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"PICTORIAL COLOR" PAGE SECTION

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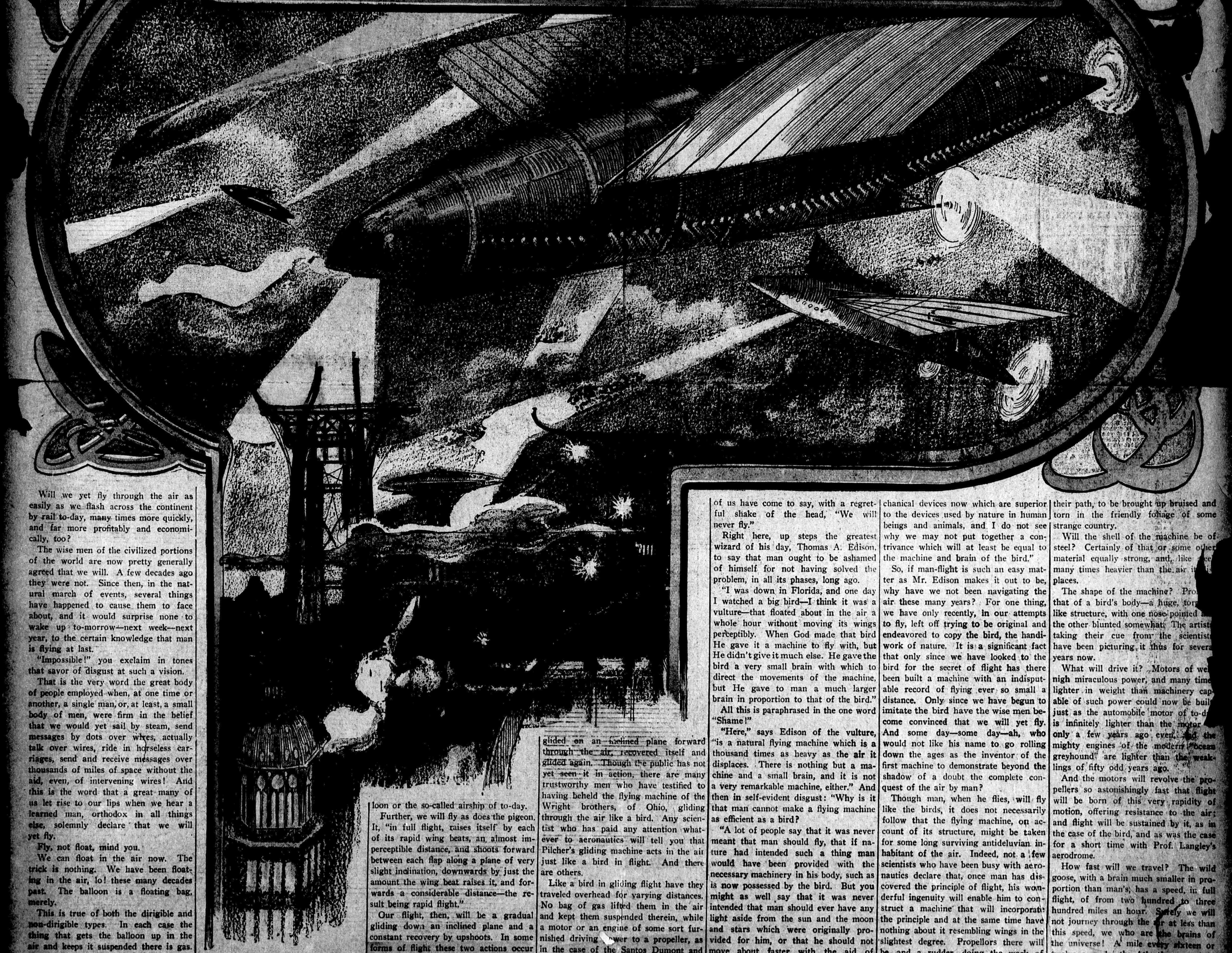
Man Flight Next!



Will we yet fly through the air as easily as we flash across the continent by rail to-day, many times more quickly, and far more profitably and economically, too?

The wise men of the civilized portions of the world are now pretty generally agreed that we will. A few decades ago they were not. Since then, in the natural march of events, several things have happened to cause them to face about, and it would surprise none to wake up to-morrow—next week—next year, to the certain knowledge that man is flying at last.

"Impossible!" you exclaim in tones that savor of disgust at such a vision.

