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THE 1897 AIRSHIPS PART III

The following articles are from the ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH:

GOLDEN HAired GIRL IS IN IT

The Airship Discovered in Southwest Missouri ST. LOUIS, MO., April 19: In the mass of evidence which has reached the POST-DISPATCH concerning the existence of an airship that is said to be floating over the Central West, the most astonishing is that furnished by Mr. W.H. Hopkins, general traveling agent for the Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Company.

Mr. Hopkins writes the POST-DISPATCH that on Friday he saw the airship a few miles away from Springfield, Mo. Not only did he see the craft, but he saw the aerial navigators, and conversed with them.

The letter is not a hoax, it is in Mr. Hopkins' handwriting, so those employed at the headquarters of the Hartford company, 517 Security Building, aver. It was also identified by his wife, who lives at 5028 Minerva avenue. Mr. Hopkins is 50 years of age, and is well-known in the West End. He is a prominent church member, and everybody spoken to vouches for his veracity. The letter is here given:

To the Editor of the POST-DISPATCH:

Till yesterday I had supposed the numerous reports of the appearance of a mysterious airship in the different parts of the country, in many instances widely separated, at nearly the same hour, were but the result of very vivid imaginations.

I thought the first report of an airship was started by some Munchausen of the press to gratify some mischievous whim and to see how many imaginative people would fall in line and claim - honestly of course - that they had seen it also. My impression was strengthened by my own experience a few days ago, when in Kansas City a friend and myself thought we saw a bright light in the heavens, which frequently disappeared and then reappeared again, but which we afterwards found was the evening star, which was intensely bright, but which was occasionally obscured by light clouds of steam, which were not visible to us in the darkness.

But after my adventure of yesterday my doubts of the reality of the air ship have been dispelled. I was wandering through hills east of Springfield, Mo.,

and coming to the brow of a hill overlooking a small clearing in the valley a short distance below me I saw a sight that rooted me to the spot with amazement for some time. I could not believe my eyes at first, and shook myself to see if I was not dreaming. There in the clearing rested a vessel similar in outline to the air ship shown in the POST-DISPATCH of a few days ago, and said to have been taken in Illinois.

As the sun shone upon it the rays were reflected as from burnished aluminum. It rested upon four legs or supports, which raised it from the ground sufficiently to give room for two wheels like the propeller of a ship lying horizontally; one at the bow and one near the stern. Another at the stern lying perpendicularly was evidently for the purpose of propelling the vessel ahead, while the other two raised the vessel. The vessel itself was about twenty feet long and eight feet in diameter and the propellers about six feet in diameter.

Near the vessel was the most beautiful being I ever beheld. She was rather under medium size, but of the most exquisite form and features such as would put to shame the forms as sculptured by the ancient Greeks. She was dressed in nature's garb and her golden hair, wavy and glossy, hung to her waist, unconfined excepting by a band of glistening jewels that bound it back from her forehead. The jewels threw out rays of light as she moved her head. She was plucking the little flowers that were just blossoming from the sod, with exclamations of delight and in a language I could not understand. Her voice was like low, silvery bells and her laughter rang out like their chimes. In one hand she carried a fan of curious design that she fanned herself vigorously with, though to me the air was not warm and I wore an overcoat.

In the shade of the vessel lay a man of noble proportions and majestic countenance. His hair of dark auburn fell to his shoulders in wavy masses and his full beard of the same color, but lighter in shade, reached to his breast. He also was fanning himself with a curious fan as if the heat oppressed him.

As I looked with astonishment on the picture, I wondered if Adam and Eve had come to earth again, or was I dreaming?

After gazing for a while I moved forward, and the woman, hearing the rustle of leaves, looked around. A moment later she stood looking at me with wonder and astonishment in her beautiful eyes, then, with a shriek of fear, she rushed to the man, who sprung to his feet, threw his arm around around her and glared at me in a threatening

manner.

