

INVENTING-MANIA!

The Sailing Airship of the
'Engineer von Tarden'

This is an English translation of the extracts from the medical records of the 'Engineer von Tarden' as printed on the panels. We kindly ask you to return the compilation of texts for the next visitors.

Department for
Psychiatry, Delirium
and Convulsions
Medical Journal

Date

Admitted
19 December 1908
Transferred
14 January 1909

Last address or place
of abode:

Rummelsburg
workhouse

Date and year of birth:

23.1.1875

Religion:

Prot.

Rank or profession:

wood turner

19.11.1908. While absconding from the dormitory on the 3rd floor of Rummelsburg workhouse, pat. became dizzy at the 2nd floor, dropped the rope on which he was lowering himself & broke his r. foot on contact with the ground, then limped on & climbed a 6m-high wall from which he jumped. In so doing, broke lower l. leg. Pat. was found next day unconscious at the base of the wall & after applying bandage was brought to the surg(ical) clinic.



Admitted 19 December 1908

Transferred 14 January 1909

Discharged 22 August 1910

a) not insane

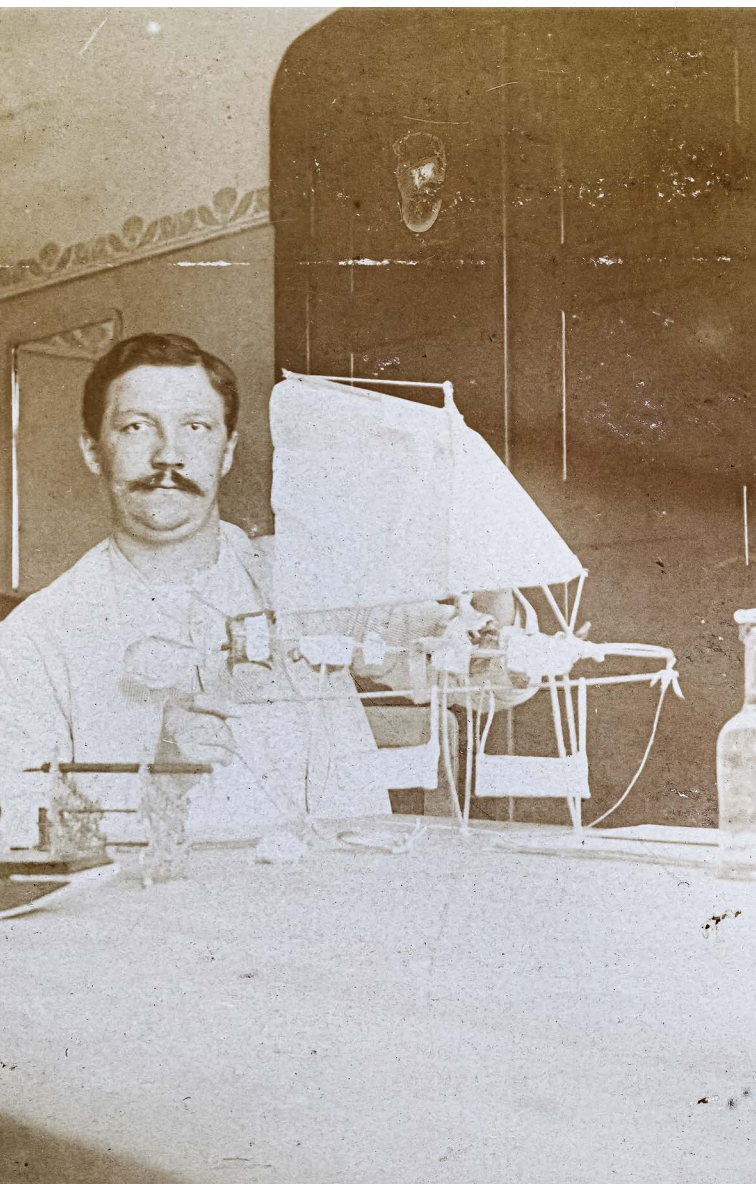
b) cured

c) improved



Form of illness?
Eth(ical) atrophy.
Psychopath(ical)
constitution
with hallucinations,
lacking retro-
spective aware-
ness of illness







Exterior view of the Charité Clinic for
Psychiatry and Neurological Diseases, garden,
Heinrich Lichte & Co. Phot. Berlin, c. 1908.

