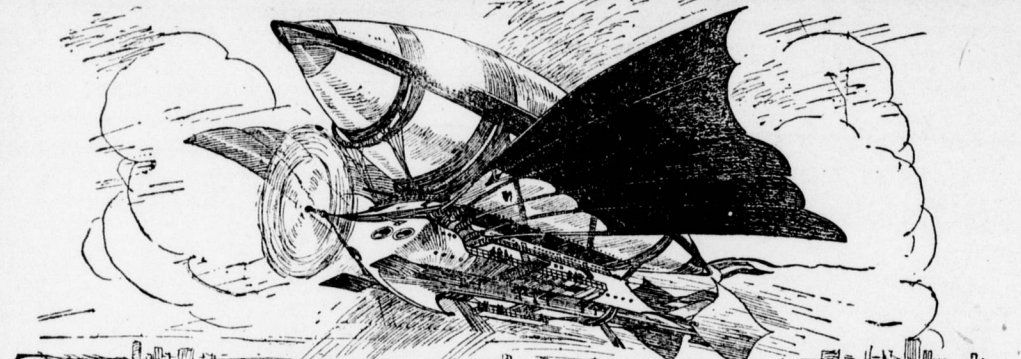


The War in the Air



BY H. G. WELLS

[Copyright, 1907, 1908, by the Macmillan Company.]

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTER.

Alfred Butteridge invents an extraordinary flying machine and plans to sell it to the British government. War is threatened. Butteridge and a lady in whom he is interested arrive at a seaside resort in a runaway balloon. Bert Smallways, a motor cycle dealer, catches hold of the car of the balloon and falls into it just as Butteridge and the lady fall out. The balloon leaps upward, carrying Smallways.

CHAPTER II. The Balloon.

BELOW him, far below him, shining blue, were the waters of the English channel. Far off, a little thing in the sunshine and rushing down as if some one was bending it hollow, was the beach and the irregular cluster of houses that constitutes Dymchurch. He could see the little crowd of people he had so abruptly left. Grubb, in the white wrapper of a Desert Dervish, was running along the edge of the sea. Mr. Butteridge was knee deep in the water, bawling immensely. The lady was sitting up with her floriferous hat in her lap, shockingly neglected. The beach east and west was dotted with little people—they seemed all heads and feet—looking up. And the balloon, released from the twenty-five stone or so of Mr. Butteridge and his lady, was rushing up into the sky at the pace of a racing motorcar.

"My crickey," said Bert, "there's a go!" To be alone in a balloon at a height of fourteen or fifteen thousand feet—and to that height Bert Smallways presently rose—is like nothing else in human experience. It is one of the supreme things possible to man. No flying machine can ever better it. It is to pass extraordinarily out of human things. It is to be still and alone to an unprecedented degree. Bert felt acutely cold, but he wasn't mountain sick. He put on the coat and overcoat and gloves Butteridge had discarded—put them over the Desert Dervish sheet that covered his cheap best suit—and sat very still for a long time, overawed by the new found quiet of the world. Above him were the light, translucent, billowing globe of shining brown oiled silk and the blazing sunlight and the great deep blue dome of the sky. Below, far below, was a torn floor of sunlit cloud, slashed by enormous rents, through which he saw the sea.

He wasn't in the least degree uncomfortable nor afraid. "Gollys!" he said at last, feeling a need for talking. "It's better than a motor bike. It's all right! I suppose they're telegraphing about me."

The second hour found him examining the equipment of the car with great particularity. Above him was the throat of the balloon bunched and tied together, but with an open lumen through which Bert could peer up into a vast, empty, quiet interior and out of which descended two fine cords of unknown import, one white, one crimson, to pockets below the ring. The netting about the balloon ended in cords attached to the ring, a big steel bound hoop to which the car was slung by ropes. From it depended the trail rope and grapple, and over the sides of the car were a number of canvas bags that Bert decided must be ballast to "chuck down" if the balloon fell. "Not much falling just yet," said Bert.

