CHAPTER XXI.

NEWS FOR MARSTON!

In a few minutes, consciousness had restored order on board the Susquehanna, but the excitement was as great as ever. They had escaped by a hairsbreadth the terrible fate of being both burned and drowned without a moment's warning, without a single soul being left alive to tell the fatal tale; but on this neither officer nor man appeared to bestow the slightest thought. They were wholly engrossed with the terrible catastrophe that had befallen the famous adventurers. What was the loss of the Susquehanna and all it contained, in comparison to the loss experienced by the world at large in the terrible tragic dénouement just witnessed? The worst had now come to the worst. At last the long agony was over forever. Those three gallant men, who had not only conceived but had actually executed the grandest and most daring enterprise of ancient or modern times, had paid by the most fearful of deaths, for their sublime devotion to science and their unselfish desire to extend the bounds of human knowledge! Before such a reflection as this, all other considerations were at once reduced to proportions of the most absolute insignificance.

But was the death of the adventurers so very certain after all? Hope is hard to kill. Consciousness had brought reflection, reflection doubt, and doubt had resuscitated hope.

"It's they!" had exclaimed the little Midshipman, and the cry had thrilled every heart on board as with an electric shock. Everybody had instantly understood it. Everybody had felt it to be true. Nothing could be more certain than that the meteor which had just flashed before their eyes was the famous projectile of the Baltimore Gun Club. Nothing could be truer than that it contained the three world renowned men and that it now lay in the black depths of the Pacific Ocean.

But here opinions began to diverge. Some courageous breasts soon refused to accept the prevalent idea.

"They're killed by the shock!" cried the crowd.

"Killed?" exclaimed the hopeful ones; "Not a bit of it! The water here is deep enough to break a fall twice as great."

"They're smothered for want of air!" exclaimed the crowd.

"Their stock may not be run out yet!" was the ready reply. "Their air apparatus is still on hand."

"They're burned to a cinder!" shrieked the crowd.

"They had not time to be burned!" answered the Band of Hope. "The Projectile did not get hot till it reached the atmosphere, through which it tore in a few seconds."

"If they're neither burned nor smothered nor killed by the shock, they're sure to be drowned!" persisted the crowd, with redoubled lamentations.

"Fish 'em up first!" cried the Hopeful Band. "Come! Let's lose no time! Let's fish 'em up at once!"

The cries of Hope prevailed. The unanimous opinion of a council of the officers hastily summoned together by the Captain was to go to work and fish up the Projectile with the least possible delay. But was such an operation possible? asked a doubter. Yes! was the overwhelming reply; difficult, no doubt, but still quite possible. Certainly, however, such an attempt was not immediately possible as the Susquehanna had no machinery strong enough or suitable enough for a piece of work involving such a nicety of detailed operations, not to speak of its exceeding difficulty. The next unanimous decision, therefore, was to start the vessel at once for the nearest port, whence they could instantly telegraph the Projectile's arrival to the Baltimore Gun Club.

But what was the nearest port? A serious question, to answer which in a satisfactory manner the Captain had to carefully examine his sailing charts. The neighboring shores of the California Peninsula, low and sandy, were absolutely destitute of good harbors. San Diego, about a day's sail directly north, possessed an excellent harbor, but, not yet having telegraphic communication with the rest of the Union, it was of course not to be thought of. San Pedro Bay was too open to be approached in winter. The Santa Barbara Channel was liable to the same objection,

not to mention the trouble often caused by kelp and wintry fogs. The bay of San Luis Obispo was still worse in every respect; having no islands to act as a breakwater, landing there in winter was often impossible. The harbor of the picturesque old town of Monterey was safe enough, but some uncertainty regarding sure telegraphic communications with San Francisco, decided the council not to venture it. Half Moon Bay, a little to the north, would be just as risky, and in moments like the present when every minute was worth a day, no risk involving the slightest loss of time could be ventured.

