

# THE LOST CITY

by

## Joseph E. Badger

### CHAPTER I. NATURE IN TRAVAIL.

"I say, professor?"

"Very well, Waldo; proceed."

"Wonder if this isn't a portion of the glorious climate, broken loose from its native California, and drifting up this way on a lark?"

"If so, said lark must be roasted to a turn," declared the third (and last) member of that little party, drawing a curved forefinger across his forehead, then flirting aside sundry drops of moisture. "I can't recall such another muggy afternoon, and if we were only back in what the scientists term the cyclone belt—"

"We would be all at sea," quickly interposed the professor, the fingers of one hand vigorously stirring his gray pompadour, while the other was lifted in a deprecatory manner. "At sea, literally as well as metaphorically, my dear Bruno; for, correctly speaking, the ocean alone can give birth to the cyclone."

"Why can't you remember anything, boy?" sternly cut in the roguish-eyed youngster, with admonitory forefinger, coming to the front. "How many times have I told you never to say blue when you mean green?"

Why don't you say Kansas zephyr? Or windy-auger? Or twister? Or whirly-gust on a corkscrew wiggle-waggle? Or-well, almost any other old thing that you can't think of at the right time? W-h-e-w! Who mentioned sitting on a snowdrift, and sucking at an icicle? Hot? Well, now, if this isn't a genuine old cyclone breeder, then I wouldn't ask a cent!"

Waldo Gillespie let his feet slip from beneath him, sitting down with greater force than grace, back supported against a gnarled juniper, loosening the clothes at his neck while using his other hand to ply his crumpled hat as a fan.

Bruno laughed outright at this characteristic anticlimax, while Professor Featherwit was obliged to smile, even while compelled to correct.

"Tornado, please, nephew; not cyclone."

"Well, uncle Phaeton, have it your own way. Under either name, I fancy the thing-a-ma-jig would kick up a high old bobbery with a man's political economy should it chance to go bu'st right there! And, besides, when I was a weenty little fellow I was taught never to call a man a fool or a liar-"

"Waldo!" sharply warned his brother, turning again.

"So long as I knew myself to be in the wrong," coolly finished the youngster, face grave, but eyes twinkling, as they turned towards his mistaken mentor. "What is it, my dear Bruno?"

"There is one thing neither cyclone nor tornado could ever deprive you of, Kid, and that is-"

"My beauty, wit, and good sense,-thanks, awfully! Nor you, my dear Bruno, although my inbred politeness forbids my explaining just why."

There was a queer-sounding chuckle as Professor Featherwit turned away, busying himself about that rude-built shed and shanty which sheltered the pride of his brain and the pet of his heart, while Bruno smiled indulgently as he took a few steps away from those stunted trees in order to gain a fairer view of the stormy heavens.

Far away towards the northeast, rising above the distant hill, now showed an ugly-looking cloud-bank which almost certainly portended a storm of no ordinary dimensions.

Had it first appeared in the opposite quarter of the horizon, Bruno would have felt a stronger interest in the clouds, knowing as he did that the miscalled "cyclone" almost invariably finds birth in the southwest. Then, too, nearly all the other symptoms were noticeable,-the close, "muggy" atmosphere; the deathlike stillness; the lack of oxygen in the air, causing one to breathe more rapidly, yet with far less satisfying results than usual.

Even as Bruno gazed, those heavy cloud-banks changed, both in shape and in colour, taking on a peculiar greenish lustre which only too accurately forebodes hail of no ordinary force.

His cry to this effect brought the professor forth from the shed-like shanty, while Waldo roused up sufficiently to speak:

"To say nothing of yonder formation way out over the salty drink, my worthy friends, who intimated that a cyclone was born at sea?"

Professor Featherwit frowned a bit as his keen little rat-like eyes turned towards that quarter of the heavens; but the frown was not for Waldo, nor for his slightly irreverent speech.

Where but a few minutes before there had been only a few light clouds in sight, was now a heavy bank of remarkable shape, its crest a straight line as though marked by an enormous ruler, while the lower edge was broken into sharp points and irregular sections, the whole seeming to float upon a low sea of grayish copper.

