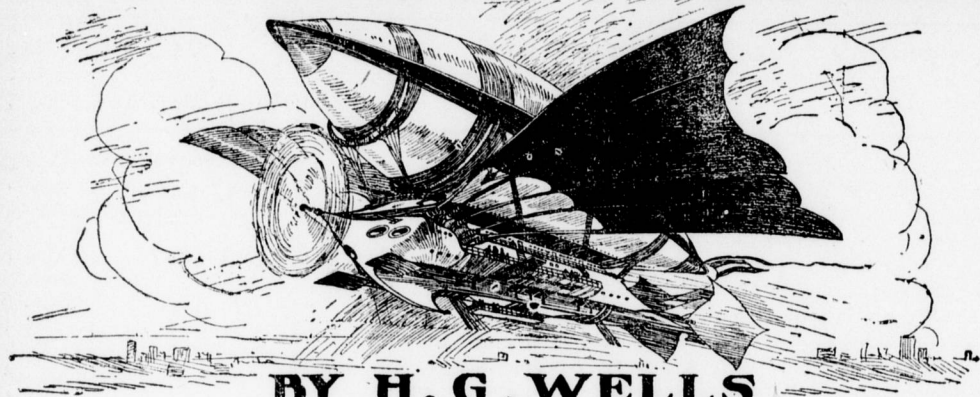


# The War in the Air



BY H. G. WELLS

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## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

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.

He rises 15,000 feet, learns that Butteridge was planning to sell his flying machine to Germany and finds drawings of the machine in Butteridge's clothing. He conceals the drawings in his chest protector and finds himself drifting across Germany.

## CHAPTER III. The German Air Fleet.

BERT was quite involuntarily playing that weird mysterious part—the part of an international spy. He was seeing secret things. He had, in fact, crossed the designs of no less a power than the German empire; he had blundered into the hot focus of Welt-Politik; he was drifting helplessly toward the great imperial secret, the immense aeronautic park that had been established at a headlong pace in Franconia to develop silently, swiftly and on an immense scale the great discoveries of Hunstedt and Stessel, and so to give Germany before all other nations a fleet of airships, the air power and the empire of the world.

Later, just before they shot him down altogether, Bert saw that great area of passionate work warm lit in the evening light, a great area of upland on which the airships lay like a herd of grazing monsters at their feed. In shape they were altogether fishlike, for the great airships with which Germany attacked New York in her last gigantic effort for world supremacy—before humanity realized that world supremacy was a dream—were the lineal descendants of the Zeppelin airship that flew over Lake Constance in 1906 and of the Lebaudy navigables that made their memorable excursions over Paris in 1907 and 1908.

These German airships were held together by riblike skeletons of steel and aluminium and a stout inelastic canvas outer skin, within which was an impervious rubber gas bag, cut up by transverse dissepiments into from fifty to a hundred compartments. These were all absolutely gas tight and filled with hydrogen, and the entire aerostat was kept at any level by means of a long internal balloonette of oiled and toughened silk canvas, into which air could be forced and from which it could be pumped. So the airship could be made either heavier or lighter than air, and losses of weight through the consumption of fuel, the casting of bombs, and so forth, could also be compensated by admitting air to sections of the general gas bag. Ultimately that made a highly explosive mixture, but in all these matters risks must be taken and guarded against. There was a steel axis to the whole affair, a central backbone which terminated in the engine and propeller, and the men and magazines were forward in a series of cabins under the expanded headlike fore part. The engine, which was of the extraordinarily powerful Pforzheim type, that supreme triumph of German invention, was worked by wires from this fore part, which was indeed the only really habitable part of the ship. If anything went wrong the engineers went aft along a rope ladder beneath the frame. The tendency of the whole affair to roll was partly corrected by a horizontal lateral fin on either side, and steering was chiefly effected by two vertical fins, which normally lay back like gill flaps on either side of the head. It was indeed a most complete adaptation of the fish form to aerial conditions, the position of swimming bladder, eyes and brain being, however, below instead of above. A striking and fishlike feature was the apparatus for wireless telegraphy that dangled from the forward cabin—that is to say, under the chin of the fish.