That is the very word the great body of people employed when, at one time or another, a single man, or, at least, a small body of men, were firm in the belief that we would yet sail by steam, send messages by dots over wires, actually talk over wires, ride in horseless carriages, send and receive messages over thousands of miles of space without the aid, even, of intervening wires! And this is the word that a great many of us let rise to our lips when we hear a learned man, orthodox in all things else, solemnly declare that we will yet fly.

Fly, not float, mind you.

We can float in the air now. The trick is nothing. We have been floating in the air, lo! these many decades past. The balloon is a floating bag, merely.

This is true of both the dirigible and non-dirigible types. In each case the thing that gets the balloon up in the air and keeps it suspended there is gas. Gas, as every one knows, is a substance lighter than air, and so it is capable, when used in sufficient quantity, to float the silken cloth, the ropes, the woven basket, and whatever else goes into the make-up of the contraption we call a balloon.

But the invention that is to give us the mastery of the now uncharted highways of the air will travel along these highways on its own initiative. It will be an active, not a passive, so-[illegible] in the realm of overhead.

[illegible] this feature it will be like unto the [illegible] and again, like the bird, it will [illegible], many times heavier, than the [illegible] Nature's body is a thou-[illegible] in the air is displaces; the machine in which man will prove to the world the complete practicability and utility of air travel will be—who knows how many hundred times heavier than the substance filling the unseen and boundless sea through which it will shoot with speed outrivalling the homing pigeon's, with the steadiness and docility of an old family [illegible]

And our flight through [illegible] in conscious imitation [illegible] the birds.

Every bird, eve[illegible] cause its flight [illegible] ance offered t[illegible] In other wo[illegible] flight by merely [illegible] loon or the so-called airship of to-day.

Further, we will fly as does the pigeon. It, "in full flight, raises itself by each of its rapid wing beats, an almost imperceptible distance, and shoots forward between each flap along a plane of very slight inclination, downwards by just the amount the wing beat raises it, and forwards a considerable distance—the result being rapid flight."

Our flight, then, will be a gradual gliding down an inclined plane and a constant recovery by upshoots. In some forms of flight these two actions occur almost simultaneously. So will they in the perfected flying machine, insuring a delightful sense of safety to the passenger, nonchalantly defiant of the law of gravitation, he knowing full well the machine's ability constantly and arbitrarily to correct the position of the center of gravity, bird fashion, thus insuring permanent stability in [illegible] air.

[illegible] best of it[illegible] declare all this; [illegible] day, [illegible] a phantasma-[illegible] has already [illegible] as the pigeon [illegible] aerodrome—air [illegible] Prof. E. P. [illegible] glided on an inclined plane forward through the air, recovered itself and glided again. Though the public has not yet seen it in action, there are many trustworthy men who have testified to having beheld the flying machine of the Wright brothers, of Ohio, gliding through the air like a bird. Any scientist who has paid any attention whatever to aeronautics will tell you that Pilcher's gliding machine acts in the air just like a bird in flight. And there are others.

Like a bird in gliding flight have they traveled overhead for varying distances. No bag of gas lifted them in the air and kept them suspended therein, while a motor or an engine of some sort furnished driving power to a propeller, as in the case of the Santos Dumont and other airships. Like a bird they have sailed, remained in the air by reason of their own initiative, the power furnished by motors or engines causing the mechanisms to offer the necessary bird-like resistance to the air, with the result of actual flight.

But, alas, because [illegible] not yet possess the full knowle[illegible] principle of flight, as does t[illegible] of birds and flying insects, t[illegible] machines which have justified [illegible], in part at least, have been [illegible] queer tricks at the most i[illegible] moments on their inventors [illegible] iously watching and waiti[illegible] so, though the greate[illegible] the world to-day pe[illegible] of us have come to say, with a regretful shake of the head, "We will never fly."

Right here, up steps the greatest wizard of his day, Thomas A. Edison, to say that man ought to be ashamed of himself for not having solved the problem, in all its phases, long ago.

"I was down in Florida, and one day I watched a big bird—I think it was a vulture—that floated about in the air a whole hour without moving its wings perceptibly. When God made that bird He gave it a machine to fly with, but He didn't give it much else. He gave the bird a very small brain with which to direct the movements of the machine, but He gave to man a much larger brain in proportion to that of the bird."

All this is paraphrased in the one word "Shame!"

"Here," says Edison of the vulture, "is a natural flying machine which is a thousand times as heavy as the air it displaces. There is nothing but a machine and a small brain, and it is not a very remarkable machine, either." And then in self-evident disgust: "Why is it that man cannot make a flying machine as efficient as a bird?