Call number: IGM-B-Alb-Charl



The photograph shows 'Engineer von Tarden' with the first model of his sailing airship. It is accompanied by a letter to the patent office with a handwritten comment: "Sailing Airship Model I, which ripped in half on 9 July 1909 as the fuselage was being mounted. The above view shows the framework and rigging."

Library and Medical Humanities Collection of the Institute for Medical History and Ethics in Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, call number: IGM-K-HPAC 3086-1908

Normal delivery/birth
Speaking – & walking –
learned
Teething fits
Rickets
Childhood illnesses
Bedwetting
School attendance
Profession
Military service
Illnesses in later life

Venereal diseases
Marriage
Abortions
Children
Maleficences
Overexertion
Agitation
Dipso
Other toxins

14.01.1909.

Pat(ient) transferred from
the surgical
clinic having
apparently
suffered a
episode of
persecution
mania early
this morning.



18./19.3.1909.

Pat(ient)

barely slept at
all, continually
conducting
conversations
with himself
about Count
Zeppelin
and airship
patents.

27.01.1909. Bandage
continually removed from
r(ight) foot; l(ef)t leg still
in solid plaster cast.

12./13.3.1909. Pat. was very agitated and restless when the watch arrived, railed against his treatment (...), after he had calmed down somewhat, he began once more to fantasize about his airship. Pat. also spent some time making the movements of his ship's wings with his arms, all the while saying: This is what the wings do when I go right, and when I go left.

15./16.1.1909. Pat.
didn't sleep the
whole night, com-
plained of terrible
pains, moaned
and groaned very
loudly. The night
watch fetched
the doctor,
who prescrib-
ed an injection of
M(orphine) that
was given at 2:15.

12.2.1909. Pat. accused doctors of obstructing his progress by delaying the forwarding of his letters; he holds them responsible for all damages sustained as a result.



6.2.1909.

Pat. asked
doctor to look
over his
drawings and
treatise on
the steerable
airship.

2.2.1909. Pat(ient) wished to send a document concerning his invention to the patent office this evening, signed 'Engineer von Tarden'. Upon being questioned as to how he came by this name, he explained: "it's been my name since I became an inventor; every inventor has the right to call himself engineer." How did you come to append the name v. T.? "All engineers have extra names. I can't invent anything under my regular name (...)." Even after the absurdity of his claim was made clear & it was explained to him that the letter would not under any circumstances be sent with this signature, he maintains that he has the right to sign his name thus.

Ingenieur v. Tarden.