"Well, well, that looks ugly, decidedly ugly, I must confess," the wiry little professor spoke, after that keen scrutiny.

"Really, now?" drawled Waldo, who was nothing if not contrary on the surface. "Barring a certain little topsy-turvyness which is something out of the ordinary, I'd call that a charming bit of-Great guns and little cannon-balls!"

For just then there came a shrieking blast of wind from out the northeast, bringing upon its wings a brief shower of hail, intermingled with great drops of rain

which pelted all things with scarcely less force than did those frozen particles.

"Hurrah!" shrilly screamed Waldo, as he dashed out into the storm, fairly revelling in the sudden change. "Who says this isn't 'way up in G?' Who says-out of the way, Bruno! Shut that trap-door in your face, so another fellow may get at least a share of the good things coming straight down from-ow-wow!"

Through the now driving rain came flashing larger particles, and one of more than ordinary size rebounded from that curly pate, sending its owner hurriedly to shelter beneath the scrubby trees, one hand ruefully rubbing the injured part.

Faster fell the drops, both of rain and of ice, clattering against the shanty and its adjoining shed with an uproar audible even above the sullenly rolling peals of heavy thunder.

The rain descended in perfect sheets for a few minutes, while the hailstones fell thicker and faster, growing in size as the storm raged, already beginning to lend those red sands a pearly tinge with their dancing particles. Now and then an aerial monster would fall, to draw a wondering cry from the brothers, and on more than one occasion Waldo risked a cracked crown by dashing forth from shelter to snatch up a remarkable specimen.

"Talk about your California fruit! what's the matter with good old Washington Territory?" he cried,

tightly clenching one fist and holding a hailstone alongside by way of comparison. "Look at that, will you?"

Isn't it a beauty? See the different shaded rings of white and clear ice. See-brother, it is as large as my fist!"

But for once Professor Phaeton Featherwit was fairly deaf to the claims of this, in some respects his favourite nephew, having scuttled back beneath the shed, where he was busily stowing away sundry articles of importance into a queerly shaped machine which those rough planks fairly shielded from the driving storm.

Having performed this duty to his own satisfaction, the professor came back to where the brothers were standing, viewing with them such of the storm as could be itemised. That was but little, thanks to the driving rain, which cut one's vision short at but a few rods, while the deafening peals of thunder prevented any connected conversation during those first few minutes.

"Good thing we've got a shelter!" cried Waldo, involuntarily shrinking as the plank roof was hammered by several mammoth stones of ice. "One of those chunks of ice would crack a fellow's skull just as easy!"

Yet the next instant he was out in the driving storm, eagerly snatching at a brace of those frozen marvels, heedless of his own risk or of the warning

shouts sent after him by those cooler-brained comrades.

Thunder crashed in wildest unison with almost blinding sheets of lightning, the rain and hail falling thicker and heavier than ever for a few moments; but then, as suddenly as it had come, the storm passed on, leaving but a few scattered drops to fetch up the rear.

"Isn't that pretty nearly what people call a cloudburst, uncle Phaeton?" asked Bruno, curiously watching that receding mass of what from their present standpoint looked like vapour.

"Those wholly ignorant of meteorological phenomena might so pronounce, perhaps, but never one who has given the matter either thought or study," promptly responded the professor, in no wise loth to give a free lecture, no matter how brief it might be, perforce. "It is merely nature seeking to restore a disturbed equilibrium; a current of colder air, in search of a temporary vacuum, caused by-"

"But isn't that just what produces cy-tornadoes, though?" interrupted Waldo, with scant politeness.

"Precisely, my dear boy," blandly agreed their mentor, rubbing his hands briskly, while peering through rain-dampened glasses, after that departing storm. "And I have scarcely a doubt but that a tornado of no ordinary magnitude will be the final outcome of this remarkable display.

