

# The Aether Chronicle

The Imaginary Alternate History of the Steampunk Empire

From Thursday January 1st 2015 to Thursday January 22nd 2015



LADY ELOISE FA TOUREN, DARINGLY GARBED IN NOUGHT BUT A CORSET FOR HER ANNUAL GALA, HER POMPADOUR HAIRSTYLE COMPLETE WITH SMALL ANIMAL CAGE WHICH HELD A SMALL LIVE HAMSTER.

## NEW YEAR'S FASHIONS LEAD TO PUBLIC ARRESTS & SCANDALS INVOLVING LIVE RODENTS!

LADY ELOISE FA TOUREN'S ANNUAL YEAR'S-END STAR-STudded EVENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE TALK OF THE HIGHSTREET OF LONDON RIGHT UP UNTIL THE NEW YEAR. HER BIZARRE TRADITIONS OF EXOTIC MIDNIGHT DINNERS, FOLLOWED BY SPOOKY RUNS THROUGH GRAVEYARDS, SIPPING CHAMPAGNE ON THE ROOFTOP OF HER HUSBAND'S ESTATE, OR TAKING OUT THE FAMILY'S YACHT TO RE-CREATE THE BOSTON TEA PARTY, HAS NEVER FAILED TO MAKE A SPLASH ON THE SOCIETY PAGES THE NEXT DAY. THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, MANY LONDON CITIZENS BELIEVE THE ECCENTRIC BARRISTER'S WIFE HAS GONE TOO FAR.

"LAST YEAR'S PARTY WAS LOVELY," A WITNESS WHO SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS DECREED. "WE SPENT THE NIGHT GAMBLING IN THE SOLAR, AND THEN WITNESSED THE PERFORMANCE OF A TROUPE OF CHINESE CONTORTIONISTS PERFORM. DINNER CONSISTED OF A SERIES OF DELICACIES: DORMICE-IN-HONEY, BRAZED FLAMINGO AND ROASTED PORCUPINE RE-DRESSED IN ITS OWN QUILLS, AND DEVILLED OYSTERS. DESSERT WAS INDIVIDUAL EDIBLE SUGAR SCULPTURES THAT LOOKED LIKE TINY ICE SCULPTURES ON THE PLATE! WE THEN WE RETIRED TO THE GROUNDS

WHERE THE LADY HAD MOST CONSIDERATELY ARRANGED A MIDNIGHT RUN THROUGH THE HEDGE MAZE—STARK NAKED, OF COURSE. THE LADY IS WONDERFULLY ECCENTRIC, AND MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE ALWAYS RELISHED HER PARTIES FOR THE MARVELLOUS LACK OF CONVENTION. IT'S REFRESHING IN THIS CONSERVATIVE, MODERN WORLD WE LIVE IN. BUT I THINK SHE MAY HAVE CROSSED SOME BOUNDARY NOW THAT WILL HAVE DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR FEMALE SOCIETY IN THE FUTURE."

OUR WITNESS IS REFERRING TO LADY ELOISE'S BIZARRE CHOICE OF COSTUME FOR HER NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA, WHICH TOOK PLACE ON DECEMBER 31ST.

"SHE SEEMED TO BE CHANNELLING MARIE ANTOINETTE WITH HER HAIRSTYLE." ANOTHER INFORMANT EXPLAINED, "A SKY-HIGH POMPADOUR, ACCENTED BY FEATHERS, FLOWERS, AND EVEN SMALL MODELS LIKE BOATS OR BUILDINGS. BUT, ANCHORED IN THE CENTRE OF HER HAIRSTYLE—THERE WAS A SMALL ANIMAL CAGE. WITH A *LIVE ANIMAL INSIDE!*" LADY ELOISE'S GUESTS WERE APPALLED BY THE PRESENCE OF A SMALL, TERRIFIED RODENT MOUNTED INTO HER COIF. HOWEVER, THE LADY IS SO WELL KNOWN FOR HER FLAMBOYANT NATURE THAT THE EVENING PROGRESSED DESPITE THE MIXED RECEPTION SHE RECEIVED. "A NUMBER OF HER GUESTS MUST HAVE BEEN FOREWARNED, FOR THEY SHOWED UP IN SIMILAR OUTFITS."

A GENTLEMAN SHUDDERED WITH DISGUST. "THE DOWAGER COUNTESS AUGUSTA DUPREE ACTUALLY BROUGHT A *LIVE ALLIGATOR* ON A LEASH! THE NERVE OF THESE PEOPLE! NOT ONLY IS IT DANGEROUS, BUT IT'S RUDE AND UNSETTLING FOR THE REST OF THE GUESTS!"

