

Roy Rockwood

**Dave Dashaway and His Giant
Airship: or, A Marvellous Trip
Across the Atlantic**



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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	9
CHAPTER III	13
CHAPTER IV	18
CHAPTER V	21
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	23

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CHAPTER I THE GIANT AIRSHIP

“Is that your airship?”

“Not exactly, but I am in charge of it.”

“The *Gossamer*, isn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“Belongs to the Interstate Aero Company?”

“You’re pretty well posted, I see.”

“Ought to be. I’m close to the Interstate people, so I’d like to look the machine over. In fact, if you’ve got an expert aviator on hand, I think I’ll take a little flight.”

John Grimshaw, ex-balloonist and battered-up aeronaut, regarded the foppishly dressed young man before him quizzically.

“Oh, you do, eh?” he observed, very dryly. “Well, it won’t be on this occasion. As to an expert aviator, we’ve got Dave Dashaway.”

“Yes, I’ve heard of him.”

“Most everybody has, I reckon. He’s here on business though, and that sign is for outsiders, yourself included.”

Old Grimshaw pointed to a sign on the big gates of the high board enclosure outside of which he stood on guard. It read: “No Admittance.” The visitor had come strolling from the direction of some summer cottages near a pretty lake close by. Grimshaw surmised that he was one of the smart set spending an outing there.

“Humph!” observed the young man, with a shrug of his shoulders and a scowl. “Pretty independent, aren’t you? I think you’ll change your tune shortly.”

“Is that so?”

“I fancy. I’ll bring somebody with me who will do what he chooses with your precious old airship, and send you about your business, if he feels like it.”

The young man turned on his heel, mad as a hornet, as he spoke. Just then the gate was pushed open, and a bright-faced, athletic young fellow stepped into view.

“What’s the trouble, Mr. Grimshaw?” he asked, pleasantly.

“Another of those pestiferous nuisances, who want to pry into other people’s business, and think they own the world,” grumbled the veteran aeronaut.

“What did he want?”

John Grimshaw told his story.

“Oh, you might have gratified his curiosity and let him look around a little.”

“See here, Dave Dashaway,” bristled up Grimshaw, “you’ve seen in the past what taking in a stranger led to. You’re here for a special purpose, and no Jerry Dawson, or fellows of that stripe, are going to get a chance to trick us again.”

“That’s so, Mr. Grimshaw, we can’t be too careful, I will admit,” agreed the young aviator.

He was a rather unassuming young fellow for a person of his merits and record, was this active lad who inside of three months had made his way from humble circumstances to the very front rank of American airmen.

Dave Dashaway looked back over the past twelve weeks of his young career with pride, pleasure and satisfaction. There were dark spots, of course. The Jerry Dawson old Grimshaw had mentioned was one of them. Envious rivals there had been, too. Danger, scheming, cunning had more than once threatened.

That bright, breezy afternoon, however, the accredited pilot of the latest monoplane on exhibition, Dave Dashaway felt like a general who had won a hard-fought battle and was resting on his laurels.

Those who have read the first volume of the present series, entitled, “Dave Dashaway, the Young Aviator; Or, In the Clouds for Fame and Fortune,” will recall how humble and difficult was the start in life made by the bright young aeronaut. The father of Dave had been a noted balloonist. Dave was of tender age when he died. For years the boy was made a drudge by a miserly old guardian. The finding of a prize medal and other valuables accidentally lost from an airship, sent Dave on his travels seeking their owner, Robert King, a noted airman, who gave Dave a job.

It seemed as though air sailing was born in Dave. He took to aviation like a duck does to water. The youth did several helpful things at the various aero meets for Mr. King that won his confidence and friendship. Dave studied all the books he could get hold of on airships, and Grimshaw, a crippled and retired balloonist, took him into his school.

From the initial run made on a dummy aeroplane along the ground, to his first aerial flight in a monoplane with Mr. King, Dave showed intelligence, skill and ambition. Then came his first brilliant flight in the *Baby Racer*, a show biplane. So well did the young aviator manage the *Racer*, that its owner, the Interstate Aero Company, made a contract with him for regular exhibitions.

Dave did not disappoint his liberal employers in his efforts. He won several prizes, gave a big lift to a chum, Hiram Dobbs, in the aero field, and made old Grimshaw proud of so apt a pupil.

In the second volume of the present series, called, “Dave Dashaway and His Hydroplane; Or, Daring Adventures Over the Great Lakes,” is told how Dave advanced another important step up the ladder of fame and fortune. The company employing him started him at exhibiting their model hydroplane. This was a new venture for Dave, but he industriously mastered its details and made a great hit at an aero meet near Chicago.

All along the line Dave had been forced to oppose the envy and malice of unprincipled business rivals. By thinking straight and acting straight, however, he had won out on every occasion, as an honest, deserving lad always does. He and his young protege, Hiram Dobbs, by making a hundred mile record flight one dark and stormy night, got a big order for the Interstate Aero Company ahead of a competitor. Then Jerry Dawson, his father and a smuggler stole the hydro-monoplane, *Drifter*, and located across the Canadian border. Dave and his friends began a wonderful chase in another machine. They had some stirring adventures, ending in the discovery of the *Drifter*.

That incident shut out the Dawsons from later aero meets, but, as they had not been prosecuted, they became hangers-on at circus and county fair exhibitions. Dave heard of them once in awhile, but they seemed unlikely to injure him any farther.

Dave and Hiram were finely rewarded by the Interstate people for their success. The company wanted Dave to make a two-year contract to exhibit their machines. Dave, however, was obliged to decline the offer.

There was a strong reason for this – a reason that was enough to set on fire the enthusiasm of any live, up-to-date boy.

As related in the preceding volume, Dave had discovered an old friend of his dead father, one Cyrus Dale. This gentleman was wealthy, had no family, and had been a fellow balloonist of Mr. Dashaway, years before. A boy who had stolen some papers from Dave had succeeded in palming himself off on Mr. Dale as Dave Dashaway.

