

U.F.O. HISTORICAL REVIEW

Farewell For Now

This will be the last print number of UHR. Rising costs combined with virtually non-existent subscriptions spell non-feasibility. For much of UHR's run finances have been out of pocket and in recent years it has been difficult to pay printing and postage bills. I do appreciate the support UHR has had from the small number of historically minded individuals who want to see this information in print. It is clear that UFOs have seen better days. It is not clear whether or not the topic will see better ones again.

What is clear too is that the advent of the Internet has spelled doom for many print publications. As more and more computers become staples of home living, paper pages have given way to electronic ones. They move at lightning speed, sometimes minutes after the information develops. A tour of libraries in my area alone reveals an increasing tilt toward electronic journals, solving a massive problem of space and facilities, and the costs to maintain them.

Ironically, the Internet's dominance, while having an upper hand over the costs of doing a printed publication, has led to a golden age of information access. One of the most important developments in recent years has been the availability of millions of pages of newspapers and journals online. What was once a very forbidding research endeavor has become easy. For a relatively small access fee, one can read news coverage from all over the world back to the beginnings of those publications from the comfort of the home. Furthermore, one can print copies at will for lesser cost than any library can offer. As one who has spent countless hours in dusty basements and at microfilm projectors, this is something of a miracle to me.

For UFO research, this means unearthing old stories that would otherwise have remained obscure indefinitely, or unveiled at the behest of the few brave individuals willing to spend whole days going through a few volumes at a time. Whether or not such discoveries take us anywhere useful remains to be seen. The UFO topic has been marginalized to the extent that we now see little mention of it in the popular press. Or for that matter we see little of any kind of press outside that of the hardcore "graybeards," those over 50 who were there from early on, knocking out little publications like this one. So for now, the "Net" will be the medium of choice for new discoveries. Cheap, efficient, timely, with low overhead. We shall see what it brings!

UFO Feature Film – In 1914!

Many of us are already familiar with early unknown airship waves in 1896, 1897 and 1909. These waves constituted the first concentrated manifestation of what we now call “UFOs,” or “unidentified flying objects.” Not alien spacecraft mind you but simply unidentified objects. From 1912 to 1913, more strange aircraft were seen over England. With the onset of World War I imminent, certainly some of this could be attributed to “war nerves” over suspicions that Germany was using Zeppelins to spy upon British fortifications. Still, not all of the reports were so summarily dismissed.

It has long been suspected that if a more intense search of old newspapers and other records were accomplished, other reports of mysterious aircraft around the world would become evident during World War I when the public was more aware of, and watching, the skies. In recent years with the advent of old newspaper archives being posted on the Internet by a handful of companies, a researcher has been allowed just the kind of searching needed to unveil these local airship scares. One such scare has surfaced in Jamaica.

On October 17, 1914, the Kingston, Jamaica “Gleaner” reported on a strange aeroplane or “something” seen over Port Arthur. Police were said to have seen an aircraft in the early evening of October 15. Later crowds of people gathered upon hearing of the story, straining to see the visitor. Sporadically, an aircraft was seen but descriptions were vague and the police weren’t talking. The Gleaner alluded to the possibility that the incident was due to “the effect of war upon the nerves” and wondered if it was due to an illusion.

However there was a more ominous possibility, according to the writer. If these strange visitors were German, keeping America assured that German hostilities at the outset of World War I were not being brought into the Western Hemisphere necessitated their night flights. No bombs would be dropped, nor other hostile action taken, but the aerial visitor, perhaps based on some small island in the area, might be expected to continue night visits.

A few days later (Gleaner, October 20) it was reported that an airship was seen near Hope Wharf in Little London on the 17th, according to “wild rumour.” Shortly after overseas reporting on strange airship flights began (Gleaner, November 12) with sightings on the British mainland over Sheerness and Harwich on November 10.

The Gleaner for December 12 went further (see above clip).

On the very day this story appeared the Palace Theatre took out an advertisement on an upcoming film feature called “The Mysterious Airship.” The ad went on: “A Great Drama that will be of much interest to all persons in and around Kingston.

*Kingston (Jamaica) Gleaner
Dec. 12, 1914*

REPORTS OF AIR CRAFT.

