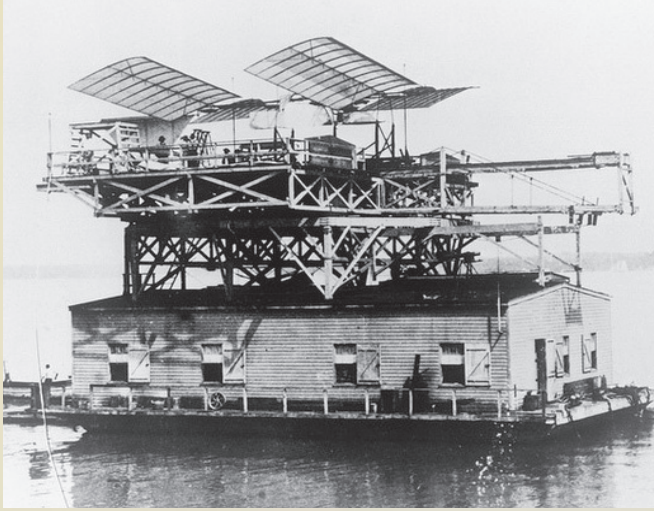


# The Aether Chronicle

The Imaginary Alternate History of the Steampunk Empire

From Monday September 29, 2014 to Monday October 13, 2014



THE FLOUNDER, BRAINCHILD OF THE ANNUAL STEAMSHIP RACES HOST, LORD PRESTON. 1

## ANYTHING GOES AT THE 10TH ANNUAL STEAMSHIP RACES!

By Kent Whittington

WHAT COULD BE A BETTER WAY TO SPEND A BLUSTERY SATURDAY AFTERNOON IN IPSWICH THAN OUTDOORS ATTENDING THE 10TH ANNUAL STEAMSHIP RACES? IT WAS MY EXTREME HONOR AND PLEASURE TO HAVE RECEIVED AN EXCLUSIVE INVITATION FOR THE SPORTING EVENT TO REPORT THE PARTICULARS OF THE DAY AS THEY OCCURRED FROM LORD PRESTON'S PRIVATE BOX SEAT, WHICH HAPPENED TO BE UPON THE "FLOATING AIRCRAFT" FEATURED IN THE PHOTOGRAPH ABOVE. THE VESSEL WAS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED FOR FLIGHT AS WELL AS SEA FARING, BUT WITH SPECTATORS PROVED TO BE TOO WEIGHTY TO EVER MAKE IT OFF THE GROUND. NEVERTHELESS, THE VANTAGE POINT FROM THE *THE FLOUNDER* PROVIDED A PERFECT VIEW FROM WHICH TO SEE WHICH PILOT WOULD WIN THE GOLD MEDAL ALONG WITH THE 5000 POUND REWARD MONEY. AS IN EVERY RACE OF THE PAST DECADE, ANYTHING GOES AND THE SHIPS ARE AS WIDE AND VARIED AS THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO PILOT THEM.

THAT'S RIGHT, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RACING HISTORY, OFFICIALS HAVE OPENED THE COMPETITION TO WOMEN PILOTS! AS I SAT IN MY SEAT WATCHING THE SPECTACLE, IT WAS MORE THAN ONCE THAT THIS REPORTER HEARD COMMENTS IN THE NEGATIVE BY THE BRITISH ELITE REGARDING THIS DEVELOPMENT. BELIEVE YOU ME WHEN I WRITE HOW VERY WRONG THESE NAYSAYERS WERE. THE WIND HAD KICKED UP RATHER NICELY FOR THE EVENT, ALWAYS A GOOD SIGN FOR AIR LIFT AND THIS REPORTER SAT

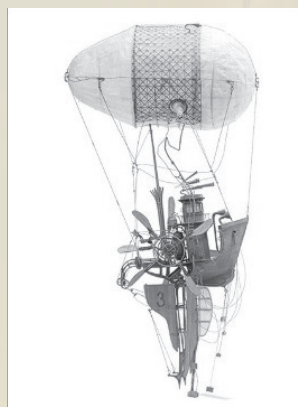
RAPT WITH EXCITEMENT AS THE ANNOUNCERS PRESENTED THE RACERS. I SHALL HIGHLIGHT THE RACES FRONTRUNNERS FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS REPORT.

THE EARLY FAVORITE, AND WINNER OF THE LAST YEAR'S RACE, BARON BARNARD THE BOMBARDIER STEPPED ONTO THE FIELD AND WAVED AT THE CROWD, WHICH WAS MET WITH SIMULTANEOUS CHEERS AND BOOS. AN APT RACER, HIS WIN THE PREVIOUS YEAR WAS CONTROVERSIAL TO PUT IT BEST AS HE MANAGED TO GET AHEAD OF THE LEAD OPPONENT AND, TRUE TO HIS NAME, EXPLODED THE RACERS BALLOON WITH A WELL PLACED DEPTH CHARGE. BARON BARNARD SMILED AT THE CROWD DESPITE THE JEERS WHILE TWIRLING HIS MUSTACHE AND LOOKED RATHER DAPPER IN HIS TAILORED FLIGHT SUIT, HELMET AND GOGGLES. WITH A FINAL BOW HE CLIMBED



THE EYER, 2 PILOTED BY BARON BARNARD.

NEXT COMES SIR DAVID DRAKE, A CLEAN SHAVEN RED HEADED ROGUE AND A FAVORITE AMONGST THE FAIRER SEX, CUTTING A DASHING LOOK IN HIS FLIGHT SUIT AS HE BOARDS HIS LIGHTER THAN AIR SPEEDSHIP, THE ZEPHER ZEPPELIN, WHOSE STREAMLINE CIGAR-SHAPED VESSEL OF HIS OWN DESIGN IS RUMORED TO CUT THROUGH THE AIRSTREAM LIKE BUTTER, INCREASING ITS SPEED TO UNHEARD OF MEASURES. JUST AS SIR DRAKE MOUNTS THE

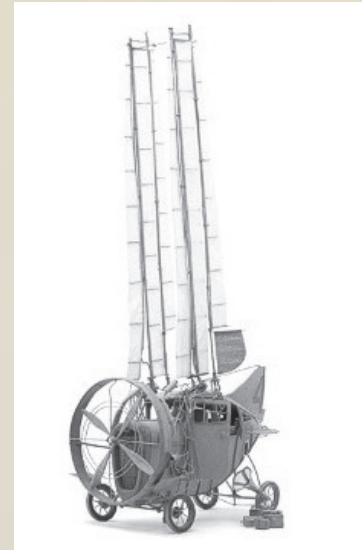


THE ZEPHYR ZEPPELIN, 2 PILOTED BY ITS CREATOR, SIR DAVID DRAKE

ZEPHER, A GANGLY PILOT ENTERS THE FIELD AND TRIPS OVER HIS OWN LEFT FOOT, CAUSING HIM TO HURTLE FORWARD INTO THE TALL GRASS, DISAPPEARING FROM VIEW UNTIL HE RISES AGAIN, SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED.

