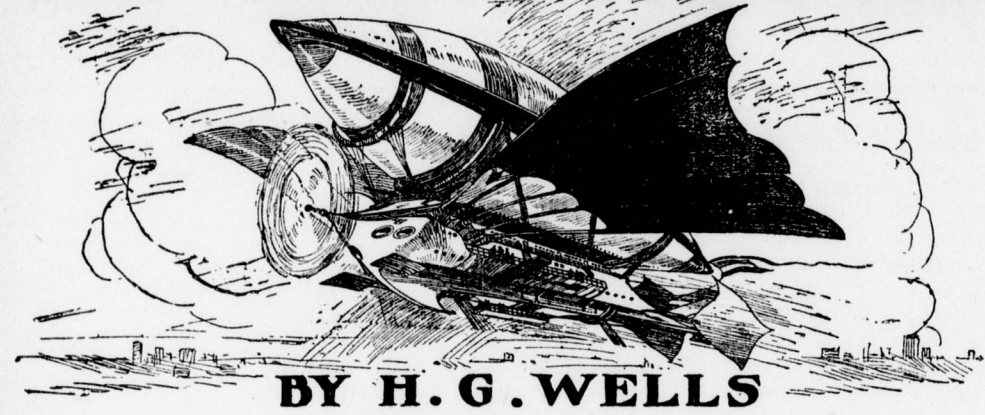


The War in the Air



BY H. G. WELLS

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PROLOGUE OF THE STORY.

Germany, hating the Monroe doctrine and ambitious for world's supremacy, secretly builds a vast fleet of airships and plans to surprise the United States by means of a sudden attack. Her airship fleet consists of great dirigibles of the Von Zeppelin type and small aeroplanes called Drachenflieger.

Prince Karl Albert commands the German airships. Germany and England have both been endeavoring to buy an extraordinary flying machine invented by Alfred Butteridge, who arrives at a British seaside resort in a runaway balloon, accompanied by a lady in whom he is interested.

Bert Smallways, a motorcycle dealer in hard luck, who is in love with Miss Edna Bunthorne, and his partner, Grubb, are impersonating a pair of "desert dervishes" at the seashore. Bert catches hold of the basket of the balloon and falls into it just as Butteridge and the lady fall out.

The balloon carries Bert across the North sea. He finds drawings of Butteridge's airship in some of Butteridge's clothing and hides the plans in his chest protector. His balloon drifts over Germany's immense aeronautic park. German soldiers shoot holes in it and capture Bert. They think he is Butteridge. Their vast fleet of war airships is about to start to attack New York. Soldiers carry him to the cabin of an airship.

CHAPTER IV.

The War Fleet Starts For America.

BERT SMALLWAYS stared about him at the room.

"Butteridge! Shall I try to keep it up, or shan't I?"

The room he was in puzzled him. "Tisn't a prison and 'tisn't a noris?" Then the old trouble came uppermost. "I wish to 'eaven I 'adn't these silly sandals on!" he cried querulously to the universe. "They give the whole blessed show away."

His door was flung open, and a compact young man in uniform appeared, carrying Mr. Butteridge's portfolio, rucksack and shaving glass. "I say," he said in faultless English as he entered. He had a beaming face and a sort of pinkish blond hair. "Fancy you being Butteridge?"

He slapped Bert's luggage down. "We'd have started," he said, "in another half hour. You didn't give yourself much time."

He surveyed Bert curiously. His gaze rested for a fraction of a moment on the sandals. "You ought to have come on your flying machine, Mr. Butteridge."

He didn't wait for an answer. "The prince says I've got to look after you. Naturally he can't see you now, but he thinks your coming providential. Last grace of heaven. Like a sign. Hello!"

He stood still and listened. Outside there was a going to and fro of feet, a sound of distant bugles suddenly taken up and echoed close at hand; men called out in loud tones short, sharp, seemingly vital things and were answered distantly. A bell jangled and feet went down the corridor. Then came a stillness more distracting than sound and then a great gurgling and rushing and splashing of water. The young man's eyebrows lifted. He hesitated and dashed out of the room. Presently came a stupendous bang to vary the noises without, then a distant cheering. The young man reappeared.