These monsters were capable of ninety miles an hour in a calm, so that they could face and make headway against nearly everything except the fiercest tornado. They varied in length from 800 to 2,000 feet, and they had a carrying power of from 70 to 200 tons. How many Germany possessed history does not record, but Bert counted nearly eighty great hulks receding in perspective during his brief inspection. Such were the instruments

on which she chiefly relied to sustain her in her repudiation of the Monroe doctrine and her bold bid for a share in the empire of the new world. But not altogether did she rely on these. She had also a one man bomb throwing Drachenflieger of unknown value among the resources.

But the Drachenflieger were away in the second great aeronautic park east of Hamburg, and Bert Smallways saw nothing of them in the birdseye view he took of the Franconian establishment before they shot him down, for they shot him down very neatly. The bullet tore past him and made a sort of pop as it pierced his balloon, a pop that was followed by a rustling sigh and a steadily downward movement. And when in the confusion of the moment he dropped a bag of ballast the Germans very politely, but firmly, overcame his scruples by shooting his balloon again twice.

It is impossible now to estimate how much of the intellectual and physical energy of the world was wasted in military preparations and equipment, but it was an enormous proportion. All Europe was producing big guns and swarms of little Smallways. The Asiatic peoples had been forced in self defense into a like diversion of the new powers science had brought them. On the eve of the outbreak of the war there were six great powers in the world and a cluster of smaller ones, each armed to the teeth and straining every nerve to get ahead of the others in deadliness of equipment and military efficiency. The great powers were first the United States, a nation addicted to commerce, but roused to military necessities by the efforts of Germany to expand into South America and by the natural consequences of her own unwary annexations of land in the very teeth of Japan. She maintained two immense fleets east and west, and internally she was in violent conflict between federal and state governments upon the question of universal service in a defensive militia. Next came the great alliance of eastern Asia, a close knit coalescence of China and Japan, advancing with rapid strides year by year to predominance in the world's affairs. Then the German alliance still struggled to achieve its dream of imperial expansion and its imposition of the German language upon a forcibly united Europe. These were the three most spirited and aggressive powers in the world. Far more pacific was the British empire, perilously scattered over the globe and distracted now by insurrectionary movements in Ireland and among all its subject races.

Even more pacific than the British empire were France and its allies, the Latin powers, heavily armed states indeed, but reluctant warriors, and in many ways socially and politically leading western civilization. Russia was a pacific power perforce, divided within itself, torn between revolutionaries and reactionaries who were equally incapable of social reconstruction and so sinking toward a tragic disorder of chronic political vendetta. Wedged in among these portentous larger hulks, swayed and threatened by them, the smaller states of the world maintained a precarious independence, each keeping itself armed as dangerously as its utmost ability could contrive.

So it came about that in every country a great and growing body of energetic and inventive men was busied either for offensive or defensive ends in elaborating the apparatus of war until the accumulating tensions should reach the breaking point. Each power sought to keep its preparations secret, to hold new weapons in reserve, to anticipate and learn the preparations of its rivals. The strength and heart of the nations were given to the thought of war, and yet the mass of their citizens was a teeming democracy as heedless of and unfitted for fighting, mentally, morally, physically, as any population has ever been—or, one ventures to add, could ever be. That was the paradox of the time. It was a period altogether unique in the world's history. The apparatus of warfare, the art and method of fighting, changed absolutely every dozen years in a stupendous progress toward perfection, and people grew less and less warlike and there was no war.

And then at last war came. It came as a surprise to all the world because its real causes were hidden. Relations were strained between Germany and the United States because of the intense exasperation of a tariff conflict and the ambiguous attitude of the former power toward the Monroe doctrine, and they were strained between the United States and Japan because of the perennial citizenship question.

But in both cases these were standing causes of offense. The real deciding cause, it is now known, was the perfecting of the Pforzheim engine by Germany and the consequent possibility of a rapid and entirely practicable airship. At that time Germany was by far the most efficient power in the world, better organized for swift and secret action, better equipped with the resources of modern science and with her official and administrative classes at a higher level of education and training. These things she knew, and she exaggerated that knowledge to the pitch of contempt for the secret counsels of her neighbors. With the coming of these new weapons her collective intelligence thrilled with the sense that now her moment had come. Particularly she must strike America swiftly, because there, if anywhere, lay the chance of an aerial rival. It was known that America possessed a flying machine of considerable practical value, developed out of the Wright model, but it was not supposed that the Washington war office had made any wholesale attempts to create an aerial navy. It was necessary to strike before they could do so. France had a fleet of slow navigables, several dating from 1908, that could make no possible headway against the new type. They had been built solely for reconnoitering purposes on the eastern frontier, they were mostly too small to carry more than a couple of dozen men without arms or provisions, and not one could do forty miles an hour. Great Britain, it seemed, in an access of meanness, temporized and wrangled with the imperial spirited Butteridge and his extraordinary invention. That also was not in play—and could not be for some months at the earliest. From Asia there came no sign.