PROFESSOR EINHARDT LOOKS MORE DRESSED FOR ADVENTURE IN HIS PITH HELMET AND SAFARI

CLOTHES AS HE CLIMBS ABOARD HIS SHIP, THE EXCELSIOR, WHICH SEEMS AN EASY FEAT, CONSIDERING THE SHIP SPORTS NO AIR BAG OR BALLOON AS IT SITS ON THE GROUND. INSTEAD ONE NOTICES WINGS



THE EXCELSIOR, 2 PILOTED BY PROFESSOR EINHARDT.

AND A TAIL MADE OF A LEATHERY MATERIAL AND A STRANGE PROPELLER MOUNTED ON TOP LIKE SOME SORT OF ORNITHOPTER DESIGNED BY LEONARDO DA VINCI HIMSELF.

FINALLY, THE CAUSE FOR ALL OF THE CONTROVERSY APPEARS. MISS SALLY SUNDAIL PRANCES ONTO THE FIELD. ONE NOTICES THE LEVEL OF JEERING IN THE NEARBY BOX SEATS, BUT UPON FURTHER EXAMINATION, THERE IS A FAIR AMOUNT OF CHEERING AMONGST THE

CROWD. EVEN THIS REPORTER MUST ADMIT TO SOME ADMIRATION UPON FIRST GLIMPSE OF OUR LADY PILOT AS SHE TAKES THE FIELD DRESSED IN MODIFIED PILOTS UNIFORM OBVIOUSLY CUT TO FIT HER SHAPELY FRAME. HER AUBURN HAIR



SALLY'S HEART, 2 PILOTED BY MISS SALLY SUNDAIL

GLISTENES IN THE AFTERNOON LIGHT AS SHE SMILES DEMURELY AT A GROWING NUMBER OF FANS. HER AIRSHIP REMINDS ONE OF A HOT AIR BALLOON WHOSE BASKET HAS BEEN REPLACED WITH A SAILING VESSEL MOUNTED WITH SEVERAL LARGE PROPELLERS TO ASSIST WITH LIFT AND PROPULSION. I AM TOLD THAT MISS SUNDAIL HAS CHRISTENED HER VESSEL, SALLY'S HEART.

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BUCKLEBURY MANOR, 3 LORD PRESTON'S COUNTRY HOME. THE AWARDS CEREMONY TOOK PLACE ON THE LOVELY AND WELL-TENDED GROUNDS.

.....CONTINUED

IT BECAME FAIRLY OBVIOUS WHO THE FRONTRUNNERS WOULD BE AS SOON AS THE STARTING GUN FIRED (WHICH IRONICALLY PUNCTURED THE HOT AIR BAG OF ONE OF THE COMPETITOR VESSELS, CAUSING IT TO FALL TO EARTH BEFORE IT COULD EVEN GAIN ANY LIFT!). BARON BARNARD THE BOMBARDIER TOOK THE EARLY LEAD AS *THE EYER* LIFTED SEAMLESSLY OFF OF THE GROUND, SPEEDING AHEAD OF THE PACK ON WHAT SEEMED TO BE WIND POWER ALONE. UPON ASKING, NO ONE COULD TELL ME EXACTLY WHAT THE MEANS OF THE BARON'S PROPULSION WAS AS NONE WAS VISIBLE. YET THE BARON'S EARLY LEAD WAS SOON QUASHED AS PROFESSOR EINHARDT'S *EXCELSIOR* SURPRISINGLY LIFTED OFF, PROPELLER SPINNING MADLY. IN A SHORT SPAN OF TIME, THE PROFESSOR TOOK THE LEAD FROM THE BARON. COMING UP NEXT IN THIRD AND FOURTH PLACE RESPECTIVELY WERE SIR DRAKE'S *ZEPHER ZEPPELIN* AND MISS SUNDAIL'S *SALLY'S HEART*.

AS THE SHIPS TURNED TO MAKE THEIR FIRST LAP, TWO OTHERS IN THE COMPETITION COLLIDED IN MIDAIR AND CAME DOWN IN A FIERY CRASH. BOTH PILOTS WERE UNINJURED AND ONCE DOWN, BOTH TOOK TO FISTICUFFS TO SETTLE THEIR DISPUTE, LEAVING OUR FOUR PILOTS RACING ALONE. *THE EXCELSIOR* HAD MANAGED TO MAINTAIN A SLIGHT AND UNCOMFORTABLE LEAD OVER *THE EYER* AS THE DREADNAUGHT BORE DOWN UPON THE PROFESSOR LIKE THE BIRD OF PREY IT WAS NAMED AFTER. JUST AS IT LOOKED AS IF A COLLISION WAS IN THEIR FUTURE, *THE EYER* ROSE HIGHER AND PASSED OVER *THE EXCELSIOR*, OVERTAKING THE TINY FLYING MACHINE. ONE COULD NOTICE THE BLADES OF THE ORNITHOPTER BEGIN TO SLOW AS IT'S PILOT BEGAN TO TIRE FROM PEDDLING, ALLOWING THE *ZEPHYR ZEPPELIN* AND *SALLY'S HEART* TO EASILY PASS AS WELL.

