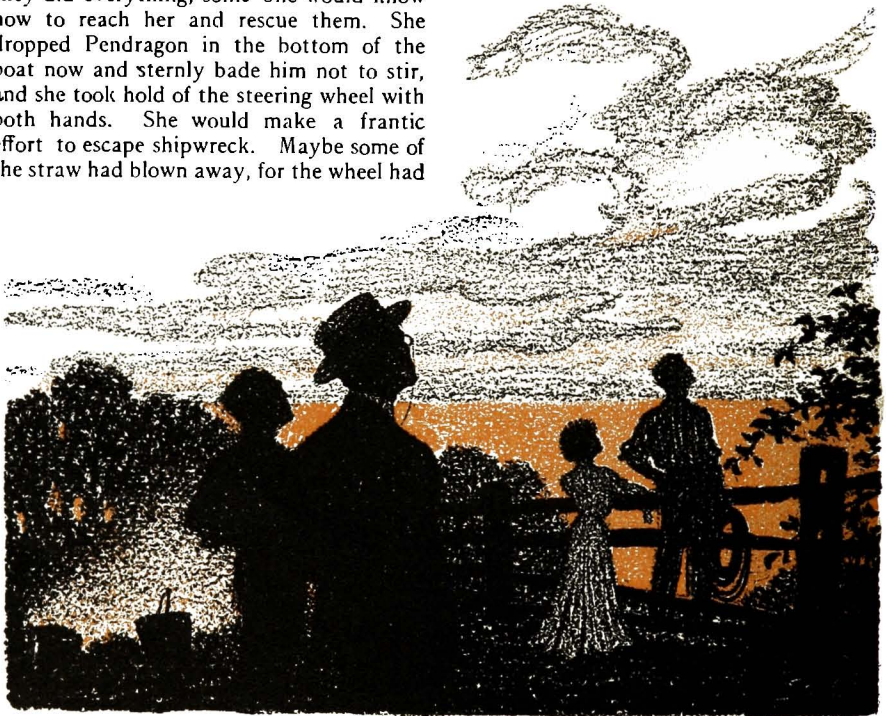
"He ought to have stocked the thing with provisions," Lulu said angrily, "who ever heard of a boat that wasn't stocked with provisions?" It was plain that whatever happened the Professor was to blame. It began to appear to Lulu that she had entered a new field. A balloon will eventually come down, but this substance had its place in the air as long as it existed, and so far as she

knew this was the only bit of it. It might swing lonely around the Earth forever. Already we at home had telegraphed to the balloon farm to have a dozen balloons sent at once, with capable aeronauts. Our answer was that most of the capable men were then under engagement at large salaries at county fairs, and to ask "for further correspondence on the subject."

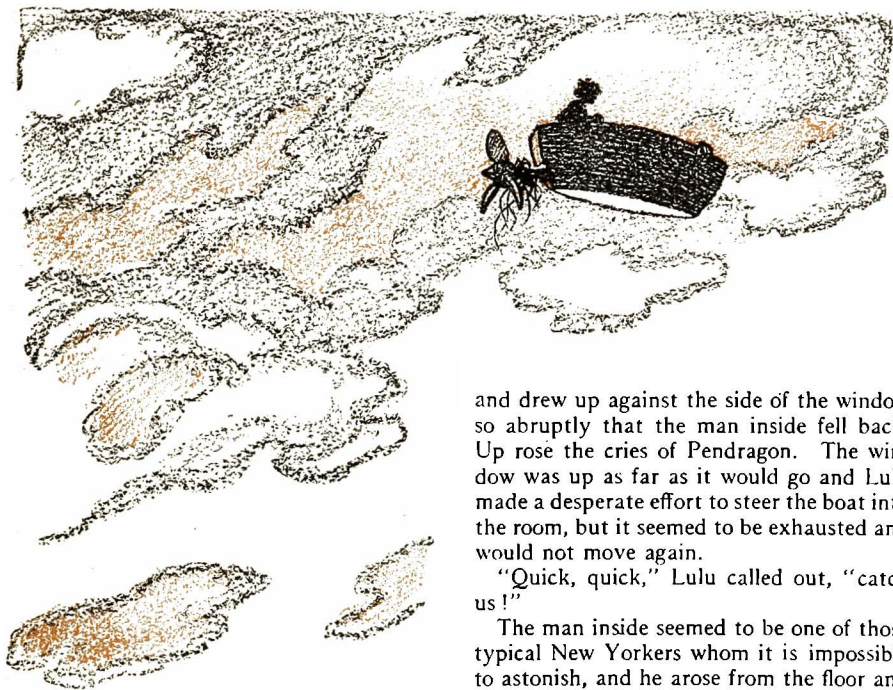
The air-boat swept across the Hudson about eleven o'clock in the evening. The wind was still blowing, but not such a gale as earlier, but it was chilly for an August evening, and very cloudy. Fortunately there was no rain. Lulu had wrapped her blue serge skirt about the baby. She said that a pluckier kid than Pendragon never lived; maybe the sweep of the air lulled him, or maybe he had inherited a taste for adventure from the bold knights and fair ladies who sallied forth from the Harlem flat. At any rate, beyond demands for "Bumba" at intervals, he took his ride without comment.