"THIS POINTLESS PUBLIC DISPLAY IS A RESULT OF BORED, POWERFUL WOMEN WHO HAVE LOST ALL SENSE OF COMMON DECENCY, AND ARE PREPARED TO GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO RECEIVE ATTENTION FROM THEIR PEERS! MY ONLY FEAR IS THAT THIS BARBARISM WILL LEAD SOME SORT OF *TREND* AMONGST THE FASHIONISTAS OF LONDON."

THE THEME OF THE EVENING EVEN INFLUENCED SOME OF THE MORE NOTEWORTHY GENTLEMEN. LORD GRANTHEM ARRIVED WITH A CUSTOM-MADE POCKET WATCH: A CLOCK'S FACE ATOP A TINY CAGE NO BIGGER THAN HIS PALM, WHICH HELD A LIVE CRICKET! HE ALSO BORE A SOMEWHAT LARGER CAGE ANCHORED TO HIS SIDE WHICH HELD A FRIGHTENED BABY FERRET." THE EVENING ENDED WITH A ROUSING FIREWORKS DISPLAY, ACCOMPANIED BY THE LATEST MUSIC IN THE NEW THEME OF "RAGTIME". APPARENTLY, AFTERWARDS GUESTS WERE IN A RUSH TO LEAVE THE PREMISES AS

QUICKLY AND INCONSPICUOUSLY AS POSSIBLE. THE REASON FOR THIS WAS SOON REVEALED WHEN THE CONSTABULARY ARRIVED ON SCENE, ACCOMPANIED BY ENRAGED MEMBERS OF BRITAIN'S HUMANE SOCIETY. "THESE FOUL UPPER CLASSES SIMPLY HAVE NO REGARD FOR THE LIVES AROUND THEM!" ONE BERNICE POTTER DECLARED, PRESIDENT OF THE HUMANE SOCIETY. "LADY ELOISE FA TOUREN IS GUILTY OF ANIMAL CRUELTY, VILE SENSATIONALISM, AND, FRANKLY, JUST PLAIN-OLD BAD TASTE. THOSE ANIMALS WERE TERRIFIED IN THOSE CAGES! THE PARTY MUSIC, THE SMOKE AND NOISE, AND THOSE CAGES WERE TEETERING ON THE EDGE, HELD FAST BY NOTHING BUT HAIR PINS—IT'S INHUMAN! AND FRANKLY DISGUSTING. THOSE MASSIVE HAIR TOWERS STANK BY THE END OF THE EVENING, LET ME TELL YOU!" LADY ELOISE FA TOUREN BROKE THROUGH NEW SOCIAL BARRIERS THIS NEW YEAR'S EVE BY BEING THE FIRST WOMAN OF THE UPPER CLASSES TO BE PUBLICLY ARRESTED, ALTHOUGH, IT MUST BE SAID, SHE WAS THOROUGHLY INTOXICATED AT THAT POINT, AND WILL LIKELY NEVER KNOW IT EVEN HAPPENED!



THE DOWAGER COUNTESS AUGUSTA DUPREE ACCOMPANIED BY A LIVE ALLIGATOR ON A LEASH.



LORD GRANTHEM ARRIVED TO THE GALA SPORTING A WATCH FACE ATOP A SMALL CRICKET CAGE, AND A CAGE AT HIS SIDE WHICH CONTAINED A LIVE BABY FERRET.





AN ARTIST'S RENDERING OF THE PHANTOM.

## ROBBERY OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND THWARTED BY FLYING MAN!

By KENT WHITTINGTON

IT HAS BEEN THE PRIVILEGE OF THIS REPORTER IN THE PAST YEAR TO REPORT ON THE TRULY FANTASTIC; FROM DEMONIC MASS MURDERERS AND GHOST HUNTERS TO FANTASTIC AIR RACES AND THE PROSPECT OF LIFE ON OTHER WORLDS. SO IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE THAT YOUR INTREPID REPORTER HAS DISCOVERED YET ANOTHER OCCURRENCE IN THE LONDON OF THE STRANGE.

ALARMS WERE SOUNDED AT 2:00AM AS IT HAD BECOME KNOWN THAT THE BANK OF ENGLAND HAD BECOME BESIEGED. POLICE ARRIVED ON THE SCENE TO FIND THE WOULD-BE BURGLARS, KNOWN EXPERTS AT LOCK PICKING AND GRAND THEFT, TRUSSSED UP LIKE A CHRISTMAS GOOSE, BOTH UNCONSCIOUS. ATTACHED TO THE LAPEL OF ONE OF THE MEN'S JACKETS WAS A NOTE ON PARCHMENT PAPER, WRITTEN IN LONGHAND, WHICH READ:

"THEFT OF THE PEOPLE WILL NO LONGER BE TOLERATED. THE INJUSTICES OF MANKIND WILL NO LONGER BE TOLERATED. LONDON WILL BE MADE SAFE FOR THE INNOCENT ONCE AGAIN. THESE TWO SHALL MAKE AN EXCELLENT BEGINNING.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS,  
THE PHANTOM"

THE TWO FORMERLY ARMED RUFFIANS CLAIMED THAT AFTER SUCCESSFULLY BREAKING INTO THE BANK OF ENGLAND

AND ATTEMPTING TO ABSCOND WITH A LARGE SUM OF CURRENCY THAT THEY HAD LIBERATED FROM THE BANK VAULT, THE ROOM THEY WERE IN BEGAN TO FILL WITH A GREY SMOKE THAT MADE THEM FEEL DIZZY AND DISORIENTED.

THEY THEN FOUND THEMSELVES UNDER ATTACK FROM WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS A "GHOST," CLAD IN A LONG BLACK COAT AND A POINTY-FACED MASK WITH HOSES ATTACHED TO IT, MUCH LIKE A GAS MASK AND A BROAD BRIMMED HAT, COMPLETELY OBSCURING THE IDENTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL FROM THE BANK THIEVES. THE MASKED MAN ALSO HAD TWO LARGE BRASS TANKS OF SOME SORT STRAPPED UPON HIS BACK AS WELL AND SOME SORT OF PORTAL MOUNTED ON HIS CHEST WHICH EMITTED A WHITISH GLOW. THE TWO THEN CLAIMED THAT THEY OPENED FIRE ON THEIR ASSAILANT AT CLOSE RANGE AS HE RUSHED THEM ONLY TO HAVE MISSED EVERY SHOT. "IT WAS LIKE THE BULLETS WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIM, LIKE HE WASN'T EVEN THERE!" ONE OF THE MEN CLAIMED. BUT THERE HE WAS AS THE TWO MEN WERE PROMPTLY BLINDED AS THE PORTAL ON THE MAN'S CHEST GREW TO A BRILLIANCE UNIMAGINABLE. THEY CLAIM THEY WERE THEN ASSAULTED, KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS AND BOUND BEFORE BEING DELIVERED INTO POLICE HANDS, WRAPPED AS A PROPER PRESENT TO MARK THE SEASON.

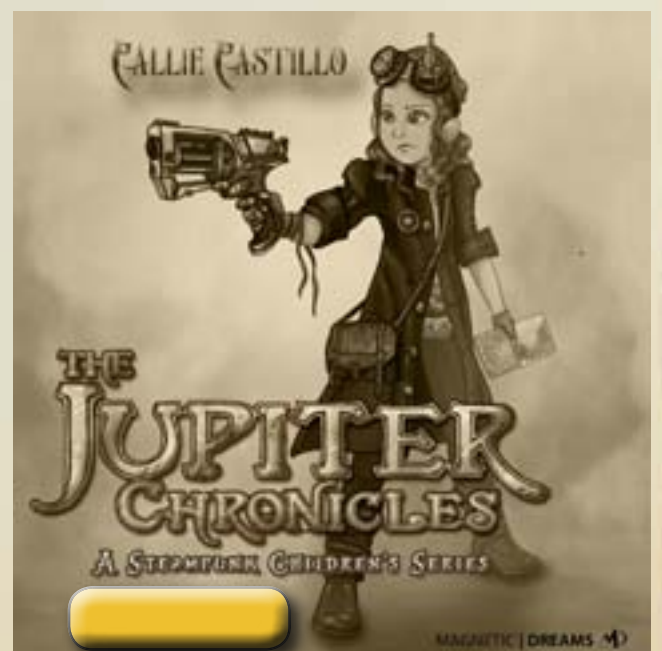
IN AN EFFORT TO FURTHER IDENTIFY THE VIGILANTE, FURTHER INVESTIGATION HAS LED THIS REPORTER TO ONE EPHRAIM COLLINS, A SMITH FROM SURREY ON HOLIDAY. MISTER COLLINS, WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE WITNESSED THE ROW, SAID THAT HE HEARD CRASHING NOISES COMING FROM THE BUILDING (THE ENTRYWAY HAD ALREADY BEEN FORCED AT THIS POINT) AND MOVED AS CLOSE AS HE DARED TO INVESTIGATE. "I COULD HEAR THE SOUND OF GUNSHOTS AND CRASHING GLASS, THEN I SAW THIS BRILLIANT WHITE LIGHT FOLLOWED BY SOME SCUFFLING SOUNDS, THEN IT WAS ALL QUIET AGAIN."