"They're running the water out of the balloonnee already."

"What water?" asked Bert.

"The water that anchored us. Artifidodge, eh?"

Bert tried to take it in.

"Of course," said the compact young man. "You don't understand."

A gentle quivering crept upon Bert's senses. "That's the engine," said the compact young man approvingly.

"Now we shan't be long."

Another long listening interval.

The cabin swayed. "By Jove, we're starting already!" he cried. "We're starting!"

"Starting!" cried Bert, sitting up. "Where?"

"What a lark!" cried the young man.

"I say! What a thundering lark! Don't you know? We're off to America, and you haven't realized. You've just caught us by a neck. You're on the blessed old flagship with the prince. You won't miss anything. Whatever's on, you bet the Vaterland will be there."

"Us! Off to America?"

"Ra-ther!"

"In an airship?"

"What do you think?"

"Me! Going to America on an airship! After that balloon! 'Ere! I say, I don't want to go! I want to walk about on my legs. Let me get out! I didn't understand."

He made a dive for the door.

The young man arrested Bert with a gesture, took hold of a strap, lifted up a panel in the padded wall, and a window appeared. "Look!" he said. Side by side they looked out.

"Gaw!" said Bert. "We're going up!"

"We are!" said the young man cheerfully. "Fast!"

They were rising in the air smoothly and quietly and moving slowly to the throbbing of the engine athwart the aeronautic park. Down below it stretched, dimly geometrical in the darkness, picked out at regular intervals by glow-worm spangles of light. One black gap

in the long line of gray, round backed airships marked the position from which the Vaterland had come. Beside it a second monster now rose softly, released from its bonds and cables, into the air. Then, sking a beautifully exact distance, a third ascended, and then a fourth.

"Too late, Mr. Butteridge!" the young man remarked. "We're off! I dare say it is a bit of a shock to you, but there you are! The prince said you'd have to come."

"Look 'ere," said Bert. "I really am dazed. What's this thing? Where are we going?"

"This, Mr. Butteridge," said the young man, taking pains to be explicit, "is an airship. It's the flagship of Prince Karl Albert. This is the German air fleet, and it is going over to America to give that spirited people 'what for.' The only thing we were at all uneasy about was your invention. And here you are!"

"But—you a German?" asked Bert. "Lieutenant Kurt—Luft-lieutenant Kurt, at your service."

"But you speak English!"

"Mother was English—went to school in England; afterward Rhodes scholar. German none the less for that. Detailed for the present, Mr. Butteridge, to look after you. You're shaken by your fall. It's all right really. They're going to buy your machine and everything. You sit down and take it quite calmly. You'll soon get the hang of the position."

Bert sat down on the locker, collecting his mind, and the young man talked to him about the airship.

"Here is the bed," he said, whipping down a couch from the wall and throwing it back again with a click. "Here are toilet things," and he opened a neatly arranged cupboard. "Not much washing. No water we've got; no water at all except for drinking. Here's a folding chair and table behind the door. Compact, eh?"

He took the chair and balanced it on his little finger. "Pretty light, eh? Aluminium and magnesium alloy and a vacuum inside. All these cushions stuffed with hydrogen. Foxy! The whole ship's like that. And not a man in the feet, except the prince and one or two others, over eleven stone. Could not sweat the prince, you know. We'll go all over the thing tomorrow. I'm frightfully keen on it."

He beamed at Bert. "You do look young," he remarked. "I always thought you'd be an old man with a beard—a sort of philosopher. I don't know why one should expect clever people always to be old. I do."

Bert parried that compliment a little awkwardly, and then the lieutenant was struck with the riddle why Herr Butteridge had not come in his own flying machine.

"It's a long story," said Bert. "Look here!" he said abruptly. "I wish you'd lend me a pair of slippers or something. I'm regular, sick of these sandals. They're rotten things. I've been trying them for a friend."

"Right O!"

The ex-Rhodes scholar whisked out of the room and reappeared with a considerable choice of footwear—pumps, cloth bath slippers and a purple pair adorned with golden sunflowers. Bert chose the pumps.