"A lot of people say that it was never meant that man should fly, that if nature had intended such a thing man would have been provided with the necessary machinery in his body, such as is now possessed by the bird. But you might as well say that it was never intended that man should ever have any light aside from the sun and the moon and stars which were originally provided for him, or that he should not move about faster with the aid of wheels because no wheels were supplied to him by nature."

Through further study of the bird and its method of flight man will discover how to fly, says Mr. Edison, and all others who have given the subject any serious thought agree with him fully. But, Mr. Edison adds, somewhat paradoxically, he who solves the problem of flight "will find out nothing new. Powerful motors of wonderful compactness will be applied to a framework of extreme lightness, and that will be all there is to it.

"Doubtless this framework will be something similar to the physical structure of a bird. I do not believe it will be difficult, because we have many mechanical devices now which are superior to the devices used by nature in human beings and animals, and I do not see why we may not put together a contrivance which will at least be equal to the machine and brain of the bird."

So, if man-flight is such an easy matter as Mr. Edison makes it out to be, why have we not been navigating the air these many years? For one thing, we have only recently, in our attempts to fly, left off trying to be original and endeavored to copy the bird, the handiwork of nature. It is a significant fact that only since we have looked to the bird for the secret of flight has there been built a machine with an indisputable record of flying ever so small a distance. Only since we have begun to imitate the bird have the wise men become convinced that we will yet fly. And some day—some day—ah, who would not like his name to go rolling down the ages as the inventor of the first machine to demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt the complete conquest of the air by man?

Though man, when he flies, will fly like the birds, it does not necessarily follow that the flying machine, on account of its structure, might be taken for some long surviving antideluvian inhabitant of the air. Indeed, not a few scientists who have been busy with aeronautics declare that, once man has discovered the principle of flight, his wonderful ingenuity will enable him to construct a machine that will incorporate the principle and at the same time have nothing about it resembling wings in the slightest degree. Propellors there will be, and a rudder, doing the work of wings and tail. But it will be flight without wings—and we have been taught from childhood that even the angels need wings to fly. Other scientists, however, believe that there will be great planes, two or more, mechanically worked like wings, in conjunction with propellors and rudder.

Again, in their perfected state, propellors and rudder will do more than to give flight. Once more man will improve on nature, and the mechanisms of his ingenuity will drive the good air machine through gales that the strongest bird could not face, while it will keep it serenely on its course, while birds, caught in the swirling, clashing, battling currents, will be hurtled miles out of their path, to be brought up bruised and torn in the friendly foliage of some strange country.

Will the shell of the machine be of steel? Certainly of that or some other material equally strong, and, like [illegible] many times heavier than the air it [illegible] places.

The shape of the machine? Pro[illegible] that of a bird's body—a huge, tor[illegible] like structure, with one nose pointed [illegible] the other blunted somewhat. The artist[illegible] taking their cue from the scientist[illegible] have been picturing it thus for severa[illegible] years now.

What will drive it? Motors of we[illegible] nigh miraculous power, and many time[illegible] lighter in weight than machinery cap[illegible]able of such power could now be buil[illegible] just as the automobile motor of to-d[illegible] is infinitely lighter than the motor [illegible] only a few years ago even, and the mighty engines of the modern "ocean greyhound" are lighter than the weaklings of fifty odd years ago.

And the motors will revolve the propellers so astonishingly fast that flight will be born of this very rapidity of motion, offering resistance to the air; and flight will be sustained by it, as in the case of the bird, and as was the case for a short time with Prof. Langley's aerodrome.

How fast will we travel? The wild goose, with a brain much smaller in proportion than man's, has a speed, in full flight, of from two hundred to three hundred miles an hour. Surely we will not journey through the air at less than this speed, we who are the brains of the universe! A mile every sixteen or twelve seconds, the Atlantic crossed in a single night, an after-lunch and before-dinner trip between New York and Chicago, a run of minutes merely from the metropolis to the Hub!

What will give life to the driving machinery? There is a wide diversity of opinion, but all are agreed that its bulk will be very small, its weight light, and a little will go a very long way. Perhaps, say the most daring, man, flies, will snatch the necessary power from space, and in his [illegible]vances there will be nothing [illegible]sembling the giant fuel bunkers [illegible] ocean greyhounds.

When man flies our wars [illegible] fought in the air; the victor [illegible]

(Continued on Page 2)