COLLINS NOTIFIED THE AUTHORITIES ABOUT THE BREAK-IN, WHO FOUND THE TWO MEN TIED TO A PILLAR ON THE TOP STEP LEADING UP TO THE BANK'S ENTRANCE, BUT NOT BEFORE HE CLAIMS SEEING THE ASSAILANT "FLY FROM THE TOP STEP INTO THE NIGHT SKY IN A BALL OF FIRE, SOARING OFF LIKE A COMET." AS TO THE ROBBERS ILL-GOTTEN GAINS, THE ENTIRE AMOUNT HAS BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR AND PLACED BACK IN THE BANK, FIRMLY UNDER GUARD ONCE AGAIN. AS THE HOUR OF THE BREAK-IN WAS LATE, LITTLE MORE CAN BE DISCERNED AS NO OTHER WITNESSES HAVE COME FORTH TO CORROBORATE MISTER COLLINS OR THE WOULD-BE BURGLARS' CLAIMS CONCERNING THE FLYING MAN. IT HAS THEREFORE FALLEN TO ME TO IDENTIFY WHO THIS INDIVIDUAL IS AND WHAT HE HOPES TO

GAIN. IS HE A MENACE OR A FRIEND TO THE PEOPLE? IS HE A VIGILANTE OR A VILLAIN? THIS REPORTER DOES NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN, BUT ONE THING IS FOR CERTAIN, THE HOOLIGANS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BREAK-IN OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND ARE NOW SAFELY BEHIND BARS, THE MONEY STOLEN IS RETURNED AND THE EXPLOITS OF THE FLYING MAN ARE DULY CHRONICLED AND UNDER FURTHER INVESTIGATION BY YOUR INTREPID REPORTER CAN DETERMINE MORE ABOUT THE FLYING MAN'S IDENTITY. THE POLICE AT SCOTLAND YARD ARE COMPLETELY BAFFLED AND THOSE IN CHARGE ARE AT LOSS FOR WORDS, IN FACT THE CHIEF INSPECTOR HAS YET TO PROVIDE COMMENT CONCERNING THIS INCIDENT. THOSE BELOW HIM TAKE LITTLE CREDENCE IN THEIR BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF THE FLYING MAN CALLING HIMSELF THE PHANTOM. AS SUCH, A CONCEPT SKETCH BASED FROM THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN OF THE PHANTOM HAS BEEN PROVIDED. ANYONE SEEING THIS INDIVIDUAL SHOULD REPORT HIS WHEREABOUTS IMMEDIATELY TO THIS REPORTER, CARE OF THE AETHER CHRONICLE.



KENT EDWARD WHITTINGTON, FEATURE REPORTER





# The Aether Review Of Books

## A Gentleman's War, By Asher Davian

### CHAPTER 4

IT WAS A VERY LONG TIME BEFORE EITHER SPOKE.

CHARLES LEANED OVER THE BALCONY, HIS TONE

UNCONCERNED BUT SLIGHTLY GRIM. "ARE MY SIRRS BOTH INTACT?"

THERE WAS NO ANSWER APART FROM A SLOW AND EVEN LOOK UPWARDS.

"I'LL TAKE SIRRS' RESPONSE AS A QUALIFIED YES. THE LADY OF THE MANOR HAS, I'M AFRAID, FAINTED ANEW. IF YOU WOULD SETTLE YOUR MATTER WITHOUT FURTHER BLOODSHED, OR INDEED DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, I'M SURE SHE WOULD BE ELATED."

WITH THAT, THE ACERBIC MANSERVANT VANISHED INTO THE MANOR. "I'D BETTER TIE THAT OFF BEFORE IT REALLY STARTS BLEEDING,"

FOXES FINALLY REMARKED, "HERE."

HE TORE A LENGTH OFF HIS SLEEVE AND FOLDED IT AGAINST THE GENERAL'S SHOULDER. "THAT OUGHT TO AT LEAST STEM THE FLOW. IT CERTAINLY IS A GOOD THING THIS ISN'T A GREATER WOUND. THAT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE INTERFERED WITH YOUR PILOTING THE WAR MACHINE."

"WELL..."

GENERAL GALLANTE WINCED. "IT'S CLEAR TO ME YOU'VE HAD LITTLE MEDICAL TRAINING. IT FEELS LIKE THERE MAY BE SOME DEEP MUSCLE DAMAGE. I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING WITH THIS ARM UNTIL LONG AFTER THE BULLET IS TAKEN OUT."

"OH?" DUDLEY BIT HIS LIP.

"YOU CAN'T OPERATE THE MACHINE WITH ONE ARM. HAS ANYONE ELSE TAKEN THE NECESSARY TRAINING COURSES?"

"NO ONE,"

GASPED THE GENERAL. "AND YOU CAN'T HANDLE IT..."