Swift and systematic and secret were their preparations and their plan most excellent. So far as their knowledge went, America was the only dangerous possibility—America, which was also now the leading trade rival of Germany and one of the chief barriers to her imperial expansion. So at once they would strike at America. They would fling a great force across the Atlantic heavens and bear America down unwarned and unprepared.

The attack upon America was to be the first move in a tremendous game. But no sooner had it started than instantly the aeronautic parks were to proceed to put together and inflate the second fleet, which was to dominate Europe and maneuver significantly over London, Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg or wherever else its moral effect was required. A world surprise it was to be—no less a world conquest—and it is wonderful how near the calmly adventurous minds that planned it came to succeeding in their colossal design.

Von Sternberg was the Molke of this war in the air, but it was the curious hard romanticism of Prince Karl Albert that won over the hesitating emperor to the scheme. Prince Karl Albert was indeed the central figure of the world drama. He was the darling of the Imperialist spirit in Germany and the ideal of the new aristocratic feeling—the new chivalry, as it was called—that followed the overthrow of socialism through its internal divisions and lack of discipline and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few great families. He was compared by obsequious flatterers to the Black Prince, to Alcibiades, to the young Caesar. To many he seemed the Nietzsche's Overman revealed. He was big and blond and virile and splendidly nonmoral.

Of all these world forces and gigantic designs Bert Smallways knew nothing until he found himself in the very focus of it all and gaped down amazed on the spectacle of that giant herd of airships. Each one seemed as long as the Strand and as big about as Trafalgar square. Some must have been a third of a mile in length.

His birdseye view was quite transitory. He ducked at the first shot, and directly his balloon began to drop his mind ran confusedly upon how he might explain himself and whether he should pretend to be Butteridge or not. "O Lord!" he groaned in an agony of indecision. Then his eye caught his sandals, and he felt a spasm of self disgust. "They'll think I'm a bloomin' idiot," he said, and then it was he rose up desperately and threw over the sand bag and provoked the second and third shots.

It flashed into his head as he cowered in the bottom of the car that he might avoid all sorts of disagreeable and complicated explanations by pretending to be mad.

That was his last idea before the airships seemed to rush up about him

as if to look at him and his car hit the ground and bounded and pitched him out on his head.

He awoke to find himself famous and to hear a voice crying: "Booteridge! Ja, ja, Herr Booteraidge selbst!"

He was lying on a little patch of grass beside one of the main avenues of the aeronautic park. The airships receded down a great vista, an immense perspective, and the blunt prow of each was adorned with a black eagle of a hundred feet or so spread. Down the other side of the avenue ran a series of gas generators, and big hose pipes trailed everywhere across the intervening space. Close at hand was his now nearly deflated balloon and the car on its side, looking minutely small, a mere broken toy, a shriveled bubble, in contrast with the gigantic bulk of the nearer airship.

He perceived that close at hand was a field telephone and that a tall officer in blue was talking thereabout him. Another stood close beside him with the portfolio of drawings and photographs in his hand. They looked round at him.

"Do you spik Cherman, Herr Booteraidge?"

Bert decided that he had better be dazed. He did his best to seem thoroughly dazed. "Where am I?" he asked.

Volubility prevailed. "Der Prinz" was mentioned. A bugle sounded far away, and its call was taken up by one nearer and then by one close at hand. This seemed to increase the excitement greatly.

An earnest faced, emaciated man with a white mustache appealed to Bert. "Herr Booteraidge, sir, we are chust to start!"

"Where am I?" Bert repeated.

Some one shook him by the other shoulder. "Are you Herr Booteraidge?" he asked.

