

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Jerome Rilke George  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Bebel Proust  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **The Air Ship Boys : Or, the Quest of the Aztec Treasure**

H. L. (Harry Lincoln) Saylor

# Imprint

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## CHAPTER I

### THE DEPARTURE OF THE OVERLAND LIMITED

The Overland Limited, aglow with lights, stood in the Dearborn Street station in Chicago waiting for eight o'clock and the last of its fortunate passengers. Near the entrance gates, through which perspiring men and women were hurrying, stood the rear cars of the train. Within these could be seen joyous passengers locating themselves and arranging bags and parcels.

In fifteen minutes the long journey of Ned Napier and his chum Alan Hope to the far southwest was to begin.

At the other end of the big shed, where the cars of the long train seemed to fade almost out of sight, four persons were anxiously awaiting the approach of the hour of departure. One of these, the conductor of the train, consulted his watch, as he had done several times already, holding it close within the glow of his green-shaded lantern.

"It's getting pretty close to time, Major Honeywell," he said with some concern. "You're sure he'll be here?"

The man addressed, who stood leaning lightly on a cane and whose soft dark hat and clothes indicated his military calling, showed similar concern, but replied confidently:

"We have nearly fifteen minutes. Young Napier has a reputation for never failing. I'm sure he'll be here in time."

"Here's the telegram," interrupted young Alan Hope, as he drew a yellow sheet from his pocket. "It is from Youngstown, Ohio, and says Ned's train is on time. He left Washington yesterday and if

everything is all right he reached the Union Depot a half hour ago. He'll be here."

"Well, you know we can't wait, much as I'd like to," replied the conductor. "You'd better have everything ready."

"She's dat, sah," interrupted the fourth person of the group, a young negro, who, as he spoke, placed his hand on the side door of the car, and moved it on its easy running bearings.

"You see, there isn't much time left," continued the sympathetic train official. "We're coupling up." And he nodded toward the gloom beyond the train shed out of which the big compound locomotive was already emerging. The military man with the cane became more apprehensive.

"What shall we do if Ned fails to get here?" he said suddenly after peering down the long platform toward the busy end of the station.

"Oh, we didn't go into this to fail," cheerily responded the youth by his side. "If we 'fall down' it won't be on a simple thing like this. He'll be here. It won't take us but three minutes to transfer the stuff when it gets here. Never fear. I'll just take another look in the car to make sure."

As he did so the colored boy exclaimed:

"It's all right. Here's de screws as he done tole us to git and here's de screw-driver outen de box as he done writ us to have ready and dar's de door all ready fur to fly open."

To prove it the lad gave the wide door in the side of the car a shove, and as it ran back on its track a portion of the inside of the car was exposed. It was a peculiar car and worth description, for in it, next to the big engine and ahead of all the other cars of the almost endless train, Ned Napier, his friend Alan Hope, and their servant, Elmer Grissom, were to be the sole passengers on a most mysterious and, as it proved, most eventful journey. In railroad parlance the car was what is known as a "club" car. Half of the interior was bare and unfinished, like the compartment in which, on special and limited trains, baggage is carried. This part of the car, now exposed to view, was dimly lighted with one incandescent bulb. In the half-light it could be seen that the space was almost wholly filled with tanks,

boxes, casks, crates and bundles, all systematically braced to prevent jarring or smashing. It was plainly not the luggage of ordinary travelers. Except for a narrow passageway in the center of the car and a space about five square next the open door, every inch, to the very ventilators of the car, was crowded with bound or crated, numbered and tagged packages. In the open space next the door Alan Hope now appeared.

"Coming yet?" he asked with apparent confidence as he peered outside.

The colored boy Elmer shook his head.

Just then the conductor returned and again his watch.

"Eight minutes," he said; "time's getting along and I've got to go back and see about my train. I don't want to make you nervous, but do you want us to take this car if fails to get here with the stuff?"

"I suppose there's no need," replied the military man, beginning to show irritation. "But there's eight minutes yet."

"I know," replied the conductor, "but after we are coupled up and it is time to leave we can't stop to cut this car out. We've got to have five minutes for that. At five minutes of eight you'll have to decide whether it is go or stay. I'm sorry—but you'll have to decide in a minute or two."

"Decide it now," interrupted Alan from the open car door. "We're going and he'll be here."

The Major appeared to be in doubt as to the wisdom of this, but before he could say anything Alan continued:

"Couple up whenever you want to, Mr. Conductor, we'll be ready," and he sprang out of the car, his face set with determination.

By that time the throbbing engine had silently moved up next the car and two grimy depot men with smoky torches had swung off the footboard to make the connections.