A Gazette Extraordinary, published yesterday, contained the following:—

“So many reports of air craft, alleged to have been seen in various parts of the island, have reached the Governor and various officials, that His Excellency now directs it to be notified for general information that, in future, such reports should be forwarded in the first instance to the nearest Police Officer, in order that no time may be lost in making investigations.”

The plot starts in much the same manner as the present rumours about an Airship that us supposed to be flying over Kingston at nights."

The first impression upon reading the ad is that this is a documentary film, silent in those days, designed to take advantage of the airship rumors circulating through Jamaica. But it is apparent that the film was produced before the reports began, saying that it starts "in much the same manner" as the Kingston airship reports.

Kingston (Jamaica) Gleaner
Dec. 12, 1914

THE : PALACE.
JAMAICA'S BEST MOVING PICTURE & VAUDEVILLE
THEATRE
"The Mysterious Airship."
A Great Drama that will be of much interest to all persons in and around Kingston. The plot starts in much the same manner as the present rumours about an Airship that is supposed to be flying over Kingston at nights; it then becomes more interesting and the mystery is finally cleared up under conditions that could occur here.
It will be to the personal interest of everyone "to learn much" by seeing this great film—in two long parts.

Efforts have been made to discover what the film was and the circumstances behind its production. If a record of the feature exists it is very obscure. This, coupled with the fact that, according to the American Film Institute, some 80% to 90% of all silent movies have been destroyed, makes finding "The Mysterious Airship" difficult if not impossible.

A few suppositions can be made. Premiering as it did in Jamaica, it might be that the film was a British production. Two years earlier England was in the grip of a mystery airship wave, from late 1912 to early 1913. This was more than enough time for a film based upon these events to be conceived and produced. It was through serendipity that the film surfaced in Jamaica at the time that their airship flurry was in force.

The public in Jamaica and elsewhere were certainly primed for interest in airships. Besides the 1912-1913 British airship scare, another had occurred in South Africa only two months before the Jamaican reports. War nerves were surely at the forefront of the South African reports, coinciding as they did with the outbreak of World War I in August 1914.

On the other hand, why was only Jamaica, and not other Caribbean islands, the focus of strange aerial flyers between August and December 1914? Locales like Cuba and Haiti would seem to be more strategically placed from the German point of view in dealing with the United States. Or were only British colonies susceptible to war nerves?

There is another possibility surrounding the circumstances of the Jamaican airship flurry and this mysterious film that appeared in the midst of the activity. The reports were vague, word-of-mouth tales spreading from person to person, and eventually reaching authorities. The government became quite alarmed but made no headway in solving the reports. The sightings seemed to stop after the premiere of the film. Could we be dealing with one of the earliest stunt gimmicks in film history to get filmgoers to go and see a movie? It would be rather easy. Movie promoters, knowing that the film was scheduled to be shown in Jamaica in a month or two, would spread stories that strange lights were seen in the sky. They could even have a pilot fly a few passes over the city of Kingston at night, this to generate buzz about mysterious airships and aviators prior to the appearance of the feature film. The film appears, does business and moves along. And strangely, the reports stop after December. Could the film's promoters have been that clever?

The film continued in Jamaica in at least one other theater after the Palace in early 1915 and even showed up in the U.S. at a theater in Frederick, Maryland. All traces of it now seem to be lost.

But the fact is that we now have definite evidence that a motion picture once existed about mysterious airships, the UFOs of their day, 33 years before the dawn of the flying saucer age. I would say that is pretty interesting!

Oddities In 1911

The March 24, 1911, "Daily Kennebec Journal" of Augusta, Maine tells of a "strange heavenly phenomena" at 9 PM on the evening of the 21st. It said that spanning the sky from the east to the west horizon, a narrow band of light appeared and remained stationary for more than a half an hour. It was stressed that the northern lights were unusually bright but that the band of light "seemed entirely removed" from the display. It faded away at 10 PM.

The July 25, 1911, Reno, Nevada "Evening Gazette" tells of the startling appearance of a "ball of fire" in the vicinity of Durango, Colorado on the evening of the 22nd. It was said to be the size of the full moon and persisted for several hours. It appeared to travel towards the earth and grew larger until it was half again as large as the full moon. It then receded and disappeared entirely. The apparition baffled witnesses, including ranchers and residents of the district and was said to have convinced some that "the time of judgment had come."