There were an aneroid and another box shaped instrument hanging from the ring. The latter had an ivory plate bearing "stato-scope" and other words in French, and a little indicator quivered and waggled between "Montee" and "Descente." "That's all right," said Bert. "That tells if you're going up or down." On the crimson padded seat of the balloon there lay a couple of rugs and a camera, and in opposite corners of the bottom of the car were an empty champagne bottle and a glass. "Refreshments," said Bert meditatively, tilting the empty bottle. Then he had a brilliant idea. The two padded bedlike seats, each with blankets and mattress, he perceived, were boxes, and within he found Mr. Butteridge's conception of an adequate equipment for a balloon ascent—a hamper which included a game pie, a Roman pie, a cold fowl, tomatoes, lettuce, ham sandwiches, shrimp sandwiches, a large cake, knives and forks and paper plates, self heating tins of coffee and cocoa, bread, butter and marmalade, several carefully packed bottles of champagne, bottles of mineral water and a big jar of water for washing, a portfolio, maps and a compass, a rucksack containing a number of conveniences, including curling

tongs and hairpins, a cap with earflaps, and so forth.

"A 'ome from 'ome," said Bert, surveying this provision as he tied the earflaps under his chin.

He looked over the side of the car. Far below were the shining clouds. They had thickened so that the whole world was hidden. Southward they were piled in great snowy masses so that he was half disposed to think them mountains. Northward and eastward they were in wavelike levels and blindingly sunlit.

"Wonder how long a balloon keeps up?" he said. He imagined he was not moving, so insensibly did the monster drift with the air about it. "No good coming down till we shift a bit," he said. He consulted the stato-scope.

"Still Monty," he said. "Wonder what would happen if you pulled a cord? No," he decided; "I ain't going to mess it about."

Afterward he did pull both the ripping and the valve cords; but, as Mr. Butteridge had already discovered, they had fouled a fold of silk in the throat. Nothing happened. But for that little hitch the ripping cord would have torn the balloon open as though it had been slashed by a sword and hurled Mr. Smallways to eternity at the rate of some thousand feet a second. "No go!" he said, giving it a final tug. Then he lunched.

He reposed for a time. Then he got up, paddled about, rearranged the ballast bags on the floor, watched the clouds for a time and turned over the maps on the locker. Bert liked maps, and he spent some time in trying to find one of France or the channel. But they were all British ordnance maps of English counties. That set him thinking about languages and trying to recall his seventh standard French. "Je suis Anglais. C'est une meprise. Je suis arrive par accident ici," he decided upon as convenient phrases. Then it occurred to him that he would entertain himself by reading Mr. Butteridge's letters and examining his pocketbook, and in this manner he whiled away the afternoon.

He sat upon the padded locker, wrapped about very carefully, for the air, though calm, was exhilaratingly cold and clear. About him, above and below, was space—such a clear emptiness and silence of space as only the aeronaut can experience.

There were letters of an entirely private character addressed to Mr. Butteridge, and among others several love letters of a devouring sort in a large feminine hand. These are no business of ours, and one remark with regret that Bert read them.

When he had read them he remarked, "Gollys!" in an awe stricken tone, and then, after a long interval, "I wonder if that was her? Lord!"

He mused for a time. He resumed his exploration of the Butteridge interior. It included a number of press cuttings of interviews and also several letters in German, then some in the same German handwriting, but in English. "Hello!" said Bert.

One of the latter, the first he took, began with an apology to Butteridge for not writing to him in English before and for the inconvenience and delay that had been caused him by that and went on to matter that Bert found exciting in the highest degree. "We can understand entirely the difficulties of your position and that you shall possibly be watched at the present juncture. But, sir, we do not believe that any serious obstacles will be put in your way if you wish to endeavor to leave the country and come to us with your plans by the customary routes—either by way of Dover, Ostend, Boulogne or Dieppe. We find it difficult to think you are right in supposing yourself to be in danger of murder for your invaluable invention." "Funny!" said Bert and meditated.

