

PLUNGED INTO THE OCEAN

FATE OF THE AIRSHIP AND ITS NAVIGATOR.

THE GREAT BALLOON IS SEEN OUT AT SEA BY A PILOT BOAT MINUS ITS CAR—NO TRACE OF HOGAN.

News was brought to this city yesterday that tends strongly to prove that inventor Peter Campbell's airship America, which made an ascension and trial trip from Brooklyn on Tuesday last, has been lost, together with its navigator, Prof. Edward D. Hogan of Jackson, Mich.

About noon on Tuesday last the ascension was made from the grounds of the Nassau Gas Company's Works, on Morton-street. Fifteen thousand and twenty-seven feet of coal gas had been put into the great silken bag, Prof. Hogan got into the car, and an instant after being released, under the impulse of a breath of air, the machine shot up 1,000 feet into space. A gentle breeze carried it in the direction of Coney Island. As its navigator wished to travel in the opposite direction he did his best to make the steering apparatus accomplish its purpose; but his efforts were in vain, and the airship was at the mercy of the wind. The lower propellor, a thin sheet-iron wheel, 8 feet in diameter, underneath the car, dropped to the ground in Hooper-street. The balloon by this time was out of the sight of those who had seen it start and float seaward. Since that time a score of stories concerning it, or some other balloon that looked like it, have been circulated. They have lacked confirmation, however. The first, and apparently conclusive, news as to the America's end was brought yesterday by Capt. John Phelan of the Sandy Hook pilot boat Caprice, now on the station. Capt. Phelan came in on the bark Belt and tells the following story:

"At 5:30 o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday last the lookout reported two schooners and a strange-looking object on the southeast horizon. It was somewhat hazy and I should say they were about ten miles off. We were about one hundred and thirty-five miles south-south-east of Sandy Hook, in longitude 71° 30', latitude 39° 56'. A stiff breeze was blowing from the north-northwest. One of the schooners was to leeward of the stranger, bearing northward, and the other was bearing east-southeast. With glasses we made out the strange-looking object, which reflected the setting sun's rays like a great golden ball, to be a balloon, traveling rapidly with the wind, apparently dragging after it some heavy object. What this object was we could not make out; but believing it to be the car of the balloon and fearing that its navigator might be in danger, we crowded on all sail and fairly flew toward it. The breeze sent the balloon along at a rapid rate. The gas-filled bag bellied into all conceivable shapes, but its general outline appeared to be like that of an egg. By 7 o'clock, after an hour and a half chase, we had approached to within three-quarters of a mile of it and could plainly see the ropes which held it down, yet could not see any car, and if the car was holding it down it must have been submerged. Suddenly the balloon parted from whatever it had been dragging through the water and shot up into the air. After wabbling for a time it lost its egg-like shape, and turning appeared to be perfectly oval. The gas must have been escaping, for the silk sank and bellied under the pressure of the wind. It rose to a great height, traveling in a southerly direction, and then, seeming to strike another current of air, its course changed to southeast and it rapidly disappeared from view. If it had continued on the course it was going when we last saw it, it would have passed over Bermuda as the first land.

"We sailed over the spot where the balloon had left the water. There was no sign of a car nor any floating objects to give evidence that one had sunk. If Prof. Hogan was clinging to the car or the ropes of the balloon when we saw her rise, then he was almost certainly drowned. Assistance could not have been rendered by the schooner bound northward. The southeast-bound schooner may possibly have been able to do something."

Hope for the America might be entertained from the fact that Capt. Phelan says the balloon chased by the Caprice was egg-shaped, were it not for the fact that he further says, that after being released from the object it was dragging through the water it became oval. The bag of the America was oval, and the statement of the Captain would indicate that a derangement of the rigging caused the balloon to assume the egg-like form. From the Caprice it could not be seen that the car was what was holding the great bag down to the surface; but that it was the car, or something of equal weight, seems to be evidenced by the fact that when released it so rapidly arose and disappeared.

Inventor Campbell, though loathe to do so, is now forced to admit that it looks as though his air ship and its navigator had perished. The suspense and its evidently worried him greatly. Said he: "The weight of the car portion of the ship is nearly eight hundred pounds, and it was so rigged that it would be impossible for it to capsize or become displaced or detached. As the only object of the ascent was to prove that the ship could be steered in midair, I cannot understand why he did not descend as soon as the under propeller fell off. The propeller probably was not properly secured. The ship was not built according to directions, and did not meet my expectations. When the under propeller fell off Hogan still had a means of descent in the escape-valve rope. If the ship and Prof. Hogan are lost, the only reason I can assign for it is that the valve rope broke. Then he would have been helpless, for he never could have reached the valve by climbing the rigging."

Prof. Hogan may have been asphyxiated, and while helpless in the car the America could have gone to destruction at its own sweet will. The escape valve was directly over the car, according to inventor Campbell's own statement. There was undoubtedly more or less gas escaping all the time as the air ship arose. If the valve failed to work, or the valve rope broke, this escaping coal gas, after the balloon had reached a sufficient altitude, would instead of rising have descended directly upon the unfortunate navigator. In such event the aeronaut would soon have been rendered unconscious and death would have followed. Inventor Campbell is satisfied that his ship did not go to pieces in midair, as some reports would indicate. It either became unmanageable, through the loss of both means of descent or else Prof. Hogan lost consciousness from escaping gas. The inventor is forced to admit that either of these causes was probable. His only remaining hope is that the wrecked balloon sighted by the Caprice was not the America, and the thread on which that hope hangs is extremely slender, as the season for country fair ascensions has not yet come and no other ascensions are reported.

Prof. Hogan was one of the best known and most daring aeronauts in this country. His birthplace was in Canada, but his home since childhood had been in Jackson, Mich., where his wife now lives. His brother, William Hogan, is also an aeronaut of considerable renown. Hogan was forty-nine years old, but did not look it, nor did he appear to weigh 171 pounds, as he did. Since he was eighteen years of age he had been making balloon ascensions and parachute jumps. For twenty-eight years he had made aeronautics his sole business and had made over two hundred ascents and as many more parachute jumps. He was courageous to a daring degree. He never drank nor smoked, and his nerves were as steady and strong as steel. He came to New-York under contract with inventor Campbell to navigate the America on the trip which was attempted from the Manhattan Athletic Club grounds on the 19th of last month. That trial was a failure, owing to leakage of gas. Hogan was so much pleased with the air ship that he decided to try it with coal gas, and waited until Tuesday last to do so.

A dispatch from Providence, R. I., yesterday stated that on Tuesday evening a big balloon was seen by some people as it passed over the city. It was thought that it might be Campbell's air ship, but that seems impossible, as to have reached Providence or any point on the Connecticut or Rhode Island coast it must have traveled against the wind, which was blowing from the north. The dispatch simply gave the bare statement, with no confirmatory details.

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