Title: Frank Reade, Jr.’s Electric Air Canoe or The Search for the Valley of the Diamonds

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Frank Reade Jr.'s Electric Air Canoe; Or, The Search for the Valley of Diamonds.
By "NONAME."
FRANK READE JR.'S ELECTRIC AIR CANOE;
OR,
THE SEARCH FOR THE VALLEY OF DIAMONDS.

A Thrilling Story of Adventures in Brazil.

By "NONAME,"
Author of ""Frank Reade and His Steam Horse,"" ""Frank Reade, Jr., With His New Steam Horse in the Northwest; or, Wild Adventures Among the Blackfeet,"" etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.
WHICH DESCRIBES THE NEW INVENTION.

Deep in the heart of a picturesque range of hills lay the beautiful little city of Handadown. The founder of the place, Frank Reade, had gained a world-wide reputation as an inventor. His inventions were many and varied, and had netted him an immense fortune.

The Steam Man and the Steam Horse had made his fame, and now at a ripe old age he had retired from the field and had been succeeded by his son, Frank Reade, Jr.

The latter was a slender, handsome youth, with remarkably intelligent features, and scarcely less inventive genius than his father as time revealed.

Frank Reade, Jr., moreover, as is the case with rising geniuses, had developed a broader scope of talent, and soon had astonished the country.

One day the startling announcement went abroad that Frank Reade, Jr., had just completed his new and wonderful air-ship, the "Electric Air Canoe."

The report spread far and wide, and one morning a reporter of the Associated Press presented himself at the Reade Iron Works.

"Is it true, Mr. Reade, that you have just completed your Air Canoe?" asked the scribe, bluntly.

"It is," replied the young inventor, modestly, "If you will step into the yard I will be pleased to show it to you."

The reporter complied with alacrity.

He gazed about him not a little surprised at the magnitude of the workshops and iron foundries which were exclusively employed in the manufacture of the various inventions of Frank Reade, Jr.

They passed on across the yard, and halted beside the door of a large, high-roofed building.

Frank Reade, Jr., tapped lightly on the door.

Instantly a voice in a rich, Irish brogue sounded within. "Paww will you have, anyway?"

"It is me, Barney," said the young inventor, authoritatively. "All right, go on."

The door swung back, and a thick-set Irishman, with a comical mug and merry blue eyes stood in the doorway. "Barney," said Frank, briskly. "I wish to show this gentleman the Electric Air Canoe. Where is Pomp?"

"Share, sor, the saywir do be over yonder, shining up that brasswork."

Frank saw a fat, comical looking dandy, as black as the soot of spades, engaged in scouring some brasswork on the Air Canoe.

"All right, Barney," said the young inventor. "I want you to stay here and watch the door until we come back."

"All right, sor."

Then Frank quickly crossed a platform to the spot where the dandy was.

Pomp instantly dropped his scouring utensils and made a low bow. "'Pee berry glad to see yo', Marse Frank!" he cried. "'Am yo' cum for de Air Canoe?"

"I have," replied Frank. "And I want you to accompany us over the vessel. Do you understand?"

"A right, sah!"

The dandy with a pleased grin proceeded to obey orders. These two eccentric characters, for such they were, had been many years in the employ of the Reades, father and son. Upon all their famous jaunts over the world the inventor had left the two faithful servants.

So long had they been in the employ of the inventors that both had become expert machinists and electricians.

"Behold the Air Canoe!" said Frank Reade, with a sweep of hand.

The reporter was spellbound with the wonderful sight. He saw what was certainly the most wonderful machine that had come across many a day.

The Electric Air Canoe, as its name would imply, was not something in the shape of a canoe.

The bow was round and canoe shaped, and the whole body of the vessel had the appearance of great lightness and buoyancy.

The deck was some fourteen feet in width, and the length of the canoe full one hundred feet.

This gave much room and allowed for a deck-house or circular shape which was in the center of the deck.

In one part of this cabin were the electric dynamos and the revolving machinery which furnished speed to the propeller and the necessary rotoscopes.

These latter were three in number, of large dimensions and great power.

The largest one was in the center of the boat, the shaft of which extended through the roof of the cabin of the deck-house.

The other two were at opposite ends, and here the shafts were extended through the roof of a smaller deck-house. In each house was a dynamo.

So that each rotoscope was operated by a different dynamo.

"The reason of that," said Frank, explantionly, "is for safety also to economize power. Any one of these suspension ropes would support the air-ship, but each is called upon to do its particular amount. In case one dynamo failed the ship would not go."

"A wise precaution!" acknowledged the scribe.

Also a separate dynamo was employed to work the propeller. This made four dynamos aboard the Air Canoe.

The motive power was based upon a storage system which was of E. Frank Reade, Jr.'s.

The main body of the canoe was made of hollow cylinders, and gave buoyancy as well as dimension to the craft.

The deck was spacious and enclosed with a guard rail which ran the way around the vessel.

In the canoe-shaped bow was a port-hole, and through it was thrust a gun which fired dynamite projectiles, also the Israelite, Frank Reade, Jr.

Altogether the Air Canoe was a rig, neat and handsome; a curiosy and light as a feather.

The reporter had kept his note-book on hand, and had been making notes.

They entered the cabin now.

It was an elegantly furnished room. There were rich and costly inlaid floor, luxuriously furnished, and two handsome rooms with elegant bunks.
Scientific instruments and a few articles of vertu hung upon the walls or rested on shelves.

Frank motioned the reporter to a seat at a table and said:

"Well, what do you think of the Air Canoe?"

"Wonderful!" averred the scribe, with a long-drawn breath.

"Nothing on earth can duplicate it. Yet it does not seem possible that this vessel can really fly."

"It is not only possible, but certain," replied Frank.

"I should like to experience the novelty."

"You shall have the chance."

The reporter shrugged his shoulders.

"The earth is good enough for me," he averred. "I think I will sit out this evening." "But I can assure you that there is no risk whatever!" declared Frank.

"You are perfectly safe."

"Not to-day," laughed the scribe. "But by the way, Mr. Reade, what will be the object of your first trip?"

"A peaceful one," replied Frank Reade, Jr., arose.

He crossed the room to a small glass cabinet, unlocked the door and took out a bundle of charts. These he threw upon the table.

"Do you see that?" he cried. "Well, that is the map of Brazil!"

"I can see it," replied the reporter. "Is that your objective point?"

"But study the chart, a bit," said Frank. "Do you see, here is the headwaters of the Amazon?"

"Yes."

"Well, here is a tributary, and it rises in a peculiar country."

"What?"

"Explorers have returned from this country with wonderful stories. It is said that savage and warlike tribes abound there, and that it is more than a white man's life is worth to venture down there."

"Indeed."

"Worse than all else are the huge pythons which infest the forests, the ferocious jaguars, which are as wild and ferocious."

"I declare! A good place to keep away from."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is where I am going with the Air Canoe!"

The reporter looked startled.

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do!"

"But..."

"What would you say, you want to know why I go there."

"You have guessed right."

"Well, I will tell you," said Frank slowly. "It is quite a story."

"The reporter brightened up.

"That is just what I want," he said. "Something exciting!"

"I have no doubt you will consider it an exciting topic. I will put my finger upon a certain spot on the map. Do you see it?"

"Yes."

"Well, there is a most wonderful valley in the center of this part of the continent. Out of a party of one hundred and twenty-five armed explorers only one lived to escape from that valley and reach Rio Janeiro and tell his wonderful story."

"Ah!"

"He gave a wonderful account of their adventures. He said that the valley was literally strewed with diamonds in the rough. They shone as common pebbles in the bed of the river, were studied in the small palm wall and could be found in the surfous soils by digging anywhere."

"A valley of diamonds!" gasped the reporter.

"That is it. I know about three huge stones, which for brilliancy are truly wonderful. They made him rich."

"Heaven! What a chance. Of course he will go back with a large party."

"Nothing would hire him to go back. Neither has any one the inclination to attempt the feat after hearing his tale!"

"But you think of going?"