JUST BEFORE THE SECOND LAP, IT SEEMED THE POOR PROFESSOR WAS ABOUT TO BE OUT OF THE RACE AS *THE EXCELSIOR* BEGAN TO DROP IN ALTITUDE. WITHOUT WARNING, PROFESSOR EINHARDT UNSTRAPPED HIMSELF FROM THE DEVICE AND ALL BUT THE WINGS PLUMMETED TO EARTH. THE PROFESSOR, NOW STRAPPED ATOP *THE EXCELSIOR*'S WINGS SLAPPED SOME SORT OF BUTTON OR SWITCH, IGNITING A POWERFUL

STEAM ENGINE HIDDEN UNDERNEATH. THE CROWD GASPED IN AWE AS HIS NEW SHIP, *THE EXCELSIOR II* ROCKETED AHEAD. IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND. WITHOUT WARNING, THE *ZEPHYR ZEPPELIN* PRODUCED TWIN TURRETS DOCKED ON THE PORT AND STARBOARD SIDES OF ITS HULL. TWIN BEAMS OF LIGHT FIRED FROM THE TURRETS; WHAT THE PROFESSOR HIMSELF CALLED "HIGH INTENSITY CONDENSED LIGHT," THAT IGNITED THE WINGS OF *THE EXCELSIOR II*, FORCING PROFESSOR EINHARDT TO ABANDON HIS VESSEL BY PARACHUTING TO SAFETY AND ENDING HIS BID FOR THE RACE. THE FORMER DASHING AND NOW DIABOLICAL SIR DAVID DRAKE PLODDED ON INTENDING TO BARE DOWN UPON *THE EYER* NEXT.

BY THE THIRD LAP, SIR DRAKE HAD BEGUN TO OVERTAKE BARON BARNARD. BEARING DOWN ON HIM, SIR DRAKE FIRED AT *THE EYER*'S TWIN AIRBAGS, IGNITING BOTH OF THEM AND GROUNDING *THE EYER* FOR GOOD, LEAVING ONLY THE *ZEPHER ZEPPELIN* AND *SALLY'S HEART* TO WIN THE RACE.

BY THE FOURTH LAP, *SALLY'S HEART* HAD BEGUN TO CATCH UP TO THE *ZEPHYR ZEPPELIN*, MUCH TO EVERYONE'S SURPRISE AS SHE HAD BEEN TRAILING THE ENTIRE RACE AND SEEMED TO BE IN DEAD LAST EVEN BEFORE THE FIRST LAP. IT WAS THEN THAT MISS SUNDAIL UNLEASHED HER ATTACK, SPINNING HER VESSEL ABOUT AND HITTING THE *ZEPHYR ZEPPELIN* WITH HER TWIN PROPELLERS, ADDING TO THE ALREADY GUSTY GALES AND THROWING HER OPPONENT'S VESSEL OFF COURSE. SIR DRAKE SOON RECOVERED AND BEGAN BEARING DOWN UPON *SALLY'S HEART* TO DELIVER THE COUP DE GRACE THAT WOULD ELIMINATE HER FROM THE RACE.

IT DIDN'T LOOK GOOD FOR SALLY AS SIR DRAKE CAUGHT UP JUST BEFORE THE FIFTH AND FINAL LAP. *SALLY'S HEART* MANAGED TO OUTMANEUVER THE *ZEPHYR ZEPPELIN* AS SIR DRAKE FIRED THE FIRST BLAST, BUT MOMENTS FROM THEN, SIR DRAKE WOULD HAVE A BEAD ON HER, DECISIVELY ENDING THE RACE. JUST BEFORE DRAKE COULD FIRE THAT FATAL SHOT, HE (AS WELL AS THE REST OF US) WERE SHOCKED AND, IN SOME CASES, DELIGHTFULLY SURPRISED AS AN ANGRY BARON BARNARD FIRED A ROCKET FROM HIS GROUNDED VESSEL, IT'S SHELL PENETRATING *THE ZEPPELIN*'S STREAMLINED AIR BAG. A CACOPHONY OF CHEERS ROSE FROM THE CROWD AS EVERYONE WATCHED SIR DRAKE'S DEFUNCT FLYING SHIP FALL TO THE EARTH JUST AS *SALLY'S HEART* CROSSED THE FINISH LINE, WINNING THE RACE.

ONCE ON THE GROUND, MISS SUNDAIL WAS MET BY BARON BARNARD, AND CONSEQUENTLY GAVE THE MAN A VERY GRATEFUL HUG FOR SAVING HER VESSEL. FOR THIS REPORTER, IT WAS A WONDER THAT EVERYONE WALKED AWAY FROM THIS RACE IN ONE PIECE. PROFESSOR EINHARDT SOON JOINED THE TWO AND TOGETHER THE THREE RACERS ENTERED THE WINNER'S CIRCLE TO CELEBRATE MISS SUNDAIL'S WIN. MISS SALLY SUNDAIL BLUSHED AS THE WINNER'S

MEDAL WAS PLACED UPON HER AND SHE RECEIVED THE 5,000 POUNDS IN PRIZE MONEY.

MEANWHILE, SIR DAVID DRAKE, FOR HIS BLATANT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT AND CLEAR DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE, WAS PROMPTLY ARRESTED AND HAULED AWAY BY THE CONSTABULARY CAUSING THE ROAR OF THE CROWD TO INCREASE ONCE MORE. AT ONE POINT BEFORE HE WAS ARRESTED, HE DID SHOUT OUT, THREATENING TO RETURN IN TIME FOR NEXT YEAR'S RACE. ONE SHUDDERS TO THINK WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT YEAR SHOULD HE BE RELEASED!



LORD PRESTON 2 AWARDING MISS SALLY SUNDAIL 3 THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY FREELANCE PHOTO ARTIST FRED JESKA, WITH THE AID OF HIS ASSISTANT DANA SMUDA.

SHOULD YOU WISH TO SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR, SUBMIT YOUR WRITTEN WORK, OR OFFER A TIP REGARDING A POTENTIAL STORY (EG. POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, CRIME, SPECIAL EVENTS, ART AND MUSIC) PLEASE CONTACT LESLIE ORTON AT: ORTONLJ@HOTMAIL.COM.

1 "PLANET IPSWICH: A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE IPSWICHES OF THE WORLD." <[HTTP://WWW.PLANETIPSWICH.COM/IPSWICHENGLAND.HTM](http://www.planetipswich.com/ipswichengland.htm)>. SEPTEMBER 2014.

