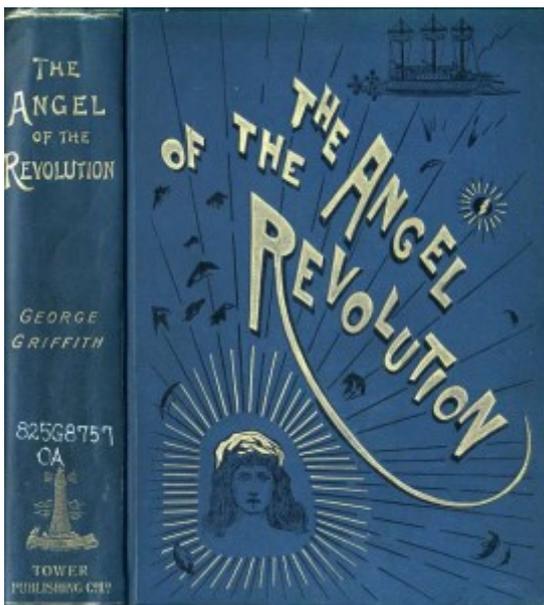


George Griffith (1893) *The Angel of the Revolution: A Tale of the Coming Terror*, London, Tower Publishing Company



The Angel of the Revolution: A Tale of the Coming Terror (1893) is a science fiction novel by English writer George Griffith. It was his first published novel and remains his most famous work. It was first published in *Pearson's Weekly* and was prompted by the success of *The Great War of 1892* in *Black and White* magazine, which was itself inspired by *The Battle of Dorking*.

A lurid mix of Jules Verne's futuristic air warfare fantasies, the utopian visions of *News from Nowhere* and the future war invasion literature of Chesney and his imitators, it told the tale of a group of terrorists who conquer the world through airship warfare. Led by a crippled, brilliant Russian Jew and his daughter, the 'angel' Natasha, 'The Brotherhood of Freedom' establish a 'pax aeronautica' over the earth after a young inventor masters the technology of flight in 1903. The hero falls in love with Natasha and joins in her war against society in general and the Russian Czar in particular it is characterised by what Michael Moorcock called its 'controlled imaginative flight', essentially socialist message and a strongly romantic air. Griffith's 'pro nihilist' stance was examined in a piece entitled "Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel" by Barbara Arnett Melchiori which appeared in the *The Modern Language Review*. A sequel, *The Syren of the Skies* appeared in *Pearson's Weekly* and was published in book form as *Olga Romanoff* in 1894. [Wikipedia]

It was followed by the sequel *Olga Romanoff / The Syren of the Skies* (1894).

Chapter 1: AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

Victory! It flies! I am master of the Powers of the Air at last!"

They were strange words to be uttered, as they were, by a pale, haggard, half-starved looking young fellow in a dingy, comfortless room on the top floor of a South London tenement-house; and yet there was a triumphant ring in his voice, and a clear, bright flush on his thin cheeks that spoke at least for his own absolute belief in their truth.

Let us see how far he was justified in that belief.

To begin at the beginning, Richard Arnold was one of those men whom the world is wont to call dreamers and enthusiasts before they succeed, and heaven-born geniuses and benefactors of humanity afterwards.

He was twenty-six, and for nearly six years past he had devoted himself, soul and body, to a single idea—to the so far unsolved problem of aërial navigation.

This idea had haunted him ever since he had been able to think logically at all—first dimly at school, and then more clearly at college, where he had carried everything before him in mathematics and natural science, until it had at last become a ruling passion that crowded everything else out of his life, [Pg 2] and made him, commercially speaking, that most useless of social units—a one-idea'd man, whose idea could not be put into working form.

He was an orphan, with hardly a blood relation in the world. He had started with plenty of friends, mostly made at college, who thought he had a brilliant future before him, and therefore looked upon him as a man whom it might be useful to know.

But as time went on, and no results came, these dropped off, and he got to be looked upon as an amiable lunatic, who was wasting his great talents and what money he had

on impracticable fancies, when he might have been earning a handsome income if he had stuck to the beaten track, and gone in for practical work. The distinctions that he had won at college, and the reputation he had gained as a wonderfully clever chemist and mechanic, had led to several offers of excellent positions in great engineering firms; but to the surprise and disgust of his friends he had declined them all. No one knew why, for he had kept his secret with the almost passionate jealousy of the true enthusiast, and so his refusals were put down to sheer foolishness, and he became numbered with the geniuses who are failures because they are not practical.