"True; but I shall not have to thread on foot, two thousand miles of dense forest peopled with a million perils. With the Air Canoe I shall be able to defy the perils of the wonderful Valley of Diamonds.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGE BALLOON.

The scribe sat like one in a daze for some moments.

Then he heaved a deep sigh.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, "I wish I had the courage to venture to go with you. As it is I can only embrace this excellent material for a story. Of course you will find no trouble in reaching the Valley of diamons, I am sure."

"On the contrary, I expect considerable difficulty," said Frank, rising. "But I mean to surmount it."

"I have no doubt you will. All the civilized world will be agape to learn how you succeed in your purpose."

They left the yard, and a few moments later Frank took leave of his visitor.

Then he returned to the building and said to Barney:

"Now, Barney, I want you to have all stores about to-morrow morning and ready for the start."

"All right, sir."

"You'll attend to it."
Indeed, even at that distance two men could be seen engaged in a deadly struggle. One had forced the other to the edge of the basket. He seemed trying hard to throw him out. But the struggle was maintained with deadly force.

The balloon rocked and swayed in a frightful manner. "'Pooh!'" grunted Frank, in horror. "Don't they know that they are in an awful struggle?"

Whether they knew it or not, the two men continued to struggle ferociously. Frank remained inactive no longer. "'Heat the Canoe for the balloon!'" he said to Barney. The Celt quickly changed the course of the Air Canoe.

The balloon speedily drew nearer. The two miles were covered very quickly. It could then be easily seen that the struggle in the basket was one of desperate effort.

The balloon was exactly on a line with the air-ship. Frank Reade, Jr., knew that it would never do for the balloon and the dead man to crash together. There was no doubt but that the rigging of the balloon would catch in the rotocages or rigging of the air-ship and the result would be serious.

So Frank directed Barney to elevate the air-ship so that it would float a hundred feet or more over the balloon. The struggle between the two occupants of the basket was going on fiercely. Frank Reade, Jr., was in a quandary. What to be done? Surely if the struggle was permitted to go on murder would be the result.

Yet the occupants of the Air Canoe seemed powerless.

"'Shove, yer, plwawter wuy do you about it?'" cried Barney.

"'Mercy on us! I do not know,' replied Frank.

"'Golly! I dosk ink dey kill each old er fo' sash!'" cried Pomp.

Frank was like one insane. He walked up and down the deck, shouting frantically to the two men to desist.

"'Cease your foolish quarrel!'" he shouted. "'Don't you know that it will be the death of you?'

But he might as well have talked to empty air. One of the men, however, looked up and saw the air-ship. There was an expression of mingled astonishment and relief upon his face.

The two suddenly, with what seemed a renewal of superhuman strength, he forced his antagonist back and dealt him a blow which laid him insensible in the bottom of the basket.

The deadly struggle was over.

Panicked and exhausted, the victor for a moment leaned over the edge of the basket.

"'Hello, down there!'" shouted Frank Reade, Jr. "'What on earth ails you?'

The survivor of the combat looked up and made a gesture.

"'Hello!'" he replied, faintly. "'Who are you?'

"I am Frank Reade, Jr.," he replied.

"'The inventor of flying machines?'" asked Barney.

"'Yes; but if you will rescue me from this perilous position, I will tell you all about it.'

"I will try." Frank Reade, Jr., turned to Pomp.

"Bring out that long rope ladder," he ordered.

Pomp hastened to obey.

In a few moments he came out of the cabin with the article in question.

It was a very light but strong rope ladder, fully two hundred feet in length.

Pomp fastened it to the rail and threw it over. Down it fell beside the balloon.

The occupants of the car were eagerly waiting for it. "'Hold firm!'" shouted Frank. "'We shall have to ask you to climb up on this ladder as we fear collision with the balloon.'

"All right" replied the balloonist; "but you will have to hurry as I can see a seam opening in the balloon now.'

"All right?"

Frank made an effort to sway the ladder over within reach of the balloonist but at that moment there was a tremendous report, the vast globe collapsed, and shot downward like a meteor.

CHAPTER III.

RESCUED.

A more awful development could hardly have been imagined. A great cry of horror went up from Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp.

"My God! They have gone down to death!' cried Frank, in agony.

"'I'm sure, it is de faw ob dem!' wailed Pomp.

"Begorra, it's the ini av tain!' squawked Barney.

All crowded to the rail of the Air Canoe to watch the downward course of the fated balloon.

It was a dizzy height.

The balloon had ascended miles away, and objects were dim and vague.

The balloon was traveling downward like a meteor. When the men on board the Air Canoe had expected to see it strike the earth with a mighty rebound.

Such a thing would of course have settled the fate of those in the basket.

But now a great cry went up from Barney.

"'Bejeholz, wud yez see the watters?' he cried; "'they'll hit for sure'

Directly beneath the descending balloon was a large lake.

That the balloon would strike in its center Frank was assured.

In an instant hope dwindled in the young inventor's breast.

He knew that it was a good chance for the aeronauts to escape if they should strike the bosom of the lake.

If they were good swimmers and the maniac recovered his senses there was a chance for them.

Frank turned to Barney.

"'Down—down!' he cried. "'Reverse the lever on the switchboard! Quickly!'

"'All right, sir!' Into the pilot-house sprang Barney.

The Celt turned the lever in question, and downward darted the air-ship.

Of course it was impossible to overtake the balloon.

This had already struck the surface of the lake.

The silk envelope was shot out upon the water, and a great cry went up from watching Pomp.

"'Fo' de Lor, Mary Frank,' cried the darky, "'dem swimming fo' all dey is waff!'

This was true.

There were two forms in the water below, and they were struggling to reach the bank.

The lake was large, and there was no possibility that they might swim to the shore.

There was no time to lose.

"'Down—down faster, Barney!' cried Frank, excitedly.

But the Celt needed no urging.

The air-ship was now but a hundred feet above the water. Another hundred feet and the rope ladder dangled in the water.

The two swimmers saw it and made for it.

The next moment both were drawn on board, not much the worse for their involuntary bath.

The maniac seemed as intelligent and lucid as his companion.

"'Can l be praised, we are saved!' he cried.

And then he passed a hand across his forehead, gazing about him in a dazed way.

"'But what is all this?' he exclaimed, vaguely. "'Am I dreaming or is it reality?'

"'It is reality, Henry Haines!' said his companion, gripping his hand. "'Poor fellow, you have been through a good deal. You probably are not aware of the fact that you were temporarily a madman up there in the air and came near taking my life'"

"'My God! do not tell me that!' groaned the restored madman.

"'It is true. If I had not rapped you on the head pretty hard you would have thrown me out of the balloon!'

"'God forgive me! I have the recollection of it, Allan Gray. I must have been the rendered air and the pressure up there'"

"'That was it,' replied Allan Gray; "'but we have escaped, let us congratulate ourselves. I think this will end our balloonizing experiences.'

"'God grant it may!'

Frank Reade, Jr., had listened with interest and now understood all.

He knew that the pressure upon the brain in upper air stratum very often caused temporary aberration of mind.

This was doubt was what had overtaken Henry Haines, the aeronaut. He was once more himself, however, as could be plainly seen.

"'Then your companion is not a confirmed madman?' asked Frank, as he shook hands with Gray.

"'Oh, no,' replied the younger aeronaut. "'You understand how it was. I beg pardon. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Allan Gray, Professor of Latin and Greek at the Western University of Ethics and Science. This my co-laborer, Dr. Henry Haines.'

"'I am glad to meet you, gentlemen,' said Frank, warmly. "'Need I introduce myself?'"

"'We have heard of you, and are well acquainted with your name as an inventor,' declared Gray, cordially. "'But I promised to tell you how we happened in our flight up there so far?'"

"'Very good!' agreed Frank.

"'The balloon is of our own construction. We have long had in mind the ascension, as you desired much to know the effect of the upper atmosphere upon certain chemicals which we had hoped to perfect in such manner as to improve upon our present style of aerometry. We were succeeding fairly well, when the valve rope broke, and we were unable to descend. Then Haines went mad. You knew the rest.'

