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"LITTLE MISS DRESDEN CHINA" BROKEN AT LAST!

How Harriet Quimby, Most Daring of Airwomen-- Apparently Nothing But Frivolous Femininity, Full of Odd Superstitions-- Was Flipped Out of Her Flying Machine by the Hand From the Clouds Which She Had Always Feared



"The Giant Cloud Finger, Tired of Playing with Her Machine, Gave Its Tail That Final, Fatal Flip."



Miss Harriet Quimby in a Favorite Conventional Costume, Which Shows Her to Have Been—Apart From Her Career As An Airwoman—Essentially Feminine, Almost Frivolously So.

Miss Harriet Quimby, in Aviation Costume, As She Appeared Just Before Her Last Fatal Flight.

It is a heavy human toll that is exacted by the sport of aviation, but in the long list of such sacrifices of life none so affects the popular imagination as that of Harriet Quimby—the most daring of airwomen, yet so dainty, pretty and essentially feminine that she came to be known as the "Dresden China Aviatrice."

In keeping with her outward aspect of frivolous femininity, too, were her odd and peculiarly feminine superstitions. Always when in the air, though she handled her powerful craft with all the cool skill and courage of any of her masculine rivals, she was obsessed by the notion of a mischievously malicious giant hand stretched forth from the clouds behind her, snapping its great fingers perilously near her outstretched planes, or, with the tip of one of those immense digits flipping upward the tail of her craft as though for the pleasure of seeing it dive headlong to the earth below.

At last that giant cloud-finger succeeded in its experiment. Miss Quimby's 100-horsepower Bleriot machine suddenly stood on its head, up a mile in the sky above the city of Boston, pitching the darling woman and her male passenger into the shallow waters of Dorchester Bay. Her odd superstition was realized; "Miss Dresden China," as she had half-expected to happen, was broken at last.

Harriet Quimby will be forever famous as the first airwoman to fly across the English channel. When she was about to leave New York last March, bent on accomplishing that feat—which the most rugged and experienced of man-flyers attacked with trepidation—her friends sought to dissuade her on the grounds of her frail physique and her generally feminine disadvantages.

"Why," said one, "your appropriate environment is the blue and gold walls of a satin-upholstered boudoir in the Louis XV. style. You're not a medieval German Amazon by Pilot; you're a Watteau Shepherdess. Why, everybody is calling you the 'Dresden China Aviatrice.'"

"Oh, I don't like that," laughed Miss Quimby. "Dresden China is so easily broken! But I'm going, just the same."

During that perilous channel passage she could almost feel the presence of that giant-cloud hand flipping its fingers playfully about her rudder—like a cat playing with a mouse. Long before that, soon after she had secured her pilot's license and was venturing into the skies alone she said to one of her intimate friends:

"Frequently when I have been flying it has seemed to be as if a huge cloud-hand were mischievously rocking my slender little monoplane. It seemed, with a playful finger, to be lifting the tail of my machine

higher than it should be. I actually had to fight with my levers to keep the machine from standing on its nose—particularly when coming down through the lower clouds. That giant hand grows more and more the longer I fly. Whenever I set among the clouds I can feel it playing with the tail of my machine."

Curiously, nothing so well as her own belief in this supernatural agency explains the mystery of that fatal plunge into Dorchester Bay. Her instructors, M. Andre Haupt, whose training enabled her to gain her pilot's license, has made this significant statement:

"It was no lack on the part of Miss Quimby that caused the drop of woman, man and machine to the earth. There was nothing the matter with her machine. It was in perfect working trim. But, so far as we can tell, something happened which destroyed its equilibrium, and instantly she was at the mercy of the air."

"Something happened," as Miss Quimby has said, that "something" almost happened whenever she was among the clouds. It was hard to keep that maliciously playful giant finger from flipping the tail of her machine too high for her safety—and now, at last it gave a flip with force enough to make resistance useless!