2 PARTICIPANT. JESKA, FRED. "LORD PRESTON". SEPTEMBER 2014.

3 PARTICIPANT. DANA SMUDA. "SALLY SUNDAIL". SEPTEMBER 2014.

# The Aether Review Of Books

## A Gentleman's War, By Asher Davian

### CHAPTER 3

BETWEEN THE IMPOSING STONE WALLS OF WEATHERBY MANOR AND THE WELL-MANICURED LAWN, DUDLEY

FOXES AND GENERAL IGNATIUS GALLANTE STOOD BACK-TO-BACK. THE GARDENER THOUGHT TO HIMSELF HOW CURIOUS THEY LOOKED; TWO MEN LOOKING SO SIMILAR, YET SO DIFFERENT. THE GENERAL STOOD IN AN EXAGGERATED MILITARY POSTURE, BACK ARCHED, CHEST THROWN OUT LIKE AN ARROGANT ROOSTER READY TO CROW. THE STILL-RISING SUN THREW A GOLDEN LIGHT OFF HIS MANY MEDALS. HIS IMPRESSIVE, BEAKLIKE NOSE WAS POINTED ALMOST STRAIGHT UP IN THE AIR. MR. FOXE, ON THE OTHER HAND, STOOD STRAIGHT, BUT THAT WAS THE END OF HIS PRETENTIOUSNESS. APART FROM THE NATURAL DROOP OF HIS NARROW SHOULDERS BEING SUSPICIOUSLY ABSENT, HE SHOWED NO SIGN OF CONFIDENCE, FEAR, OR EVEN NERVOUSNESS.

IT WAS TRUE, THEY HAD MANY THINGS THAT SEEMED TO SET THEM APART, THOUGHT HENRY. BUT IT OCCURRED TO THE AGED GARDENER THAT THEY COULD BE THOUGHT OF AS ALMOST IDENTICAL—THEIR HAIR WAS A UNIFORM CHESTNUT-BROWN, WITH MATURE, DISTINGUISHED GREYING AT THE GENERAL'S TEMPLES. THEIR STRONG JAWLINES WERE ALMOST IDENTICAL, AS WERE THEIR COOL BLUE EYES. THEIR FACIAL HAIR WAS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT, BUT THAT WAS A MANNER OF GROOMING—IF THE GENERAL SHAVED OFF THOSE PRODIGIOUS SIDEBURNS, HE'D BE LEFT WITH THE SAME CURLED, DIGNIFIED MOUSTACHE MR. FOXE WORE. AND AS TO THEIR DRESS AND POSTURE, IF THEY WERE TO WEAR THE SAME CLOTHES AND STAND IN THE SAME MANNER, THEY WOULD BE AS TWO BROTHERS. APART FROM THAT NOSE OF THE GENERAL'S. NATURALLY, IT SHOCKED HENRY TO SEE THEM EMERGE FROM THE HOUSE, THESE TWO CHARMING ACQUAINTANCES OF THE LADY'S, WITH THE OLD LORD'S DUELLING PISTOLS IN HAND. BUT HE WAS JUST A GARDENER, AND GARDENERS SHOULD BE SEEN, NOT HEARD. HE TOOK A QUICK SWIG OF HIS HIP FLASK AND RETURNED TO TRIMMING THE HEDGE.

THE GENERAL HISSED UNDER HIS

BREATH. "SHALL WE ASK THE GARDENER TO BE OUR UMPIRE?"

"I'D BE ASTONISHED IF YOU EVER ACCEPTED ANYONE'S WORD ON THIS SORT OF A THING BUT YOUR OWN," DUDLEY SNAPPED, "SO WE'LL DO IT OURSELVES. YOU MAY COUNT."

"VERY WELL. ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR..." AS IGNATIUS MARCHED AWAY, HIS MIND ROILED WITH THIS OUTRAGEOUS SCANDAL. EVIE WITH THAT UPSTART SCAMP. AND NOW MY GOOD NAME STANDS TO BE SULLIED BY HER SORDID AFFAIRS. FOR THE LIFE OF ME, NOT A LORD OR LADY IN ALBION RETAINS THE HONOUR THEY KNEW IN OLD DAYS. TO TAKE UP WITH SUCH A LITTLE MAN.

"...EIGHT, NINE, TEN, ELEVEN..." DUDLEY SEETHED JUST BENEATH THE SKIN. UNLIKE THE DEMONSTRATIVE GENERAL, DUDLEY WAS A PROFESSIONAL MAN, AND APART FROM HIS LITTLE EXPLOSION IN FRONT OF EVIE (FOR SHAME, HE THOUGHT) HE MAINTAINED A PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOUR. HE COULD SCARCELY SEE FOR HIS WRATH, HIS VISION SPINNING AND SWIMMING THROUGH THE THICK LENSES OF HIS SPECTACLES. HOW I'D LOVE TO TAKE SOME HOT AIR OUT OF HIM.

"...SIXTEEN, SEVENTEEN, EIGHTEEN..." DUDLEY'S FOOT CAME DOWN ON A LOOSE STONE HIS INEXPENSIVE SHOE HAD BROUGHT OFF THE FRONT WALK. HE SLIPPED, FELL, AND EXCLAIMED, UTILIZING A WORD NOT ENTIRELY SUITED FOR THE LADY'S COMPANY. GOOD THING SHE WASN'T THERE. IGNATIUS HEARD THE EXCLAMATION, AND ASSUMING THE UNSCRUPULOUS RAT HAD TURNED TO FIRE EARLY, WHIRLED ABOUT AND FIRED, THE BULLET CREASING THE STILL MORNING AIR INCHES ABOVE DUDLEY'S HEAD AS HE FELL. NOT THE NIMBLEST, AS HE CRUMPLED ON THE STONE STEP, MR. FOXE TURNED OVER ON HIS BACK AND FIRED WILDLY. IMAGINE THAT, ALBION'S MOST CELEBRATED GENERAL TURNING TO SHOOT BEFORE THE COUNT WAS OVER. AND HIM DOING THE COUNTING! THE CAD!

NEITHER SHOT FOUND ITS MARK, BUT DUDLEY'S RICOCHETED OFF THE ARCH OF THE MANOR DOOR, AND THE GENERAL TOOK ANOTHER SHOT AS HE TOO HUNKERED DOWN, DASHING FOR THE STONE STEPS AS HE FIRED OFF STILL ANOTHER. THE

LITTLE RAT'S ABANDONED THE CODE OF HONOUR ENTIRELY, HE REASONED, TO PULL A TRICK MANOEUVRE LIKE THAT DIVE SHOT.

FOXES STOOD, THE GENERAL'S MOVEMENT ALLOWING HIM TIME FOR RECOVERY, AND ADVANCED ON THE GENERAL'S HIDING PLACE, FIRING AT THE STEPS HE WAS HIDING BEHIND. JUST SHAKE HIM UP A LITTLE, THEN MOVE IN. HE MADE SURE TO LEAVE ONE BULLET IN THE GUN. "GENERAL?"