"'I think you may congratulate yourselves upon a fortunate escape,' said Frank.

"'Indeed we may, and we owe the preservation of our lives to you.'

"'I am glad to have been able to serve you," said Frank, modestly.

But what a wonderful invention this is! Truly you are a genius!
FRANK READE JR.'S ELECTRIC AIR CANOE.

Mr. Reade. In fact, I may safely say, the goons of the age.

Frank blushed confusedly at such a direct compliment as this. He proceeded, however, to show his prowess on the air-ship.

The two scientists were delighted.

They declared the Air Canoe the most wonderful of modern inventions.

"Now, gentlemen," said Frank, pleasantly, "where shall I drop you?"

"If I were allowed to follow my own inclination," said Gray, "I should beg of you to allow us to travel with you on this wonderful voyage in quest of the Valley of Diamonds."

"I fear that would be impossible," said Frank, politely.

"Oh, of course! But we wish you success, Mr. Reade."

"Thank you."

"As for that— you may drop us at Stirling, a village at the other end of this lake. We can make our way home easily from there."

"Very well!"

A short while later the Air Canoe descended in the vicinity of the small town named, and leave was taken of the scientists.

These more the Air Canoe shot upwards and took its southward course.

No other aeronauts were encountered, and in two days' time Pomp sighted the Gulf of Mexico.

Soon they were above this vast body of water.

Straight to the southward the air-ship kept, passing over certain islands of the West Indies.

Then one day, and was sighted, which Frank declared to be the coast of Venezuela.

The air-ship was here allowed to descend nearer the earth.

The rocky coast was revealed, with its shores rich with tropical vegetation.

The heat was intense and the voyagers had all donned white linen shirts and caps. Frank took his bearings, and calculated that they were not far from the mouth of the Orinoco river.

As they were so near the estuary of the great river it was decided to visit it.

Accordingly the air-ship was headed a little to the east, and the coast was followed for one hundred miles or more. Then the next morning Barney first sighted the mouth of the mighty river so near the equator.

A wonderful sight was spread before the gaze of our voyagers. The delta of the Orinoco presented a scene of impressive grandeur. Divided into a thousand streams the great river here waters a vast territory, back of which the scenery is as wild and grand as any human mind could conceive.

The air-ship was now headed inland. Several large towns were passed over and in one of these there was a large fort.

From this cannon shots were fired upward at the Air Canoe.

But at that height our voyagers could laugh at this. From what could be seen of the people below, they seemed to have been thrown into a state of the greatest excitement.

There was no doubt but that the appearance of the air-ship had a supernatural effect upon them.

Frank did not retaliate, for he had no desire to shed human blood. With his dynamite projectiles he could have blown the town to atoms, but he would not.

The air-ship passed over mighty plantations where negro slaves were at work in gangs.

On land for the first time the Air Canoe swiftly sailed.

Then civilization was left behind, and a country wilder than the human imagination could picture was encountered.

The country now became more hilly and waterfalls became frequent.

At times small native settlements were seen in the woods below.

The air-ship was sailing over the at the surface of the river when a thrilling incident occurred.

Across the river, at an angle where it was not very wide, a rope bridge was stretched.

The ropes were manufactured of a kind of fiber or vine which grows in the forest and are very strong and durable.

Often the South American natives bridge the deepest chasms or most dangerous streams with these ropes.

At sight of the rope bridge Barney gave a sharp cry.

"Sure wud you let at the bridge av rope?" he cried; "that's fair wurr to be share."

"You are right!" cried Frank. "But ah—look at that."

A native half naked had started to cross the rope.

It was a foot wide and half way across when she chanced to look up and see the air-ship.

A yell of terror escaped her lips and she went off the bridge like a flash.

Down into the water she went with a great splash.

But this was not all.

The moment she struck the water from the shores there started a myriad savage alligators all eager for a meal.

The fall of the native woman into the water was a matter of little consequence.

She could have swam double that distance to shore.

But in the treacherous waters of the river, with the alligators all about her, her fate seemed sealed.

"Begorra, it's easier up than wud we be," cried Barney.

"Golly, you're right!" cried Pomp.

"She must be saved!" declared Frank, with rigid face. "Barney, down with the rope ladder, will you? Pomp, you steady the ship."

Barney needed no further bidding.

The way he put the rope ladder over the rail was wonderful.

Frank Reade, Jr., springing to the dynamite gun in the bow.

The native woman had crawled upon a rock, but she was by no means out of the way of the alligators, who were coming for her full speed.

Frank pulled back the air valve of the pneumatic gun and set a projectile in the breech.

He took careful aim at a mass of the alligators and pulled the lever.

The next moment the projectile struck the water and raised a column fifty feet in height.

Half a dozen dead alligators lay belly upward in the water. Quick as a flash Frank turned the gun in another direction and shot.

The effect was the same.

It was a slaughter of savages.

The water was red with blood and the bodies of the alligators floated everywhere.

Meanwhile, Barney had gone down the rope ladder like a monkey.

He reached down and threw one arm about the terrified native woman.

"Shure, av ye will help yerself a bit we'll soon git yer out av this," cried the Celt.

But the native woman was too terrified to heed what was said to her, nor could she have understood Barney if she had.

But Barney lifted her in his powerful arms and led to Pomp. The latter started the Air Canoe forward, and in this manner Barney and his charge were swung across the bosom of the river to the land.

Here the Celt dropped his load and himself upon the ground.

But the native woman at once fell upon her face before her rescuer in the most abject manner.

"Begorra, ye didn't do that!" cried the Celt, humorously. "Shure it's not polite in ye to throw yeil at a gentleman's feet. The ledies in our country don't do that. It's the other way, begorra."

But the native woman evidently believed her captor a devil and was bound to pay him homage.

Frank from the deck saw the situation.

He laughed in amusement.

"Now is your chance, Barney!" he cried. "Why don't you catch on!"

"Shure an' I might av wasn't a married man," cried the Celt.

"Shure, it's niver any man can have the ladies worship him."

Frank came down the ladder with this, Pomp meanwhile lowering the Air Canoe.

But no sooner had the young inventor's feet touched the ground when a startling thing happened.

From the undergrowth about full a score of uncouth natives leaped out.

They were armed to the teeth.

But as sight of the air-ship they all fell upon their faces.

"Begorra, it's a very polite loc av havin' they be, to be shure," cried Barney. "Mebbe iz't their av gottin' acquainted."

"No doubt," said Frank, with a laugh.

Finally one of the natives, evidently the chief of the tribe arose, and ventured to approach Frank.

He was a white-haired, patriarchal-looking old fellow and wore a huge embroidered belt of python's skin.

He jabbered away for a few moments, and then began sign talk.

As near as possible Frank learned from him that they were at the moment in the heart of a dangerous country, and that there were hostile tribes near.

"Well," said Frank to Barney, after awhile, "we can gain nothing by staying here. Let us get out."

"All right, sir!"

Barney had turned to go aboard the air-ship, at that moment a startling thing happened.

There came from the woods a wild cry, and into the open sprang a man.

At first the voyagers took him for one of the natives.

He was dressed just the same, and his skin exposed for so long to the tropical sun was of nearly the same color.

But that he was a white man and an American was quickly known.

Long matted hair fell down upon his shoulders and a beard upon his breast.

He sprang up to Frank, crying wildly:

"One of my own countrymen. God be praised! How glad I am to see you?"

"Heaven!" gasped Frank. "Who are you?"

"Will you ask that question?" cried the nomad. "I have nigh lost my identity in all these years!"

"You are a white man!"

"Yes, and a native of New York. Are you an American?"

"I am."

"I know it. My name is Jasper White. I was once a man of wealth in New York City."

"But—what are you doing here?" asked Frank, in amazement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHITE EXILE.

The fall of the native woman into the water was a matter of little consequence. She could have swum double that distance to shore.
Ah, that is a sad story. I did not stay here and adapt this life of my own free will.

"Indeed!"

Eighteen years ago I invested my fortunes in a mine in British Guiana. I came down here to look it up, found that I had been victimized and was a ruined man.

