

## CHAPTER SECOND.

The Article in the Daily Telegraph.--War between the Scientific Journals.--  
Mr. Petermann backs his Friend Dr. Ferguson.--Reply of the Savant Koner.  
--Bets made.--Sundry Propositions offered to the Doctor.

On the next day, in its number of January 15th, the Daily  
Telegraph published an article couched in the following terms:

"Africa is, at length, about to surrender the secret  
of her vast solitudes; a modern OEdipus is to give us the  
key to that enigma which the learned men of sixty centuries  
have not been able to decipher. In other days, to seek the  
sources of the Nile--fontes Nili quorerere--was regarded as  
a mad endeavor, a chimera that could not be realized.

"Dr. Barth, in following out to Soudan the track traced  
by Denham and Clapperton; Dr. Livingstone, in multiplying  
his fearless explorations from the Cape of Good Hope  
to the basin of the Zambesi; Captains Burton and Speke,  
in the discovery of the great interior lakes, have opened  
three highways to modern civilization. THEIR POINT OF  
INTERSECTION, which no traveller has yet been able to  
reach, is the very heart of Africa, and it is thither  
that all efforts should now be directed.

"The labors of these hardy pioneers of science are now

about to be knit together by the daring project of Dr. Samuel Ferguson, whose fine explorations our readers have frequently had the opportunity of appreciating.

"This intrepid discoverer proposes to traverse all Africa from east to west IN A BALLOON. If we are well informed, the point of departure for this surprising journey is to be the island of Zanzibar, upon the eastern coast. As for the point of arrival, it is reserved for Providence alone to designate.

"The proposal for this scientific undertaking was officially made, yesterday, at the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society, and the sum of twenty-five hundred pounds was voted to defray the expenses of the enterprise.

"We shall keep our readers informed as to the progress of this enterprise, which has no precedent in the annals of exploration."

As may be supposed, the foregoing article had an enormous echo among scientific people. At first, it stirred up a storm of incredulity; Dr. Ferguson passed for a purely chimerical personage of the Barnum stamp, who, after having gone through the United States, proposed to "do" the British Isles.

A humorous reply appeared in the February number of the *Bulletins de la Societe Geographique* of Geneva, which very wittily showed up the Royal Society of London and their phenomenal sturgeon.

But Herr Petermann, in his *Mittheilungen*, published at Gotha, reduced the Geneva journal to the most absolute silence. Herr Petermann knew Dr. Ferguson personally, and guaranteed the intrepidity of his dauntless friend.

Besides, all manner of doubt was quickly put out of the question: preparations for the trip were set on foot at London; the factories of Lyons received a heavy order for the silk required for the body of the balloon; and, finally, the British Government placed the transport-ship *Resolute*, Captain Bennett, at the disposal of the expedition.

At once, upon word of all this, a thousand encouragements were offered, and felicitations came pouring in from all quarters. The details of the undertaking were published in full in the bulletins of the Geographical Society of Paris; a remarkable article appeared in the *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages, de la Geographie, de l'Histoire, et de l'Archaeologie* de M. V. A. Malte-Brun ("New Annals of Travels, Geography, History, and Archaeology, by M. V. A. Malte-Brun"); and a searching essay in the *Zeitschrift fur Allgemeine Erdkunde*, by Dr. W. Koner, triumphantly

demonstrated the feasibility of the journey, its chances of success, the nature of the obstacles existing, the immense advantages of the aerial mode of locomotion, and found fault with nothing but the selected point of departure, which it contended should be Massowah, a small port in Abyssinia, whence James Bruce, in 1768, started upon his explorations in search of the sources of the Nile. Apart from that, it mentioned, in terms of unreserved admiration, the energetic character of Dr. Ferguson, and the heart, thrice panoplied in bronze, that could conceive and undertake such an enterprise.

The North American Review could not, without some displeasure, contemplate so much glory monopolized by England. It therefore rather ridiculed the doctor's scheme, and urged him, by all means, to push his explorations as far as America, while he was about it.

In a word, without going over all the journals in the world, there was not a scientific publication, from the Journal of Evangelical Missions to the Revue Algerienne et Coloniale, from the Annales de la Propagation de la Foi to the Church Missionary Intelligencer, that had not something to say about the affair in all its phases.

Many large bets were made at London and throughout England generally, first, as to the real or supposititious

existence of Dr. Ferguson; secondly, as to the trip itself, which, some contended, would not be undertaken at all, and which was really contemplated, according to others; thirdly, upon the success or failure of the enterprise; and fourthly, upon the probabilities of Dr. Ferguson's return. The betting-books were covered with entries of immense sums, as though the Epsom races were at stake.

Thus, believers and unbelievers, the learned and the ignorant, alike had their eyes fixed on the doctor, and he became the lion of the day, without knowing that he carried such a mane. On his part, he willingly gave the most accurate information touching his project. He was very easily approached, being naturally the most affable man in the world. More than one bold adventurer presented himself, offering to share the dangers as well as the glory of the undertaking; but he refused them all, without giving his reasons for rejecting them.

Numerous inventors of mechanism applicable to the guidance of balloons came to propose their systems, but he would accept none; and, when he was asked whether he had discovered something of his own for that purpose, he constantly refused to give any explanation, and merely busied himself more actively than ever with the preparations for his journey.