

Airship Collapses at Height of 300 Feet

Sixteen Men Who Take Initial Flight Badly Injured

TROUBLE AT START OF TRIP

The great crowds that thronged the fences and streets waited impatiently for the orders to cast off the guy ropes. The great cylindrical bag rode sluggishly at anchor, hardly moving. Morrell was everywhere busily engaged in giving final instructions. The members of the crew were directed to their stations and were testing the riggings and engines.

THE PREPARATIONS.

Since 8 o'clock in the morning the men had been at work and the great silken bag was being filled with gas, which was poured in from the big 12-inch main. The rear end bulged out and strained at the ropes. The forward end hung limp and there seemed to be some trouble in getting it filled. Slowly it assumed its proper proportions and the crowd waited breathlessly as Morrell climbed into the rigging and gave the directions to cast off.

THE CATASTROPHE.

Some trouble was encountered at the start. Morrell had difficulty in making the men of the crew hear his orders and the rear end of the ship shot upward, tipping the vast structure with the prow downward. The front end of the bag seemed weak and flabby, while the rear end was full and round. The ship was finally brought to its equilibrium. Morrell dropped his hat. It was the signal for all below to free the ship. The signal was misunderstood and the anchor men again tipped the balloon forward. It started upward and the stern was about 500 feet in the air when something seemed to give way. There was a sickening crackle of the silken bag, which seemed to double up, and the forward end, crumpled and broken, fell rapidly earthward. The men, caged like rats in a trap, clung to the rigging and waited for that awful moment when they should be crushed to the ground. The air was filled with the hoarse shouts of men and the shrieks of women and children, who ran helplessly about below, unable to save the descending victims. Women and children fainted in the tense excitement of the moment and were crushed and jostled by the

Full List of Injured

Those who were in the Morrell airship, with a description of their injuries, are:

J. V. Rodgers, 900 Hopkins street, Berkeley, assistant engineer. Crushed under heavy machinery and internally injured. May die.

C. A. Morrell, inventor of the air ship, inside rigging forward end, crushed by rigging of propeller when airship hit the ground. Leg broken and badly lacerated. Taken to Roosevelt hospital.

C. Tripple, of San Francisco, assistant engineer of engine No. 4. Crushed by engine. Roosevelt hospital.

Justin Barber, photographer residence Berkeley, in forward end of rigging. Rib broken; taken to Roosevelt hospital.

W. Tyson, valve tender, residence San Francisco, jumped fifty feet before collapsed bag struck ground. Badly bruised and cut. Taken to Oakland receiving hospital.

E. C. Wallen, newspaper man residing at 2807 Hazel street, Berkeley. Badly bruised and suffering from shock. Escaped more serious injury by climbing into network of passenger apartment from under engine. Taken to Roosevelt hospital.

P. H. Goodfriend, first engineer, residence Berkeley. Jumped before bag struck ground, dodged engine and escaped with slight bruises and gash on right arm.

Herst Miller, valve tender, residence 445 Stuart street; slightly bruised.

John Byrne, known as "Shorty," riding on top of gas bag. Escaped injury by marvelous agility, scaling net work that surrounds silk gas bag, going hundred feet up the side of the bag as it turned on end and started to come down. Uninjured.

Charles T. Hall, commercial photographer, residence 1035 Franklin street, San Francisco, riding in forward net. Escaped with slight bruises by climbing into netting above heavy engine that struck the ground under him. Unconscious from shock when taken from under collapsed air bag, but

Big Crowd At Scene

Women Faint and Men Groan as the Immense Dirigible Balloon Commences to Fall From Dizzy Height—Many Are Prostrated and Bruised in the Crush.

At least 5000 spectators were gathered around the four sides of the enclosure and on adjoining roofs and fences. Every ear coming from Oakland and distant points of the town was burdened with the curious who wished to see the ascent. At 11 a. m., the hour scheduled for the ascension, the crowd began to press into the field, and it was with difficulty it could be held back by the squad of regular and special policemen.