As she came into the glare of light from the electric affirmation of a cake factory, she hoped with all her soul that some one would see her. Surely, here in New York, where they did everything, some one would know how to reach her and rescue them. She dropped Pendragon in the bottom of the boat now and sternly bade him not to stir, and she took hold of the steering wheel with both hands. She would make a frantic effort to escape shipwreck. Maybe some of the straw had blown away, for the wheel had

turned a little. She had an idea that if she once could get in the channel between two tall buildings, she might hang there until morning, as in a harbor, and might be rescued; and so she tugged at the wheel. Once she scraped over the top of a building, and she lifted Pendragon up to drop him over and then jump, but a current of air swept them so swiftly over the chasm of the street that she shuddered at the narrow escape she had made. Not yet were the buildings above the boat, and she both hoped and dreaded as she neared the great towering cliffs. The boat might break into bits against some steel and granite side. The Professor had assured her that each individual bit would float, but she and Pendragon would fall to the ground amid the fragments. And as her fears gave her strength, she worked at the wheel and by jerks, a foot at a time, it seemed to obey her, and it was with joy and thanksgiving that she at last was able to turn into the dark cañon of tall buildings and swing there about the tenth story, for she had been able to descend some yards. There they hung, at peace from the storm, and with the certainty that they would be rescued in



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the morning. With this optimistic thought, Lulu prepared to put Pendragon to sleep. It was disgraceful for him to be awake so late. And while she cuddled and patted her nephew, and told him the tale of the ten little pigs, Lulu went over the joy of astonishing her coming rescuers. How self-possessed she would be! It was only an accident to the steering apparatus that had put her in this predicament, she would assure the first man who looked out of the tenth story window.

Suddenly she remembered that it was Saturday night, and that the tenth story windows of the downtown buildings would not be opened on a Sunday. But after all she would be seen from below, and she had begun to change the dialogue of her rescue when Pendragon claimed her attention. The start had disturbed him and he began his own loud and penetrating evening wail, which is known to the family as the "hushless."

Suddenly one of the dark windows almost on a level with the boat was illumined with a quick flash of electric light, and the black shadow of a head was pushed out. Lulu's heart beat so that she could hardly breathe, and she gave a convulsive turn of the wheel,

and drew up against the side of the window so abruptly that the man inside fell back. Up rose the cries of Pendragon. The window was up as far as it would go and Lulu made a desperate effort to steer the boat into the room, but it seemed to be exhausted and would not move again.

"Quick, quick," Lulu called out, "catch us!"

The man inside seemed to be one of those typical New Yorkers whom it is impossible to astonish, and he arose from the floor and took hold of the side of the boat and held it against the window as though it were the most natural thing in the world to assist ladies to alight from mid air.

Lulu lifted Pendragon, black in the face from holding his breath, and dropped him inside and then gave a frantic jump and followed him; and then, after all her plans for the calm superiority of a heroine, she fainted dead away on the floor. The man, who was in his shirt-sleeves, with his thick black hair rumpled with sleep, let go of the air-boat and set about bringing her back to consciousness. The short skirt of serge which Lulu had managed to take off and wrap around the baby, had been left in the boat. Underneath was a very fluffy, lacy piece of lingerie, for Lulu had never had the advantages of a sensible college education. It matched her white waist very well, and the entire costume had a tendency to settle the rescuer's mind on the subject of his visitors. When Lulu had come out of her faint and laughed and cried and hugged Pendragon, who sometimes cried and sometimes sat with his mouth open for an interval and stared at these new events, the rescuer said with some feeling, "Do you not think it was wrong to make an ascension with a baby? I am a member of

the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and if this thing is being done I shall certainly report it. For whom did you go up?"

"Up?" asked Lulu.

"In the balloon. I suppose you are performing somewhere. This cannot be your baby, although you seem fond of it. How could you do such a cruel thing as to expose its life—and your own?" he added politely.