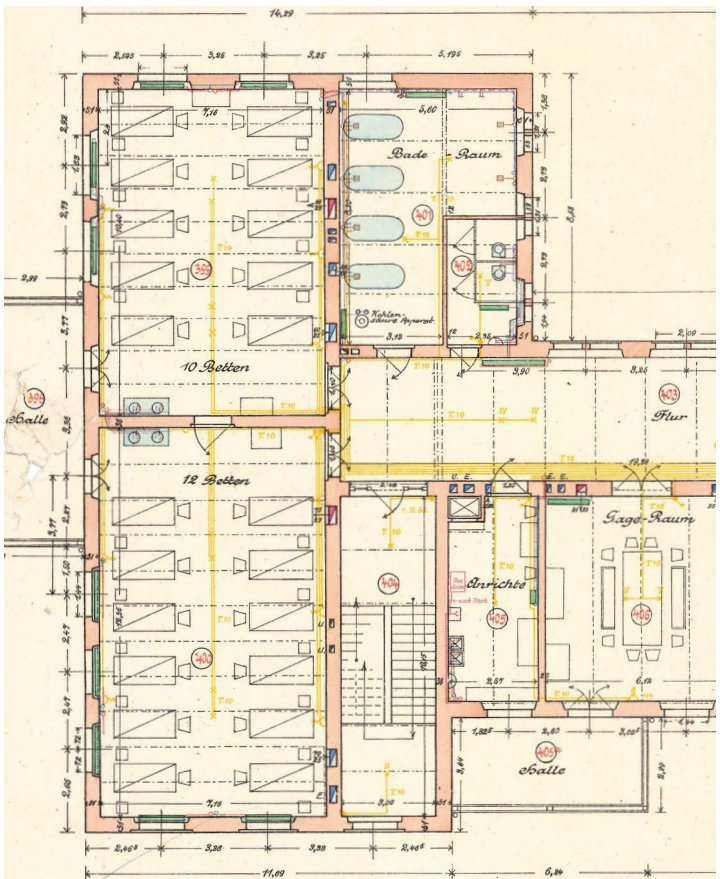
4.2.1909. "The patent office granted me the aristocratic title 10 years ago now. It's the same for any engineer.

Otherwise one would have to

believe that Count Zeppelin is really a count, and that's not true, inventors are only ever engineers."

12.3.1909. Patient behaving calmly and working constantly on his airship; he also wishes to write out a precise explanation. The condition of his foot is improved however the pain means patient requires (...) sleeping remedies.

14./15.4.1909. Pat. didn't sleep at all tonight; (...) climbed several times out of bed, crawled around the room (...) Spoke all the while only of his airship & when the watch addressed him as A. R. (...) wanted to be addressed as Mr v. Tarden. At 1½ o'clock pat. demanded to be carried to the closet. When the watch was away one minute, pat. was in the act of sticking his head through a sturdy noose fashioned from strips of knotted bedding, which he had fastened there for the purpose of hanging himself.



Bed rooms, bath and toilet room, detail from the plan of the 1st floor of the Charité Psychiatric and Neurological Clinic, drawn by Georg Diestel and August Knocke, 10 October 1907.

18. 3. 1909. w. Prof. Z(iehen).
“Was Z(eppelin) here?”

13./14.4.1909.

Pat. didn't sleep
until 2 o'clock.

19.3.1909. Pat. complains of sleepless nights. He asks (...) that the auditorium might be put at his disposal; he intends to give a lecture on his inventions.

6.4.1909. Weeps, says
he knows exactly why he has
sleepless nights.

20.3.1909. Yesterday pat.
wrote a letter to Zep(pelin).

30./31.3.1909. Pat. slept well from
2 o'clock, before that he talked a lot about
his airship.

26./27.3.1909.

Pat. complains
of severe
pain in left foot
and often de-
mands a knife
with which
(...) to cut off
said foot.

3.4.1909. When asked what he made of Zeppelin's successful landing, he replied: It was pretty pathetic & pitiful; that wouldn't happen with my invention. There was a strong gale, though. Gales are exactly when I do my best flying and landing.

4.5.1909. "There are motor-boats on the water, there are motorboats in the air, as e.g. zeppelins. There are sailing boats on the water, accordingly there must also be sailing ships in the air – that must be possible. After all, no one can prove otherwise to me." "Can you really fly to New York in 8 mins?" "I miscalculated there (...)." 

5./7.-6./7.1909.

Pat. passed
the night
without sleep,
sitting com-
pletely upright
in bed.

22.5.1909. Pat. sticking firmly to the name “von Tarden”

29./30.6.1909. Pat. was awake until 12 o'clock and occupied with drawing, after which pat. soon fell asleep again.