Mr. King had unmasked the imposter. The latter, with some friends, had then kidnapped Mr. Dale. The veteran aviator, Robert King, had rescued Mr. Dale from their clutches. The gratitude of

the latter for this act, together with his warm interest in Dave, had led to the three coming together in a most friendly way. It was this ideal situation which had resulted in the carrying out of a long-cherished plan of Mr. King.

This was nothing less than a scheme for crossing the Atlantic in a giant airship. It had been the pet idea of the skilled aviator for years – the hope and dream of every ambitious airman in the world.

Of all men in the field, Mr. King had the ability to direct such a project. Mr. Dale was not only willing but ready to supply the capital. As to Dave and Hiram, they talked constantly of the enterprise daytimes and dreamed of it nights.

The plan of the veteran aviator, however, was one that involved time, skill and expense. His plans for building the great airship were very elaborate. A month had now gone by, and only the skeleton of the mammoth air traveler had so far been constructed.

A temporary aerodrome had been constructed on the edge of a large city about twenty-five miles from Lake Linden, where we find the young aviator at the opening of the present story. There Mr. King, Mr. Dale and some skilled workmen were energetically pushing forward their work. If their plans did not go awry, before the end of August the giant airship would start out on the strangest, grandest trip ever attempted in the field of aeronautics.

In the meantime the Interstate Aero Company had prevailed on Dave to give them a month's special service. This comprised the exhibition of their latest hydro-monoplane, the *Gossamer*, at Lake Linden. The district was one visited every summer by men of wealth from New York, Boston and other large cities. The Interstate people had secured what had once been a small private park. Here Dave, Hiram and Mr. Grimshaw had been located for over a week.

The object of their exhibitions was to influence a sale of the Interstate machines among the rich men visiting Lake Linden. Many of them were aero enthusiasts. Besides that, the proprietors of the resort paid the company quite a large fee for making occasional flights as an attraction to popularize the lake.

Dave glanced after the man who had just had the verbal tussle with Mr. Grimshaw. He did not like his trivial looks any more than the old balloonist had. They had many curious visitors at the enclosure, however, and Dave forgot the strange brag of the latest one, as he looked down the road in the direction of the town of Linden.

"It's strange Hiram doesn't get back with the carryall," remarked the young aviator.

"Yes, I heard the train come in half an hour ago," replied Grimshaw. "Expecting quite a crowd, aren't you, Dashaway?"

"Why, yes, according to the message the Interstate people sent me," said Dave. "It seems there is a special party of foreign airmen our New York salesman has interested. Some of them have come over to take a try at the meets in the Southern circuit, and want to buy machines."

"They'll find ours the best," asserted Grimshaw.

"I think that, too," agreed Dave. "That's why I've got everything spick and span inside there. The *Gossamer* looks as if she was just waiting to float like an eagle at the word."

"She's a beauty, and no mistake," declared Grimshaw, and like some ardent horseman gazing at a fond pet, he pushed open the gate, and fixed his eyes on the hydro-aeroplane in the middle of the enclosure. "She's the last word in airships," boasted the old enthusiast. "That trial flight of yours yesterday, Dashaway, was the prettiest piece of air work I ever saw."

Intimate as the young aviator was with the *Gossamer* and every detail of her delicate mechanism, he could not resist the fascination of looking over the most beautiful model in the airship field.

The *Gossamer* had proven a revelation, even to skilled airmen. It had been constructed in strict secrecy. The public had known nothing as to the details of the craft until it was taken out on Lake Linden to test its balance and speed.

It was equipped to carry four passengers, was driven by a forty horse-power motor, and made the tremendous speed of fifty miles an hour in the water and sixty miles an hour in the air. With its two propellers driven by clutch and chain transmission, and its new automatic starter and fuel gauge, it was a marvel of beauty and utility, as readily sent up from the confined deck of a warship as from the broadest aero field.

“She’s a bird, sure enough,” declared old Grimshaw, admiringly.

“Wasn’t she sort of built for a bird?” challenged Dave, with a smile.

“That’s so. Ah, I hear the wagon. Hiram is coming.”

The two went outside the enclosure, and the man looked keenly down the road in the direction of the village.

“Why Dashaway,” he exclaimed, “it’s Hiram, but he isn’t bringing the party you expected.”

“That’s queer,” commented the young aviator.

“He’s all alone – oh, no, he isn’t. He’s got one passenger aboard – a girl.”

“A girl?” repeated Dave, staring somewhat mystified at the approaching vehicle.

“Yes.”

“That’s queerer still,” remarked the young aviator.

CHAPTER II

“FOR MOTHER’S SAKE”

“Whoa!” sang out Hiram Dobbs, bringing the team to a halt and beckoning to Dave.

“Why, what’s the trouble, Hiram?” inquired the young aviator.

“Crowd didn’t come, that’s all.”

“And no word from them?”

“Why, yes, there was a wire,” and Dave’s friend and assistant handed a yellow sheet to Dave with the explanation: “Operator at the station gave it to me that way. A rush, so I read it.”

“That’s all right,” returned Dave, and he also read the brief dispatch in his turn.

It stated that there had come an unexpected hitch in the arrangements of the New York agent of the Interstate people, and that the party he had in tow would not visit Lake Linden until the following day.

“That’s good,” said Dave. “It will give us a chance to go to the city and see how our giant airship scheme is coming on.”

“Fine!” applauded Hiram. “There’s something I wanted to talk to you about first, though, Dave.”

“What’s that, Hiram?”

“Wait a moment, Miss.”

Hiram interrupted with these words, addressed to the only passenger in the carryall. For the first time Dave glanced at her closely. She was a plainly-dressed, modest-looking girl of about sixteen. Her eyes were red with weeping. She held a handkerchief in her hand, and was pale and seemed greatly distressed.

“Oh, I must make you no farther trouble,” she said, in a broken tone. “I will get out of the carryall here and walk the rest of the way to the seminary.”

