

**CROTCHETS IN THE AIR; OR; AN
(UN) SCIENTIFIC ACCOUNT
OF A BALLOON-TRIP, IN A
FAMILIAR LETTER TO A FRIEND**

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Crotchets in the Air; Or; An (Un) Scientific Account of a Balloon-Trip, in a Familiar Letter to a Friend by John Poole

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JOHN POOLE

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ACCOUNT OF A BALLOON-TRIP,

IN

A FAMILIAR LETTER TO A FRIEND.

BY

JOHN POOLE, ESQ.

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"PAUL PRY," "SIMPSON AND CO.," "SKETCHES AND RECOLLECTIONS,"

&c. &c.

"Nearer to Heaven, than when I saw you last,
by the altitude of a Chopine."

SHAKESPEARE.

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CROTCHETS IN THE AIR.

Planet, Earth :

29th September, 1838.

MY DEAR TOM ;

I HAVE purposely postponed a reply to your impatient letter of the 16th instant. I am grateful to you for your kind anxieties upon my account, as evinced by your—“ P.S. Pray answer this *without the delay of a SINGLE MOMENT.*” (I give you your own emphatic markings.) Now, suppose—do but suppose—I had complied with your request, and answered your letter immediately upon its arrival, which occurred within only a couple of days after my return to this pen-ink-and-paper earth of

ours,— why, I doubt whether you could have understood one sentence in twenty of all I might have written to you ; so inflated, so exalted was I, that my style must necessarily have been affected by my own feelings. You are aware of my detestation of that barbarous jargon which is compounded of Gallicisms, and Latinisms, and Italianisms, and all manner of *isms*, (with the single exception of good-English-isms,) and which is nick-named the modern fashionable style of writing : from all such *isms* my disgust of them would have kept me clear ; but how could I have avoided the perpetration of a few balloonicisms ? The moment I had “ pulled the liberating-iron of my sensations,” I should inevitably have “ thrown out every bag of the ballast of judgment,” and abandoned myself without opposition to “ the buoyant gas of enthu-

siasm." How should you have liked that? Only two pages of it?—one?—only half a page? No, no, Tom; rely upon it 'tis better as it is.

You ask me many questions. The first in order I will answer first, for the reason that it is the first.

"Did you go up in a balloon on Friday, the fourteenth?" I may reply to you in the words of Hamlet, I have been "nearer to heaven, than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine." But the next time you speak of that particular travelling-carriage (the Great Nassau), pray speak of it with becoming respect, and call it *the* Balloon. All others, whether beneath the clouds, within or above them, are mere balloon-sprouts, chick-balloons, Balloonettes, in short. As is a peach to a pumpkin, so is the biggest of those to the Great

Nassau. You sit in a thing like a sauce-boat, and look up to a world floating above your head. Methinks I hear you say—"Hold, there! Let off a little of your gas." I will; but not much, Tom. And now, having replied to your first question, I will, for the present, float over—(I beg your pardon, but I could not help *that*.)—I will pass over all the intermediate ones, and notice your last. For this irregularity I have two motives: first, to get rid of a perplexing inquiry; and, secondly, to let you understand at once the kind of account of a balloon-trip you must expect from me:—nothing about "Here the barometer fell to —," "Here the thermometer rose to —," "Here the mercury stood at —;" no balloon-jargon, but a plain, surface-of-earth description. So, on to your question.

"According to your observations, in what

manner, and to what extent, are the interests of science likely to be advanced, and the state of society in general, *morally* and *physically* considered (dividing your answer to this portion of the question into two branches), likely to be improved by the use of balloons?—and within what probable period?”

This question is framed with such extraordinary precision, that, to one who could, there ought not to be the slightest difficulty in answering it. My observations, however, having been confined chiefly to the looking down on the chimney-tops, I am enabled to reply only, with anything approaching to certainty, first, that I do not know; secondly, that I cannot tell; and, thirdly, that it is hard to say. Yet are there points upon which I will venture to speak positively. One (and, perhaps, the most