Then he went through the other letters. "They seem to want him to come," said Bert, "but they don't seem hurting themselves to get him, or else they're shamming don't care to get his prices down."

"They don't quite seem to be the gov'ment," he reflected after an interval. "It's more like some firm's paper. All this printed stuff at the top, Drachenflieger, Drachenballons, Balloonstoffe, Kugelballons Greek to me."

"But he was trying to sell his blessed secret abroad. That's all right. No Greek about that! Gollys! Here is the secret!" He tumbled off the seat, opened the locker and had the portfolio open before him on the folding table. It was full of drawings done in the peculiar flat style and conventional colors engineers adopt. Lord," he said, "here am

I and the whole blessed secret of flying—lost up here on the roof of everywhere.

"Let's see!" He fell to studying the drawings and comparing them with the photographs. They puzzled him. Half of them seemed to be missing. He tried to imagine how they fitted together and found the effort too much for his mind.

"It's trying," said Bert. "I wish I'd been brought up to the engineering. If I could only make it out!"

He got more and more perplexed up there among the clouds as to what he should do with this wonderful find of his. At any moment, so far as he knew, he might descend among he knew not what foreign people.

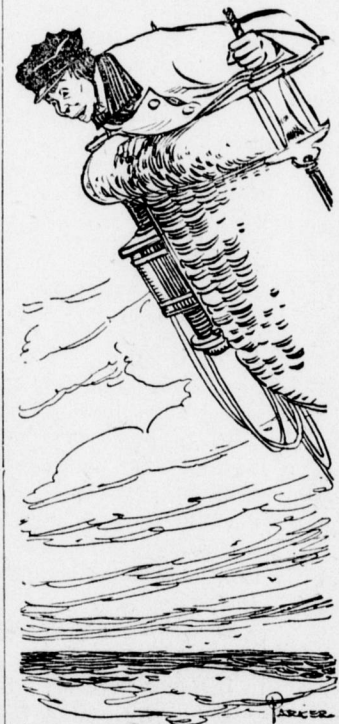
"It's the chance of my life!" he said. It became more and more manifest to him that it wasn't. "Directly I come down they'll telegraph—put it in the papers. Butteridge'll know of it and come along on my track."

"Wouldn't do. What's the good of thinking of it?" He proceeded slowly and reluctantly to replace the Butteridge papers in his pockets and portfolio as he found them. He became aware of a splendid golden light upon the balloon above him and of a new warmth in the blue dome of the sky. He stood up and beheld the sun, a great ball of blinding gold, setting upon a tumbled sea of gold edged crimson and purple clouds, strange and wonderful beyond imagining. Eastward cloudland stretched forever, darkling blue, and it seemed to Bert the whole round hemisphere of the world was under his eyes.

Down went the sun and down—not diving steeply, but passing northward as it sank—and then suddenly daylight and the expansive warmth of daylight had gone altogether, and the index of the stato-scope quivered over to "Descente."

"Now what's going to happen?" said Bert.

He found the cold, gray cloud wilderness rising toward him with a wide, slow steadiness. Abruptly the sky was hidden, the last vestiges of daylight gone, and he was falling rapidly in an evening twilight through a whirl of fine snowflakes that streamed past him toward the zenith, that drifted in upon



He Looked Over in Time to See a Minute White Splash.

the things about him and melted, that touched his face with ghostly fingers. He shivered. His breath came smoking from his lips, and everything was instantly bedewed and wet.

He had an impression of a snow-storm pouring with unexampled and increasing fury upward. Then he realized that he was falling faster and faster.

Imperceptibly a sound grew upon his ears. The great silence of the world was at an end. What was this confused sound?

He craned his head over the side. He was dropping, dropping—into the sea!

He became convulsively active. "Ballast!" he cried, and seized a little sack from the floor and heaved it overboard. He did not wait for the effect of that, but sent another after it. He looked over in time to see a minute white splash in the dim waters below

him, and then he was back in the snow and clouds again.