“I want to speak to my friend here first, Miss,” said Hiram. “You just wait. Maybe he can suggest some way to help you out.”

“You have been so kind to me already,” murmured the girl.

Dave wondered what was up. The carryall was a hired one, and he had supposed at first that Hiram had given the girl a lift, finding she was going his way. Hiram was always doing such kindly things.

The forlorn appearance of the girl, however, and the rather serious manner of Hiram as he jumped from the wagon seat and beckoned Dave out of earshot of his passenger, made the young aviator surmise that he had something of particular moment to impart to him.

“Now then, what is it, Hiram?” he asked.

“You see that girl?”

“Of course.”

“I never felt so sorry for anyone in my life as I do for her.”

“Who is she?”

“A poor girl working her way through the young ladies’ seminary up at the other end of the lake.”

“Oh, I see.”

“It seems she got a telegram about an hour ago. It is from her home, a hundred miles west of here. It stated that her mother was in a critical condition, and if she expected to see her alive she must take the first train for Easton. She hurried to the depot. I found her there crying as if her heart would break.”

“Poor girl! she had missed the train.”

“By just four minutes, and no other until eight o’clock this evening.”

"I am dreadfully sorry for her," said Dave, glancing with genuine sympathy at the girl in the carryall.

Hiram fidgeted about. He dug the toe of his shoe into the dirt. Then he looked Dave daringly in the eye. Then he dropped his glance. Dave was quick to read his impetuous and open-hearted comrade's thoughts.

"I fancy I guess what's in your mind, Hiram," he said.

"I hope you do, anyhow. Say, if I knew how to run an airship like you – "

"You'd run it to Easton, I suppose?" intimated Dave.

"Yes, sir, that's just what I would do. See here, Dave, suppose you had a sister in the trouble that young girl is in?"

Dave put up his hand interruptingly. His face was earnest and serious.

"I'd get her to her mother if I had to sell the shoes off my feet. You're a grand-hearted fellow, Hiram Dobbs, and, as I'll not let you beat me in the doing-good line, why – "

"You'll take her to her mother in the *Gossamer*?" fairly shouted Hiram, dancing from one foot to the other in his excitement over such a prospect.

"I'll try and make it out that way," responded Dave. "Let me think for a minute or two, Hiram."

The young aviator took another look at the mournful face of the young girl in the carryall. Then he made up his mind. He was a fully-trusted employe of the Interstate Aero Company, and pretty nearly at liberty to do as he pleased. Dave looked up at the sky, made some mental calculations, and said finally:

"Tell her who I am, Hiram – I want to have a little talk with her."

"This is my best friend, Dave Dashaway, Miss – "

"My name is Amy Winston," spoke the girl, a trifle shy and embarrassed.

"Hiram Dobbs has told me about your trouble, Miss Winston," said Dave. "He is a fine fellow and feels sorry for you, and so do I. We are going to try and get you to your home within the next three hours."

"Oh, if you only could!" exclaimed the young girl, anxiously. "But there is no train until this evening."

"That is true," replied Dave.

"You see, Dave is a great aviator, Miss," broke in Hiram, in his usual impulsive, explosive way. "He's taken lots of prizes. He won the – "

"That will do, Hiram," laughed Dave. "The truth is, Miss Winston," he continued to the puzzled girl, "we have only one way of getting you to your home. Please step down and I will show you what it is."

Dave helped the girl down the steps at the rear of the vehicle. He led her to the gates of the enclosure and drew one of them wide open.

"Why, it is an airship!" exclaimed Amy Winston. "I saw it yesterday from the seminary grounds."

"Dave was running it, and I was aboard," boasted Hiram, proudly.

"How beautifully it sailed," murmured the girl.

"Miss Winston," spoke Dave, "I can make Easton in about three hours in that machine. It may be something I should not propose, considering the possible risk, but the *Gossamer* is at your service."

"Oh," exclaimed Amy, her eyes filling with tears of gratitude and hope, "I would dare any danger to once more see my dear mother before she dies."

"You are willing to try it?" asked Dave, definitely.

Amy was trembling, but she answered bravely in the affirmative.

"Tell Mr. Grimshaw," said Dave to his friend, who at once started off to obey the order. "Now, Miss Winston," continued the young aviator, "I will help you to a seat in the machine."

When the girl had been disposed of in the most comfortable seat in the *Gossamer*, Dave gave her a strap to draw her dress skirt tightly about her feet. Other straps bound her in the seat so that by no possibility could she fall or be thrown out.

The girl had grown a shade paler and was all in a flutter, but she did not show the least inclination to draw back from an exploit that would start most people into hysterics.

Dave went into the tent where he and Hiram and Grimshaw ate and slept, and came out in aviation garb. He took some time looking over a guide book. Meanwhile his two helpers had been working about the *Gossamer*, getting everything in order.

Grimshaw made no comment on the occasion. While he always resented any intrusion of outsiders at aerodrome or meet, he had long since made up his mind that Dave knew his business and was just about right in everything he did. The old expert went over the *Gossamer* as thoroughly as if the machine was bound on a long distance non-stop flight. He saw to it that nothing was lacking that an air navigator might need. He even set the green lantern on the right side and the red to the left, steamship code, in case of some delay or accident, whereby the *Gossamer* might drift up against night work.

“Look out for a change in the wind,” was Grimshaw’s parting injunction.

“It looks like a coming squall in the northwest,” replied Dave; “but I think this head wind will hold till we get out of range. All ready, Miss Winston?”

“Yes, sir,” fluttered the little lady, holding tightly to the arms of her seat behind the operator’s post, although she was securely tied in.

“All free,” said Dave simply, and his helpers stood aside as the self-starter was set in motion.

The *Gossamer* rose lightly as a bird. Just above the fence line, however, Dave slightly turned his head at an unusual sound. He had just a glimpse of two figures acting rather wildly immediately beyond the enclosure.