Evidently, therefore, the most advisable plan was to sail directly for the bay of San Francisco, the Golden Gate, the finest harbor on the Pacific Coast and one of the safest in the world. Here telegraphic communication with all parts of the Union was assured beyond a doubt. San Francisco, about 750 miles distant, the Susquehanna could probably make in three days; with a little increased pressure, possibly in two days and a-half. The sooner then she started, the better.

The fires were soon in full blast. The vessel could get under weigh at once. In fact, nothing delayed immediate departure but the consideration that two miles of sounding line were still to be hauled up from the ocean depths. Rut the Captain, after a moment's thought, unwilling that any more time should be lost, determined to cut it. Then marking its position by fastening its end to a buoy, he could haul it up at his leisure on his return.

"Besides," said he, "the buoy will show us the precise spot where the

Projectile fell."

"As for that, Captain," observed Brownson, "the exact spot has been carefully recorded already: 27° 7' north latitude by 41° 37' west longitude, reckoning from the meridian of Washington."

"All right, Lieutenant," said the Captain curtly. "Cut the line!"

A large cone-shaped metal buoy, strengthened still further by a couple of stout spars to which it was securely lashed, was soon rigged up on deck, whence, being hoisted overboard, the whole apparatus was carefully lowered to the surface of the sea. By means of a ring in the small end of the buoy, the latter was then solidly attached to the part of the sounding line that still remained in the water, and all possible precautions were taken to diminish the danger of friction, caused by the contrary currents, tidal waves, and the ordinary heaving swells of ocean.

It was now a little after three o'clock in the morning. The Chief Engineer announced everything to be in perfect readiness for starting. The Captain gave the signal, directing the pilot to steer straight for San Francisco, north-north by west. The waters under the stern began to boil and foam; the ship very soon felt and yielded to the power that animated her; and in a few minutes she was making at least twelve knots an hour. Her sailing powers were somewhat higher than this, but it was necessary to be careful in the neighborhood of such a dangerous coast as that of California.

Seven hundred and fifty miles of smooth waters presented no very difficult task to a fast traveller like the Susquehanna, yet it was not till two days and a-half afterwards that she sighted the Golden Gate. As usual, the coast was foggy; neither Point Lobos nor Point Boneta could be seen. But Captain Bloomsbury, well acquainted with every portion of this coast, ran as close along the southern shore as he dared, the fog-gun at Point Boneta safely directing his course. Here expecting to be able to gain a few hours time by signalling to the outer telegraph station on Point Lobos, he had caused to be painted on a sail in large black letters: "THE MOONMEN ARE BACK!" but the officers in attendance, though their fog-horn could be easily heard--the distance not being quite two miles--were unfortunately not able to see it. Perhaps they did see it, but feared a hoax.

Giving the Fort Point a good wide berth, the Susquehanna found the fog gradually clearing away, and by half-past three the passengers, looking under it, enjoyed the glorious view of the Contra Costa mountains east of San Francisco, which had obtained for this entrance the famous and well deserved appellation of the Golden Gate. In another half hour, they had doubled Black Point, and were lying safely at anchor between the islands of Alcatraz and Yerba Buena. In less than five minutes afterwards the Captain was quickly lowered into his gig, and eight stout pairs of arms were pulling him rapidly to shore.

The usual crowd of idlers had collected that evening on the summit of Telegraph Hill to enjoy the magnificent view, which for variety, extent,

beauty and grandeur, is probably unsurpassed on earth. Of course, the inevitable reporter, hot after an item, was not absent. The Susquehanna had hardly crossed the bar, when they caught sight of her. A government vessel entering the bay at full speed, is something to look at even in San Francisco. Even during the war, it would be considered rather unusual. But they soon remarked that her bowsprit was completely broken off. Very unusual. Something decidedly is the matter. See! The vessel is hardly anchored when the Captain leaves her and makes for Megg's Wharf at North Point as hard as ever his men can pull! Something must be the matter--and down the steep hill they all rush as fast as ever their legs can carry them to the landing at Megg's Wharf.