When he came of age he had inherited a couple of thousand pounds, which had been left in trust to him by his father. Had it not been for that two thousand pounds he would have been forced to employ his knowledge and his talents conventionally, and would probably have made a fortune. But it was just enough to relieve him from the necessity of earning his living for the time being, and to make it possible for him to devote himself entirely to the realisation of his life-dream—at any rate until the money was gone.

Of course he yielded to the temptation—nay, he never gave the other course a moment's thought. Two thousand pounds would last him for years; and no one could have persuaded him that with complete leisure, freedom from all other concerns, and money for the necessary experiments, he would not have succeeded long before his capital was exhausted.

So he put the money into a bank whence he could draw it out as he chose, and withdrew himself from the world to work out the ideal of his life. [Pg 3]

Year after year passed, and still success did not come. He found practice very different from theory, and in a hundred details he met with difficulties he had never seen on paper. Meanwhile his money melted away in costly experiments which only raised hopes that ended in bitter disappointment. His wonderful machine was a miracle of ingenuity, and was mechanically perfect in every detail save one—it would do no practical work. Like every other inventor who had grappled with the problem, he had found himself constantly faced with that fatal ratio of weight to power. No engine that he could devise would do more than lift itself and the machine. Again and again he had made a toy that would fly, as others had done before him, but a machine that would navigate the air as a steamer or an electric vessel navigated the waters, carrying cargo and passengers, was still an impossibility while that terrible problem of weight and power remained unsolved. In order to eke out his money to the uttermost, he had clothed and lodged himself meanly, and had denied himself everything but the barest necessities of life. Thus he had prolonged the struggle for over five years of toil and privation and hope deferred, and now, when his last sovereign had been changed and nearly spent, success—real, tangible, practical success—had come to him, and the discovery that was to be to the twentieth century what the steam-engine had been to the nineteenth was accomplished.

He had discovered the true motive power at last.

Full text available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31324/31324-h/31324-h.htm>

Plot [Wikipedia]:

The title of the novel was a conspiratory name of a female character Natasha, daughter of the mastermind of the revolutionary organization. Her unparalleled beauty and her devotion to the cause made the name quite fitting.

The story begins on September 3, 1903 with young man, Richard Arnold, twenty-six old scientist devoted heart and soul to the invention of flying machine, finally realizing his dream in the form of air-ship model that can fly on its own. However, living completely for his dream, he ended with no money to sustain even his next day's life, let alone do something practical with his revolutionary invention. The circumstances made him wander around the streets of London, until a stranger overheard his muttering about flying machine that he wouldn't want to put in hands of tyrants or for the use in war and destruction. The stranger introduced himself as Maurice Colston, and soon both men realized they share the same distaste for autocracy and the status quo as it was, placing themselves "at war with Society".

With the arrangement of Colston, Arnold met with other heads of the Brotherhood of Freedom, the revolutionary organization of Anarchists, Nihilists and Socialists bent on ending the society of oppression and misery. Agreeing with their cause, he put his knowledge and skills at their disposal, while still keeping his complete control over the invention that will change the face of the Earth. During the meeting he met Natasha, the Angel of the Revolution, and immediately fell in love with her. However, the Cause they've been set to achieve was of far greater importance so the romance between them had to wait for better times. Equipped by the Brotherhood with everything he needed, Arnold finished the construction of first air-ship to ever fly the skies above Earth: the Ariel.

First use of the air-ship was in the rescuing of Natasha in the March 1904, arrested by

Russian government about the time Ariel was built. On their flight towards the designated town in Russia where they'll attempt to rescue Natasha, the Terrorists - as everyone called the members of this secret order - decided to show the world the destructive power of the air-ship. Strongest European fortress Kronstadt, situated on the island in the Finnish Gulf, was picked as an example of what the Terrorists can now achieve. Within several minutes, the fortress was brought down to ruin, with weapons fired from the Ariel, of the devastating power that no army has yet seen. Through the use of such vessel and the innumerable agents the Brotherhood had all around the Western world, in all professions, the Terrorists managed to rescue Natasha before the convoy of political prisoners reached Siberia. The news of the mysterious air vessel and its power traveled all over the Western world, causing fear and panic in the ranks of both common people and the upper classes.

Meanwhile, after forty years of peace, European powers were readying for the inevitable final clash: plans were being laid down, treaties made and tested, armies equipped and mobilized. Attempting to control the coming war and make it the war to end all wars, Terrorists set off to find a suitable place for headquarters from where they could send orders and organize their own troops without being distracted. A region in the midst of Africa, called Aerial by the English explorers who found it, made a perfect spot. The region was a paradise valley surrounded by high mountains, thus unreachable by any conventional vessel - except the air-ship. In that paradise Arnold and Natasha finally swore their love to each other, agreeing to prolong their longing passion until the war to end all wars is over and eternal peace restored on Earth. In the meantime, Terrorists built eleven more air-ships identical to Ariel and the twelfth - a flagship - with twice the firepower and the size.