"Got to know," repeated the sympathetic conductor. "Only five minutes." He looked at the Major for the final word.

The latter peered down the long almost vacant platform. There was no one in sight but the late arrivals being helped aboard the

cars in the far end of the station. Then he gave another look of appeal at his own watch as if in doubt what to say. To send a special car half way across the continent was no inexpensive project. And to send it without the person or the precious material that it was intended seemed not only a waste of money but foolish. Although the anxious man had both confidence and nerve it could be seen that he was in a quandary.

"Five minutes," exclaimed the railway official. "Does she go or stay?"

Before the man could answer, Alan faced him and with a hand on the Major's arm exclaimed:

"Ned will be here, he can't fail; tell him we're going."

The Major smiled. "That's it," he exclaimed suddenly. "Take her along. It's up to us to take care of ourselves."

"Good," said the conductor, "I hope he'll make it."

With a signal to couple on the engine he hurried away for a final inspection of his train.

For a moment the three persons left behind stood in silence. There was a hiss of the engine as it pushed the connecting blocks together and then those waiting so anxiously could hear the jar of connecting valves as the brake hose were snapped. Confident as Alan was, it gave him a sinking feeling. Then, as the swish of tests sounded and the gnome-like figures of the depot men crawled from under the car, the Major looked again at his watch in despair.

"Four minutes —"

Before he could say more Alan caught sight of a movement among those gathered around the last car at the far end of the depot.

"There he is!" he shouted and darted forward.

"He sho'ly is," exclaimed Elmer, his white teeth showing, "and Yar's de screw driver and yar's de screws all ready."

A slowly moving truck had carefully turned the end of the waiting train and, drawn by two baggage-room employees, was making its way along the platform. By its side walked a boy—a lad of about seventeen. One of his hands rested on the truck and his eyes were carefully fixed on the load it bore. This was a black, iron-bound case about four feet long, three feet deep and perhaps a yard in height. On each side in red letters were the words:

"Explosive; no fire." Beneath this ominous legend were two large iron handles.

When the men drawing the truck quickened their pace the boy spoke to them sharply and they fell again into a steady walk. For the curious onlookers through whom the strange little caravan passed the lad by the side of the truck seemed to have no concern. A traveling cap was pushed back from his young face and his keen and alert eyes and the tone of his voice indicated a quality that goes with those born to command.

"Hello, Ned," came a ringing greeting from Alan as he ran forward. "They were afraid you wouldn't get here. But I knew you would. It's only a minute or two. Hurry."

"Four," said the new arrival cheerfully and confidently.

He gave his left hand to Alan and a better welcome in a cheery word of greeting, but his right hand did not leave the truck. Nor did his eyes leave it except for a moment.

"And the Major?" asked the new arrival as the truck rumbled on.

"Waiting to bid us good-bye."

"Everything aboard and shipshape?"

"Everything but this," and Alan glanced at the black case on the truck.

"I've carried it a thousand miles like a baby," laughed Ned. "Rode with it all the way in the express car."

"Then you didn't sleep last night?"

Ned laughed. "It was too interesting," he answered, "and I can sleep to-night. But I'm glad it's here with no one killed and not a drop spilled."

Advancing leaning heavily on his cane, the military man had hurried forward, his face radiant.

"Welcome, my boy, and congratulations. But for goodness' sake hurry," he began hastily.

Ned smiled again. "I think we had better not hurry this," and he pointed to the truck load. "That's the reason I'm late. I walked the horses from the Union Depot. You see we can't afford to spill our supplies. It was too hard to make and cost too much."

In another moment the truck was abreast of the open car door.

"Back her up," exclaimed Ned giving a hand himself to the tongue of the truck. Then, as the top of the truck came up flush with the car door and floor he sprang lightly on the truck and motioned the men to do likewise. For a moment they hesitated, but being reassured, Ned and Alan and the truck men lined up on either side of the big case. Slowly and carefully, with a brawny truck man on each side to help the less stoutly muscled lads, the case slid forward and with a "yeo-ho" or two from Ned it was soon in the car. Without a pause it was pushed at once into a space outlined on the floor.

"And about two minutes to spare," cried the Major from the platform jubilantly and thankfully.

"Not quite," laughed Ned, "but it'll be a half a minute and that's as good as an hour. The screws, Elmer."

The colored boy, who had been busy keeping out of the way, sprang forward to perform his part of the apparently ticklish job. It was then seen that each bottom corner of the mysterious box had an iron flange. In the center of each of these was a small hole.

"Major," called out Ned as the truck men climbed out of the car, "these men were very obliging and careful."

