

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ARCTIC AVIATION

ACTIVE efforts to explore the polar regions by air travel began with S. A. Andrée, who had been a member of the Swedish International Polar Expedition of 1882. An aëronaut of some experience, he established his base at Danes Island, Spitsbergen, in 1896. Adverse winds and an unsuitable balloon — which was quite permeable — forecast disaster and prevented an attempt that year.

With an improved balloon a start was made on July 11, 1897; the balloon carried a load of about five tons — food, men, freight and ballast. Accompanying Andrée were Strindberg and Fraenkel. Three message buoys, dropped by Andrée, have been found, from which it is known that the balloon had reached  $83^{\circ}$  N.,  $25^{\circ}$  E. The balloon was then at an altitude of 820 feet, over a rugged ice field, and was moving not north, but 45 degrees east of north. Repeated searches have failed to disclose under what conditions the party perished (Stadling: "Andrée's Flight into the Unknown." *Century Magazine*, Nov., 1897).

Wellman's attempt to utilize a balloon in his Spitsbergen explorations was equally unsuccessful,