"IT'S DOUBTFUL,"

GROWLED THE GENERAL, LOW AND EVEN.

"WELL, IT'S JUST AN IDEA, BUT PERHAPS IT'D SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS..."

"DO TELL,"

MURMURED THE OFFICER. DUDLEY FOXES PROMPTLY DREW A SMALL BLACKJACK FROM HIS VEST AND CLUBBED THE GENERAL ON THE BACK OF THE CRANIUM.

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GENERAL IGNATIUS GALLANTE

AND A SMALLISH DOCTOR WALKED INTO THE WEATHERBY MANOR IN THE HARSH LIGHT OF HIGH NOON, CARRYING BETWEEN THEM THE LIMP FIGURE OF DUDLEY FOXES. THE LADY EVELYN WAS RECLINING ON THE DAVENPORT, TRYING TO REGAIN HER COMPOSURE AFTER SUCH A FRIGHTENING TUESDAY MORNING. "IGGY? HOW IS HE? HE ISN'T..."

"NO,"

REPLIED THE GENERAL. HE HELPED THE DOCTOR REST DUDLEY IN AN EASY CHAIR AND ADJUSTED THE BANDAGE AROUND HIS UPPER ARM. "BUT I'M AFRAID I DID CLIP HIS SHOULDER. HE'S LOSING BLOOD, SO I GOT THE DOCTOR."

"THE DOC—YOU WERE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS THIS MORNING! WHAT HAPPENED?"

"HE TRIPPED, I FIRED EARLY, AND NEITHER OF US WERE KILLED. WE REALIZED TENDING TO ONE ANOTHER'S WOUNDS THAT NEITHER OF US IS EXPENDABLE."

THE GENERAL TIPPED LADY EVELYN'S CHIN UP SLIGHTLY TO MEET HER EYES. "NEITHER OF US CAN BE SPARED. BUT WHERE DUDLEY FIGHTS HIS BATTLES HERE, IN HIS LABORATORY ON THE HOME FRONT, I MUST FIGHT THEM ABROAD. FAREWELL, MILADY, AND I HOPE WE MEET AGAIN IN HAPPIER DAYS. IN THE MEANTIME, I HOPE MR. FOXES CAN GIVE YOU WHAT I FAILED TO IN DAYS PAST."

WITH THESE WORDS, THE GENERAL TURNED AND SLIPPED SILENTLY OUT, LADY EVELYN MINCING HESITANTLY AFTER HIM, GLANCING BACK ONCE TO SEE THE PRONE FORM IN THE EASY CHAIR, THE DOCTOR TENDING HIM. AS SHE VANISHED, THE MAN, AT DEATH'S DOOR THOUGH HE WAS, OPENED ONE EYE. "WHO ARE YOU? WHERE AM I? WHAT HAS THAT FOOL DUDLEY DONE?"

THE DOCTOR'S GREYING MOUSTACHE TWITCHED AT THE QUESTIONS. "CALM YOURSELF, GENERAL, AND REMEMBER, YOU'RE DUDLEY FOXES NOW. HE'S THE ONLY MAN ALIVE WHO CAN PILOT THE WAR MACHINE AS OF NOW, AND SO AS NOT TO DAMPEN THE SPIRITS OF THE ALBIONESE ARMY, HE'S TAKING YOUR PLACE AS GENERAL FOR UNTIL YOUR SHOULDER HEALS. IT'S NOT TOO TERRIBLE A WOUND, BUT I'M AFRAID YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING WITH THAT ARM FOR A WHILE."

"WE'RE TRADING PLACES."

THE GENERAL REFLECTED. "IT'S JUST AS WELL, I'M IN NO CONDITION TO FIGHT, AND HE KNOWS THE MACHINE BETTER THAN ANY MAN. WELL, MY PRAYERS WITH HIM, FOR HE LIKELY GOES TO HIS DEATH."

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"WAIT!"

CRIED EVELYN. SHE SEIZED THE OFFICER'S HAND, FEELING HOW ROUGH AND POWERFUL IT WAS AGAINST HER TINY, VELVETY GLOVE. "LEAVING SO SOON? AREN'T YOU GOING TO WAIT FOR HIM TO WAKE UP?"

"I COULDN'T FACE HIM, EVIE. I'VE ALMOST KILLED AN INNOCENT CIVILIAN. ONE OF OURS, YET,"

GALLANTE REPLIED GRAVELY. "I DON'T FEEL QUITE MYSELF. GOODBYE, EVELYN."

"WAIT!"

THE GENERAL'S COLD BLUE EYES RETURNED HER GAZE. "I CANNOT."