The Captain could hardly force his way through the dense throng, but he made no attempt whatever to gratify their ill dissembled curiosity.

"Carriage!" he cried, in a voice seldom heard outside the din of battle.

In a moment seventeen able-bodied cabmen were trying to tear him limb from limb.

"To the telegraph office! Like lightning!" were his stifled mutterings, as he struggled in the arms of the Irish giant who had at last succeeded in securing him.

"To the telegraph office!" cried most of the crowd, running after him like fox hounds, but the more knowing ones immediately began questioning the boatmen in the Captain's gig. These honest fellows, nothing loth to

tell all that they knew and more that they invented, soon had the satisfaction of finding themselves the centrepoint of a wonder stricken audience, greedily swallowing up every item of the extraordinary news and still hungrily gaping for more.

By this time, however, an important dispatch was flying east, bearing four different addresses: To the Secretary of the U.S. Navy, Washington; To Colonel Joseph Wilcox, Vice-President pro tem., Baltimore Gun Club, Md; To J.T. Marston, Esq. Long's Peak, Grand County, Colorado; and To Professor Wenlock, Sub-Director of the Cambridge Observatory, Mass.

This dispatch read as follows:

> "In latitude twenty-seven degrees seven minutes north and longitude forty-one degrees thirty-seven minutes west shortly after one o'clock on the morning of twelfth instant Columbiad Projectile fell in Pacific--send instructions--
>
> BLOOMSBURY,
>
> Captain, SUSQUEHANNA."

In five minutes more all San Francisco had the news. An hour later, the newspaper boys were shrieking it through the great cities of the States. Before bed-time every man, woman, and child in the country had heard it and gone into ecstasies over it. Owing to the difference in longitude, the people of Europe could not hear it till after midnight.

But next morning the astounding issue of the great American enterprise fell on them like a thunder clap.

We must, of course, decline all attempts at describing the effects of this most unexpected intelligence on the world at large.

The Secretary of the Navy immediately telegraphed directions to the Susquehanna to keep a full head of steam up night and day so as to be ready to give instant execution to orders received at any moment.

The Observatory authorities at Cambridge held a special meeting that very evening, where, with all the serene calmness so characteristic of learned societies, they discussed the scientific points of the question in all its bearings. But, before committing themselves to any decided opinion, they unanimously resolved to wait for the development of further details.

At the rooms of the Gun Club in Baltimore there was a terrible time. The kind reader no doubt remembers the nature of the dispatch sent one day previously by Professor Belfast from the Long's Peak observatory, announcing that the Projectile had been seen but that it had become the Moon's satellite, destined to revolve around her forever and ever till time should be no more. The reader is also kindly aware by this time that such dispatch was not supported by the slightest foundations in fact. The learned Professor, in a moment of temporary cerebral excitation, to which even the greatest scientist is just as liable as the rest of us, had taken some little meteor or, still more probably,

some little fly-speck in the telescope for the Projectile. The worst of it was that he had not only boldly proclaimed his alleged discovery to the world at large but he had even explained all about it with the well known easy pomposity that "Science" sometimes ventures to assume. The consequences of all this may be readily guessed. The Baltimore Gun Club had split up immediately into two violently opposed parties. Those gentlemen who regularly conned the scientific magazines, took every word of the learned Professor's dispatch for gospel--or rather for something of far higher value, and more strictly in accordance with the highly advanced scientific developments of the day. But the others, who never read anything but the daily papers and who could not bear the idea of losing Barbican, laughed the whole thing to scorn. Belfast, they said, had seen as much of the Projectile as he had of the "Open Polar Sea," and the rest of the dispatch was mere twaddle, though asserted with all the sternness of a religious dogma and enveloped in the usual scientific slang.

