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The Balloon in War

Much speculation is naturally excited by the expiration last Friday of a prohibition placed upon a certain method of conducting warfare by the international peace conference at The Hague. An agreement was entered into at that time by more than a score of nations to refrain from the use of projectiles which might be dropped from balloons, of bombs which, upon explosion, would diffuse suffocating gases, and of explosive bullets.

To the second of these provisions the United States and England withheld their consent, but the others were adopted unanimously. Again, regarding the second and third there appears to have been no time limit. As for the first of them, it was explicitly agreed that abstinence was to continue for five years only. The conference adjourned on July 29, 1899, and the prohibition dated from that day.

Some of the military possibilities of the balloon were promptly perceived immediately after it was invented. The first notable ascent by the Montgolfier brothers occurred in 1783. Within ten years thereafter a regular school of aerostation was established at Meudon, under the auspices of the army, and in 1794 the head of it, Colonel Coutelle, took up with him to a height of over a mile a general and adjutant to observe the position and strength of a hostile force. This incident occurred on the eve of the battle of Freurus, and the reconnaissance gave the French a distinct advantage over the Austrians. Telegraphy had not then come into use. Hence the information which was secured was transmitted to the commander only after the descent of the balloon. Nevertheless, it contributed directly to the decisive victory which followed. On that occasion the airship was prevented from going astray by means of a rope and windless—an expedient which has been generally adopted ever since when balloons have been employed for observation. At Santiago in 1898 there was, in addition to the rope, a telegraph wire, by means of which the signal officer aloft could communicate directly and instantaneously with headquarters.

Balloons have been used in almost every great war for a century. The first Napoleon took a number of them into Egypt in order to impress the Arabs with the superiority of European ideas. In the siege of Paris, 1870-71, the attempt was made to establish postal communication by means of airships between the beleaguered city and the national authorities as the carrier pigeon service. After all, the principal military use of the balloon hitherto has been reconnaissance, and one officer after another has testified to the help thus received. Lord Wolseley has asserted that he finished his campaign in the Soudan far more quickly than would otherwise have been possible because of such aid.

An observer in a captive balloon is exposed to great danger from the enemy's guns. Even Coutelle, over a century ago, was threatened by a cannon shot, and was obliged to let out more rope to insure safety. Today the Mauser and other rifles carried by infantry soldiers have a range of three miles or more. At Santiago showers of well directed bullets flew around the signal officers who were on duty and whose elevation was at no time greater than 1500 feet. There were narrow escapes from instant death on that account, to say nothing of injury from premature descent had the balloon been badly punctured.

Such risks have furnished an important incentive for experiments with airships which could be kept moving by suitable machinery. In the United States the war department has lent encouragement to Professor Langley for that reason, and several European powers have pursued a similar policy for at least twenty years. The prototype of the Santos-Dumont machine was developed by two French army officers, Renard and Krebs. They used electric power instead of gasoline engines to drive their screws, but they adopted the cigar shaped gas bag, in order to lessen the resistance encountered from the atmosphere while flying horizontally. They are said to be the first aeronauts who described a complete circle in the air while aloft, thus demonstrating the feasibility of steering and propelling craft of this kind. No speeds have yet been developed which exceed fifteen or sixteen miles an hour, and no voyage has yet extended over an hour and three-quarters. Little further improvement in these directions is needed, though, to put in the hands of military men an agent of largely increased power. Not only will a good flying machine, properly managed, be able to keep out of the way of an enemy while engaged in reconnaissance, but it should be able to assume the aggressive and work fearful havoc. The kind of service which now becomes permissible has not hitherto

been attempted, for a variety of reasons. The agreement made at The Hague five years ago has interfered temporarily. Before that prohibition took effect there had been no important war for a considerable period. Besides, the airship had not reached its present state of development. However, both in America and Europe a number of wide-awake men have considered plans for making trouble for an enemy in new ways. One scheme is to operate in the air a mechanism akin to the Whitehead torpedo. The latter propels and steers itself after being launched in the water. The aerial torpedo, if designed for horizontal flight, could be liberated from a captive balloon or an elevated station on land, or from a self-propelled airship of the Santos-Dumont type. It has also been proposed to drop torpedoes from craft of the latter kind, a venient position first being reached above an army or a town, or even over a ship at sea. Were these torpedoes filled with dynamite or gun cotton, they might do much damage, though it is impossible to say how much. Santos-Dumont has pointed out that from one of his airships it might be possible to hit a submarine boat, even if the latter was submerged. The former, being more nimble than the latter, could probably maneuver better, and hence would have the advantage in such a contest. Inasmuch as the blow would be delivered with a suitably weighted torpedo, carrying its charge in its nose, the one essential to success would seem to be a good aim. Gravitation would do the rest.

The possibility of the adoption of this kind of warfare by either Russia or Japan during the present struggle depends upon a number of things. One is the duration of the contest itself. Another is the degree of preparation for it which the combatants may have made in secret. The generally backward state of the Russian provision for the war and the limited amount of attention hitherto given to aerial navigation by the czar's army officers discourage the expectations that they have anything "up their sleeve" which can be produced on short notice. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the French, who have always been conspicuously devoted to aeronautic ventures, are friendly to Russia, and might co-operate with her, had they anything new to offer. Again, Japan, though wonderfully alert to modern methods of fighting, has given no indications of a purpose to avail herself of the privilege now open to her. Perhaps the world may be obliged to wait until the next great war is fought before it witnesses a trial of the aerial torpedo. Nevertheless, freedom to use the latter will doubtless encourage inventors to present a number of fresh ideas to the military authorities of the leading powers. That none of these propositions may prove acceptable and revolutionary cannot safely be affirmed.

Fire in Louisville Hotel.

Louisville, Aug. 6.—Fire broke out in the basement of the Galt house, one of the largest hostleries in the city, at an early hour this morning and for a time serious consequences were feared. There were over 300 guests in the hotel, all of whom were awakened and escaped to the street. None of the guests was injured so far as known. The damage will amount to several thousand dollars.

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I was afflicted with blood poison, and the best doctors did me no good, though I took their treatment faithfully. In fact, I seemed to grow worse all the while. I was disheartened, for it seemed that I would never be cured. At the advice of a friend I then took S. S. S., and began to improve. I continued the medicine, and it cured me completely, building up my health and increasing my appetite. Although this was ten years ago, I have never had a sign of the disease to return. Box 285, Savannah, Ga. W. R. HEWMAN.

every bone, muscle, tissue and nerve in the body becomes infected with the poison, and from the roots of the hair to the soles of the feet there is not a sound spot anywhere. To cure this awful contagion the blood must first be purified, and nothing will do this so quickly and surely as S. S. S., which has been known for years as an antidote for the poisonous virus of Contagious Blood Poison. Mercury and potash may check it for a time, but it comes back in a still more aggravated form. S. S. S. is guaranteed purely vegetable, and \$1.00 is offered for proof that it contains a mineral ingredient. Write for our home-treatment book, and learn all about Contagious Blood Poison and how to treat it. No charge for medical advice. THE SWIFT SPECIFIC CO., ATLANTA, GA.



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