

LOVE IN A BALLOON.

"Speaking of flash literature, reminds me of an incident which occurred some time since in connection with a deceased friend of mine," said Bryan McSwyny. "The person alluded to was a man of genius. I will not mention his name because of his family connections. He was engaged in writing a serial story for a well-known weekly paper of the 'Snake-Eyed Bob and Bully of the Woods' order. The story had run so long that the publishers were getting tired of it, and they wrote to my friend telling him to bring the story to an end in the next installment. He did so in the following unique manner:

"The balloon rose slowly from the foot of the cliff, bumping along the face of the rock as it did so. Angelina, frightened at the prospect of the perilous journey ahead when the balloon was 1000 feet from the ground, jumped recklessly out upon a shelf of rock which projected from the face of the cliff. Frenzied with fear Algernon followed his love at the risk of breaking his neck, and the balloon sailed away and left them in their precarious situation. There the lovers were, 1000 feet from the top of the cliff and an equal distance from the bottom. Algernon seated himself beside the lovely maiden and clasped her to his bosom in a passionate embrace. Slowly the sun sank behind the western hills. Its expiring rays lit up the forms of the lovers, oblivious of their awful position. The shadows deepened and night fell like a black pall upon the scene.

"Will you always love me, Algernon?" said Angelina.
"Till death, darling," was the reply.

"THE END."

"Well," continued Bryan, "letters began to arrive at the office of publication asking such fateful questions as these: 'What became of the lovers? Did they dry up and blow away? Did the buzzards feed upon the form of the lovely Angelina?—Did they fall off the cliff and smash into pieces at the foot? Did a bowl roll over the edge of the cliff and crush them? Did the birds of the air bring food to the lovers? Did some one let a rope down from the top of the cliff and pull 'em up?—For heaven's sake, what became of them?'"

"These letters accumulated so fast in the office that the publishers became alarmed and wrote to my friend, asking him to write another installment of the story, which he gladly did, the concluding sentences of the last chapter being as follows:

"The long night passed slowly away with leaden tread. The eastern sky began to flush with the first beams of morning light.

"Are you awake, dearest?" whispered Algernon in Angelina's shell-like ear.

"The white curtains over the beautiful eyes slowly lifted, and the musical voice replied in a faint whisper: 'Yes, darling, but I'm very hungry.'"

"By the gods," replied Algernon, springing excitedly to his feet, "you shall have food! For see, dearest, the balloon approaches."

"It was, indeed, as Algernon had said. Outlined against the fleecy clouds, by straining those eyes of heavenly blue Angelina could see a faint speck about as big as a door-knob. The speck gradually grew larger as the lovers gazed hungrily upon it, now taking upon it the dimensions of an orange, then swelling out as large as a coconut, until it drew within their sight and assured them that they could not be mistaken; it was indeed their long-lost balloon. The their fears were excited anew by seeing the balloon sway as it was struck by a current of air. Clapping her hands around Algernon's neck, Angelina exclaimed in agony:

"Oh, darling, the balloon is going away!"

"Wait, love," said Algernon, soothingly; "another blast may strike it."

"It was indeed so, as Algernon had said. A favoring gale from heaven, it seemed, directed the balloon toward the cliff again, and in a miraculous manner it was wafted against the face of the cliff. As it came nearer and nearer to their resting place Algernon said, in a husky whisper:

"Now, Lena, my heart's love, jump when I jump."

"They jumped and clung like spiders to the netting until Algernon had descended to the car. Then, like the hero he was Algernon rescued his darling one from her perilous position and laid her upon the floor of the car. She was resuscitated by a drink of life giving brandy, which Algernon found in a hamper, and an hour later they were pleasantly engaged in viewing the diversified landscape over which the balloon sailed like a swallow in its flight.

"Higher and higher the balloon rose until a band of Indians who were watching it saw it gradually fade away against the empyrean blue of the sky until it dwindled down to the size of an apple, then faded away until one speck like the head of a pin remained, and then was lost in the shadowy realms of space.

"THE END."

"Well, what did the publishers say this time?"

"Oh," replied Bryan, with a smile, "they simply discharged my friend, that's all."

