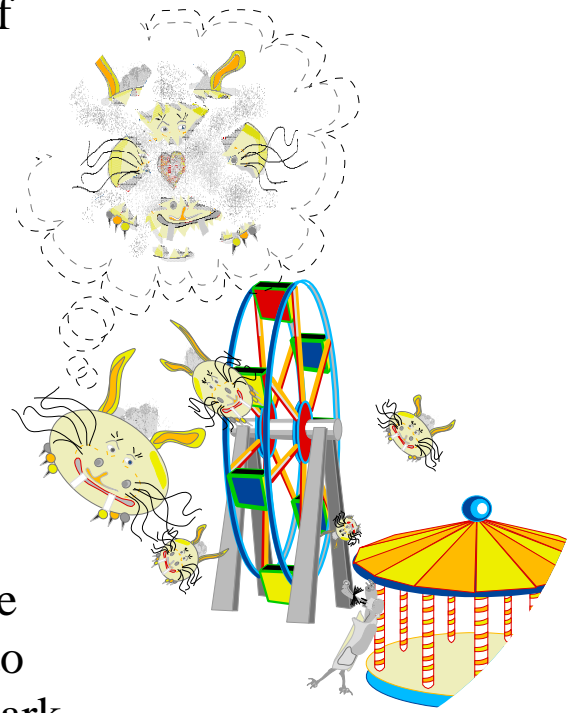


It seemed as good a time as any for a bit of mature reflection, as Eustace and friends drifted upwards past the 100' level. For a moment, it looked as if they might be able to catch hold on the big wheel, and so get back down to earth, but they missed it by a good ten yards, and drifted out over the fields, still rising at a fair rate. I don't know if you, the gentle reader (as they say) have ever done any flying, but if you have, you'll know a few of the pit-falls: like running out of engine because you forgot to lift the cowling and count the number of spark plugs before taking off, or freezing up the carburettor, or even stalling off a climbing turn. These are all good for at least one laugh, but largely irrelevant to this situation. This is because, if one is lucky (and rich enough) to be using an aeroplane for flying in, there are some handy levers, which give at least some control over which direction you go, and a fair number of clocks and lights to tell you if you are going right, wrong or ridiculous.



Just at this moment, Eustace and Co. were feeling the lack of these things rather keenly, as they hung short of eternity on two sphincters apace. On one of those hot days in summer, with the holes in the ozone layer letting in a good healthy dose of UV, especially if there's a fair, and people out and about in the evening, you know how the old cumulonimbus or thunder clouds start forming about tea-time, and the light goes green, and there's a funny flat sort of feeling as the birds all go quiet? Yeah! you must! Anyway, this is exactly what was happening on this particular evening. Even the 'chrome plated' boys don't bother flying through those thunderhead things! — They are ice and fire all the way up to 30,000 feet and beyond sometimes, with fantastic up and down draughts which are particularly bad if you happen to be in a balloon, or even worse, if you happen to be a balloon. It was Herbert† who first realised what was likely to happen, as He and Alphonse took turns gazing through an old telescope at their receding (and possibly ex)

customers. "Can Y' still see them then?" Asked Alphonse a bit impatiently, as He paced about thinking about the bad publicity, trade descriptions act, customs and excise, inland revenue and a few more delicate complications. "Yes, Herbert said slowly, they're just below the cloud base at an altitude of oh! about 1500 feet SSW about erm, 6 miles. here" and so saying, He handed the telescope over to His partner. After less than a minute, Alphonse said, "ahem! Can't see them at all" and handed the instrument back. Herbert had another quick look.... Eustace and Co. had indeed disappeared from view, either down, from sudden and vitually simultaneous deflation, or, (which the pair thought more likely) upwards into the murky and towering cloud that was fast approaching the fair site.

† I should explain that soon after the unexpected (and in Alphonse's opinion premature) departure of the rabbits, he had borrowed something fast, to nip back to the brewery and bike in the scientific and technical consultant (that's Herbert of course) BSc, Dosser, PhD. "Any thoughts"?' said Alphonse to Herbert, as they both viewed from a safe distance as the reporters and (whups!) guardians of law and order tried to find out what was going on.