The Major understood him, and as he began searching his pockets for a bill Ned quickly inserted four screws in the waiting holes and with a few sharp turns of the screw driver made the case hard and fast to the floor of the car. Almost as quickly he threw the door into

place and bolted it, and then with Alan hurried out for a last word to the friend who was so much interested in his success.

"Was I right?" he exclaimed. "Half a minute?"

"To the dot," enthusiastically answered the Major. "Now, boys, good-bye. Everything in that car is exactly as you planned and asked. From now on it is subject to your orders alone. What mine are you know. God bless you both and good luck to you!"

As the boys took his hand Ned handed him a letter. "I'm sorry I couldn't have seen my mother again, but please send her this. I wrote it to-day on the train."

Far down the line of cars came the words, "all aboard," and Elmer, cap in hand, sprang onto the steps.

"Good-bye," exclaimed Alan, "and thank you for the great chance you're giving us."

"Good-bye," said Ned, "if we fail in our work it won't be your fault, Major."

And then, as the train began to move, the boys stepped aboard, off at last, after six weeks preparation, in search of the lost Cibola and the treasure of the Turquoise Temple.



## CHAPTER II

### NED'S MEETING WITH MAJOR BALDWIN HONEYWELL

Six weeks before Ned Napier and Alan Hope had set out on this trip Ned had been the surprised recipient of a mysterious note. In this message, written on the stationery of the Annex Hotel, he was urged to call on the writer the next morning at ten o'clock. With his mother's approval he had kept the engagement. The events which followed will explain how Ned came to take his momentous journey to the far southwest.

Promptly on the hour Ned presented himself at the office desk. A clerk with a handful of letters gave him a half glance and turned away.

"I say," began Ned in a voice that made the clerk turn quickly, "I want some information."

The man stepped forward, leaned over the counter far enough to get a full view of his questioner, and answered:

"All right, sonny. What can I do for you?"

"You can tell me if Major Baldwin Honeywell is staying here."

"Friend of Major Baldwin's?" asked the clerk, his smile broadening.

"If Major Honeywell is stopping here I suppose he is paying well for his entertainment," replied Ned after a moment's pause.

"Sure," answered the facetious clerk, "regular rates."

"Perhaps that ought to include civil attention to those he has business with. I have an appointment with him at ten o'clock. I wish you would see at once that he knows I am here."

The clerk's smile was not quite so broad now but he was still amused.

"What name shall I give, son?" He was about to repeat the "sonny" that had grated a little on Ned's sense of the proprieties but he stopped short—and added: "Have you a card, Mr.—?"

"I have no card and I don't call myself 'Mr.'," answered Ned, "but you can say that Ned Napier is here and will be glad to see Major Honeywell whenever it is convenient."

At the mention of "Ned Napier" the clerk's airiness disappeared. A certain respect seemed to take its place. Then he leaned forward and said a good deal more politely: "You are not the Ned Napier?"

"I never heard of any other one of that name," answered the boy.  
"But I think we are losing time. Please say I'm here."

A moment later a page announced that Major Honeywell, in suite 8 A, desired Mr. Napier to be shown up at once. Reaching the apartment the page knocked and there was a quick "Come in."

Hat in hand, and with all the manliness and dignity his seventeen years afforded, Ned stepped into the room. At a table a man had just risen as if from work on some papers. As the man turned to come forward and his eyes fell upon the lad he paused as if surprised. Ned Napier was neither large nor small for his age. But his circumstances had been such, financially, that his attire was plain and perhaps old fashioned—much of it the handiwork of his frugal and fond mother; and the absence of smart and up-to-date ideas in clothes and shoes made him look, perhaps, even younger than his years. Other lads of his acquaintance—those in his classes in high school—aped their elders. Ned's time and interests were too much given up to his boyish ambition to permit this.

Ned saw a man of about sixty years, with snow-white moustache, dressed in blue. The man had every appearance of being both a soldier and an officer. His face was tanned as if by much exposure to the sun, but the line of white at the top of his forehead, where his hat gave protection, suggested that the color was both recent and transitory. Major Honeywell's hair, which was yet dark and only slightly streaked with gray, was too long to suggest present active service, as Ned at once concluded. His face, too, had something of the student in it, and this effect was increased by a pair of large gold

spectacles with double lenses. The man's contracted eyes gave the youth the uncomfortable feeling of being microscopically examined, and Ned was for a moment ill at ease. The manner of the scrutiny was that of a scholar who had before him a strange new specimen. Ned, still with hat in hand, felt more like a dead bug than a very live boy. Then the white-mustached man smiled, took off his heavy-lensed glasses, and stepped forward with his hand extended.