The August 4, 1911, Mansfield, Ohio "News" tells of a "phenomenon" seen by Dr. and Mrs. A. H. McCullough while driving on Brinkerhoff Avenue at 9 PM on the 3rd. They saw an unusual light shining across the road. Thinking at first it was another auto, they watched and could see that it actually came from a ball of fire in the north. It seemed to

be 6 inches in diameter and about 50 feet from the ground. It shone like an arc light and was in view for a few minutes, then disappeared.

The September 27, 1911, Lincoln, Nebraska "News" carried an interesting cartoon on the front page of their paper. If it is not clear enough, the last panel shows a crashed kite with lanterns attached.

News LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1911.

IT HAPPENED IN WINSTED, CON^N.

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The October 7, 1911, Sandusky, Ohio "Daily Register" tells of a "mysterious red light" in the northern sky on October 6th at 7 PM, according to telephone calls and eyewitnesses. As word spread about the light, newspaper reporters and others conducted a search for it but failed to see it anywhere. It was speculated that the light was attached to a balloon sent up from Kansas City the previous day. Further inquiries showed that the balloons traveled in the wrong direction for Sandusky. A balloon race was offered as a possible explanation but in only one instance was that thought to be plausible.

And Yet More in 1914!

More research has unveiled another mystery airship flurry in Ontario in 1914. Within a couple of weeks of the start of World War 1, the New Liskeard, Ontario "Speaker" reported on how just after their August 20th edition went to press, a Mr. William Judge of White River called of his sighting of an airship from the northwest to the northeast. It was thought that German spies were active and the event was circulated to other papers. Then on August 25th, a hydroplane was reported taking off from a lake by two witnesses, one of whom in his zeal to seeing the aircraft ran off the wharf and into the water.

New reports continued. The "Speaker" of September 11th told of another airship, while the Waterford, Ontario "Star" of September 3rd told of an aeroplane carrying a large searchlight passing over the city of Welland on August 27th. Then on the evening of the 2nd another airship passed over Welland, seen by a Michigan Central train engineer and fireman coming from the direction of Buffalo, N.Y. and travelling slightly ahead of his train as it moved.

The New Liskeard "Speaker" of October 2nd again told of another airship, this time seen by a C.P.R. train crew at 11 PM of the previous evening. It moved from the area of Ignace to Fort William, Ontario. The crew saw the airship through a telescope and described it as being about 100 feet long. Other witnesses were said to have seen the airship at different times.

At Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario (Toronto Globe, October 20), several residents were said to have seen an aeroplane rising into the sky from an area near the American Soo Locks. It was said to have sailed across the river and hover near the Canadian locks, guarded by the Canadian militia.

Commenting on the airship activity, the Simcoe, Ontario "Reformer" said: "The London Advertiser takes no stock in all the weird tales of night-visiting airships. Neither does this great family journal and never has. We have been taken out into the starlight night on several occasions to have our Doubting Thomas obstinacy completely squelched, but so far with disastrous results only to the squelchers. When an aeroplane is seen passing over Simcoe it will be heard as well as seen."

It is rather clear that more will be forthcoming on mystery airships during the World War 1 era. The surface has barely been scratched on press research of airship scares. It would surely help if more such research took place in other European nations besides England, which we know to have had such activity.

Sample Press Coverage of the 1913 Meteor Procession

The fireball procession of February 9, 1913 has become rather well known in UFO literature over the years. But little of the actual press reporting has been seen. Here are a few samples of what the public saw at the time of the incident.

*Rev. Free, Ont.
Mercury
Feb. 21, 1913*

BRILLIANT METEORIC DISPLAY

A brilliant display of meteors was witnessed by many people last Sunday evening. Toronto seems to have been unusually favored by the spectacle, and the papers contain interesting accounts of the unusual exhibition of fire works. A number of our own citizens who were on the street about nine o'clock were startled by the sudden appearance of a ball of fire leaving behind it a starry train of light moving somewhat slowly over the town. The phenomenon must therefore have been on an extensive scale and the earth in her voyage through space must have run into an unusually large bunch of meteors. These are nothing more than bits of rock moving with great velocity in an orbit of their own about the sun. When one of these stones strikes the upper air sailing in at the rate of fifty to a hundred miles a second, it immediately springs into flame and vanishes in the form of gas. Occasionally a mass is too large to be thus consumed and falls to the earth as an aerolite. Millions of these small bodies strike our atmosphere every year. They are popularly known as shooting stars.—Midland Free Press.