One was the foppish fellow who had recently been repulsed by Grimshaw, and who had made the strange threat that he would bring somebody with him who would settle affairs.

Apparently this vaunted individual was now in his company. He was a richly dressed lad, somewhat older than Dave. He seemed to be a good deal excited about something; acted, as Grimshaw had described it, as if he owned the world.

His companion was waving his cane angrily as the airship shot skyward. The boy himself shook his fists toward the *Gossamer*, and shouted out furiously some command or threat the young aviator could not make out.

Dave wondered what this second visit meant. He had no time nor thought to spare, either staring or guessing, however. Eye, hand and brain were centered intently upon his task. Dave for the moment forgot everything, except that he was directing to a safe, steady course a mechanism as delicate and sensitive as the works of a fine chronometer.

He caught the echo of a low, quick respiration from the girl behind him. The suddenness of the ascent had acted on her as it did on every novice, producing a startled feeling. Then, as the *Gossamer* whirled three hundred feet high, and the swaying, gliding exhilaration of perfect motion followed, a long-drawn breath told of relief and satisfaction.

“Don’t be frightened, Miss Winston,” called out Dave, venturing a quick glance at his passenger, whose wide-open eyes surveyed the panorama beneath them in speechless wonderment.

“Oh, I am not, indeed,” cried Amy Winston. “It is only the strangeness.”

“You are perfectly safe,” assured the young aviator. “We have made a splendid start. Just think of home – and your mother,” he added very gently. “I feel certain that we can make Easton inside of two hours.”

“I am so glad; oh, so glad,” replied Amy, with grateful tears in her eyes.

Dave was pleased that his course towards Easton took him due southwest. A six-mile breeze was coming from that direction. This was a perfect condition for even, stable progress. Over towards

the northwest a bank of ominous black clouds were coming up, threatening a gale and a deluge of rain. The young pilot of the *Gossamer* planned and hoped to dodge this storm by fast flying.

The southern edge of the big cloud began to cover the sky ahead of Dave. Once or twice there were contrary gusts, and he had to do some skillful engineering to preserve a safe balance. He felt considerably relieved to observe that the *Gossamer* was safely out of range of the real storm center. Some ragged-edge masses thrown out from the main body were, however, scudding ahead of him. There were one or two spatters of rain.

To the far right of him Dave could tell that a momentary tornado was sweeping the tops of the trees. He set the lever to the limit notch, made a long volplane and then a wide circuit to the south.

“I believe we are out of range,” Dave told himself, hopefully.

Then, as a sudden and unexpected shock announced the meeting of two powerful forces, he sat motionless and helpless.

The young aviator faced a mishap most dreaded of all that threaten the safety of the expert aeronaut.

CHAPTER III

A NARROW ESCAPE

The *Gossamer* had struck “a hole in the air!” “We are lost!” thought Dave Dashaway.

The young aviator was not prone to arrive at senseless conclusions. He had made a practical study of aeronautics, in a way; from the first time the pioneer airman harnessed a gasoline engine to a kite and called it a flying machine, down to the loop-the-loop somersault trick in aviation.

A “hole in the air” to the sky traveler is what a yawning chasm is to a speeding automobile or an unexpected cataract to a hydroplane. It is worse than a “killed” motor or even a threatened “turn turtle.” Every part of the machine suddenly goes useless. The heavy mechanism simply drops. In a word, the *Gossamer* had been caught in a dead void caused by two opposing air currents colliding, and shutting the machine into an absolute pocket, or vacuum.

If Dave had remained inert, or had hesitated for a single instant of time, the *Gossamer* would have been doomed. A slender thread of hope presented itself and he was quick to utilize it to the limit. “Feeling” the air with one cheek, he noticed the tail of the machine give a quick switch. This he at once understood indicated that the master air current was from the north. Dave hoped there was power enough left in the propellers to make a sharp, quick turn. He set the apparatus for the speediest whirl he had ever attempted.

The machine was tipping, dropping steadily. Dave banked to the left at a most critical angle. There was a dizzying spin and then a dive. A great breath of relief swept from Dave’s lips as the *Gossamer* righted. The wings caught the violent blast of the gust, and the machine fairly bored its way ahead, true as an arrow, into the teeth of the storm.

A drenching shower shut the aerial wayfarers into a blinding deluge of rain drops. Then their course lightened, and Dave knew that the thinning veil of moisture indicated sunlight beyond it. He shut down speed slightly. The air pressure was fast decreasing as the *Gossamer* emerged from the clouds. Dave gradually worked the head of the machine due southwest once more. The former head wind was regained, and sunny progress offered beyond.

“A close shave,” said Dave, to himself, and turned to see how his passenger had taken it.

“I suppose that scared you somewhat, Miss Winston?” he remarked.

Amy’s face was pale, and she showed the strain of her startling experience, but she replied:

“I could not be frightened with you. Anybody as kind and thoughtful as you are to a poor girl in distress like myself, could not be anything but brave.”

Dave’s heart warmed at the compliment. He admired the girl, too. As he thought back, he realized that his nerves had been at a tension where any outcry or movement on the part of his passenger might have upset his self-control, and have prevented the prompt action which had saved the day.

He felt proud and pleased at his success in turning a hard corner. His passenger, too, became more light-hearted as the prospect of soon reaching the side of her invalid mother became more assured. Once or twice as they flew over chicken coops in farm yards there was great excitement beneath them, and she could not help but smile.

“That is Easton,” she leaned over finally to say to Dave, as the steeples and factory chimneys of a little town came into view.

The girl pointed out her home a few minutes later, and Dave prepared to make a landing. The *Gossamer* came to earth in the middle of a field a few hundred yards distant from the house the girl had designated.

Long before Dave had released the ropes that had held his passenger in her seat, people who had viewed the novelty of a real airship came flocking to the spot from all directions. Amy seized

the hands of the young aviator, bubbling over with gratitude. She tried to thank him as she wished to, but the words would not come.