The stranger covered his face with his hands and wept.

Finally he continued:

"I kissed them both, and if I could have got back to America then, I think I would have killed them. But I could not. I had no money, and could I have been dead or stilled in this accursed land.

"Well, after a time I tried to forget it, and I drifted into the woods.

One day our party was set upon by natives, and all were killed but me.

"My life was interested for by the child's daughter. I was taken into the tribe, she became my wife according to their forms, and here I am.

"Eighteen years I have lived in the same manner as primitive man. You are the first of my people whom I have seen in that time."

"Indeed!", exclaimed Frank, who had been deeply interested in the tale. "You have seen the same experience."

"You will agree to that?"

"Yes,"

"But it seems a blessing divine to look upon my kind again."

"I presume you are anxious to get back to America?"

"No,"

"The stranger's face wore a sad and sorrowful expression.

His breast heaved with emotion.

"I will agree to put you in the way to get back!" declared Frank.

"No," said the stranger, firmly. "I have no desire to go back."

"No desire?"

"Pray, why not?"

Frank nodded his head.

"Perhaps you're right.

"I know that I am. What is more, my native wife has been true and loving to me. In a measure I have educated her and brought her much to my level. We have plenty children and our primitive home is happy."

The recluses stepped forward and gripped Frank's hand.

"I thank you kindly," he said, "but you can see why I do not go back!"

"I do!" replied Frank, heartily. "And I think you may be right."

At any rate, I wish you all success!"

"I thank you."

Jasper White, the recluse, was wholly astounded when the Air Canoe was shown him.

"I can remember the wanderings of the steamship and the railroad," he declared, "but I have never expected to see the problem of sailing in the air solved."

"Well, you see it now," said Frank, pleasantly. "If you see fit to leave your house, I will take you to the nearest seaport."

"No, I will stay here."

The natives, under the influence of their white chief, now ventured to come nearer the air-ship.

They, indeed, became quite social, and even went so far as to bring presents of nuts and a tiger skin to Frank.

In return they received some articles of steel and some old garments, which delighted them greatly.

When it was generally known that the voyagers had saved one of their women from the alligators the natives were more than ever friendly.

The sight of the score or more of dead alligators in the river was a thrilling one to the natives.

It seemed to give Jasper White an idea.

He advanced to Frank's side.

"Would we wish to see our co-operation in a little matter," he said.

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"There is a tiger of the man-eating species which has troubled us for a year past. He has caused the death of fully a dozen of our people."

"Indeed!"

"If you could help us to hunt him down, we will pay you in any way within our power."

"I will do that with pleasure!" replied Frank, readily.

"Thank you a thousand times!"

Barney and Pomp were delighted with the idea of a tiger hunt.

It promised excitement of the most intense kind, and this was vastly to their liking.

Jasper White led the way through a leafy screen of forest to the native village.

Here a curious scene was spread out to the gaze of the voyagers.

It was much to the education of Barney and Pomp.

CHAPTER V.

YAMING THE TIGER.

The native village embraced half a hundred conical shaped huts.

They were made of palmetto leaves intertwined and framed, and were absolutely impervious to water.

The native women were collected for a dance in honor of the visitors.

These were in the main comedy, and the curious dance was not ungraceful and quite amusing.

Then the chief's guests were invited to participate in a feast.

This consisted much of game, wild fruits, and fruits.

An appetizing drink made from a peculiar plant found in the forest was indulged in.

All this ceremony over with, the tiger hunt was broached.

The air-ship was brought down into the village.

Arrangements were quickly made.

It was known to a certainty where the tiger's lair was.

This was in a deep jungle not far from the village.

It was planned that a score of the natives would beat the jungle, armed with torches to defend themselves.

There was no doubt but that the tiger would come forth.

The air-ship would hover over the jungle, and at sight of the tiger, Frank would annihilate it with one of his dynamite projectiles.

The pneumatic gun was trained and ready.

Frank and Barney and Pomp with Jasper White were on board.

The air-ship went up one hundred feet and started for the jungle.

The sensation of sailing in the air was an exciting one to Jasper.

He was for a time wholly carried away with the novelty, but exciting incidents were close at hand.

The air-ship now hung over the jungle, and Jasper pointed out the spot where the beast had its lair.

Descent paths were seen in the jungle leading in all directions.

These, it was declared, had been made by the brute.

The jungle had always been a resort of terror to the natives.

It could be seen that the natives were already encircling the jungle and beginning to beat the grass.

But Frank Reade, Jr., did not feel disposed to wait for all this business.

The young inventor conceived a better and more expedient idea.

"Well, my friend," he said to White, "you believe that the beast is in that jungle, do you?"

"Yes, sir," replied White.

"All right."

"What are you going to do?"

"Scare him out."

"How?"

"I will show you."

"But I would pray you wait. My men will soon succeed in that."

"I haven't the slightest doubt of that," replied Frank, "but I know a quicker way."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Ah, well, I have nothing to say."

Frank advanced to the bow of the Canoe and trained the gun upon the thick clump, believed to be the lair of the man-eater.

Then he sent a projectile down into the place.

There was a terrific explosion.

The result was wonderful.

Earth, stones, grass and debris flew up into the air to a great height.

The noise of the explosion had hardly died out, when the brute gave a terrible roar, and out into the open part of the jungle there leaped a magnificent specimen of the South American tiger.

He was a monster of his species.

There he stood, baring his fangs and glaring up at the air-ship with a wicked light in his eyes.

"Whoa!" cried Frank. "He is a big fellow, isn't he?"

"Didn't I tell you so?"

"You're right!"

"Begorr, I'll take me langy that Barnum nirver had the lookts at him in his big menagerie!" cried Barney.

"Hah!" said Pomp. "Didn't yo' ever see a tiger outside ob Barnum's afo? yo' big foot! Bahamore!"

"Jebejaws, it's a foil yez call me, eh?" spluttered Barney, making a pass at the darky.

"Dat am what yo' a-of?

"I'll have yer hide fer that, magsur!"

Barney and Pomp would have had a scrap then and there, but Frank stopped it.

There was too much other fun ahead now, and the practical joking was stopped.

Frank could have sent a projectil down and blow the tiger into pieces mean with easy.

But another idea had come into his mind.

"Look here, White," he said, with a laugh. "You say that tiger has eaten up twelve of your people?"

"Yes."

"Well, how would you like him for a pet?"

The recluse was astounded.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Just what I say."
CHAPTER VI.

POPP SQUARES UP WITH BARNLEY.

The native's countenance was gay that night.

While the中国企业s were built, the tom-toms were beaten loud and well.

The dancing maidens appeared again, and then came the warriors in grotesque dances.

It was all very interesting to the voyagers.

But Pomp said:

"Huh! I done fink we kin bot dat music all out. Eh, Pish?"

"Begorra, it's rough yu are, naygur!" cried Barnley.

"Into the cabin they ran.

When they came out they had a bonfire and fiddle.

Pomp was a skilful player of the famous Irish fiddle.

Pomp wafted into the center of the camp and began a lively clog

upon his banjo.

The natives ceased their own discordant music.

They crowded about the two sailors, agog with interest.

"I'll give yez fast show, naygur!" cried Barnley. "Do yer best!"

"Alright, said Pomp.

Pomp whirled the banjo into position and began work.

He was an uncommon good player.

The way he rallied off the music there was thrilling.

He sang plantation melodies, song and dance, and many others.

The natives ecstatically applauded to the echo.

Then came Barnley with his famous Irish fiddle.

The Celt played jig and air and wound up by singing some very

beautiful Irish airs.

It was before sunrise.

Yet every native was on hand.

"Remember that you will always be welcome in Tanagusa Land!"

cried Jasper White, warmly. "You will never be forgotten!"

"It is pleasant to know that," said Frank.

"By the way, Mr. Reade, are you traveling for pleasure?"

Frank gave a start.

"Ah, that makes me think!" he exclaimed. "I want to ask you, Mr. White, if you have ever heard of the Valley of Diamonds?"