24.5.1909. Due to visual
impairment, restrictions on
morphine & hyoscine

26.6.1909. Pat. claimed to have seen the Privy Councillor yesterday and he is to go straight to the auditorium and give a lecture about his steerable airship.

31.5./1.6.1909. slept
little

22.6.09. Pat. said today he has seen Prof Z and Dr F sitting by his bed at approx. 7 o'clock every evening for the past 5 days. Both stay with him for around 20 minutes. They converse with him about his inventions, especially his steerable airship. Prof Z had on white gloves yesterday, a folder under his arm. Prof Z promised to advance him 1 million for his brilliant invention. Patient wasn't dreaming, but saw both gentlemen with his eyes open. The conversation was conducted at low volume, so as not to wake the other patients from sleep.

17.6.1909. Pat. still believes in his patent: "three-sided fashioning for the lathe stand (...)" (...) He believes he will get 10,000M for it in Germany, the same amount in Russia, France and England with the money he plans to build the "sailing airship". It is intended particularly for purposes of war. He believes he hasn't been given a response from the Minister for War because of his illness. "I can't drop this idea, even if I should become poor and perish." As the first airship division hasn't answered regarding the balloon cover, he will soon turn to a larger company (Opel). "I will be a famous man, my name will be on everybody's lips!"

21.6.1909.

Patient complains of unbearable pains in leg, he wants to have it amputated at last.

4./5.7.1909. Pat.
was very ill tempe-
red and said (...)
yesterday morning
three judges came
to see him again,
and sentenced
him to death be-
cause of the patent
application for his
airship.

28.11.1909.

Pat. no

longer making
drawings
of his air-
ship. He lets
himself be
addressed
as A.R. with
no objection.

19./20.7.1909. Pat. slept until 3 o'clock,
at 2.30 o'clock pat. leapt suddenly out of
bed with the remark that three men
with glowing eyes were there.

29.10.1909. Pat(ient) finished another drawing of his airship, he is less depressed.

27.7.1909. Suspend
Morph(ine)!

“Right now they only fly for a short time, but afterwards, when they’ve seen my drawings, they’ll be able to fly for longer.” Did you not want to send in your drawings? “No. Exactly the same thing will happen to me as it did with Zeppelin, he’s keeping me prisoner here and wants to have me executed to answer for my inventions.”

9.8.1909. Now sleeps always without morphine, only receives Veronal or amylene hydrate.

14.10.1909. At the surgical clinic it is believed possible to manage without operating. 2 h. out of bed but not in day room.

28.8.1909. Pat.
keen to see Zeppel-
lin's airship as
well, says: "If only
it would fly with my
sails, it would get
on much faster."



4.10.1909. Pat. asks to be allowed to get out of bed. Shows designs for flying machines. Asks why no response received from patent office to his designs for airship improvements.

3.1.1910. The nervous moods have abated somewhat recently but still persist, and currently make a return to the workhouse seem questionable.

25.4.1910. While being prepared for operation, patient became convinced he would remain under anaesthetic. Gave exact instructions for all that was to happen after his death. Described exactly how the memorial to be erected for him outside the Psychiatric Clinic should be constructed, in which pose he is to be portrayed. Asked that all plans for his airship be sent to his betrothed, so she may profit from his invention. Claimed he was going to be murdered so that his skull, which of course has a double turn, can be examined.

27.1.1910. Pat. recounts that he has found a new remedy for making medicines taste- and odourless.

25.4.1910. Patient will
be operated on today in surg.
clinic under anaesthetic.

31.1.1910. Pat. reveals that he has created a new invention to rescue people from a state of apparent death.

23.4.1910. On leave
again today.

12.3.1910.

Patient
behaving
calmly and
working
constantly



“Sailing Airship Model III.”