As the Europe sank into war between Anglo-Teutonic Alliance (led by Britain, Germany and Austria) and the Franco-Slavonian League (led by Russia, France and Italy), the new warfare proved to be more devastating than ever, especially with Russians and French employing the newly built war-balloons. The balloons, although in many ways inferior to Terrorists' air-ships, were destroying a fort after fort, city after city, and securing numerous victories for the Franco-Slavonian League. Even though they could only drop dynamites from above, war-balloons were causing such a havoc, that German and Austrian armies could not cope with the situation, losing the land fast. During the early weeks of this war of the Titans, Terrorists tried to stay away from siding with any alliance, occasionally appearing here and there and settling their own issues with involved sides or their weapons of war, pushing their own well-planned agenda slowly but steadily. Still, by mere moment of lack of caution, Terrorists lost one air-ship to Russians, due to treason in their own ranks. Pursuing the lost vessel in attempt to either retrieve it or destroy, the Terrorists proved the superiority of their flying machines to any other human machine, including the war-balloons of the Russians and French. Finally retrieving the lost air-ship, they witnessed the destructive power Franco-Slavonian League had at its disposal against Anglo-Teutonic Alliance, which assured them that Britain and her allies had no chance of winning such a war.

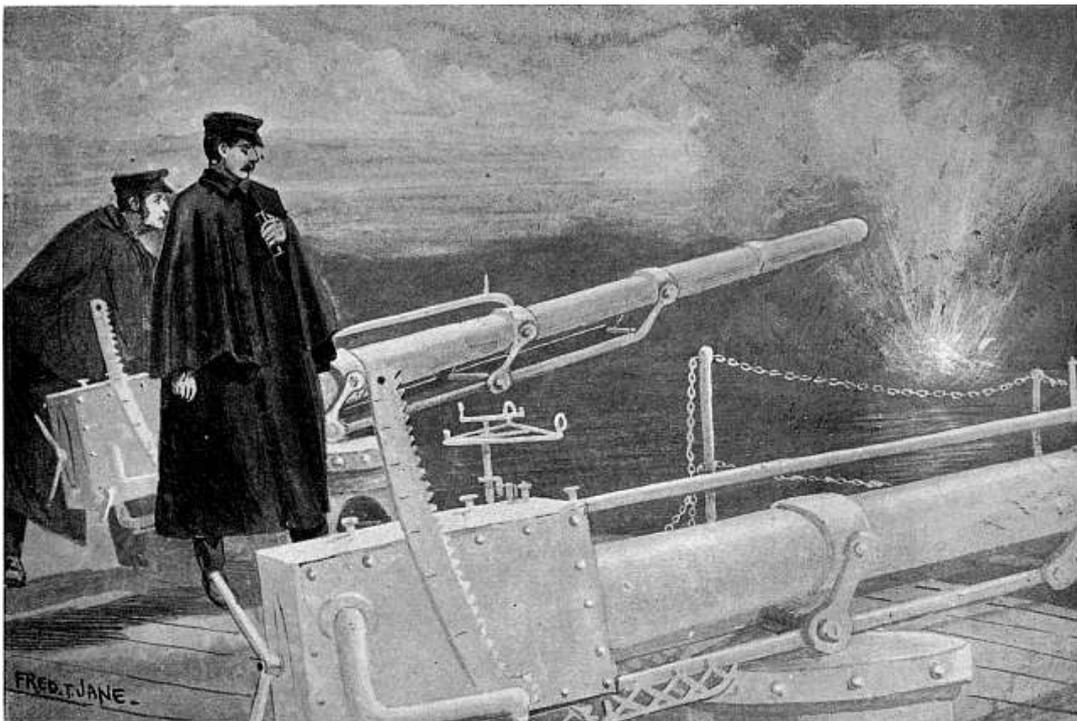
As the European war irresistibly drew closer to Britain shores, with Germany falling completely under the power of Russian Tsar, Terrorists had more important work to finish. Head of the American section of the Brotherhood, Michael Roburoff, asked for Natasha's hand, and at the utter disappointment of both Natasha and Arnold, Natasha's father sent her daughter to America. Both lovers did not try to challenge the will of the leading terrorist, so they accepted the change as they usually did - being certain that Natas' plan was again made with careful and rational preparation. However, it turned out that Roburoff was in fact blackmailing Natas: he was proposing to exchange the allegiance of American section for Natasha's hand. By the will of Natas, Roburoff was shot dead by Natasha's hand when he received her in his house in America, and the American section gained new leadership, ready for the revolution.