"Very, certainly."

"Where is it located?"

"Far down in Brazil. Near the Rio Negro. I believe it is in Ma-

zouka Land."

"Have you ever been there?"

"No.

"Is it difficult of access?"

"It always has been. The Mazoucas are hard fighters and always hostile. Then there is the Serpent Valley to pass through."

"Indeed!"

"You will be almost sure to be attacked by pythons in that valley."

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then you think we will have trouble?"

"Ah, I forgot," said White, with a low bow. "Of course the Air Canoes can go anywhere."

"Is there any truth about the discovery of diamonds there?"

"It is all truth. The lands of the river are full of diamond."

"Thank you for the information."

A short while later the air-ship took leave of Jasper White's settle-


ment.

The natives were scarcely less pleased by his performance.

They cheered him wildly and wanted more.

But it was a late hour and all felt called upon to retire.

The fete was ended for the night.

At last the travellers were in bed and all were soon fast asleep.

The next day Frank decided to leave the Tanagusa village at an

early hour.

Frank had decided to remain there until the next day.

Accordingly preparations were made by the delighted Tanagusas for a grand fete in honor of their old and new guests.

The natives scattered up with Barne.

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FRANK READE JR.'S ELECTRIC AIR CANOE.

CHAPTER VII.
IN THE PYTHONS' VALLEY.

The cry given by Pomp was one of great alarm. But it was not necessary for him to explain his alarm, for the cause was at once made apparent to the others.

The Air Canoe had seemed to lose its headway and had begun to sink down to the earth.

"We are falling!" cried Frank. "What is the matter?"

He rushed into the dynamo room. It was easy to see.

The dynamo did not work.

What was the trouble?

Frank guessed at once that it was on account of the empty storage jars.

However, no harm could be done if the Air Canoe did not strike the earth too hard. But it seemed to settle gradually.

The rotoscopes kept up sufficient motion to steady the ship. Down went the aerial vessel and rested upon an open space of ground in the verge of a dense growth of trees.

Here the Air Canoe rested safe and secure.

With joy Frank saw a deep brook near from which to get water to replenish the jars.

"Golly, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp, with wide, open eyes. "We jes' in good luck dis time!"

"You are right," agreed Frank; "but come, there is work for all to do, and we must get about it.

The two faithful servants needed no urging.

A line of hose, connected with a force pump, was led to the water of the brook.

But before water could be pumped, a series of most thrilling incidents occurred.

Barney was at the edge of the brook with the end of the hose.

Pomp was half way to the Air Canoe.

Barney thrust the end of the hose into the brook.

He was about to rise when he stepped upon what he thought was a long palmetto log.

The Celt's surprise was beyond expression when the supposed log yielded and suddenly became a squirming, live body.

A great brown body rose in the air and threw itself into mighty coils.

"Tare an' "annual!" shrieked the astounding and terrified Celt. "It is a snake! Sure it's a bit I am. Help—help!"

Barney made a dive for the Air Canoe.

But the huge python, for such it was, threw out a coil and caught him.

In a trice Barney was lifted from his feet, his belt cracking and saw the snake's huge jaws over him.

The poor fellow shrieked with terror and despair.

Pomp was so dazed and horrified that he could not act.

But at that opportune moment Frank came on deck.

He saw the situation.

At once he cried:

"Keep quiet, Barney. Don't try to make a move!"

The Celt heard Frank's voice.

"Save me, Misher Frank!" he cried. "Shure, it's the ind a me!"

"Have courage!" shouted Frank, and quick as a flash he threw his Winchester to his shoulder.

He knew that it was a fine shot, and that only a chance of any narrow kind would save the Celt.

But he did not hesitate to make it.

He aimed straight at the huge serpent's head.

Crack!

The bullet sped on its way.

Instantly the tables turned.

The ball struck the serpent's head and reduced it to a vulgar fraction.

There was a convulsive plunge and leap of the coils. Barney felt himself freed and sprang away.

But the headless coils of the snake went twisting away into a pit of bruises.

No sooner had it struck the bruises, however, when the clown seemed alive with twisting bodies.

Out into the open shot a huge python.

A second came close behind, and then a third.

Three of the monsters were now in full play.

"Heaven's!" gasped Frank. "I never saw such a den of snakes!"

Barney had just clambered aboard the Air Canoe.

Pomp had his rifle ready and drew aim upon one of the pythons.

"We are indeed very on the Python Valley," cried Frank. "Did you ever see so many snakes before?

"Look out dar!" cried Pomp. "I jes' gwine to smash dat thing with yer yaller body!"

Crack!

The darkly's rifle spoke.

But his aim had not been as good as Frank's.

The bullet struck the python but not its head.

The ball plowed into the reptile's body and made an ugly wound.

"Why, of course!" cried the young inventor. "It must be done once!"

An alarming cry came from Pomp at this moment.
CHAPTER VIII.  
THE GORILLA.

It was truly a strange sight which the young inventor beheld.  

The air was filled with a strange squelching noise.  
The pygmy seemed all in a state of unrest and excitement.  

These on the air-ship's deck glided off, and Frank was astounded to see some of them making for the cover of the jungle past haste.  
The explanation of this was, however, as clear as an arrow at once.

Into the clearing there had swung a vast herd of curious little animals.  

They looked very much like pigs, but ran like squirrels over the ground.

Frank knew at once what they were.

He understood all.

They were pygmies.

These curious little animals are a terror in their way.

With the luckless traveler or animal who gets in their path when once they start to run.

The pygmy is of the swine family, and these are all known as the implacable enemy of the man.

The huge pygmies were no less of terror to the pygmies.

No pygmy was ever known to crush a pygmy in its folds.

The little animals are too spry and agile and have such fearful razor-sharp teeth, that they would make mincemeat of a man in an instant.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew this well.

So when he saw the pygmies coming he knew they were at an end.

Down into the clearing came the pygmies.

There seemed a thousand of them in the drove.

Nothing could stand before them.

Such as the pygmies as stood their ground met a swift fate.

In less than two minutes after the pygmies had struck the snake scarcely a vestige of it could be seen anywhere.

With their fearful sharp jaws they had torn the reptiles to pieces with the swiftness and ease of a minute meat chopper.

Down through the glade went the flying pygmies.

In a twinkling they were out of sight.

But not a pygmy was left on the scene.

The pygmies had cleared the country completely.

It had been a wonderful sight, and the spectators never forgot it.

"Wurroo!" cried Barney.  "Did ever you see the looks at that?  

Sure, them little pigs are jest like the kolinds that run wild in cold Ireland!"

"Easy, Barney!" said Frank, with a laugh; "but come, let us get out of this insomnious place."

Barney joined him, and in a short while the jaws were filled.

Then the dynamics were once more working, and all was in readiness to start.

Frank lost no time.

He had no desire to stay longer in the valley of the pygmies.

The diamond valley next!" he cried.

The Air-Ship rose once more into the air.  

Down through the pygmy valley went the air-ship.

Very soon the entrance to the valley beyond was reached.

It was a deep pass between high walls of stone.

The air-ship passed over it and hovered over the Valley of Diamonds.

At last the Megan of their pilgrimage had been reached.  

The voyagers were eager to begin work.

There certainly was a large stream which flowed through the valley.

By other points Frank also recognized it as the spot for which they had been searching.

The young inventor viewed the scene with varied emotions.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed; "It is just such a spot as I should have imagined for a diamond mine!"

"Bogorra, it looks to me very much like a howling wilderness," asserted Barney.

"Of course!" agreed Frank; "but it is in just a wilderness that precious stones and minerals are found.  Look at the Kimberley mines, for example."

Barney said no more.

Frank decided upon a spot and landed, and the air-ship slowly settled down upon the earth.

It was a level spot not far from the stream.

This latter was quite a torrent, rushing down over rocks at a rapid rate.

"Now for work!" cried Frank, as he emerged from the cabin with a pick-ax and light spade.  

"Come, Barney and Pomp, let us see how true this story of the existence of diamonds is."

"All right, sir," cried Barney.