It is not difficult for an imaginative person to conceive how an obsession like this could, finally, so operate on the mind and nerves of its victim as to produce reactions of the muscles used in guiding the machine that would cause a catastrophe identical with the one so dreaded by Miss Quimby. Believing that the gigantic cloud-finger was tired of playing with her machine, and had given its tail a final, fatal flip, her hands on the guiding levers unconsciously reversed their usual procedure.

Miss Quimby was a story writer, a poet, a dramatist—in fact, a dreamer with a mind extraordinarily active on its imaginative side. Her belief in that cloud-hand was no stranger than the beliefs of the ancient Greeks in the immortal beings which controlled all the manifestations of nature.

When Icarus flew high above the Mediterranean with wings made of wax he knew that it was in the power of Phoebus-Apollo, rolling the sun across the heavens in his chariot, to bring disaster upon him by melting his wax wings, which is exactly what the sun did, and the ancient Greek mythological aviator took his fatal plunge into the sea.

To personify mysterious forces far above the earth, picturing in her mind cloud forces concentrated in an intelligent, all-powerful hand, was a not unnatural obsession in one of Miss Quimby's temperament and

mental constitution, considering her hazardous performances in cloud-land.

There was another superstition of Miss Quimby's that had a certain bearing on the catastrophe of her career. She wore a number of Oriental decorations that, with her complexion, made her resemblance to fabled queens of Egypt more than merely fanciful. She had, in particular, a string of weirdly colored stones that she obtained from a Cairo muleteer. Unless these were around her neck she would not fly. Her own narrative of how she got them is illustrative of the woman behind the girl.

"I had noticed a most peculiar combination of stones which were around the neck of a muleteer as part of his head-stall. A number of queer little Oriental gods and goddesses were suspended irregularly from this string of stones. A close examination of them showed that they were all really the same god or goddess. I do not know which, and that Ganesha was the name. I think he is a Hindu god of Luck.

"I offered the boy a guinea for the string of stones, but he wanted three times that much. We finally compromised for two guineas. And my luck changed that very day. I have never been so happy as since I bought those little charms."

But Ganesha was to play a part in Miss Quimby's life that, all unfor-

seen was tragic almost beyond words. In the office of a London newspaper which had financed her flight across the Channel, she met with a large replica of Ganesha. The strange idol, with its elephant head, three legs, and three arms, all on a human body, had been sent to the newspaper office to be destroyed. The newspaper had collected from its readers a number of unlucky talismans, and Ganesha was among them.

Miss Quimby, seeing that he matched the smaller idols which had hung on her Cairo mule's headstall, begged so hard for Ganesha that the figure was reluctantly turned over to her. And here is Miss Quimby's version of what happened.

"Any one would suppose that after I had rescued Ganesha from such an untimely end as burning he would be grateful and would behave like his little children did. But almost immediately I began to have bad luck."

When Miss Quimby returned to New York after her triumphal crossing of the Channel, Ganesha kept on misbehaving, and she decided finally that she would guillotine him. So she had his head cut off and put the head in a desk drawer, while she used the body of the idol for a paper weight. The day that Miss Quimby was killed in Boston a friend of hers was near her desk and saw Ganesha, with his cut-off

head resting again on his shoulders and still grinning horribly. Miss Quimby had replaced the head the day she went to Boston.

It was Miss Quimby's oft repeated statement that "happy people all belong to the same generation," and she did everything she could to make people happy. She was as cheerful as could be, and in a letter which she posted on her way to the aerodrome the day she met her death she laughingly quotes Omar to show how little she fears that anything will happen to her and yet how she refuses to take herself seriously. The quotation, which evidently answered some entreaty to be careful, told how improbable it was "That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close."

Miss Quimby's ambition was to earn enough money before she was thirty-five so that she might retire from daily work to write one big book or one big play. The residents of Hardeiot, the fashionable French resort on the English Channel, had presented her with a bungalow and a large piece of ground for her cross-channel flight. She wanted to go there in the Summers, when she retired from business affairs, and to live her Winters in southern California, where she owned an orange ranch.

But the cloud-hand was too strong for her. It lifted the tail of her monoplane once too often.