That first downward plunge filled Bert with a haunting sense of boundless waters below. It was a summer's night, but it seemed to him, nevertheless, extraordinarily long. He had a feeling of insecurity that he fancied quite irrationally the sunrise would dispel. Also he was hungry. He felt in the dark in the locker, put his fingers in the Roman pie and got some sandwiches, and he also opened rather successfully a half bottle of champagne. That warmed and restored him. Then he made a discovery. His—or, rather, Mr. Butteridge's—waistcoat rustled as he breathed. It was lined with papers. But Bert could not see to get them out or examine them, much as he wished to do so. He fell asleep.

He was awakened by the crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs and a clamor of birds. He was driving slowly at a low level over a broad land lit golden by sunrise under a clear sky. He stared upon hedgeless, well cultivated fields intersected by roads, each lined with cable bearing red poles. He had just passed over a compact whitewashed village with a straight church tower and steep red tiled roofs. A number of peasants, men and women, in shiny blouses and lumpy footwear, stood regarding him, arrested on their way to work. He was so low that the end of his rope was trailing.

He resolved to rise a little and get rid of his wig, which now felt hot on his head, and so forth. He threw out a bag of ballast and was astonished to find himself careering up through the air very rapidly.

"Blow!" said Mr. Smallways. "I've overdone the ballast trick. Wonder when I shall get down again? Brekfus' on board, anyhow."

He removed his cap and wig, for the air was warm, and an improvised impulse made him cast the latter object overboard. The stato-scope responded with a vigorous swing to "Montee."

"The blessed thing goes up if you only look overboard," he remarked and assailed the locker.

Then he took off his overcoat, for the sunshine was now inclined to be hot, and that reminded him of the rustling he had heard in the night. He took off the waistcoat and examined it. "Old Butteridge won't like me unpicking this." He hesitated and finally proceeded to unpick it. He found the missing drawings of the lateral rotating planes, on which the whole stability of the flying machine depended.

An observant angel would have seen Bert sitting for a long time after this discovery in a state of intense meditation. Then at last he rose with an air of inspiration, took Mr. Butteridge's ripped, demolished and ransacked waistcoat and hurled it from the balloon, whence it fluttered down slowly and eddily until at last it came to rest with a contented flop upon the face of a German tourist sleeping peacefully beside the Hohenweg, near Wildbad. Also this sent the balloon higher, and so into a position still more convenient for observation by our Imaginary angel, who would next have seen Mr. Smallways tear open his own jacket and waistcoat, remove his collar, open his shirt, thrust his hand into his bosom and tear his heart out—or at least, if not his heart, some large bright scarlet object. If the observer, overcoming a thrill of celestial horror, had scrutinized this scarlet object more narrowly, one of Bert's most cherished secrets, one of his essential weaknesses, would have been laid bare. It was a red flannel chest protector, one of those large quasi-hygienic objects. Always Bert wore this thing. It was his cherished delusion, based on the advice of a shilling fortune teller at Margate, that he was weak in the lungs.

He now proceeded to unbutton his fetich, to attack it with a penknife and to thrust the new found plans between the two layers of imitation Saxony flannel of which it was made. Then, with the help of Mr. Butteridge's small shaving mirror and his folding canvas basin, he readjusted his costume with the gravity of a man who has taken an irrevocable step in life, buttoned up his jacket, cast the white sheet of the Desert Dervish on one side, washed temperately, shaved, resumed the big cap and the fur overcoat and, much refreshed by these exercises, surveyed the country below him.

"Wish I knew how to get down," said Bert, 10,000 feet or so above it all, and gave himself to much futile tugging at the red and white cords. Afterward he made a sort of inventory of the provisions. Life in the high air was giving him an appalling appetite, and it seemed to him discreet at this stage to portion out his supply into rations. So far as he could see he might pass a week in the air.