As the great inflated bag, held by the taut ropes, was let slowly into the air, swinging with the strong air currents, men raised their hats, and women their parasols and handkerchiefs, and waved them to the daring aeronauts, who replied by shouts and waves of their hats. The great ship, floating nicely, topped an adjoining windmill, thick with humanity, still held by the cables. As the ropes became unreeled on the ground, the cheers were deafening, the unconscious spectators wrapped in the beauty and fascination of the sight, and waving hats, handkerchiefs and parasols madly.

THE COLLAPSE.

Then came the collapse. The engines of the ship had scarcely cleared the windmill, when the front end of the great bag sagged inward and dropped a distance of several feet. The bag then slowly assumed a perpendicular position, throwing almost the full force of its weight of thousands of feet of gas against the upper end. A noise like a sudden puff of wind, and the spectators looking fascinated, saw a rent one-third the length of the bag, and saw the upper end sag quickly together as the great bag fell slowly to the ground, swallowing the men in an intricate mass of canvas and netting.

Spectators turned away, sick with the sight, as the monster ship slowly descended. They saw the man on top, clinging wildly to the netting covering the bag, expecting in a minute that the bag would turn turtle and plunge him to his death. Then many hid their eyes in their hands, or turned away, as they

gazed with the maneuvers of the great broken bag, not daring to take their eyes away, as much as they desired to do so. Men groaned, women wept and fainted, and some called for protection to the men in the mammoth descending wreck from above.

CROWD SNAPS THE FENCE.

Then came a rush, the fulfilling of a simultaneous impulse in thousands of breasts. The fence surrounding the enclosure was snapped like so much string by the endeavors of the mob to get to the fallen ship and begin the work of rescue. Men opened their pocket knives as they ran. Headed by the cool policemen, some cut the bag to let the remaining gas escape, while others formed into line and rolled the mass of canvas away from the engines, where the greatest number of men were imprisoned.

Hard and fast the rescuers worked, finally succeeding in freeing all the men. Those with slight injuries helped in the work of rescue, and their more unfortunate fellows were taken to immediate relief.

CUT UP BAG FOR SOUVENIRS.

The crowd was driven off the field when the work of rescue was done, the ladders cutting great strips out of the bag for souvenirs. Many lingered to regard the wreck from without the enclosure, and those who had been watching from distant office buildings, or other points scattered down to observe the tangled hopeless wreck upon which the clever Morrell has spent so much pains.

FRANTIC CLIMB TO SAVE LIFE

STORY OF THE FLIGHT

Appearance of the Airship When It Began to Take Its Tumble From the Clouds.

Before the horrified eyes of five thousand spectators one of the most disastrous accidents in the whole history of experimental aerial navigation occurred in Berkeley at noon today, when the immense Morrell airship, carrying a human freight of sixteen souls, collapsed while at a height of 300 feet in the air, turned on end, carrying sickening terror to the hearts of the helpless spectators and shot in a heap to the ground.

Ten of the passengers and crew, including C. A. Morrell, the inventor, whose leg was broken and ankle crushed, were badly injured.

The life of at least one of the injured, J. V. Rodgers of 900 Hopkins street, who was assistant to the chief engineer of the airship, is despaired of. He lies at the Roosevelt hospital this afternoon suffering from internal injuries and a fractured ankle. He was fearfully crushed under one of the five heavy automobile engines that generated power for the Morrell contrivance whose trial trip has resulted in such fearful disaster.

The great balloon with its five propellers and its five automobile engines, representing an investment of \$90,000 was a complete loss. Its engines are wrecked, and its immense 482-foot gas bag cut and slashed into tatters. The loss to the company is almost great enough to wreck the concern, extensive as its financial equipment is.

Fortunately there was hardly a breath of air stirring when the levitation of the sky began to rise. With its freight of sixteen men it rose in a perpendicular line toward the sky. When the texture of the great silk bag gave way it turned on end and came down in as straight a line toward the earth as it had ascended. Thus when it struck the earth it struck in the center of the lot from which the ascent was made, and the lives of hundreds of the spectators were no doubt saved by that circumstance. Had the wind veered the