A certain amount of questioning was taking place of the various punters and fairground layabouts who were now seeking shelter from the teeming rain which had begun just after the first few lightning bolts and thunderclaps. Yes! was Herbert's reply.

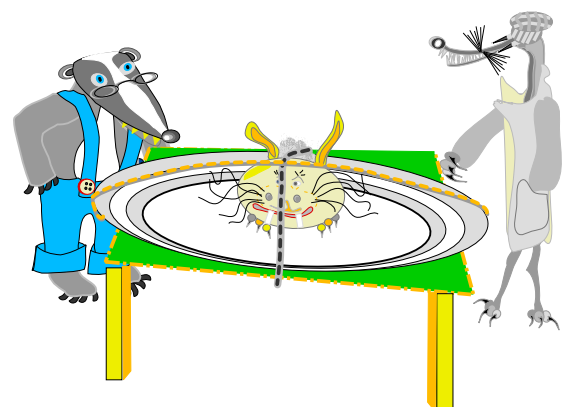
[a] Dump the rest of the gear and keep a l.o.o.o.w profile.

[b] Lose the gas bottles and the brew vat.

[c] Hang around under this storm until they drop out of it, and then should they still be in any shape to do so, come to some private arrangement with them.

"Yup! that's about what I thought too"! Alphonse grinned, "but I hadn't allowed for them surviving! You know, I reckon that's well-nigh impossible, especially as they aren't any use to us now except for eating, as they sure as hell won't buy any more of our beer". "You have a point there I suppose", Herbert agreed, "but, first we had better

**Waddaya mean —VEGAN!**



find out if anyone has put two and two together and got the atomic weight of Helium as the answer". ( 4 that is, unless it is Helium 3 of course, then it's 3 – naturally)

If anyone has, then you and I are in the Shh-you-know-what good and proper, so I think we'd better keep a watch on their houses tonight in case they come down alive, and do our best to find them tomorrow if they don't do quite as well as that.

It's going to be a long night matey!

With that, he swiftly rolled a dandelion leaf (still miraculously dry), lit it with an old zippo (still miraculously working)

and lapsed into a vacant stare and silence.

### Digression # 1.

If Mallory, the Everest-climbing mountaineer can be allowed to answer 'cos it's there" when asked why He was trying to climb things and live on thawed out snow and tinned sardines, and still not get as high as the average tourist going to Corfu, I daresay that You won't mind me slipping this little song in eh?

It's really a peaceful sort of song,  
and not the kind of thing that one normally would sing when rising up the centre of a thunder cloud,

but,  
never mind,

here it is.

# The Heat of the Day

R.J.Peach.

Oh the heat of the day sha-ll fade a-way and the  
 3 co-ld of the night a-rise. a-- world o- f c- ol- ou- r to  
 6 black and white trans- formed be- for- e--- our eyes  
 9 words and thoughts we-ve had to- day sha-ll i- n ou- r dreams be  
 12 locked a- way mo- d- i- fied an- d re arr- ange- d  
 15 place e- s face- s subtl- y changed when the de-e-w falls and the morn- ing calls  
 19 for an- o- - th- er day o---n the spi- ral way

Oh! The heat of the day shall fade away,  
 and the cold of the night arise,  
 a world of colour to black and white,  
 transformed before our eyes.

And the rising heat from the asphalt street,  
 to the sky shall make it's way,  
 and evening time shall send a breeze  
 to the ending of our day.

The sun shall fall through a cloud-built wall,  
 with shades of blood and fire,  
 and stars unfold in the gathering cold,  
 as the light of the moon gets higher,

As the night draws in , and the lights come on,  
 slowly and against their will,  
 while traffic slows, and silence grows,  
 so then shall the night be still.

Words and thoughts we've had today,  
 shall in our dreams be locked away,  
 modified and re-arranged,  
 places, faces , subtly changed.

As the dew falls, and the dawn calls,  
 for another day on the spiral way.

Oh! the heat of the day .....