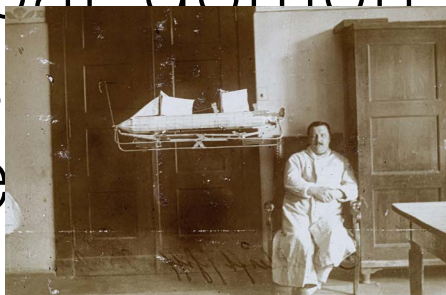
IGM-K-HPAC 3086-1908

tantly on his
airship.

15.4.1910.

On leave
again today.
Returned
punctually
and sober.

2.4.10. Furthermore, pat demonstrates an ostentatious, vain character.



“Sailing Airship Model III., 1 April 1910”
IGM-K-HPAC 3086-1908

Requires a lot of time for his toilet. Much occupied with his airship invention. Has himself photographed with it in all possible poses.

11.4.1910.

Patient
no longer
occupied
with his
airship.

22.6.1910.

Presentation
in Colleg.

Mania system
of pat. has not
undergone
any kind of
development.

(...) recently
not spoken
much of his
airship etc.

Minster for War!

Inform you that I have been occupied for years with building a steerable airship. I had the idea of equipping the same with a sail. With this vehicle I traverse the air just the same as a sailboat crosses the water. Nor, in this case, do I need any machines, the airship moves with the speed of the wind accordingly my airship travels much faster than the airship of Count Zeppelin. (...) My sailing airship is very well suited to war aims & would achieve the greatest successes. (...) Engineer v. Tarden currently Imperial Charité Station 29

Berlin, 13.8.09.

Dearly respected Dr Forster! (...) I have one more wish, which is that I might speak before yourself, the senior consultant, as regards my inventions, at which time I will also convey to you that my ideas are correct and healthy. Why should I not succeed in becoming a millionaire, but unfortunately it always has to be a count or some such. (...) Signed most loyally Engineer v. Tarden

“Since you began calling yourself Engineer von Tarden, have any doubts ever arisen as to the authenticity of this name?” “No.”

Berlin, 5.6.09.

Dear Mr Privy Councillor!

(...) But as long as I am alive, while I am and will be a lifelong cripple, then I will make all possible efforts to bring this airship into being for our future, and Count Zeppelin will doubtless have to step down from his world record. (...)

Respectfully, Engineer v. Tarden.

Berlin, 30.06.1910

Dear Dr Forster!

It occurred to me very suddenly tonight that I am not called v. Tarden but A. R., born 23.1.75 in Breslau. Under this name, v. Tarden, I will never be able to be discharged from here, as I am called A. R., it can therefore only have been nonsense on my part, I myself do not know how I came by it and thus beg most kindly for forgiveness.

A. R., model turner



This photograph from 5 April 1910 shows “Engineer von Tarden” (sitting on the bench, 2nd from left) with fellow patients and nurses in the garden of the Psychiatric Clinic. Sailing Airship Model III is passing overhead. The photo is embellished with the handwritten comment “Airship flight against the wind” and was enclosed with the patient’s letter to the patent office.

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2.8.1910.

Slept
without
morphine.



17.8.1910.

Pat. to be
told that his
correctional
custody is
lifted.

Berlin, 5.2.09.

Dear Sir Director of the Imperial Patent Office.

Allow me to send you herewith my sketches for the steerable airship, & request your assessment of the same. Based on my knowledge, the sail linen is to comprise 8 (square) metres, fashioned from silk. Mast (...) of aluminium or bamboo. For reasons of lightness, the car to be basketwork.

Berlin, 24.2.09

Sir Director of the Imper. Patent Office
for Berlin

Allow me hereby once again an enquiry as to whether you have placed all orders for me. Firstly the loan of the balloon

from the military airship division at Tegel. Secondly the procurement of Chinese silk for fashioning the sail. As far as the framework is concerned, I will build this myself.

Would you be so good as to have the balloon and the parcel of silk which is at Lehrter Station brought to my workshop in Reinickendorf. I am considering undertaking the first flight to New York in late summer, & will doubtless land happily after 8 minutes.

Engineer v. Tarden

