

THE HUMAN COMET

Whose Orbit is not an Ellipse but a Figure 8

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

IN the spring of the year 1910 an extraordinary being came up out of the jungles of South Africa — known to science as Theodore Roosevelt. Nothing like this person had ever been known in the world before. It was perhaps a mere accident that his advent to the civilised world

coincided very nearly with that of Halley's comet. Some, however, assert that this was a collusion; others hold to the theory that both the comet and the MAN were primary facts of nature. At all events whatever the nature-fakers say it seems to be a certainty that Theodore Roosevelt is the terrestrial comet.

This human sky-wanderer has the whole world at gaze. With the star-spangled banner for a tail he pursues an orbit unknown to sun, moon and stars. He came up from lower Africa, where in the stripes of the tiger's hide and in the lion's roar he had discovered

what was essentially wrong with civilisation—since he left it. He had no sooner got clear of the jungle and into north Africa than he found that something was wrong with the Lion—so he twisted its tail. At Alexandria he paused to remember Alexander the Great and Napoleon, both of whom in that part of the world had demonstrated that they didn't know how many worlds there were to conquer. What did they know about Santiago? Remember the Maine! The Comet crossed to Naples and Rome. Here he recited two volumes of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," inspected the antiquities to see that they were up to date and went gunning over the Seven Hills after the wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus. He now crossed the Alps into the main part of Europe which is said to be the centre of the world's art and most of its civilisation. Going at the rate of a million miles a second he was barely able to get a flying impression; but he whittled off enough time to tell most of the European countries what was the matter with them and why—even to the ethics of the spot-light. The Kaiser in Berlin was twinkling away as usual and as much like a fixed star of the first magnitude as possible; but when the Comet swung up his way the *pater omnium* of Germany crinkled up and turned pale at the first whiff of cyanogen—vulgarly known as gas. Europe had expected a real collision which would explain the old scientific riddle of an irresistible Force meeting an immovable Object. But the Comet and the Kaiser sang a celestial duet consisting of "Die Wacht am Rhein" and the "Star-Spangled Banner" and the Comet took a spin over to France where he was expected to deliver an oration on race suicide at the Sorbonne. He inspected the relics of the great flood and gravely exhorted Paris to be good or he would send them another. Some few on the boulevards are said to have recognised in the Comet the reincarnation of Bonaparte; but Theodore had already demonstrated that an astral body is merely a phase of the star-dust in a comet's tail. Not having time to dig up Hamlet to tell him what was "rotten in the state of Denmark," and giving Russia the go-by because she had refused to adopt the Teddy Bear for an emblem, Theodore followed the trail of the other "Flying Dutchman" across the Channel and he landed in England; about which time he read in a newspaper that Col. Henry Watterson, who

periodically squelches the Four Hundred in Gotham, had printedly pronounced him "the most startling figure that has appeared in the world since Napoleon."

The death of King Edward the Seventh is said to have caused the Conqueror to look grave for a season. A cloud went over the Comet. For a day or two he was not seen. Then came a cablegram from one President Taft in Washington officially appointing him the United States representative at the funeral of the King. At first sight this seemed like impertinence—for it was only less than three months before Roosevelt had begun to reconstruct the world in Africa that he had moved that same Taft to the king row on the chessboard with his own little finger.

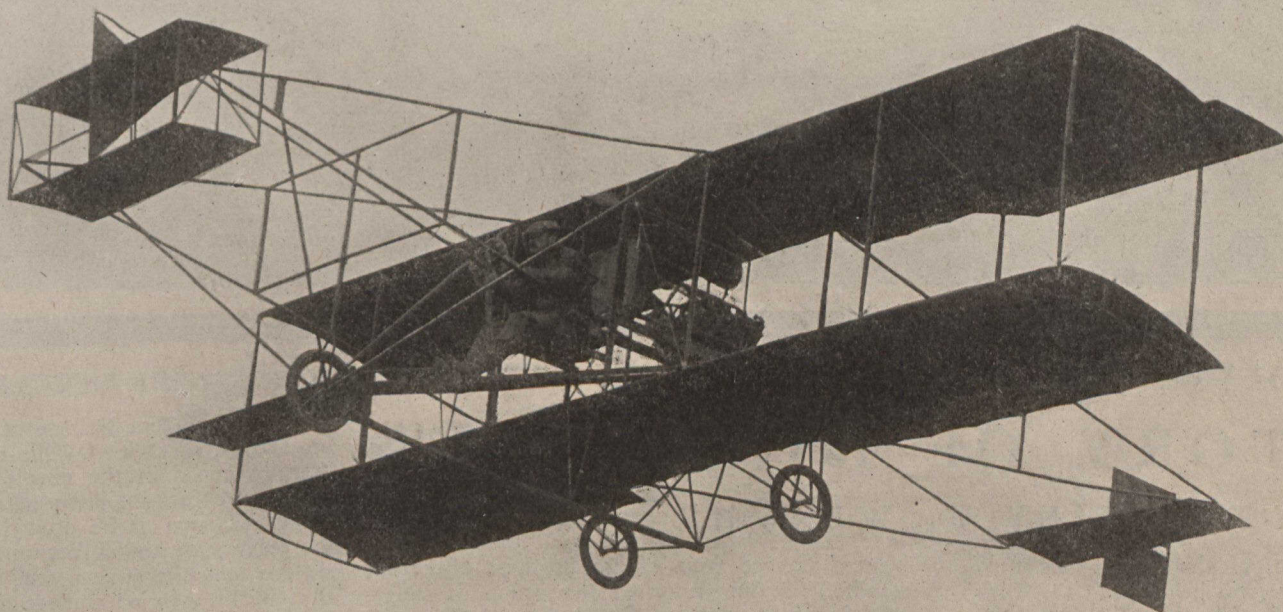
"Wait till I get back to Washington," he said aloud. "I'll make Taft look over my European scrap-book."

However—Taft can be adjusted in due course. Meanwhile with the speculation about the peace of Europe since the passing of the Peacemaker the editor of the British Weekly having noted that the Comet had startled Europe with his Nobel Peace Prize oration containing a quatrain of platitudes about how to make peace, called upon Roosevelt to become the world's intermediary. Neither was this rejected; merely jotted down in a memo book for future reference—when not too busy discussing 'ologies with the professors and isms with the clergy.

Whereafter Mr. Roosevelt was given the freedom of the world's greatest city on the Thames—save the mark!—not forgetting that once he had been Police Commissioner in that other greatest city on the Hudson. Not having been invited by the Admiralty to reconstruct the navy—in spite of the fact that he was once a navy man himself—Mr. Roosevelt delivered a lecture at Guild Hall; which was about the moment that the newest self-governing confederation in the great Empire had its jubilee natal day in South Africa; and in that speech he condescended to tell England how badly she had been bungling matters in North Africa — which called down upon him the seven vials of wrath from the British press.

But you can't extinguish a comet with a fire hose. The unparalleled human sky-wanderer over the face of the earth continued on his fiery way. At last accounts he was still visible in the heavens. When at length he condescends to swoop down upon New York, the statue of Liberty will probably take a tumble to itself and step down and out.

AN AMERICAN RIVAL FOR THE WRIGHT BROTHERS



Curtiss on his Biplane, from a remarkable photograph taken last September at Rheims, France. This is the man who learned flying with McCurdy under Professor Bell, and has now distinguished himself by his flight from Albany to New York, 150 miles in 166 minutes