"GO AHEAD AND KILL ME," BARKED THE VOICE BEHIND THE STONE STEPS. "CUT ME DOWN! THROW TO THE WIND ANY CHANCE OF ANY MAN PILOTING THAT WAR MACHINE TO VICTORY, AND DOOM YOUR OWN COUNTRY TO BE OVERRUN BY THOSE NOSIRAN DEVILS!"

DUDLEY CAME AROUND TO SEE THE GENERAL FACE-TO-FACE. PISTOL STILL TRAINED ON HIM, HE SMILED. "NO, GENERAL. YOU'RE FAR TOO VALUABLE TO ALBION TO KILL. BUT CAN WE CONSIDER THIS MATTER SETTLED IN MY FAVOUR?"

"CERTAINLY NOT! TRYING TO SHUFFLE ME FROM THIS MORTAL COIL BEFORE I'D FINISHED THE COUNT--"

"WHAT?! YOU FIRED THE FIRST SHOT, TURNING BEFORE YOU FINISHED THE COUNT! YOU WERE TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MY BLUNDER!"

"BLUNDER?! YOU--"

"YES, WHEN I TRIPPED OVER THAT STONE OUT THERE, YOU... OH."

"OH. I THINK I SEE WHAT WENT ON."

THERE WAS AN AWKWARD SILENCE. DUDLEY WAS THE FIRST TO CHUCKLE. IGNATIUS REPLIED IN LIKE KIND. SOON, THEY WERE BOTH LAUGHING.

"SO YOU THOUGHT I WAS... OHOHOO!"

"YES, AND YOU THOUGHT I WAS A RAT YOURSELF!" DUDLEY TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND LEANED BACK, GRINNING LIKE A BABOON. "WELL, I SUPPOSE THERE'S NO USE FOR THIS LAST BULLET."

"NONE AT ALL!" GALLANTE LAUGHED.

SO DUDLEY FIRED IT INTO THE AIR. OR MORE ACCURATELY, INTO THE BALCONY. RICOCHETING OFF THE BALCONY, IT STRUCK THE STONE WALL AT A VERY PRECISE ANGLE BEFORE DRIVING ITSELF INTO THE GENERAL'S ARM.

"...OOPS," MR. FOXE OFFERED.

# The Aether Review Of Books

## A Gentleman's War, By Asher Davian

DEAR READERS, ASHER DAVIAN DELIGHTS US WITH THE THIRD CHAPTER OF HIS SATIRE ENTITLED "A GENTLEMAN'S WAR".

THE THIRD CHAPTER

PROMISES READERS THE OUTCOME OF THE DUEL BETWEEN DUDLEY FOXE AND GENERAL IGNATIUS GALLANTE. ONE A LOWLY ENGINEER, THE OTHER A SEASONED GENERAL. ONE THE MAKER OF AN AWESOME MECHANICAL WEAPON MEANT TO TURN THE TIDE OF A WAR, THE OTHER THE ONLY MILITARY MAN CAPABLE OF PILOTING IT. THE DUEL IS OSTENSIBLY TO WIN THE FAVOUR OF THE LOVELY LADY EVELYN WEATHERBY WHO, CANNIVING WOMAN THAT SHE IS, HAS BEEN SEEING BOTH MEN SIMULTANEOUSLY. THE SCENE IS SET: THE HOUR IS DAWN. BOTH MEN INTEND TO BE VICTORIOUS IN ORDER TO PURSUE LADY EVELYN'S SUIT, AND BOTH MEN HARBOUR SECRET RESENTMENTS TOWARDS THE OTHER, SO BOTH ARE EAGER TO SHAME THEIR RIVAL IN VICTORY.

THERE IS A DELIGHTFUL BIT OF CLASS RIVALRY TAKING PLACE HERE, COMPLETED BY THE PRESENCE OF THE GARDENER, WHO GAZES ON INDIFFERENTLY AT THE DUEL. A LOWLY GARDENER MIGHT REFLECT FREELY ON THE RIDICULOUSNESS OF WHAT IS ABOUT TO TRANSPIRE, AND EVEN MAKE NOTE OF SOME CRUEL PARALLELS BETWEEN THE TWO GENTLEMEN, WHO ARE DEFIANTLY AT ODDS. HOWEVER, THE GARDENER HAS WORK TO DO, SO HE SHUFFLES ON, TO LEAVE THE MEN TO SETTLE THEIR QUARREL.

NOW, THE AUTHOR BEING THE SATIRICAL SCRIBBLER THAT HE IS, READERS MIGHT ANTICIPATE A HILARIOUS AND SATIRICAL END TO THIS DUEL, AND THEY WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED! THE YOUNG DUDLEY FOXE STUMBLES ON A LOOSE STONE AND, HEARING THE RAUCOUS BEHIND HIM, THE GENERAL TURNS AND FIRES! *THE CAD!* DUDLEY THINKS TO HIMSELF, *HE'S FIRED BEFORE THE OFFICIAL COUNT WAS COMPLETE, AND HE WAS THE ONE DOING THE COUNTING!* GENERAL IGNATIUS GALLANTE IS LIKewise APPALLED THAT THE YOUNG UPSTART WAS ATTEMPTING TO WIN BY CHEATING, DUCKING LIKE THAT AND FIRING FROM THE

GROUND! WELL, BOTH MEN BEGINNING FIRING WILDLY, AND THE GENERAL IS FORCED TO TAKE COVER.

DUDLEY FOXE HAD THE PRESENCE OF MIND TO BEGIN ADVANCING, AND THE GENERAL WAS TRAPPED. DUDLEY REMEMBERED TO KEEP ONE BULLET IN THE CHAMBER, AS HE CHALLENGED THE GENERAL. "GO AHEAD AND KILL ME," BARKED THE GENERAL. "CUT ME DOWN! THROW TO THE WIND ANY CHANCE OF ANY MAN PILOTING THAT WAR MACHINE TO VICTORY, AND DOOM YOUR OWN COUNTRY TO BE OVERRUN BY THOSE NOSIRAN DEVILS!" THESE TWO ARE STRANGELY LINKED BY SKILL AND PURPOSE. GENERAL IGNATIUS GALLANTE IS DUDLEY FOXE'S EMPLOYER; DUDLEY FOXE MAY BE THE YOUNG MECHANICAL GENIUS, BUT HE WOULD HAVE NO POSITION IN SOCIETY AT ALL IF THE GENERAL WAS NOT AS "FORWARD-THINKING" AS HE WAS (AT LEAST COMPARED TO OTHER MILITARY MEN IN THE MONARCHY OF ALBION.) DUDLEY FOXE'S WAR MACHINE IS SET TO TURN THE TIDE OF THE WAR, BUT ONLY A SEASONED VETERAN HAS THE SKILL TO PILOT IT. DUDLEY FOXE UNDERSTANDS THIS, AND REACHES A DECISION WITH REGARDS TO KILLING THE GENERAL. "NO, GENERAL," HE STATES, "YOU'RE FAR TOO VALUABLE TO ALBION TO KILL." THE