"I am Major Honeywell," he began in a low voice, "formerly of the regular army and later detailed on ethnological work for the Government. You are —"

"Ned Napier," responded his youthful caller.

"You must take no offense if I am a little surprised," exclaimed Major Honeywell; "I had supposed you would be older. Perhaps your surprise came first on receiving my note?"

"It did," replied Ned; "I was surprised and so was my mother. But she thought I ought to come, although we could not imagine what you wanted."

Major Honeywell smiled and motioned Ned to a chair with a graciousness that made the lad more comfortable. It had taken but a passing glance to reveal to the boy that he was in the presence of no ordinary man. The articles scattered about the room, which apparently were part of his host's traveling outfit, confirmed this. Of three leather cases or trunks in front of the mantel and within Ned's view, one was open. On the extended top of this, still partly covered with the folds of a light Indian blanket, were several flat and dull plates or dishes of Indian design, more or less broken and chipped. From the case came a pungent aromatic smell such as Ned had noticed in the "Early American" room of the museum. He was not quite sure what "ethno" meant, but he made a guess that it related to old Indian things, and this theory he confirmed to himself when he noticed on the table that Major Honeywell had just left another piece of pottery and by its side a large reading or magnifying glass.

"A collector," thought Ned, more puzzled than ever.

"I thank you for coming," said Major Honeywell finally. "It was good of you to do so. But I had supposed you were older — at least a young man," and he smiled again as if in some doubt.

"Perhaps," replied Ned with just a shadow of resentment in his voice, "if you will tell me why you sent for me I can help you in making up your mind as to whether you were wrong in doing so. I'm seventeen."

Major Honeywell arose, took off his glasses again and walked to where Ned was sitting.

"I hope you'll not take offense, my boy. But my business with you is most important. It is possibly the most important thing that has ever come to me. Fate, or chance more properly, of course, seems to have brought us together. If what I have in mind and have partly hoped could be brought about, is brought about, you will have no reason to regret my sending for you. We must be sure of ourselves. So far we know almost nothing about each other. Since our acquaintance may mean a great deal to us let us be sure of ourselves. Therefore, you will pardon me if I ask you if you are the Ned Napier?"

Ned laughed good-naturedly.

"That's what the clerk down stairs asked me few moments ago – if I were the Ned Napier. Well, I never heard of any other Ned Napier. But boys don't carry credentials, you know, Major Honeywell. I'll take your word for it that you are Major Baldwin Honeywell, formerly of the United States Army, and now of the – what do you call it – ethno – ?"

"Ethnological survey," laughed the Major. "Then, since we know each other, I want to congratulate you, my young friend, on being one of the brightest, nerviest, and most promising young men of America. I've read about you and that's why I sent for you."

Ned could only conclude one thing and it made him blush. "You mean my dirigible balloon experience last summer?" he asked with growing embarrassment.

"I do," replied Major Honeywell with what Ned thought was wholly unnecessary warmth and enthusiasm, "and I want to shake the hand and congratulate the youngest, most daring and most promising balloon navigator in the world."

## CHAPTER III

### THE RELATION OF MIGUEL VASQUEZ

It may be well to recount how such a young lad as Ned had become so famous.

Ned's father had been a consulting engineer with a fondness for aeronautics. When Mr. Napier died, a year before Ned's meeting with the Major, it was discovered that he was making in his little shop a small dirigible balloon to be used at an amusement park. Mr. Napier's death was sudden. Manufacturer's bills for the balloon bag and engine came due and Ned, young as he was, knew that he must pay them. Putting on all the dignity that his sixteen years would permit he called on the manager of the amusement park.

"I hear your father is dead," said the manager. "I suppose we have lost the twenty-five per cent we advanced on the air ship."

"Why do you suppose that?"

"Because he had complete charge of the work and we have no one to take his place."

"I mean to do that myself," said Ned.

The manager smiled and shook his head. "No doubt you would try—you look it—but we don't care to experiment."

"But you want the air ship, don't you? You've advertised it."

"Yes, it was ordered—through your father. Since he is dead and cannot contribute his services, our agreement is void."

"Very well," replied Ned. "Good day."

"Look here," interrupted the manager, "what do you mean to do?"

"I'm going out to sell an air ship."

"You mean our air ship?"

"You said the contract is void."

The manager laughed again, but not as jovially.

"You ought to get on," he exclaimed.

"I've got to get on, and I'm going to do it by being on the square."

"I guess you're right. What's your proposition?"