The lieutenant broke into a cheerful snigger. "Here we are trying on slippers," he said, "and the world going by like a panorama below. Rather a lark, eh? Look!"

Bert peeped with him out of the window, looking from the bright pettiness of the red and silver cabin into a dark immensity. The land below, except for a lake, was black and featureless, and the other airships were hidden. "See more outside," said the lieutenant. "Let's go. There's a sort of little gallery."

He led the way into the long passage, which was lit by one small electric light, past some notices in German, to an open balcony and a light ladder and

gallery of metal lattice overhanging empty space. Bert followed his leader down to the gallery slowly and cautiously. From it he was able to watch the wonderful spectacle of the first air fleet flying through the night. They flew in a wedge shaped formation, the Vaterland highest and leading, the trail receding into the corners of the sky. They flew in long, regular undulations, great dark, shiklike shapes, showing hardly any light at all, the engines making a throbbing, throbbing sound that was very audible out on the gallery. They were going at a level of five or six thousand feet and rising steadily.

"Jolly it must be to invent things," said the lieutenant. "How did you come to think of your machine first?"

"Worked it out," said Bert after a pause. "Test ground away at it."

"Our people are frightfully keen on you. They thought the British had got you. Weren't the British keen?"

"In a way," said Bert. "Still, it's a long story."

"I think it's an immense thing—to invent. I couldn't invent a thing to save my life."

They both fell silent, watching the darkened world and following their thoughts until a bugle summoned them to a belated dinner.

And so presently Bert found himself sitting to eat in the presence of the "German Alexander," that great and puissant prince, Prince Karl Albert, the war lord, the hero of two hemispheres. He was a handsome blond man, with deep set eyes, a snub nose, upturned mustache and long white hands, a strange looking man. He sat higher than the others under a black eagle with widespread wings and the German imperial flags. He was, as it were, enthroned, and it struck Bert greatly that as he ate he did not look at people, but over their heads, like one who sees visions. Twenty officers of various ranks stood about the table—and Bert. They all seemed extremely curious to see the famous Butteridge, and their astonishment at his appearance was ill controlled. The prince gave him a dignified salutation, to which by an inspiration he bowed. Standing next the prince was a brown faced, wrinkled man with silver spectacles and fluffy, dingy gray side whiskers, who regarded Bert with a peculiar and disconcerting attention. The company sat after ceremonies Bert could not understand. At the other end of the table was the bird faced officer Bert had dispossessed, still looking hostile and whispering about Bert to his neighbor. Two soldiers waited. The dinner was a plain one—a soup, some fresh mutton and cheese—and there was very little talk.

No smoking was permitted, but some of the officers went down to the little open gallery to chew tobacco. No lights whatever were safe amid that bundle of inflammable things. Bert suddenly fell yawning and shivering. He was overwhelmed by a sense of his own insignificance amidst these great rushing monsters of the air. He felt life was too big for him—too much for him altogether.

He said something to Kurt about his head, went up the steep ladder from the swaying little gallery into the airship again and so, as if it were a refuge, to bed.

Bert slept for a time, and then his sleep was broken by dreams. Mostly he was feeling from formless terrors down an interminable passage in an airship—a passage paved at first with ravenous trapdoors and then with openwork canvas of the most careless description.

"Gaw!" said Bert, turning over after his seventh fall through infinite space that night.

He sat up in the darkness and nursed his knees. The progress of the airship was not nearly so smooth as a balloon. He could feel a regular swaying up, up, up, and then down, down, down, and the throbbing and tremulous quiver of the engines. His mind began to teem with memories—more memories and more.

Through them, like a struggling swimmer in broken water, came the perplexing question, What am I to do tomorrow? Tomorrow, Kurt had told him, the prince's secretary, the Graf von Winterfeld, would come to him and discuss his flying machine and then he would see the prince. He would have to stick it out now that he was Butteridge and sell his invention. And then if they found him out! He had a vision of infuriated Butteridges. Suppose after all he owned up, pretended it was their misunderstanding. He began to scheme devices for selling the secret and circumventing Butteridge.

[To be continued.]