I stopped and, taking my handkerchief from my pocket, waved it in the air. A few minutes we stood. I then spoke some words of apology for intruding, but seemed not to understand, and replied in a threatening tone and words which I could not make out. I tried by signs to make him understand, and finally he left her, trembling and trying to hold him back, and came toward me. I extended my hand. He looked at it a moment, astonishment depicted in his dark brown eyes, and finally he extended his own and touched mine. I took his and carried it to my lips. I tried by signs to make them understand I meant no harm. Finally his face lighted up with pleasure, and he turned and spoke to the woman. She came hesitatingly forward, her form undulating with exquisite grace. I took her hand and kissed it fervently. The color rose to her cheeks and she drew it hastily away.

I asked them by signs where they came from, but it was difficult to make them understand. Finally they seemed to do so and smiling they gazed upwards for a moment, as if looking for some particular point, and then pointed upwards, pronouncing a word, which to my imagination, sounded like Mars.

I pointed to the ship and expressed my wonder in my countenance. He took me by the hand and led me towards it. In the side was a small door. I looked in. There was a luxurious couch covered with robes of most beautiful stuff and texture, such as I had never seen before. From the ceiling was suspended a curious ball, from which extended a strip of metal, which he struck to make it vibrate. Instantly the ball was illuminated with soft scenes such as I had never seen before.

At the stern was another large ball of metal, supported in a strong frame-work and connected to the shaft of the propeller at the stern was similar mechanism attached to each propeller and similar balls attached to a point of metal that extended from each side of the vessel and from the prow. And connected to each ball was a thin strip of metal similar to the one attached to the lamp. He struck each one and when they vibrated the balls commenced to rotate with intense rapidity, and did not cease till he stopped them with kind of a brake. As they revolved intense lights, stronger than any arc light I ever saw, shone out from the points at the sides and at the prow, but they were of different colors. The one at the prow was an intense white light. On one side was green and the other red.

The two had been examining me with the greatest curiosity in the meantime. They felt of my clothing, looked at my gray hair with surprise and examined

my watch with the greatest wonder. Signs are poor medium to exchange ideas and therefore we could express but little.

I pointed to the balls attached to the propellers. He gave each of the strips of metal a rap, those attached to the propellers under the vessel first. The balls began to revolve rapidly, and I felt the vessel begin to rise, and I sprang out, and none too soon, for the vessel rose a lightly as a bird, and shot away like an arrow, and in a few minutes was out of sight. The two stood laughing and waving their hands to me, she a vision of loveliness and he of manly vigor.

Probably people will ask as they did of the farmer in Iowa: "Where did you get your whisky?" But I can say if I ever drank liquor I would go immediately and get some more of the whisky.

If you wish to learn anything more particularly regarding my experience my address is 517 Security Building, St. Louis.

W.H. Hopkins.

Muskogee, I.T., April 17, 1897.

The above letter was taken to 517 Security Building, which proved to be the St. Louis office of the Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Co., and was shown to C.C. Gardner, the manager. He read it through carefully.

"That is wonderful," he said. "That is Mr. Hopkins' handwriting and he is now in that territory. He was also at Springfield on the day named. He is traveling agent for the company."

"So you believe what he says?"

"Indeed I do. Strange as it seems I am compelled to believe it. Mr. Hopkins is not a romancer. He never courts notoriety. What he writes he has seen and he believes it is his duty to make the facts public. He does not drink a drop. He has been connected with this company for a long time and is most reliable. What he writes you can publish as being absolutely true."

While Mr. Gardner was talking several clerks examined the letter. They compared the writing with that of letters received recently from the agent, and it was conclusively proven the same hand had penned all.....

When his wife was asked if he was given to jesting or perpetrating a hoax, she said: "Quite the contrary. He is most serious. What, a man 50 years of age writing a letter without it being true! He is a member of the Maple Ave. M.E. church, and has many friends in the West End. He undoubtedly wishes to acquaint his friends with the marvel he has seen..."