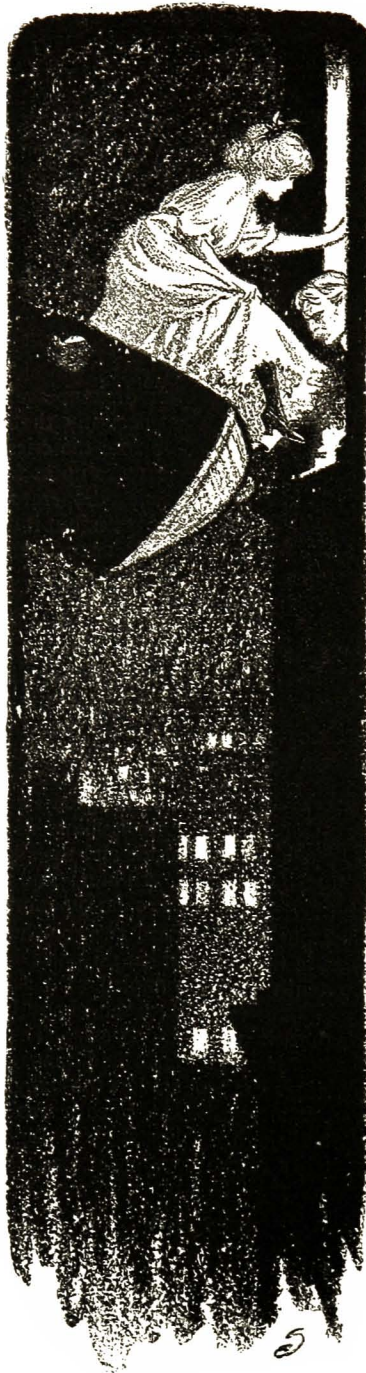
"I—oh," and the self-possessed Lulu began to wrinkle up her face and cry with the spirit of Pendragon at his best. She had no handkerchief, and the rescuer kindly went to his coat hanging on the back of a chair, extracted a fresh handkerchief of the quality which is reassuring to a chance acquaintance, and gave it to her.

"You seem young for this sort of life. Was it your first ascension?"

"Y—es," sobbed Lulu.

"Well, you see, you might have been blown out to sea and drowned. Why don't you give up this life and do something more useful?" It was at this stage that Lulu lost complete control of herself. She said that it was so funny that there were no words to talk with.

The rescuer had taken Pendragon on his knee, found his watch where he had left it on the table, and was dangling it before the infant eyes. Lulu put her head down



"held it against the window as though it were the most natural thing in the world to assist ladies to alight from mid air"

on the table and cried with hysterical laughter.

"There, there," the man said kindly, "you're upset. Drink some water." He went over to a large carboy labeled "Golden Drop Spring water" and tilted it until he had filled a glass, carrying Pendragon meanwhile on one arm. The baby snatched at the glass and gulped the water down. "Why, hello, the little chap's hungry!"

Lulu arose with such dignity as was left her. "I think we will go if you please. Thank you so much. My sister and brother will thank you, but I must go home, and take the baby." It had not yet occurred to her that she was some distance from home, without a penny, and that a short white petticoat was not a conventional traveling-dress.

For the first time their host showed some embarrassment.

"Well, to tell the truth," he said slowly, "we are locked in."

Lulu made a dash for the door. It opened with the greatest of ease, and she turned with inquiry. The man's face and manner were undoubtedly those of a gentleman, and he had hastened to put on his coat as soon as he thought of it, which, Lulu said, convinced her that he was a perfectly proper person.

"It's the street door. The janitor and his family who live on the roof seem to have gone

out for the evening, and as it was Saturday and a half-holiday, I suppose they closed the place and took themselves off at five o'clock. I worked until six, and when I rang the elevator bell there was no one to answer it. I walked down-stairs ten flights and then up twenty-four, and then down fourteen to here again. By that time I felt as though I had been mountain climbing and I went to sleep."

"But the janitor may have returned."

"No. I put a large placard on his door telling him that I was here and to come and let me out as soon as he returned. As Coney Island is their usual relaxation, and the janitor is supposed to be in the building by midnight, I do not think we shall have long to wait."

"But," said Lulu, "in these cases people always telephone for help." She probably put some of the usual scorn of the commonsense of men which abides in all feminine souls into her voice, for she was answered with some triumph that, as it was Saturday, the telephone had been taken out for some necessary repairs. "I have tried to get into other offices, but it is impossible. While we are waiting we must give the baby his supper. You, too, are doubtless hungry."