A GLANCE AT WORLD AFFAIRS

THE president's annual message was read in both houses of congress on Dec. 5. The tariff and the trusts were the two subjects chiefly emphasized, with recommendations of a parcels post law and of closer government supervision of the capitalization of railroads as close seconds. On the tariff the president favored a revision of the woolen schedule in accordance with the report of the tariff board, with the understanding that a revision of the cotton schedule is to follow soon. On the trust question a federal incorporation act was again proposed. As for the Sherman anti-trust law, no amendments were recommended except such as would supplement, strengthen and more clearly define the intent of the act. These subjects, together with currency revision, on which the national monetary commission has already reported, will form the important subjects of legislation during the session. There is certain to be a protracted struggle over federal incorporations, the opponents of the measure insisting that such a law would deprive the states of their power to control the trusts doing business within their borders. Two additional issues that will cause protracted debate are the direct election of senators, with the federal control of elections amendment which was added to it in the senate during the special session, and second class postage rates for magazines, on which a commission headed by Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Hughes has been making an inquiry.

The New China.

Despite a few minor reverses the Chinese rebellion has swept forward and republics have been proclaimed in various states of the empire. There are four possibilities, but none of them includes the continuance of the Manchu dynasty. The first is that

together in one place. For the first time since 1857 the gate of the kings was opened, and for the first time since it was stolen long ago the famous Kohinoor diamond reappeared in India. There is a legend to the effect that the owner of this diamond holds India. The durbar opened on Dec. 6, the emperor and empress entering in state on the 7th. Dec. 12 a ceremony equivalent to the coronation was held. This is the third durbar under British rule, that of Edward VII. having occurred in January, 1903, and of Queen Victoria in January, 1877.

Italy Suppresses Slave Trade.

One of the gratifying results of the war between Italy and Turkey is that Italy is suppressing the slave trade that formerly flourished in the ports of Tripoli. In this she is following the example of France in Algeria, Tunis and Morocco and England in Egypt and other ports to the south. The Italians vigorously deny the reports of atrocities said to have been committed by their soldiers on the noncombatants of Tripoli, including women and children. The truth seems to be that the Arabs treacherously turned on the Italians and began firing on the soldiers and even on the Red Cross workers without warning. With such extreme provocation it is not to be wondered at that the Italian soldiers committed some excesses, although they deny that they killed any except those in arms against them. Turkey has recently been moving for the intervention of the powers, and it is thought that the unequal struggle must soon cease, the chief result of the war being that Turkey will surrender Tripoli to Italy. Thus passes Turkish rule in northern Africa, the land that before the advent of the Vandal and the Arab was called the granary of the world.

Skating on Thin Ice.

Another reasonable warning might be directed to the boys and girls who at the present time of the year are interested once more in the popular winter sport of ice skating. Boys, the smaller the more reckless as a rule, are wont to display their bravado by risking their lives on weak ice, while the height of their foolhardy daring is reached in essaying to skim over the death trap known as an air hole. Such boys are aching for the old fashioned seance with pa in the woodshed.

Irrigation and Other Subjects.

From Dec. 5 to 9 was held in Chicago one of the greatest irrigation congresses in the history of the nation. Representatives had been invited from all the important countries, and many of these were in attendance, telling of the efforts toward reclamation of arid areas that had been made in their own lands. Other important meetings of the week were the national rivers and harbors congress, which met in Washington on Dec. 6, a delegation representing the Lakes to the Gulf Deep Waterways association, headed by President Kavanaugh, being present, and the first safety congress held by the state labor bureau of Minnesota, experts from insurance companies, the steel trust and others addressing the meeting; the gas and gasoline trades in Cleveland on Dec. 5-8, the southern corn show in Atlanta Dec. 5-9 and the Empire State poultry show in New York same dates.

Socialist Mayors.

The increase of the Socialist vote throughout the country still continues the subject of serious discussion among politicians. It was the one surprise of the late election. One of the most sur-



Rev. George R. Lunn, Socialist Mayor of Schenectady, N. Y.

prising Socialist victories was that at Schenectady, N. Y., where the Rev. George R. Lunn was elected mayor.