Late in the afternoon of a pleasant summer day in the year 191—, if one may borrow a mode of phrasing that once found favor with the readers of the late G. P. R. James, a solitary balloonist—replacing the solitary horseman of the classic romances—might have been observed wending his way across Franconia in a northeasterly direction and at a height of about 11,000 feet above the sea and still spinning slowly. His head was craned over the side of the car, and he surveyed the country below with an expression of profound perplexity. Ever and again his lips shaped inaudible words, "Shootin' at a chap," for example, and "I'll come down right enough soon as I find out 'ow." Over the side of the basket the robe of the Desert Dervish was hanging, an appeal for consideration, an ineffectual white flag.

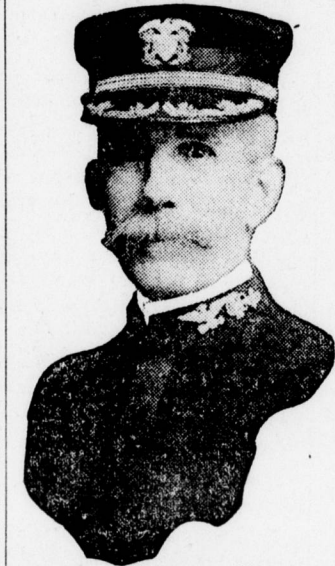
[To be continued.]

A GLANCE AT WORLD AFFAIRS

REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD WAINWRIGHT, hero of one of the most remarkable sea fights of the Spanish-American war, is about to retire from active service. His achievement thirteen years ago was in its way a more noteworthy performance than the sinking of the Spanish fleet at Santiago.

While Admiral Sampson was blockading the harbor of Santiago Admiral Wainwright, commanding the Gloucester, which had been converted from a yacht into a dispatch boat, carrying less than 100 men, a couple of six pounders and some light guns, was assigned the haphazard task of running close in to the mouth of the harbor every night in order to make sure that the enemy should not escape. When Cervera's fleet finally emerged Wainwright, though not supposed to do any fighting, closed with the torpedo boat destroyers, the Pluton and the Furor. Wainwright feared that they might get within striking distance of one of the big battleships.

The two destroyers dashed at the Gloucester, but Wainwright, swooping down upon them in return, engaged



Rear Admiral Wainwright.

them in a terrific struggle. The Spanish fire was heavy, but inaccurate, and the Gloucester, therefore, escaped sinking. Her six pounders wrought fearful havoc with the two torpedo boats. First the Pluton staggered and ran ashore after less than half an hour's exchange of shots, and then, smashed by the Gloucester's projectiles, the Furor caught fire. One gun crew after another was shot down, and in a short time the vessel ran up the white flag. Wainwright was the executive officer of the battleship Maine when that vessel was blown up in Havana harbor.

A Unique Experiment.

Potatoes, pears and pork are the three P's on which Mayor Lew Shauk of Indianapolis rests his claim to municipal state and national gratitude. They are the food products which he has endeavored to reduce in price by going to producers and inducing them to send directly to market without calling in the services of middlemen. He began with potatoes, continued with pears and went on to pork. Apples were also mentioned as coming within the list of food commodities that the mayor believed could be handled directly. The mayor said food prices were too high in Indianapolis and should come down.

Say Nation Needs a Mending.

That there is something the matter with the country and considerable remedial legislation should be enacted at the next congress session, which will start in Dec. 4, is the opinion of a body of prominent men who will convene on Dec. 11 to see what recommendations they can devise and agree upon.

Politics and Matrimony.

Step up, Mr. Aspirant For Public Office, and produce your marriage certificate when you ask your fellow citizens to nominate you. That was the attitude taken by some Massachusetts women, who said that Louis A. Frothingham, Republican candidate for governor, and David I. Walsh, Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor, were unsatisfactory because they were not married. Thus is a new terror added to politics.

"Only married men in public office" hereafter will be the slogan of a not inconsiderable portion of the Bay State's fair sex.

The Reichstag Election.