That Meteoric Display Last Week.

A very beautiful sight was beheld by a number of our townspeople on Sunday night, when a shower of meteors, travelling through the air from northwest to southeast, was visible. The dazzling occurrence happened about 9.10 and lasted perhaps two or three minutes. The number of the heavenly bodies seen has been reported variously from 25 to three times that many. The illumination was seen in many other places as well. From some witnesses also come tales of heavy rumblings, but it is thought these sounds might have been due to other causes. According to astronomers, it was an ordinary me-

teoric performance, and no special importance is attached to it. Very fortunately there are few superstitious people nowadays, else there would have been considerable excitement.—Simcoe Reformer.

Asks Information About the Meteors.

Prof. C. A. Chant of the University of Toronto is seeking information regarding the meteoric display of Sunday evening. Reports from those living some distance from Toronto would be especially valuable, particularly in regard to the position in the sky in which the meteors were seen—that is, whether apparently overhead or to the east, the west or any other direction; and if not overhead how high above the horizon they were. Prof. Chant wishes as definite information as possible regarding the following: Time of occurrence, position in the sky, direction of the motion, how many seen in all, how many at once, how long whole phenomenon lasted, if any sound was heard, if so, at what time it was heard and what it was like; if bodies remained intact or broke up, if bodies had tails and how long they were, how long any one body was in sight.

*Simcoe, Ont.
Reformer
Feb. 13, 1913*

A Meteoric Phenomenon

A very beautiful sight was beheld by a number of our townspeople on Monday night, when a shower of meteors, travelling through the air from northwest to southeast, was visible. The dazzling occurrence happened about 9.10 and lasted perhaps two or three minutes. The number of the heavenly bodies seen has been reported variously from 25 to three times that many. The illumination was seen in many other places as well. From some witnesses also come tales of heavy rumblings, but it is thought these sounds might have been due to other causes.

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*Washington Post
Feb 16 1913*

Seeing Stars.

From the New York Sun.

The astronomers say that every day, or maybe every other day, 20,000,000 meteors shoot through space close enough to this sphere to be seen without the aid of telescopes. The name of the astronomer who counted the meteors is not given in the essay on the subject. In August, the scientific folk assert, more meteors searsh themselves into vapor than in any other month.

Capt. Abbot, of the British freight steamship Zafra, which finished a very leisurely trip across the Atlantic from Havana with a cargo of iron pyrites, says that August is not in it for meteors with February. He was about 780 miles off the South Carolina coast when the sky artillery began to bombard him.

The meteors were fired slowly. It took 6 minutes for 40 of them (that's the skipper's count, and he thinks he is an amateur compared with the 20,000,000 counters) to write their glowing, bluish-white autographs across the sky. In this six minutes of incandescent glory the skipper read over the love letters of his youth and made his will, as he thought that the last day might be pretty close.

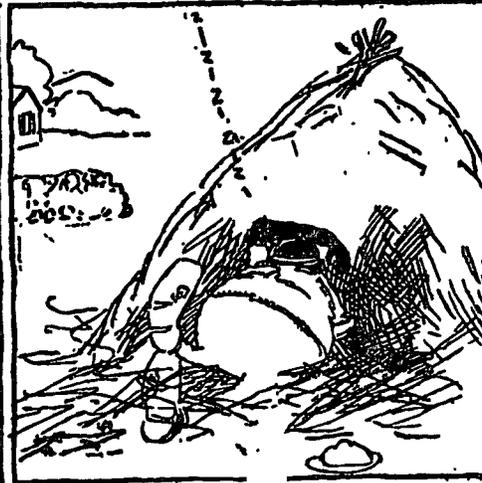
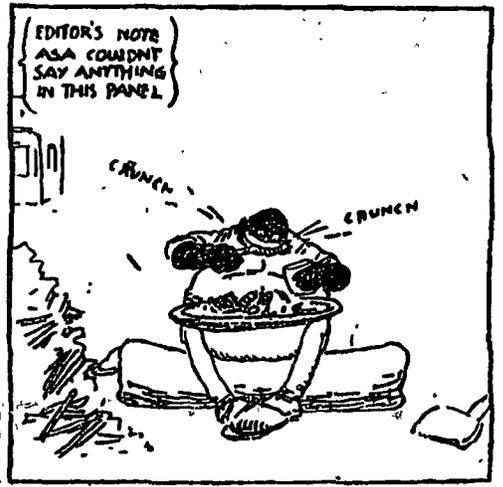
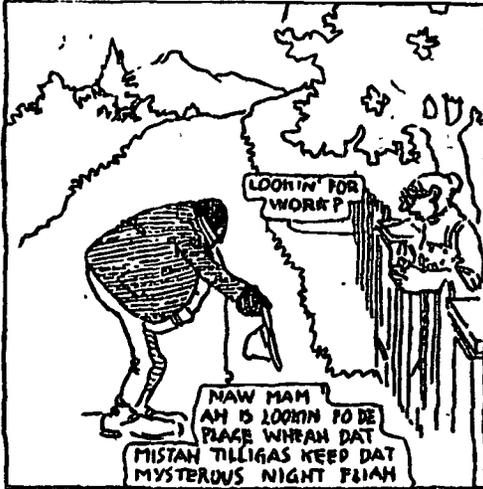
He says the stream of meteors passed from northwest to southeast, and appeared to be about 2,000 feet above the ship. None sized in the unquiet sea. The scientists say that 40 miles would be a better guess than that of the skipper, who is not a practical astronomer, and never could count 20,000,000 meteors in a day, or 10,000,000 meteors in a night.