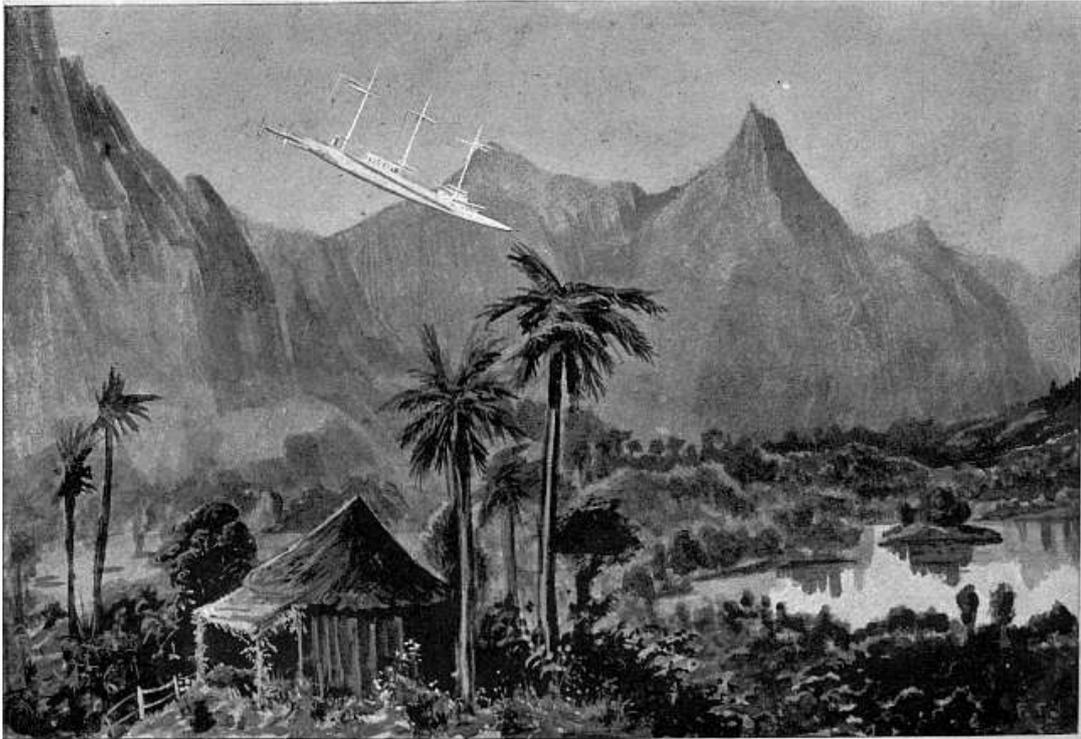
On the night of the 4th of October 1904, the order was passed to millions of secret followers of the Brotherhood in America, and the next day production completely stopped, streets and institutions were taken by organized masses and the government was overthrown. New government arrested big capitalists who were scheming to use European conflict for gaining even greater profit by supplying the Franco-Slavonian League, and with a threat of air-ships and mass of troops devoted to Brotherhood's Cause the terrorists proclaimed new Anglo-Saxon Federation. Soon Canada faced the same destiny and the terrorists turned to Britain with a proposal: either face utter destruction by Russian and French forces, or become a part of the Federation. British government refused the proposal, willing to fight till the bitter end and still hoping that the islands could not be taken by any continental army.

Much to their surprise, with the aid of war-balloons, Franco-Slavonian League managed not only to cut all oversea trade to and from Britain, but also arranged successful landing of troops on British soil, aiming to take London as a heart of Anglo-Saxon world.