“Don’t delay, Miss Winston,” said Dave. “I know they must be very anxious about you at home.”

Dave led his little charge to the fence surrounding the field and helped her over it. Then he returned to the *Gossamer*. He found that the propellers had gone through some strain during his adventure in the storm, and he had some little work to do with chisel, hammer and wrench. While he was thus occupied almost a mob surrounded the airship, curious, gaping and delighted.

A man wearing a big star, and evidently the policeman of the town, made himself very officious keeping the crowd back. He had seen an airship once at a county fair and paraded his knowledge now. He tried industriously to make himself very agreeable to the young aviator. Dave had to laugh secretly to himself as the man pinched his fingers describing to a local newspaper man that this was the “magenta” – meaning magneto; and that the “carbutter” – meaning the carburetor.

“You must have been reading up on airships,” spoke the newspaper man to the policeman, as the latter walked importantly about the craft, now and then sternly calling on some small lad to “git back out th’ way.”

“I have,” came the confident answer. “I know a lot about ’em. Of course I haven’t ever sailed in one, but my brother, he’s a policeman in Long Island, and once, when I was on a visit to him, he was detailed to go out to a place where they was havin’ one of these airyplane contests, and keep order. I went with him, and he swore me in as his deputy assistant. I seen a lot of them foreign fellers fly, and I picked up a lot of information.”

“I suppose so,” murmured the newspaper man, who was new in town, and did not know enough to discount the boasting talk of the officer.

“Yes, indeed!” went on the constable. “Why, once one of them birdmen – they call ’em ‘birdmen’ you know,” he explained as though he knew it all, “once one of ’em run out of gasoline just as he was goin’ to start in a prize flight, and if it hadn’t been for me he’d never won it.”

“How’s that?” asked the reporter.

“Why I hustled over to the hangar – that’s the French word for a balloon shed,” he explained condescendingly, “I rushed over to the hangar and got him a can of gasoline and he went up as slick as anything and won the prize. He said I helped him a lot, and he gave me a dollar. I didn’t want to take it, but he insisted. Oh, I know a lot about airships.”

Dave was so busy tightening some of the guy wires that had come loosened at the turn buckle, by reason of the great strain, that he paid little attention to the reporter and the constable for a few minutes.

The young aviator, however, noticed that the officious officer was becoming more and more familiar with the machine, touching the different parts, often calling them by their wrong names, and totally unconscious of his errors. Nor was the reporter any the wiser.

“I don’t exactly understand what makes the airship move,” confessed the newspaper man to the self-appointed instructor. “Is it – ?”

“It’s these here perpellers,” explained the constable. “They work just like an electric fan, you know.”

“I see, but then the blades of an electric fan go around but the fan doesn’t sail in the air. Why is that?”

“Well – er – it’s because – Oh, here’s something I forgot to explain,” said the constable quickly, finding himself unexpectedly in deep water. “I’ll tell you about the perpellers later. This here’s the radiator,” he went on. “It’s full of water, just like in the radiator of an automobile, and it keeps the gasoline from boiling over – cools it off you know.”

“Indeed,” said the reporter, who knew a little about autos. “But I thought the water was to keep the engine from getting overheated.”

“Not in an airship,” insisted the constable. “In an airyplane the radiator keeps the gasoline cool. I’ll jest show you how it works,” and, before Dave could stop the man, he had opened a small faucet in the radiator, designed to drain out the water.

Now it happened that Dave had been running his engine very fast, and, in consequence, the water in the radiator – which really did cool the motor and not the gasoline – this water was very hot – in fact some steam was present.

No sooner did the meddlesome constable open the stop-cock that a jet of steam shot out, burning his fingers severely. The man jumped back with an exclamation of pain.

“I – I didn’t know it was so hot!” he cried. “This must be a new cooling system he’s using on this affair.”

“I should say it was more like a *heating* system,” remarked the reporter, with a smile he could not conceal.

“Ha! Ha! Shiner got burned!” yelled a small boy who had been ordered away from the craft. “Shiner got burned! Ha! Ha!”

“Make a cup of tea, Shiner!” yelled another lad, “Shiner” evidently being the constable’s nickname.

“I’ll ‘shiner’ you if I git holt of you!” he threatened, rushing forward with some of his fingers in his mouth to render the pain less. It was not a very dignified attitude for a guardian of the law.

“I wish you’d shut that stop-cock!” cried Dave, who was busy tightening a part that he could not very well leave just then. “Shut that water off, or I’ll lose all there is in the radiator, and have to put in more.”

“It – it’s too hot,” objected the constable, his attention drawn from the annoying lads. “I didn’t know it was so warm. What system do you use?”

Dave was too annoyed to answer, and the constable, not wishing to burn himself again, held back. Meanwhile water and steam were spurting from the stop-cock.

“I’ll shut it off,” volunteered the reporter, feeling that he was partly to blame for the incident, since he had evinced a curiosity that the constable had tried to gratify.

The newspaper man advanced toward the radiator, which was now enveloped in steam. Dave saw that he had on no gloves.

“Look out!” cried the young aviator. “You’ll get a bad burn. That’s very hot. Here,” he added, “take these pliers, and turn that valve. I’d do it myself only if I let go this wire it will slip and I can’t easily get it in place again,” and Dave indicated where a pair of pliers lay on the ground.

“I get you,” said the reporter with a smile. A moment later he had shut the stop-cock and the stream of water and the hissing steam stopped.

“Cricky! but this burns!” exclaimed the constable. “I forgot about the radiator part. Some airships don’t have ’em on.”

“Why not?” asked the reporter.

“Oh, er – well – you see – say, here’s what I was telling you about, the perpellers, they make the ship go. You see you turn them around to start the engine, jest like you crank an auto. I guess I can turn them over, though it’s pretty hard. Down on Long Island, where my brother was that time, I helped one of the birdmen lots. You jest do it this way,” and he advanced toward the big wooden propeller.