The general election for the German reichstag is now exciting the German capital. All the parties and groups were well prepared for battle a month ago. As the result of a rumor the Vorwärts printed to the effect that the government, wishing to secure a majority for the Conservative groups, had warned the latter to be ready for a "surprise" general election. There are no fewer than fifteen parties and groups represented in the imperial legislature, divided into the right, center and left. The parties of the right are the Conservatives, the Imperial Conservatives, the agrarians and four groups of the anti-Semites. The center consists of the Roman Catholic party, the political representatives of the papal church in Germany, where

approximately the Roman Catholics number about one-third of the population, while the left consists of the three Liberal and Radical groups, now united under the name of Progressive People's party, and by the Socialists, sometimes distinguished as the extreme left. Then there are other parties, which cannot strictly be included in these divisions.

The "Second Coronation."

The great durbar of India, sometimes referred to as the second coronation, and which is even more elaborate than the coronation in London, is scheduled to begin on Dec. 7, the king-emperor and queen-empress being due to arrive in Delhi on the morning of that day. They will be met by Lord and Lady Hardinge, the governors and the heads of the provincial administration of India. Then follow a strenuous ten days for their majesties. In the afternoon of the 8th and 9th the king-emperor will receive visits from India's chiefs and will lay the memorial stone of the late King Edward. His majesty on Dec. 11 will present colors to three British and two Indian regiments.

On the following day the durbar will take place in the presence of a hundred thousand persons. The next day King George will receive the volunteer and native officers of the Indian army. There will be a grand review of troops on the morning of the 14th. Their majesties will go in a state procession through the city on Dec. 16.

The Peabody Fund.

For more than forty years the Peabody fund, founded by George Peabody, the famous philanthropist of the nineteenth century, has been doing its good work among educational institutions of the south. Now it is to be all distributed and its trustees discharged of their duties, according to recent announcement. The sum remaining is about \$1,500,000, which will be distributed among eleven southern states.

The Peabody educational fund was founded in 1867 by Mr. Peabody for the purpose of promoting "intellectual, moral and industrial education in the most destitute portion of the southern states." It amounted to more than \$3,000,000 and was the first of the gifts of millions to charitable and educational causes.

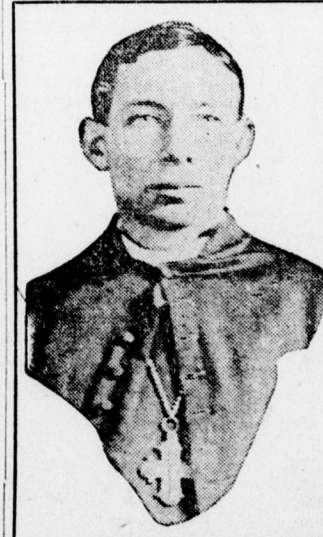
Women of Six States Voting.

Suffragists throughout the country are rejoicing over their victory in California, which will enable the women of Los Angeles to decide the result of the majority election on Dec. 5. More than 30,000 women are expected to vote in the city. The Socialists are making herculean efforts to capture a good part of the votes of the fair sex for their candidate, Job Harriman. Mayor George Alexander is the "good government" aspirant for re-election, and his workers are carrying their campaign to the homes of the new voters.

It has been a year of progress for the advocates of votes for women. Some big men have come out openly and espoused their cause, and leaders in the movement have been declaring that the time is not far distant when their victory will be general. In addition to California, the women have won the ballot in Washington, Utah, Colorado, Idaho and Wyoming.

Aim to Free World's Drug Slaves.

Empowered by their respective governments to execute agreements looking to international regulating in the matter of habit forming drugs delegates from many points are now at The Hague, Holland, for the opening on Dec. 1 of the international conference for the suppression of the opium



Bishop Brent.

traffic. Means whereby the distribution of opium, cocaine and morphine will be minimized will be formulated at this meeting, which is the sequel of the international opium conference held in Shanghai in 1909.

Bishop Brent of the Philippine Islands is one of the American delegation which sailed for Holland the middle of this month.

The Apples of the East.

For the purpose of demonstrating the apple growth in the east an association of Virginia and Maryland apple growers is giving an exhibit in the new Masonic temple, Washington. The show closes on Dec. 2.