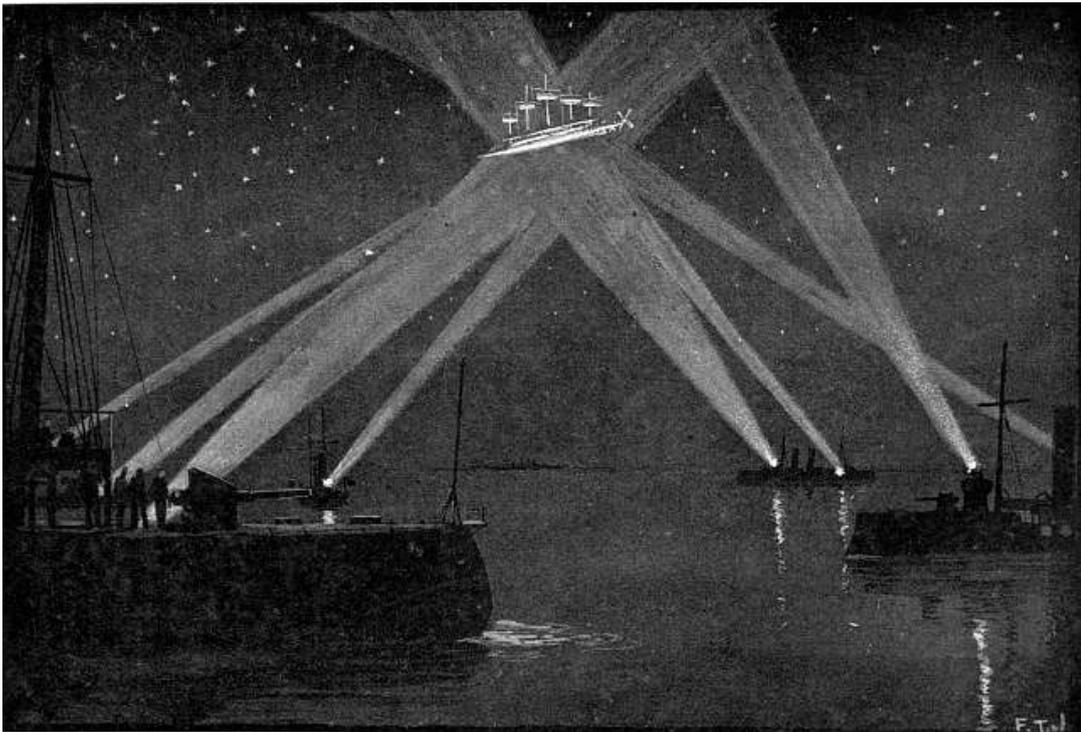
Under siege and with no allies left, Britain fought the last battle furiously, but the siege cut all food supply and left the Old Lion with no other choice than to accept newly sent proposal from the terrorists. At the highest pitch of his power, Russian Tsar was already looking forward to Britain's surrender and was taken by surprise as the new army arose in Britain: the army called by the terrorists, just like they did in America. Even greater was Tsar's surprise when he realized that terrorists had thousands of their men in his own ranks. Aided with air-ships and troops from American section, the Brotherhood - now acting as the Anglo-Saxon Federation - swiftly destroyed almost all Russian, French and Italian troops, forcing a surrender of all the armies and ending the world war in just two days.