Lulu looked about the room. On shelves along one side was a motley collection of boxes, bottles, stones, models of machines, and many things she did not understand. But nowhere was there any sign of food. The young man, still carrying Pendragon, who had evidently given himself up as one in the hands of Providence, hanging carelessly over one arm, began taking things down from the shelves.

"Here is just the thing for the baby, as soon as I get it boiled up in some water. It is concentrated milk and bread, something entirely new. We expect to make millions out of this. Here is a can of concentrated chicken, some meat tablets, some sauce powder, and some bottled celery, and indeed, almost everything to eat."

"Do you live here?" Lulu asked.

"Oh, no. These are samples. I am a promoter of affairs and inventions, and just now I am experimenting with army foods. Did you ever think that there is never a time when there isn't a war somewhere?" He skilfully opened cans and bottles and set a very complicated alcohol stove alight. "Look at this stove. A soldier can carry it in his knapsack and put it down anywhere and

cook his dinner in a few minutes. It weighs nothing." Bit by bit he explained its mechanism. "We shall make a huge fortune for the inventor out of this."

Lulu's eyes brightened and she leaned forward. "I think," she said, "that I know of a machine that would interest you. We shall need a man of business."

"Ah — um," said her host without enthusiasm. By this time they were eating a very comfortable supper. To be sure there were no knives or forks, but as most of the food was liquid, they did very well. "I'll tell you, valuable inventions are very few, Do you know what percentage of patents ever pay? About one in five hundred. I suppose yours is something acrobatic." He evidently did not wish to linger over any mechanical dreams of a parachute jumper. He had kept Pendragon and was feeding him to the delight of both of them. "How old is the little chap? Do you know?"

"I should say I did know," said Lulu indignantly. "He's my sister's baby. He's thirteen months, and large for his age."

"Your sister's baby! How could your sister consent to your taking him up in a balloon?"

"She didn't. She fainted."

He gazed at Lulu with horror, and she began her silly giggle again. "You see it was like this," and she began her incredible story. She had gotten as far as the baby having been put to sleep on the rick, and his careless relations going after the apples, when she branched off into a description of the Professor and the laboratory and the invention. The man stopped feeding Pendragon, and looked at her as though he would swallow every word. Finally, when she saw there was no way to save Pendragon from a fiery death by usual means she had thought of the air-boat, gone after it and —

"It worked!" he fairly shouted. "It worked! Good Lord!" He put Pendragon down on the floor and flew to the window.

The air-boat had drifted out of sight.

"Why didn't you hold it?" he asked Lulu accusingly. "Do you know what you have done? If it is lost you have upset civilization. You have put the world back into the dark ages. And you let it go!"

"Pardon me," Lulu said with some coldness, "you let it go." People were not in the habit of taking that tone with her, and she very properly resented it. "And anyway the Professor can make another." It was at this moment that a very surprised

janitor put his head in at the door. He looked shocked for a moment, but the presence of Pendragon reassured him.

"Sure, I didn't know yer wife and baby was here, sir, Mr. Mellish." Mr. Mellish sprang toward the door. He stopped to whisper to Lulu, "Don't tell him. You can't keep these things too close," and then he started out evidently bent on following the air-boat. He got as far as the elevator, and then his wits came back. With the readiness of the born excuse maker, he began telling the janitor his troubles and giving him to understand that it was all his, the janitor's, fault. Lulu was surprised to hear that her dress skirt had been burnt up in lighting the alcohol lamp, for it was the first she had noticed the loss of that valuable addition to a lady's toilet.

The janitor's daughter brought a skirt, and after the janitor had opened an office that had a telephone, they found a cab, and Pendragon and Lulu, with their rescuer's purse in possession, started for the Grand Central station, leaving the enthusiastic Mr. Mellish hunting through the channels

and bays of lower New York for the air-boat.

Lulu and Pendragon arrived at nine o'clock on Sunday morning about three hours before their telegram; but the air-boat was never found, and, what was much more singular, the Professor has not returned. He never appeared in Washington, and we at last inclined toward the opinion that he had made another boat in which he had tried to travel to Washington, and that he had met with some mishap, becoming a derelict in the uncharted currents of the skies. Mellish still advertises for him in the *Herald* with that fervor and intensity which has named his medium the agony column.

I tried to get Cecil to tell this story in the hope that some other experimenter might be able to make a hornet's nest full of "some kind" of gas so that civilization might go on in its appointed way, but he declined.

He said there was no human interest in it, because Mellish has a wife and six

young children, and Lulu is going to marry Walter Baker. He says that from the artistic point of view, nothing happened.



"The janitor's daughter brought a skirt"