For, as the record will amply prove, the most destructive windstorms are invariably heralded by a fall

of hail, heavy in proportion to the-

"Then I'd rather be excused, thank you, sir!" again interrupted the younger of the brothers, shrugging his shoulders as he stepped forth from shelter to win a fairer view of the space stretching away towards the south and the west. "I always laughed at tales of hailstones large as hen's eggs, but now I know better. If I was a hen, and had to match such a pattern as these, I'd petition the legislature to change my name to that of ostrich,-I just would, now!"

Bruno proved to be a little more amenable to the law of politeness, and to him Professor Featherwit confined his sapient remarks for the time being, giving no slight amount of valuable information anent these strange phenomena of nature in travail.

He spoke of the different varieties of land-storms, showing how a tornado varied from a hurricane or a gale, then again brought to the front the vital difference between a cyclone, as such, and the miscalled "twister," which has wrought such dire destruction throughout a large portion of our own land during more recent years.

While that little lecture would make interesting reading for those who take an interest in such matters, it need scarcely be reproduced in this connection, more particularly as, just when the professor was getting fairly warmed up to his work, an interruption came in the shape of a sharp, eager shout from the lips of Waldo Gillespie.

"Look-look yonder! What a funny looking cloud that is!"

A small clump of trees growing upon a rising bit of ground interfered with the view of his brother and uncle, for Waldo was pointing almost due southeast; yet his excitement was so pronounced that both the professor and Bruno hastened in that direction, stopping short as they caught a fair sight of the object indicated.

A mighty mass of wildly disturbed clouds, black and green and white and yellow all blending together and constantly shifting positions, out of which was suddenly formed a still more ominous shape.

A mass of lurid vapour shot downwards, taking on the general semblance of a balloon, as it swayed madly back and forth, an elongating trunk or tongue reaching still nearer the earth, with fierce gyrations, as though seeking to fasten upon some support.

Not one of that trio had ever before gazed upon just such another creation, yet one and all recognised the truth,-this was a veritable tornado, just such as they had read in awed wonder about, time and time again.

Neither one of the brothers Gillespie were cravens, in any sense of the word, but now their cheeks grew paler, and they seemed to shrink from yonder airy monster, even while watching it grow into shape and awful power.

Professor Featherwit was no less absorbed in this wondrous spectacle, but his was the interest of a

scientist, and his pulse beat as ordinary, his brain remaining as clear and calm as ever.

"I hardly believe we have anything to fear from this tornado, my lads," he said, taking note of their uneasiness. "According to both rule and precedent, yonder tornado will pass to the east of our present position, and we will be as safe right here as though we were a thousand miles away."

"But,-do they always move towards the northeast, uncle Phaeton?"

"As a rule, yes; but there are exceptions, of course. And unless this should prove to be one of those rare ex-er-"

"Look!" cried Waldo, with swift gesticulation. "It's coming this way, or I never-~~ISN'T~~ it coming this way?"

"Unless this should prove to be one of those rare exceptions, my dear boy, I can promise you that-Upon my soul!" with an abrupt change of both tone and manner, "I really believe it IS coming this way!"

"It is-it is coming! Get a move on, or we'll never know-hunt a hole and pull it in after you!" fairly screamed Waldo, turning in flight.

## **CHAPTER II. PROFESSOR FEATHERWIT TAKING NOTES.**

"To the house!" cried the professor, raising his

voice to overcome yonder sullen roar, which was now beginning to come their way. "Trust all to the aeromotor, and 'twill be well with us!"

The wiry little man of science himself fell to work with an energy which told how serious he regarded the emergency, and, acting under his lead, the brothers manfully played their part.

Just as had been done many times before this day, a queer-looking machine was shoved out from the shed, gliding along the wooden ways prepared for that express purpose, while Professor Featherwit hurried aboard a few articles which past experience warned him might prove of service in the hours to come, then sharply cried to his nephews:

"Get aboard, lads! Time enough, yet none to spare in idle motions. See!

The storm is drifting our way in deadly earnest!"

And so it seemed, in good sooth.