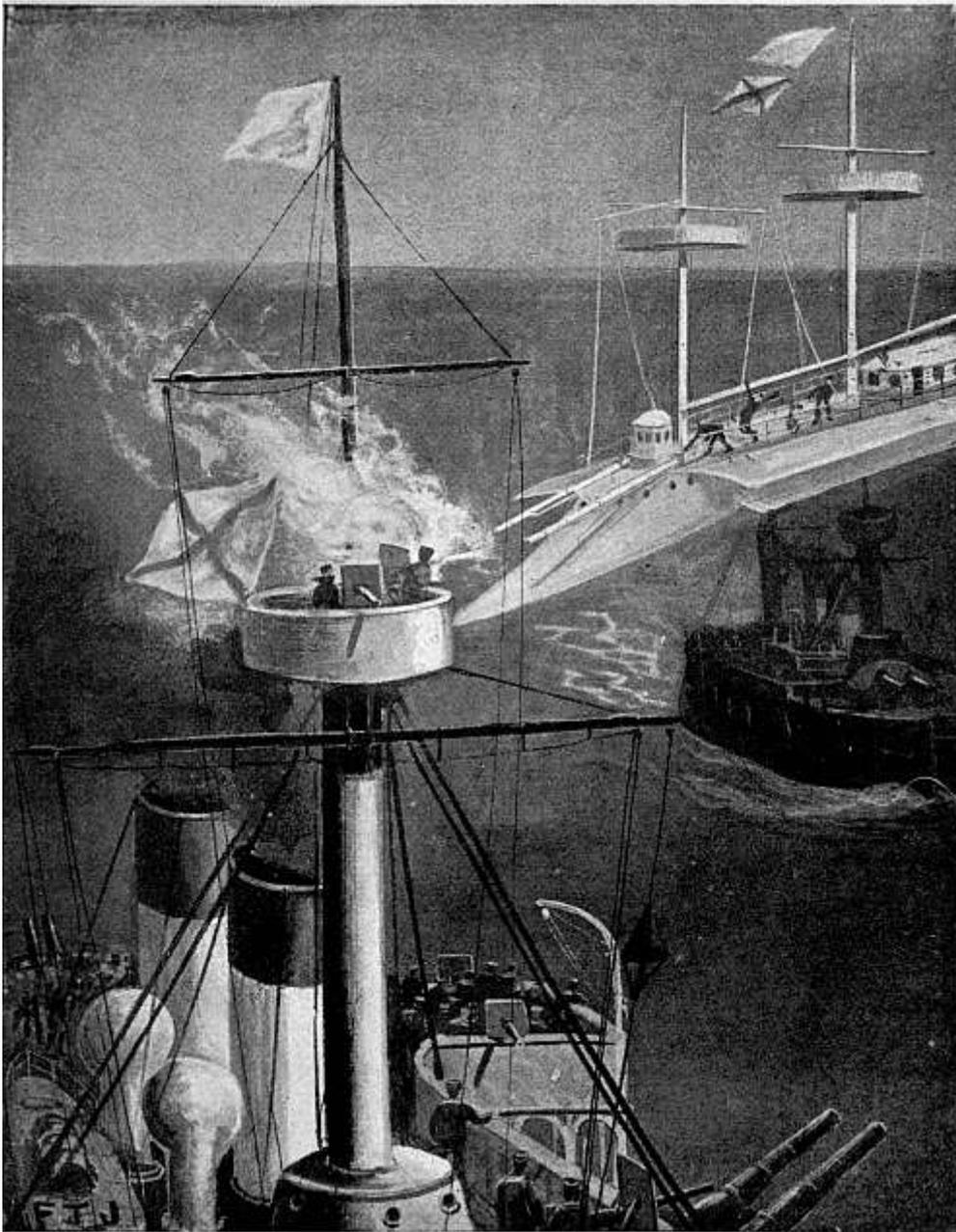
On the 9th of May, Conference was held to decide the future of the Western world. Having the power of millions of men under their Federation's banner, and air-ships in the sky, the terrorists easily convinced all European leaders that the only way to stop destruction was to make wars impossible to fight. Thus, disarmament of all standing armies was enacted, with police being the only force to keep the order. However, in the East, Buddhist and Muslim people fought each other without information of what happened in Europe. After defeating their opponents, the Muslims moved to Turkey in an attempt to conquer the Western world. Met with tremendous destructive power of the Federation, they soon admitted the defeat and accepted the conditions of surrender that were laid before them by the terrorists. The conditions were same for all the nations, now united under the banner of the Federation, the all-powerful peace force. Removing from the national laws all unjust and confusing parts and confiscating in the hands of the state all the land that wasn't directly used for production, the Federation finally achieved the order that suited the common man, without any fear of wars in the future. Willing and able to achieve their goal by any means at their disposal, the terrorists finally succeeded and concluded their war to end all wars.