“Here, don’t touch that!” cried Dave, but he was too late. The officious constable whirled the wooden blade around. As it happened Dave had turned on the switch in order to make a test, and had forgotten, until that moment, to turn it off. But when he saw what the man was going to do he realized what would happen. “Let that alone!” he cried, being unable to get out, as he was straddling one of the runners to tighten a wire.

The constable gave the apparatus another turn, and with a rattle and bang, like a salvo of musketry, the motor started.

Now there is considerable power to an airship's propeller – there has to be to make the craft sail. As the blades whirled about they fairly blew the constable back out of the way. His helmet went sailing off, tossed by the terrific wind created and, only that he jumped aside in time he would have been hurt. The airship, too, would have moved off, only Dave had left the drag-brake on. This halted it long enough for the young aviator to leap out and shut off the switch.

“Say!” the lad cried to the constable, “I’ve a good notion to – ”

“I – I didn’t know it would start!” cried the man, finally managing to get on his feet, for he had staggered back so fast that he fell. “I didn’t know it would do that. I – I guess I’ll go up to the drug store and get something for my burned fingers,” and, not stopping to give any more information to the newspaper man, the officer hurried off, amid the laughter of the crowd.

It took Dave half an hour to get the machine as he wanted. He had a pleasant chat with the local reporter, who was immensely interested. Dave got ready to start back for home, when a young fellow about his own age made his way hurriedly through the crowd. Our hero observed his resemblance to his recent passenger. He was excited and eager, and seized Dave’s hand with great warmth.

“You are Mr. Dashaway?” he spoke.

“Yes, I am Dave Dashaway,” replied the young aviator, pleasantly.

“My sister sent me. Oh, how we want to thank you,” and the tears began to fall down the cheeks of the manly young fellow.

“How is your mother?” asked Dave, embarrassed at the growing attention of the listening crowd about them.

“That’s it, that’s it,” exclaimed young Winston, brokenly. “You’ve saved her, oh, think of it; the doctor says she won’t die, now!”

Dave tried to quiet the agitated lad, but the latter would have his say. From his incoherent talk Dave gathered that Mrs. Winston had indeed been near death. The main trouble was that she imagined her daughter Amy had died away from home. The girl’s return had quieted the frantic sufferer. She had received Amy in a wild transport of delight. Then she had gone to sleep in her daughter’s arms, happy and quiet, the fever broken; and the doctor had announced that the crisis was past.

The crowd began to get wind of the pretty little story of Dave’s heroism. The newspaper man was excitedly taking notes. The policeman looked proud at having something of importance happen in the town of which he was the public guardian, and the crowd began to shout handsome things at Dave.

The young aviator was actually blushing as he started the *Gossamer* again. Cheers of genuine enthusiasm rang out, three times three and many times over, as the machine shot skyward. Then, as Dave caught sight of a little lady waving a handkerchief at him from the front porch of the Winston home, he felt somehow as if a real blessing had been bestowed upon him.

“It’s a good deal to be an airman,” Dave told himself. “It’s a good deal more to be able to do a kind deed and make others happy,” he added, so glad that he had been of service to Amy Winston, that he would have been willing to go through the daring adventure all over again.

The skies had cleared in every direction. The machinery of the *Gossamer* worked to a charm on the return trip to Lake Linden. The dial showed a trifle over two hundred miles in five hours and a half.

Dave made a run for the turning bar in one corner of the enclosure to get the stiffness out of his limbs. Then he hurried over to the living tent, glad that he had an interesting story to tell to his fellow airmen.

“Nobody here?” he remarked, looking around. “Mr. Grimshaw and Hiram must have gone to town. Probably didn’t expect me home so soon.”

“Hello, there!” spoke an unexpected voice.

Dave turned quickly. Two persons had passed the gates and were approaching him. He recognized them at once. One was the foppishly-dressed man he had seen twice before. The other was the boy who had shaken his fist at Dave when the *Gossamer* had started on the hasty trip to Easton.

At closer sight than before the young aviator instantly read his visitors as in a book. The elder of the twain was about twenty-five or thirty years of age, and all his elegant attire and rather handsome face did not disguise his resemblance to some shrewd sharper who made his way in the world by living on others.

The boy suggested the spoiled scion of some wealthy family, with plenty of money, and used to spending it foolishly. His face was flushed and excited, and Dave decided that he was under a very baneful influence in the company he kept. He was the first to speak.

“You are Dashaway, I suppose?” he observed in a careless, almost insolent way.

“Yes,” said Dave.

“Well, this is my friend, Vernon. Was here before, to-day.”

“I know he was,” replied Dave.

“Where is the old fellow who was so saucy to him?”

“What do you want to know for?” demanded Dave, unable to keep from getting a trifle angry.

“Because he’s due for a trimming, that’s why. I don’t allow my friends to be treated that way. See here, I don’t suppose you know who I am,” observed the speaker, with an air of self-assertion that was almost ridiculous.

“I don’t,” answered Dave.

“I thought so. That may enlighten you.”

The boy drew an elegant case from his pocket, selected a card with a tissue paper cover, and handed it to Dave, who took it, somewhat curious to know the personality of so presumptuous an individual. The card read: “*Elmer Brackett.*”

The name Brackett was suggestive to Dave, but not altogether enlightening. There was a Mr. Brackett who was president of the Interstate Aero Company. Dave read the card over twice, closely and thoughtfully, then he looked his visitor squarely in the face.

“Well?” he demanded, coolly.

“My name is Brackett, as you probably observe,” remarked the boy, smartly.

“I see it is.”

“You don’t seem to understand yet,” proceeded the forward youth. “My father is the owner of the company that hires you.”

“Well?” again challenged Dave.

“You’ve heard of him, I reckon.”

“Many times,” replied Dave.

Young Brackett looked nettled. Apparently he had expected Dave to bow with reverence or quake with fear.

“See here,” he spoke suddenly in a harsh, rasping tone. “I’m Elmer Brackett, my governor owns that airship and everything around here. I’m his son, and I want to give my friend Vernon a spin in the air.”