FACT THAT THE TWO MEN MIGHT BE SO REASONABLE IN THEIR ARGUMENTS, BUT CANNOT COME TO SOME UNDERSTANDING REGARDING LADY EVELYN WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF FIREARMS, IS A PIECE WITH THE IRONY OF THIS STORY. THE ENSUING ARGUMENT IS SETTLED AS LAUGHTER OVERTAKES THE MEN AT THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS THEY ENCOUNTERED IN THIS DUEL. IN THE SPIRIT OF FELLOWSHIP, DUDLEY FOXE FIRES HIS LAST BULLET INTO THE AIR—WHICH RICOCHETS OFF THE BALCONY, BEFORE DRIVING ITSELF INTO THE GENERAL'S ARM. THE DUEL, IT WOULD SEEM, IS BACK ON, AND DUDLEY FOXE IS THE WINNER AT FIRST BLOOD! "...OOPS," THE VALIANT WARRIOR OFFERS! READERS, I REALLY HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY WITH REGARDS TO THIS RIDICULOUS DISPLAY. "OOPS" OF ALL THINGS! WHAT CHANCE DO TWO SUCH INDIVIDUALS HAVE OF SURVIVING THE WAR!

SHOULD YOU WISH TO SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR, SUBMIT YOUR WRITTEN WORK, OR OFFER A TIP REGARDING A POTENTIAL STORY (EG. POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, CRIME, SPECIAL EVENTS, ART AND MUSIC) PLEASE CONTACT LESLIE ORTON AT: [ORTONLJ@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:ORTONLJ@HOTMAIL.COM).



NEW AUTHOR ASHER DAVIAN

# Travel

## Poland, By Amelia Owen Kibbey

**T**HE ZEPPELIN TOUCHED DOWN SHORTLY AFTER ONE. ALICE AND I HAILED A HACKNEY, BOUND FOR THE POLISH COUNTRYSIDE. THERE'S NOTHING LIKE POLSKI PRZEWOZU. THE DARKEST WOOD, POLISHED TO A HIGH SHEEN, WITH ROYAL BLUE VELVET CUSHIONS INSIDE AND HEAVY PEWTER FIXTURES. THE WINDOW CURTAINS WERE SLIGHTLY FRAYED BUT, NO MATTER. WE RODE THE FIFTY MILES TO CASTLE DZIEDZIC IN STYLE.

A FORMER HOUSE OF NOBILITY, THE CASTLE NOW HOSTS VISITORS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE GLOBE FOR A REASONABLE NIGHTLY FEE. GUESTS ARE TREATED TO A LITTLE BIT OF LUXURY AND GET TO EXPERIENCE A MODICUM OF WHAT ITS PREVIOUS INHABITANTS WERE ABLE TO. MODICUM BEING THE KEY WORD, MIND YOU.

AS YOUR TRAVEL REPORTER, I HIGHLY RECOMMEND ADDING THIS TO YOUR ITINERARY. THE CASTLE IS PERCHED ON A PROMONTORY WITH VIEWS ACROSS LUSH, NEIGHBOURING LAND. IT CONTAINS TWENTY-THREE ROOMS, ALL OF WHICH ARE APPOINTED WITH FINE FURNITURE, THE LATEST IN ELECTRICAL LIGHTING, AND AMENITIES OF CULTURE SUCH AS A PIANOFORTE IN THE MUSIC ROOM, A PAINTER'S STUDIO WITH EASELS AT THE READY, A DIMINUTIVE SALON FOR HOSTING LITERARY DISCUSSIONS, TEA SERVICE FOR TWENTY (SERVED IN AN ENORMOUS DINING ROOM), AND A BUTLER OR MAID FOR EVERY CHAMBER. IT EVEN HAS A BUTTERY ON THE PREMISES.

WE SPENT TWO NIGHTS THERE AND FOUND IT TO BE A PLEASING MIXTURE OF UPPER CRUST AND DOWN HOME COUNTRY LIFE. OH, THE BEDROOMS! THE DÉCOR WAS UNDERSTATED- DON'T IMAGINE THAT THE WALLS WERE ENCRUSTED WITH JEWELS- BUT ALL I COULD WISH FOR WITH DOWN BEDDING, A LARGE CLAW FOOT TUB IN THE BATHROOM, AND A FIREPLACE IN MY QUARTERS.

\*TIP: NOT ALL GUEST ROOMS HAVE A FIREPLACE. IF YOU VISIT DURING THE COOLER MONTHS BE SURE TO REQUEST ROOM 6,9,13,16 OR 21.

LUNCH AND DINNER MEALS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY MASS QUANTITIES OF CURED MEAT ALONG WITH CHEESE FROM A LOCAL DAIRY FARM. TEA WAS THE DRINK OF CHOICE AT DZIEDZIC. IT'S GETTING CHILLY OUT THESE DAYS AND IT WARMED MY SOUL AS WELL AS MY BONES TO INDULGE IN SEVERAL CUPS AFTER THE SEVEN A.M. HIKE WITH OUR GROUNDSKEEPER CUM-TOUR-GUIDE, PHILIP. AUTUMN FOLIAGE IS MAKING ITS FIRST APPEARANCE AND IT WAS A JOY TO EXPERIENCE THE RED AND GOLD FOR THE FIRST TIME OUTSIDE OF BRITAIN. THE SUN IS TAKING ON THAT BRILLIANT QUALITY IT ALWAYS DOES AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, ALL SHARP AND DREAMY, AND IT MAKES MY HEAD HAZY.

