

4 VIRGINIA OF THE AIR LANES

walked inshore through soft, trodden sand, down to a lower level of yellowed palmettoes, and scaled a steep dune-slope thicketed with curious scrub-oaks only a few feet high, but hoary with age, their ancient and stunted limbs contorted fantastically by the rheumatism of age, and covered with moss. Beyond was a deeper hollow, quite out of sight of the sea, but lulled continually by its roar. Here was hidden a cabin of rough boards with a wide veranda or gallery, on the columns of which were to be seen bleached barnacles telling of the storm-tossed voyage which had brought them hither. Abutting on the cabin by one end was a spacious shed, without visible door or window. So thoroughly was the edifice concealed by the oak scrub and the low-growing bastard-spruce, that one might have passed a dozen times within a stone's throw of it without seeing it; and even from the air-ships, its drab roof powdered with blown sand was well-nigh invisible. Under the gallery was perfect safety from observation from aloft.

As seen through the glass, the air-ship was swelled to impressive bulk, now. Her rudder stood aslant, a stripe of brown against the silver foil of her bilge. On the seaward side ran the darker line of a toy aëroplane—a matter of appearance more than use—and slung beneath by a gossamer nacelle, steady as the deck of a liner, hung her roomy car,