

## BALLOONING FOR LADIES.

**T**HE lady balloonists, members of the Aëro Club of London, have furnished us with one of the chief sensations of the season.

The Princess di Teano is one of the fashionable women who have become identified with the sport. Aëronauts, like all those whose lives depend for safety upon the vagaries of the elements, have a firm belief that certain passengers carry good or bad luck in their wake, and the Princess di Teano, the reigning belle of a couple of seasons, is an especially popular fellow voyageur. Exceptional good luck has attended every ascent she has yet made.

The ethics of balloonists when making a descent are such as to make the possession of pluck an absolute necessity. No matter what immediate danger the unfortunate feminine aëronaut may see directly ahead, when being landed with an unexpected drop, and no matter how easily she could leave the balloon, she must not dream of doing so until the aëronaut in charge gives the word of command. For to lighten the car of one person's weight before the balloon is quite deflated might send it suddenly skyward, whence it might descend again with a drop, killing the occupants.

The fittings of the up-to-date balloon car, even when women passengers are to be taken, are of necessity meagre. In many cars the occupants have only just room enough to stand up in, though some of the bigger cars are provided as a special luxury with a very narrow wooden seat running across one side for the benefit of the feminine voyageurs. Most men elect to stand. A dozen or more bags of ballast—filled with finely-sifted sand—are placed in the bottom of the car.

Some balloons have among their fittings a small shovel with which the aëronaut ladles out this sand, a small handful at a time, for in a well-balanced balloon the throwing out of a single handful of sand will cause her to rise hundreds of feet in the air, so delicately is she poised.

A small aneroid barometer, a megaphone—for attracting the notice and asking questions of passers-by—a map, a statoscope—the newly-invented and delicate instrument which registers the rise or fall of the balloon, thus avoiding the necessity for throwing out pieces of paper in order to find out whether they rise or sink—and an electric torch, together with a trailing cord, and a grappling iron or anchor, complete the aëronaut's outfit, while a danger cord, or ripping cord, as it is technically termed, by means of which the ballon is ripped up in a previously prepared place to let the gas out quickly when making a rough descent on a gusty day, thus preventing the car and its occupants from being dragged at the heels of a half-deflated balloon through barbed wire or over glass hothouses and cucumber frames,



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is tied up in the rigging in a bright red bag to prevent its being accidentally touched by meddling onlookers before the start.

There is no side entrance to a balloon car, so a pile of sandbags is often arranged beside those destined to carry lady passengers. By this means they mount into their respective cars five minutes before the start, swinging themselves into the basket between the ropes of rigging.

It was chiefly in order that the Princess di Teano and the actress, Miss Granville, might see what experienced aeronauts declare to be one of the most impressive of all sights from a balloon—namely, that of the sun rising from above the mists of an early summer morning—that a midnight supper party was once organized. An ascent was made at 2 A. M. into the pitch-black night by two balloons.

"We shot right up through a big black cloud," said Miss Granville to a representative of the *Ladies' Realm*, "and for some time it was so dark that we could not even see each other's faces. We had an electric torch, though, with which we were enabled to consult our instruments, to glean some idea as to where we were and in what direction we were travelling.

"One of the most curious sights we saw before the sun rose was that of the moon, which appeared to bob from side to side of the heavens, now appearing on the right, now on the left of us, with the weirdest imaginable effect. The explanation was that we were spinning slowly around in the air; but in ballooning one feels absolutely no movement whatever.

"One may be travelling before a wind blowing forty miles an hour and yet appear to be in the midst of an impenetrable stillness and silence."

So still, indeed, is it to the occupants of the car that the feminine aeronaut does not even trouble to tie a motor veil around her hat.

Ballooning has always held an extraordinary fascination for women from the time of its inauguration, early in 1782. It was chiefly the mother wit of a feminine bystander who chanced to watch the first experiments of the famous brothers Montgolfier, and saw the weak points that doomed their earlier efforts to failure, which was responsible through a timely suggestion for the launching of the first balloon, and about two years later Madame Fible, the pioneer of women aeronauts, made her first ascent from Lyons.