Now fairly at its dread work of destruction, tearing up the rain dampened dirt and playing with mighty boulders, tossing them here and there, as a giant of olden tales might play with jackstones, snapping off sturdy trees and whipping them to splinters even while hurling them as a farmer sows his grain.

Just the one brief look at that aerial monster, then both lads hung fast to the hand-rail of rope, while the professor put that cunning machinery in motion, causing the air-ship to rise from its ways with a sudden

swooping movement, then soaring upward and onward, in a fair curve, as graceful and steady as a bird on wing.

All this took some little time, even while the trio were working as men only can when dear life is at stake; but the flying-machine was afloat and fairly off upon the most marvellous journey mortals ever accomplished, and that ere yonder death-balloon could cover half the distance between.

"Grand! Glorious! Magnificent!" fairly exploded the professor, when he could risk a more comprehensive look, right hand tightly gripping the polished lever through which he controlled that admirable mechanism. "I have longed for just such an opportunity, and now-the camera, Bruno! We must never neglect to improve such a marvellous chance for-get out the camera, lad!"

"Get out of the road, rather!" bluntly shouted Waldo, face unusually pale, as he stared at yonder awful force in action. "Of course I'm not scared, or anything like that, uncle Phaeton, but-I want to rack out o' this just about the quickest the law allows! Yes, I DO, now!"

"Wonderful! Marvellous! Incredible! That rara avis, an exception to all exceptions!" declared the professor, more deeply stirred than either of his nephews had ever seen him before. "A genuine tornado which has no eastern drift; which heads as directly as possible towards the northwest, and at the same

time-incredible!"

Only ears of his own caught these sentences in their entirety, for now the storm was fairly bellowing in its might, formed of a variety of sounds which baffles all description, but which, in itself, was more than sufficient to chill the blood of even a brave man. Yet, almost as though magnetised by that frightful force, the professor was holding his air-ship steady, loitering there in its direct path, rather than fleeing from what surely would prove utter destruction to man and machine alike.

For a few moments Bruno withstood the temptation, but then leaned far enough to grasp both hand and tiller, forcing them in the requisite direction, causing the aeromotor to swing easily around and dart away almost at right angles to the track of the tornado.

That roar was now as of a thousand heavily laden trains rumbling over hollow bridges, and the professor could only nod his approval when thus aroused from the dangerous fascination. Another minute, and the air-ship was floating towards the rear of the balloon-shaped cloud itself, each second granting the passengers a varying view of the wonder.

True to the firm hand which set its machinery in motion, the flying-machine maintained that gentle curve until it swung around well to the rear of the cloud, where again Professor Featherwit broke out in ecstatic praises of their marvellous good fortune.

"'Tis worth a life's ransom, for never until now hath mortal being been blessed with such a magnificent opportunity for taking notes and drawing deductions which-"

The professor nimbly ducked his head to dodge a ragged splinter of freshly torn wood which came whistling past, cast far away from the tornado proper by those erratic winds. And at the same instant the machine itself recoiled, shivering and creaking in all its cunning joints under a gust of wind which seemed composed of both ice and fire.

"Oh, I say!" gasped Waldo, when he could rally from the sudden blow.

"Turn the old thing the other way, uncle Phaeton, and let's go look for-well, almost anything's better than this old cyclone!"

"Tornado, lad," swiftly corrected the man of precision, leaning far forward, and gazing enthralled upon the vision which fairly thrilled his heart to its very centre. "Never again may we have such another opportunity for making-"

They were now directly in the rear of the storm, and as the air-ship headed across that track of destruction, it gave a drunken stagger, casting down its inmates, from whose parching lips burst cries of varying import.

"Air! I'm choking!" gasped Bruno, tearing open his shirt-collar with a spasmodic motion.

"Hold me fast!" echoed Waldo, clinging desperately to the life-line.

"It's drawing me-into the-ah!"

Even the professor gave certain symptoms of alarm for that moment, but then the danger seemed past as the ship darted fairly across the storm-trail, hovering to the east of that aerial phantom.