Both followed Frank over the rail.

The Air-Cane was securely anchored.

There was little chance for it to get away, and the young inventor felt safe enough in leaving it.

The rail had been cleverly charged with electricity.
CHAPTER IX.

THE NATIVE VILLAGE.

The situation was now to say the least alarming. Barney gave a yell and demanded his issue.

"Ooh honoo, the bloody baste is after us, Mister Frank!" he cried.

"Shure it's kilt we'll all be!"

It was indeed a terrifying sight to see the huge monster bearing down upon them so savagely. Barney was well justified in his terror.

Barney and Pomp crouched close beside Frank in abject terror.

"Beaah, we'll have to work fast, na'gurt!" cried Barney.

With this all fell to work in haste. But the next half-hour's digging brought no fruit.

Then it uttered a frightful roar. Accordingly he started up with that purpose.

Frank readied himself for a lunge at the creature's head. But as he glanced over the edge of the tank to the Air Canoe he read a thrilling spectacle.

"Great heavens!" he gasped. "What do you call that?"

"'tis that ye say!" cried Barney, starting up.

"Truly it is a thrilling sight which met their gaze. Crossing the open space between them and the Air Canoe was a creature of most extraordinary appearance.

Frank looked at the airship and saw the monster. He was about to start when the creature appeared. He had to decide whether or not to intervene.

"Ah golliff!" gasped Frank.

"Let us make a lunge at it!" cried Barney.

"Must we?" asked Frank, doubtfully.

"No!" cried Barney.

"Let us make a lunge at it!" cried the astonished Celt. "An' shure, shor, phew should I bow ow!"

"It won't do to shoot."

"Ah! phew not, sot?"

"Nothing would be gained by it. The creature's hide is too tough for our guns to penetrate."

"Shure ye don't man it?"

"Yes, I do."

Barney reluctantly lowered his rifle.

"Phew this we shall do, Misher Frank!" he asked.

"I don't know, for a fact, for a fact, for a fact!"

"Keep quiet for a while!" said Frank, with discernment. "We may have to do this thing before we escape an attack by the brute."

"But Barney had no more to say.

"Pomp all the while had been watching the creature with wonderment.

The gorilla seemed wrapped in a kind of contemplation of the airship. To its primitive mind the invention of civilized beings must have been an object of wonderment.

The brute leaned upon its staff a moment contemplatively.

Widling the stout sapling aloft he flung it with terrific force straight at the airship. It struck the rail with such force as to be splintered in fragments.

"Begorra, wot ye lute at the muscle by the blast!" cried Barney.

"Shure he's as strong as an ox."

"Stroonger than Frank." said Frank. "Why, I tell you the Brazilian gorilla can fell an elephant. The ho's no match for his powerful arms."

The gorilla, now evidently satisfied as to the offensively active character of the airship, advanced toward it.

Frank now smiled.

If the brute should chance to come in contact with the rail it would be interesting to note the result.

The strongest men could not resist the electric current.

It was hardly likely that the gorilla could. But Frank watched with great interest.

The beast approached the Air Canoe cautiously. Then slowly it reached up and grasped the rail. The result was as well as extremely comical.

For once in its life the gorilla encountered a force greater than its own.

Though it was but a puppet the huge brute was hurled back with such force that it turned a couple of desperate somersaults. A more astonished animal than that gorilla when it recovered itself would have been hard to find.

In spite of the peril so close upon them, the voyagers could not refrain from a hearty laugh.
Frank Read Jr.'s Electric Air Canoe.

But Pomp brought the hatchet mercilessly down upon their fingers. With a shriek the two monsters relaxed their hold and went down into the earth to the sides of the wall.

They struck the earth in a heap and lay there.

Frank turned his head and his eyes follow their former path. He seemed to assume that they had been instantly killed.

Barney now checked the upward flight of the airship. The Air Canoe now hung—

Frank's fears were verified at once, and a thrill of horror seized him.

These natives were the very tribe of whom he had been told who had murdered the previous visitors, only one escaping to tell the tale.

CHAPTER XI.

Treachery of the Natives.

The effect of this discovery upon the young inventor may well be imagined.

His first inclination was to turn about and visit vengeance upon the assassins.

This he could easily have done with his dynamite gun.

But upon second thought he refrained from so doing.

And having committed a breach of great judgment.

Thinking to impress the worthy with the power of his invention, he took four of the canoes and boarded the airship.

It was a great mistake.

They knew eyes and showed natures took in everything.

The electric current, which Frank exhibited to them, was in their case a matter of trial.

They considered the voyagers as no more than they were themselves—human beings—and the capability of the savage was aroused at once.

On the return of the determination seized them to take possession of the Air Canoe.

Frank never committed a greater breach of discretion in his life.

He saw it when too late.

The first and natural trick of the designing savages was to profess friendship.

They came around the airship in a friendly manner, and Barney and Pomp hurried articles with them for small diamonds which the natives declared came from the sacred valley.

Of course our adventures only too glad of the opportunity to procure the precious stone so cheaply.

But they did not dream of the crush so near at hand.

For two days the voyagers remained at the native village.

Then Frank began to think of paying a visit again to the diamond valley.

The chief assured him that the diamonds were to be procured nowhere else.

Then he took Frank to the outlet of the lake.

Here a startling sight was revealed to him.

A long natural flame lay down across the lake.

At its upper end, what seemed like a precarious collection, served alone to hold back the waters of the lake.

The chief grinned when Frank remarked this.

The savages seemed eager enough to engage in the pursuit of diamond hunting at this upper end of the valley.

The other end was where the gorillas were to be encountered, and nothing would induce them to go there.

Frank considered this all natural enough, and did not demur.

Arrangements were made to begin work the next day.

Early the next morning Frank saw the chief and a dozen of the natives approaching.

They came boldly onto the airship's deck.

Frank was surprised at this action.

Barney was in the cabin and Pomp was on the forward deck.

The chief made signs as if to speak with Frank.

The young inventor drew near.

Quick as a flash the chief made a sign to his men, and they were upon Frank like human wolves.

The young inventor was crushed to the deck instantly.

In a flash of time he was a prisoner in the power of the natives.

A sensation of horror swept over him.

Too late he saw his folly.

Pomp was overtaken by the next moment by the natives.

He was also overpowered.

The natives then seized him and dragged him to the side of the crowd.

Frank was not noticed by the chief.

Frank turned towards the Air Canoe's deck and went among the bats.

But Barney had seen the danger just in time and was quick to act.

He darted into the cabin and closed the door behind him.

The natives dashed their weight against it, but in vain.

The windows were iron barred, and they could not enter that way.

Barney was safe.

"Begorah, Mister Frank!" he cried, "What villain shall I do? If I come out to help ye, they'll grab me too?"

"Turn the lever, Barney,!" cried Frank, with quick thought.

Swift as a flash Barney complied.

It was certainly the best move under the circumstances.

He turned the lever.

With a great whirr and rush the rotocages began to revolve, and up shot the Air Canoe.

Up like a flash, and in a twinkling the earth was a thousand feet below.

The effect upon the natives was just what might have been expected.

The sensation was a new and startling one to them.

They became seized with a panic, and rushed to the rail.

Frank and Pomp were both safe and uninjured.

Barney flew open the cabin door, and both rushed in.

The natives meanwhile were clutching the rail with clattering teeth and wilderst terror.

"Begorah, we fooled the speleons that tomes!" cried Barney.

"You're right?" agreed Frank, "but it was a close call!"
**CHAPTER XI.**

**THE FLOOD.**

The Mazootas certainly seemed to be the best fighters. They forced their enemies back to the very verge of the diamond valley.

The descent here was a steep one, and if they were forced over the loss of life would be large. The natives fought determinedly. But they had not their chief with them to direct them. He had fallen a victim to the vengeance of the gorillas. Hottier waxed the fight.

Finally the natives were driven down into the sacred valley. Here they made a bold stand, and aided by some unevolved grunts held the Mazootas at bay.