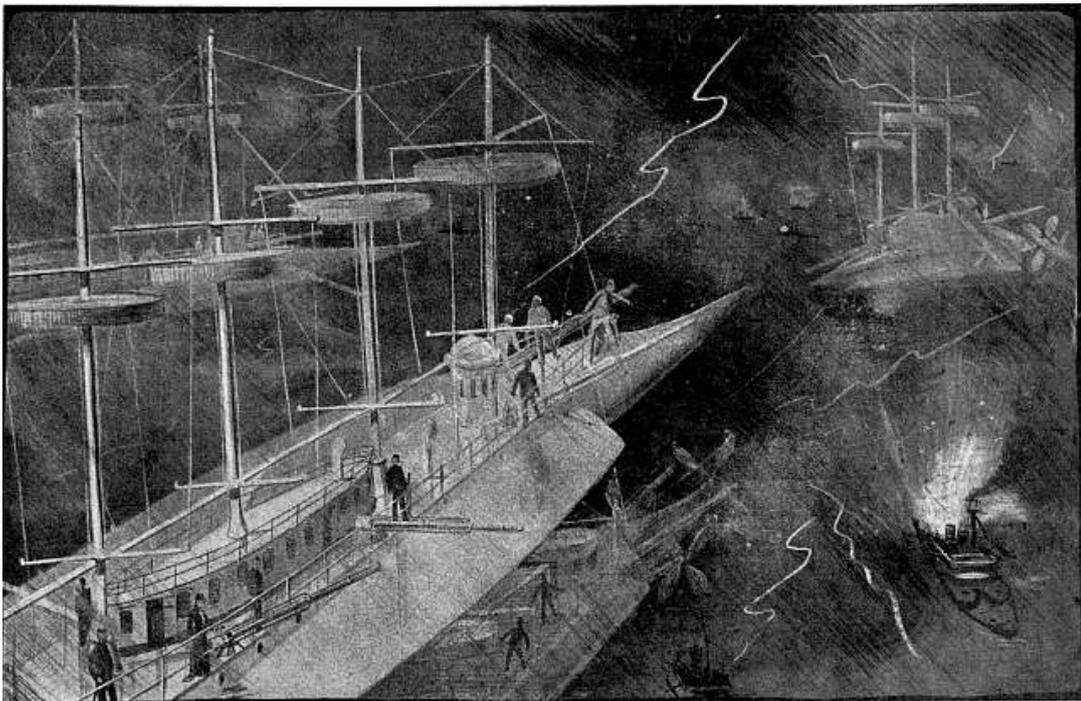
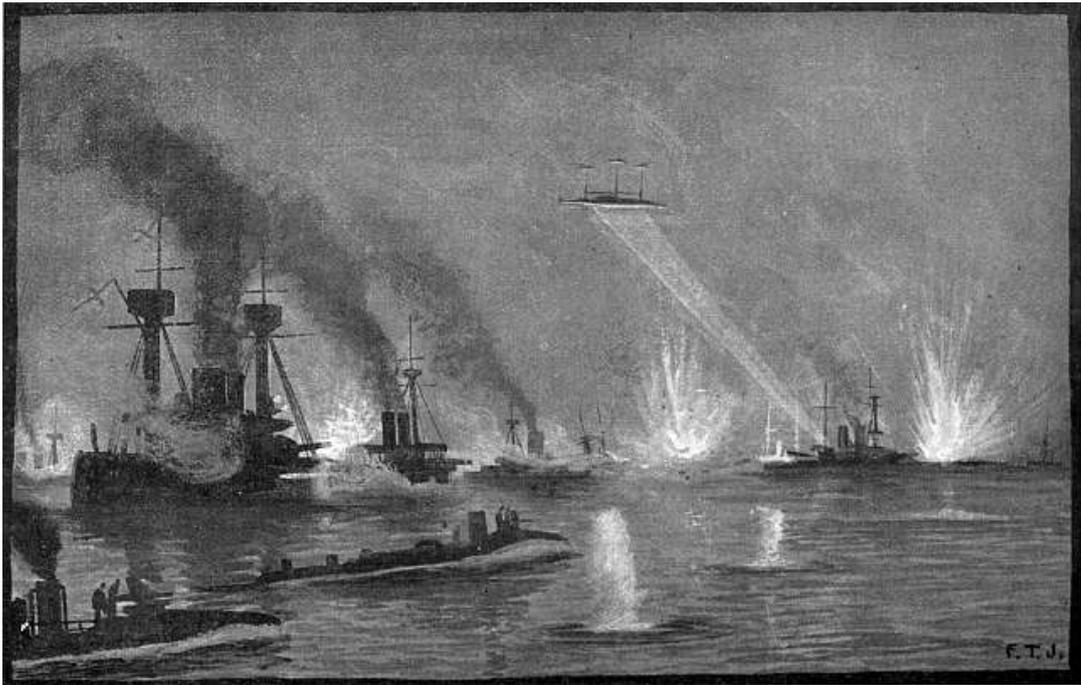