Airships and Political Incorrectness in 1909

The following pages illustrate a peculiar blend of airship coverage of the 1909 New England wave and a terrible racist cartoon that appeared to reflect common attitudes at the time. It is all the more peculiar coming from the Boston Globe, now a bastion of liberalism.

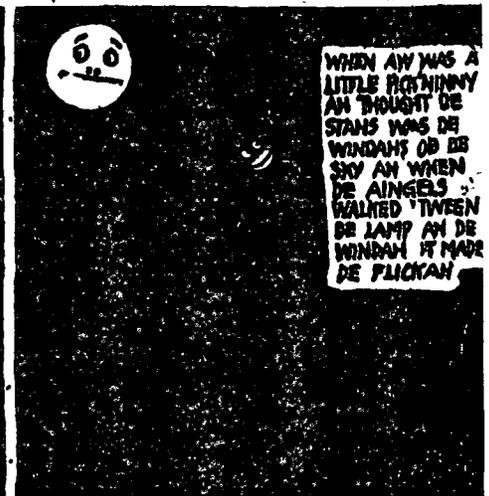
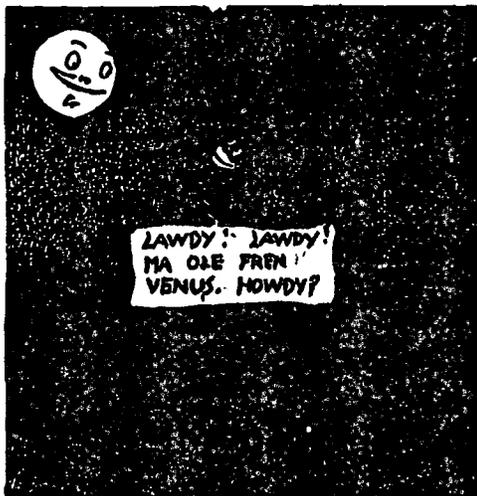
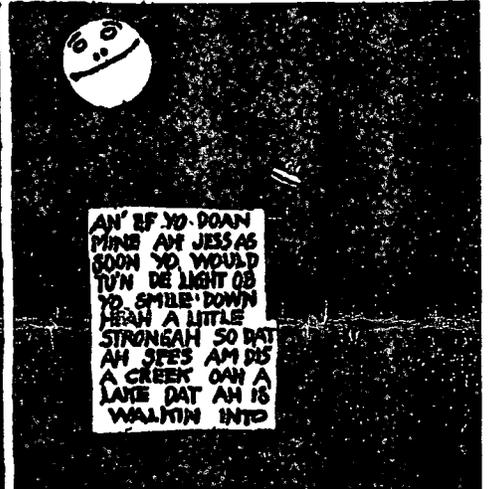
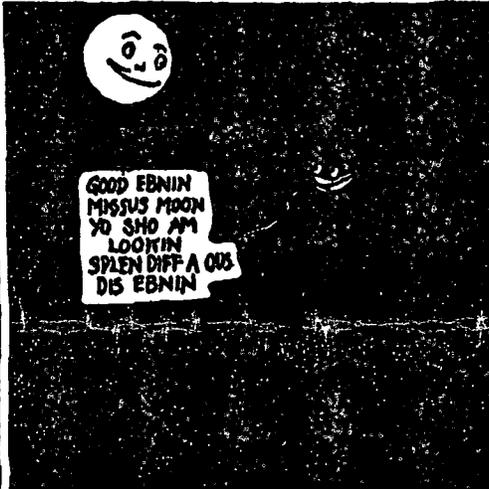
Boston Globe - Aug. 7, 1910