But the latter did not seem to press the fight so hard now. Indeed, their purpose was a far deeper one and meant the extermination of the foe at one fell swoop. How they brought about this was quickly seen.

A number of them rushed to the head of the flame. The effect that it was a well-guarded fact to the natives that but one log kept the lake back from flooding the valley. The parting of this single log would allow the debris to fall, and the lake would leap from its impoundment. Even Frank Reade, Jnr., had not discovered that fact. But the Mazootas had got hold of it in some way. Frank saw their purpose when it was too late to prevent it. The Mazootas had liberated the lake, and it was on its way down the valley.

The natives in the valley realized this, and ran shrieking for their heights.

But they never reached them.

Down into the Valley of Diamonds surged the tremendous avalanche of water.

In a matter of minutes it raced to the farthest end; there was no outlet there. The lake was held imprisoned. It merely exchanged its channel for another.

The two miles of wild valley was in less than fifteen minutes transformed into a mighty body of water. Before knew forever were the treasures of the diamond valley. Nobody ever knew just what treasures were buried there; what was the real worth of the doggeries.

The natives gazed ashamed upon the impressive scene. The Mazootas were holding up the keels of their boats.

"Our quest is ended," cried Frank, with a shade of disappointment in his voice. "The diamond valley and its wealth is buried forever!" But the young inventor went forward and thrust a dynamite cartridge into the pneumatic gun.

He was just the man to give the barbarian Mazootas a good lesson. He inclined the muzzle of the gun downward and drew back the trigger. The cartridge exploded. It struck the center of a group of barbarians. In a flash the air was filled with debris, and in mad terror the burst of the blood of the bowlers fled incoherently. Another projectile sent after them effectually warned them away. Upon one of them Frank allowed the Air Canoe to settle down over the center of the lake bed. In places the water stood in pools. But there were wide stretches of sand and gravel. Upon one of these Frank allowed the Air Canoe to rest. Then preparations were made for exploring the bed of the lake.}{ continue }
It was so dazzling in its radiance that a great cry escaped his lips.

"My soul! here is a diamond the first thing. What a beauty."

On the sand Frank picked a diamond fully the size of his thumb.

It was a magnificent stone and worth many thousand dollars.

The young inventor was delighted.

"There's the one we always sought. Perhaps we have exchanged old diggings for better ones."

Barney and Pomp viewed the stone with admiration and wonderment.

Then the Celt exclaimed:

"On me weorred, Barney O'Shea, ye're not smart, or ye'll find the moe to that."

"I hope you may" laughed Frank.

Then the search began.

But strange to say, it proved a futile one.

For two days the diamond hunters remained in the bed of the lake.

But not even the smallest kind of a precious stone was found.

Finally they abandoned the quest in despair.

"Is it possible?" cried Frank Beade, Jr., in dismay.

"Is this the silly stone we are to find?"

"It lacks that way, sort it" said Barney.

"I don't think it makes water but covered up de moe valuable ob de diamond!" cried Pomp. "We're no in it!"

"Faw's that—the watter?" interrogated raggedy Barney.

"You mean to say, you didn't know the Jiffishman! Don't y'giv me no saist!"

There might have followed a racket for this, but a stern look from Frank stopped it.

"We have no time for fooling," he declared. "Let us make one more search, and then if not successful we will leave here."

"Aight, sah," agreed Pomp.

Indeed the feverish excitement, and very shortly they would have been sailing away on a new course and not a peculiar accident happened to Barney.

Suddenly loud shriek of alarm was heard.

Frank and Pomp both turning beheld a startling sight.

Dove, up to his neck in a muck hole, was Barney.

"Help me!" gasped Barney. "Help me!"

Frank quickly obeyed. He did support him and right well too. Pomp went back to the Air Canoe for a rope.

This was brought and fastened under Barney's arms, and he was hauled out of the hole.

Barney was indeed a comical-looking sight.

From head to foot he was nothing but one mass of slime and mud.

It required some time and work for the Celt to clean himself up.

When from him he was much succeeded, Pomp and Frank returned from fruitless quest, and the latter said:

"It is of no use. We will leave this spot at once!"

But Frank decided first to make a journey around the valley of the Sumac and then took up the lake.

Barney and Frank performed this feat, Pomp remaining behind to guard the Air Canoe.

The two explorers met with a number of thrilling experiences.

Once they resisted an attack by a number of prowling Mazootas.

At another time they narrowly missed an encounter with a gorilla, surely one of the survivors of the flood.

Frank looked in vain for some trace of diamonds.

But he was not successful.

The said specimen, in which they are usually found seemed to have wholly confined to the flooded valley.

"It's off of us," Frank finally concluded. "Faith has eluded the hopes of search!"

Yet he could not feel that the quest had been a hopeless one.

The big diamond he had found in the lake was a small Kohinoor for a diamond hunter.

They had quite a number of others of medium quality, obtained from the natives.

Frank decided once to leave the region of the diamond valley.

"It's a fatal locality," he declared.

"See what a horrible scene this has covered up. A whole tribe swept away in a moment of inattention."

When Frank made up his mind to do a thing, he rarely lost time in execution.

"Shut the door, is home we'll go from here?" asked Barney.

"No," replied Frank.

"Where thin, sort?"

The Big Nile was not far from here. I think we will strike that.

Follow it down to the Amazon. From there to Rio Janeiro, a trip on the coast and then home."

Barney and Pomp were delighted with this decision.

They had not as yet seen enough of Brazil, and were anxious for new adventures.

Their desires were destined to be gratified before many days.

Thrilling adventures were at hand.

The airship left the diamond valley the next day, and thus ended the quest for the great wealth buried there.

But we will not take leave of our adventurers for another chapter,

In which will be detailed the dire calamities and the great peril which overtook them before they reached the mouth of the Amazon.

CHAPTER XII

DOWN THE AMAZON—A CATASPROPH.

The Air Canoe set out upon its course down the Rio Negro.

Many wonderful sights were seen as the Air Canoe continued on its way.

Vast forests of dye woods were passed over, of mahogany and rosewood, of oak and cypress.

Jungles and swamps interwove, and uplands came in turn; and mighty chains of lakes and wide, sluggish rivers added to the variety of the scene.

The voyagers never tired of watching it all.

Want matted it to them if the jungle beneath was the haunt of the savage tiger, the poisonous serpent or other deadly beasts and reptiles.

They were secure on the deck of the air-ship, and could laugh to scorn any of these specters.

For some days the course of the Rio Negro was followed.

Frank was much averse to traveling at night, so, when darkness approached, he generally managed to find a good spot to descend and camp.

Many rare and curious things were secured at such times.

Barney had secured a handsome white monkey, and Pomp had a collection of beautiful plumaged birds.

Sometimes at night the wolves would come howling about the air-ship.

But our adventurers were always secure in the cabin.

Occasionally Barney or Pomp would be tempted to give them a shot; each would make them scarce.

Thus the travelers kept on until the conjunction of the Rio Negro with the Amazon was reached.

And now they beheld before them a region which was not by any means in comparison with that left behind.

The swamps were ten times thicker, the jungles larger, the forests darker.

For two days they followed the course of the mighty river.

It gradually grew broader, and in places was only to be compared with a vast inland sea.

But the third day after reaching the Amazon the water tanks gave signs of giving out.

Frank decided to descend upon a sort of wooded peninsula, which jutted out into the river.

The place seemed free from wild beasts, and well situated for a stopping place.

The air-ship descended and rested upon a clear spot.

Near by were several massive mahogany trees.

It was in the latter part of the afternoon, and as it seemed such an admirable place to stop, Frank decided to camp.

At once Barney made a fire, and Pomp going a little way into the woods, shot an antelope.

But the darkly upon the return to camp crossed a well-beaten path.

It might have been made by wild beasts on their way to a watering place.

But a deadly fear struck the darkly.

He reckoned, and not without reason, that the path had been made by human beings.

"Golly!" he muttered. "I jest'ink I tell Marie Frank 'bout dat, fo' mebbe he would like to know."

So Pomp did so.

Frank listened with surprise.