NOTE: THE CASTLE IS NO SLEEPY PALACE AT NIGHT! IT ENTERTAINS WITH SCAVENGER HUNTS, MUSICAL PERFORMANCES, STORIES OF OLD IN THE PARLOUR,

AND DANCING AMONG OTHER THINGS. SINCE I WAS A NOVICE AT THE SCAVENGER HUNT I GLADLY SIGNED UP FOR THE MIDNIGHT ROUND. THE KINDS OF TROUBLE ONE CAN GET INTO WHILE SCOURGING THE HIDDEN CORNERS AND UNDOCUMENTED ROOMS OF A POLISH STRONGHOLD OF ROYALTY! WHAT A NIGHT.

AFTER LEAVING DZIEDZIC, WE TRAVELLED TO WARSAW FOR A FEW DAYS. I WAS EAGER TO CHECK OUT THE CANDY DISTRICT, WHICH IS LOCATED IN THE CITY CENTER. SO THE HISTORY GOES, TWO OPPOSING CANDYOLOGISTS SET UP SHOP ALONG A BOULEVARD IN THE OLD DISTRICT TEN YEARS AGO, COOKING UP THE KINDS OF SWEETS CHILDREN USUALLY ONLY SEE IN THEIR DREAMS. A REAL RIVALRY GREW BETWEEN THE TWO UNTIL ONE SPRING THEY DECIDED TO HOST A PUBLIC COMPETITION IN THE CITY OF WARSAW. WHO WAS THE OFFICIAL BEST THEY WANTED TO KNOW, ONCE AND FOR ALL. WHAT NEITHER OF THEM CONSIDERED WAS THAT AN UNKNOWN LIKE ELAINA PUCINSKI COULD COME IN AND WALK AWAY WITH THE PRIZE, LEAVING THEM SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS IN BEWILDERMENT. HER LEANING TOWER OF BUTTERSCOTCH WAS A KNOCKOUT AND THE PEOPLE MADE THEIR CHOICE. A CLEAN DOZEN SHOPS OF EXTRAORDINARY MERIT OPENED THEIR DOORS IN THE ENSUING EIGHTEEN MONTHS AND THE CANDY DISTRICT WAS BORN.

THESE SHOPS ARE WONDERFUL REFLECTIONS OF POLISH CULTURE, LIVELY AND COLOURFUL IN DESIGN, SERVING UP CONFECTIONS THAT DAZZLE MORE THAN JUST THE CHILDREN OF WARSAW. MEN IN STIFF HATS AND WOMEN WITH THEIR PARASOLS LINE UP OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOORS, EAGERLY AWAITING THE HOUR AT WHICH THEY CAN MAKE THEIR FIRST PURCHASE. FOR A SMALL BIT OF CURRENCY A PIECE OF TOFFEE SHAPED LIKE A ZOO ANIMAL OR A PEPPERMINT TREEHOUSE CAN BE HAD, THE SWEET TOOTH MOLLIFIED UNTIL THE NEXT ROUND PREMIERES IN LIZPETH'S SHOP WINDOW TO ENTICE. SIR GILDEROY PURPOSELY KEEPS HIS KITCHEN WINDOW OPEN IN THE BACK, BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT IT DOES TO AN ELEVEN YEAR OLD TO BE MADE PRIVY TO THE SMELL OF CHOCOLATE BEING BAKED! I NARROWLY ESCAPED WITH MY POCKETBOOK INTACT THAT AFTERNOON.

ONE OF THE MORE REMARKABLE SPORTING EVENTS IN THE COUNTRY IS THE ANNUAL ARCHERY TOURNAMENT. IT IS HELD JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY IN THE CLEARING OF A LARGE FORESTRY. HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE ATTEND AND DOZENS COMPETE. IT IS REMINISCENT OF ROBIN HOOD IN ALL BUT THE COSTUME. THIS YEAR THERE WAS A RECORD CROWD TURNOUT BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE LOCAL CHRONICLES THAT YOSEF ALDIN HAD REGISTERED HIMSELF AS A CONTENDER. HE WAS WELL KNOWN IN THE SOUTH AND HIS REPUTATION HAD BEEN ADVANCING STEADILY NORTHWARD.

ALICE AND I ARRIVED BRIGHT AND EARLY IN ORDER TO SECURE ADVANTAGEOUS SEATING. THE STANDS WERE ALREADY FILLING UP, A FULL TWO HOURS BEFORE THE FIRST ROUND WAS SET TO TAKE PLACE.

BY ELEVEN, THE GROUNDS WERE JAM PACKED FULL OF PEOPLE. AT THE FIRST BELL, TWENTY ARROWS ZIPPED THROUGH THE AIR SIMULTANEOUSLY, ALL BUT ONE MAKING THEIR MARK IN THE CENTER OF THE BULL'S-EYE. AN AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING!

THERE WERE TARGETS PLACED AT VARIOUS RANGES AND, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, THE FURTHER INTO THE COMPETITION ONE GOT THE FARTHER AWAY THEY GOT. THERE WERE BLINDFOLDED SHOTS, RUNNING SHOTS, EVEN SHOTS MADE VIA MIRRORS AND TOM FOOLERY. WHEN THE CROWD WASN'T CHEERING (OR JEERING) IT WAS HUSHED INTO ABSOLUTE SILENCE BY THE PROCTORS, FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT OF TENSION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL FOR THE PLAYERS. DID IT ELEVATE THEIR LEVEL OF CONCENTRATION OR HINDER IT, I WONDER? GRAINS OF WOOD FRACTURED AT THE INTRUSION OF SHARP TIPPED METAL, SPLINTERING OUT IN EVERY DIRECTION. THE SOUND REVERBERATED, A MOMENTARY ECHO IN THE AIR, UNTIL THE AUDIENCE BURST INTO APPLAUSE AT EACH OUTCOME.

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN IN THESE ENVIRONS AND THIS COMPETITION WAS NO EXCEPTION. HOWEVER, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT THAT REVEALED A CHEAT IN OUR MIDST. IT WAS AT THE SEVENTY-FIVE METER MARK THAT THE CHAMPION OF THE SOUTH SHOWED HIS TRUE COLOURS. HALF A DOZEN MEN WERE STILL IN LINE FOR THE TITLE. WHEN THE CALL CAME TO TAKE THE FIELD THEY STRODE ACROSS THE GRASS, STRUCK A PROFESSIONAL STANCE, AND WAITED FOR THE BELL. OUR MAN YOSEF RAISED UP HIS BOW AND FOCUSED A KEEN EYE ON THE TARGET. HE BREATHING WAS DEEP, HIS ARM STEADY. THE BELL RANG LOUD AND CLEAR, SHRILL IN MY EARS, AND I WATCHED WITH EVERYONE ELSE AS THE ARROWS BROKE FREE...