The meeting held in the Club House, 24 Monument Square, Baltimore, on the evening of the 13th, had been therefore disorderly in the highest degree. Long before the appointed hour, the great hall was densely packed and the greatest uproar prevailed. Vice-President Wilcox took the chair, and all was comparatively quiet until Colonel Bloomsbury, the Honorary Secretary in Marston's absence, commenced to read Belfast's dispatch. Then the scene, according to the account given in the next day's Sun, from whose columns we condense our report, actually "beggared description." Roars, yells, cheers, counter-cheers, clappings, hissings, stampings, squallings, whistlings, barkings, mewings, cock

crowings, all of the most fearful and demoniacal character, turned the immense hall into a regular pandemonium. In vain did President Wilcox fire off his detonating bell, with a report on ordinary occasions as loud as the roar of a small piece of ordnance. In the dreadful noise then prevailing it was no more heard than the fizz of a lucifer match.

Some cries, however, made themselves occasionally heard in the pauses of the din. "Read! Read!" "Dry up!" "Sit down!" "Give him an egg!" "Fair play!" "Hurrah for Barbican!" "Down with his enemies!" "Free Speech!" "Belfast won't bite you!" "He'd like to bite Barbican, but his teeth aren't sharp enough!" "Barbican's a martyr to science, let's hear his fate!" "Martyr be hanged; the Old Man is to the good yet!" "Belfast is the grandest name in Science!" "Groans for the grandest name!" (Awful groans.) "Three cheers for Old Man Barbican!" (The exceptional strength alone of the walls saved the building, from being blown out by an explosion in which at least 5,000 pairs of lungs participated.)

"Three cheers for M'Nicholl and the Frenchman!" This was followed by another burst of cheering so hearty, vigorous and long continued that the scientific party, or Belfasters as they were now called, seeing that further prolongation of the meet was perfectly useless, moved to adjourn. It was carried unanimously. President Wilcox left the chair, the meeting broke up in the wildest disorder--the scientists rather crest fallen, but the Barbican men quite jubilant for having been so successful in preventing the reading of that detested dispatch.

Little sleeping was done that night in Baltimore, and less business next

day. Even in the public schools so little work was done by the children that S.T. Wallace, Esq., President of the Education Board, advised an anticipation of the usual Christmas recess by a week. Every one talked of the Projectile; nothing was heard at the corners but discussions regarding its probable fate. All Baltimore was immediately rent into two parties, the Belfasters and the Barbicanites. The latter was the most enthusiastic and noisy, the former decidedly the most numerous and influential.

Science, or rather pseudo-science, always exerts a mysterious attraction of an exceedingly powerful nature over the generality--that is, the more ignorant portion of the human race. Assert the most absurd nonsense, call it a scientific truth, and back it up with strange words which, like potentiality, etc., sound as if they had a meaning but in reality have none, and nine out of every ten men who read your book will believe you. Acquire a remarkable name in one branch of human knowledge, and presto! you are infallible in all. Who can contradict you, if you only wrap up your assertions in specious phrases that not one man in a million attempts to ascertain the real meaning of? We like so much to be saved the trouble of thinking, that it is far easier and more comfortable to be led than to contradict, to fall in quietly with the great flock of sheep that jump blindly after their leader than to remain apart, making one's self ridiculous by foolishly attempting to argue. Real argument, in fact, is very difficult, for several reasons: first, you must understand your subject well, which is hardly likely; secondly, your opponent must also understand it well, which is even less likely; thirdly, you must listen patiently to his arguments, which is

still less likely; and fourthly, he must listen to yours, the least likely of all. If a quack advertises a panacea for all human ills at a dollar a bottle, a hundred will buy the bottle, for one that will try how many are killed by it. What would the investigator gain by charging the quack with murder? Nobody would believe him, because nobody would take the trouble to follow his arguments. His adversary, first in the field, had gained the popular ear, and remained the unassailable master of the situation. Our love of "Science" rests upon our admiration of intellect, only unfortunately the intellect is too often that of other people, not our own.

