

THE AIRSHIP AGAIN.

IS IT A HOAX?

Persons in various parts of the State continue to observe objects in the sky which they convert into the appearance of an airship. Quite recently a lady in Claremont declared that not only was a veritable airship seen there by her husband and herself, but that its proximity to her house was such that her spouse called out to the occupants to be careful of the chimneys, to which reminder he received a reply in some language to him unknown. The latest account comes from Mr. Wilfrid Gull, a son of Mr. H. B. Gull, of Guildford. Mr. Gull, jun., is living on his property, Southampton, near Balingup, and he has written to his father, detailing his experiences. From the letter, it appears that Mr. Gull, jun. last Saturday night, visited some friends in the district, and remained with them for several hours. After leaving his friends—the time then being nearly midnight—he rode in the direction of his home, which is some distance away. A bright light suddenly made its appearance in the sky, and attracted his attention. As it came nearer to him he observed that the light belonged to a long dark object. It was soon practically overhead, and Mr. Gull frankly confesses to the trepidation with which he witnessed it apparently descending straight upon him. Unwilling to accept closer quarters with the visitors, he rode back to his friends, and rousing them from their slumbers, invited them out to see the visi-

slumbers, invited them out to see the visitor for themselves. The invitation was readily accepted, and from that time right on to 3 o'clock on Sunday morning, Mr Gull and his friends remained watching the object, which continued to move in various directions in the sky, and at different heights, until at the hour named it disappeared. It will be seen that the account is a very circumstantial one, and Mr. H. B. Gull thought it of sufficient interest to cause him to place the details at the disposal of a representative of this journal.

So many accounts have been heard of late from Pingelly to Dongarra, of an unusual appearance in the heavens, that in several quarters the opinion is gaining ground that something more than mere imagination has been at work. It is well known that during the past six or seven years, several residents of this State have been experimenting in aerial vessel building, and that they have claimed for the results of those experiments considerable progress towards the solution of the most interesting problem of the day. To their own satisfaction and in some instances to that of their friends, they have demonstrated that if they had not actually reached the goal of their ambitions, they had at least advanced in that direction, and as was recently stated in these columns, in two cases at least, support of a financial character is being provided to enable more thorough demonstrations to be made. There are persons in this city who connect the alleged appearance of mysterious visitors in the nightly sky with the operations of some of these local experimenters, and argue that the silence observed by the latter affords no ground for doubting that such experiments are being conducted. There are others, however, who do not regard the appearance as the result of mere experiment, but are

as the result of mere experiment, but are as fully persuaded that what was seen was an airship as was those two Tasmanians who recently declared that such a visitor was seen in the Garden Island, and that the occupants of the vessel—like the alleged one at Claremont mentioned above—spoke in a foreign tongue. A resident of East Perth only yesterday forwarded to this journal an extract which, he stated, he had taken from a Melbourne publication three weeks old, couched in the following terms:—

“Airships for Papua.—Strange exploring scheme. A New York newspaper says that the Netherlands Government and the German Colonial Office are contemplating a joint exploration of New Guinea by airship. New Guinea is divided into three parts, Germany and the Netherlands owning two-thirds. All former attempts by the Germans or the Hollanders to explore the interior of the island have proved failures, largely because of the ferocity of the natives. Now it is hoped that by the use of an airship, the exploration of the wild country will be made safely, and out of reach of the savage natives. Lieutenant Bombaldo, of the Dutch navy, will take charge of the expedition. To a correspondent the lieutenant, who is a trained aeronaut, said:—
“The Netherlands Government has spent much money and sacrificed hundreds of

lives in endeavouring to explore Western New Guinea, but swamps, impenetrable forests, and hostile natives have made progress by land impossible.’ The lieutenant, who is a native of Dutch India, and a geographer and astronomer of note, pur-
poses to start in an airship from the

noses to start in an airship from the Dutch settlement of Steenboom."

While the alleged appearance of an airship in this State is believed in by some, others treat it with levity as being the result of a more or less romantic imagination, or as capable of being explained from the astronomer's viewpoint. Indeed, among the latter are to be found those who point out that in the cases where it is alleged two bright lights have been seen close to each other not long after sunset, these lights are in all probability Jupiter and Venus, and that with men's minds so persistently turned to the subject of aerial navigation by the daily cablegrams referring to the subject, a tendency to confuse the usual with the unusual might very conceivably arise.

Another suggestion which has been put forward is that in some cases one or more persons have been engaged in hoaxing the good folk of Western Australia, by the perpetration of a clever trick. One suggestion in their connection is that some jocosse individual has conceived the idea of sending up fire balloons, singly or in pairs—the latter being united with a length of cord and forming what is known in pyrotechny as "twin balloons." Another suggestion bearing on the matter of hoaxing the public is that what is known as the "box kite" is being flown in some of the places where the "visit" is reported to have taken place. This class of kite—a familiar one to those who have witnessed the kite-flying in Chinese communities—can be made of a prodigious size, and is easily and readily illuminated, and it is suggested that a large one of this form flown in the air might well deceive the beholder at night into the belief that he was witnessing the passage of an airship overhead.

Whatever explanation may be offered, there can be no doubt that the minds of

There can be no doubt that the minds of many in this State, in common with the rest of Australia, have been considerably exercised of late over the airship question.