YOSEF'S STRUCK THE CENTER OF THE TARGET ON THE FIRST TRY! NO ONE ELSE EVEN CAME CLOSE. HE WAS CLEARLY ON HIS WAY TO BEING DECLARED CHAMPION WHEN OUT OF NOWHERE AN ERRANT ARROW FLEW STRAIGHT TOWARD THE MAN FROM THE EDGE OF THE CROWD. SOMEONE GASPED AS IT SANK INTO HIS BICEP. WE STOOD ON OUR FEET, SURE TO WITNESS THE MAN'S PAIN FIRSTHAND. YET...IT WAS NOT FORTHCOMING.

FOR THE SAKE OF WORD COUNT I WILL CUT TO THE PROVERBIAL CHASE IN REPORTING TO YOU THAT JOSEF'S EXTRAORDINARY TRACK RECORD WHEN IT CAME TO ACCURACY CAME TO BE KNOWN AS A DIRECT RESULT OF A MECHANICALLY ENHANCED APPENDAGE! SUCH SCANDAL ACROSS WARSAW AND THE SURROUNDING CITIES! CERTAINLY IN THE COMING WEEKS AS THE STORY BREAKS IN LOCAL JOURNALS HIS REPUTATION WILL BE DESTROYED.

OUR JOURNEY ACROSS THE POLISH EMPIRE IS AT AN END AS I COMPOSE THIS ISSUE'S ENTRY AND ALICE AND I ARE ON OUR WAY TO PRAGUE. PLEASE JOIN US THEN FOR MORE UPS AND DOWNS IN OUR TRAVELOGUE OF THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT.

# The Aether's Weekly Steamswaddle

By Tropole E. Armitage

## ROYAL SERVICE

ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMANT, HER MAJESTY HAS EXPRESSED HER DISPLEASURE AT THE NUMBER OF AIRSHIPS

CASTING SHADOWS AS THEY PASSED OVERHEAD, BLOCKING THE SUN FROM HER HIGHNESS'S LAWN WHILE SHE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF PLAYING A GAME OF CROQUET. EVIDENTLY SHE IS TO ISSUE A ROYAL DECREE THAT THE NEXT MISCREANT IS TO BE SHOT DOWN FORTHWITH. WE HAVE IT ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT THE ROYAL GUARD IS ALREADY MAKING READY THEIR NEW STEAMHAPTOR BLAST TUBES AROUND THE PALACE TO FULFIL HER MAJESTY'S WISHES. FOR THOSE OF OUR GENTEEL READERS WHO DO NOT FOLLOW THINGS MILITARY, THE STEAMHAPTORS WERE INVENTED BY KURLIQUE HAPTOR, A CONTEMPORARY OF BRUNEL WHO SAW A NEED FOR AN EFFECTIVE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE FROM ATTACK BY AIRSHIPS, AND AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS OF TOIL IN THE WORKSHOP BEHIND HIS MECHANICAL CONTRAPTION SHOP HE SUCCESSFULLY TESTED THE PROTOTYPE. DESPITE THE MISFORTUNE THAT RESULTED FROM THE FIRING, WHICH RESULTED IN HIS DEATH, THOUGH NO BODY WAS EVER FOUND, THE DETECTIVES AT THE CONSTABULARY RECOGNISED THE POTENTIAL OF THE WEAPON AND HANDED IT OVER TO THE ARMY, IN WHOSE HANDS IT WAS THOUGHT TO BE SAFEST. WE ARE SURE MR HAPTOR WOULD BE PROUD TO HEAR OF HER MAJESTY'S FAITH IN THE ABILITY OF HIS DEVICE TO ENSURE THAT THE SUN SHALL CONTINUE TO SHINE ON HER. LONG LIVE THE QUEEN.

YOUR HUMBLE CORRESPONDENT,

TROPPL E. ARMITAGE

## TRAGEDY AT THE OPHELIUM

T

FOLLOWING SELL OUT PERFORMANCES AT THAT RENOWNED PLAYHOUSE THE OPHELIUM, TRAGEDY

STRUCK YESTERDAY EVENING WHILE YOUR CORRESPONDENT HAD THE FORTUNE, OR MISFORTUNE, TO BE IN THE AUDIENCE. MADAME POMSIFFLER, FAMOUS FOR HER FLAMBOYANT HAIR AND TROUPE OF MECHANICAL PERFORMING DOGS SEEMS TO HAVE MET WITH AN UNFORTUNATE END. THE TRAGEDY OCCURRED DURING THE INTERMISSION BETWEEN ACTS ONE AND TWO WHILE THE AUDIENCE WAS ENJOYING SOME LIBATIONS TO THE GODS OF THE THEATRE. A FRENZIED BARKING WAS HEARD FROM BACK STAGE. IT WAS SO LOUD MANY REMARKED ON IT, NOT JUST FOR ITS LOUDNESS BUT FOR ITS DURATION. WHEN WE RETURNED FOR ACT TWO THE MANAGER APPEARED AND ASKED FOR SILENCE BECAUSE HE HAD AN ANNOUNCEMENT. HE THEN TOLD US THAT THE SHOW HAD BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO A MALFUNCTION OF AT LEAST ONE MECHANICAL DOG AND THAT REFUNDS WOULD BE AVAILABLE. HE LOOKED MUCH SHAKEN AND AS OTHERS LEFT, I MADE MY WAY BACKSTAGE TO BE CONFRONTED WITH A GHASTLY SCENE. I COULD NOT SAY FOR CERTAIN THAT IT WAS MADAME POMSIFFLER, EXCEPT I DID RECOGNISE THE HAIR. MUCH OF WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE BODY WAS STREWN AROUND AND I IMMEDIATE THOUGHT OF THE MANAGER'S ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT A MALFUNCTIONING DOG. I MADE A DISCREET EXIT BEFORE THE CONSTABULARY ARRIVED AND AM SURE IN TIME THE MYSTERY OF WHAT HAPPENED WILL BE REVEALED. BUT FOR SAFETY I RECOMMEND AVOIDING ALL PERFORMANCES INVOLVING MECHANICAL ANIMALS, AS I SURELY WILL.

YOUR HUMBLE CORRESPONDENT,

TROPPL E. ARMITAGE

Welcome to The Aether Chronicle!



TROPPL E. ARMITAGE,  
NEW FEATURE COLUMNIST