"Since you've thrown up the contract I'm going to sell the balloon at a profit. The price is now \$3,000. And I want a contract as operator for six weeks at \$100 per week."

The manager stared at Ned and then exclaimed. "I'll do it. You are the very youngster we want."

That was how Ned Napier came to finish the air ship his father had planned, and how it happened all that summer that the papers printed news stories and Sunday specials with pictures of his daring flights, and how Major Baldwin Honeywell and other happened to speak of him as the Ned Napier.

To return to the scene of Ned's meeting with the Major —

"My name is Ned Napier," the boy began as soon as his host's cordiality gave him a chance, "and I am the young man the newspapers wrote about."

"I certainly made no mistake in sending for you," exclaimed the soldier. "But, before I say more I want you to realize that this is, to me, a most important matter."

"You mean it is —"

"A solemn secret. I want secure your services in a desperate and daring adventure that will mean a great deal to me—and a great deal to you."

"Certainly," was the boy's response. "I give you my pledge on that."

A look of relief came into the old soldier's face.

"If I furnished you the money," went on Major Honeywell suddenly, "could you produce in a short time a practical and manageable balloon?"

Before the boy could answer the old soldier continued: "I don't mean one of those affairs in which ascensions of an hour or so are made. I mean one in which you could travel for several days—perhaps a week?"

"No," said Ned, "it can't be done. No one has yet remained in the air in a balloon over fifty-two hours."

Major Honeywell said nothing, but Ned could see that what he had told the Major had dashed some budding hope.

"That is," Ned hastened to explain, "you couldn't do it unless you periodically renewed your supply of hydrogen. I really believe," continued Ned, "that I ought to know more about what you are planning to accomplish."

Again the white-mustached man was silent a few moments, and then he told without reserve the great secret. He began with an account of himself. Until three years before he had been an officer in the United States cavalry, stationed in the southwest. Then the President had assigned him to ethnological work. His special work was in the ruins of the Sedentary Pueblos. While scaling a cliff in this work he fell and permanently injured his left knee.

Resigning from the army, he traveled for a year and then went to visit an old friend, Senor Pedro Oje, whose immense sheep herds in Southwestern Colorado had made their owner a millionaire.

While here, hearing of an ancient nearby pueblo, just south of the Mesa Verde, Major Honeywell and his friend drove to the settlement. To Major Honeywell's surprise he found an old friend in Totontenac, the chief. As the two white men were about to leave, old Totontenac presented to his soldier friend an ancient funeral urn.

Major Honeywell was almost paralyzed with astonishment when he saw that the vessel was sealed and that it bore on its side, instead of the conventional Aztec design, this inscription in black: "Miguel Vasquez, 1545."

"What was in it?" asked Ned quickly when the Major came to this part of his narrative.

"That man was undoubtedly a soldier who marched out of Mexico in 1539 with Friar Marcos, the great explorer," went on Major Honeywell, ignoring the question, "and when others gave up the search for the famed seven cities of Cibola and the wealth of the Aztecs that every Spaniard believed rivaled the treasure of the Incas, this man kept on. Either by accident or design Miguel Vasquez was left by the expedition and six years later he wrote on cowhide and concealed in that vase one of the most valuable historic records extant in America to-day—confirmation that there was a real basis for the tales that lured the Spaniards to this region in quest of treasure."

Stepping to a trunk Major Honeywell took from a compartment a tin tube. From this he extracted a stiff sheet of parchment-like material.

"It's writing, isn't it?" exclaimed Ned.

"Yes, and Spanish. It is Miguel Vasquez's last will and testament, written over three hundred and fifty years ago. And here is a translation of it. You may read it yourself. That is my secret— and yours now!"

And these are the words that turned the current of Ned Napier's life:

"A relation of Miguel Vasquez soldier of Spain made in the year 1546 concerning the hidden city of Tune Cha. Coming out of Saint Michael in the Province of Culican I journeyed with Captain Marco de Nica in 1539. At Vacupa I departed from him and remained now six years among those of this land. Three years I dwelt in the town of Acuco and heard often of the city of Tune Cha wherein is to be found the Temple of Turquoise than which none more beautiful is to be found, not even in Castile itself. Such I have seen with my own eyes. It standeth within a palace of five hundred rooms or more wherein are to be found priestly vessels of gold and silver. And this same palace or City of Priests is compassed about by a massive wall. And in the center of the palace standeth the Temple, facing the sun which is the sacred place of al Quivera, Arche and Guyas. And the walls of this Temple are naught but precious Turquoise even to the height of forty feet or more, and the pillars thereof are of gold and silver alternate. Knowledge of this hidden and beautiful city hath