“Well,” said Dave simply, “you can’t do it.”

CHAPTER IV IN BAD COMPANY

“What’s that?” shouted young Brackett.

He made a spring forward as if he hoped to intimidate Dave. The young aviator did not budge an inch, and his adversary contented himself with simply glaring at him.

“You heard me,” said Dave, simply.

“Yes,” fired up the fellow named Vernon; “we heard you, and if I was in Brackett’s place you wouldn’t be heard much longer. Say, Elmer, why don’t you wire your father and get some kind of an accommodating crowd around here.”

“I’d soon show who was boss if I was near the old man,” grumbled young Brackett.

“I am boss here, if that is what you want to call it,” said Dave. “This is private property, I am in charge, and you are trespassers. Outside of your not coming at me in the right way, I want to say to you that the *Gossamer* is here for a specific purpose, and I have my orders and plans.”

“If my father was here, he’d soon order you to give us a spin in the *Gossamer*,” declared Brackett.

“I know who your father is, and respect him greatly,” replied Dave, “but I would have to have his written order to do any work outside of routine.”

“Oh, is that so!” sneered Brackett. “You seem to make no bones about gallivanting about in the *Gossamer* as freely as you choose with your own particular lady friends.”

Dave made no reply. He did not consider that his visitors had the fineness of mind to understand the pathetic circumstances of his efforts in behalf of the Winston family.

Vernon gave his companion a wink and a nudge. He whispered some quick words to him that Dave did not catch. Young Brackett drew out a wallet stuffed full of money.

“See here, Dashaway,” he spoke, in a tone meant to be friendly and wheedling; “be a good fellow. There are some girls down at the hotel I promised to show the *Gossamer* to, and what she could do on the water. I’ll make it a twenty. Come, help us out.”

“I am sorry,” replied Dave, steadily.

“You won’t do it?”

“No.”

Again Vernon whispered to his companion. The latter nodded his head. Vernon shot a quick glance about the enclosure. Then, before Dave could surmise his purpose, the man made a spring at him.

The young aviator was athletic and strong, but he had to cope with a full grown man. Vernon had seized his arms from behind and Dave struggled in vain.

“Fetch those ropes over near the airship,” directed Vernon, with an unpleasant laugh. “I’ll show you how to do this thing.”

Young Brackett looked a trifle frightened.

“See here, Vernon,” he said, “I don’t know about this.”

“Well, I do,” retorted Vernon, securely twisting the rope about Dave’s arms and body. “You said you knew how to run the machine, didn’t you?”

“Why, I’ve been up in a biplane at the works several times,” said Brackett, rather hesitatingly.

“What are you afraid of, then? Just because it’s a bigger machine? Look here, give it a try.”

“What are you going to do with Dashaway?”

“Take him along.”

“What!”

“Certainly, so if we make any blunders he’ll have to take the helm to help himself out of the fix.”

“I want to warn you,” cried Dave. “You are trying a dangerous experiment.”

Vernon only laughed. Brackett put on a braggart air of over-confidence. The former lifted Dave into one of the seats and took his own behind the pilot post.

“All right,” announced Brackett, climbing into the forward seat. “I think I can manage the machine.”

Dave cast a hopeless look towards the gates of the enclosure. There was no sign of Grimshaw or Hiram. He watched the bungling of Brackett over the delicate mechanism, fearful as to the outcome of the resolution of the reckless fellow.

“Self-starter, eh?” he heard the presumptuous pilot say. “I know how to operate that. What’s this little mirror for? Oh, yes, to index the curves. Pshaw! I can’t go wrong if I watch that.”

“Can’t you? Oh, my!” muttered Dave.

Young Brackett was all right at the wheel. His brief biplane experience counted for enough to enable him to make a very pretty swoop aloft. He was so delighted at this that he chuckled:

“Say, I guess I’ll take a job at running the governor’s machine myself. Hey, what?”

“Good for you – doing finely,” commended Vernon. “Get over the lake, Brackett. If you can manage to sail the machine we’ll take the girls for a ride.”

Dave held his breath. Brackett had split half a circle abruptly, and the *Gossamer* got ready for a dive. By some accident the frightened pilot banked just in time to save a spill.

“Don’t change your course – don’t dare to!” fairly shouted the excited Dave, as he saw that any further attempt at a head change in novice hands meant sure destruction for the *Gossamer*.

Young Brackett was terribly frightened. In his fear and dismay he turned on the full power, but let the machine run a perfectly straight course. It was, however, on an angle of about fifty degrees.

“What’s he to do?” chattered Vernon, himself growing pale and nerveless.

“I can’t tell – I can only show him. If the course is not changed, the machine will hit the earth going forty miles an hour,” declared Dave.

“Show him, then! show him!” gasped Vernon.

He reached over with trembling hands and began to loosen the ropes with which he had bound the young aviator. In some way they had become tangled, and in that circumscribed space he dared not move about freely. The *Gossamer* tipped slightly, and its dismayed pilot let out a yell of fear.

While Vernon was tugging breathlessly at the ropes, Dave noted that the machine was due to land with a terrific shock inside of two minutes. It just grazed the tops of some tall trees. Then it missed a flagpole in the center of some private grounds.

“Shut off the power, or we are lost!” cried Dave.

Brackett had just enough sense left to obey him, but that did not prevent a catastrophe. They were just passing near some glass-covered hothouses. The first one they skidded. At the second one the head of the machine ripped the top row of glasses out of place like a toboggan shoe splintering a stretch of thin ice. Then the under floats tangled in the frame work, and Dave bore company with the others in a dive into a bed of geraniums.

The shock of even that soft landing place was sufficient to half stun our hero for the moment. In a dim blur of vision he seemed to see two figures limping away. He caught sight of the machine lying half-way through a frail trellis. Then he heard these startled words in an unfamiliar voice:

“Hello! I say, what’s this?”