There was no difficulty in filling their lungs now, and once more Professor Featherwit headed the flying-machine directly for the balloon-shaped cloud, modulating its pace so as to maintain their relative position fairly well.

"Take note how it progresses,-by fits and starts, as it were," observed Featherwit, now in his glory, eyes asparkle and muscles aquiver, hair bristling as though full of electricity, face glowing with almost painful interest, as those shifting scenes were for ever imprinted upon his brain.

"Sort of a hop, step, and jump, and that's a fact," agreed Waldo, now a bit more at his ease since that awful sense of suffocation was lacking.

"I thought all cyclones-"

"Tornado, my DEAR boy!" expostulated the professor.

"I thought they all went in holy hurry, like they were sent for and had mighty little time in which to get there. But this one,-see how it stops to dance a jig and bore holes in the earth!"

"Another exception to the general rule, which is as you say," admitted the professor. "Different tornadoes have been timed as moving from twelve to seventy miles an hour, one passing a given point in half a score of seconds, at another time being registered as fully half an hour in clearing a single section.

"Take the destructive storm at Mount Carmel, Illinois, in June of '77.

That made progress at the rate of thirty-four miles an hour, yet its force was so mighty that it tore away the spire, vane, and heavy gilded ball of the Methodist church, and kept it in air over a distance of fifteen miles.

"Still later was the Texas tornado, doing its awful work at the rate of more than sixty miles an hour; while that which swept through Frankfort, Kansas, on May 17, 1896, was fully a half-hour in crossing a half-mile stretch of bottom-land adjoining the Vermillion River, pausing in its dizzy waltz upon a single spot for long minutes at a time."

"Couldn't have been much left when it got through dancing, if that storm was anything like this one," declared Waldo, shivering a bit as he watched the awful destruction being wrought right before their fascinated eyes.

Trees were twisted off and doubled up like blades of dry grass. Mighty rocks were torn apart from the rugged hills, and huge boulders were tossed into air as

though composed of paper. And over all ascended the horrid roar of ruin beyond description, while from that misshapen balloon-cloud, with its flattened top, the electric fluid shone and flashed, now in great sheets as of flame, then in vicious spurts and darts as though innumerable snakes of fire had been turned loose by the winds.

Still the aerial demon bored its almost sluggish course straight towards the northwest, in this, as in all else, seemingly bent on proving itself the exception to all exceptions as Professor Featherwit declared.

The savant himself was now in his glory, holding the tiller between arm and side, the better to manipulate his hand-camera, with which he was taking repeated snap-shots for future development and reference.

Truly, as he more than once declared, mortal man never had, nor mortal man ever would have, such a glorious opportunity for recording the varying phases of nature in travail as was now vouchsafed themselves.

"Just think of it, lads!" he cried, almost beside himself with enthusiasm. "This alone will be sufficient to carry our names ringing through all time down the corridors of undying fame! This alone would be more than enough to-Look pleasant, please!"

In spite of that awful vision so perilously close before them, and the natural uncertainty which attended such a reckless venture, Waldo could not repress a chuckle at that comical conclusion, so frequently used

towards himself when their uncle was coaxing them to pose before his pet camera.

"Is it-surely this is not safe, uncle Phaeton?" ventured Bruno, as another retrograde gust of air smote their apparently frail conveyance with sudden force.

"Let's call it a day's work, and knock off," chimed in Waldo. "If the blamed thing should take a notion to balk, and rear back on its haunches, where'd we come out at?"

Professor Featherwit made an impatient gesture by way of answer. Speech just then would have been worse than useless, for that tremendous roaring, crashing, thundering of all sounds, seemed to fall back and envelop the air-ship as with a pall.

A shower of sand and fine debris poured over and around them, filling ears and mouths, and blinding eyes for the moment, forcing the brothers closer to the floor of the aerostat, and even compelling the eager professor to remit his taking of notes for future generations.

Then, thin and reed-like, yet serving to pierce that temporary obscurity and horrible jangle of outer sounds, came the voice of their relative:

"Fear not, my children! The Lord is our shield, and so long as he willeth, just so long shall we-Ha! didn't I tell ye so?"