Dr. Lunn is only thirty-eight years old. He began his career in Schenectady as pastor of the First Reformed church, the oldest in the city. About three years ago his Socialist teachings became so pronounced that he was compelled to resign his pastorate, after which he organized the United People's congregation, which recently combined with the Congregational church, Dr. Lunn continuing as pastor. He is also an editor and was a prominent figure in graft investigations.

SHOT DESTROYED MEMORY.

For Fifty Years Old Soldier Couldn't Recall Where He Hid Treasure.
The story of a wound received in the civil war which sealed the hiding place of a fortune for more than half a century and of a strange trick of fate which cleared the hider's memory in the evening of life was brought to Los Angeles by the hider's son, J. K. Anderson of New Orleans, says the Herald of that city.

Anderson's father joined in the gold rush and was one of the miners of the forty-nine days. He located a claim in Placer county, near Auburn and Newcastle. Within a year he had snatched a fortune from the river bottoms. Then the call of the south for volunteers reached him. He buried the gold beneath the adobe blocks of a tavern in the vicinity of his claim, strapped all the precious substance he could carry about his body and hurried to join the Confederate army.

Anderson says his father was struck in an engagement with the Union troops by a bullet, which tore open his scalp and robbed him of his memory for fifty years. During that time, the son says, the parent was like a child, with all knowledge of the hiding place of the gold gone. Before he died, a year ago, his memory of the gold rush returned to him, and he was living again in the past that preceded his part in the conflict.

It was during these last moments that the old man told his son and the mother where he had buried what he claimed was a fortune.

THE WORLD OVER.

It is predicted that within a few years ships without funnels or boilers, but using oil engines as motive power, will be making regular passages across the Atlantic. For submarines such engines have been almost universally adopted by the admiralties of all countries except England and the United States. The maximum of British coal production was in 1907, when the total mined and brought to the surface was 267,812,000 long tons. Experiments in compressing flour show that its keeping qualities are prolonged almost indefinitely by the process. Its bulk is decreased by one-third. The largest telephone exchange in existence is that at Hamburg, which is taking care of 40,000 lines at present, but accommodations have been made for future extensions so that this exchange will be enabled to take care of twice as many lines. It is told of a clock in Brussels that it has never been wound by human hands. It is kept going by the wind.

BEETLE IS REMARKABLE.

Its Strength Surprising For Its Size. Carries 500 Times Its Weight.

If asked to name the strongest animals most persons begin with the largest, the elephants, and continue with oxen, horses, etc. This is, of course, correct in so far as their total horsepower is concerned, but for real strength proportioned to the size and weight of the animal one must go to the insect world. Compared with insects, the strength of almost any large animal and especially of man is absurd.

A man is considered strong if he can drag a mass weighing three or four times as much as himself, but the beetle will walk with 500 times its weight. If a man were placed under a wooden box with five times his weight on top to hold it down he would remain there indefinitely, but to retain a stag beetle prisoner in the same way one must pile on top of the box at least 1,800 times its weight.—Harper's Weekly.

Studying the Thumb.

The thumb confesses the man. No man is clever enough to deceive it. It has been divided into three parts, typifying the three qualities that master the world—will, logic and love. The first, or nail phlange, signifies will; the second, logic; the third, which is the boundary of the Mount of Venus, love. When the thumb is unequally developed and the first phlange is extremely long it is neither love nor logic that governs the individual, but merely sheer will. If the middle phlange be much longer than the first reason predominates. Yet the man may not have the power to will himself to do that which his reason dictates.

When the third phlange is long and the thumb is short man is revealed as the slave of the sense, guided neither by will nor reason.

If the thumb is supple jointed the individual is easy going, spendthrift, careless of time, money, energy, opportunity and all things.

If it be firm jointed he is cautious, watchful, keen, diplomatic, tireless in planning, confident and sure of success, self possessed and self controlling.—London Tit-Bits.

The Population of China.

According to the latest official returns, the number of inhabitants of China proper, Manchuria and the new dominion is 312,425,025. And, as we have pointed out before, observes the National Review (China), the estimates of China's population have always had a tendency to exaggeration, and even if 10,000,000 be added for Mongolia and Tibet the total is far below that usually quoted.