MR ASA SPADES IS ON THE TRAIL OF MR TILLINGHAST AND HIS MYSTERIOUS FLYING MACHINE



MR ASA SPADES WAS HOT ON THE TRAIL OF THE TILLINGHAST AIRSHIP WHEN—

By WALLACE GOLDSMITH.



Mystery Aircraft Over Stoneham in 1910

Yes, a mystery aircraft flew over UHR's hometown and injected yet another mystery inventor into the airship waves of the early 20th century. This time it is Theodore Driver of Melrose, Massachusetts who claimed that he had been flying clandestinely for six months up to the time of the Stoneham overflight. He did however disavow being responsible for flying on May 15th, the time of the news story.

A check of local papers revealed nothing about the reports that were relayed to the Boston Globe.

STONEHAM SEES AN AEROPLANE

Built Like an Owl, Goes
Mile a Minute.

Melrose Man, However,
Expresses Deep Disgust.

Had His Machine Out, but
Didn't Quit Earth.

What some persons declared was a man in an aeroplane built on the lines of a Tennessee mountain owl was seen in rapid flight over the town of Stoneham yesterday, according to those who called the Globe office on the telephone.

In their excitement they said the "manbird" was headed for Boston and making a mile a minute. But when night had settled on the city the airship and its helmsman had not appeared. Then reporters undertook to run down the cause of the excitement and located Theodore P. Driver of Melrose, who has been making experiments with aeroplanes for many months and has escaped newspaper notice, much to his satisfaction.

He expressed his disgust last night for "village pests" and "town gossips" who, he said, imagined things. He said:

"There is nothing to it. Everybody is crazy. A lot of fools are making experiments with aeroplanes and flying machines nowadays and I don't know whether any of us have been up yet or whether any of us will ever go up. I tell you now that if I could find an elevator big enough I would run my aeroplane upon it and get into it and

*Boston Globe
May 16, 1910*

go up and stay up just so I could say I have been up in a flying machine.

"I have three machines. I made them. Any fool can make a flying machine and a lot of them are making them today. I made a sad mistake today and I wish I could live the day over again. If I could I would do differently than I did.

"I have toted my flying machine about at night and in the early morning hours for six months and have escaped being seen. But today I made the mistake of my life. I dragged three bicycle wheels, having a frame covered with cloth over it and a buzzsaw in front, through the streets behind my little chug-chug wagon.

"I was caught in a thunder storm and the flying machine (and it didn't look like a flying machine at that) was soaked with water and covered with mud and I guess the automobile and I didn't miss much of the mud and water either.

"Say, if you want to know the truth, I have been trying to find a place where I can experiment with a flying machine without killing anybody. I have found it and I am not going to tell any one where it is. I have found three places, in fact, and today I was moving to one of them when some wildly excited persons saw me and spread the report that I was flying over the country like a bird, and ever since I have been bothered to death by anxious inquires about the trip and the workings of my machine. It is all rot.

"If they had reported seeing me making a flight at night or about 3 o'clock in the morning that would have been different, perhaps. I don't want anything said about this; I haven't got any stock to sell. I haven't got a press agent and don't want one.

"Nobody has got a picture of my machine and nobody is going to get one. I have a nice, quiet, secluded place out in the country where it is safe for me to experiment with my machine and I want to be let alone. That's all. Nobody saw me make a flight today.

"When the excited 'gossips' saw me today the wheels of my machine were flying over and touching the ground. I wasn't gliding above the tree and house tops either. Now don't forget what I am telling you, but for heaven's sake forget the chatter of the crazy folks who say they saw me flying in my aeroplane."

Despite Mr Driver's protestations several persons out about North Stoneham were positive last night that they had seen an aeroplane gliding with the grace of a swallow above the house and treetops, at all times apparently completely under the control of the aviator.

Like Halley's comet, this Sunday evening monster had a tale to it and now it has been told.