"Why, that is queer!" he exclaimed. "I would take my oath that we are miles from any native settlement."

However, taking his rifle, Frank went back to examine the path.

He gave a start at first sight of it.

He followed it carefully through the woods for some ways.

Suddenly he came to a little woodland stream.

In the soft roll upon its bank he saw the imprint of a foot. It was the bare footprint of a human being.

All doubt was settled.

Frank started to go back to the camp. But he had not proceeded far when a thrilling incident occurred.

He was passing a copse, when he heard a strange rustling sound which set his nerves tingling.

It was not the first time he had heard that sound.

What did knew what was the cause of it.

He saw the flash of two diamond-like eyes in the bushes, and made quick action.

He swung his rifle over the shoulder, and grasping the branches of a tree drew himself up among them.

The occupant of the copse was a large python.

Frank knew the facility of the copse to beat a retreat.

Or even to remain upon the ground.

Should the terrible coils of the python once envelope him he knew well his fate would be sealed.
There was but one hope and this was to escape them.

He knew that by climbing the tree the monkey would be taken at a disadvantage, for the huge snakes are not good tree climbers.

At about twenty feet from the ground Frank halted.

He unsheathed his rifle and watched his foe warily.

But to his astonishment the monster did not attack him.

To the contrary it gave a prodigious hiss and lunging out of the0

the coupe started away like the wind.

The speed of the coupe was something frightful.

Frank felt the wind of its huge, brown body as it swept under the
tree beneath him.

Straight towards the location of the Air Canoe went the monster.

Frank alighted for Barney and Pomp.

He fired a shot after the python.

But this was intended more as a warning for Barney and Pomp.

Then the young inventor leaped down out of the tree.

He knew that there was need for immediate action.

He did not hesitate a moment.

A way for the python he ran.

A few moments later he heard the report of rifles and a terrible commotion.

"D'you see!" he gasped, "the monster has reached the Air Canoe!"

And he ran faster.

Now he came in sight of the camp. The scene there was a thrilling

one, and a ghastly paralyzed Frank with horror.

"My God!" he groaned, "I fear that is the end of Pomp!"

The monster python had the darky in its terrible coils.

Barney lay at one end of the mouthless beast, and Pomp had the other.

Pomp was cutting and slashing away with his knife with all his

strength.

The python was passing in actual torrents from the python's body.

But the snake's coils were drawing tighter, and it was striking

Pomp with its head with such force as to knock the breath out of

him.

Frank saw that a moment's delay would be fatal to Pomp.

Quick as a flash he raised his rifle.

The snake's head was reared high in air ready to deal Pomp another

blow.

Frank took quick aim.

The rifle spoke sharply.

A great cry of joy welled from Frank's throat as he saw the effect.

The bullet went true to the mark.

It struck the snake's head and battered its brains.

It seemed as if Pomp was saved.

But the mighty python's coils in the death agony did not seem to

relax about Pomp's form.

More than that, the snake went plunging and twisting toward the

river. The next moment into the water it went and Pomp sank.

Frank gave a cry of horror as he saw Pomp disappear beneath the

waves.

"My God, he is lost!" he cried.

But this was not so.

The darky came to the surface like a cork, and striking out alone

the worse, swam ashore.

Barney by this time had recovered himself.

"Rejoice!" rejoiced Frank, with wonder.

"Phew, man, you must be tired out after your

labor," drawled the reptile.

"God! I done forgit mah's last day had come!" cried Pomp.

"Marse Frank, dast was a good shot oh yours!"

"It was a miracle," exclaimed Frank, fervently.

"I think the

best thing parson do to leave this place at once."

But the words had not left his lips when an astounding thing hap-

pened.

A distant wild yell was heard and a flight of arrows came tumbling

about them.

"Jiminy!" gasped Pomp. "Whafsawhatisthat!"

But the question was answered as they gazed out upon the river's

surface.

From a clump of reeds a war canoe had shot out.

It held fully half a score of armed natives.

They began discharging arrows and yelling.

Frank saw that action must be made at once.

"We've got to get out of here!" he cried. "This is a little too un-

comfortable."

"Rejoice, that's right," cried Barney.

All started for the Air Canoe.

But at that moment a cry of terror burst from Pomp's lips.

"'Fo de Lor', Marse Frank, would yu jess listen to de likes oh

the speed."

But Frank had heard the sound.

From the distance through the trees came a queer meaning sound.

Then a great river there shot frothing gusts of wind.

Gret, deep shadows came creeping through the forest. The sky

grew yellow and dark.

The savages had ceased their yelling and were paddling madly for

the river.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew well what was coming.

He knew full well the awful character of the Brazilian torsos, how it mowed everything on its path--trees, bushes, and grass.

"Quick!" he shouted. "On deck! throw out the anchors. Is the air-ship securely or are we lost?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

The tornado was close at hand and there was no time to lose.

Barney and Pomp rushed to the anchor ropes.

But they were barely able to throw them out when the storm erupted.

With all haste the tires were inflated, musicians rushed into the cabin.

The din was now tremendous.

Rain was swept in torrents through the air, flying debris, rocks, stones and other material and the boughs and branches of trees.

The hurricane churned the waters of the river into billows that

of the sea.

A literal path was moved through the forest.

Frank was in the pilot-house trying to see out of the windows.

He feared every moment that the Air Canoe would be lifted and blown into the river.

The force of the wind was something frightful.

Suddenly there was a wrenching and twisting and a whirling of

rotoscope shafts.

Frank experienced a chill of horror.

One of them had been demolished and swept away by the storm.

One of them next moment went the same way.

The rotoscope was made of glass and gimbals, people with gimbals.

The tones were cast away as if in the very heart of the South west.

The winds were with them.

Without a boat or any other means of travel they had not the

best chance of ever reaching civilization.

But the worst was yet to come.

Suddenly above the thunder of the tornado there came a pre-

ocious, resounding crush.

The Air Canoe's deck gave in, there was a terrific grinding,

crushing, shattering, jolting and jarring.

The voyagers were thrown flat upon their faces.

But in that supreme moment the tornado spent its force.

It was gone as quickly as it had come.

The three victims of the catastrophe crawled out of the wrecked

Air Canoe.

It was a pitiful sight.

Every rotoscope was gone and the propeller.

The whole after part of the aerial vessel had been crushed in by

weight of a falling tree.

The Air Canoe could never be redeemed.

Repairing or reconstruction was wholly out of the question.

Frank Reade, Jr., stood for some time sorrowfully viewing

the wreck of his wonderful invention.

"That is hir!" he declared. "The fate are against us.

Shure it's the end of us!" wailed Barney. "Arrah, an' I'd like

to live to die in this out-a-way place as de woorly as de

soon to mourn for yez."

Pomp was equally as much affected.

But Frank Reade, Jr., was possessed of a lion's courage.

He set his lips firmly.

"Never mind!" he gritted. "We'll pull out of this scrap yet."

Then he set to work directing the building of a raft.

For four days all worked like beavers.

At the end of that time the raft was finished.

On this Frank hoped to float down to some civilised settlement.

It was the dernier resort, the forlorn hope of the castaways.

Provisions were placed aboard and ammunition.

Frank took all of his scientific instruments and all else of use

he could.

Then the voyagers set forth upon the broad bosom of the Amazon.

They made long sweeps with which to propel the raft.

For two days they progressed slowly down the river.

But the tropical sun was broiling hot, and the nights were

miserable. The spirits of all were depressed.

It seemed an interminable distance to cover. A hider fate was

ever, now waited upon them.

Fifty miles further down the river they were picked up by an old

steamboat owned by a Spaniard named Pinto.

They were kindly received by the Spaniards, and six weeks later

were landed at Para. From there a steamer was taken to

People in Riverstown were delighted to welcome them back; sorry to learn of the loss of the Air Canoe.

But Frank Reade, Jr., said:

"Never mind! The Air Canoe is gone, but I'll construct a ship that shall excat all my past efforts."

The young man therefor for keenly.

What the next air-ship was like and the adventures which

with it was to be told to the reader in due form in a future novel

this library.