

CHAPTER XVI.

It was well planned and beautifully executed, the appreciated serenade of last evening that my fellow bandsmen had so kindly given me.

The big aerodrome that had brought some of our audience to the Musical Festival (but which I had not been permitted to see) after returning its passengers, had been requisitioned by the Orchestra with intent to give me this agreeable surprise. Shortly afterwards I had the opportunity to inspect the huge machine.

In appearance, it was primarily three huge gas bags shaped like fish; sharp at both ends; not round, but oval shaped in cross section; and with the fish back a straight horizontal line, but the belly below sagged to extend like a fin keel.

In profile it was thus roughly an obtuse angled isosceles triangle with inverted apex.

This gas holder was not a yielding bag enclosed in a net; but was a tightly stretched skin covering an interior multiple trussed framing. Not only so. but this trussed interior was a honey comb of aeroplane cells so constructed that in case of accident to the gas balloons whereby their sustaining power was gone, a quick pull of reefing lines would strip off the skin in