For the blinding veil was torn away, and once again the trio of adventurers might watch yonder grandly awesome march of devastation.

"Heading direct for the Olympics!" declared Professor Featherwit, digging the sand out of his eyes and striving to clean his glasses without removing them, clinging to tiller and camera through all. "What a grand and glorious guide 'twould be for us!"

"If we could only hitch on-like a tin can to the tail of a dog!" suggested Waldo, with boyish sarcasm. "Not any of that in mine, thank you! I can wait. No such mighty rush. No, -SIR!"

There came no answer to his words, for just then that swooping air-demon turned to vivid fire, lightning playing back and forth, from side to side, in every conceivable direction, until in spite of the broad daylight its glory pained those watching eyes.

"Did you ever witness the like!" awesomely cried Bruno, gazing like one fascinated. "Who could or would ever believe all that, even if tongue were able to portray its wondrous beauty?"

"What a place that would be for popping corn!" contributed Waldo, practical or nothing, even under such peculiar circumstances. "If I had to play poppy, though, I'd want a precious long handle to the concern!"

More intensely interested than ever, Professor Featherwit plied his shutter, taking shot after shot at yonder aerial phenomena, feeling that future generations would surely rise up to call him blessed when the results of his experiments were once fairly spread before the world.

And hence it came to pass that still more thrilling experiences came unto these daring navigators of space, and that almost before one or the other of them could fairly realise that greater danger really menaced both their air-ship and their lives.

Another whirly-gust of sand and other debris assailed the flying-machine, and while sight was thus rendered almost useless for the time being, the aerostat began to sway and reel from side to side, shivering as though caught by an irresistible power, yet against which it battled as though instinct with life and brain-power.

Once again the adventurers found it difficult to breathe, while an unseen power seemed pressing them to that floor as though-Thank heaven!

Just as before, that cloud was swept away, and again air came to fill those painfully oppressed lungs. Once again the trio cleared their eyes and stared about, only to utter simultaneous cries of alarm.

For, brief though that period of blindness had been, 'twas amply sufficient to carry the aeromotor perilously near yonder storm-centre, and though Professor Featherwit gripped hard his tiller, trying all he knew to turn the air-ship for a safer quarter,-'twas all in vain!

"Haste,-make haste, uncle Phaeton!" hoarsely panted Bruno, leaning to aid the professor. "We will be sucked in and-hasten, for life!"

"I can't,-we're already-in the-suction!"

## **CHAPTER III. RIDING THE TORNADO.**

Whether it was that the air-ship itself had increased its speed during those few moments of dense obscurity, or whether the madly whirling winds had taken a retrograde movement at that precise time, could only be a matter of conjecture; but the ominous fact remained.

The aerostat was fairly over the danger-line, and, despite all efforts being made to the contrary, was being drawn directly towards that howling, crashing, thundering mass of destructive energy.

Already the inmates felt themselves being sucked from the flying-machine, and instinctively tightened their grip upon hand-rail and floor, gasping and oppressed, breath failing, and ribs apparently being crushed in by that horrible pressure.

"Hold fast-for life!" pantingly screamed Professor Featherwit, as he strove in vain to check or change the course of his aeromotor, now for the first time beyond control of that master-hand.

A few seconds of soul-trying suspense, during which the flying-machine shivered from stem to stern, almost like a human creature in its death-agony, creaking and groaning, with shrill sounds coming from those expanded, curved wings, as the suction increased;

then-A merciful darkness fell over those sorely imperilled beings, and the vessel itself seemed about to be overwhelmed by an avalanche of sand and dirt and mixed debris. Then came a dizzy, rocking lurch, followed by a shock which nearly cast uncle and nephews from their frantic holds, and the air-ship appeared to be whirled end for end, cast hither and yon, wrenched and twisted as though all must go to ruin together.

A blast as of superheated air smote upon them one moment, while in the next they were whirled through an icy atmosphere, then tossed dizzily to and fro, as their too-frail vehicle spun upward as though on a journey to the far-away stars.