HE SPUN ON HIS HEEL AND MARCHED AWAY, LEAVING HIS LOVER PINING, TORN BETWEEN TWO GENTLEMEN, ONE DYING, THE OTHER DEAD INSIDE.

THIS WAS NO GENTLEMAN'S WAR. NO WAR HAD EVER BEEN SO CRUEL TO A WOMAN.

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).



# The Aether Review Of Books

## A Gentleman's War, By Asher Davian

**D**EAR READERS, I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT YOU WITH THE LONG-AWAITED FOURTH INSTALMENT OF ASHER DAVIAN'S CHARMING SATIRE "A GENTLEMAN'S WAR."

AT OUR LAST GLIMPSE INTO ASHER DAVIAN'S WORLD, THE THIRD CHAPTER DESCRIBED A 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 WAS OSTENSIBLY TO WIN THE FAVOUR OF THE LOVELY LADY EVELYN WEATHERBY WHO, CONNIVING WOMAN THAT SHE IS, HAD BEEN SEEING BOTH MEN SIMULTANEOUSLY. THE TWO HOT-HEADED RIVALS MANAGED TO COMPLETE THE DUEL WITHOUT INJURING ONE ANOTHER. HOWEVER, IN THE SPIRIT OF FELLOWSHIP, DUDLEY FOXE FIRED HIS LAST BULLET INTO THE AIR—WHICH RICOCHETED OFF THE BALCONY, BEFORE DRIVING ITSELF INTO THE GENERAL'S ARM. THE DUEL, IT WOULD SEEM, WAS BACK ON, AND DUDLEY FOXE WAS THE WINNER AT FIRST BLOOD! "...OOPS," THE VALIANT WARRIOR OFFERED!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER PROMISES READERS THE OUTCOME OF THIS COMEDY OF ERRORS. WHILE TENDING TO ONE ANOTHER'S WOUNDS, BOTH MEN REFLECT UPON THE DAMAGE THEY HAVE DONE TO THEIR COUNTRY'S CHANCES OF WINNING THE WAR, BY CHOOSING TO INJURE ONE ANOTHER IN THIS PETTY DUEL. AFTER ALL, ONE MAN IS THE CREATOR OF THE FAMOUS WAR MACHINE, SET TO TURN THE TIDE. THE OTHER IS THE SEASONED GENERAL WHO IS THE ONLY MAN FIT TO PILOT THE MACHINE. HOWEVER, WITH A MINOR BULLET WOUND, BOTH MEN REALIZE THAT THE GENERAL WILL NOT BE CAPABLE OF PILOTING WITH ONE ARM. A PLOT IS HATCHED BETWEEN THE TWO MEN: IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS, BYSTANDERS HAVE COMMENTED ON THE FACT THAT THESE TWO RIVALS LOOK ALARMINGLY ALIKE IN THEIR APPEARANCE, SAVE FOR BEING SEVERAL DECADES APART IN AGE. LADY EVELYN HERSELF UTILIZED THE PLOY THAT SINCE THE TWO MEN LOOK SO SIMILAR, SHE ASSUMED THEY WERE THE SAME MAN WHEN SHE FIRST MET THEM, AND THAT SHE HAD ONLY ONE SUITOR WHO WAS CHOOSING TO COME TO HER IN DIFFERENT GUISES.

THE TWO MEN EXCHANGE CLOTHING, AND DUDLEY FOXE CLOUTS THE GENERAL OVER THE

HEAD, RENDERING HIM UNCONSCIOUS. THEN, HE FETCHES A DOCTOR. THE DOCTOR AND DUDLEY CARRY THE GENERAL INTO THE LADY EVELYN'S HOUSE, WITH DUDLEY PRETENDING TO BE THE GENERAL. DUDLEY PARROTS THE GENERAL'S SPEECH, AND EXPLAINS TO LADY EVELYN THAT HE MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY TO RESUME HIS WAR DUTIES, AND THAT NEITHER HE NOR THE GENERAL WILL BE FIGHTING AMONGST THEMSELVES ANY MORE.

LADY EVELYN FOLLOWS HIM OUT INTO THE FOYER, WHEREUPON THE REAL GENERAL AWAKENS AND THE DOCTOR EXPLAINS HOW THEIR PLAN IS PROGRESSING. THE GENERAL STATES BALDLY THAT BY ATTEMPTING TO PILOT THE WAR MACHINE IN THE FIELD OF BATTLE, HE BELIEVES THE YOUNGER, UNBLOODED DUDLEY FOXE IS HEADING TO HIS DOOM.