"Herr Booteraidge, we are chust to start!" repeated the white mustache,



"Do you spik Cherman, Herr Booteraidge?"

then helplessly: "What is de goot? What can we do?"

The officer from the telephone repeated his sentence about "Der Prinz" and "mitbringen." The man with the mustache stared for a moment, grasped an idea and became violently energetic, stood up and bawled directions at unseen people. Questions were asked, and the doctor at Bert's side answered: "Ja! Ja!" several times, also something about "Kopf." With a certain urgency he got Bert rather unwillingly to his feet. Two huge soldiers in gray advanced upon Bert and seized hold of him. "Ullo!" said Bert, startled. "What's up?"

"It is all right," the doctor explained; "they are to carry you."

"Where?" asked Bert, unanswered.

"Put your arms round their—hals—round them!"

Before Bert could decide to say anything more he was whisked up by the two soldiers. They joined hands to seat him, and his arms were put about their necks. "Vorwärts!" Some one ran before him with the portfolio, and he was borne rapidly along the broad avenue between the gas generators and the airships rapidly and on the whole smoothly, except that once or twice his bearers stumbled over hose pipes and nearly let him down.

He was wearing Mr. Butteridge's Alpine cap, and his little shoulders were in Mr. Butteridge's fur lined overcoat, and he had responded to Mr. Butteridge's name. The sandals dangled helplessly. Gaw! Everybody seemed in a devil of a hurry. Why? He was carried joggling and gaping through the twilight, marveling beyond measure.

There was a matter of sentinels, gangways and a long, narrow passage, a scramble over a disorder of baggage, and then Bert found himself lowered to the ground and standing in the doorway of a spacious cabin. It was perhaps ten feet square and eight high, furnished with crimson padding and aluminium. A tall, birdlike young man with a small head, a long nose and very pale hair, with his hands full of things like shaving strops, boot trees, hairbrushes and toilet tidies, was saying things about Gott and thunder and Dummer Booteraidge as Bert entered. He was apparently an evicted occupant. Then he vanished, and Bert was lying back on a couch in the corner with a pillow under his head and the door of the cabin shut upon him. He was alone. Everybody had hurried out again astonishingly.

"Gollys!" said Bert. "What next?"

[To be continued.]

## A GLANCE AT WORLD AFFAIRS

"BANG" went the bombs dropped from the Italian aeroplanes into the Turkish camp near Tripoli, and a new era in warfare was inaugurated. It was the first successful use of the aeroplane in warfare, although experiments in the employment of the flying machines for scouting have been carried on for some time. Moralists have found texts for mournful commentary in the fact that the new invention, essentially peaceful in its nature, has been diverted by men to the purpose of slaughtering one another.

Military and naval experts had doubted that aeroplanes could be put to practical use in war, but their employment in Tripoli as carriers of deadly explosives which they could drop with accurate aim has disproved many of their contentions. It is reported that the sight of the machines flying over the Turks and Arabs has had a tremendous effect on the untutored minds of those who had never before seen this modern marvel.

### Linking City and Country.

A closer relation between the city of Baltimore and the counties of Maryland is the object of "Maryland week," Dec. 4 to 9. An exhibit by the State Horticultural society is a feature of the celebration.

It would seem as if Maryland has hit upon a first rate idea. The "big brother" of a state's smaller and less important communities can be a very useful factor in furthering the interests and development of the latter, and the country towns can do things, too, for the "big brother" if they like him well enough.

### Perils of Flying.

The roll of deaths in flying lengthens steadily and probably at an increasing ratio, but does not apparently diminish the zeal and the temerity of new aspirants. More than 100 names are now in the death list, and these include those of some of the most careful and expert scientific experimenters. When we take into account the comparatively short time in which attempts at aviation have been practiced and in which, therefore, the list has been growing and the small number of persons who have engaged in it, the total is appalling. It must far exceed proportionately that of deaths in motor racing or any other comparable occupation. The new art, thus far at least, is exceptionally dangerous, so dangerous that only the most genuine advantage to mankind can justify the practice of it, and therefore it should be confined to prudently regulated experiments.

### The Irrigation Congress.

Representatives from many countries are in Chicago for the nineteenth annual national irrigation congress, Dec. 5 to 9. The last convention, which met in Pueblo, Colo., adopted resolutions declaring federal control essential to equitable distribution and utilization of the water of interstate streams.