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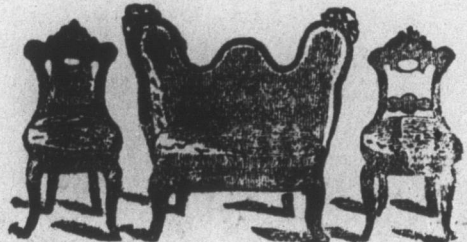
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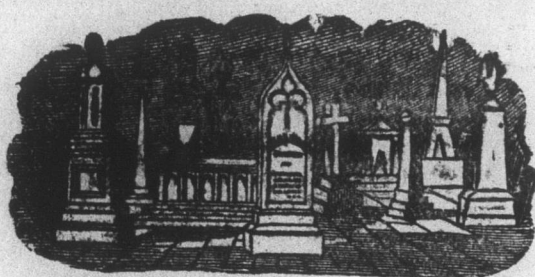
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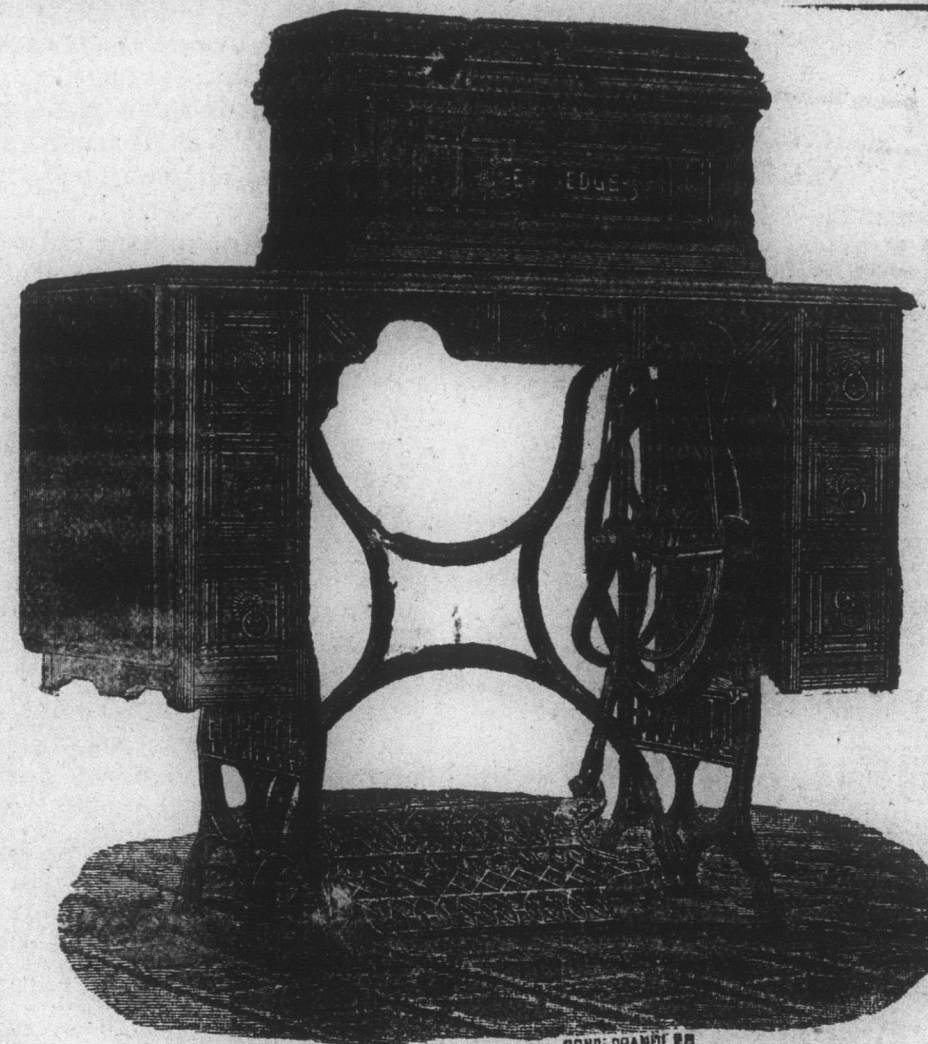
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