THIS CHAPTER IS FULL OF GRIM REALITIES, AND THE CHARACTERS ARE FORCED TO CONFRONT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS. THE WAR EFFORT HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN THE BACKDROP OF THIS LOVE TRIANGLE; A GENTLE PRESSURE UPON EVENTS, THAT NEVERTHELESS FAILS TO DIRECTLY INFLUENCE ANY OF THE CHARACTERS' MOTIVATIONS. HOWEVER, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE CHARACTERS' ACTIONS ARE GUIDED BY THE IMPENDING WAR, AND THEIR ROMANTIC PLANS ARE CURTAILED BASED UPON THE EFFECT SAID ACTIONS MIGHT HAVE UPON THE WAR. THE ONLY CHARACTER WHO HAS NOT BEEN AFFECTED BY THOUGHTS OF THE WAR IS LADY EVELYN. SHE WAS QUITE

CONTENT TO PLAY THESE TWO KEY PLAYERS IN THE WAR EFFORT OFF ONE ANOTHER FOR AS LONG AS SHE COULD GET AWAY WITH IT. FURTHERMORE, SHE IS QUITE PUT OUT BY "THE GENERAL" LEAVING SO SOON, AND THE IMPLICATION THAT HER LOVERS PURSUIT OF HER WILL BE STALLED BY THE WAR EFFORT. LADY EVELYN THINKS TO HERSELF: "THIS [IS] NO GENTLEMAN'S WAR. NO WAR [HAS] EVER BEEN SO CRUEL TO A WOMAN."

THE FACT THAT LADY EVELYN *STILL* BELIEVES HERSELF TO BE THE TRUE VICTIM OF ALL OF THESE EVENTS: THE WAR, THE LOVERS' QUARREL, THE DUEL, ETC., IS PART OF WHAT MAKES THIS STORY A TRUE SATIRE. LADY EVELYN IS THE EMBODIMENT OF IRONY. NEVER MIND THE FACT THAT SHE CAUSED ALMOST ALL OF THESE EVENTS (I EXEMPT HER FROM ALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAR) COMPLETELY ESCAPES HER. ALL SHE KNOWS IS THAT THESE COMEDICALLY TRAGIC EVENTS HAVE NOT ANSWERED BACK TO HER. THE OUTCOME HAS NOT NOT MADE HER HAPPY. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HER REACTION ONCE SHE REALIZES HER TWO LOVERS SWITCHED PLACES ON HER IN ORDER TO WIN THE WAR. LET'S SEE HOW SHE REACTS THE TABLES BEING TURNED ON *HER* FOR A CHANGE! AND IF THESE TWO TESTY RIVALS CAN SUCCEED IN FINDING COMMON GROUND, THEN WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR THE BATTLE TO WIN THE HEART OF LADY EVELYN? IN THE MEANTIME, DEAR READERS, THE WAR BECKONS!



NEW AUTHOR ASHER DAVIAN



# The Aether's Weekly Steamswaddle

By Tropple E. Armitage

HAT THE DICKENS?

WHILE THE WINDS OF AUTUMN HAVE CHILLED OUR BONES AND THOSE OF US FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE A ROOF

OVER OUR HEADS AND A FIRE TO WARM US ARE WELL SET FOR THE SNOW AND ICE WHEN IT SWEEPS UP THE THAMES TOWARDS US, SOME ARE LESS FORTUNATE AS THE INESTIMABLE MR DICKENS REMINDS US WITH HIS CHRISTMAS BOOK, A CHRISTMAS CAROL. AS MUCH AS IT IS BUT A STORY WE DO NOT HAVE TO LOOK TOO FAR TO SEE EXAMPLES THAT MAKE EBENEZER SCROOGE, (MR DICKENS' MEAN SPIRITED CHARACTER FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET READ IT) APPEAR BENEVOLENT. IT MAY SHOCK MY MORE GENTEEL READERS THAT NONE LESS THAN ONE OF ENGLAND'S WEALTHIEST MEN, LORD FALCONHAVER, RECENTLY LEFT THE CHILL OF LONDON IN HIS AIRSHIP, THE OPULENCE OF WHICH DOES NOT END WITH THE WALL LININGS OF BLACK BEAR SKINS.