The very sound of Belfast's phrases, for instance, "satellite," "lunar attraction," "immutable path of its orbit," etc, convinced the greater part of the "intelligent" community that he who used them so flippantly must be an exceedingly great man. Therefore, he had completely proved his case. Therefore, the great majority of the ladies and gentlemen that regularly attend the scientific lectures of the Peabody Institute, pronounced Barbican's fate and that of his companions to be sealed. Next morning's newspapers contained lengthy obituary notices of the Great Balloon-attics as the witty man of the New York Herald phrased it, some of which might be considered quite complimentary. These, all industriously copied into the evening papers, the people were carefully reading over again, some with honest regret, some deriving a great moral lesson from an attempt exceedingly reprehensible in every point of view, but most, we are sorry to acknowledge, with a feeling of ill concealed pleasure. Had not they always said how it was to end? Was there anything more absurd ever conceived? Scientific men too! Hang such science! If

you want a real scientific man, no wind bag, no sham, take Belfast! He knows what he's talking about! No taking him in! Didn't he by means of the Monster Telescope, see the Projectile, as large as life, whirling round and round the Moon? Anyway, what else could have happened? Wasn't it what anybody's common sense expected? Don't you remember a conversation we had with you one day? etc., etc.

The Barbicanites were very doleful, but they never though of giving in. They would die sooner. When pressed for a scientific reply to a scientific argument, they denied that there was any argument to reply to. What! Had not Belfast seen the Projectile? No! Was not the Great Telescope then good for anything? Yes, but not for everything! Did not Belfast know his business? No! Did they mean to say that he had seen nothing at all? Well, not exactly that, but those scientific gentlemen can seldom be trusted; in their rage for discovery, they make a mountain out of a molehill, or, what is worse, they start a theory and then distort facts to support it. Answers of this kind either led directly to a fight, or the Belfasters moved away thoroughly disgusted with the ignorance of their opponents, who could not see a chain of reasoning as bright as the noonday sun.

Things were in this feverish state on the evening of the 14th, when, all at once, Bloomsbury's dispatch arrived in Baltimore. I need not say that it dropped like a spark in a keg of gun powder. The first question all asked was: Is it genuine or bogus? real or got up by the stockbrokers? But a few flashes backwards and forwards over the wires soon settled that point. The stunning effects of the new blow were hardly over when

the Barbicanites began to perceive that the wonderful intelligence was decidedly in their favor. Was it not a distinct contradiction of the whole story told by their opponents? If Barbican and his friends were lying at the bottom of the Pacific, they were certainly not circumgyrating around the Moon. If it was the Projectile that had broken off the bowsprit of the Susquehanna, it could not certainly be the Projectile that Belfast had seen only the day previous doing the duty of a satellite. Did not the truth of one incident render the other an absolute impossibility? If Bloomsbury was right, was not Belfast an ass? Hurrah!

The new revelation did not improve poor Barbican's fate a bit--no matter for that! Did not the party gain by it? What would the Belfasters say now? Would not they hold down their heads in confusion and disgrace?

The Belfasters, with a versatility highly creditable to human nature, did nothing of the kind. Rapidly adopting the very line of tactics they had just been so severely censuring, they simply denied the whole thing. What! the truth of the Bloomsbury dispatch? Yes, every word of it! Had not Bloomsbury seen the Projectile? No! Were not his eyes good for anything? Yes, but not for everything! Did not the Captain know his business? No! Did they mean to say that the bowsprit of the Susquehanna had not been broken off? Well, not exactly that, but those naval gentlemen are not always to be trusted; after a pleasant little supper, they often see the wrong light-house, or, what is worse, in their desire to shield their negligence from censure, they dodge the blame by trying to show that the accident was unavoidable. The