### A Queen's Gift.

During the coronation the king and queen of England were showered with testimonials of all kinds, coming alike from rich and poor subjects. One of the most noteworthy presents received by the queen was £65,000 con-



Queen Mary of Great Britain, Who Benefits Toilers.

tributed by girls of the British empire who could lay claim to the name Mary. With this money, it is announced, the queen will establish a seaside home for working girls.

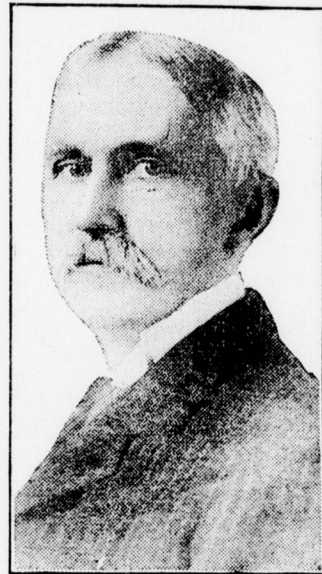
### Personnel of the Tariff Board.

The fact that the board's reports will be made the basis for tariff legislation on the wool, cotton, steel, chemical and other schedules makes this one of the most notable commissions in the government. The personnel is as follows: Professor H. C. Emery, chairman; James Burton Reynolds, Alvin H. Sanders, William M.

Howard and Professor Thomas Walker Page. Professor Emery holds the chair of economics in Yale. Mr. Reynolds formerly was assistant secretary of the treasury, in which capacity he had charge of the customs. Mr. Sanders at one time was president of the International Live Stock Exposition association. Mr. Howard formerly was a member of congress from Georgia. Professor Page occupies the chair of history and economics in the University of California.

### For an Asset Currency.

The report of the monetary commission, which is in readiness for the opening of congress, recommends a national reserve association and a currency based on assets. Thus it avoids



Secretary of the Treasury MacVeagh, Who Approves Currency Plan.

in name at least the central bank plan, which the public understood would be the chief feature recommended. Since the abolition of the United States bank in Jackson's time there has been considerable sentiment against a central bank, and the comment on the commission's plan, so long as it was believed that this feature would be included, was not entirely friendly. While the national reserve association covers some of the same ground as a central bank, the name does not arouse the same hostility. There is also opposition to an asset currency, and the fight on this point is likely to be one of the most vigorous of the session. The president and secretary of the treasury, Franklin MacVeagh, have endorsed the commission's report, making it practically an administration measure.

### Central American Unity.

In the western hemisphere the election of Madern to the presidency of Mexico has had a happy effect in settling disturbances in that country, although there are still occasional outbreaks. The leading editors of the five Central American states have been getting together, and there is renewed talk of a confederation of these nations.

### A Problem of Russia.

The meeting in the interest of the harassed religionists in Russia and of a broader tolerance which was held this fall under the auspices of the New York Federation of Churches and was attended by rabbis, Roman Catholic priests and clergymen of all the Protestant denominations in the five boroughs of New York city was said to have been the first instance in the history of New York of such a gathering for a particular purpose. In this case interest is more marked because the work embraces an effort to help religionists of whatever name to secure their just rights.

### The Wool Report.

After several months of exhaustive inquiry carried on by experts in all lands where wool in large quantities is grown or woven into cloth the tariff board has reported on the wool schedule. This report is of historic importance for the reason that it inaugurates a new method of tariff revision. It also is of interest because the president when he vetoed the three tariff bills during the extra session virtually promised that when the tariff board had time to report he would join congress in bringing about a revision based on its findings. While the board's figures do not show to a mathematical certainty the difference in cost of production at home and abroad, they probably approximate it as closely as the fluctuations in such cost from time to time and the variations in different countries permit.

### The Arbitration Treaties.

The first big fight in point of time in the congress just opening will be that over the arbitration treaties with Great Britain and France. This struggle will occur in the senate. During the special session the foreign relations committee of the senate reported these treaties out with amendments that were distasteful to the president. He thereupon began a campaign to arouse public opinion in favor of the treaties in their original form. The indications are that some senators have been won over to the president's position, but whether there are enough to ratify the instruments by a two-thirds vote yet remains to be seen.