I AM RELIABLY INFORMED THAT THE AIRSHIP IS BOUND FOR THE WARMER CLIMES OF AFRICA WHERE HIS LORDSHIP CAN INDULGE HIS INTEREST IN HUNTING, THOUGH I HAVE HEARD TELL IT IS NOT JUST ANIMALS THAT HE HUNTS. AS MUCH AS THAT IDEA MAY CHILL THE HEARTS OF UPRIGHT MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY IT IS ANOTHER KIND OF CHILL THAT HAS BEFALLEN THE STAFF AT LORD FALCONHAVER'S PRESTIGIOUS ABODE OVERLOOKING HYDE PARK WHO HAVE BEEN LITERALLY TURNED OUT IN THE COLD WITH NO ROOF, NO MONEY AND NO HOPE RATHER THAN HIS LORDSHIP HAVING THE EXPENSE OF FEEDING THEM AND PAYING FOR A LITTLE COAL TO KEEP THEM WARM WHILST HE WAS AWAY. WHAT CAN I SAY BUT WHAT THE DICKENS IS SOCIETY COMING TO WHEN WE ACCEPT THIS MEAN SPIRITEDNESS FROM THOSE WHO HAVE NO NEED TO BEHAVE THAT WAY. I AM SURE THAT NONE OF MY READERS WOULD CALL THEMSELVES A FRIEND OF LORD FALCONHAVER BUT THOSE THAT WOULD, SHOULD BEWARE LEST THEY BE TARRED WITH THE SAME BRUSH FOR ALL TO SEE.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

YOUR HUMBLE CORRESPONDENT,

TROPPL E ARMITAGE

ROUBLE ON HIGH

SOMETIMES IT TAKES A CHANCE REMARK THAT LEADS TO A DISCOVERY FITTING FOR THE INTEREST OF OUR AUGUST

READERS, AND SO IT WAS IN THIS CASE WHEN I WAS SHELTERING FROM THE RAIN IN A COFFEE HOUSE NEAR CHANCERY SQUARE. THE PLACE WAS FULL ALMOST TO OVERFLOWING WITH LIKEMINDED MEN TAKING REFUGE SO I PERCHANCE SHARED A TABLE WITH A MOST AGREEABLE FELLOW WHO HAD ALL SORTS OF TALES TO TELL.

HE WAS ONE OF THE LESSER KNOWN PARTICIPANTS IN THE RECENT TENTH ANNIVERSARY STEAMSHIP RACES, WHICH WERE WIDELY REPORTED IN THE CHRONICLE. BUT HIS STORY WASN'T ABOUT HIM IT WAS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE RACE. HE WAS FLYING HIS CONTRAPTION JUST A LITTLE HIGHER THAN ANOTHER COMPETITOR AND WAS GAINING ON HIM WHEN HE LOOKED INTO THE COCKPIT TO SEE THE AVIATOR HOLDING A TELESCOPE TO HIS EYE AND WITH NO HANDS ON THE STEERING LEVERS. AT FIRST HE THOUGHT THERE MIGHT EASILY BE A CRASH BUT THEN HE LOOKED WHERE THE TELESCOPE WAS POINTING AND QUICKLY AVERTED HIS GAZE AS MOST REAL GENTLEMEN WOULD. THE TELESCOPE WAS IN THE HANDS OF MR REGINALD BENTWHISTLE, SON OF LORD BENTWHISTLE OF HYTHE AND IT WAS POINTING AT A WINDOW ON THE TOP FLOOR OF A TERRACE HOUSE. DECORUM DOES NOT ALLOW ME DISCLOSE WHAT HE WAS LOOKING AT, BUT I WILL SAY THAT THE LADY INVOLVED WAS COMPLETELY INNOCENT AND WOULD HAVE HAD NO IDEA SHE WAS BEING SPIED UPON. MY INFORMANT WAS OUTRAGED AT THE ACTIONS OF THE YOUNGER BENTWHISTLE AND WAS DETERMINE TO CONFRONT HIM ON LANDING AND WOULD HAVE SO DONE IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR A MINOR CRASH ON LANDING THAT RESULTED IN A STAY IN HOSPITAL THAT PREVENTED HIM. BUT HE DID INFORM ME THAT MR BENTWHISTLE THEN ACTUALLY FLEW THE COURSE IN REVERSE IN ORDER TO AGAIN DALLY IN THE SAME PLACE AND WE CAN ONLY GUESS AT HIS BEHAVIOUR. ONE MIGHT EXPECT LOUTISH BEHAVIOUR FROM LESSER CLASSES BUT SUCH DESPICABLE BEHAVIOUR FROM ONE OF MR BENTWHISTLE'S STANDING IS A COMPLETE AFFRONT TO DIGNIFIED SOCIETY AND CLEARLY NO WOMAN IS SAFE FROM MR BENTWHISTLE, HIS AERIAL CONTRAPTION AND HIS TELESCOPE.

THE CONSTABULARY IS CHECKING STATUTES TO SEE IF THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR PROSECUTION

BUT IN THE MEANTIME, TAKE HEED FINE LADY READERS AND CLOSE YOUR CURTAINS FOR PROTECTION LEST THE LIKES OF MR BENTWHISTLE PEER IN.

YOUR HUMBLE CORRESPONDENT,

TROPPL E ARMITAGE



TROPPL E. ARMITAGE,  
FEATURE COLUMNIST