A shrieking blast of wind served to briefly clear away the choking dust, affording the trio a fleeting glimpse of their immediate surroundings: hurtling sticks and stones, splintered tops of trees, shrubs with wildly lashing roots freshly torn from the bed of years, all madly spinning through a blinding, scorching, freezing mass of crazily battling winds, the different currents twining and weaving in and out, as so many hideous serpents at play.

A moment thus, then that horrid uproar grew still more deafening, and the air-ship was whirled high and higher, in a dizzy dance, those luckless creatures clinging fast to whatever their frenzied hands might clutch, feeling that this was the end of all.

Further sight was denied them. They were powerless to move a limb, save as jerked painfully by those shrieking currents. Breath was taken away, and an enormous weight bore down upon them, threatening to produce a fatal collapse through their ribs giving way.

Upward whirled the flying-machine, powerless now as those wretched beings within its cunning shape, smitten sharply here and there by some of those ascending missiles, yet without receiving material injury; until a last shivering lurch came, ending in a sudden fall.

A dizzying swoop downward, but not to death and destruction, for the aerostat alighted easily upon what appeared to be a sort of air-cushion, and, though unsteady for a brief space, then settled upon an even keel.

"Cling fast-for life!" huskily gasped the professor, unwittingly repeating the caution which had last crossed his lips, which he had ever since been striving to enunciate, faithful to his guardianship over these, his sole surviving relatives.

"I don't-where are we?"

Waldo lifted his head to peer with half-blind eyes about them, in which action he was imitated by both brother and uncle; but, for a brief space, they were none the wiser.

All around the aeromotor rose a wall of whirling winds, seemingly impenetrable, apparently within reach

of an extended arm, changing colour with each fraction of a second, hideously beautiful, yet never twice the same in blend or mixture.

A hollow, strangely sounding roar was perceptible; one instant coming as from the far distance, then from nigh at hand, causing the air-ship to quiver and tremble, as a sentient being might in the presence of a torturing death.

"Look-upward!" panted Bruno, a few seconds later, his face as pale as that of a corpse, in spite of the dirt and blotches of sticky mud with which he had been peppered during that dizzy whirl.

Mechanically his companions in peril obeyed, catching breath sharply, as they saw a clear sky and yellow sunshine far above,-so awfully far they were, that it seemed like looking upward from the bottom of an enormously deep well.

And then the marvellous truth flashed upon the brain of Phaeton Featherwit, almost robbing him of all power of speech. Still he managed to jerkily ejaculate:

"We're inside,-riding the-tornado-itself!"

Then those whirling winds closed quickly above them, shutting out the sunlight, hiding the heavens from their view, enclosing that vehicle and its occupants, as they were borne away into unknown regions, within the very heart of the tornado itself!

Yet, incredible as it surely seems, no actual harm came to the trio or to their flying-machine as it swayed

gently upon its airy cushion, although from every side came the horrid roar of destruction, while ever and anon they could glimpse a wrestling tree or torn mass of shrubbery whizzing upward and outward, to be flung far away beyond the vortex of electrical winds.

Once more came that awful sense of suffocation. That painted pall closed down upon them, robbing their lungs of air, one instant fairly crisping their hair with a touch of fire, only to send an icy chill to their veins a moment later.

In vain they struggled, fighting for breath, as a fish gasps when swung from its native element. While that horrid pressure endured, man, youth, and boy alike were powerless.

Again the pall lifted, folding back and blending with those madly circling currents, once again affording a glimpse of yonder far-away heavens, so marvellously clear, and bright, and peaceful in seeming!

Weakened by those terrible moments, Bruno and Waldo lay gasping, trembling, faint of heart and ill of body, yet filling their lungs with comparatively pure air,-pity there was so little of it to win!

Professor Featherwit still had thought and care for his nephews rather than himself alone, and pantingly spoke, as he dragged himself to the snug locker, where many important articles had been stowed away:

"Here-suck life-compressed air!"

With husky cries the brothers caught at the tubes