Susquehanna's bowsprit had been snapped off, in all probability, by some sudden squall, or, what was still more likely, some little aerolite had struck it and frightened the crew into fits. When answers of this kind did not lead to blows, the case was an exceptional one indeed. The contestants were so numerous and so excited that the police at last began to think of letting them fight it out without any interference. Marshal O'Kane, though ably assisted by his 12 officers and 500 patrolmen, had a terrible time of it. The most respectable men in Baltimore, with eyes blackened, noses bleeding, and collars torn, saw the inside of a prison that night for the first time in all their lives. Men that even the Great War had left the warmest of friends, now abused each other like fishwomen. The prison could not hold the half of those arrested. They were all, however, discharged next morning, for the simple reason that the Mayor and the aldermen had been themselves engaged in so many pugilistic combats during the night that they were altogether disabled from attending to their magisterial duties next day.

Our readers, however, may be quite assured that, even in the wildest whirl of the tremendous excitement around them, all the members of the Baltimore Gun Club did not lose their heads. In spite of the determined opposition of the Belfasters who would not allow the Bloomsbury dispatch to be read at the special meeting called that evening, a few succeeded in adjourning to a committee-room, where Joseph Wilcox, Esq., presiding, our old friends Colonel Bloomsbury, Major Elphinstone, Tom Hunter, Billsby the brave, General Morgan, Chief Engineer John Murphy, and about as many more as were sufficient to form a quorum, declared themselves to be in regular session, and proceeded quietly to debate on

the nature of Captain Bloomsbury's dispatch.

Was it of a nature to justify immediate action or not? Decided unanimously in the affirmative. Why so? Because, whether actually true or untrue, the incident it announced was not impossible. Had it indeed announced the Projectile to have fallen in California or in South America, there would have been good valid reasons to question its accuracy. But by taking into consideration the Moon's distance, and the time elapsed between the moment of the start and that of the presumed fall (about 10 days), and also the Earth's revolution in the meantime, it was soon calculated that the point at which the Projectile should strike our globe, if it struck it at all, would be somewhere about 27° north latitude, and 42° west longitude--the very identical spot given in the Captain's dispatch! This certainly was a strong point in its favor, especially as there was positively nothing valid whatever to urge against it.

A decided resolution was therefore immediately taken. Everything that man could do was to be done at once, in order to fish up their brave associates from the depths of the Pacific. That very night, in fact, whilst the streets of Baltimore were still resounding with the yells of contending Belfasters and Barbicanites, a committee of four, Morgan, Hunter, Murphy, and Elphinstone, were speeding over the Alleghanies in a special train, placed at their disposal by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, and fast enough to land them in Chicago pretty early on the following evening.

Here a fresh locomotive and a Pullman car taking charge of them, they were whirled off to Omaha, reaching that busy locality at about supper time on the evening of December 16th. The Pacific Train, as it was called though at that time running no further west than Julesburg, instead of waiting for the regular hour of starting, fired up that very night, and was soon pulling the famous Baltimore Club men up the slopes of the Nebraska at the rate of forty miles an hour. They were awakened before light next morning by the guard, who told them that Julesburg, which they were just entering, was the last point so far reached by the rails. But their regret at this circumstance was most unexpectedly and joyfully interrupted by finding their hands warmly clasped and their names cheerily cried out by their old and beloved friend, J.T. Marston, the illustrious Secretary of the Baltimore Gun Club.

At the close of the first volume of our entertaining and veracious history, we left this most devoted friend and admirer of Barbican established firmly at his post on the summit of Long's Peak, beside the Great Telescope, watching the skies, night and day, for some traces of his departed friends. There, as the gracious Reader will also remember, he had come a little too late to catch that sight of the Projectile which Belfast had at first reported so confidently, but of which the Professor by degrees had begun to entertain the most serious doubts.