Dave looked up to see a man in gardener’s garb staring in turn at himself, the *Gossamer*, and the havoc the machine had made.

“If you’ll help me up,” said Dave, rather faintly; “I’ll try to explain.”

“You’ll have to!” cried the gardener. “Who ever heard of such a thing? Get up, but don’t you try to run away from all the mischief you’ve done.”

“Hardly,” promised Dave, as the man cut the ropes securing him. “How badly is the machine damaged?”

“How badly are my greenhouses damaged, you’d better say!” shouted the man. “Say, who’s to pay for all this wreck and ruin?”

“Don’t worry about that,” replied Dave. “The company will settle with you.”

“I don’t know anything about your company,” retorted the man. “If you’re Dashaway – ”

“I am.”

“I’ve heard of you, and you look like a decent, honest fellow. But say, this is an awful fix for me. I’m only in charge here, and I don’t know but the boss will hold me responsible for what’s happened and take the damage out of my small pay.”

“I will see that he doesn’t do that,” pledged Dave.

The man was almost crying in his fright and distress.

“You estimate what it will cost to replace things as they were,” directed Dave, “and I’ll settle it right out of my own pocket before I even leave here.”

“You will?” cried the gardener, joyfully.

“You can depend upon it. Did you see anything of two fellows who were in the machine with me?”

“Yes, I saw two young men running for that back fence yonder. They got out of sight pretty quick.”

“I’m glad they weren’t hurt, anyway,” thought Dave.

The gardener went around, surveying the damage done to the greenhouses, while Dave examined the *Gossamer*. Our hero was agreeably surprised to find that outside of the warping of one of the wings and a twisted propeller, the machine had suffered very slight injury.

“A lucky escape,” he said to himself. “Those venturesome fellows were never nearer death than fifteen minutes ago.”

“I say, what’s this, Dashaway!”

It was Grimshaw who spoke, pale and out of breath. Equally startled and anxious, Hiram Dobbs, following him, came rushing up to the spot.

CHAPTER V

“THE RIGHT KIND”

“Oh, say, Dave, what’s happened, anyway?” burst out the irrepressible Hiram.

“You see,” observed Dave, with a sweeping wave of his hand.

“Yes, I see,” said Grimshaw. “But you never ran the *Gossamer* into all this!”

“No, I wasn’t the pilot on this occasion,” admitted Dave.

“I told you so!” cried Hiram, jubilantly. “When we first saw the airship and its queer doings, and ran after it, didn’t I tell you that Dave couldn’t be at the wheel, Mr. Grimshaw?”

“You did, and I felt sure he wasn’t,” commented Grimshaw. “Who was?” he challenged, bluntly.

“That’s quite a story,” explained Dave.

“Then tell it.”

“I don’t want much said about it for the present,” stipulated the young aviator.

“All right,” nodded Grimshaw.

Dave motioned his friends out of earshot of the gardener, who was pottering about his broken panes. Then he told the whole story.

“Why, the wretches!” growled old Grimshaw, fiercely, when the narrative was concluded.

“The mean sneaks!” exclaimed the indignant Hiram. “Left you here in that fix, not knowing whether you were dead or alive.”

“I’d have those two rascals locked up, double-quick,” advised Grimshaw.

“No,” dissented Dave.

“Why not?”

“I want to think things over a bit, before I decide on what I shall do,” was the reply. “I have no patience with the fellow called Vernon.”

“Take my word for it, he’s a bad one,” declared Grimshaw.

“The other one – young Brackett – I feel sorry for.”

“Of course you do,” observed Grimshaw, rather sarcastically; “that’s your usual way. Who’s going to pay for the damage here? Say, you take my advice – teach those two smart Alecks a lesson by having them arrested, and send the bill to Mr. Brackett, telling him all the circumstances.”

“I’d a good deal rather help young Brackett than harm him,” said Dave, considerately. “He doesn’t strike me as a bad fellow at heart. It’s the influence of Vernon that is leading him into trouble.”

“How’s the machine?”

“Not in very bad shape. I think there are enough tools and materials aboard to mend her up till we get home.”

All three of them looked the *Gossamer* over critically. Expert that he was, old Grimshaw soon had the machine free of the trellis and the injured parts repaired. Dave went over to the gardener, who was figuring on the side of a fence post with a piece of chalk.

“Well, my friend,” he said cheerily; “what’s the damage?”

“Why, you’re acting so handsomely about it, I want to make the bill as reasonable as I can,” was the reply.

“Of course you do – that’s the right way.”

“The frames aren’t much broken,” explained the man. “About all there is to do is to replace the glass.”

“Yes, but there’s a heap of it,” said Dave.

“We buy the panes by the gross. I’m willing to do the setting and puttying myself. I think twenty dollars will cover everything.”

Dave took out his pocket book, selected some bank bills, and handed them to the man. He heard an ominous growl from old Grimshaw behind him, and caught a “S’t! S’t! S’t!” from the exasperated Hiram. Dave, however, had his own ideas as to disposing of the matter in hand.

“If you find it’s more, you know where to see me,” said Dave to the gardener.

“Say, you’re an easy one,” observed Grimshaw, with a look of disgust on his face.

“It’s a shame to let those vandals go scot free,” scolded Hiram.

“I’m glad the *Gossamer* didn’t get smashed up, as I feared,” was all the young aviator would reply.

Dave made pretty sure that the machine would stand a trip back to the enclosure. To his satisfaction he made the flight without any mishap. Looking the craft over more critically after the return, however, he decided that the wings and floats would need some expert attention before he could venture any extended flight.

It was dark by the time they got the airship housed and supper ready in the living tent. After the meal Hiram strolled away, saying he would go to town after the evening mail. Dave and Grimshaw went inside the tent as a shower came up. They chatted agreeably, watching the gentle rain in the glint of the tent light.

“Hello,” said the old man, bending his ear sharply.

“Yes,” nodded Dave, “some one is knocking at the gate.”

“I’ll go and see who it is.”

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