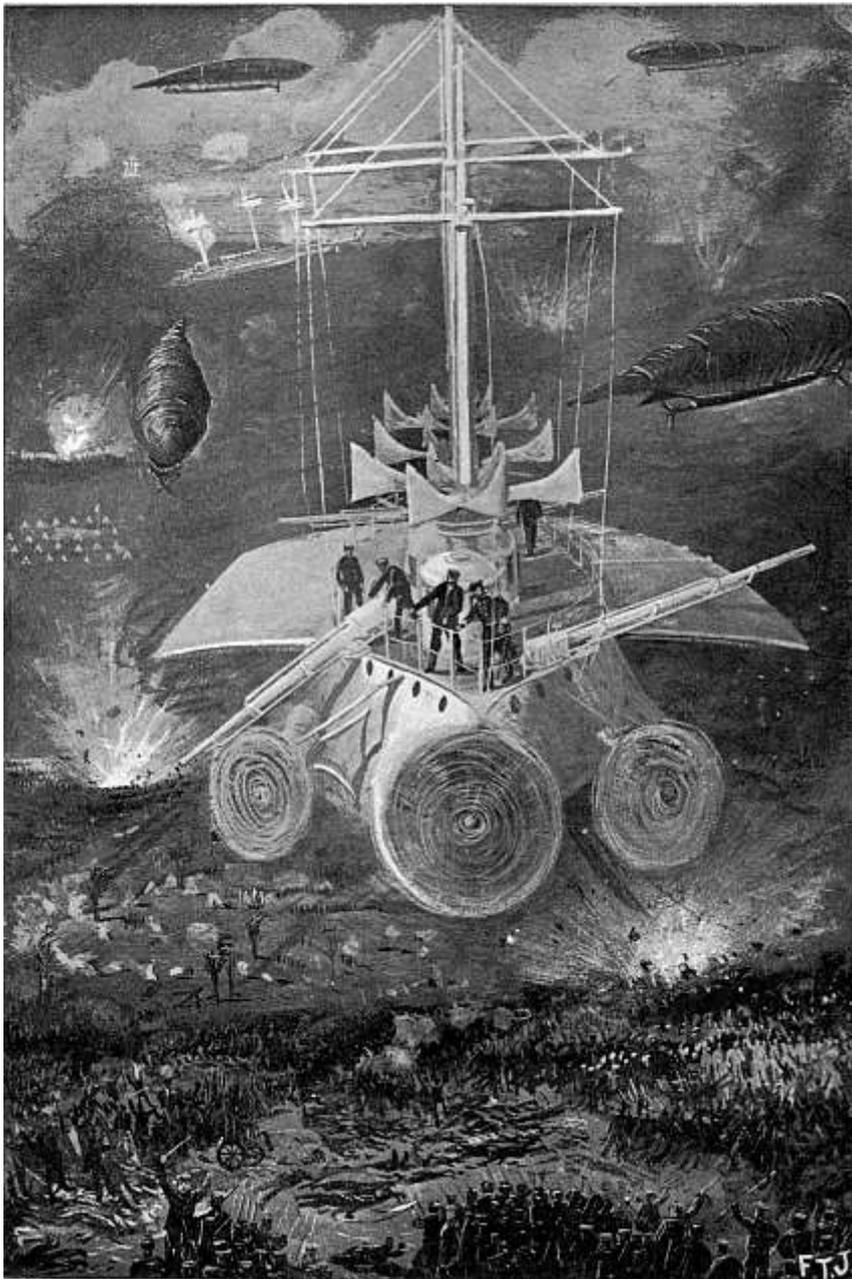


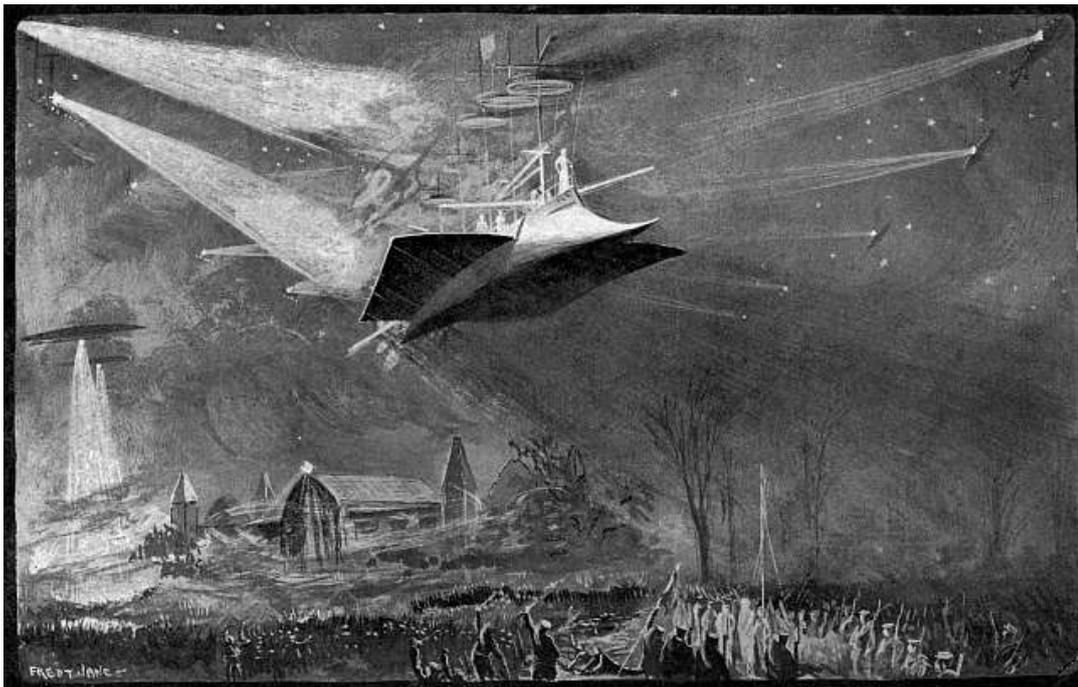












Other posts of possible interest:

[Griffith, G. \(1894\) Olga Romanoff / The Syren of the Skies](#)

[Griffith, G. \(1895\) The Outlaws of the Air](#)

[Fawcett, E. D. \(1893\) Hartmann The Anarchist](#)

[Verne, J. \(1886\) Robur the Conqueror](#)

[Verne, J. \(1904\) Master of the World](#)