In these doubts, however, Marston, strange to say, would not permit himself for one moment to share. Belfast might shake his head as much as he pleased; he, Marston, was no fickle reed to be shaken by every wind; he firmly believed the Projectile to be there before him, actually in

sight, if he could only see it. All the long night of the 13th, and even for several hours of the 14th, he never quitted the telescope for a single instant. The midnight sky was in magnificent order; not a speck dimmed its azure of an intensely dark tint. The stars blazed out like fires; the Moon refused none of her secrets to the scientists who were gazing at her so intently that night from the platform on the summit of Long's Peak. But no black spot crawling over her resplendent surface rewarded their eager gaze. Marston indeed would occasionally utter a joyful cry announcing some discovery, but in a moment after he was confessing with groans that it was all a false alarm. Towards morning, Belfast gave up in despair and went to take a sleep; but no sleep for Marston. Though he was now quite alone, the assistants having also retired, he kept on talking incessantly to himself, expressing the most unbounded confidence in the safety of his friends, and the absolute certainty of their return. It was not until some hours after the Sun had risen and the Moon had disappeared behind the snowy peaks of the west, that he at last withdrew his weary eye from the glass through which every image formed by the great reflector was to be viewed. The countenance he turned on Belfast, who had now come back, was rueful in the extreme. It was the image of grief and despair.

"Did you see nothing whatever during the night, Professor?" he asked of Belfast, though he knew very well the answer he was to get.

"Nothing whatever."

"But you saw them once, didn't you?"

"Them! Who?"

"Our friends."

"Oh! the Projectile--well--I think I must have made some oversight."

"Don't say that! Did not Mr. M'Connell see it also?"

"No. He only wrote out what I dictated."

"Why, you must have seen it! I have seen it myself!"

"You shall never see it again! It's shot off into space."

"You're as wrong now as you thought you were right yesterday."

"I'm sorry to say I was wrong yesterday; but I have every reason to believe I'm right to-day."

"We shall see! Wait till to-night!"

"To-night! Too late! As far as the Projectile is concerned, night is now no better than day."

The learned Professor was quite right, but in a way which he did not exactly expect. That very evening, after a weary day, apparently a month

long, during which Marston sought in vain for a few hours' repose, just as all hands, well wrapped up in warm furs, were getting ready to assume their posts once more near the mouth of the gigantic Telescope, Mr. M'Connell hastily presented himself with a dispatch for Belfast.

The Professor was listlessly breaking the envelope, when he uttered a sharp cry of surprise.

"Hey!" cried Marston quickly. "What's up now?"

"Oh!! The Pro--pro--projectile!!"

"What of it? What? Oh what?? Speak!!"

"IT'S BACK!!"

Marston uttered a wild yell of mingled horror, surprise, and joy, jumped a little into the air, and then fell flat and motionless on the platform. Had Belfast shot him with a ten pound weight, right between the two eyes, he could not have knocked him flatter or stiffer. Having neither slept all night, nor eaten all day, the poor fellow's system had become so weak that such unexpected news was really more than he could bear. Besides, as one of the Cambridge men of the party, a young medical student, remarked: the thin, cold air of these high mountains was extremely enervating.

The astronomers, all exceedingly alarmed, did what they could to recover

their friend from his fit, but it was nearly ten minutes before they had the satisfaction of seeing his limbs moving with a slight quiver and his breast beginning to heave. At last the color came back to his face and his eyes opened. He stared around for a few seconds at his friends, evidently unconscious, but his senses were not long in returning.

"Say!" he uttered at last in a faint voice.

"Well!" replied Belfast.

"Where is that infernal Pro--pro--jectile?"

"In the Pacific Ocean."

"What??"

He was on his feet in an instant.

"Say that again!"

"In the Pacific Ocean."

"Hurrah! All right! Old Barbican's not made into mincemeat yet! No, sirree! Let's start!"

"Where for?"

"San Francisco!"

"When?"

"This instant!"

"In the dark?"

"We shall soon have the light of the Moon! Curse her! it's the least she can do after all the trouble she has given us!"